Title: “Changing the Game”
A Pre-Study to Marketing Planning in a Local Squash Club

Author: Patrik Zackrisson

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| Address        | University of Gävle  
|                | Department of Business Administration  
|                | 801 76 Gävle  
|                | Sweden  
|                | Telephone  (+46) 26 64 85 00  
|                | Telefax  (+46) 26 64 85 89  
|                | Web site http://www.hig.se |

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Patrik Zackrisson</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>2010-01-13</td>
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<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Lars Ekstrand</td>
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| Abstract       | **Aim:**  
|----------------| The purpose was to perform a pre-study to marketing planning for a local squash club in Sweden that had difficulties with membership growth and development. This pre-study would provide the squash club with valuable information and a starting point when creating its first marketing plan. |
|                | **Method:**  
|                | The chosen research approach included theoretical and empirical studies. Empirical data was collected by triangulation, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. A semi-structured interview and two surveys using on-line questionnaires were conducted, analyzed and presented. The discussed theory including key definitions, models and concepts was related to the empirical data findings and reflected on. |
|                | **Results & Conclusions:**  
|                | A small non-profit squash club with scarce resources and slim organization has to implement a customer centered mindset and work smarter instead of harder. It is important for the club to carefully match market opportunities with its objectives and capabilities. Engaging in marketing planning and the development of a marketing plan will enable the club to find new creative ways to offer a unique squash experience that will result in a positive membership development. |
|                | **Recommendations:**  
|                | The squash club should strive to develop key strategic partnerships that can compliment its strengths and help reduce its weaknesses. An own club website would improve internal and external communication significantly and decrease the club management’s administrative workload. It would be advisable for the club to perform annual online customer satisfaction surveys to monitor and measure own performance and detect key changes in the marketplace. |
|                | **Contribution:**  
|                | This pre-study could be a good opportunity for the squash club’s management team to engage in marketing planning and develop its first marketing plan. Perhaps this study could also benefit other small sports clubs with similar challenges and give them ideas and new tools for future development, such as using on-line surveys. |
|                | **Suggested future research:**  
|                | It would be interesting to perform a comparison among the four racket sports: tennis, badminton, table-tennis and squash and the reasons behind young people choosing to play one sport over the others. The result would help racket clubs to better understand how they should position themselves in the market place to attract young people to their particular sport. |

| Key words       | Marketing Plan, SWOT, Competitive Advantage, MIO Matrix Model, Online-Questionnaire, Marketing Strategies, Marketing Planning Process |
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First I would like to thank my supervisor at University of Gävle, Lars Ekstrand for his flexibility, patience, guidance and valuable support during this study project.

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I also appreciate the moral support from my parents who have been an important source of motivation during the writing process.

It has been challenging, fun and a great learning experience conducting this study and writing this paper.

Patrik Zackrisson

Stockholm, March 2010
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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this first chapter is to introduce the reader to the topic and provide background as well as the motivation for the study. It will also present an overview of the study objectives, research questions and the study structure.

1.1 BACKGROUND

A sport called Squash
The name squash originates from the English word “squashy” because it is played with a soft rubber ball. It was invented in England 1850 and was first called “racquets”. A more modern version called squash was introduced in the 1930’s and was similar to the sport that is played today.


Squash is played by over 15 million people in more than 150 countries according to the World Squash Federation and the sport is especially popular in countries like Pakistan, Egypt, England and Australia.

The sport is quite different from other racket sports because it is played in a box with four walls, with no net and where both players are competing for the same space hitting the ball in the front wall above a tin line. It can be played as a singles or doubles game but due to the fact that a double court is slightly wider than a single court there are not many doubles courts available and doubles is seldom played.

Squash is sometimes referred to as the “forgotten” racket sport even though it is in fact a large international sport. There are high hopes that squash one day will join the Olympic program, something that the World Squash Federation has been working for since 1986. This would give the sport the long wanted global visibility and recognition. (Svensk Squash 2009)

The game of squash has developed much over the years and become a more attractive sport to watch due to innovations. Perhaps the most important is the all glass court that enabled squash to move from being a “basement” sport to becoming an arena sport.

Squash is considered to be one of the most physically demanding and competitive sports in the world and this makes it difficult to play as a social game. Even though it is a hand-eye coordination sport like tennis and badminton it is perhaps more related to chess and boxing due to the combination of endurance and strategy. “Squash is the last great fighting game: boxing without brain damage!” (Pearson 2001, p.9)

In 2003, Forbes ranked squash as the healthiest sport in the world based on six different criteria. Squash scored exceptionally well for cardio respiratory, muscular endurance as well as calories burned and was ranked above sports like rowing, rock climbing, swimming and cross country skiing.

I personally believe squash has a bright future if marketed right because it is a fun sport that gives maximum workout in minimum time and can be played all year round with no weather impact.
Squash in Sweden
Squash was a popular sport in Sweden in the 1970’s and Sweden was in fact together with UK the best squash nations in Europe during this period. At this time there were around 450 squash courts in Sweden and in 2007 there were only 212 courts left. It is a small sport in Sweden today with only about 60 active clubs and 5000 members compared to tennis that has over 100 000 members in more than 500 tennis clubs.

Squash’s popularity in Sweden dropped during the 1980’s and 1990’s and a contributing factor may have been that Sweden during this period had an increased interest for tennis and table-tennis.

The Swedish Squash Federation was established in 1969 and its main objectives include administrating and promoting squash nationally as well as working for making the sport more accessible for everyone. Its development plan for 2007-2011 included to increase the number of squash courts by 50 during this period and long term to have at least one court in each Swedish town. (Svensk Squash, 2007)

Today the challenge is that the majority of all squash courts in Sweden are located in the larger cities and this makes it more difficult to increase the awareness and popularity of the sport on a national level.

The racket center
In Sweden there has been a trend in recent years to gather several sports in multi-sport or racket centers instead of building dedicated facilities for each sport. Most of these multi purpose venues are currently located in the larger cities.

A popular racket center is Enskede Rackethall (hereby referred to as “the racket center”) situated in the south of Stockholm. This racket center’s main philosophy according to its General Manager is to improve the quality of life for people who play racket sports.

The facility was built in 1985, has 20 employees and an estimated 600 daily visitors. It hosts 17 badminton courts, 4 tennis courts, 4 squash courts and 2 table tennis courts. There are also 1 tennis club, 2 badminton clubs, 1 squash club and 1 racketlon club represented in the racket center “community”. Plans exist to build more courts and facilities to further enhance the total racket sports experience.

Enskede Racketthall offers all racket sports and a fifth sport called racketlon under the same roof. Racketlon is the sport where you compete in the 4 racket sports against an opponent in the same match. This sport is young and started in Sweden only some 20 years ago and is now growing fast in Sweden as well as internationally.

The racket center operates a large Round Robin squash program for men and women that started before the squash club was founded. The purpose with this activity is to introduce people to squash and to provide a service for those who want to play squash in an organized way against other players of comparable skill level. Since there are groups for beginners, intermediate and advanced players it is a popular service that suits most players. There is no current requirement for squash club membership to participate in the RR and the majority of these players are not members of the local squash club today.
The sports club membership of non-profit organizations
Historically people joined sport clubs often for life and did so because they shared the same ideal and values as the organization they belonged to. Today it is common to have multiple memberships in different organizations and to be less loyal than before.

The reason to become a member is perhaps more now than before for personal gain and benefits and especially economic incentives are being sought.

This trend makes it difficult for clubs and especially non-profit organizations that have to work harder and be more creative than before to retain existing members as well as attract new members in order to maintain the same membership level. A high turnover of disloyal members makes it difficult to establish long term relationships with members in order to deliver expected value to them. Technology plays an important role here since people now and especially the younger generations expect a faster and different type of communication such as email, mobile text messages and access to club websites. (SISU, 2008)

The famous 80/20 rule tells us that 80 % of an organization’s revenue normally comes from 20 % of its customers. Non-profit organizations nevertheless often have an obligation or goal to serve the remaining 80% equally well and instead measure performance in customer satisfaction and not profit.

It is estimated that it takes 4-5 times the effort for most sports organizations to gain a new member as it takes to keep an existing member and the average breakeven on a new member is around 2-3 years. This means that is makes more sense to invest time and effort to provide value and satisfaction to existing members and make them loyal long term members than to have a high turn over due to chasing the wrong prospects.

Loyal satisfied customers normally talk positively to other people about their experience and this helps the organization gain new customers via word of mouth. It is however also important to be aware of the fact that unhappy customers tell twice as many people of their experience than happy customers do. (SISU, 2008)

The local squash club in focus
Enskede Squash Club (hereby referred to as “ESC” or “the squash club”) was founded in 1993 and is a small non-profit organization with no employees' only volunteers.

In the fall of 2008 the club had 73 members of whom 67 were male and 6 were female. 12 of these 73 members were juniors (under the age of 19).

This squash club is located south of Stockholm in Enskede Rackethall, a popular racket center that specializes in racket sports. Some competition exists among the different sports clubs in the racket center when it comes to space, attention and members, but there are also interesting opportunities for collaboration with the racket center.

The club has been known to have a competitive profile with few non-competing activities. Most members in the past have been males in their 30’s and 40’s and the squash club has had few women and juniors.
Since the club had this competitive focus it was not concerned with targeting a wider market in order to get a more dynamic mix of club members or to grow the number of members and develop the club.

In the last couple of years the squash club’s management team which consists of 7 men and 1 woman has been working hard to try to change the direction of the club in order to attract more members and to become a squash club that can offer something for all members regardless of age, gender and skill level.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

My personal experience is that the majority of squash clubs in Sweden are small non-profit organizations with scarce resources and with difficulty to grow.

These clubs face a similar challenge in not having enough members to finance activities that can satisfy existing members and attract new members.

I have been a member of a local squash club’s management team for some time and would like to see the club move in a new direction.

When I was deciding on a research topic I was looking for something that would be interesting to me personally but also of importance to an organization that I have a close relationship with and that could possibly benefit from any findings.

In the 1990’s when I attended business school in the US I was considering both sports marketing and sports management courses because the combination sports, marketing and management was appealing to me.

With this in mind I thought it could be interesting, fun and rewarding to write about my great passion in life, sports, and at the same time support my local squash club by performing a pre-study to a future marketing plan. This would be a suitable study project due to the possible mutual benefits, available resources and timing.

1.3 PROBLEM DEFINITION

“We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them “(Albert Einstein)

ESC wanted to grow in total number of members. The problem was related to both gaining new members, especially females, a group that was greatly underrepresented but also retaining existing members. Historically the club has had an annual membership count of around 50 and in order to become more stable financially the club needed approximately 100 members. The goal was to grow to 150 but doing this without having to hire any staff or reduce existing service to members.

The squash club is a non-profit organization with no employees and relies completely on 100% volunteer work. The challenge was that most volunteer work in the club is today performed by the management team and even though the management is competent and experienced they lacked in time, so finding new volunteers and key partners was of great importance.
The main source of financing came from annual membership fees and this was expected to continue in the years to come. Keeping existing members and attracting new ones in order to increase the total number of members over time was therefore of paramount interest to the organization.

The squash club had to develop a sustainable growth strategy and pursue appropriate opportunities that would deliver customer value and at the same time support the organization’s resources and capabilities. Before this strategic decision could take place more information was needed. The idea of a pre-study to marketing planning to help identify existing and predict future customer requirements was discussed with the management team as valuable and something that would benefit the club’s development.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Objectives

- To identify how a marketing plan could benefit ESC and if there was a suitable marketing planning model for the club.
- To understand the target market’s needs and wants in order to identify key opportunities, suggest appropriate marketing strategies and possible improvements to the current marketing mix.
- To conduct a beneficial SWOT analysis for ESC

Research questions

There are several important research questions for this study and I have listed both major and minor questions. Answers to all research questions will be provided in chapter 5.

Major questions:

- How can a marketing plan be beneficial to a small non-profit organization like ESC?
- Where are the best growth opportunities for ESC?
- Should ESC change anything specific in its existing marketing mix?
- Does ESC have an effective segmentation strategy today?
- How can ESC collaborate with partners to add value to members and prospects and increase the total number of members?
- What would a beneficial SWOT analysis look like for ESC?
Minor questions:

- How overall satisfied are current members with the squash club and their membership?
- What are the main reasons why people become ESC members?
- How can ESC interest more women to become members?
- What is ESC’s competitive advantage, if any?

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I have used both quantitative and qualitative methods by triangulation in my research project. The collection instrument for obtaining qualitative data was done by a semi-structured interview. Two online questionnaires were designed and delivered using Kwiksurvey.com software in order to gather needed quantitative data from two different groups of multiple respondents.

My research project follows Kotler & Keller’s (2006) marketing research model and is discussed more in detail in chapter 3.

![Figure 1 The Marketing Research Process (Kotler & Keller, 2006, p.103)]

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

I preferred to limit my study to a local squash club. Due to personal interest, time restraints, accessibility and resources I decided to write about my own squash club in Stockholm and its specific problem concerning membership growth and development. The purpose was not to deliver a complete marketing plan for the squash club or to cover every aspect of a marketing plan but to conduct a pre-study to marketing planning and provide initial data to a future marketing plan.
1.7 STUDY STRUCTURE

The structure of this study is initially based on 6 different study seminars by University of Gävle. These are translated into 5 chapters in my written paper:

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| Table 1 Study Structure (Zackrisson 2009)            |

In the beginning of each chapter the ingress tells the reader the main content of that specific chapter as seen below:

**Chapter 1:**
The purpose of this first chapter is to introduce the reader to the topic and provide background as well as the motivation for the study. It will also present an overview of the study objectives, research questions and the study structure.

**Chapter 2:**
This chapter will discuss the theoretical framework. Models, definitions and concepts in focus are presented and explained and will form a foundation for the empirical data discussion.

**Chapter 3:**
In this third chapter, methodology and different types of research methods and definitions are discussed and explained to the reader. My chosen research approach including choice of methods and the design of data collection instruments are described.

**Chapter 4:**
In this chapter the empirical data collected during the 2 online questionnaires and the semi-structured interview is presented and analyzed. A beneficial SWOT analysis is also conducted.

**Chapter 5:**
In this final chapter key findings and conclusions will be presented as well as answers to the research questions. Empirical data is related to key theory and the chapter ends with recommendations, suggestions for future research and a self evaluation.
CHAPTER 2     THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will discuss the theoretical framework. Models, definitions and concepts in focus are presented and explained and will form a foundation for the empirical data discussion.

2.1 THE MARKETING PLAN

“Plans mean nothing, planning means everything!”
(D D Eisenhower)

Definitions
Kotler & Keller (2006, p.60) define a marketing plan as “...a written document that summarizes what the marketer has learned about the marketplace and indicates how the firm plans to reach its marketing objectives”

A business plan is sometimes mixed up with the marketing plan but is different from the marketing plan. It is a more comprehensive document that usually covers all aspects of an organization including a marketing plan and a strategic plan.

The strategic plan is normally for a period of 3-5 years and includes key company long term strategies for the future while the marketing plan is often limited to 1 or perhaps 2 years and may need to be updated and or revised during this time frame.
Several marketing plans can exist in an organization and plans can be created for a specific business unit, target market or product. (Andberg & Eliasson 2005)

Kotler & Keller (2006) argue that the marketing plan of today is more consumer and competitor focused as well as more realistic than before. This is due to that the fact that market conditions change more quickly now with the speed of new technology but also due to other external forces within PEST (Political, Economic, Social, Technology). The organizations that can best make appropriate changes when the market changes, will have a greater chance of becoming successful.

The marketing plan may have different names and formats depending on the size and nature of the organization that it is created for and its purpose.
In a small organization like a local non-profit sports club the marketing plan is perhaps called development plan or activity plan in order to be received and accepted better internally and to sound less formal.

Structure and contents
The marketing plan consists of several key parts tailored to an organization’s specific requirements. It is imperative that all main parts are well connected since they impact each other when changes are made.
Below is an example of structure and contents for a typical marketing plan (Hollensen 2005)
To follow a structure helps the marketer stay on course and not overlook any main parts that need to be included in the plan. It is advisable to involve as much of the organization as possible when developing a marketing plan. There are a large number of companies that specialize in providing marketing plan templates and software that enables marketers to create a comprehensive marketing plan. This is helpful when multiple individual plans are needed for multiple products or markets.

**Purpose**

*"The marketing plan turns strategy into tactics, bridging the gap between ambitions and actions, and ensuring that the business prospers."* (Cheverton 2004, p. 45)

According to Jobber & Fahy (2003) the two most important questions that the marketing plan has to answer are:

- Where and how should an organization compete?
- How should this organization grow?

Marketing planning, the process that leads up to the finished marketing plan is considered more important than the marketing plan itself. The reason for this is that the planning process enables an organization to get an understanding and an overview of current resources and capabilities and how to best coordinate these in order to use them in the marketplace where the best opportunities for success exist. (Andberg & Eliasson 2005)

When performing marketing planning it is important that the customer is the starting point and not the organization. Organizations that are customer oriented and manage to develop a customer centered mind set strive to make customers for life and will therefore be more successful. (Andreasen & Kotler 2002)

**Benefits**

Some important benefits of a good marketing plan are to discover new opportunities, to better use organizational capabilities and competencies, to define focus market and how to best communicate to the market (Hollensen 2005)
2.2 MODELS FOR MARKETING PLANNING

“A model is a simplified representation of reality” (Eriksson 2005, p 1)

It is advisable to evaluate any model based on three main criteria, coverage, communication and consistence to make sure that the model chosen covers the area of interest, is easy to understand and remember as well as used in a consistent way across the organization. (Eriksson et al 2004)

I have studied some different models used for marketing planning and have chosen two that I found relevant, interesting and suitable for practical purposes, the MIO Matrix and the Marketing planning process that I will cover in the next two sections.

2.2.1 THE MARKETING PLANNING PROCESS

“Marketing planning is the structured process of determining how to provide value to customers, the organization, and key stakeholders by researching and analyzing the current situation, including markets and customers; developing and documenting marketing’s objectives, strategies and programs; and implementing, evaluating, and controlling marketing activities to achieve the objectives” (Wood 2007, p.3)

According to Wood (2007), the marketing plan is the result of the planning process and the marketing plan must not be a static document but will change with changes in the marketplace. Therefore the planning process must be continuous in order to create a new marketing plan each year rather than to revise an existing one.

Wood’s marketing planning process model consists of six steps and in order to build a successful marketing plan that communicates how to build strategic relationships and deliver customer value, all six steps need to be completed in the suggested order. The model has three main sections where the first section includes step one and two and covers the research and analysis of the current situation including external and internal scanning of the micro and macro environment as well as identifying market and customers’ needs and wants.

The following section (step three, four and five) is about selecting appropriate strategies for how to segment the market, which segments to serve and the way the firm wants to position itself in the marketplace.

The fourth step is to make sure that short term objectives and long term goals are supported and in line with the right marketing activities.

In the fifth step marketing strategies and action programs for the marketing mix are created and implemented based on the result of the previous steps. The final section with step six is to ensure that the marketing plan is performing and delivering according to the set objectives and goals. After step six is completed the entire process begins again to create a new plan rather than revise the existing version (Wood 2007)
Wood (2007) has developed five guiding principles for marketers to consider during the six stages of marketing planning in order to reach the core benefits of customer value, strategic relationships and competitive advantage.

Marketers should *expect change* in market conditions and be prepared to act on this change quickly. Planning is a continuous process and the marketing plan will also change over time. *Relationships* with all key stakeholders are relevant to sustainable success regardless of industry or business.

Marketing planning needs to *involve* the whole organization by internal marketing in order to develop customer relationships and identify business opportunities. Relationships need to be developed with key stakeholders and form *alliances* or strategic partners to compliment existing service to become more competitive. *Innovation* can be used to create, communicate and deliver value to customers. There are several ways to innovate and using technology to differentiate is often shown effective. (Wood 2007)

New technology including the internet has taken marketing to a new dimension with faster development and delivery of new products and services, global access to information and creative ways to communicate and build relationships with customers. (Cheverton 2004)

### 2.2.2 THE MIO MATRIX

The MIO matrix model is based on 3 key perspectives: **Market** (external), **Interaction** (relationships) and **Organization** (internal) and these are each analyzed in a decision making process of 4 decision stages called **present situation**, **opportunity analysis**, **strategy** and **action**. This frame of the 3 perspectives and the 4 decisions is the most important part of the MIO matrix. The present situation and opportunity analysis stage make up the organization’s conditions and the strategy and action stages the intentions (or directions) of the organization. (Eriksson et al 2004)
The starting point of the MIO model and central idea is based upon asking 3 important questions concerning the organization's business proposal:

1) Who wants to buy our offer? (Market)
2) What are we selling? (Interaction)
3) What resources are needed to fulfill the offer? (Organization)

(Eriksson et al 2004)

Present situation:
This stage is the shortest of the 4 MIO stages and describes the current situation of the market, the market relationships and the organization including the existing customers and competitors. It also describes how the marketing mix of Product, Price, Promotion and Place are currently used and what the internal organization’s competence, capacity and objectives look like.

The information in the present situation should be short and concise.

Opportunity Analysis:
In the second and most important MIO stage the focus is on analyzing the information from the present situation (internal and external and relationship) in order to identify opportunities and threats for the future and identify new developments and directions.

“The goal of the Opportunity analysis is to find new alternatives in the market, new alternatives in the customer relationship and undeveloped alternatives in the organization…” (Eriksson et al 2004, p.21)

The SWOT model is incorporated in this MIO Opportunity stage at the Organization and Market perspectives to analyze existing strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats.

Strategic choices:
In the strategy stage the best alternatives from the opportunity analysis stage are identified and strategic choices are made for the future. This occurs by market strategies using segmentation and positioning, via interactive strategies by developing long term strategic relationships with customers and providing value by innovation as well as the right marketing mix and branding.

Developing partnerships, strategic alliances and networks are important organizational strategies that will enable the organization to decide what activities make sense to outsource based on the organizations core competencies.

Action programs:
The last stage of the MIO model is to create short term action programs. Based on the information provided in the strategy stage, it should now be possible to target key segments with the appropriate marketing mix. The organization needs to create a budget and a project plan where time frames and people responsible are assigned to all selected activities.

The implementation of the project plan should be monitored and the results evaluated so that this knowledge can benefit the next plan or revision including fine tuning the marketing mix to further improve the customer interaction. (Eriksson et al 2004)
The completed MIO matrix can be seen below with its key concepts for all perspectives and decision stages ready to create value added processes.

![Key Concepts in MIO Matrix](image)

According to Eriksson et al (2004) the MIO matrix model is suitable for the purpose of product and business development, marketing planning (including content description of the marketing plan), managerial control and revision. The MIO Matrix model’s strength is not only that it is easy to use, remember and understand but at the same time comprehensive and flexible with the possibility to add items and make changes. It is a practical and versatile tool of multiple purposes that can be used in different business situations.

2.3 MARKETING AUDIT

“A marketing audit is a systematic examination of a firm’s marketing environment, objectives, strategies and activities, which aims to identify key strategic issues, problems areas and opportunities” (Jobber & Fahy 2003, p. 275)

According to Jobber & Fahy (2003, p. 275), the marketing audit should answer three key questions:

- “Where are we now?
- How did we get there?
- Where are we heading?”

The marketing audit consists of both an internal environment analysis and an external environment analysis and is also referred to as the situational analysis. The internal analysis is concerned with controllable items such as the organization’s marketing objectives, marketing mix and segmentation choices.

External analysis includes uncontrollable items such as market, competition and environmental forces of PEST (Political, Economic, Social, Technological). The reason for making an internal and external environment analysis is that this data will form the foundation of future marketing strategies that are often developed in the SWOT analysis and will determine the focus and direction of the organization. (Jobber & Fahy 2003)
When the marketing audit is completed the marketer has a better understanding of the internal and external environment and a SWOT analysis can be conducted to evaluate choices for the future and analyze the customer and competitive situation. A SWOT analysis is a structured approach performed to identify and evaluate the organization’s overall Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. (Wood 2007)

The organizations’ internal and controllable strengths and weaknesses should be viewed from the eyes of the market being customers, competitors and stakeholders. Opportunities and threats are external events and are not considered controllable by the organization. (Cheverton 2004)

Strengths and weaknesses should not only be viewed as absolute but also relative in relation to the organization’s competition because relative strengths and weaknesses will reflect the competitive advantage and disadvantage.

Changes in the economic climate and the development of new technology can be a threat as well as an opportunity depending on the current strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

“The SWOT allows us to assess our capability (strengths and weaknesses) as a match for the market needs (opportunities) in the light of the competitive environment (threats).” (Cheverton 2004, p. 85)

The main advantage of the SWOT analysis is that it focuses both on the present and the future situation and enables marketers to make educated decisions moving forward developing strategies for the future.

2.5 MARKETING STRATEGIES

Marketing strategy can be explained as a map or a game plan that tells marketers how to best reach their marketing goals. (Kotler & Keller 2006)

Marketing is a whole chain of activities that take place in a given time. It is about finding and fulfilling needs and wants better than competition, to identify the right opportunities and to build and maintain relationships with existing and new customers. (Anderssson et al 1997)

It could also mean finding new customers by creating needs and wants that these customers did not know they had.

When an organization has performed the environmental scanning, analyzed the internal and external factors and completed a SWOT analysis, it is time to evaluate and formulate appropriated marketing strategies and action programs using the marketing mix. (Wood 2007)
General strategies
There are only 2 types of competitive advantage according to Porter (1985) and these are low cost and differentiation.

He claims that there are 3 general strategies that normally start the strategic formulation for most organizations in achieving a competitive advantage which is a foundation for success:

1) Overall cost leadership, 2) Differentiation and 3) Focus strategy.

Regardless of what initial strategy an organization chooses it must be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of that specific strategy and make sure it fits the organization since it may be difficult to change strategy later on. (Kotler & Keller 2006)

An overall cost leadership occurs when an organization is trying to become the low cost player by serving all or most of the market at the lowest possible cost and customer price. This strategy is generally good if the firm has limited marketing skills but possesses superior skills in producing or distributing standard goods or services.

A main disadvantage of being a low cost provider is that it is difficult for more than one firm at a time in a specific market to act as the cost leader. Though the focus is on low cost and wide target to gain a competitive advantage it is however important to consider differentiation to become less vulnerable to price wars and maintain a desired level of profitability. (Porter 1985)
An organization can compete on *differentiation* meaning that it is trying to be different from competition by delivering something that is perceived valuable or unique by the majority of the market in a specific industry.

Differentiation can be obtained by quality, design, availability or superior benefit sought in a product or service etc and by doing this the firm is able to charge a premium. However differentiation often increases the cost of production and if low cost is not reached in areas outside the differentiation the firm’s advantage may be lost. (Porter 1985)

Differentiation must add value to customers otherwise it will not be successful. The value must be the one perceived by customers and not by the organization that is providing this value. This is a common mistake among marketing firms today. (Cheverton 2004)

The third generic strategic choice a marketer has is to use a *focus strategy* based on either cost or differentiation (3A, 3B). The competitive scope for a focus strategy is narrow and is implemented in selected target segments in order to achieve maximum competitive advantage. (Porter 1985)

According to Porter (1985) it is of course possible to mix several generic strategies but is not recommended within the same business unit because their individual abilities to provide competitive advantage may be inhibited when combined. An organization should however try to pursue cost reduction opportunities that do not sacrifice differentiation but also pursue differentiation opportunities that do not incur much cost.

### Growth strategies

![Ansoff Matrix](image)

Figure 10  Product growth strategies: the Ansoff matrix (Beech & Chadwick 2007, p.428)

A company or organization has 4 growth strategies to engage in depending on what their goal is and what their capabilities are, according to Ansoff’s matrix above.

1. **Market penetration or expansion:**
   Relying on existing products and services for existing markets and to penetrate the market in order to find new customers in that market and or make old customers become more loyal and buy more of the same products and services by altering the marketing mix. This often means lowering prices.
2. **Market development:**
   Current products and services are sold to a new market. This new market can be located by segmenting the existing market and serve a new customer segment or by finding a completely new market domestically or abroad.

3. **Product development:**
   This strategy aims to increase current market share by adding new or improve products or services for the existing market. This can be accomplished by adding a complete new product or by changing an existing product’s feature such as quality, design, etc.

4. **Diversification:**
   Diversification is used when an organization decides to develop new products or services to a new market or markets. This normally occurs when neither the existing market nor the existing product or service has a future to provide growth. This strategy is more difficult, uncertain and costly than the other 3 strategies but can be successful with the right implementation and fit between the market and product. (Jobber and Fahy 2003)

**Market strategies**
The process of **Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning** is often called “STP” and are three strategic market decisions undertaken in a specific sequence.

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<tr>
<th>Segmentation</th>
<th>Targeting</th>
<th>Positioning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select the market</td>
<td>Select number and priority of segments for entry</td>
<td>Select meaningful attributes for differentiation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apply segmentation variables</td>
<td>Select segment coverage strategy</td>
<td>Apply positioning through marketing strategy and tactics</td>
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<td>Assess and select segments for targeting</td>
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Figure 11  Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning (Wood 2007, p.56)

Wood (2007, p. 54) defines market segmentation as “...the process of grouping customers within a market according to similar needs, habits or attitudes that can be addressed through marketing”

Organizations may engage in **segmentation** because they are not able to serve the entire market successfully by mass marketing using only one marketing mix for the entire market (undifferentiated strategy). They try to identify groups of customers with similar requirements that they believe they can serve better than competition and satisfy with their current offering and capabilities and subsequently increase their profits and market share.
Segmentation is important because it can help identify growth opportunities and increase customer satisfaction since it enables marketers to get a better understanding of individual customers’ requirements, hence better provide value to them. (Jobber & Fahy 2003)

There are four main groups (Demographics, Psychographics, Behaviors and Geographics) that are the bases for segmenting consumer markets. These four groups have each individual variables such as age, lifestyle, region and benefits etc as per below figure.

After the general market is identified, the segments are created by applying one or several variables. When this is completed appropriate segments are selected for targeting based on individual attractiveness and fit to organizational capabilities. (Wood 2007)

During the first step of the targeting process the best segments are evaluated, numbered and ranked for entry to make sure that the segments with the best opportunities are pursued first.

The next step is to decide on the segment coverage strategy to use: undifferentiated, differentiated, focused or customized strategy. Differentiated strategy targets multiple segments and uses a separate marketing mix for each segment compared to the undifferentiated where 1 mix serves all segments in the market.

A focused strategy means picking only 1 segment to serve and try to serve this better than competition. In customized marketing, a separate marketing mix is developed for each individual customer. (Jobber & Fahy 2003)
Jobber & Fahy (2003) tell us that **positioning** is about deciding where an organization wants to compete and how it wishes to compete in the market place.

In the last two steps in the STP process a decision has to be made regarding a positioning strategy and how to use an appropriate marketing mix based on the four P’s to differentiate on the specific benefits sought by the customers in the target segment.

Marketing research exploring customers’ and prospects’ needs and wants and competitive information can assist in detecting the best attributes to use as differentiators in order to communicate competitive advantage. (Wood 2007)

### 2.6 THE MARKETING MIX

The marketing mix is the tactical instrument that organizations use to manage marketing activities in order to reach objectives and implement marketing strategies.

Kotler and Keller (2006) argue that the most successful organizations are those that can not only meet customer needs with effective communication but also do it economically and conveniently.

Depending on the industry and the nature of the organization, Product, Price, Place and Promotion and their individual variables may play different roles in the chosen marketing strategies. In general Price and Promotion have normally more interaction with the target market than Product and Place. (Kotler & Keller 2006)

Organizations that may not have strong promotional or pricing capabilities (eg. non-profit sport clubs) instead have to innovate and try to “stand out” and be “different” to attract their target market.

![Figure 14 The Four P Components of the Marketing Mix](image-url)
The traditional groups of the 4 Ps of the marketing mix including Product, Price, Place and Promotion were developed by McCarthy. It is a well established and recognized marketing model that has over the years been revised and there have been several additions to the original model over time as seen in figure 15.

The 4 Ps have also been translated into 4 Cs in order to fit better with the customer's perspective. Product, Price, Place and Promotion become Customer solution, Customer Cost, Convenience and Communication. (Kotler & Keller 2006)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>McCarthy, 4P</th>
<th>Judd, 5P</th>
<th>Booms and Bitner, 7P</th>
<th>Baumgartner, 15P</th>
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Figure 15 4 Ps and more Ps (Gummesson 2008, p.323)

Marketers always strive to develop an optimal marketing mix for their organization and target market in order to create, deliver and communicate value and subsequently competitive advantage.

This can be accomplished by using a well blended marketing mix that can satisfy customers' needs and wants and that is in line with internal organizational capabilities and resources. (Jobber & Fahy 2003)

![Figure 16](image)

The optimal marketing mix is obtained when an organization spends the least possible amount of money and effort to meet all its marketing objectives. Because market conditions constantly change it is however also needed to change the marketing mix accordingly. (Hannagan 1992)
CHAPTER 3  RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

In this third chapter, methodology and different types of research methods and definitions are discussed and explained to the reader.

My chosen research approach including choice of methods and the design of data collection instruments are described.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research definition
Marketing research can be defined as “the collection, analysis and communication of information undertaken to assist decision making in marketing” (Wilson 2006, p. 4)

Research does not necessary involve finding new facts but can provide a new perspective or insights to existing knowledge. (Riley et al 2006)

Saunders’s (2007, p.5) definition of research is that “research is something that people undertake in order to find out things in a systematic way thereby increasing their knowledge”.

We learn by these definitions that research includes collecting, analyzing, understanding, communicating information in a systematic way to increase our knowledge.

Research is performed for many different reasons in various settings and can vary in terms of the scope of the project. In business marketing research is often performed in order to find out more about a specific problem that we seek a solution for. Companies may want to identify competitors’ strengths, to learn more about existing market conditions or to launch a new product.

Research structure and quality
So what constitutes “valid” research and how can we make sure we follow a structure that will lead us right especially if we hold little previous experience in the research field?

Effective marketing research can be produced by following a number of predefined steps that will help the researcher to stay on the right course. Kotler & Keller (2006) suggests a model of six steps that starts with identifying the research problem and objectives and ends with a decision.

This is also the model that I have followed in my research project.
The beginning is about identifying the problem that needs to be investigated and decide upon research objectives and research questions.

The next phase involves designing the empirical and theoretical research plan. This step also determines what secondary and primary data is needed and what qualitative and or quantitative methods to use.

Then the researcher collects the needed qualitative and or quantitative empirical data by using appropriate designed collection instruments such as observation, experiment, interviews, or survey questionnaires.

Collected data is analyzed and after this the key findings are presented. Finally, decisions or recommendations are made based on the outcome in the previous step.

Figure 17 The Marketing Research Process (Kotler & Keller, 2006, p.103)

Saunders (2007) points out that even though we are to be objective as researchers we are still influenced by how we are as individuals and what skills and interests we have. This reflects in our choice of research and methods as well as how well we perform our research tasks.

Research topic
The research topic is the starting point to all research. When doing research and deciding on a topic it is an advantage to choose a topic that interests the researcher especially since he or she will be working on the project for some time. It may also be of interest to choose a topic that can support one’s career and or deliver a specific value to an organization. (Jones et al 2007)

Research approach
“The research methodology is the philosophy or general principle which guides the research” (Dawson 2007, p. 24.) and “…research methods are the tools you use to collect your data." (Dawson 2007, p.28)

When performing research one has to be familiar with the different methods available and be able to choose an appropriate mix based on skills and interests as well as the research purpose.

The researcher can use two basic research approaches, either a deductive or an inductive reasoning to establish what is true or false and make conclusions. Deduction means that conclusions are derived from logical reasoning and a hypothesis based on existing knowledge is tested.

Induction is when conclusions are instead made from empirical observations and then related back to existing theory and knowledge.
Induction is often associated with qualitative methods where our general conclusions are made based on our empirical findings. In the case of deduction our conclusions are generated from our logical reasoning where the researcher builds and tests a hypothesis from existing knowledge. Deduction is more common in quantitative than in qualitative studies. (Ghauri & Grönhaug 2005)

The approach I used is more deductive than inductive, since my theoretical position is quite clear before my data is collected.

Secondary data can be described as data that has already been collected by someone else already before accessed by you. In research projects secondary data is normally gathered first in order to get a good understanding of what type of primary data to collect and most research includes some kind of secondary data.

In my study secondary data is mainly collected from external published sources of books but also from magazines and internet and from internal sources such as the squash club’s membership database and meeting protocols.

Primary data (or empirical data) is data that is gathered by the researcher via observation, experiment or communication. Primary data takes more time and costs more money to gather than more available secondary data and this is good to keep in mind before engaging in a research project.

My primary data was gathered via 1 interview and 2 surveys

Figure 18 Sources of primary data (Ghauri & Grönhaug 2005, p.102)

Qualitative vs. Quantitative method
Should we in our research use a qualitative or quantitative research method and which method is better? You cannot say for a fact that one is better than the other because they are very different and both have their strengths and weaknesses but you could perhaps argue that one method may be more suited for certain research projects.
“Qualitative research can be defined as research that is undertaken using an unstructured research approach with a small number of carefully selected individuals to produce non-quantifiable insights into behaviour, motivations and attitudes” (Wilson 2006, p 105) and “Quantitative research can be defined as research that is undertaken using a structured research approach with a sample of the population to produce quantifiable insights into behaviour, motivations and attitudes” (Wilson 2006, p.135)

Qualitative research is generally best used when the aim is to find out about feelings, experiences and behaviour and like the name states; it focuses more on quality and goes more in depth than quantitative research that is more fitted when investigating a larger number of respondents. Questions such as how many and how often are more typical in a quantitative study while words like problems and experiences are more common in qualitative studies. Qualitative research is said to rely more on the researcher’s skills while quantitative research relies more on the instruments collecting the data since this is often automated. However sometimes quantitative studies can be quite difficult for the researcher to master. Developing an appropriate design for a questionnaire can be challenging and does require some skills. (Dawson 2007)

In my study I used both qualitative and quantitative methods by triangulation in order to collect the necessary empirical data for the study and 1 interview and 2 online surveys were designed.

The design and delivery of the interview and the questionnaires will be described in the following sections.

3.2 QUALITATIVE METHOD

Qualitative research provides in depth information regarding attitudes, believes, and behaviour as well as experiences. I thought it was important to perform an interview with an expert in the field in order to get a different angel of information than I would in a quantitative study using a survey. There is no firm evidence that multiple methods combined by triangulation increase result or the validity of the research but there is always a chance that two methods may compliment each other because they indeed are different.

"A study that combines qualitative and quantitative methods gives you depth of understanding as well as information about the general representativeness of that understanding” (Wilson 2006, p.105)
3.2.1 INTERVIEW

**Interview types**
There are *structured*, *unstructured* and *semi-structured* interviews.

Unstructured interviews are also called *in-depth* or *life story* interviews because very few open questions are asked and the interview can be very long. Here the respondent is very free to expand in the subject and the interviewer is more passive.

Structured interviews are similar to a questionnaire where most questions are predetermined and mostly closed-ended questions. This interview type does not allow for much clarification or expansion by the respondent and is much less flexible than unstructured and semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interview is the most popular of the three interview types and often an interview schedule is used to ensure that different topics and questions are covered and not missed by the interviewer. (Dawson 2007)

The personal interview is a great way to find out more detailed and personal information where the respondent can use his or her own words. It also gives the interviewer a chance to clarify, probe and ask additional questions depending on the answers from the respondent. In order to have a successful interview the researcher needs to prepare well and consider a number of things including:

- The respondent
- The location
- To establish rapport
- The recording method
- The questions and format

(Christensen at all 1998)

There are some key advantages and disadvantages to the personal interview. The interview enables the interviewer to show physical material, ask difficult questions and questions that require greater knowledge in an area. The interviewer can explain, reword questions, probe and ask sub questions which give him greater control over the interview. There is however a high cost involved in conducting personal interviews and money often limits the scope of research projects.

The personal interview may not be the perfect tool for very sensitive questions, if a large number of respondents are required, or if respondents are located in remote areas. Conducting a successful personal interview and getting access to the right respondents as well as analyzing the data can be a difficult task especially for someone who has little experience in interviewing techniques. (Christensen at all 1998)
3.2.2 DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF INTERVIEW

When I decided I was going to use personal interviewing as a data collection method I first wanted to perform several interviews but quickly changed my mind when I realized two things. First, interviews take much time to set up and secondly they can be difficult to carry out especially if you are not used to conducting interviews. My main data collection method was surveys using questionnaires. I understood that it was valuable to conduct an interview for the learning experience but also because it contributed to my study with detailed qualitative data which was a good compliment to the quantitative study. I conducted the interview after my two surveys and by doing so the interview would hopefully be able to clarify, confirm and add to some of the findings in the surveys.

I wanted to perform a personal interview with the General Manager of the racket center to add qualitative data to my marketing research. The respondent was selected because he was a key stakeholder that could provide valuable insight to my study. Before I conducted the interview I had to decide on a number of important things such as: Time and place for the interview, type and number of questions to ask and how to record the answers.

I chose a semi-structured interview since the respondent would have flexibility and ability to expand on questions that a structured interview would not allow for. We did not have much time for the interview so I wanted to make sure I got the answers to all my questions and therefore a unstructured format would not be as suitable either. An advantage was that I knew the General Manager before the interview and had easy access to him which caused no problems in setting up a date and time for the interview. We decided to do the interview in the racket center on a weekday evening which was convenient for both of us since he was done for the day and I lived in the area. Since the racket center is very busy during the evenings and we wanted minimal distraction we decided to do the interview in a small conference room where we could be alone with no interruptions for 60 minutes.

The General Manager had previously been informed regarding the purpose of the interview, the expected length and what type of questions he would be asked. I did not use a recording device during the interview because I believe it can be a little intimidating and make the respondent less comfortable during the interview.

My sales training skills from many years of face to face meetings made me feel comfortable in talking notes by hand while talking. We were interrupted once during the interview but this was a very short interruption so it did not affect the outcome of the interview. I was able to ask all my 16 questions (appendix A) and got them all answered. The interview went very well I think even though it took a little longer than I initially expected.
3.3 QUANTITATIVE METHOD

My primary research method for collecting most of the empirical data for my study was done using surveys and two on-line questionnaires as the collection instruments. The reason for choosing this method was because I needed to obtain data from two groups of multiple respondents.

I designed two surveys because I thought it would be appropriate to do a satisfaction survey for existing members as well as a slightly different survey for a group of target members. These two surveys would provide data for a situational analysis and an opportunity analysis as well as be used for segmentation purposes.

3.3.1 SURVEY

Surveys are performed normally because the researcher wants to find out respondents’ knowledge, wants and needs as well as satisfaction level (Kotler & Keller 2006).

Jobber & Fahy (2003) state that in research design it is important to follow a framework of sample process, survey method and questionnaire design.

First you have to decide who you need information from (sample) before you can decide which method to collect the data (survey method) and what design that is the most appropriate for your project (questionnaire design).

For my survey I was quite concerned with cost and time issues and therefore decided early not to use a face to face survey.

I wanted to make the survey experience more interesting to myself and to the respondents and therefore also rejected telephone and postal surveys in favor of the internet-mediated survey.

I distributed my survey via email with a link to a website and I was able to get confirmation on each completed survey but all respondents were still anonymous which perhaps improved the completion rate.

Questionnaire types
The questionnaire is a data collection tool that helps standardize the question format and makes sure that every respondent has the same conditions when answering the survey questions.

This contributes to the validity of the research since data is comparable and collected in a systematic unbiased manner.

The main two types of questionnaires are self-administrated where the respondent is entering all the data and interviewer-administrated where all data is completed by the researcher.
Which type of questionnaire to choose is dependent on a number of factors such as where your respondents are located, how many respondents you need and the number of questions as well as the type of questions that have to be asked.

Self-administrated questionnaires and in particular internet-mediated questionnaires have the advantage that the data is captured and entered automatically and sometimes analyzed.

There is software that also provides an automated design tool that makes it possible to develop a questionnaire much faster than with traditional methods. (Saunders et al 2007)

The questionnaire’s main task is to reduce the noise and misunderstanding and ensures that there is effective communication between the researcher and the respondent. (Wilson 2006)

3.3.2 THE SAMPLING PROCESS

The sampling is usually done before the questionnaire design and they are equally important. There is a sampling process that is recommended to follow.

Wilson (2006) states we use sampling to answer a number of important questions for our study:

1. Who do we want to survey?
2. Where can we locate these people?
3. How can we best select the respondents?
4. How many respondents to we need to gather our data?
5. How representative is the data that we collect?

In my first survey the population of interest was the existing members of the squash club and in the second survey it was the female Round Robin players who were non-members. I used sampling in both cases and when I was to determine on a sampling frame for my first survey my best option for finding a list was the squash club’s internal membership rooster. It was complete with 100% of all existing members home addresses, 70% of the email addresses and 50% of phone numbers. I was considering first a postal questionnaire where the list would be close to 100% accurate but this method would not be as exciting for me or the respondents as an online survey would be.
I decided to do a convenience sample selecting the members that had an email address. A missing email address did not mean that this person was very old or did not use the internet on a regular basis. The population with no email data did not differ in any specific way from the rest of the population. A convenience sample was also chosen for the second survey where the sampling frame was a list from the racket center including only email address data but this data was 100% complete for the population of interest.

Since this survey was also to be delivered with an on-line questionnaire and sent via email this was quite convenient. The only concerns I had with using email was that people tend to change their email address when they move between jobs or change Internet Service Provider and since a large number of respondents on my list did not have a private web based email account like yahoo mail, hotmail or gmail I was not sure how many email addresses that were inactive and would possibly bounce.

In my two convenience samples I would use every person in the two lists that had an email address and skip the ones who did not have one. For the membership survey this meant that out of a sampling frame of 73 members (of whom 67 were male and 6 female and of these 12 were juniors under the age of 19) the sample size would be the 52 members with email data. In the second survey where the sampling frame had 36 names in the prospect list and 36 email addresses I would use the entire sampling frame as the sample size.

3.3.3 DESIGN OF QUESTIONNAIRES

I wanted to study the needs and wants of existing and potential members by conducting a membership survey and a non-member (prospect) survey using on-line questionnaires.

It is not an easy task to create a well designed, and effective questionnaire that motivates respondent to complete the survey.

In this section I will discuss how to design a questionnaire according to the literature and how I designed my own questionnaires.

When developing a questionnaire it is helpful to follow a structure to produce a good design. The below figure describes the different questionnaire design stages according to Wilson (2006), a structure that I also used in my work.
The first step is about developing appropriate question topics based on the research objectives that will group the individual questions. The question topics must be viewed as interesting and relevant for the respondents to be willing to answer. The respondents also need to have knowledge about the topics to be able to provide answers to the questions. (Wilson 2006)

In my design I used six groups of question topics that covered demographics, personal squash experience, squash club membership, information & communication, activities and general information.

The second step is to select question and response formats. This means deciding on the number and type of questions, whether to use open, closed or scaled responses and if the questionnaire should be self-administrated by the respondents or interviewer administrated.

Open-ended questions are good when the researcher wants the respondents to explain in their own words. The disadvantage is that answers can be long and hard to analyse and respondents are often reluctant to give detailed answers especially if they are administrating the questionnaire themselves.

Other variations of open (unstructured) questions are word association and sentence completion. Closed questions can be of Yes or No answer called dichotomous but also in the form of multiple choice formats. Closed questions are faster to complete but do not allow for much flexibility.

This is why the researcher often includes an open-ended answer option in a closed-ended question in order not to miss an important answer. Self-administrated questionnaires have in general less open-ended questions due to the fear of respondents not answering all questions. If you have a very large number of respondents then it is quite convenient to use a self administrated questionnaire with mostly closed-ended question because the data will be easier to analyze.

Scaling questions are useful to measure attitudes and opinions and two common types are the likert scale and the rating scale questions. (Dawson 2007)
My questionnaires were self-administrated internet mediated and I used a mix of structured (open), unstructured (closed) and scaled questions but the majority of questions were multiple choice. These were often combined with one open-ended answer. I made sure all listed responses to closed questions were mutually exclusive.

**Step 3** concerns selecting the *wording*. It is important to be careful and use appropriate words that can easily be understood by all respondents and not use leading questions.

*Ambiguous* questions or *double barrelled* questions (asking two questions at the same time) will likely result in incorrect answers and very *sensitive* or *offensive* questions will most likely result in no answer. A good rule of thumb is to use short questions and not too many questions in a questionnaire if you want a high response rate. (Dawson 2007)

I provided clear instructions to avoid any misunderstandings and I was careful in my choice of words and not to ask questions that were leading, ambiguous or too sensitive.

**The fourth step** is to *determine the sequence* of the questions seen from the respondents' view. This means that you strive to find a sequence that is most appropriate and interesting for the respondent and that makes him or her comfortable to complete all questions.

It is advisable to start with general, easy and fast questions and save the longer, difficult and more sensitive questions to the end of the questionnaire. It is also good to apply a *funnel sequence* meaning that each topic moves from general to more detailed questions. *Classification* questions that contain personal and demographic data are normally placed in the end unless they are used to screen the respondents in which case they are located in the beginning. (Wilson, 2006)

In my questionnaires I put personal classification questions first and general unstructured questions in the end. The funnel sequence was used for the most important questions that were located in the middle of the questionnaire.

In **step 5** *design layout and appearance* are decided upon.

To get a good response rate the design layout has to be appealing. This is important especially in self-administrated questionnaires. The choice of color, the variety of answer formats, spacing between questions and high paper quality are all key attributes to a professional look. (Wilson, 2006)

For my questionnaires I used computer software where design layout was developed very quickly through the use of templates in an online wizard.

**The sixth step** is the *pilot test*. This is a key activity to ensure that the questionnaire is functioning as expected. The pilot survey is tested on a smaller number of respondents that represent the same population as the main survey. The pilot test will enable the researcher to time the questionnaire, detect any possible errors, remove, add and or change questions and format based on feedback from the pilot test group. (Wilson, 2006) I pilot tested my questionnaires to the squash clubs management team before they were launched and the general feedback on the length, structure, layout and wording was positive. One question was added to the final version in both questionnaires.
The seventh and last step in the questionnaire design process is undertaking the survey. Before the survey is launched to selected respondents a last check is normally done to ensure that the final version of the questionnaire is correct and that key parties have given approval. (Wilson, 2006)

After the changes from the pilot testing feedback were completed, I received the approval from the squash club’s management team to launch the final version of the two surveys.

The survey software (Kwiksurveys.com) that guided me through the entire design stage would now also support me in the survey questionnaire delivery stage and data collection.

3.3.4 DELIVERY OF ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRES

For my online questionnaires I used the latest technology and software that allowed me to design, collect, administrate and analyze data automatically. I did not have the budget to purchase advanced software like SNAP so I had to find free software that included most or all of my requirements. There are many free versions available such as surveymonkey.com, freeonlinesurveys.com, esurveypro.com.

Many of these free survey tools have unfortunately limited functionality in terms of number of questions, number of surveys or respondents and some only work for a short period of time unless you upgrade to a paid version. After evaluating a number of free software I found the Kwiksurveys.com software that had all functionality that I needed for my project.

This software supported the creating, delivery and the administration process of survey questionnaires and was a web based tool that was flexible and easy to work with. When the design stage including the pilot test of my two questionnaires were completed and approved for delivery, it was time to launch the surveys.

For both surveys (members and prospects) I created an email that was sent to all respondents explaining the purpose of the survey, the expected completion time and that all responses were anonymous. This email also included a hyperlink to the survey that was located at Kwiksurvey.com. In order to improve the response rate I informed the respondents that they were included in a raffle for 3 free club T-shirts and 1 free club membership if they participated.

As soon as a respondent had completed his or her survey I received an email notification and it was also registered in my Kwiksurvey web-administration tool. The Kwiksurvey software made sure that no respondents could answer the survey twice.

52 members were emailed the member survey (survey 1) and 36 were emailed the prospect survey (survey 2). In the first week there were 20 respondents who had completed survey 1 and 15 who completed survey 2. A reminder email was sent out to both groups after 1 week and this resulted in some more responses over the following week.

When the surveys closed after 2 weeks, 29 respondents had completed survey 1 (members) and 28 respondents' survey 2 (prospects).
7 email addresses used for survey 1 and 1 email address for survey 2 were incorrect and these emails were returned. This means that the actual sample size was 45 for survey 1 and 35 for survey 2.

The response rate was 29/45 = 64% for survey 1 and 28/35 = 80% for survey 2, which I consider to be an acceptable result for both surveys.

**Data analysis**

Data analysis was done by the Kwik survey software (www.kwiksurveys.com).

I did not have to import the questionnaire data into a separate data analysis software tool since the data was entered automatically and results provided instantly. This also meant that I did not have to code any questionnaire and this saved time. The tool had a function that enabled filtering of results if needed as well as the ability to view total and individual data.

The empirical findings are presented in chapter 4.

### 3.4 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity is an instrument’s ability to measure what it is supposed to measure. (Eriksson & Wiedersheim 2001)

Validity occurs if our results can be generalized and applicable to other studies in different settings. With accurate sampling we can increase the level of generalization and hence the validity.

If we receive the same results by repeating the same test with the same measurement tool we can also claim reliability in our measurement tool. “Reliability refers to the stability of the measure” (Ghauri & Grönhaug 2005, p. 81)

For my quantitative research I used an online software tool to create, deliver, enter, collect and to analyze the data and this lowered the probability of data errors. I carefully followed the questionnaire design stages as well as the sampling stages and even though I used convenience samples for both my surveys I believe that my study had acceptable level of both validity and reliability. My results would have been easy to replicate in a different setting with a different population using the similar method.

In qualitative research it is difficult to obtain the same validity and especially reliability that can be reached in the more structured quantitative research. I did my best to obtain a reasonable level of validity and reliability in my interview.

A suitable respondent, an expert in the subject area was selected and I used a semi-structured interview with an interview schedule of prewritten questions. The respondent was informed in advance regarding the nature of the questions and my purpose for the interview. Before the interview I prepared well by studying literature on how to design and conduct interviews in order to minimize the risk of making mistakes and instead increase the possibility of a successful outcome.
CHAPTER 4  EMPIRICAL DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter the empirical data collected during the two online questionnaires and the semi-structured interview is presented and analyzed. A beneficial SWOT analysis is also conducted.

4.1 PRESENTATION OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Presentation of qualitative data is different compared to presenting quantitative data because qualitative data is analyzed using conceptualization while quantitative data analysis uses more of visual aids such as graphs and tables in order to present the standardized quantifiable data.

Analysis of the qualitative verbal data (respondent’s answers) is taking place at the same time as the collection of the data which enables the interviewer to generate new questions or to probe; hence new data collection is taking place (Ghauri & Grönhaugh 2005).

My semi-structured interview was conducted with Lennart Eklundh, the General Manager of Enskede Rackethall AB (ERAB),

16 questions in total (Appendix A) were asked and in the next section I will present a summary of the result from this interview.

4.1.1 INTERVIEW WITH STAKEHOLDER.

At the beginning of the interview I was told that Enskede Rackethall (hereby called “the racket center”) was built in 1985. The racket center has around 600 daily visitors and a staff of 11 full time and 9 part time employees. It has 17 badminton courts, 4 tennis courts, 3 squash courts and 2 table tennis courts.

According to the General Manager, the purpose of the racket center is to provide a first class racket facility in order to give racket players an opportunity to improve their quality of life. The aim is to have a professional staff and best possible service, to make sure the facility is of high quality and the ambition is to become a leading concept center for racket sports in Sweden. The short term goal is to be the best at what they do and the long term goal is to become a “complete” center with good conditions for all four racket sports.

The General Manager explains that the racket center’s competitive advantage is its total concept, good customer service and facilities, and the ability to play four different racket sports including racketlon under one roof.

Other racket centers in Stockholm are not viewed as competitors but partners. Large sports like football and ice-hockey as well as fitness clubs and non sporting activities are the main competitors today to the racket center according to the General Manager.
To the question regarding any possible investment plans for squash in the near future and how important squash is for the racket center the answer was that squash is very important to the racket center. The plan is to expand the racket center in the near future to include 1-2 additional squash courts and an office for the squash club that would support their ambition to develop and grow.

The racket center is running a squash Round Robin program since 1992 and the General Manager explained that the Round Robin program existed before the squash club did. Its purpose is to attract people to start playing squash and provide a service that helps them develop and learn to compete which is important in order to really enjoy squash.

A goal is to make all Round Robin players members of the squash club if this is possible.

The racket center could let the squash club run the Round Robin when they have the capacity to handle it. Today it is not possible to demand membership in the squash club to participate in the Round Robin. A possible solution in the future could be to offer discounts of Round Robin fee for members in ESC as well as giving members priority in the Round Robin queue.

Currently the racket center gives club members discount on seasonal court times and in the pro shop. Junior members are also offered to buy a “stand by” racketlon card to a low fee that enables them to play any racket sport for free when courts are available.

These terms are the same for all racket clubs in the racket center. The General Manager does not believe in regulating the clubs’ membership fees, these should be decided on by the clubs themselves.

Hopefully we can together find a working model in the future of how to run the Round Robin that would benefit the racket center, the squash club and the Round Robin players, the General Manager says.

The Racket center is encouraging exchange between the different clubs that can benefit and learn from each other.

There is an annual meeting where representatives from all clubs in the racket center meet and share information and experiences. Joint activities should be continued and developed, such as the annual racket center day, school sports days, Christmas parties and racketlon competitions.

The General Manager points out that racketlon indeed helps to increase the interest for squash and the importance to practice squash in a multi center that is preferably a racket center. Squash players have often played other racket sports before they start playing squash. The sport of racketlon drives the building of more squash courts in Sweden which means that more people will come in contact with squash and hopefully also become members of a squash club like ESC.
We discussed the low representation of women playing squash in general. The General Manager’s opinion on this was that squash probably does not have fewer female players than any other racket sport. Perhaps squash is the most difficult of all racket sports to play as a social game because it is a competitive sport that is hard to play without keeping score. The fact that the sport is so physically hard on the body could possibly mean that it fits males better than females. A typical squash player is a man in his thirties and forties according to the General Manager.

We talked more about the squash club, ESC and if he thought ESC had any distinct competitive advantage and or disadvantages compared to other squash clubs in Stockholm. He mentioned ESC’s location within the racket center and its complete offering including service and the staff’s knowledge of racket sports plus the fact that 600 people come here every day to play racket sports.

The strategic geographic location of the racket center is attractive with good public communications and free parking. A competitive disadvantage could be that the squash club does not have enough squash courts and no office of its own.

I asked the General Manager what he thought is the most important reason why ESC has had problem with membership growth in the past years and that few members are female. He told me that the organization has not been good enough and has lacked in commitment. During many years the club was all about competition and there was no focus on the non-competitive activities. A well functioning modern club needs a healthy mix. ESC has had difficulty in communicating its information. They have an info page at the racket center’s website but the club really needs a website of its own that can be updated easily. The reason for the low number of female members is a result of the squash club not having targeted this group in the past he says.

The interview ended with asking the General Manager what he thinks the racket center and ESC jointly can do to make squash more interesting and attractive and deliver a better squash experience. He pointed out that the racket center will hopefully build more squash courts including a possible doubles court (the second in Sweden) in the near future. This will improve the squash club’s conditions and growth in order to provide more activities and serve its members better.

The General Manager’s vision is to hopefully have most of this completed within the next few years.
4.2 PRESENTATION OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

For my analysis of the quantitative data in my 2 survey questionnaires I decided to export the data from the online Kwiksurvey.com reporting tool to Excel. The reason for this was that the Kwiksurvey tool only had the capability to present the data in horizontal bar charts and I realized that it would be more interesting if the data was presented using vertical bar charts and pie charts as well.

Answers to all questions of the 2 surveys are intentionally not presented graphically due to space limitations. I have selected the information that I think is most interesting to present for each survey and that also contributes to answering my research questions.

The quantitative results are based on answers from 29 respondents for questionnaire 1 (members) and 28 respondents for questionnaire 2 (female Round Robin players). The sample size was 45 and 35 respectively.

4.2.1 ONLINE QUESTIONAIRE 1 – MEMBERS

My questionnaire consists of 5 different parts that were created based on 5 question topics and the same structure is now used when presenting the results.

The first part deals with the members’ demographics.

These 2 graphs show the members’ gender and age distribution in the study. Of 29 members that answered the survey 97% were male and 3 % female. Almost 80% were in the age group 30-49 years, only 3 % were under the age of 20 and 17 % were over 50 years of age.

1 female and 1 junior participated in the survey which can explain for the low number of female members and members under the age of 20. The squash club at this point had 73 members in total (12 juniors, 6 female and 67 male members).

Comments: The typical club member in this study is a male in his thirties and forties.
The second part is about the members’ squash experience

Almost 70% of existing members in the study had at some point participated in the racket center’s Round Robin program and 10% were waiting in line to get into the program while 21% never participated in the Round Robin.

This result shows that the Round Robin is a popular activity and that members of the squash club are not automatically granted a place in the racket center’s Round Robin but have to wait in line like non-members do. Nearly half of the members have been playing squash for 9 years or longer and almost 75% have been playing for 5 years. Only 3% have played squash less than 1 year which indicates a quite high maturity level of squash experience among ESC members.

Comments: Since many members have participated in the Round Robin program therefore the club could perhaps start a Round Robin for members only with some years of playing experience (intermediate and advanced levels).

The third part concerns the membership of the squash club

Close to half of existing members have been members of ESC for 3 years or more, 10% for 2 years and 42% have been members for 1 year or less. The squash club has 4 types of memberships where regular members make up nearly 50% of all members. The second largest group is members playing in national league competition and the two smallest groups are the Round Robin players (14%) and junior members.
Comments: 42% new members in the past year indicate a positive membership growth trend. Almost half of members are interested in playing squash competitively and at least 31% participate in competition outside the racket center in national events.

Figure 30 (source: member survey, question 9 Appendix B)            Figure 31 (source: member survey, question 11 Appendix B)

Most members or 86% think that their current squash club membership is priced on a good level. The remaining 14% think the price of their membership is too high.

The major deciding factors for becoming members in the squash club were the location of the racket center and membership benefits. Neither the membership fee nor the club’s activities were a deciding factor for joining the club. 14% named other factors for joining the squash club.

One reason was the ability to play more squash besides the Round Robin.

Comments: All 4 categories of club membership are priced reasonably. The favorable location of the racket center is not controlled by the squash club but further development of membership benefits and activities are.

Figure 32 (source: member survey, question 14 Appendix B)           Figure 33 (source: member survey, question 13 Appendix B)

The majority of members are currently content with their ESC membership and only 7% are dissatisfied. Most members (66%) do not have any one in their household that potentially could be interested in joining the squash club. Almost one third of members have at least one family member that could be interested in club membership. 14% have several family members that could be interested in membership.
Comments: At least 12 new members could be recruited from the 29 existing member households. This could mean that for the actual total of members (73) this number of 12 would likely be higher.

The fourth part is about the squash club’s communication to members

The members were given the opportunity to rate the level of the club’s communication where a grade of 5 was the best score and grade of 1 the lowest score. Almost half (48%) of members gave the club a score of 2 or lower and 52% gave the grade of 3 or higher. No member gave the club the highest score of 5. The average score was 2.62.

Members were also asked about how they would like the squash club to communicate with them. The number one choice of communication method was email and was selected by 28 out of 29 members (97%). A club website and the club notice board were considered the second and third most important means of communication and chosen by 16 and 13 members. The least preferred methods were telephone and post.

Comments: The study shows that the squash club needs to improve the level of communication and the importance of choosing the right method to communicate. It also indicates the need for the club to create a website of their own.

The last section is about general information regarding members and their opinions

A majority (69%) of members welcomes more collaboration between the different clubs in the racket center but 17% do not want the clubs to have activities together. The squash club received grades between 1 and 5 on overall performance, where 5 was the best grade. No one gave the club a grade of 5 and only 2 members (7%) gave the grade of 2.
Comments: The common perception among the club members is that they belong to a good squash club. In order to earn a better average overall grade than 3.41 the club perhaps needs to improve communication as well as activities with other clubs in the racket center.

4.2.2 ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE 2 - PROSPECTS

The first graph shows that 79% of the female Round Robin players are of the ages 30-49. Most of the women have a long experience of playing squash and 50% have played more than 5 years. Only 11% have played for 1 year or less.

Comments: The majority of the female Round Robin players are of the same age group as the male club members. This could be interpreted that the typical squash player in the racket center seems to be in his or her thirties and forties according to the study. As most men and women are in the same age group they may also have other interests in common and benefit from social club activities. This could improve the club’s general social atmosphere.

All four Round Robin groups are represented well in the study where group 1 has the highest skill level. One respondent in the survey was no longer playing in the Round Robin program. 29% of the players thought the Round Robin lacked something but they did not provide any answer to what this could be.

Comments: It could be interesting for the squash club to find out what needs and wants the Round Robin program does not fulfill today for one third of the players and if the
club could fill this gap some how. A deeper analysis shows that the players who missed something did not belong to a specific group (1-4) or level of play but were evenly distributed among the 4 groups.

More than half of all players have played in the Round Robin for at least 3 years. 29 % have played in the Round Robin for 1 year or less. 100% of the players are very satisfied with the Round Robin and gave overall grades of 4 and 5.

Comments: The racket center’s Round Robin program for women seems to be very successful and well liked.

5 out of the 28 female Round Robin players who answered the survey are members today in the squash club. 21 % are considering club membership but 7% do not know how to become a member. More than two thirds think that the club’s membership fee for Round Robin players of 300 SEK is on a fair level. Only 11 % view the fee as being too high and 21 % have no opinion.

Comments: The fee for membership is not an obstacle for joining the squash club but the club needs perhaps to communicate better regarding club benefits and activities (including specific activities for women) to get more than 21% interested in club membership.
The study shows that 39% of female Round Robin players think that members in the squash club should have priority to play in the Round Robin. 36% are not sure and 29% do not like the idea.

Comments: The number of women in favor of members’ priority to the Round Robin is surprisingly high considering the low number of interest in club membership.

27 out of 28 women (96%) wanted to receive information via email, 11 (39%) via website and 12 (43%) via the club’s notice board in the racket center. Traditional means of communication such as telephone and post are not interesting at all to this group.

Comments: The result is very similar to the member survey which means that electronic format is by far the most desired way of communication.
The study shows that 39% of Round Robin players would like more interaction and activities among the various clubs in the racket center. 29% do not find this interesting and 32% do not know.

**Comments:** Almost 40% of female Round Robin players and nearly 70% of the squash club’s members were in favor of more collaboration between the clubs and joint activities in the racket center. This is obviously something that the squash club should discuss further with the racket center and the other racket clubs in order to develop a positive interaction within the racket center “community”.

Most of the Round Robin players (73%) considered it important or very important that the squash club has its own squash coach. A closer analysis shows that the players who considered a coach to be important (51%) and very important (21%) were evenly distributed among the four groups of Round Robin players.

**Comments:** It is important that the squash club keeps its own coach.

The different skill levels (group 1-4) of the Round Robin players are not a deciding factor whether the Round Robin players considered a coach to be important or not. 23 out of 28 women answered in the survey that training with a squash coach was the second most attractive activity after playing in the Round Robin.

Hence offering group training with the club coach could be a way for the club to attract more female Round Robin players to become members.
4.3 BENEFICIAL SWOT ANALYSIS

This SWOT is based on the present and future situation of the squash club (ESC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The squash club’s location in the popular racket center</td>
<td>- The squash club’s internal and external communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The racket center’s professional staff and excellent customer service</td>
<td>- No employees due to scarce financial resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 100% volunteer work results in low operating costs for the squash club and low priced activities for members</td>
<td>- Too few volunteers limit the club’s capacity and capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The club has its own squash coach</td>
<td>- Few activities targeted to women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Members have the opportunity to compete on several levels in the national squash league</td>
<td>- Lack of activities on weekday evenings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Expansion of the racket center and the building of new squash courts and a club office.</td>
<td>- The squash club has no own office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Collaboration with the clubs in the racket center to offer joint activities (social events, junior programs)</td>
<td>- The racket center does not expand and no new squash courts are added and or court prices go up for the club.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strategic partnership with the racket center to grow the number of squash club members and volunteers (eg. from Round Robin players).</td>
<td>- If the Round Robin program grows further it may compete for the squash club’s existing court time and expansion plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Development of a squash club website to improve communication and reduce the club’s administration</td>
<td>- Increased competition from other clubs in the racket center or unwillingness to collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The new sport racketlon may increase the interest in playing squash in a racket center</td>
<td>- Economic down turn may lead to fewer people playing squash and investing in club membership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>THREATS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The racket center does not expand and no new squash courts are added.</td>
<td>- Squash is not becoming an Olympic sport in 2016 and the sport gets much less exposure than rival racket sports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increased competition from other clubs in the racket center or unwillingness to collaborate</td>
<td>- Economic down turn may lead to fewer people playing squash and investing in club membership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Development of squash club website to improve communication and reduce administration costs.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Beneficial SWOT – ESC (Zackrisson 2009)
CHAPTER 5  CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this final chapter key findings and conclusions will be presented as well as answers to the research questions. Empirical data is related to key theory and the chapter ends with recommendations, suggestions for future research and a self evaluation.

5.1  KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Key findings

• The process of marketing planning is more important than the finished outcome, the actual marketing plan due to constant changes of market conditions. Marketing planning and the creation of a marketing plan is not only a key exercise for large companies but small organizations like ESC also benefit from engaging in this activity on a regular basis.

• The main benefit of the marketing plan is that it summarizes what an organization needs to do in order to reach its objectives and how to best communicate with the market and identify new opportunities.

• Using an appropriate model as a guide and frame work during marketing planning and development of a marketing plan can be beneficial as it can provide the organization with valuable structure, direction and focus.

• Segmentation can help an organization to better understand and serve its target market and it is a good method to discover new growth opportunities.

• The squash club’s best opportunity in terms of recruiting new members and volunteers are male and female squash players who participate in the racket center’s Round Robin program. The program has over 100 players and very few of these are club members today. Existing members’ families are also an important source for finding additional members and volunteers since an estimated 30% of existing members have one or more family members that they believe could be interested in joining the squash club.

• Specific activities for women such as group training with a squash coach are important in order to attract more female players (especially female Round Robin players) to become members of the squash club.

• The majority of existing members want better communication from the squash club regarding information concerning the activities and membership benefits. The study showed that electronic information via email and via a club website was the two preferred means of communication by members and female Round Robin players.

• Creating a club website and updating membership and prospect data records with email information is essential to improve communication and administration.
The main weaknesses of the club are its resources, capacity and especially communication. The lack of employees and enough volunteers influence greatly the club’s capabilities and activities offered. Collaboration with the racket center is vital since its strengths (people, facilities and customer service) help reduce the squash club’s weaknesses. The squash club needs to find more volunteers to help out with various club activities.

The squash club’s only real strength is that it has a very low operating cost due to having no employees and only using volunteers (including its own squash coach) and can therefore price its activities relatively low to members. This together with the fact that the club is located in the popular racket center that has excellent customer service and facilities is the club’s main competitive advantage.

The MIO (Market –Interaction-Organization) model including the SWOT analysis is an appropriate tool to use for the squash club during the continuous marketing planning process and when developing a marketing plan.

The racket center has plans to expand and to build more squash courts and club facilities in the near future and this a great opportunity for development and growth since available court time for club activities are limited today due to the large Round Robin program.

Conclusions
A small non-profit squash club like ESC with scarce resources and slim organization has to implement a customer centered mindset and work smarter not necessarily harder. A club website and a marketing plan will support this initiative.

The club has to carefully match market opportunities with its objectives and capabilities in order to develop a sustainable growth strategy that will lead to long term success.

Timing and flexibility play an important role since the market conditions change constantly including consumers’ needs and wants. Engaging in marketing planning and the development of a marketing plan will enable the club to find new creative ways to offer a unique squash experience that will result in a positive membership development.

The squash club has a bright future with nice opportunities for growth since the racket center and its “community” has everything the club needs in order to become successful.

The racket center is supporting the squash club’s development. The population in the racket center is large enough for all racket clubs so there is no need to compete for members or space especially when the plans are to expand the center further with additional courts and improve conditions for all clubs.

To improve the situation of the low number of women and volunteers in the squash club the fastest and easiest way would be to prioritize the segment of female Round Robin players since they already play squash every week in the racket center and the fact that the club has access to their email addresses.
Hopefully the club’s strategic partnership with the racket center will result in additional value delivery in terms of direct benefits for squash club members. These benefits could be priority to the Round Robin activity and perhaps a discount on its annual fee since this would significantly improve the club’s chances to recruit many from this group. Ideal would of course be if a squash club membership was required in order to participate in the Round Robin.

Customer service and customer satisfaction are more important to measure than profit to non-profit organizations. These organizations rely much on viral marketing to gain new members via word of mouth from satisfied existing members. A good way to measure customer service and customer satisfaction levels is by conducting marketing research and performing annual survey questionnaires. The 2 online survey questionnaires in the study proved that it indeed can be a quick, cheap and suitable way to get valuable feedback from both prospects and members.

5.2 ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this section is to answer the research questions that were asked in chapter 1.

**Major questions:**

- **How can a marketing plan be beneficial to a small non-profit organization like ESC?**

  **Answer:**
  A marketing plan provides a valuable framework, focus and direction as well as an overview of how the organization should manage its objectives. Any organization would benefit from a marketing plan regardless if it is profit or non-profit, large or small because it provides an important path for the future, what opportunities to pursue and how to best use the organization’s resources and capabilities doing it. A marketing plan will support ESC’s efforts to better develop the club’s services and manage existing members but also how to best find and attract new members.

- **Where are the best growth opportunities for ESC?**

  **Answer:**
  The best opportunities for growth in terms of members are the racket center’s Round Robin players and juniors from the other racket clubs in the center. There are currently 36 female and 90 male RR players and today only a small number of these are members of the squash club. Female RR players are the most important to the squash club short term due to the fact that the club currently has very few female members. Juniors (under the age of 19) are the solution to long term survival since most members in the squash club are in their 30’s and 40’s and very few are in their 20’s.
• Should ESC change anything specific in its existing marketing mix?

Answer:
The squash club’s location (Place) in the racket center and the club’s membership fees (Price) are good according to 86% of members but Yes, the squash club needs to make changes regarding communication (Promotion) and to offer specific activities for women (Product) such as group training with the squash club’s coach.

The club’s communication was poor and insufficient and the overall grade by the club’s members was 2.62 out of possible 5. The main source of communication in the past has been the club notice board in the racket center but this was only visible to people playing squash on the courts on the second level where the board was located.

The member survey showed that members preferred that the club communicated with them electronically via email (97%) and the use of a club website and a similar result was recorded in the survey for the female Round Robin players.

It is clear that the club needs to update its member and prospect records with data of email addresses and to develop a website of their own that enables easy and more frequent updates of club information accessible from anywhere. A website would reduce the club’s administrative workload as well as costs and improve the speed of communication to the target market.

• Does ESC have an effective segmentation strategy today?

Answer:
It is better today compared to earlier years but it can be further developed to become even more effective.

Recently the squash club has used a differentiated segment coverage strategy targeting multiple segments in its target market and this has resulted in an increase of members.

Current target segments are: Round Robin players, juniors and people who want to compete in the national squash league. The club applies differentiated pricing of membership for these groups. However, the squash club needs to adjust its segmentation strategy to add new key segments especially women and refine existing segments such as Round Robin players to include RR female and RR male players, since they have different requirements. Squash players with annual court time contracts with the racket center would be another possible segment for the squash club to go after since they are familiar with the racket center but have not been prioritized by the squash club.
• How can ESC collaborate with partners to add value to members and prospects and increase the total number of members?

Answer:
A strategic partnership with the racket center will enable the squash club to develop and grow because the squash club shares the same goal as the racket center.

This goal is to have many loyal squash customers that are active and participate in activities and who are all members of the local squash club.

The racket center’s Round Robin program is a perfect activity and service for male and female squash players, members and non members and the racket center does a fantastic job running it and the program is growing. This activity would be quite difficult for the squash club to copy or take over and operate. However the activity does not fulfil the needs of all participants especially those who want to play more squash than once a week for 30 minutes. The squash club can offer a range of activities such as group training, club competition and social events but these are only available to members.

Both the tennis club and the badminton club in the racket center currently have waiting list for their juniors and have to turn down children every year due to capacity issues. Collaboration with these 2 clubs would enable the squash club to create a “win-win-win” situation where juniors can be offered to play squash while on a waiting list for tennis or badminton program and may not have to leave the racket center.
The squash club gets more junior members and the tennis and badminton club can provide a value added service instead of having disappointed juniors on waiting lists.

• What would a beneficial SWOT analysis look like for ESC?

Answer:
See table 2 in chapter 4.

Minor questions:

• How overall satisfied are current members with the squash club and their membership?

Answer:
93 % of the members in the survey were satisfied with their club membership and the club received an average overall grade of 3,41 out of 5 possible from its members. This indicates however that the club can do more in order to improve the overall customer satisfaction level.
• What are the main reasons why people become ESC members?

Answer:
According to the member survey the most deciding factors for becoming members in the squash club were the location of the racket center and the membership benefits.

• How can ESC interest more women to become members?

Answer:
The squash club has to actively work to engage women better in becoming members by offering them specific activities and communicate the club’s membership benefits. Most of the surveyed female Round Robin players (73%) considered it important or very important that the squash club has its own squash coach. 23 out of 28 women in the survey indicated that training with a squash coach was their second most wanted activity after playing in the Round Robin. Group training on Saturday mornings and Sunday evenings with the club coach could be a way to attract more female Round Robin players to become members.

• What is ESC’s competitive advantage, if any?

Answer:
ESC’s competitive advantage is that the club has a low cost strategy with no employees and only volunteers working for the club. This enables the club to offer members quality activities to low prices such as instructor lead group training. The club’s location in the popular racket center and the relationship with the racket center is also unique and gives the club a competitive edge that no other squash club in Stockholm has.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The squash club should strive to develop a strategic partnership with the racket center in order to turn Round Robin players, especially women, into members as well as identify additional membership benefits that would add high perceived value to members and key prospects.

Collaboration with the other clubs in the racket center’s “community” and exchange of information between clubs could benefit junior development. Juniors who are on waiting lists for one sport can be offered a place in another club’s junior program while maintaining their place in the original waiting list. This would prevent juniors from leaving the racket center thus improving service to members and subsequently customer satisfaction level.

The different clubs in the racket center could form an alliance to jointly serve young racket players better. This would benefit the squash club most likely with an increase in junior members as a result.
The squash club needs to implement a well defined segmentation strategy to improve understanding of target market’s requirements in order to serve it more effectively. Groups of prospects that can add the most short term and long term value to the squash club need to be prioritized. The recommended 4 key market segments moving forward are:
1) female Round Robin players, 2) juniors, 3) male Round Robin players, 4) racket center’s contract players.

Perhaps students and retired seniors would also be groups to consider in the future since they do not work and are able to play squash during day time and may be interested in volunteer work for the club.

If the racket center decides to build a doubles court this may have a positive effect on the number of seniors playing squash later in life.

It would also be advisable for the squash club to perform annual online customer satisfaction surveys in order to monitor and measure own performance and detect key changes in the marketplace.

A major weakness of the club is the internal and external communication and the club has to improve significantly in this area and an investment in IT is perhaps the solution. It is advisable for the club to create an own website and quickly update its membership database with email addresses to all members in order to communicate with them better and more frequently.

Another goal could be to get access to emails of all Round Robin and contract players in the racket center as well as juniors on waiting lists in the other clubs.

The squash club needs to engage in marketing planning on a regular basis and develop a marketing plan due to the overall benefits this adds to the organization. The MIO matrix model would be a suitable framework. It has all essential components of the marketing planning process yet it is easy to understand and flexible and this makes it appropriate for a small squash club.

I would recommend the squash club to pursue a cost focus strategy that would enable the club to offer reasonable prices for most activities and differentiate where possible to create additional value in line with Porter’s (1985) thoughts that an organization should always try to pursue cost reduction opportunities that do not sacrifice differentiation but also pursue differentiation opportunities that do not incur much cost.

An appropriate growth strategy for the squash club moving forward is a combination of market penetration and market development because this fits with the club’s organizational capabilities and market opportunities. Penetrating the existing market with existing services powered by better communication will hopefully help the club build new relationships and turn existing members into loyal long term customers.

The club should also engage in market development, providing current services to a new market by serving new customer segments such as female Round Robin players.
I suggest the club position itself as a squash club with high customer service (with support from the racket center and the use of Information Technology), low prices (having low operating cost due to volunteers) and value added activities for all members.

Finally I believe that the squash would benefit moving forward by recruiting more female members to the club’s management team. Today the team consists of 7 males and only 1 female member and this may very well be an indirect result of the club’s low attention to the needs and wants of female squash players in the past.

An increased representation of women in the club’s management would add valuable insight and send a positive message to the female squash population in the racket center that the club is looking after their interests if they become members.

5.4 SUGGESTED FUTURE RESEARCH

I think it would be interesting to study and compare the membership development between the two main groups of squash clubs in Sweden, the clubs located in a multi-sport venues or racket centers and clubs that operate in dedicated squash facilities.

One could also perform a comparison among the four racket sports: tennis, badminton, table-tennis and squash and the reasons behind young people choosing to play one sport over the others. The result would help racket clubs to better understand how they should position themselves in the market place to attract young people to their particular sport.

5.5 SELF EVALUATION

I finally come to the part of self evaluation, looking at things that I did well but more important is what I could have done better or different.

I believe the topic I chose was the right one because it was important to me on a personal level as well as interesting and I knew that after my work was finished it would be of practical importance and benefit the squash club’s future development.

The most interesting part of this study project was the work of designing and delivering the on-line survey questionnaires. Looking back I think I could have asked a few questions differently both in my interview and in my 2 surveys but overall I am pleased with the outcome. For example in my member survey I should have included a question regarding existing membership benefits in order to find out which benefits members value the most and give members the opportunity to suggest any new benefits that they would like to see in the future. This question should also have been asked to the non female Round Robin players in my second questionnaire.

I was fortunate to find the free Kwiksuryes.com web-based questionnaire software since this tool was very feature rich, easy to work with and the fact that all surveys and results are stored and available to access in the future.
This enables the squash club to later reuse and modify existing questionnaires for annual customer satisfaction surveys and to quickly create and launch new surveys for specific customer segments.

The only drawback with the Kwiksveys.com software was that its data analysis capability was limited to only presenting survey results in bar charts. This was not a major issue but the activity of exporting raw data into excel in order to provide a better variety of graphical presentation was time consuming and was also a potential source for human errors when the data was transferred.

The study showed that 55 out of a total of 57 respondents in my 2 online surveys preferred electronic communication by email and only 3 liked the idea to receive club information via post and 1 via telephone. I feel content that I decided to use online questionnaires to be distributed via email because traditional paper postal surveys or telephone surveys would probably not have provided me with sufficient answers to produce reliable and credible results.
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APPENDIX A – Interview questions

APPENDIX B – Online questionnaire 1

APPENDIX C – Online questionnaire 2