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How to increase brand awareness

Case company – Mai Niemi Design Shop

Preuhs, Celia

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Preuhs Celia Marie Edwige
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Abstract

Preuhs, Celia Marie Edwige

Increasing brand awareness. Case company: Mai Niemi Design Shop

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Mai Niemi is a Finnish fairytale design shop located in Helsinki, at the Senate Square. Mainly tourists, who are eager to discover and purchase unique handicraft items related to Finnish history and culture, visit it. The pieces of clothing available in the store have been designed by the owner herself, who became inspired by the Kalevala, as well as Finnish nature. However, at the moment not many tourists or locals are well aware of the existence of the shop, resulting in poor sales.

This thesis examines the results of the current marketing strategy. The purpose of the thesis is to develop a successful marketing plan that will be implemented from the first of December 2014. The objective of this plan is to increase brand awareness among local people as well as tourists. The results of the marketing plan will be seen by the end of the summer season of 2015.

Three different research methods have been used to collect the data. To start with, two interviews with Mai Niemi were conducted in spring 2014 in order to receive necessary background information about the current situation and the goals of the owner. Then, observation in May 2014 to understand the customers’ journey from the Senate Square and Market Square to the shop. Questionnaires were utilized to gather information from tourists visiting the shop. Interviews were used to understand the sources of motivation of local people to visit the brand’s premises. The data collected helped defined the most effective and efficient marketing channels, to target the different customers in the best possible manner.

The ultimate objective is to create a brand that customers will easily be able to identify and willing to become brand ambassadors.

Keywords marketing, brand awareness, small-sized company, channels, Finnish design

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1 Introduction

The first part of the thesis will briefly provide the reader with information related to the background of the company, the history of Mai Niemi Design Shop and the Kalevala. Then the objectives will be presented.

1.1 Background of the company

Mai Niemi is a Finnish Fairytale Design Shop located in the city center of Helsinki, more precisely at the Senate Square. This is a start-up company that has entered the market in August 2013, even though the idea of making the items that are available in the shop originated in 1999. At that time, Mai Niemi was studying Feng Shui, from a vision of a demand for sustainable fashion. The year 1999, marked the beginning of the brand, since the first items were created on that year.

1.2 History of Mai Niemi Finnish Fairytale Design Shop

According to an interview hold on 11th March 2014, Mai Niemi described the shop as being a conscious fashion concept for sustainable and wellbeing fashion market, which is inspired by the Nordic nature and history. Most of her inspiration is coming from the Kalevala, making the items closely related to Finnish history and traditions.

Illustration 1: 180° View of the boutique

The concept of sustainable clothing is based on two words, which are; timeless and ageless. Less is more, and it gives the opportunity to recycle and renew one’s wardrobe. Everything is pure, made of ethical materials and produced locally. The pieces of clothing, as well as the accessories, provide a “connection to the heart” to the story and life style of the customers. Customers get inspired when wearing the clothes, and have a feeling of happiness and joyful atmosphere when wearing them. It takes from one and a half day up to ten days to make the items, since there is a wide variety of pieces of clothing and accessories.

Illustration 2: Best sold item

The items are made mainly of wool, but some of them are also made of linen and cotton. The suppliers of wool, linen and cotton are all located in Great Britain and in Finland. The reason for having suppliers in Great Britain is because Mai Niemi has spent several years over there, and got to know about the Scottish culture, which is very comparable to the Scandinavian one, due to historical facts.

Illustration 3: Examples of accessories sold

The images that Mai Niemi would like the customers to receive is joy, happiness, usability, feminine empowerment and nature support. For Mai Niemi, customer satisfaction and relationships with customers play important roles. This is the reason why, whenever a customer suggests an item, Mai Niemi is eager to create it, on condition that it matches the concept of sustainable clothing. According to Mai Niemi, being a Finnish Designer is rather challenging since there is not much recognition from the State. On the other hand, customers' as well as fans' support is the greatest reward one could ever ask for (Mai Niemi. 2014. Pers Com).

1.3 Kalevala

The Kalevala is the Finnish national epic, compiled by Elias Lönnrot (1802-1884). It is considered as a milestone of Finnish literature and one of the greatest works of world literature. The first edition has been published in 1835, and has been compiled from folk poetry, which had been previously recorded in notebooks by Elias Lönnrot himself, during his trips among poetry singers in the late 1820s.

Kalevala became a symbol of the Finnish past, relating Finnish history and Finnish language, which has been used as a basis of establishing the Finnish identity. Lönnrot "dubbed the work the Kalewala or Old Karelian Poems from the Ancient Days of the Finnish People – Kalewala taikka Wanhoja Karjalan Runoja Suomen kansan muinosista ajoista –" (Kalevalaseura).

The original version of this epic is nowadays called "the Old Kalevala". It contained thirty-two poems and over twelve thousand verses. This edition was printed in five hundred copies, mainly reserved for a narrow circle of intellectuals. However, the Finnish people considered this epic as the most valuable treasure possible, reflecting their national and mythic history. Nowadays, the version contains ten thousand verses.

The Kalevala has had a strong impact on the Finnish culture, arts and sciences. Indeed, it has left its mark on the finest arts, literature, theatre, dance and music. There is not only one, but many different possible interpretations of this epic.

Kalevala Day is celebrated on 28th February, in memory to the day, which Elias Lönnrot signed the preface of the Old Kalevala on 28th February 1835, in Kajaani, Finland (Kalevalaseura).

1.4 Objectives

The objective of this thesis is to create and deliver a thorough marketing plan to Mai Niemi, having for purpose to increase the Mai Niemi brand awareness. The marketing plan that will be presented throughout the sections has been established according to the findings that have been provided by observation, interviews and questionnaires conducted during the month of May and June 2014. The goal of the marketing plan is to provide Mai Niemi with a solid foundation that will allow possible changes in order to remain up-to-date with the changing environment. The plan has been developed so that it could be used also in the years to come.

2 Knowledge base

The second part of the thesis focuses on providing explanations on the main concepts that have been used to deliver a thorough marketing plan.

2.1 Branding

Branding is refered to the allocation of a particular name to a specific product, and is divided mainly into three parts, which are: brand recognition, brand positioning and brand management (Forbes 2013).

2.1.1 Brand recognition

Brand recognition means the awareness of a customer that a particular brand exist (Business Dictionary 2014). According to Forbes (2013), there are some steps to follow in order to better brand recognition. The first one being providing an exceptional customer service, if the customer is pleased by the shop’s employees he or she will be likely to come back in the future. Then, a company needs to remember that providing value in the way that it exceeds customer’s expectations is very important. Sending newsletters or writing a blog explaining about new pieces of clothing available and events in which Mai Niemi will participate, on a regular basis is an efficient way of communicating with the customers and reminding them that the company is still existing, in order for them not to forget about the brand. Finally, using the same logo in all the marketing materials, whether online or on paper will enable the company to become easily recognizable to customers.

2.1.2 Brand positioning

Brand positioning is constituted of several variables, of which the three most significant ones are: vision, meaning and parameters of relevance. The vision helps defining the roots of the company as well as its target for the future. It is essential for managers to have a clear and deep understanding of the vision of the company they are working for. A failure in understanding the vision will lead to wrong attitudes, which will harm the brand and possibly destroy it. The meaning of the brand defines the purpose of its presence on the marketplace. This step establishes the desired image attributes that the brand will have to be recognized in the market. Parameters of relevance are the limits to which the brand can be extended beyond its core meaning without compromising its credibility. This step will allow managers to visualize what the brand is, and what it is not (Lippincott 2013).

Brand positioning has to be clear to customers. When positioning a brand, managers need to ask themselves a few questions, which will help them identifying the brand and the targeted goals. Moreover, these questions will give the opportunity to modify the goals to remain realistic and credible over time (Lippincott 2013).

One of the most important aims of brand positioning is, to notice that the brand owns a specific word or benefit in the customers' minds. Then, the current product and service offering of competitors need to be closely examined, to recognize whether the firm's products will be targeted to a niche, which is currently dissatisfied with the competitors' offering, or whether the products will be targeted to a larger audience. Next, one has to ensure that the brand meets the overall goals and visions of the company. Confusion would lead the company in the wrong direction (Lippincott 2013).

Furthermore, the brand goals must be realistic. Moreover, the company should have the necessary funds to develop the brand positioning. If not, another strategy has to be considered. Finally, in order for the company to be successful, managers must think of long-term goals when planning the brand positioning (AYTM 2013).

2.1.3 Brand management process

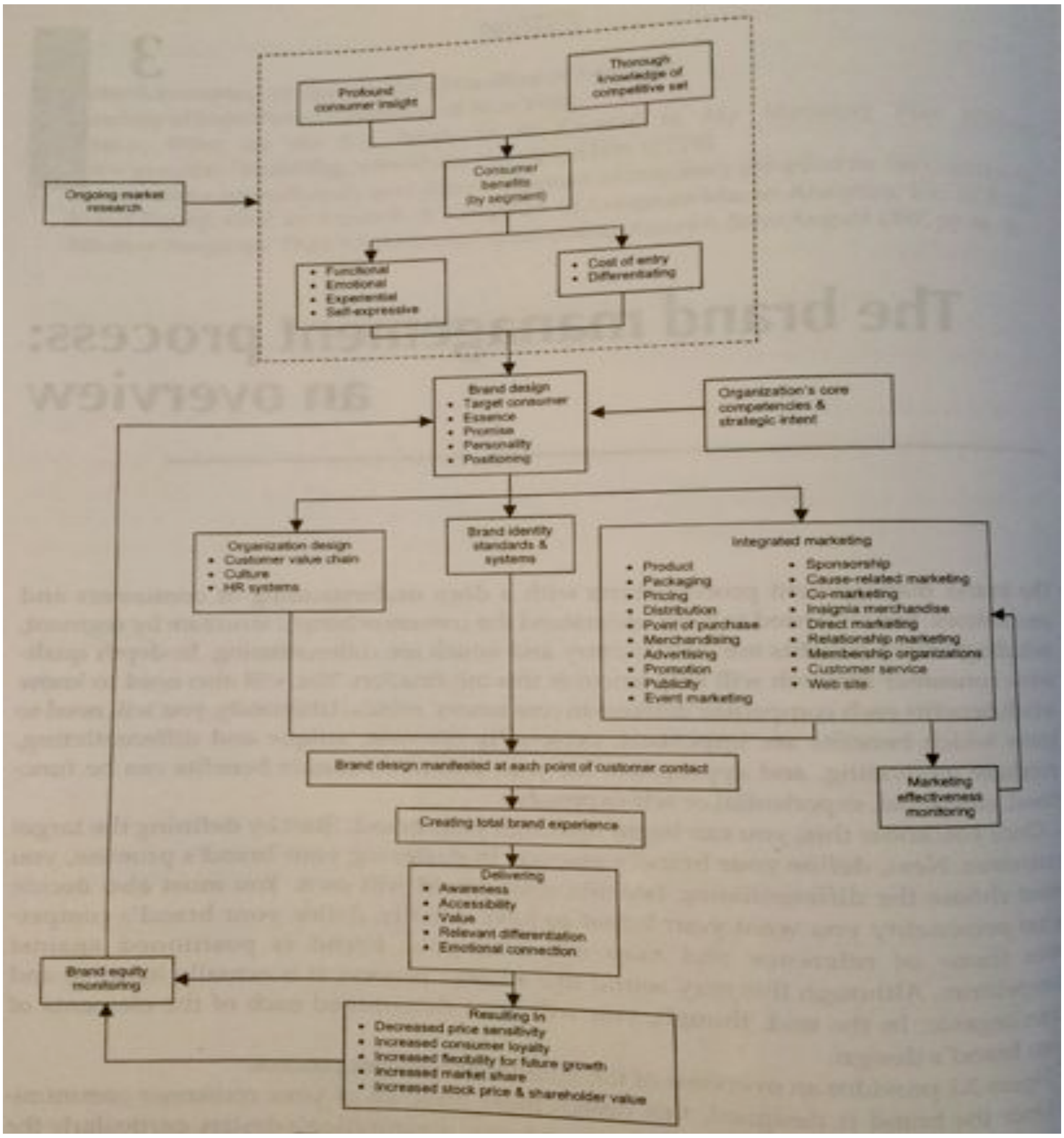

Illustration 4: Brand management process
(VanAucken 2002)

The brand management process starts with a deep understanding of consumers and competitors. The products have to be carefully identified, in order for the brand manager to understand the values drivers of that the brand is giving to the customers. It is crucial to have a comprehensive knowledge of the benefits delivered to customers before starting to establish the brand. The brand manager needs to ensure that the brand will deliver unique benefits to the customers. The brand image has to be clearly defined. The customer value chain, meaning that each activity of an organization should lead to added value to its target customers, has to be designed meticulously (VanAucken 2002).

2.1.4 Brand promise

Figure 1: Brand promise
(VanAucken 2002)

The brand promise is the most important part of a brand's design, owing to the fact that a brand must provide its customers with a relevant, compelling and differentiated benefit. The benefit may be of various nature such as: emotional, experimental, fuctional or self-expressive. The ultimate goal for each brand is to have the three following qualities: the brand is considered as extremely important to consumers, the firm is ”uniquely suited to deliver it”, and the competitors are not currently addressing such product (VanAucken 2002).

2.1.5 Brand insistence

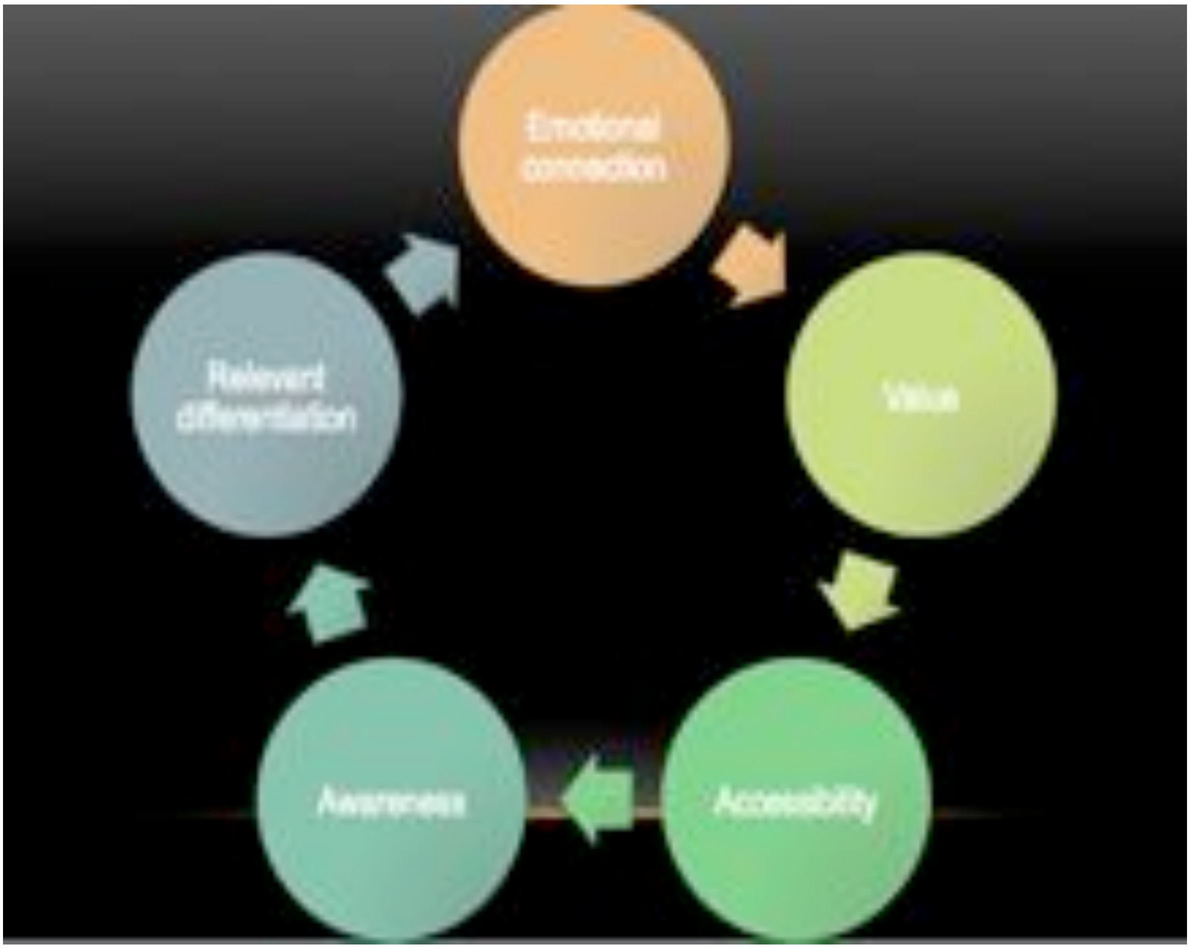

Figure 2: Driving the consumer from brand awareness to brand insistence
(VanAucken 2002)

The ultimate goal of brand equity building is to ”move the consumer from brand awareness to brand insistence”. Brand insistence is based on five points, which are: emotional connection, value, accessibility, awareness and relevant differentiation. Brand building starts with brand awareness. Ideally, as a result of successful branding, the brand should be the first one coming to the consumers’ minds. The brand needs to be available in the places at which, the consumers shop. It should not be too difficult to encounter. The brand has to deliver value for consumers to purchase the products. Therefore, the price has to match the value offered by the brand. If the price is perceived as too high or too low, it will have a negative impact on the consumer buying behavior. The emotional connections refer to the feelings consumers have towards one particular brand. Such feelings can be uniqueness, admirable brand, intense and vibrant brand, important, or the brand makes them feel good (VanAucken 2002).

2.2 Marketing

According to Kotler (2009), marketing is the activity and process of creating, communicating and delivering offerings that have value for the target group, like the customers for instance.

2.2.1 Marketing

Westwood (2011) defines marketing as the "provision of goods or services to meet the customer's needs". Marketing is indeed, the way of designing the products that tomorrow's customer will want to purchase, in order to meet their expectations and have the products available, before they start thinking about the product. In other words company managers need to be able to read the customers' minds. Marketing is innovating, but can not be done without integrating the company's ability and the requirements of the customers. This is the reason why companies have to be flexible, since they will have to enter new markets, create new products or services over time that will match the customers' as well as the marketplace's expectations. Marketing involves the abilities of the company, the requirements of the customers and the marketing environment. Company managers can control the core elements of the ability of the company and need to adjust them as best as possible, since those variables will determine the success of the company. The seven variables are the following: product, price, promotion, place, people, process and physical environment. These variables will be explained later on, in the marketing mix section (Westwood 2011).

2.2.2 Market research

According to Kotler, marketing research is the "systematic design, collection, analysis and reporting of data and findings relevant to a specific marketing situation facing the company". The process involves several steps: defining the problem, the decision alternatives, the research objectives, collecting the information, analyzing the information, presenting the findings and finally making the decision (Kotler 2009).

Once all the needed information has been presented, the company managers will have to estimate in either percentages or numbers, the size of the market share, the volume of sales and other variables like the estimated demand, in order to forecast the future in the most accurate possible manner, so that the predictions would match the real results as closely as possible (Kotler 2009).

2.2.3 Marketing mix

Figure 3: The Marketing Mix 7Ps
(Marketing Mix 2013)

The marketing mix is composed of seven components, which are: product, price, promotion, place, people, process and physical evidence.

The people portion refers to a firm's personnel such as employees, management. But also includes the organization's culture, and its customers. It is crucial to understand what customers are willing to buy, in order to design the right product for them. Nowadays it is not about making customers buying a firm's products, but instead is to create the products that customers have in mind and cannot find elsewhere. Satisfying customers and meeting their expectations in the key towards success. One efficient way of knowing what the dream product is, is to conduct surveys or interviews.

Each product has a visible and an invisible part. Therefore, a product is composed of several processes such as the designing of the product, ensuring that it meets the customers' expectations, manufacturing, quality, packaging, as well as warranty and possible accessories.

The price will later on be decided according to the existing pricing strategies, which are: skimming, penetration, value-based, cost plus and cost leadership.

The place refers to all the possible locations in which the customer can purchase the product. Usually it refers to retail, wholesale, mail order, Internet, direct sales, peer-to-peer or multi-channel.

Promotion includes all the means created by the management to motivate prospects to become customers by purchasing a firm's products, and not the ones of a competitor. Special offers, advertisements, endorsements, user trials, article marketing, social media marketing and campaigns are among the most used forms of promotion nowadays. A firm's budget will have an impact on the promotion method that will be chosen, however other variables such as the message to be delivered, and the group of customers to whom it will be targeted, will help determining which channel would be the best option in a particular situation.

The sixth "P" of the marketing mix refers to "process", which describes the uniformity of offering, the service delivery and the service consumption. Managers have to determine how the products will be delivered to the consumers, whether it is electronically or physically. The whole delivery chain has to be carefuly examined.

Finally, physical evidence refers to how a company and its products are presented on the market place. The key to success is branding, meaning that an effective branding strategy will enable customers to recognize the brand at all time, and will know what it stands for. It is a crucial step that will allow a company to become more successful than its competitors, especially on the long run (Marketing Mix 2013).

2.2.4 Marketing communication

Marketing communication is a fundamental and complex part of company's marketing efforts. It represents all the messages and medias, which will be utilized to communicate with the market. Marketing communication includes advertising, direct marketing, branding, packaging, online presence, printed materials, public relations activities, sales presentations, sponsorships and trade show participation.

Marketing communication has two objectives: creating demand on a long-term basis, and shortening the sales cycle. The goal is to make customers extremely satisfied with a firm's products, so that they would never be tempted to try similar ones from another company.

Understanding a customer's buying process has an important impact on reducing the sales cycle since, the shorter the cycle the more cost-efficient.

When purchasing a product, customers go though a five-steps buying process, which is: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase evaluation. From a firm's point of view, the five steps should drive the customer to think only about one company. Indeed, one of the most significant variable, which will determine success, is customer retention.

The rule of 3/11 can be also used to illustrate this example. A satisfied customer will tell about his or her positive experience to three people, whereas a dissatisfied customer will complain about the product or service to eleven people. Once a company has gained a customer it is crucial to keep this person over time. This is why marketing communication is so important nowadays (MaRS 2013).

2.2.5 Word of mouth marketing

Word-of-mouth marketing is defined by Sernovitz (2009) as giving people a reason to talk about one company's products, and make the conversation easier to take place between two individuals. The concept is very simple as the goal is to make people not only being aware about a product or a service, but instead talking about it to their friends, families, colleagues and also on the social media. Word-of-mouth marketing is free of charge and is based on four rules which are: being interesting - a product needs to be different than what the customers are used to, making it easy - the message has to be simple and easy to remember, make people happy – the product has to be of excellent quality and deliver value to customers, and earn trust and respect – by being an honorble company attaching a strong importance on customer satisfaction and service (Sernovitz 2009).

There are three reasons why people talk about a specific company or product, either because they like the brand or the item, using the product creates a feeling of happiness, and people feel like they belong to a special group (Mullins 2009).

Sometimes word-of-mouth happens as an accident, however sometimes it is the strategy of the company. In order for the word-of-mouth to be spread out in the right way, the five Ts of word-of-mouth marketing need to be settled: talkers, topics, tools, taking part and tracking (Mullins 2009).

The marketing managers of the company need to identify the type of people who will be likely to share their feelings with their friends, the reason why they will talk about the product, how the discussions can easily be started, how the company should join the conversation either physically or on the social media after a certain time, and finally tracking what is actually being said. Since word of mouth cannot be faked, it is imperative for the company to ensure that customers are satisfied with the products, in order to avoid the negative effects of the rule of 3/11 – when satisfied a customer is likely to talk about the product or service to three people, whereas when dissatisfied he or she will tell the story to eleven people (Mullins 2009).

2.2.6 Event management and event marketing

The concept of event management in businesses is rather new. An event can be defined as ”something, which happens, and can range from a friend dropping round unexpectedly for coffee to a major sporting event such as the Summer Olympics” (Beech 2014).

The term ”event” is wide and can mean different types of events such as carnival, conference, convention, exhibition, expo, fair, festival and show. An event requires managing to ensure that the activities are operated efficiently and effectively, starting from the planning process and lasting until the end of the forecasted event itself. A budget must be estimated and allocated. A specific person should be held responsible for managing the event as a whole, and can in some cases be an event organizer. Finally, an event also involves other stakeholders than the company organizing the event and the visitors, such as florists, catering companies and installation companies are usually also involved (Beech 2014).

Events have several characteristics since they need to be built around a specific theme, have a planning and executing phase, should enable the company to make profit or at least earn customers, and require interaction between all the stakeholders involved (Beech 2014).

When planning an event it is essential to know very well the clientele and desired target group. The whole process of planning an event should be closely connected to the target audience, and based on it, in order to meet the audience’s expectations in the best possible way. There are several motives that drive managers to create an event, however it is necessary to remember that an event has to be either considered as original or depending on a specific request (Beech 2014).

The creative lens process is composed of three points, which are related to the theme and are the following: the purpose of the event, the success factors and concept testing. Before approving the event, the concept has to be tested in order to determine whether it would be successful or not. If not, then the idea has to be abandoned by the organization. In addition to the creative lens, the design lens is composed of three elements, which are gravitating around the event concept and are: the stakeholder review – to determine who all the stakeholders are -, logistics – to determine whether the company would need to contact another company to receive all the elements needed for event, or not- and finally finance – to determine whether the company has sufficient resources to allocate to the project or not. When the company disposes of sufficient financial resources, the total amount of money needed will be calculated in comparison to the amount of money available in the company. Once all the previously mentioned variables have been carefully analyzed, the company managers can create and launch an appropriate marketing campaign in order to reach the largest possible audience (Beech 2014).

2.2.7 Public relations

Public relations is concerned with an organization's relationships with the various groups, affecting its ability to achieve its goals and objectives. These relationships act as an image and information that the public holds about a company. Usually, the image is created by print advertising, however in order to be more efficient, relationships with the public are needed (McDonald 2013).

Public relations, therefore, is an important support for both, positioning and relationship marketing. Public relations enable a company to reach the audiences that it would like to influence. It is considered as being cost-efficient since, it does not involve mass media advertising. A message received via a user review is perceived as being five times more influential than one received via an advertisement (McDonald 2013).

Public relations does not consist of replacing advertisement, but instead is considered as a development that will increase the significance of the advertisements. There are six main areas of public relations activities, which are: news generation, events, publications, support for good causes, expert opinion and visual identity (McDonald 2013).

News generation appears as one of the most widely used tool of public relations. News are best structured around a story, which can include information about an organization or its products. Achievements, personalities, discoveries are all means of telling a story. News is also used to stimulate potential customers by making them aware of the existence of a product. Companies' websites are considered as one of the most relevant place for such activity (McDonald 2013).

Events are useful occasions for companies to gain people's attention. A firm can participate in an event, by being present on stage, or by sponsoring the event. News conferences, seminars, exhibitions and anniversary dinners are all examples of events that are likely to gain media coverage and draw attention to the firms sponsoring the event. Enforcing credibility and establishing the image wanted by the company, are both executed when participating in an event. Finally, events are good opportunities to develop relationships with suppliers, opinion leaders, associate and customers (McDonald 2013).

Publications of an organization are another method of communication in which, public relations have a strong interest. Sales support material such as brochures, manuals and presentations are examples of publications that will be used by all sorts of people in relation with the organization. Also, it is important that a firm communicates with its stakeholders by providing them with newsletters and magazines (McDonald 2013).

Support for good causes is another means of promoting an image and associating a firm with a certain set of values. Charity donations in return for product coupons, the sponsorship of public service activities such as festivals, support for local community such as crime prevention provide many opportunities for publicity elsewhere than on advertisements (McDonald 2013).

Individuals working in the firm can act as sources of expert opinion in describing the activities of the organization. Those opinions are mainly targeted to journalists and research investigations. Public relation managers seek to promote their organization and its success by delevopping contact lists and increasing their employees' presentation skills (McDonald 2013).

Lastly, visual identity gives the opportunity for a firm to be easily visible to customers. Visual identity includes logos and designs, which are perceived as being the most important form of presence in the market, making it possible for customer to easily identify a company's products or services (McDonald 2013).

Public relations are very useful for smaller firms with limited promotional budgets, since it permits people to see the name of the brand and therefore, talk about the brand with their families and friends, acting as word-of-mouth (McDonald 2013).

2.3 Planning phase

The planning phase refers to the step that, the managers of the company have to analyze before launching their business idea. Indeed, the information collected will enable a better understanding of the firm's future position in the market place, as well as reveal crucial information needed prior to establishing the business plans.

2.3.1 SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis is an evaluation of a company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, which enables the managers to determine what measures should be taken internally and externally to reach the objectives fixed. The strengths and weaknesses originate from the company itself, and are therefore internal. Whereas the opportunities are to be found in the external environment. Both, internal and external measures are considered as helpful, since they lead to achieving the objectives of the company. On the other hand, threats are related to the external environment. Both, weaknesses and threats are considered as harmful to achieve the objectives (Kotler 2009).

2.3.2 Porter's generic strategies

Michael Porter has proposed three generic strategies providing company managers with three options to choose from: overall cost leadership, differentiation and focus.

Overall cost leadership means that the firm has chosen to achieve the lowest production and distribution costs so that the final price of the products and services would be very low, in order to win a large market share to dominate the market (Kotler 2009).

Differentiation means that the company is focusing on developing products and services that are completely unique by achieving a superior performance in terms of customer value. For example, companies choosing this strategy are seeking for quality leadership by making products with the best components, having experts as employees and a thorough inspection to ensure that the products are perfect before being sold (Kotler 2009).

Focus means that the business is concentrating on a certain niche only, by learning all the aspects of the niche to target the customers in the best possible manner (Kotler 2009).

2.3.3 Developing the business plan

A business plan will help the managers to remain focused with the initial idea, and provide the necessary guidelines to measure progress and achievement (Butler 2006). The business plan should include the following information: ”the business idea – the type of business proposed and service to be offered, the method of operation, personal parameters, outline of market and customers, location and operating area and the statement of viability-, the proprietors of the business. Plus, details of key personnel, personal profile of the owner, the reasons behind the choice of business, personal skills and experience relevant to the proposed business, an appraisal of available skills and identified development needs (Butler 2006).

In addition to the resources required – inventory of required plant, equipment and materials, schedule of available resources, premises, transport, personnel and insurance requirements-. Moreover, financial plans - budgetary plans and cash flow forecasts, explanation of basis for planned budgets, personal survival budget, break-even analysis, profit forecast, value of available capital and resources, potential funds, chosen sources of finance and reasons for the choice and financial monitoring procedures- need to be added (Butler 2006).

Next, marketing – target market and operational area, explanation of unique features of proposed products, market research, identification of market influences and seasonal factors, analysis of competitors' products, the marketing plan, samples of advertising material, schedule of fees and charges, statements of quality standards and monitoring of sales and marketing activities-, the implementation of the proposals – chosen means and justification for choice, relevant legislation, timetable, key stages of implementation, longer-term plans-, a summary of the six points along with an estimation of the results, and finally appendices listing the data and charts that have been used to consolidate the findings (Butler 2006).

Before developing the business plan it is important to take into account several factors, as shown on the picture below.

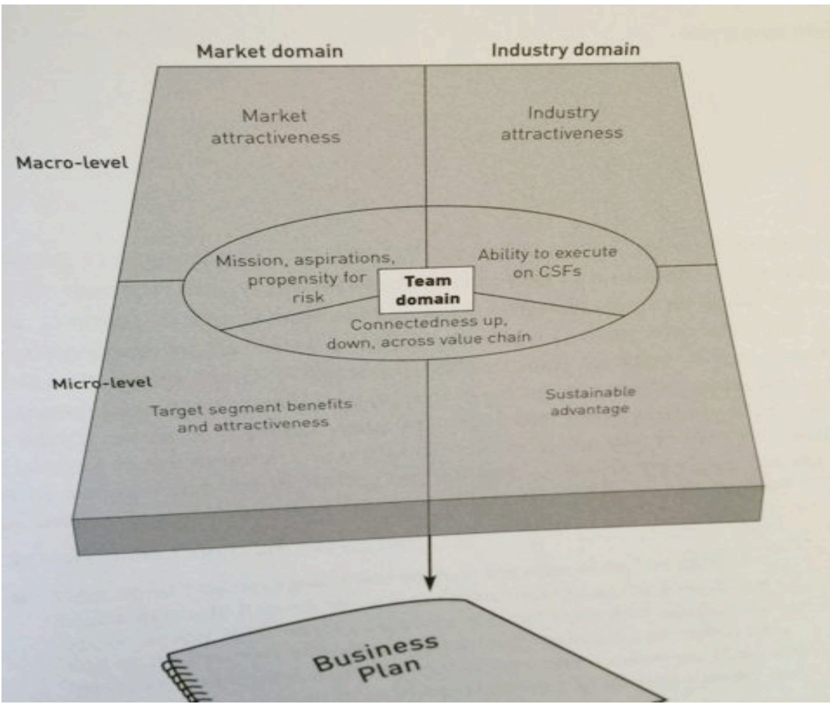

Figure 4: How to develop a business plan?
(Mullins 2006)

First the entrepreneur needs to know whether the target segment is considered as attractive and will create profits. To answer this question is it crucial to analyze carefully the target segment, in order to know whether the target segment is large or small at the moment, and whether it is estimated to grow in the near future. Also, it is important to know what the target segment considers as values, and what their purchasing behavior is like (Mullins 2006).

Once those points have been answered, the entrepreneur can focus on the market attractiveness. Variables such as the short-term growth of the market, long-term growth of the market and size of the market place to ensure that the product will not be handicapped by competitors' strategies and products, will enable the entrepreneur to choose whether to pursue the analysis of the market place or not (Mullins 2006).

Then, the entrepreneur need to ask himself whether the industry is attractive, by analyzing and determining whether there are threats to entering the market. Such threats can be of several forms: threat of substitutes – meaning that if the product of the entrepreneur can be easily reproduced or not -, competitive rivalry, supplier power and buyer power – meaning whether those two groups have the power to set terms and conditions in the market place (Mullins 2006).

Next, the sustainable advantage has to be evaluated. A company will be considered as having a sustainable advantage when some of the elements require a patent or trade secrets, when the firm is operating in such way that duplicating or imitating the processes would be hard, and the business model needs to be economically viable – the revenues have to be in ad equation with the capital investments, the company has to ensure that enough money is received in order to pay for its expenses – (Mullins 2006).

The previous elements were related to the external environment of the company, however the internal factors must be examined as well. There are three internal factors, which are: the reason why the entrepreneur wants to establish a company (his mission, aspirations and personal traits), the ability of the team (entrepreneur and employees) to execute the tasks and the connections of the entrepreneur within the market place, in terms in relations between the different actors in the seected market place (Mullins 2006).

When those elements have been accurately studied the entrepreneur can decide, whether to enter the market with the products or service, or not.

2.3.4 Developing a marketing plan

A marketing plan is usually made to be conducted for a long period of time, however companies should recall that it needs to be updated from time to time, in order for the business to be successful, even though some changes in the market place can occur after the plan has been commenced.

According to Delaney (1994), the success of the company is driven by the marketing plan. This is the reason why some steps need to be carefully followed to avoid making mistakes. First of all, it is imperative to conduct a profound analysis of the market, meaning that the past and future trends must be taken into account, as well as the demographics related to customers such as their age, behavior, and purchasing attitudes. Then, the company should determine the budget that will be allocated to the marketing activities, either on a monthly basis or on a yearly basis. Creating a budget enables the managers to identify the future cash inflows and outflows.

Also, it is relatively easy to adapt the budget according to potential changes. Distinguishing customers carefully will empower the company managers to approach them in the best possible manner, along with ensuring that their expectations are met, and even exceeded, to provide the best possible satisfaction level. Competitors in the market place should be carefully skimmed, knowing not only their names, but their strategies, strengths, weaknesses and goals will warrant success (Delaney 1994).

Finally, managers need to recall that advertising has to be done when sales are slightly dropping, instead of increasing advertisement efforts whenever important amounts of money have been generated. Indeed, advertisements should be used to boost a firm’s sales. This is why, it is not considered as useful to invest large amounts of resources in advertising whenever the firm’s volumes of sales is constantly growing (Delaney 1994).

2.4 Start-up

A company is considered as a micro firm when its number of employees does not exceed nine. There are three different types of influences encouraging individuals to become entrepreneurs: personal character traits, situational factors and antecedent influences (Burns 2011).

Traits such as the desire for independence, achievement, self-confidence and innovativeness are personal character traits. Employment or unemployment, immigration and economic opportunity are situational factors. Family, ethnicity, gender, social group and national culture are antecedent influences. Combining the three types of influences define the start-up influences (Burns 2011).

A start-up is a company that is ”in the first stage of its operations”. The founders of the start-up believe that in the market place there is demand, in form of an opportunity, for their specific products or services. On the other hand, start-ups are usually limited due to either revenues or high costs and thus their status in the future is difficult to determine, since in most cases funding from venture capitalists will be needed after a few years, in order to keep the business running (Investopedia 2014).

3 Methods

This section will explain the three different methods that have been chosen in order to conduct the research.

3.1 Quantitative method

A questionnaire has mainly two advantages. First, compared to conducting an interview, distributing a questionnaire is less expensive in terms of money, human resources and time. It is considered as an ”inexpensive method of data collection” (Kumar 1996). It also offers greater anonymity, as there is no face-to-face interaction between the interviewer and the respondents.

On the other hand, using questionnaires as a method of data collection has several disadvantages such as, a limited application, because not all people who are in age to speak, are able to write (children, handicapped people, illiterate). A low response rate, since many respondents tend not to return them or return them but are incomplete, the sample population may not have been properly evaluated, it neglects spontaneous responses due to the non-existent interaction between the two stakeholders, and lacks of opportunity to clarify issues as the respondents are not asking if they have a doubt regarding a question, but instead tick an answer. Moreover, the responses to a question may be influenced by the response to other questions, because the participants usually read all the questions before starting to answering them. Questionnaires offer the possibility for respondents to consult others, as they might ask the person next to them to tell what they have answered. Finally, the responses can in any case be supplemented with other information such as additional information (Kumar 1996).

Questionnaires are usually used when the purpose of the research is to obtain accurate answers about predefined questions, such as in the case of a descriptive or explanatory research. Questionnaires can be of different types. The design will differ according to how it is administrated, and the number of participants will vary in accordance with the type of questionnaire chosen (Kumar 1996).

Questionnaires can be self-administred, meaning that they are administred electronically using the Internet, interviewer-administered, which means that they are directly distributed by the interviewer to the participants, or administrated by telephone or online using tools like Skype, for instance. The choice of the questionnaire will be influenced by several factors, according to the research questions and objectives of the research. The researcher needs to determine which factors are relevant for its particular research by asking himself or herself questions, whether it is relevant to reach a particular person, what should the characteristics of the sampling population be, whether the answers of the participants would be contaminated or distorted, the type of question needed to collect the right data and the number of questions needed to cover the research topic (Kumar 1996).

Contamination of the answers can come from various sources, for example uninformed response defines the fact that when participants do not know the answer they will tend to guess it or, because they believe that certain responses are more ”socially desirable”. Also, when completing the questionnaire along with other people, participants may tend to ask the others what they have answered before making their final decision (Kumar 1996).

The choice of a questionnaire also depends on the resources available, such as time, finances, availability of the interviewers and easiness of analyzing the data (Sanders 2009).

When designing the questionnaires it is important to take into account the different types of questions to be asked to the participants. Open questions are used whenever the purpose is to obtain a detailed answer. List questions enable participants to select between several possibilities and are used do determine which of the variables has the most significant impact on the participant’s behavior. Category questions are useful when the goal is to observe the participants’ behavior and attitudes. Ranking questions allow participants to ranks the propositions in the order of importance from the participant’s point of view. Rating questions have for purpose to give participants the possibility to express their opinion about statements. Finally, matrix questions enable the participant to answer two questions at a time. Question order is fundamental and has to be chosen logically. The purpose of the questionnaire has to be stated, whether in a form of a covering letter, a banner, a title or a graphic illustration, to explain the purpose of the research to the participants. At the end of the questionnaire a sentence informing the respondent of what he or she should do, has to be written (Sanders 2009).

3.2 Qualitative method

According to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008), interviews often take place face-to-face and consist most of the time of a series of questions and answers. The interviewee answers the questions asked by the interviewer. There are three types of interview study: positivist, emotionalist and constructionist.

The positivist approach concerns interviews having for purpose to collect as accurate information as possible and are focused on facts and numbers.
Emotionalist is an interview approach focused on the participant's experiences, thus people's perceptions, conceptions, understandings, viewpoints and emotions are considered as the most important factors (Eriksson 2008).

The constructionist approach resembles every day conversations, in which the interviewer and interviewee discuss with each other, the purpose being the meanings produced through interaction between the two stakeholders (Eriksson 2008).

Whether the approach chosen, there are three types of interviews which are; structured and standardized interviews, guided and semi-structured interviews and open interviews. Structured interviews are when the interviewer sticks to the script and has a limited capacity of changing the word order in addition to the question order. The same questions are asked to the whole sample with minor flexibility. Usually such interviews are conducted for two reasons, either due to a lack of time and resources, or because the goal is to compare the answers of the whole sample to make a comparison of the data collected (Eriksson 2008).

Semi-structured interviews differ to the previous ones since the interviewer is given more flexibility regarding the wording and the questions themselves. There are two challenges that may occur when using this method, the topic may not be fully covered in some cases, and it is not as easy to compare the answers of the different respondents as with the previous method (Eriksson 2008).

Finally, the open interview is usually utilized when the purpose is to explore a topic intensively, thus freedom is given to the interviewees to express their points of view, without being limited to answers the questions of the script, but when searching for comparisons this method is not applicable. Two types of questions can be used, open ones give the ability to the interviewee to tell his or her story, whereas closed ones allow the respondent to answer by ”yes” or ”no” or by choosing among the alternatives (Eriksson 2008).

Interviews can be either recorded on tape or on video, or written down as notes during the interview or right after it (Kumar 1996).

According to Kumar (1996), interviews have five main advantages, the first one being the fact that it is more suitable for complex situations, since the interviewer has the ability to prepare the respondent to the questions and can give details and explanations if needed. In addition, the questions can be explained and information can be supplemented by observation of non-verbal actions, for instance. Then, it is very useful when the goal is to collect in-depth information. Finally, unlike completing a questionnaire, anyone can be interviewed such as children, illiterate and handicapped people. However, there are some drawbacks as well since the interviewer can ”introduce his or her bias” (Kumar 1996) in the framing of questions and the interpretations of answers. In addition, if the interviewer is paid he or she may be more motivated to collect better information than if doing it voluntarily.

The quality of data depends upon the quality of the interviewer, in the manner that the results are affected by the commitment, experience and skills of the interviewer. For the same reason, the quality of data may vary when several interviewers are used, because they may not all interpret the data in the same way and act with the interviewees in a different style. Also, the quality of data is closely linked to the interaction between the two stakeholders. Finally, interviewing is a time-consuming and expensive method when the sample is located in different areas, however if located in the same this drawback is of minor importance (Kumar 1996).

3.3 Observation

The method of observation is divided into seven steps which are the following: defining a research problem, choosing a research site, gaining access, finding an identity, looking as well as listening, recording observation and developing analysis of field data (Silverman 2011).

The person who will observe the situation needs to be very careful and spend time observing closely and meticulously what customers are doing. Indeed, in most cases, small details tend to be ignored, due to the fact that they are considered as either obvious or useless. However, details may enable observators to find the key to the solution of the problem faced by companies. Close observation of customers will lead to the identification of the route that customers take to reach the settled place, as well as showing how they act, what they do, and what their patterns and habits are once in the shop. Most of the time, the customer journey that managers have in mind, according to what they have designed, can highly differ in reality. Customer observation is therefore the most accurate source of information that managers can get, due to the fact that observators will record the customers’ journey, without customers being aware of it. Unlike in surveys or interviews, there will be absolutely no interaction with customers. This is the reason why, the observation method can not be falsified by wrong answers to please the researchers (Silverman 2011).

There are several ways of recording observations such as audio or videotaping, drawing the journey on maps which have been previously printed, and writing down notes. The researchers should keep in mind that not all information is worth writing. Taking too much notes could lead observators to miss some details or important information. Five sets of questions should always be answered when making field notes. The observatory needs to observe what people are doing or trying to accomplish, how do they do this, how people understand and characterize what is going on, what kind of assumptions they make, and then analytic questions related to the situation and its environment, as well as the relevance of the notes (Silverman 2006).

Finally, there are three crucial aspects of observational research: the focus of the study, methodological decisions and theoretical decisions (Silverman 2006).

3.4 Sampling

According to Kumar (1996), sampling means selecting a few people from a bigger group of people to use as a basis for estimating the overall picture of the entire group. Only the sample selected will be studied, otherwise it would require too much time and resources to study the entire population. Therefore this process has advantages as well as drawbacks. The advantages are the time and cost efficiency of the method in comparison to analyzing the whole group. The disadvantages is that the sample might not exactly represent the entire population, thus there is an existing possibility of error in the estimation (Kumar 1996).

It is important to keep in mind that two factors can affect the validity of the research. The first one is the size of the sample, which needs to be determined carefully and thus computed, not only randomly chosen. The second on is the extent of variation in the sampling population, meaning that if only the same variety of people is selected, the results will tend to be the same, so it will not be representing the whole population. This is the reason why, there are two goals when selecting a sample (Kumar 1996).

The sample should be selected accurately and bias in the selection should be avoided. The type of sampling that will be used for this research is called ”cluster sampling”. This type belongs to the probability sampling design, which can be utilized in this research since the number of the total population can be calculated rather easily. Cluster sampling is a ”simple random and stratified sampling technique based on a researcher’s ability to identify each element in a population” (Kumar 1996). The total population will be divided into groups, called clusters, and then a sample will be selected within each cluster. The sampling population will be chosen using the sample random sampling (SRS) method, which means that within each cluster the sample will be picked randomly, using the fishbowl draw method. In order to achieve the highest accuracy, the larger the sample size, the more accurate the estimates (Kumar 1996).

3.5 Ethical issues

Ethics define the rules of conduct as well as the moral principles of a particular group of people (Dictionary 2014). The code of conduct is proper to each profession and culture, however some similarities have been observed among the different groups.

Kumar (1996) stated that in a research, there are always at least two stakeholders: the participants and the researcher himself. This is why the concept of ethical issues appears twice, once concerning the participants, and once concerning the researcher. In order not to offense the sampling population and to avoid any misunderstanding, it is important that the researcher explains the purpose of the study, before asking the respondent to answer the questionnaire or the interview. The participant must also express his or her consent, and often wants to know, whether the answers will be kept anonymous or not. The researcher must avoid bias that could occur due to subjectivity and the interpretation of the respondent's answers (Kumar 1996).

The credibility of the research is emphasized when the respondents are provided with a short sentence describing the purpose of the research before starting to complete the questionnaire or the interview. The concepts of confidentiality and anonymity should be clearly defined prior to commence the interview, and the researcher must accept the situation in which, the respondents may not be willing to participate in the research (Erkisson 2008).

3.6 Analyzing data

When analyzing quantitative data three techniques can be used and are the following; the mean, the median and the mode. The mean refers to dividing the sum of all the values in the sample by the number of all the values in the sample. However, if the gap between the smallest and largest variables is high, the results obtained by calculating the mean may not be accurate. This is the reason why, using the median technique delivers a more precise result. The median is the "midpoint of the values after they have been ordered from the smallest to the largest. Fifty percent of the observation above the median, and fifty below the median" (Lind 2001).

The last method is called the ”mode” and is the value of the observation appearing the most. This method is usually used in describing nominal levels of measurement, resulting in sentences like ”the largest number of respondents favored Lamoure, as evidenced by the highest bar” (Lind 2001).

In addition to what has been previously explained, dispersion can also be used to reinforce the results already obtained. Qualitative and quantitative data are not analyzed in the same manner, since qualitative data is non-numerical. There are several means to analyze qualitative data such as memos, maintaining a researcher’s diary and summaries (Saunders 2009).

There are different types of data, and the method for entering, computing and analyzing the data has to be defined before starting the process. It is also important to remember to check for possible errors once all the data has been entered into the computing system. Checking can be done easily by looking at the different data, and notice if there has been a mistake such as, for instance an additional zero or missing information. When exploring and presenting the data, a wide quantity of variable can be identified (Saunders 2009).

Thus it is important to select which ones are relevant to the research. The researcher can choose between specific values, highest and lowest values, trends over time, proportions and distributions. The most suitable types of charts are not the same for all types of variable. For instance, to show highest and lowest values, bar charts, histograms or pictograms are the best options, whereas pie charts are a better option to show proportions. Once data has been explored, conjunctions, totals and relationships or interdependence can easily be made. To assess the strength of a relationship, it is recommended to use a correlation coefficient, since it illustrates the strength of the linear relationship between two variables. The results vary between +1 and -1, +1 signifying that there is a positive correlation and -1 a negative correllation (Saunders 2009).

3.7 Validity and reliability of the research

The concepts of validity and reliability are crucial in a research. Validity is ”the ability of an instrument to measure what it is designed to measure” (Kumar 1996). However, determining who and how, to ensure that the instrument is actually measuring what it is supposed to can be challenging. This is the reason why it is important to ensure that, the questions of the survey or the interview are in relation with each other, and with the topic of the research (Kumar 1996).

There are three types of validity, face and content validity, concurrent and predictive validity and construct validity. The first one, face validity, will be used for this research. Face and content validity are based on the logical link between the questions and the objective of the study, this is called face validity. Content validity refers to the fact that, the questions asked should cover the full range of possibilities of answers that the research has been designed for (Kumar 1996).

Reliability is defined by Kumar (1996) as ”the greater the degree of consistency, and stability in an instrument, the greater is its reliability”.

There are five factors that could possibly affect the reliability of a research instrument and are the following: the wording of questions, the physical setting – the time and place when the questionnaire or interview will be conducted -, the respondent’s mood, the nature of interaction – the answers might change if the respondent has already been interviewed by the same person in the past or about the same topic -, and finally the regression of an instrument – respondents may feel that they have been too positive or too negative when answering the questions (Kumar 1996).

In order to determine the reliability of an instrument, there are several procedures, which are either considered as external consistency practices or internal consistency practices. External consistency practices means that, the respondents have answered the same questionnaire twice, which enables the results to be more accurate, since the results of the first and second round are compared before conducting the final analysis. Internal consistency procedure represents the idea that the similar results should be obtained from the questions. The split-half technique is designed to ensure that the questions are divided in half so that they measure the same aspect, in order to deliver the same answer. The total score of the two halves is correlated and allows a more realistic and reliable analysis (Kumar 1996).

4 Empirical study

The empirical study focuses on two main parts. On one hand, on revealing the reader information related to the background of the research and providing examples of the current practices. On the other hand, the description of the purposes and implementations of the research methods.

4.1 Background

On March 2014, two interviews have been conducted with Mai Niemi in order to know more about the brand, and collect information about the current situation. The first interview has been conducted on March 11th 2014, and the second on March 24th 2014. The purpose of these two interviews was to gather all the necessary information about the current sales situation as well as the current marketing practices, to be able to find solutions to remediate to the problem of low sales. In April and May 2014, more information has been revealed by personal communication and by email. Communication between the owner and the student has been very effective and efficient during the internship along with the thesis writing process.

4.1.1 Current practices

According to the interview conducted on March 24th, 2014, Mai Niemi stated that her objective was to develop an efficient marketing plan, that will be implemented step by step in the end of 2014, to increase brand awareness about the shop among tourists and locals. This is the reason why, the personnel has received a specific training in late April 2014, in order to be able to inform the customers as much as possible about the items and their story.

Mai Niemi Brand is currently advertised in Visit Helsinki, Tori Korttelit, Facebook and Global Blue. Although, according to Mai Niemi, it should also be advertised in some small Finnish Designers' boutiques, and in the tourist information center. Also, the information needs to be updated, since it perceived as being out-dated (Mai Niemi 2014. Pers Com).

The budget allocated for the marketing campaign is relatively low, ranging from tree hundred to five hundred euros, for the reason that the previous sales have not generated sufficient resources yet. Nonetheless, in order to target the right audience, new pictures will be taken with models wearing the items, and will be used as leaflets, which will be printed and later on dealt to restaurants, hotels and touristic centers (Mai Niemi 2014. Pers Com).

Concerning the stock, about eighty percent of the items are in the shop, this is why, Mai Niemi is currently working at home and creating new ones before the summer season starts, as lacking of stock would penalize the whole business. The rest of the stock can be found at Kanhurin Tupa Shop in Esplanad 35. Some items are in the previous shop, Omnia Shop, which is nowadays used as a "retail outlet" (Mai Niemi 2014. Pers Com).

The sales forecast for the summer season, from May 2014 to September 2014 is expected to be "huge" as told Mai Niemi during the interview on March 24th, 2014. Since it is in that particular period of the year that most of the sales will be made, due to the fact that summer is when the number of tourists is the highest. The visibility of the shop has to be improved to attract more customers in the summer.

Illustration 5: Street visibility of the shop

When thinking about expanding the shop, several plans have been already considered by the owner. One would be to open a new boutique either in Helsinki or in Turku. The second one would be an entry into the American market, in the form of pop-up shops to begin with, and later on to distribute permanently to a few carefully selected retailers. The third option at the time is to expand to Europe, by exhibiting in fairs and salon all around the continent. Mai Niemi is willing to cooperate to some extent with other Finnish designers or artists in order to increase the brand name.

4.2 Observation

This section will present the purpose as well as the implementation of the observation.

4.2.1 Purpose of the observation

The area of this observation was the shop itself, located on Katariinankatu 4 B, 00100 Helsinki. The purpose of the observation is to understand the customers’ journey, and their attitude inside the shop. The customers’ journey has been observed from the Senate Square and Market Square to the Wanha Bock House, from the main building to the shop, and then inside the shop.

4.2.2 Implementation

The observation has been conducted in the month of May 2014, on different days of the week, as well as at different time of the day, to avoid any misinterpretation in relation to a specific pattern that people would have at a certain time of the day, such as in the morning or in the evening. The observation has been conducted by the researcher herself.

4.3 Questionnaires for customers

A study conducted in May 2014, having for purpose to determine the number of customers visiting the shop, has been used to determine how many questionnaires should be printed, as well as to give a first impression about the different groups of customers. The results presented by this study have been estimated to be rather similar for the month of June 2014, time when the questionnaires and interviews will be conducted.

4.3.1 Determining the questions

The goal was to determine what the most efficient channels of marketing were, and to adapt the marketing plan to enable the company to reach its customers in the most effective and efficient manner as possible.

First, it is important to understand the background of the customers to identify, which marketing practices are more suitable according to the customer’s nationality. This is the reason why, questions related to the customer’s provenance and sex were asked. Also, in order to expose the marketing materials at the right place, respondents were asked to tell which means of transportation they had used to reach Helsinki. Subsequently, customers were asked to choose between several alternatives, which marketing channels have the most significant impact on them and those having the least.

The number of times as well as the frequency at which, they have heard about Mai Niemi were also questions to which customers have answered. Second, according to the customer’s background, possible actions could be envisaged in the future to reach them in an even more effective manner, such as by translating the flyers into their mother tongue. Later on, a Russian-speaking intern or employee could be engaged by the company, to welcome the Russian tourists to the boutique. Finally, to be able to reach the tourists in the most efficient way, it is crucial to know how they search for information about local handicraft and traditional shops, and the frequency at which they are searching for this type of information.

4.3.2 Implementation

The questionnaires have been distributed to customers visiting the boutique starting from Monday, June 2nd for a total of twenty days until Friday, June 27th 2014. One could notice that between the second and twenty-seventh there are more than twenty days, however the boutique was closed during Sundays, this is the reason why the result is twenty.

In practice, the total amount of customers visiting the shop has been counted and computed into an Excel table during the month of May 2014. The month of May has shown how many people visited the store, based on this number a comparison has been made with the number of people who visited the store in the month of June, to enforce the reliability of the questionnaire. The number of visitors, who came in May has not been used to determine the sample, but instead has been conserved to support the decision of the sample size for the month of June. Three hundred respondents were the number of participants chosen for the questionnaire sample, since it represents about twenty-five percent of the total amount of visitors. The research has been conducted so, to ensure that there would be at least five respondents per cluster, to avoid generalization which could have occurred by surveying the first three hundred tourists who visited the shop, since they would be very likely to belong to the same group, for instance a group of Chinese tourists coming by bus to the Senate Square.

4.4 Interviews with customers

A qualitative method, interview, has been chosen to supplement the results obtained by the questionnaires. Interviews have not been conducted to the same people who had completed the surveys, due to the fact that the interview had for purpose to be more detailed than the questionnaires and was designed mostly for people who had previously visited the shop or heard about the brand. Plus, interviews enabled customers to express themselves more freely than with the questionnaires, since open questions have also been asked.

4.4.1 Implementation

The interviews have been conducted during the same period of time than the surveys, starting from Monday, June 2nd for a total of twenty days until Friday, June 27th 2014. According to the number of visitors, one hundred participants have been chosen for the interview. The sample has been selected so that only local people (Finns and foreigners living in Finland) would be interviewed, due to the fact that they were most likely to have either heard of the brand or visited the shop beforehand.

5 Findings

The fifth part of the thesis reveals the findings of the three research methods utilized, starting from the observation, to the questionnaires and eventually to the interviews.

5.1 Observation

The observation demonstrated that most of the people visiting the Senate Square were directly going to the Market Square without stopping-by at any shops. The same pattern has been observed with people visiting the Market Square and later on, going to the Senate Square.

One reason for this inconvenience has been identified, and is in relation with the short amount of time that tourists have to visit both places, once they have been allowed by their tour guides to walk-around the area freely. Usually, the amount of time allocated is of thirty minutes.

It has also been noticed that whenever the tram was circulating in the area, people would rather take a parallel street in which, there would be no traffic, instead of walking straight to Katariinankatu, to reach the Senate Square or the Market Square.

In addition, another observation has been made by the researcher, when trying to identify the reason why people walking in the street were not entering the shop. It has been found that the signs were not visible enough. Also, since the Wanha Bock Talo is located next to one of the Finnish Government’s official buildings, people would tend not to pay attention to the signs, thinking that this district is only reserved for governmental purposes.

Moreover, not only tourists are passing by in this area, but local people as well. According to the results of the interviews, which will be presented later, it was found that not so many Finns were aware of the brand and its shop location. Indeed, inhabitants of Helsinki walking in this street were analyzed to be rather in a hurry, and were not showing any sign of intention to enter any shop during their route towards the end of their journey. Generally, regarding local people, one could affirm that this street is mainly belonging to the route leading to the person’s work or home, therefore not used as a shopping street.

5.2 Results of the questionnaires

A total of three hundred customers participated in the questionnaire survey in the month of June 2014. Out of the three hundred respondents, the figure bellows shows a detailed repartition of the nationality of the customers.

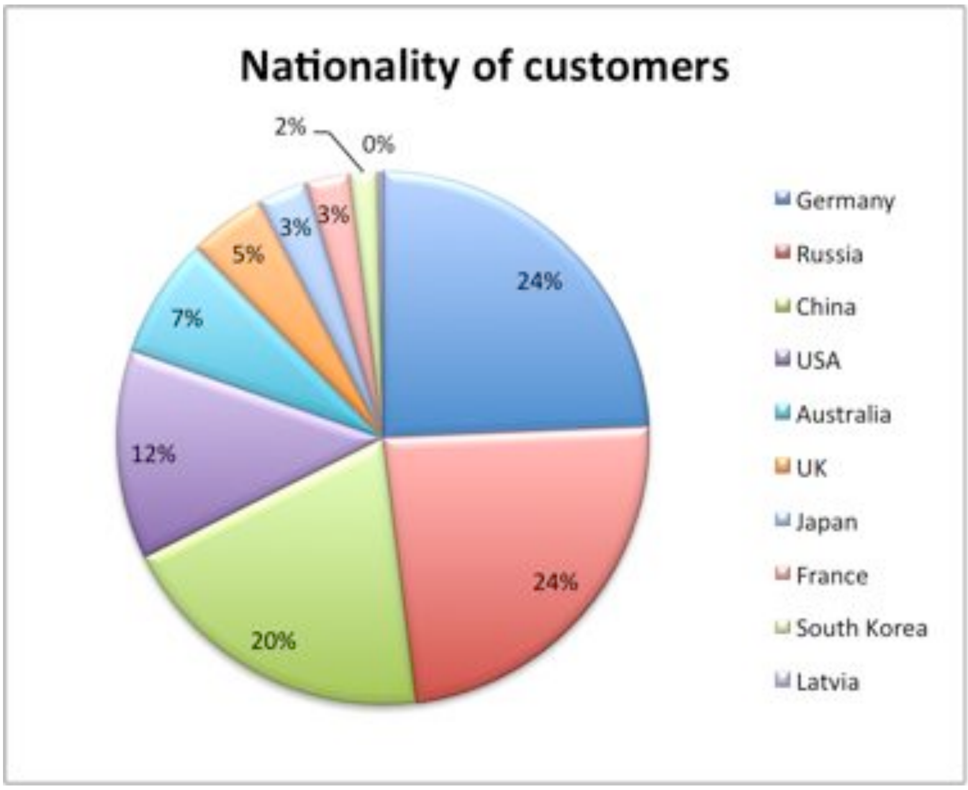

Figure 5: Nationality of customers

As a result, three main customers groups can be identified. German and Russian tourists being equal in percentages (24%) followed by Chinese (20%). Altogether these three groups represent sixty-eight percent of the whole amount of respondents. More accurately, seventy-three respondents were from Germany, seventy-one where from Russia and fifty-nine from China. The fourth largest group of respondents represents American tourists (12%).

The other groups of respondents are considered as minor, in relation with their small share of the total of the respondents. However, those groups still accounted for a significant share of customers representing respectively Australia, the United Kingdom, Japan, France, South Korea and Latvia.

According to the results, one can see that the customers were coming from four different continents which are: Europe, Asia, America and Oceania. The major part of customers was coming from Europe, representing forty-six percent of the total respondents. Russia has been included in the European group, due to the fact that most of the Russian tourists where coming from the regions of Saint Petersburg and Moscow. The second most significant continent represented is Asia, with twenty five percent of the total respondents, followed by North America with twelve percent, and finally Australia with seven percent.

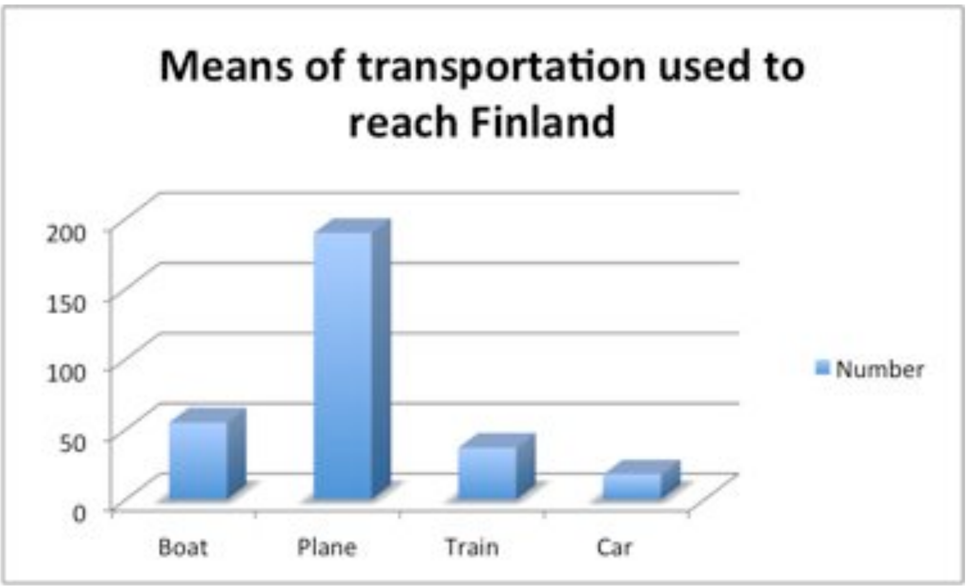

Figure 6: Means of transportation used to reach Finland

As Figure 6 indicates, the largest platform used to reach Finland is the airport, especially the Helsinki-Vantaa airport. Nearly two thirds of the respondents came to Finland by plane.

The second largest means of transportation used by tourists is the boat. Different sorts of boats are being used such as cruise boats and ferry boats (freight). Out of the fifty-five people who came to Finland by boat, five came from Germany with the ferry departing from Trävemünde. The largest group of people using boats to reach Finland is the Russian tourists, taking the boat from Saint Petersburg to Helsinki. Also, out of the total Americans, fifteen of them stated that they had been traveling from the United States of America to Finland by boat, on a cruise.

Different harbors have been used in relation with the origin of the journey. Länsi-satama was stated to be the harbor used by Russian tourists, whereas Germans coming from Trädemünde arrived at Vuosaari Harbor, whereas Americans arrived in Katajanokka.

The train is the third most used means of transportation, utilized exclusively by Russian tourists coming from Saint Petersburg. This train named Allegro arrives at the Helsinki Central Railway Station.

Finally, some tourists are coming to Finland by car, exclusively from Russia in this situation.

None of the customers responding to the questionnaires, no matter wherever they came from, had ever heard of the brand beforehand.

Country	Printed advertisements	Tourist Guide	Billboards	Friends	Social Media	Shop Itself (Street signs)	Total
China	13	20	9	7	0	10	59
USA	13	4	3	8	8	3	39
Germany	10	0	5	18	20	20	73
Russia	15	1	1	23	2	29	71
Australia	0	0	0	6	12	4	22
France	2	0	3	0	0	3	8
UK	4	0	0	5	3	2	14
Japan	1	2	1	0	5	0	9
South Korea	0	0	0	0	5	0	5
Total	58	27	22	67	55	71	300
Total in %	19%	9%	7%	22%	18%	24%	100%

Table 1: How respondents would like to hear about the brand

Table 1 represents the answers that respondents gave, when they were asked, where they would like to hear about the brand. In general it can be stated that twenty-four percent of them would like to see signs in the street, whereas twenty-two percent would rather hear about the brand from their friends. Nineteen percent would like to see the brand on printed advertisements, and eighteen percent would like to see the brand in the social media. Unlike the close results that those four marketing channels have generated, only a few respondents would like to hear the brand from a tourist guide (9%) or see advertisements on billboards (7%). The marketing channels that each group of customers like the most differ from one group to another. This is the reason why, the results are going to be explained country by country. The nationality of customers has an impact on the marketing channels to be used in order to reach them in the most effective and efficient manner. Indeed, the results illustrate that according to their nationalities, tourists do not respond in the same way to the same kind of marketing channels.

The results shown that Chinese tourists are most likely to be affected by words from tourist guides, because they are local and perceived to know the city the best. Printed advertise-ments are the second most efficient channel of marketing for Chinese tourists, followed by the outlook of the shop itself and the signs visible in the street. Billboards and words from friends are also channels affecting this group, however slightly less than the ones mentioned before. On the contrary, social media has been mentioned on the questionnaires as being the marketing channel affecting the less the group's actions.

Americans chose printed advertisements, words from friends and social media as being the most efficient marketing channels in order to reach them. Unlike the previous group of respondents, American tourists are not affected by billboards, nor by words from tourist guides and neither by the outlook of the physical shop.

Social media, words from friends in addition to the shop itself are perceived as being the most efficient channels of marketing to reach German tourists. Unlike Chinese people, Germans mentioned that they prefer visiting the city on their own, rather than utilizing the services of a local tour guide. Also, this group stated that they would not pay attention to billboards, due to the fact that they believe that they are all written in Finnish language, making it therefore impossible to understand. Print advertising presented more or less the same characteristics, this is the reason why German respondents have mentioned that these particular channels were not good options to reach them.

Russians are expecting the shop to be easily visible from the street, and tend to visit shops, which have been recommended by their friends. This is how one can come up with the conclusion that word-of-mouth is considered as the most important channel of marketing in order to increase the brand awareness in Russia. Printed advertisements, especially the ones written in Russian are considered as an important source of information for Russian tourists visiting Finland. Words from tourist guides, social media and billboards are on the other hand not relevant for this group of customers according to the results of the questionnaires.

Australians mentioned that social media is of crucial importance to remain up-to-date and a good way of becoming aware of the trendy shops abroad. Plus, Australians tend to pay a close attention to the recommendations of their friends when going abroad. Some tourists have explained that their friends have more or less the same tastes than them therefore, they believe that they would find something interesting in the same shop. The outside look of the shop was for some important, whereas for other was not considered as crucial. Printed advertisement in addition to billboards and words from tourist guides have been mentioned as being not the right marketing channels.

Considered the small number of respondents for the following groups of customers: France, United Kingdom, Japan and South Korea, no generalization can be made in relation with the results obtained. This data should only be used as an example.

The results illustrated that French people seemed a little bit more conservative towards advertising than the other groups. For this reason, they believe that printed advertisements, billboards and the presence of signs indicating the shop are the marketing channels, which are going to have the biggest impact on their behavior. Unlike German tourists, French mentioned that social media and words from friends were not the most successful channels.

Tourists from the United Kingdom stated that, respectively, words from friends, printed advertisements, social media and signs indicating the shop were the most efficient marketing channels.

In order to reach the Japanese tourists, social media and words from tourist guides are considered as the most efficient marketing channels, followed by printed advertisements and billboards. The signs indicating the shop and words from friends did not seem to have any significant importance.

Finally, South Korean tourists stated unanimously that social media was the one and only efficient marketing channel, the others considered as non-efficient.

Country	Internet	Brochure	Friends	Street Signs	Tour guide	Total
China	3	24	3	20	9	59
USA	9	7	10	13	0	39
Germany	16	23	19	15	0	73
Russia	12	25	22	12	0	71
Australia	6	5	7	4	0	22
France	2	2	2	2	0	8
UK	5	2	5	2	0	14
Japan	3	1	2	1	2	9
South Korea	0	2	2	1	0	5
Total	56	91	72	70	11	300
Total in %	19%	30%	24%	23%	4%	100%

Table 2: Locations at which tourist search for information when abroad

Table 2 illustrates the sources of information utilized by the tourists, who visited Mai Niemi Finnish Fairytale Design Shop in the month of June 2014. Thirty percent are searching for information in brochures, whereas twenty-four percent ask tips from their friends, whereas twenty-three percent seek for information when walking in the street only. Nineteen percent have utilized the Internet to seek for information related to their stay abroad. The same conclusion that has been drawn above, is valid for this situation as well: Chinese and Japanese tourists tend to rely more on the words of a tourist guide than the other groups.

In Russia, Germany and in the United Kingdom, words from friends appear to be the most significant source of information when searching for tips. Brochures, street signs and the Internet are also very important sources of information, which the respondents have stated to like utilizing.

Country	Every day	Upon arrival	Hotel or Restaurant	Street	Total
China	19	15	16	9	59
USA	21	7	7	4	39
Germany	17	12	13	31	73
Russia	8	29	26	8	71
Australia	0	12	6	4	22
France	2	3	2	1	8
UK	2	1	4	7	14
Japan	2	4	2	1	9
South Korea	0	2	2	1	5
Total	71	85	78	66	300
Total in %	24%	28%	26%	22%	100%

Table 3: Frequency at which tourists search for information when abroad

The frequency at which, tourists search for information when abroad varies inside the groups. Generally speaking, the results have shown that twenty-eight percent check information upon arrival, meaning at the airport, harbor or railway station. Twenty-six percent seek for information in the hotel at which they are staying, or at the restaurants in which they are eating. Twenty-four percent mentioned that they are using all sorts of information, and are searching for it on a daily basis when abroad. Finally, twenty-two percent stated that they are searching for information when walking on the street.

As a result, the frequency at which, tourists search for information when abroad is rather similar. This is the reason why, it would be beneficial for Mai Niemi to have brochures in hotels and restaurants, as well as in the places, where tourists are the most likely to come, meaning airport, harbors and railway station, in addition to better signs on the streets.

The chart below explains the future actions of the customers. The blue color indicates if customers will visit the shop again, whereas the red color indicates if customers will check the website, whereas the green color indicates if the customers will tell their families and friends about the brand.

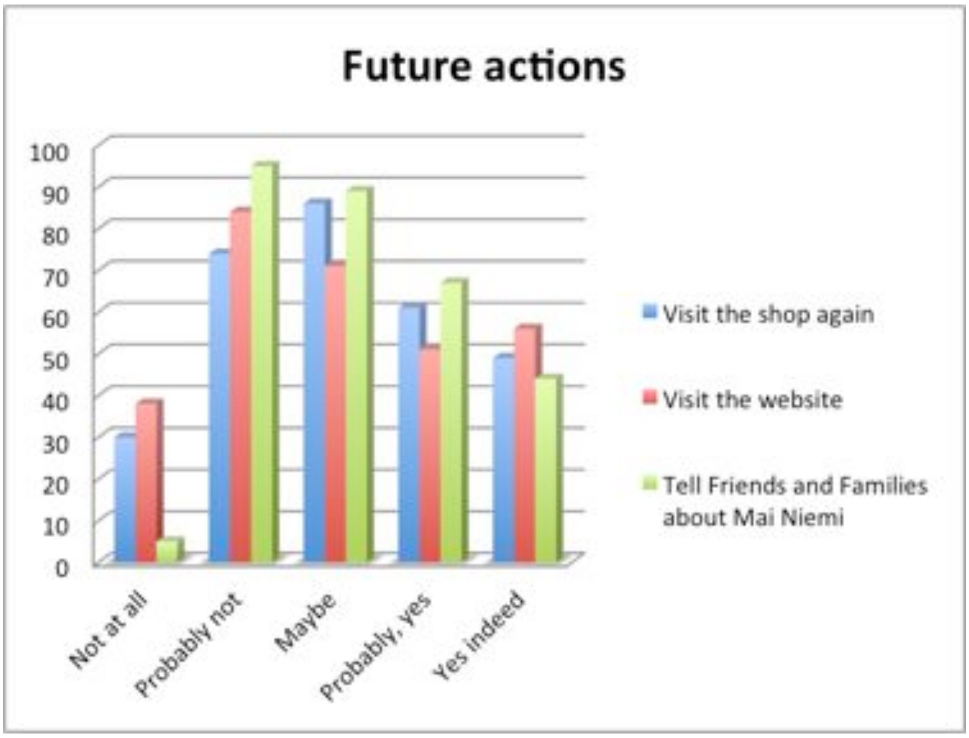

Figure 7: Future actions

The graph shows that people who are not likely to visit the shop at all, are not likely to visit the website and will not share the information about the brand to their families and friends. People who replied that they would probably not visit the shop again stated that they would probably not visit the website nor tell their families and friends about the brand.

The ones who answered that maybe in the future they will visit the shop again, are likely to visit the website as well, and will maybe share the information with their families and friends. Customers who are willing to visit the shop again, will most likely visit the website as well, and tell their families and friends about Mai Niemi. Also, the ones who stated that they will definitely visit the shop again, will definitely check the website and will share the information about the brand.

The graph illustrates that most people will either maybe, probably or definitely visit the shop again in the future. For this reason, approximately two hundred people out of the three hundred respondents will most likely be in contact with the brand in the near future.

5.3 Results of the interviews

One hundred interviews have been conducted in the month of June 2014. The interviewer was the researcher, whereas the interviewees were local people, therefore mostly Finns. The reason for this choice was that the questions were designed mainly to understand why locals would visit the shop. The interviews have been completely anonymous and were not recorded as videos or sound-tapes, but instead notes have been written down during the interviews. Each interview had a total duration of approximately five to ten minutes. The respondents' names were not asked.

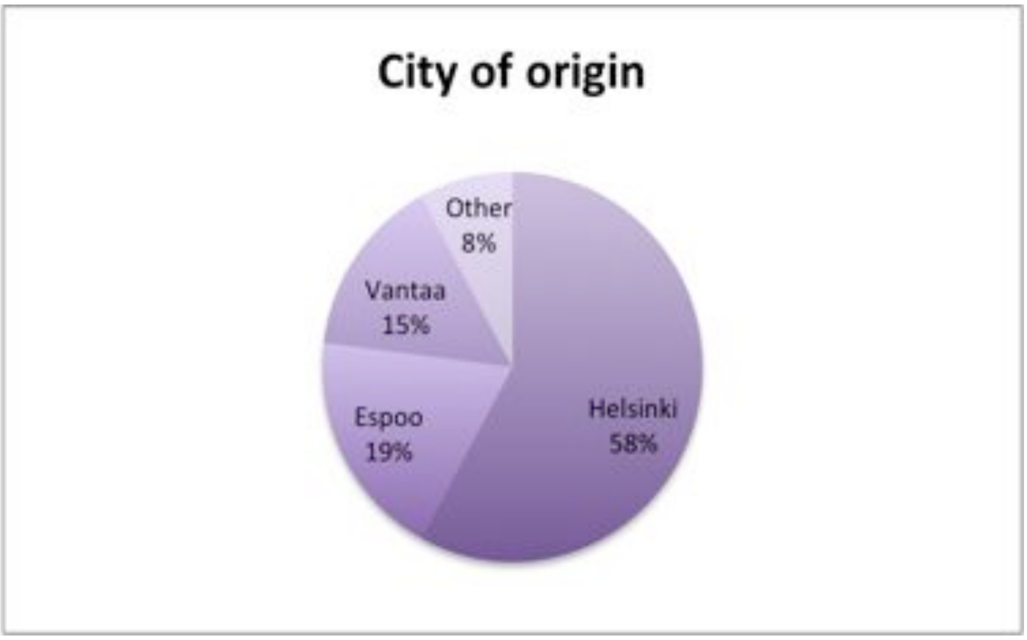

Figure 8: Interviewees' city of origin

As shown in the figure 8, the interviews revealed that respondents were mostly dwelling in the Capital area, from which the majority was living in Helsinki (58%), followed by Espoo (19%) and Vantaa (15%).

Those results indicate that only a few Finns living in other parts of Finland are not visiting the shop. The reasons, which would explain such findings, could be either that Finns are not coming to Helsinki to visit the Senate Square and its surroundings, or that Finns visiting Helsinki are not coming to purchase Finnish Design items, or that Finns living outside of the Metropolitan area are not aware of the existence of Mai Niemi, and for this reason are not visiting the shop.

Nearly ten percent of the locals who visited the shop were Swedish-speaking.

Interviewees have mentioned that they would like to hear about the brand more often, whether it would be online or physically. Online refers to social media such as Facebook, Twitter or Blogs, whereas physically refers to printed advertisements, or billboards visible in the street.

Questions	Yes	No
Ever heard of Mai Niemi?	61	39
Already visited the shop?	48	52
Already purchased anything?	26	74
Will you visit again?	58	42
Will you purchase again?	24	76

Table 4: Results of the interviews

As presented in the Table 4, sixty-one people had heard of Mai Niemi, whereas thirty-nine had not. The proportion of people aware of the brand is considerably higher among locals in comparison to the amount of tourists knowing the brand.

Seventy-eight percent of the interviewees, who have stated that, they had already heard about the brand before have visited the shop, meaning that the current marketing strategy has been more successful in Finland than abroad. Out of the forty-eight people who had previously visited the shop, some of them were present in the store for the third time on the day that they were interviewed.

Nearly all interviewees stated that their friends told them about the shop, this is the reason why they decided to visit it. Several locals had stepped into the shop for the first time in June 2014, accompanied by one of their friends, whom explained their action due to the fact that they have been enchanted by the shop and willing to make their friends discover it.

Out of the sixty-one interviewees who had previously visited the shop, fifty-four percent of them had purchased at least one piece of clothing or an accessory. This result is quite satisfying, since it indicates that local people tend to purchase Mai Niemi's creations. The current product offer is meeting some of the customers' expectations, which is an asset.

Out of the twenty-six people who had previously made a purchase, twenty-four of them are likely to buy another item in the future, meaning that nearly one hundred percent of existing customers are willing to keep on buying items designed by Mai Niemi.

One of the main driving factors stated by the interviewees is the quality and uniqueness of the pieces of clothings and accessories. Mai Niemi's purpose of creating such pieces of clothing is to enable the people wearing them feeling amazing, because the items are believed to bring joy and happiness. The interviewees satisfied with the item answered to this statement in a positive manner, meaning that they agreed.

As a result, word-of-mouth marketing is the most efficient channel that has been used so far. The results of this type of marketing are expected to continuously grow throughout the years in proportion to the number of people, whom will hear about the company. The number of customers from Finland is expected to increase in the years to come. Consequently, Mai Niemi has to focus on the long term customer relationships with her existing customers, in addition to the new customers.

6 Suggestions for a marketing plan

The marketing plan that has been developed for Mai Niemi is to be executed starting from the first of December 2014. The ultimate goal is to put into practice the marketing plan in the winter season, to ensure that, by the start of the summer season 2015, the number of customers visiting the shop will be much higher than it was in the summer 2014. According to the results that have been presented above, Mai Niemi is provided with all the necessary tools to start implementing a successful marketing strategy, which will lead to a strong brand awareness increase among tourists and locals. The marketing plan has been established so that it could easily be adjusted according to the occurring events and changes in the customers' habits, if needed.

6.1 Situation analysis

Market information provides the needed information in terms of the market size and its characteristics, which are: the segments - the main customers, the main suppliers, the main sold products -, the state of the market - whether it is a new, mature or saturated market-, information about the competitors and how well they succeed in the market place at the moment, the channels of distribution, the methods of communication, the financial and legal aspects - whether there are particular issues affecting the market place such as tax burdens, patents or product standards-, and development opportunities (Westwood 2011).

In order to analyze the current situation as accurately as possible, company managers need to first conduct a market research and then collect historical data about the products and the company before using the information to evaluate the current situation (Westwood 2011).

6.1.1 Company analysis

According to Michael Porter's generic strategies, the company has chosen the differentiation strategy. The firm strives to develop products that are completely unique, by achieving a superior performance in terms of customer value. This is the reason why, the pieces of clothing are created with the best raw material and customer service is irreproachable.

The company's objectives are the goals that the managers want to achieve, whereas the strategy refers to the actions undertaken in order to achieve the objectives (Westwood 2011). Mai Niemi's marketing objective is to sell new products into an existing market and reach a constant annual growth in the years to come. Regarding the long-term goals, Mai Niemi is considering opening another shop either in Helsinki or in another city located in Finland, plus developing the brand in the United States of America.

Mai Niemi is a Finnish Fairytale Design company having for purpose to provide its customers with unique pieces of clothing, which will enable them to feel wonderful. The main concern of the owner is to please its customers, by listening to their ideas and suggestions, unlike other brands, which are more oriented towards mass production.

The culture of the company can be defined as an atypical one, owing to the fact that it is related to the inspiration emerging from the Kalevala and Finnish nature. It is a small-sized company, having a few employees and a manager. In the years to come, the structure of the firm is forecasted to remain similar. Indeed, a few changes will be made in relation with the market evolution.

The current market share of the organization is rather small, since its products have not been marketed enough for local people and tourists to be aware of the existence of the brand. It is not possible to deliver the exact percentage of market share that the brand possess, however, it is estimated to be around five percent. The estimation has been based on some research conducted in the Senate Square area with Finnish design shops belonging to Torikorttelit.

The CoCo Tool Kit is a collection of five tools as well as a workbook that have been designed to support service business in adapting co-creation activities (CoCo Tool Kit 2014).

The idea is to draw a map using the cards of the Tool Kit – CoCo Cosmos - to describe the current situation of the company from the customer’s perspective and not from the company’s perspective.

The map reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the current situation, enabling the company’s managers to find solutions to overcome them. Indeed, it is crucial for a firm to understand what the customer perceives in comparison to what the company believes that the customer journey is.

Often, the differences between those two approaches tend to be significant.

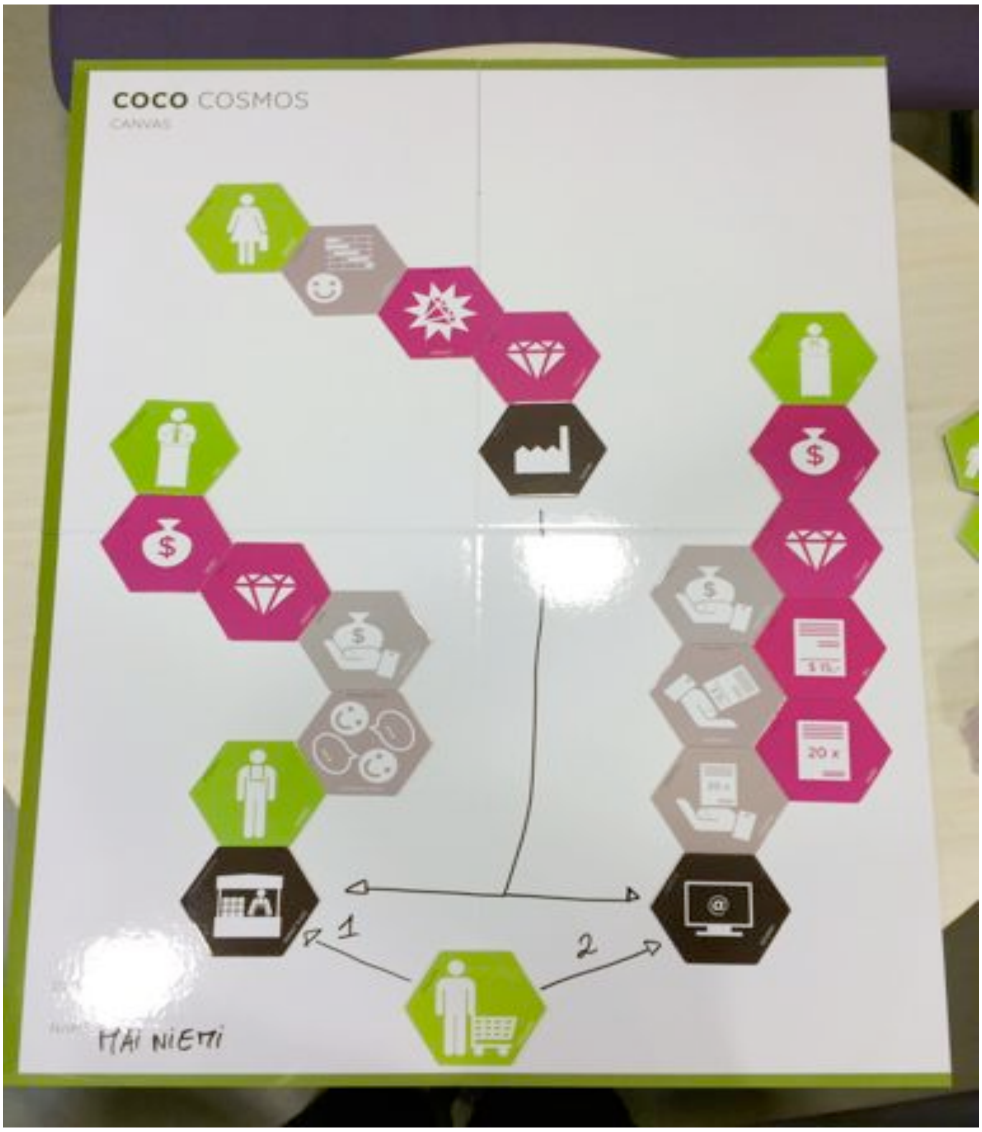

Illustration 6: CoCo Cosmos - Actual customer journey

Illustration 6 shows the current practices from the customer’s point of view. Indeed, at the moment, the customer can decide whether to go to the boutique to shop, or to order an item online.

When choosing the first path, the customer’s first encounter is the physical shop and the employee working at the counter. The employee is qualified to help the customer throughout his or her journey inside the shop, and give advices on the items that suits the most the customer. If the customer decides to purchase a piece of clothing, the payment can either be handled in cash or by credit card, and the money will go later on to the company (described in the picture as the CEO) if there is any profit at the end of the year.

When choosing the second path, the online path, the customer has to select the item first, makes an order, receives an invoice, has to pay for the item and receives a confirmation of order. When the payment has been received, then the item will be shipped to the customer. The amount of money received by the company will be used to pay for all the fixed and variable costs, and if there is profit at the end of the accounting year, the CEO of the company will then utilize the money has described in the plan; either as dividends, or to be utilized for the marketing campaing for instance.

On the top of the picture, the CEO – who is also the designer – has an idea, creates the product, which will then be manufactured. The manufacuration process in this case is not an usual one, owing to the fact that the designer herself will manufacture the product.

Illustration 7: CoCo Cosmos - The desired customer journey

Illustration 7 describes the desired customer journey. The top of the picture represents the idea generating, which is the same than in the previous picture, meaning that the idea originates by the designer herself.

The path number one, shows the customer journey inside the shop. The steps are identical to the one already in use.

The path number two, describes the customer journey when shopping online, and is similar to the current practices.

However, the path number three describes that collaboration between Mai Niemi and small Finnish designers would enable the brand to be present in more than just one physical shop.

Indeed, the cooperation would make it possible for customers to purchase the items in several locations, which would increase the total volume of sales of both companies.

Also, lacking from the previous picture is the feedback part. At the moment it is possible for customers to share their opinion and experiences with the employees, but only a few have given their opinion. If there would be more interaction and discussions between the employee and the customers, feedback would be provided, and would be used for further development. It has been analyzed that, whenever the customer is offered the possibility to communicate his or her feelings directly with an employee, he or she feels important and this reinforce the relationship between the company and the customer.

On the left, in the bottom corner, it is shown that altogether paths one, two and three would generate higher sales volumes and therefore, increase the total amount of sales, and profits for the company. This is the reason why it is crucial for Mai Niemi to have a clear and deep understanding of such practices.

The business model canvas is a strategic management tool enabling the description of the business model of a company (Business Model Generation 2014).

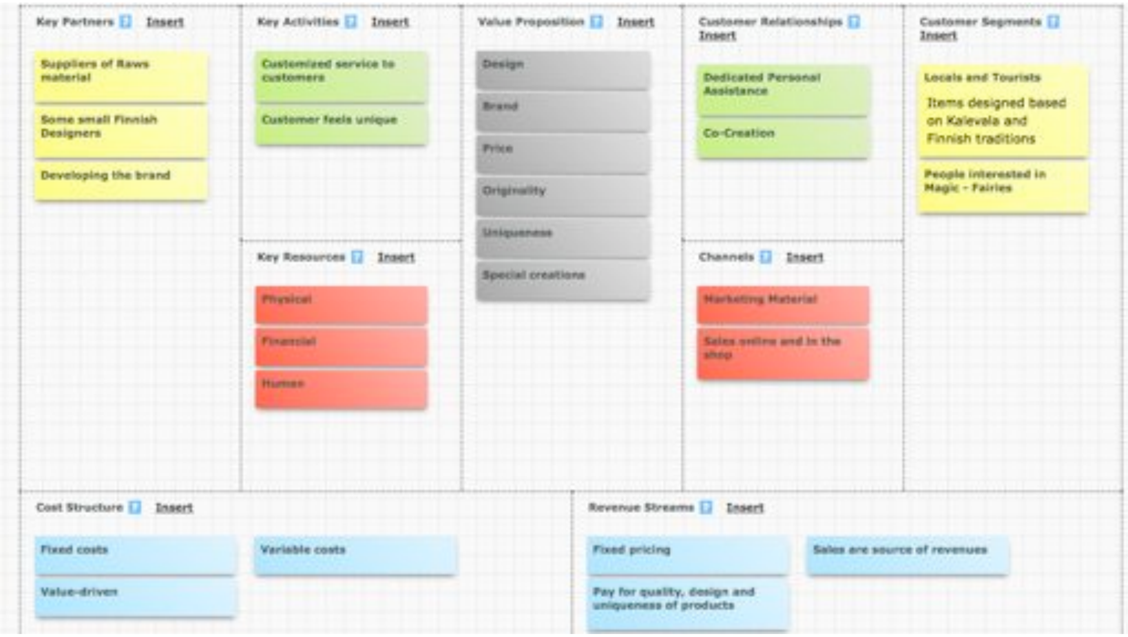

Figure 9: Business Model Canvas

The first step is to define who the customers actually are. For Mai Niemi Design Shop, the customers are a niche composed of the Finnish population in addition to tourists. The segment is considered as niche, since the business idea is proposed to a small group of customers, interested either in fairies or magic, or in Finnish items of clothing inspired from an epic novel called “The Kalevala”.

Customers are provided with hand made and unique pieces of clothing, which have been designed in Finland by Mai Niemi herself. The products have been created to enhance the feeling of happiness, energy and strength, in order for the customer wearing the clothes to feel amazing. The colorful and unique designs are bringing light in the dark season. People seeking for different pieces of clothing have their need fulfilled when wearing Mai Niemi’s designed items. The products have not been produced massively to be delivered to a large population, on the contrary, have been created to be unique.

The customer segments expect the brand to establish long term customer relationships with them, based on the feeling of uniqueness. The customer has to feel special. In order to implement this strategy, all the staff will receive special training sessions emphasized on customer service to provide a dedicated personal assistance.

Customers feel important, since they are given the opportunity to collaborate with the designer by suggesting ideas for improvement, such as new design ideas or new colors.
This type of customer relationships are not costly, but generate some efforts in maintaining contact with existing customers, due to the fact that they have to be sent regular information about the brand.

Identifying the most relevant customers will enable the manager to focus on delivering the best possible customer service experience for this particular group, in order to maintain and seeking to constantly increase the number of purchases of these customers.

Such customers are considered as key accounts, and special techniques of key account management have been developed, to understand the buying pattern of these customers, and to understand the importance of maintaining them in the firm’s customer database.

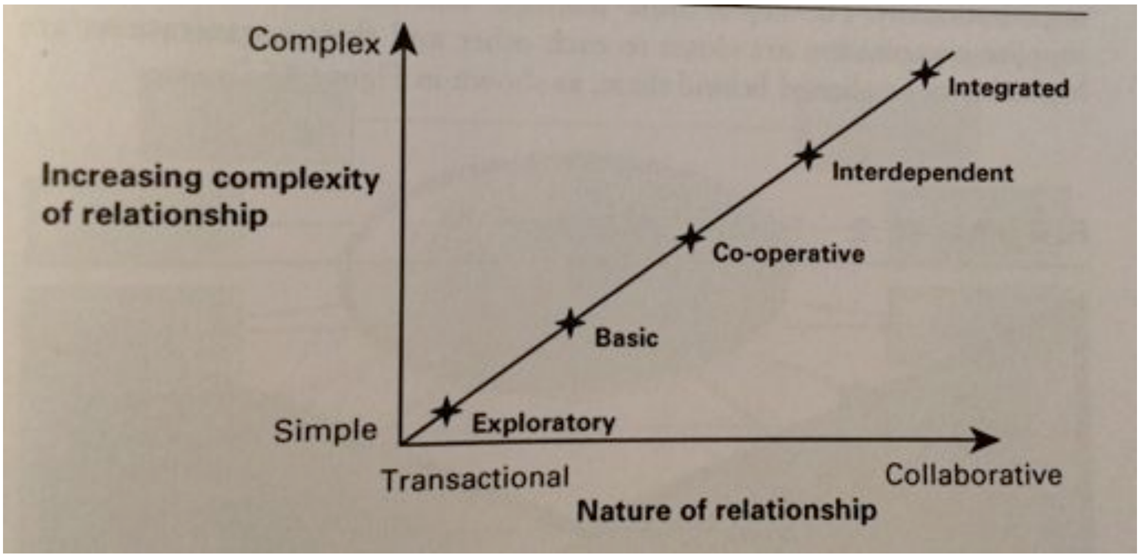

Illustration 8: Evolutionary nature of Key Account Management (KAM) relationships
(Mc Donald 2013)

The exploratory stage is a scanning and attraction stage, “where the seller and buyer are sending out signals and exchanging messages prior to the decision to get together”. In this stage, both parties are interested in reducing costs (Mc Donald 2013).

The next stage, known as the KAM stage, describes the situation when the transactions have begun between the company and the consumer. The company tends to focus more on the products rather than on the customers. Customers are not quite trusting the company yet at this stage (Mc Donald 2013).

In the co-operative KAM stage, trust is developed and the company is considered as being one of the customers’ favorite. Each interaction taking place in this phase between the company and the customer will reinforce the relationship (Mc Donald 2013).

Interdependent KAM is the following stage, in which both parties benefit from the relationship, and start to communicate with each other in order to find a compromise. Such compromises can be discounts, loyalty or better service (Mc Donald 2013).

Eventually, the last stage is called “Integrated KAM” and refers to the situation, in which both parties are considered as linked together (Mc Donald 2013).

As the results shown, different ethnic groups of customer would like to be reach differently. Indeed, some people prefer to receive newsletters, whereas others would rather see posters in the street, or advertisements in physical form. At the moment, social media marketing - mainly on Facebook -, word-of-mouth as well as flyers given in the shop are the two marketing channels used by the company to reach its existing and potential customers. Word-of-mouth is considered as being the most efficient channel, since it is costless, and satisfied customers tend to share and spread the information about the brand.

Currently the brand is not represented sufficiently on the market, as some respondents stated. Indeed, most of the customers visiting the shop were not aware of the brand yet. This is the reason why a new marketing strategy has to be implemented in the near future.

People who had previously purchased some items stated their satisfaction towards the items, and were enthusiastic to promote the brand to their families and friends. The buying process is in this case simple, customers can choose to either buy in the physical shop or online. In both cases the post-purchase customer support is the same, meaning that Mai Niemi is devoted to her customers and is willing to do her best to please them.

Customers are currently paying the items sets at a fixed price based on the costs of raw material. The price is rather high, but is justified by the amount of time that Mai Niemi has spent designing and making the items. Sales are the only source of revenues at the moment, therefore, they account for the total revenues of the company.

Currently there is not any relevant key partner, as the brand's products are available only on the website and in the shop. However, the target is to develop relationships with other small Finnish designers, so that both – Mai Niemi and the other designer – would beneficiate from the cooperation, because the items of both designers would be available in both of the shops. Such cooperation will reinforce the brand credibility on one side, and on the other side increase the brand visibility. The main motivation for creating partnerships is to develop the brand.

The value proposition requires two key activities, which are: production and sales. The supply chain is very simple, since the raw materials are being ordered directly by Mai Niemi and being delivered to her home. Once the end products are ready for sales, Mai Niemi is delivering herself the items to the shop, where they will later on be sold by the employees.
The value proposition requires three main key resources, which are: physical, human and financial. Physical refers to the shop located at the Senate Square, human refers to the creation and making of the items, and financial refers to the resources needed to finance the shop and the supply of raw material.

The most important sources of costs are, on one hand the raw materials, and on the other hand the costs related to the rent of the premises and wages of the employees. The business is value driven, due to the fact that it is focused on value creation and premium value proposition and not on maximum automation or extensive production.

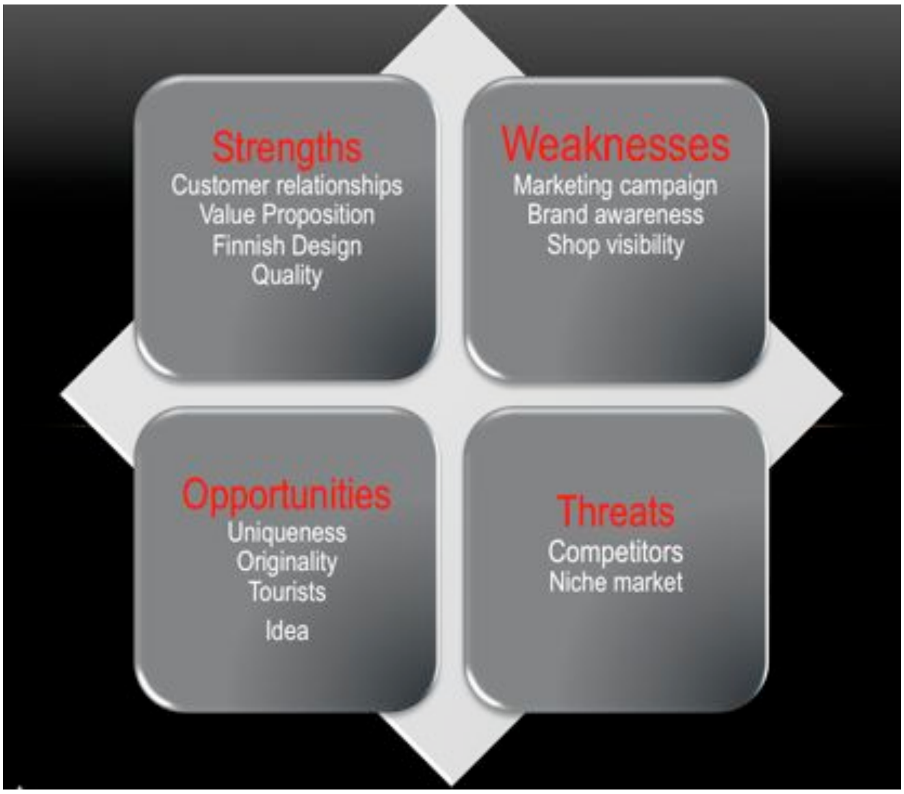

Figure 10: SWOT analysis of the company

The strengths of the company are based on the value proposition. The pieces of clothing as well as the accessories, are perceived as unique from a customer's point of view. The relationships that have been created with the customers are excellent, this is why trust has been built between the two parties. Because the clothes have been hand made in Finland, from raw material originating from the United Kingdom, the quality is optimum and last for a lifetime. Due to the fact that it is a Finnish Design company, local people in addition to tourists are being curious about the value proposition and are pleased to purchase items that have been entirely produced locally, and not directly imported from another country.

The weaknesses can be found first, when taking a closer look to the marketing campaign. In accordance with the tight budget, the printed materials are limited to a small number and are available only in the shop. A Facebook campaign has been launched, however one needs to be aware of the brand before following the company on the social media. Also, respondents stated that the shop was not easily visible from the street, neither from the brochures that are given to tourists in places such as the airport, harbor or tourist info. In order to overcome those weaknesses, a strong marketing campaign has to be implemented.

The firm is beneficiating from different opportunities based on the uniqueness of the pieces of clothing. Indeed, tourists are very likely to purchase items as souvenirs when knowing that, they have been produced locally. Moreover, the inspiration from the Kalevala in addition to Finnish nature is the origin of such unique garments.

The threats are related to the niche. Because the amount of customers is rather small, if they decide to change their buying behavior, the total number of customers would decrease. Providing products for a niche, is challenging especially for a small companies. The resources are expected to be higher than if the products were designed for largest target groups. The costs are also high therefore, providing and maintaining products for a niche only is not an easy task, especially when the brand is not yet well known. Another source of threat is coming from the competitors. All the small Finnish Design shops located in the Senate Square area account for competitors. For this reason the competition is fierce. The brand needs to become known for the niche, in order for the company to strive on the market place.

6.1.2 Customer analysis

According to a research that has been conducted in the month of May 2014, 1573 people visited the shop. Due to the fact that the touristic season reaches a peak in the month of July, the number of visitors is expected to increase in June 2014 as well as in July 2014.
The figure below describes the percentage of each group of visitors according to their nationalities.

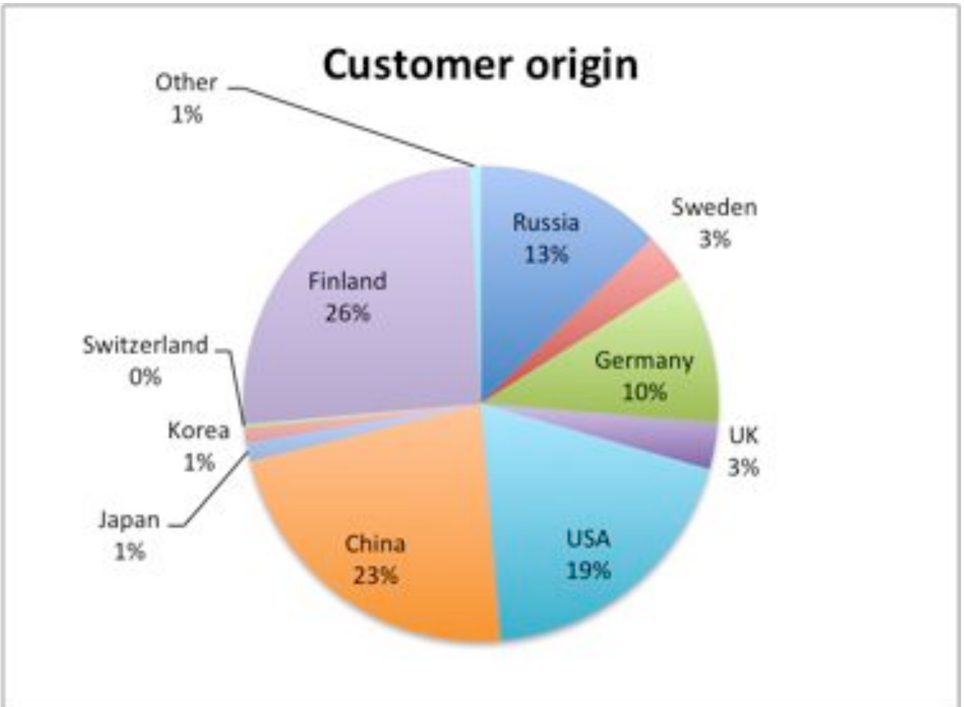

Figure 11: Customers' origin

The above chart represents the share of customers as well as the percentages of the different groups. Finland (25,62%) followed by China (22,24%) followed by the USA (19,22%) appears to be the largest customer groups in May 2014. Russia (12,81%) and Germany (10,25%) are also represented among the five largest customer groups in the month of May 2014.

The term ”other” represents customers from countries such as France, Estonia, Italy and other countries from which, the customers themselves were not willing to share the information. According to the surveys that have been distributed to the customers in the month of June 2014, it can be stated that the results of May 2014 were verified for the following month. Therefore, the idea to base the research according to the results of May 2014 was revealed to be successful.

The social class of the customers has not been clearly identified, due to the fact that the question was not asked in the questionnaires according to the principle of ethics, and would have been considered as inappropriate. However, the customers purchasing pieces of clothing as well as accessory can be identified, as people seeking to look original and who do not want to be dressed up like the majority.

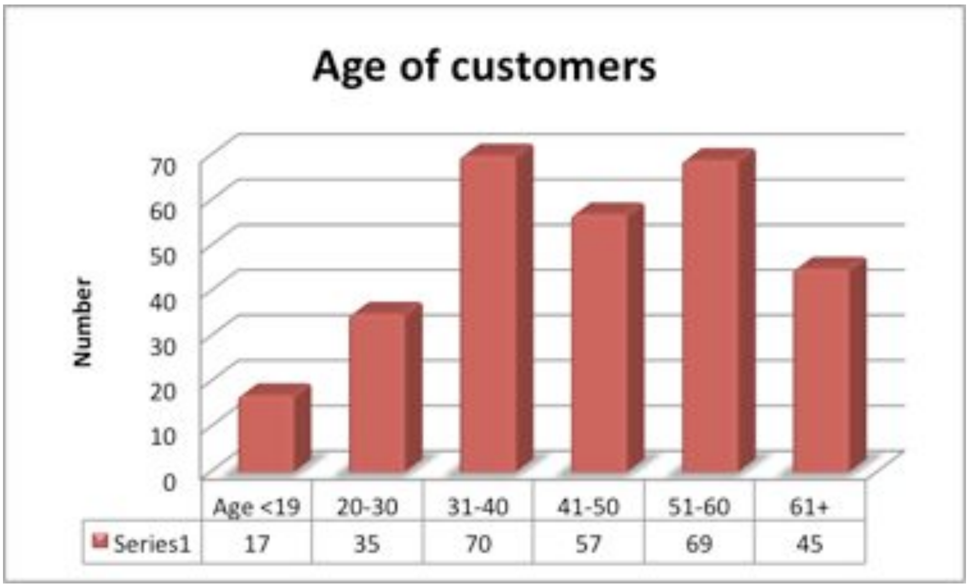

Figure 12: Age of customers

Figure 12 shows the repartition of customers according to their age. The results indicated that seventy-two percent of the total customers are females, whereas men account for twenty-eight percent. The sample used for the whole research was based on three hundred individuals. One can notice that the total number of the ages does not equal to three hundred, for the simple reason that a few customers decided not to answer this question. The majority of customers are over thirty years old. The two largest groups of customers are composed of people aged from thirty-one to forty and from fifty-one to sixty. These two groups account for forty-seven percent of the whole customer basis. The two following groups of customers are respectively aged of forty-one to fifty years old, and over sixty-one years old. These two groups account for thirty-five percent of the total customer basis. This is the reason why, it could be stated that over eighty percent of the total customer based is represented by people over thirty years old, meaning that the marketing channels used will be slightly different for the different groups.

6.1.3 Competitor analysis

When analyzing a market prior to decide whether or not a company should enter it, studying the competitors and their strategies are a crucial part of the market research one should perform. According to Porter's five forces framework, companies managers need to find whether there are any barriers to entry the market, and if so, determine the type of barriers as well as their importance on the market. The competitors' products or services need to be analyzed, in order for the firm to visualize whether its products or services will be targeted to a special group of customers, whom are not currently satisfied by the current offer. The bargaining power of suppliers and buyers has to be carefully taken into account for the company's managers to understand the potential of their success. In markets dominated by a limited number of buyers it may be difficult for a new firm to gain market share. The same situation is valid for suppliers in a market, where one supplier accounts for a very large proportion of market share, in this case it will not be easy for the new firm to be competitive. Finally, the degree of market competition is the last criteria managers should examine, since the more numerous the competitors, the more intense will be the rivalry within the market (McDonald 2013).

In the current situation, Mai Niemi is the only design shop in Helsinki providing customers with fairytale-related items of clothing. All the Finnish design shops located especially in the Senate Square area act as direct competitors since, they all enable customers to purchase unique items made in Finland by Finnish artists. Also, special clothing shops located in the Helsinki area are direct competitors, because the items provided are considered as unique and have been created by designers. There is therefore, no particular barrier to entry to the market. No particular company is considered as being a monopoly operating in this area. This is the reason why, Mai Niemi's products can be classified as favorable since, in the market there are no such items provided at the moment.

6.1.4 PESTEL analysis of Finnish market

The PESTEL analysis is an analysis that indicates the political, economical, social, technological, environmental and legal situation of a country in a specific time frame. The situation can change suddenly, therefore is it crucial to establish one's work with the current situation of a country, using up-to-date data.

Figure 13: PESTEL analysis of Finland

Finland is a parliamentary republic government having Sauli Niinistö as President since the first of March 2012. All Finnish citizens have for duty to elect the president by voting. The president holds a period of six years term, with a maximum of two consecutive terms. Finland has been a member of the European Union since 1995, and has adopted the Euro (€) as official currency on the first of January 2002.

According to Country Economy (2014) Finland's GDP in the year 2013 was $47232. The growth rate from 2012 to 2013 was +0,3 percent. Finland generates most of its revenues in the service sector, accounting for nearly sixty six percent in 2013, followed by manufacturing sector in producing metal and chemicals. There are different types of industries in Finland, which are: bio-economy, research and development (R&D) and innovation, clean technologies, health care and wellbeing, information and communication technologies (ICT), manufacturing, mining, retail and travel and tourism (Invest in Finland 2014).

According to Statistics Finland (2014), Finland's population at the end of August 2014 was 5,465,290. The number of unemployed people at the end of August 2014 was of 197,000, meaning that the unemployment rate is currently 7,4 percent. The workforce accounts for twenty-seven millions.

The three major ethnic groups present in the country are Finns, Swedes and Sami, and a large number of them are believed to be Lutherans (Statistics Finland 2014).

The Finnish education system has established so that children aged from seven to thirteen must attend school. Free meals are provided to all pupils during this compulsory period of time. There are no tuition fees in Finland, due to the fact that the government wants to allow everyone to receive education, as a result the literacy rate is nearly one hundred percent. The education system of Finland has been ranked first, worldwide, for over ten years (Statistics Finland 2014).

Finland has been among the first countries in the world to invest large amounts of money in research and development and to promote innovations. The government is encouraging its citizen to become entrepreneurs and makes it easier to develop start-ups. Staying ahead of competition is of significant importance for the country nowadays (Invest in Finland 2014).

Finland is emphasizing the need for greater sustainability and reducing unnecessary wastes. This is the reason why, investments in research and development are increasing. The target is to create innovations based on a low level of resource usage as well as a small footprint across the entire life cycle of the products and services. Moreover, Finland is constantly developing energy-efficient systems and technologies. It is expected to be one of the fastest-growing renewable energy markets in Europe over the next five years. Finland set the goal to be the European Union's leading users of renewable energies by capita by the year 2020. Clean technologies, smart grids, carbon-neutral energy generation, distributed energy systems, sustainable fuels, efficient energy use, resource-efficient production technologies and services, recycling and waste management are all examples of the current actions undertaken by the Finnish government to reduce the impact on the environment (Invest in Finland 2014).

Finland is a welfare state and the Rule of Law forms the basis. The municipality of residence has to guarantee everyone a worthwhile existence and offer equal opportunities for a balances and active life (UK Essays 2014).

Promptly, Finland's education system is ranked first. The quality of life in Finland make the country the fourth best in the world, and its economy dynamism ranks Finland at the eighth position (Uk Essays 2014).
As a result, there is no particular problem that would prevent a Finnish designing company to enter the Finnish market. On the contrary, companies using clean technologies and oriented towards environment-friendly practices are encouraged to start operating in the market. Also, the market is not considered as saturated, instead as rather new. Therefore, all the conditions are reunited for Mai Niemi Design Shop to become successful in the Finnish market place in the years to come.

6.2 Marketing strategy

This section will present the seven elements of the 7Ps of the marketing mix, meaning: product, price, place, promotion, people, processes and physical evidence.

6.2.1 Product

Mai Niemi is the name of the brand, and refers to items of clothing as well as accessory such as jewelry, hair accessories and bags, made by organic wool and environmental friendly raw materials. The items are very colorful and are designed as well as hand-made by Mai Niemi herself, based on the inspiration that she gets from the Kalevala, Finnish nature and traditions. All items are unique and are in most cases available in different colors, enabling customers to find the perfect match.

The original concept was to make customers feel great when wearing the pieces of clothing, due to the positive energy delivered by the colors and shapes of the collection. Customers having purchased some of the items have told that, wearing them was a positive source of energy, joy and happiness, especially during the winter season. Mai Niemi is very caring about her customers' wellbeing and therefore, has created life-long lasting products to ensure that they would not damage easily with time.

The product range is constantly being developed and expanded, in order to meet the expectations of customers. The products are mostly meant to be worn in the winter time since they are made of wool, this is the reason why one of the current objective is to expand the product range so that people would wear the items all year round.

As presented below, in Figure 14, the Boston Matrix classifies and characterizes the activities of an organization in relation with the markets in which it operates. The purpose of the matrix is to show the overall picture of the business' position and a basis for development thinking. The matrix shows either the strategic business units (SBUs) of a company, or its product portfolio. The growth rates and a product or SBUs' relative market share are the two key aspects shown by the matrix. The market growth rates are ranged on the vertical axis, and are rated between zero and twenty percent, with ten percent being high. However, what is considered as high or low varies from one industry to another. The horizontal axis shows a product or a SBU's relative share in comparison to the one of competitors. Thus, 0,1 means that the market share of the company is considered as ten times smaller than the one of competetors in the market. On the opposite, 10 would demonstrate that the firm's market share is ten times higher than the one of the competitors (Mc Donald 2013).

A Star describes a company or a product, which has attained market leadership in high growth markets. The priority will be to invest in order to maintain the leadership against challenges from the Question Marks of other organizations. In a regular market, star products will become cash cows if the leadership has been protected. Cash Cows still require some investments to remain in the leadership position, however not as significant investments as star products. Usually, Cash Cows products are the ones that a firm still produces and sells in large volume, but do not need high investments. Question marks are products which the firm is seeking to become Stars in other markets (Mc Donald 2013).

On the other hand, whenever a business has a relatively low market share in a mature market, it is classified as a Dog. The reason for this qualification is that the firm is unlikely to generate the same quantity of money than the leader. However, Dog products can be profitable for a company that is focusing on a niche (Mc Donald 2013).

Eventually, an unbalanced portfolio can have significant cash flows implications for a business. For instance, if the firm does not have any Star, it means that the chance to earn money with Cash Cows is relatively low. Alternatively, too many Question Marks may drain a business of cash if there are ambitions for leadership in each of the markets in which they have been launched (Mc Donald 2013).

Thus, it is important for Mai Niemi to understand in which category the clothing items and accessory can be categorized. The goal is to have the right products in the right market, at the right time. At the moment the products can be perceived as Dogs. This is why, the manager should aim at becoming Stars.

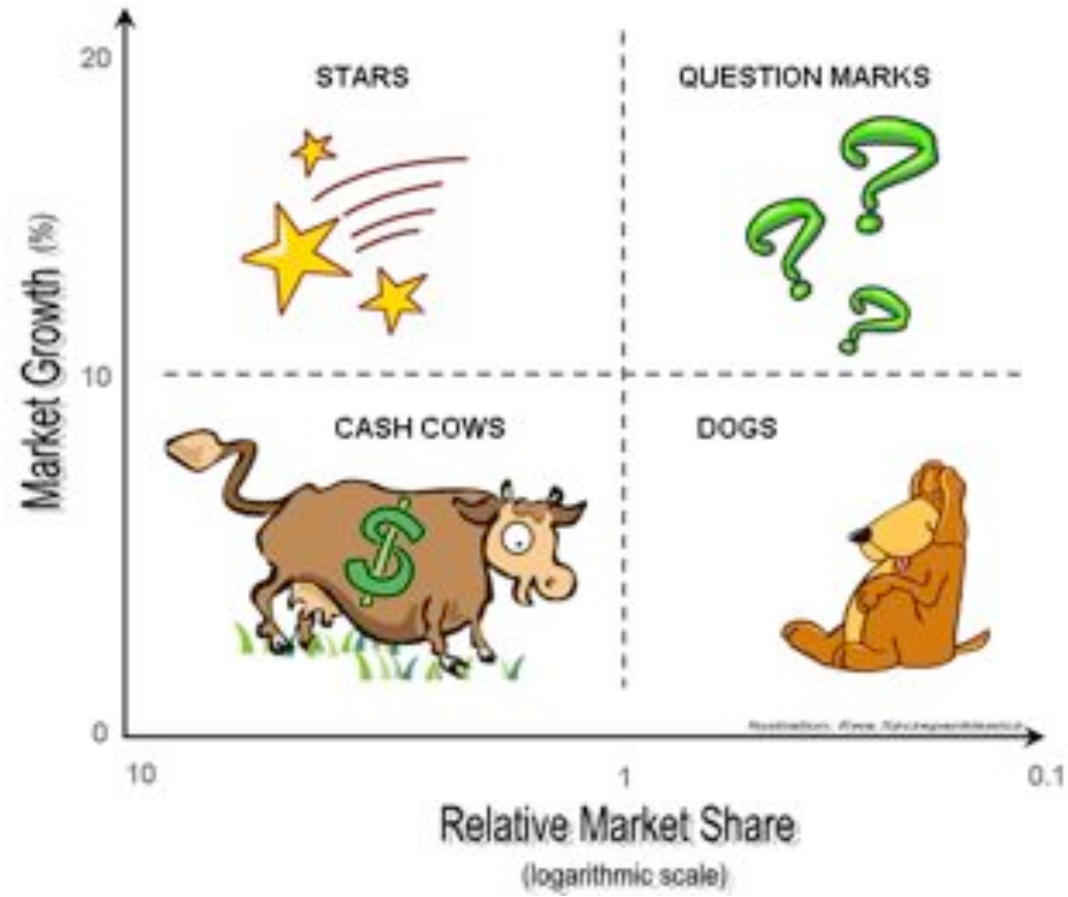

Figure 14: Boston Matrix
(Encyclopedia of Management 2014)

6.2.2 Price

Setting a price is a rather complicated step of the marketing plan, since it is based on many features. Deciding on the right price cannot be done randomly, but instead has to originate from various variables, which need to be taken into account carefully. There are both internal: firm-related motivations, and external: customer or supplier-driven motivations. The pricing strategy need to support the organization's overall marketing strategy, cover the costs of acquisition of raw materials, and deliver profitability. There are several pricing strategies that any firm can choose, but the decision does not have to be taken before having examined all the possible strategy, in order to find the most suitable one for this particular company (McDonald 2013).

Cost-based pricing refers to the fact that the price will be highly related to the costs of raw materials (McDonald 2013). It would not be relevant for Mai Niemi to set a low price to obtain volume sales or a high price to focus only on a niche of customers.

The prices of the items are related to the costs of the raw materials utilizes to produce the products. Mai Niemi disposes of a sewing machine at home, which has been purchased once, and does not need to be purchased again within the next couple of years. The depreciation of the machine can be included in the price of the end products. The highest costs of the company are the rent of the premises and the price of the raw materials. The workforce is composed by Mai Niemi herself and is not technology-related. It is not always easy to determine the costs of a product therefore, it is even harder to find the final price for the product. The price of each item is not meant to vary extensively throughout the months, this is the reason why it is enough to set the price once, and later on make only a few adjustments according to the situation of the market and customers' remarks.

The payments have to be made at the same time than the purchases, whether it is done in the shop or on the website. The merchandise will be shipped only after the payments have been approved. At the moment, it is possible to pay for the products by credit card or cash. The company does not offer the possibility for customers to pay their purchase in several times, since the prices are not high enough to use this method.

Some discounts are being offered to customers during special events or, according to the total sum of a customer's purchases. The company is not yet participating in the tax refund program, but may join it in the future in relation to the amount of sales.

6.2.3 Place

The pieces of clothing as well as the accessories are for now, only available in the physical shop located in the heart of Helsinki city center, and on Mai Niemi's website.

Customers can visit the shop to purchase the items from Monday morning until Saturday afternoon in the low season, and every day of the week during the high season, which is from June to August. All the employees working in the shop have received detailed explanations about the items, and are therefore willing to share the story with customers, to make them understand the reason why they have been designed in a certain way.

The website has been designed so that customers would easily find the items they would like to purchase, either when they know exactly what kind of product they want, or by browsing the webpages. Each item has its picture, which presents it and shows how to wear the product. Different colors are available, and if the item has been sold-out, Mai Niemi will create a new one for the customer, in order to make him or her feel special.

6.2.4 Promotion

As mentioned in the findings above, different channels of marketing need to be used in order to reach the major target groups.

A social media website enables the communication between two entities, on one side the firm itself, and on the other side the customers. There are several objectives of social media marketing: increasing brand awareness, reinforcing brand values and reputation, developing relationships and spreading news. However, one has to be consistent when uploading articles or pictures about a company. The frequency, at which a firm will be active and add pictures or texts, will either maintain customers' interests or decrease the interest towards the brand. A too high frequency or a too low one will both lead customers to stop following the company.

Mai Niemi disposes of a Facebook page, which gives the opportunity for customers and fans to be up-to-date with the company's activities. All the incoming events are posted on the Facebook page. Mai Niemi herself is taking care of the Facebook page, and regularly uploads pictures of her new creations and pictures taken at events. Customers are able to share their opinion, share the pictures and ask questions directly to the owner. A Facebook campaign has been launched at the beginning of the summer 2014 in order to raise customers' interest towards the brand.

Writing a blog and articles about new items, participation in events and stories related to the Kalevala or fairies would facilitate the customers' understanding and significance of the brand. A bi-monthly updated blog with notifications linked on the Facebook pages, would have the same impact than a newsletter, which would be sent to the customers' email addresses.

Nowadays it is very important to communicate with customers, because it makes them feel important, since they can have an impact on the future events and on the idea generation of new items. When able to participate in contests or simply when knowing that, their comments will be taken into account, customers can share their opinions and ideas, which are considered as a precious tool to companies.

Maintaining a close relationship with current customers, as well as prospects, will develop the word-of-mouth marketing, owing to the fact that people would talk more about the company than they do at the moment. Having regular followers will also increase Mai Niemi's level of confidence towards the brand, and will therefore, boost creativeness and participation in events, which will increase the brand awareness. Social media marketing in English would enable customers and fans living abroad to be up-to-date with the brand.

Special attention needs to be undertaken towards social media. The company already has a Facebook page, but in addition a blog should be created. On the blog, existing and potential customers would be able to read news regarding the company, on a regular basis, such as once every other week or once per month, which would stimulate the needs of these customers to purchase items from the website or physical shop.

A thorough Facebook campaign has to be launched, if possible with some contests or prizes in order to entertain the followers. The content of the pages should be mainly in English, so that fans living abroad would be able to understand the articles. However, a translation in Finnish should also be available for local customers, since they represent an important share of customers.

In addition to the Facebook page and a blog, an Instagram account could also be created. Indeed, some prospects as well as regular customers may be interested to follow the brand on a regular basis. This would also enable these people to remain up-to-date with the brand, and would raise their interest towards the brand, resulting in more people visiting the shop.

Mai Niemi is participating in fairs all year around within Finland. During those fairs, Mai Niemi goes herself to the cities to promote her brand and discuss with potential customers. In the spring and summer of 2014, such fairs have occurred in Tampere and Kemiö.

The company participated in the Ihanat Päivät (Wonderful Days) organized by the city of Helsinki from the 14th of May 2014 to the 18th of May 2014. This event is held every year and has for purpose to enable the shops belonging to Tori Kortteli to be promoted to Finns as well as to tourists. Usually, during this week, designers are discounting their products. A special parcel is delivered to all the shops that have registered to this event, providing them with the same marketing material, in order for customers to easily find the participating shops from the street. The marketing material consists of signs to be hung on the doors, windows, as well as outdoor posters to stick on the street.

Moreover, a Fairy Day (Keijupäivä) has been held on May 17th 2014, to cloture the Ihanat Päivät. The employees were all attending this event, and were dressed from head to toes with the pieces of clothing created by Mai Niemi. Pictures were taken in the Esplanad Park to be used as future marketing material. The purpose of this event was to invite all the people either belonging to fairy-clubs or interested in discovering the brand. Special discounts were in use on that day, and a woolen rose was offered to all customers who were purchasing an item. This event brought lots of new people to the shop, and contributed to the brand expansion.

In addition, Mai Niemi has been participating in fairs such as the Kajaanin Runoviikko in Kajaani, Kainuu, Finland held from July 2nd till July 6th 2014. The manager was not present herself at this event, however her items have been exposed by Pia Snecker, a designer originating from Kajaani, with whom they have decided to collaborate by sharing some items. Both designers met during the Kainuu week held in the Senate Square of Helsinki in June 2014, and believe that both could gain from exposing each other's items in both of their shops, one in Helsinki and one in Kajaani.

At the moment, Mai Niemi is working on a project to bring Finnish design to the United States of America. The project was supposed to be held in the autumn of 2014, however due to some delay in the administrative process, the fair has been postponed to the spring of 2015. The event will first take place in Minnesota, state in which the Finnish community is the most significant of the country. The goal of this event is to promote Finnish Design, as well as enabling Americans from Finnish decent to learn and understand more about their origins, whether by talking with Finns or by discovering Finnish design items. The outcomes of this fair are expected to be of large scale by Mai Niemi, due to the fact that, currently many American tourists are asking whether her items will be available for purchase within the United States one day.

Participating in such events, collaborating with other small Finnish designers and meeting with the customers are all excellent public relation activities that will give the opportunity for Mai Niemi to gain more customers over the years.

A certain generalization can be made for Chinese and Japanese tourists, owing to the fact that both of these groups seem to discover Helsinki with a tour guide. Spreading the words to tourist guides, or asking them to bring the tourists to the shop would be considered as a very efficient way of attracting tourists to the shop. Some cooperation should be done with the tourist information center or private tourist guides to reach this particular group of customers.

Also, in the years to come, it would be beneficial for the company to participate in the Tax Free program, due to the fact that many Asian customers have asked if the shop could offer them discounts of this type.

Printed advertising has been mentioned, by nearly all the different customer groups, as being an efficient marketing channel. Since most of the tourists are arriving to Finland at three different harbors (Länsi Satama, Katajanokka, Vuosaari), at the airport and at the Central Railway station, brochures have to be displayed in those places. In relation with the small budget that the firm disposes at the moment, it would be preferable to start displaying brochures at the Helsinki-Vantaa airport, first. The airport has an information desk in which, tourists can find all sorts of information and brochures for their stay in Finland. These brochures could also be translated into several languages, for them to be even more attractive to tourists. Because there are many Russian tourists visiting Finland, the brochures could be translated into Russian. However, this would maybe lead Russian people to think that Russian is spoken in the boutique by all employees.

In the years to come, billboards or bigger-size posters could be displayed in shopping centers or in the street for two purposes. First, to indicate existing customers that the shop is still existing. Second, to raise the brand awareness among locals and tourists, who would happen to read the signs and see the pictures.

Finally, the visibility of the shop has to be improved. Bigger signs should be bought and displayed in the street, in which some items of Mai Niemi’s creations should be included. The windows should be decorated in a more visible manner, especially when it is dark outside. The brand’s logo has to remain the same from now onwards, in order to be easily identified by the customers.

The budget of the social media marketing campaign is non-existent, due to the fact that an Internet connection and electricity are available at Mai Niemi’s premises, such costs are already present in the firm’s operating budget. The participation fees vary according to the size and frequency of the events therefore, it is not easily calculable. However, it should be kept in mind that the participation fee to an event should not exceed, at maximum, fifty percent of the total revenues perceived during the event, in order to gain profit.

Due to the fact that the company only disposes of a small amount of money to spend for marketing purposes, the marketing material needs to be printed in reasonable quantities. Five hundred euros are necessary for the strategy to be implemented, even though it would limit the actions. It is important to increase the budget in relation to the number of marketing material to be printed. The break-even point is estimated at one thousand euros, meaning that any budget exceeding this limit would result in a net-loss for the company.

6.2.5 People

At the moment, Mai Niemi does not sell her products via any intermediary, therefore all the customer transactions are being held in the shop or online on the website.

All the employees have received some specific training on how to behave and act with customers, in order to serve them in the best possible way.

Customer service is believed to have significant impacts on the future of the brand, this is the reason why, adopting a friendly attitude will have positive repercussions on the brand. Employees are required to be friendly, smiling, and willing to assist customers, when it is perceived as needed. Greeting customers entering the shop and having a positive attitude towards them, enables customers to feel respected and at-ease throughout their visit in the shop, so that they will remember the visit as a positive experience.
Employees' as well as management's attitudes are in accordance with the company's organizational culture.

Customers must receive the same treatment in all the premises of the company, whether he or she will be facing an employee or the manager. This is the reason why, it is important to inform the future business partners, collaborators and small designers with whom, selling activities will be conducted, of the organizational culture and principles of the brand.

6.2.6 Process

According to the surveys and interviews, some customers had already visited the shop before, whereas some were visiting it for the first time. Among the ones who were in the shop for the first time, some were aware of the brand's products and some were not.

The buying process for those customers, who had already visited the shop or heard about the brand, is more or less the same. People who had heard about the company have identified a need for a certain type of products, and by thinking have decided that visiting Mai Niemi Finnish Fairytale Design Shop would be an opportunity to purchase the item corresponding to the identified need. People who had been previously to the shop, have also decided to come back to purchase a product that they perceive as necessary.

The customer will directly go home with the product that he or she will have purchased in the shop. However, if the customer decides to order the item from the Internet, it will take about one week to receive the product.

6.2.7 Physical evidence

Physical evidence refers to how a company and its products are presented on the market. At the moment the company is not very well known among Finnish people nor among tourists. The brand visibility needs to be increased and this can be done through several ways. Consistency is the key, this is why, the colors used for the logo and the brand name have to remain the same over time. The color and shape have to be easily identified by customers, no matter where or when they encounter the logo. Plus, on all printed advertisements the logo should be placed more or less at the same place, and big enough so that it would be recognized without having to seek for it.

Interviewees and respondents to the questionnaires have stated that it was not easy to find the shop from the street. The signs are too small and not appealing enough, customers tend to walk by without noticing them. Bigger wooden signs and stands including some of Mai Niemi's designs should be placed instead on the street. One sign should be placed in the main street of the Senate Square, whereas the other one should be positioned in front of the shop. Also, one could be placed by the Market Square – Kauppatori – so that people walking in this area would become aware of the exact location of the shop.

These wooden signs should contain a two-sided black board that could be covered by a glass, so that some items such as collars, or jewelry could be displayed. This would catch the eye of people and would give them an opportunity to visualize the kind of items available in the shop. The other option would be to decorate the signs with small woolen item, which are not relatively time-demanding to create and which are not expensive, in case they would be either stolen, or ejected in case of strong wind. Such decorations would have the same effect on customers, meaning that it would catch their eyes and appeal them to visit the shop.

A small vitrine has been installed on the left side of the main door of Wanha Bock Talo – the building in which the boutique is located-. Exposing one of the items in this vitrine would have a positive effect on customers especially during night time when the shop is not open. Indeed, during night-time and weekly closing days of the shop, the signs are not on the street, as a consequence people walking-by can not see any sign indicating the shop. This is the reason why, this vitrine would attract customers' eyes and would allow them to have an idea of the selection of items in the shop.

Additionally, sticking a sign on the two street-oriented windows of the shop would also make it easier for customers to find the store. Whenever it is dark outside, especially whenever the shop is closed, having some rather powerful lights around the two windows would catch people's eyes. Indeed, some products are currently being exposed on the windows, but the light is not bright enough to be seen from the street. In order to save energy, those lights should be Leds and a timer could be set, so that the lights would be on from six o'clock in the morning until eleven o'clock in the evening, in winter time, when the flows of people are the greatest. It is not necessary to have the windows lighted from eleven o'clock at night until six o'clock in the morning, since not a lot of people would happen to be walking on this particular street at this given time. Turning off the lights during those seven hours would save costs and energy.

Also, collaborating with small Finnish designers such as Pia Snicker – a Yoga-mat designer from Kajaani – would increase the physical evidence of the brand. People would be able to see the products exposed in some other cities, in a similar boutique therefore, the credibility of the brand would be reinforced. On top of that, using printed advertisements several times per year would also be beneficial, since customer would see the brand name elsewhere than in the store area.

If the budget allows, a billboard could be exposed in one of the major pedestrian roads of Helsinki, at tram or bus stops, or in tourist centers, would have the power of reinforcing the brand as well as increasing its credibility both, among Finns and tourists.

6.3 Schedule and implementation

The marketing plan will be launched on the first of December 2014, in the winter season. The plan has no particular end date considering the fact that the goal is to continuously increase the brand awareness among tourists. Launching the marketing plan on that particular date would enable people to notice and hear about the brand before the high-season – summer of 2015-. Also, since the pieces of clothing are motsly made of wool, starting in December would permit people to purchase Mai Niemi's designs as Christmas presents for instance. Moreover, future customers could wear the pieces of clothing during the winter season 2014-2015.

6.3.1 Social media

A thorough marketing campaign on Facebook should be launched on the first of December 2014. The idea would be to give the opportunity to fans to participate in a contest, either by answering questions or by posting creative pictures. There would be three types of rewards, the first one being a gift to the winner, such as a piece of clothing or an accessory worth of about fifty euros. The second prize would be a coupon of twenty euros, and the third prize a coupon of ten euros. Such contests would motivate fans to participate in the events, whether they would take place online or in the shop. Knowing that such kind of events exist, would

encourage people to ”like” the brand, which would increase the numbers of fans, and therefore the number of people expected to be aware of the brand’s activities.
Stories, discounts and different events should also be promoted on the Facebook pages.

A blog containing articles related to magic, fairies and the Kalevala would develop the interests of fans towards the shop and its origins. Such articles should include some text and a picture, and would have to be uploaded either twice or once per month, to keep the customers’ interest on growing.

Social media marketing is considered as very efficient for companies disposing of a rather small budget. Also, it reaches individuals in the whole world, no matter in which country they live.

6.3.2 Printed material

Printed material in the form of brochures should be the focus of the company at the moment. The ideal would be to have the material ready for the first of December 2014, so that tourists coming to Finland right before Christmas would have the opportunity to know about the brand and some of them would be very likely to visit the shop to buy some Christmas gifts for their friends and families.

Brochures or flyers should be mainly displayed at the airport, in Terminal two, where the tourist information corner is located at.

If the company manager disposes of enough time, some of the material could be translated into foreign languages, starting from Russian or German. Prior to printing the materials it is necessary that a specialist of the language checks the language, to ensure that there is no mistake. For this, the company manager could contact a translating agency located in Helsinki and ask for the delays and prices.

6.3.3 Overall visibility of the shop

The overall visibility of the shop has to be improved as soon as possible. Indeed, there is a need to increase the brand awareness other than in the media or in advertising. A significant number of pedestrians are walking-by in the area each day. Even though some of the people may be locals, eye-catching street signs are expected as being an important factor, which would result in more customers visiting the shop.

6.3.4 Collaboration with designers

Collaboration with small Finnish Designer in the whole country – Finland -, as well as in the Senate Square has to be increased in the months to come. Such collaborations can be of two different forms. The first one being in the form of printed advertisements displayed in the shops. The second one being the pieces of clothing, which would be displayed at other small designer's premises, and in exchange, Mai Niemi would display some of their items. Collaboration with designers of the same size and having the same goals is crucial in order to lead to success. Plus, such collaboration would be beneficial for both parties.

6.4 Financial Review

Financial planning refers to the various estimations of the resources requirements, costs and the forecasted sales revenues. This process is complex and involves five different analyses which can be conducted separately: the personal survival budget, the break-even analysis, the budgetary plan, the cash-flow forecast and the profit and loss statement (Butler 2006).

The personal survival budget corresponds to the expectations of the entrepreneur, in order to know the amount of sales that, should be generated to ensure a decent living. The break-even analysis permits to distinguish the amount of sales needed in order to break-even, which means to equal the costs. Breaking-even is thus not generating profit (Butler 2006).

The budgetary plan is a detailed plan of the forecasted total income and expenditure fixed for a certain period of time, usually a month or a year. The purpose of the budgetary plan is to show the cash flows of the company, in other word to predict how the money will be coming from and where it will be going to (Butler 2006).

The cash flow forecast is similar to the budgetary plan however the purpose is slightly different in terms that the goal is to identify the date at which the income will be received and when the payments for expenditure will be incurred. The profit and loss statement is also called the income statement and shows the sales income and the expenses, as well as the gross profit, profit before and after taxes and finally the real profit for the year (Butler 2006).

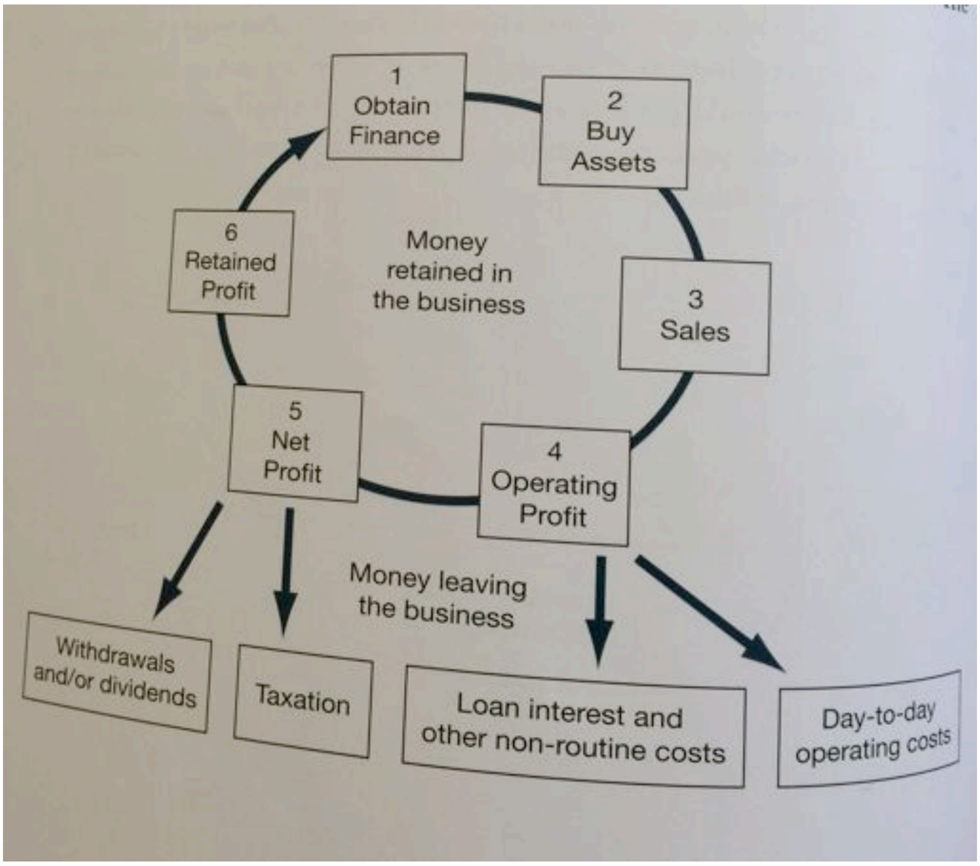

Figure 15: The profit statement
(Butler 2006)

6.4.1 Project costs

When thinking about costs, one needs to take into consideration that, there are fixed and variable costs. Fixed costs remain the same no matter what the amount of sales is, such as the rent of premises, internet connection, electricity. Whereas variable costs are varying according to production, this is the case for raw material for example.

It is not hard to determine the fixed costs, however one has to be careful and include all the components. In this case, the fixed costs are the rent of the premises, electricity – electricity is considered in this case as a fixed cost since the amount of electricity used in not depending on the production, but instead depends on the hours of opening of the shop, meaning that in the winter the electricity costs will be expected to be slightly higher than in the summer season – , salaries and wages of the employees and manager, insurance, payroll taxes and employees benefits, professional fees and the costs of marketing activities.

Variable costs consist in this case of the raw materials, wool especially, as well as the activities related to the rotation of the stock, the depreciation of production equipment and packaging. The company has been registered over a year ago. There is no Internet connection fee available for this building, since it disposes of the free Wi-Fi provided by the city of Helsinki. There is no land phone in the building, nor sewing machines neither any other kind of machinery.

The budget allocated for the marketing purposes depends on the different channels the company's manager is willing to use.

6.4.2 Revenues

The revenues of the company originate from the selling activities, both, online and in the physical shop. At the moment, the company is breaking-even, meaning that it is not generating any money, but it is not losing any money either.

The total revenues are identical to the total costs. The company is not perceiving any other types of revenues at the moment since, there has been no request from shareholders to invest money into the company.

The organization is currently facing some difficulties, due to the fact that the sales revenues are not as high as expected, therefore the company manager is seeking for solutions to overcome this problem. One solution would be to allow crowd funding.

Crowd funding is the process of using a large amount of individuals bringing a small amount of money to finance a project. Kickstarter is a platform designed for both, individuals and companies, who both need to register. Almost anyone can become an investor, and individuals themselves choose the project as well as the amount of money that they would like to invest into. Companies have the choice to either refuse or accept the money from the investors, and are due to verse them a dividend (Kickstarter 2014).

Using this method would allow individuals from all over the world to support the company by providing it with small amounts of money from a large number of individuals. This would have a significant impact on the total revenue capacity of the company, which will enable Mai Niemi herself, to launch a bigger marketing campaign in order to reach a very large audience. The dividends would be later on given to the investors, within an acceptable time frame, when the company's financial situation would be better.

6.4.3 Profits

In order to determine whether a company is generating profits or not, one needs to carefully analyze two documents which are: the balance sheet and the profit and loss statement.

The balance sheet will indicate what the company owns – assets - and what it owes – liabilities -. The total sum of the assets must be equal to the total sum of the liabilities according to the rule of double entry book keeping.

The income statement illustrates the company's revenues and expenses. Another useful document, especially for smaller businesses is the cash flow statement. This document will show the flows of money towards and from the company. In order words one will see the money coming to the company and going out. It shows how a firm uses its resources.

Profits are generated along with sales' activities. In order to have profit a company needs to have its total revenues superior to its total costs. One needs to subtract the total costs to the total revenues.

The result found will be called profit. It can either be positive – net profit - or negative – net loss -. In order to optimize the profits, the company needs to generate more sales revenues.

For that, customers need to buy more, so the marketing strategy has to be done so that, they would like to purchase more often and in higher quantities.

Also, one other option is to increase the price of the goods sold. However, this technique does not necessarily have positive impacts on the long-run, due to the fact that it would increase the sales revenues on a short-term basis, but customers would be likely to purchase the items elsewhere, or cancel their ideas of buying goods if they perceive that the price is too high. Finding out the key customers will considerably be beneficial for the company's future sales revenues.

Finally, there is no major tax burden or need to possess a patent to conduct operation in this market.

6.4.4 Ansoff Matrix

As shown below, in Figure 16, the Ansoff Matrix is a "2x2 depiction of the options open to an organization wishing to improve its revenues or profitability. The axes of the matrix focus on the relationships that an organization has to manage with its customers, regarding the provision of products. A firm is thus faced with four options for commercial actions, which are: concentrating on existing products for existing markets, looking for new products for existing markets, seeking new markets for existing products, and diversifying into new products for new markets (McDonald 2013).

Right now, the company is more focused in producing new products for a new market. It is in this phase that the failure risk is the highest, since the company has no previous experience with these products in another market, neither experience in this new market. This is called diversification.

In the future, Mai Niemi should seek to enter new markets with existing products. It has been mentioned above that, one of the wishes of the company manager was to enter the American market. Therefore, it would enable the product development in the United States, and a higher volume of sales.

Figure 16: Ansoff Matrix
(Spencer 2013)

7 Theoretical linkage

The theoretical background has enabled the author to use varied theories based on brand recognition and brand positioning.

Moreover, a broad ensemble of marketing channels was presented, which has enabled the author of this paper to investigate the research from a wider point of view.

The theories related to quantitative data acquisition in addition to qualitative data acquisition have given the opportunity to the author to create surveys and conduct interviews, which provided valuable answers to develop a solid marketing plan.

The chosen theories have appeared to be appropriate and indispensable to the author. Without the utilization of these theories, the marketing plan delivered would not have been as accurate and thorough. Neither would have the information related to the development of the brand. In conclusion, the theory has been well used by the author of this paper.

8 Conclusion

Mai Niemi Finnish Fairytale Design Shop has the potential to experience a continuous increase in sales in the years to come. The brand is not yet very well known on the Finnish market therefore, the company is facing some difficult times at the moment. However, according to the marketing plan that has been developed, the results for the future sounds promising for the brand.

The observation indicated that the shop was rather hard to find, due to the fact that it was not easily visible from the street. The lack of signs results in a lack of visitors.

The questionnaires revealed that the current marketing strategy and channels used are not adapted to the major groups of customers. Indeed, the lack of marketing channel diversity is reducing the audience therefore, not many individuals are aware of the existence of the brand.

The results of the interviews demonstrated that customers are interested in the pieces of clothings designed by Mai Niemi, meaning that the brand has its potential in the market place. The target group is considered as a niche, due to the fact that the uniqueness of the items is not appreciated by all individuals. Locals and tourists were pleased to be given the opportunity to purchase clothing inspired by the Kalevala and Finnish nature. Therefore, were guaranteed of the authenticity of the items.

The data gathered delivered essential information prior to establishing the marketing plan. The research questions have been answered, and it is now possible to understand the behavior of customers towards the brand. Indeed, the results indicated that the marketing channels should differ according to the nationality of customers. Social media and words from tourist guides are not expected to deliver the same results with tourists coming from different parts of the world. Some marketing material such as brochures and flyers should be translated into various languages, to reach a larger audience. Moreover, brochures and flyers should be displayed in touristic hubs located in the Capital area, such as at the Helsinki-Vantaa airport, in the Cenral Railway Station, in Länsi Satama (West harbor), in Katajanokka harbor and possibly in Vuosaari harbor. The visibility of the shop has to be improved so that more pedestrians would find their way to the shop.

A logical link has been established throughout the implementation part of this thesis, between the questions and the objective of the study. Indeed, both questionnaires and interviews were related to the predetermined ojective. This is the reason why it can be stated that, face validity has been utilized. Also, owing to the fact that, the quantitative and qualitative methods have been both conducted over the whole month of June 2014 and at different times of the day, plus, according to the internal consistency method presented in this thesis, consistency in the answers of respondents has been noticed. Therefore, the factors that could have affected the reliability of this research have been eliminated.

The objective has been reached, since the purpose of this thesis was to create a marketing plan for Mai Niemi Design Shop, based on the findings of the questionnaires and interviews. The results of the marketing plan are expected to be visible by the end of the summer 2015.

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Mai Niemi, Designer and Owner. Mai Niemi Finnish Fairytale Design Shop. Interview with the owner. 11 March 2014. Helsinki. Personal interview.

Mai Niemi, Designer and Owner. Mai Niemi Finnish Fairytale Design Shop. Interview with the owner. 24 March 2014. Helsinki. Personal interview.

Illustrations

Figures

Tables

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Mai Niemi Design Shop - Finnish Fairytale

This questionnaire has been designed for research purposes. The information will not be sold nor kept, and the respondents will be totally anonymous. The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine what marketing channels would be the most relevant for Mai Niemi Design Shop to use, in order to reach the target group in the most efficient way as possible.

1. Where are you from? ________________________________

2. Gender

   ____ Female ______ Male

3. What is your nationality?

4. How did you come to Helsinki?

   ___ By Boat ___ By Train ___ By Plane ___ By Car

5. Age

   ___<19 ___20-30 ___31-40 ___41-50 ___51-60 ____ 61<

6. Where have you heard about Mai Niemi Design shop?

   ___ Hotel ___ Restaurant ___ Friend

   ___Tourist Guide ___ Other. Where? ____________________

7. How many times have you heard about Mai Niemi Design Shop?

   ___ 0 ___ 1-2 ___3-5 ___ More than 5 times

8. Where would you like to hear about the shop? (You can choose several)

   ____Print advertising ___ Word from a Tourist Guide

   ____ Billboards ___ Friends

   _____Internet & social media ___ Shop itself (looks nice from outside)

   ____ Other?

9. What form of advertisement **does not** impact your purchasing habits? (You can choose several)

____Print advertising ___ Word from a Tourist Guide

____ Billboards ___ Friends

_____Internet & social media ___ Shop itself (looks nice from outside)

____ Other?

10. Would you visit the shop again next time you come to Helsinki?
On a scale from 1-5. 1: Not at all – 5: Yes indeed

___1 ___2 ___3 ___4 ___5

7. Will you visit or purchase on Mai Niemi's website now that you visited the shop?

On a scale from 1-5. 1: Not at all – 5: Yes indeed

___1 ___2 ___3 ___4 ___5

8. Will you tell to your family and friends about Mai Niemi Design Shop?

On a scale from 1-5. 1: Not at all – 5: Yes indeed

___1 ___2 ___3 ___4 ___5

9. Where do you search for information about local Handicraft **when you are abroad**?

___ Internet ____ Brochures ____ Tips from friends
___ Signs on the street ____ Tour guide

10. How often do you search for information about shops **during your stay abroad**?

____ Every day ___ Upon arrival ___ In the hotel/restaurant
____ In the street ___ Several Times ___ Never

Thank you for your time! Have a nice stay in Helsinki.

Appendix 2: Questions for interviews

Question 1: Which city are you from?

Question 2: How often do you shop in this area?

Question 3: Have you ever heard of Mai Niemi Finnish Fairytale Design Shop?

Question 4: If yes, where?

Question 5: If yes, how many times?

Question 6: Have you already visited the shop?

Question 7: How many times?

Question 8: Have you purchased any pieces of clothing or accessories?

Question 9: If yes, are you pleased with the quality, design, colors, or other? And why?

Question 10: If not, tell us why

Question 11: Where would you like to receive information about Mai Niemi?

Question 12: Would you be likely to visit the shop again?

Question 13: Would you purchase items again?

Question 14: Anything you would like to add?

Thank you for your time and have a nice day.