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The brand image of X

– A case study

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Standing out from competition is getting harder by the minute, and the essence of branding has taken stronger foothold inside companies. This is also the case with X, a newly launched service, that will replace its predecessor, and current market leader, Y in a few years.

To know where X stands in the eyes of its customers six months after the launch, it was seen important to conduct a case study and find out what kind of brand image it has. The case study was conducted with a help of a questionnaire including both multiple choice and open-ended questions. A total of 132 respondents answered the questionnaire. A similar questionnaire was also conducted to the workers behind X. It was answered by 29 people representing different units and tasks.

The goal was to find out how X is seen in these two different groups and are there any differences. In addition, the results were reflected to a previously made brand strategy of X. The results show that the brand image of X has started in the right path, but a lot of work needs to be done. Majority of the respondents from the customers group pointed out unfamiliarity throughout the study and hardly any of the defined competitive advantages of X were mentioned. The workers behind X on the other hand were seemingly proud and saw a lot of potential for the future.

Sanna Ukkonen

X:n brändimielikuva

- Tapaustutkimus

Kilpailijoista erottautuminen vaikeutuu jatkuvasti, mikä on johtanut brändin vankempaan asemaan yhä useammissa yrityksissä. Tämä pätee myös X:ään, vastikään lanseerattuun järjestelmään, joka tulee korvaamaan edeltäjänsä ja nykyisen markkinajohtaja Y:n muutaman vuoden kuluessa.

Vaikka X:n julkaisusta oli kulunut vain 6 kk, koettiin brändimielikuvan selvitys tärkeäksi. Selvitys toteutettiin tapaustutkimuksena hyödyntäen monivalinta- ja avoimien kysymysten kyselylomaketta. Kyselyyn vastasi yhteensä 132 eri yrityksiä edustavia henkilöitä. Samanlainen kysely toteutettiin myös X:n taustalla työskenteleville henkilöille, ja siihen vastasi 29 eri yksiköitä ja tehtäviä edustavaa henkilöä.

Tavoitteena oli selvittää, millaisia mielikuvia X on luonut, ja eroavatko mielikuvat kahden eri vastaajaryhmän välillä. Lisäksi tuloksia verrattiin X:lle aiemmin laadittuun brändistrategiaan.

Tulokset osoittivat, että X:n brändimielikuva on lähtenyt oikeaan suuntaan, mutta paljon työtä on vielä tehtävänä. Enemmistö asiakasryhmän vastaajista korosti tutkimuksen aikana epävarmuutta ja harva mainitsi X:n kilpailuetuja. Samaan aikaan X:n taustalla työskentelevät henkilöt vaikuttivat ylpeiltä järjestelmästä ja näkivät paljon potentiaalia sen tulevaisuudelle.

Asiasanat:

Brändi, Brändimielikuva, Digitaalinen brändi, Palvelubrändi

Content

Appendices

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In a world saturated with choices and information, the power of branding has never been more crucial. What compels a person to choose one product or service over the other? What comes to play, when the person is representing a company, and the choice they make ultimately has an effect to the business of the company? Some decisions are made in the heat of the moment, but usually there's something deeper at play, especially in the B2B world, and that's when branding comes along.

The core of branding is an art of telling a compelling story about the essence of a business, a product, a service, or even a person. At its best it can shape behavior, influence decision-making processes, and define the way people perceive the world around them. It's not just cute and clever taglines and compelling images, but relationships, trust, and communication.

Most of all, knowing how a brand is positioned among its competitors is crucial. Only that way does the company comprehend, what kind of actions might be necessary to reach their goals and build a convincing and unique brand.

This thesis attempts to find out how the brand image of a newly launched, still evolving enterprise resource planning (ERP) system called X has started to build. The more precise goals and methodologies are described in the following sections, starting with the target organization.

1.2 The target organization

1.2.1 Organization Z

The target organization, X is part of Z, a digital service business and media company that provides various content and services for consumers and businesses.

Z's business operations include leading housing and automotive marketplaces, financial and professional media, national consumer media, and content and data services for professionals and businesses. More precise structure of the organization Z is shown in appendix 6.

1.2.2 Service system X

As mentioned in section 1.2.1, X is a part of an organization Z. It's a comprehensive service that will (eventually) offer all necessary (and beyond) tools all kinds of professionals in the housing field needs for their daily work.

In time X will replace its predecessor, Y, which has long been the market leader. Y was originally designed for one specific customer, and it was launched in 2005. As the system proved to be a success it was opened to the whole market in 2006. Since then, Y has been updated several times, but the technical specs behind it have run their course, which is why project X was launched.

The project has had many phases from early on, and for example switching the structure and technical implementations behind the whole project has had the most impact leading to delays in the original launch plans. Instead of a launch in the end of 2020, the first phase of X was ultimately launched in January 2023.

As building a completely new and comprehensive ERP system for professionals takes time, it's important to note that while X is being built, the Y remains working. That being said, the first phase of the launched X did not involve any of the Y users, but the users who relied on a free Contract Customer Service (CCS) for their daily work.

The difference between the CCS and Y is quite big and it is further explained in appendix 7.

1.2.3   X's position in brand hierarchy

Understanding the hierarchy and connections of different brands regarding X is important in comprehending the market position it is in. With the help of brand hierarchy, the organization provides structure to a portfolio of brands. (Houraghan n.d.) The way a brand hierarchy is structured can positively or negatively impact the success of a brand. (Deksia 2021.)

The brand hierarchy of Z can be seen as a house of brands brand hierarchy as it boasts a brand portfolio of independent brands as shown in Appendix 8. The brands can be sectioned into portfolios starting from the portfolio including the brands in each of the business units of Z, and further into portfolios including brands of specific field, such as housing.

All of the portfolios are refined further to even more inclusive portfolios of brands that are specifically targeted to professionals as opposed to consumers. The brands and their products/services are quite scattered, which is why it was seen important to clarify the variety of products offered to this specific and strategically important target group.

This specific brand portfolio carries the name "A", and it includes multiple brands. An important remark is that eventually X holds the access to all these products/services making the everyday life of the professionals quite a lot easier, and in a business point of view also prospering potential for increased sales.

1.3   The goals and content areas

The goal and research problem of this thesis is to find out what kind of brand image X, a newly launched ERP service, has both in the eyes of the current/potential customers and the workers behind it. Are there differences between the inside and outside view? Do the results reflect

the strategic definitions of X's brand? The topic is important as X is on its journey to take the place of a current market leader Y.

X's journey has just begun, as has the building of its brand. That's why it's relevant to see where the brand stands at this point. With the help of this information, it's easier to continue the brand work towards the wanted goal.

1.4 The methodologies used

Brand image is something that exists in people's heads and thus has different perceptions. It is something that is felt and seen rather than a specific gauge that can be measured, let alone generalized to other brands.

Even though different research extracts can roughly be divided between qualitative and quantitative, there are other methods between the two, some overlapping or even contradicting each other. These blended research combinations include case studies, development research and action research. Subfields of qualitative research include ethnographic, phenomenon and narrative studies. (Kananen 2014, 21.)

As the purpose of this thesis is to understand the current status of a certain brand, and the means to find answers was by conducting a survey (mostly including open questions), it meets the criteria of a case study, a blend of qualitative and quantitative research methods.

1.4.1 Data collection

The survey questions were planned by the author of this thesis, and the final questions were refined together with the Business Manager, Development Manager and Marketing Manager of X. It was decided to include as many open-ended questions as possible to avoid inserting unintentional thoughts by deciding answer options on behalf of the survey participants.

It's important to pay special attention to the target group of the study to ensure good quality results and data. (Kananen 2014.) To reach the people who have the best possible knowledge about the issue, the target groups for the survey were first divided by two criteria: one survey for all the customers, and one for the workers behind X. Furthermore, the customer group was narrowed down by a specific group that are known not to be as informed about the issue at this point, which could possibly affect the end results of the survey.

The actual questions were similar, excluding the background questions at the beginning of the survey, and questions that were related only to the customers.

In addition, it should be noted that the target group consisting of the customers were divided by three subgroups:

- Customers who use X as their sole tool
- Customers who use an ERP system (Y or other) as their sole tool but have used X for any additional tasks.

- Customers who have not used X at all and manages operations through an ERP system (Yor other).

The target group consisting of the workers behind X was divided through two phases: first a division between business units and then by different teams inside the units.

The survey was done with the help of QuestPack, a software designed for conducting surveys, and the surveys were sent by email. To ensure as many answers as possible it was decided to give out small prizes to five participants. The actual questionnaire was anonymous, but those participants who wanted the chance to win the prize were asked to fill in their name, phone number and email address. The information could not be traced back to the given answers.

The survey was sent on the 5th of June 2023 and the respondents had time to answer until the 12th of June. In qualitative research the amount of data depends on the answers received. The researcher should analyze the results as they are coming in and in the light of this make the decision to end collecting data. (Kananen 2014.) It was agreed to extend the answer time if needed, and a few reminders were sent during the initial time window. Reflecting on past surveys conducted to quite the similar target group, it was apparent that anything near 100 responses would be a victory. It was also taken into consideration that only a few weeks before this survey, there was another survey done. Fortunately, the target group had some variations as it was targeted mostly at people who oversee their organization's operations.

After the 12th of June the survey sent to the customers had gathered 134 responses and the one sent to the workers behind X 29 responses. In this case the situation was considered a victory and an extension period was not executed. In addition, the hectic nature of the customers' workdays, the critical need for the results, and the fact that the summer holiday season was approaching were considered.

1.5   Analyzing the results

The gathered data was in text and numeric forms as the answers consisted both of open answers (text) and marked choices (percentages) for the multiple-choice questions. QuestPack provided results for the multiple-choice questions automatically and presented the results in a form of graphs showing the number of answers in percentages for each of the answer alternatives. Some of the multiple-choice answers were further analyzed by filtering the answers according to the background of the respondents.

The gathered text from the open answers were filtered based on the material gathered and divided to main groups and their respective sub-groups. The answers were then analyzed through the research question and the set research problem.

2 X's brand

2.1 The starting point

Initially X's brand work started in the first quarter of 2020. It was conducted as a group consisting of people from different teams, such as the developer, marketing, UX/UI design etc. including the Business Manager of X. To get the best possible results in the best possible time while ensuring each member of the group as much time to concentrate on the given task as possible the project was conducted using an agile methodology of a sprint. Brunskill (2019) defines a sprint as a set period during which specific work has to be completed and made ready for review. Each sprint begins with a planning meeting during which the tasks that need to be completed during the sprint are agreed. The duration of a sprint is determined by the facilitator of the team. In this case the facilitator was a consultant from a different company to help the team to think outside the box and stay on the right tracks.

Even though the length of a sprint is traditionally 30 days (Brunskill 2019.) it was decided that 2 weeks sprints were sufficient as every member of the brand team had other tasks and duties to accomplish on the side. Each task had a dedicated subgroup who committed to working on the given assignment together. After a few sprints the team had gathered a brand book including:

- The reasons why X exists with visions and missions according to the brand hierarchy where Z define the umbrella level vision and mission.
- The values of X.
- The service promises of X.
- The most important aspects that make X stand out from competition and that have a competitive advantage.
- The current competitors and the way they are communicating.
- An elevator pitch for X.
- The tone of voice.

In addition, the visual elements with fonts, colors, logo, and the wanted image styles were gathered in a separate brand guide document and a short PowerPoint material was made for the sales and customer support teams.

As stated before, the initial goal for the launch of X was in the end of the year 2020, but the actual launch happened in January 2023. During that time X's core team had many changes from the Business Manager to Development Manager as well as a switch in the structure and technical implementations behind the system resulting in delays. In addition, during 2022 a new aggressive competitor emerged to the market generating a completely different business environment.

Due to the new competitive setting, it was decided to refine the brand book and see what could be improved to give the best possible impression of the brand and help marketing, sales, and customer support team to work towards building the wanted brand image.

This time an outside marketing agency was hired to help and a small inside team was formed including people from marketing, sales, customer support, UI/UX and development. After a day of refining the competitive advantages and strengths of X as a team, the agency compiled a first draft of the brand book. It was then iterated together with the team and after a few iterations the final version was ready.

It should be noted that during the latter brand work of X, a complementary service had gone through an extensive brand renewal process with noteworthy changes especially in the visual elements including, colors, fonts, logo, and image styles. As the changes made to that service brand was considered a big success, it was decided to take advantage of the new and fresh elements in building the brand for X excluding the other services' brand colors. The complementary service has a strong and sturdy brand, which is why utilizing the same elements in X's brand can make a better connection between the two brands.

Section 2.2 focuses on the results of the latest brand work by elaborating the strategic definition of the brand. At this point it can be seen as the goal on how X's brand is wanted to be seen in the market. It also acts as a comparison for the data that was gathered during the research.

2.2 The strategic definition of X's brand

The strategic definition creates a base for all marketing and communication actions, which are in a key position in building X's brand. All actions, whether tactical or long-term developments should reflect and support the made strategy. The main components of the strategic definition of X's brand are introduced in the following sub-sections.

2.2.1 Target groups

There are five main marketing and communications target groups that were found during the latest brand work. These target groups were defined bearing in mind the current situation of X: a new ERP system that will eventually take over Y, which creates a window for thinking all the options in the market:

1. **The business-oriented decision-makers** of manager-level, who focuses on the big picture: What is the cost-value ratio? How does this decision affect the staff? Are there possibilities for unexpected costs? They also value the opinions of their peers and thinks highly of the stability of the provider.
2. **The security-oriented decision-makers** who are sole entrepreneurs or own a small business. The possible risks are the main concern of this target group, and changes are considered a fear-factor. After all, refined routines have gotten this group so far.
3. **The digitally exceptional gatekeepers** who are first and foremost focused on the user experience and modern technology behind every system. This group sees themselves as experts in their field and want to ensure that the recommendations they make are

in line with their image. Whether or not this target group recommends the system to the final decision-maker depends mostly on the technical abilities.

4. **The price-conscious decision-makers** of manager-level, who are mostly concerned about the overall costs. They want to be assured the estimated costs stay in the promised frame and values the ability to test the system thoroughly before making any decisions.

5. **The comfort-loving decision-makers** either manager-level or highly successful real estate agents with long experience. This group values their workflow and do not want anything messing it. They want everything to work as easily and smoothly as possible, preferably with their mobiles. The decisions are based on their feelings regarding the ease of use and value reached through the system.

2.2.2   The strengths and benefits of X

The strengths and benefits define the conditions for operation, but do not necessarily act as factors that stand out from the competition.

1. **Ease** (of use). X offers versatile tools for easy CRM and personal contacts. It guides, predicts, reminds, and sees that all parties are up to date during the sales processes. In addition, X brings relevant info and lucrative sales to the fingertips of every professional regardless of their level of expertise. All they need is a mobile, and X takes care of everything else.

2. **Speed.** X takes productivity and quality to the next level. It standardizes, streamlines, and boosts the workflow by focusing every work phase into one service. The easy-to-use service allows better allocation of time for the sales and caring of the customers without any extra steps or transitions between different services. X has the means to stand out from the competitors by personal service and top-notch customer experience.

3. **Reliability.** X has a long lifecycle, and it ensures that good agency practice is followed. The comprehensive service has high class security methods and procedures throughout the system, a reliable 10-year archive and customer support with fast response times. X is built on open API, which makes scaling for all types of needs and different size organizations possible. The customer pays only for the features being used.

4. **Supported by a sturdy organization group and equipped with superb customer support.** The recognition of Z and Y lower the bar for the customers to start using X. Stable financial situation brings security, strong product development continuity, the best customer support in the industry ease. As users of X the customers are also able to take advantage of the most comprehensive market information from the industry (produced by Z group) before anyone else.

5. **The most popular and comprehensive medias in Finland.** Z group owns the largest field specific marketplaces in Finland. With the help of the marketplaces the professionals can reach a ready customer base and are able to market their services profitably. With the help of the market knowledge of Z together with data produced by

different medias, X can give better service than the competitors, and enable using tools that help the customers reach better results.

6. **Over 20 years of experience from the industry.** X represents already a third-generation ERP system of its industry. It knows the industry and speaks the same language with its customers. During implementation, X takes the customer's business and further development of their processes into consideration. Its extensive experience and comprehensive market data allows it to help the customers to stay ahead and lead with knowledge while increasing their sales.

2.2.3 The competitive advantages of X

The distinguishing factors, or competitive advantages are unique strengths that cannot be offered by any other company to the same target group. For X these include:

- **Understanding the industry.** X speaks the same language with its customers. It has over 20 years of experience from the industry and knows all the about the workdays, legislations, and fragmentary processes. X is dedicated to developing the businesses of its customers with consultative and practical means. X creates trends, recognizes needs for development, offers solutions, and shares the best practices of the industry.
- **Taking advantage of data.** X helps to lead with knowledge. It offers unique, business supporting data that no one else in the industry has access to. The data is gathered for example by different studies conducted by Z.
- **Support and security.** X is a safe choice. The backing of Z group with its variety of media and the solid position of Y makes it easier to start using X. X is a long-term and cost-effective investment well into the future. It has strong product development, studiously superior customer support and state of the art data security.

2.2.4 Positioning of X

Positioning defines the preconditions of the brand's operation in relation to the competitors who offer same services to the same target group. X is valued and approachable expert of the industry, and a technological pioneer. It brings positive changes to the customers' lives by highlighting visionary, partnership as well as genuine care and attendance.

X is known for its in-depth knowledge of the industry and the needs of its customers as well as the ability to develop and support its clients' businesses with technology and data.

3 The brand image of X through the eyes of the customers

3.1 Background of the respondents

A total of 132 respondents contributed to this study. All of the graphs and more detailed answers are shown in Appendix 9.

The majority of the respondents are working in a private company (63 %) and a little over one third (34 %) work in a company that is part of a larger chain.

Most of the respondents reported that they are working in a company with 1-9 people (67 %), 11 % work in a company with 10-19 people, 11 % with 20-49 people and 10 % in a company with 50 or more people.

The roles of the respondents were divided between those who oversee the decision-making, those who contribute to the decision-making and to those who are not involved in the decision-making process. Nearly 50 % of the respondents are in a decision-making role, 30 % are involved in the decision-making process and 21 % are not involved in the process at all.

Majority of the respondents are situated in Uusimaa (41 %), then Pirkanmaa (17 %) followed by Pohjois-Pohjanmaa (10 %), Keski-Suomi (6 %) and Varsinais-Suomi (6%). Other provinces were quite equally represented with lower than 3 % respondents. Only Ahvenanmaa, Kainuu and Pohjois-Karjala were not represented by the respondents.

Majority of the respondents were at least somewhat familiar with X, as 58 % reported that service is used by the company partially, 11 % reported that the company is using X as their sole tool and 27 % reported their company does not use the system and all tasks are handled with some other ERP system. 4 % couldn't say whether X was in use in their company or not.

If filtered between those who work in a chain company and those who work in a privately owned company, the privately owned companies' respondents are using X more, either fully or partially (73,5 %) than those who are part of a bigger chain (58 %). Respondents working in a bigger chain also couldn't say whether X is used or not (9 %) than those of privately owned companies (1 %).

In addition to the question about the usage of X it was seen important to find out what the main ERP used was if the respondent answered that X was partially in use. Table 7. in Appendix 9 shows the division of different ERP systems used.

It can also be seen that almost half (44 %) of the respondents belonging to a chain company checked the "Other, what?" option and elaborated the ERP system used was one that is specially designed for it. The respondents from privately owned companies had 0 responses in the same option "Other, what?".

The respondents who reported that X is not used at all were also asked what ERP system they use, and the division of different systems can be seen in Appendix 9, Table 9. In addition, Table 10. in Appendix 9 shows the situation (from respondents who reported X is not used at all) between chain companies and privately owned companies. It can be seen that one third from

chain companies (33 %) reported "Other, what?" ERP system being used as opposed to almost half (44 %) of the respondents who reported using X only partially and work in a chain company. Those belonging to a chain company with checked "Other, what?" option also told that the ERP system used was one that is specially designed for the company.

3.2   Structured questions

The respondents who confirmed being decision-makers and that their company either had X only in partial use or not in use at all were asked whether their company has had any considerations to fully transition to use X.

Table 11. in Appendix 10 shows that 43 % of the respondents answered "Yes", 48 % "No" and 9 % couldn't say.

When looking at the responses through those working in a chain company and those in a privately owned company (Table. 12 in Appendix 10), respondents from chain companies had considered the option to transition to use X less (28 %) than the respondents from privately owned companies (46 %). This could be because X does not (yet) offer all the needed functions that a bigger chain company needs, and/or more time is needed to elaborate all options before taking decisions like these into discussions.

When asked how the image provided by X reflects reliability and professionalism, most of the respondents (58 %) saw that it was reflected very, or quite well. Third of the respondents (31 %) couldn't say, 9 % felt that it was reflected quite badly and 2 % answered that it was reflected very badly. (Table 13. in Appendix 10)

Even though over half of the respondents thought that the brand reflects professionalism and reliability very or quite well, the number of responses reflecting either unawareness or more negative thoughts tells that the brand does not yet have a solid ground in the thoughts of the customers.

There weren't any notable differences when looking at the same results filtered by chain companies and privately owned companies (Table 14. in Appendix 10).

54 % of the respondents felt that technological development and innovation is communicated very, or quite well by X (Table 15. in Appendix 10). Again, approximately third (32 %) of the respondents couldn't say, 10 % felt that communication of technological development and innovation is communicated quite badly, and 5 % very badly.

When dividing the responses according to respondents working in chain companies and privately owned companies, notable differences cannot be found. (Table 16. in Appendix 10).

Overall communication about current issues and developments related to X (Table 17. in Appendix 10.) was sufficient for 46 % of the respondents, not sufficient for 25 % and 30 % couldn't say.

When looking at the responses filtered by respondents working in chain companies and in privately owned companies (Table 18. in Appendix 10.), the opinions are more evenly

distributed between all the answer alternatives in the privately owned company -group, as 39 % feel the communication is sufficient, 34 % feel that it's not sufficient and 28 % can't say.

Those who felt that the communication of current issues and development was not sufficient were asked a follow-up question through which channels and means they would like to get more information. Table 19. in Appendix 10 shows that 64 % prefers receiving information through email, 58 % would like to attend webinars for more information, 46 % would like to have instruction videos, 21 % would like to be personally contacted for example a salesperson and 9 % preferred information through social media. 3 % shared an open answer opinion regarding a chance to try new features right away in the right environment (X).

The preferred methods had notable variations when filtering the answers between chain companies and privately owned companies. (Table 20. in Appendix 10.).

Those representing chain companies preferred emails, instruction videos and webinars, whereas privately owned company workers were solely rooting for methods of social media, personal contacts, and other means. Perhaps the bigger chain company workers feel they want to receive information in a more efficient way and the smaller company workers appreciate a more personal touch.

3.3   NPS of X

NPS stands for Net Promoter Score and answers the question "How likely would you recommend the product or service to your friend or colleague?". The NPS is divided to detractors, passives, and promoters and the final NPS score is calculated by distracting the number of detractors from the number of promoters, dividing the result by the total number of all answers, and finally multiplied by 100. The final score could be something from -100 to 100, and everything over 0 is considered positive as most of the customers would recommend your company. NPS over 50 is excellent and NPS over 70 is a world class score. (Aaltonen, 2019)

Keeping track of the NPS score is a great tool for being up to date on the thoughts of the customers. That way any risen concerns can be dealt with proper actions possibly resulting in turning detractors to promoters.

To get a NPS score for X, it was included in the survey. It was, however asked only from those who responded to have had some experience of using X. The results show that the final NPS score is -8 with more detractors than promoters. (Picture 4. in Appendix 10.).

To get a better idea of the results there was a chance to leave an open comment with the NPS score. In this case the answers were also divided to detractors, neutrals, and promoters. Most of the answers could be categorized as neutrals, a slightly smaller number of answers could be categorized as detractors and minority of the answers to positives.

Detractors felt X as unfinished, unclear, or more complicated to what they have been used to. Some were anxious about the learning process and there were also mentions about the inexperience on the matter.

Neutrals mostly commented not really knowing what X really is about and thus not being able to lean towards a promoter nor detractor.

Positives felt that the new service is functioning well, the users have been pleased and some felt X is modern.

3.4   Open ended questions

The questionnaire included a total of 7 open ended questions, of which 6 was directed to everyone, and 1 question *"What kinds of factors have influenced the considerations related to the transition (to X)?"* was directed only to decision-makers who represented a company where X was partially used, or not used at all.

All open answers are filtered based on the material and then categorized accordingly. All the answers can be found from the Appendix 4.

3.4.1   Considerations on transitioning to X

The precise question was: *"What kinds of factors have influenced the considerations related to the transition to X?"* and it was answered by 37 respondents who reported of being a decision-maker and either partially use X in their company, or do not use X at all. The initial question was situated after a multiple-choice question: *"Has there been any thoughts in your company on transitioning to X?"*.

The answers could be categorized to the following main categories with their respective sub-categories:

1. **User Experience and Familiarity**
   - Time constraints and learning curve
   - Familiarity with the current system
   - Resistance to change due to familiarity

Most of the answers in this category were related to the fact that the current system in use is so easy and simple, that if would feel overwhelming to change to a new system. "Why change a working system to another?". There was also worry regarding the time it takes to learn a new system. "There's no time" was repeated several times.

2. **Functionality and Features**
   - Comprehensive system functionality
   - Desired and useful features
   - Modernization and future needs
   - Mobile access and usability

The answers in this category were mostly positive in nature. Availability of desired features, technical development, and modernity as well as mobile functionality were mentioned. "Every

function in one place" was brought up a couple of times and "the ease of use with future needs taken into account" were mentioned as well.

3. Transition and Compatibility
- Challenges and benefits of transitioning
- Compatibility with existing systems
- Data transfer and integration concerns

Some felt that the challenges opposed to benefits were unclear in the transition process. Some mentioned that the transition is necessary because current system is not equivalent to the company's needs. There was also a mention of trust built through a long relationship with the complementary service from the same organization group Z, which makes the transition decision easy and X as their choice.

4. Cost and Pricing
- Concerns about pricing and expenses
- Comparison of costs with other systems
- Value assessment based on features and benefits

The cost of X was compared in relation to the current costs of the complementary service and some felt that a competitor offers a better suited entity for their needs.

Purchase decisions are not as straightforward in the B2B world as they would be in the consumer world. The company must thoroughly think about all the possible affects the decision has on its future operating. The costs are high and there should be a clear understanding on the benefits the purchase will have to overcome all costs toward a thriving business. (Gronlund 2013.)

An ERP system plays a huge role especially in the bigger companies. It is no wonder that costs and possible challenges regarding the transition to X was raised in the answers. Reassurance of a smooth transition and all the benefits would most likely help with the decision-making process.

3.4.2   The image of X

The precise question was: *"What kind of images do you have when thinking about X?"* and it gathered 86 answers. The answers could be categorized to the following main categories. In this instance the sub-categories were replaced to a division of positive, negative, or neutral answers.

1. Functionality and entity

Positive comments in this category felt that X is a well-working and wholesome entity, modern, and something with new possibilities.

Negative comments described the new system as old-fashioned, unfinished, or as just a new "icing" over the old system.

Neutral comments included assumptions that X worked in an "OK" fashion and that it is the current Contract Customer Service.

2. Usability and Clarity

Positive feedback included comments on the good clarity and ease of use. Some mentioned how easy it is to see all received contacts and some gave compliments on the statistics and the how development ideas have been taken into consideration. X was also seen as something that is still developing and more versatile than other systems.

Negative comments on the other hand reflected bad user experience with unclarity and feelings that the system is confusing. Some also felt that the system feels unfinished and uncertain.

Neutral comments brought forth inexperience of the system.

3. Reliability and Value

Positive feedback quite consistently stated that they see X as a quality system.

Negative feedback brought feelings that X is expensive, and some felt as chained to a monopoly.

4. Excitement and expectations

Positive comments show that X is greatly anticipated system, some stated that the complementary service from the same Z group is the only option as it has the best visibility in Finland.

Negative feelings showed frustration for the upcoming transition process, which was felt as completely unnecessary change. Some also mentioned how the employees of their company were not eagerly waiting for the transition to X.

Neutral comments were mostly stating there are no big expectations yet.

It must be noted that a great majority (over 50) of all the responses to the question brought forth uncertainty and inexperience towards X. This is not a surprise because at the time of the survey, X had been functioning for only 6 months and it did not offer the actual ERP qualities at that point.

As Uusitalo (2014) states the core aspects when building a brand should evolve around value; how it's created, how it's communicated and how it's captured. In this case especially the communication is in a key position in building a strong brand for X.

3.4.3 The perceptions of X against its competitors

The precise question was: *"In your opinion, how does X differ from its competitors?"* and it was answered by 74 respondents. The answers could be categorized to the following main categories with their respective sub-categories:

1. User experience

- Clarity and visual elements
- Uncertainty and inexperience

Some of the respondents felt that X is a pioneer in the field and that system is clearer than the competing systems. There were also mentions on more interesting visual elements, and some pointed out the fact that X is completely domestic operator. Most of the responses, however pointed out inexperience or uncertainty on the matter.

3. **Functionality and features**
   - Ease of use
   - Statistics
   - Modernity

X was felt as most comprehensive and versatile, and some pointed out the well-functioning statistics as well as the modernity of it. Some on the other hand felt that the development of the system is much slower from the competitors and is not as easy to use.

3. **Reliability and support**
   - Good customer support
   - Back of a large organization group

There was also a mention of the fact that X is supported by a large company (Z group) and some felt that the customer support of X is better than those of the competitors.

Looking through all the answers, the majority (over 40) of them reflected uncertainty and unfamiliarity on the matter.

Brand doesn't form in a vacuum, or just inside an organization, but is subject to outer forces from the competitive market as well. (Taipale 2007.) Even though the answers reflected positive and wanted attributes, most of the respondents could not really evaluate where X stands against its competition. Perhaps more communication on the matter would help the situation.

3.4.4   The expected equivalence of X to the future needs and expectations

The precise question was: *"When thinking about your future needs and hopes, how well do you think X is able to meet them?"* and it was answered by 60 respondents. The answers could be categorized to the following main categories with their respective sub-categories:

1. **Hope and trust**
   - Wholesome solution
   - Positivity
   - Ease of use

Majority of the responses in this category showed positivity in their hopes on X's equivalence to their future needs. Some were sure that X will fulfill their future needs, some thought that X is technically advanced, and many wished effortless user experience and faster functions.

2. **Uncertainty and unfamiliarity**

- Comparisons to competitors
- Incompleteness
- Poor level of experience

Some respondents pointed out they have already chosen another system for their company, some were not eager to consider X as their ERP system and majority felt unable to think about the equivalence to their future needs due to weak level of experience of the system.

The answers for the question at hand could be roughly divided 50/50 to those who felt quite sure that X would provide sufficient service for their needs in the future, and to those who were still uncertain due to lack of experience on the system.

The benefits of any brand's offerings should be communicated clearly and in a manner that is easy to understand (Taipale 2007.). As half of the respondents were still uncertain due to lack of experience, it might be a good idea to paint a clearer picture of all the features X has to offer in the future.

It's the brand that has the most impact in the decision-making process of customers and it's especially important for the customers to have solid trust on the organization and its abilities to deliver products and services that continue to evolve and stay up to date as time and technology change. (Taipale 2007, 27.)

3.4.5   The visual appearance of X

The precise question was: *"What kind of feelings does the visual appearance of X evoke?"* and it was answered by 58 respondents. Due to the nature of the responses the answers are divided into categories reflecting positive, negative, or neutral feelings.

1. Positive

The number of positive answers was higher than the other groups. Most of the responses describe the visual appearance as good or pleasing. Some feel that it reflects modernity, and some feel it mirrors quality.

2. Negative

Some felt that the visual appears as unfinished, and some reflected the visuals to bad user experience. There were also mentions that the visual elements are plain or simply not to the taste of the respondent.

3. Neutral

The second most answers belonged to this group consisting of "Neutral" and "OK" answers. Some felt uncertainty and answered, "I can't say".

First impressions are usually lasting ones, which is why creating a logo/symbol along with other visual elements that reflect the personality of the brand as well as the expectations and needs of customers. (Gronlund 2013). At this point, the visual elements of X are mainly considered as good or neutral, which can be seen as a positive result.

3.4.6   Most important feature of an ERP system

The precise question was: *"Which brokerage ERP system feature is so important to you that you wouldn't give it up at any cost?"* and it was answered by 66 respondents. The answers could be categorized to the following main categories with their respective sub-categories:

1. **Information management and documentation**
    - Simplicity of managing listings
    - Trustworthy archiving
    - Data management and integration
    - Secure system

The simplicity of managing listings regardless of the marketplace visibility was mentioned quite often, also the importance of a reliable archive system and overall security came up in the answers. Some felt that a working integration system would be all they need, and others brought up the significance of data management.

2. **Functionality and features**
    - Statistics and price estimation possibilities
    - Digital signatures and document handling
    - Everything in one place

Some felt that comprehensive statistics and a possibility to make price estimations are the most important features, others brought up the importance of document handling in one place and a possibility to utilize digital signatures. Quite a few stated that the best possible scenario would be a system that includes everything they need in one place.

3. **User experience and ease of use**
    - Possibility to use in every device
    - Clarity and easy to use

A functional and easy to use entity was mentioned a few times as well as the possibility to use the system in every device.

The wide range of different answers show how important an ERP system is for the companies and for the individuals using it as their everyday tool. X can be seen as a digital service where the user experience is formed mostly from the functionality of the system. The information provided through this question gives crucial knowledge on what the customers are looking for, what they need and what they dream or worry about. As Kotler, Keller etc. (2012) say brand perception often has less to do with the product or service but relates to everything the customers perceive, and much of what customers learn about brands takes place in the digital world. And that is exactly the case with X.

3.4.7 Final greetings from the respondents

As a final "question" the respondents were given a chance to leave their regards to the X team. 33 respondents took the chance, and the answers could be categorized to the following main categories:

1. Hopes for a contact

Some wished to have a contact from the X team for more information regarding the service. Unfortunately, these could not be traced to anyone because the survey was conducted anonymously.

2. Ideas and wishes for development

There were several quite specific development ideas. For example, a suggestion that the system would save made entries automatically and a possibility to make notes under a listing in a way that would be visible to every user of that same office. Also, improvements to maps were brought up.

3. Experiences of X

There were some comments pointing out how they are not impressed by X or that it has been in minor use. Some felt that using Y and X has been difficult, and someone felt that the communication of the relationship between X and Y has been unclear.

4. General greetings and feelings

Some wanted to thank, someone waits eagerly for the comprehensive X, someone wanted to bring out the fact that a good user experience is vital, and someone pointed out how time is of great value.

4 The brand image of X through the eyes of its workers

4.1 Background of the respondents

A total of 29 people answered to this study. Table 21. in Appendix 11. shows the representation of different teams among the respondents. 28 % are a part of the product development team, 24 % of the sales team, 21 % of the customer support team, 7 % of the marketing team, 7 % of the maintenance team, 3 % of the D team and 10 % of other teams.

As all relevant questions were the same for the customers and the workers behind X, the results will be compared with each other. That way it can be seen if major differences occur. The structured questions are analyzed in the next section (4.2) and the open-ended questions after that (section 4.3).

4.2 Structured questions

The first structured question was about how well X reflects reliability and professionalism. The Table 22. in Appendix 11. shows that the workers are more confident about the reflection than the customers. 87 % of the workers answered the image reflected the given attributes quite well or very well, when the same options were chosen by 58 % of the customers. 3 % of the workers, and 9 % of the customers saw the given attributes were reflected quite badly. None of the workers chose the very badly option while 2 % of the customers did. Finally, the I can't say option was chosen by 10 % of the workers and 31 % of the customers.

Next question concerned the communication of technological development and innovation of X. Table 23. in Appendix 11. shows that the biggest differences between the two respondent groups were in the quite badly (24 % vs. 10 %) and I can't say (10 % vs. 32 %) options. None of the workers felt that the communication is very bad, while 5 % of the customers chose that option. 65 % of the workers thought that the communication was handled very or quite well and 24 % quite badly. The same percentages in the customer group were 54 %, 10 %.

The differences between the two groups might be explained by the fact that the workers know the technological aspects of X a lot better than the customers. This should be taken into consideration when planning the communications for the customers.

The question regarding sufficient communication about the current issues and developments of X to the customers, the answers of both groups didn't show major differences, as can be seen in the Table 24. in Appendix 11.

38 % of the workers (46 %) thought that the communication is sufficient, 31 % (25 %) thought it is not sufficient and 31 % (30 %) could not say. The percentages in brackets show the results of the customers.

If the respondent felt that the communication is not sufficient, they were asked a follow-up question on their preferred channels information should be shared more. It should be noted that only 9 respondents answered this question.

The biggest difference between the answers of the workers and the customers was regarding the method of getting information personally, from example a salesperson. 89 % of the respondents of the workers chose this option, as opposed to 21 % of the customers. Email was the second most preferred method for both groups: workers 79 % and customers 64 %. Webinars was chosen by quite the same percentage as 56 % of the workers and 58 % of the customers felt it would be the best method of receiving more info. Instruction videos was preferred by 44 % of the workers and 46 % of the customers. Social media as the means of distributing and receiving info was preferred by 22 % of the workers and 9 % of the customers. 11 % of the workers chose the "Other" option but did not elaborate further what other means they were possibly thinking.

The major difference between getting/sharing information personally through the salespeople between the two groups might show eagerness for the X personnel to get a chance to share the possibilities of the system face-to-face in order to ensure full understanding and a chance to overcome possible doubts. Perhaps the customers feel they want to get to know the system and what is said about it on their own first, and only after that are more open for a personal contact from the salesperson. Of course, the question is also about the personal preferences of different customers. Some like face-to-face interactions more than others.

4.3   Open ended questions

The questionnaire for the workers included a total of 6 open ended questions. All the answers are filtered according to the same categories as were used in the customers' answers. The sub-categories are based on the material filtered to the main category. A short comparison to the answers of the customers is also made. All the answers can be found in the Appendix 5.

4.3.1   The image of X

The precise question was: *"What kind of images do you have when thinking about X?"* and it gathered 26 answers. As with the answers of the customers, these answers were also categorized to main categories and further to positive, negative, and neutral answers.

1. Functionality and entity

The answers regarding functionality and entity were only positive in nature. It was described as a big and complex project designed to help the real estate professionals in every situation they encounter in their work, as an advanced system for handling big entities.

When comparing this category with the customers answers, it can be seen that the customers are a bit more pessimistic and skeptical regarding the upcoming system. There are, however, visible similarities in the positive comments of the customers to those of the workers.

2. Usability and Clarity

Again, only positive comments could be found in the answers regarding this category. X was described as easy-to-use and clear, something completely new in the market and "the future". It was also described as a working system that does what it promises.

The customers had similar answers in the positive section as ease of use and clarity were mentioned. The customers also brought out that the system is still developing. A clear contradiction to the answers of the workers as opposed to the customers could be found in the negative thoughts of the customers, as they felt that the system is confusing or outdated.

3. Reliability and Value

Positive thoughts included that X is trustworthy, of high quality and something that is easily accessible wherever you are. It was also described as modern (many times).

Negative feelings pointed out the number of bugs found in the beginning of the implementation and the fact that X is still very much a work in progress.

Comparing to the answers of the customers a quality system was a consistent term used about the system, which is quite consistent to the positive answers of the workers. Negative feelings about costs or a negative echo about the Z group as a monopoly didn't come up in the comments of the workers.

4. Excitement and expectations

Some of the answers in the positive category were anticipating eagerly, some hoped that X would become a great system and at the same time feared it would fail miserably, which would count as a negative feeling. Some stated that they were not able to say anything at this point.

The biggest difference between the two answer groups was the negative feelings of frustration of the upcoming transition process from the customers, which was not found in the answers of the workers. Eager anticipation was found from the answers of both groups.

4.3.2   The perceptions of X against its competitors

The precise question was: *"In your opinion, how does X differ from its competitors?"* and it was answered by 26 respondents. The answers were categorized using the same main categories as in the section 4.3.3 and sub-categorized according to the material in the main category.

1. User experience
   - Clarity and ease of use
   - Legislation taken into consideration
   - Versatility

Some pointed out that X has better options for its personalization for the needs of the customers. Some felt that X is very clear and easy to use, and that it is designed for the needs

of the customers', for example making sure all the legislative factors are correct and it's safe to use.

2. Functionality and Features
- Advanced system for a wholesome experience
- From professionals to professionals
- Strong business know-how
- Modern technologies used

The expertise found behind X was mentioned in many ways as well as the modern technology used. Some also pointed out that X is a more advanced entity than its competitors.

3. Reliability and Support
- Long history and experience in the field
- Customers get what they are promised
- Benefits of a large company and partners

There were many answers that brought out the long history from the field and especially from making brokerage ERP systems. It was also felt important that X delivers what is promised.

Compared to the answers of the customers it can be noted that the customers are much more uncertain of the benefits or differences of X as opposed to the workers behind X. There are, however, similarities in both groups' answers regarding the feelings of more modern, easier to use, more versatile system that is backed by a large organization (Z group).

4.3.3   The expected equivalence of X to the future needs and expectations

The precise question was: *"When thinking about the future needs and hopes of the customers, how well do you think X is able to meet them?"* and it was answered by 24 respondents. The answers were categorized using the same main categories as in the section 4.3.4 and sub-categorized according to the material in the main category.

1. Hope and trust
- Certainty of great equivalence
- Superiority
- Customers' needs are listened to

The majority of the answers were under this category with great certainty that X will deliver everything and beyond a customer will ever need. Some pointed out the fact that customer needs have been and will be listened in the future as well, some felt that the system will be a great improvement to what has been used to.

2. Uncertainty and unfamiliarity
- Work in progress, difficult to say
- Possible huge changes needed
- Somewhere in the future
- Should speed up the process

Some were a bit doubtful due to work still being in progress, some anticipated changing needs in the future and some felt that the process should speed up in order to succeed.

Comparing the two respondent groups, the majority of both, the customers, and workers behind X, felt that X will meet their needs in the future. The doubts of both groups have similar touching points as the workers also ponder how the incomplete system will show as something that will meet the customers' needs, and the customers are not able to see that in their level of experience of the system.

4.3.4   The visual appearance of X

The precise question was: *"What kind of feelings does the visual appearance of X evoke?"* and it was answered by 23 respondents. Due to the nature of the responses the answers are divided into categories reflecting positive, negative, or neutral feelings.

1. Positive

Majority of the answers reflected positive associations. The appearance was described as fresh, premium, high quality, modern and simple, logical, light, reliable, inspiring, nearly luxurious, and clear.

Negative associations came from the appearance in social media channels, and someone felt the overall image is too dark, too focused on people and that the communication is unclear. Some on the other hand felt that the colors are too plain.

Neutral feelings brought up thoughts of modesty and neutrality, or no feelings at all.

Compared to the customer group, there is quite a difference on the thoughts of X's visual elements. Most of the customers leaned on the neutral side not being able to distinguish anything specific. The positive feelings had some similar adjectives used as with the workers behind X, such as modernity and high quality. The customers' negative feelings were reflected to bad user experiences, and feelings of unfinished product, whereas the workers behind X listed quite specific visual elements they did not like, and the number of negative associations among the workers was substantially smaller than among the customers. The differences could be due to familiarity of the system; the workers are most likely more used to the visuals of X and in a way blinded by it. Whereas the customers are still not that used to the new layout and colors making it unfamiliar.

4.3.5   Most important feature of an ERP system

The precise question was: *"To your opinion, which brokerage ERP system feature is so important to the professionals in the real estate field that they wouldn't give it up at any cost?"* and it was answered by 23 respondents. The answers were categorized using the same main categories as in the section 4.3.6 and sub-categorized according to the material in the main category.

1. **Information management and documentation**
   - Leads
   - Commissions
   - Managing listings
   - Reporting possibilities

Most of the answers were related to the same factor: the topicality of different data be it received leads, commission contracts, and other needed documents. The management of listings regardless of the marketplace visibility was also mentioned.

2. **Functionality and features**
   - Digital sales and signatures
   - All the current features Y has
   - Transactions process from start to finish

Some felt it was important to be able to handle transactions and signatures digitally and others saw all the features included in Y are considered important.

3. **User experience and ease of use**
   - Works with mobile devices
   - Easy to use
   - Everything in one place

"All features in one place" was mentioned multiple times as was the importance of good user experience in an easy-to-use environment and with any device, especially mobile phones.

Looking at the answers of both groups it's quite clear that the workers behind X and the customers of the complementary service are on the same page when it comes to the most important features of an ERP system. Same themes could be seen in both groups' answers. Working alongside (workers behind X and other services of Z and the end customers) with different projects throughout the years are clearly showing.

4.3.6   Final greetings from the respondents

The workers behind X were also given the chance to leave greetings of their own. 14 people chose to take the chance and the answers could be categorized to positive, neutral, and negative in nature.

1. **Positive**
   - Keep involving customers in the development and testing processes.
   - I'm sure that after more customers have gained experience of X the positive word-of-mouth will spread through the industry.
   - Keep up the good work, developers!
   - To be a pioneer demands constant learning, customer understanding and agility
   - Great work, keep it up!
2. **Neutral**
   - It would be good to keep the x.fi up to date at all times

- How about offering a demo environment that allows testing and shows all the features under development so that customers considering X could get a realistic experience to back their decision-making process.
- I hope the timetable stands

3. **Negative**
   - There should be a lot more active face-to-face selling in the field.
   - Most of the Y users are still unclear what X is and when it will replace Y, not to mention what is needed before, during and after the transition phase.
   - Social media is not the channel for our customers
   - Customers are not informed what is coming and where X is at right now. The competitor shows off with unfinished features and makes X seem as a much worse option than it actually is.

5 The reliability of the study

Defining the reliability and validity in qualitative research is not as easy as it would be in quantitative research for which the reliability measures of scientific research have been developed by adopting the natural sciences (such as chemistry and physics). It's quite impossible to conduct qualitative research in a laboratory like circumstances. People don't act or think the same ways every day because they are living in changing environment, they are subject to other people's opinions, they learn and overall do not behave in certain predefined patterns. (Kananen 2014, 145, 151.)

According to Kananen (2014) the most commonly used criteria when assessing the reliability of a qualitative study are:

- **Confirmability:** The simplest way to verify the interpretation is to have the person who have given the info (in an interview) to read the material and confirm that they are correct. Given the anonymous nature of the study, this criterion cannot be utilized in this case.
- **Evaluability/Documentation:** Sufficient documentation enables the reader to trace the path in which the interpretations have been made. The sufficient documentation has been considered bearing in mind that some of the documents are confidential and cannot be shown to a larger audience.
- **Non-contradiction of interpretation/internal validity:** Even though it is possible to find different interpretations from the same material, it should only be possible through different angles (filters) and research problems. If another researcher comes to the same conclusions, it can be stated that the research has non-contradiction of interpretation. The results of this study are available for all the employees of Z making it possible for others to study the findings. This criterion is not, however, officially utilized when writing this thesis.
- **Saturation:** The end results from different sources begin to repeat themselves. In other words, if many people answer a certain question in the same manner, it can be seen as saturated. Saturation is available and visible in this study, and it is a criterion that can be taken into consideration.

At the end of day, the reliability and validity in qualitative research lay in the hands of the researcher, as they depend on the researcher's assessment and evidence. This is why documentation and full enclosure of made decisions is important. With that said, the reliability and validity of this research have been assured by:

- Creating a questionnaire with:
  - valid and neutral questions, that do not provoke certain answers and are relevant for the research problem.
  - the possibility to create own answers.
  - respondents' complete anonymity.
  - same questions to every target groups.
  - allowing pressure free way of answering the questionnaire online and in the privacy of the respondent's office/car/home.
- Attaching all relevant documents and validating every decision concerning the survey (such as questionnaires, answers, survey email etc.).

- Showing evidence of saturation.
- Understanding the possibility of subjectivity when analyzing the materials.

6 Analysis

6.1 Analysis of the results

The main goal of this case study was to find out the brand image of newly launched ERP system, X through the following questions:

- How is X seen through the eyes of the customers?
- How is X seen through the eyes of the workers behind X?
- Are there differences between these two target groups?
- Do the results reflect the strategic definitions of X's brand?

In addition to the main goal, identifying the before (section 2.2.1) recognized target groups of X (the business-oriented decision-makers, the security-oriented decision-makers, the digitally exceptional gatekeepers, the price-conscious decision-makers and the comfort-loving decision-makers) was an option that was left open as a possibility. Going through the survey material, it was quickly apparent, that this identification was not possible. The situation does not, however affect the outcomes, as the information was not in any way critical, but rather a nice-to-know detail.

6.2 X's brand through the eyes of the customers

Given the quite short lifespan of X, the results of the survey showed that the image has slowly started to build towards the wanted goals. The responses reflected both emotional and functional elements of a brand, which, according to Kotler, Keller etc. (2012) are important factors in engaging the customer to an experience that delivers a holistic and an emotional fulfilment. The functional elements, at this point could be seen as thoughts on how well the new system is working now or what is expected from it in the future, but most of the answers were reflecting emotional elements of uncertainty.

When comparing the results to the strategic definition of X, many of the received answers reflected some of the strengths and benefits of X. Especially, the question *"What kind of image comes to your mind when thinking of X?"* showed similarities with the defined strengths and benefits of Ease (of use) and Reliability. The same strengths and benefits could also be found from the answers to the question: *"When thinking about your future needs and hopes, how well do you think X is able to meet them?".* Likewise, the multiple-choice question *"How well do you think the image created by X brings out reliability and professionalism?"* gathered 58 % of the answers to the options "very well" or "quite well". Given these results, it can be said, that the image of X, at the time this case study was conducted, reflects reliability and trust.

If reflecting the gathered material to the factors defined as X's competitive advantage, more work needs to be done. Barely any of the given answers matched to the three competitive advantage factors; "Understanding the industry", "Taking advantage of data" and "Support and security" (described in section 2.2.3). Although the "Taking advantage of data" -

competitive advantage describes more a world in the future, the other factors should already have a strong foundation in the minds of the customers, especially now amid a battle of market leadership. There were a few answers referring to the "Support and security" that revealed knowledge and trust to the fact that X is supported by a solid and profitable z group. But given the amount of all answers these few answers do not represent an overall opinion.

The positioning of X leans to expertise and pioneership of the industry, which was also recognized by the customers through their answers to question *"How well do you think X communicates technological development and innovation?"*: over 50 % answered either "Very well" or "Quite well", 15 % answered "Quite badly" or "Very badly", and 32 % couldn't say. There is room for improvement, but the starting point is not bad. In addition, a promising find was in the answers to the question *"Which brokerage ERP system feature is so important to you that you wouldn't give it up at any cost?"* as most of the features described are the kind that will be a solid part of X in the future.

Given the results, it must also be noted, that uncertainty and inexperience was strongly present in every response regarding the thoughts about X. These feelings might also reflect the answers behind the question *"Do you feel that you're getting enough information about the current issues and developments related to X?"* as over half (55 %) of the respondents answered either "no", or that they "can't say".

The visual image of X was mostly considered in a positive or neutral point of view. As the visual elements are under a modification process stemming from the brand reform of the complementary service, it's important to preserve and preferably improve the visual images representing modernity and high quality.

All in all, the building of X's brand has had a promising start in the right tracks, but the work must continue consistently to get the wanted results. Suggestions for future are made in the section 7.

6.3   X's brand through the eyes of the workers behind X

The workers who participated to the survey mentioned every single competition advantage, (section 3.2.3) that has been defined for X, through their answers to questions*: "What kind of image comes to your mind when thinking of X?"* and *"In your opinion, how does X differ from the competition?"*. In addition, the strength, and benefits (section 3.2.2) that represent X, were present in the answers throughout the survey. It cannot, however, be said with absolute certainty whether the answers reflected only the respondents' pure knowledge about the wanted position of Xs brand or their pure thoughts behind the brand. When looking at the answers, it could be stated that both scenarios were present within the answers.

As the respondents represent various departments, such as sales, marketing, customer support, product development etc., there is a high chance that the factors representing the strengths and benefits as well as competitive advantages of X are present in the important encounter points between the customers (be it current, or potential) and representatives of X in their respective roles. As Taipale (2007) states; every single time a customer is in contact with the organization, has the potential to strengthen or weaken the brand image.

The high positivity stemming from the workers' answers is a good sign: When the people behind the product/service are proud and believe in what they do makes a difference, it most likely will be visible for the customers as well. The similar answers reflecting the most important features of a brokerage ERP system between the customers and workers behind X shows that there is true knowledge of the industry, and that the needs, hopes and dreams of the customers have been listened to.

7   Conclusions and suggestions for the future

X is well on its way in building a strong brand. Merely the fact that there is a clear strategic foundation and well-defined target groups backs up the branding process and is a solid tool for the everyday work.

A stronger focus on communicating the defined competitive advantages along with the strengths and benefits is clearly needed to stand out and create a concrete basis that reflects the true value of the brand.

Martinez Onaindia and Resnick (2013) state that the very embodiment of B2B branding is people, and that communication is the key tool that first leads to connectivity, then to brand awareness, from there to brand experience and finally to brand loyalty.

According to Martinez Onaindia and Resnick (2013) building fostering relationships in the B2B field can be achieved by:
- Amplifying the key distinguishing characteristics at every touch point.
- Forging relationships by taking advantage of meeting and speaking opportunities or sparking a conversation through social media.
- Adding a touch of personality with storytelling.
- Staying in front of the relevant audience with innovative and informative news and taking the role of thought leadership.
- Solicitating clients and recruit new hires with third-party testimonials that are promoted on external websites, blogs, and social channels.

With these factors in mind, it might be a good idea to bring the competitive factors along with every newsletter sent, through X's landing page, social media channels and of course different sales material.

Repetition is key to getting your message through, but the messages should, however, be communicated from different angels for them to truly penetrate the minds of the customers (present or potential).

The strength and benefits might be best communicated through the mouth of the current customers who have chosen X for their ERP system. Also interviewing the customers who have been a part of developing X could bring credibility and faith that the opinions of the customers, the actual users of X, are heard and taken seriously.

A brand does not, however, build only by communicating through newsletters, articles, and such but by being a solid part in the everyday work of the management and service design, sales, development, and customer experience. (Kotler, Keller etc. 2012, 466-467.) That way the brand stays consistent throughout different channels, and everyone knows which goals they are mainly working for. Probably the most important channel, in this case, is the user interface (the digital service) providing the user experience, as it's the place where and how the brand is seen and felt by the customers.

Furthermore, just communicating, and promising ease of use is not sufficient. The brand experience (in every possible touch point) must demonstrate it. (Kotler, Keller etc. 2012, 518.)

This is why communicating constantly about the done improvements and new features inside the actual operating system is very important. Honesty and transparency are imperative, and every issue should be communicated truthfully.

It's also vital to keep notes on customers' requirements and update the brand accordingly. It's essentially all about creating value for the customer through a wide mix of marketing variables that reflect the image the brand wishes to convey. (Kotler, Keller etc. 2012, 463, 466-467.) To keep track on how the brand work for X is proceeding against the wanted goals, it would be good to continue surveys on the matter. The surveys do not have to be as extensive as the one conducted for this research. Maybe a short pop-up in the landing page and inside the operational system would be efficient for shorter term surveys (approximately after every 6 months) and more extensive ones after a longer period (approximately after one year).

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