How can the company improve its marketing to attract potential customers and retain current clients?

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Abstract

The following dissertation is based upon the marketing issues faced by Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters which is a small limited company established in September 2012, the issues are highlighted throughout chapter 1. The literature review in chapter 2 illustrates the common themes throughout SMEs and their ability to market effectively. These include the lack of resources available from both a skill set and financial perspective to the added advantage of flexibility afforded SMEs in the business world today. The authors included relate specifically to SME and marketing consequentially developing the hypotheses that clarifies the theoretical background of the report and how it influences the SME performance. This then directs the formulation of the hypotheses in this paper and the conceptual framework adapted on which the research is based. Chapter 3 presents the methodology used to collect and analyse the data in detail in order to justify the research design framework. In chapter 4 the findings are presented sequentially following the structure presented in the conceptual framework and then by research method for each of the 3 objectives. The conclusion demonstrates the commonality between the themes uncovered in the literature review and those facing Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters. The final section of the report discusses the implication of the findings to the business, highlights the limitations of the study and provides recommendations on the way forward with limited resources available. This is then collated into an implementation plan based upon a strategy within the means of the business with contingencies planned for accordingly.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The author is employed by Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters Limited as the part time Business Support Manager. Due to the infancy of the company there is currently a strong focus on building the client base and retaining the current customers, consequently this is one of the main aspects of the role at present. Other duties carried out within the role include the following:

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Table 1 Responsibilities of the Business Support Manager

About the Company

Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters Limited is a small limited company established in September 2012, based in Chorley in the North West of England and is owned by the Managing Director. The business commenced when an opportunity was presented to absorb customers from a company in decline. The
company provides whole vehicle body spray, replacement panels and paint spraying of parts and repairs to scratches on any size of vehicle.

In addition to the Managing Director, there are 2 full time employees who are fully qualified paint spray technicians, 1 full time third year apprentice, who is trained to spray to a high standard and therefore carries out the same level of work as the other 2 painters, 1 full time preparation technician, 1 full time administrator and a part time business support manager, see Figure 1 below.

![Organisational Chart](chart.png)

Figure 1

Since commencing the trade the business has seen a growth by over 50% in both revenue and customers, there is an existing customer base with new clients slowly yet continually approaching the company. The expansion of the business was initiated by hiring a full time Preparation Technician and an additional full
time Paint Spray Technician after a recommendation from Bolton College. Following this the administrator was sought to support the team. From this point on the volume of work had outgrown the current premises that comprises of a relatively small rented operational work unit on an industrial estate, which did not contain office space or the ability to house larger vehicles.

Fortunately, an opportunity was recently taken to rent an additional larger unit local to the current premises, more visible to potential passing trade, containing an office and a low bake vehicle oven, this can hold larger vehicles to support the expansion by being able to deliver services to companies with larger vehicles, such as, Tyrer’s bus company. Previously only small repairs were carried out for this particular firm where as now a bus can be completely re-sprayed at a charge of £4000 and are being presented on a regular basis. The expenditure to gain the new premises was £25,000 via an asset finance company on a guarantor based loan. Financially, this was a great opportunity brought about again by a local business in decline.

**Issues under Review**

To attract larger companies from beyond the immediate area the business is working towards being SCANIA approved, a global vehicle manufacturing organisation, this certificate of recognition can also be awarded by other similar organisations within the vehicle industry to display the high standards achieved and this approval will increase the prestige and image of the business. Exactly how far the business is from this is not yet known as the Managing Director has
only recently been in a position to delegate this to the Business Support Manager to action plan accordingly.

The current marketing of the company is limited to one van advertising the company logo which generally follows the same route daily and therefore has limiting potential to advertise the business. There is a basic website publicising the company, location and contact details and services available and has only recently been updated and had regular images of recent work carried out displayed.

Due to the lack of advertising and not yet being approved by any certificated body the company work on the principle that ‘you’re only as good as your last job!’ This drives the quality standards and overarching philosophy of the team and underpins the customer focus of some of the strategic objectives. However whilst this is a valid work ethic to adopt it is not a basis on which to rely on future trade and customer retention.

The Managing Director is particularly skilled in sourcing custom, networking with relevant and beneficial businesses and has a proven track record of success in gaining new custom. However with more vehicles coming in the Managing Director’s painting skills are required on site, consequently this has reduced the amount of promotional networking time and without a consistent marketing approach there are periodic dips in the trade coming in.
Strategic Significance of the Issues under Review

Over the past 18 months the company has achieved 2 out of 3 of the aims detailed in the business plan;

1. Focus on the areas of the business with the most revenue potential, e.g. Horse boxes due to retaining consistent and valued customers and smaller vehicles that provide a quick turn-around.

2. Expansion of an additional larger operational site located to attract passing trade and carry out larger vehicle work.

By fulfilling the first aim of the business plan the company was positioned to progress and expand due to the financial growth and the good practice embedded in the team, by focusing on the quality standard and customer care to ensure productivity and promote customer loyalty and embedding this in the strategic objectives.

The strategic objectives that assisted in achieving this were;

- Excellent customer service ensuring all work is delivered to a high standard and applying the reputation of the business to this.
- Revenue growth
- Investment in equipment that enables proficiency

The areas of the strategic business plan that require ongoing development comprise of a strategic marketing campaign that is both cost efficient, easily recognised and attractive to customers. This coupled with the development of
the website and other social media sites will bring the company in line with the initial aims and objectives set when commencing the business in 2012.

**Research Question and Objectives**

How can the company improve its marketing to attract potential customers and retain current clients?

**Research Objectives**

1. To critically evaluate the current marketing of the organisation.
2. To identify key themes of competitors marketing.
3. To identify any improvements to the marketing of the enterprise.

The structure of the report enables the in depth exploration of the literature pertaining to related issues effecting the marketing of SMEs which highlights the common themes relevant to Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters. Through defining a conceptual framework from the literature review the research gives a systematic approach to investigating the current marketing of the business including evidencing the strengths and weaknesses and potential opportunities for growth and development. The findings and analysis presents the basis on which a marketing strategy can be devised and finally an implementation plan demonstrates how best to address the research question.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Within the literature review Small Medium Enterprises (SME) and their marketing will be focused upon and explored. The authors included will relate specifically to SME and marketing and where possible literature, pertaining to large firms has been discarded unless deemed insightful in relation to marketing and strategy. Historical data that pre dates the recession lacks relevance to the current economic climate and how SMEs are currently placed within it. The orthodox marketing management material is presented initially with the review of more anti-theoretically inclined works presented afterwards. Reijonen and Laukkanen, (2010) and Bettiol et al (2012) agree there is little research available addressing marketing within SME’s there are however many definitions of marketing as displayed in Table 2 below:
Definition | Author and Year
--- | ---
Marketing is the delivery of customer satisfaction at a profit. The goal of marketing is to attract new customers by promising superior value, and to keep current customers by delivering satisfaction. | Kotler, et al (2005) pp4
Marketing is the study of exchange processes especially those associated with the provision of goods and services. | Adcock et al (2001) pp2
Marketing is a process of organizational improvisation and adaption resulting from the interactions between emerging environmental forces (including day to day market events) and emerging managerial choices (including day to day improvisations and adaptions in the strategy content and task environment) directed toward achieving market and organizational objectives. | Sashittal and Jassawalla (2001)

Table 2 Definitions of Marketing

Despite the definition by Sashittal and Jassawalla (2001) being specific to marketing within SMEs and detailing the day to day operations the definition by Kotler (2005) will be applied throughout the literature review as it encompasses the generalisation of marketing and the objective of attracting new custom whilst maintaining current customer satisfaction and has a more generalised approach. The common themes identified within the literature are displayed in Table 2.1 below:
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<th>Theme</th>
<th>Author</th>
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Table 2.1 Common Themes of Marketing

**Thesis**

**Small Medium Enterprises**

Aldaba (2012) and Cant (2012) commonly found in relation to the lack of managerial skills and barriers to success within SME’s the following caused major issues:

- Marketing
- Finance
- Personnel
- Business
- Technical skills
- Infrastructure
Cant (2012) promotes the remedy is training, counselling and financial support. This is important because according to (Skokan et al 2013 and Emmanuel 2014) SMEs are essential to the community, the economy and create employment. Cant (2012) advocates meeting customer need as a basis for success and by using a “marketing concept” generates revenue at the same time, this financial aspect is supported by Ahmad (2013). Marketing skills and business knowledge are dominate in relation to the successes of a business and by applying research into customer needs, competitive advantage, target markets and a proactive marketing mix a marketing concept can be established, (Cant 2012). Due to the owner/managers of SME’s being the driving force of the business the responsibility for marketing relies clearly on them, this includes staying abreast of current trends and changes that potentially impact on the business and gaining the skills and knowledge required to do this and meet business objectives, (Bettiol et al 2012 and Cant 2012 and Emmanuel 2014).

Kotler et al (2005) and Ogumokun et al (2012) are of the opinion SME’s can potentially employ the use of a wide range of marketing models or techniques within the resources available to the business and may see a degree of success, despite the resource limitation, (Fiore et al 2013 and Bamiatzi and Kirchmaier 2014 and Mukerjee 2014). However, Karanja et al (2013) found SME’s were founded by entrepreneurs with little faith in marketing who instead focused on quality presuming sales would continue and suggest the business’ would have been even more successful had the correct marketing been applied. Cant (2012) extends this view by stating SME owners require marketing skills whether they
enjoy the marketing aspect of the business or not as this is imperative to the success of the business.

**Marketing Strategy**

As in larger companies within the SME business arena strategies are implemented to aid prediction and forecasting to enable the appropriate planning of goals, objectives and resource allocation. To aid marketing it is essential to have a sound basis for an appropriate strategy that ensures all steps are taken as displayed in Kotler’s (2009) Strategic Planning Process Figure 2 below, this shows the stages a business goes through to achieve an all encompassing strategy, initially assessing the micro and macro environment and consequently setting goals. According to Kotler (2009) the strategic purpose of a business is to create added value and strategy formulation consists of 4 aspects;

Segmentation: is a group of customers with similar wants and needs, Johnson (2009) and Kotler (2009), historically encompassing the geographic, demographic, psychosocial aspects of customers. This enables SME’s to customise marketing to reach different customers through added value in order to be as profitable as possible, (Reijonen and Laukkanen 2010 and Cant 2012).

Targeting: SME’s need to be vigilant in identifying their target market by thoroughly researching the needs and wants of the customer and how these change. Promoting what’s on offer and how to access the business is imperative for success, (Kotler 2005 and Cant 2012). In addition, Reijonen and Laukkanen (2010) advocate targeting segments that generate the most profit and are ideal for the function of the business.
Positioning: is the act of designing the company’s offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of the target market (Kotler 2005). The role of positioning is to create the value proposition or rationale that exploits the value opportunities in response to the customers creating a demand for new products and services. This perspective is shared by Hatch and Zweig (2001 pp.45) who state, “clearly, it is necessary for the offer to be unique, but it is insufficient if the offer does not provide substantial value by addressing a clear customer need.” Positioning for SME’s needs to distinctive depicting the unique attributes of product or services offerings that are difficult to replicate. What’s on offer happens in the mind of the consumer and provides the perspective this is viewed from Kotler (2005) and Cant (2012) and Akpoyomare et al (2013).

Relationships: Reijonen and Laukkanen (2010) denote the assorted data collated on customers should be effectively processed to devise customer relationship management methods that are beneficial to both parties. Bettiol et al (2012) states through the relationship with key consumers both brands and products can be improved upon.

Formulation and implementation depict how businesses achieve the desired outcome and finally gaining feedback to ensure the strategy is working, carrying out research to this effect (quantitatively if possible). Once the value is identified and created it is implemented into the promotional advertising and marketing seen by consumers. Cant (2012) views the process as an ongoing cycle continually reviewed to maintain focus of the purpose on the business and to
allow for adjustments to the marketing strategy to ensure competitive advantage and a proactive response to changes in the macro or micro environment.

The Strategic Planning Process

Collins, (1998, p.84) critiqued linear models by applying the following N Step guide, described as, “...the term n-step guide for change, denotes a programmatic approach to change which argues, or more often assumes, that change management may be conceptualized adequately as being formed of a number of relatively discrete, yet simple and easily manageable steps or phases”. Table 2.2 below interprets the phrases used by Collins;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collins Terminology</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Uni-linear</td>
<td>Concepts or models move in a linear pattern without feedback loops</td>
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</table>
Uni-directional | Models illustrate a stilted dynamic in one direction only  
---|---  
Univocal | Methodologies “hide the voices” of participants, so we only have the author(s) voice(s) to narrate the text  
Under-socialised | Models or concepts exclude the human element when applying change or new strategies.

Table 2.2 Collins Terminology

When applied to the Strategic Planning Process it highlights how ‘under-socialised’ the process is by not taking into account the human element involved in achieving the desired outcome. This also entails the diversity concerned with employees and customers with varying degrees of understanding and perception. The process is uni directional yet feedback and control loops exist at any given stage of the process to capture changes or to adapt to changes affecting that particular aspect of the strategy. The process is dictated by the author, in this case Kotler, therefore being uni-vocal and only capturing one perception disallowing for those involved in and affected by the process to air their views and doesn’t allow for any previous practices operated within the business.

There is a presumption within the Strategic Planning Process that the resources and skills required to deliver the strategy are present within the business, as Collins (1998) highlights several authors utilise models as a prescriptive formula engaging in each step in a logical methodical way. Therefore the strategic planning process lends itself to the N-Step approach in this way as it appears rational and able to pre-empt change and plan accordingly. Yet in reality, a business isn’t a linear process with a start and end point and has to include the social aspect. Collins (1998) views N-Step guide authors, including the Strategic
Planning Process, as privileged due to the supposed advanced knowledge they possess on the alleged success of the linear models. In contrast to the projected rational status the N-Step guides are insufficient in the delivery of change processes within the business or organisational arena.

Orthodox strategies are devised for future planning to provide direction to a business or during times of harsh change, economic or market conditions where short term strategies are best applied as a contingency to manage the emergent circumstances, Skokan et al (2013) further report, supported by Ogumokun et al (2012) that SMEs were found to be more successful if they had a detailed strategy. Whilst Cant (2012) deemed specifically that limited marketing skills were the main contributor to business failure. As displayed in Table 2.3 below, the long term strategy can vary depending on a range of issues and these can have either a positive or negative impact on the business.

<table>
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<th>Long Term Strategy Variables</th>
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<tr>
<td>Type of business</td>
<td>International, large or SME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstances</td>
<td>Recession</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scope of the activities it carries out</td>
<td>Extent of the aspects of the trade/industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources available</td>
<td>Finances, employees, assets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of competence/skills and knowledge</td>
<td>Recruitment, staff training, dissemination of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People involved in the business</td>
<td>Managers, employees, customers, stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of influence</td>
<td>Impact on local, national or international community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political climate</td>
<td>Impact from policy or election on trade/industry, tax increase or relief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive advantage</td>
<td>Unique or innovative selling point</td>
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Table 2.3 Long Term Strategy Issues

Bamiatzi and Kirchmaier (2014) and Cant (2012) promote a strategy that supports the growth of a business based on the resources available which as previously documented are notoriously restricted and a productive marketing strategy can be expensive as it includes advertising and generating an interest by promoting competitive advantage. In turn this should increase revenue, the reputation of the business and the brand image. However, Centeno et al (2013) perceive limited research in relation to SME brand building and that without exception, despite the contrast in size and resources; it is believed to develop in the same way as larger companies. If this was the case there would be no need for advertisement campaigns and notable images across the board. To compare and perceive large and small business development in the same way is just one of the barriers to SME development. Due to the obstacles of non acknowledgement of limited resources and access to pooled knowledge, experience and skills as in larger firms where employees are recruited to carry
out specific tasks where as in SMEs the majority of the decision making and strategy implementation can be down to one person to carry out.

Marketing strategy evaluates the needs, wants and expectations of customers and stakeholders and it is the aim of the marketer to satisfy them. Sunsai et al (2004) and Apokoymore et al (2013) emphasise the importance of applying the right strategy through as thorough research of competitors as possible and by scrutinising the current position in the market. By conducting appropriate analysis of competitors and providing a comparison that promotes the offerings as substantially more advantageous and ensuring the offerings promoted are symptomatic of the perception the business desires to be viewed from or the image it projects.

Mukherjee (2014) and Cant (2012) found the values set by the SME alongside a well developed strategy increased the competitive advantage of a business by promoting an all-encompassing process that improves over time. This emphasises the ethos or mission of the business as a good starting point. Furthermore, Kotler (2010) and Karanja et al (2013) support the view that to promote a competitive advantage SME’s should embrace all aspects of a marketing strategy. Karanja et al (2013) perceive the majority of SME’s as focusing on sales irrespective of customer needs and that an appropriate marketing strategy should be implemented to promote longevity and financial success of the business. Agarwal et al (2012) and Kim et al (2014) report managers are more assured when a strategic marketing plan is embedded and has been developed based on previous strategic exercises and reviewed to
incorporate lessons learnt. Agarwal et al (2012) suggest the following are prerequisites for a pragmatic strategy:

- is achievable within certain terms; including time and resources
- is based on measurable assumptions;
- deals with all relevant environmental aspects (both internal and external)
- Includes clear responsibilities for anyone involved

**SWOT Analysis**

Analysis of the macro and micro environment can identify opportunities to create value. Externally, customer requirements may change rapidly. By accurately analysing the macro environment through SWOT analysis, see Figure 2.1 below, a competitive advantage may be improved upon and a weakness in performance addressed. Sluismans et al (2010) report little available research into the effectiveness of SWOT irrespective of its popularity and it being a starting point for many businesses in relation to analysis providing outcomes that steer the businesses in the right direction. Panagiotou and Riëtte (2005) and Sluismans et al (2010) and Hosseini-Nasab et al (2011), perceive SWOT as ideal for assessing current circumstances to prompt decisive action based on a complete picture ensuring the business continues to positively progress rendering the inventory gathered from the SWOT analysis key to devising the marketing strategy in strengthening the business by maintaining the good practice and seeking out new opportunities and intervening in the weaker areas and potential threats. Furthermore, Sluismans et al (2010) and Cant (2012) report the SWOT
has initiated the first steps to creativity and innovation from the pros and cons for the business being identified and can assist either a section of the business or in its entirety.

Figure 2.1 SWOT Analysis Kotler (2009)

Hosseini-Nasab et al (2011) acknowledge SWOT in relation to addressing the weaknesses of the business by drawing on the strengths. The micro environment includes the reviewing of strategies and going on to be innovative and secure in the knowledge of the potential impact of any risks taken. From the consequential goal and strategy formulation identifying the opportunities and understand what the consumer prizes most from the business to create value through positioning and branding. Here the wants of the consumer can be exploited through the prestige they desire in association with the branding providing an understanding
for the business in relation to marketing based on the value associated with consumer needs and wants.

**Creativity and Innovation**

Several authors including Carson et al (1995), Bettiol et al (2012), Cant (2012), Goel (2014) cite the flexibility afforded to SMEs invokes innovation and creativity when applying resources. Garg and De (2014) and Goel (2014) suggests SME’s should use this to conduct business with up to date modern technology, including social media and web-based research into customer needs as well as applying post sales customer service to establish a client base in order to retain customers consequently building and promoting the brand. This is also a cost effective way to market the business and keep it up to date with current trends and be constantly in contact with customers and increase exposure to potential customers. Bengesi and Le Roux (2014) and Emmanuel (2014), supports creativity applied to brand building as being essential for SMEs to succeed either nationally or internationally by continually being competitive within the market.

The constraints of the resources can hinder the progress of some SME’s in this area.

Due to the limited financial resources experienced by many SMEs the more creative and innovative the branding and promotion of the business the better the chances of success without the burden of costs usually associated with advertising and sourced marketing expertise. This is supported by Ishak and Omar (2013) and Goel (2014) who agrees here SME’s have the advantage over time served or larger businesses due to how quickly and flexibly innovative
changes can be implemented. This also applies to how quickly an idea that isn’t working can be aborted freeing up the much needed resources for the next innovative idea or project. Ishak and Omar (2013) and Bozkurt and Kalkan (2014) state innovation is pivotal to the competitive advantage and the flexibility afforded SMEs compliments this. The authors deem innovation as ‘incremental’ in SMEs due to the financial and resource constraints but acknowledge the need for it in gathering momentum. Bozkurt and Kalkan (2014) state further that the resource issue prevents appropriate recruitment to carry out the creative and innovative ideas effectively. So by ensuring employees understand the strategy applied to implement innovation it is more likely to succeed, especially if their ideas are also considered. This also boost staff moral and is inclusive of good practice by promoting a shared goal whilst innovation and creativity are explored and embedded as routine practices.

**Antithesis**

Contrary to a well structured marketing strategy the following literature revealed a variety of approaches adopted by SMEs. Bettiol et al (2012) found entrepreneurs within SME’s devise their own take on how to structure marketing using innovative ideas. Whilst Bamiatzi and Kirchmaier (2014) and O’Cass and Sok (2014) recommend a multiple strategy approach to cover all bases as the study conducted by Bamiatzi and Kirchmaier (2014) revealed 15 out of 20 businesses did not engage in structured marketing but relied on current customer information to promote the business. The authors found most SMEs favoured
relying on a softer approach to marketing through recommendations and local networking whilst O’Cass and Sok (2014) found to progress SMEs require a mix of expertise in the field, creativity, a good reputation and marketing.

Gabrielli and Balboni (2010) and Bettiol et al (2012) describe a perspective commonly held is the values of marketing are the same for both large businesses and SMEs and can be utilised within both in equal worth. This is often not the case as found by Brooks and Simkin (2012) who state SME’s are deterred due to the potential cost associated with modern marketing. This consequentially is why the above approaches develop and this can render the SME operating mainly off its reputation as O’Cass and Sok (2014) acknowledge the SME is only as good as its reputation irrespective of a robust marketing strategy and must have this intact to develop. The author’s further state by applying excellent customer service the impact gained will likely generate loyalty from the consumer.

Bettiol et al (2012) devised a conceptual framework, displayed in Figure 2.2 below, to demonstrate and make sense of SME owner/managers ideas and how the opportunities presented are taken in a true entrepreneurial spirit and formulated into marketing strategies.
Figure 2.2 Bettiol et al (2012) Conceptual Framework

The diagram shows the impact from the external forces or macro environment and the way the entrepreneur rationalises this and creates an idea from an opportunity. From here the concepts are explained in a dynamic modern way to stakeholders to generate resources and to the consumer to present the competitive advantage. The authors state, “This two-step process of sense-making, in the proposed conceptual framework, informs marketing strategies and influences the choices of marketing levers and initiatives,” (pp. 241). Their conceptual framework is proposed in 3 clusters of occurrence which the authors acknowledge could be further researched indicating the model isn’t without limits.

Their conceptual framework does not factor in the internal forces or micro environment that can potentially have as big of an impact on the success of SME’s as external factors. It also relies solely on one perception, that of the
entrepreneur. There is flexibility in which frameworks to apply but this could potentially lead to a lack of direction, also, the marketing strategies come in at the end of the conceptual framework showing the seizing opportunities and ideas as being more dominant in SME’s.

**SWOT Analysis**

According to Agarwal et al (2012) and Caprarescu et al (2013) there are several critics reported as having little faith in the significance of SWOT. Caprarescu et al (2013) view it as merely a way to catalogue the current circumstances affecting a business. Furthermore, the authors perceive SWOT as a haphazard way of collating both the external and internal factors that are not necessarily relevant to the business itself. From this perspective it is questionable whether any actions devised from the SWOT and taken forward by the business would be of any significance due to the ambiguity of what they are based on. Caprarescu et al (2013) further state, the design of the SWOT does not lend itself to being a robust structure that presents the issues identified in a clear segmented categorical way. Consequently due to this and many other opinions like it as Agarwal et al (2012) report the SWOT is then either discarded or ‘improved ‘ upon to force it to fit the needs of the business. Caprarescu et al (2013) found the consequences to the ill fitting use of the SWOT caused a gap in how to apply it which rendered it of little use to a business and view the model as being used more for effect than to demonstrate substance.

**Creativity and Innovation**
Bengesi and Le Roux (2014) promote creating opportunities through strategic application and identifying gaps in the services delivered through customer feedback. Whilst this is strategically sound it can be difficult to be innovative if focusing on the strategy consequently missing potential opportunities. The authors also suggest networking as the key to success through shared experiences and expansion of resources. However despite advocating this method they acknowledge that it is shrouded in uncertainty as this relies heavily on businesses complimenting each other and immense trust.

Filser et al (2014) supports responding to customer needs the authors also view the competitive advantage as the way forward for SMEs. Here innovation and creativity have the potential to expand all aspects of marketing to promote a business from the networking element through to branding and promotional opportunities. De Clercq et al (2014) report the literature as highlighting SMEs positioning and flexibility in responding to change as potentially difficult yet the two are implicit within innovation. However, with the limited resources many aspects of marketing are potentially challenging for SMEs and changes effecting them are varied and at times unpredictable and it is from this that innovation and creativity can harness from arising opportunities.

**Synthesis**

Bettiol et al (2012), Centeno et al (2013), Fiore et al (2013), Karanja et al (2013) and Mukherjee (2014), agree SMEs have limited resources to invest in marketing strategy. However, from this Centeno et al (2013) found restricted financial resources were more of a motivator to develop an effective brand as opposed to
obstructing the creativity. The consistent themes throughout the literature have been the limiting resources available to the SME business, the creativity and innovation that this can inspire, be it on a team or individual basis and the increased or potential scope to increase the competitive advantage through calculated risk taking and re-evaluating via the marketing strategic planning process. Bettiol et al (2012), Aldaba (2012), Cant (2012) and Karanja et al (2013) raised the issue regarding owner/managers limited skills not only in relation to marketing but also business skills in general. This clearly has an impact on the way marketing is perceived and implemented within the business.

SWOT analysis is viewed as a snap shot in time of the business as it stands and doesn’t allow for varying factors that can change on a day to day basis. It enables a business to take stock in order to move forward with clarity but doesn’t allow for potential change and therefore contingency planning, for example, during times of recession. Yet when used as part of a strategic planning process in a cyclical way where the snap shot is taken on a regular basis this will give it merit and accuracy for delivering a marketing strategy that can review past efforts and identify trends as well as plan for the future if not forecast.

Forecasting is a way of identifying potential opportunities and a way of avoiding high risk situations allowing for appropriate contingency planning or bypassing the risk altogether. A SWOT that allowed this level of identification within the model would then fit the needs of a business rather than having to operate 2 models simultaneously when conducting a thorough analysis of the business. Therefore simply demonstrated in Figure 2.2 below the SWOT analysis has been extended to capture the potential issues.
Conceptual Framework

Bettiol et al’s (2012) conceptual framework for demonstrating entrepreneurs’ sense-making of opportunities and ideas when being innovative and establishing how to present themselves to both stakeholders and consumers has been adapted to be the conceptual framework for this study, as shown in Figure 2.4 below. Due to the relevancy of the impact from the environmental changes on SMEs and how this is then translated into threats or opportunities. Furthermore, this also provides the structure for both innovation which inevitably coincides with the resourcefulness of SMEs and the marketing element including the application of strategy. The 3 stages of the framework have been amended to display the relevant areas and now include the impact from the macro and micro environment, the resources available, innovation and creativity, the strategic plan for stakeholders and the competitive advantage that’s taken to market. In addition
a the arrows represent the changes impacting on the business and the need for periodic review.

Areas for investigation include:

Stage 1

- conducts a SWOT analysis to determine the current factors affecting the SME in addition to identifying the strength and weaknesses
- Explores the available resources and how these are utilised at present

Stage 2

- Establishes the scope for innovation within the business and the skills held by the owner/manager in its application
- Understands where the business is in the current market and in relation to the competitors marketing

Stage 3

- Assesses the methods utilised by the owner/manager in delivering the marketing to both stakeholders and customers
Chapter 3

Research Methodology

This chapter discusses research methods and approaches in order to justify the research design framework. The research philosophy adopted is viewed as vital to applying the research strategy and methods to ensure solidarity and validity of the chosen approaches and the outcomes. It is described by Saunders et al. (2012, p.127) as, “This overarching term relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge.” This can be ontological, dealing with the nature of reality including laws and experiments where there is control over the variables and expected outcomes. Here the researcher is neutral and is concerned with how something can be knowledge as opposed to assumptions...
and can fall into being objective or subjective. The opposite of this is epistemology, based on trust, instinct and motivation within the human imagination of reality, (Saunders 2012). It is not possible to transfer between the 2 realities as the context for each reality is different. However there is the ability for the research to have elements of both. Within this there are 3 philosophical research positions to consider positivism, interpretivism and realism.

**Positivism**

Positivism is the natural scientific perspective and is a concrete external reality that can be quantified through gathering data, observation, and predictable findings. Research conducted based on this philosophy will provide factual evidence that can be relied upon as there is no deviation from the stringent methods used. The researcher is neutral and controls the variables applying specific laws making replication a possibility as the research can be carried out over and over with the same outcome expected and this provides external validity. In addition to requiring a ‘highly structured methodology’ Saunders et al (2012, p.135) adds, “the emphasis will be on quantifiable observations that lend themselves to statistical analysis.” This also allows for credible data to be utilised on which to base new research and take forward for more in depth analysis.

**Interpretivism**

Interpretivism refers to phenomenological perception symbolic interactionism, (Saunders et al 2012) and is predisposed to qualitative research and is adopted
by those who see the business world as complex and without simple laws. It has been developed over the past fifty years through the research conducted in social sciences from a positivist perspective that was unable to capture the dynamics of the issues within it. Interpretivism has a less structured approach than positivism as it addresses socially constructed externalities. Neutrality is hard to demonstrate and it is unlikely there will be control over the variables due to the human element. Replication of the research is not advisable as little control over the variable implies it cannot be repeated with the same outcome. The research can be validated internally as it is applicable to that point in time and looks for meaning and how to move forward, improve and establish what’s required to do so.

**Realism**

Saunders et al (2012, p.136) describe realism as, “relating to scientific enquiry,” the fundamental nature is of something existing whether being thought about or not. There are elements of both positivism and interpretivism within realism labelled as ‘direct realism’ and ‘critical realism’ respectively, by Saunders et al (2012). According to Saunders et al (2012, p.136) direct realism, “ says that what you see is what you get: what we experience through our senses portrays the world accurately.” Critical realism is, “ what we experience are sensations, the images of the things in the real world, not the things directly.” This belief is based on the potential for our eyes to deceives us and interpret information incorrectly. From these descriptions it is evident that realism is a combination of positivism and interpretivism as one is based on social constructs and the other on reliable
data making this an ideal philosophy for business management that changes continually.

**Research Philosophy for this Study**

The pivotal research objective is to evaluate how effective the marketing is within the business by applying selected research methods based upon the conceptual framework developed in chapter 2 (figure 2.4). The literature review established marketing consists of processes that are interpreted and implemented in various ways, as reflected in the conceptual framework, subsequently as in most management research there are elements of positivist and interpretivist philosophies therefore requiring a “mixed” approach. In this instance there is partial neutrality as despite the author being employed within the family business she was not involved in developing the current marketing plan. The externalised objective realities encompass the budgeting element and documented marketing plan that are fixed and can be replicated and is therefore positivist, however the contents of the plan are amendable and subject to interpretation by those implementing it and the authors evaluation. The impact the marketing plan has on the business was measurable in terms of success or failure rendering it interpretivist.

Identifying the key themes of competitors marketing requires investigating socially constructed externalities in addition the author had limited control over the variables as the research was reliant on other people’s perspectives, therefore interpretivist, this may have been influenced to a degree due to the management position held but has no direct superiority over the employees. The
evaluating aspect of the research is dependent on the authors perspective and was therefore subjective and within interpretivism. The marketing element applied specific laws that were investigated and benchmarked utilising a positivistic approach to determine the external construct.

Some improvements are subjective from the perspective of the author so within interpretivism as this evaluated individual, heterogeneous social constructs that could not be externally validated. The defining principles of what will definitely assist the business are positivist as this was based on a concrete external reality quantified through the data, observation, and predictable findings. Consequentially, the overall tangible elements and social processes, within the conceptual framework have elements of positivism and interpretivism indicating that on reflection a realism approach was most appropriate in relation to the research design.

**Research Strategy**

There were several research strategies to consider including case studies, experiments, surveys, archival research, case study, ethnography, action research, grounded theory, narrative enquiry also longitudinal and cross-sectional, (Saunders et al, 2012). Bell (2005, p.8) suggests, “each approach has its strengths and weaknesses and each is particularly suitable for a particular context.” The research objectives were clearly defined to the marketing of a SME at a point in time, therefore a case study was the most appropriate strategy to apply as according to Bell (2005, p.10) the advantage of a case study is it “provides opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth.”
Other advantages of a case study are; it can use both quantitative and qualitative techniques that support the achievement of methodological triangulation, hence a case study is able to support a realism approach as it caters for both positivist and interpretivist paradigms. In addition, there is no fixed time frame and is at the discretion of the researchers own boundaries. Furthermore, case studies seek out the distinctive characteristics found within businesses and the employees to gain a better understanding of how the intrinsic workings have an effect on the business putting the research within the realism philosophy. This provides internal validity within the business but not external validity across SME’s specifically. The disadvantages are that it is a ‘one off’ study so has no benchmark, so the findings cannot be considered in relation to other studies or deemed entirely relevant to other businesses.

**Method 1: Data Line Analysis**

Data Line Analysis (DLA) is based upon the work by Douglas (1995) and was initially used as an introduction to highlight any prominent concerns within organisations. The research is conducted by a word or phrase relating to the business environment being printed onto a postcard with some deliberately left blank for the individual to add any they wanted including, totalling 55 cards. By adding blank cards Douglas was opening up the questions. Each individual research participant shuffles the cards and then organise them in order of importance from bottom to top, in relation to how they feel about the word or phrase. The results are entered into a spreadsheet giving an indication of all the data and allowing for analysis by individual, teams or the whole organisation. The advantages of the DLA are; seeing the working environment from the employee’s
perspective; validation is immediate as results can be checked making it both
time and cost effective consequently results being seen imminently; the number
of cards used is flexible as long as pivotal words and phrases are captured.

The disadvantages are; it requires support from other research techniques such
as semi-structured interviews to ensure validation; there is no accurate way of
knowing the participant has given the process due attention; interpretation of the
words or phrases may differ from person to person and if participants complete
several of their own cards this can both impact on the agenda for the research
and dilute the responses. Despite the disadvantages this method was chosen to
conduct first as it has been previously utilised by Douglas (1995) to gain an initial
perspective of a situation. The sample size for this method is the 5 employees
including the Managing Director as all employees are viable participants due to
their knowledge of the business and the number is manageable in terms of time
and data. Validation is achieved following the completion of the DLA by direct
clarification with the participant.

**Method 2: Semi-Structured Interview**

The semi-structured interview was selected as the second method, firstly to
validate the DLA as proposed and secondly to provide flexibility of inquiry. Semi-
Structured Interviews require a degree of skill in engaging the interviewee to
obtain the information by ensuring jargon is not used and the surroundings and
inter-personal skills are as neutral as possible. The advantages of this generate
the opportunity for the interviewee to explore issues pertinent to them that may
benefit the research.
For semi-structured interviews the line of questioning is based on the research objectives and allows for flexibility in omitting questions, adding them and changing the sequence according to business context. All responses are documented either in note form or recorded, with consent, the author opted for hand written notes during the interviews. The advantages to doing this include only relevant information is noted rather than an abundance of recorded information. The disadvantages are; ensuring the time is managed to record all the information before progressing to the next question and slowing the respondent down if required. The 3 types of questioning utilised are;

- Open - permits explanations and elaboration providing more information to analyse
- Probing - allows relevant answers to investigated in more depth.
- Closed - used to ask specific questions and for confirmation.

By applying the questions accordingly Fisher (2007, p.159) denotes, “the respondent has much latitude to respond to the questions in ways that seem sensible to them.” This also provides the interviewer with much leverage in broadening the scope of the DLA and interrogating the data.

The sample size was a total of 5 interviews with employees including the Managing Director, being interviewed last to enable amendments to any questions that evolved from the previous interviews. This also provided the opportunity to establish the scope for innovation within the business and the skills
held by the owner/manager in its application. Due to the business being an SME the selection criteria is based on the small number of employees being a viable amount to engage in the research and all having an awareness of each facet of the business despite having their own roles within it. With this being a family owned business the potential bias of the interviewee may impact on the quality of the data and therefore affect the reliability, however anonymity was assured. The author carried out the interviews face to face and with the combination of appropriate time allocated to do so and the sample size this presented manageable data analysis.

**Method 3: Self-Completed Questionnaires**

By applying de Vaus’s 2002 definition of a self completion questionnaires Sunders et al (2012, p. 416) provide the following, ‘each person is asked to respond to the same set of questions in a pre-determined order’. Self completion questionnaires are provided to individual respondent and returned once done in a pre arranged fashion. Initially a pilot is conducted to ensure the viability of the questionnaire in being as accurate as possible in data collection. Fisher (2007, p. 192) advocates questionnaires being, ‘as short as possible,’ and the design being inclusive of the following;

- 2 – 4 sides of A4
- Attractive to the eye
- Logical and sequential structure
- Questions designed in relation to the conceptual framework and objectives
- Easy questions at the beginning and harder questions at the end
• Ask personal questions last

The latter encourages openness from the participant as they have already divulged information readily.

The advantages include; being time effective as it does not rely on the researcher’s time to complete each one; depending on how they are issued the cost can be reduced significantly by using a website or if in paper form by having a confidential return system that avoids postage. The disadvantages are; the questionnaires not being returned; a lack of opportunity to interrogate answers; closed questions impacting on the scope of data; there is a limit to the number of questions that can be asked due to the effect on response rate. Other issues include how significant the subject matter is to the respondent and their relationship to the author.

Due to the SME only having a small team and no subsequent divisions the author piloted the questionnaire with fellow students. The sample size was 5 to reflect the employees and customers involved in the research and taking part in the self completion questionnaire. The selection criteria for the actual sample size was based on the 5 employees having adequate knowledge of the business and the customers providing valuable information about competitors and the competitive advantage the business has currently.

**Triangulation**

In Table 3 below the achievement of Triangulation is shown by demonstrating the contrasting advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methods to be used within the case study.
## Comparison of advantages and disadvantages of research methods

| Data Line Analysis (blank cards to capture opinion) | Some costs and time to complete | + | Data current and therefore high quality | + | Partial face to face, Lack of anonymity may impact on honesty when answering | - | Efficient data collection method and time effective | + | High quality data and blank cards to capture innovation | + | Familiar with the data | + | Initial and post face to face contact, some visual evaluation | + | Some control over data quality, validation can clarify meaning | + | Questions designed specific to objectives | + | Partial opportunity to explore answers | + | Ability to clarify words and phrases with participant | + |
| Semi-structured interviews (open questions) | Some costs and large amount of time to complete | - | High quality and recent data | + | Face to face, lack of anonymity may impact on honesty when answering | - | Time consuming method for data collection | + | Quality data yet difficult to analyse varying answers | - | Familiar with the data | + | Face to face contact, ability to assess body language | + | Reduced control over data quality, open questions and less structure | - | Questions designed specific to objectives | + | Good opportunity to explore answers | + | Ability to clarify questions with interviewee | + |
| Self completion of questionnaires (closed questions with sections to capture opinion) | Minimal cost and low amount of time to complete | + | High quality and recent data | + | Anonymity improves honesty of answers | + | Efficient data collection method, easy distribution and time effective | + | High quality data and section to capture innovation | + | Familiar with the data | + | No face to face contact, no visual indicators | - | Control over data quality closed questions can clarify meaning | + | Questions designed specific to objectives | + | No opportunity to explore answers | - | Questions open to interpretation by respondent | - |

| Triangulation achieved | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Table 3. Triangulation
Cross Mapping Matrix

The author has made every attempt to triangulate the data within the cross mapping matrix. Table 4 below shows the Cross Mapping Matrix displaying the triangulation of the chosen methods and demonstrates how this will be carried out to achieve the objectives in conjunction with the conceptual framework ensuring all aspects are included in the research. The left hand column contains each element of the conceptual framework, resulting in 7 areas to be investigated through the objectives set and displayed at the top of the table which is then broken down to highlight the methods and relevancy to the conceptual framework.
## Cross Mapping Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Framework</th>
<th>Research Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To critically evaluate the current marketing of the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To identify key themes of competitors marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To identify any improvements to the marketing of the enterprise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>DLA</th>
<th>SSI</th>
<th>SCQ</th>
<th>DLA</th>
<th>SSI</th>
<th>SCQ</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
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<td>3</td>
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Table 3.1 Mapping Matrix
A Critical Evaluation of the Overall Research Design

As previously stated the pivotal research objective was to evaluate how effective the marketing is within the business by applying selected research methods based upon the conceptual framework developed. Subsequently, the conceptual framework had elements of positivism and interpretivism indicating a realism approach was most appropriate in relation to the research design. By adopting a case study research strategy according to Fisher (2007, p.55), “enables you to give a holistic account of the subject of your research.” This allowed exploration of all facets of SME that impact on marketing and vice versa, for instance, establishing the current factors affecting the business in addition to identifying the strength and weaknesses and investigating the available resources and utility.

The research design used a range of research methods to collate as much viable evidence as possible. However, each approach has limitations, such as, the DLA, there is very little evidence available to suggest this is a viable research tool except for that of the author’s. Therefore is potentially biased as there is a lack of fundamental research to support its value which can also limit the interpretation of its use for the author in as much as adapting style and functionality to obtain rigorous data. The DLA is a moderate way of engaging the participants in an ice breaker fashion and gaining a base line of the current issues and concerns held within the business, whilst obtaining vital information. This then gives direction on how to proceed to the semi-structured interviews which in addition to
validating the data gathered here highlights the relevant themes to explore in more depth.

As there was no accurate way of knowing whether the participant had given the DLA process due diligence the validation of answers was imperative to confirm that the data reflected the participants opinions on the marketing element of the business. In addition this gave the opportunity to confirm there was no misinterpretation of the words or phrases used and to amend the answers if required once a consistent understanding was reached with the participant. At this point, to avoid any misunderstanding with the author, any responses introduced by the participant in the blank spaces provided was clarified to ensure there was no jargon or abbreviations that were trade specific and potentially outside of the authors knowledge. This then transcended to the semi-structured interviews in how the questions were formed and when clarifying and validating responses.

The sample size of five was inclusive of all the employees providing two distinctive advantages; firstly their participation was guaranteed except for unforeseen circumstances causing prolonged absence from work, which was unlikely. This occurring would have been detrimental to the research preventing adequate collection of data to reach an informed outcome. Secondly, the data was concise enough to manage and interpret given the time constraints of the study. There was potential for bias as it is a family owned business, however, the objectivity applied to the questions in all of the methods and the interviewers conduct sought to impede this as far as
possible. The authors position within the firm is in relation to business support therefore hierarchical issues did not apply. There was flexibility in the sample size in relation to the customers self completion questionnaires that aimed for a sample size of five to reflect the number completed by the employees in order to present a comparison. However, potentially this would have been less if problems occurred in accessing customers.

The selection criteria consisted of all employees due to the low numbers but also because of the vast and relevant knowledge held regarding the detail of the business. For the self completion questionnaire it was anticipated the respondents would be reliable, although engaging the customers was unpredictable as depending on workload only one or two customers may attend per week, therefore it was necessary to consider approaching customers in order to obtain the research in the timeframe provided. The research gained from the customers was crucial to objective 3, to understand where the business was positioned in the current market and how this compared to competitors marketing.

Therefore, the selection criteria for the customers were in relation to work planned and those that were attending the premises within the constraints of the time frame. This was extended to those in the vicinity of the business to reduce the margin of error and improve the chances of a response or easy follow up to gain a response and to reduce cost in relation to postage and time spent chasing up the respondents.
The skills required to conduct the semi-structured interviews to engage the interviewee and obtain the information included applying a calm purposeful manner in order to remain focused on the themes as well as draw out influencing factors in relation to the marketing and capture any scope for innovation or issues not already identified. By adding a neutral environment to this the anonymity was further reassured and enabled the exploration of issues raised. This also provided opportunity to relay the note taking procedure and the requirement to capture the details of the responses so as not to compromise the data and to fully reflect the issues raised by the employees.

Anticipated limitations associated with the quality of the data gathered were directed more towards the semi-structured interviews due to reduced control, the open questions and less structure the outcome was more unpredictable. The evolving questions from employee to Managing Director provided the opportunity to assesses the methods utilised in delivering the marketing to both stakeholders and customers yet the varying answers provided were potentially difficult to analyse requiring the author to be consistent in the themes addressed yet allowing for spontaneity to capture pivotal issues raised.

Approaches taken are a combination of engaging with individuals in the semi-structured interviews and non intrusive through the DLA and self completion questionnaires allowing for both a probing and reflective approach enabling the data to be obtained and validated in various ways. Whether qualitative or quantitative data gathering methods the research
requires interpretation therefore the methods and questions are transparent with the aim of upholding reliability.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

Following on from chapter 3 this chapter presents the research findings from the applied research methods and the analysis. The findings will sequentially follow the structure presented in the Cross Mapping Matrix (Table 3.1) of the conceptual framework and then research method for each of the 3 objectives using the following headings:

- Element of Conceptual Framework
- Data Line Analysis Results
- Semi-structured Interview Results
- Self-completion Questionnaire Results
- Commentary in Relation to the Objectives

The data line analysis, (see Appendix 1), was completed with the employees including the MD. This consisted of employees who have worked for Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters since the business commenced and the new recruits, totalling a sample size of 6. For the purpose of the DLA research they will be referred to collectively as participants in this instance. The semi-structured interviews were initially
piloted on one employee who was the newest recruit to the team and was then no longer involved in the research. Then post adjustments the semi-structured interviews, (see Appendix 2), were rolled out across a sample size of 5 employees. For the purpose of the semi-structured interview research the employees will be referred to as interviewees. There was a covering letter, (see Appendix 3), attached to the self completion questionnaire, (see Appendix 4), that was initially piloted on 1 customer who then no longer took part in the research. Post adjustment it was rolled out to a further sample size of 5 customers who were booked in over a 2 week period and were as random as possible resulting in a combination of singular vehicle owners and SME business owners. For the purpose of the self-completion questionnaires the customers will be referred to as respondents. By conducting research with both employees and customers an internal and external perspective was gained.

Customer Profile

Below are four graphs showing the results of the questions pertaining to the customer profile of the respondents who completed the self completion questionnaire.

Question 1:
**How long have you been a customer of Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&lt;1 year</th>
<th>&lt;2 years</th>
<th>&gt;2 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 SCQ Question 1 Results

Table 4 above shows the majority, consisting of 4 respondents, had been customers for over 2 years with one respondent using the service for less. The business itself was established 4 years ago so the longer standing customers would have seen the business grow and develop from its infancy. The more recent customer perspective will provide an insight into how they are currently viewed without the historical context.

**Question 2:**

*How often do you use Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters?*

![Figure 4 SCQ Question 2 Results](image)

Figure 4 above shows the frequency the respondent’s access the services, the vertical axis is the number of respondents and the horizontal axis is
the optional answers to choose from the question posed. 2 respondents accessed the service once which corresponds with the response to question 3 asking who the respondents represent as displayed in Figure 4.1 below. The 2 respondents represent singular customers booking in their own vehicles. There are 2 respondents using the services 2 to 3 times per year and 1 over 4 times per year. Again this corresponds with the information shown in Figure 4.1 below where 3 SME’s are represented; therefore one SME accesses the services over 4 times per year providing a significant contribution to the workload. There weren’t any larger firms involved in the research despite several accessing the service; this will provide a gap in the data due to not capturing the demographics of all the customer groups.

Question 3:

Are you representing......

![Figure 4.1 SCQ Question 3 Results](image)

Element of Conceptual Framework - Analysis
Objective 1: To critically evaluate the current marketing of the organisation.

Data Line Analysis Results

Statement 1

Figure 4.2 above shows the results from the DLA, the vertical axis represents the participants by letter A – F and the horizontal axis the number the statement was ranked by each participant. There is a varied response ranging from 1 – 6 with 4 participants ranking the statement between 2 – 4 and demonstrating knowledge about the need to analyse the marketing.

Semi-structured Interview Results

Question 1:

How often does the Managing Director review the marketing of the business?

The results to this question varied from weekly to infrequently depending on the length of employment, those who had worked there the longest had
a perception the marketing was rarely analysed whereas the newest recruits were under the impression it was carried out on a more regular basis.

Issues raised included;

1. The knowledge this should be carried out regularly
2. Some employees viewed infrequently as being once or twice per month or 6 monthly

One interviewee responded with the following;

“It’s definitely annually when doing the business plan for the next 12 months but if opportunities arise I take them so we don’t miss out, so I guess annually is at a minimum.”

This shows the actual analysis as taking place annually to inform the business plans aims and objectives. However, opportunities that arise are taken to promote the business further where possible and periodic reviews take place of the overall business plan consequently capturing the marketing element.

Self-completion Questionnaire Results

Question 6:
Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters current marketing should be analysed....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Annually</th>
<th>Quarterly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 SCQ Question 6 Results

The questionnaire results in Table 4.1 highlight 4 respondents advocate an annual review of the marketing with one respondent stating monthly. The results for question 15 shown in Figure 4.3 below displays how satisfied the customers were with the service provided. Here all 5 will use the services again.

Question 15:
How likely are you to return to Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters?

![Figure 4.3 SCQ Question 15 Results](image)

Commentary In Relation to the Objectives
The results point towards the marketing being continually developed but requiring more analysis to give direction and identifying gaps. The participant’s perception of infrequent analysis ranging from monthly to 6 monthly shows their lack of knowledge and understanding in relation to how marketing is carried out and what the MD does regarding this behind the scenes. The respondents perception displayed in Figure 4.3 from the self completion questionnaire provides a more realistic view of the marketing analysis with only 1 respondent being of the same opinion of the interviewees. This corresponds with some of the respondents representing SME’s and being aware of the marketing process. All of the respondents will return to use the service again, this will be less likely of the singular vehicle owners but good for business via word of mouth referrals and recommendations. The SME’s will present again and this is highly likely considering 1 SME cited the value for money as a reason and another reported using the service over 4 times per year.

Objective 2: To identify key themes of competitors marketing.

Self-completion Questionnaire

Question 20:

What do you think is Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters biggest competition?
Figure 4.4 shows Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters potential competition. 1 respondent considers more up to date services are a threat and 2 agree additional services are their main competition. The last 2 respondents found cost to be the biggest competition.

**Commentary in Relation to the Objectives**

The question posed captured customer opinion on the competition Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters faces. The research found the threats come from other painters providing additional services, such as mechanics or tyre repair etc and the cost competition including being undercut with quotes and cheaper products being used. Only one respondent claimed they need to provide more up to date services, this would include provisions for vinyl or carbon wrapping to bring the more modern elements of vehicle painting into the business. This could be considered a niche market as opposed to a generic provision at vehicle painters.
Objective 3: To identify any improvements to the marketing of the enterprise.

Self-completion Questionnaire

Question 11:

The marketing....

![Figure 4.5 SCQ Question 11 Results](image)

Commentary in Relation to the Objectives

Figure 4.5 above shows 3 respondents consider the business is targeting the right audience whilst 2 feel they need to target the right audience. From this it is difficult to state whether the business is on the right track in relation to the target audience or whether by developing services further this would capture a broader audience or cater more for a niche market. By targeting both commercial vehicle businesses such as plant hire and bus companies they target the larger firms whilst also carrying out bespoke work on horse boxes and customising vehicles. This then captures the main target audience where there is more revenue to be gained as opposed to just repair work.
Element of Conceptual Framework – Resources

Objective 1: To critically evaluate the current marketing of the organisation.

Data Line Analysis Results

Statement 2

Figure 4.6 DL Statement 2 Results

Figure 4.6 above shows the majority of the participants placed the allocation of resources in the middle of the 8 statements with one ranking it 2 and one ranking it 8.

Semi-structured Interview Results

Question 2:

What resources are currently allocated to marketing the business?

There were mixed responses to this question ranging from interviewees being aware of the initial set up but with little knowledge to the latest
changes including Facebook and the logo on the new van to some knowing all the latest changes and new marketing plans.

“IT support has been maintaining the website for us for a while now and we all have printed t-shirts. There’s not much allocated to marketing, it was really just the cost of setting up the website.”

Here the interviewee was unaware of the current marketing or how the resources were used. In addition to this another interviewee was better informed and responded to the question with the following information.

“I have allocated quite a lot of financial resources this year with getting a new van and spraying the logo on. It looks far more professional especially with the uniforms. There’s been a lot of time invested in setting up the Facebook page, which has been a great team effort. I still pay a company to look after the website at the minute too.”

Another interviewee gave the response below which again highlighted there was little knowledge or recognition as to what has been done so far but it was recognised that the MD had time constraints to do it alone and now has employed an administrator to keep it updated.

“Times spent on the website but it’s not updated that often. There’s not much money allocated from what I can see, definitely not in the
last 3 to 6 months but that will all change now the administrator is here to maintain things. At the minute we strongly rely on the MD’s networking.”

Self-completion Questionnaire

Question 4:

How easy was it to book your vehicle in for painting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very easy the team were very flexible</th>
<th>Relatively easy, there was some negotiation on dates</th>
<th>They were unable to accommodate the dates required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>respondents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 SCQ Question 4 Results

As shown in Table 4.2 4 out of 5 respondents found booking their vehicles in very easy with only 1 requiring negotiation. Figure 4.7 demonstrates the perspective on resource allocation with 3 respondents agreeing the resources are allocated and utilised well whereas 2 agreed the business requires appropriate allocation of resources to marketing the business.

Question 5:

It is obvious to you as a customer that...
Figure 4.7 SCQ Question 5 Results

In relation to resource the results in Figure 4.7 above show the 3 respondents agree there is appropriate allocation of resources and 2 state appropriate allocations are required.

**Commentary in Relation to the Objectives**

Overall the interviewees were under the impression there wasn’t much focus on marketing within the business and that it wasn’t a priority. There was little mention of the recent investment of time and money over the past months in relation to the Facebook page, uniforms with logo’s other than one interviewee. The reasons for this are either it is not cascaded through the team on a regular basis or not deemed relevant to their jobs for them to know.

The respondents were either of the opinion the marketing was well resourced or it needed further resourcing showing an inconsistency that needs addressing. They all booked in with relative ease which the business should be commended for as until recently there has not been an administrator responsible for bookings and this was organised by the
MD who managed the vehicle/work load and structure for the weeks ahead. There was a comment on a returned SCQ about the building signage still showing the previous tenants logo which still needs addressing since the move to the new premises. The business does require a structured budget allocating where the spend is planned for and reviewed, however the MD is aware of this and has included previous aims and objectives within the business plan, that is due for review and updating for the new fiscal year, that have been achieved.

**Objective 2: To identify key themes of competitors marketing.**

**Semi-structured Interview Results**

**Question 3:**

*What marketing themes have you seen applied by competitors that could be imitated within the current resources?*

The interviewees had very little knowledge of the key marketing themes adopted by competitors. The interviewee who had worked for another vehicle painter gave the following response.

“**It’s down to the products that are used and whether you use better paint and have better equipment. I’ve not seen any at my previous employers, it was shocking working there and the things they did, nothing like here.**”

Other interviewees reported respectively;
“I’ve got very little knowledge of other sprayers, I’ve never really thought about the competition we might face, I guess that’s the MD’s job.”

“Mainly it’s Facebook and a customer emailing list but we’re lucky here as locally there isn’t much competition with us having the low bake oven.”

Commentary in Relation to the Objectives

Despite the interviewees having little knowledge on their local and direct competition one was very knowledgeable as to the other business in the locality and considered what they offered wasn’t much of a threat. Here, they perceived the business as more of a threat due to the low bake oven they have which increases the turnover of vehicles and presents a more professional service to the customers at no extra cost.

Objective 3: To identify any improvements to the marketing of the enterprise.

Semi-structured Interview Results

Question 4:

How can the business best apply its resources to improve its marketing?
The interviewees views on this again differed from historical ways business was generated to more modern and up to date application of resources, as reflected in the contrasting views below.

“We can exploit the good relationships we have with our customers because small jobs become big ones. Quality work wouldn’t matter if you had an all singing all dancing website, or strategy if you did a ropey job for someone that’d be what shows up.”

The following interviewee was far more enthusiastic about being involved in promoting the business and where to effectively apply resources.

“We can keep it simple and something we can all do is to give customers cards every time we finish a job, leave one in the vehicle, even the ones we do that go aboard. We can spray a sign ourselves for this new building rather than waiting for funds to get a sign writer in, it’d be cheaper and show off our painting skills. The Facebook page is currently underway and should have segmented photos in albums to show off the work we’ve done that’s relevant to the customer. We can do customers cars to include custom jobs and then promote the work we’ve done at car cruises. By custom I mean a paint job that would include especially sprayed alloys that are unique to the car and there can be up to 500 people at the cruises at a time and includes professional sprayers and those who want to invest 40-50k in their cars.”

More specifically an interviewee stated;
“I’d say by having a separate marketing strategy rather than it being in with the business plan. Once it’s in black and white and you can plan where you’re going and what you can do it’s more achievable.”

Self-completion Questionnaire

Question 19:
As a customer you would like to see Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters....

Figure 4.8 SCQ Question 19 Results

Figure 4.8 above shows 2 respondents were of the opinion the business would benefit from investment into more modern aspect of vehicle painting whilst equally 2 recommend improvement to the current services provided, indicating the need to analyse and identify current gaps and apply the resources appropriately.

Commentary in Relation to the Objectives
The contrasting opinions by the interviewees and respondents shows the resources require proper allocation and monitoring to ensure they benefit the business in a clear manner. There are obvious elements of good management of resources when managing the work load and providing good customer service but this needs to be consistent. The more up to date methods of marketing such as social media can easily be exploited more at little cost and the ideas generated by the interviewees are worth pursuing as they are practical and low cost and can also be carried out by the team themselves if they are delegated between them, especially the apprentices attending car cruises and the more established employees liaising with customers.

**Element of Conceptual Framework – Innovation**

**Objective 1:** To critically evaluate the current marketing of the organisation.

**Data Line Analysis Results**

**Statement 3**

![Innovation is encouraged by the Managing Director and popular marketing themes exploited](image-url)

*Figure 4.9 DLA Statement 3 Results*
As shown above in Figure 4.9 the participants rank statement 3 from 5 – 7 implying innovation is not particularly encouraged and that the MD doesn’t exploit popular marketing themes to the advantage of the business.

**Semi-structured Interviews**

**Question 5:**

*What do you consider to be innovative about the current marketing?*

The interviewees knowledge of current innovative marketing within the business varied but was accurate in that there wasn’t anything exceptional or above ordinary marketing practices. Again there was varying degrees of positivity about this which can affect the ability to draw out innovative ideas from the team.

> “I can’t answer that as there’s no sure strategy we just keep everybody happy. Marketing is all well and good but there’s a fine line with SMEs. If you don’t want to keep growing you’ll go the opposite way and to expand this smaller site we’d need to move next door to progress any further.”

Problems can arise when trying to keep everybody happy and this can be the case when operating 2 sites if there’s no communication regarding work planned.

> “The repeat business coming through the door shows a good standard. Planning the work and chasing the customers. I don’t
think there’s anything innovative as there’s nothing going on that’s any different to any other company.”

In contrast to this another interviewee stated;

“We’re SIKKENS approved which is the first step to proving we’re to a certain standard. The Facebook page is built and is looking really good. Nobody has to go out of their way to use it or access our services. It’s good free promotion for us and a way of providing clear quotes and booking people in. We also advertise on the website that we’ll paint any part and mail out to people. We don’t have a landline to take calls generated by FB and the website so this goes directly to the MD’s and Business Support Managers mobile.”

The contrast in enthusiasm can hinder innovation as staff morale is a larger contributor to encouraging and producing innovative ideas with the reassurance they will be seriously considered.

Self-completion Questionnaire

Question 7:

Do you think...?
Figure 4.10 above shows 3 respondents view Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters as marketing the business innovatively and exploiting popular themes to do this. However, equally one respondent deems other businesses as having better marketing and another feels there’s room for improvement.

**Commentary in Relation to the Objectives**

The current innovative aspects of the marketing of the business are limited at present with there being little opportunity or resources to invoke the ideas potentially generated by employees. The marketing is carried out through more traditional and common themes. This has not affected the customer perspective of the business which is overall mostly positive. However, there is definite room for improvement but the ideas from the employees provide a sound basis to start from. There was a degree of negativity from interviewees in relation to marketing but fortunately this is counterbalanced with the enthusiasm of others. Factors impacting on this included staff morale and the job they did, the more enthusiastic tended to be those who felt their skills were valued.
Objective 2:  To identify key themes of competitors marketing.

Semi-structured Interview Results

Question 6:

*What do you consider to be exceptionally innovative about the competitors marketing?*

The majority of staff didn’t know of anything exceptionally innovative their competitors were doing but one employee provided the response below.

“*‘There’s nothing locally, it’s usually really big firms doing innovative stuff. If they’re SCANIA approved this shows the next step of approval after SIKKENs and shows quality paint is used.’*”

Another added;

“*‘I think going to the car cruises and handing out leaflet/business cards and taking an example of the work is a good idea. Also when staff wear uniforms it makes it look more professional.’*”

The approval status provides the recognition and standard the business wants to be revered as.

Objective 3: To identify any improvements to the marketing of the enterprise.

Semi-structured Interview Results

Question 7:
What creative or innovative ideas do you have to improve the marketing of the business?

The employees had a range of ideas to present but not necessarily innovative or unique. The most innovative are presented below;

“*The social media should be exploited to create opportunities from being on Facebook or a twitter page, but it’s better no page if they’re not being kept up to date. We should have free advertising on our pushbikes and uniforms for the triathlons we’re doing. We could also email customers regularly.*”

“In addition to Facebook, uniforms, car cruises, business cards in vehicles I think we should open a you tube account to show at fast speed the process and how it works. It’d be great publicity when people see the level of skill involved and the finished product.”

**Commentary in Relation to the Objectives**

The innovative ideas generated by the interviewees are achievable within the current resources and exploitive of social media, this will compliment the Facebook page and website. The advertising on the cycling equipment would not only promote the business during triathlon but also through the regular training that takes place in the local area. There is also a potential market in spraying motorbikes and pushbikes.
Element of Conceptual Framework – Creativity

Objective 1: To critically evaluate the current marketing of the organisation.

Semi-structured Interview Results

Question 8:

How have you creatively contributed to the current marketing?

The interviewees provided the following responses;

“Networking with customers and maintaining those relationships.”

“It's not specific to marketing but did encourage a better procurement of stock and maintenance of this that improved job times. I've also source business for us.”

“I took photos of vehicles we’ve done along the way and these are being uploaded to our Facebook page. I’m doing my apprenticeship to qualify and I'm leaps and bounds ahead of others on my course. I take before and after photos to show repairs on badly damaged vehicles too. I've not given much because they've not used any of my ideas so far.”

Commentary in Relation to the Objective

The interviewees have used their initiative and strengths in relation to their creative contributions. The interviewees who didn’t favour social media had maintained and created custom through nurturing the relationship with
the longer term customers who make recommendations to others. Another interviewee who has excellent organisational skills organised the orders to ensure there was no time wasted waiting for deliveries therefore hindering the progression of work and the apprentice’s initiative to keep the photographs for the past 3 years has enriched the launch of the Facebook page with all the examples of work provided set up in relevant albums for customers to browse.

Objective 2: To identify key themes of competitors marketing.

Data Line Analysis

Statement 4

![Image of bar chart]

Figure 4.11 DLA Statement 4 Results

Commentary in Relation to the Objective

The DLA statement 4 results above in Figure 4.11 show a mixture of responses by the employees ranging from 3-7 in rank regarding the MD’s knowledge of the competitor’s creativity. This is presumably related to the lack of knowledge the employees themselves possess in relation to
competitors and the confines of innovative ideas and creativity they are able to express in their current roles and resources. With the embracing of social media and if new ideas are pursued the teams knowledge will also broaden in relation to what competitors are offering.

**Objective 3:** To *identify any improvements to the marketing of the enterprise.*

**Self-completion Questionnaire**

*Question 7:*  
As previously demonstrated in Figure 4.10 above the level of response shown regarding the need for improvements to the businesses marketing only 1 respondent thought this was necessary.

**Commentary in relation to the Objective**

The respondent perception is that very little is needed to improve the marketing of the business suggesting the aesthetic marketing of the business is of a good standard.

**Element of Conceptual Framework – Strategy**

**Objective 1:** To *critically evaluate the current marketing of the organisation.*

**Semi-structured Interview Results**

*Question 9:*
What do you consider the main aspects of the current marketing strategy to consist of?

The interviewees didn’t view the business as having a marketing strategy; this coincides with the lack of awareness in relation to the MD’s activities and knowledge in other areas such as competitor knowledge and the allocation of resources to date and as reflected in the following responses below;

“The MD is always in contact with customers and we rely on word of mouth rather than a strategy.”

“It’s mainly networking and the quality of work we produce encouraging repeat custom. We walk around the vehicle with the customers and take the opportunity to talk to them but I don’t think we have a proper marketing strategy so to speak of.”

“There doesn’t seem to be a formal strategy, we’re just doing alright as we are, there’s always work in. We don’t promote enough due to us being a small firm and we wouldn’t be able to cope with a big influx of work, we’d need more staff to manage and it’s difficult to find quality sprayers. The old signage has encouraged some custom from people looking for the old owners so we’ve also done work for them. We more take opportunities as they arise whilst maintaining enough work for the staff to cope with.”

“The strategy at present is mainly to make sure there’s enough work in to clear what we need to make it pay. I forecast what work’s
coming in and pre-empt any downtime and go and source custom. Other than that it’s all the visual stuff and getting on to social media and getting it running right and working for us. This is where I’ll involve the staff, other than that they just want to know there’s enough work to keep jobs, those that have been here a while have seen me have to lay people off.”

Self-completion Questionnaire

Question 8:

It is obvious that Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters…

![Bar chart showing SCQ Question 8 Results]

Figure 4.12 SCQ Question 8 Results

Figure 4.12 above shows 3 respondents perceive Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters as having a marketing strategy in place with 1 stating a strategy is needed and another deeming a marketing strategy as irrelevant for the business.

Commentary in Relation to the Objective
It is evident there is no real structure to the current marketing and that this has been amalgamated within the business plan and followed up from there depending on what goals were set and what opportunities came along. This has created ambivalence from the staff and mixed impressions from the customers presumably based upon their experiences of the service on the day. However, one interviewee’s response highlights the current strategy and the plans moving forward and the reasons this has not been adequately cascaded to the team. It is evident there is a strategy based upon the volume of work coming through even if this is largely based upon networking and the relationships maintained with repeat customers and the SME’s and larger firms despite this not being formally documented.

**Objective 2: To identify key themes of competitors marketing.**

**Semi-structured Interview Results**

**Question 10:**

*How do you know if your competitors have a strategy?*

One interviewee’s opinion was based on the length of time some of the competitors have been in business, 2 interviewees had no opinion as they felt they did not know enough about who their competition was locally and 2 interviewees offered the following:

“I’d say it’s the volume of work going through and how busy they look.”
“Commercially we have the upper hand due to the larger vehicles fitting in the booth. Other local competition has smaller facilities but no clear evidence of a strategy.”

Commentary in Relation to the Objective

The issue that has arisen of some of the interviewees not being aware of their competition is based upon several factors, firstly there are employees who are new to the field and the area, and secondly employees have not been expected to do anything beyond their role so other than the MD and another long term employee they do not network. Thirdly, one employee has worked in the industry for decades but has continually operated the same way and shirks the modern approach to business and marketing. The fact they are the only business locally with a low bake oven is a significant competitive advantage.
Objective 3: To identify any improvements to the marketing of the enterprise.

Data Line Analysis Results

Statement 5

![Bar Chart](image)

Figure 4.13.DLA Statement 5 Results

Figure 4.13 above reflects the participant's opinion in relation to the business having a robust marketing strategy. 1 participant deemed this the most important of the 8 statements with the others ranging from 2 – 7.

Semi-structured Interview Results

Question 11:

How important do you think a strategy is to improve the marketing of the business?

The interviewees were aware of the importance of having and implementing a marketing strategy and reported the following;

“We should have some sort of strategy as the team is bigger now and you have to have work in as every Monday morning you know you need to clear 2 ½ – 3k to keep level.”
This reiterates the previous response to the semi-structured interview question 9 that the employees want to feel their jobs are secure.

“It’s very important for the business because it’s the authority needed for the staff so we know what work we’re doing and when.”

The comments show a strategy and the structure a strategy would be accepted by the team.

“A strategy is always important because to set a target or meet an objective you need a plan in place to achieve it.”

“It’s important if it’s a good strategy otherwise it’s useless. I’m a perfectionist in my work so I would rather have a handful of good workers than double and not have the quality. We rely heavily on word of mouth and the work being done 100% right. We rely on the quality of the staff to get the job done right and in the best time.”

Commentary in Relation to the Objective

There was clear evidence to suggest the interviewees were on board with the business generating a marketing plan that would further promote and establish the business. The reasons as to why it is important varied as demonstrated in the interview results and the point regarding the value of the strategy is valid in terms of the other issues raised including managing a team of staff and ensuring there is enough work in to cover the outgoings per week.
The results in Figure 4.14 show the participants are almost unanimous in their opinion of the lack of knowledge or importance regarding who the stakeholders are and what they want from the business. The concern here is without this knowledge there is difficulty in identifying the target market and providing quality customer service. However, this has not impacted on the customer perception as shown in Figure 4.3 SLQ Question 15.
Figure 4.15 DLA Statement 7 Results

Figure 4.15 shows the majority of participants see the importance marketing the business correctly has on the success of the business as 4 participants ranked the statement between 1-2.

Semi-structured Interview Results

Question 12:

*How is the business currently marketed?*

The employees show a sound understanding of the visual side of the marketing and are aware the MD networks consistently but as previously demonstrated there is little knowledge or faith in a current strategy being in place so are less knowledgeable about the work that takes place behind the scenes.

“*Through the website, the van, business cards and the word of mouth provided by the customers and the uniforms.*”

“*Via word of mouth and networking, we also have the website and repeat custom, business cards and uniform.*”
The following response gave a more rounded view of what is currently happening.

“The business cards, website, but this needs updating and the emails need checking regularly. The Facebook page is being currently built up, the MD is networking and sourcing work all the time but especially when there seems to be quiet times ahead. We don’t turn down jobs and we’ll keep the customers informed as accurately as possible if we can and we’ll jig work about to satisfy the customer.”

Self Completion Questionnaire

Question 9:

The marketing of the business...

![Figure 4.16 SCQ Question 9 Results](image)

The respondent’s views reflected in Figure 4.16 highlights 4 out of 5 respondents report business will be gained if a marketing strategy is applied. All of the respondents consider a strategy is important.
Commentary in Relation to the Objective

The research suggests a marketing strategy is viewed as an important aspect of the business to provide structure, allocate resources and gain business and maintain current customer relationships. This is particularly relevant to the SME and larger businesses that provide the majority of the repeat business to maintain custom. By knowing who the stakeholders and competition are the strategy can be catered to exploit the current strengths of the business and manage the weaknesses in terms of making improvements and utilising the ideas generated by the team and continuing to receive customer feedback. By doing this the more established businesses accessing the service would be inclined to share good practice ideas that could benefit both parties.

Objective 2: To identify key themes of competitors marketing.

Semi-structured Interview Results

Question 13:
What are the key marketing themes within the industry and your competitors?

There are common themes highlighted below but not all interviewees were able to provide details on the marketing themes within the industry or their competitors.

“Being seen in the trade magazines of the vehicles they work on such as equestrian or stock car racing.”

This can be done by the business and included in the social media developments.
“Cars being vinyl wrapped rather than just painting. I think dipping’s cheaper too.”

This and the following statement would require financial investment that may be beyond current resources.

“Carbon wrapping adds variety to what’s on offer especially for those wanting custom cars and it appeals to a younger audience who trawl the internet. Also road or motor bikes too as there’s a market in people sending these off for custom spray jobs.”

“I’ve not really looked at other garages but I do know the industry marketing themes are more about promoting the equipment they have for custom spraying.”

Commentary in Relation to the Objective

Combined with other responses in relation to competitors marketing the interviewees had little knowledge in this area but did have an awareness of the industry wide competition which is basically a more up to date technology to paint vehicles. This is also more of a niche market at present due to this technology being sought after by a younger audience for customising cars so other than providing additional service it wouldn’t replace the current technology used for the larger vehicles that are catered for with the low bake oven making this a more viable aspect to promote as mentioned with the larger vehicle companies such as horse box and transport firms.
Objective 3: To identify any improvements to the marketing of the enterprise.

Semi-structured Interview Results

Question 14:

How relevant do you think marketing is to improve the business?

Some interviewees struggled to answer this question as they thought it more the MD’s role to know this, however, the response below captured the general opinion of the team.

“Other than word of mouth it’s really important. You want to do someone’s pride and joy to perfection for them. We revamped an old corsa the other week and the job was so good the customer came back with some beers for the team.”

The sense of achievement and team ethos played a large part in the delivery of the service.

Self-Completion Questionnaire

Question 18:

The marketing of Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters would benefit from...
Figure 4.17 above shows 3 respondents support financial investment for better promotion and 2 respondents supporting a better marketing strategy to structure what is currently happening within the business.

**Commentary in Relation to the Objective**

There is evidence to support the need for a more proactive marketing strategy that is inclusive of the employees to improve their understanding of what is required for a business to succeed and their roles within it. By investing in and devising a marketing strategy that is inclusive of current practices and new ideas the business can now potentially grow and expand into other vehicle painting areas. From the research it is possible to identify the most indicative aspects of the business to focus on and promote the aspects of the service that have been deemed excellent such as quality of work and customer service. In addition by identifying the gaps in the marketing and investing resources to rectify them new ventures can be pursued.
Element of Conceptual Framework - Competitive Advantage

Objective 1: To critically evaluate the current marketing of the organisation.

Semi-structured Interview Results

Question 15:
What do you consider to be the current competitive advantage of the business?

The common theme emerging from the interviewees is the high standard of work produced based on both the equipment used and attention to detail as presented below;

“We have one of the biggest low bake ovens and this needs going on the website. This gives cleaner air and creates less dust to stick to the vehicle and the customer perspective is that it’s great.”

“The preparation and cleaning of the vehicles gives the job an excellent quality standard.”

“There’s not much local competition and the quality of the work we produce is better than other places and the prep we do is to a high standard.”

“We have a large spray booth so we can work any size vehicle. We can turn work over fast and to a high standard.”

Self-completion Questionnaire
Question 10:

The business...

![Bar chart showing results of SCQ Question 10](chart.png)

Figure 4.18 SCQ Question 10 Results

The results to question 10 displayed in Figure 4.18 above shows the majority of respondents consider the business to have a clear competitive advantage that needs further promotion, with 2 stating one is required. Considering the results in Figure 4.19 below which highlights the response to question 13, all respondents reported the team are aware of who the stakeholders are and what they want.

Self-completion Questionnaire
Question 13:

The team ...

![Figure 4.19 SCQ Question 13 Results](image)

Commentary in Relation to the Objective

The results show the business has a competitive advantage based on the standard of work and the quality that derives from this. In addition through the equipment used which is sought after by the customers and the level of customer service reported. This however has not been exploited in a marketing fashion as it is seen as more of a team ethos to maintain a good work ethic and provide a quality service. By promoting and exploring this, the business would not only develop a competitive advantage but also distinguish their image.

Objective 2: To identify key themes of competitors marketing
Question 16:

What do you believe to be the competitive advantage that stands out in the industry?

The responses below reflect a working knowledge based on the products used that provide a quality finish to the painting and also give the customer a variety in relation to the vinyl wrapping which is directed more to a niche market.

“The types of paints used that give a really good finish and hide any marks really well. Also really good colour matching.”

“Possibly a hydro graphic dipping tank, the machine makes the paint a liquid picture that rather than just paint its vinyl so it’s like a tattoo on whatever part of the vehicle you want. It’s more geared towards younger lads and it’s expensive so limited people maybe wanting it. But because it’s not common you might get people wanting it.”

Commentary in Relation to the Objective

There were 2 interviewees who struggled to answer the question due to a lack of knowledge in this area. The apprentices provided a sound knowledge of the competition that was relevant to their interests within the industry and the theory they have explored at college. Value was placed on the calibre of products used rather than the image competitor’s project, therefore by producing an image reflective of the products and equipment used and the quality of the work produced there is a sound basis to generate a marketing theme from.
Objective 3: To identify any improvements to the marketing of the enterprise.

Data Line Analysis Results

Statement 8

Figure 4.20 above shows the contrast in the participant's opinion regarding a need for a competitive advantage within the market with 2 participants ranking it the most important statement and one considering it the least.

Semi-structured Interview Results

Question 17:

How can the business gain a competitive advantage?
Below the responses show some valid ideas that can further promote the business which are also cost effective so can be orchestrated within the current resources.

“Being published in magazines by taking pictures of the horse boxes we’ve done and take them to local equestrian events and promote who your current customers are as well”

“I think we should spend a little more time on the finishing touches of the vehicle rather than having such a strict timescale.”

This however would impact on the revenue generated and ultimately effect pay and jobs.

“More apprentices to keep the cost down but churn out more vehicles.”

This option would only be of benefit if the apprentices could develop their skills as quickly and efficiently as the current ones, as without guarantees it could be ineffective.

“Advertising more on customising cars. Horse boxes are faster to do so better cash but cars can be prepared quicker for spraying with the experience we have at the garage at the minute.”

Again the customising is a niche market that can potentially be exploited.

**Self-completion Questionnaire**

*Question 12:*
As a stakeholder do you feel Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listens to what you want as a customer and produces this</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goes over and above to ensure the work they produce for you is to the standard and completed within the time frame you expect</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could improve on their communication with customers</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 SCQ Question 12 Results

Table 4.3 above shows the response to question 12 by the respondents as being wholly positive.

**Question 14:**

The customer service provided by the team...

![Figure 4.21 SCQ Question 14 Results](image)

The results in Figure 4.21 above show a unanimous high standard to the friendliness and level of customer service provided by the team.

**Question 16:**
How likely are you to recommend Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters?

![Graph showing customer responses](image)

Figure 4.22 SCQ Question 16 Results

Above Figure 4.22 question 16 results again reiterates the quality of the work and the value for money with 4 customers agreeing the excellent standard of work and one identifying the value for money.

**Question 17:**

*What do you consider the competitive advantage of the business to be?*

![Graph showing competitive advantage](image)

Figure 4.23 SCQ Question 17 Results

Value for money has been highlighted as the main competitive advantage for the business as displayed above in Figure 4.23, followed by the quality.
of work produced. Both have been selected over the level of customer service.

**Commentary in the Relation to the Objective**

It is evident the business provides excellent customer service and the team work well together to deliver this. However, the value for money stood out as the best competitive advantage they currently hold followed by the quality of work. The most likely reason for recommendation was the high standard of work produced but with the combination of all three being to a high standard this is a good basis to build the competitive advantage from followed by the equipment and the certification of the standard the business performs at.

**Chapter 5**

**Conclusions**

The penultimate Chapter, Chapter 5, concludes the findings of the research presented in chapter 4 through the discussion of each of the 8 elements of the conceptual framework. The data line analysis consisted of a combination of employees who have worked for Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters since the business commenced and new recruits, totalling a sample size of 6. The semi-structured interviews also consisted of a sample size of 5 employees. The self completion questionnaire consisted of a sample size of 5 customers 4 of which had been customers for over 2 years and one for less than 2 years. This
provided evidentiary research from both an internal and external perspective. In addition, 3 of the customers were from SMEs who accessed the services 2 to 3 times per year and 1 over 4 times per year contributing massively to the businesses turnover of repeat customers. 2 customers represented singular custom booking in their own vehicles. Unfortunately, larger firms were not represented in the research despite several accessing the service; therefore there is a gap in the data due to not capturing the demographics of all the customer groups.

Analysis

The employees demonstrated knowledge about the need to analyse the marketing but their perceptions varied as to what was actually meant and how often it should occur. Some employees viewed infrequently as being once or twice per month or 6 monthly whereas the actual analysis is conducted annually but through the business plan. Opportunities are taken to promote the business further where possible and periodic reviews occurred of the overall business plan consequently capturing the marketing element. The more realistic approach was given by the customer’s stating analysis should occur annually and the overall feedback from the research suggests the marketing is continually developing but needs more direction.

The threats from competitors to the business were reported as more up to date services or additional services being offered by competitors, with a limited response stating cost. The business is mostly viewed as targeting
the right audience but needs to establish it is on the right track and capture this within the marketing plans. By targeting both commercial vehicle businesses such as plant hire and bus companies they target the larger firms whilst also carrying out bespoke work on horse boxes and customising vehicles.

Resources

There was a mixed response regarding the allocation of resources as the employees had limited knowledge of the current marketing or how the resources were used. The wide range of views on how the resources are used and what changes could be made highlighted the resources require appropriate allocation and monitoring to ensure they benefit the business in a clear manner. The customer perspective was mixed also as the initial contact with the business was wholly positive but found the business required appropriate allocation of resources for marketing the business. There was further inconsistency in the reporting from the customers as they were either of the opinion the marketing was well resourced or it needed further resourcing. There are obvious elements of good management of resources when managing the work load and providing good customer service but this needs to be consistent. The business does require a structured budget allocating where the cost is planned for and reviewed, the MD does have this on his agenda for the coming year.

Innovation
The employees had very little knowledge of the key marketing themes adopted by competitors both locally and industry wide. They put great faith in the equipment they used, such as the low bake oven, providing a much needed competitive advantage. Enthusiasm to be innovative varied depending on the job they did, the more enthusiastic tended to be those who felt their skills were valued. The innovative ideas generated by the employees are achievable within the current resources as they are practical and low cost and can also be carried out by the team themselves if they are delegated between them, especially the apprentices. The employees didn’t feel the MD exploited popular marketing themes to the advantage of the business. There was no additional knowledge to demonstrate what the current innovative marketing was as responses varied. However, they were accurate in saying there wasn’t anything exceptional or above ordinary marketing practices. The attitudes towards innovation and marketing ideas were mixed with varying degrees of positivity. There was evidence to show potential problems in trying to keep everybody happy especially the customers. The employees would contribute more innovative and creative ideas if they thought they would be seriously considered, therefore, the current innovative aspects of the marketing of the business are limited and carried out through more traditional and common themes. This has not affected the customer perspective of the business which is overall positive.

Creativity
The employees demonstrated where and how they made creative contributions; there was again a lack of knowledge in relation to competitor’s creativity and innovative ideas. However, the customer perception is that very little is needed to improve the marketing of the business suggesting the aesthetic marketing is of a good standard. The MD is opportunistic as opposed to creative and has stayed within the more traditional realms of marketing and only recently devised a Facebook page. The additional administrative support as made this possible to pursue and will provide additional support to free up the MD’s time to either increase the turnover of work through painting and therefore taking on more customers or provide time to be innovative and creative taking risks that can further benefit the business.

**Strategy**

It is evident there is no real structure to the current marketing which consequently created an ambivalence within the team and mixed impressions from the customers. The volume of work generated currently informs the strategy as opposed to the strategy supporting the gaining of work. It is largely based upon networking and the relationships maintained with repeat customers and the SME’s and larger firms despite this not being formally documented. Much emphasis to succeed is based on the commercial vehicle company’s attraction to the spray booth as other local competition has smaller facilities but no clear strategic advantage. The fact they are the only business locally with a low bake oven is a significant competitive advantage and can be robustly marketed. The research
demonstrated a strategy and the structure a strategy would bring would be accepted by the team providing clear evidence to suggest the employees would be onboard with the business generating a marketing plan that would further promote and establish the business. This would add value and ensure there is enough work in to cover the outgoings per week.

**Marketing**

The employees were unanimous in their opinion of the lack of knowledge or importance regarding who the stakeholders are and what they want from the business. Despite concerns this would impact on identifying the target market and providing quality customer service the contrary is evident. The employees see the visual side of the marketing and know the MD networks consistently but are less knowledgeable about the work that takes place behind the scenes. Overall, the research highlighted the importance of a marketing strategy to provide structure, allocate resources and gain business and maintain current customer relationships. The team ethos played a large part in the delivery of the service and a more proactive marketing strategy that is inclusive of the employees to improve their understanding of what is required for a business to succeed and their roles within it could only benefit the business. Potentially allowing the business to grow and expand into other vehicle painting areas. The research has provided the platform on which to base the marketing strategy by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the business.

**Competitive Advantage**
The findings highlighted the standard of work produced based on both the equipment used and attention to detail to be a clear competitive advantage. The level of customer service reported is exceptional but not exploited in a marketing fashion as the team take pride in their work and in providing a quality service. However, the value for money stood out as the best competitive advantage they currently hold followed by the quality of work. Throughout the research the strengths of the business were consistent and reports from employees and customers genuine. By devising and implementing a marketing strategy that continues to focus on the strengths, including the quality of the work produced, customer service, and value for money whilst addressing the weaknesses in the marketing such as promotion of the equipment and a level of consistency a robust achievable innovative marketing strategy can be achieved.
Chapter 6

Recommendations & Implementation Plan

The following final chapter presents the recommendations drawn from the conclusions pertaining to each element of the conceptual framework as previously displayed. They aim to be practical and feasible within the current restrictions of the business and a rational will be provided in relation to any possible human, political and managerial implications.

Analysis

Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters would benefit from a detailed SWOT analysis to firmly establish the internal and external factors affecting the business. By conducting a SWOT the strengths will be identified supporting a consistency of application throughout the business. The weaknesses can be addressed through appropriate allocation of resources or investment planned for if necessary. The usual opportunistic approach to marketing and running the business will still exist but will have the added advantage of having more structure and better planning. The analysis of threats will provide much needed information on competitors and also potential political changes affecting the small businesses in the up-coming election. The basis for a more detailed analysis has already been conducted as part of the research and a more in-depth analysis of the whole business can be conducted by the Business Support Manager.

Resources
A full inventory of the resources should be collated and include the following;

- Finances
- Assets
- Equipment
- Stock
- Employee skills/knowledge
- Staffing levels

From the inventory a clear assessment can be made as to where to appropriately allocate resources, how best to utilise them and what size budget is required to maintain current levels or invest in additional resources. An investment of time is required to do this and the MD and Business Support Manager are best placed to conduct the inventory with the exception of the stock that is monitored by the Preparation Technician. Any changes that occur to the allocation of the resources post the inventory will be decided by the MD with the support of the Business Support Manager and further implemented by the team. Consequentially any changes that impact significantly on the team will be communicated and managed accordingly to ensure all staff are on board.

**Innovation**

Pursuing the more innovative ideas the employees suggested will provide low cost improvements to the current marketing of the business as well as improve the team moral. The majority of the following ideas should be implemented once the analysis and resource inventory are complete to
ensure cost is at a minimum and time is managed effectively. Therefore, the ideas are presented in order of the current financial capabilities.

1. Painting the employees pushbikes: - 3 employees cycle to work, for exercise and as a hobby compete, by painting the bikes it provides free advertising and presents a competitive image that will be potentially noticed throughout the region. The competitions are on occasion completed for charity and this would also further promote the business. The paint is already in stock as the work van was naturally painted by the team adding no further cost.

2. Open a YouTube account: - this idea presented by a 3rd year apprentice has no additional financial cost to open the account but does require time to set up recording and uploading the videos. However, after a select few have been recorded and uploaded links can be created from the website and Facebook. As mentioned by the employee in the semi-structured interviews to avoid giving away any trade secrets and potentially losing customers the videos would play at an increased speed demonstrating the finished product.

3. Road and motorbike painting: - promoting this on the back of painting the employees push bikes and previously painted motor scooters would broaden the scope of customers. Whilst there is little revenue in these size vehicles compared to the horse boxes and buses they are quickly turned around. In addition customising motorbikes and scooters is a bespoke service that can be reflected in the price.
4. Vinyl wrapping: - this requires financial investment for the specialised equipment so budgets allowing once the analysis and resource inventory are complete it would be worth pursuing to gain customers wanting customised paint on their vehicles. Whilst this at present is viewed as a niche market the constant evolution of technology will make it more readily available in the not too distant future leaving traditional spray painters behind.

Creativity

The creativity within the team was limited although they did play to their strengths. To further encourage this there should be clear use of the creative ideas suggested that would add value to the business and feedback given to staff about this. The 2 most creative ideas provided that should be implemented and are at a minimal cost to the business are;

- A sign designed and sprayed by Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters for the new building. This is simply replicating what has already been painted on the van and the paint is already in stack ad can be carried out by an apprentice to a high standard.
• Seek opportunities through customers to gain free promotion in magazines or websites pertaining to the vehicles painted, for example, equestrian magazines and websites for the horse boxes. The research in to this can be carried out through either the normal networking channels the MD and Business Support Manager use or through the administrator when booking in the work and then passed to management to pursue if worthwhile.

• When team meetings occur the generation of efficiency through creativity should be addressed as a standing agenda item by the MD to prevent missed opportunities and also to cascade information pertaining to competitors.

Strategy

This is the most pivotal recommendation that can only be complimented by the foundations the analysis and inventory brings. By devising a marketing strategy that exploits the strengths, addresses the weaknesses and is inclusive of creating and taking opportunities whilst contingency planning for threats there can be appropriate prediction and forecasting. Through a strategic planning model such as Kotler’s (2009) Strategic Planning Process as displayed in Figure 2, chapter 2 the planning of goals, objectives and resource allocation will create added value. When devising a strategy specific to SME’s the flexibility afforded the business will compliment the varied approaches taken as opposed to one specific route this will allow for innovation and new opportunities.
Marketing

Due to how broad the subject of marketing is there are several recommendations to include both from the ideas generated from the employees and from the research findings that encompass various aspects of the recommended strategy. They are again presented in order of resource capabilities starting with the low cost and easy to implement working towards further investment.

1. Exploit the good relationships with customers: - by continuing to network and develop the relationships further encouraging loyalty and recommendations. Keep in regular contact via the customer email list sending promotional information and new services available, also advertising when there’s time available to book vehicles in. This is an administrative task to a degree once the information has been provided from the MD.

2. Provide customers with business cards every time a job is finished, simply by leaving one in the vehicle including those bound for aboard. This ensures the contact details are readily available to the customer both for themselves and to pass on to potential customers. There are numerous vehicles travelling throughout Europe from UK based companies providing opportunity for the business to be promoted further afield.
3. Continue to update the Facebook page and develop the segmented albums to display the work by relevancy for the customer. The boundaries on what can be written on the page need to be clear to ensure professionalism is maintained and the reputation of the business doesn’t come into disrepute.

4. Attend car cruises: - this should be delegated to the apprentice role where possible as a reward for their hard work and also to provide inspiration to maintain motivation in the trade and pass on the enthusiasm for the custom car side of the business. By displaying samples of work combined with handing out leaflets and business cards new customers and networking can be developed.

5. Targeted promotion of ‘we paint any part,’:- the web site boasts painting any part of the vehicle and mailing it out to the customer, this is specifically beneficial, for example, to customers wanting a wing mirror repairing or customising and then posting out rather than the car being in the garage. There is revenue to be gained from this due to the convenience it brings people and how quickly smaller parts can be painted but needs promoting with the target audience rather than just being on the website. The time sourcing parts and posting out is an administrative role that can be absorbed into the routine procurement.
6. Make full use of social media: - The team need to continue to develop and keep updated the Facebook page and website. A Twitter account needs opening and the MD needs a Linked In profile developing to reach all aspects of customers and to network more proficiently. Opening a YouTube account will also add prestige to the social media marketing through reaching another audience and by linking the videos to the website and Facebook page giving current and potential customers an overview of the quality of work produced. There would be initial time spent by the MD on setting up the profiles post this it can be monitored by the Business Support Manager or administrator. Again, clarity of the boundaries regarding what can be posted on the sites to maintain professionalism and maintain objectivity needs addressing.

7. Increase and structure the networking: - The current networking is carried out by the MD when work needs generating and the Business Support Manager when meeting new customers or chasing payments. By increasing the networking in a structured way through sites like Linked In and attending local business promotional ventures the scope and type of companies networked with will broaden and present opportunities for gaining customers and possible investment or partnerships to expand the services provided.

8. Increase advertising for customising cars: - The business has been attracting more of the commercial companies with larger vehicles
rather than cars. Advertising the customising of cars will increase the likelihood of attracting these customers. This can also be promoted through the YouTube account and linked to the website and Facebook page.

**Competitive Advantage**

The findings of the research portrayed clearly the current competitive advantages of the business but also demonstrated these are not publicised enough to be of value. By instilling the competitive advantage in the marketing strategy the reputation of the business will be associated with these values.

1. **Value for money:** - This was the most distinguishing competitive advantage according to the customers that would encourage them to return. By providing a price comparison, guaranteeing to beat quotes and guaranteed satisfaction with the completed work this instils a sense of trust from the customers and therefore loyalty. This will take the time of the MD and Business Support Manager to review the current marketing and revise it to reflect value for money.

2. **Quality standards:** - the MD to devise and implement a plan to achieve SCANIA approval ensuring recognition and promotion of the standard of work produced. For this to succeed the team need to be on board and fully understand what is required of them. Once certificated post this on the website and Facebook page and display in the garage.
3. Customer service: - The research highlighted the excellent customer services provided by the team and this can be added to by presenting a professional image through all the team consistently wearing uniforms. To ensure this happens during the colder months the MD should invest in boiler suits to enable the team to wear warmer clothes underneath but still present a professional image.

4. Testimonials: - Gather feedback from the customers and use as testimonials on the website and Facebook page highlighting the areas that cover the competitive advantage of the business.

**Implementation plan**

The implementation strategy will prioritise the SWOT Analysis and resource inventory to establish the scope of achievability and the potential amount of investment required to succeed. As shown in the Implementation Plan, Table 7 below. The plan demonstrates the cost effective methods that can be implemented within a reasonable time scale and require little contingency to achieve. The contingency plan adopted to achieve the overall plan will be to review the progress monthly and update the actions ensuring any new items are added or unachievable items removed to keep a realistic perspective throughout the plan. This will also allow for any unforeseen changes to staffing levels or customer flow effecting trade.
The implementation plan displays the actions in order of priority and the expected timescale to achieve the desired outcomes. Initially this is a short term strategy to effect change quickly within the current resources with a view to developing a long term marketing strategy with its own budget allocation to ensure future upkeep of the marketing and quality of the services delivered.
# Implementation Plan

**Action Plan Date:** 07/04/2015  
**Review Date:** 07/05/2015  
**Author:** Joanne Howard, Business Support Manager

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Number</th>
<th>Item:</th>
<th>Actions:</th>
<th>Delegate:</th>
<th>Timescale:</th>
<th>Resources Required:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>SWOT Analysis</td>
<td>Conduct a thorough SWOT Analysis</td>
<td>MD and BSM</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>Cost of time to conduct</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Resource Inventory</td>
<td>Compile a list of all available resources</td>
<td>BSM</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>Cost of time to conduct</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Devise a marketing strategy that incorporates the findings from the analysis and the inventory</td>
<td>MD and BSM</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Cost of time to conduct</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Competitive Advantage</td>
<td>Promote the value for money throughout the website, Facebook page, leaflets and business cards</td>
<td>BSM</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Cost of time devising new promotional material and liaison with the website company, cost of new leaflets and business cards</td>
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<td>Testimonials</td>
<td>Gather and display customer testimonials on the social media sites, websites and in the garage</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Cost of admin time to gather and upload the testimonials</td>
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<td>4.2</td>
<td>Quality standards</td>
<td>Devise a strategy for reaching SCANIA approval and establish timeframe the process takes</td>
<td>MD and BSM</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>Cost of time to plan, employee training and time to demonstrate for the assessor</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
<td>Customer service</td>
<td>Provide feedback to the team on the excellent level of customer service.</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>With immediate effect</td>
<td>Cost of time</td>
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<td>4.4</td>
<td>Uniform</td>
<td>Confirm cost of and order boiler suits displaying the company logo</td>
<td>BSM</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>Allocation of uniform budget post devising marketing strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure staff are aware of the policy regarding the wearing of uniform</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Cost of time spent conducting team meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Creativity sign designed and sprayed</td>
<td>Creativity to be a standing agenda item on team meetings to provide opportunity for contribution and discussion</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>With immediate effect</td>
<td>Cost of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promotion in magazines or websites</td>
<td>Liaise with customers regarding promotion through their networks, taking advantage of those publicised in magazines and on the internet</td>
<td>MD and BSM</td>
<td>With immediate effect</td>
<td>Cost of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Paint the employees pushbikes</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Cost of time and paint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 6.1 | Open a YouTube account | Record notable vehicles being painted
Open a YouTube account
Upload recordings in high speed
Link to Facebook and website
Link to websites specific to vehicle, i.e., horse boxes and equestrian websites | BSM | 3 months             | Cost of time and Recording equipment |
|     | Road and motorbike painting | Promote road and motorbike painting on the social media and website
Devise a segmented album on the Facebook page | BSM | 5 months             | Cost of time and adjustments to website |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vinyl wrapping</th>
<th>Research the feasibility of vinyl wrapping including cost and local competition Forecast potential costs and implementation plan</th>
<th>MD and BSM</th>
<th>6 months</th>
<th>Cost of time and potential financial investment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Car Cruises</td>
<td>Increase advertising for customising cars Research local car cruise events Attend car cruises, presenting examples of work and give out leaflets and business cards</td>
<td>BSM and 3rd year apprentice</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Cost of time and additional hours worked for the apprentice at weekends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Customer relationships</td>
<td>Exploit the good relationships with existing customers to increase word of mouth referrals. Create a customer email list and Facebook page 'like' list to periodically send out service updates and promotional offers.</td>
<td>MD and BSM</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Cost of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>‘we paint any part’</td>
<td>Targeted promotion of the ‘we paint any part’ aspect of the service through Facebook at the website to car customising enthusiasts and for quick convenient repairs.</td>
<td>MD and BSM</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Cost of time, promotional materials and events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Increase and structure the networking</td>
<td>Source local business events to attend. Select those viable to the trade and potential partnership work.</td>
<td>MD and BSM</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Cost of time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendices
Appendix 1

Data Line Analysis

Rank Statements 1-8;

{1 = most important, 8 = least important}

- The current marketing of the business should be regularly analysed.
- Resources should be allocated and utilised to market the business.
- Innovation is encouraged by the Managing Director and popular marketing themes exploited.
- The Managing Director is aware of creativity adopted by competitors.
- The business should have a robust marketing strategy in place.
- The team are aware of who the stakeholders are and what they want from the organisation/enterprise.
- The marketing of the business is important for it to improve.
- The business requires a competitive advantage within the market.
## Appendix 2

### Semi-structured Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>What would you say are the positive and negatives in relation to.....?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Awareness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. How often does the Managing Director review the marketing of the business?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>What would you say are the positive and negatives in relation to.....?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Awareness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What resources are currently allocated to marketing the business?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What marketing themes have been applied by competitors that could be imitated within the current resources?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How can the business best apply its resources to improve its marketing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>What would you say are the positive and negatives in relation to.....?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Awareness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What do you consider to be innovative about the current marketing?</td>
<td>Positives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What do you consider to be exceptionally innovative about the competitors marketing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What creative or innovative ideas do you have to improve the marketing of the business?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>What would you say are the positive and negatives in relation to.....?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Awareness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How have you creatively contributed to the current marketing?</td>
<td>Positives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>What would you say are the positive and negatives in relation to.....?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Awareness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What do you consider the main aspects of the</td>
<td>Positives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current marketing strategy to consist of?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How do you know if your competitors have a strategy?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. How important do you think a strategy is to improve the marketing of the business?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>What would you say are the positive and negatives in relation to.....?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Positives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. How is the business currently marketed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. What are the key marketing themes within the industry and your competitors?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How relevant do you think marketing is to improve the business?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive Advantage</td>
<td>What would you say are the positive and negatives in relation to.....?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. What do you consider to be the current competitive advantage of the business?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. What do you believe to be the competitive advantage that stands out in the industry?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. How can the business gain a competitive advantage?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3

Self-completion Questionnaire Covering Letter

Dear Customer,

I am currently studying for a Masters’ in Business Administration at the University of Bolton and as part of my dissertation; I am conducting research into the marketing of Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters.

Please would you therefore assist me?

By participating in this questionnaire, as a valued customer you would be helping us to improve our marketing and consequentially, our service to you, as this gives you the opportunity to provide us with constructive feedback that we can take forward in this endeavour.

The questionnaire will take less than 10 minutes of your time to complete and all results are confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research for my dissertation.

For further details or to answer any queries pertaining to the questionnaire, please contact me at the above address. Please note that the final date for the questionnaires to be completed and returned is Friday 13th March.

Thanking you for your kind assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Joanne Howard

Business Support Manager
Appendix 4

Self-completion Questionnaire

Marketing Research Questionnaire

Please select the statement that best describes your opinion on the marketing of Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters:

1. **How long have you been a customer of Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters?**
   a) Less than 1 year
   b) Less than 2 years
   c) More than 2 years

2. **How often do you use Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters?**
   a) Only once as it was for my own vehicle
   b) 2 – 3 times per year
   c) Over 4 times per year

3. **Are you representing**
   a) Yourself as a vehicle owner
   b) A small medium sized enterprise
   c) A larger business

4. **How easy was it to book your vehicle in for painting?**
a) Very easy, the team were very flexible  
b) Relatively easy, there was some negotiation on dates  
c) They were unable to accommodate the dates you required

5. It is obvious to you as a customer that....  
a) Resources are allocated and utilised well to market the business.  
b) The business needs to allocate resources to market the business.  
c) There is too much focus on marketing the business.

6. Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters current marketing should be analysed....  
a) Annually  
b) Quarterly  
c) Monthly

7. Do you think...?  
a) The marketing of the business is innovative and uses popular marketing themes  
b) Other similar business have better marketing  
c) The marketing needs to be improved

8. It is obvious that Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters...  
a) Has a robust marketing strategy in place.  
b) Needs a robust marketing strategy in place  
c) Does not really need a marketing strategy
9. The marketing of the business....
   a) Is important to improve performance
   b) Will gain more business
   c) Is not important

10. The business...
    a) Requires a competitive advantage within the market.
    b) Has a clear competitive advantage that needs promoting
    c) Will do well without pursuing a competitive advantage

11. The marketing....
    a) Is targeted to the right audience.
    b) Needs to be more specific to capture the right audience
    c) Need to target a larger audience

12. As a stakeholder do you feel Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters?
    a) Listens to what you want as a customer and produces this
    b) Goes over and above to ensure the work they produce for you is to the standard and completed within the time frame you expect
    c) Could improve on their communication with customers

13. The team ...
a) Are aware of who the stakeholders are and what they want from the business.

b) Need to be made aware of who the stakeholders are and what they want from the business.

c) Should just get on with their jobs and not be expected to know who the stakeholders are and what they want from the business.

14. The customer service provided by the team...

a) Is friendly and to a high standard

b) Is in need of improvement

c) Is irrelevant to your needs as a customer

15. How likely are you to return to Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters?

a) Very likely, they produce excellent work

b) Likely, they provide value for money

c) Unlikely, I was not impressed by the standard of work produced

16. How likely are you to recommend Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters?

a) Very likely, they produce excellent work

b) Likely, they provide value for money

c) Unlikely, I was not impressed by the standard of work produced
17. What do you consider the competitive advantage of the business to be?
   a) The quality of the work produced
   b) The value for money
   c) The level customer service provided

18. The marketing of Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters would benefit from...
   a) Financial investment to promote what they can do
   b) A new innovative competitive advantage
   c) A better strategy to structure what they currently do

19. As a customer you would like to see Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters....
   a) Invest in more modern aspects of vehicle painting, such as vinyl wrapping
   b) Expand the services they provide, such as additional mechanics
   c) Improve the current service they provide

20. What do you think is Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters biggest competition?
    a) Other painters providing better more up to date services
    b) Other painters providing additional services
    c) The cost of the services
    d) The level of customer services provided by other painters.
Bibliography


Coleman, J.E. and Heriot, K.C. (2013) The use of social media by small businesses:


To stimulate strategic conversation in SMEs, IIE Annual Conference Proceedings, pp. 1-6.


PART TWO

Of the Report

Joanne Howard

Project submitted in part fulfilment of the

Master of Business Administration

Bolton Business School

The University of Bolton

May 2015
## Contents

1. An Evaluation of the Concepts Applied ........................................ 1
2. The Methodology Used and Problems Encountered .................. 2
3. Constraining Forces in the Workplace .......................................... 4
4. Evaluation of the Learning Set .................................................. 7
5. Personal Skills Developed ....................................................... 8
1. An Evaluation of the Concepts Applied

There were many definitions of marketing presented which required deliberation to select the most fitting in relation to the objectives. This was achieved with Kotler (2005) definition as it clearly incorporated all 3 objectives. More specifically, objective 2 which was the most challenging objective to research due to the recruitment of interested customers and reliability of the employee’s knowledge of their competition which was limited. The literature review uncovered a variety of concepts and theories that mirrored the current issues effecting Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters as a small business, including restricted resources, the ability for SMEs to be flexible to achieve success and innovation. In addition there were theories highlighting SMEs being better off without marketing strategies that presented a dilemma as the aim of the research was to evaluate the marketing in order to improve this based on a robust strategy.

Owner/Manager skills were raised as an issue within the literature and this was alluded to in relation to knowledge base within the research as opposed to skills, therefore this was not specifically focused on within the research and consequently the recommendations and implementation plan did not really address this. This was due more to this being an analytical journey on how to develop the business based on pooled resources and skills of the team rather than highlighting one specific area that may not be the driving force to marketing development in the near future if the Business Support Manger takes the lead on this.

The Strategic Planning Process (Kotler 2009) and the resources issues and flexibility an SME can afford gave the inspiration on which to base the conceptual framework and enabled its development by adapting Bettiol et al (2012) that reflected the
entrepreneurial aspect of SMEs but also provided the appropriate analysis on which to base a robust strategy that allowed for innovation.

2. The Methodology Used and Problems Encountered

Realism was selected for the methodology based on the research containing both positivist and interpretivist aspects. This provided as much solidarity and validity as was possible to the research and findings. The research was opinion based so to quantify and then capture the information the self-completion questionnaire was devised providing this aspect of positivism. The research objectives were specifically related to the marketing of a small business at a point in time, therefore a case study was the most appropriate strategy to apply.

When devising the Data Line Analysis (DLA) it was difficult to know whether to include each aspect of the 7 points identified in the conceptual framework and ensure these were compatible with the objectives in as much as making sense of the statements and ensuring they matched up appropriately to get the most out of the method. There was concern that this was not a robust enough of a method as it felt too easy, and superficial for being accurate data that could be utilised with any merit. However, after deliberating over the statements, it was perceived as an excellent way to introduce the research to the participants. When transforming the data into graphs that best represented the findings the usual ones that would be applied such as pie charts and vertical bar charts didn’t adequately display the data so more time than planned was spent on this. However the results were worth it as the ones chosen highlighted the results of the statements accurately.
The questions for the semi-structured interviews were devised to encompass aspects of the conceptual framework and the objectives. To ensure all aspects were included 17 questions were devised which in hindsight was too many, 10 -12 would have been less repetitive for the interviewee. This was highlighted in the pilot that was conducted on the newest recruit to the business, an administrator. Despite not knowing the business workings in depth she possessed enough knowledge to respond to all of the questions to some degree but found that some were the same answers as previously given such as Q9 and 12, Q11 and 14, here the pilot highlighted the same responses were given.

The 3rd and fourth interviews were more straightforward allowing for the capturing of more specific information pertaining to the current marketing, however, one individual had very little to offer regarding competitors as they had very little knowledge of them and the other was relatively new to the business but could bring a competitors perspective due to having been employed elsewhere previously. Thankfully the two perspectives gave a balance to the research.

Post the self-completion questionnaire being verified by my supervisor 2 questions pertaining to the MD specifically were removed as irrelevant. The questionnaire was piloted on a previous customer and concluded that question 15;

The team....

a) Represent the business well
b) Are not required to represent the business
c) Promote the individual work they’ve done
did not really inform of anything pertinent to marketing and that question 20;

The aspects of the current advertising that you like best are....
a) The work vehicle displaying the logo
b) The staff uniforms
c) The business cards and leaflets

was removed as this was specific to advertising as opposed to the general marketing the rest of the questionnaire aimed to capture. The questionnaires were then given out to customers either dropping off vehicles that week or collecting, this captured those who owned their own vehicles and the last 2 were completed by SME vehicle firms who utilise the services regularly. One completed it on site and the other took it away to complete.

3. Constraining Forces in the Workplace

Cooper Car and Commercial Vehicle Painters is a family run business employing 3 generations from both sides of the family. There was an expectation that this would pose a problem when interviewing staff and there was apprehension from the MD when receiving feedback and potential criticism. On the whole it was a very positive experience for everyone with good ideas generated and even persistent problems ironed out as a new arena to discuss with a constructive outcome was presented for everyone to take advantage of.

However, there was a delay in carrying out the DLA with staff due to a family bereavement occupying three weeks of the time allocated for research. In addition to this a member of staff was absent for 2 weeks due to sickness. These obstacles were overcome by taking the opportunity to complete the DLA on site whenever possible rather than trying to find a suitable time for everyone and then due to it being a family run business, sending the final DLA home with the Managing Director to
hand to the person off sick. This was then collected the following day to enable verbal verification of the results.

On completing the DLA all staff bar one fully understood the ranking system but this was clarified prior to them commencing. One member of staff had concerns regarding confidentiality due to the family relationships within the business this was dealt with reassuringly and accurately informing them personal comments would be anonymous and collated to present constructive findings of the research. On verifying the responses with another employee they wanted to provide a level of detail synonymous with that required for the semi-structured interviews. Here an explanation was provided about the semi-structured interviews to come and thanked them for their participation and enthusiasm.

After conducting the pilot and rectifying the questions I proceeded with the first member of staff who had been off sick and was on light duties then post this I was informed by the MD that I could not conduct any further interviews until the end of the week due to the volume of work and there being 2 painters short at the beginning of the week. This impacted on the schedule for the interviews and consequently the questionnaires which I had planned to have ready by early the following week for completion and returned by the end of the week which was viable due to the customers we had due in being in the vicinity. I was informed on the Wednesday that I had a 2 hour window to complete the semi-structured interviews on the Thursday morning between 11 and 1pm.
I rescheduled my diary and ensured I was at the site, I went to the smaller site first to interview a member of staff who works predominantly on his own here due to the limited equipment and space available. I had been prepared by the MD to expect this interview to take twice as long as all the others due to a) the wealth of knowledge the person has on the business, b) the effect of working alone all day and c) a general talkative personality. I factored this in to the time and allowed for 40minutes and focused on the topic at hand. The information was invaluable from a research perspective due to the historical context provided and also in gathering ideas moving the business forward.

4. Evaluation of the Learning Set

Throughout the MBA we have been an ever decreasing group of students, resulting in a final 6 to complete the course. This was beneficial as a bench mark for motivation and in measuring progress and sharing problems we had encountered. In January, on transferring tutors there were differences to account for in the way the sessions were mapped out. Instead of group tutorials reflecting on work produced and where to progress moving forward the tutorials were individual with a strong emphasis on personal motivation to complete. Towards the end of the course this was clearly a more beneficial approach to solely address individual matters pertaining to completion.

Within a tutorial I discussed the repetition of the semi-structured interviews and we came to the conclusion to improve on this when the semi-structured interviews were carried out with the staff the questions would be combined to capture what was being asked once as follows; Q9 and Q12 became, What do you consider the main aspects of the current marketing strategy to consist of and how is this applied?
Q11 and Q14 became How important do you think a marketing and a strategy is to improve the marketing of the business?

The tutorial also gave support in planning the questionnaires and how best to pilot this. The advice differed from previous advice given but simplified the method which was positive in light of the time constraints mentioned previously.

5. Personal skills developed

The MBA has assisted me in consolidating the experience I have gained as a manager over the past 11 years; in addition, it has strengthened my resilience to change which has been significant from a work perspective over the past 3 years. The project has developed my managerial skills further by providing the experience of researching the environmental factors impacting on the business from a larger scale and providing a strategic approach to addressing this rather than crisis management when something happens. The research experience provided method to specifically address issues and provide substance to findings and consequently the recommendations to make the changes required to move forward or pre-empt external changes that may negatively impact on the business.

The qualities improved upon in my day to day practice include the ability to clearly define objectives and explain the purpose or rational for the actions the management team are take and the expectations of the employee role within this. From a customer perspective there was more purpose to the conversations we had with an outcome of increased trade and improved networking. One of the more modern aspects of marketing skills I have gained, despite personally using social media, was the ability to exploit this and manage
it on a day to day basis to maximise publicity and respond to inquiries whilst continuing to maintain the status quo of the business.

From the recommendations and implementation plan devised, there is already notable progress with extended partnership work and sponsorship for a customer in the stock car racing business. This is planned to transcend/cascade to the social media side of their marketing and will provide ongoing promotion of the business. The confidence gained in devising strategies and plans is immeasurable compared to just 12 months ago. Now the detail I can provide within this and direction to support its success gives assurance to both me and my employer that it can be relied upon.