Improving brand image and market share on special transportations in Northern Europe

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Abstract

Customer satisfaction surveys have been carried out regularly in numerous logistics companies, associations, and public authorities. Surveys are typically commissioned by market research institutes, but it can also be carried out as a part of a larger research. The company that commissioned this research has not carried out a customer satisfaction survey during the recent year.

The need for this thesis arises from the history and current situation of the commissioning company. The company aims to grow, and the marketing strategy was needed to support these growth plans. The goal for the thesis was to create a marketing strategy based on customer satisfaction, purchasing processes of existing customers and the overall strategy of the company. Therefore, also the literature review focuses on business-to-business purchasing processes, business-to-business customer satisfaction and marketing strategy.

The aim of the research was to find out the level of customer satisfaction, the purchasing process, and the factors influencing purchasing decisions. The research was conducted as open interviews and the analysis of the interviews was carried out by using data-driven content analysis methods. The results of the research showed that customer satisfaction is linked to the success of the whole logistics process and the quality of customer service. The most relevant finding for the commissioning company was that customer satisfaction throughout the logistics and the overall customer service is at high level. The analysis revealed only individual areas for improvement in customer satisfaction, for which solutions are being developed in the marketing strategy. It is recommended that the success of these solutions in the company are researched in the coming years through new studies on customer satisfaction.

The result of the thesis is a marketing strategy that gives a clear plan for the commissioning company of how to improve their brand image and market share. The plan includes steps for all the different objective levels. Thesis ends with discussion on the results.

Keywords/tags (subjects)

Customer satisfaction, business-to-business customer, marketing strategy, market share, logistics marketing, business-to-business purchase making,

Miscellaneous (Confidential information)

To avoid identifying respondents, no identifying information is found in the appendices.

Kuvailulehti

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Tiivistelmä

Asiakastyytyväisyystutkimuksia on tehty säännöllisesti lukuisissa logistiikkayrityksissä, yhdistyksissä ja viranomaisten taholta. Tutkimuksia teettävät yleensä markkinatutkimuslaitokset, mutta ne voidaan toteuttaa myös osana laajempaa tutkimusta. Tämän tutkimuksen tilannut yritys ei ole toteuttanut asiakastyytyväisyystutkimuksia viimeisen vuoden aikana.

Tämän opinnäytetyön tarve ilmenee toimeksiantajayrityksen historiasta ja nykytilanteesta. Yrityksen tavoitteena on kasvaa ja markkinointistrategiaa tarvittiin tukemaan näitä kasvusuunnitelmia. Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli luoda markkinointistrategia, joka perustuu asiakastyytyväisyyteen, nykyisten asiakkaiden ostoprosesseihin ja yrityksen kokonaistrategiaan. Siksi myös kirjallisuuskatsauksessa keskitytään yritysten välisiin ostoprosesseihin, yritysten väliseen asiakastyytyväisyyteen ja markkinointistrategiaan.

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää asiakastyytyväisyyden taso, ostoprosessi ja ostopäätöksiin vaikuttavat tekijät. Tutkimus toteutettiin avoimina haastatteluina, ja haastatteluiden analyysi tehtiin aineistolähtöisen sisällönanalyysin menetelmin. Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että asiakastyytyväisyys on yhteydessä koko logistiikkaprosessin onnistuminseen ja asiakaspalvelun laatuun. Merkittävin havainto toimeksiantajayrityksen kannalta oli se, että asiakastyytyväisyys koko logistiikan ja asiakaspalvelun kokonaisuudessa on korkealla tasolla. Analyysi paljasti vain yksittäisiä asiakastyytyväisyyden parantamisalueita, joihin kehitetään ratkaisuja markkinointistrategiassa. On suositeltavaa, että näiden ratkaisujen onnistumista yrityksessä tutkitaan tulevina vuosina uusien asiakastyytyväisyystutkimusten avulla.

Opinnäytetyön tuloksena syntyi markkinointistrategia, joka antaa toimeksiantajayritykselle selkeän suunnitelman siitä, miten se voi parantaa brändimielikuvaansa ja markkinaosuuttaan. Suunnitelma pitää sisällään vaiheet kaikille eri tavoitetasoille. Opinnäytetyö päättyy tulosten pohdintaosioon, jossa esitellään myös mahdolliset jatkotutkimuskohteet.

Avainsanat (asiasanat)

Asiakastyytyväisyys, business-to-business asiakkaat, markkinointistrategia, markkinaosuus, logistiikkamarkkinointi, business-to-business ostojen tekeminen

Muut tiedot

Vastaajien tunnistamisen välttämiseksi liitteistä ei löydy tunnistetietoja

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1 Introduction

Strategy is often a fancy-sounding concept and, for many people its meaning is often not understood. Like in any cases when people do not really understand the deepest meaning of a word, it appears a bit scary and hard to approach. But even if it is a fancy-sounding term, over the years it has been used more and more in many different areas and for many different purposes. Strategy is used in business for its various aspects, and so it is in marketing. (Fifield 2007, 9-12.)

In the modern world, digitalization brings new perspective to creating strategies. Companies need to be very much up to date all the time with the digitalization for them to be able to create or benefit from competitive advantages. As in strategies overall there is no one-and-only right solution for every company creating their strategies. (Ho, Tsolakis, Dawes, Dora & Kumar 2022, 10.)

It is difficult to define marketing strategy. There are almost as many interpretations of the term as there are interpreters. So, for different companies, marketing strategy means different things. What they all have in common, however, is that for each company a marketing strategy meets the individual needs of both the company and the market. However, it can be said that a marketing strategy is the process by which a company aligns its activities with the market it serves or seeks to serve. It therefore adapts the firm's business objectives and strategy into marketing activities. (Fifield 2007, 12–16.)

The marketing strategy is therefore part of any company's larger strategic framework and contributes to the achievement of the business objectives. Over the past decades, the marketing of services has been studied from a number of different perspectives. (Fifield 2007, 12-14.) There is also a growing understanding of the quality of customer service and its importance as an important part of a company's overall strategy (Jong, Ruyter, Keeling, Polyakova & Ringberg 2021). Shamsudin, Razak, and Salem (2018, 957) theorise that interaction has a clear link to customer satisfaction. Corporate communication is always an important part of marketing, so it is important to notice the importance of customer satisfaction when creating a marketing strategy.

1.1 Background

In the modern competitive environment also logistics companies need to be aware of different ways to increase and maintain their performance and competitive advantages. This requires high strategic awareness and formulation of strategy. In an ever-changing world, the most important parts of strategy formulation in the logistics business are the definition of new organizational processes and defining new IT projects and working habits. (Kamariotou, Kitsios & Madas 2021, 1.)

Logistics truly is an ever-changing and evolving sector, even if it is often perceived as an old-fashioned and rigid industry. It is influenced not only by national laws and regulations, but also by international standards, legislation, and economic fluctuations. The logistics sector is highly competitive, which is why many operators are trying to change their services in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Competitive advantage can be sought not only through specialised services but also through price, branding and responsibility. (Solidor, Verytelnyk & Anikin 2021.)

Transport and logistics services are one of the most dynamically developing areas, which has contributed to the spread of globalization and the revival of international trade. The market for transport and logistics services in general is one of the most affected sectors of the economy. (Solidor, Verytelnyk & Anikin 2021.)

As the Figure 1 presents, the most common types of marketing strategies used in the logistics business are:

1. differentiated or segmented markets
2. concentrated or niche markets
3. individual markets (Solidor et al. 2021.)

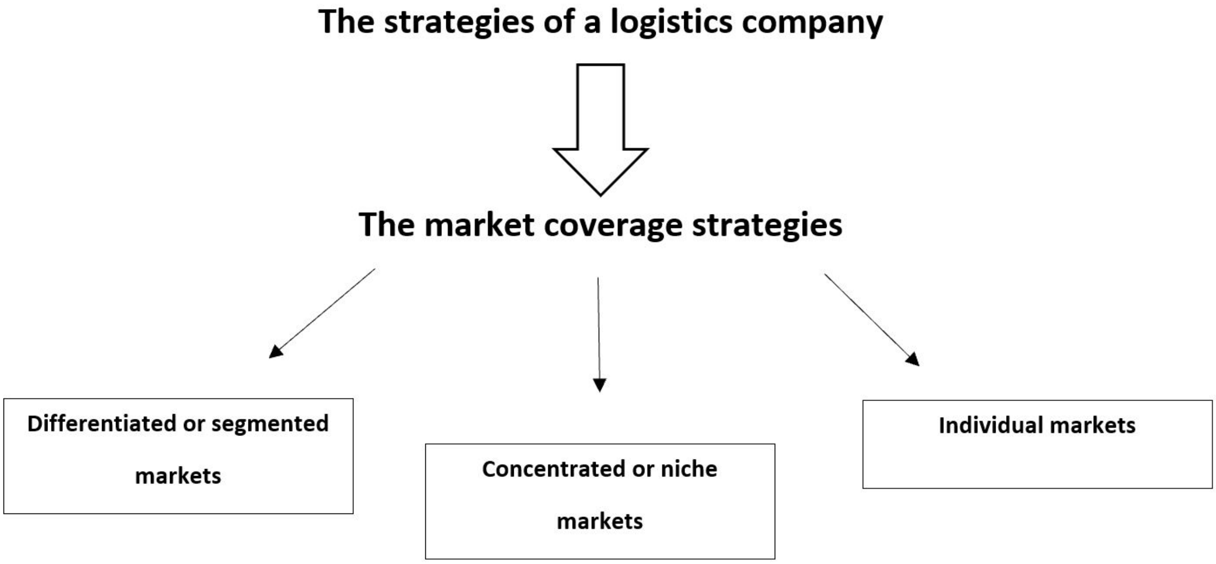

Figure 1 The Strategies of Logistics Companies

In their paper, Hong, and Nguyen (2020, 213), present two theories that can be made when describing the business scale of a logistics company based on the company's structure and objectives. The first hypothesis states that the quality of marketing strategy is positively correlated with the performance of a logistics company. The second hypothesis suggests that the durable business scale is positively correlated with the performance of a logistics company. All the internal and external factors that a logistics marketing manager should consider before publishing the company's marketing strategy are prioritized in the same paper. However, this suggestion should always be evaluated with caution, as each market area has its own most important factors that drive the development of a marketing strategy. The method outline may be used to analyze these factors.

Hong and Nguyen (2020,213) present in their paper the internal and external factors that a logistics marketing manager should consider before publishing a marketing strategy for his company, in order of importance. However, this suggestion should always be treated with caution, as each market has its own most important factors that drive the development of a marketing strategy. These may be different from one another, although they can always be analysed using the method outlined.

According to Hong and Nguyen (2020, 213-214) business networks have a significant impact on marketing strategy, which is why logistics companies are encouraged to create closer cooperation and networks with their business partners, government, and customers to improve business performance. Small and medium-sized logistics companies may consider the possibility of collaborating or joining various associations to improve their business networks and business practices. The company that commissioned this thesis works closely with several other logistics companies in its area of operation and strives to maintain close and good partnerships with them. In addition to other logistics companies, the client has found it important to maintain networks with other actors in its industry. The company is a member of the Finnish Wind Energy Association and several international associations. The company management believes that this is important for maintaining the company's brand.

1.2 Objectives, research problem and delineation

This thesis delves into creating a marketing strategy for a transport company specialising in wind turbine logistics to strengthen and increase the company's market share. The thesis is done in co-operation with a transport company that is active in specialised transport in Northern Europe, Russia, and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) -countries. What distinguishes the company from a traditional transport company is its focus on specialised transports, covering both oversized and otherwise challenging logistics solutions. This thesis focuses on the entity of special transportations that the company does and also its new or upcoming services.

This thesis aims to delve deeper into the creation of a marketing strategy and aims to create a strategy to strengthen and increase market share in an industry that is very limited in terms of the number of potential customers. The aim of the thesis is to provide valuable and up-to-date information on the company's customer satisfaction and to show how this information can be used in the company's future marketing strategy. The research question of this research is “How are the purchase decisions made in the special transportation business?”

For the transport sector in general, the thesis provides information and tips on what kind of things to consider when creating a marketing strategy in the transport sector. More specifically, the thesis provides information for companies working in the field of wind turbine logistics on what kind of things customers in this sector want from a company providing transport services, what kind of aspects they particularly value and which aspects influence a potential purchase decision.

1.3 Research methods

Qualitative research is used to identify the phenomenon, the factors influencing it and the interdependencies between them. It therefore answers the question "what?". What is it and what is the phenomenon? After the "what" questions have been answered it is possible to move on to implementing quantitative research. (Kananen 2011, 15.) The qualitative approach is particularly suitable when you want to study the detailed structure of events rather than their general distribution, to find out the role of individual actors, to study natural situations or to learn about the causal links between certain events (Metsämuuronen 2006, 88). Qualitative research has several trends, methods of data collection and analysis, and ways of interpreting results. Qualitative research is characterised by the fact that it is shaped by various choices as the research progresses. There is therefore no single right way to conduct qualitative research. For each study, there are several options for how it can proceed, and it is always a different version of the subject being studied. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006.)

Because of the nature of this research, it was decided to carry it out using a qualitative research approach. This means that the research was decided to be implemented by using words and phrases rather than the numbers.

The research was conducted as a thematic interview. Thematic interviews are a form of research that is a hybrid between a rigorous and carefully structured pre-form interview and a completely open-ended interview. Typical of thematic interviews is that the topics of the interview, i.e., the themes, are known in advance, but the exact form or order of the questions is not defined. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 197.) A thematic interview can be called a so-called semi-structured interview. However, it is closer to unstructured than structured. Semi-structured thematic interviews are, because the topics of the interview are defined in advance and remain the same for all interviewees. However, the thematic interview lacks the precise form and order of questions characteristic of a structured interview, although it is not entirely free form. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 47–48.) Thematic interviews were an excellent research method for the study because the researcher knew the topics of the interviews. As the interviewees' views on the issues were known in advance, the interview framework could be built up in advance. However, the answers could not be predetermined, which meant that a fully structured interview could not be conducted. On the other hand, a completely free in-depth interview could not be conducted either, as it would not have been possible to ensure that the interviewees would go into the desired areas during the interview. The interview framework and the preliminary open-ended questions that were used to conduct the interviews were created prior to the interviews. However, as each interview progressed, the interviewees are free to share their thoughts or views and the researcher was able to ask any additional questions that came to the mind of the interviewee.

The work is therefore based on a customer survey, which has investigated customer satisfaction with the services provided by the transport company and the factors influencing customers' purchasing decisions. The marketing strategy created based on the results of this study will serve as a basis for marketing activities in the coming years and support the sales activities of the company in its aim to increase its market share in its sector.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into 5 chapters. The chapter 2 begins by introducing the literature review of the main subjects. These main subjects are marketing strategy, business to business purchase making process, and business to business customer satisfaction.

Chapter 3 consist of methodology and research question as well as data analysis and limitations of the research in question. The chapter also presents the questions used in the interviews that were made for customers. Chapter describes the findings of the research and the outcomes of the conducted interview. Background of the interviewees are discussed and what were the key components of the interviewing situation.

Chapter 4 focuses on the marketing strategy that was created by using the findings that were presented in the previous chapter. The chapter presents not only a general marketing strategy but also highlights some practical solutions for implementing this strategy.

The last chapter of this paper is about summarizing the presented information in relation to research questions. It includes elaborating actions for future use as well as reflect whether the research was able to answer the research questions. Study is concluded by presenting possible further research for the future.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Business-to-business purchase making process

Unlike consumer customers business customers purchase products or services for their business or to resell the products. Business customers often purchase raw materials, technical products, or services that they need. In addition to these, businesses purchase some of the same products as consumers, like detergents, office supplies, etc. (Bergström & Leppänen 2021, 108-110.)

Digitalisation has changed the purchase making process, especially for private customers, but it has also had a significant impact on business customers. However, what a business customer is purchasing has a great importance. It is quite different to purchase office supplies than, for example, a special transport service for an oversized cargo. Although there is only a little research data on how important role digital marketing plays in these business-to-business purchase making processes, it is to be expected that it plays an important role in them as well. Over half of sales transactions are initiated online and the purchase process is well underway before the business customer has any contact with the seller. As the same research shows that 90% of business customers do not answer sales calls from unidentified numbers, it is crucial that a company selling its services, for example, uses its marketing to get inside the purchasing process of by creating engaging content for their marketing. (Lahtinen, Pulkka, Karjaluoto & Mero 2022, 61.)

Although the needs for which companies purchase are more rational than those of consumers, the purchasing behavior is often very similar to that of consumers. Businesses also buy products or services to satisfy different needs and their motivations for buying may vary. In practice businesses are often more planned and precise in their purchases than consumers. Instead of emotional buying, business purchasing is guided by careful calculations and plans. Often in addition to the buyer himself, several people are involved in the process of purchasing for the company. This is because purchases for a company are often so large in financial terms that a wrong choice can damage the whole business. An often-made mistake, however, is to forget that also the companies who buy have people doing the purchase decision. So, the seller should keep in mind that same factors which influence a consumer buying decision do also influence a business-to-business customer as well. In practice, however, businesses are often more planned and precise in their purchases than consumers. Instead of emotional buying, business purchasing is guided by careful calculations and plans. Often in addition to the buyer himself, several people are involved in the process of purchasing for the company. This is because purchases for a company are often so large in financial terms that a wrong choice can damage the whole business. (Bergström & Leppänen 2021, 108-110.)

Business customers have many similar characteristics with consumer customers. These include, first and foremost, perception and learning. Business customers learn about new products or services, familiarise themselves with them and form images in very much the same way as consumer customers do. Commitment to the company also varies in the same way as in the consumer market. In addition, of course, some purchases are more important to business customers than others, which means that the level of risk varies from one purchase to another. (Bergström & Leppänen 2021, 108-110.)

Even if the purchasing process for business customers is partly like consumer customers, there are significant differences. Because the purchase process is more systematic, it is easier to identify the different stages of the process. The purchase process often involves considerably more communication within the purchasing organisation as well as with the selling party. The purchasing process itself is also often very different as the business customer often does not buy from a shop as the consumer customer does. (Bergström & Leppänen 2021, 108-110.)

The purchasing process for a business customer starts by recognising a need. The initiative comes from the department using the product or service, from designing department, maintenance, or management. An external marketer can also provide the stimulus to identify a need. The definition phase identifies the options for addressing the need and the characteristics of the product or service that may be purchased. (Bergström, S. & Leppänen 2021, 108-110.) Once the need has been identified and defined, the process of identifying sources of supply and alternatives that meet the criteria begins. Potential suppliers are invited to offer for the products or services, after which the potential suppliers are evaluated, and negotiations are started with the various suppliers to rank the options. Through this process, the option that best serves the company’s needs is selected.

After the actual purchase, the purchase is evaluated, i.e., the performance of the procurement is assessed, and the success of the selling party is evaluated. Satisfaction often leads to an ongoing customer relationship, while dissatisfaction often leads to a search for a new supplier. (Bergström & Leppänen 2021, 108-110.)

The purchasing process of businesses is often influenced by whether it is a routine purchase, a deliberate repurchase, or a completely new purchase. Routine purchases are often made very quickly from familiar suppliers with a proven track record. A deliberate repurchase involves routine purchases, but the purchase is not automatically made from the same supplier in the same way as before. The competitive situation and any changes in practices are considered more carefully and the situation is reanalysed with consideration even if the buyer would have been satisfied previously. In a completely new purchasing situation, the company has no previous experience of purchasing for a similar need and will therefore carry out a great deal of research before making the decision. (Bergström & Leppänen 2021, 108-110)

2.2 Business-to-business customer relationship

Customer management is based on customer data, customer analysis, and understanding customer insights. These can be used to describe existing and new customers. These groups can be then used to create objectives and customer strategies on how to increase purchases from existing customers and attract new ones. These will help creating a plan for relationship management and marketing activities. The success of the implementation of these plans can be measured and the results be used to further develop these plans and customer relationships. (Bergström & Leppänen 2021, 356.)

Customer information is the most complex types of information within a company because this information comes from various sources both within and outside of the company and is dynamic and can change rapidly. Many businesses generate enormous amounts of customer information at the different levels of organization from customer service to accounting. Some research suggest that customer and market information utilization in business-to-business markets is inherently different from that in consumer markets. (Rollins, Bellenger & Johnston, 2012, 758-764.)

Understanding the customer should always be the base for customer management and leadership. The marketing and sales teams must always understand customer's actions and wishes. Building customer insight requires the integration of a wide range of information from various sources. Marketers follow latest research, statistics, and forecasts to get an overview of developments in the industry their company operates in. (Bergström & Leppänen 2021, 356.)

Listening to customer is always important. This can be either passive or active. Active listening is actively communicating with both existing customers and potential new customers. Passive listening means providing opportunity to give feedback, but not actively requesting for it. A good understanding of the customer behavior and what they value as a customer can help to deliver a better customer experience. (Bergström & Leppänen 2021, 356–367.)

2.2.1 Business-to-business Customer satisfaction

Mittal, Han, Lee & Sridhar (2021) explain that there have been studies to show that quality, communication, and ongoing service with support are attributes that maintain the B2B customer satisfaction; pricing, safety, and project management are attributes to balance satisfaction; sales process and corporate responsibility are attributes to enhance satisfaction. On the other hand, there are also studies to show that pricing and project management are the ones to maintain satisfaction, quality, CSR, communication with ongoing service and support are balancing the satisfaction, and safety with sales process are enhancing satisfaction. The differences in these study results can be explained with the fact that some of the studies have studied heterogeneity across industry subgroups, while the others studied differences across customer subgroups of a single company.

Mittal et al. (2021) explain that rather than these attributes always belonging to a certain group or always being a satisfier or dissatisfier, they may in some situations sift from one to another. This is why company management must always monitor these attributes and understand them and their importance well.

2.2.2 Implementing customer knowledge and satisfaction

Measuring customer satisfaction is often one of the biggest financial investments a company can make for marketing intelligence. It also often is the only systematic way of marketing intelligence that companies use. (Morgan, Anderson & Mittal 2005, 131.) Measuring customer satisfaction alone is not enough, but the company must also take action to improve customer satisfaction based on the results. Simply measuring the customer satisfaction level will not make customers happier if the company doesn't know how to implement the results of surveys in any way. (Ylikoski 1999, 149.) In many companies there are significant gaps in the ability or potential to use this gathered information (Morgan et al. 2005, 131). A common mistake in customer satisfaction surveys is the lack of clear objectives set prior conducting the survey. These objectives should be such that they are easy to assess or measure. Equally important is to determine how the research information will be treated once it has been collected. (Aaker, Kumar, Day & Leone 2011, 599–600.)

Very little information is available on how the companies should or even could use the collected customer satisfaction information. Studies have proved that the financial performance of a company is strongly dependent on customer satisfaction, which is why companies have started to invest in improving the level of their customer satisfaction. However, it is not enough just to aim or have a certain level of it. You also need to know how to use this information in the company's operations and marketing. Customer satisfaction information usage is a significant link between marketing actions and company's performance and financial outcome. All in all, customer satisfaction information usage covers all processes that companies use to monitor, diagnose, and take action to optimize customer satisfaction. When all these are done properly, company should have a superior customer satisfaction information usage and be able to perform on a higher level than their competitors. This once again creates a better customer satisfaction level and company's financial outcome increases as well. (Morgan et al. 2005, 131–132.)

Based on the analysis of the results, the company needs to consider what action it should take. If the level of satisfaction has been on a targeted level, it should be maintained. The main problem with monitoring the customer satisfaction is how the company uses the results. If the company knows how to put the customer feedback in good use, the increased customer satisfaction level will cover the costs of the surveys many times over. (Ylikoski 1999, 166–169.)

The use of customer satisfaction information refers to the processes that companies use to collect, analyse, and improve customer satisfaction level. Companies that collect customer satisfaction information on a regular basis and make use of this information are able to provide their customers with the products or services they wish for. The knowledge on how to use customer satisfaction information to the company's advantage is an important part of the overall marketing of the company. (Morgan et al. 2005, 132.) Rollins et al. (2012, 758–764) present, that companies invest far more in researching customer satisfaction and recording customer data than in analysing the results of the research and using the data it provides. According to the, the results of customer satisfaction surveys can be used in two ways: in an action-oriented way and by improving their own knowledge of customer orientation.

According to Rope and Pöllänen (1998, 61) customer satisfaction information can be used to identify problems in a company, maintain its operational excellence, implement marketing for its loyal customers, and obtain systematic feedback from its customers. The main challenges in utilizing the results of the customer satisfaction surveys are that the areas where the company should utilize the results have not been identified before the surveys were implemented.

Improving customer satisfaction requires measures that need to be carefully selected by the company. When defining the actions to be taken in a company and the order in which they should be implemented, the results of the customer satisfaction survey should be reviewed and prioritised. Staff of the company should also be engaged, and every member of staff should be aware of the level of customer satisfaction. It is only with staff input that knowledge becomes practice and therefor staff should be engaged in increasing or maintaining customer satisfaction. The objectives of the surveys are important to be communicated to the staff, and the results are important to be discussed with the staff as well. (Ylikoski 1999, 167–169.) Only through an ongoing customer satisfaction survey process can a company monitor the level of satisfaction compared to previous results or their competitors. In addition, the repetition of a quantitative survey, the repetition of a qualitative survey should as well be considered from time to time to obtain new information. (Aaker et al. 2011, 602.)

Customer satisfaction is at the heart of every company's marketing and strategic objectives. Ultimately, customers are the only factor that affects a company's cash flow. Consequently, attracting and retaining profitable customers must be one of the company's top priorities. The creation and management of processes to exploit customer satisfaction information must therefore be one of the most important tasks of both the company and its marketing in order to ensure that the business is profitable and can be continued and developed in the future. (Morgan et al. 2005, 148.)

2.2.3 Customer satisfaction and brand image in logistics business

Only a few research has been done on the importance of the brand image of logistics companies in the manufacturing sector. Balmer, Lin, Chen & He (2020, 850-851) have studied these issues and the effects of a positive brand image on customer loyalty. Studies in general have focused very little on the importance of these issues on the industrial side and no studies on B2B logistics activities in industry have been conducted before the study of Balmer et al.

Balmer et al. (2020, 851-852) state that, when choosing a partner, organizational buyers are likely to choose a logistics company with a well-established industrial corporate brand image. Even so, the data of industrial logistics company brands focuses on factors related to logistics partnerships rather than on company brand image. Even if it is well discovered that corporate brand images have a high importance within marketing.

Especially with logistics companies, multinational corporate brands face challenges that domestic brands do not. These are related especially in relationship with environmental contexts. However, international corporate brands are almost invariably thought to be of higher quality than domestic brands, which gives these companies a strategic competitive advantage. It can also be indicated that the industrial company brand image has more significant role in organization buyer decision-making for pre-purchasing. These organization buyers also make fast evaluation of the brand and its truthfulness regarding the logistics services they have received. The key logistics service attributes are delivery, reliability, response, flexibility, coverage, professionalism, tracking, variety, complaint handling and price. These attributes must be taken into consideration with building the services and brand image. Especially within logistics business corporate brand image is the result of customers' experiences of logistics services provided to them. (Balmer et al. 2020, 852-854.)

2.3 Marketing strategy

Marketing strategy has multiple definitions. By learning about these different definitions, one will get an understanding of the complexity of the term. (Fifield 2007, 12.) The definition is often something else but straightforward. Despite of this, everyone might agree that marketing strategy is created for the company to meet their existing or potential customer wants and needs, create value for the customer and build sustainable and profitable relationships with them. (StudySmart-er 2023.) A marketing strategy helps company to deliver value to customers, owners, and partners in line with its objectives. The marketing strategy is a highly operational program of activities that puts the marketing vision into practice. The marketing strategy can be thought of as the most im-portant strategy at the company performance level. (Tikkanen, Aspara & Parviainen 2007, 59-60.)

From time-to-time marketing strategy is thought to explain to the company how it can identify and gain sustainable economic advantage. For a marketing strategy to be able to answer such a com-prehensive question, it must address one of the most fundamental issues for the company and explain how far the company’s activities can be implemented in practice. Indeed, over the dec-ades, a marketing strategy has increasingly incorporated the practicalities of management, sales, and marketing. (Baker & Hart 2016, 53–55.)

Choosing a marketing strategy starts with understanding the business strategy and identifying the interlinkages. The marketing strategy is very individual, depending on the business situation and the objectives of the strategy, and it is unlikely that two companies will therefore have the same marketing strategy. (Tikkanen & Vassinen 2009, 21-26.) In the first stage, the company must also carry out a competitor and market analysis. This can be followed by an assessment of the techno-logical potential of the company. (Pulkka 2023.)

Once this initial situation has been established, each level of the marketing strategy must be de-fined with its own objectives. These objectives at different levels may include, for example:

- individual-level objectives, such as sales performance
- relationship-level objectives, such as customer satisfaction and customer profitability
- customer segment level targets, such as market share
- customer relationship targets, such as the acquisition of new customers or the profitability or number of different customer segments in relation to each other

- business model-level objectives, such as meeting targets for access to finance and reassuring financiers of profitability. (Tikkanen & Vassinen 2009, 27-28.)

The next step is to crystallise the company's value proposition to its customers and to define and put in words its competitive advantage. These may have been done already at some earlier point, but it is important to note these when creating the marketing strategy. Before implementing the marketing strategy, a measurement plan, and a set of KPIs must be established. These will help the company to monitor how well are the objectives met. (Pulkka 2023.)

Once designed, the marketing strategy must also be put into practice. This requires that marketing, sales, and marketing support measures are decided. It is also highly important for the marketing strategy to succeed that internal communications about it are clear and understandable for everyone. (Tikkanen & Vassinen 2009, 28-29.)

2.3.1 Creating a marketing strategy

To create marketing strategy, marketers need to examine the market, plan, and control the process. Creating the marketing strategy might be hard and complex task to complete. To succeed in this, the process should be put down into smaller steps. The steps in which the creation process should be divided into, is shown below in the Figure 2 below. (StudySmarter 2023.)

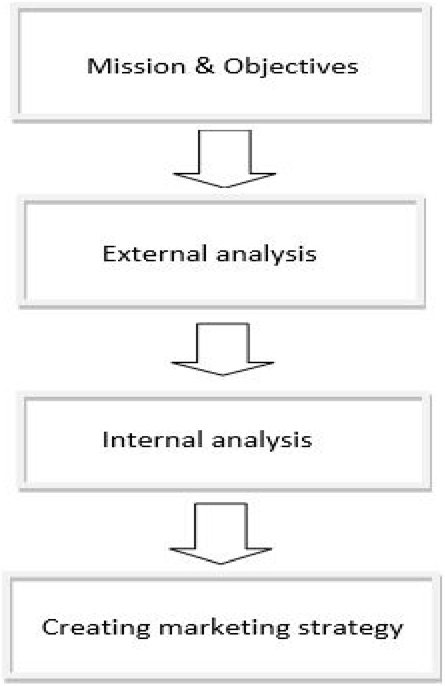

Figure 2 Steps to creating a marketing strategy

The first step in creating a marketing strategy, as shown in the figure, is to define company's mission and objectives for marketing. The company management must define the purpose of marketing and the reasons for its existence. (StudySmarter 2023.) This means that the purpose of the company will be defined. Management should start by asking themselves what business the company is in and that business they want the company to be in. These may seem like easy questions but for many companies these will end up being highly useful questions to start with. These questions may also help the company management to rethink the company's whole strategy. (Hooley 2017, 30-31.)

The second step in creating marketing strategy is external analysis. This means that the second step is to conduct market research. This is important to be done for the management to gain insight of the existing external market conditions and possible future directions of the market. Very popular way to do the external analysis is using PESTLE model for it. With this model one can examine political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors which may have an impact for the company's external environment. (StudySmarter 2023.)

PESTLE analysis model covers factors:

- Political factors
- Environmental factors
- Social factors
- Technological factors
- Legislations and regulations
- Economic and competitive forces

The model is useful in understanding all the possible factors effecting possible growth or changes by looking over the internal factors and understanding what is going on in the marketplace that the company operates in. (Franklin 2011.)

When creating this analysis with PESTLE model, marketer will:

- think of possible events that company may face and describe them
- describe the affect that this event would have for the company
- estimate the possibility for this event
- determine how important this event would be for the company (StudySmarter 2023.)

After focusing on the external market conditions, it is time to focus in the internal sector. This means that the third step in creating marketing strategy is internal analysis. In this phase company focuses in analyses of its internal conditions, including its resources, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This can be done with SWOT analysis, which has become more and more familiar during the last decades. It can be used to understand company's external conditions too but especially looking into company internally, this tool helps to see how the company can use its strengths to gain more market share. (StudySmarter 2023.)

SWOT analysis is supposedly a best-known technique to be used in identifying elements inside the company and its surroundings. This analysis is divided into four different perspectives. These perspectives are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The purpose of doing this analysis is to create an understanding of the forces possibly affecting the company in the future. After having this understanding, it helps in creating any strategies or strategic decisions. (Andersen 2007, 18.)

SWOT analysis is done by brainstorming and listing factors under all four titles. Even if the technique is seemingly easy, creating a good SWOT analysis takes time and practice. Finding the relevant factors may end up being harder than it first seems to be but with time and communicating all thoughts the results will be helpful. (Andersen 2007, 18.)

After analysing is done, the company understands how to capitalise on the market factors to convey its purpose and reach the objectives it has set. This is when the actual creation phase for the marketing strategy starts. So, it is time for step four. (StudySmarter 2023.) At this point, company management should understand that marketing strategy is something that will help the company to achieve its purpose. By creating a clear marketing strategy, a company can assure that its potentials match the needs and requirements of the markets it operates in. For an effective strategy, resources and capabilities of marketing must help the company to meet the needs of its customers. It is also important for the company management to understand that strategic thinking reaches the whole company instead of marketing management alone. Marketing management has a significant role in implementing the overall company strategy. This is why marketing strategy needs to be aligned with the company strategy to ensure that the objectives of the company can be reached. (Hooley 2017, 29–30.)

Choosing a marketing strategy starts with understanding the business strategy and identifying the interlinkages. The marketing strategy is very individual, depending on the business situation and the objectives of the strategy, and it is unlikely that two companies will therefore have the same marketing strategy. (Tikkanen & Vassinen 2009, 21-26.)

Once this initial situation has been established, each level of the marketing strategy must be defined with its own objectives. These objectives at different levels may include, for example:

- individual-level objectives, such as sales performance
- relationship-level objectives, such as customer satisfaction and customer profitability
- customer segment level targets, such as market share

- customer relationship targets, such as the acquisition of new customers or the profitability or number of different customer segments in relation to each other
- business model-level objectives, such as meeting targets for access to finance and reassuring financiers of profitability. (Tikkanen & Vassinen 2009, 27-28.)

Once designed, the marketing strategy must also be put into practice. This requires that marketing, sales, and marketing support measures are decided. It is also highly important for the marketing strategy to succeed that internal communications about it are clear and understandable for everyone. (Tikkanen & Vassinen 2009, 28-29.)

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research approach and context

The research method chosen was qualitative research with open thematic interviews. This choice was made because the purpose of the study is not to generalise the results but only to examine the current situation of the company in its own sector and with its own customers. This is an important point to take into consideration, as qualitative research does not aim for generalisability as quantitative research does. So, as usual in qualitative research, this study only looked at a single case, rather than over all generalisabilities. (Kananen 2014, 18–19.) Based on the company's objectives, it was decided to get to know the company's appointed customers. These customers were selected from among the company's existing customers in order to target as diverse range of customers as possible. From these companies, interviews were carried out with purchasing decision-makers who were already familiar with the client. The interviews were conducted as open thematic interviews with only a few themes and the interviewer tried to guide the discussion as little as possible. The aim of the discussion was to gain a broad understanding of the customer's purchasing decision process and the factors that influence it. The aim was to understand rather than explain, as is traditional for qualitative research. In addition, the aim was to find out the customer's attitude towards the company and collect any open feedback.

3.2 Data collection

As the aim was to find out the individual views, opinions, and practices of the company's customers, it was clear from the outset that the research would be conducted with an open interview method. The data was collected by using thematic interviews and a formal semi-structured setting, with predetermined themes and supporting questions, but the interviewee was allowed to share their thoughts and views on the topic very freely. In-depth questions were asked by the interviewer when needed, but due to the predetermined themes and questions, the data collection cannot be characterised as fully in-depth interview. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 3.)

The number of interviewees was kept open for a long time and the possibility of new interviewees existed until the end. However, it was decided not to increase the number of interviewees any further, as the results and responses were becoming repetitive, and it was thought no longer possible to get completely new perspectives from the interviews, and the sample size ended up being seven. This is one of the main criteria for saturation, and it was considered to have been met. It can therefore be said that saturation was achieved with this sample of the customers. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018)

The interviews were conducted in Teams during autumn 2022 in the end of September and the beginning of October. Two hours were booked for each interview to ensure that there was enough time for a calm discussion and that the interviewer did not have to interrupt the conversation with the interviewee due to lack of time. In the end, the interviews took a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of a little bit over an hour. The time allocated was therefore excellent and there was no need to arrange re-interviews or follow-up discussions with any of the interviewees.

The interview questions that had been predefined were:

- What is your company's purchasing process like?
- What are the criteria or factors that most influence your purchase decision?
- Do personal chemistries have influence on the purchasing decision?

- Where do you get information about new service providers, or do you seek information about new options?

The interviews were conducted with people who make purchasing decisions for the company they represented, who knew the client company and had purchased its services in the past. This decision was made because these people could reflect their possible experiences on the wishes or criteria of the company they work for. This ensured a good basis for a marketing strategy which would be based on the interviewees point of view.

3.3 Data analysis

The original questions have two separate purposes, in this research report they are used either to prove a research hypothesis or to serve as a basis for a hypothesis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 12). In the report the citations are put together into the figures which show how the answers were combined.

When analysing the results of the research interviews, a significant amount of consideration was given on how to understand the interviewees and their wishes. Also, when writing up the results, the two-way understanding was kept in mind so that the readers of the research report could clearly understand what they are reading. This considered the theory that Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2018) presented about qualitative research, which according to them is always about the two-way nature of understanding.

The analysis of the research was carried out by using data-driven content analysis methods by following the presented steps:

1. Listening to interviews and transcribing them word by word
2. Reading the transcribed interviews and familiarising with their content
3. Searching for and understanding simplified expressions
4. Listing of simplified expressions

5. Searching for similarities and differences in simplified expressions
6. Grouping, combining, and subcategorising simplified expressions
7. Combining subcategories and creating categories from them
8. Combining categories into main titles or combining classes and forming an overall concept for them

3.4 Ethical consideration

To confirm internal validity, the quality of a research is always assessed based on its reliability and validity. According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009), reliability refers to the extent to which data collection methods or analytical procedures produce consistent results. Therefore, some limitations of the research need to be recognised. It is necessary to examine the reliability and validity of the research results and whether reliability and validity have been achieved. In addition, an effort must be made to determine whether these potential issues have a positive or negative impact on the internal validity of the research.

The aim of the research presented in this report was not to produce generalisable results and the results presented are therefore not replicable. Therefore, this data was interpreted subjectively, as the results of this thesis relate directly to the interview responses and the key findings of them.

Assessing the validity and reliability of this research is challenging in the sense that the aim is not to produce generalisable or replicable results, but only to develop customer-based knowledge of a single logistics company. The validation has been improved by including a rich and comprehensive literature review using recent sources as a basis for it. Nevertheless, reliability is certainly challenging to demonstrate. However, generalisable results were not intended to be collected and therefore reliability is not a major concern. More important is the usefulness of the results of the research for the case company. To a certain extent, reliability has been demonstrated by a transparent explanation of how the research process was carried out and what actions led to certain results. As far as ethics are concerned, the highest possible standards have been applied. One aspect of ethical principles is that references to the original author and publication have been ensured for each claim made during the literature review. On the other hand, only results that could be presented as conclusions of the researcher based on the interviews have been presented. One formal means of ensuring high ethical standards is the standard use of the Urkund software, which ensures that there is no room for plausible deniability.

4 Results

4.1 Customer purchase desicion making

The research included interviewing existing customers of the company. The main goal was to identify the factors influencing their purchasing decisions. As diverse a range of customers as possible were selected to gain a comprehensive understanding of the criteria on which the company's customers base their purchasing decisions.

The interviewees included industrial operators with a long-term customer relationship as well as customers with individual orders. However, all customers were business customers, and no consumer customers were interviewed. The proportion of private customers among the company's customers is so small that they were not considered to be of much economic importance to the company's business.

The first step was to ask the interviewee to describe the progress of the purchasing process of the company they represent and the factors influencing the decision-making process. Without exception, the interviewees started to explain their company's purchasing process in a comprehensive and fluent manner. Interviewees explained how the need arises and how they move forward step by step towards the purchasing decision and conclusion of the contract.

send certain service providers or partners different kinds of estimation surveys so largely with the information they have and this phase will then start to see based on experience, of course, that what is worth addressing what is not and how to support the customer as if the first kind of so as to go through.	send out estimation surveys with the data you have and start looking at what to address and what not to address and how to follow up with the customer	estimation surveys and see what is worth addressing and what is not	estimation surveys	estimation surveys/inquiries
we then approach companies, and send a message saying "hey we have a questionnaire for such and such a place" and then we start to go through it in more detail and try to get the information that we know you need.	send a message and let's go through it in more detail and try to get the information we know you need.	send a message and let's go through it in more detail and try to get the information you need	send a message and let's go through it in more detail	
we start with a request for information (RFI) process where we send several forwarding and transport companies this RFI and then ask them for answers about their knowledge of the area, their location in the destination or whether they have agents or partners or something like that if they are not in the location themselves.	start with a request for information where you send out a number of RFI's and ask for answers about their knowledge of the area, their location in the destination or whether they have agents or partners or something like that.	send out several RIFs and ask for responses on knowledge of the area, location at the destination or whether there are agents or partners	send rfi to several companies	
we as a lot for indications. Let's start with the fact that the indicators are at the point where it could be that there are two or three years ahead and the trade is being questioned and massaged at a very early stage.	quite a lot ask for indications. Let's start from the point where the indicators are at the point where you're two or three years ahead and you're asking about the trade and you start to massage it early on.	a lot asking for the indications. Let's start with rubbing the indications early on.	lots of asking for indications at an early stage	
We start thinking about what kind of service we ultimately need and when we need it. When all the projects are so different, so so so... so it must first find out what we need. Then when it is known we will approach the companies that we think are suitable and could offer it to us. We tell them what we need and ask if they could do it.	we will then approach companies that we think are suitable to offer this to us. We tell them what we need and ask if they could do it.	approaching suitable companies. Tell them what you need and ask if they could do	approaching suitable companies and asking if they could do it	
We have three, at least three, different companies bidding for our contracts. And then the most suitable one is selected.	we have three, at least three, different companies bidding for our contracts. And then the most suitable one is selected.	at least three different companies are put out to tender. The most suitable of these will then be selected.	put out to tender by at least three different companies	

Figure 3 Interview answers part1

The interviews showed that the purchasing process follows broadly the same pattern. The purchasing process starts when a company identifies a need for a service. The first step is for the purchasing party to search for and list potential service providers according to its needs. A pre-qualification round is then carried out to identify those service providers who can actually deliver the service as desired. After this round, the first round of calls for tenders will start, where the need will be presented again to the selected service providers, and they will be asked to tender for the provision of the service. This can be done either by phone or often by email, explaining the need and how the project is to be carried out. In other words, the call for tenders tells you what kind of service the customer needs. A deadline is set for submitting the offer to the customer, by which time the offer should be received. It turns out that while some remind or ask for offers, others do very little or nothing and consider it as a bad sign, or as a sign on unreliability, if offers are not delivered on time or at all. In addition to meeting the deadlines, respondents also felt it was important to respond to the calls for tenders with the content as requested, rather than modifying the content of the tender to make it better from their point of view. The first stage is to keep tenders as comparable as possible. It was obvious in all the answers that it should be very important for the company to reply all the calls for tenders, and this should not be ignored.

How much does it cost to get something like this from point A to point B. And then it comes... sometimes it comes on time, and sometimes it gets forgotten in some it... bit space on some miracle... send that offer that I even reproached your principal owner a little bit this weekend.	Sometimes it comes on time, and sometimes it gets forgotten somewhere, which is what I was complaining about.	Sometimes it is forgotten, that's what I complain about	Sometimes it is forgotten	
they are like the response we expect at the tender stage	tender phase response what we expect	awaiting response at the tender stage	response at the tender phase	
Once or twice go unreplied and then you can forget about it.	Once or twice unreplied and forget about it	Once or twice unreplied are forgotten in the future	Once or twice unreplied are forgotten	
Let's say, normally, there's a certain kind of check. You can almost see directly, what is the indication, what is what, so you can put it like that, but all the cases that are offered a little bigger, that's all. They're constantly being looked at and twisted and asked questions.	Normally, there is a certain kind of check. They're always looking over their shoulder and twisting and asking questions.	A certain check, always looking back and twisting and asking questions	Check, to follow up, and ask questions	
if we have, for example, asked you for prices, then we have been told that hey, now we heard that there is no point in putting any more money into this or this is someone else or... but eliminating unnecessary work is really important.	eliminating unnecessary work is really important.	eliminating unnecessary work is really important	eliminating unnecessary work	
then if you go to do something bigger so yes sometimes it's really funny, that what kind of requests for proposals are that they have been said and quite a few have gotten in the way really quickly, that who are then genuinely coming so then there rupee to get genuinely that picture and story and then with it can move forward.	what kind of requests to tender are they that have been said and quite a few have fallen by the time	what kind of requests to tender are they that have fallen by the time	tender request have fallen along the way	Clear, well-calculated and well-thought-out offers on time
Of course, when you realise that the solution offered is unprofessional, sloppy, even arrogant, you'll notice it right away. You don't bother those...	when you realise that the solution offered is unprofessional, don't bother.	when you notice that the solution is unprofessional, you don't bother.	no to unprofessional solutions	
Then again, in those cases, as something like over-promising is usually such that you usually notice it at some stage and hope that you don't have to experience it. It is better to humbly offer what you can and say directly how things are when you see that it is difficult.	over-promising is usually something you do notice and hope you don't have to experience. It's better to humbly offer what you can and tell it like it is	promising too much, usually you hope not to have to get those. Better to offer what you know and say how it is	It's better to offer what you know and say it straight and not promise too much	
The fact that you have a bid done well. It's been sold, marketed well, done well, invoiced the right way so you're happy to pay it on the due date.	The offer is well made. It's sold, marketed well, done well, invoiced the right way.	Bid well, sold, marketed, done well.	A well-executed package, including the offer.	
answer as asked and stick to what has been agreed. And then, of course, during the project, it is expected that the forwarder is able to communicate and proactive, so that he does not have to wait and grab things from there, answers.	Answer as asked and stick to what was agreed, during the project the forwarder is communicative and proactive	Answer as asked, stick to what was agreed, communicative and proactive during the project	Answer questions, stick to what's agreed, communicate openly and honestly	

Figure 4 Interview answers part2

The next step in the purchasing process was either to select a service provider and plan the implementation of it with them (especially for individual transports). Another option is to go through the next round of selecting only the most suitable bidders and then scheduling a meeting with them to ask further in-depth questions. In any case, at this stage, the service providers will be consulted on the content of the project in more detail and together with the customer they will consider the possible options for implementation. The content of the offer and the scope of the service will be jointly defined at the latest at this stage.

Finally, the customer chooses the service provider, i.e. makes the final purchasing decision. Based on the interviews, this last purchasing decision is mainly influenced by the factors shown in the table below. The responses show that price invariably influences the decision, but that the cheapest price is not usually the basis for the choice. In addition to price, the clarity of the offer and price, the reliability and professionalism of the provider, and communication with the customer all play a significant role in the purchase decision. It is based on these factors as a whole that the buyer makes the final purchase decision and choice.

Usually the next rounds, usually we do it in such a way that usually the cheapest and the most expensive have to be dropped, because neither of them know what they're doing.	Usually the cheapest and the most expensive have to be dropped, because neither of them know what they are doing.	Usually the cheapest and most expensive out because they don't know what they are doing	Cheapest and most expensive off due to estimated lack of skills	The price must be clear, reasonable, well calculated. Service and trust must be in place, so price alone is not the deciding factor.
Of course, we want to know how it is organised, because it has often happened that during the project we get burnt out by one of the contractors and also by us, because we don't know how to resource it, and we have tried very hard to pay attention to that, so to speak, that the next round will be the ones in whose process we believe in. Whether we think it is realistic.	We want to know how it is organised, because it often happens that during a project, one of the contractors and we, on our side, when we don't know how to resource and try to pay attention to the next round of those who are trusted to do the process. Whether we think it is realistic.	For the next round, those whose process is believed to be done, it is considered realistic.	For the next round, those whose process is credible and whose bid is realistic.	
The price is, of course we'll see, if we get seven or so offers, we'll see what the average price is.	The price is, if we get seven bids, we'll see what the average price is.	Iif we get seven bids, we'll see what the average price is	Average price	
there have been many times in the last ten years that the winner is the one who only has the cheapest price. So, fortunately, that time seems to be a bit over. There are some other values, there are environmental values and others.	There have been many times when the winner is the one with the cheapest price. Fortunately, that time is getting a bit past. There are other values, there are environmental values too and others.	We are getting past the time where the winner is always the one with the lowest price. There will be environmental values too and others.	Environmental values etc. Not just a cheap price anymore.	
you see all kinds of prices from time to time. They are like from the woods sometimes and probably trying, in some way as in the project business, to be the first to sell themselves in with pricing in order to get to bid.	You see all kinds of prices. They are out from the woods sometimes and aim to be the first to sell themselves in with pricing to get a bid.	You see all kinds of prices. They are from the woods sometimes and seek to sell themselves by pricing themselves in.	Prices are sometimes whatever and they try to sell themselves on it.	
You have to be competitive and so on, but you have to find the realism that you have to do the profit in a completely different way. That kind of as if personally the trust, understanding, know its competence. That is important. But sometimes you have to remember that what is important is to be able to say no.	You have to be competitive, but you have to find the realism that you have to make the profit in a different way.	You have to be competitive, but you have to make the profit in a different way	Need to be competitive and make profit in another way	
Basicly, always the cheapest, but then also taking into account how the service is suitable for us, and how we trust that it will happen as agreed and so on.	Basicly, the cheapest, but taking into account how the service suits us and how confident we are that it will happen as agreed and so on.	The cheapest, but taking into account how the service suits us and how we trust	The cheapest service that works for us and is trusted	
Of course, the first thing I look at when I see the offers is the prices first. What the price is. And then after that we start to read the small prints to see what the price includes. How much it is... the price may be cheap but then the loading time is too short. And overcharging for overtime is too expensive. Compared to others and others it can be even five hundred euros more expensive or a ton depending on where you go. We sometimes talk about a difference of fifty euros between price and freight. So they say that, well, it's not much of anything. Or we talk about a hundred or a thousand. It depends a bit on the total amount.	The first thing I do when I get offers is look at prices. Then after that you start to read what the price includes. For a fifty euro price-freight difference it's not much of anything. A bit depends on the total amount.	The first thing I'll do is look at the prices. After that, let's read what's in it. Depends on the total.	First price, then what it contains.	
The total price and that would be the price of the service and that's it. Then what comes afterwards so for you, just as if the authorities and this type of things so good to be as if already included in the price. No need to return to them in a year and think that where it is now this, to which gig belongs.	The total price and that would be the price of the service and that's it.	The total price and that would be the price.	The total price must include everything	
Yes, but the fact that price is of course the number one thing these days, but it doesn't always matter if the price level is the same for many. Like then just a little bit let's see with whom to do and with whom not.	That price is of course the number one thing today, but it doesn't always matter if the price level is the same for many. Then we'll see who we do business with and who we don't.	Price does not always matter if the price level is the same for many.	The price level is not necessarily the deciding factor.	

Figure 5 Interview answers part3

The interviews revealed that the most important factors influencing purchasing decisions, apart from price, are clear communication, cooperation, service, and reliability. When a company takes care of these aspects, it creates a positive brand image of itself in the eyes of its customers and enables it to be considered for future purchases and tender rounds. It can therefore be concluded from the responses that price influences the purchase decision, but there are other factors to consider in order to build lasting customer relationships.

The search for new companies starts from the fact that first we look at the experience we have, then we look at the know-how, then we have these certain networks where we can ask what we can look at. Maybe we talk to colleagues, customers, others.	if someone is the most expensive all the time and then if they have been told about it several times and nothing is done about it then we don't do anything about it... there are of course many things and yet we believe in giving people a chance to try.	a good example is breakbulk and different events, fairs where you meet different actors. They are good places to visit. Meet and get to know companies and people.
Follow the business. We've been doing some serious networking in the Scoden network which is a worldwide company.	That same person might pop up in another forwarder.	I found this company by just looking it up on Google... if you don't understand see it from Google. See how it could be done, what is a possible partner who could be used in general.
It is important to understand and deepen it, which is what I was thinking myself, that if every time it would come from the world and take different companies and all the offers from different places... surely it would save a few hundred, a thousand, but then the constant development is missing, which I think is important. Do you need to do all the extra work all the time to save a few hundred when it might be better to do it easier and faster.	We talk to each other, ask each other if we've had any experiences with anyone. And of course there are semmosiiki forwarders from so when in a way just have not received the offer on time or have not responded as requested, so enough of them now a few times try to try now, try now, pay attention to this and a little as if babysittais it to come to the offer from there so as to see if there is so as nothing. Of course, when you start to see that none of them are always late with their offers, they never respond to all of them and they only respond in part, it makes you think that we should look for something else to replace them.	if the service provider is not active, we do not look in the phone book, so to speak, to see who is so to speak logistics and then call them. No. But it all depends on the activity of the journalist, proactivity, for example, if there is now a project in the press, someone will contact you and say that we can make this project a thing.
In what way are partners and new options now available. And admittedly so when I said so very much we are approached about it yes, but that as a man I was the kind of guy when you tell me you need you to take care of it so I was there soku finger in the mouth and google google google help me google.	we assume to know the operators in the areas where they are and then if not, we go to see how we can take care of them through old contacts, maybe through new networks or others, and we have to keep our eyes open all the time.	Of course, we go to a lot of fairs and events and all sorts of dinners. But it's not like that... or decisions are made in other matters and those are just the maintenance of relationships. And of course we like them, but the decisions are not made just because somebody offers you dinner or a glass of champagne.

Figure 6 Interview answers part4

The interviewees’ responses were also used to identify the ways in which they search for new partners or service providers from who they could buy the service they are in need for. The responses showed that the majority of customers rely on their own networks and contacts. In addition, events such as exhibitions were seen as a good place to find new service providers or make new contacts. The visibility and discoverability of the company through online search engines was also highlighted by some respondents.

Based on these results, a marketing strategy started to be planned. The following section presents the marketing strategy which was created.

4.2 Marketing strategy plan

The company's long-term goal is to continue to be the number one player in the industry and to evolve with the market. The aim for the coming years is also to enter new markets. These new markets are a way for the company to introduce new services to the market. Over the next few years, the aim is not to expand geographically, but to strengthen market shares in existing regions and services and to launch new service scopes. When examining the company's activities, objectives, and overall strategy, it was found that the company's marketing strategy could be classified as diversification and market penetration strategy. Although no actual marketing strategy had been created in the past.

The company introduces its core values in their brand book, which has been created to provide all the information behind the brand for the employees. In the brand book it is said that the core values for the company are responsibility, solution-focus, cooperation, and flexibility of a family-owned company.

The company thrives to be responsible for the safety of its employees and environment. The company also encourages the staff to work as responsibly as possible, because they feel that it is a matter of honour to do and complete the work as well as possible. This is thought to build trust in the work communities and gives a clear image of the capabilities to work in all conditions and environments. For the company, responsibility also means respecting nature and environment. It is clear for all employees that the company wants to be part of the production chain of renewable energy and thereby creating the best possible future for the future generations.

Solution-focus is one of the first values that the company has had throughout its existence. This value refers to the will to seek solutions in all situations. The management of the company trust that the customers can rely on the company to find the ways to manage every single project no matter what challenges they may have. It is believed in the company that with the continuous development they can ensure their pioneer position.

One of the important values for the company is cooperation. For them the cooperation covers cooperating with each other and their customers. The company requires the best input from the entire chain for all projects. This means that the full focus is required from everyone from planning to project management and execution. The company's excellent performance is born from cooperation between all the experts and people involved. It is stated that working for a common goal is a safety factor as well.

The background as a family-owned company means communality, openness, and the ability to be flexible according to the customer needs. Company management sees that it is important for the employees to know each other and to be able to use their best expertise in their daily work. This is thought to also increase trust between each other.

The company has a vision to be the leading provider of logistics services for oversized and heavy cargos in the Nordics, covering operations all over Europe. The company wants to employ the best people in the industry, develop innovative solutions for transport technology and digitalisation, and work efficiently and safely. The vision is also to widen the scope to make the company the number one solution for all the logistics services, including storage and construction services for customers in the renewable energy sector.

4.2.1 External analysis

When starting the external analysis of the company, the aim was to identify its position in relation to its competitors and the opportunities and threats to future growth. The PESTLE analysis was chosen to identify and investigate these issues, as it makes it possible to identify external factors from different sectors. As presented earlier in the report, the PESTLE analysis covers political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors. These factors can be threats, challenges, or issues affecting operations and decisions that need to be considered in planning the organisation's operations.

In the diagram below, these factors are divided into their own sectors. However, it is worth remembering that several of them go more or less hand in hand and influence each other.

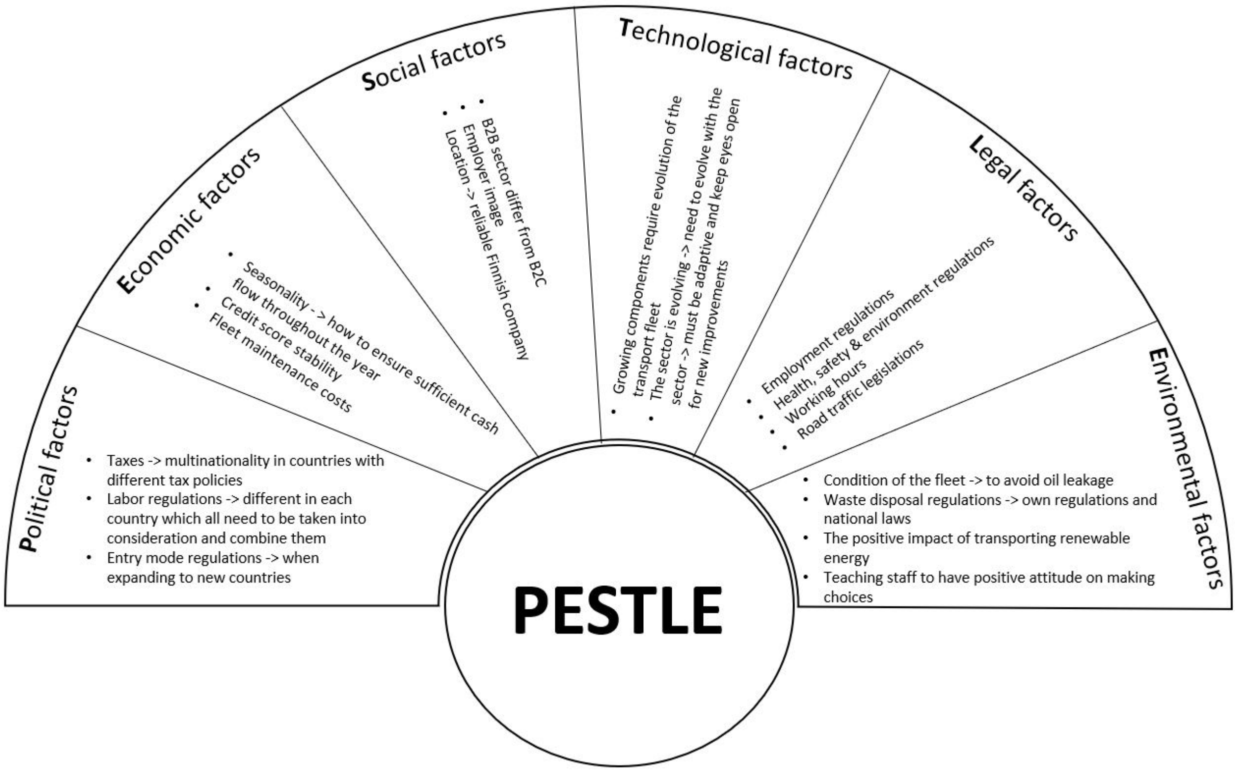

Figure 7 PESTLE - analysis

The political factors that came to the fore were the taxation of countries. In a multi-national business, with both operations and turnover taking places in several countries, it is of the utmost importance that all aspects of operations consider the taxation of different countries and financial flows between them. When the activity in mainly intra-EU and money flows between EU countries, the general EU rules must naturally also be considered.

In addition to taxation, the labour laws of different countries must also be considered in multinational projects. When employees working in the same project come from more than one country, common internal company rules must be created. These rules must consider the laws of all these different countries. The simplest approach to this is to list each country's regulations or certain issues and adopt the most stringent of these regulations or laws as internal company practices. In this way, the conduct is acceptable in the eyes of the legislation of each employee's home country. In addition, it is important to take into account the laws that apply in the country where the project is being carried out as well. This is particularly important to bear in mind in cases where the project takes place in a country from where none of the staff members are from.

In addition to the above, it is important to consider the provisions on the entry space for new countries. This is particularly important to consider in situations where activities are extended to new countries or where the project extends to new countries. For example, it is important to examine the road traffic legislation in the country of transit to see if it differs in any way from the country of origin or destination.

When looking at the economic factors affecting the operation of the company, the first thing that emerged was the seasonal nature of the activity in the Nordics. When considering the operation and stability of a business, it is very important to consider how to ensure a continuous and, in particular, sufficient cash flow throughout the year. This is also extremely important to ensure the stability of credit data from one year to the next. If cash flow is particularly affected by seasonality in a particular year, it is possible that the company's credit record will also be affected, with a potentially even more significant long-term impact. During the busy season, it is often more challenging to maintaining fleet, which is why major maintenance operations are often scheduled at quieter timer for other activities. This can also have a significant impact from a financial point of view, if these maintenance operations entail significantly costs that are difficult to cover when the incoming cash flow is lower.

Thirdly, the social factors affecting the operations of the company were considered. The first point that emerged was that the business-2-business sector is significantly different from business-2-customer sector. This has a major impact on how a company can act socially and the ways in which it should, for example, present itself to the outside world. Marketing activities in the business-2-customer sector are often much more straightforward and visible than in the business-2-business sector. This must of course be taken into account in all activities and in the design of marketing strategy.

As a social factor, employer image also plays a huge role. In today's society, it is often extremely challenging to find the right, professional staff for a company, and a well-established employer image plays a very important role in this respect. By creating a trustworthy and positive image of itself as an employer, a company attracts the right job seekers. A positive employer image can also easily have an impact on the entire brand image of a company, and in this case, it also affects credibility and reliability in the eyes of customers. Geographical location and culture have also an impact in the social determinants sector. It is obvious, that Finland as a company's home country creates an image of reliability and professionalism in the minds of customers and potential new customers. Indeed, being Finnish is a factor which, if presented appropriately, can have a positive impact on social factors.

In the external analysis of the technological factors, the first to emerge were the ever-growing components in transports. Particularly in wind power transportation projects, the components have almost doubled their size over the years. This naturally has an impact on the transport fleet required, which the company must renew and develop in order to be able to offer transport services. The industry is also constantly evolving, and companies must strive to keep up with developments in order to remain reliable in the eyes of their customers and continue to provide services that meet their needs.

In addition to the labour and transport legislation mentioned above, health, safety, and environment regulations must also be considered. There are also differences between countries in this sector and it is particularly important that companies consider each country's own regulations in this area too. In addition, working time legislation must be taken into account for each country and employee. These laws must be harmonised to ensure equality for all employees.

The last external factor to be considered is the environment. The first of these factors to emerge was the condition and maintenance of the fleet. It is particularly important for a transport company to maintain their fleet in a good condition in order to avoid, for example, oils leakages or other damage that could harm the environment. Employees are also instructed and trained in waste recycling, again taking into account the regulations and laws in the various countries that operations take place in. A large part of the company's activities is linked to the production of transport of renewable energy. This can be seen as a positive factor in relation to external environmental factors.

4.2.2 Internal analysis

The company conducts an annual employee well-being survey to monitor employee satisfaction and well-being. The survey also identifies any suggestions for improvement or development of the company's operations. The company wants to maintain its family business model and its main principles include transparency and everyone's involvement in the development of the company and its practices. It is also important for the company to listen to its employees, and it has been a fundamental principle throughout its history that everyone should be free to express their views at all levels of the company. Each employee can, if he or she wishes, contact his or her supervisors, colleagues, or even the company's management or owners, so that complaints or concerns are taken into account with the necessary seriousness.

The results of the latest workplace well-being survey are presented in the figures below.

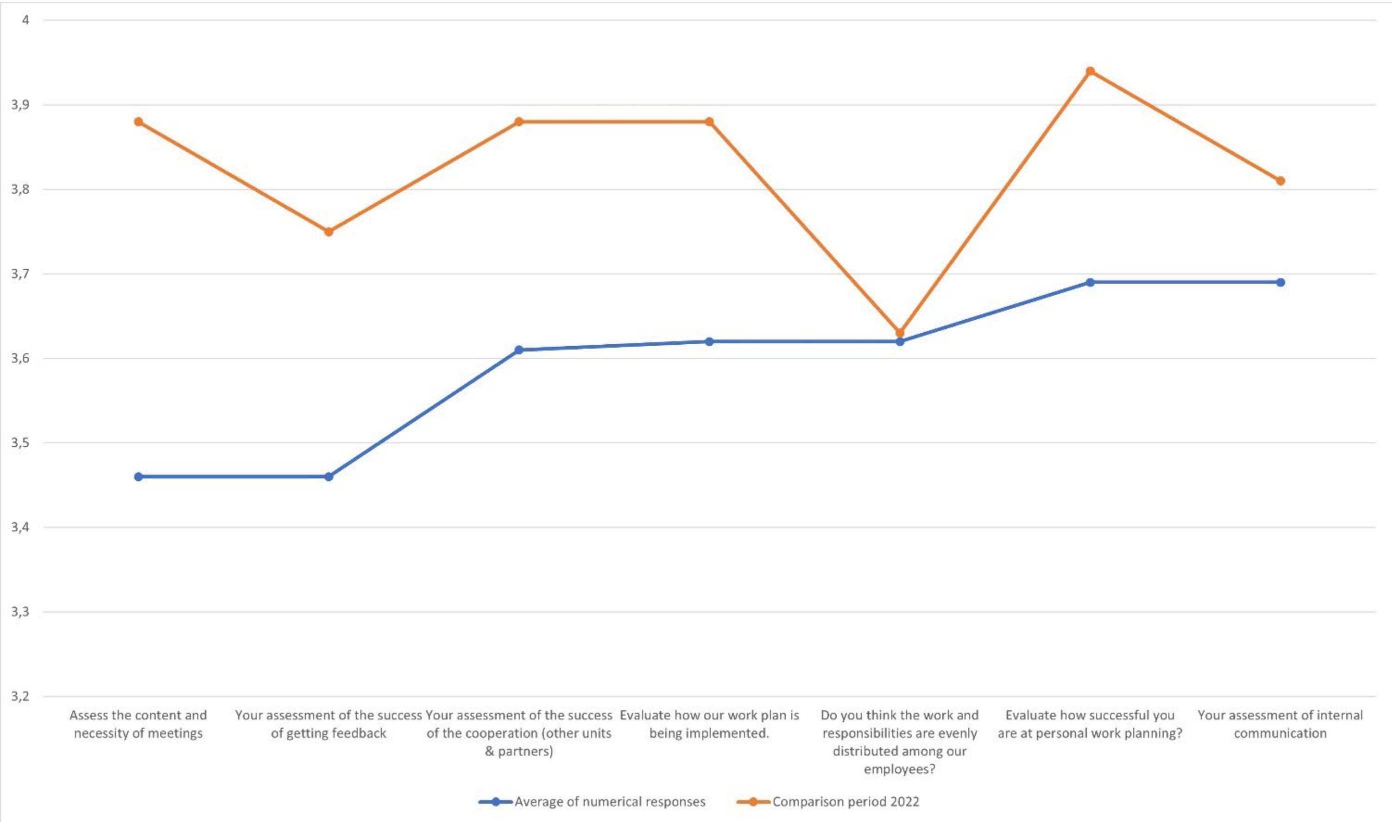

Figure 8 Office staff part1

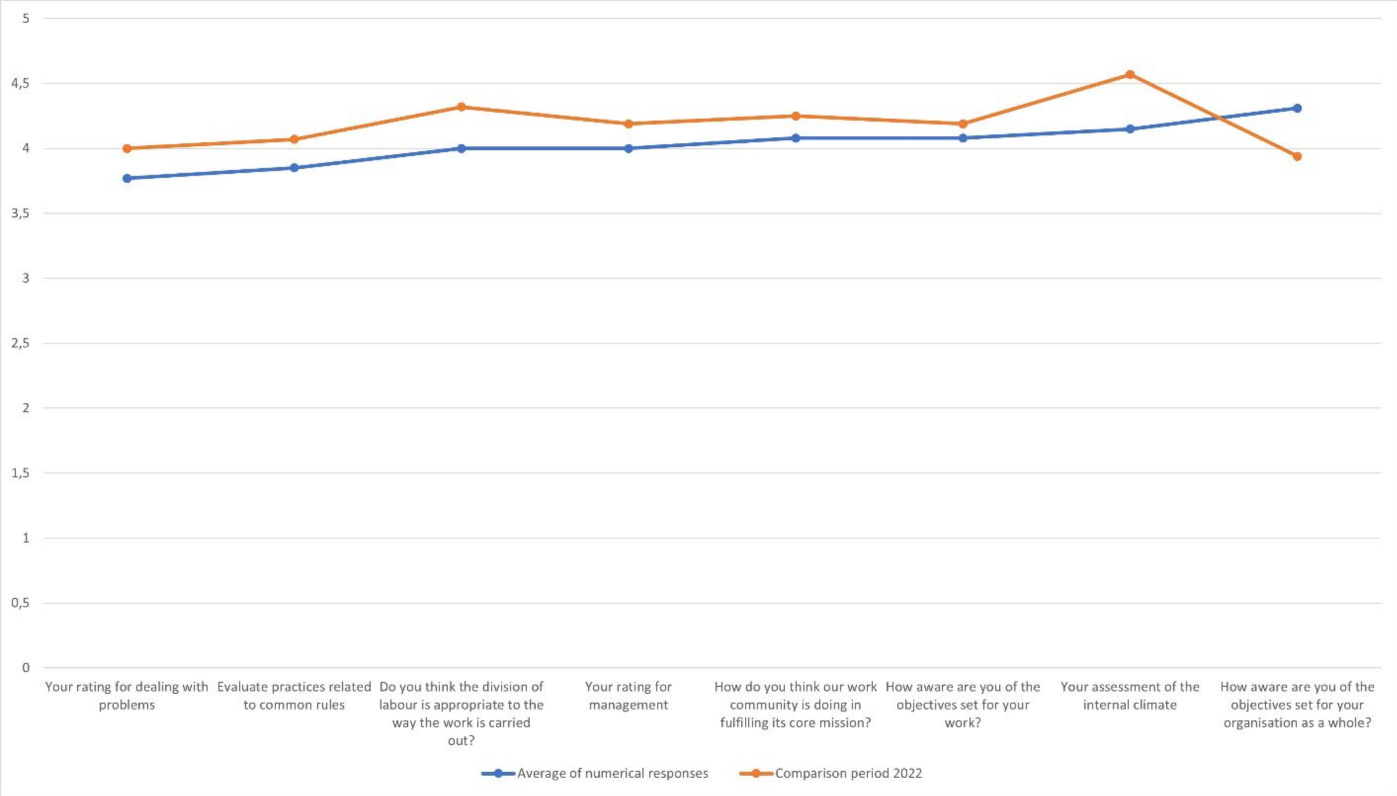

Figure 9 Office staff part2

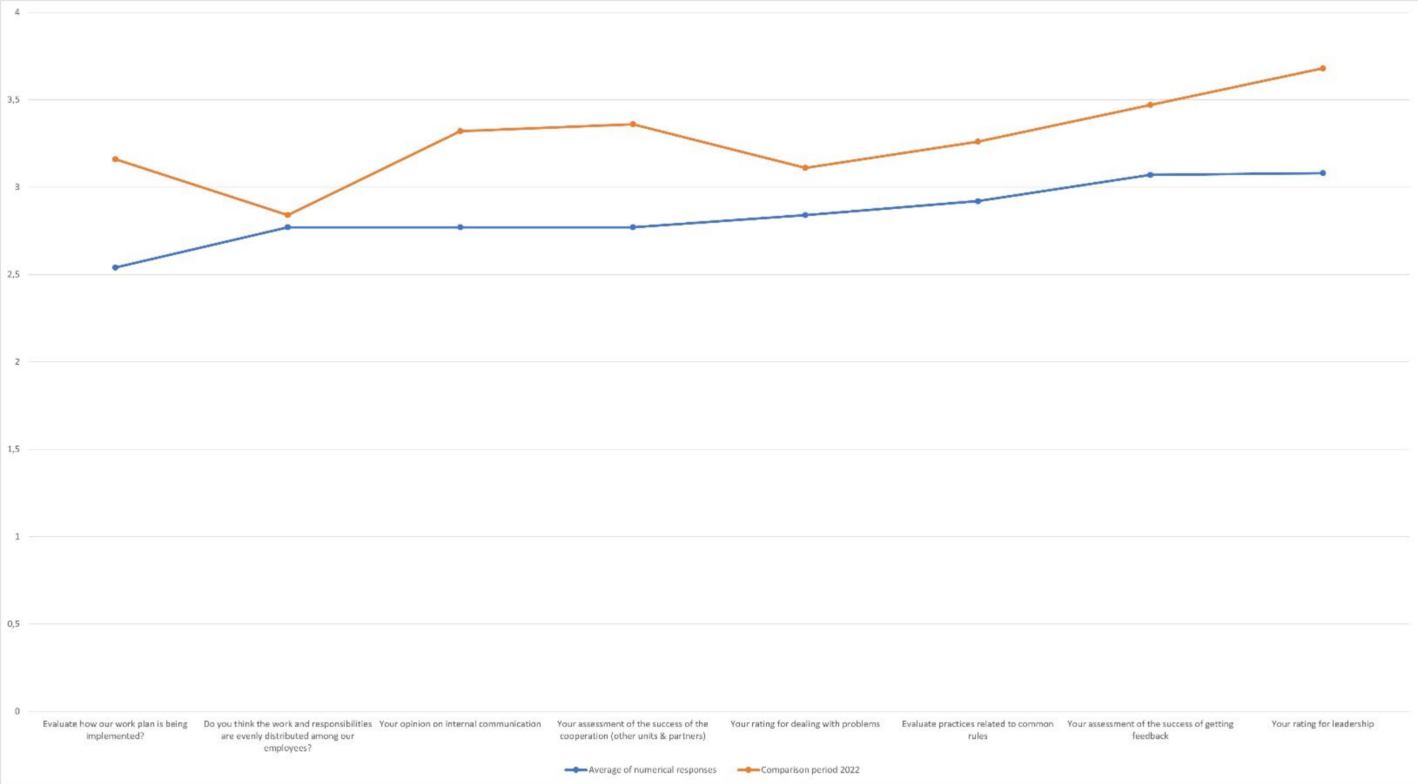

Figure 10 Drivers part1

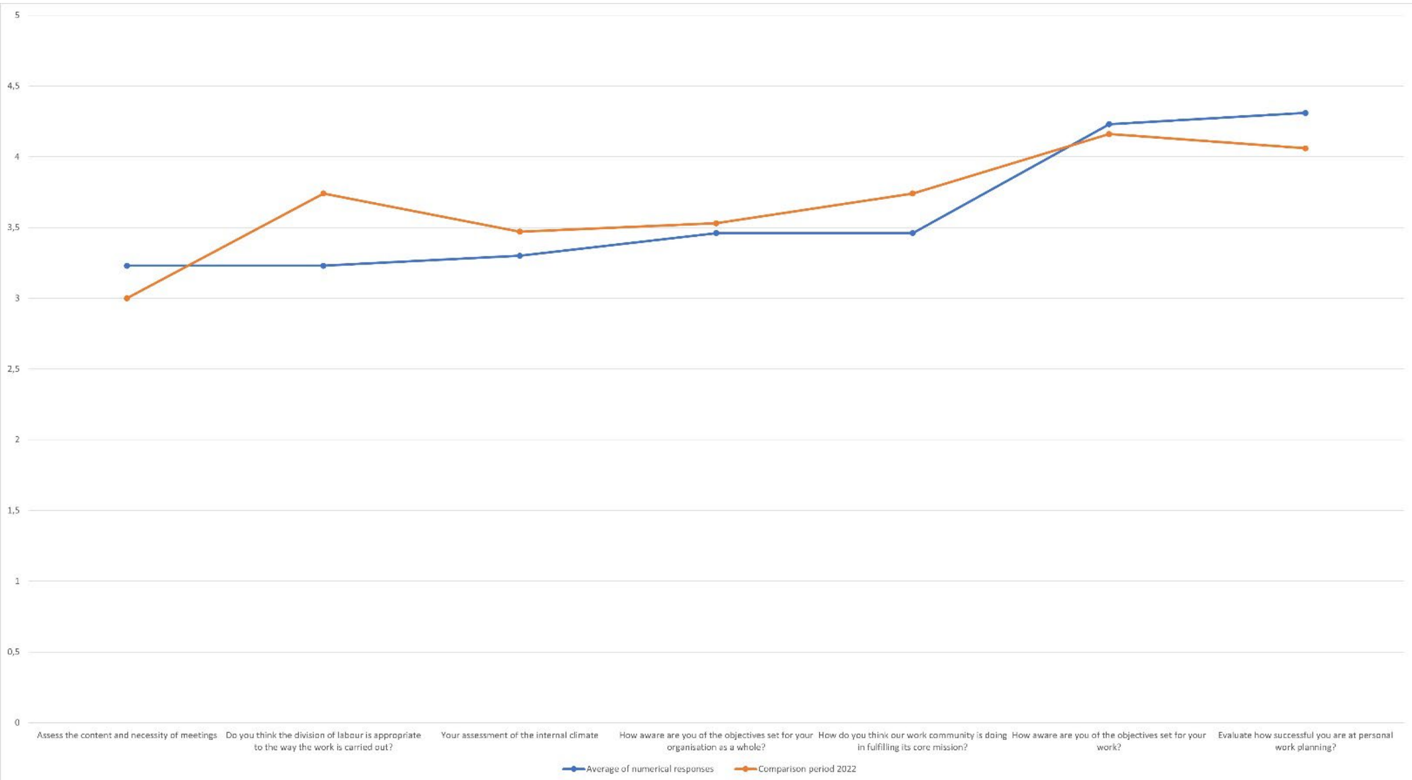

Figure 11 Drivers part2

Question	Summary of positive answers/ ideas for improve	Summary of negative
Have we talked enough about the basic mission of our work community?	Most answer yes, few no	
How do you define your core mission? How do you succeed in doing it?	Respondents get to define their basic tasks	
Ideas to improve work planning?	Hope for more clarity on who does what.	
Feedback/ideas on the division of labour	Workload could be shared more evenly, more transparency in cooperation between departments	
What meetings does your job involve?		Many have too much meetings
Feedback/ideas for the meetings	Creating agendas, focusing who to invite, reducing the number of project meetings	
What is the atmosphere in our workplace? (e.g. open, supportive, tense, negative...)	Open, good, supportive, cooperative	
What are the good things about the atmosphere?	Being yourself, team spirit, daring to speak up about problems, humour, getting help when you need it	
Mitä kehitettävää/ ongelmia ilmapiirissä on?	What is there to improve/problems with the atmosphere?	
Have you observed/experienced bullying or discrimination? If so, what kind?	Reluctant talk, disdain for foreign workers	
How does Silvast deal with problems and conflicts related to working together? Is there room for improvement?	Mainly good feedback, but follow-up would be welcome	
Do you feel able to raise problems if you see them?	100% respond yes	
What works well in leadership? What about site management? What needs to be improved?	Openness, relaxed atmosphere, ability to discuss issues, willingness to develop and evolve	More discussion and listening, communication could be better, more resources for leadership
Are the common rules clear?	Nearly all answered yes	
Do we stick to the common rules?	Mainly yes	There is some perception that the rules apply to others to varying degrees
How do you deal with situations where you have deviated from the common rules? Is there room for improvement?	Mainly yes	Some things are overlooked
What works well for internal communication?	Internal newsletter, Lauri's meetings, Information meetings	
What are the problems with internal communication? How would you improve internal communication?	At times too infrequent or delayed, too much word of mouth information and gossip	
Do you receive feedback of your work?	Most respondents yes	Many say no
If yes, what kind of feedback have you received? From whom?	From manager and colleagues.	
Ideas for improvement/feedback on feedback	Development discussions in working groups, more feedback in general. Positive feedback is particularly needed	
How does cooperation work with different services and partners? What works well, where are the challenges?		Different offices have different ways of working, no common agreed ways are committed to. A lot of cronyism
Should we increase or decrease cooperation with different services and partners?How would you improve cooperation?	Want to increase cooperation in general.More live meetings are needed to build team spirit.	Suspicion and distrust of the Danish office

Figure 12 Office staff open ended questions

Question	Summary of positive answers/ ideas for improvem	Summary of negative comments
Have we talked enough about the basic mission of our work community?	Almost everyone says yes	
How do you define your core mission? How do you succeed in doing it?	Known and thought to be very successful	
Ideas to improve work planning?	Improving information flow, transparency, asking for advice from the field	Lying?
Feedback/ideas on the division of labour	Distribute work more evenly, end job selection, more presence for traffic management on the south-eastern route	
What meetings does your job involve?	Site meetings, Toolbox	Some do not feel that there are meetings at all, although there are quite a few where drivers are invited.
Feedback/ideas for the meetings	A firmer agenda for general teams, dealing with difficult issues in meetings, sticking to what was agreed in meetings	
What is the atmosphere in our workplace? (e.g. open, supportive, tense, negative...)	Funny, good, ok	It is perceived as largely divided and a little tense.
What are the good/bad things about the atmosphere?	Teamwork often works well, you get to work independently, the people are nice.	More equal treatment, more transparency in management and an end to lying
Have you observed/experienced bullying or discrimination? If so, what kind?		Talking behind others backs
How does the company deal with problems and conflicts related to working together? Is there room for improvement?	By talking	No nuisance must be caused, perceived as a wrong approach
Do you feel able to raise problems if you see them?	100% Yes	
What works well in leadership? What about site management?	Praise for Simo Ritvanen, also for the site management. Some people understand that information is shared as soon as it is available. Good communication with the driving organisation.	We want feedback, more transparency and information about the gigs, anticipation, no more lying,
Are the common rules clear?	Seems to be 50-50	
Are common rules being respected?	More no than yes	
How do you deal with situations where you have deviated from the common rules? Is there room for improvement?	By talking about it, or by feeling that you're not being treated properly in any way.	
What works well in internal communication?	Communication from Simo and HR, it is generally felt that communication has improved and is working at a general level.	
What are the problems with internal communication? How would you improve internal communication?	There's a lack of information, too many rumours, you don't always feel like you know who should know about thing.	
Do you get feedback on your work?	Everyone does get feedback	
If yes, what kind of feedback have you received? From whom?	Mainly good from managers or customers	
Ideas for improvement/feedback on feedback	More criticism wanted, including development	
How does cooperation work with different services and partners? What works well, where are the challenges?	Otherwise fine, but Danish employees are not trusted	
Should we increase or decrease cooperation with different services and partners?How would you improve cooperation?	In principle, yes, but the first thing we want is to get the Danish branch under control	

Figure 13 Drivers open ended questions

The results show that employees are generally very satisfied with their employer and their work. When comparing the different groups of respondents, it is clear that office staff members are generally slightly more satisfied than drivers. However, both groups of employees have an average satisfaction rating of more than 3.

Office staff gave the lowest rating to the content and usefulness of the meetings. This was rated on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1=not at all satisfied and 5=very satisfied, with an average score of 3,46. The office staff members assessment of the success of the feedback also received the same average of score. The lowest rating was given by drivers to the implementation of the work plan. The average for this rating among them was 2,54. This means that it was rated only slightly more positive than negative.

The question ”How aware are you of the objectives set for our organisation as a whole?” received the highest score from the office staff members. The average score for this question was 4,31. The question ”How do you manage your personal work planning?”. The average score for this question was also 4,31. In other words, although drivers are the most critical of the success of overall work planning, they are nevertheless pleased with their able to plan their own work and satisfied with it.

The responses to the open-ended questions were mainly positive feedback and suggestions for improvement from all employees. Only a few individual respondents made negative comments on these questions. The main areas for improvement, according to the responses, are the division of work and the clarification of tasks for each employee. Some employees felt that they do not know the person behind all responsibilities or tasks and get confused from time to time because of this. More clarity and communication on these issues was requested by many respondents.

The general atmosphere is perceived as positive by both groups of respondents. Employees in both groups feel that they can be openly themselves and honestly and openly share their opinions or views on different issues. In both groups of respondents, employees feel that they can get help from their colleagues when needed. However, the drivers' responses also revealed that there is sometimes a tendency towards cliquishness and tension in the workplace. This group of respondents also feel that there is a certain amount of talking behind others' back amongst colleagues. The responses suggest that these situations create inequalities and that there is a desire for some better equality for all employees. More transparency within internal communication would also be welcome.

The responses from both groups of respondents also show that trust in offices and employees in different countries is somewhat questioned by many respondents. In particular, the respondents in the driver's sector do not trust the employees of the foreign offices as much as the employees of the Finnish head office.

Both groups of respondents give credits and high marks to transparency, communication, and leadership. Respondents from both groups also feel that they can influence the problems they perceive. Openness and supervision are issues on which the company has invested in recent years, and the responses suggest that this has had the desired effect.

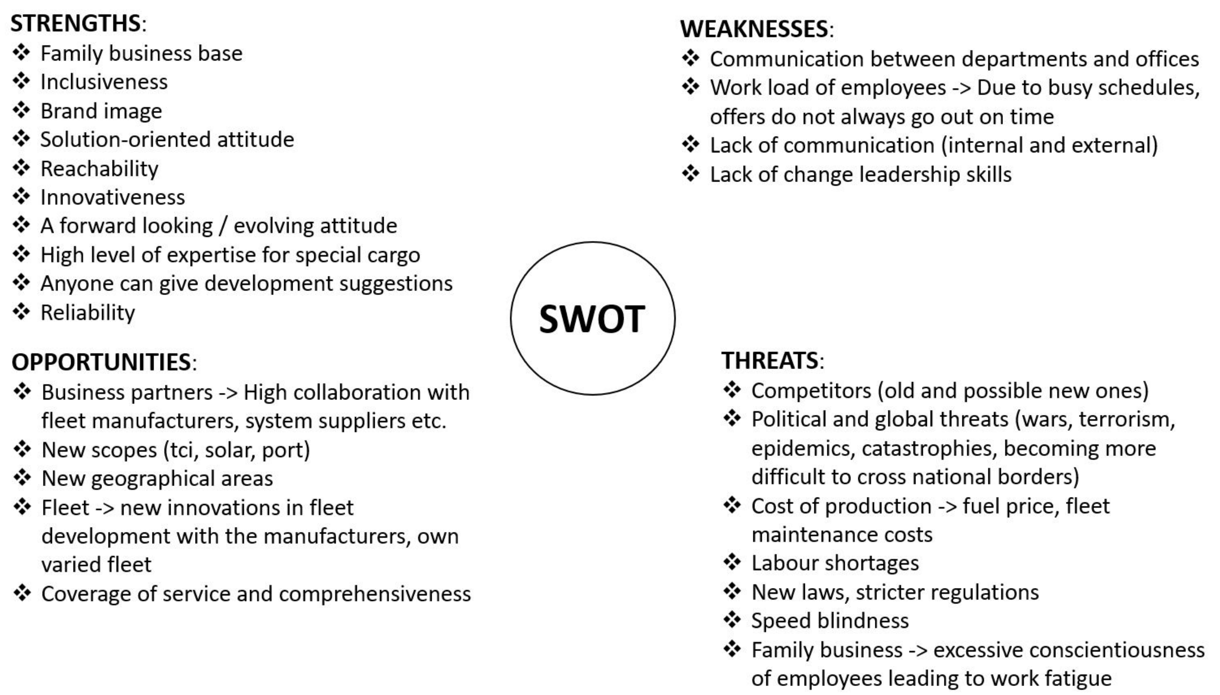

Figure 14: SWOT-analyses

Finally, a SWOT analysis of the company was carried out based on the employees' responses and other observations in order to summarise the internal analysis of the company. The summarised analysis can then be used both in the development of the marketing strategy and in the later stages of the company's development. The SWOT analysis can also be repeated at regular intervals in the future, so that the previous and new results can be compared in order to get an idea of how the company has developed on the basis of the internal analysis.

The first step in creating SWOT analysis was to assess the company’s strengths. The strengths of the company were found in its family business background and in its attitudes. The company’s overall attitude has always been and will remain to be solution-oriented and inclusive of every employee. The company has worked over the years in creating a trustworthy, approachable, and professional brand image. This has been achieved through hard work on marketing and work performance, and by hiring the best professionals in the industry. Employee retention and wellbeing have been a key factor, for example by allowing each employee to suggest areas for improvement that they feel need to be addressed. The company's strength also lies in its constant efforts to look forward in the future.

When considered the company's weaknesses, the first thing to emerge from the employee satisfaction survey was the lack of adequate communication between different departments and offices. This lack is then ultimately expressed in a feeling of inequality or distrust towards certain departments and offices. This weakness was reflected in the responses of both the drivers and office staff members. There are also perceived weaknesses in other areas of communication, both internal and external. In addition to the weaknesses in communication, employee workloads were identified as a weakness. Due to the fast growth of the company as a result of the acquisition, strong and professional change management would have been needed. The lack of this was therefore identified as a weakness of the company.

The next step was to consider the opportunities for the company. A major opportunity for the company is seen as a business partnership and joint development of existing fleet and software. The company has been involved in the development of fleet used in the special transport so that it has been able to evolve with the ever growing and evolving components company transports. The employees and management have also been involved in developing and adapting the used software for it to better suit their operations.

The development of new industries and services is also seen as an opportunity. These new services have been developed and are being piloted. These are definitely seen as strong opportunities for the future of the company. New geographic areas to expand into are also seen as opportunities for the future years. The scope of services, seen as a strength of the company and their further development, is also clearly seen as an opportunity for the company in the future.

Looking at the potential threats to the business, many of them were perceived as more likely to come from outside than from within the business. Internal threats included rapid growth and family business-orientation, which can lead to excessive conscientiousness among employees, putting them at risk of work fatigue. The rapid growth may cause speed-blindness for the company management, which is why it is important for the management to pause occasionally to review the situation and the progress already made.

The analysis also considered external factors, over which there is little internal control, as potential threats. When these threats arise, the only option is to adapt to them by modifying one's own practices in ways that are appropriate to the situation. These threats include political or global threats such as wars, terrorism, pandemics, disasters, or the difficulty of crossing borders between countries. Increases in the cost of production are also perceived as a potential threat. It is possible that the cost of fuel will increase further as the price of oil rises. It is also possible that the cost of maintaining fleet will increase as the cost of materials rises.

Already today, part of the challenge is the occasional shortage of labour, which is very common in the sector. For the company, however, this has not yet become a real challenge, but it must be taken into account as a threat. New laws and regulations that make it more difficult to operate in one way or another are also a potential threat to the company's activities.

4.3 Marketing strategy

The company's strategy is divided into its business areas: wind turbine logistics, heavy transports, Härnösand port operations and the TCI (Towers, Cranes, Installation) business. These aspects can be combined with marketing in terms of sales and marketing communication in each of the areas. On the basis of these elements, the following marketing strategy has been created, a marketing plan will be created and actively monitored in order to achieve the objectives of the strategy.

The first level of the marketing strategy is to increase sustainability and strengthen sustainability communication in order to continuously make the company's operations more financially sustainable and responsible in every aspect of sustainability. In the coming years, sustainability will have to be taken into account more and more carefully in marketing and in all other activities of the company. This will also have to be communicated and reported clearly and comprehensively. The minimum requirements will be the reporting obligations laid down by the EU but in marketing terms this will not be enough. The sustainability reports conducted will be used for marketing communications and to reinforce the image of a responsible employer. A sustainability reporting plan will be used for internal and external marketing communication in accordance with the annual marketing plans. Communication of all sustainability actions will be carried out in an open and clear manner to avoid any possible misunderstanding or thought of greenwashing.

Marketing activities will continue to maximise the opportunities in rapidly growing digital channels, particularly social media with creating a high level of attraction to possible employees. The Marketing and management team is responsible for the overall management and delivery of the strategic marketing and communications. Further progress will be made during the year to look at potential business groups and organisations in Northern Europe to widen the scope of strategic partnership.

As identified in the overall strategy, the goals for the years 2024-2025 include:

- Maintain reputation of a trustworthy professional
- Widen the company image to cover professionalism more also on TCI-operations
- Continue to deliver high class transportations and projects to customers
- Promote Härnösand port operations and TCI expertise
- Be flexible and adaptable to focus on growing market opportunities
- Create an image as a responsible and sustainable transportation company

The strategic plan outlined sets out to achieve the above-mentioned goals. These goals will be achieved by a strong collaboration with all the departments in the company. The main focus will therefore be strengthening the collaboration within the company and with the subcontractors.

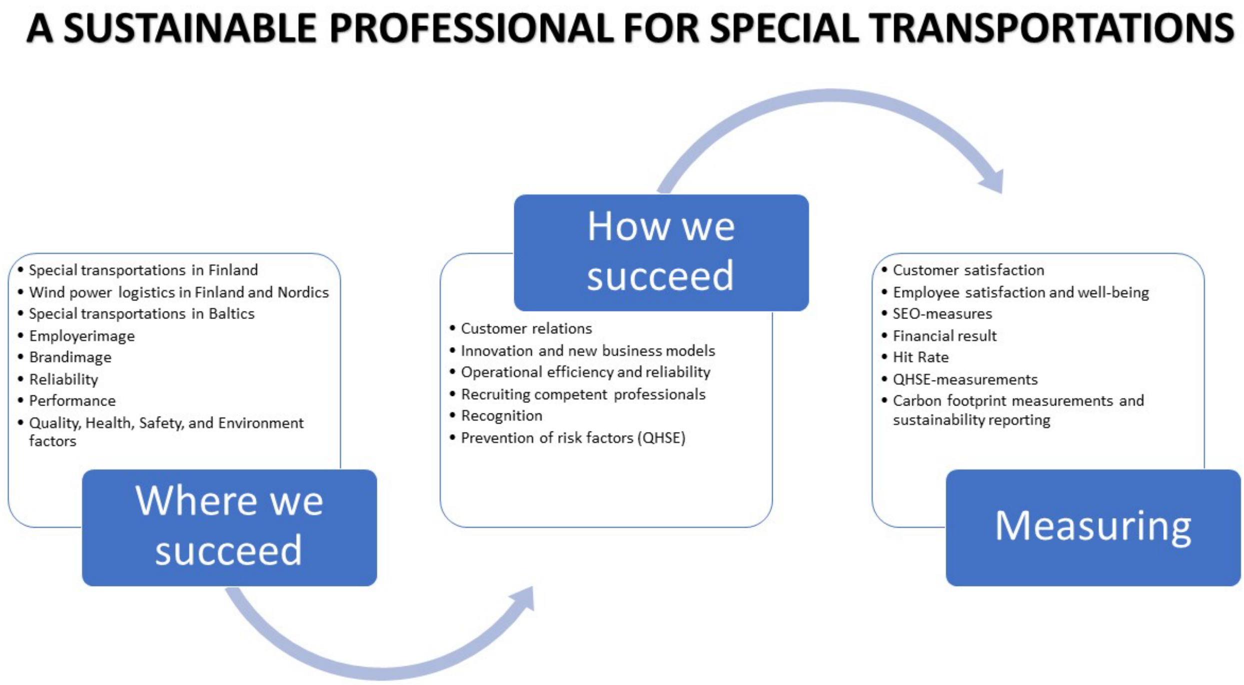

Figure 15 Strategy map

4.3.1 Individual-level objectives, such as sales performance

Objective	KPI
Increasing the share of wind power in business	Projects won in tenders Leads progressing to negotiations Share of wind power projects in turnover
Increasing the personal sales of salespeople	Achieving sales targets Monitoring
Vendor specific customer feedback	Negative customer feedback vs. positive customer feedback
Increase Sales per department/person	Increase revenue Reduce number of rejected tenders Increase profit

Figure 16 Individual-level objectives

When thinking about individual-level objectives, four objectives became the most important ones. First of the objectives is increasing the share of wind power projects in the business. For several years, wind turbine transport projects have been the largest part of the company's activities, both financially and operationally. Although wind turbine logistics have already been significant part of the company's activities, the aim for the near future is to increase this share even further. This will be monitored by measuring the number of projects won in tenders, the number of contracts that have reached the negotiation stage and the share of wind power projects in turnover.

The next individual-level objective is increasing the personal sales of salespeople. In order to increase the overall sales and profits of the company, each individual salesperson needs to focus on personal sales at an individual level. An annual sales target will be created for each salesperson, and this will be monitored on a quarterly basis. At the beginning of each quarter, the target for that quarter is updated and monitored personally and also by the sales manager. Targets can then be updated and adjusted over time. There may, for example, appear need to focus on finding ways to achieve the target if there is a significant shortfall in any quarter.

One of the individual-level objectives is vendor specific customer feedback. The aim is to serve each customer in such a way that the ration between positive and negative customer feedback is strongly tilted towards the positive side. The achievement of this objective is monitored by recording feedback for each salesperson, both on a project and customer basis. Each negative customer feedback will be handled individually, and these issues will be addressed in order to give the customer a positive memory of the cooperation with the vendor or the relationship with the company.

The last one of the individual-level objectives is to increase sales per department and per person. This will be monitored by how the level of revenue is increased. The revenue will be compared to previous years and new measures by sales departments will be created to reach these objectives if necessary. The achievement of this objective is also monitored by observing the ration of the number of tenders accepted to the number of tenders sent and/or rejected. Another important indicator for this objective is the increase in operating profit. If sales increase by department and by individual, it is inevitable that the turnover and profit will also increase, and this is therefore and excellent indicator for monitoring the achievement of this objective.

4.3.2 Relationship-level objectives, such as customer satisfaction and profitability

Objective	KPI
Customer satisfaction	Reply to all tender requests (image issue) Each transport/project should be handled with high quality and reliability High quality and fast handling of customer complaints or feedback Clear and open communication
Customer profitability	Increase profit per customer
Permanent / continuous customer relationships	Reduce customer dissatisfaction or reclaims Increase repeat customers Build customer groups Improve reputation
Acquire new customers	Increase traffic on website and number of requests for offer Increase number of new customers Build email list

Figure 17 Relationship-level objectives

When considering relationship-level objectives, there are four main objectives. The first one of these objectives is customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction will be reinforced and monitored by responding to all requests for quotations. This response to tenders is done by replying immediately after receiving the request, thus indicating to the sender that the request has been received and noted by the salesperson. The response to the request for quotation is clear and promises to deliver the quotation within the time limit specified by the customer. If no deadline is given, the salesperson gives the customer a deadline by which the offer will be submitted. This approach is highly important, as the only critical feedback from the customers was specifically about non-response or delays in responding to calls for tender.

In addition to this response to requests for quotations and customer contacts, the company aims to ensure customer satisfaction by ensuring that each transport and project will be carried out with high focus, quality, and reliability. In addition to transport security and safety, open and clear communication with the customer also increases customer satisfaction.

The objective is also to increase the profitability of individual customers. This objective applies in particular to ongoing customer relationships. The objective will be actively monitored by actively tracking sales and performance for each customer. Actual sales will be compared with previous years and the aim will be to increase profitability by minimising additional costs during implementation.

Continuous customer relationships are one of the most important objectives. This objective also includes maintaining customer satisfaction, building reputation, increasing ongoing customer loyalty, and reducing claims and reclaims. In order to achieve these objectives, the company will create customer groups, under which the right policies will be established for each group, to ensure that each transport and project will be managed the best possible way from start to finish. These policies will determine who will contact the customer, what things will be communicated during the implementation, and what issues will be of particular importance during the implementation of the transport or the project.

Acquire new customers is also considered as a relationship-level objective. The objective is to increase traffic on website and number of actual requests of quotation that the company receives through the website. The objective is to increase number of new customers with who the company can start building customer relationships with. One practical objective to work with is to build up-to-date email lists of the customers.

4.3.3 Customer segment level targets, such as market share

Objective	KPI
Strengthen/expand market share on the wind power sector	Increase the market share of wind power projects for the company
Strengthening the market share of heavy transports	Increase the market share of heavy transports/projects in Nordics, Baltics and Central Europe
Increase market share for new scopes	Increase sales on port operations Increase sales on TCI service and decommissioning projects
Increase number of heavy transport customers	Create new customer relationships in heavy transports in Nordics, Baltics and Central Europe Create new continuous customer relationships in Nordics, Baltics and Central Europe

Figure 18 Customer segment level objectives

The objective is to strengthen the market share for wind power projects and to further strengthen the market share for heavy transport projects. The objective is also to increase the market share of port operations in Sweden (Port of Härnösand), and to convince possible customers with expertise also in TCI projects. In addition, the aim is to expand wind power projects in the Baltic countries.

The second objective is to strengthen market share also in heavy transports. For these transports, the aim is to strengthen market share, especially in the Nordic and Baltic countries and in Central Europe. This work has already started during the previous years, but the aim is to continue to work hard in this area in order to increase market share so that the company's capacity is fully utilised all year round. In addition, the objective is to increase the number of heavy transport customers and to create new customer relationships in the Nordics and other regions of operations.

In addition to wind power transports and heavy transports, the objective is also to increase visibility and market share for company's new scopes. This objective includes the aim of increasing sales of port operations and increasing sales of TCI service and decommissioning projects. The objective is also to carry out the first complete TCI project packages, which will enable the company to strengthen its potential also in this market.

4.3.4 Customer relationship targets, such as the acquisition of new customers or the profitability of different customer segments in relation to each other

Objective	KPI
Reach the sales budget	Find out if the sales budgets can be reached with already existing customers If the above mentioned is not achieved, search for new customers to reach the budgeted sales
Own wheels spinning continuously	Efficiency must be achieved through sales or orders Own production needs to be large enough (own staff should be employed as much as possible)
The profitability or percentager of different customer segments in relation to each other	Wind power 55% Heavy transport 30% TCI 6% Port operations 9%

Figure 19 Customer relationship objectives

The main objective is to increase the share of large wind power projects. The aim is to increase the share of those bids that turn into contracts compared to previous years. This will be done by strengthening customer relationships and by increasing the professional brand image and reliability of the company in the eyes of these customers. The target for the coming years is that wind power projects should account for 55 % of the business, heavy transports 30 %, port operations 9 %, and TCI projects 6 %.

For the heavy transport business, the objective is to further strengthen relationships with customers and to present a broader range of competencies to these customers in a more robust way. The interviews revealed that some customers ask the company for a quote only for a very narrow range of specific types of transports, because they only have an image of the company as a specialist in this type of activity and only a little knowledge of other scopes that the company offers.

The aim is to get company's own production ongoing actively throughout the year. This means maintaining a constant level of production that keeps the staff as busy as possible all year round without breaks affecting the finances. This objective can be achieved through efficient sales operations. Efficiency must be achieved through these sales and orders.

4.3.5 Business model-level objectives, such as meeting targets for access to finance and reassuring financiers of profitability

Objective	KPI
Attracting and convincing financiers	Financiers look directly at the previous year's performance therefor the financial results must be good enough to maintain/attract financers
Compelling and credible ESG-report	Create a convincing and credible esg report as part of the company's annual report

Figure 20 Business model-level objectives

The objective is to maintain attractiveness in the eyes of financiers. Financiers monitor and observe the performance of previous years and therefore, in all its activities, the company must constantly keep an eye on the financial results to ensure that they are at sufficient level to attract and convince financiers. This means that the right approach to achieving financial targets must be made clear to each department and individual.

Another important business model-level objective is to create convincing and credible ESG-reporting. Responsibility and sustainability are extremely important in today's world and no company can operate without taking these into account. The EU has begun to demand more and more comprehensive sustainability reporting, which all companies will have to implement in the future. This is also a major part of the company's marketing strategy for the coming years. Sustainability reporting will also become a permanent part of the company's annual reporting. However, reporting alone is not enough: practical steps must also be taken to ensure that a company can operate in an economically sustainable and responsible way, taking account of both nature and social considerations. The aim is, for example, to reduce unnecessary air travel in the coming years and to make use instead of other ways of traveling or remote meetings whenever possible. These sustainability objectives will be monitored and updated annually. A sustainability reporting plan will be created. A team for writing the report will be working on it and monitoring all actions affecting on ESG factors throughout the year.

4.3.6 A Measurement plan to track marketing and sales activities

Once the marketing strategy has been created and written down, there is also a plan for monitoring the measures and measuring the achievement of the objectives. Sales performance is monitored and measured both individually, by department and as an entity for whole company. The monitoring is done like this, because also the targets are set for the whole organisation, for departments and for each individual salesperson. These targets and their achievement rate can be monitored by the sales pipeline and the systems used by the company to record offers and sales. Company management and sales management monitor the volume of offers and their success rate.

Customer satisfaction and profitability are monitored and measured by short customer surveys and by open discussion between salespeople and their customers. After each completed project, the salesperson contacts the customer to inquire about customer satisfaction and to thank them for the cooperation. This is an important small measure to maintain customer relations and a positive image in the eyes of the customer. Any feedback from customers is also responded by the contact person immediately and is used to monitor the company's image in the eyes of the customer.

Market share is monitored annually through clear, simple calculations of market share in the overall market. This calculation is done simply by calculating the amount of bids and the percentage of transport projects carried out by the company compared to all projects. These percentages are then compared with those of previous years and with the objectives set. The shares of the different activities in total turnover are also monitored and compared to percentage of previous years.

Measuring and monitoring the achievement of these defined objectives is very quantitative, and when calculations are made, it is assumed that the results are the results of both marketing and sales working together. This is why the success of marketing is thought to be reflected in these figures. Based on the results and the market outlook, targets are reviewed quarterly and, at least every year, quantitative targets are defined on the basis of past success rates.

In addition to quantitative targets, marketing aims to create clear customer segments and information on customer contacts, key business models, etc. This is done so that in the future, new salespeople or other employees working with customers will be able to familiarise themselves with customer information before making initial contact. This ensures that contacts are not cold, and that the employee has some basic knowledge of the customer in question. The success of this objective can be reviewed at the end of the period to see if this segmentation has been achieved.

4.3.7 Internal communications plan

These objectives are communicated openly to the whole company overall. In addition, these objectives are communicated very precisely to the sales departments and management, both in writing and in detailed presentation in the sales meetings. This will be done as a visual presentation to give as clear information as possible. This visual presentation is distributed to each member of the sales department and the main features of the marketing strategy, and the objectives are discussed individually with each salesperson. The objectives are discussed company, department, and individual level. A plan for each individual salesperson's personal objectives and the measures to achieve them is drawn up in one-to-one meetings.

Each individual's success in achieving their goals is monitored individually by their own manager and plans are adjusted according to how the objectives are achieved. General communication will be carried out quarterly to sales departments in sales meetings. These meetings will include going through the past quarter and how the objectives have been met during the time. The objectives for the next quarter and rest of the year will be adjusted during this meeting. In addition, the overall picture will be communicated to the whole company on a semi-annual basis as part of an internal newsletter.

5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to investigate how satisfied the customers of the case company are and what are the factors which affect their satisfaction level or purchase decisions. The interviewed customers were selected by the company representative and researcher from the customer list of the case company. The research measured the satisfaction of the most important customers and the ones with a possibility to grow into a more important customer for the company. Furthermore, research aimed to find out what are the factors to be considered when creating a new marketing strategy for the company. The practical purpose was to eventually create a marketing strategy for the case company to be able to grow and develop into even more significant player in the field they work in.

The theoretical framework of this research is about customer satisfaction in business-to-business markets and about marketing strategy. The aim was to create a solid marketing strategy by using customer satisfaction and customer behaviour as the basis for it. High customer satisfaction is more likely to predict success than low satisfaction and therefore this way of creating a marketing strategy is thought to help the company to achieve its goals. Marketing plans for the coming years will be based on the established marketing strategy and systematic marketing and sales activities will be carried out in accordance with the marketing strategy, aiming at the objectives set out in the report.

5.2 Using customer satisfaction interview as a base for marketing strategy

It is clear that, overall, the company's customers are satisfied with the company. Since customer satisfaction can be thought of as a forward-looking marketing indicator, it can be predicted that the company will continue to be successful in its business in the future. However, there are areas for development that should be taken into account in the company's activities in the years to come. One of the company's objectives is to strengthen its market share in the wind energy construction sector. On the basis of the background information, it appears that the company has gained a strong position in this market, but it is clear that it needs to further strengthen its share of the heavy transport market compared to its competitors.

During the interviews, it was found out where the company has been successful in its marketing and business activities from the customers´ point of view. The company received praise from its customers for things like visibility, clarity, and reliability of communications. In the past years, the company has consciously invested in visibility and reliability in particular, and the research shows that this investment has produced the desired result and taken the company in the desired direction.

In addition to the issues mentioned above, the interviews revealed issues in which the customers would like the company to focus on in the future. These issues seem important for the customers, but the company has not taken these factors into account sufficiently in the past. These issues include responding to requests for quotations quickly enough, responding to every request for quotation or enquiry, and having clear lines of responsibility and people. In the future, more attention will be paid to these issues in line with the marketing strategy.

5.3 Possible future research

It is not possible to give any generalisable research options for the future, as the research has been done specifically for the case company and at no point was it intended that this research or the marketing strategy created from it would be generalised or replicable for other companies or communities. However, in the future, it is possible to examine and review whether the marketing strategy created has achieved the desired results, have the customer satisfaction levels changed, and has the market share increased accordingly to plans.

5.4 Conclusion

The aim of the research was to find out the customer satisfaction of the company and the main factors influencing customers´ purchasing decisions. This research was used to create a marketing strategy to support the company's overall strategy during the coming years. Logistics is a highly competitive sector and the company, which has achieved a pioneering position, aims to continue to develop its activities and increase its market share in its strongest scopes despite the increased and intensified competition in recent years.

The research was carried out as qualitative research by interviewing the company's customers from different industries. The interviews were continued until the responses were found to be increasingly repetitive. The interviews were conducted by Microsoft Teams during the autumn of 2022. The interviews revealed the importance of communication and reliability in all activities. These are already important aspects of the company's operations, so the interviews proved that the company was on the right track with its customers.

Based on the research, a marketing strategy was created to provide a basis for marketing and sales activities in the coming years. The main objectives of the marketing strategy will be used as the basis for plans for the coming years and the achievements of these objectives will be monitored comprehensively by marketing, sales, and other departments. The strategy will be rolled out company-wide with a clear communication and actions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Summaries of customer satisfaction interview rensponses

send certain service providers or partners different kinds of estimation surveys so largely with the information they have and this phase will then start to see based on experience, of course, that what is worth addressing what is not and how to support the customer as if the first kind of so as to go through.	send out estimation surveys with the data you have and start looking at what to address and what not to address and how to follow up with the customer	estimation surveys and see what is worth addressing and what is not	estimation surveys	estimation surveys/inquiries
we then approach companies, and send a message saying "hey we have a questionnaire for such and such a place" and then we start to go through it in more detail and try to get the information that we know you need.	send a message and let's go through it in more detail and try to get the information we know you need.	send a message and let's go through it in more detail and try to get the information you need	send a message and let's go through it in more detail	
we start with a request for information (RFI) process where we send several forwarding and transport companies this RFI and then ask them for answers about their knowledge of the area, their location in the destination or whether they have agents or partners or something like that if they are not in the location themselves.	start with a request for information where you send out a number of RFI's and ask for answers about their knowledge of the area, their location in the destination or whether they have agents or partners or something like that.	send out several RIFs and ask for responses on knowledge of the area, location at the destination or whether there are agents or partners	send rfi to several companies	
we as a lot for indications. Let's start with the fact that the indicators are at the point where it could be that there are two or three years ahead and the trade is being questioned and massaged at a very early stage.	quite a lot ask for indications. Let's start from the point where the indicators are at the point where you're two or three years ahead and you're asking about the trade and you start to massage it early on.	a lot asking for the indications. Let's start with rubbing the indications early on.	lots of asking for indications at an early stage	
We start thinking about what kind of service we ultimately need and when we need it. When all the projects are so different, so so so... so it must first find out what we need. Then when it is known we will approach the companies that we think are suitable and could offer it to us. We tell them what we need and ask if they could do it.	we will then approach companies that we think are suitable to offer this to us. We tell them what we need and ask if they could do it.	approaching suitable companies. Tell them what you need and ask if they could do	approaching suitable companies and asking if they could do it	
We have three, at least three, different companies bidding for our contracts. And then the most suitable one is selected.	we have three, at least three, different companies bidding for our contracts. And then the most suitable one is selected.	at least three different companies are put out to tender. The most suitable of these will then be selected.	put out to tender by at least three different companies	

How much does it cost to get something like this from point A to point B. And then it comes... sometimes it comes on time, and sometimes it gets forgotten in some it... bit space on some miracle... send that offer that I even reproached your principal owner a little bit this weekend.	Sometimes it comes on time, and sometimes it gets forgotten somewhere, which is what I was complaining about.	Sometimes it is forgotten, that's what I complain about	Sometimes it is forgotten	Clear, well-calculated and well-thought-out offers on time
they are like the response we expect at the tender stage	tender phase response what we expect	awaiting response at the tender stage	response at the tender phase	
Once or twice go unreplied and then you can forget about it.	Once or twice unreplied and forget about it	Once or twice unreplied are forgotten in the future	Once or twice unreplied are forgotten	
Let's say, normally, there's a certain kind of check. You can almost see directly, what is the indication, what is what, so you can put it like that, but all the cases that are offered a little bigger, that's all. They're constantly being looked at and twisted and asked questions.	Normally, there is a certain kind of check. They're always looking over their shoulder and twisting and asking questions.	A certain check, always looking back and twisting and asking questions	Check, to follow up, and ask questions	
if we have, for example, asked you for prices, then we have been told that hey, now we heard that there is no point in putting any more money into this or this is someone else or... but eliminating unnecessary work is really important.	eliminating unnecessary work is really important.	eliminating unnecessary work is really important	eliminating unnecessary work	
then if you go to do something bigger so yes sometimes it's really funny, that what kind of requests for proposals are that they have been said and quite a few have gotten in the way really quickly, that who are then genuinely coming so then there rupee to get genuinely that picture and story and then with it can move forward.	what kind of requests to tender are they that have been said and quite a few have fallen by the time	what kind of requests to tender are they that have fallen by the time	tender request have fallen along the way	
Of course, when you realise that the solution offered is unprofessional, sloppy, even arrogant, you'll notice it right away. You don't bother those...	when you realise that the solution offered is unprofessional, don't bother.	when you notice that the solution is unprofessional, you don't bother.	no to unprofessional solutions	
Then again, in those cases, as something like over-promising is usually such that you usually notice it at some stage and hope that you don't have to experience it. It is better to humbly offer what you can and say directly how things are when you see that it is difficult.	over-promising is usually something you do notice and hope you don't have to experience. It's better to humbly offer what you can and tell it like it is	promising too much, usually you hope not to have to get those. Better to offer what you know and say how it is	It's better to offer what you know and say it straight and not promise too much	
The fact that you have a bid done well. It's been sold, marketed well, done well, invoiced the right way so you're happy to pay it on the due date.	The offer is well made. It's sold, marketed well, done well, invoiced the right way.	Bid well, sold, marketed, done well.	A well-executed package, including the offer.	
answer as asked and stick to what has been agreed. And then, of course, during the project, it is expected that the forwarder is able to communicate and proactive, so that he does not have to wait and grab things from there, answers.	Answer as asked and stick to what was agreed, during the project the forwarder is communicative and proactive	Answer as asked, stick to what was agreed, communicative and proactive during the project	Answer questions, stick to what's agreed, communicate openly and honestly	

Usually the next rounds, usually we do it in such a way that usually the cheapest and the most expensive have to be dropped, because neither of them know what they're doing.	Usually the cheapest and the most expensive have to be dropped, because neither of them know what they are doing.	Usually the cheapest and most expensive out because they don't know what they are doing	Cheapest and most expensive off due to estimated lack of skills	
Of course, we want to know how it is organised, because it has often happened that during the project we get burnt out by one of the contractors and also by us, because we don't know how to resource it, and we have tried very hard to pay attention to that, so to speak, that the next round will be the ones in whose process we believe in. Whether we think it is realistic.	We want to know how it is organised, because it often happens that during a project, one of the contractors and we, on our side, when we don't know how to resource and try to pay attention to the next round of those who are trusted to do the process. Whether we think it is realistic.	For the next round, those whose process is believed to be done, it is considered realistic.	For the next round, those whose process is credible and whose bid is realistic.	
The price is, of course we'll see, if we get seven or so offers, we'll see what the average price is.	The price is, if we get seven bids, we'll see what the average price is.	Iif we get seven bids, we'll see what the average price is	Average price	
there have been many times in the last ten years that the winner is the one who only has the cheapest price. So, fortunately, that time seems to be a bit over. There are some other values, there are environmental values and others.	There have been many times when the winner is the one with the cheapest price. Fortunately, that time is getting a bit past. There are other values, there are environmental values too and others.	We are getting past the time where the winner is always the one with the lowest price. There will be environmental values too and others.	Environmental values etc. Not just a cheap price anymore.	
you see all kinds of prices from time to time. They are like from the woods sometimes and probably trying, in some way as in the project business, to be the first to sell themselves in with pricing in order to get to bid.	You see all kinds of prices. They are out from the woods sometimes and aim to be the first to sell themselves in with pricing to get a bid.	You see all kinds of prices. They are from the woods sometimes and seek to sell themselves by pricing themselves in.	Prices are sometimes whatever and they try to sell themselves on it.	
You have to be competitive and so on, but you have to find the realism that you have to do the profit in a completely different way. That kind of as if personally the trust, understanding, know its competence. That is important. But sometimes you have to remember that what is important is to be able to say no.	You have to be competitive, but you have to find the realism that you have to make the profit in a different way.	You have to be competitive, but you have to make the profit in a different way	Need to be competitive and make profit in another way	The price must be clear, reasonable, well calculated. Service and trust must be in place, so price alone is not the deciding factor.
Basicly, always the cheapest, but then also taking into account how the service is suitable for us, and how we trust that it will happen as agreed and so on.	Basicly, the cheapest, but taking into account how the service suits us and how confident we are that it will happen as agreed and so on.	The cheapest, but taking into account how the service suits us and how we trust	The cheapest service that works for us and is trusted	
Of course, the first thing I look at when I see the offers is the prices first. What the price is. And then after that we start to read the small prints to see what the price includes. How much it is... the price may be cheap but then the loading time is too short. And overcharging for overtime is too expensive. Compared to others and others it can be even five hundred euros more expensive or a ton depending on where you go. We sometimes talk about a difference of fifty euros between price and freight. So they say that, well, it's not much of anything. Or we talk about a hundred or a thousand. It depends a bit on the total amount.	The first thing I do when I get offers is look at prices. Then after that you start to read what the price includes. For a fifty euro price-freight difference it's not much of anything. A bit depends on the total amount.	The first thing I'll do is look at the prices. After that, let's read what's in it. Depends on the total.	First price, then what it contains.	
The total price and that would be the price of the service and that's it. Then what comes afterwards so for you, just as if the authorities and this type of things so good to be as if already included in the price. No need to return to them in a year and think that where it is now this, to which gig belongs.	The total price and that would be the price of the service and that's it.	The total price and that would be the price.	The total price must include everything	
Yes, but the fact that price is of course the number one thing these days, but it doesn't always matter if the price level is the same for many. Like then just a little bit let's see with whom to do and with whom not.	That price is of course the number one thing today, but it doesn't always matter if the price level is the same for many. Then we'll see who we do business with and who we don't.	Price does not always matter if the price level is the same for many.	The price level is not necessarily the deciding factor.	

The search for new companies starts from the fact that first we look at the experience we have, then we look at the know-how, then we have these certain networks where we can ask what we can look at. Maybe we talk to colleagues, customers, others.	if someone is the most expensive all the time and then if they have been told about it several times and nothing is done about it then we don't do anything about it... there are of course many things and yet we believe in giving people a chance to try.	a good example is breakbulk and different events, fairs where you meet different actors. They are good places to visit. Meet and get to know companies and people.
Follow the business. We've been doing some serious networking in the Scoden network which is a worldwide company.	That same person might pop up in another forwarder.	I found this company by just looking it up on Google... if you don't understand see it from Google. See how it could be done, what is a possible partner who could be used in general.
It is important to understand and deepen it, which is what I was thinking myself, that if every time it would come from the world and take different companies and all the offers from different places... surely it would save a few hundred, a thousand, but then the constant development is missing, which I think is important. Do you need to do all the extra work all the time to save a few hundred when it might be better to do it easier and faster.	We talk to each other, ask each other if we've had any experiences with anyone. And of course there are semmosiiki forwarders from so when in a way just have not received the offer on time or have not responded as requested, so enough of them now a few times try to try now, try now, pay attention to this and a little as if babysittais it to come to the offer from there so as to see if there is so as nothing. Of course, when you start to see that none of them are always late with their offers, they never respond to all of them and they only respond in part, it makes you think that we should look for something else to replace them.	if the service provider is not active, we do not look in the phone book, so to speak, to see who is so to speak logistics and then call them. No. But it all depends on the activity of the journalist, proactivity, for example, if there is now a project in the press, someone will contact you and say that we can make this project a thing.
In what way are partners and new options now available. And admittedly so when I said so very much we are approached about it yes, but that as a man I was the kind of guy when you tell me you need you to take care of it so I was there soku finger in the mouth and google google google help me google.	we assume to know the operators in the areas where they are and then if not, we go to see how we can take care of them through old contacts, maybe through new networks or others, and we have to keep our eyes open all the time.	Of course, we go to a lot of fairs and events and all sorts of dinners. But it's not like that... or decisions are made in other matters and those are just the maintenance of relationships. And of course we like them, but the decisions are not made just because somebody offers you dinner or a glass of champagne.