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SCIENCES

Underdog Branding – Developing Your Bark;  
Creating Future Scenarios as an Underdog: Case Aludra

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## ABSTRACT

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The case company in this research is Aludra which is a one-man venture from Tornio, Finland that operates in the media information business field. The objective of this exploratory research is to provide Aludra with suggestions for ways of improving itself through the lesser known concept of Underdog branding. This research is a qualitative single case study.

Two interviews, one for finding out the current state of the case company and one for receiving information about the future visions of the CEO Jarno Linnell were conducted. From these interviews we created a SWOT analysis and two business model canvases. The analysis and business model canvases provided the key drivers that enable Aludra to grow as a business. In order to provide Aludra with practical ideas, three future scenarios were constructed from the underdog branding point of view.

From the scenarios built, we found out that Aludra has the opportunity to use Underdog branding to its advantage. The best possible Underdog service they offer at present is Copter Cam, a remote controllable helicopter mounted with a video camera. The possibilities for future research are evident. Future scenario planning process can be repeated as well as the SWOT analysis. Furthermore, there is a demand for a competitor analysis to be conducted.

Key words: underdog, branding, scenario planning, business model canvas, Aludra

## CONTENTS

### ABSTRACT

1 INTRODUCTION .....	5
1.1 Case Company Introduction.....	5
1.2 Topic introduction.....	5
1.3 Motivation of the research .....	7
1.4 Research questions .....	7
1.5 Structure of the research.....	8
2 METHODOLOGY.....	10
2.1 Research methods and objectives.....	10
2.2 Data collection and analysis.....	11
2.3 Limitations of the research.....	12
3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND .....	13
3.1 Underdog Branding.....	13
3.2 Business Model Canvas .....	13
3.3 SWOT analysis .....	16
3.4 Scenario planning.....	16
3.5 Scenarios as an Underdog .....	18
4 CASE STUDY .....	19
4.1 Interview 1 .....	19
4.2 Current Business Model Canvas .....	19
4.3 SWOT- Analysis .....	22
4.4 Interview 2 .....	23
4.5 Future Business Model.....	23
4.6 Future Scenarios.....	25
4.6.1 Future of the business field.....	26
4.6.2 Future Scenario 1 - One client is enough.....	27
4.6.3 Future Scenario 2 - Photography as a main service.....	27
4.6.4 Future Scenario 3 - The unique Copter Cam .....	29

5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION.....	31
5.1 Most favorable scenarios.....	31
5.2 Possibilities for future development .....	33
REFERENCES.....	34
APPENDICES 1-3	

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The case company is introduced first. In addition, the core-concept of Underdog branding is discussed. The motivations behind our research, research questions and the structure of the research are also explained in detail.

### 1.1 Case Company Introduction

Our case company is a Tornio based one-man venture, Aludra. It was established in 2009 by Mr. Jarno Linnell. Among the wide variety media services Aludra offers are presentation materials, including videos and PowerPoint presentations, photography and brochures. Aludra has mainly been operating in the Kemi-Tornio area, but has also been involved in a variety of projects in the Nordic countries.

Aludra differentiates itself among the other actors in its field due to their aerial video service called Copter Cam. In addition to the quality of the service that sets them apart from the competition, mainly the price policy is the core factor in making the case company unique in its field. Making a professional aerial video would normally require a team of multiple people, a helicopter, a pilot, tons of gasoline and a large amount of money. However, Aludra can achieve a fairly reasonable price tag for their services by shooting the aerial videos with a remote-control helicopter and a two-man team. The remote-control helicopter can also navigate through challenging environments and execute tricky maneuvers that would not be possible with a normal sized helicopter.

### 1.2 Topic introduction

In underdog branding, a company willingly and deliberately announces itself as an underdog in order to attract attention from the public. The goal is to eventually move towards loyalty in the customer base, meaning that the people would identify themselves with the brand.

“Everyone loves a scrappy underdog” (Avery, Keinan and Paharia 2010). It is intriguing to see an underdog rise from the shadows and challenge the bigger rivals. These David vs. Goliath, big vs. small, good vs. evil, type of settings can be found in our everyday life. They can be seen in sports, politics and business world of today. For example, during the presidential campaign of 2008 in the United States, almost all of the runners identified themselves as underdogs. It is an interesting notion, since the expected outcome for underdogs is often to lose.

An important question to find answers to is what possible reason would companies have to identify themselves as the underdog? We believe that the main reason is to stand out from the crowd and attract customers to choose them over a bigger company. With the help of underdog branding companies can create a feeling of sympathy in potential customers. The mindset of the potential customers will change into actually wanting to support the underdog business, rather than buying from those who sell for the cheapest price. This will result in loyalty within the customer base which is a key for a successful business.

We believe that the main reason people prefer the underdogs, derives from the feeling of belonging experienced when rooting for them. It is more satisfying to identify oneself with a weaker party, rather than joining the already strong one. The ultimate satisfaction can be received if and when the underdog rises atop and beats the favorite. In their article *The Underdog Effect: The Marketing of Disadvantage and Determination through Brand Biography*, Avery, Keinan and Paharia (2010) describe the appeal of underdog brand biographies as follows: “The underdog brand biography is powerful because it appeals to consumers’ identity needs. Consumers react positively when they see the underdog aspects of their own lives reflected in branded products.” Furthermore, a company's underdog position can be made use of, not only in brand biographies, but also in their marketing.

Aludra, being a small business, has many bigger rivals in the Finnish market. At the moment, Aludra does not identify itself as an underdog (Linnell 2012). However, according to five characteristics of underdogs described in the book *Underdog Advertising: Proven principles to compete and win against the giants in any industry* by Bjerre, Heding and Knudtzen (2009, 2-8), Aludra has the ability to refer to itself as an underdog. The five characteristics are as follows:

1. Competition enjoys higher sales.
2. Competition spends more money on advertising.
3. Product awareness is low.
4. Clout lacking in marketplace.
5. Budget constraints handcuff the company.

These characteristics are all relevant for Aludra due to the company's low sales, product awareness, budgets and the lack of clout in marketplace. At the moment, the company has a non-existent budget for advertising.

### 1.3 Motivation of the research

Underdog Branding is a relatively new concept that has not been widely researched. There are some general publications that can be found, but there is an evident lack of applied works written. We feel that by using Aludra as our case company and making our findings feasible through them, we can help not only Aludra, but other underdogs as well. In addition to the personal interest on the subject, our case company also expressed that they would be interested to see how they could improve themselves through the underdog branding.

### 1.4 Research questions

The aim of our research is to provide Aludra with ways of developing itself through underdog branding. In order to start the process we used business model canvas to identify the key drivers and characteristics of Aludra. The business model canvas is explained in the data collection and analysis chapter. Finally, we compiled a series of possible future scenarios for Aludra by using the future scenario planning tool. Scenario planning will help Aludra to foresee future outcomes and prepare for them. It creates action plans that can be utilized if certain events take place.

The main research question with two supporting sub-questions has been identified to help us reach our aim. The main question of our research is the following:

How can Aludra develop itself by using Underdog branding?

The two sub-questions compiled are as follows:

What are key drivers that enable Aludra to grow?

What are future scenarios for Aludra as an Underdog?

To answer the main research question, we will first define and explain the concept of underdog branding and then narrow it down in a relevant way for the purposes of our case company. The key drivers we searched for in the first sub-research question could also be called factors. We try to find the aspects that influence Aludra in its everyday operations. These can come, not only, from the inside of the company, but also from outside sources. These factors help us compile the future scenarios for Aludra. The second sub-research question describes the future scenarios that we can foresee for the company.

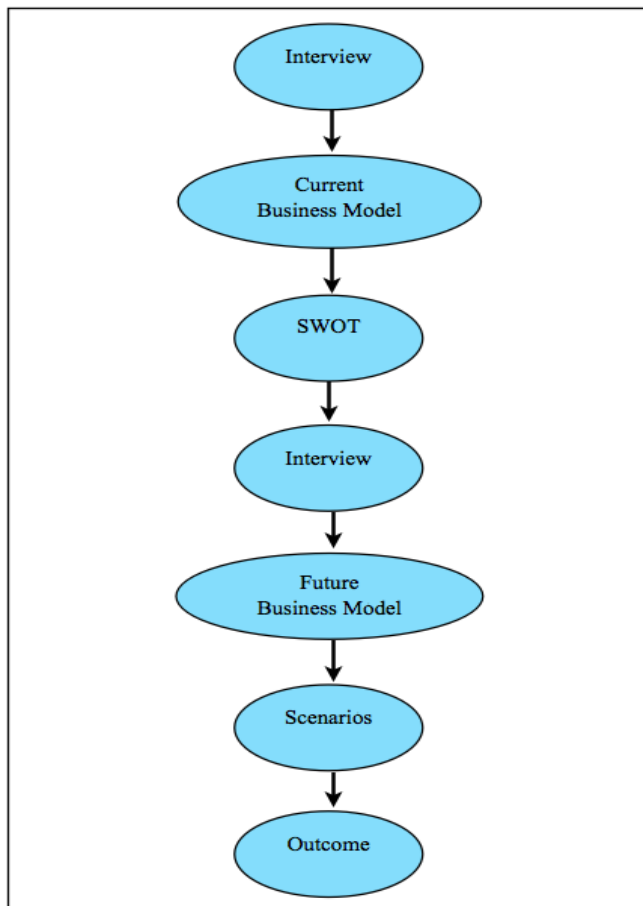
### 1.5 Structure of the research

This research is divided into five chapters. The first chapter of this research contains the discussion of the case company and topic descriptions, as well as the background of the research. The second chapter describes the methodology used in the research. It provides an account of the process of our research. Within it we explain the data collection process, research methods used and the limitations of the research. The third chapter describes the theory segment of our research work. In it, we describe the different techniques used such as business model canvas and future scenario planning including the discussion of the conceptualization of these techniques.

The actual case study research starts with the description of the first interview conducted and the current business model canvas. Following the completion of the first business model canvas, we analyze the findings with a SWOT analysis. Our research

continues with the description of the second interview and the future business model canvas. With the help of these business model canvases we identify the two important drivers of Aludra and created the four possible future scenarios for Aludra as an underdog.

Finally, we complete our thesis with the conclusion and discussion of the research. To further explain our research process, we created Figure 1 to illustrate it.



**Figure 1.** Research process

The process of the research work in step-by-step form.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

The research methodology and methods used and their relevance concerning our research objectives are discussed in this chapter. The research process is explained in detail with an addition of the discussion of our data analysis.

### 2.1 Research methods and objectives

This exploratory research was conducted in Tornio, Finland during the years 2011 and 2012. The objective of this research was to provide Aludra with ways of improving itself through the lesser known concept of Underdog branding. As we have only one case company to deal with in our research, we chose qualitative single case study research as our research method. Furthermore, the case study method was used for its applicability in business researches. "As a research strategy, the case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena." (Yin 2009, 1)

Our research is written in an inductive form. In other words, we focus on the case company in the beginning of the research and gradually move to the general level. By connecting a case company to our research, we have created a link between the theoretical information and practice.

The research techniques used include interviews, i.e. two face-to-face interviews with the CEO of the case company Mr. Jarno Linnell and observations conducted personally during the years 2011 - 2012 in Tornio, Finland. These observations include witnessing the remote controllable copter in action and participating in video editing process. The reason for interviewing Mr. Linnell was to gain insights into how the company is run and to find out how his visions and ideas compare against our findings. In addition, Mr. Linnell is the only person actively working in the company during the time of conducting this research. The interviews conducted with the CEO Mr. Linnell and the literature reviews give us a base to compare and analyze our findings against the vision of the company. The interviews were conducted in Finnish and then transcripts of the interviews were translated into English.

The literature research was conducted throughout the year 2011. The uniqueness of this research impacted on the choices of source materials in a sense that there were very few books to be found on the subject. We did, however, find articles and other compact publications which we studied intensively.

The researchers Carita Rahko and Jarkko Kyllönen were the main participants in this research. The supervisor of the research was Mr. Hans Zwaga from the Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences. This research has been written in a narrative style introduced by Czarniawska (1998). The narrative style developed by Czarniawska makes the research more accessible for the reader. Furthermore, the narrative aspect used in this research helps with conveying, not only the theory, but the personal views of the participants. It helps this case study research to become more tangible.

## 2.2 Data collection and analysis

The empirical data collection was done via interviews. The first interview with the CEO of Aludra was conducted on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2012. In this interview, we focused on general issues concerning the business and their current situation. In addition, we looked at the competitor situation and how the CEO of the case company sees the future prospects. The 2<sup>nd</sup> interview was conducted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2012. In this session we discussed the long-term future plans of the company.

The main data analysis tool used is the business model canvas that was introduced by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010). It is an effective managerial tool for developing a company's current and future business models. The tool itself is a visual chart that is divided into nine different "blocks" describing the different aspects of the business concerned. These aspects are the firm's value proposition, infrastructure, customers and finances. In addition to the business model canvas, a SWOT analysis is used to analyze the company's current situation.

### 2.3 Limitations of the research

We wanted to make our findings applicable, not only for Aludra, but for other underdogs as well. The generalization of the research was difficult to conduct since we only dealt with one company. Furthermore, the two interviews that were conducted with the CEO of the company might not be enough to draw general conclusions from. The time spent observing the company might be too short. However, to compensate the lack of time, we prepared very well for the interviews to collect the data that was needed to complete a proper research work.

### 3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

#### 3.1 Underdog Branding

Underdog branding is a relatively new marketing approach that is quickly developing into a new trend. There has always been a need for innovative marketing strategies that would differentiate a company from the masses. A good story of a company starting out and tackling almost impossible challenges is definitely going to raise some eyebrows. The setting of a David vs. Goliath, good vs. evil, small vs. big, can be seen, not only in movies, but in today's business life as well. Many large companies still emphasize their roots and how they once were underdogs. It makes people see them in a different light. No more are they one of the big and evil corporations, but a nice and trustworthy company. One of the most well known examples of effectively using underdog branding could be Apple Computers Inc. They have repeatedly reminded the public of their battle against the bigger companies such as Microsoft, and how they overcame the odds and became market leaders.

Underdog branding is done by focusing on the fact that one company is against big companies that have more power and influence than that one company. A company makes this point clear to the potential customers in marketing and the actions chosen. Furthermore, underdog branding relies heavily on key services and products offered which people choose over the competition. All of this creates the company image that it portrays to the public, in other words, the brand.

#### 3.2 Business Model Canvas

The Business Model Canvas created by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010, 14-44) is an innovative tool for outlining a business model. It consists of nine building blocks that all specify on different aspects within a business model. The blocks consist of key activities, partners and resources, customer segments and relationships, value propositions, channels, cost structure and revenue streams. All the blocks have questions that help creating the overall model.

The Business Model Canvas may be constructed from an underdog point of view. The five characteristics introduced by Bjerre, Heding and Knudtzen (2009, 2-8) limit the number of possible business models. The underdog needs to choose one model that fits these characteristics to be efficient. The business model canvas helps create a model that fits for an underdog by analyzing the different segments of the business. These segments, also called the building blocks, are explained below.

Customer segments identify who the customers are and for who is the value created for. There are several types of customer segments according to Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010). These segments include mass market, niche market, as well as segmented, diversified and multi-sided platforms. Mass market focuses on a large group of customers with similar needs whereas niche market specifies on certain, requirements and criteria of a group of customers. There may also be several different segments that have similar, yet different needs and problems, this is called segmented. Serving totally different customer segments is called diversified. Serving several independent groups of customers is called multi-sided platforms. An underdog may serve several customer segments.

Value propositions address value, what it is and for which customer segment is it for. What are the services/products offered for these customer segments and what purpose do they serve. Questions like these were created in order to serve the customers' needs. Values are divided into two categories, qualitative and quantitative. Customizing products, improving performance, creating entirely new services or reducing costs, these are just a few examples of how value can be created in the eyes of a customer. Other examples include reducing the risks of buying a product, helping customers with problems, making the products more accessible and easier to use, adjusting the price, design and brand.

The channels building block helps determine these key issues by introducing five phases. These phases are awareness, evaluation, purchase, delivery and after sales. There are five channel types that may be either own or partner and indirect or direct. These channel types are sales force, web sales, own stores, partner stores or wholesaler.

Customer relationships distinguish between the different relationships that may be created with customer segments: Personal assistance, dedicated personal assistance, communities, self-service, automated services and co-creation. These are all different relationship types that can be adopted by businesses in order to satisfy the customers' needs. Furthermore, the relation types can be mixed together or separately.

Generating revenue is vital to businesses, therefore it is important to know how much the customers are willing to pay in order to receive a good or service. How to get a revenue stream from a customer segment is one of the core questions of this building block. There are multiple different means to generate revenue streams. Subscription, usage and brokerage fees are just a few of these examples. In addition, one may choose to adopt advertising, licensing or lending as a revenue stream. Asset sale is also a viable option as a revenue stream, by selling the products and their ownership rights for customers to enjoy. The revenue streams may be either recurring or one-time payments. There are different pricing mechanisms that may be used with each revenue stream. These mechanisms are divided into dynamic and fixed menu pricing. The former option includes negotiating, yield management, real-time-market and auctions. The latter option includes list price, product feature, customer segment and volume dependent.

Value propositions, distribution channels, customer relationships and revenue streams all require key resources in order to operate. These resources are physical, intellectual, human or financial.

Key activities address the issue of what to do in order to achieve a working business model. Production, problem solving and networks are core concepts of these activities. Key partnerships concentrate on partners and suppliers. There are four partnership styles, strategic alliances, co-opetition, joint ventures and buyer-supplier relationships. There are three motivation factors for starting a relationship. These factors are optimization and economy of scale, reduction of risk and uncertainty and finally, acquisition of resources and activities.

The last building block, cost structure, describes the costs and expenses included in the business model. There are two types of business models, cost and value driven. The former concentrates on minimizing costs and the latter focuses on value creation rather than costs. Cost structures have four main characteristics which are fixed costs, variable

costs, economies of scale and economies of scope (Osterwalder and Pigneur 2010, 14-44).

### 3.3 SWOT analysis

SWOT is an abbreviation from the words strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. In business context, The SWOT analysis is an effective strategic planning tool used to evaluate both internal and external factors of a business. The internal factors include the strengths and weaknesses of a business. The external ones are the opportunities and threats coming from the outside of the company. Tim Berry (2009) describes SWOT analysis as "a very simple process that can offer powerful insight into the potential and critical issues affecting a venture."

When prospecting for the future, the SWOT analysis is not the best tool available. However, when the SWOT analysis is turned around, it becomes TOWS analysis, which will reflect the outside threats and opportunities against the internal weaknesses and strengths. This can be used effectively to see what are the future issues regarding the business.

With the help of SWOT and TOWS analyses the current business model can be renewed in a way that possible changes are easy to adapt into it. Furthermore, adding the future scenario planning into the mix will help creating some breathing room for the future. Detailed explanation of future scenario planning can be found in the chapter 4.6 of this research.

### 3.4 Scenario planning

In their everyday lives, people encounter situations where they make a choice between numbers of possibilities, whether it be doing, saying or buying something. One might not think about it at the time, but all of these actions are done so that a certain goal is achieved in the near future. The main logic behind future scenario planning is to plan ahead in order to be able to choose actions accordingly. A quickly made decision to act

is always a risk, especially in the business world. In their book *Scenario planning: The link between future and strategy*, Lindgren and Bandhold (2009) point out that the modern business world has shown us the need to prepare for the non-preparable. With this in mind, businesses need to assess their current and future situations to be able to prepare well for all kinds of scenarios.

Future scenario planning was first used in the military to anticipate possible scenarios where the troops would need to respond to threats quickly and effectively. In today's world, where war on terror is seen in many countries, the leaders are telling the public that they have prepared for all possible scenarios. This is done to, first of all, prevent terrorism and subsequently battle it. The same methods can be mirrored into the business world. Businesses can anticipate the strategic plays of their rivals and counter them more effectively.

Creating a scenario is a step-by-step process. Schoemaker describes the various steps in his work *Scenario Planning: A tool for strategic thinking* (1995). Firstly, the planner should define the scope of the scenario. This narrows down the timeline to years or even days. When the timeline is clear, the major stakeholders are to be identified. At this point the planner should answer to questions such as: Who will the plan involve and how are they involved? Identifying the basic trends is the next step. The basic trends are events that are sure to happen. At the same time, key uncertainties should be thought about. Uncertainties such as political, economical and financial changes can be hard to predict, so multiple scenarios should be constructed to prepare for different outcomes. After identifying the basic trends and key uncertainties, the actual scenario writing process can begin.

After the scenario is constructed, the planner should go through to check for consistency and plausibility issues. Everything needs to fit the timeline established previously. Creating titles and storylines can help to develop the learning scenarios that are to be constructed. At the same time, all the quantitative data should be made into models to get a clear look at them. Finally, the planner should move as close to execution of the scenario as possible to see how it works in reality (Schoemaker 1995). The prepared future scenarios for Aludra can be found from the chapter 4.6 in this research.

### 3.5 Scenarios as an Underdog

Planning for the future is an important part of the underdog marketing process. With future scenarios the underdog can prepare for possible threats and opportunities. The underdog needs to be one step ahead of the competition and the current trends. One can have the most innovative product at the moment but the major question is as follows: What does one do when you lose your advantage? The different future scenarios can help one in preparing for these kinds of situations.

Scenario planning can also clarify some uncertainties that the company might have. When business models are being viewed from multiple angles, the flaws can be discovered and reconstructed. The company's vision and mission are important especially in underdog branding and marketing. With the help of scenario planning one can create multiple action plans for these visions in order to predict how the plans are going to work. Diving head on without any consideration of future developments is insanely risky for underdogs.

## 4 CASE STUDY

### 4.1 Interview 1

We conducted two interviews with the CEO and founder of Aludra, Mr. Jarno Linnell. In order to discover the key drivers and be able to produce the future scenarios for Aludra, we asked questions ranging from the start of the company to its future plans. Both interviews included structured open-ended questions which Mr. Linnell was able to answer freely. The first interview was conducted in the office of Aludra on the 8th of April, 2012. We used the information from the first interview to construct a current business model canvas for Aludra, which can be seen below.

### 4.2 Current Business Model Canvas

Mr. Linnell does not describe Aludra as an underdog when compared to bigger companies, because he states that Aludra is not directly competing with them for customers. At the moment Aludra has one big client, Company X, a construction company from Finland. All of Aludra's current efforts go towards evolving and maintaining its current relationship with Company X.

The current financial situation of Aludra according to Mr. Linnell is not perfect but rather tolerable. He points out that Aludra is a young company, only at its second year of existence. The first year was financially feasible and development was seen on many different aspects. The second year has not started with the same pace but there is almost a constant amount of work to be done.

As stated above, Aludra mainly serves its key client Company X. It is highly dependent on their relationship and Mr. Linnell maintains that Aludra probably could not exist without Company X as a client. This means that Aludra is customizing its services to suit only Company Xs needs, as it is its niche market.

The value propositions of Aludra and its clients were discussed. Company X, as a big player in the construction field, has media and information technology needs that Aludra is helping them with. When asked about what makes Aludra a better choice than big marketing companies, Mr. Limnell points out the key issues as follows: Firstly, he feels that the flexibility and stability Aludra can offer is immensely important. The customer can be sure that the product is done in time and meets their expectations. Mr. Limnell points out that he can be reached almost day and night to answer the needs of the clients. This has enabled the relationship between clients and Aludra to grow to personal level.

The lack of bureaucracy and accessibility when dealing with Aludra is an advantage that big companies cannot offer for their clients. This enables the decision making process to be quick since there is no need to have big meetings every time something has to be decided. Another key element that Aludra can provide for its customers is the price they ask for their services. Many big companies have the tendency to bill their clients for every single small task they do, which Aludra tries to avoid.

We also wanted to know about the communication between the companies, the channels and methods that are used in particular. The channel types Aludra uses are both direct and indirect. We found out that the work assignments go from Company X to Company Y that delegates the production assignments to Aludra. However, communication between Aludra and Company X does not necessarily go through Company Y, since e-mails and phone calls are exchanged when necessary. Mostly, however, Aludra and Company Y communicate together and shape the final product that is presented to Company X. Mr. Limnell added that using e-mail and mobile phones is a really cost effective way of maintaining communication between companies. He also prefers this way over the traditional face-to-face meetings.

The final product done by Aludra is usually delivered to the customer via DVD-disc or a Blue-ray disc. Also, copies are distributed with the help of Internet but as often in media, the files tend to be large in size, therefore physical discs are preferred. Additional post purchase customer support is done by phone.

We also asked about how Aludra found such a big and important client and how they maintain their customer relationships. Mr. Limnell told us that he was doing some work

for them with his previous company Action Media. The relationship between the two companies was formed there and it has lasted ever since. The partnership with Media-Arena was formed when Aludra started working with Company X. The relationships between these three companies are personal. Every order and sale is done via some form of human communication, be it face-to-face, e-mail or telephone.

The revenue stream Aludra uses is one time payments according to the billing plan. Aludra generates revenue streams with asset sales, which means that it sells specific products to its customers. The pricing mechanisms used are fixed menu pricing and dynamic pricing. Usually, customers are billed by the hour, but in some bigger projects, a fixed price is determined.

We asked about the key resources that Aludra needs to conduct its day to day business. These resources are not only physical, but also human, intellectual and financial ones. The physical resources include computers, the RC-helicopter and its parts, cameras and software that are the most important and expensive resources. These resources are used almost daily to produce the actual products.

The most important intellectual resources include the relationships with the partner company and the key customer. Without them, it would be hard for Aludra to maintain productivity and generate revenue. Furthermore, the knowledge Mr. Linnell has acquired over the years is the base of operations. However, knowledge can become irrelevant over time; therefore, it is important for Mr. Linnell to keep on studying the newest technological changes and develop his own competences.

Mr. Linnell is his own most important human resource. The RC-helicopter pilot is vital when aerial videos are concerned. In addition, there are some contacts in the partner and key customer companies that he feels are tremendously important. Financial resources are needed to acquire computers, software and other resources.

The key activities of Aludra include production and problem solving in the field of media creation. Production activities include designing and creating products that suit the needs of customers. Among these products are aerial videos, power point, video productions, website creation, marketing tools and photography. Problem solving

activities include editing the materials created by others and maintenance and development of web sites.

Aludra has a key partnership with another Northern-Finland based company Company Y. Aludra is responsible with the design and the actual production of products while Company Y handles the contents. A partnership with the RC-helicopter pilot is vital for the completion and development of aerial videos.

During the interview we discussed the cost structure of Aludra. The largest amount of costs is generated by purchasing new equipment and software. Aludra is one the verge of being a cost-driven and a value-driven business. The company tries to keep its costs down, but at the same time, work with the premier quality equipment available. Part of its plan is to be able to offer the same quality than its competitors. This is not possible with lower-end gear.

#### 4.3 SWOT- Analysis

Based on the answers of the first interview and the findings from the business model canvas, we compiled a SWOT-analysis for the current state of the company.

The strengths of Aludra are in our opinion; the flexibility they offer, the personal relationship with the customers, the high level of knowledge on the field of business and the uniqueness of their aerial video service. If the company can keep up with maintaining, and even developing, its current relationship with Company X and the partners, we feel that it can reach a position where it can safely rely on its business plan. This would also give room for new developments to take place. We have seen that the company does bring fresh ideas to the ever changing world of media productions and this is something they should emphasize on.

The number one weakness is the limitations set by the fact that the company is a one man venture. There is only so much time available for one person and some options can be left unexplored. Secondly, the company is highly dependent on the work of others and that can create some issues that can be hard to foresee.

We feel that the opportunities for Aludra to grow are good if not excellent. However, it all depends on the development of its services to a level that is more unique and interesting than its competitors. The aerial video service offers huge potential to attract customers from all around the world. Also, using the underdog branding strategies can help to attract new clients if the orders from Company X and others are not enough.

The biggest threat facing Aludra is its lack of customers. With practically only one big client, the company is relying solely on them. What happens if Company X decides to switch its media production provider is a threat to be addressed. Also, not keeping up with the development of the business field can be a threat. The world of media is changing every minute. It can be really difficult to keep up with the changes and offering dated services is not a good option.

#### 4.4 Interview 2

The second interview was conducted on the 2nd of May in the office of Aludra. In this interview we focused on the future prospects of the company. We produced a future business model canvas based on the views of Mr. Linnell that are shown below.

#### 4.5 Future Business Model

Aludra has no plans to grow its customer base at its current state. However, if Aludra shifts its focus towards photography, the need for new customers will be urgent. Mr. Linnell emphasizes that acquiring customers for the photography service will be difficult by stating that "Nowadays, everyone can be a photographer. People use their digital cameras to take photos of their friends and families". The CEO would like to diversify Aludra's customer base into photography clients and Company X. This means that he would offer two different services to two different customer segments. The Copter Cam service should be available for customers in the year 2014 and could attract a whole new customer segment. Mr. Linnell has not decided on the target market of the Copter Cam service. Some options can be found from our future scenario plans.

Mr. Linnell would like to preserve the flexibility and stability that Aludra can offer for its clients. Furthermore, customization of products for both customer segments is needed. To diversify itself from the large amount of competitors in the photography business field, Aludra needs to be able to offer something unique to the clients. Mr. Linnell has been considering Kuusamo and its limitless possibilities for photography since according to him "There are not many photographers who take pictures of people in the nature. This is what I would like to offer". He also points out that the ability to move around Northern-Finland is a value customers can appreciate. Another service idea is to offer social media centered photography services. This means that he would travel to meet the customer and take profile and wall pictures according to the customers' needs.

Social media photography will also introduce a new channel to reach Aludra's clients. If the customers are looking for a new profile picture to Facebook, it would be viable to communicate with them via it. Furthermore, Mr. Linnell knows that marketing in Facebook would be practically free. When the customer uploads his/her picture into the service, he/she would also provide a link to Jarno Linnell's personal page, where all his contact information would be listed. The traditional methods, such as telephone and e-mail, would also be in use. One of the advantages of these methods of customer interaction is the low costs involved. Mr. Linnell does not want Aludra to be yet another photography shop that sells cameras and prints.

As stated before, customer relationships would be upheld via phone calls, e-mail and social media. Face-to-face meetings would be held according to the customers' needs, however, they are not the desired method of Mr. Linnell. Most of the business could be discussed while taking the actual photographs. The revenue streams would stay almost the same with the exception of additional costs and income from photography.

An addition to the current physical resources will be a wide selection of lighting equipment needed in professional photography. Also, the computer software used to digitalize and customize the photos is updating regularly. Aludra needs to be able to afford these new intellectual resources in order to keep its competitive ability. Mr. Linnell himself will still be the main human resource. However, in the Copter Cam-

service, the pilot is needed. New financial resources are needed to fund the possible investments in the photography field.

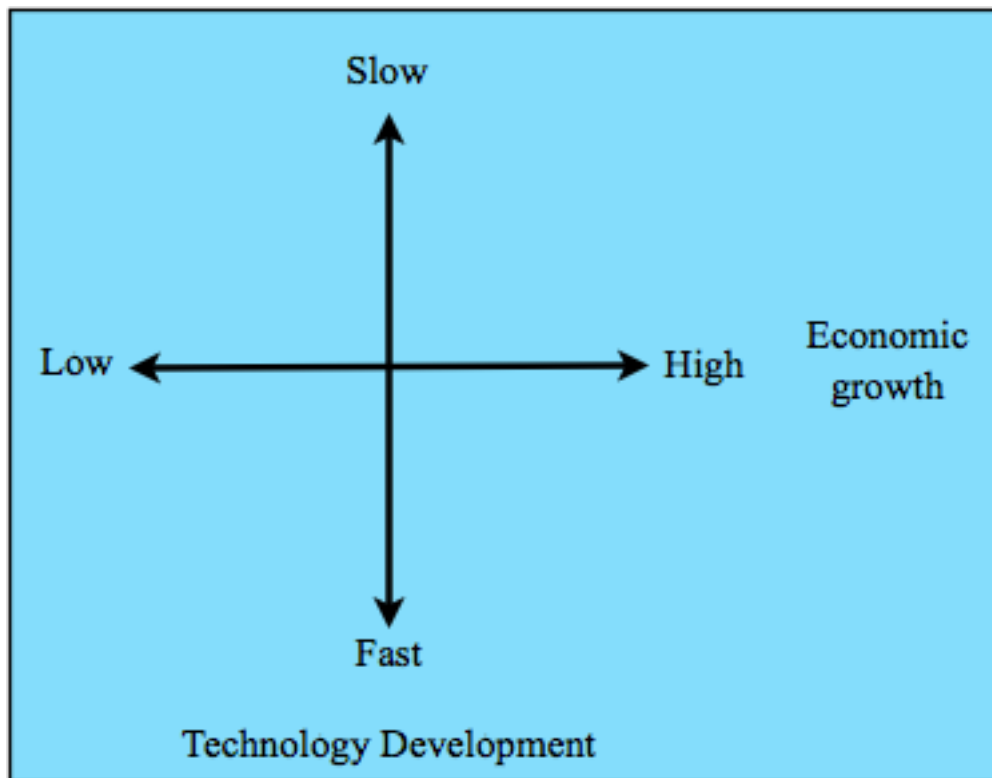
The key activities in the future include creating a professional website to use as an Internet platform. Today, Aludras Internet activities are scattered around different services. A central hub for all these is needed to improve the accessibility for customers. If Aludra begins to centralize its functions around social media, the help of social media consults could be beneficial. Problem solving activities are required to prospect the potential customers for Copter Cam-service.

As stated previously, the pilot of the rc-copter is the key partner needed. In addition, if the relationship with Company X continues, so does the relationship with Company Y. Mr. Linnell does not exclude the possibility of co-opetition with other companies from the same business field by maintaining that "I have not thought about that before. It is not an impossible idea, however it is not something I seek particularly".

In the future, Aludra needs to keep up with the rapid technological changes. This means that the costs of doing business will be increasing. To tackle this challenge, Aludra needs to minimize its marketing costs by mainly focusing on the Internet.

#### 4.6 Future Scenarios

To improve understanding of how underdog branding can help Aludra, we created three different future scenarios for Aludra. All of the scenarios are linked to technological and economic growth of Aludra. This is being illustrated below in the Figure 2. To construct the scenarios, we used the future scenario planning tool explained in chapter 3 of this thesis.



**Figure 2.** Drivers of Aludra

We identified the key drivers of Aludra. Here they are shown without the scenarios implemented. Scenarios with the drivers can be found in Figure 3 in sub-chapter 5.1.

#### 4.6.1 Future of the business field

As our thesis has a focus on the future, we wanted to know the views of Mr. Linnell on the development of the field of business. He pointed out that the media industry is not going anywhere anytime soon. It is rather the opposite according to him. He also mentioned that the marketing aspects have changed forever and he stated in view of his company that "We used to only get mail in the mornings where we had a couple of small advertisements sent to us. Now, we get bombarded with marketing everyday through mobile phones, computers and tablets such as Apple's iPad". Furthermore, he added that the digitalization of the industry is going to continue through the innovations of the future, especially in mobile phones. From the interviews conducted, it became evident for us that the two most important key drivers for Aludra are the technological and economic changes. These drivers are incorporated within the following future scenarios.

#### 4.6.2 Future Scenario 1 - One client is enough

The first future scenario depicts the current situation continuing as it is. This means that Mr. Linnell works as a media professional and focuses on Aludras biggest client Company X. The economic growth will most probably affect the amount of work that Company X is able to offer. If the economy stays at its current level, Aludra will be able to sustain its profitability. If the technological development is slow and new devices and upgrades are not introduced at a fast pace, Aludra will not have any problems keeping up with the rest of the industry. However, Aludras budget is limited and rapid developments can cause substantial issues.

Aludra is dependent on Company X and in case of problems with this partnership Aludra might face a threat of being left without any clients. In this case, the solution is to quickly search for new clients that can prove to be extremely difficult. Failing to find new clients will most probably mean that Aludra cannot continue its operations without reaching for substantial financial aid or a loan.

The financial growth for Aludra in this model would be very slow. Only if Company X runs into a situation where they would need extensive help from Aludra, would the financial position be improved. This, however, would also mean that the workload for would increase also. In this case, Aludra would most likely need to hire new personnel to balance the situation.

Underdog branding would be almost impossible to use in the current model. With only one substantial client and with no real desire to look for new ones, Aludra would not compete with the bigger companies in the business area.

#### 4.6.3 Future Scenario 2 - Photography as a main service

Mr. Linnell expressed his interest in making photography as the main service of Aludra. This is not the result of the current photography markets, but rather his personal interest. In reality, the current photography market can be best described as risky and crowded. Therefore, new customer segment needs to be acquired, since there probably

will not be enough work available only from Company X. Furthermore, according to Mr. Linnell if photography is made the main service, Aludra will slowly move to providing photography services exclusively. The change cannot be made hastily though, since the financial backlash would be brutal if Aludra would cancel its relationship with Company X.

In case of economic growth being low and technologic development slow, Aludra would compete against relatively equal opponents. In this case, no one would have the advantage of having superior technology or more capital than others. Rather, photographers would rely on their skills to stand out from the crowd. In this case, Aludra could utilize underdog branding to stand out from the crowd. It doesn't matter how good your pictures are if nobody sees them. With this in mind, we agree with Mr. Linnell's idea to mainly market Aludra in the social media scene. Not only is the marketing there free of charge, but the potential client base would be large. One option is to create unique service that would offer clients unique nature portraits of themselves. Marketing should be done using only the name of the photographer, not the company. This creates the illusion that the photographer is not taking orders from a big corporation but is independent. Furthermore, minimalistic approach to marketing could prove successful. People have the tendency to upload their favorite pictures to social media services. By including the name of Jarno Linnell and a link to his contact information, new clients could be found without practically doing any work.

The best possible situation for Aludra would include high economic growth and slow technology changes. This would mean that the customers would have more money to spend on luxury services, such as professional photography. Furthermore, Aludra could stay on par with the competition technology wise. We feel that the professionalism of Aludra will never be an issue, unless the development of technology is too fast to keep up with. As in many other practical professions, photography also depends a lot on the amount of practice the photographer does. Without the technology at hand, Aludra would fall behind the wagon rather quickly.

With slow technological development, Aludra would be able to use its profits to market itself directly to the customers. In this case, radio and newspaper marketing could work in addition to the Internet marketing. In the marketing, it should be made clear that

Aludra is a small company that is ready and willing to help the clients with flexible time schedules and quality work.

#### 4.6.4 Future Scenario 3 - The unique Copter Cam

Aludra has been developing a service where a remote controllable helicopter is flown with a camera attached to it. The service is quite unique for the Finnish market with only a few other companies offering the same service. Aludra could use the Copter Cam service as the main attraction to gain new customers. There a lot of businesses, such as construction companies, movie industry, event organizations and even the army, that could use these kinds of aerial videos. Furthermore, the price that Aludra is able to offer them will be substantially lower than they would get from big companies using traditional sized helicopters. As we mentioned earlier, the Copter Cam service is on halt because of the pilot's personal attachments elsewhere. This means that the service can be fully launched between the years 2013 and 2014.

If economic growth is low and technological developments slow, Aludra does not need to upgrade its current remote controllable helicopter with new parts. However, the work available might not be substantial for the business to grow. In this case, Aludra should direct its marketing to big players such as Company X to ensure steady income. Using their best qualities in their marketing will be a key to get to the big companies. Making sure that they understand that Aludra is a flexible, small and easy-to-work with company can create an advantage over the allegedly faceless big marketing groups.

Economic growth being high and technological development slow will enable Aludra to reach out to an increasing number of clients. In this case, Aludra will not need to upgrade its equipment to keep up with the competition. The event organization industry, for example, is a potential market for Aludra when the economy is bullish. There are many festivals and gatherings that would most probably be interested in professional aerial video documentation of their events.

If the technology starts developing fast and changes need to be made, Aludra will need to be able to come up with the funds to keep up with the competition. In a good economic situation, this should not be a problem since the companies have more money available to them than if the economy is slack. If Aludra is able to keep up with the fast

technological changes which are required in, for example, the movie industry, Aludra could offer its services to Finnish and international film makers. There have been already movies made in Europe and the United States that have used similar aerial filming technology. Aludra could contact production companies, such as Blind Spot, to set their foot in the Finnish film industry.

Problems might be encountered if the economy is bearish and technological changes are made globally. Aludra would need to upgrade its equipment to remain competitive but it might be hard for them to acquire the funds needed to do so.

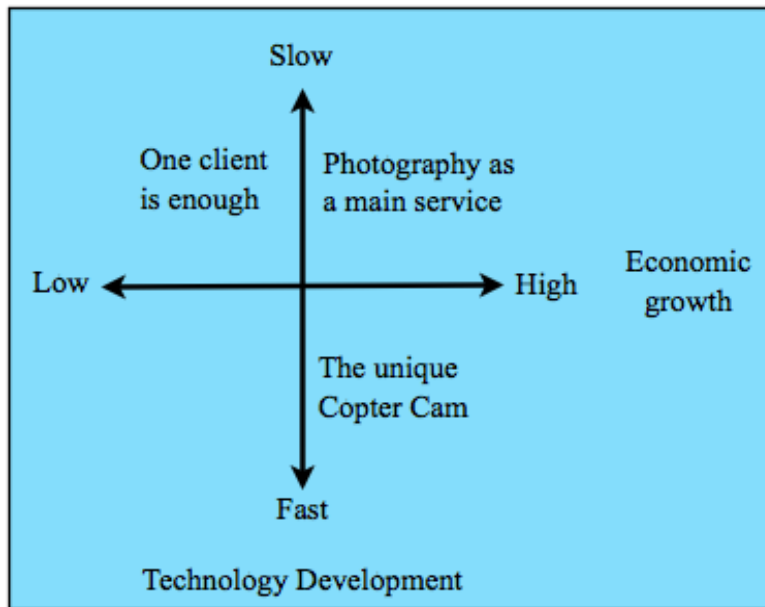
## 5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Within this research we have explained the new approach to branding from an underdog point of view, looked at the business model of Aludra through business model canvas and produced future scenarios to see the possibilities for the case company. To complete our research, we will present our conclusions and discuss the best future scenarios for Aludra as an underdog.

In the chapter 1.4 we introduced our research questions. The first sub-research question was as follows: What are the key drivers that enable Aludra to grow? We wanted to see what outside drivers influence Aludra in its daily work. The second sub-research question was the following: What are the possible future scenarios for Aludra as an Underdog? To find an answer to this question, we constructed three different scenarios based on different products and services. Both of these sub-research questions were to help us answer the following main research question: How can Aludra develop itself by using Underdog branding?

In order to find answers to these questions, we interviewed the CEO of Aludra Mr. Jarno Linnell. We did two interviews with the first one providing us with a general look into the company's current situation. During the second interview we asked questions about the future prospects and visions of Aludra. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Finnish and then translated into English in the transcripts documented in this thesis in Appendixes 2 and 3. During the interviews we had an opportunity to see some of the work Aludra has done for its clients. Furthermore, we an opportunity to participate in a photo shoot conducted by Aludra and see how the work was done.

### 5.1 Most favorable scenarios



**Figure 3.** Scenarios with drivers

The three scenarios produced are shown with the key drivers of Aludra. Their position is illustrated within the figure.

From the interviews and general observations we concluded that the key drivers for Aludra are technological development and economic growth. Aludra, being in the media business field, is very dependent on the technology that is available. New innovations are made constantly and Aludra needs to be able to keep its competitive ability by tagging along with the changes. Failing to keep up with the development would mean outdated products and losing potential clients. In addition to the technical development, economic growth is important for Aludra's development. Low economic growth would mean that potential clients do not have the financial capability to spend a lot of money on marketing. This could affect the work situation of Aludra dramatically.

With the key drivers known, we created Figure 3 to illustrate the findings. Furthermore, we used the drivers to construct three different future scenarios for Aludra. The first future scenario created dealt with how the current business model could be used along with underdog branding in the development of Aludra. The conclusion we reached was that the current situation relies too heavily on the key client Company X to use underdog marketing in any way.

The second future scenario was done to see how underdog marketing could help if the shift towards photography as a main service took place. In this scenario we can

conclude that the best possible situation for Aludra is when the technological changes are slow, meaning that the equipment available now will suffice. Furthermore, the economic growth would be high in the best possible scenario to ensure a steady stream of clients. Underdog marketing can be utilized in this model to attract new clients. The important part is to get the work where the people can see it. This can be done by using social media as a grapevine to spread the word about the company. Standing out with good quality work and emphasizing the fact that the company is small, could attract many people to have their photos taken by Aludra.

The final scenario that we composed was a look into the most unique, and in our opinion the strongest, service Aludra has - Copter Cam. The possible target market for this service is very large because of the low price for the customer. The possibilities for where the service can be utilized are large as well: It can be used to capture events, to map out new areas, to shoot an aerial chase scene for a movie and even for spotting targets for the military. The fact that a small company can do this is extraordinary and should be emphasized in the marketing. It should be made clear that the service was created by two guys in the northern parts of Finland, who would do this even as a hobby. This creates the feeling of enthusiasm for the marketing. The potential customers realize that the service is a passion for those who have been developing it and that it is not a done by a allegedly faceless corporation. To conclude, the potential of underdog marketing in this scenario is near infinite.

## 5.2 Possibilities for future development

Scenario planning can be reiterated. With this in mind, the possibilities for further research are good. When the decision to focus on either on photography, the aerial services or even in both is made, another set of scenarios should be created. Constant SWOT and TOWS analyses can help understand where the company is heading. Finally, competitor analyses could help see the weaknesses of the bigger companies that a small business like such as Aludra could utilize.

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NYKYINEN TILA:

Tunnetko olevasi altavastaaaja muihin yhtiöihin verrattuna? Miksi?

Miten Aludralla menee tällä hetkellä?

Ketkä ovat Aludran tärkeimmät asiakkaat?

Mihin tarpeisiin tarjoat apua?

Mitä teet ja kenelle?

Mitä asiakkaat arvostavat eniten Aludrassa?

Kuinka löytää asiakkaita? Miten ottaa yhteys heihin?

Mitkä ovat tärkeimmät tekijät jotka mahdollistavat tämän työn sinulle?

Teetkö yhteistyötä kenekään kanssa?

Mitkä ovat mielestäsi Aludran parhaat ominaisuudet muihin verrattuna?

Minkä kanavien kautta otat yhteyden asiakkaisiin? Kuinka he haluavat että heihin otetaan yhteyttä? Miten nämä kanavat toimivat keskenään?

Minkälaisen asiakassuhteen asiakkaat yleensä haluavat? Kuinka kallista niitä on ylläpitää?

Mikä on se arvo jonka vuoksi asiakkaat ovat valmiita maksamaan? Kuinka he maksavat?

Mitkä ovat avain resurssit joita tarvitset? Niin fyysiset, rahalliset ja persoonalliset?

Mitä avain resursseja saadaan yhteistyökumppaneilta? Mitä avain toimintoja he suorittavat?

Mitkä avain resurssit ovat kaikista kalleimmat? Mitkä avain toiminnot ovat kaikista kalleimpia?

**TULEVAISUUS:**

Mihin suuntaan näet alan menevän tulevaisuudessa?

Minkälaista uutta teknologiaa luulet olevan tulossa?

Onko jotain mitä haluaisit muuttaa yhtiöstäsi?

Haluaisitko laajentaa asiakaskuntaa? Ja millä tavalla?

Jos kyllä, luuletko että uusien asiakkaiden hankkiminen tulee olemaan helpompaa / vaikeampaa kuin nyt? Miksi?

Onko sinulla ideoita millä tavalla markkinoida yhtiötä tulevaisuudessa?

Miten rahalliset vaatimukset tulevat vaikuttamaan markkinointiin ja tulevaisuuden toimintoihin?

Haluaisitko kehittää Internet toimintoja pidemmälle?

Onko tiedossa uusia tuotteita / palveluja joita haluaisit tarjota asiakkaille?

Kuinka haluaisit kehittää dialogia asiakkaiden kanssa?

Mitä ajattelet co-opetitionista? Eli yhteistyöstä kilpailijoiden kanssa?

Onko tiedossa uusia yhteistyö kumppaneita? Haluaisitko niitä?

Kuinka suureksi näet Aludran kasvavan tulevaisuudessa?

Missä haluaisit että yhtiö sijaitsee?

Mitä ongelmia / uhkia näet tulevaisuudessa?

Onko sinulla jotain lisättävää?

## CURRENT SITUATION

Do you feel Aludra is an underdog against other companies? Why is that?

I do not feel like an underdog since I am not competing with big companies at the moment.

How is Aludra doing at the moment?

It is a young company, started only two years ago. The first year was OK for a start. The second year has been a bit too slow. There is some work to be done.

The copter cam project is unique; however it is on a development status at the moment. The partner the project depends on cannot be a part of it for a year.

Who are the key customers of Aludra?

Company X is the key customer.

Which needs are we helping to solve?

The media needs of the company.

What and for which customers?

Media design for Company X.

What do the customers value the most in Aludra?

The ability to be flexible and the fast production. There is no bureaucracy involved. We do not need to have a meeting every other day. I am always reachable.

How to find customers? How to reach them?

I am not looking for new customers actively at the moment. If I shift to favor photography however, then I am going to do that.

What do you think are the key factors that enable you to do this kind of work?

I do not know.

What partnerships do you have?

Partnership with Company Y that is in charge of the actual content of the media. I do the technical design and development.

What do you think is your best attribute when compared to other companies?

Working with Company X, there is an advantage with being a small company. I can be flexible where as the big advertisement companies cannot. Also, the prices I offer are significantly lower. We share a trust with the client, a personal relationship so to say.

Through which channels do you reach your customers? How do they want to be reached? How are the channels integrated?

The relationship with Company X began with my last company Action Media. I did some work for them and they liked it. The relationship has carried to this day. 90 percent of the work is forwarded to me by Company Y. Company X tells Company Y what they want, Company Y then comes up with the content and I design and produce the final product. All the bills go directly to Company X.

What type of relationship does each of our customer segments expect us to establish and maintain with them? Which ones have we established? How costly are they?

Nowadays it is done mainly on the Internet and by telephone. Sometimes we have meetings but it is very rare. This is a very cost-effective way to maintain a relationship.

For what value are our customers really willing to pay? Which ones do they pay now? How are they paying?

They pay for the final product. I bill according to my work hours and in some cases, there is a fixed price for a completed project. I send them a bill and they pay it.

What Key Resources do you require? Distribution channels, customer relationships, revenue streams? (Physical, intellectual, human, financial)

The key customer Company X is very important. The partnership with Company Y is also crucial.

What are the key resources acquired from partners? What key activities do they perform?

The content and timetables come directly from them. They also take care of some practical issues so I do not have to do them.

What are the most important costs inherent in our business model? Which key resources are the most expensive ones? Which key activities are the most expensive ones?

The computers, cameras and software the most important and expensive.

## FUTURE

Where do you see the industry going?

It will not disappear, that is for sure. Almost everyone needs media and marketing. As the technology advantages, they will need it even more. We have seen the rise of social media, tablets and mobile phones. You can bombard people with media from every direction. The information flow is almost constant. The digitalization will continue.

What kind of new technologies do you think will be coming out?

I think the mobile devices will keep on improving and become even more important.

Is there anything you would like to change about your company?

I would like to add photography as a service. I am not sure if it will be an additional service or the main service.

Would you like to expand your customer base? Any preferences?

Yes, if the shift to photography is made.

If yes, do you think acquiring customers will be easier/more difficult than now? Why?

I believe acquiring customers will get more difficult. Nowadays everyone can be photographers. People take photos themselves or their friends. There are more people today who want to be professional photographers than there were before the digital age.

Have you any ideas of how to market the company in the future?

You have to be better than everyone else, stand out in a positive way. Everyone takes photos, therefore you need to find your own style that will stand out.

If people link my pictures to Facebook and such, they would use my name as a reference. Perhaps their friends would get interested?

Do you have any financial requirements concerning marketing or other business activities?

There will be expenses including the lighting equipment for example. There is not that much money that can be spent on marketing.

For creating commercial advertisement photos one needs to have really good quality equipment and a lot of skills.

Would you want to develop your Internet activities further? (website, customer feedback system etc)

Web activity is everything in today's business. All of your services need to be presented online. I feel that social media is very important with services like Facebook and Twitter gaining users all the time. The word of mouth spreads really fast on these platforms. I could offer professional profile pictures to the users of such services. The idea is not to be another traditional photography shop that sells cameras and develops pictures.

Social media consults could be useful. I can think of contacting them if I choose to invest in social media.

Are there any new products/services you would like to offer?

Specialization on social media could be one option. I can go to the customer's own location with the gear and take photos, be a mobile photographer in a way. However, the profitability of this might not be too high.

How would you like to develop the dialogue with the customers?

Social media is important. Otherwise, I use the traditional methods of discussion such as telephone and e-mail.

What are your thoughts on co-opetition (creating partnerships with competition)?

I have not thought about that before. It is not an impossible idea, however it is not something I seek particularly.

New partnerships?

If I choose to go with the social media strategy then I will consider contacting social media consults.

How big do you see Aldura being in the future?

Well, every business wants to grow their turnover and generate profit. My goal is to get a normal income from the business. The goal is to provide work for myself.

Where would the company be situated?

In the northern Finland. Kuusamo could be good because RUKA ski-resort has brought a lot of business in to the area. There are a lot of nature photographers there, however I have no intentions to be one of them. There is also a lot of advertisement and movie productions being done in Kuusamo. You can take nice pictures in the nature by bringing all the lightning equipment with you. There are not many nature photographers who take pictures of people. This is what I would like to offer.

The plan is to keep the business activities in the north. I have no intention to start competing with the companies in the southern Finland.

What problems / threats do you see in the future?

There is always a threat that the work Company X offers, comes to an end. Another one is that the photography service does not take off. It can be hard to make any revenue out of it.

Do you have anything to add?

The plan is to become as good as possible with software such as Photoshop and digital remastering of photos. I would be able to offer a full package, meaning both the actual photography and digitalization.