

INCREASING BRAND EQUITY OF ONLINE CASINOS THROUGH ONLINE MARKETING TOOLS

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>As the popularity of online gambling is blooming and the number of online casinos has increased drastically, it has led to a growing demand of positive brand equity. Therefore, it is vital for online casinos and other businesses to gain a competitive advantage with increased brand equity. Yet, many online casinos don't realize the real value of brand equity in a modern interactive marketplace where there already are too many option for consumers. Online casinos should aim be at the forefront of making technology work and create a better playing experience for consumers.</p> <p>The aim of the study was to examine how online casinos can increase brand equity in today's digitalized world. Other objectives were to study which marketing strategies online casinos should focus their resources on and to study the impact of online marketing in general for the industry. Essentially, this research will help online casinos to develop their brand and lower the barrier for new market entries.</p> <p>The methodology entails collecting information by using quantitative research. Using online survey was implemented and distributed on online gambling discussion boards. The survey executed on Webpropol software which also allowed the data to be analyzed.</p> <p>The results indicate that positive brand equity is a significant factor for online casinos' success. Consumer choose an online casino based on brand loyalty, brand image and based on its advertisements and promotions. The impact of the already popular online marketing strategies such as affiliate marketing, search engine optimization and email marketing cannot be denied. Nonetheless, they should be improved. The findings reveal that online marketing is an important driver to increase brand equity, however, the way the strategies are used is the main key to success.</p>		
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Tiivistelmä <p>Nettikasinot ovat saavuttaneet suuren suosion viime vuosina ja niiden suosio jatkaa kasvamistaan. Se on johtanut vahvan brändipääoman merkityksen kasvamiseen nettikasinoille. Nettikasinoiden on elintärkeää keskittyä brändin vahvistamiseen saadakseen yrityksestään kilpailukykyisemmän. Monet nettikasinot eivät välttämättä ymmärrä brändipääoman merkitystä modernilla kilpailullisilla markkinoilla, missä kuluttajilla on jopa liikaa vaihtoehtoja.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tavoite oli selvittää kuinka nettikasinot voivat vahvistaa brändipääomaansa nykypäivän digitaalisessa ympäristössä. Lisäksi, tavoitteena oli tarkastella mitkä digitaaliset markkinointistrategiat ovat nettikasinoiden kannalta hyödyllisimpiä sekä markkinoinnin merkitystä ylipäättään nettikasinoille. Tämä tutkimus auttaa nettikasinoita kehittämään brändiään ja madaltaa kynnyistä mahdollisilla uusien nettikasinoiden perustajille.</p> <p>Tutkimusmetodi sisältää tiedon keräämisen kvantitatiivisen menetelmän avulla. Tarkemmin, tutkimuksessa käytettiin web-kyselyä, jotka jaettiin nettikasinoihin keskittyvillä keskustelupalstoilla. Kysely toteutettiin käyttämällä Webropol-työkalulla.</p> <p>Tulokset näyttävät, että vahvan brändin merkitys on suuri nettikasinoiden menestyksen kannalta. Kuluttajat valitsevat nettikasinon erilaisten kanta-asiakasohjelmien, tuotekuvan sekä markkinoinnin ja promootioiden perusteella. Tulosten perusteella tietyt jo, nettikasinoiden käyttämät markkinointistrategiat kuten affiliate-markkinointi, hakukoneoptimointi ja sähköpostimarkkinointi omaavat edelleen suuren vaikutuksen nettikasinoiden suosioon. Joka tapauksessa, kaikkia näitä markkinointikeinoja, tulisi kehittää vahvistaakseen brändiä ja nettikasinoiden tulisi miettiä miten näistä saadaan kaikki hyöty irti.</p>		
Avainsanat(asiasanat) Brändi, brändipääoma, internet markkinointi, CRM, hakukoneoptimointi, sosiaalinen media, nettikasinot		
Muut tiedot		

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Key Concepts

Brand

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these, that identifies the maker or seller of a product or service.

Brand Equity

A set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers.

Customer Relationship Management

Customer relationship management (CRM) refers to the principles, practices and guidelines that an organization follows when interacting with its customers.

Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimization (SEO) refers to methods used to increase traffic to a website by increasing its search engine page rank.

Social Media

Websites and other online means of communication that are used by large groups of people to share information and to develop social and professional contacts.

Online Gambling

Any form of gambling game which is played using a computer or mobile device and an internet connection can be referred to as online gambling. Online establishments offer sports betting, traditional casino games, video slots, and more.

1 Introduction

Gambling, defined as “the activity or practice of playing at a game of chance for money or other stakes” (dictionary.com), has been proven to exist thousands of years ago. However, the first online gambling website was established just over 20 years ago. In the recent years, online gambling has gone mobile and rightly so, after all, it is a billion-dollar industry. In 2013, the online gaming market had a volume of 35.5 billion U.S. dollars and the volume is expected to reach over 56 billion U.S. dollars in 2018 (statista). Gaming Innovation Group’s, which is a technology business of seven B2C gambling products and three B2B products, had annual revenue of €1m in 2011 and €80m in 2016 (gaminginnovationgroup).

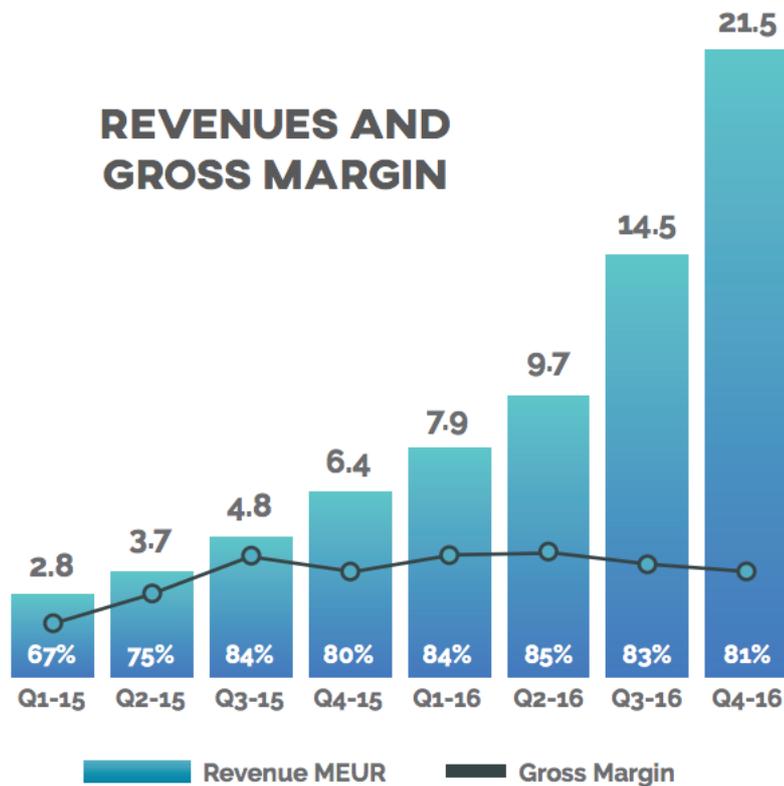


Figure 1. Revenues and Gross Margin of Gaming Innovation Group (GamingInnovationGroup)

The popularity of online casinos has been rising at a vast rate and it continues to do so. New online casinos pop up almost on a weekly basis trying to get their share of the market. In Keller’s, Apéria’s and Georgson’s (2012, 3) view, individuals and business are facing an increasing amount of choices and on the contrary, have less and less time to make those choices. Buttinger and Vallaster (2008, 6) describe the

internet as a “giant megaphone” where companies cannot control information which adds pressure for businesses. They believe people have become more suspicious and more aware of the products they consume (ibid., 6). This increases the need for businesses to be trustworthy in the current environment. The online gambling industry is heavily affected by marketing and branding. As we are living in a digital era, it is vital for online casinos to keep up with the latest trends and strengthen their brands.

Online gambling is an industry where the money exchanged doesn't provide any fixed assets to customers, hence, having a strong brand can be more powerful in comparison to other e-commerce businesses. Additionally, gambling is commonly viewed as a guilty pleasure and many see it as a dodgy industry. According to LaPlante (2008, 2400), the internet is a controversial new medium for gambling. Therefore, consumers may have prejudices toward online gambling and brand awareness might be a decision breaker when consumers choose an online casino to make transactions to. The author of this thesis has been an avid user of online casinos for years and has experienced countless experiences with various online casinos. That said, the author has seen a great deal of changes in online casinos in addition to experiencing both negative and positive aspect of different online casinos. Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009, 22) write that a research topic should be something that can be undertaken and one that excites your imagination. Consequently, this specific topic was chosen.

The main purpose of this thesis is to discover how much online casinos are affected by brand equity and which marketing strategies are the most beneficial for them. The theoretical framework examines the basic concepts of branding in addition to most fundamental marketing strategies for online casinos. The marketing concepts for the theoretical framework were chosen by skimming through various online casino websites. Essentially, this thesis will help online casinos to strengthen their brand equity and develop their online marketing strategies. Despite the primary focus being on online casinos, a major part of the content applies to other businesses as well.

There is a scarcity of previous research on this specific topic. Most of the research found on online gambling address the issues with problematic gambling or study the behavior of online gamblers. According to Reilly & Smith (2013) online gambling is an

emerging field of research and most previous research is either commentaries or surveys of limited value. Regarding literature review, branding and online marketing are widely coveted subjects, hence there was an excess of literature to assemble a theoretical framework for this research. Saunders et al (2009, 62) argues a literature review should not be a summary of what has been written on the research topic, but to review the most relevant and significant research on the topic which was also the authors goal for this thesis.

This thesis will aim to discover reasons that affect consumer's decision when deciding to play at an online casino. It will also measure the value of having a brand equity and which marketing strategies are most efficient for online casinos. There is a vast number of online casinos to choose from which leads to questions such as why certain online casinos are more popular than others and why consumers choose one casino over another? The main research questions are:

- How much having a positive brand equity influences the buying decision?
- How can online casinos make increase their brand equity?
- Which online marketing strategies are most beneficial for online casinos?

The following chapter, which is the literature review, focuses on examining branding, brand equity, brand building and online marketing strategies. The online marketing strategies part consist of consumer relationship management, email marketing search engine optimization, affiliate marketing and social media marketing on building brand equity. Third chapter of this thesis is methodology part which is followed by fourth part, results. Final part of the thesis covers discussion and conclusion.

2 Literature review

The literature review examines key concept of branding and online marketing strategies aiming to provide a solid foundation for the rest of the study. It discusses the principles and advantages of these concept as well as familiarizing the reader on how to implement these strategies.

2.1 Brand and Brand Equity

For a product or a service to be able to call itself a brand it must be characterized by a distinctive attribute in consumers' mind (Knapp 2000, 7). Kotler & Armstrong (2013, 245) define brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these, that identifies the maker or seller of a product or service." One simpler definition is given by Yohn Denise's (2013, 3) view by declaring brand as what companies do and how they do it as opposed to what they say they do. Knapp (2000, 9) believes many companies focus too much on solely getting a sale, instead of bringing customers enjoyment from a product or service or inspiring confidence on the purchase decision.

Great brands can conceive of their brands as complete strategic platforms. They can identify the key factors and attributes that define their brand and then make their brands their businesses. Many companies don't realize the full business value of the brand itself. The world we live in today has nearly infinite options. Therefore, the power of having a great brand can't be argued as researches show consumers are willing to pay more for a great brand's product. (Denise, 2013, 4.) Moreover, consumers are browsing the internet from a variety of sources ranging from search engines to affiliate links to offline promotions. They are cautious of giving their

money to an entity they have not established a relationship, thus, stronger brands give a greater assurance of quality services and user experience. (Roberts, 2003, s. 223.) The benefits of having a strong brand are explained more thoroughly in the upcoming subchapters.

Brand Equity

Aaker (1991, 15) defines brand equity as “a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm’s customers”. A study conducted by Monavvarian, Asgari and Hoseinabadi (2015, 13) shows brand equity has a positive and significant effect on brand preference. They continue that brand with positive brand equity can have numerous advantages such as higher interest margins or purchase intention of customer.

Fisher-Buttinger and Vallaster (2008, 124) display two key drivers of brand equity; alignment of brand promise with actual brand experience and building emotional connections with key stakeholders. More precisely, when brands eliminate misalignment between elements that deliver the brand will increase trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility. On top of that, continuous engagement with stakeholders in a welcoming environment counters skepticism and satisfy the increased need for information. (s. *ibid*). According to Aaker (1991, 15), brand equity is constructed of five dimensions; brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other proprietary assets. To build brand equity, Tuominen (1999, 65) states it requires the creation of a familiar brand that has favorable, strong and unique brand associations. While it may be achieved by initial choices of brand identities (e.g. brand name, logo or symbol, and through the integration of the brand identities to the supporting marketing program), however, the most important contribution are the marketing efforts that support the brand (s. *ibid*).

Aaker (1991, 16) and Keller (2013, 34) believe brand equity provides value to both customers and firms. For customers’ brand equity can make their purchasing decision easier if they’ve had positive past experiences with the brand or they are familiar with the brand in general (Aaker, 1991, 16). Aaker highlights the importance of brand associations and perceived quality ability to enhance customers’ satisfaction

with the use of experience. Due to past experiences with the brand and its marketing efforts, consumers find out which brands are in their favor and which are not. Consumers can assign responsibility to a specific manufacturer or distributor since brands have identified the source or maker of a product resulting in more simple product decisions. When consumers recognize a brand, it is easier for them to trust the brand and make a faster product decision. Importantly, brands can serve as much more as just a sign of quality. They may serve as symbolic devices which are associated with certain types of people. These brands allow consumers to project their self-image or reflect different values or traits. By using these types of brands consumer can communicate with others and show people their personality or the type of person they would like to be. (ibid.)

Gambling is commonly viewed as a risky activity. Consumers may be aware of many types of risks when purchasing or consuming a products and brands can lower the risks in these situations. The risks can be the following:

- Functional risk: The product may not perform as expected
- Physical risk: The product may be a threat to user's well-being or health
- Financial risk: The product isn't worth the price tag
- Social risk: The product is embarrassing
- Psychological risk: The product may be a threat to user's mental health
- Time risk: If the product is a failure, there is an opportunity cost of finding another satisfactory product.

To handle these risks, consumers are prone to use well-known brands to simplify their decision and thus, reducing these risks is invaluable (Keller 2013, 35).

Regarding firms, brand equity can have multiple benefits according to Aaker and Keller. Firstly, Aaker (1991, 17) displays how promotions can be more effective if the customers are already familiar with the brand. This can have an effect to decrease skepticism when trying new products or services. Brands with lower brand equity need to invest more in promotional activities compared to brands with stronger brand equity that can have reduced reliance upon promotions. If at some point, brands wish to extend via brand extensions or cooperate with another firms, the brand name will provide a competitive edge and create barriers to competitors. (ibid.)

Essentially, according to Keller (2013, 35), brands serve as an identification purpose to simplify product handling or tracing. Brands can have legal protection for their unique features of their products in addition to retaining intellectual property rights, giving legal title to the brand owner. Registered trademarks, copyrights, designs and patents ensure that the firms can safely invest in a brand and gain benefits of an asset. While some of them might be copied by competitors, the brand image in the eyes of consumers cannot. When brands have the gained a certain level of customer loyalty, it provides security and predictability which in results will create challenges for new firms trying to enter the market. Altogether, brands have enormous value, hence, the amounts invested in mergers and acquisitions. To illustrate, Keller displays the Wall Street boom in the mid 1980, where financiers, who believed strong brands results in better profits, sought out under valuable companies from which to invest in. (ibid.)

When consumer or a company is making a choice between a product or service, brand equity or brand management will matter to an organization. A key benefit of building a strong brand is increased marketing communication effectiveness. By having a strong brand, consumers may become more willing to attend additional communications for a brand, thus, they will process these communications more favorably and have a bigger ability to later recall these communications or their accompanying cognitive or affective reactions. (Keller, 2009, 140.)

However, Keller (2009, 140) also states that these benefits only arise with a strong brand, hence, building a strong brand should be management priority. Hoeffler and Keller (2003) document a wide range of benefits from having a strong brand. Having a strong brand enhances customer loyalty and leads to more flexible customer response to price decreases and increases. Stronger brands are less vulnerable to any adversities and at the same time, they are more capable to brand extensions and additional licensing. It also affects to marketing communication, which will enhance. Most importantly, strong brand will result in increased margins. (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003, 421-426.)

The significance of a brand grows even more when it comes to online businesses where there is an abundance of variety to choose from. The internet is a powerful medium for developing customer communities that are committed to a brand. Tai

(2013, 20) writes there are far too many brand already in the market and customers have enough brand to serve them. Brand equity is an effective strategic marketing tool today and it can be a powerful differentiator in a highly competitive market place (Saxena, 2009, 318). Above all, a strong brand image offers consumer comfort in unfamiliar online purchasing situations. The process of creating a strong brand may be lengthy and expensive, however, it results in a lasting competitive advantage. (Roberts, 2003, 224.)

In Harden's & Heyman's (2009, 46) theory, there are four ways customers find a company on the web. Either they search for it specifically, they find it while browsing for related products or services, the website has been referred by a friend via web or email or finally they find the website by while looking for something else. Due to these reasons, branding well on the web makes it easier for companies to attract new customers as well existing ones. Crucially, customers can also become engaged with a company (s. 46).

Kerner & Pressman (2007, XI) highlights the significance of being "cool". They claim brands that when brands evoke the characteristic of cool they are more likely to stand out in today's competitive market place. To illustrate, they give Grey Goose vodka, which they describe an "iPod of their industry" which refers to something everybody wants to be. Surprisingly, Grey Goose vodka isn't the winner of taste-testing, thus, the success was a result by having a distinctive brand in a category based almost exclusively on a bland product. (ibid., 10.) According to them, being cool is what companies chase but they shouldn't chase like a greyhound after a fake rabbit. Instead, companies like Apple or Nike saw opportunities that others didn't and it all happened by being authentic. (XIV.)

Brand Name and Slogan

Generally, the brand name is associated with the product. For instance, In the online gambling industry the names usually refer to betting, gaming or money to make it recognizable for consumers, for example, Betsafe, Videoslots or Unibet. According to Kotler & Armstrong (2013, 246), brand names help consumers identify products or services that might be beneficial for them. In addition, they display several advantages branding gives the seller. Buyer who always purchase the same brand

know that the products or service is always the same quality with the same features and benefits. The brand name becomes the basis on which to build stories about a product's special qualities. (ibid.)

Another key thing to remember is how brand name and trademark provide legal protection that otherwise might be copied by competitors. What is more, branding helps the seller to segment market. For instance, Toyota Motor Corporation can offer the major Lexus and Toyota brand to European car buyers in addition to numerous sub-brands, instead of one general product for all consumers. (ibid., 246.) Similarly, online casinos are often operated within a larger corporate group. For example, Betsson Group has several online casinos under their corporation (Betsson). In terms of branding it means certain groups have a stronger brand value than others, and when that specific brand can be seen on an online gambling website customers associate it with their former experiences with that same brand.

Generally, brands also have a slogan which resembles their brand. Slogans can be defined as short phrases that communicate descriptive or persuasive information about the brand (Keller 2013, 158). Keller (2013, 158) says slogan are a powerful way to reinforce brand positioning, build brand awareness and equity. According to Branding magazine article (Branding of Online Casino Websites, 2014), online casinos slogans are intended to make lower barriers to sign up for an online casino. As an example, they give 888 casinos' slogan "play the game" which shifts the focus from gambling to playing videogames (2014). Similarly, some slogans tend to play with the brand name in some way or some to increase brand awareness. Most significantly, slogans can build up brand positioning. (Keller 2013, 158.)

Stone and Desmond (2007, 207) argue that while many brands can be similar and fulfil similar needs, they can still have their clear and effective personalities.

Furthermore, this allows consumers to choose a brand that expresses their own individuality resulting in higher brand loyalty and increased market share (ibid).

Consequently, Keller (2013, 158) displays a key benefit of slogans as helping customers grasp the meaning of a brand and what makes it special. Slogans can also be tied to different advertising campaigns. To illustrate, Keller gives an example of Nike giving a lot of specific tag lines for their ad campaigns. Campaign-specific tag lines may shift the focus from the brand slogan and reinforce the message of a

campaign. Moreover, it might help the brand slogan to remain fresh. (ibid., 161.) Above all, Aaker (1991, 14) believes brand name and what it represents is the most important intangible asset for companies.

2.2 Building a brand

Horst & Duboff (2015) present a key role of brand building: “Brand building is necessary to sustain the healthy margins that allow a business to keep fulfilling its brand promise in the long run”. Stone and Desmond (2007, 205) display a few steps to building a brand in their book *Fundamentals of Marketing*. First step is to identify the brand values. What aspects makes it different to others and where does it stand in the mind of the customer. Secondly a gap analysis ought to be done following a SWOT analysis. Gap analysis refers to analysis that aims to state the goals that needs to be achieved to move on to a desired level. What is more, the factors that make the brand unique should be defined as well as developing a brand property. (ibid., 206-207). Stone and Desmond emphasizes heavily on the brand proposition and suggest it should be tested with customers from the target segment. The construction plan of the brand should involve the 4 Ps (Price, Product, Place and Promotion) in relation to the brand. Finally, the plan should be monitored by going back to the beginning and identifying the brand position. (ibid.)

In Keller (2013, 68) view there are three models that provide vital micro and macro perspectives on successful brand building. When using these models collectively, they will help marketers create branding strategies and tactics to maximize profits and long-term brand equity. Also, they will be able to track their progress along the way. The models are the following;

Brand positioning model

The idea of this model is to describe how to establish competitive advantages in the minds of consumers in the marketplace (ibid., 68). To be more precise, Keller (2013, 69) defines it as the “act of designing the company’s offer and image so that it occupies a distinct and value place in the target customer’s minds”. In brand positioning model, marketers need to know who are their target consumers, main

competitors and to distinguish the main similarities and differences compared to them (ibid). Burmann, Riley, Halaszovich and Schade (2017, 107) argue problems within brand management often trace back to brand positioning. They believe companies are not able to clearly define the positioning of the brand. Regardless, brand positioning aims to develop unique images and associating with the brand among consumers. (ibid. 107.)

Brand resonance model

Brand resonance model illustrates how to take advantage of the competitive advantages the brand positioning models describes and devise intense, active loyalty relationship with customers. Moreover, it describes how brand positioning affects what consumers feel, think and do and the degree to which they resonate or connect with a brand. (Keller 2013, 107). This model uses a sequence of steps, each of which is dependent on achieving the objectives of the previous step. First step is to assure identification of the brand with customers and to form associations of how the customer's think about the brand. Next step is to clarify the brand meaning in customers' minds by strategically linking a host of tangible and intangible brand associations. After this, the proper customer responses to the brand should be obtained. Final step is to convert these responses to create brand resonance and active loyalty relationship between customers and the brand. (ibid.)

Brand resonance can be characterized by two dimensions, intensity and activity. Intensity meaning the psychological bond customers have with the brand whereas activity is explained by the level of activity engendered by this loyalty. Furthermore, these two dimensions can be broken down into four categories.

Behavioral loyalty: refers to how often customers purchase a brand and how much? Consumers that are behaviorally loyal can bring enormous value. Keller gives an example of that by stating that a consumer who spends \$100 a month on diapers can create a lifetime value of estimate \$3,000 for a single baby.

Attitudinal attachment: means a stronger attachment to a brand by viewing it as something special rather than having just a positive image of a brand. In this context, stronger attachment means that customers love a certain brand or consider it as

their absolute favorite. By having a deeper attitudinal attachment, brands are more prone to greater customer loyalty.

Sense of community: can be achieved by brand having an even broader meaning to a customer. Many online casinos have noticed the benefits of having a strong sense of community by trying to personalize their websites accordingly by for example, showing which games the users are playing or how much have they won. A greater sense of community can lead to favorable brand attitudes and intentions according to Keller. (ibid., 120-121).

Active engagement: might be the strongest affirmation of brand loyalty. It arises when customers are engaged meaning they are devoted to the brand by investing their money, time or other resources beyond those expended during purchase or consumption of the brand. Customers might participate by posting on discussion forums, visit brand-related websites or perhaps join a club centered on a brand. Keller describes them as brand evangelists and ambassadors that communicate about the brand and make the brand ties of others stronger (ss. 120-121).

Brand value chain model

To better understand the return on investment (ROI), brand value chain model aims to trace the value creation process for brands to get a clearer view of the financial impact of brand marketing expenditures and investments. The brand value chain is a structured approach to assessing the sources and outcomes of brand equity and how marketing activities create brand value. It provides insights to support brand managers and other employees whom may need different types of information and whom need to be aware of relevant branding effects. There are several basic premises in the brand value chain. The model assumes that many linking factors intervene between value stages and, these linking factors determine the extent to which value created at one stage multiplies to the next stage. Figure 2 demonstrates how the three sets of multipliers moderate the transfer between the marketing program and the three value stages. (Keller 2013, 128.)

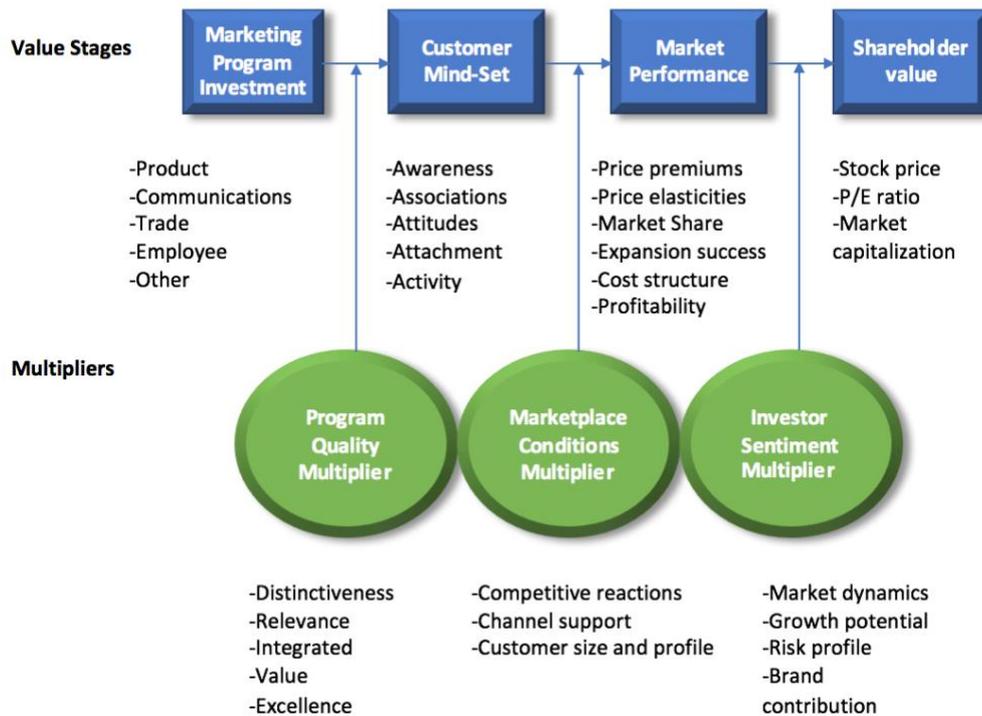


Figure 2. Brand Value Chain Summary. (Keller 2013, 128)

Keller (2009, 144) also presents a customer-based brand equity model pyramid (see Appendix 1, p. 52.), which represents the idea on how brands should be built in terms of consumer knowledge structures. Saliency looks at the brand from customer point of view, how customer recognize or recall the brand as well as how often the brand comes to their mind in purchasing situations. Performance encompasses how satisfied customers are with the product or service. Imagery means how customers' needs are met psychologically or socially and describes how the extrinsic properties of the product or service. Judgements and feelings are quite similar as both take into consideration personal opinions to examine to how customers feel and think about a brand. Feelings as the name indicates, focus more on customers' emotional responses and judgements on customers' personal opinions and evaluations. Lastly, resonance which presents the likelihood of customer remaining loyal to one brand. (ibid, 143.)

Keller presents a theory of brand building with interactive marketing communications, especially, on the internet. Internet, according to Keller, offers

versatility in brand building and each aspect of the brand resonance pyramid displayed above, can be positively impacted by interactive marketing. He identifies interactive marketing communications such as websites, blogs or online ads/videos as form of potentially impacting brand equity. (ibid., 150-151.) While companies choose which forms of interactive marketing communications they use, both micro and macro perspectives are included. More precisely, in micro sense, their interactive marketing communications must be effective and as possible in isolation and in macro sense, integration with other online marketing communication activities in addition to offline activities (ibid., 149). Keller (2009, 152) suggest marketers re-think their communication strategies to be able build customer loyalty and brand resonance in today's complex marketing environment.

Urde (2016, 26) implies all brands have an inner core, which he describes as what it can be reduced to without losing its fundamental meaning or its utility as a point of reference in long-term management. When companies neglect defining its core, it can lead to derailing from a brand-building process and harm brand assets. Moreover, not knowing what the core consists of, might result in the brand losing its identity and market position. (ibid., 27) Hence, Urde suggests brand core values should have a meaning for the organization, its customers and stakeholders. Urde further propose companies need to align the brand's identity, communication and positioning with its core. Brand's reputation, position and track record should be considered in the aligning process as well. (ibid., 39). All things considered, building a brand is time consuming as it takes planning and perseverance but in return, it produces intangible outputs such as greater customer satisfaction and fewer defections, reduced price sensitivity or more referrals (Knapp, 2000, 28).

2.3 Online Marketing Strategies

If businesses aim to be successful they must merge and synchronize all channels in terms of creativity of promotions, loyalty programs, timing and consistent brand message (Charlesworth 2012, 89). Charlesworth believes online marketing a key part of brand development (2012, 29). Before examining the marketing strategies, it is vital to understand what exactly is marketing and online marketing. Kotler & Armstrong (2013, 4) define marketing simply as "managing profitable customer

relationships.” They argue that marketing has two goals; to attract new customers by promising superior value and deliver satisfaction to keep and grow current customers (ibid.).

Prior to commercial Internet, marketers had control over marketing messages reaching the public. The presence of internet decreases organizations control over their brand leading to more challenging marketing environment. (Charlesworth 2012, 291). Keller (2009, 148) also emphasizes the challenges of having less control over what consumer will do with their online messages and activity. Halligan and Dharmesh (2014, xi) note we are living a revolution where a company can be successful without having an extensive marketing budget. Consumers now pay more attention to those with great content which makes great web presence critical for businesses (ibid).

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2009, 10) define Online Marketing as “Achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies”. Essentially, online marketing is how companies manage different forms of their online presence such as social media or e-mail marketing (ibid). While Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick write about “digital” marketing, Charlesworth (2012, xii) adds the word digital covers much more than just the online presence of a company as it encapsulates all available digital channels. Regardless, the definition still applies in this context. In this chapter, online marketing tools that are essential to online casinos are presented. Online marketing itself is an extensive topic, therefore it can be covered only limitedly in this thesis.

Customer Relationship Management

Having loyal customers and customer service are huge factors on online casinos success. To thrive and rise above the competition, online casinos need to collect huge set of statistics and excel in data analytics (Smyth, 2016). Data allows major amount of information to be obtained about the buying patterns transaction histories of identifiable customers in addition to what promotional offers customers will find appealing (Horst & Duboff, 2015).

As the marketing landscape is constantly evolving and customer choices are influenced by the advent of digital and social media, the demand for Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools has increased. Tools, which help making

marketers become more effective and realize the return on investment on the marketing efforts. (Singh & Chanda, 2014, 15) CRM (customer relationship management) is an approach designed to create improved shareholder value through the development of appropriate relationships with key customers and customer segments. Underlying potential of relationships marketing strategies and IT can be united to create successful relationships with customers and other key stakeholders. (Baran & Galka 2013, 4.) Kurvinen and Seppä (2016, 272-273) regard the most fundamental part of CRM is to improve companies' customer relationship, as the name of the concept already indicates. In their research, Baran & Galka (2013) identify five key processes that help define CRM.

1. Strategy Development: at both business and customer level. It takes the outputs the business strategy and value creation processes and turns it into value-adding interactions with customers.

2. Value creation: involves determining what attributes customers value and analyzing which customers and customers segment bring value to the company. Thus, it helps companies to identify and direct relationship efforts to those with high customer value.

3. Multichannel integration: is process of integrating sales personnel, customer contact centers, outlets, direct marketing, e-commerce and m-commerce to create the "perfect customer experience".

4. Information management: includes collecting, organizing and using customer data and information to gain customer insights and generate the appropriate marketing response.

5. Performance assessment: measures the success of CRM by analyzing metrics on customer acquisition, retention, win-back, satisfaction, loyalty, and profits. (Baran & Galka 2013, 5.)

Advantages of CRM

According to Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer and Johnston (2009, 330) there are various benefits of CRM which can improve marketing. One imperative benefit of

CRM is the automation processes which can be applied to both sales forces and marketing. It enables sales representatives to use tools in their account management to arrange and record customer visits. (s. 342.) As for marketing automation, using CRM tools gives you the possibility to plan, create and execute marketing campaigns and help organizations realize their marketing objectives (Singh & Chanda 2014, 16,21).

The vast amount of data can be overwhelming, complex and confusing. Thus, marketing automation involves lead acquisition, lead nurturing, lead scoring, customer segmentation, lead transfer, customer data integration, and closed loop marketing analysis, which will help marketers overcome issues related to data. Nonetheless, many companies are running marketing campaigns simultaneously which can lead to ineffective results without the right automation tools. (Singh & Chanda 2014, 24-25.)

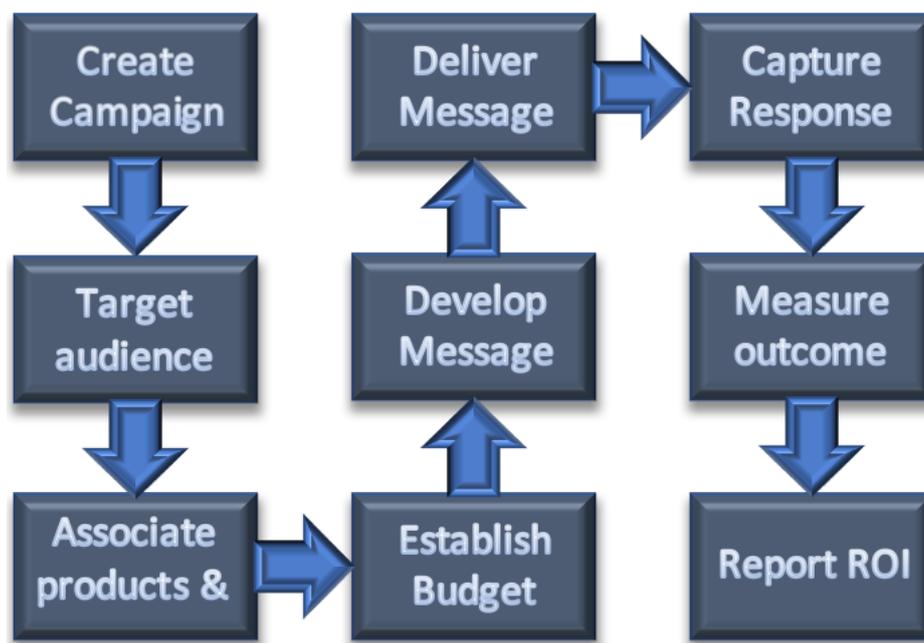


Figure 3 Common marketing steps in CRM (Singh & Chanda 2014, 27)

The data can be analyzed through technologies such as data warehouses or approaches such as data mining to optimize the marketing mix, customer's buying behavior, characteristics or different campaigns. In addition, contact center representatives can respond to customer request for information by using an intranet

to access databases containing information on the customer, products or previous queries. (Chaffey & Ellis Chadwick 2012, 323.)

According to Baran & Galka (2013, 250) CRM data is useful to understand customer segments which is the first step in developing marketing strategies and tactics. Online customer management consists of computing recency, size and frequency of last purchase (RSFM) and margins attained on product purchased or customer lifetime value (CLV), which can be measured with CRM data marts. It also consists of studying visitors' and users' footprints to reveal success or failure in attracting visitors, converting them to users and repeat customers, cross-selling and managing migration. Moreover, online customer management consists of improving deficiencies by modifying the website, and measuring results. (ibid.)

By analyzing this data to improve a website can have dramatic improvements to customer-business life cycle and could also result in winning back customers (Baran & Galka 2013, 250-251). Online casinos are almost if not always, subscription based. Baran & Galka (ibid., 251) believe win-back strategies are useful for subscription based businesses and lost customers can be won back more frequently compared to closing a sale on a new customer. To identify the reasons for leaving customers, a defection analysis needs to be conducted. Consequently, marketers will develop a variety of promotional tactics that address reasons for defection. (ibid., 250). Horst & Duboff (2015) add that businesses that have strong loyalty programs and customers who receive electronic promotional messages, can in fact, have enviable ability to track and influence its customers' behavior. Although, analytics-driven promotions can also lead to promotions that are off brand strategy and brand-destructive, hence, marketers should stay focused on long-term goals. (Horst & Duboff, 2015.)

One significant point Baran & Galka (2013, 325) point out is the use of CRM in Social Networking. As social media is impacting all aspects of people's lives around the globe, companies that practice social CRM, are provided with a channel to increase customer retention, acquire new customers and winning them back. It has become one of the most important ways marketers can acquire and maintain relationships with customers. (s. ibid.) Consumers are no longer just seen as just objects for a sale, instead, they have become decision makers with their own needs and the option to choose what and where they are making purchases. Companies that fill costumers'

social needs can build long lasting and meaningful relationships with their customers. The need of social CRM has therefore, increased. Social CRM strategy can be considered as emphasizing customer relationship communication via new communication technologies. (D'Ascenzo, Magni, Lazazzara & Za 2016, 163.) Furthermore, it enables companies to engage with their customers in real time and find out what they want, think or feel at any given time (Coles 2015, 5). Kotler and Armstrong (2013, 13) describe CRM as perhaps the most important concept of modern marketing, and with CRM, companies can maximize brand loyalty.

Email Marketing

Email marketing for online casinos can be divided into two categories, email marketing for online casinos and email marketing for online gambling affiliates. Craig Border (2015), Vice President of Database Marketing at Marketing Results Inc., says email marketing is still outperforming other online marketing methods such as social media and paid ads. He claims email marketing is especially effective in the online gambling industry (David 2015). Rohrs (2013, 110) believes emails can be incredibly productive and profitable channel for those who take the time to establish their permission-based email subscribers. According to him, in a recent survey of online retailers', email subscribers were found to be 11 percent more valuable than average customers (ibid). However, it is not worth trying to capture all the ways email contribute to brands bottom line (ibid).

Email marketing will continue to thrive and survive due to its unique nature of being only proprietary audience channel that command the consumer adoption, flexibility and direct-to-consumer control as effectively as emails. If companies are neglecting on building email subscriber audience, they are bypassing the opportunity on what could be a primary revenue and reengagement driver for them. (Rohrs 2013, 112.) Kananen (2013, 102) describes email marketing as bit old-fashioned and claims email marketing suffers from bad reputation due to spam emails. Regardless, he believes email marketing is still competent way of marketing.

Advantages of Email Marketing

When consumers are already proven to be shown interest in a company, email marketing is especially effective. Using emails is a useful way of contacting customers

and maintain customer relationships. (Kananen 2013, 112.) The relationships can even be long-term and create brand loyalty (Jenkins 2008, 3). However, this requires using customer relationship software which was examined previously in this thesis (Kananen 2013, 112). Additionally, sending emails to consumers is restricted and emails can only be sent to consumers that have allowed it. Therefore, Lahtinen (2013, 196) suggest businesses should refrain from sending unsubscribed emails as it may result negatively to brand image. He emphasizes the importance of making unsubscribing from emails as easy as possible (ibid., 197). Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 529) and Juslén (2009, 159) also believe permission-based emails marketing is a powerful tool for building relationships with customers online.

According to Juslén (2009, 159), establishing an extensive subscriber list is a requirement for long-term success. Notably, emails are substantially cheaper to implement compared to direct mail. In addition, integrating them with other direct media can increase campaign response as the message is reinforced by different media. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 532.) Likewise, Lahtinen (2013, 197) mentions email marketing is only productive when it is integrated with other communication of the organization and it's being developed by the aid of monitoring.

Email marketing is a broad concept and for marketers, it requires expertise in many categories. Although, when mastering it, it offers huge potential and growth implications. In Mullen and Daniels theory (2011, 6-8), email marketing can drive brand awareness and maintain loyal customers. Moreover, the success of email marketing can be measured as well having targeted content to different customer segments (Jenkins 2008, 4). Jenkins (2008, 4) mentions that sending promotions via email can have an incredible effect on revenue. The bottom line is email marketing has an impact on a company, whether it will strengthen or weaken the brand it comes down to the strategies. Positive impact will enhance credibility and create sense of trust, which according to Mullens and Daniels (2011, 18), are major components of brand equity.

Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a process of getting traffic to your website by using methods to enhance the visibility of your website. Simply put, it is optimizing

your website for search engines. (Charlesworth 2012, 178.) Bergström and Leppänen (2015, 285) acknowledges that in the modern world it is imperative to be visible in the internet. Especially business operating solely online need to focus on their SEO. Making a website visible in search engine results can be done via organic or paid techniques. In other words, using natural ways or pay-per-click services (Shenoy & Prabhu, 2016). As mentioned earlier, Harden and Heyman (2009, s. 46) emphasizes the importance of brand engagement which can be achieved by customers finding the website easily.

Around two-thirds of adults use social networking today and the notion of search has expanded beyond Google and other prominent search platforms to internal Facebook or innovations such as Apple's Siri voice assistant. The convergence of marketing and public relations, search and social media are inevitable to meet brand needs to engage customers. The sources of information can be vast, but for marketers that isn't always better. Instead, relevance, timeliness and ease of sharing means better content and visibility in the places customers might be and thus, make a better experience with brand and consumer interactions (Odden 2012, 6). Odden (2012, 7-8) emphasizes how valuable it is to make information easy for search engines to find and how marketers need understand myriad data sources and file types that can be included in search results. By utilizing these opportunities marketers can inventory their digital assets to create a better, more comprehensive SEO strategy that recognizes the benefit of visibility where the customers are looking (2012, 8). According to Arlitchs & Obrien (2013, 3) creating a successful SEO strategy is a process of raising awareness, setting goals, developing new skill sets, communicating across the organization, and continuous monitoring.

Most importantly, SEO is about understanding what the organization is trying to achieve and enhancing the flow of communication to ensure everyone is informed and involved (Kenning & O'Brien 2013,3). Another compelling argument Kenning & O'Brien point out is the fact that everyone in the organization must take responsibility for continuing to make digital information available for users (ibid). Search engines get smarter by the day; hence, it is critical to use sufficient strategies to achieve natural visibility (Shenoy & Prabhu, 2016.) As the figure from Phil Simon (2015, 36) below shows, people rarely go beyond the first 10 searches of google.

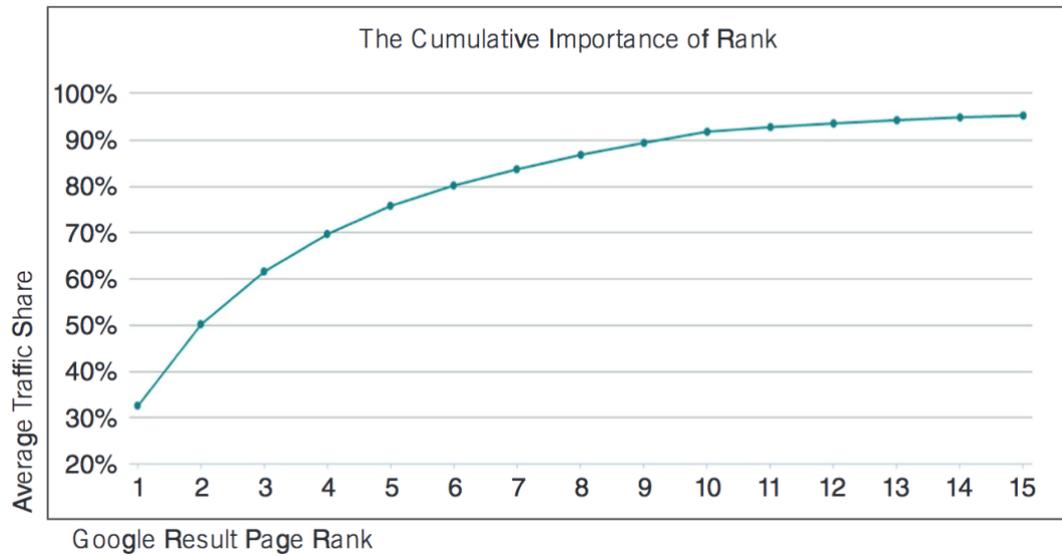


Figure 4. Google Results Page Rank (2015, 36)

Simon (2015, 37) claims companies often hire pricey SEO specialists to study Google's algorithm to maintain and improve their company's site rankings. Simon (2015, 37) also notes that it is possible to buy your way to the top of search results via Google AdWords, however, it may get expensive quite rapidly. Another thing he points out that Google isn't the only search platform as Odden (2012, 6) already stated previously in this chapter. To support this argument, Simon (2015, 38) writes one-third of U.S searches are divided between Bing, Yahoo and other search engines. The significance of SEO to online casinos can be noted by observing their available jobs section on their website where there is a vast amount of available jobs for SEO experts. For example, now of writing this chapter the current amount of SEO related jobs at Betsson Group's website is six (Betsson).

Shenoy & Prabhu (2016) list several advantages of implementing SEO in website designs:

Serving to a large audience: SEO is organic meaning when your site goes up the ranking you will get more traffic to your website. When consumers search for something on the internet, they tend to click on the first searches which is why those websites in the first few pages of search engine results garner more traffic compared to others.

Permanent results with low costs: Whereas pay-per-click services might make your website show at the top of the search results, it is costly, and doesn't provide lasting

results. It is dependent on ads, SEO results, however, will appear at the top of the charts without advertising. In the long run, the return of investment could be huge for just a minimum upkeep.

Data and analytics: Data is a fundamental part of SEO. It is used a resourceful alternative to help organizations gain insight into customer preferences, marketing trends or detailed analytics to major improvement for your business. With the aid of Google Analytics and Google Search Console, you can gather data that can help you understand the reasons for your websites visitors' behavior such as conversion and bounce rates or whether they just browsed at your website or made a purchase.

Competitive advantage: The benefits of data also apply to analyzing your competitors. SEO tools lets you see the results and reports of your competitors. The data will help organizations to compare their results with their completion and gain better insights of your competitive factors.

Usability: Vital function of SEO and its future is creating an enhanced user experience. In addition to search engines, SEO should also focus on user's requirements and intent. Attractive content and website design are SEO traits which will create a better user experience. (Shenoy & Prabhu, 2016.) Online casinos are also available on mobile devices and remarkably, the number of mobile devices according to Google (Google Developers 2016) has surpassed the number of personal computers in many countries. By making a website mobile-friendly, it will improve user's search experience and overall experience (Google, 2013).

Content marketing and branding: As mentioned earlier, websites that rank higher in search results are more likely to reach more users. When a website ranks higher in search results, it reflects a certain trust and credibility. Fresh content plays a significant role in engaging users and will results in conversion optimization. What's more, the increasing traffic can boost your brands credibility. Especially small and medium sized organizations should be more focused on SEO implementation as they don't have the same resources to increase brand awareness compared to larger-scale organizations. (Shenoy & Prabhu, 2016.) A report made Google and Nielsen (2013, 9) shows that out of 950 respondents, 48 % of mobile users start on search engine, 33% start on branded websites and 26% start on branded apps. While these

statistics are based only on mobile research, yet, they illustrate the significance of search engines when it comes to branding.

Affiliate marketing

Affiliate marketing is a crucial part of online casinos. When browsing through various online casinos, an affiliate section can be found at the bottom of the website. If companies don't offer affiliate program while their competitors do, they are missing a competitive advantage according to Harden & Heyman (2009, 135). Harden & Heyman (ibid., 46) argue that many business-to-business websites often forget the value of web affiliate programs. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 515) describe affiliate marketing as the ultimate form of marketing communications due to it is recognized as "pay-per-performance marketing" marketing method. It is a commission-based arrangement where a website owner receives a commission for generating a transaction such as a sale or a lead (ibid). Essentially, there are two ways of affiliate marketing; hosting an affiliate program on your website where others can join and sell your products/services on their website or joining an affiliate network where you sell other products on your website (Brown 2009, 18) Former one, according to Brown (s. ibid) is the ultimate solution for those who have products to sell.

Goldschmidt, Junghagen and Harris (2003, 76) present two key roles why participants' brands play a role in their participation in affiliate marketing. Firstly, there is an ongoing branding value that is created as company's brand is promoted through another company. Secondly, companies can either benefits or lose from being associated with another company and its brand. Affiliate marketing can be seen more beneficial for the marketer's brand as affiliates only get paid when the visitor performs a transaction. If a brand is associated with a well-known company, it can have a positive branding effect. In other words, it may work as a bridge to create credibility. Goldschmidt et al. (ibid., 78) describe it as a "stamp of approval". While it may be relatively easy to become an affiliate for a large, many users are not aware of it. However, becoming associated with an unethical firm may cause brand weakening and have a negative impact. Also, if users experiment a negative experience from an affiliate link, it may cause them to blame the source of the link. (ibid., 79.)

2.4 Social Media Marketing in Brand Building

Before the concept of Social Media can be analyzed any further, it requires to be defined. Simply, the word “social” refers to people being social and “media” to content published online. It is a platform for online based conversation and for business purposes, social media can be used to increase brand awareness and build relationships. (Coles, 2015, 4.) The idea behind Social Media is quite simple. Nevertheless, it may create confusion to what exactly should be included under this term. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, 60.) Kaplan & Haenlein (2010, 61) define it as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and the exchange of user-generated content”.

Despite the fact Online Gambling is a huge industry, the numbers don't correlate with the number of followers or likes in their social media accounts. The value of social media seems to be bypassed by surprisingly many online casinos. Through a quick overview of their social media accounts, an observation can be made that many of online casinos social media accounts are not updated regularly. Some of which, had weeks or even months of gaps between their updates.

Rohrs (2013, 8) displays social media users or consumers as “audience”. According to him, getting and sustaining an audience is difficult and it demands a consistency of thought, purpose, and action over a long period of time. While social media users may not be tangible, they are considered as valuable business assets. Many business fail to see audience assets in the same regard as physical assets. (ibid., 12.) Another valid point is made by Rohrs who says audience can always leave anytime they want to whether it is unfollowing a social media account or unsubscribing from emails (ibid., 14). Therefore, it is essential to pay attention to the content and know how to communicate on each social media channel. A study conducted by Emily Cray (2012, 43), shows advertisers must earn and develop relationships between their brands

and customer and it takes time, strategic planning, research and commitment.

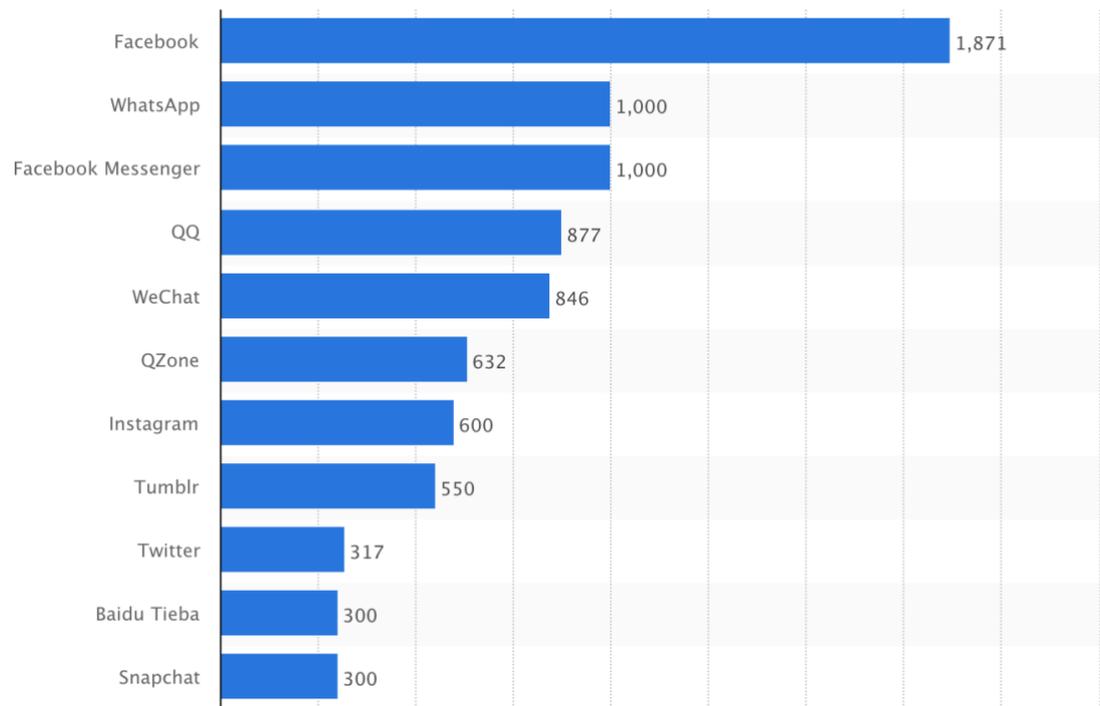


Figure 5. Number of active social media users in million (Statista, 2017)

Figure 6 above displays how many users use social media actively. In Paloranta's (2014, 157) view, social media platforms such as Blogs, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and many other applications offer various opportunities for marketing.

Measuring Social Media

Gilfoil & Jobs (2012, 637) argue that how much and how long companies continue to use social media, depends on how effective it proves to be in the long run. Therefore, the effectiveness should be measured, in other words, the return of investment (ROI) is vital. However, finding out the ROI of Social Media can be complex. (Gilfoil & Jobs, 2012, 637.) The steps of succeeding in Social Media business processes according to Gilfoil & Jobs are the following:

All social media projects should be aligned with industry or corporate goals. If the project is successful, the benefit and how can the benefit be tracked to the higher entity's measurable goal are questions that should be answered at this step. Goals and objectives must be clearly articulated. At this point, metrics should be developed as well. Everyone involved in the project should be aware of program goals, measures and timelines. They should be fully aware of what the project aim to

achieve and what is the result of the program. Make sure all actions are implemented, due dates and quality deliverables are achieved to execute the program successfully. As with reviewing other business process metrics, social media programs metrics should be measured and tracked as well. By reviewing the metrics regularly, gaps between actual metrics and targets metrics can be identified to make possible corrective actions. In addition, any issues in metrics collection or calculation should be identified or make other adjustments if needed. Finally, continuous improvements to programs, processes and metrics should be done is possible, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of social media programs (Gilfoil & Jobs, 2012, 644).

Blanchard (2011, 30) recommends using a social media measurement software suitable for organizations needs and shaped by its capabilities. Due to social medias' volatile nature Blanchard can't suggest any specific social media measurement software (s. *ibid*). However, the software should have the ability to high degree precision rather than measuring many things poorly. Consequently, the reliability of data is a key point when measuring social media which can only be achieved by choosing the software based on what the organization wants to measure and what metrics matter the most. Positive press and what tools other companies use shouldn't be organizations' criteria when choosing the right software for your needs as every company is different. All things considered, the software that suits your needs the best comes down to your budget. (*ibid.*, 31).

Irrespective of what industry in question, social media has become mainstream and leaders in majority of companies expect their employees to measure the return on it. This has led to companies spend more money to social media efforts, which increases the pressure to measure the return. Similarly, to justify additional investments, metrics will be required. (Holloman 2014,1-3). Hoffman & Fodor (2010) suggest companies could go beyond measuring for example, return on sales of social media activities. Instead, companies could think about what marketing objectives such as brand awareness, brand engagement and word of mouth affect the purchase decision funnel. Hoffman & Fodor (2010) present a table of relevant metrics for social media applications which can be seen in Appendix 2, p. 53.

Social Media Guidelines

Whether a social media page is administered by a private person or a company, one must remember certain ground rules in order to get traffic leading to loyal visitors and thus, increasing the number of members of the social media page (Kananen, 2013, 115) Kananen (2013, 115) writes the most vital part is building relationships to the users and between them. A trust relationship generates more visitors and makes them more loyal. However, while relationships are essential, social media pages must offer content that makes consumers attracted to it. (ibid., 115-116.) Charlesworth (2014, 307) has the same view as he writes brands that have succeeded in social media marketing have offered something that meets the needs of users.

Baer (2016, 1) writes in his book "Hug Your Haters" that business is more competitive than it's ever been and differentiation is tough. He believes customer experience and customer service are fertile opportunities for standing above the competition (ibid). Baer highlights the importance of increasing customer advocacy by replying to negative comments or complaints (2016, 9). According to Baer, every interaction between brand and a consumer has the potential to delight or enrage, or in other words, to become memorable and social media enables those memories to live on for a very long time (2016, xii). Nonetheless, the problem is companies have the tendency to dismiss their complaints and not responding is a response saying, "I don't care about you" (2016, 4). Thus, Baer suggests companies should always respond, especially to complaints, as he puts it "Hug Your Haters" (2016, 5).

Adam Metz (2011, 63) introduces one common phrase that should be applied when using social media; listen before talking. If brands want to know what their customers are saying, they need to deploy social marketing insights solution to find out which conversational streams about the brand are most important (ibid., 63). Gilfoil & Jobs (Gilfoil & Jobs 2012, 644) displays a few useful guidelines and principles to the use of social media presented by Blanchard (2011). Firstly, it is important to be transparent; be clear about who you are and who you represent and never provide false or misrepresented information. Good judgment and common sense should be used in creating social media content. Similarly, the content should be respectful and in good taste. Notably, all non-confidential company or industry activities should be kept in privacy. Regarding legal matters, litigation or any parties a company may be in litigation with, it is best stray away from commenting them. To avoid any legal

problems, it's best to ask permission to publish information and always give others credit for their work. (Gilfoil & Jobs 2012, 644.) Having said that, Charlesworth (2014, 307) notes releasing any online content should take more consideration compared to traditional media.

Building a community gives a benefit of customers supporting the company and vice versa. It should be on a platform where users feel comfortable sharing content with others and communicating with others in any way. Blanchard believes social media platforms should aim to add value in different levels to readers, followers, customers, fans or prospects. Give them a reason to engage with the company and the rewards will be reaped afterwards. Not only the use social media should be trained but also the audience as well. Knowing what the audience is crucial to avoid alienating or antagonizing them along the process. (Gilfoil & Jobs 2012, 644-645). Besides all the technology social media consist of, it is also a social phenomenon involving interaction, writes Kananen (2013, 15). Therefore, companies should be consistent when communicating with consumers in social media. Neglecting responding to consumers gives out an unprofessional feeling of the interaction between a company and a consumer, Kananen argues (ibid.).

A report made by Stelzner (2016, 5), shows evidence of Facebook being the most important for marketers a sample of 5086 respondents, 55 % selected Facebook as their most important platform. On the contrary, many marketers are also unsure about their Facebook marketing. What is more, using videos has increased in popularity and 73% of marketers plan using videos in their marketing. Consequently, marketers should focus on using these platforms. However, Charlesworth (2014, 331) remarks how SMM strategies should be in sync with organization's wider strategies as well as being integrated communication strategies. He also points out social media marketing is not suitable to every brand. Nevertheless, participating on social media marketing takes a lot of work and before undertaking any commitment toward SMM strategies, organizations must evaluate their resources (ibid., 332).

Advantages of Social Media

Social Media channels can help brands deliver key brand messages to places where consumers are spending their time. These channels allow brands to conduct research

and receive feedback. They are also critical for brands to differentiate themselves and to understand the key issues making decisions in highly considered categories (Powell, Groves & Dimos 2011). Social Media is an important tool to gain corporate reputation. It enables companies to interact and participate with customers which in turn, creates greater involvement with and commitment to a company (D'Ascenzo et al., 164). Therefore, (D'Ascenzo et al., 164) propose there is a positive relationship between a firm's social media activity and corporate reputation. Coles (2015) states Social Media presents a huge audience which can be accessed even without a cost. It is a great communication tool where engaging with customers is easy and will lead to gaining more visibility on the web. A significant benefit is also the ability to receive real-time feedback (Coles, 2015, 5). This enables brands a chance to react and address any issues immediately (Bacon, 2011).

Organizations which derive value from its connection to its customers will be able to outperform those that do not (Earl & Waddington 2012). In Alhaddad's (2015, 73) theory, social media has changed the traditional communication between brands and consumers which has led to consumers being able to make both positive and negative impact on brand equity. Their study suggests that companies can create brand equity on social media by focusing on the creation of awareness advertising. To increase brand equity, companies should create various types of media content as people recall and recognize these posts better in addition to sharing them more likely (ibid., 80).

Social Media, according to Charlesworth (2014, 307) works as a powerful platform use the medium to encourage dissemination of a positive brand. Especially, for businesses operating in a market place where a customer retention is a challenge, Fill (2016, 292) states they should foster brand-based relationships through social media. Stelzner (2016, 17) reports two top benefits of using social media are increased exposure and increased traffic. He also remarks most marketers are using social media to increase brand loyalty and gain marketplace intelligence. In conclusion, social media is vital opportunity for organizations to be connected to customers, and thus, increase brand equity.

3 Methodology

This chapter examines the research methods used in this thesis. In general, there are two ways of conducting a research, qualitative and quantitative. The main research method chosen for this thesis is quantitative research. Valli (2015, 10) states that knowing the research method is significant for the author to be able to interpret and analyze the results in a correct and versatile manner. Consequently, the chosen research methods are explored in the next chapter.

Research method and Questions

The premise for conducting a quantitative research is that is that the phenomenon is known prior as opposed to qualitative research. Knowing the phenomena based on explaining theories enables forming detailed questions which will form data collection method or the survey (Kananen, 2014, 133). Quantitative research always begins by defining the research problem (ibid., 133). For this research, the problem was to determine reasons for online gamblers pick for a specific casino, examine brand loyalty toward online casinos and examine the effectiveness of various marketing strategies for online casinos. In Hair's, Bush's & Ortinau's (2012, 255) theory, quantitative research method is driven by researchers' desire to collect information enough members of the target population to incorporate inductive logic and probabilistic inferences as well as in understanding the relationships between desired market factors and phenomena under investigation. With this in mind, the research questions were formed;

- How much having a positive brand equity influences the buying decision?
- How can online casinos make increase their brand equity?
- Which online marketing strategies are most beneficial for online casinos?

Data Collection

Choosing online surveys as the main research method was self-evident as the target group for this research was active users of online gambling websites. However, according to Kananen (2013, 21), the fact that the target group has online accessibility doesn't guarantee their contribution toward the survey. Nevertheless,

the survey was posted on three different online casino forums; casinomeister.com, casinofoorumi.net and askgamblers.com in which, the author had created an account. All of them have active members who participate on the discussions forums regularly. In total, the survey gathered 75 answers, however, the number of answers varies between questions.

Saunders et al. (2009, 362) claim descriptive surveys enable to identify and the variability of different phenomena. Hair et al. (2012, 254) believe descriptive research is a suitable approach for researching specific characteristics of existing market phenomena or to evaluate current marketing mix strategies of a defined target population or market structure. In the light of this information, descriptive research design was implemented.

The survey was completely anonymous, which was also emphasized when posting the survey on discussion forums to work as an incentive. Kothari (2004, 101) writes there are either structured or unstructured surveys. Structured survey was implemented in this research as it has definite, concrete and pre-determined questions. Furthermore, structured surveys are simple to administer (ibid.101).

Implementation of the survey

In the beginning of the survey, there were two demographic questions that asked about the background information of the respondents. The questions aimed to discover the average age of the users as well as primary gender. Similarly, the survey continued with numerical data and next step aimed to find out how much the respondents consume money on online gambling, how many years they have been playing and how many online gambling websites do they use regularly. 6th question asked the names of the websites they use and to put them in an order from most used to least used. This question examines the popularity of certain casinos and is related to question number 18 which examines the popularity of slogans and whether there is a correlation between the most popular casinos and slogans that the users recognized. Survey in full, can be seen in Appendix 3, p. 55.

7th and 8th questions ask the reasons respondent chose these online casinos in the beginning and what factors made them stay playing at these casinos. Questions from 13 to 17 were matrix questions with identical response option on top. Respondents

were asked to indicate their agreement level of each item of the sections on the ten-point Likert-type scale. Final question of the survey was a supplementary qualitative question that asked the respondents to answer freely, but had an incentive to compose answers regarding the current/future state of online gambling.

Data Analysis

The survey was created using Webropol survey tool, which allows users to analyze both numerical and qualitative text answers. According to Sachdeva (2009, 1997), the main purpose of statistic is to accurately summary the data into easily interpretable fewer numbers. A key benefit of using Webropol was that it provides tools within the platform where you can form cross-tabulations and frequency distributors, which were used for analyzing data in this study. Frequency distributor was the most used tools for analyzing data between variables.

The study approached online casino users with variables, such as asking which factors affect their decisions in using online casinos and discovering the usage of average online gambler. The data was analyzing in a brand equity and marketing point of view. More precisely, factors that impact consumer's decision based on brand equity and marketing. Webropol provided graphs and tables which enabled to draw comparisons between different variables, which were helpful in forming the results.

Many of the questions were multiple-choice questions which had answers that measured different objects of the study. While most the questions were quantitative, the final question of the survey was an open-ended qualitative question. The qualitative question helped to assess the research problem more thoroughly and resulted in answers which proved to be essential in examining future research topics.

There was some missing data as some of the participants refused to answer certain questions. Nevertheless, only a small amount of data is missing from the results, thus, it was analyzed anyway. According to Stewart (2016, 55), if small amount of data is missing, it could be analyzed regardless.

4 Results

This chapter presents the main results of the research based on the survey. The answers are analyzed in different topics that are important regarding the research problem. The results in full can be found in the Appendix 4, p. 61.

User demographics

The total number of answers from the survey amounted to 75. Out of 75 answers, 89,33 % (n=68) of the respondents were male and 10,57 % (n=8) female. Out of 73 answers, age of the respondents varied between age 18-64 most common age being from 25 to 34 (34 respondents). When asked the amount of years as an online gambling user, it showed from 74 answers, 59,46 % (n=44) of the respondents have been using online casinos for more than 6 years while only 2,7 % (n=2) respondents were new users of online casinos meaning they have been playing for one year or less. 18,92% of the respondents have been active online gamblers for 4-5 years. Regarding the average amount of money spend in online gambling per month, majority of the respondents, 43,24 % (n=32) answered they spend between 100 to 300€ per month, 9,46 % (n=7) of the respondents spend less than 50 € and 13,51 % (n=10) spend 1000€ or more per month. In summary, the most typical online gambler is a 25 to 34-year-old male who spends 100 to 300 € on online gambling per month.

Measuring Brand Equity

Brand loyalty was measured by asking how many online gambling websites do you use regularly. Four (4) respondents stick to using only one online casinos, 28,38 % (n=21) say they use 2-3 casinos, 12,16 % (n=9) say they use 4-5 and the majority 54,05% (n=40) use five (5) or more online casinos. Correspondingly, which brands are the most used by the respondents was asked. Out of 67 answers, Videoslots gained the most popularity by having 34,33 percent (n=23) of the answers. 11 of them displayed it as their most used online casino. Second on the list is Casumo, which 29,89 percent (n=20) of the respondents choose as one of their favorite and 10 of them as their most used online casino. Betsson was used among 23,88 percent of the respondents and close to Betsson was Betsafe with 20,89 percent of the total

answers. Three (3) respondents chose Betsson as their most used online casino and four (4) chose Betsafe.

This question was followed by asking the factors why did they choose these online casinos in the beginning, allowing to answer as many choices as needed. However, only two of the choices represented brand equity, trust and reputation and loyalty programs. Out of 74 answers, trust and reputation gained the greatest share of answers by 83,78 % (n=62) of the respondents. Loyalty programs received 29,73 % (n=22) of the respondents' answers. The question had also the possibility to answer "other", which gained 12 answers in total. Five answers (5) were about fast payments and withdrawals. One respondent wrote that trustworthy people behind the casinos as well as good representatives at Casinomeister online forum were decisive factors.

In relation to the previous question, factors that made respondents continue using these online casinos was asked. This question gathered 74 answers in total. Three of the choices were related to brand equity. Firstly, loyalty programs, which was answered by 32,43 % (n=24) of the respondents. Secondly, trust and reputation, was answered by 63,51 % (n=47) of the respondents. Finally, sense of community, which gained the least amount of answers by 5,41 % (n=4) of the respondents ticking that answer. To answer "other" was also a possibility which received 13 answers in total. Fast payments and withdrawals was answered by 7 of the respondents.

A question regarding "how likely would it for you to switch your favorite online casino if an alternative casino was better" distributed the answers rather evenly between highly unlikely and very likely. For 24,66 % (n=18) respondents it would be very likely to switch to an alternative, however, answers 1,2 measuring unlikeliness gained 0 answers.

Brand awareness was measured by asking how likely would it be for the respondents to play in an online casino they have never heard of. The answers leaned more towards highly unlikely with a 3,92 average in a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 indicated highly unlikely and 10 highly likely. Out of 73 responses, 21,92 % (n=16) stated it would be highly unlikely to play in an unfamiliar online casino. Majority of the answers were evenly distributed between scale of 2-5, thus leading more toward

highly unlikely. Only 6,85 % responded it would be highly likely for them to play in an online casino they have never heard of.

Question number 18 measured the recognition of slogans. It asked if respondents can connect the given slogan with the correct brand. The casinos with the most recognized slogans are presented in the table below. Out of 38 respondents, 21,92 % (n=16) marked Unibet's slogan correctly, 39,47% (n=15) had recognized Betsafe's slogan and 23,68% (n=9) Betsson's.

There is a small correlation between the recognition of slogans and the most popular casinos. Betsafe, Betsson and Casumo were on top of both lists as can be seen from the page in the Appendices. However, Unibet which had the most recognizable slogan didn't gain popularity when asked which casinos the respondents use the most. On the contrary, Videoslots, which was the most used online casino among the respondents, didn't gain any recognition from its slogan.

Decisive factors and marketing strategies

When asked what factors made respondents choose the online casinos, mentioned in question number 6, in the beginning, out of 74 respondents, 43,24 % (n=32) answered advertisements/promotions. Similarly, when asked what made respondents stay playing at these casinos, the number who chose promotions as a decisive factor, rose significantly to 51,35 % (n=38). Another question asked whether marketing/special promotions increase the frequency of respondents' usage of online gambling. 23,61% answered strongly agree and only 1,39 % answered strongly disagree. Overall, the results indicate marketing/special promotions affect the frequency of online gambling.

In relation to previous question, the following question asked whether marketing/special promotions affect the respondents' choice of online casino. From this, it can be clearly observed that marketing/special promotions impact on consumers when they are choosing an online casino as the average was 6,55 leaning toward strongly agree. 21,92 % respondents feel that marketing/special promotions don't affect their choice of an online casino. Majority of the answers indicate marketing/special promotions has a positive effect on consumer's choice of online casino.

Impact of Search Engine Optimization for online casinos was measured by asking if respondents have used google to find new online casinos or information about them. Out of 74 responses, majority, 40,54 %(n=30) told they have used Google occasionally, 20,27 %(n=15) say they use it always and 20,27 % use it often. Only one (1) percent said they have used it once. In addition, question that asked decisive factors for choosing online casinos in the beginning had two answers displaying positive results toward the usage of SEO. User-friendly website was marked as a factor to choose an online casino by 25,68 % (n=19) of the respondents and mobile-friendliness 13,51 % (n= 10).

Affiliates seem to be fairly used among the sample as 32,88 % (n=24) out of 73 respondents say they use affiliates links often and 39,73 % (n=29) say they've used them a few times. 8 % said use affiliates always and 10 % said they've never registered to an online casino through an affiliate.

Out of 74 responses, large majority of respondents, 96 % (n=72) marked they receive emails from online casinos, closely followed by text messages which are received by 69 % (n=51) of the respondents. Only 17 % of the respondents receive social media updates from online casinos. Similarly, 17 % also receive phone calls. 5,41 % answered "other". To specify, 3 respondents said they receive snail mail and one said that the representatives are active in Casinomeisters' discussion boards.

A small correlation between using mobile-devices and social media updates can be seen. Question 17 asked whether online casinos' use of social media affect the respondents' choice of online casino. Majority answered 30,14 % (n=22) strongly disagree and 12,33 % (n=9) strongly agree. Average for this question was 6,14, thus leaning more towards strongly disagree. Regarding using playing with a mobile-device, 22,54% (n=16) couple times a week, 14,08(n=10) play once a week or once a month. 32,39% (n=23) preferred not to use a mobile-device at all.

Qualitative question

Final question of the survey was open-ended, where the respondents could answer freely, but there was an incentive to present their view on the current or future state of online gambling. It gathered answers from 28 respondents in total.

There was one specific common theme that arose from the answers. Many of the respondents said there are already far too many brands in the market and in the future, they believe that more online casinos will be closing or bought-out from by bigger rivals. "I think the number of operating brand will decrease drastically in the future" said one of the respondents. In general, the tone of the answers was rather negative as many criticized the terms and conditions casinos have for players to agree to play at these casinos. One of the respondents said: "Regulations and complex T&Cs are strangling the market." (T&C= Terms and Conditions). Few respondents said online casinos will be influenced by new technology such as virtual reality options.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to examine the value of brand equity for online casinos as well as what online marketing strategies are the most significant and the impact of marketing in general for the online casino industry. The survey didn't gain as much answers as needed to form accurate conclusions, however, they are sufficient to work as a guidance toward increased brand equity. One must also note, most of the online casino users might not use discussion boards, which led to the low amount of answers.

How much having a positive brand equity influences the buying decision?

The results indicate that when consumers are deciding which online casino to use, the impact of brand equity is invaluable. Consumer choose an online casino based on its trustworthiness, brand image and brand awareness. For online casinos to be successful, they need effective marketing strategies to gain brand equity to acquire customers. Bigger brands such as Unibet, Betsafe and Betsson gained more recognition for their slogans and were also among the most used online casinos.

How can online casinos make increase their brand equity?

Customers of online casinos tend to use multiple websites, so it is clear, there is room for more efficient loyalty programs, increased marketing efforts or any other improvements to enhance brand equity. Building trust and reputation are factors that cannot be overlooked. Online casinos should start to consider what are other competitors doing right and what they are missing. Additionally, they should focus more on their brand building by implementing marketing strategies which aim to increase their trust and reputation.

Biggest factors that affect consumers' decisions when choosing an online casino?

When choosing an online casino for the first time, consumers look for trust, promotions and reputation. Primarily, as they spend their money and are not guaranteed of winning, the brand image has an increased value in terms of where they want to spend their money. Customer service was one the main reason consumer express brand loyalty in addition to marketing/promotions and trust and

Which online marketing strategies are most beneficial for online casinos?

Emails and text messages seemed to be received by nearly every respondent of the survey. Social Media didn't gain as much popularity as expected, but the rather small sample size must be taken into consideration as well as the age of the respondents. Affiliate marketing is a strategy that has been proven to be effective and online casinos should continue or start implementing it if they already haven't. Online casino's websites should be search engine optimized, as the results indicate that a large majority of the respondents use google or other search platforms to find new online casinos or information about them. Overall, marketing and various promotions are huge factor that affects consumers' decision and usage of online casinos.

It seems many of the respondents switch from one casino to another by choosing a casino based on its promotions. Majority of the respondents stated they use more

than five online casinos and choose a casino based on its trust and reputation. To maintain a loyal customer base, it is crucial to have effective promotions and have marketing efforts that increase brand equity. Nonetheless, the impact of customer service and overall functionality of the casinos cannot be denied. Small things can have a large impact and as the results show, most of the respondents who answered the final question believe the number of online casinos will only increase in the future in the already is over-saturated market. Larger brands have the upper-hand in the industry as they have more resources and already extensive customer-base. Sense of community wasn't a popular choice among the respondents when asked reasons for playing at certain online casinos. This leaves room for development that could there be a more social platform where players can engage with each other as some online casinos have already headed to that direction.

Online casinos need to realize their business relies on loyal customers, therefore, customer advocacy should be on their priority list. The results didn't indicate much positive outcomes on the impact of social media, however, the theoretical framework illustrates its significance to brand equity. The lack of popularity in the results may, however, demonstrate the fact online casinos are not implementing their social media strategies sufficiently.

The results revealed majority of the respondents use multiple online casinos regularly. Online casinos could benefit from this information by trying to improve their loyalty programs and gather more loyal customers. As seen on page 41, emails were favored by nearly every respondent. Email marketing could be a strategy where online casinos could potentially, to differentiate from competitors and gain a competitive advantage.

Many of the casinos which gained popularity of the respondents are not the largest in terms of market value. This shows smaller online casinos can compete with bigger operators by being innovative and focusing on their customers. Main idea is to implement and or enhance online marketing strategies that will lead to increasing trustworthiness and reputation of the casino.

Limitations of the study

Conducting a survey on online discussion boards was quite difficult to implement. The survey didn't reach the amount of potential answers, as these discussion boards have hundreds of users. In hindsight, there could have been an incentive to gain something concrete from the survey, for example, a raffle between the respondents to win a prize. Additionally, the survey was only posted on discussion boards where the primary focus is on certain types of online gambling, whereas online casinos also include for example, sports related aspects, hence, the survey could have been distributed on sports or other gambling related forums. In general, people tend to be annoyed by surveys and feel they are waste of their time. One of respondents posted a message, displaying he/she was frustrated with one the questions as it has been on many similar surveys (how much money do you spend on online casinos per month). Online casinos send customer satisfaction surveys from time to time so it could be one reason for the scarce sample size.

Regarding the survey, some of the questions could have been removed or adjusted. When asked what kind of updates do you receive from online casinos, the social media updates should have been edited to "do you follow online casinos on social media" to avoid any obscurities. Some of the questions were not answered, which leads to suspicion whether they were too complicated. For example, question number 5 had 74 answers whereas the following question (6) had 67 answers. In question number 6, the idea was to the respondents to display their most use(d) online casinos. Another similar occurrence can be noticed from question eighteen (18) where respondents were asked to connect the slogans with the right brand. Only 38 respondents left an answer to it from which arises a question "Did the rest of the respondents even bother to try answering it.?" Question that should have been added is "Have you had a negative experience with an online casino, if so, did you continue to use that specific casino?" Furthermore, some of the questions might had required too much thinking which also resulted in decreased amount of answers. In general, the survey wasn't perfect but one must consider the fact the author was inexperienced and conducting a quantitative survey for the first time.

In general, the online gambling industry is such a diverse industry and there is always a moral dilemma behind it regarding gambling problems, which can be quite severe.

(Disclaimer; the author of this thesis encourages to responsible gambling, and if in a case of gambling addiction, help should be sought. Also, there are always legal aspects that need to be taken into consideration in marketing actions of online casinos. Furthermore, brand equity and online marketing are comprehensive subjects and this thesis couldn't consider all dimensions of them.

Conclusion and Future Suggestions

Online gambling has become a massive industry during the 21st century. The industry is constantly growing and technological development as well as increasing number of internet users have played a significant role of why largest operators have over billion euros of market value. Various trends will shape the industry in upcoming years, and to succeed, online casinos must keep up and maintain or increase their brand equity. The literature review provides essential and useful content for online casinos to do so.

As there is a vast number of online casinos, consumers have too many choices to choose from. Increasing brand equity enables to online casinos to draw and maintain customers. Marketing has a huge impact as a decisive factor when consumers choose an online casino to play in. It may be obvious; however, some casinos are still more popular than others which evokes questions whether online casinos are doing efficient enough online marketing. Based on the results, online casinos that will focus on developing their loyalty programs, promotions and customer-service will have bigger chances of succeeding in the competitive market place.

In the future, online casinos need to keep up with the latest trends in the industry as well as online marketing trends. The demand for brand equity will only keep increasing and thus, the value of how the online marketing strategies are used will rise.

As the usage of mobile-devices will increase in the future, the possibilities increase for online casinos. Currently, Videoslots, who claims to be the world's most popular online casino, has only slightly over 4000 likes on Facebook. Potential research could be conducted on why the social media accounts of online casinos are not so popular. Email marketing is highly used among online casinos and it could be researched more thoroughly. For instance, what are the reasons for customers unsubscribing them or

what do they prefer. The survey was shared on websites with heavy-users, hence, in the future the gaming habits of more average consumer could be researched as well. In Finland, there are two major gambling operators, Ray and Veikkaus, which also are the most popular. These operators may not be the best in terms of customer experience and enables opportunities for researching if the average consumer would be willing to use different online casinos.

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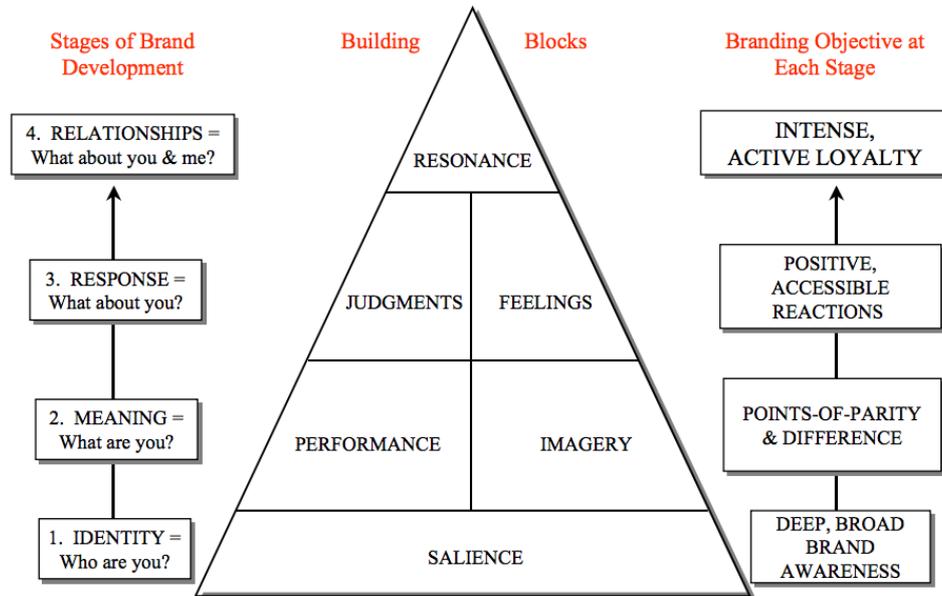
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Appendices

Appendix 1. Customer-based brand equity model



Appendix 2. Relevant metrics for social media applications. Taken and modified from (Hoffman & Fodor, Can You Measure the ROI of Your Social Media Marketing?, 2010).

Social media application	Brand Awareness	Brand Engagement	Word of Mouth
Blogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -number of unique visits - number of return visits - number of times bookmarked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - number of members number of RSS feed subscribers -number of comments - amount of user-generated content -average length of time on site - number responses to polls, contests, surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of references to blog in other media (online/offline) - number of reblogs - number of times badge displayed on other sites - number of likes
Microblogging (e.g. twitter)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -number of tweets about the brand -valence of tweets +/- -number of followers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -number of followers -number of @replies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -number of retweets
Forum and Discussion boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of page views -number of visits -valence of posted content +/- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -number of relevant topics/threads -number of individual replies -number of sign-ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -incoming links -citations in other sites -tagging in social bookmarking -offline references to the forum or its members -number of "likes"
Product reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -number of reviews posted -valence of reviews -number and valence of other users' responses to reviews (+/-) -number of wish list adds -number of times product included in users' lists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -length of reviews -relevance of reviews -overall number of reviewer rating scores entered -average reviewer rating score 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -number of reviews posted -valence of reviews -number of valence of other users' response to reviews (+/-) -number of visits to review site page

Social Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -number of members/fans -number of installs of applications -number of impressions -number of bookmarks- number of reviews/ratings and valence +/- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -number of comments -number of active users number of “likes” on friends’ feeds -number of user-generated items -usage of metrics of applications/widgets -impressions-to-interactions ratio -rate of activity (how often members personalize profiles, bios, links, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -frequency of appearances in timeline of friends -number of posts on wall -number of reposts/shares -number of responses to friend referral invites
Videos and Photo sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -number of views of video/photo -valence of video/photo rating +/- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -number of replies -number of page views -number of comments -number of subscribers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -number of embedding’s -number of incoming links -number of references in mock-ups or derived work -number of times republished in other social media and offline -number of “likes”

Appendix 3. Structure of the survey

1. Are you a male or female? *

- Male
- Female

2. What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75 or more

3. For how many years have you been an active online gambler?

- 1 or less
- 2-3
- 4-5
- 5-6
- 6 or more

4. Currently, how many online gambling websites do you use regularly (make deposits, play or make withdrawals)?

- 1
- 2-3
- 4-5
- 5 or more

5. On average, how much money do you spend on online gambling per month?

- less than 50
- 50-100
- 100-300
- 400-500
- 600-1000
- 1000 or more

6. What online gambling websites do you use regularly? Name most used first, second most used second etc. If you use only one, name that one.

7. What factors made you choose these online casinos in the beginning?

- Trust and Reputation
- Loyalty Programs
- Advertisements/Promotions
- User-friendly website
- Mobile-friendly
- Name of the casino

Other? (specify)

8. What made you stay playing at these online casinos?

- Loyalty Programs
- Customer Service
- Sense of Community
- Promotions
- Trust and Reputation

Other (specify)

9. What kind of updates do you receive from these online casinos? (tick all that apply)

- Emails
- Phone calls
- Text messages
- Social Media Updates

Other (specify)

10. I've used google (or other search platforms) to find new online casinos or information about them

- Always
- Often
- Occasionally
- Maybe once
- Never

11. I've registered to an online casino through an affiliate

- Always
- Often
- A few times

16. Marketing/Special Promotions affect my choice of online casino

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly disagree ○○○○○○○○○○ Strongly agree

17. Online casinos' use of social media affects my choice of online casino

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly agree ○○○○○○○○○○ Strongly disagree

18. Can you connect these slogan with the right brand? (If you can't, leave them blank)

In it to win it

By Players, For Players

Anytime's playtime

The World's Happiest Casino

A Real Casino Online

Why Wait?

Real Rewards

The Amazing Journey

Your Game

Our Games Pay More

19. Stage is yours. For example, what do you think about the future or current state of online gambling? (You can also leave this question empty)

Appendix 4. Answers of the survey

1. Are you a male or female?

Number of respondents: 75

	N	Percent
Male	67	89,33%
Female	8	10,67%

Average
1,11

2. What is your age?

Number of respondents: 73

	N	Percent
18-24	10	13,7%
25-34	34	46,58%
35-44	20	27,4%
45-54	8	10,96%
55-64	1	1,37%
65-74	0	0%
75 or more	0	0%

Average
2,4

3. For how many years have you been an active online gambler?

Number of respondents: 74

	N	Percent
1 or less	2	2,7%
2-3	10	13,51%
4-5	14	18,92%
5-6	4	5,41%
6 or more	44	59,46%

Average
4,05

4. Currently, how many online gambling websites do you use regularly (make deposits, play or make withdrawals)?

Number of respondents: 74

	N	Percent
1	4	5,41%
2-3	21	28,38%
4-5	9	12,16%
5 or more	40	54,05%

Average
3,15

5. On average, how much money do you spend on online gambling per month?

Number of respondents: 74

	N	Percent
less than 50	7	9,46%
50-100	4	5,41%
100-300	32	43,24%
400-500	11	14,86%
600-1000	10	13,51%
1000 or more	10	13,51%

Average
3,58

6. What online gambling websites do you use regularly? Name most used first, second most used second etc. If you use only one, name that one.

Number of respondents: 67

Responses
Unibet, Veikkaus, Nordicbet, Expekt
Vera & John, Video Slots, Guts
casumo video slots rizk 32 red leo vegas william hill ikibu
Videoslots. Rizk, royal panda, skyvegas, guts, leovegas, 32red, casinoeuro.
Videoslots
nordicbet, paf, its very difficult put line casinos, because i only look good promo bonuses. But i think is over twenty casinos what i use these days regularly.
Stugan, Folke, suomikassu, mobilbet, paf, video, heroes, guts, chanz, cashmio, casumo, thrills, lenny, next, suomiautomaatti, leo,
Casumo Leovegas MrGreen LVBet Chanz Betsson brands 32Red
Veikkaus Pinnacle
Nordicbet, Betsson, Voodoo dreams, Cherry Casino, Olybet, One Casino, Videoslots, Unibet, Vera & John, Superlenny, PAF, Thrills, Leo Vegas, ...
chanz coolbet gala casino
casumo, videoslots, betsafe, leovegas
Redbet, Fly, Casinoluck
casumo, paf, betsson, casinoheroes
I mainly play on Casumo. Secondly I play on QuasarGaming
Too many, can't answer. Everymatrix, Unibet, IGaming Cloud based sites mostly
Paf.com, suomikasino.com, kolikkopelit.com
fintoto, betsson, nordicbet, guts.....
Guts, Paf, Rizk

Responses
videoslots, comeon
Casumo.com Guts.com Betsson.com Nordicbet.com
Leovegas Mr Green 32Red Vera & John Nordicbet Unibet Betsson PokerStars
Videoslots, guts, betsafe, rizk, betspin, paf
Casumo Leovegas Vera&John Betsson Nordicbet Betsafe
Videoslots, leovegas, casinoluck, vera&john, 24hbet
guts leovegas cherrycasino rizk paf casumo
vera + john videoslots casino heroes casino euro betsafe
Leovegas Betsson Videoslots Betsafe
Rizk, Suomikasino, Kolikkopelit
EnergyCasino, Vera&John, SlotsMillion, Betsafe, NordicBet, Betsson, Casinoeuro, 32Red
Chanz, Coolbet, Paf ja monia luotettavaksi selvitettyjä ensitalletus bonusten perässä.
William Hill Sky Vegas
betsafe, videoslots, leo vegas, betsson, casumo, slot millions
Uptown Aces Sloto Cash Bitstarz Casino Extreme VegasCasino.io
Pokerstars, Videoslots, Trada
Betsafe, Dunder, Wunderino, Guts
Videoslots Verajohn Rizk 32red Sky Vegas Mr Green
Videoslots Next Luck Extreme Ladbrokes Sky V&J Betsafe Betspin Jackpot Capital Bet365 The list goes on and on!
Videoslots, bet365, guts, buzzpoker, rodeopoker
Videoslots
Coolbet Quasar Casinoheroes
Videoslots Guts 32Red Verajohn Thrills Rizk
Videoslots Vera & John Intercasino 21Prive TradaCasino Royal Panda Slotocash
Rizk.com Tradacasino.com Verajohn.com Casumo.com Royalpanda.com Guts.com Betat.ie Unibet.com Ladbrokes.ie
veikkaus.fi ray.fi unibet.com
Rizk.com
Videoslots Casumo Grande Vegas
casumo energy casino bellfruitcasino
Videoslots Guts Suomivegas
Vera&John, Supergaminator
Videoslots Guts Rizk Vera and John Betsafe Betsson Nordicbet Kaboo Cherrycasino Paf Chanz Kalevalakasino Leovegas Voodooreams

7. What factors made you choose these online casinos in the beginning?

Number of respondents: 74 , selected answers: 159

	N	Percent
Trust and Reputation	62	83,78%
Loyalty Programs	22	29,73%
Advertisements/Promotions	32	43,24%
User-friendly website	19	25,68%
Mobile-friendly	10	13,51%
Name of the casino	2	2,7%
Other? (specify)	12	16,22%

Average
2,67

Answers given into free text field

Option names	Text
Other? (specify)	Profilli margin
Other? (specify)	they have games i like
Other? (specify)	Fast cashouts and good promotions
Other? (specify)	Withdraw Times
Other? (specify)	convenience
Other? (specify)	WR on slots (low)
Other? (specify)	Trustworthy people behind them, good reps at Casinomeister
Other? (specify)	Speedy payouts
Other? (specify)	one of my wasteman friend got me into unibet...
Other? (specify)	Fast payments
Other? (specify)	Fast withdrawals
Other? (specify)	Welcome bonus

8. What made you stay playing at these online casinos?

Number of respondents: 74 , selected answers: 148

	N	Percent
Loyalty Programs	24	32,43%
Customer Service	22	29,73%
Sense of Community	4	5,41%
Promotions	38	51,35%
Trust and Reputation	47	63,51%
Other (specify)	13	17,57%

Average
3,68

Answers given into free text field

Option names	Text
Other (specify)	Continuous profit from bonuses
Other (specify)	speed of withdrawals
Other (specify)	Convenience
Other (specify)	Withdraw Times
Other (specify)	fast withdrawals
Other (specify)	The games they have (Slots)
Other (specify)	Quick withdrawal s
Other (specify)	addiction
Other (specify)	fast payments
Other (specify)	range of games
Other (specify)	fast withdrawals
Other (specify)	Reload bonuses
Other (specify)	Fast withdrawals!

9. What kind of updates do you receive from these online casinos? (tick all that apply)

Number of respondents: 74 , selected answers: 153

	N	Percent
Emails	72	97,3%
Phone calls	13	17,57%
Text messages	51	68,92%
Social Media Updates	13	17,57%
Other (specify)	4	5,41%

Average
2,11

Answers given into free text field

Option names	Text
Other (specify)	Reps are present and active in casinomeister
Other (specify)	snail mail
Other (specify)	Letter
Other (specify)	snail mail

10. I've used google (or other search platforms) to find new online casinos or information about them

Number of respondents: 74

	N	Percent
Always	15	20,27%
Often	15	20,27%
Occasionally	30	40,54%
Maybe once	8	10,81%
Never	6	8,11%

Average

2,66

11. I've registered to an online casino through an affiliate

Number of respondents: 73

	N	Percent
Always	6	8,22%
Often	24	32,88%
A few times	29	39,73%
Once	6	8,22%
Never	8	10,96%

Average

2,81

12. How often do you play with your mobile device?

Number of respondents: 71

	N	Percent
Couple times a week	16	22,54%
Once a week	10	14,08%
Once a month	10	14,08%
Couple times a year	12	16,9%
Not at all	23	32,39%

Average

3,23

13. How likely would it be for you to switch your favourite online casino if an alternative brand was better? Rate on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is highly unlikely 10 very likely)

Number of respondents: 73

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		Total	Average
Highly unlikely	0	0	3	3	9	8	9	13	10	18	Very likely	73	7,55
	0%	0%	4,11%	4,11%	12,33%	10,96%	12,33%	17,81%	13,7%	24,66%			
Total	0	0	3	3	9	8	9	13	10	18		73	7,55

14. How likely would it be for you to play in an online casino you have never heard of?(Rate on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is highly unlikely 10 very likely)

Number of respondents: 73

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		Total	Average
Highly unlikely	16	9	13	8	12	3	4	2	1	5	Very likely	73	3,92
	21,92%	12,33%	17,81%	10,96%	16,44%	4,11%	5,48%	2,74%	1,37%	6,85%			
Total	16	9	13	8	12	3	4	2	1	5		73	3,92

15. Marketing/Special promotions increase the frequency in which I gamble online (Rate on scale 1 to 10 where 1 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree)

Number of respondents: 72

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		Total	Average
Strongly disagree	1	5	4	5	9	10	7	10	4	17	Strongly agree	72	6,71
	1,39%	6,94%	5,56%	6,94%	12,5%	13,89%	9,72%	13,89%	5,56%	23,61%			
Total	1	5	4	5	9	10	7	10	4	17		72	6,71

16. Marketing/Special Promotions affect my choice of online casino

Number of respondents: 73

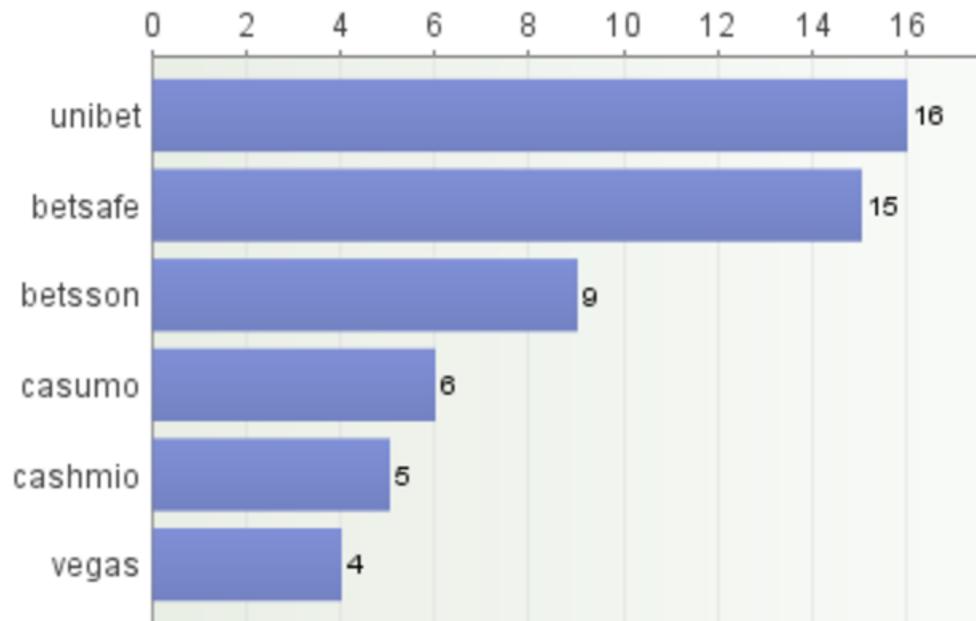
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		Total	Average
Strongly disagree	2	3	7	4	9	9	11	7	9	12	Strongly agree	73	6,55
	2,74%	4,11%	9,59%	5,48%	12,33%	12,33%	15,07%	9,59%	12,33%	16,44%			
Total	2	3	7	4	9	9	11	7	9	12		73	6,55

17. Online casinos' use of social media affects my choice of online casino

Number of respondents: 73

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		Total	Average
Strongly agree	9	6	6	4	8	6	2	7	3	22	Strongly disagree	73	6,14
	12,33%	8,22%	8,22%	5,48%	10,96%	8,22%	2,74%	9,59%	4,11%	30,14%			
Total	9	6	6	4	8	6	2	7	3	22		73	6,14

18. Can you connect these slogan with the right brand? (If you can't, leave them blank)



19. Stage is yours. For example, what do you think about the future or current state of online gambling? (You can also leave this question empty)

Number of respondents: 28

Responses
Gambling has been "trendy" in Finland for the past few years. This has been caused by few celebrities who often post their tips online from websites they are affiliated with and often brag if they have won big. These people are admired by youth and I believe it might cause gambling problems for younger players who might not understand the dangers of gambling addiction.
It's reasonably good from my perspective (being a Dutch player). The number of fast paying casinos may grow in the future, and improved technology (VR) is but a few years away to enhance players' experience.
Online gaming in the UK is only going to get stronger as the smoking ban and <u>fobts</u> are killing the bookies, arcades and casino's
Too many casino's vying to get a slice of the pie without having the customer as their priority. Too many <u>casino's</u> with way too many sister sites. If <u>your</u> looking for new models as an indication of how new casino's will thrive then look at Videoslots and what they <u>have to offer</u> . <u>Rizk</u> are good too alongside Royal panda.
Good luck with your studies. Col
monopoly in <u>finland</u> should be demolished
<u>Its</u> a good way to make money, <u>If</u> you know how to use bonuses properly. Other than that, casinos suck.

Hoping it will be legalized across the <u>globe:D</u>
it <u>get's</u> bigger and bigger all the time
I will do this <u>as long as</u> it is profitable.
Licensing is crap and will fasten down spiral. I sit now on the ferry from Estonia and <u>can not</u> get to my casino's because those <u>havo</u> license in Estonia. <u>Finlands</u> monopoly for RAY is good because <u>wild internet..</u>
<p>Campaigns and promotional offers have gone worse Year by Year. Been gambling and bonus <u>whoaring</u> soon twenty Years; could say all the time when internet casinos have been around.</p> <p>In the <u>future</u> I see only tightening terms and worsening terms for players. Also big ones will be even bigger by buying out small fish and then launching white <u>skins..</u> all with even reduced terms seen by the player.</p>
Too many rogue casinos out there therefore, screening a casino first is mandatory.
I think online gambling is growing more day after day, so I think more people will play online than land based casinos, also because they are more variety of games and because of comfort of playing from home.
Casinos need to stop using crappy terms and get with the modern day!
<p>I am working within the iGaming industry, on one of the bigger companies based in Malta. The industry is just growing more and more, and I think the future is very bright for the companies.</p> <p>However, I think the industry is <u>pretty ugly</u> in some ways. I see everyday customers showing problematic gambling signs, and it is not being dealt with. It is all about the money, and it is <u>kinda</u> sad from a public health point of view.</p>

Oversaturated currently. I think the number of operating brands will <u>decrease</u> drastically in the future.
Many <u>many</u> casinos will die this year.
It is going to be more and more social, <u>vr</u> , <u>3d</u> etc-
Never make happy, but still <u>i</u> play them.
The market has become saturated with sites that are clones of one another and it is destroying the experience.
too many stalling techniques used by casinos if you have a withdrawal, that why I stick with just a few trusted casinos. As for the <u>future</u> I think that eventually they will be closed online in certain countries when governments realize the amount of money leaving a county
I think its headed down the shifter for <u>usa</u> folks, <u>however</u> places like <u>bitstarz</u> is a great option as they protect against over betting when using a bonus.
hopefully better <u>regulation</u> and taxation as gambling is a massive cost to society (negative externals)
The future is obviously multi-platform sites that offer fast payouts
There are FAR, FAR, FAR too many different online casinos (estimated to be over 5,000) with new ones opening all the time. This is totally ridiculous - too many for the number of players. In the <u>future</u> I see more casinos crashing & closing down, or getting bought-out by richer competitors. Regulations and complex T&Cs are strangling the market.
Online gambling is <u>canada</u> is dying. Banks refuse <u>wiretransfers</u> . Legal casinos <u>runned</u> by <u>gouvernement</u> are shit. I stopped a month ago and won't ever play again. It was fun while it lasted. Not <u>netent</u> ? No <u>wiretransfers</u> ? No liberty? Fuck it <u>im</u> done
I think it will get more innovative with 3D slots <u>and also</u> the market will be more saturated with all the casino's <u>popping up</u> online.
Too many casinos under each operator and very heavy marketing on late night TV. Gambling authorities need to clamp down on rogue outfits who confiscate winnings, slow pay, etc. Too many rogue T&C's to benefit the casino. If the casino accepts the bet, they need to pay out on it if it wins.
Too much providers makes competition too hard. So many new casino's will be bought by bigger ones. More scamming casino's will be online. First real virtual casino will be released.