MARKETING INTERNATIONAL STUDY PROGRAMMES TO FINNISH UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Case: Lahti University of Applied Sciences Ltd

Lahti University of Applied Sciences Ltd
Degree Programme in International Business

VILKKO, IIRA: Marketing International Study
                                       Programmes to Finnish Upper
                                       Secondary School Students
                                       Case: Lahti University of Applied
                                       Sciences Ltd

Bachelor's Thesis in International Business, 56 pages, 11 pages of
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ABSTRACT

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The project built to support the purpose of the thesis was to market
international study programmes of Lahti University of Applied Sciences Ltd
to Finnish upper secondary school students. The author collaborated with
Kannas Upper Secondary School's IB students. Lahti UAS, with other
universities and universities of applied sciences in Finland, will start
charging tuition fees from foreign students in the fall of 2017, and the
upcoming change has already caused the number of foreign applicants to
go down. Still, it remains imperative to market international programmes to
Finnish students as well.

The thesis consists of two parts: theoretical and empirical. The theoretical
part covers different areas of marketing in general, talks about the
importance of a target audience, and introduces the reader to the case
companies. The empirical part of the thesis covers a project that was
executed in two parts. First, the author visited Kannas to give a
presentation, and afterwards Kannas students visited Lahti UAS. They,
together with an international group of students, participated in a
discussion programme at Lahti UAS' official campus radio. Qualitative
methods were used to collect data for the research. The author observed
and interviewed the focus group and had them fill out a questionnaire. The
results of the research were highly positive and encouraging, as students
stated they relate better to other students rather than to faculty members,
and are thus more receptive and willing to participate.

Based on the findings, Lahti UAS is in need of additional marketing not
only to Finnish students, but to foreign students as well. The project
utilized can be applied in the future as well and modified in several ways to
fit current needs and include more aspects. Social media can be applied to
reach foreign students in the future. And, the project created an example
of future marketing for Lahti UAS and other schools in Finland.

Key words: internationality, international study programmes, marketing,
marketing education, higher education

Lahden ammattikorkeakoulu
Kansainvälisen liiketalouden koulutusohjelma

VILKKO, IIRA:　　　　　　　　Kansainvälisten koulutusohjelmien
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　markkinointi suomalaisille lukio-
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　oppilaille
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Lahden ammattikorkeakoulu

Kansainvälisen liiketalouden opinnäytetyö, 56 sivua, 11 liitesivua

Kevät 2017

TIIVISTELMÄ

Opinnäytetyön tueksi luodun projektin tarkoitus oli markkinoida Lahden ammattikorkeakoulun kansainvälislä opinto-ohjelmia suomalaisille toisen asteen opiskelijoille. Kirjoittaja teki yhteistyötä Kannaksen lukion IB – oppilaiden kanssa. Muiden korkeakoulujen tapaan Lahden ammattikorkeakoulu alkaa veloittamaan lukuvuosimaksuja ulkomaisilta opiskelijoilta vuoden 2017 syksyllä, ja tämä muutos on jo aiheuttanut laskun ulkomaisten hakijoiden määrässä. Siitä huolimatta on tärkeää markkinoida kansainvälisiä ohjelmia myös suomalaisille opiskelijoille.

Opinnäytetyö koostuu kahdesta osasta: teoriaosuudesta ja empiirisestä tutkimuksesta. Teoreettinen osuus kertoo markkinoinnista useasta näkökulmasta, kohdeyleisöstä, sekä esittelee mukana olleet oppilaitokset. Kahden koulun välille luotu projekti oli osana toiminnallista opinnäytetyötä ja empiiristä tutkimusta. Kirjoittaja vieraili Kannaksen lukiossa ja piti esitelmän liittyen kansainvälisiin koulutusohjelmiin englanniksi opiskeleville suomalaisille oppilaille, jotka vierailivat sittemmin Lahden ammattikorkeakoulussa. Heidät yhdistettiin kansainvälisen ryhmän kanssa, ja kaikki osallistuivat Lahden ammattikorkeakoulun virallisen kampusradion keskusteluohjelmaan. Tutkimuksen data kerättiin tarkkailemalla ja haastattelemalla kohderyhmää, sekä lopuksi täytettävän kyselyn avulla. Tulokset olivat erittäin positiivisia ja rohkaisevia. Oppilaat samaistuvat helpommin toisiin oppilaisiin ennemmin kuin henkilökuntaan, ja ovat näin vastaanottavaisempia ja halukkaampia osallistumaan.

Tutkimuksen perusteella on selvää, että Lahden ammattikorkeakoulu tarvitsee lisämarkkinointia sekä suomalaisille että ulkomaalaisille opiskelijoille. Kyseistä projektia voi soveltaa tulevaisuudessa uudelleen, sitä voi muokata useilla tavoilla nykyisiin tarpeisiin sopivaksi sisältäen enemmän osa-alueita. Sosiaalista mediaa voi hyödyntää ulkomaalaisten opiskelijoiden tavoittamiseen, ja projekti loi esimerkin tulevaisuuden markkinoinnille Lahden ammattikorkeakoulussa ja muissa kouluissa.

Asiasanat: kansainvälisyys, kansainväliset koulutusohjelmat, markkinointi, koulutuksen markkinointi, korkeakoulutus

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1   INTRODUCTION

This section introduces the reader to the outlines of the thesis. It explains the research background, presents the research questions, objectives, and limitations. After that, the theoretical framework will be discussed, followed by data collection, thesis structure and finally, the main chapters.

1.1   Research Background

As Lahti University of Applied Sciences Ltd (Lahti UAS) is transitioning from tuition-free education to tuition payments for students arriving from outside the European Union and ETA -countries, the school is in need of additional marketing. Besides hoping to increase the marketing aimed for foreign students, Finnish students are also a major target group. (Viljanen 2016.) While Lahti UAS offers a broad selection of studies, the main focus in the thesis will be on the international study programmes, and students in the focus group are Finnish students. Kannas Upper Secondary School (Kannas) in Lahti, Finland, turned out to be an excellent collaboration partner, as they currently have International Baccalaureate (IB) students who are completing their studies entirely in English.

In general Finnish students acquiring an international degree often hope to find a job abroad after graduating. Completing a part of their studies abroad is even mandatory in some cases and they can choose to either find an internship abroad or enter a student exchange program, or they can do both. Having to spend a certain amount of time abroad is exciting and for some it is the main reason for applying to the international programs. This also encourages them to aim higher when school is over and it is time to enter the job markets. However, this system can also take away resources from certain cities in Finland – they educate the students and then lose them to other cities or to foreign job markets. This brings about an important reason to encourage Kannas students to think of Lahti UAS as their next step: keeping the students in Lahti in order to support the local markets and in order to gain more visibility to international programmes in both schools. (Lonka 2016.)

1.2 Thesis Objectives, Research Questions, and Limitations

The simple objective of the research is to get Finnish students more interested in Lahti UAS and its international studies. It is also imperative to familiarize the students with an international environment from early on in order to ensure and improve class dynamics. The Kannas students in question have chosen to study in English already, and how that affects their plans for future studies is an essential part of the research.

Selecting research questions is a relevant part of the thesis, as the purpose of the questions is to provide an explanation as to what the research is all about, and what the author is aiming to answer. In this study, the main research question is:

- How to market international study programmes?

As the question above cannot be answered in one simple way, the following sub-questions will help provide a more substantial answer:

- To whom should international programmes be marketed?
- What affects a student's decision about future studies?
- How can non-traditional marketing methods be applied?

This topic allows for a broad research. However, it is impossible to explore every single aspect of a topic this diverse, which is why the research has to be narrowed down. In order to provide a good perspective on the subject, the purpose is to focus strictly on marketing for Finnish students studying in English only. Lahti UAS study programmes, while briefly mentioned, will not be explained in detail except for the international ones. While marketing to foreign students is also needed and explained in more detail in the thesis, the main focus group is Finnish students.

Kannas is also in need of additional marketing with the IB programme, but unfortunately it is not possible for the author to provide assistance other than the research in question that is planned to benefit both Kannas and Lahti UAS. This type of research can be applied in the upcoming years as

well, and similar actions can be taken to continue the marketing process and the collaboration between the two schools.

1.3   Theoretical and Empirical Framework

The theoretical part discusses marketing in general and follows with the importance of target audience. Marketing education and social media marketing give an idea of a more focused marketing for education institutes. Later on both schools involved will be discussed, as well as their need for marketing at the moment.

The empirical part of the research will consist of a project diary of the collaboration. Each phase of the project was documented and will be presented in the thesis. During the project the author visited Kannas to give a presentation (Appendix 2) and when Kannas students visited Lahti UAS, they were paired up with international students in Finnish for Foreigners 2 class (FFF2) taught by Lindeberg, a lecturer at Lahti UAS. The groups then participated in a discussion programme at Lahti UAS' campus radio, Limuradio. The programme was themed around the appropriate topics discussed in the thesis. The interaction between these two groups of students will be addressed and analysed.

1.4   Research Methodology and Data Collection

In the research qualitative research methods were used throughout the project. Studying a focus group and performing short interviews provided an interesting point of view to the subject. At the end of the project quantitative research was applied. Kannas students were asked to fill out a questionnaire (Appendix 1), which was the single quantitative method applied in the thesis.

The results of the research are analysed in the fourth chapter. The chapter also ties the project together by demonstrating the stages from start to finish.

1.5   Thesis Structure

The thesis has two main parts: theoretical part and the project diary. The theoretical part explains the main concepts of marketing, its importance and influence, and also basic information about the schools and their programmes. The project diary explains the project in detail from its beginning stages all the way to the end. The next figure shows the thesis structure, and after that the outlines of each chapter will be introduced.
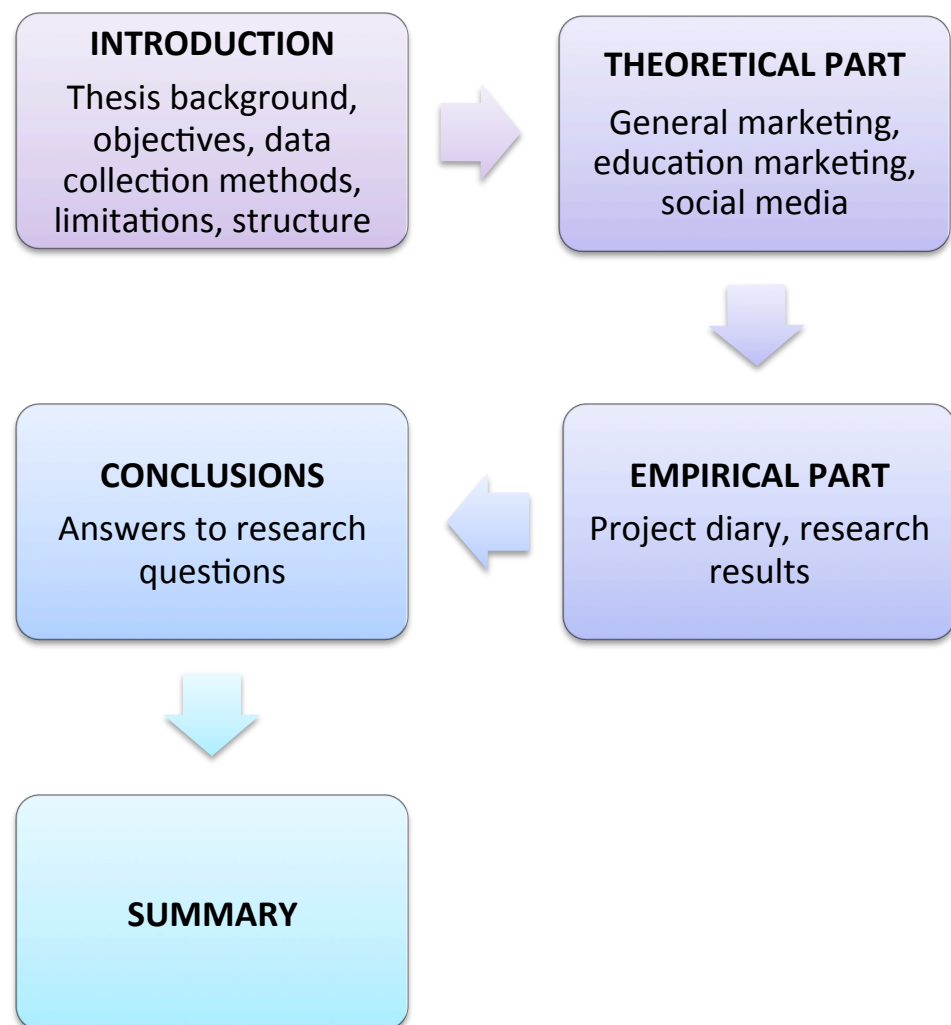
FIGURE 1. Thesis Structure

The author visited Kannas to give the students a presentation about Lahti UAS, its international programmes, events, study path, and activities. In turn, Kannas students visited Lahti UAS to get first-hand experience of the school, and were introduced to the alternative side of it by letting them freely interact with international students and familiarize themselves with Limuradio and its operations.

The second chapter starts the theory part of the thesis and introduces the reader to the concept of marketing from multiple points of view. The basics of marketing including a demonstration of a SWOT –analysis and explaining how to choose the right target audience, gives the reader a general overview of the background theory needed in order to carry out the project. Marketing is also discussed briefly from an international and cultural aspect. Marketing education is naturally a subject that needs attention, and it is followed by an explanation of non-traditional marketing methods, which were mainly used in the project. Social media marketing is crucial in education marketing nowadays, and four major social media networks are presented along with ways to market higher education institutes with them.

The third chapter focuses on the case companies participating in the project. Lahti UAS is introduced along with its international study programmes. Lahti UAS' need for marketing will be pointed out due to its upcoming tuition charges and how that has affected the number of applicants already. Kannas and the IB –programme are introduced respectively. The third party involved is Lahti UAS' official campus radio channel, Limuradio. Their broadcasted discussion programme offered Kannas students and the international degree students at Lahti a unique outlet to talk about their opinions on matters such as education and internationality.

The empirical part of the thesis is covered in the fourth chapter. Project management theory is a natural part of the thesis and will be featured before the collaboration between Lahti UAS, Limuradio, and Kannas is explained in detail from how the project got started up to the end of it. The

project results are analysed along with the questionnaire results, and the final sub-chapter summarizes the entire project in a simple manner. The thesis ends with conclusions - chapter presenting answers to research questions, followed by the final chapter that summarises all topics covered in the thesis.

2 THE CONCEPT OF MARKETING

The basic idea of marketing is to match the organization's services and/or goods with the needs of customers. A transaction must be beneficial to both parties involved. A business-minded environment is known to be unstable, which makes the matching process that much more difficult at times. There are multiple external factors that can threaten an organization in its endeavors to guarantee customer satisfaction – new competitors with better services and government restrictions are just two examples of such factors. However, there are also multiple positive external factors, e.g. environmental ones, which can further help an organization to reach its goals. (Frow et al. 2011, 8.) Figure 2 below illustrates the matching process with both negative and positive environmental factors.
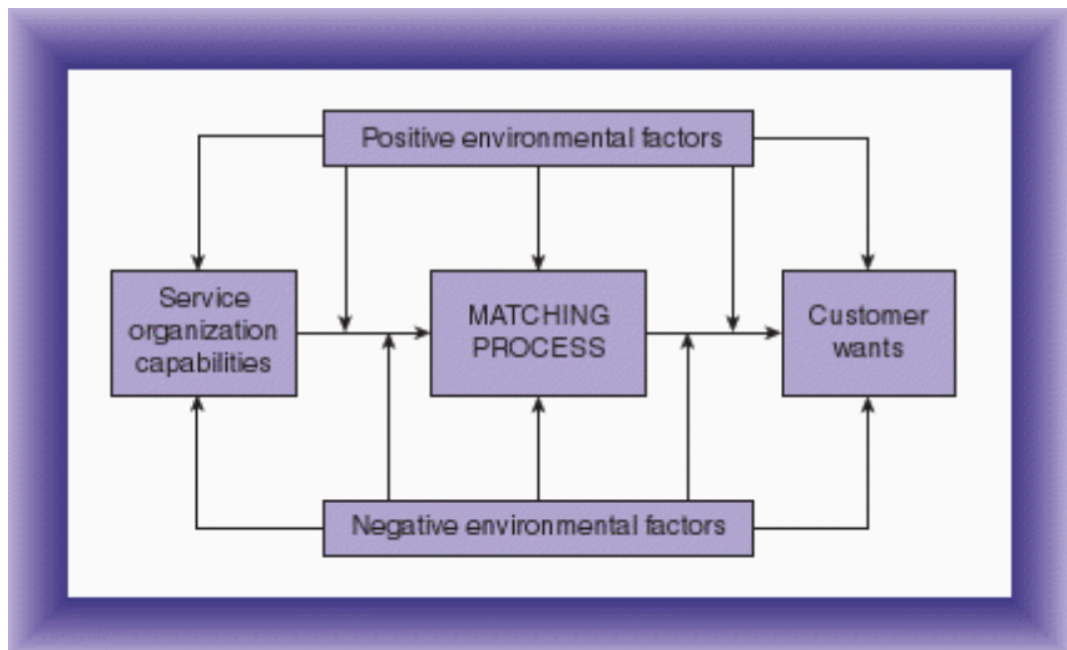
FIGURE 2. Matching Process (Frow et al. 2011, 8)

As shown above, environmental factors not only influence the organization, but also the customers, and the matching process as a whole. Thus, several factors within the process have the power to change the dynamics between all parties. (Frow et al. 2011, 8, 9.)

Good and proficient marketing can increase sales and the popularity of the organization, and this applies to marketing education as well. This chapter

talks about the basics of marketing as a concept and the importance of the right target audience. Marketing education and international marketing will be presented, followed by a sub-chapter of non-traditional marketing. It is also explained how social media can be used to improve education marketing.

2.1 Basics of Marketing

Marketing is said to be many things. There are several ways to approach the subject, however, marketing is always, to some extent, a business function (Baker 2008, 4). Whether it be a school recruiting new students, or a bookstore sales person branching out, marketing is what brings the seller and buyer, employer and employee, school and students, together.

A profound marketing research helps organizations to gather information on the customers' behaviours, attitudes, and consumption, and work this to their advantage. No matter what the organization, intel on customers and competitors is crucial if the organization is to meet its strategic goals and customer needs effectively. However, the marketing research environment is radically changing all the time. Rather than keeping the focus on current customers, several organizations are becoming more interested in their potential new customers. Marketing is thus redirected to serve a new purpose. Budget cuts and divisional changes also contribute to the changing research environment making it unstable at times. (Wilson 2008, 140, 141.) Formulating a suitable research approach and assessing the market situation as a whole ensures more efficient marketing that brings desired results. This can be more challenging with international marketing.

Understanding different cultures brings along opportunities, but also challenges. Culture influences a person's behaviour and decisions, but culture does not always determine these things. Culture, while an important factor, does not drive everything in international marketing. (Lee & Usunier 2009, 3.)

When marketing Lahti UAS' international study programmes to Finnish students, cultural factors do not play as big a part as they do when marketing same programmes to prospective foreign students. This is because Finnish organizations know how to market to Finnish target audiences. When promoting services or goods in another country with a different culture, certain things must be considered in order to avoid cultural blunders and misunderstandings. Other countries possess different values that influence the decision-making and the thought process of an individual. These factors may contribute to how marketing is viewed. Other details, e.g. symbols and logos, could be seen harmless in Finland, but offensive in another country. (Hunt 2017.) Even colors can mean different things in different countries. All this makes cultural awareness imperative when marketing anything internationally.

Marketing can also be viewed from different perspectives – an individual's, or from the perspective of a group of consumers in general. Who is the marketing aimed for? Does the organization wish to reach out to specific individuals or large groups of people with certain traits that make them a desirable target? An outsider's point of view can also be beneficial, which is when a simple tool such as a SWOT-analysis can make a big difference.

2.1.1   SWOT -Analysis

A SWOT –analysis is a quick and simple way for organizations to identify their internal and external factors when planning a marketing strategy. SWOT is short for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths and weaknesses are considered internal factors – things the organization can influence itself. Opportunities and threats are external factors dependant on the environment and the competitiveness of the local markets. (Seth 2015, 5, 6.)

FIGURE 3. SWOT –matrix (Burke 2017)

The above figure demonstrates the simple outlook of a SWOT –matrix. Identifying factors in each segment helps analyze and eliminate risks and makes it easier for an organization to conform to the markets.

SWOT is brilliant in its simplicity, for it can be used to analyze anything – an organization or even a person. Analyzing details through a SWOT can lead to other investigative tracks in the research. This method helps the researcher discover aspects and matters they would have neglected otherwise, and makes it easy to perceive the main issues at hand. SWOT is also easy to present and serves the visual side of things as well. (Hetherington 2007, 41, 42.)

A SWOT –analysis can easily be applied in marketing education. Education institutions can improve their status by recognizing these four factors that have a major influence on marketing strategies. SWOT – analysis does not only cover these four areas and aid organizations in

recognizing their potential, it also helps to improve the existing strategies and to build better ones.

2.1.2 Target Audience

When it is time to gather a target audience, a marketing strategy should already be created. There can be more than one target audience involved, depending on what is being marketed. A target audience can be described, e.g., as a group of people who share common needs or characteristics that the organization wants to address and serve. (Kotler & Lee 2016, 128.)

Selecting a target audience can be made easier by following these three steps:

- Segmenting the market. Dividing the larger audience into smaller segments that still share common interests, needs, and wants, also helps targeting individuals in those segments.
- Evaluating segments. All segments will then be evaluated in order to prioritize targeting.
- Choosing one or more segments to target. Selecting one or just a few will help create a customer profile, which in turn will help the organization decide on a marketing mix. This might differ between target audiences, even if the main idea remains the same. (Kotler & Lee 2016, 128, 129.)

For education institutions, students are obviously the main target audience - both current and prospective future students. However, a smaller segment would be the families of these students. Parents want to stay on top of their childrens' studies, but especially when they have to pay high tuition fees. Marketing the school to parents is thus equally important, and informing them on various school-related events will help maintain good relations between all parties. Furthermore, as graduating students become alumni members, they will have a chance to help market their school and benefit from it in other ways.

Kannas' second – year IB-students were an ideal target group for the project at hand. Their current studies form an excellent base for continuing studies in an international programme at Lahti UAS or at some other higher education institution that offers education in English. Since the IB-programme's curriculum includes preferred action outside the classroom and getting to know other cultures, a visit to Lahti UAS was a perfect fit.

2.2 Marketing Education

Marketing research can be divided into two parallel sections. The first section explains it as professional marketers taking on the research approaches as a whole, and it usually includes researching consumers, prices, and competitors. The second section, however, is related to academics. This type of research investigates the nature of marketing usually undertaken by academics or other professionals. The main focus is the actual operation of markets in a certain area, such as education. Education markets are not a new occurrence. It is agreed that a market exists when there are options for individuals to choose from. (Hemsley-Brown et al. 2012, 44.)

What needs to be taken into account when marketing education is the duration of the impact of that specific marketing. A marketing strategy can be built and executed over a short period of time, but a profound strategy expands and, when needed, adjusts to a students' current needs. (Hemsley-Brown et al. 2012, 53.) Study time in a university of applied sciences in Finland is usually three to three and a half years at minimum, while university degrees take even longer. Marketing services and opportunities to students throughout their time at school makes all the difference and has long-term benefits when the alumni students are able to take what they have received and use it to recruit new students.

Education institutes are involved in major national and international markets. Whether these institutes can resolve their problems by identifying students as consumers, and thus improve their status, is merely an assumption. Gibbs and Maringe (2008, 6, 7) take on an interesting

approach, when introducing a term "pro-educating", with which they want to emphasize education rather than the market itself, and describe it as follows:

> *The mutually beneficial development of informed learning systems within which the development of relationships increases the opportunity for well - being and in which a duty of respect is owed and an obligation of fairness is assumed (Gibbs & Maringe 2008, 6, 7).*

Contextualization is another important area to be discussed. It means a deeper understanding of the internal and external environment when developing a curriculum. It is suggested that while education institutes view themselves separately as researchers and as educators they cannot successfully build their curriculum, for these two views should not be separated at all. When separated, identyifying with their core business is lacking. However, fixing this with pro-educating does not guarantee that higher education marketing problems will be solved. (Gibbs & Maringe 2008, 7.)

Naturally, a marketing strategy with education marketing relies on the type of classes offered and everything related to that – course length, delivery format, and geographical matters. Defining clear areas of education leads to more defined target groups, which in turn makes the marketing portion easier in general. Promotion, pricing, advertising, and budgeting all go hand in hand when it comes to marketing education. (Ingram 2017.)

All in all marketing education is about good communication. Students have a lot of questions that need to be answered, and a school, as an organization, is responsible for its students' well – being as well as for their satisfaction with the education they are receiving. Should an education institution fail in doing so, it would have an instant negative impact on their marketing strategies and student follow-ups.

2.3   Non - traditional Marketing

The point of non-traditional marketing is to use creative and unorthodox ways to reach audiences and set objectives. A non-traditional marketing strategy usually contains aspects and forms of traditional marketing, but they are used in a different way. There are a variety of ways to create exposure, like street marketing. It most likely includes posters and flyers, which is not uncommon, but it also includes one-on-one interaction with people, which is what a poster, a flyer, or a billboard cannot do on their own. Utilizing unusual and mixed media in artwork and campaigns is guaranteed to receive more attention than a regural print – out of an event or service. (Gaille 2015.)

There are several types of non - traditional marketing. Product placement is a commonly used method, in which, e.g., a movie showcases products from a certain brand only, or even briefly films a certain store or a spokesperson. Disney has gone above and beyond to market its image by theme parks. Stealth marketing has been used by Blackberry, when their ad campaign featured attractive women who flirted with men and had them insert their numbers into Blackberry phones. These examples prove that when it comes to non - traditional marketing only the marketer's imagination is the limit. (Marketing – Schools.org 2012.)

The thesis builds around a project in which the author used more non – traditional ways of marketing to attract Kannas students. One form of non – traditional marketing is to get up close and personal with the target group, and show them a less known side of the organization. Such strategy was applied in the project that will be introduced in more detail in Chapter 4. The author – a student – served as the marketer in order to offer Kannas students a relatable and easily approachable contact person. First – hand experience, coming directly from a student's perspective, was beneficial and well received.

One of the main goals with using non –traditional marketing methods, was to show Kannas students an alternative side of Lahti UAS, instead of

placing the students in a normal teaching situation. Continuous interaction with international degree students, and introducing the campus radio, Limuradio, showed the students other possibilities they would have at Lahti UAS besides academics.

2.4 Social Media Marketing

Even though the project in question did not focus on social media marketing, the participating students were aware of Lahti UAS' networks and stated that social media is one of their main channels to retrieve information from. While face-to-face marketing was applied, the importance of social media in marketing education nowadays is indeniable.

When marketing education and educational facilities, social media marketing plays as big a role as any other type of marketing. With the increasing number of social media platforms students all over the world are easier to reach out to than ever before. Educational institutes all have official webpages and in addition share valuable information on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and even Snapchat. Staff members and/or students podcast events, and take advantage of the visibility social media brings them in order to market their schools and programmes.

The benefits from social media marketing are substancial. Brand recognition is shown to have increased tremendously with social media marketing, as people tend to trust more in what they see, rather than what they hear about. When the marketing on social media is open and aimed to the right target group it can significantly improve brand loyalty. People talk about their experiences with organizations on social media and their audience in turn will want to try out the services on their own – assuming what they have read about was positive. The more attention an organization gets on social media the better its authoritative status becomes. Without social media a brand is far less likely to gain visibility and new clientele as it remains limited to people who are already familiar with it. Another major perk with social media is that organizations can go a

long way promoting themselves free of charge, which eliminates marketing costs. (DeMers 2014.)

What needs to be understood about social media marketing, however, is that it does not happen over night. Gaining followers can be a long and tedious process, during which openness and continuity is the key. Social media should be regarded as an interactive medium between the organization and the target audience. Maintaining a social media platform takes time and patience, and should be handled by a person who understands how to establish a social media presence. When used right, social media can help an organization to reach out to people instantly, and in a creative way. When used inproperly, it can be a great waste of time and money, and – in the worst case – it can lead to a loss of status. (Smith & Treadaway 2010, 18, 19.)

For the purpose of the thesis four major social networks are introduced, and their use in marketing higher education is briefly discussed. Lahti UAS holds accounts on all the following social media platforms. During the project execution Kannas students were informed of these channels and of other means of finding more information about Lahti UAS.

2.4.1   Facebook

Facebook is one of the largest social networks in the entire world. What started as a way for college students to stay in touch after graduating is now a platform for millions of people to share their life in pictures and with written post updates, allowing its users to stay connected with people anywhere in the world. Facebook also features games, interactive groups, and official pages for businesses including educational institutions. (WebWise 2012.)

In order to build a presence on social media, organizations need to determine the value they can bring to the market. What can they offer that another similar organization cannot? It is up to the organization to figure out the best way to market themselves on social media – whether to lead

with a brand or perhaps just information about their business. Building a strong and known social media success is not easy. (Smith & Treadaway 2010, 48.)

Several higher education institutes are benefiting from using Facebook as a marketing tool. On Facebook schools can provide their prospective students a virtual tour of the campus, announce important information regarding school events, exams, and everything else concerning the faculty and the student body. Facebook provides an excellent way to promote school pride and makes it easy for prospective students to reach out to existing ones and vice versa. (Kessler 2011.) Facebook allows users to create pages and profiles for different purposes, such as a business page, profile for a webpage (e.g. a blog), various types of groups members can join, and fan pages for high profile individuals.

2.4.2   Instagram

Instagram has become highly popular since its release in October 2010. It gained a million users in just two months, and in 2012 Facebook bought Instagram. On Instagram users can post photos and short videos, and all of the written interaction is tied to captions and comments, since written updates are not a function like on Facebook. Users can mark their photos with hashtags (#) in order for other people to find them, and to gain visibility. Today Instagram has hundreds of millions of active users. (Desreumaux 2014.)

Visual marketing is strong on Instagram. Since the platform is so popular among young users, reaching out to students through it is ideal. Students can easily share their stories and using their school's hashtags allows prospective students to find these photos and/or videos that are aimed to them. A single photo can also contain only text to inform students about something important – the visuality gets the students' attention, and the rest of the information can be found in the caption or behind a link provided. (Miller 2015.) Lahti UAS uses Instagram frequently to post e.g. events, exams, sign up dates for classes, congratulating graduates, etc.

2.4.3 Twitter

Twitter describes itself as a place where users can find out what is happening in the world. Users can mark their interests per topic, and the use of hashtags is also a way to communicate and find tweets from other users. One tweet can only contain 140 characters, and it is possible to re-tweet other users' tweets and pictures. (Twitter 2017.) Twitter has grown its popularity among celebrities and politicians, and it is an interesting notion that the network has never peaked interest among the youth in Finland, whereas in other countries, especially in the United States, it is one of the most used networks along with Facebook and Instagram among users of all ages and statuses. In Finland Twitter is mostly used by politicians, reporters, and organizations.

Building a brand is important on Twitter, too. Twitter is also the main source for news to many people, and this is why higher education accounts should also tweet about news, articles, and blog posts that concern their school, brand, or institution. Twitter is an ideal platform for building a community. (Opel 2014.) What also help institutions to market higher education are multiple Twitter accounts, e.g. one for each department. A separate account for Admissions department would make it easier to have direct contact with prospective students, and to assist existing students with possible issues. Another account could be dedicated to promoting events on campus, announcing job openings, and encouraging students to socialize. (Baker 2015.)

2.4.4 Snapchat

Snapchat is a unique network, for nothing on it is permanent. Users can connect via photos and videos up to 10 seconds long, but they all disappear a few seconds after they have been viewed by the recipient. Users can also add videos and photos on their Story, which is a feature that shows to all of the user's contacts and lasts for 24 hours. Snapchat's story-feature is not one of a kind anymore, since Instagram updated their services, and now users can share 24-hour stories on Instagram as well.

(Moreau 2017.) The story feature has been recently added on Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and on WhatsApp as well.

How to market higher education on a network where everything disappears? The key is to focus on the now. Through Snapchat workers can communicate with each other, and institutions can share videos of their campuses and whatever is happening there at that moment. School officials can arrange Q&A sessions and contests with future and present students. Snapchat can also be integrated with other social networks to help with cross promotion. (Liaison 2017.)

3   CASE COMPANIES

For the project part of the thesis the author chose to collaborate with Kannas Upper Secondary School's IB –students – Finnish students who are completing their studies in English. This chapter introduces Lahti UAS and Kannas as well as their current study programmes in English. The need for marketing at Lahti UAS and at Kannas is presented and the chapter concludes with an introduction of Limuradio, also a participating party in the marketing project.

3.1   Lahti University of Applied Sciences Ltd

Lahti UAS, established in 1992, is an international higher education institution in Lahti, Finland. It is one of Finland's 24 universities of applied sciences, and is currently educating some 5,000 students in addition to some 1,000 students who are completing open courses. (Lahti UAS 2017a.) Lahti UAS currently has seven units in Lahti (Lahti UAS 2017b). New facilities are being built in Niemi, and the school should have all its faculties in the same campus by 2018 (Lahti UAS 2017c).

Lahti UAS is home to some 400 foreign degree students and hosts some 200 exchange students annually. Internationality is seen and heard at Lahti UAS. (Lahti UAS 2017d.) There are events arranged throughout the school year, such as the International Food Festival, where international students prepare foods from their home countries for others to taste.

Lahti UAS has 27 bachelor's degree programmes in fields such as design, business, technology, and social and healthcare. In addition, the school has 10 master's degree programmes. However, only international programmes will be introduced in the thesis due to the purpose of marketing them to Kannas students.

3.1.1   International Programmes

Lahti UAS offers three international Bachelor's Degree Programmes:

- Business Information Technology
- International Business
- Nursing

There are also two international Master's Degree Programmes:

- Environmental Technology
- Urban Sustainability and International Business Development.

Bachelor's Degree Programmes are three and a half (3.5) years in length with 210 ECTS, while a Master's is only one and a half (1.5) years, with 90 ECTS respectively (Lahti UAS 2017e). Each programme is built to give students a firm foundation and abilities to work in their chosen field. Several courses put emphasis on group work and projects, thus building social skills. Students are also required to complete practical training periods. In international programmes it is mandatory to spend a portion of the study time completing studies or practical training abroad as well.

All teaching in international programmes happens in English, except for Swedish courses and one or two Finnish communication course for Finnish students. Foreign degree students are required to study Finnish. Developing language skills in the Finnish language is an essential part of the education for international degree students, for some of them remain in Finland after graduating, and need Finnish skills in order to land a job in their field of expertise. For the students heading abroad after graduation language skills are an equal asset that they can benefit from no matter where they set base next. Lahti UAS has both Finnish and native English –speakers as lecturers. Educating in the English language is planned to prepare students to work efficiently in international projects, and it also serves the international students. Lahti UAS' Student Union also trains students to become international tutors, so they can help the incoming echange students during their time in Finland. (Lahti UAS 2017f.)

Courses taught in English are also available for students in Finnish study programmes. The variety of courses ensures there is something for everybody from basic and professional ones to electives.

3.1.2   Need for Marketing

Starting from fall 2017, Lahti UAS, along with other universities of applied sciences and universities in Finland, will start charging tuition fees from international students coming from outside the European Union and ETA – countries (Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein). Tuition fees will not concern Finnish students, or any international student who has started their studies prior to 2017. The amount of fees is individual to all schools. (Opintopolku 2017.) Lahti UAS' fees are €7,900/year in bachelor's programmes, and €8,900/year in master's programmes. However, every foreign first-year student will receive a scholarship that covers 50 percent of the tuition fee. (Kangas 2017, 3.)

Finland is known for its high level of education, the fact that education is available to everyone equally, and for the education being extremely affordable or completely tuition free. Thus, tuition fees have already assumably caused the number of primary applicants to go down from some 400 in 2016 to only 222 in 2017. The number of foreign applicants went down 40 percent. Lahti UAS has 105 available study places in 2017. Some foreign students feel that Lahti UAS is not marketed enough internationally – many find out about the school from its alumni students and from social media. Tuition –free education used to be an asset to Finland, but the upcoming fees are causing students to ponder reasons of coming to Finland, as the fees are about the same as in the rest of Europe. Money can also grant access to schools in America without an entrance exam. (Kangas 2017, 3.)

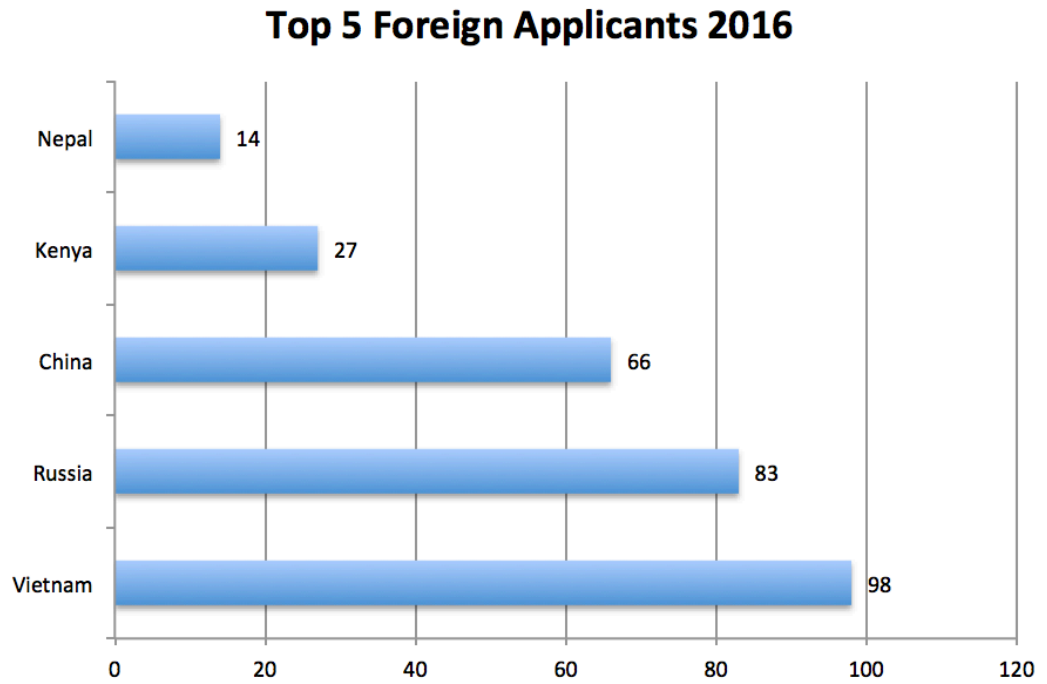The following figures 4 and 5 illustrate the current change that has happened with foreign applicants.

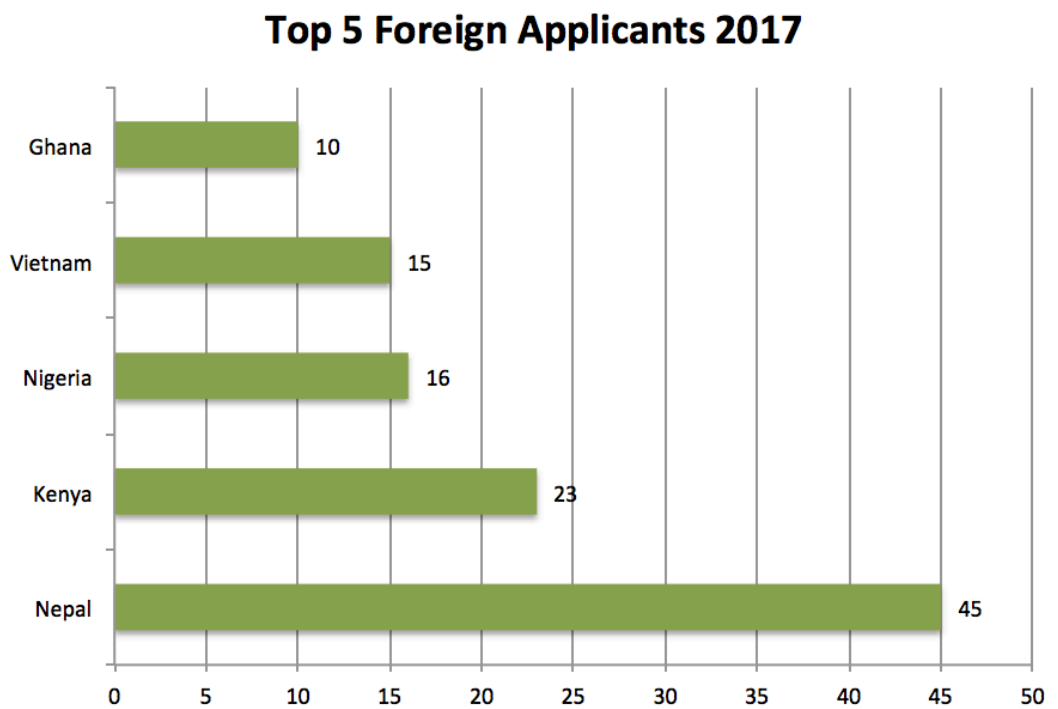FIGURE 4. Top 5 Foreign Applicants 2016, modified by the author (Kangas 2017, 3)

FIGURE 5. Top 5 Foreign Applicants 2017, modified by the author (Kangas 2017, 3)

Figure 3 shows the top five countries in 2016, from which Lahti UAS received applicants. Vietnam and Russia clearly dominated with over-powering number of applicants compared to the other countries. However, as Figure 5 demonstrates, the change in 2017 is obvious. Vietnam is fourth on the list, and Russia has dropped from the top five all together. Nepal shows a big increase in applicants from 2016, although its number of applicants in 2017 is less than half of what Vietnam's was in 2016.

Even if the upcoming changes will not permanently lower the number of foreign applicants, marketing to Finnish students remains imperative nonetheless. According to Kilpinen, Lahti UAS' Director (education, RDI), Lahti UAS is mainly marketed through collaboration networks and official websites (Kangas 2017, 3). Increased marketing is needed to reach more foreign students, but also to Finnish students to fill the available spots that are no longer filled by international degree students.

Lahti UAS has been working on a new marketing concept that would involve more students. The working title of it is LAMK PR (LUAS PR), and it is planned to launch in the fall of 2017. The concept has three working groups. The first group would circulate schools and events and promote Lahti UAS, the second group would create content to Lahti UAS' social media networks, especially Instagram, Snapchat, and Youtube, and the third group would produce written reports. All three groups and their activities could be integrated into communications – courses. As it still is a work in progress, it is naturally a subject to changes. (Kuisma 2017.)

3.2   Kannas Upper Secondary School

Kannas Upper Secondary School is a progressive secondary education (high school) institution also located in Lahti, Finland. At this school of some 750 students, students can either choose to follow the general upper secondary curriculum, or they can specialize in the arts. The third option is to apply to the International Baccalaureate (IB) –programme. (Kannaksen lukio 2017a.)

Kannas Upper Secondary School, along with Lahti UAS, is big on internationality. They encourage their students to apply for student exchange, and they have partner schools in France and Spain. Kannas is also arranging a trip to Sweden, where students get the chance to use and listen to Swedish, and visit a local upper secondary school. IB-students are collaborating with an IB-school in Shangai as well. (Kannaksen lukio 2017b.)

3.2.1   IB - Programme

IB –students are concluding all of their studies in English, except for the mandatory Swedish studies. They study fewer subjects than students who follow the regular curriculum, but they are studied more in quantity and in depth. The IB-programme is a challenging one, which is why there is a separate entrance exam. The matriculation exams also differ from the regular ones. (Kannaksen lukio 2017c.) The IB-programme also has its own mission statement (separate from Kannas' own mission statement), which states:

> *International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right. (Kannaksen lukio 2017d.)*

3.2.2   IB - Programme Marketing

The project was planned with the intention of bringing more visibility to Kannas' IB-programme, although the author was unable to design a specific marketing strategy for it. According to Lonka (2016) the programme is in desperate need for marketing. However, statistics show an increase in applicants in 2017. Participating in the project with Lahti UAS was a great source of new information to the IB-students, as they got to see that there are international options available to them in Lahti. Many students with an IB-degree head abroad without knowing about further study options in Finland. An IB-degree certainly opens doors to its alumni. It is possible to get both bachelor's and master's degrees in English language in several higher education institutions in Finland, and naturally these programmes are open to everyone, not only to those with an IB-degree. (Lonka 2017.)

Should a project similar to the one presented in the thesis be applied in the future as well, an added marketing plan for Kannas' IB –programme could possibly bring even more awareness and applicants. Such a project can also be integrated in the IB – programme as well – they can market their programme in a similar way to Finnish ninth graders who are considering attending upper secondary school rather than a vocational school, and arrange visitation days and projects alike.

3.3   Limuradio

Limuradio, Lahti UAS' official campus radio, agreed to collaborate with the author and the participating students in the project introduced later in the thesis. The author wanted the project to benefit Lahti UAS and also some organization within Lahti UAS, which is why they were asked to take part in the project. The purpose was also to give the visiting students a chance to experience a fun and a different way to learn and contribute. Limuradio has been operating since 2013. The word "Limu" comes from "Lihamuki" which translates to "meat mug" – a traditional kebab served in Lahti. The purpose of Limuradio is to capture the essence of Lahti and offer an

alternative to the mainstream media. Limuradio is not only a campus radio - it is also a learning environment for Lahti UAS students. (Limuradio 2017.)

The roots of campus radios come from the United States, but even though the concept works in Finland, it has never quite reached the same kind of popularity that it has in America, the UK, or Spain. A campus radio is a radio station completely or partially maintained by its host organization's students. These radio stations are mainly non-commercial and work not-for-profit. The main agenda is to create an independent learning environment in which students produce material that is connected to their studies, educational programmes, and some material produced outside of the campus radio by other individuals. Working at a campus radio station is believed to improve students' communication and marketing skills, perfect their customer service and problem solving, project management, and technical abilities. (Hautaniemi 2015.)

4   PROJECT DIARY

This chapter explains the theory behind project management and then introduces the main project created by the author. The goal was to get students from both schools involved in an interactive experience designed to benefit every participating member. Mainly non-traditional marketing was used, as Kannas students were shown an alternate side to studying at Lahti UAS, rather than having them participate in actual lectures.

The project and its schedule and limitations are presented further. They are followed by results of the entire project, including the questionnaire Kannas students filled out at the end of their visit.

4.1   Project Management

Project management as a concept includes the whole process from planning a project, organizing what is needed, and executing the project to the very end. A project is usually a temporary one – time occurrence that aims to reach a certain goal, whether it is to raise money for charity, plan an event, install software, or observe a target group in action. Projects can be however long they need to be, but they do have a set ending date. It is also notable that projects differ from an organization's operations due to their temporary form. Operations in an organization can include, e.g, human resources and accounting. (Hom 2013.)

Project management is meant to gather up everything one would need to develop and carry out a project in its entirety. Every project is different, but there are four key steps that apply to most projects and their lifespans:

- Developing an idea and defining the project
- Planning the project
- Putting the plan in action
- Finishing and evaluating the project (Haynes 2009, 7, 8.)

Ethics play a big part in project management as well. Projects are driven by decisions, and many of them have to be made about resources in

general, including the people involved and environmental factors. Following ethics means being disciplined about doing what's right and best for the project at hand. (Project Management Institute 2017a.)

In short, project management is the application of learned skills, knowledge, and techniques in order to reach the project objectives. Projects are unique, and must be concluded within agreed limits concerning time and budget. (Project Management Institute 2017b.)

The project of marketing Lahti UAS' international study programmes clearly featured all of the four stages mentioned above, as can be seen from the upcoming sub-chapters. The project was managed by the author, who was solely responsible for developing the idea, for the style of implementation, for the use of qualitative and quantitative methods, and for the conclusion of the project.

4.2 Project Idea

The idea for the project was inspired by the author's own specific interest in education and the English language. In order to bring about a business-related point of view, it was decided that marketing was the most appropriate approach to the subject. The author's own connections to Kannas Upper Secondary School, and the fact that they had an IB – line made the school an ideal collaboration partner. Lonka's group consisted of like – minded students with an enthusiasm to be included in different projects, which is why they were chosen as the focus group.

The author worked in close association with Kannas English lecturer, Lonka, whose IB-group of 19 students took part in the project, as well as with Lindeberg, Lahti UAS Finnish language lecturer, whose international FFF2 -group was also chosen to participate. The goal was for the Finnish Kannas students to get to interact with international students, and for the international students to get to interact with Finnish students, so the scenario made sense. The plan was to get more Finnish students excited about the multi – cultural study opportunities Lahti UAS has to offer, and

offer the FFF2 –students a chance to use Finnish language while sharing their perspectives.

What made this type of marketing stand out was that it was performed solely by a student. It is not uncommon for upper secondary schools to have visiting lecturers or other faculty members inform the students of higher education institutes, but in the past students have not been a major part of the marketing process. This is currently changing at Lahti UAS.

The coordinators of all the faculties at Lahti UAS are responsible for the marketing of the school, and even though it still remains their job to lead the process, they are recruiting more and more students to take on the marketing itself. Upper secondary schools in Lahti usually contact Lahti UAS when they wish to have someone present at their school, and Lahti UAS also invites guidance counselors from various schools in Lahti to hear about the study programmes. (Rantahalme 2017.)

The hypothesis of a current Lahti UAS student being more relatable to prospective future students was also tested during visitations.

4.3   Schedule

The project started in September of 2016 when it was introduced to the head of Lahti UAS' International Business Programme, Viljanen. The matter was discussed in order to determine whether it could be applied to the field of business studies. The rough idea was to somehow work in collaboration with Kannas and make Lahti UAS more known to Finnish students. Later in the fall the project was brought to the attention of Lindeberg, who then became the thesis supervisor. Meetings between her and the author continued throughout the entire project from establishing what the project was going to be like, who would be involved and to what extent, to the aftermath of the project and also the writing process. Most of the planning took place during the fall semester of 2016 with the intent of executing the practical portions during the following spring.

Limuradio, Lahti UAS' radio channel, was contacted in the beginning of 2017 to see whether they would be interested in participating in the project. The author's initial intention was to take advantage of this opportunity and try to benefit a Lahti UAS –related organization through the project as well, so that Kannas students would get a sense of the various services Lahti UAS has to offer. Such organizations included e.g. the Student Union and the official campus radio, Limuradio, which ended up wanting to collaborate. The author exchanged emails and met with the radio members on a few occasions to determine what kind of a project would be useful and fun to bring alive. It was then determined that a discussion program with the students would be a good way to get the students' voices heard on matters such as internationality both in Lahti and at schools respectively, education in English, studying in a foreign country, and future possibilities for current students in Lahti.

Visitation day at Kannas Upper Secondary School was set for February 22, 2017, which made it possible to finalize the project plans in the beginning of the spring semester. Kannas students were set to visit Lahti UAS on March 16, 2017.

4.4   Project Execution and Limitations

The project was planned to be executed in two parts: giving a presentation to the Kannas students at their own school, and having them visit Lahti UAS afterwards. Creating a proper foundation of knowledge about options in Lahti was one of the main points, and establishing a form of familiarity with the Kannas students prior to their visit was to ensure their comfort and interest in the project.

Due to the author's schedule the practical portion of the thesis could not be executed until the spring of 2017. This, in turn, made it impossible to market Lahti UAS to third-year students at Kannas as they were out of school, studying for their matriculation examinations. It was then decided that the target group was going to be second – year students (first – year IB – students). However, this way of marketing was designed so that it can

be applied in the upcoming years as well, which makes marketing to third-year students in the future an interesting possibility. Further suggestions regarding the project and its timing are presented in the conclusions.

During the visit day at Lahti UAS, time was limited with the Kannas students, who were only able to spend three hours out of school that day. Arranging the visit for another day would have also created a challenge due to conflicting schedules, and the visit should not have been too far apart from the author's visit at Kannas. The time limitation made it crucial to schedule the day's activities well beforehand.

4.4.1   Visiting Kannas Upper Secondary School

On February 22, 2017, the author, alongside with two other Lahti UAS International Business students, visited Kannas. The author gave a presentation to the students introducing Lahti UAS, its international study programmes, study path, and activities. Other areas covered were internationality at Lahti UAS, application process, and some general statistics of admitted students from 2016.

During the presentation the author also talked about the opportunities students have to complete a part of their studies abroad. The author presented her own experience of doing practical training in the United States, and the two other students shared their own views of student exchange in Cyprus and England. The aim was to give the Kannas students a profound and well-rounded image of what it is like to be a student at Lahti UAS by students themselves. Offering more than one point of view was well received and more relatable. At the end of the presentation the students were given time to ask questions. Many of the students were particularly interested in student exchange and completing practical training abroad, and how to fund them. They also asked about the application period and specific requirements.

4.4.2   Kannas Students Visiting Lahti UAS

Kannas students got the chance to visit Lahti UAS on March 16, 2017. The marketing strategy was non-traditional – the students were introduced to the study environment at FellmanniCampus, where they were combined with Lindeberg's FFF2 –group. All of the students got the chance to get to know each other and interact in both English and Finnish, thus benefiting the curricula of both classes. During the initial interaction between the two classes the author circulated among the students and performed short interviews in addition to observing the situation as a whole.

The project was built to give the visiting students a unique glimpse of what studying at Lahti UAS could be like by combining them with a class of international students but without placing them in an actual teaching situation. The goal was to present a relaxed environment and show the alternative side to academics. The author interacted with all of the students, both visiting and FFF2-students, hearing their opinions about their schools, current studies and future plans, and thoughts on the importance of multi-cultural learning.

The students were divided into five groups of seven to eight people, and were then taken to the Limuradio studio, where each group got to take part in a discussion panel on pre-meditated questions. All together the programme lasted for an hour, and each group was given 10 minutes of recording time. The programme was lead by Einari Uusitalo, one of the voices of Limuradio. During the discussion students provided answers to the following questions:

- Is internationality important in education?
- Do you wish to study abroad?
- Does Lahti offer good career and study opportunities for young people?
- Why study in Lahti?

After the radio programme FFF2-students had completed their portion of the project. Kannas students were given free time to explore the campus

and enjoy lunch together. Before dismissing the students the author briefly discussed the importance of marketing with the students and was provided with valuable insights on what influences a student when it comes to choosing a place to study. The students also filled out a questionnaire before returning to their own school. The results of the questionnaire and of the project in general will be analysed next.

4.5   Results

Over all the results from both visitation days were highly positive. The students provided feedback when needed and also had comprehensive questions to which they were then provided answers. Throughout the entire project the Kannas students showed admirable attitude and willingness to be a part of the project, as well as wanting to express their opinions as to how certain aspects in marketing education could be improved. Most students expressed strong opinions about education in general, and also provided their perspective on how information on further education options could be shared better. Although social media tends to give almost all the information needed, the students felt a visit to a school is a better way to get a real sense of what the school is like.

The FFF2 –students also provided reasons as to why they chose to study in Finland, and how they feel about studying in a foreign country in general. For many, Finland was the only choice. Free education was also a reason mentioned. The students expressed their excitement about getting to share their experiences with younger students and proved to be a valuable part of the project.

Qualitative methods were the main research methods used in this project. Observation, group discussions, and group interviews provided the author some intell on what motivates the students and what counts when looking into higher education institutions.

4.5.1 Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire (Appendix 1) conducted by the author was the only means of quantitative research methods used in the project. Kannas students filled out the questionnaire at the end of their visit at Lahti UAS and the results are as follows.

All 19 students stated they received a positive image of Lahti UAS, however, only five (5) out of 19 said they would consider becoming a student at Lahti UAS, and two (2) responded 'maybe'. As all 19 also stated they wish to continue their studies in English in the future as well, the common consensus was that Lahti UAS does not offer enough international options. Three international programs is not a lot, and the students were unanimously more interested in *what* they are studying rather than *where* they are studying. When asked what makes a school appealing to students, they stated aspects such as the school's marketing and how they present themselves, their study programmes, their environment and athmosphere, and the school's general image and reputation.

According to the questionnaire most students rely on the Internet when looking for information about schools. Social media is another way for them to find what they need. Some students were also interested in statistics and comparisons between schools. However, viewing statistics is not always preferred. For instance, low acceptance rates may discourage a student from applying to the school in the first place.

It is interesting how the English language was highly valued among the students, and it is thought to be the gateway to international success, as the following Figure 6 shows:
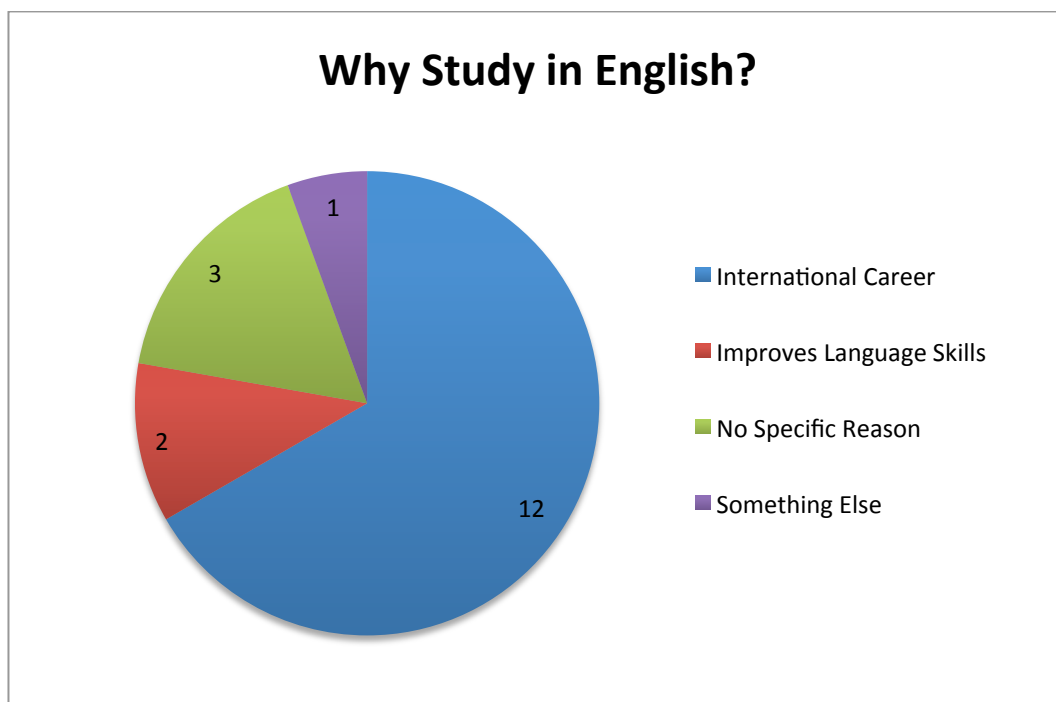
Why Study in English?

FIGURE 6. Reasons to Study in English

The students expressed they feel the English language gives them more opportunities even if they choose to stay in Finland, because language skills are always appreciated. Most of them were also interested in pursuing an international career either in Finland or abroad.

The visiting students were impressed by the international athmosphere at Lahti UAS. Their interaction was effortless and surely provided everyone new perspectives on education in Finland and abroad. It was a unique chance for Kannas students to get to hear experiences from current international degree students at Lahti UAS, and for the international degree students to share their views and make an impact on younger students, who are still figuring out where to continue their education.

It was widely agreed that there is not enough information presented to the students personally about study opportunities in Lahti. Eighteen students found the type of marketing used in the project to be beneficial. Some of them were not aware of the options at Lahti UAS at all. Figure 7 illustrates how students prefer to receive this type of information:
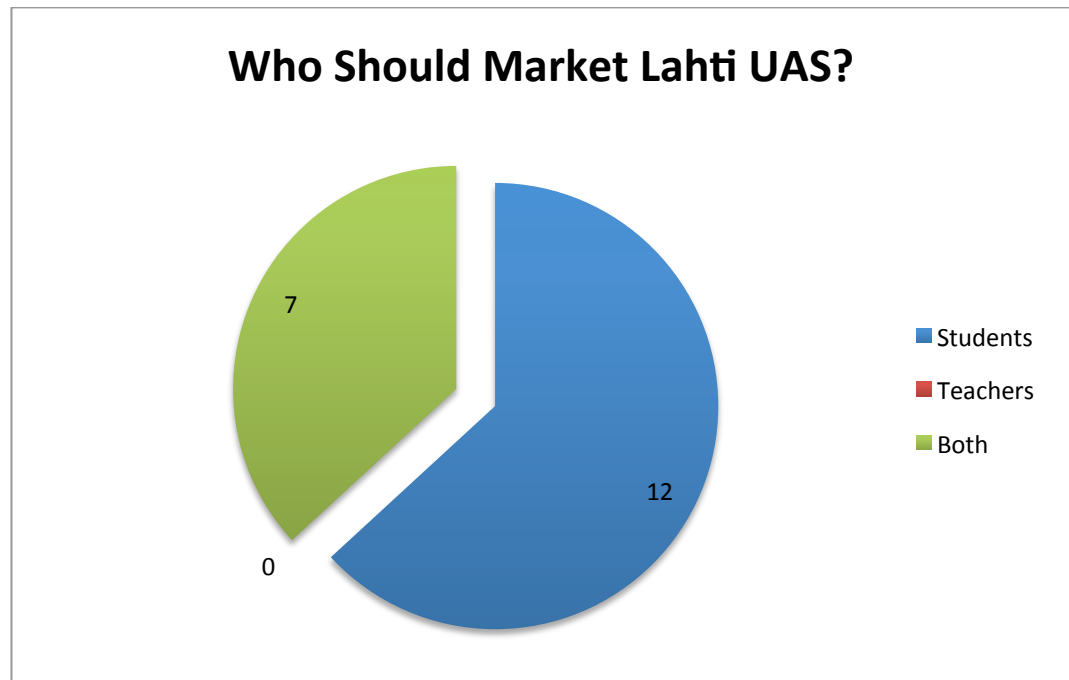
FIGURE 7. Who Should Market Lahti UAS?

It is clear that students prefer the opinions and viewpoints of other students to those of faculty members, unless they are presenting together with the students. According to the questionnaire, students are thought to be more honest in addition to them being able to provide first-hand experiences, points of view, opinions, and thoughts on the school and its study programmes. The over-all consensus was that teachers alone usually provide a better image of their school than the school actually deserves. Students, rather than educators, are naturally thought to be more relatable to other students.

The marketing situation of Lahti UAS can also be analysed through SWOT. Diversity is a major strength Lahti UAS possesses. The institution has provided quality education to students from all over the world for several years now, and with the right kind of marketing it can continue on doing so indefinitely. Updating the marketing strategies to involve more students is a big improvement. However, Lahti UAS' weaknesses include the limited number of international study programmes. By adding even one more programme to the mix the school could acquire more visibility and a higher number of applicants. Schools with more programmes and a higher

ranking pose a threat to Lahti UAS. Marketing to students in Lahti in order to reduce the number of students moving to other cities to pursue higher education is a start. Branching the marketing to other cities can create new opportunities, such as collaborations with other education institutes. Marketing more internationally also creates a chance to utilize social media more, which will be explained further in the conclusions.

4.5.2   The Project Structure

This chapter ties the entire project together by revising and demonstrating the process from start to finish, providing a general guideline for those wishing to apply these methods in the future. The project can be applied as it is, or it can be modified to fit another target audience and marketing needs. The timeline of the project expanded from the fall of 2016 until late spring of 2017 including five stages that are introduced in the figure below. In the future the timeline can, naturally, be altered as well. The conclusions – chapter introduces more ways to expand the project.

The following Figure 8 is designed to benefit the reader by illustrating the entire project summed together in a simple way.
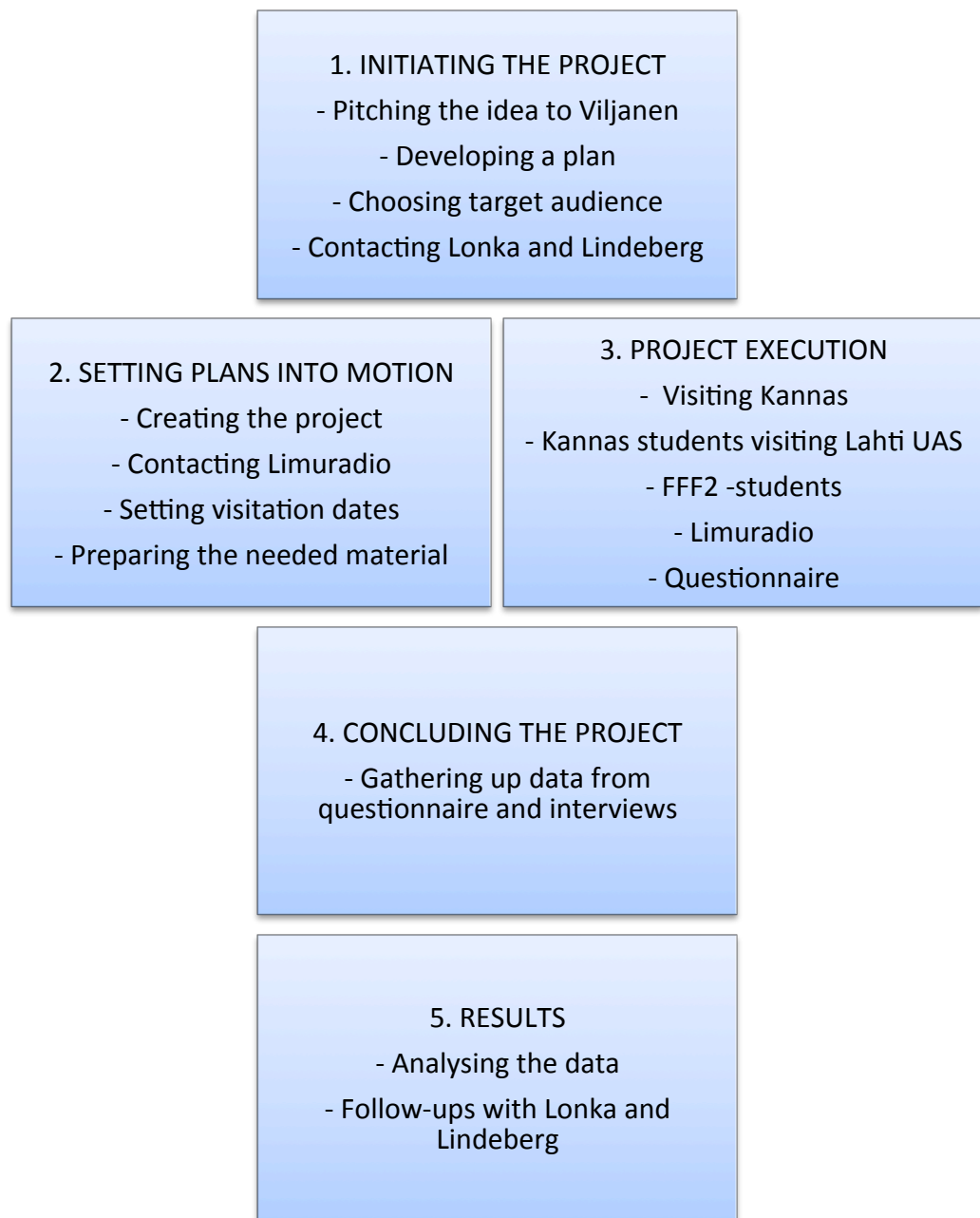
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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│        1. INITIATING THE PROJECT     │
│      - Pitching the idea to Viljanen  │
│           - Developing a plan         │
│        - Choosing target audience     │
│     - Contacting Lonka and Lindeberg  │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│  2. SETTING PLANS INTO MOTION │  │      3. PROJECT EXECUTION     │
│      - Creating the project   │  │        -  Visiting Kannas     │
│      - Contacting Limuradio    │  │ - Kannas students visiting Lahti UAS │
│      - Setting visitation dates│  │         - FFF2 -students      │
│   - Preparing the needed material │  │          - Limuradio        │
│                               │  │         - Questionnaire       │
└──────────────────────────────┘  └──────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────┐
│     4. CONCLUDING THE PROJECT │
│       - Gathering up data from │
│       questionnaire and interviews │
└─────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────┐
│            5. RESULTS         │
│        - Analysing the data   │
│      - Follow-ups with Lonka and │
│              Lindeberg        │
└─────────────────────────────┘
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FIGURE 8. Project Structure

1. **Initiating the project.** The first stage includes developing an idea for the project, seeing whether such a project can be done, and whether it can be applied in the thesis process to reach certain objectives. The project was first pitched to Viljanen, and then applied to the field of business studies appropriately. Other participating members were then contacted and the project was developed.

2. **Setting plans into motion.** Practical matters need to be arranged with all parties involved. Visitation dates were set with Kannas, and a schedule was created and distributed to everyone involved. A PowerPoint presentation for added value to the actual execution was developed, and Limuradio was contacted.

3. **Project execution.** Carrying out the project as planned, and prepared for possible last minute changes. Applying pre – set methods (qualitative/quantitative). The project started with a visit to Kannas, and a few weeks later Kannas students visited Lahti UAS. They were combined with Lindeberg's FFF2 – group, and the author observed and interviewed everyone. They were all then a part of Limuradio's discussion program about internationality and education. Kannas students filled out a questionnaire at the end of their visit.

4. **Concluding the project.** Gathering up all the data and theory on a report with possible follow-ups with participants. Finishing the project all together.

5. **Results.** Analysing results from the project. Breaking down data from questionnaires, interviews, and group interaction. The data was then analysed to benefit the thesis and the research. The author performed some follow-up questions to people involved in the project.

One should not underestimate the theory that supports a project no matter what the project is. Being familiar with concepts and appropriate terminology is important, and knowing about project management makes managing the situation that much easier. Clarifying data collection methods helps the project manager decide how to carry out the project and what to expect. Defining limits is crucial, for it is possible to go very deep on a subject such as marketing education. However, limiting the research makes it more reader - friendly and an easier subject to approach. There are always possibilities for follow-up projects that dig deeper into the subject. When solid background knowledge is established,

the practical portion comes more naturally, and the project is far more likely to turn out a success.

5   CONCLUSIONS

This chapter concludes the thesis and brings together all main topics and the research process. The author will answer the main research question as well as the sub-questions and discuss the validity and reliability of the thesis. In the end, the author will give suggestions as to how to expand and improve the project should it be applied again in the future.

5.1   Answers to Research Questions

The purpose of the thesis was to try a new way of marketing Lahti UAS' international study programs to Finnish students. The main research questions, as presented in the introduction, was:

How to market international study programmes?

The question in itself gives a lot of room for interpretation. One marketing strategy that involves people from multiple nationalities has to be neutral enough to accommodate everyone. A neutral marketing strategy – to avoid cultural blunders – can also be highly effective. Of course there are multiple ways to market international study programmes. There is not one simple answer that can be provided to this question. However, with the help of the sub-questions also stated in the introduction, a well - rounded answer can be presented.

The thesis covered a project – based marketing strategy that involved Finnish upper secondary school students, who were studying in English already. They were the focus group to whom international study programmes at Lahti UAS were marketed by presenting them with the basic information of Lahti UAS, its programmes, events, and other activities besides academics. They also visited Lahti UAS and got to be a part of a radio discussion programme with FFF2 -course international degree students. This allowed both groups to brush up their language skills with each other. At the end of the visitation day Kannas students filled out a questionnaire, and the author analysed the results to benefit the thesis. This project was sparked from the author's personal interest in

education and the English language, and pre-existing connections to Kannas. The project showcased a unique way of marketing Lahti UAS' international study programmes to Finnish upper secondary school students, and therefore answers the question. However, a more thorough answer to the main research question will be given after the sub-questions.

To whom should international programmes be marketed?

Although for the purpose of the thesis said programmes were marketed only to Finnish students, current circumstances require more international marketing as well. With the number of international applicants down by 40 percent from 2016, it is clear that Lahti UAS' marketing strategy needs more attention outside of Finland. Recruiting more Finnish students may be a temporary solution, but they can hardly fill the positions at Lahti UAS to the maximum. An international study programme needs international students.

Marketing to Finnish students was a conscious decision with a goal of raising awareness of Lahti UAS' options. Kannas' IB – students were chosen because they were already studying in English, and were thus more likely to do so in the future, too. Although a clear minority of the focus group stated their willingness to attend to Lahti UAS, the remaining students were still impressed by the school and can very well change their minds before it is time for them to apply to higher education institutions. A change in circumstances or preferences may occur, and when the time comes for a student to realistically decide where to apply to, they are more likely to remember the schools they have received positive images of. This is why reaching out to prospective students needs to start early enough, and not on the last minute when they are already about to apply. This is true with both Finnish and foreign students.

What affects a student's decision about future studies?

Young people often feel pressured when deciding their future study path. What they view as the most important factor is *what* they are studying, not

where they are studying. Location does not matter, as Kannas students stated during interviews. If students can study what they want at Lahti UAS, then that would be their school of choice. However, all Kannas students wish to continue studying in English, and since Lahti UAS' international programs are limited, most students want to browse other schools and some of them wish to earn their degrees abroad. In some cases the teaching language makes a big difference.

The school in itself also affects a student's decision to attend there. How a school represents itself online, how many resources there are available, what kind of a reputation they have, and what current students have to say about the school is important to prospective students. It is safe to say, therefore, that marketing truly affects the minds of people and influences their decision-making process.

How can non-traditional marketing methods be applied?

Both traditional and non-traditional methods can bring equally great results. Non-traditional marketing was used in the project so that Kannas students could see that studying in a higher education institute is not just about reading books, doing research, and writing reports. Academics are important and held in high regard, but Lahti UAS has a lot more to offer than just that. Studying at Lahti UAS or at any other university of applied sciences, or at any university in general is more laid back in a certain way, because a student has so much power over how to proceed in the studies.

Using face-to-face methods rather than relying on social media and a simple presentation about the facts of Lahti UAS was a big part of the project. The author wanted to create a personal relationship with the students and offer an alternative marketing strategy to Lahti UAS on a trial basis. All Kannas students were happy to be a part of the project and stated that the specific kind of marketing used was extremely beneficial, even to those who already knew they would not attend Lahti UAS.

So, when considering the main research question, a substantial answer to it is layered. The method used and presented in the thesis was one of

several ways to market international study programmes. It proved to be effective and received highly positive feedback from the participants. Even if most of the focus group students will not choose to attend to Lahti UAS, it does not necessarily mean that the marketing process was unsuccessful. As many students stated, the options at Lahti UAS and in Lahti in general were not made known well enough to them before. A project as such was well received and provided the students information they needed from a source they best relate to and trust the most – a student. Therefore, a project – based marketing strategy involving collaboration with another education institute and international students proved to be a very powerful one, and could certainly be applied again with a much bigger focus group.

5.2   Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability proof the accuracy of research results. Validity measures how results are equivalent to the main goal of the thesis, and reliability concerns the repetitiveness of the research and whether similar results can be obtained should the research be conducted again.

All of the research questions and objectives presented in the introduction part were answered in the thesis. The collected data included both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected during the project with the help of interviews and focus group observation. The author performed short interviews with both Kannas students and Lahti UAS' international degree students and received a wide range of opinions and statements supporting the hypothesis that Lahti UAS needs to improve its marketing. The secondary data was collected from written sources, such as books and newspaper articles, in addition to online sources and qualitative interviews with a study coordinator and lecturers. The faculty interviews in particular provided valuable intell on the state of marketing at both participating schools, and also on how the marketing is usually handled. The author was able to bring a new perspective on the matter by making the marketing strategy all about the students, and created a

relaxed and relatable atmosphere. Thus, the author considers the thesis reliable and valid.

5.3   Expanding the Project

A project as such can live on in the future, should more students want to get involved in the marketing of Lahti UAS to prospective students. As the spring of 2017 was the first time the project was put into action, it served as a trial and created a solid base from which to modify it further according to the current marketing needs.

There are a number of ways to apply the project in the upcoming years when marketing Lahti UAS study programmes to upper secondary school students. For example, the process could include more stages and span over a longer period of time. Students could be reached out to during their second year of studies at an upper secondary school, with a follow-up with those truly interested on their third year. This method would allow building a strong foundation with the students, and make Lahti UAS familiar to them even before they would attend the school as a new student. As pointed out before, marketing should expand over the duration of studies and students need to be the focus point then as well, not only when recruiting them, and when using them as marketing intermediors. Marketing and projects should always meet the current needs of the student body and address issues at hand, rather than playing the same scenario year after year.

There are also ways to modify the project with more detail. Visiting students could attend actual lectures at Lahti UAS during the course of one day. When arranged early enough, it could be possible for the visiting students to have more than a few hours of time. There could also be a few group projects for the students to choose from, during which they would get the chance to participate in activities with international degree and exchange students.

Social media brings along endless possibilities and opportunities to market Lahti UAS. The use of four major networks was instroduced in the thesis, and all of them can be easily applied at Lahti UAS. For example, utilizing the project that was created for the purpose of the thesis is not possible with prospective foreign students. However, they could be gathered together at their current schools in their home countries and be presented a virtual tour of Lahti UAS by its current students. This could be arranged, e.g., right before or after entrance exams. Virtual tours, contests, and cross promotion in multiple networks makes marketing more interesting to the target audience and keeps the students engaged in a creative way.

As a result of the tuition fees Finland has to set its education programmes apart from those of the rest of Europe. Finland needs a new hook now that the free education is history. It was, after all, a major reason for many students from arbroad to choose Finland. With the tuition fees many new students will most likely head to other parts of Europe rather than up to the cold and dark north. Taking the time to come up with new ways to market schools in Finland for both Finnish and foreign students, is not a task for just one particular school. Once Finland's higher education institutes establish a clear selling point, perhaps the country's high level of education and other positive statistics, each institution can then start building their own marketing strategies and projects to benefit their own ojectives.

6   SUMMARY

The final section of the thesis will summarize the contents of the thesis in detail. The main objective of the thesis was to find a new way to market Lahti UAS' international study programmes to Finnish students in a student-friendly manner.

The introduction presented the reader a comprehensive overview of the outlines of the thesis, and covered the research questions, data collection methods, background to the research, and thesis structure. The main idea of the project was explained along with reasons as to why such a project was current and the additional marketing of Lahti UAS needed.

The background theory related to the project was mainly covered in the second chapter. A SWOT –analysis and choosing the right target audience were talked about before discussing marketing from several points of view. International and non-traditional marketing were among the subjects. However, marketing education was the most essential part of the chapter considering the nature of the project along with ideas on how to take advantage of social media in education marketing, although it was not applied during the project itself. However, the benefits of social media marketing should not be underestimated.

The third chapter introduced the participating case companies. Lahti UAS, Kannas, and Limuradio were all collaborating in the project and their input was greatly valued. The chapter also talked about the need of marketing at both Lahti UAS and Kannas. Lahti UAS' new marketing concept, LAMK PR is under construction, and should be launched in the fall of 2017. This marketing plan is involving more students in the process. As for Kannas' IB – programme and its marketing, it was suggested that they could benefit from applying the project and arranging visits with Finnish ninth graders to promote the IB –line.

The fourth chapter covered the empirical part of the thesis. Lahti UAS' international study programmes were marketed to Kannas' IB-students through an interactive two-part project that took place in the spring of

2017. The author visited Kannas to give the students a presentation about Lahti UAS, and introduced its study programmes, study path, activities, events, and international aspects. A few weeks later Kannas students visited Lahti UAS at FellmanniCampus for the second part of the project. The author combined Kannas students with Lindeberg's international FFF2 –students, and together the two groups of students got to interact and get to know each other, while the author observed the general behaviour of the group, and performed short interviews with everyone. Then, all students got the chance to participate in a discussion programme arranged at Limuradio, Lahti UAS' official campus radio. The theme of the discussion lead by one of Limuradio's staff members was built around internationality, and covered questions related to that. At the end of their visit Kannas students filled out a questionnaire.

The questionnaire results along with the general results of the research were analysed in the fourth chapter. Kannas students provided the author with valuable opinions and information on how they see education marketing nowadays. They all found this type of marketing a nice change and beneficial, even though a minority of the group expressed their willingness to attend to Lahti UAS due to its limited number of international programmes. Kannas students clearly cared more about what they are studying rather than where their studies would take place. They also expressed their concern over the lack of good education marketing. The project structure was explained in a nutshell at the end of the fourth chapter.

The author managed to create a good connection with the students and prove that students are, in fact, more relatable sources of information to other students, than faculty members. The over-all feedback of the project was extremely positive from all parties.

The fifth chapter concludes the thesis by answering the research questions. The author explained the validity and the reliability of the thesis and provided suggestions as to how the project could be utilized and expanded in the future. Social media offers the most opportunities and

should most definitely be applied and taken advantage of, and traditional marketing strategies could be applied on their own or along with non-traditional methods. As a general suggestion to all universities of applied sciences and other higher education institutes in Finland that are starting to charge tuition fees, it was pointed out that they need to come up with a strategy in order to stand out from the rest of Europe. This is due to Finland giving away one of its greatest educational assets by not offering free education to all foreign students anymore.

The topic such as researched in the thesis is applicable to several other higher education institutes and even to second – degree institutes as well. Internationality and education marketing can be observed from different points of view, collaborations between schools can be established and projects created. There are endless ways to market education and thus improve a school's image and bring in more students. Only imagination is the limit.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: The Questionnaire

Gender

- o   Male
- o   Female

Why Are You Studying in English?

- o   I want an international career (either in Finland or abroad)
- o   I want to further improve my language skills
- o   I have no specific reason
- o   Something else? Please explain

Would You Like to Continue Studying in English in the Future?

- o   Yes
- o   No

What Are You Planning on Doing After Finishing High School?

- o   Continue my studies at a higher education institution
- o   Take a gap year
- o   Work
- o   Something else? Please explain

What Makes a School Appealing to You? Please Explain.

Would You Rather Have Students Market Their Schools or Hear From the School Faculty? Why?

Did You Find This Type of Marketing of Lahti UAS Beneficial? Please Explain.

Did You Receive a Positive Image of Lahti UAS?

- o   Yes

o No

If No, Please Explain What Could Be Improved.

What Are Your Primary Ways of Learning About Higher Education Institutions?

- o The Internet
- o Social Media
- o Presentations by students or faculty members
- o Something else? Please explain

Would You Be Interested in Studying Abroad?

- o Yes
- o No

Would You Consider Becoming a Student at Lahti UAS?

- o Yes
- o No

Anything Else You Would Like to Say? Please Leave Your Comments Below (e.g. How to Improve the Marketing of Lahti UAS? Did You Enjoy Your Visit?)

APPENDIX 2: The PowerPoint Presentation

Lahti UAS
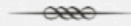
- One of Finland's 24 Universities of Applied Sciences
- 5000 + 1000 students
- 392 faculty members
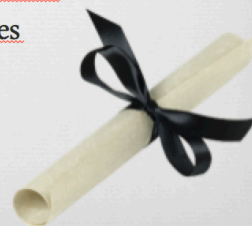- Modern facilities
- (Tuition fees)

Study Programmes
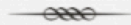
- Business & Travel
- Design
- Social & Healthcare
- Music & Drama
- Technology
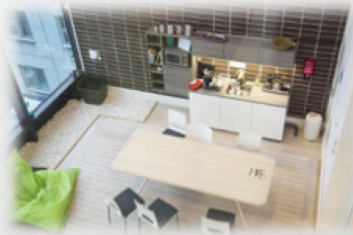
Study Programmes
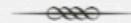
- 27 degree programmes
  - 3 international programmes
- 10 higher degree programmes
  - 2 international programmes

International Programmes

❦Business Information Technology

❦International Business

❦Nursing

Internationality at LUAS

- Over 300 international degree students
- 200 exchange students
- Cultural studies
- International classes offered in all degree programmes

Activities

- Lamko
  - Tutoring
- Limuradio
- Events
- LAMK Sports
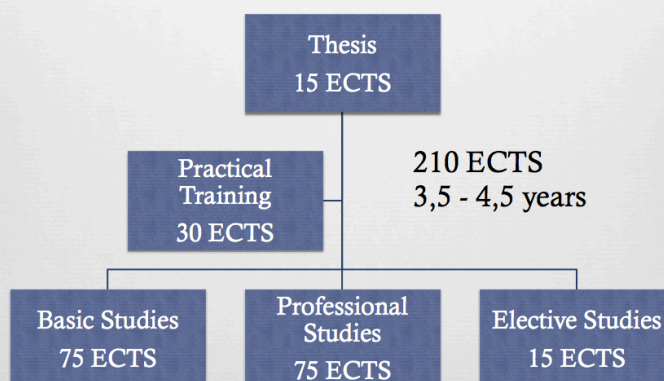- Duuniexpo

Application Process

&Online application

&Entrance exam

&Written

&Oral

2016	Spots available	Primary Applicants
Cultural Studies	167	696
Business	181	838
Social and Healthcare	144	1139
Technology	200	467
TOTAL:	**692**	**3140**

Study Path

Thesis
15 ECTS

Practical Training
30 ECTS

210 ECTS
3,5 - 4,5 years

Basic Studies
75 ECTS

Professional Studies
75 ECTS

Elective Studies
15 ECTS

Study Path

❧Vast variety of classes

❧Projects

❧Summer classes

Practical Training & Student Exchange

❧ Practical training OR student exchange **abroad**

❧ 3-6 months
  - ❧ Practical training 5 months
  - ❧ Student exchange times vary

❧ Erasmus

❧ Grants

❧ Partner schools all over the world!

My Practical Training in NYC

❧ Finland Center Foundation & Salmagundi Club

❧ 5 + 1 months
  - ❧ J-1 Visa

❧ Student arranges everything
  - ❧ Visa
  - ❧ Flights
  - ❧ Accommodation
  - ❧ Practical training placement
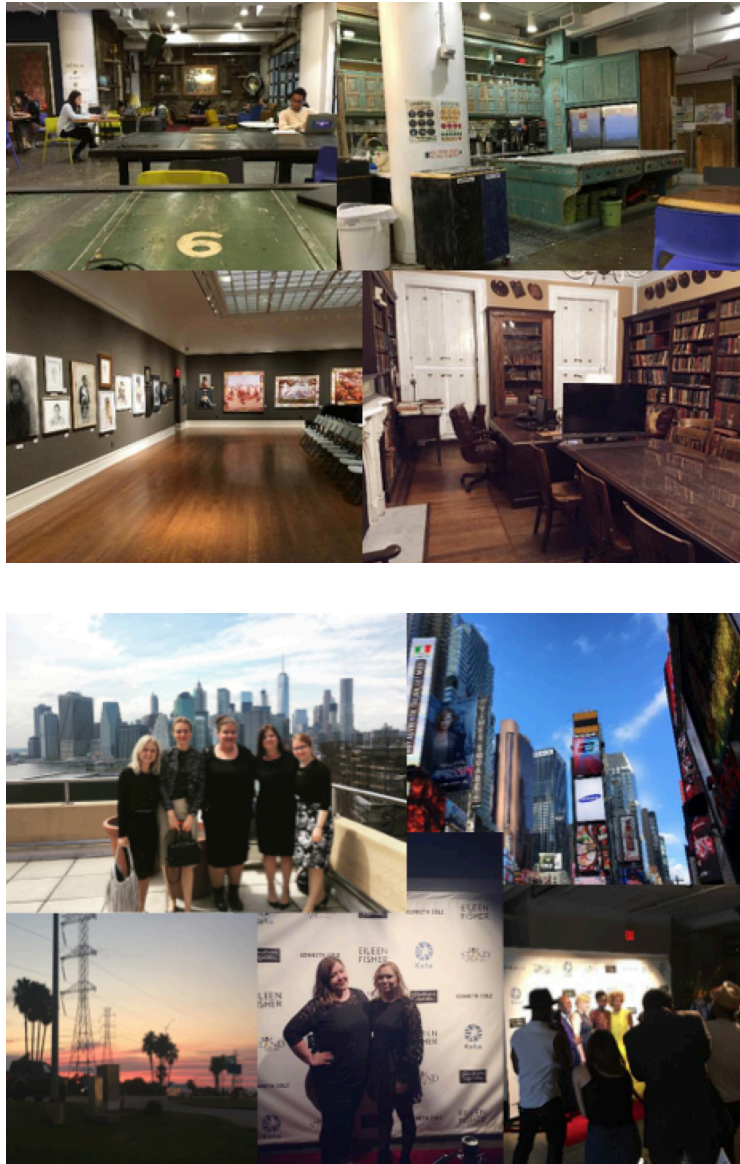
# Why LUAS / International Study Programme?

- Next Step Fair
- Interest in Business and Internationality
- Professional impression
- Gap year inspired to return to school
- International activities and opportunities to go abroad
- New friends

Exchange in Cyprus
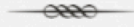
- Semester lasted for 4 months
- Nicosia – the capital of Cyprus
- Frederick University in Pallouriotissa
- 30 ETCS, school from Monday to Friday
- Free time included shopping, student nights, going to the beach, hiking, going to different trips and watching movies
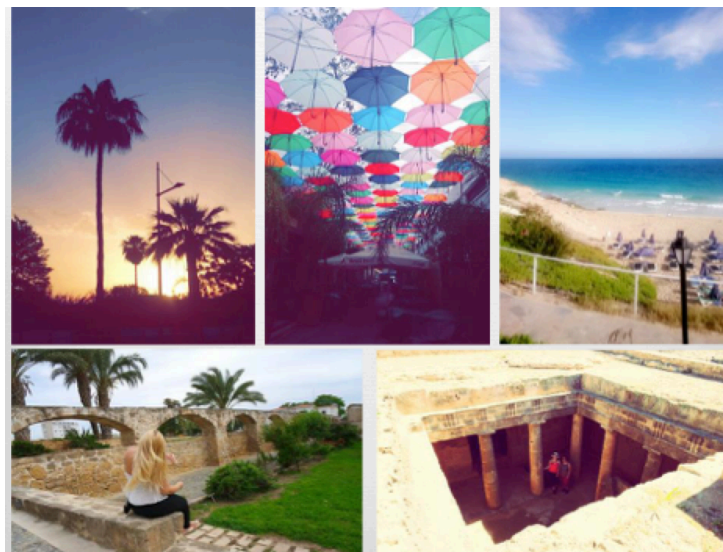
Exchange in England
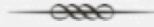
- Southampton Solent University

- 5 months – 30 CATS=15 ECT school on 3-4 days a week

- Lectures and Seminars

- "Cruise Capital" where Titanic departed in 1912

- Accommodation in student area – Bedfordplace

- Free time: Making food and dining together with other exchange students, shopping, travelling, student parties and movies

Thank You!

❧

Questions?