

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences  
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# **A Marketing Plan for Santalahti Holiday Resort**

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## **Abstract**

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A Marketing Plan for Santalahti Holiday Resort, 68 pages

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The purpose of the study was to create a marketing plan for Santalahti Holiday Resort. The aim was to find new ways to attract customers to visit Santalahti Holiday Resort and to improve the company's social media marketing.

Data for this study was collected mainly by using qualitative research method. No questionnaire was conducted, since it was not necessary. The information for the theoretical part was gathered from books, articles, the Internet and by interviewing the company owners. The empirical part was written based on the theoretical part, interviews with the company owners and information about the company.

The marketing plan of this study can be used by the company to improve their marketing. The marketing plan includes the company's objectives and strategies how to achieve them. The strategies of the marketing plan are feasible and realistic. All strategies were designed in such a way that they can also be implemented financially.

Keywords: marketing, social media, tourism, marketing plan

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# 1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to create a marketing plan for a holiday resort. A marketing plan is an important part of the growth and development of a company, since it defines the key marketing elements of the company and clarifies the objectives and directions for the company and the employees. Addressing the marketing issues can be useful for the business owner, since it forces them to evaluate their business. The marketing plan can provide orientation and be a source of motivation for the employees of the company. (Cornerstone Business Solutions 2001.)

A marketing plan prepares the company to anticipate and integrate in what the market does. A marketing plan plays an important role in being ready to deal with the changing conditions of the market. It is better to plan and prepare for a market change before it happens rather than finding out about it later on. (Khemal 2014.)

One thing that has an effect on tourism in Finland is the Russian ruble crisis. The collapse of the Russian ruble has decreased the border crossing from Russia to Finland by 33 percent from December 2013 to December 2014 (Leisti 2015). Due to this, it is important to analyze the collapse of Russian tourism in Finland and how it affects the case company.

The increased usage of social media has had an effect on companies' marketing (Blakley 2013). Companies have to make use of the different channels of social media and other marketing opportunities to reach the old and potential new customers. Companies have to keep up to date of the changing environment of marketing in order to maintain and grow their market share.

A marketing mix is a set of tools that companies use to reach their marketing objectives in the target market (Kotler 1997, p.92). A marketing mix can be used as a base when creating a marketing plan. All of the components of the marketing mix can create different kind of value for a company and can help formulate a strategy.

## **2 Objectives of the study**

The purpose of this study is to create a marketing plan for Santalahti Holiday Resort. This company did not have a proper marketing plan before, thus it is important to have one. The objective is to identify the possible market segments and new ways to advertise the services in order to enable new clientele for this business. The marketing plan includes increasing the usage of social media in order to get more visibility, attracting more Finnish and Russian tourists and to get more groups and companies to organize meeting and recreation events in Santalahti Holiday Resort.

## **3 Delimitations of the study**

The focus of this study is to find new ways to market a holiday resort. This study will concentrate only on tourist and business travelers from Russia and Finland, since most of the clientele comes from these countries. Other countries will be excluded from this study. This study concentrates only on the case company, Santalahti Holiday Resort, and thus excludes other holiday resorts in Finland. The social media aspect includes only Facebook, Instagram, Santalahti webpage and a possible blog. There were no budget limitations given by the case company, but the marketing plan will be designed so that it is economically rational and could be implemented in practice. The marketing plan is done according to Philip Kotler's theory only. The budgeting section of the marketing plan is excluded from this study.

## 4 Research questions

The main objective of this study is to create a marketing plan for the case company and find out new ways to attract customers, thus the suitable research question is *“How to market a holiday resort effectively in the selected market segments?”* The question contains all the market segments that were chosen for this study.

Since the main research question is quite broad, the following supportive questions have been formulated to make it easier to answer the main question:

- Which are the marketing segments?
- Which marketing tools are the most effective when marketing a holiday resort?
- How to use social media in order to achieve effective marketing?
- How to attract more Finnish and Russian tourists to visit Santalahti Holiday Resort?
- In which ways should Santalahti Holiday Resort approach potential companies and encourage them to use Santalahti's services?

The first sub-question related to marketing segments was chosen, since it is a part of Philip Kotler's marketing plan. Segmenting is described in the current marketing situation part (Kotler 1997, p.96). Segmentation means dividing customers with similar consumption style into their own segments (Ghauri 2014, p.229). The second sub-question about the marketing tools is related to Kotler's marketing plan's action programs. The action program introduces the marketing programs created to achieve business objectives. The third sub-question related to social media is a part of the marketing strategy of Kotler's marketing plan. The case company seeks to expand their visibility in social media. The fourth sub-question about attracting tourists will be described in the marketing strategy part of Kotler's marketing plan. The last sub-question is a part of the action programs part of the marketing plan. (Kotler 1997, p.96.)

## 5 Theoretical framework

The key concepts of this study are marketing, social media, tourism and marketing plan. Marketing includes both Business-to-business (B2B) marketing and Business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing. Both of these marketing techniques are used in this study, because the clientele includes tourists and companies. The key concepts are discussed next.

### 5.1 Marketing

Simply defined, marketing is daily advertisements, such as sales calls, TV and radio commercials, banners, direct mail offers and e-mail pitches. However, these are only a small part of the whole marketing. Marketing is a process of creating value for customers by companies and building solid customer relationships to ensure that they receive customer value in return. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, p.29.) The goal of marketing is to match consumer needs with the offerings in the market (Dolnicar & Ring 2014).

*“Marketing is a customer focus that permeates organizational functions and processes and is geared towards making promises through value proposition, enabling the fulfilment of individual expectations created by such promises and fulfilling such expectations through support to customers’ value-generating processes, thereby supporting value creation in the firm’s as well as its customers’ and other stakeholders’ processes”* (Dolnicar & Ring 2014).

Marketing is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they want or need. In the process, they create and exchange products, producing value for each other. (Kotler 1988, p.3.) The marketing process figure (Figure 1) demonstrates the five steps of marketing. The first four stages consist of understanding customers, building customer relationships and creating customer value. In the fifth stage, companies receive the reward of creating value for customers, in the form of profit, long-term customer equity and sales. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, p.29.)



Figure 1. Marketing process (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, p.29)

Marketing is no longer only about developing, selling and transporting products. It is increasingly more involved with the maintenance and development of long-term customer relationships, which are considered mutually satisfying. (Buttle 1996) Widely defined, marketing is a managerial and social process that helps companies and individuals to obtain their needs and wants while exchanging value with each other (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, p.29).

As stated by the marketing guru Peter Drucker in Kotler & Armstrong (2010, p.29), “The aim of marketing is to make selling unnecessary.” By understanding customer needs, the marketer can develop products that satisfy those needs. By pricing, promoting and distributing them effectively, the products will be easily sold. According to McDonald (2008, p.8), the goal of marketing is to provide services and products according to customer demand instead of selling just the products which a company wants to produce.

## 5.2 Social media

According to an established definition, social media refers to information networks and e-communications format. It deals with interactive and user-generated content and creates and maintains relationships between people. In practice, this means that all of the computer-aided services in which people communicate with each other and produce content to them are social media in one form or another. (Haasio 2013, p.9.) Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p.61) have defined social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content”.

Typical social media services are document sharing services (Google Drive), community services (Facebook), photo services (Pinterest), micro-blog services (Twitter), links and news distribution services (Reddit), virtual worlds (Habbo Hotel) and different kinds of blogs. In principle, all of the services above are based on the idea that the service provider offers users a forum to which they, together with other persons using the Forum, can produce and add content. Another common basic idea of these services is that people can share their own skills and information with other network users. (Haasio 2013, pp.10-11.)

Community is a key element in social media. Social media is characterized by copyability, persistence, searchability, and scalability of localization. In practice, this means that the majority of material published in social network is eternal and permanent. (Haasio 2013, p.13.) Social media has changed the way tourists search and read information about tourist destinations. Tourists can also share their experiences through social media. (Namho & Chulmo 2014, p.215.)

### **5.3 Tourism**

Tourism is dynamic, competitive and considered as the world's largest industry (Raju 2009, pp.1-2). Tourism includes activities of people traveling and staying in different places outside their home area. The purpose of travelling is usually leisure, business, or other purposes. (go2 Tourism HR Society 2014.) Tourism has two elements; travelling to the destination and staying at the destination including activities. Staying at the destination is only temporary and short-term. Tourists have an intention to return home within a certain period of time. (Raju 2009, p.2.)

The primary tourism products, such as food services, accommodation and transportation, are the key elements when tourists are deciding the destination they want to visit. The attraction of the destination usually depends on the environmental, physical and socio-cultural attributes of the destination. The environmental and physical characteristics consist of the landscape, climate and ecology. The socio-cultural characteristics include art, ways of life, history, buildings and politics. These characteristics can be associated with different activities, such as promotion and packaging in the tourism industry, which makes the activities more available and readily consumed by the tourists. (Benur & Bramwell 2015, p.2013.)

## 5.4 Marketing plan

A marketing plan is an important part of the growth and development of a company, since it defines the key marketing elements of the company and clarifies the objectives and directions for the company and the employees. Marketing plan is a document describing a company's advertising and marketing plans for the upcoming years. It can include a company's marketing situation, positioning, target markets and activities to achieve marketing objectives. (Entrepreneur 2014.) The main idea of a marketing plan is to identify and create a competitive advantage (McDonald 2008, p.86). A marketing plan has usually a number of different parts. The number depends on how detailed the company's top management wants the marketing plan to be (Kotler 1997, p.96).

The structure of the marketing plan in this thesis is from Philip Kotler. Kotler is a Professor of International Marketing in the Northwestern University in Chicago. He is known for writing a wide range of books and articles about marketing. (Kotler Marketing Group 2012.) Kotler's marketing plan was chosen for this study, since he is considered the world's leading marketing guru, and the content of his marketing plan was the most suitable and logical for this study. Kotler's marketing plan includes a budgeting section, but it is excluded from this study, since there was no budget given by the case company (Kermally 2004, p.73). In this study, five sections of Kotler's marketing plan are used:

1. Current marketing situation
2. Opportunity and issue analysis
3. Objectives
4. Marketing strategy
5. Action programs (Kotler 1990, pp.76-77.)

Other marketing plans were also studied when deciding the most suitable one for this study. Overall, the contents of marketing plans are quite similar, but some differences can be found. According to William Luther (2001, p.11) a marketing plan consists of eight sections:

1. Strategic position, major marketing objectives, marketing personnel
2. Product/service plan

3. Marketing communications plan
4. Research plan
5. Internet plan
6. Customer service plan
7. Sales management plan
8. Budget, plans, action plans and timing

According to Marisa Jacobson (2003, pp.73-74) the outline of a marketing plan has seven components:

1. Fact book
2. Strategic/business plan
3. Operational plan
4. Positioning statement
5. Marketing plan
6. Action plan
7. Feedback

Luther's and Jacobson's marketing plans had some sections which were not necessary for this study. In Luther's plan, the sales management plan and customer service plan were not in accordance with the case company's needs. The strategic/business plan and feedback in Jacobson's plan were also considered unnecessary for this study. The marketing plan is discussed in chapter 10.

The marketing theory used in this study is the 7 P's Marketing Mix. It is a set of actions or tactics that companies are using when promoting their brand or products in the market. It includes price, product, promotion, place, people, process and physical environment. (The Economic Times 2014.) The 7 P's Marketing Mix is discussed in chapter 8.

Social media has become a more important part of marketing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Due to this, this study will focus on how marketers can use social media to reach their target audience. Facebook and Instagram will be the main focus in the social media part, since the case company was mainly interested in those sites. The social media is discussed in chapter 9.

## **6 Research method**

A qualitative research method is partly used in this study, because the information is gathered from different sources and no questionnaires are used. This research is a practice-based case study conducted to a certain case company. The theoretical part consists of information from various sources, such as books and articles. The empirical part is based on the theories from the theoretical part and includes the actual marketing plan. The market analysis part includes current marketing situation, opportunity and issue analysis, objectives, marketing strategy and action programs. Current marketing situation and opportunity and issue analysis contain the SWOT analysis.

This thesis has two authors. In general, the whole thesis was done together, but some parts were divided between the authors. In the marketing plan, there are three different target areas: Social media, Russian and Finnish tourists and Russian and Finnish business groups from different companies. Pauliina Paakki focused on the individual travelers and Emilia Lehtinen concentrated on group travelers from businesses. The social media part was done together.

## **7 Case company**

The case company of this study is Santalahti Holiday Resort Ltd. It is located in Kotka, Finland. It is a five-star holiday resort by the sea. It was established in 1991. Santalahti is a family owned company, founded and owned by Jukka Markkola and Katriina Halles-Markkola. (Santalahti a.)

### **7.1 Santalahti Holiday Resort**

Santalahti started as a camping area. Customers could either sleep in a tent or arrive with a caravan and stay there. In 2008, it was voted in Finland as the Camping area of the year by the Finnish Caravan association. The camping area has grown during the past decade and has now 120 caravan spaces and three service buildings. (Santalahti a.)

The holiday resort is open round the year and it employs about seven people all year and about 30 people in time of the summer season. Santalahti has 43 cottages in three different sizes with 228 beds in total. There are also six luxury villas and two log villas, which have 80 beds in total. (Santalahti a.)

Santalahti offers various services, such as saunas, a cave sauna, cafeteria, children's adventure track and playground, Mini-golf Park, beach volleyball court, beach and nature trails. Santalahti offers also services for business meetings and private events. Catering service is offered if requested. In 2014 Santalahti began to offer free Wi-Fi connection in the whole cottage area. (Santalahti a.)



Figure 2. Map of Santalahti Holiday Resort (Santalahti b)

The 2013 Income statement of Santalahti Holiday Resort shows that the turnover for 2013 was EUR 1,286,439,73. The turnover increased by EUR 224,110.05 compared to the same period in 2012. The profit for the year 2013 was EUR 66,005.34. In 2012 the profit was EUR 34,616.51, thus the company has almost doubled their profit in one year. (Santalahti 2013.)

## 7.2 Santalahti web

Santalahti webpage offers versatile information, such as weather forecast, upcoming events and different activities in Kotka. The webpage is the main information source for customers. Reservations for the cottages, villas, saunas and meeting rooms can be made through the webpage. (Santalahti c.)

Santalahti Holiday Resort uses Google services. One part of Google services is Google Analytics, which the company uses to see how many visitors they have had on their website. Google Analytics shows statistics such as sessions, users, page views, pages per session and the average duration of the session.

Figure 3. shows the number of Santalahti website visitors in 2014. As can be seen from the chart, Santalahti website has the most visitors during the summer time. During September and October Santalahti Holiday Resort implemented Google and Yandex Ad words campaign in Russia, which explains the higher visitor numbers during that period.

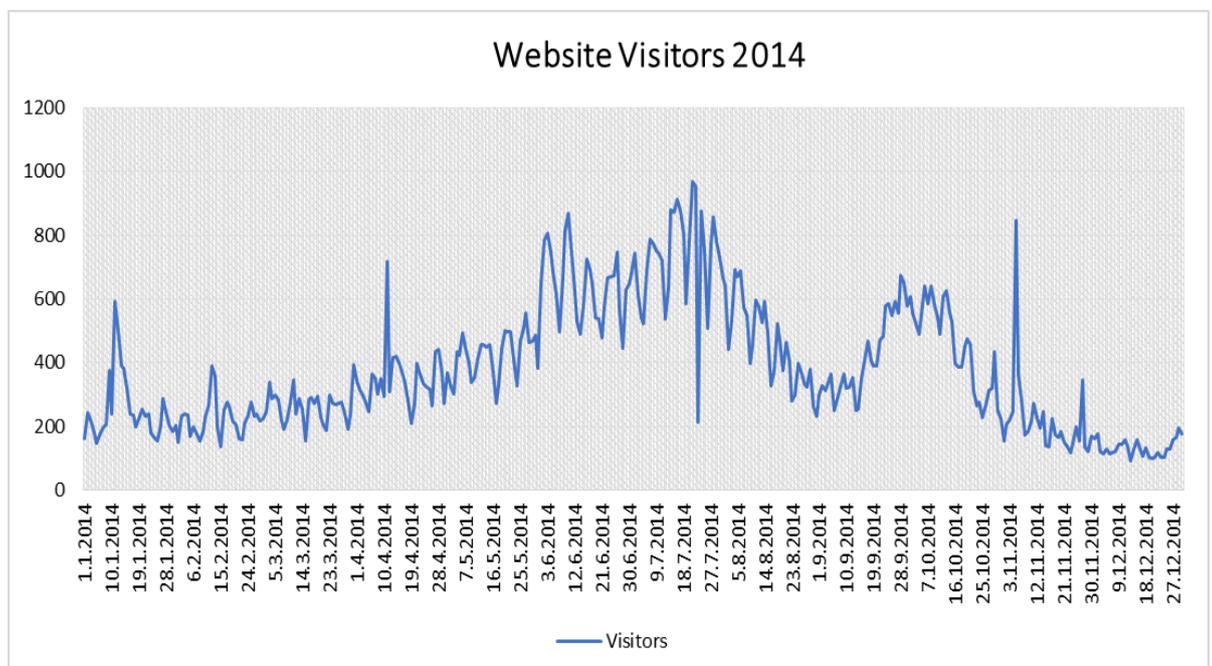


Figure 3. Santalahti website visitors in 2014 (Google Analytics 2015)

Figure 4 shows the amount of sessions by countries from 2<sup>nd</sup> of February to 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2015. Santalahti website had a total of 6,270 visitors. Majority of the visitors were from Finland. The second largest visitor group was from Russia. The next largest visitor groups were from the United States and Germany. The website had also a few visitors from countries all over the world, which are combined to “Others”. Due to these figures, this study focuses only on Finnish and Russian tourists. The average duration of the sessions was 03:24 minutes, which is considered to be quite a long time in travel sites (Markkola 2015).

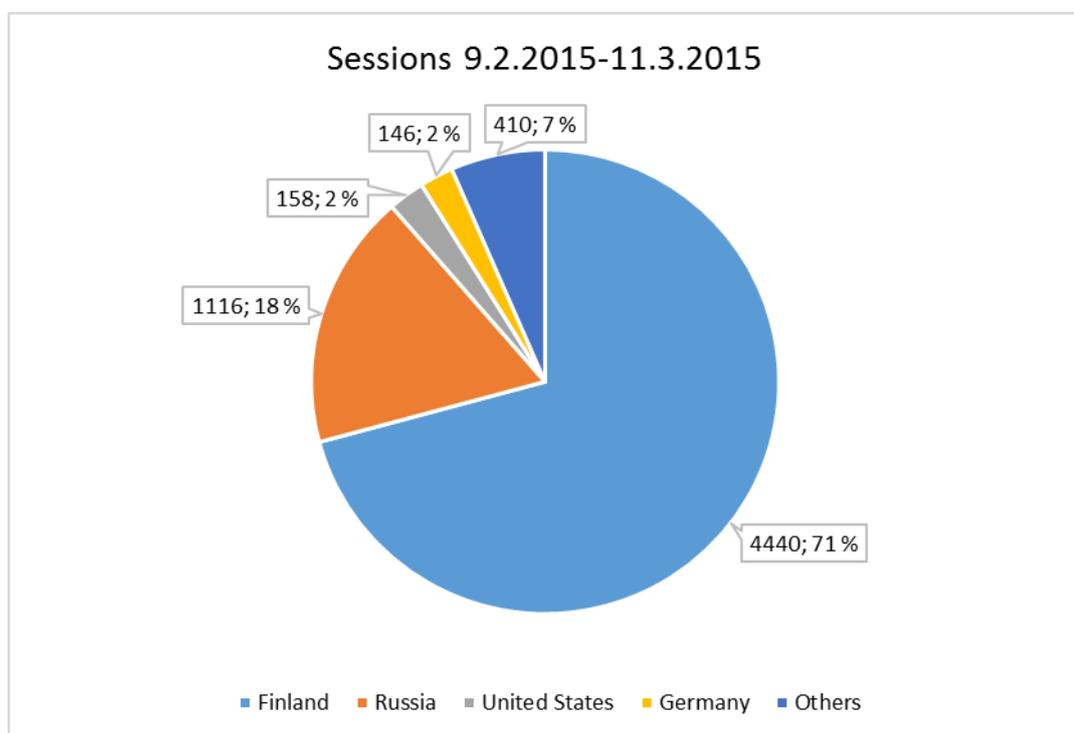


Figure 4. Santalahti website sessions by countries (Google Analytics 2015)

## 8 Marketing mix theory

The best-known product-marketing model, the 4 P’s Marketing Model, was created in 1960 by Jerome McCarthy (Professional Academy). Marketing mix combines different marketing methods into a single entity. This allows customer service, interaction with customers and standing out from the competition. Originally the theory consisted of four different parts; price, product, place and promotion.

(Kaipio 2012.) The basic idea of a successful marketing mix is to sell the right product with the right price at the right place using the best promotion method (Business Case Studies 2015).

In 1981, Bernard H. Booms & Mary J. Bitner added three new parts to the 4 P's model. The three added parts were people, process and physical environment. The Marketing Mix could now include products that were services and not just tangible things. (Van Vliet 2013.) The 7 P's model enables companies to define and review key issues affecting the product and service marketing. The model is also a framework for the modern day digital marketing mix. (Hanlon 2014.) The marketing mix is widely used in many companies, since it makes marketing easier to handle and separates marketing from other business activities (Londhe 2014, p.337). The 7 P's of the marketing mix are shown in Figure 5.

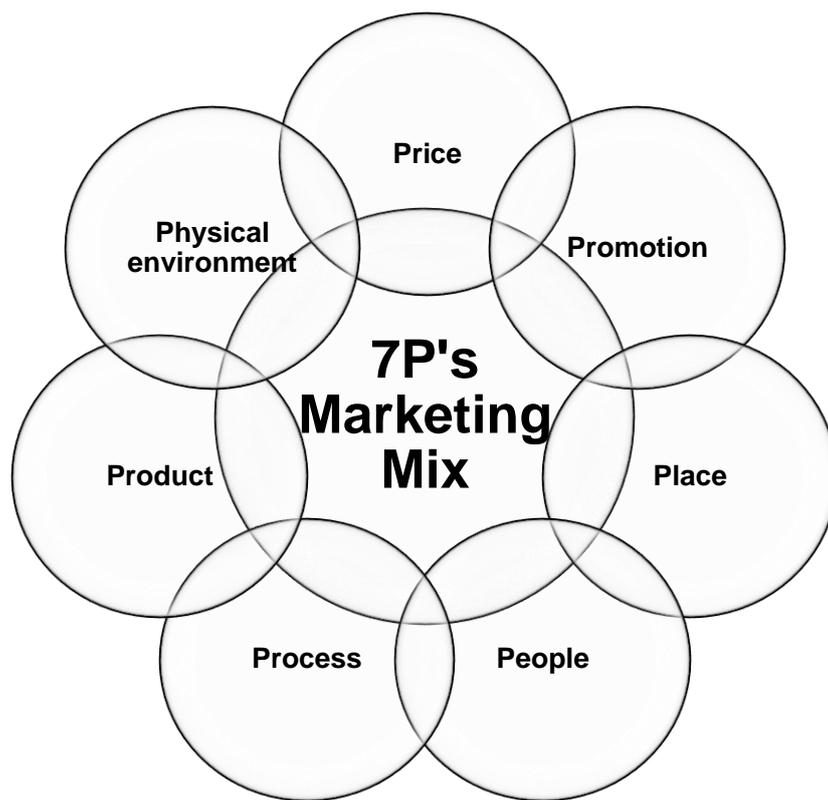


Figure 5. 7P's Marketing Mix (Professional Academy)

### 8.1 Price

Price is the exchange value of a service or a product expressed in money. Pricing is the only element in a marketing mix, which accounts for sales revenue and

demand. When consumers are comparing alternatives and making the final purchasing choice, price is considered as the only objective criteria. (Hundekar 2010, pp.77-78.) Pricing should provide quality indication and value addition to the consumers. Consumers are seeing price as the main cost they must pay to get the wanted benefits. (Kushwaha & Agraval 2014, p.87.)

Pricing has five objectives. The first objective is growth in sales. It can be achieved with a low and competitive price, but it is not always necessary. A company has to determine the right price to stimulate sales increase. The second pricing objective is market share. Market share can be increased by using the right pricing. The third objective is predetermined profit level. Generating profit is the most logical objective of pricing, since companies have to make profit in order to stay in operation. The fourth objective is to meet or follow competition. Companies want to stabilize their pricing and operating margin on the same level as their competition or follow the price leader. The final objective is to control the cash-flow. The basic objective of pricing is to have as much cash return as possible in a certain period. Capital expenditure and investments should be recovered in a specified period. (Hundekar 2010, p.79.)

When deciding a price for a product, a company should take into account the following factors; cost, objectives, demand, competition, distribution channel, government, economic conditions, ethical consideration, types of buyers and product differentiation. Fixed and variable costs have an important role in organization's pricing policy. When a company understands how their costs are divided, they can utilize their resources and move them to the best profit opportunities. Objectives of a company play a big role in pricing policy. (Hundekar 2010, p.80.)

A company can set its own objectives for pricing, and those objectives can be allocated into stability in prices, maximizing profits, maintaining return on investment, meeting or preventing competition and maintaining or increasing market share. Demand for a product is an important factor when making pricing decision. Demand curve can be used to evaluate changes in total demand. The product is price elastic if price has a huge impact on demand. On the other hand price can be inelastic if the price does not affect demand. (Hundekar 2010, p.80.)

A company should find out about its competitors' prices before setting their own price. Therefore, a company should customize their prices to meet competition. Products become available to customers by using intermediaries, thus the distribution channel should be planned carefully. The compensation paid to the intermediaries should be contained in the whole price of the product. Expenses due to government interference, such as taxes, will have an influence on an organization's pricing policy. If the government increases the tax rate, customers have to pay more for the product, since the raised tax is included in the price of a product. (Hundekar 2010, p.80.)

Economic conditions, such as inflation and depression, usually have an effect on prices. During inflation, prices are usually higher due to increase in costs. On the contrary, during depression prices are decreased. A company may also use ethical consideration while pricing a product and thereby sell some products as a measure of public welfare, without making profit. (Hundekar 2010, p.80.)

The types of buyers have a major impact on price fixation. Consumer might have different motives and values, such as quality, status or safety, thus pricing should be done according to the perceived value of consumers. Product differentiation is used in marketing to reach customers. The price of a product varies based on the way it is differentiated. (Hundekar 2010, p.81.)

## **8.2 Product**

A product can be considered as the most important and concrete part of a marketing program. How the company handles its product policy and strategy is the key element of a marketing mix. From a marketer's perspective products are the main components of a marketing plan and market success. A product can be a good, a service or both. Product includes price, brand, design, label, packages, physical objects and services. (Hundekar 2010, pp.49-50.)

A product consists of both tangible and intangible attributes, which creates the value for the buyer. The tangible attributes of a product can be determined by physical terms such as materials that are used, weight and dimensions. The intangible attributes include brand reputation, product status and manufacturer's commitment in service. (Keegan & Green 2008, p.327.)

Products and services can be categorized into two types of products depending on their usage; consumer products and industrial products. Consumer products are used for personal consumption by final consumers. These products include shopping products, unsought products, convenience products and specialty products. Shopping products are compared on quality, price, suitability and style. These kind of products and services include clothing, major appliances, airline services, furniture and cars. Unsought products are usually not well known products, which customers do not often think of buying, such as prepaid funeral plans. Convenience products are products and services, which consumers often buy immediately and without comparison, such as candy, flowers and magazines. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, p.250.)

### **8.3 Place**

Place is where a company's product or service is sold. A company can use different selling methods, such as telemarketing, direct selling, catalogs, mail orders, trade shows, retailers, representatives and distributors or joint ventures. Companies can also use a combination of these methods. It is important to choose the right place or location to make sure customers receive all the necessary information to make a buying decision. (Tracy 2004.)

Nowadays the use of mobile phones is almost universal. This enables people to have access to the Internet at any time and almost everywhere. This way products and information can be brought closer to the customers. Marketers should take advantage of the technological advancements and engage closely with the customers. (Bernardt, Mays & Hall.)

Today very few manufacturers sell their products directly to the final customer. There is a large number of intermediaries between the manufacturers and the end customers. Distribution channel decisions affect, directly or indirectly, other company management's marketing decisions, such as pricing is dependent on the company using selective or large volume distribution way. Marketing channels can be said to be a group of independent organizations, whose task is to deliver the product or service to the final customers for use or consumption. (Kotler 1990, p.464.)

## **8.4 Promotion**

The idea of promotion is to communicate the existing products to potential customers. It is a marketing communication process including influence, information and persuasion. A company should promote information to users, resellers and consumers. Promotion is an effective tool of competition since it can provide leading position in the market. (Sherlekar 2010, p.250.)

Using a promotion mix may help a company to influence customers' beliefs, life style, attitudes, preferences and values about the company and its products, and thus influence the behavior of the customers. A promotion mix includes advertising, publicity, personal selling and all forms of sales promotion. Advertising is a paid form of presenting or promoting products, services and ideas. Publicity is an incentive for demand for services, products or businesses. It can be done by presenting a product or a service in the media. Personal selling is face-to-face and oral communication with the purpose of making sales. Sales promotion covers all marketing activities besides personal selling, advertising and publicity. It includes activities such as shows, demonstrations, displays and exhibitions. (Sherlekar 2010, pp.250-251.)

Marketers are increasingly using Internet to market products and services. Internet offers tourism companies an excellent opportunity to market their products in a cost-effective way and reach the right target group at the right time. In the best case, the customer will reserve and pay for the hotel or other service before using it. Tourism is the industry that benefits from internet marketing the most. Knowing, respecting and appreciating the customer in internet marketing is just as important as in other marketing. Choosing the right content and attractive exposition is important. The characteristics and the benefits of the product should be clearly displayed for the customers who are planning a trip. (Kauppinen.)

## **8.5 People**

People are an important part of the service marketing mix, since they are involved in transactions of services or products. Usually they are customer contact em-

ployees, personnel, management and customers. The customer contact employees are usually the face of the company. They bear a physical service with a discernible result. (Van Vliet 2013.)

Service companies must manage their customer contact employees to observe the quality of the service. Observing the service quality is important, since the quality of a service can vary strongly between service companies (customer contact employees) and customers. Customer perception is formed through the company's employees' attitudes and behavior. The perception can be positive or negative, and it can influence customer satisfaction and purchase decisions. (Van Vliet 2013.)

## **8.6 Process**

Process represents the procedures, activities and protocols by which the service is delivered to the customer. Process describes the order and method in business services and creates customer value. Well-designed processes confirm the availability, total ease, convenience and quality of a service. If the process is badly designed, it might annoy the consumers. In badly designed processes the service delivery is usually poor quality, frustrating, slow and difficult. (Kushwaha & Agraval 2014, p.89.)

## **8.7 Physical environment**

The physical environment refers to the way a product, service or the whole company looks from the outside. It contains business cards, company website, brochures and reports, which represent the service. (Van Vliet 2013.) In service business, the service is usually intangible, thus the quality is hard to assess. Due to this, consumers consider that the service environment represents quality. (Kushwaha & Agraval 2014, p.88.)

A service scape is an environment where the service takes place and it can influence customer experience. The service scape has three dimensions related to the physical environment. The first dimension is Space and Functions, which includes equipment, decoration and maps among other things. The second dimension is Signs, Artefacts and Symbols, such as personal touch and signature. The

last dimension is Environment conditions, such as smells, temperature and sounds. (Van Vliet 2013.)

## **9 Social media theory**

Social media refers to the new services and applications in the Internet that combines the communication between the users and the content which others have produced. Social media does not have a standard definition, even though the use has spread rapidly in the media and education. "Social" generally refers to the interaction between people and "media" refers to the information channels through which it is distributed and transmitted. Social media is different from traditional mass communication in the fact that users are not only recipients but can also do things, such as comment, share content, get to know others and mark their favorites. These activities produce more sociability, networking and community. (Hintikka.)

The interaction of people with each other and with companies has changed because of the influence of social media. The increased usage of Internet has allowed customers to respond to company's actions. With the modern technology, companies can reach a worldwide audience with their ads and other information in a few seconds. (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom 2014, p.58.) If most of the company's customers are using social media, the company should also use it (Tiago & Verissimo 2014, p.2). Social media has become a new way to deliver messages between companies and consumers (Yu-Qian & Houn-Gee 2015, p.1).

Earlier, companies used direct marketing, informational websites, radio, telemarketing, television and e-mail blasts to market their services and products (Tiago & Verissimo 2014, p.2). Traditional commercial information, such as promotion and advertisements, are becoming less effective. On the other hand, the peer customer opinions in social media is considered more reliable and important. According to a globally implemented survey, only 46 percent of the respondents still trust traditional advertisements, while 92 percent of the respondents trust marketing through word-of-mouth and 70 percent trust online reviews. (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom 2014, p.58.)

Social media sites have become an essential part of search results. In a study about the role of social media in online travel information search 11 percent of travel related searches in Google referred to social media sites. (Xiang & Gretzel 2009, p.184.) According to a similar study, 27 percent of accommodation related search results indicated to social media sites (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom 2014, p.58).

In 2013, U.S. companies used \$5.1 billion on social media advertising, with the goal to promote their services and products. It has been projected that by 2018 that number will be almost \$15 billion. Although U.S. companies spent a lot of money in social media marketing, according to a recent survey majority of U.S. consumers were not influenced by those advertisements. One challenge of Internet advertisements is that customers might see them as irritating and thus try to avoid them. According to one research, only 15 percent of U.S. consumers place confidence in social media marketing. (Yu-Qian & Houn-Gee 2015, pp.1,5.) Despite of these figures, social media marketing is becoming more popular and companies are increasingly starting to use and invest in social media as a marketing tool.

Social media includes numerous amount of different sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest and VKontakte (eBizMBA Inc. 2015). Twitter is a microblogging site where registered customers can post short messages called tweets. LinkedIn is designed for the business community by allowing its users to share their education and work experience and promote themselves or their businesses. YouTube is a music sharing, video production, movie making and vlogging site. In Pinterest people can share and categorize images that are found online. (Moreau 2015.) Vkontakte is a same kind of site as Facebook, that is used mainly in Russia and the eastern Europe (Rouse 2012). In this study, Facebook and Instagram are the main social media tools used.

## **9.1 Facebook**

Facebook is the most popular social networking site with over 800 million daily users. Facebook is used by both individuals and organizations. (Bright, Kleiser &

Landreth Grauh 2014, p.148.) Facebook allows its users to send messages, create a profile, keep in touch with family, friends and colleagues and upload photos and videos (Rouse 2014). Facebook creates value for its users by building useful services that allow people to express themselves, connect and share with friends, stay connected everywhere, discover and learn (Facebook Inc. 2013, p.5).

Facebook creates value for different kinds of marketers, such as direct marketers, brand marketers, developers and small and medium sized businesses. With Facebook, marketers can increase online or in-store sales or create awareness for their products and services. (Facebook 2015a.) Facebook earns the majority of their business revenues by selling advertising space for marketers. By buying advertising space from Facebook, marketers will get the following benefits: Facebook ads, Facebook ad systems, targeted reach, engagement and ad measurement. (Facebook Inc. 2013, p.5.)

## **9.2 Instagram**

Instagram is a popular photo sharing mobile application. It allows its users to share real-time photos and videos on the move (Moreau 2015). Photos uploaded to Instagram can be shared directly to Facebook, Twitter and Flickr (Instagram 2015b). Instagram photo stream is also available for browsing with a computer. Users can log on to the service with their user IDs and browse the latest photos with their phones. So far, Instagram is not going to open up the possibility of sending images via a web browser. (Storås 2013.) In the beginning of the year 2015 Instagram had over 300 million accounts. The users share over 70 million videos and photos daily. (Instagram 2015a.)

Instagram users use hashtags (#) to categorize images and make them easier to find. Hashtags can show how the image was created, where the image was taken or what is in the picture. The most common reasons to use hashtags are branding, gaining more followers or pulling into a feed. (Instagram 2015b.)

Instagram has a goal to help businesses reach their target audiences through images and videos. Marketers can get inspired by the tools and resources provided by Instagram. (Instagram 2014a.) Instagram was launched in 2010, and already in 2011 it had one millions users, including some of the world's best

known companies, such as Starbucks, Red Bull and National Geographic (Instagram 2014a). In 2013, Instagram began to provide different ways for marketers to reach customers (Instagram 2015c).

### **9.3 Success story**

There are many benefits for companies to use Facebook and Instagram in marketing. This example shows how combining these two social media platforms can create great results in marketing. One of the most well-known car brands, Mercedes-Benz, decided to use Facebook and Instagram to advertise its new GLA compact SUV. The outcome of this campaign showed that using Facebook and Instagram together could create better results than using just one platform alone. Mercedes-Benz used Instagram to create visual inspiration and Facebook to show the design, versatility and premium interior and to drive action. (Instagram 2014b.)

By posting branding ads across Facebook and Instagram, Mercedes-Benz website visits increased by 54 percent. The website visits also increased 580 percent when the branding ads were engaged with the direct response ads in Facebook. By using Instagram and Facebook together, Mercedes-Benz succeeded in moving people from awareness toward action. (Instagram Business.)

### **9.4 Blog**

A blog is a web page or site, to which one or more persons produce content on a more or less regular basis. The writer of a blog is called a blogger. In a blog the blogger can produce content not only in the form of text, but also images, video or audio format. Data presentation of blogs is characterized by focusing on time, linking and personal perspectives. (Web-opas 2015.) In blogs, the posts are displayed in chronological order, since the latest writing is displayed first (Karjalainen 2010, p.7). There are a number of different kinds of blogs, such as fashion blog, lifestyle blog, food blog, wedding blog, news blog and corporate blog (Web-opas 2015). The blog type used in this study is the corporate blog.

A corporate blog is maintained by persons who have formally or informally been adopted by the company. A corporate blog differs from other forms of business

communications by the fact that it allows one-way and two-way communication. Corporate Blogs are divided into employee blogs, group blogs, management blogs, advertising blogs and newsletter blogs. Employee blog is written by the company's employee. The blog can work either in a private website or the company's website. A group blog is written by several employees of the company. The blog is usually at the company's website and bloggers are the company's experts. Management blog is written by the company executives and by doing this the executives give this face for the company. In the advertising blog the company's products and events are marketed. The advertising blog often lacks the authentic human voice. The newsletter blog publishes messages related to the company news and product information. (Karjalainen 2010, pp.8-9.)

## **10 Marketing Plan theory**

The marketing plan for Santalahti Holiday Resort is done according to Philip Kotler. A marketing plan is an important part of the marketing process. The purpose of a marketing plan is to achieve the goals of different product levels inside a business unit. (Kotler 1997, p.95.) The marketing plan contains the current marketing situation, opportunity and issue analysis, objectives, marketing strategy and action programs (Kotler 1997, p.95).

### **10.1 Current marketing situation**

This part of the plan presents relevant background knowledge of the market, competition, product, distribution and the macro environment. The market situation includes a variety of information presented about the target market. The total market size and growth rate are shown from the previous years, as well as the size and growth rate of the market and the geographic segments. In addition, information on customers' needs, buying behavior and perceptions are presented. The product situation shows the price, sales, net profit and contribution margin for the main products for several previous years. (Kotler 1997, p.96.)

In the competitive situation analysis the largest competitors are identified by their market share, marketing strategies, size, products quality, goals and other characteristics. Distribution situation provides information on how much each distribution channel sells products, and how important different distribution channels are to the company. This section also shows the necessary changes in the prices and in the terms of trade. (Kotler 1990, p.76.) Macroenvironment situation characterizes wide macroenvironment trends, such as economic, political, demographic, social and cultural aspects. The purpose of this part is to describe the large-scale trends in the macro environment, which affect the product line in the future. (Kotler 1990, p.76.)

## **10.2 Opportunity and issue analysis**

With the information received from the current market analysis, the company must identify the greatest opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses as well as the contentious issues that the company's product will face during the planning period. Opportunities and threats refer to external factors that may affect the business in the future. They are presented simultaneously with suggestions of other possible measures. Management should classify the opportunities and threats so that the main ones are receiving attention. (Kotler 1990, p.77.)

A company must also identify its strengths and weaknesses. They are internal variables as opposed to the opportunities and threats, which are external. The company's strengths refer to specific strategies that the company should use. Weaknesses refer to matters that the company should correct. A company uses the previous results of analysis to define the main contentious issues that need to be commented on the marketing plan. If these obstacles are changing, the strategies, objectives and tactics might change. (Kotler 1990, pp.77-78.)

## **10.3 Objectives**

At this stage management knows the contentious issues and must make decisions on how to deal with these in the future and decide which objectives are included in the marketing plan. Objectives guide the strategies and action programs to find and give answers to questions to the contentious issues. The company must set targets for the future. (Kotler 1990, p.78.)

Objectives must meet certain conditions. Firstly, each of the target must be presented unambiguously and in measurable form, while implementation period must be mentioned. Secondly, the different objectives should be consistent with each other. Thirdly, the objectives must be expressed in a hierarchical way and, if possible, as a way in which lower objectives are clearly derived from the higher ones. Lastly, the objectives must be achievable, but they must also be sufficiently challenging to encourage implementing managing level to even harder efforts. (Kotler 1990, p.79.)

#### **10.4 Marketing strategy**

The organization can now draw up a marketing strategy. Building a strategy has many options and each objective can be achieved in different ways. For instance if the target is to increase sales revenue, the company can raise all the average prices of the products, increase the total amount of sales or sell relatively more expensive products. (Kotler 1990, p.79.)

The total sales increase is possible by increasing the market or market share. Increasing the market can succeed, among other things, by influencing people's purchasing behavior. When the management scans each target step by step, they will identify the most important product line strategy options. Management will present its strategy in written form as a strategy statement. (Kotler 1990, p.79.)

Strategy statement includes target market, advertising, service, product line, sales promotion, price, marketing research, sales force, positioning, distribution outlets and research and development. When the strategy is drawn up, the company must be clear whether the sourcing of materials or manufacturing is expected to have bottlenecks that impede the achievement of the planned sales volume. In addition the availability of adequate financing and sales staff must be determined. (Kotler 1990, p.80.)

#### **10.5 Action programs**

Strategy statement tells the broad basics of marketing aimed at achieving business objectives. Each element of the marketing strategy needs to be edited to

provide answers to questions on what to do, when it is done, who does what and how much it will cost. (Kotler 1990, p.80.)

## 11 Marketing mix of Santalahti Holiday Resort

### 11.1 Price

Pricing can be an important competitive advantage for a company. When customers are deciding on the travel destinations, price is one of the most influential factor. (Hundekar 2010.) Due to this Santalahti should take into account the competitors' pricing. Santalahti Holiday Resort is the largest holiday resort in the Kymenlaakso area. There are a few small holiday resorts in the area and some private cottages for rent. Kaunissaari Holiday Resort located in Pyhtää has ten four-bed cottages. The prices are 80 euros per day or 300 euros per week. (Kaunissaaren lomakeskus Oy.) Hamina Camping is located in Hamina. They offer four-bed cottages for 45 euros per day. (Suomen Leirintäalueyhdistys ry.) Similar cottages in Santalahti Holiday Resort cost 83 euros per day or 427 euros per week (Santalahti d). Santalahti Holiday Resort has a bit higher prices, but the additional services and location should be taken into account in the price difference.

	<b>Santalahti Holiday Resort</b>	<b>Kaunissaari Holiday Resort</b>	<b>Hamina Camping</b>
<b>Price / day</b>	€83	€80	€45
<b>Price / week</b>	€427	€300	€315

Table 1. Price comparison of the four-bed cottages.

Suomen Kotteria Ltd has three villas in the Kymenlaakso area. One villa located in Pyhtää offers accommodation for 10-12 persons. The price is 1,590 euros per

week. (Suomen Kotteria Oy.) Santalahti Holiday Resort has a villa for ten persons, with the price of 1,740 per week (Santalahti e). In this comparison location and additional services must also be taken into account. As an example the Suomen Kotteria Ltd villa does not offer bed linen or a final cleaning, but Santalahti Holiday Resort does.

The prices of the Santalahti camping area also differ from other camping areas nearby. A camping area called Kevätti Valkeala is located in Kouvola. The area fee is 15 euros per day or 13 euros per day with the SF Caravan card. Electricity is 14 euros per day. (Kevätti Valkeala.) In Hamina Camping, the area fee is 14 euros per day. The SF caravan card offers two euros' discount. There is also a person charge of four euros. The electricity costs 4.5 euros. (Suomen Leirintäalueyhdistys ry.) In Santalahti Holiday Resort, the camping area fee is 18 euros per day or 15 euros with the SF Caravan card. The person charge is five euros per day and the electricity is five euros per day. (Santalahti f.) As can be seen from the price comparisons, the pricing of the camping areas is quite similar and the total daily prices do not differ much. In Table 2, the total amount is counted for one person staying for one night in the camping area.

	<b>Santalahti Holiday Resort</b>	<b>Kevätti Valkeala</b>	<b>Hamina Camping</b>
<b>Area fee / day</b>	€18	€15	€14
<b>SF Caravan area fee</b>	€15	€13	€12
<b>Electricity / day</b>	€5	€14	€4.50
<b>Person fee / day</b>	€5	-	€4
<b>Total :</b>	€28 / SF €25	€29 / SF €27	€22.50 / SF €20.50

Table 2. Comparison of the camping prices.

Santalahti Holiday Resort has calculated and considered the prices of the cottages, villas and camping area in a way that the prices cover the costs and generate profit. The biggest event in Kotka in the summer time is the Kotka Maritime Festival in the end on July. During that time, Santalahti Holiday Resort has higher prices for the accommodation, but this does not have an effect on the number of customers. As an example, the camping price for one person is 35 euros per day during the Kotka Maritime Festival, whereas normally it is 28 euros. The four-bed cottages are 620 euros per week during the Festival, while usually they are 427 euros per week. (Santalahti d.) Santalahti Holiday Resort is always full during the festival, so it is wise to raise prices during high peaks. Overall, some of the prices are higher than competitors' prices, but the price differences can be explained and justified by the other sections of the marketing mix, such as place and product.

Pricing can improve the market share, but having lower prices is not always the right way to do it. For Santalahti Holiday Resort it is more useful to have special offers for the low seasons and the national holidays. Even though the lower prices do not generate as much profit, they attract customers to visit Santalahti Holiday Resort.

## **11.2 Product**

Santalahti Holiday Resort is mainly a service business, since their main business is to offer accommodation. In addition to accommodation, Santalahti Holiday Resort offers a number of different services, such as free saunas in the morning, bicycle renting, catering and cafeteria. With the high quality services and facilities, Santalahti Holiday Resort has achieved a five star rating. The high quality should be maintained and improved in the future by following the trends of accommodation and additional services.

As a brand, Santalahti Holiday Resort is well known in the Kymenlaakso area and among the caravaners. In other areas, the brand awareness should be increased. Those who are aware of the brand know that they will get high quality service. The Santa Café was renewed in 2013. It now has a glass wall covered terrace

and a sun terrace. (Santalahti a.) The terrace attracts many locals to visit and enjoy refreshments and snacks.

The cottages were built in the beginning of the 2000s. During the last few years the company has started to renovate the cottages to meet the modern needs. This improves the attractiveness of the cottages and lures customers to visit again. Each cottage has kitchenware, bed linen, towels, television, microwave oven and fridge. (Santalahti d.) In the camping area, there are three service buildings. The service buildings have showers, toilets, kitchen, a TV-room, a playroom, clothing care room, chemical toilet discharge room and dishwashing rooms. In the camping area there is also a barbecue shelter, a car washing place and a playground for children. (Santalahti f.)

The conference and recreation services include a Lounge with a fireplace, Meeting cabinet Luppi, a Lappish shelter and a cave sauna world. The Lounge is designed for 30 people. It includes projectors, TV, screen, internet connection, refrigerator and flip chart. The meeting cabinet Luppi is designed for up to 16 people. The cabinet is equipped with all necessary meeting equipment. The Lappish shelter has seating for up to 30 people. It has a fireplace and barbecue equipment. (Santalahti 2015a.) The cave sauna world is recommended for groups of about 20 people. A cave sauna, heated pool, changing room and a terrace are included in the cave sauna world. (Santalahti 2015b.)

### **11.3 Place**

Santalahti Holiday Resort has an ideal location. It is right by the sea, five kilometers from Kotka town center. It is easy to find, since there are Santalahti signposts on the roadside. The distance between Helsinki and Santalahti Holiday Resort is 135 kilometers and it takes about one and a half hours to drive from Helsinki to Kotka (Santalahti g). A new highway was recently built between Helsinki and Kotka, which means that it is easy and fast to drive. This is why business travelers from Helsinki are one of the target groups of Santalahti Holiday Resort.

Another target group is Russian tourist. The distance between St. Petersburg and Kotka is about 275 kilometers (Santalahti g). The nearest border crossing to Kotka from Russia to Finland is Vaalimaa. The distance from Vaalimaa to Kotka

is about 70 kilometers. These distances show that it does not take a very long time for the tourists or business travelers from distant regions, such as Helsinki or St. Petersburg to visit Santalahti Holiday Resort.

In addition to the Santalahti Holiday Resort reception, the guests can reserve cottages and villas on Santalahti webpage. Customers can also make requests for ready-made sauna or conference packages on the webpage. Caravan places and other services can be reserved by phone or from the reception. The webpage is well designed for doing online reservations. When reserving cottages or villas on the webpage, customers can see the availability right away, which makes the reservation process easier and faster.

#### **11.4 Promotion**

Santalahti Holiday Resort uses different advertising channels, such as their own website and Facebook, Southeast135 and SF Caravan –magazine. The Santalahti website is the biggest information source for customers. All information about accommodation, additional services and offers can be found on the website. The website also has a mobile version, thus it is easy to access the website anywhere and see if there are any available cottages. One goal is to get more people to visit the website to increase awareness and to promote Santalahti Holiday Resort more in social media, especially in Facebook and Instagram.

Santalahti Holiday Resort has some brochures, which contain a map of the area, contact information and webpage address. The brochures are in Finnish, English and Russian. The Russian language brochures have been occasionally distributed at the Vaalimaa border for Russian tourists. All brochures can also be found at the Santalahti reception. So far, the brochures are designed only for tourists, but in the future, it would be better to have brochures and flyers for both tourist and businesses.

Southeast135 promotes towns in southeast Finland; Pyhtää, Kotka, Hamina, Virolahti and Miehikkälä. The website gathers all the events, activities, accommodation and services in the area. Santalahti Holiday Resort is part of this website,

since it is located in Kotka. Southeast135 takes care of the southeast area's marketing to Russia. Santalahti Holiday Resort does not do their own marketing to Russia, since they are a part of Southeast135.

SF Caravan is a caravanners' association, which offers information about all the caravan areas in Finland and some abroad. They have a website and an annually published magazine. Santalahti Holiday Resort is promoted in both the website and the magazine. It is important to ensure visibility and buy an advertising space from the magazine.

Usually companies use a promotion mix in marketing. The promotion mix includes advertising, personal selling, publicity and all forms of sales promotion. Currently Santalahti Holiday Resort buys advertising space from Southeast135 website and brochures and from SF Caravan magazine. Santalahti Holiday Resort also has a pop-up ad space in Camping.fi site. Personal selling is done by the employees in the reception. The employees can sell everything from accommodation to rental skis or a cup of coffee. Santalahti Holiday resort should encourage their employees to promote and sell the additional services more to the customers when they come to the reception. The company should try to increase their brand awareness in several different media sources to get more publicity. Now the publicity comes mainly from the media that is focused on caravanning.

Santalahti Holiday Resort has a special offers section on their website. At the end of March they had two camping offers for Easter and Labour Day and a lowest price guarantee on their own website. The price guarantee means that if customers find the same accommodation with a lower price from another website, Santalahti will refund the difference tenfold. All the special offers are published in the website and newsletters. Website visitors can order the newsletter to their e-mail from the website. The newsletter contains information about special offers and current events and news related to Santalahti Holiday Resort and Kotka.

### **11.5 People**

Company's employees have an important role in making a good first impression about the company and creating customer satisfaction. In Santalahti Holiday Resort, a few employees work all year round. In the summertime, there are many

seasonal workers, since summer is the busiest time in the Holiday Resort. When the seasonal workers come, it is important to organize a comprehensive orientation to ensure that the employees handle the customer service situations in an appropriate and pleasant way.

One purpose of the marketing plan is to increase the number of business travelers. When Santalahti Holiday Resort succeeds in this goal, it is important to continue and improve the co-operation with the companies. When the co-operation has been achieved, the contact persons should stay the same to ensure better customer service and relationship.

### 11.6 Process

There are many ways for customers to reserve and use Santalahti's services. Figure 6 shows one way how the process proceeds. As stated in chapter 11.2, customers can reserve cottages and villas from Santalahti website, by phone or in the reception. When customers reserve a cottage online, they have to pay it right away. For the company, it is better that the customer must pay at time of booking. In this case, the company does not make loss if the customer does not appear. After making the reservation, the customer can arrive to Santalahti Holiday Resort and enjoy the stay. The customer might want some additional services, such as sauna or rental bicycles. These can be bought from the reception. After the stay is over, the customer does not have to take care of the final cleaning, since it is included in the price.

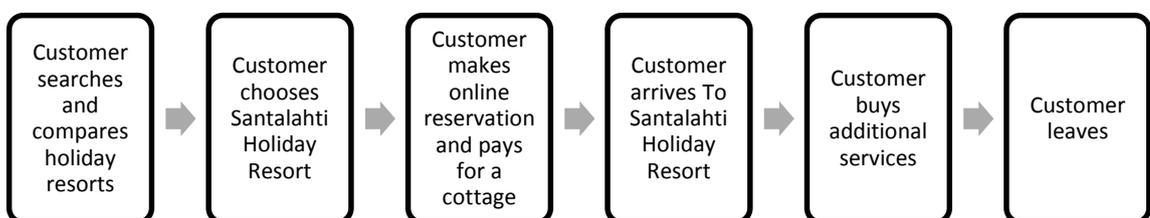


Figure 6. Service process.

In general, all service processes work well in Santalahti Holiday Resort. As an example, the checkout is at 12 am and check-in is at 3 pm. This gives the cleaning staff three hours to clean all the necessary cottages. This way it can be ensured that the cottages are clean and ready for the next customers.

### **11.7 Physical environment**

It is important to have an appealing physical environment, in order for the customers to feel like they want to visit Santalahti Holiday Resort. The reception, cottages, common areas and the surrounding are the main physical environment components on the premises. This is why the company has renewed and modernized different buildings and premises in the area. They also have strict rules about how tidy the area should be. This has a positive impact on the customers' opinion of Santalahti Holiday Resort.

Another component is the Santalahti website. The company owners have spent a lot of time in designing and improving the Santalahti website. A professional photographer was hired to take beautiful and appealing pictures of the whole area. Visually attractive pictures lure customers to reserve a holiday or business trip from Santalahti Holiday Resort. These pictures should be promoted more in the company's Facebook and Instagram profiles to increase customers' knowledge about Santalahti's high quality services.

## **12 Santalahti Holiday Resort in Social media**

Nowadays, social media is an important marketing channel. So far, Santalahti Holiday Resort has put a lot of effort in improving the company's website, but the Facebook profile has not been paid attention to as much. Before now, the company did not have an Instagram account. The Instagram account was created after the writers of this study had their first meeting with the company owners. The benefits of having an Instagram account were brought up by the writers of this study. There are two goals related to the social media. First goal is to make the Facebook and Instagram accounts more appealing and have them updated

more frequently. The second goal is to get more likes and followers to both accounts and thus increase awareness among possible customers. Both accounts will also be used for marketing purposes.

### **12.1 Santalahti Facebook**

The Santalahti Facebook profile was established in 2012. The Facebook page offers some basic information and pictures about the company. So far, the company has published newsletters and pictures of some events held in Santalahti. They also have a link to TripAdvisor review about Santalahti Holiday Resort. TripAdvisor is the largest travel site in the world. People can post and read reviews about different places, such as hotels or restaurants. (TripAdvisor 2015.) Many people rely on the other travelers' reviews in TripAdvisor, thus it is good that Santalahti Holiday Resort has the link in their Facebook profile. These days the company owners are taking care of updating and posting text and pictures to the company's Facebook profile.

### **12.2 Santalahti Instagram**

The Santalahti Holiday Resort Instagram account was established in the spring of 2015, after the writers of this thesis had suggested it in a meeting with the company owners. The goal is to get more followers and post pictures continually. Since the pictures can be shared directly from Instagram to Facebook, Santalahti Holiday Resort does not have to take separate pictures for Facebook. By sharing the Instagram pictures to Facebook, the company might get more visibility and Instagram followers through Facebook. Since the company's Instagram profile was established, the company owners have been the ones to update it.

## **13 Marketing plan for Santalahti Holiday Resort**

This marketing plan explains the Santalahti Holiday Resort's current market situation, opportunities and threats, objectives, and ways to achieve the objectives. This allows the company to create a strategy that helps the business to achieve

its objectives. The company owners' opinions have been taken into account when creating this marketing plan.

### **13.1 Current marketing situation**

This part describes the current marketing situation of Santalahti Holiday Resort. It includes recession and ruble crisis, competitors, target market, financial development and macro environment. This part provides an overview of where the company stands and which factors might affect the company.

#### **13.1.1 Recession and Ruble crisis**

Currently the Finnish economy growth is weaker than in the whole Finnish economic history since the 1860s (Lassila 2015). According to the Ministry of Finance's forecast, this year Finland's gross domestic product (GDP) change is positive for the first time in years. In 2013, the GDP change was -1.3 percent and -0.1 percent in 2014. In 2015, Finland's total production is expected to grow by 0.5 percent and 1.4 percent in 2016. (Pelkonen 2015.) According to the Labour Institute forecast, the Finnish GDP will grow in 2015 by 0.8 percent and 1.6 percent in 2016. The forecast has been lowered this year by 0.2 percentage points, due to the expected decline in Finnish exports to Russia. (Sajari 2015.)

The price of oil and the value of the ruble have gone almost hand in hand. The ruble collapsed when the price of oil fell sharply and has since been revived with the price of oil. (MTV 2015.) Russia's middle class has traveled extensively abroad, including Finland. After the collapse of the ruble, travelling has become significantly more expensive, and the goods and services in the destination country have become more expensive. (Helsingin Sanomat 2014.) In 2014, the Russians made 4.8 million trips to Finland. Travelling to Finland decreased by 13 percent from 2013, when the total number of trips was 5.5 million. (Visit Finland 2015.) The bookings and payments of trips are also made later than before. In 2014, the trips were reserved an average of 10 to 12 weeks before departure. In 2015, the reservations are made 4 to 6 weeks before travelling. (Visit Finland 2015.) As can be seen from Table 3, the border crossing from Russia to southeast Finland has decreased significantly when comparing December 2013 and December 2014.

<b>Border</b>	<b>December 2013</b>	<b>December 2014</b>	<b>Change 13/14 %</b>
<b>Vainikkala</b>	50 401	31 861	-37%
<b>Imatra</b>	213 418	133 072	-38%
<b>Nuijamaa</b>	284 752	161 425	-43%
<b>Vaalimaa</b>	275 503	190 476	-31%

Table 3. Border crossings from Russia to the southeast Finland (Leisti 2015).

The ruble crisis has an effect on Santalahti Holiday Resort, since fewer Russians are travelling to Finland and using the services. The number of Russian tourists visiting Santalahti Holiday Resort has decreased by 10 percent from 2013 to 2014. (Halles-Markkola 2015.) Due to the ruble crisis, Russians prefer domestic travelling and cheap travel destinations (Visit Finland 2015). Finland is considered as a quite expensive country, thus Russians cannot afford to travel to Finland. Due to this, Santalahti Holiday Resort should promote their services more in Russia and try to attract Russian tourists to visit Santalahti Holiday Resort.

Like Russians, also Finns prefer domestic travelling during recession, since it is less expensive. This can be seen in Santalahti Holiday Resort as a 15 percent increase in the amount of domestic tourists from 2013 to 2014 (Halles-Markkola 2015). Santalahti Holiday Resort should take advantage of this situation and promote more in the Finnish market.

### **13.1.2 Competitors of Santalahti Holiday Resort**

In Kotka, the tourists can choose from a variety of accommodation types and price categories. There are hotels, villas, apartments, motels and cottages available for renting in the area. According to Discovering Finland website, the most popular accommodation places are Sokos Hotel Seurahuone, Hotel Merikotka, Hotel Cumulus Kotka and Santalahti Holiday Resort. The three hotels mentioned

above can be considered as the main competitors of Santalahti Holiday Resort, when it comes to accommodation in Kotka, although their main target groups are different to some extent. The hotels' target groups are mainly short time overnight guests, such as business travelers or weekend visitors. The target group of Santalahti Holiday Resort are mainly holiday travelers. Santalahti's share of Kotka's accommodation is approximately 30 percent (Halles-Markkola 2015).

There are approximately 130 caravan areas in Finland (Suomen Leirintäalueyhdistys ry 2015). All the caravan areas can be considered as competitors to Santalahti Holiday Resort, since they all have the same target group. In addition to Santalahti Holiday Resort, there are four five star holiday resorts in Finland; Poroholma in Rauma, Rastila in Helsinki, Rauhalampi in Kuopio and Manamansalo in Oulunjärvi (Keränen 2014). These can be considered as potential competitors when it comes to people who are looking for high quality camping areas. The SF-Caravan association nominates each year the Caravan areas of the year by member votes. Ruissalo Camping, located in Turku, and SFC-Rantasarka, located in Oulu were ranked the best camping areas of 2014. (SF-Caravan ry 2015.) Although these areas are located in western Finland, they are still a threat to Santalahti Holiday Resort, since people will likely want to visit the awarded caravan areas.

In general, all accommodation services are competitors to Santalahti Holiday Resort, but the main competitors are the ones that offer similar services of the same quality. One holiday resort similar to Santalahti, is the Poroholma Holiday Resort, located in Rauma. Poroholma offers high-quality accommodation, such as cottages, caravan area and port services. Poroholma also has many additional services, such as restaurant services, sauna, Wake Park, karaoke and a movie theater.(Poroholma.) Poroholma Holiday Resort has succeeded in Facebook marketing better than Santalahti Holiday Resort. Both Facebook profiles were established in the beginning of 2012, but so far Poroholma has about 2000 more likes than Santalahti. One reason for this might be that Poroholma is more active in publishing posts in their profile.

When it comes to making reservations in hotels, caravan areas and holiday resorts, the reservation process is usually quite similar. Hotel rooms and holiday

resort cottages and villas can be reserved from the company's website, by phone or on the premises. Caravan places can be reserved by phone or on the premises. If most of the accommodation is reserved in the same way, it is hard to gain competitive advantage through the booking system.

### **13.1.3 Target market**

The main target groups of Santalahti Holiday Resort are caravaners and holiday travelers. A smaller target group includes business travelers. Finland is the main target market, but Santalahti Holiday Resort is continually putting more effort in marketing in Russia. Originally, Santalahti Holiday Resort was just a caravan area, but over time, the company has expanded their operations and services by building cottages and villas and adding additional services, such as minigolf and a café. Due to this, in addition to the caravaners, the target group also started to include holiday travelers.

In 2009, Santalahti Holiday Resort started to focus also on business travelers by building conference rooms. Currently, some businesses are using the conference packages, but the awareness of the conference services should be increased among businesses. Since Kotka is quite near Helsinki and St. Petersburg, the business travelers from those cities should be encouraged to visit Santalahti Holiday Resort. Since the amount of Russian tourists in Finland has increased in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they have become one of the target groups of Santalahti Holiday Resort.

### **13.1.4 Financial development**

In 2009, the turnover of Santalahti Holiday Resort was EUR 756,446.54. By 2013, the turnover had grown by over half a million, when the turnover was EUR 1,286,439.73. The increase in turnover shows that the company has grown since 2009 and each year more customers visit Santalahti Holiday Resort.

Figure 7 shows the development of the net profits between years 2009 and 2013. In 2009 the net profit was EUR 51,374.74 (Santalahti 2009). The highest peak was in 2010, when the net profit was EUR 88,233.34 (Santalahti 2010). The lowest point was in 2011, when the net profit was EUR 4,919.30. In 2011, a lot of

investments, such as new cottages, villas and improvements, were made, which affected the net profit. (Santalahti 2011.) Depreciations for the period were twice as much as in 2010. After 2011 the net profit started to grow and in 2012 the net profit was EUR 34,616.51 (Santalahti 2012). In 2013 the net profit was EUR 66,005.34 (Santalahti 2013).

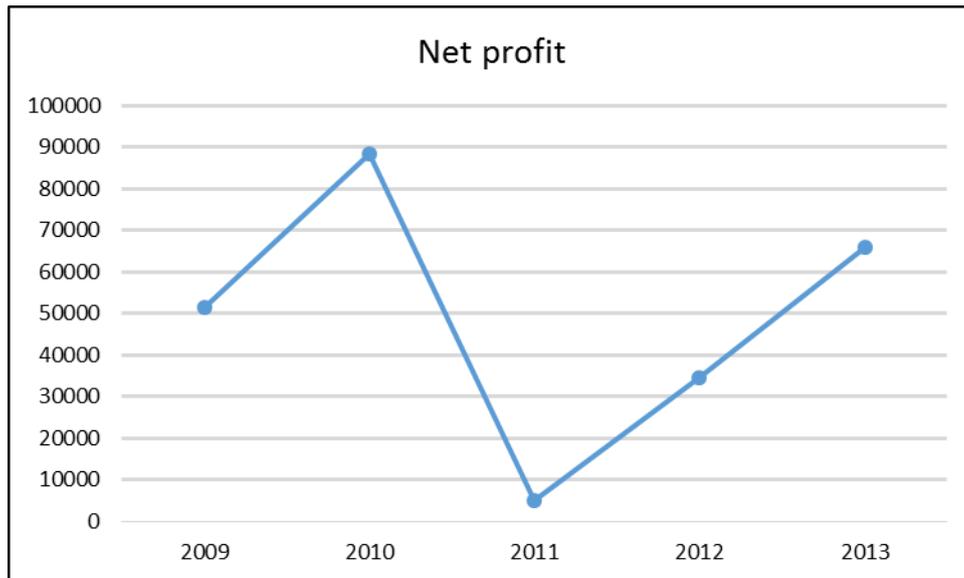


Figure 7. Net profit of Santalahti Holiday Resort 2009-2013. (Santalahti 2009-2013)

### 13.1.5 Macro environment

With the macro environment analysis, a company can clarify large-scale business trends, which affect the company's business. At this time, the political field in Finland does not have any processing matters that might influence a company's operations. The Finnish parliamentary elections were held in the spring of 2015. After this, issues that affect entrepreneurs' activities either positively or negatively are handled in the parliament. As an example, the increase or decrease in the corporate tax might have a positive or negative effect in Santalahti Holiday Resort. The decisions of the European parliament might also have an effect on the member countries' affairs.

The economic situation in the European Union has been in an economic downturn many years, but it has been projected to increase 1,7 percent in 2015 (European Commission 2015). If the economy starts to grow, it will positively affect on people's buying behavior and increase traveling. This might also have a positive impact on the amount of visitors in Santalahti Holiday Resort. In Santalahti Holiday Resorts, the social, demographic and cultural factors, such as age distribution, level of education and social classes do not have an impact. The company treats all customers equally, regardless of age or nationality.

### 13.2 Opportunity and issue analysis

It is important that companies identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to be able to analyze and develop their business. The SWOT analysis is done according to the opinions of the writers of this study. In the interview with the owners of the company, the SWOT analysis was not discussed.

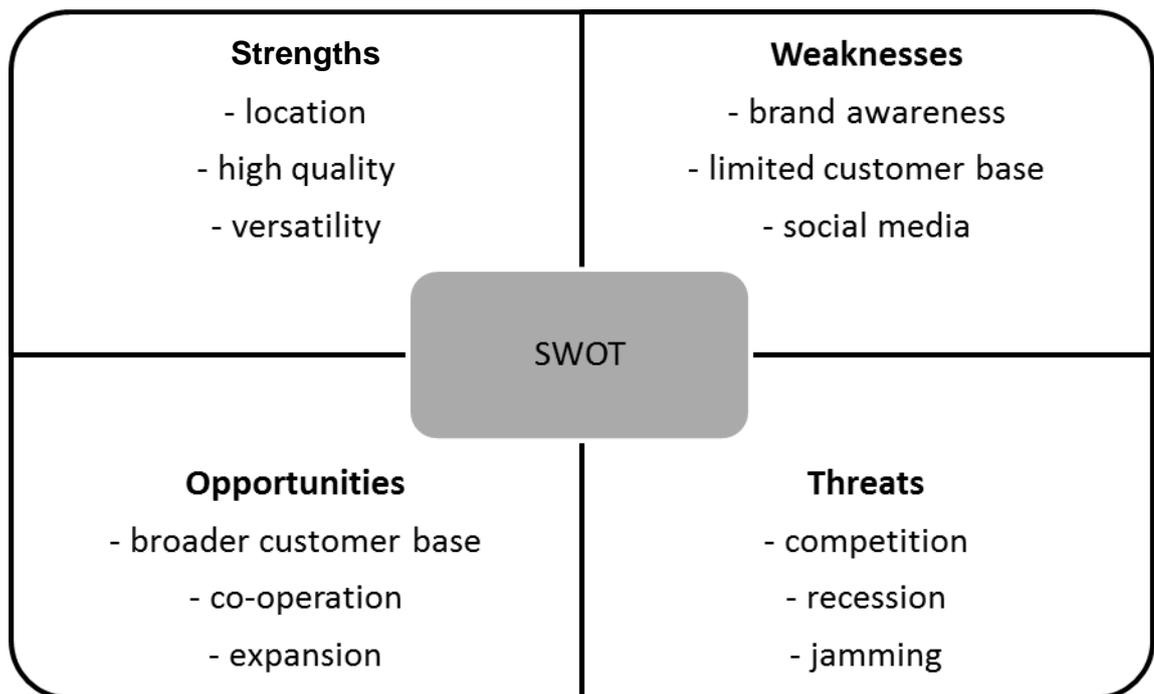


Figure 8. SWOT of Santalahti Holiday Resort.

### **13.2.1 Strengths**

Santalahti Holiday Resort has several strengths, such as good location, high quality services, versatility and ability to react quickly to changes. Since Santalahti Holiday Resort is located in Kotka in southeast Finland, it is near both Helsinki and St. Petersburg. These cities are the main target market to get more business travelers. Russians are also the second largest tourist group of Santalahti Holiday Resort, after Finns. Santalahti Holiday Resort is located right by the sea, and near Kotka town center.

Since Santalahti Holiday Resort has a five star rating, they offer high quality services. The company has continually renewed their facilities to ensure the high quality level and customer satisfaction. With good customer service and quality, Santalahti Holiday Resort can ensure customer satisfaction and customers' desire to visit Santalahti again.

Another thing that affects customer satisfaction is the versatility of the services. Santalahti Holiday Resort offers a number of different services in addition to accommodation, such as café, bicycle and ski renting, catering and free morning saunas. Since Santalahti Holiday Resort is a small family owned company, the owners are able to react to quick changes, such as updating their website and social media. Due to this, the company can also lower their prices quickly, if there is a low period.

### **13.2.2 Weaknesses**

As was discussed in chapter 11.2, the Santalahti brand is quite unknown outside of Kotka, which is one of the main weaknesses of Santalahti Holiday Resort. Due to the low brand awareness, the customer base is also quite limited. Limited customer base means that the same customers are using Santalahti's services, and the number of new customers is limited. As an example, mainly certain companies use the conference and recreation services in Santalahti Holiday Resort. These weaknesses can be improved by developing and enhancing promotion.

Another weakness of Santalahti Holiday Resort is the low use of social media. Previously, the company had only a Facebook profile, which was updated infrequently. The company has identified themselves their usage of social media as a weakness, which is why they have started to increase the activity in Facebook and set up an Instagram account. With social media, the company is able to increase the brand awareness and the number of customers. All the weaknesses of Santalahti Holiday Resort can be developed and turned into strengths.

### **13.2.3 Opportunities**

Santalahti Holiday Resort has many opportunities to improve their results. Firstly, the company has a possibility to broaden their customer base by attracting new customers to visit Santalahti Holiday Resort. The company has an opportunity to get more tourists from both Finland and Russia. The company has also all the prerequisites to increase the number of business travelers, as the conference facilities are in good condition.

So far, Santalahti Holiday Resort has not made use of cooperation between companies. Santalahti Holiday Resort could cooperate with local tourist attraction companies, such as the Maritime Centre Vellamo, to get more visibility and potential new customers. Another cooperation opportunity is to create partnerships with companies, which could use the conference and recreation services of Santalahti Holiday Resort. This might increase companies' usage of the conference facilities.

Santalahti Holiday Resort has expanded a lot in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The company still has construction permission on their property, thus they could expand more in the future. The company could either build more of the cottages they already have, or design completely new accommodation buildings. Santalahti Holiday Resort offers multiple different services, but they could create more service by following modern trends and thus maintain a competitive edge.

### **13.2.4 Threats**

Santalahti has been one of the forerunners in the camping business in Finland. The company should maintain their high position, since the competition is rough

and the tourism industry has many challengers. As was discussed in chapter 13.1.2, Santalahti has many competitors in different business areas, therefore it is important to develop and improve the competitive position.

Recession can be seen as a threat to most businesses, especially tourism companies, including Santalahti Holiday Resort. During recession, the money expenditure of individuals and companies decreases. Due to this, the amount of travelers decreases as well. During an economic downturn the number of domestic travelers might increase in Finland, since people want save in traveling costs. If the recession deepens, even domestic traveling will decrease.

In a tourism company, it is important to continually develop and modernize the facilities and services in order to stay appealing and up to date. Jamming means that a company is in standstill and does not renew its services and facilities. Jamming may occur without a company noticing it. It can be hard for the company to reach the competitors after a long standstill. So far, Santalahti Holiday Resort has continuously developed their company, but the company should keep developing also in the future.

### **13.3 Objectives**

The objectives of this marketing plan can be set based on what was discussed in the current marketing situation and opportunity and issue analysis. The main objective of Santalahti Holiday Resort is to attract more new customers. An ideal growth rate of all customers would be five to ten percent in a year. The ten percent growth target is ambitious but reachable with the right actions.

Both tourists and business travelers are included in the customer base of Santalahti Holiday Resort. The main tourists groups come from Finland and Russia. The target is to increase the amount of Finnish and Russian tourists visiting Santalahti, rather than increasing the number of other nationalities. The target growth rate for tourists is about eight percent in a year. Especially in the winter season, it would be possible to get more customers, since during winter season the occupancy is smaller.

So far, there has not been that many businesses using the conference and recreation services of Santalahti Holiday Resort. Due to this, there is a great opportunity to increase the amount of business travelers. The aim is to get more business travelers from both Finland and Russia. Since the amount of business travelers has been exiguous, the target growth rate can be set as high as 100 percent. The goal is to get new business travelers, as well as get the previous customers to return to Santalahti Holiday Resort.

One way to expand the customer base is to enhance the use of social media. Due to this, one of the targets is to modernize the company's marketing through social media. For a tourism company, the two most useful social media platforms are Facebook and Instagram. The goal is to increase the company's activity in both Facebook and Instagram and get more likes and followers. The aim for Facebook likes is 3000 more likes. In Instagram, the company should try to get at least 500 followers.

#### **13.4 Marketing strategy**

After the objectives are set, it is possible to create the strategies to achieve those objectives. The strategy in this study is mainly designed to be executed from 2016 to 2017. Some actions and preparations, such as social media, can be initiated already in the summer of 2015. The implementation period of the strategy was chosen to be one calendar year, since then it is easier for the company to measure the results. The fiscal year of the company is also one calendar year.

The main objective is to increase the amount of customers by five to ten percent in a year. The customers are divided into three different target groups, which are Finnish tourists, Russian tourists and business travelers from Finland and Russia. A distinct strategy will be created for all three target groups. In addition to the customer strategies, a separate strategy will be created for the selected social media parts.

##### **13.4.1 Finnish tourists**

As the facilities of Santalahti Holiday Resort are in good condition and the quality is high, the only way to get more Finnish tourists and add brand awareness is

promotion. Even though the company is being advertised in some marketing channels, such as southeast 135 and SF Caravan, it is necessary to put more effort in advertising to achieve the goal of eight percent increase in the total amount of tourists. Santalahti Holiday Resort should continue advertising in the previous marketing channels and start using new ones.

Santalahti Holiday Resort should take part in different travel fairs in Finland. People go to travel fairs to find and learn about new travel destinations. These fairs give Santalahti Holiday Resort a chance to find new customers and increase visibility and brand awareness. In addition to the travel fairs, Santalahti Holiday Resort should take part in Finnish caravan fairs. Since caravaners are a big part of the company's customers, it is important to be seen at the caravan fairs.

Santalahti Holiday Resort should consider having different offer campaigns. Various offers and discounts are a good way to attract customers to visit the company. Having special offers can generate profit for the company, since customers using services with lower prices is better than not using the services at all.

Santalahti Holiday Resort could start strategic cooperation with companies located in Kotka area. Cooperating with other businesses can create certain benefits for Santalahti Holiday Resort. As an example, the cooperation could generate a small profit, expand the offerings and increase visibility.

Santalahti Holiday Resort should advertise in different travel magazines. The travel magazines are distributed all over Finland, and most of them are available in the Internet. This could increase brand awareness outside of Kotka area. Although most Kotka citizen are aware of Santalahti Holiday Resort, they might not know all the services that Santalahti Holiday Resort offers.

#### **13.4.2 Russian tourists**

Since Russian tourists are one of the target groups of Santalahti Holiday Resort, the company should do more marketing in Russia. The company should continue working with Southeast135, but they should also consider doing marketing in Russia more independently. This way the marketing can be done in the company's own way, and they would stand out better from other companies.

Santalahti Holiday Resort should also take part in tourism fairs in St. Petersburg either independently or with Southeast135. The fairs provide a great opportunity for Santalahti Holiday Resort to get more visibility and awareness in Russia. This could increase the amount of Russian tourists in Santalahti Holiday Resort. The company should also promote their services in the border crossing stations, travel magazines and some reasonable places in St. Petersburg.

#### **13.4.3 Business travelers**

Santalahti Holiday Resort has high quality conference rooms and recreation possibilities. The company offers ready-made conference packages, which can be modified according to the customer's needs. So far, the usage of these services has been quite low, thus it is important to get more companies to use these services. Both Finnish and Russian business travelers are included in the same strategy. Santalahti Holiday Resort should start cooperation with potential companies that could use the conference and recreation services. This way Santalahti Holiday Resort would get new customers and increase the usage of the conference and recreation services.

#### **13.4.4 Facebook**

Santalahti Holiday Resort needs its own strategy for Facebook. Facebook has become an important marketing channel for companies, therefore Santalahti Holiday Resort needs a specific plan to take advantage of the opportunities Facebook offers. Santalahti Holiday Resort has to increase activity in Facebook to get more likes and awareness.

#### **13.4.5 Instagram**

Like Facebook, also Instagram can be used for marketing purposes. Due to this, Santalahti Holiday Resort should focus on improving their Instagram usage, to get more followers and visibility. Since Santalahti Holiday Resort is new in using Instagram, they still have a lot of room for improvements.

### **13.4.6 Blog**

The owners of Santalahti Holiday Resort have thought about adding a blog on the company's website. When establishing a blog, it is important to have an idea what the content of the blog might include, in order to avoid having an incoherent blog. The company should start a corporation blog on their website. The aim would be to post something interesting in the blog at least once a month.

### **13.5 Action programs**

This part describes how the strategies will be implemented in Santalahti Holiday Resort. All the ideas mentioned in the marketing plan are just suggestions for the case company, since the decision making and implementation is the company's responsibility. The main implementation period for the strategies is from 2016 to 2017, since planning takes time. Some strategies, such as social media, can be implemented already in 2015.

#### **13.5.1 Finnish tourists**

Since marketing has been the responsibility of the owners of Santalahti Holiday Resort, the owners could be in charge of the marketing for Finnish tourists. The marketing strategies can be refined during the autumn season of 2015. Especially the advertising materials should be designed in advance. Once the strategy is ready, the implementation can start gradually in the beginning of 2016. The owners should continuously follow the booking situation. When the booking situation seems low, the owners should respond quickly and put out special offers to attract more customers.

The company can improve their special offers in many ways to get more customers. In addition to the public holiday offers, the company could have special prices for low periods, such as weekend offers. For Finnish tourists the most suitable offers would be weekend offers and quick offers, since it is easy for Finnish tourist to travel fast and without planning to Santalahti Holiday Resort. Due to this, special offers on public holidays are a good way to influence Finns.

Preparations for the travel and caravan fairs should begin well in advance. The Nordic Travel Fair and the Caravan Fair are held in Helsinki at the end of January

2016 (Suomen Messut ). The stand should be reserved already in the summer of 2015. The company should consider hiring employees to represent Santalahti Holiday Resort at the fairs

Santalahti Holiday Resort could distribute flyers about their company at the fairs. In addition to basic company information and pictures, the flyers could contain special offers, such as discount campaign codes. The campaign codes can be used while making a reservation. The brochures and flyers for Finnish tourists should be designed and printed by the end of 2015, in order to have the advertising material ready for 2016. Santalahti Holiday Resort should design at least three different kinds of flyers; for general use, travel fairs and caravan fairs. The company can design the brochures by themselves and use an advertising agency if necessary. The general and travel fair brochures should include information about the company, accommodation services and additional services. Some price examples could be mentioned. The only difference between the general and travel fair brochures would be that the travel fair brochures should have some kind of offer, such as a campaign code. The caravan fair brochures should contain information about the caravan services in Santalahti Holiday Resort. These brochures could also have a campaign code for special discounts.

Santalahti Holiday Resort is located right next to Kotka Golf Center, therefore the company could cooperate with Kotka Golf Center by selling accommodation together with golf packages. Another option would be to cooperate with different event organizers, such as Kotka Maritime Festival, to sell package deals. The packages could include accommodation and different event tickets. Santalahti Holiday Resort could also consider selling tickets to various tourist attractions, such as underwater world Maretarium or Maritime center Vellamo.

The cooperation with local companies could be handled by the company owners or a regular employee. The cooperation should be pursued regularly to ensure that the cooperation would continue. Santalahti Holiday Resort should approach the local companies and event organizers in the beginning of 2016, since the most suitable time for the cooperation would be the summertime. As an example, if the company chooses to cooperate with the Maritime Festival in the summer of

2016, they should approach the organizer latest by the end of 2015, since the ticket sales start in the beginning of April 2016.

Special services, such as the cave sauna and festivity packages, should be promoted more in the Kotka area. For the locals, Santalahti Holiday Resort could be promoted through local newspapers; *Kymen sanomat* and city magazine *Ankkuri*. The company could also put flyers in the notice boards in the city center. The easiest, cheapest and fastest way to promote Santalahti Holiday Resort for Finnish tourist is through social media. The most suitable time for newspaper advertisements would be during the summer. In the summertime, many locals might get ideas for spending their evenings and spare time if they see an advertisements of different services in Santalahti Holiday Resort, such as saunas or the terrace. The advertisement could be designed already in the spring, in order to avoid haste in the summertime. Another suitable time for newspaper advertisements would be before Christmas time, if people are seeking a place where to organize a Christmas party.

### **13.5.2 Russian tourists**

One way to increase awareness in Russia is to take brochures to the House of Finland located in St. Petersburg. The House of Finland is the Finnish culture, science and industry concentration. It is also a meeting place for interaction between Finland and Russia. (*Suomi-talo*.) The brochures should include basic company information, web address, pictures, a list of accommodation types and prices. The brochures and flyers for Russian tourists should be designed at the same time as the brochures in Finnish language, to ensure that they are ready to be distributed to the borders and the House of Finland in 2016.

As well as at Finnish fairs, Santalahti Holiday Resort could distribute flyers with special offers at the Russian fairs. This might lure Russian tourists to visit Santalahti Holiday Resort more eagerly. The St. Petersburg Tourism Forum is held in October 2015 (*Tourist Guide of Greece*). Brochures in Russian language should also be distributed to Vaalimaa, Nuijamaa and Imatra borders, since Russian tourists might cross the border in any of these three borders, no matter where they are planning to go in Finland. Santalahti Holiday Resort could arrange a few

days in the spring of 2016 that some staff members would be at the borders and distribute the brochures to Russian tourists.

Santalahti Holiday Resort should consider advertising in Fintourist magazine and website. Fintourist magazine and Fintourist.fi website reach tens of thousands of Russians every week and provide them with good quality, strong expertise and professionally produced content about towns, accommodation, recreation opportunities and current events (Kaakon Viestintä Oy 2015a). The magazine is distributed in the border stations, St. Petersburg and in over 100 places in Finland (Kaakon Viestintä Oy 2015b). Santalahti Holiday Resort should also promote their services more in their VKontakte account.

The Fintourist magazine appears five times a year, in February, April, June, September and December (Kaakon Viestintä Oy 2015b). Most suitable times for Santalahti Holiday Resort to put an advertisement in the magazine would be in April and December, since Russians usually travel the most during the summer and January. The owner of Santalahti Holiday Resort are responsible for buying the advertisement space if the company decides to pursue this strategy.

### **13.5.3 Business travelers**

Santalahti Holiday Resort should approach possible customer companies to get their attention and arouse interest to use the conference rooms. Companies can arrange different events in Santalahti Holiday Resort, such as Christmas parties or workplace health promotion days. Santalahti Holiday Resort could develop a brochure intended for businesses only. The brochure could include information about the company, services, prices and conference packages. The brochures could be sent by e-mail or by post to the executive secretaries of different companies.

The brochures for businesses should be designed at the same time as the brochures for Finnish and Russian tourists, since it is more economical to print all the brochures at the same time. This way Santalahti Holiday Resort can start approaching possible customer companies in the beginning of 2016. Either one of the company owners or a regular employee could be the contact person be-

tween Santalahti Holiday Resort and the customer companies. The contact person would be in charge of approaching the Finnish and Russian companies and keeping up the partnerships.

For the local companies, the conference and recreation services of Santalahti Holiday Resort could be advertised in the local newspapers. For the Russian companies, the services could be advertised by brochures in the House of Finland in St. Petersburg. When marketing to companies located in southern Finland, such as in Helsinki, it would be wise to mention the new highway between Helsinki and Kotka. The new highway enables quick and easy traveling between the two towns. Furthermore, Santalahti Holiday Resort should promote the accommodation services for the companies located outside of Kotka area. Santalahti Holiday Resort should try to create a long-lasting and profitable business relationship to ensure that the companies return to use the services again and might recommend the services to other companies.

Santalahti Holiday Resort could advertise the conference and recreation services in the local newspapers throughout the year, but especially in the beginning and at the end of the year. In the beginning of the year companies usually have a lot of annual general meetings and at the end of the year is the Christmas party season. The owners of Santalahti Holiday Resort could be in charge of the newspaper advertisements, since they are the decision makers when it comes to advertisements.

#### **13.5.4 Social media**

Since the social media parts do not require a lot of planning, Santalahti Holiday Resort can start improving their social media usage already in the summer of 2015. So far, the company owners have been in charge of updating their social media, but in the summertime they can authorize one of the summer employees to update the Facebook and Instagram accounts. The blog could also be started in the summer of 2015, and one of the employees could be in charge of it. The employee in charge of the social media should be able to speak and write in English language, since the updated should be both in Finnish and English languages.

### **13.5.5 Facebook**

There are many improvements Santalahti Holiday Resort could do to improve their Facebook profile. Firstly, the company should add the opening hours of the reception to the front page in their Facebook profile. Secondly, the company should add posts in both Finnish and English, so that foreign customers could also understand them. Combining Finnish and English language into one profile is more beneficial than establishing a new profile for English language posts. The company should also have the profile name in both Finnish and English to ensure that all tourists can find the profile in Facebook.

Thirdly, the profile should be updated more often. This can be done by posting more pictures, happenings and special offers. The special offers can now be found at Santalahti website and in their newsletters, but it would be convenient for the customers if the offers were posted in Facebook. This would make it easier for the customers to find out about the offers.

Fourthly, to increase the activity of Santalahti Facebook profile, the company could launch a monthly customer interview. Each month one customer/group would be interviewed about their experience in Santalahti Holiday Resort, and the interview would be posted in Facebook. Customers rely on peer evaluations, thus having positive customer experiences posted in Facebook could increase the awareness and interest in Santalahti Holiday Resort. The monthly customer interviews can start already in June 2015.

Fifthly, Santalahti Holiday Resort should consider buying advertisement space in Facebook. The ad contains a picture, some text and a link to the website (Facebook 2015b). This way potential customers could spot Santalahti Holiday Resort in Facebook and visit their website.

Finally, Santalahti Holiday Resort should try to increase the number of Facebook likes. This could be achieved by having a "Like us in Facebook" sign in the reception. The sign should be put up in the reception before the summer holiday season starts. The Facebook link in the Santalahti website could be changed to a "like us" link and make it more visible. People can also be encouraged to like

Santalahti Holiday Resort in Facebook by having small inducements. As an example when the company gets 2000 likes in Facebook, they will raffle a price or prices among the likers. This competition could be organized in the summer of 2015.

The most suitable time for buying advertisement space in Facebook would be in March, summer season and in November. In March many people plan and reserve their trips for the summer, thus advertisements about the accommodation in Santalahti Holiday Resort could be published in Facebook. During the summertime, Santalahti Holiday Resort could publish advertisements about the terrace and accommodation to get people to make extempore trips to Santalahti Holiday Resort. Advertisements related to Christmas parties could be published in November. Again, when it comes to advertisements and using money, the company owner are the ones in charge.

### **13.5.6 Instagram**

Since Santalahti Holiday Resort is new in using Instagram, they still have a lot of room for improvements. Using hashtags is important in Instagram, since it allows the account and pictures to be found with keywords. If Santalahti Holiday Resort uses “#santalahti” in their posts, people can easily find them by writing “Santalahti” in the Instagram search field. Customers can also use the “#santalahti” in their pictures if they have visited Santalahti Holiday Resort.

For the Instagram account, Santalahti Holiday Resort can also have a “Follow us on Instagram” sign at the reception. Like the Facebook sign, also the Instagram sign should be put up in the reception before the summer holiday season starts. People can tag Santalahti Holiday Resort to their pictures by using “@santalahti”. When someone clicks the “@santalahti”, it leads to the Santalahti Holiday Resort Instagram account. The company could print small flyers for the cottages and the reception saying “Post your holiday pictures with @santalahti”. Santalahti Holiday Resort can afterwards repost some of the customers’ posts on their own account. The flyers could be distributed in the cottages as soon as they are done.

Santalahti Holiday Resort could arrange a picture contest in Instagram. Customers would post their holiday pictures of Santalahti Holiday Resort by using “@santalahti”. At the end of every month, Santalahti Holiday Resort would choose one or more pictures, and the winners would get a small prize. This competition could be arranged in the summer of 2015.

### **13.5.7 Blog**

When establishing a blog, the company can choose between different blog types, such as employee blog, group blog, management blog, advertising blog or newsletter blog. The best option for the company would be to designate one employee to be in charge of the blog, but also allowing other employees to give ideas for the blog. The content of the blog could be a mix of advertising and newsletter blogs. The blog can consist of both text and pictures. The blog should be published in both Finnish and English languages, to ensure that also foreign customers can read it. Some texts could also be translated to Russian language. The blog would work as marketing channel in addition to traditional and other social media marketing. Some possible topics for the blog would be events, customer experiences, news and fun stories “behind the scenes”. Since summertime is the busiest season in the Holiday Resort, the company could establish the blog in the summer of 2016.

## **14 Conclusions**

The purpose of this thesis was to create a marketing plan for Santalahti Holiday Resort. One goal was to find new ways to attract Finnish and Russian tourists and business travelers to visit Santalahti Holiday Resort. Another goal was to think of ways to improve the company’s social media usage and awareness.

In the theoretical part marketing mix, social media and marketing plan components were explained. The marketing mix was chosen for this study since it can be used as a base when creating a marketing plan. All of the components of the marketing mix can create different kind of value for a company and help formulate

a strategy. Social media has become an important marketing tool for companies. For tourism companies, social media is a suitable and effective marketing channel. With the help of a marketing plan, companies can define their key marketing elements and clarify the objectives. This may result in the growth and development of the company.

The empirical part was written based on the theories of the marketing mix, social media and marketing plan. The different elements of the marketing mix were studied from the company's point of view. The results of the marketing mix showed that all the facilities and services of Santalahti Holiday Resort are now in order, but the promotion needs improvement. Since, social media was proven to be a good marketing channel for tourism companies, it was included in the marketing plan of Santalahti Holiday Resort. The company has started to put more effort in their social media usage, but there is still room for improvement. The marketing plan included the company's objectives and strategy suggestions.

The result of this study is a ready-made marketing plan for Santalahti Holiday Resort. The marketing plan of this study was drawn based on the theoretical part, the marketing mix and social media results of the empirical part and interviews with the company owners. The strategies of the marketing plan are feasible and realistic. The strategies were designed in such a way that they can also be implemented financially, even though there was no budget given by the case company.

The results show that Santalahti Holiday Resort has many opportunities to increase their marketing to get more customers and visibility. The company should put more effort in social media, especially Facebook and Instagram. In addition, cooperation with other companies should be considered. The company should take part in travel fairs to increase awareness among possible customers. Since Russians are the company's second largest customer group, Santalahti Holiday Resort should promote its services in the House of Finland in St. Petersburg and advertise in the Fintourist magazine.

For future research, the possible changes in the micro and macro environment should be paid attention to. Since situations change quite fast these days, it might

be necessary to create a new marketing plan in a few years to meet the needs. One additional study subject for future research could be adding the budgeting section to the marketing plan. This way the costs have been estimated and calculated in a way that the marketing plan is already feasible. In this marketing plan only Finnish and Russian tourists were included, but in the future it might be wise to do research on other potential countries. Since social media continues to develop all the time, new platforms might be created. Due to this, there might be room for future research to sort out the most useful social media platforms. In the future, marketing for business travelers and Russian tourists could be researched more.

In conclusion, the writers of this thesis feel that the study was successful, well executed and will give the case company new ideas to improve their marketing. The marketing plan can be considered reliable, since it was done according to an actual marketing plan model and the strategies are feasible. The study progressed according to plan and was completed on schedule.

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