

Darren P. Ingram

**PUBLIC RELATIONS AND EXTERNAL
COMMUNICATIONS AS AN AID TO EXPORT**

**Examination of leading companies in Western
Finland**

Thesis

CENTRIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Degree Programme in Business Management

March 2016

ABSTRACT

Unit Kokkola-Pietarsaari	Date March 2016	Author D P Ingram
Degree programme Business Management		
Name of thesis PUBLIC RELATIONS AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AS AN AID TO EXPORT. Examination of leading companies in Western Finland		
Instructor Sara Åhman		Pages 125+4
Supervisor		
<p>Finnish companies have a reputation for designing and producing quality products and services. Unfortunately, they also seem en masse to be less capable and successful when it comes to selling or marketing them, particularly overseas. The Finnish economy and society-at-large would benefit from increased export activity.</p> <p>Telling prospective customers about your products should be a natural part of sales and marketing activity, with marketing-led tools such as public relations (PR) a way of introducing a brand/company to a market and helping develop its presence. Once established it would sustain and grow markets, generating additional customer loyalty and interest that should contribute towards a company's financial success. For many companies marketing activities can be restricted to attendance at a trade fair, sending out some brochures or maybe having information on their website. Relatively passive, in other words, hoping that a prospective customer will know of them in order to find them or stumble across them by chance.</p> <p>Does management understand or care about its marketing activities? This thesis looks at how larger companies in western Finland (an area said to be particularly export-aware) view and manage their PR activities and use this as a tool to assist and drive export sales. The necessity of export, PR and when combined as export marketing, is examined in detail, offering a practical reference that may shake some companies into action and supporting those who are presently trying and seek to improve or refine their activities. Recommendations for action and further research are also given.</p>		
Key words Content Marketing, Customer Communications, Export, Export Marketing, Management Change, Marketing Communications, PR, Press Relations, Public Relations, Social Media Marketing, Trade Development, Web Content		

TIIVISTELMÄ OPINNÄYTETYÖSTÄ

Yksikkö Kokkola-Pietarsaari	Aika Maaliskuu 2016	Tekijä D P Ingram
Koulutusohjelma Business Management		
Työn nimi SUHDETOIMINTA JA ULKOINEN VIESTINTÄ VIENNIN APUNA. Tutkimus Länsi-Suomen suurimmissa yrityksissä		
Työn ohjaaja Sara Åhman		Sivumäärä 125+4
Työelämäohjaaja		
<p>Suomalaisilla yrityksillä on hyvä maine tuotteiden ja palveluiden suunnittelussa ja valmistamisessa. Valitettavasti ne ovat vähemmän kyvykkäitä ja menestyneitä myymään ja markkinoimaan niitä, etenkin ulkomaille. Suomen talous ja yhteiskunta hyötyisi kasvavasta vientiaktiivisuudesta.</p> <p>Mahdollisille potentiaalisille asiakkaille tuotteista kertomisen pitäisi olla luonnollinen osa myynti- ja markkinointitoimintaa, markkinointia ohjaavien työkalujen kuten suhdetoiminnan (PR) esitellessä liikemerkkiä/yritystä markkinoille ja auttaen luomaan sen näkyvyyttä. Päästyään tähän se ylläpitäisi ja kasvattaisi markkinoita lisäten asiakaslojaalisuutta ja kiinnostusta, joka veisi yritystä kohti taloudellista menestymistä. Monille yrityksille markkinointiaktiviteetit voivat olla rajoitettuja messuosallistumisiin, esitteiden lähettämiseen tai tiedon jakamiseen kotisivujen kautta. Tämä on yrityksiltä suhteellisen passiivista toimintaa. Yritykset ikään kuin toivovat, että asiakkaat tuntisivat heidät löytääkseen heidät tai osuakseen sattumalta oikeaan paikkaan oikeaan aikaan.</p> <p>Ymmärtävätkö tai välittävätkö johtajat yrityksensä markkinointitoiminnoista? Tämä opinnäytetyö kävi läpi miten Länsi-Suomen suurimmat yritykset (alue, jonka kerrotaan olevan vientitietoinen) kokevat ja hoitavat heidän PR-toimintaansa sekä käyttävät tätä työkaluna ulkomaanmyynnissä. Viennin tärkeyttä, PR:ää sekä yhdistettyä vientimarkkinointia on tutkittu yksityiskohtaisesti ja se tarjoaa käytännön esimerkkejä, jotka voivat herättää joitakin yrityksiä toimintaan ja tukea niitä, jotka tällä hetkellä yrittävät etsiä parannuksia tai korjata toimintojaan. Suosituksia toiminnoista ja jatkotutkimuksista on myös annettu.</p>		
Asiasanat Asiakasviestintä, Johtamisen muutos, Lehdistösuhteet, Markkinointiviestintä, Myynninedistäminen, PR, Sisältömarkkinointi, Sosiaalisen median markkinointi, Suhdetoiminta, Verkkosivujen sisältö, Vienti, Vientimarkkinointi		

SAMMANDRAG

Enhet Kokkola-Pietarsaari	Tid Mars 2016	Författare D P Ingram
Utbildningsprogram Business Management		
Arbetets namn PR OCH EXTERN KOMMUNIKATION SOM ETT STÖD FÖR EXPORT. Undersökning av ledande företag i Västra Finland		
Handledare Sara Åhman		Sidantal 125+4
Uppdragsgivarens handledare		
<p>Finländska företag har ett rykte om att designa och producera kvalitativa produkter och tjänster. Tyvärr verkar företagen också att vara mindre kapabla och framgångsrika när det gäller att sälja eller marknadsföra dessa, särskilt utomlands. Ekonomin och samhället skulle dra nytta av ökad exportverksamhet.</p> <p>Att man berättar om sina produkter borde vara en naturlig del av försäljnings- och marknadsföringsaktiviteterna, och med marknadsföringsledda verktyg, som PR, ett sätt att införa ett varumärke eller företag på en marknad och hjälpa till att utveckla sin närvaro. Om varumärket eller företaget etableras skulle det upprätthålla och utöka marknaden, vilket genererar ytterligare kundlojalitet och intresse som borde bidra till ett företags ekonomiska framgång. För många företag kan marknadsföringsaktiviteter begränsas till närvaro vid en mäsas, utskick av några broschyrer eller eventuell information på företagets webbplats. Med andra ord sker marknadsföringen i hopp om att en potentiell kund hittar företagen för att kunden redan känner till företagen eller hittar dem av en slump.</p> <p>Förstår eller bryr sig ledningen om sin marknadsföring? Detta examsarbete undersökte hur större företag i västra Finland (ett område som sägs vara särskilt exportmedvetet) visar och hanterar sina PR-aktiviteter och använder dessa som ett verktyg för att hjälpa och bedriva exportförsäljning. Nödvändigheten av export, PR och kombinationen som exportmarknadsföring, granskas i detalj, och arbetet erbjuder en praktisk referens som kan få vissa företag att agera och stödja dem som för närvarande försöker förbättra eller förfina sin verksamhet. Rekommendationer till åtgärder och vidare forskning ges också.</p>		

Nyckelord

Export, Exportmarknadsföring, Innehållsmarknadsföring, Kundkommunikation, Ledarskapsförändring, Marknadsföringskommunikation, Marknadsföring i sociala medier, PR, Pressrelationer, Sociala medier, Webbinnehåll

PREFACE

At the heart of this thesis is something that has concerned me for quite a long time, namely do Finnish companies really communicate effectively.

For many years as a journalist, with news from the Nordic region being part of my daily activities, there was this nagging feeling that on the whole they just did not. Exceptions existed, of course, yet they remained exactly that, exceptions. As a collective it felt that Finnish companies were more hesitant with their public relations (PR) activities, both reactively and particularly proactively. At the time it was assumed to be a quirk of specific industry sectors, despite them being allegedly more world-focussed and operating in a wider international environment.

There is something to be said about the Finnish reserve and stereotypical desire not to make a song and dance about everything – which is one of many reasons why I am proud and privileged to have called this country home for over a decade. Yet a company with a good product and a great story should be taking every opportunity to tell everybody and anybody who may listen its news, hopefully receiving acclaim and possibly additional business in the process.

Some years ago I retired my notepad and pen, yet the perception and concern remains, bolstered by being a news junkie at heart who cannot switch off.

Communicating to a worldwide audience is easier today, compared to the mid-1980s when my glances first turned towards Finland and the 1990s when this became part of my daily grind. Today, a company has to fight harder to get its message heard. Communications may be faster, yet competition for attention is greater, spread through a wider range of media outlets and different channels.

In middle age I rediscovered the world of academia - as a young man establishing what would turn out to be a fairly successful international media company was more enticing than university life. So I have gone “back to school” - doing things in an unconventional order - and this thesis is the first of what may be many theses. Whilst the research for this project was engaging and interesting, the outcome and the growing body of circumstantial evidence was sadly less enjoyable. It is an area deserving of additional multidisciplinary research and something I hope to focus on in the future.

I am grateful to Mr. Pertti Kinnunen from South Ostrobothnia Chamber of Commerce for his guidance, wise counsel and support with this project. I am also indebted and thankful to Ms. Sara Åhman, degree programme head and my supervisor at Centria, for her ongoing assistance, good humour and granting me extensive freedom to help determine what future may lie ahead of me.

Similarly, many other Centria staff members should be remembered for enduring (and often encouraging) the tidal wave of energy and comments that I inevitably brought forth at every opportunity. The staff at Tritonia Allegro library in Jakobstad have been invaluable and are thanked for this assistance; as a child I learned the

importance and value of a librarian and I am pleased to say that nothing has changed over the years!

Thanks must be expressed to the various industry participants, who have been interviewed for this research, for giving generously with their time and opinions. At times it felt as if I was a lone voice in the wilderness, yet you managed to convince me that at least there are several lone voices out there, even if we are still members of the exclusive “silent minority” club.

It is customary to note the support one’s own family has given during this process and what may be a long road ahead. Small things often mean the most, yet they are often never acknowledged to the degree they really deserve.

I would finally like to record grateful thanks to the Robert Åke Lindroos Stiftelse for their very generous financial support to this project and my studies in general.

This thesis process and its underlying research has convinced me that there are many rich seams of future academic research within this area. With that in mind, I welcome all kinds of feedback from the reader should they be so inclined via e-mail (Darren@Ingram.fi).

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AS AN AID TO EXPORT	3
2.1	Defining and focussing the art	3
2.2	The role of PR	4
2.2.1	A small part of a much larger entity	6
2.2.2	Theory and practice: together not separate	9
2.2.3	It is, but it isn't, advertising	10
2.2.4	Advocacy, viral marketing or hidden advertising	15
2.2.5	You can't control the fire hose, but what about its pressure?	16
2.2.6	A question of propriety	17
2.3	Doing PR	19
2.3.1	Relationships matter	19
2.3.2	A shotgun or a laser-targeted approach?	21
2.3.3	Social media knocks down some media walls	22
2.4	Active management	23
3	THE ROLE OF EXPORT	25
3.1	The importance of export	25
3.2	Size is not everything	26
3.3	Reasons for, excuses against and helping hands	27
3.4	Export, as part of a bigger strategic plan	28
3.5	What happens in Finland should not stay in Finland!	30
3.6	Finnish effects	31
3.7	A drive to boost exports: does the drive need a kick-start?	41
3.8	Finnish innovation, management, know-how...	45
3.9	Finns MUST get talking and share their pride and successes	47
4	MARKETING + EXPORTS = MARKETING EXPORTS	49
4.1	International is different	49
4.2	Communications constipation: laxative needed	50
4.3	Supporting the export process	52
4.4	Measuring success and validating the need	54
5	RESEARCH PROCESSES	58
5.1	Research into export-led company PR activities	59
5.1.1	Research definition and implementation	59
5.1.2	Research justification and methodologies	61
5.2	Media audit of corporate web presence	64

5.2.1	Research definition and implementation	64
5.3	Personal interviews	65
6	DATA ANALYSIS	68
6.1	Research into company attitudes concerning PR	68
6.2	Media audit of corporate web presence	72
6.3	Personal interviews	78
6.3.1	Respondent ALPHA	79
6.3.2	Respondent BRAVO	82
6.3.3	Respondent CHARLIE	83
6.3.4	Respondent DELTA	87
6.3.5	Respondent ECHO	89
6.3.6	Respondent FOXTROT	92
6.3.7	Respondent GOLF	94
6.3.8	Respondent HOTEL	96
7	AGENDA FOR CHANGE	99
8	CONCLUSION	104
	REFERENCES	106

1 INTRODUCTION

You can have some of the best products and services in the world but it does not help if you effectively keep news about them secret. That is a slightly overdramatic way of introducing the problem that many Finnish companies, possibly even the majority, appear to have when it comes to their use of export marketing and public relations (PR). They seem to be not exactly proactive and focussed with their communications activities, hardly rushing to tell the world's media and anyone who will listen about what they have and why they are the company to deliver it.

Naturally, exceptions exist, but communications-based activities seem to have a very low priority, or no priority, for far too many companies. In some situations, you can survive without external communications. It might require great luck. This can work if you are manufacturing something that another company will sell under its own name or incorporate within its own product. Yet how does the customer get to know about your company? Maybe you had great success with a salesperson knocking on doors or endured the delights of manning a trade show stand and fate brought you together. That is probably not enough, or put another way, think of what you can achieve if you also talk about what you are doing!

Communication is key, irrespective of whether you are selling primarily in a business-to-business (B2B) context or you are more of a business-to-consumer (B2C) sort of company. There will be crossover. There may be scope for general press articles in newspapers, radio and television in many situations, whether on a local, regional, national or international basis. Add the relatively new phenomena of social media and the power of Internet search engines and you have a very cogent argument for ensuring that your company has a very broad, "noisy" and contributory presence in the media and the Internet-at-large. It is not enough to just have a website and occasionally update it.

This thesis looks at the theory behind PR as a communications form and the necessity of export both generally and for Finland in particular before considering how both elements may go together. Research was undertaken in a bid to

understand what major companies in western Finland, an export-rich area of the country, are thinking and doing about PR and export on a practical level. The objective being to determine how and why these companies communicate and the role and value public relations (and thus by association other elements of marketing) may contribute to the export process.

Smaller companies, of course, do export too but they are often hamstrung by trying to develop, sell and market products at the same time with limited time, financial and personnel resources. Larger companies should have the experience and financial muscle necessary for exporting, establishing and developing best practice along the way. Undoubtedly both groups can learn from each other.

In an attempt to get a greater understanding of what these larger companies are doing, three elements of field research have been undertaken. A major, comprehensive survey sought to get a deeper respondent-determined overview of implemented PR and related activities, whilst a subjective media audit was made of the same cohort's web presence, as viewed through the eyes of a foreign journalist or possibly even a prospective export customer. This was rounded off with a select number of personal interviews, featuring senior executives and industry participants, in an attempt to get a candid overview of the subject.

The broader objective being to be able to assess what may be working (and could be possibly implemented by other companies in a similar position) as well as areas that might need improving with some suggested areas for consideration. There are clear limitations to this research. One observer noted that the subject under consideration would be very challenging, since most companies probably do not have a systemic approach to PR and external communications matters. Even companies that have communications officers or people charged with supervising such activities, there is a difference between how they manage (or not) their domestic activities and the wider, more difficult international marketplace.

Opinions can vary. Some companies can really "get it" but are they in the majority or the minority? Even then, could more be done and in a wider range of countries?

2 THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AS AN AID TO EXPORT

When a boy meets a girl he tells her how lovely she looks, how much she means to him, and how much he loves her, that's sales promotion. If, instead, he impresses on her how wonderful he is, that's advertising. But if the girl agrees to go out with him because she's heard from others how great he is, that's public relations. (Simmons 1991, 133.)

PR is one of those terms that most people recognise but significantly less know what it truly means, let alone have an understanding as to how the process is conducted. Such activities have taken place since time immemorial, yet the collective term itself is linguistically a relative newcomer with it starting to emerge in the late nineteenth century.

2.1 Defining and focussing the art

Today PR is generally accepted to mean, inter alia, “the relationship between an organization or an important person and the general public; the occupation of establishing or maintaining a good relationship between an organization or an important person and the general public” (OED Online 2015b.). There is another definition that is less commonly used, namely “the relations a person has with people outside his or her immediate circle; [also] the relations between persons, bodies, or nations at a public or political level” (Ibid.), although you can see the rationale for its use and how it transformed into an accepted definition of today.

Trade associations representing the PR industry have refined their definitions over time. The Public Relations Society of America now declares the activity as “...a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics” (PRSA undated.) whilst the Chartered Institute of Public Relations in the United Kingdom is more verbose, noting “Public Relations is about reputation - the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public Relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing

opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.” (CIPR undated.)

Researchers and academics have also had their say, with many hundreds of different definitions all competing for attention (Lamme & Russell 2010, 284.), although most tend to broadly agree that the purpose of PR is to influence public behaviour, understanding and acceptance. (Czinkota, Ronkainen & Moffett 2005, 500.) That does not stop fairly cogent calls to redefine PR from time-to-time from being made (Edwards 2012.), in part to keep in time with changes in society and contemporary usage. Yet, no matter the description, most will surely understand its core definition and objectives of PR, even with a few rough edges present.

2.2 The role of PR

Modern PR has to help brands innovate, market, and message well. My goal is to demonstrate that PR is for everyone. It helps entrepreneurs earn more, small brands become household names, Fortune 500 companies preserve and grow their positions, and personalities and politicians maintain and increase their credibility and relevance. And it helps all of the above rapidly increase brand value. If you have a great idea, product, or service, PR can do a lot to cut through the noise and let the world know. (Torossian 2011.)

Publicity, the form of any non-paid news or comment about a company, its products and services and related interests, is an important component of a company’s PR activity, itself forming part of the marketing communications function that seeks to “earn public understanding and acceptance” of its activities and endeavours. (Albaum & Duerr 2011, 795; Pickton & Broderick 2005, 556-557.) Many suggest that there is a subtle difference between marketing PR and corporate PR because of the nature of the underlying support they provide (Copley 2014, 287, 289-290; Kotler & Keller 2012, 281.). It is true that these activities can be distinct, yet complementary, and are often executed and supervised by the same internal resources.

In larger companies there can be a greater degree of task specialisation, with senior management or board-level oversight and strategic involvement, which is one of many indications about the importance ascribed to the value (perceived or actual) of communications-related activities and their contribution to corporate success. (Communication Director 2012.) It can be an either-or equation, as many companies don't understand the importance of PR or provide cursory lip service towards it (Etzel, Walker & Stanton 2001, 561.), whilst others "get it" and seek to exploit every opportunity that it may offer.

PR can have its place at the heart of every company. One U.S. survey noted that 40 per cent of PR/communication professionals actively participated in corporate strategy planning and that 44 per cent asserted that senior management believed PR contributed to the financial success of the company. (Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism 2014.) In the United Kingdom, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations reported in its 2015 State of the Profession report that so-called inter-departmental convergence is a clear and growing trend, with a marked increase in internal cooperation and closer working with other parts of the organization in just two years. (CIPR 2015.) Custom and practice can vary between companies (and countries) due to cultural differences but the key message is probably universal: PR is, or should be, a central strand of every company's strategic and operational management.

Senior management seemingly takes communications seriously. A pan-European survey noted that in 69.4 per cent of European organisations communications-related recommendations were taken seriously by senior management and in 72 per cent of organisations communications professionals would be invited to senior-level meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning. (Zerfass, Verčič, Verhoeven, Moreno & Tench 2012, 57-58.) In Finland this was reported to be 70.8 per cent and 82.3 per cent respectively. A further self-determined survey of Finnish companies inferred a high level of senior-level representation for the communication function, with about three-quarters of companies featuring communications within its senior management team. (M&M 2015.) Yet one month later, a different survey of the top 100 Finnish companies revealed that only 38 per

cent of organisations placed communications functions within its senior management team. (Saario 2015.). An earlier 2009 survey revealed similar findings (Erkkilä 2009.), in any case, with a PR director present in 37 per cent of senior management teams (marketing director represented 28 per cent, with some responsible for both roles).

2.2.1 A small part of a much larger entity

PR activity is, or should be, shaped by the company as part of its broader marketing and sales promotion activities, being part of the communications mix, itself a subdivision of the marketing mix. (Blythe 2009, 174.) At the start this should be a proactive process to help prepare the marketplace and make potential customers receptive and open to the company's sales and marketing approaches (Blythe 2006, 137.) and latterly this is also a sustaining and enhancing activity. There will also be an element of reactive, defensive PR activity that should not be overlooked. (Baker 2014, 410; Blythe 2006, 137.)

Most companies are inherently unwilling to leave their reputation and image to chance and will seek, or should seek, to create goodwill and control their image through PR activities. (Burnett & Moriarty 1998, 344.) Care should be taken to ensure that PR activities are not side-lined or under-resourced, not being treated as a minor or insignificant part of the promotional mix. (Kotler 2003b, 616.) The method of PR deployed can also be a subtle distinction, yet something worthy of consideration, especially when you view the crossover between PR, marketing and the larger integrated marcomms perspective. (Kotler & Mindak 1978, 16-19; Pickton & Broderick 2005, 552-554.)

PR cannot be a corporate panacea, it has limitations. It cannot confer credibility unless the content, source and method of communications delivery is credible. It cannot wholly do the job of advertising. It cannot build reputations overnight. It cannot sustain a reputation that is not deserved. It cannot be a substitute for an absent or unconvincing product and it cannot explain away a bad policy or turn it

into a good one. (Stone 1995, 14-17.) It is a strategic tool, one of many tools in the management toolbox that should be suitably and strategically deployed.

There is more to PR than just trying to get media coverage that can persuade or influence customers to buy a product or service. PR is not a synonym for publicity. PR involves dealing with the company's "other publics", which other than consumers can include shareholders, government departments, employees, external pressure groups and even industry partners, peers and rivals, (Blythe 2006, 137; Burnett & Moriarty 1998, 347-349; Pickton & Broderick 2005, 559.) with activities such as sponsorship, product placement, corporate communications, lobbying and corporate counselling. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2009, 744.) PR can also be used to transform a cause or currently-held impression, to generate or rescue a vertical market segment such as declining consumption of milk. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 472.) For some businesses with a consumer focus, there can also be scope to operate various promotional or merchandising support campaigns or member clubs that function as "positive PR" opportunities and, today, these would also form part of the inevitable social media marketing operations. (Blythe 2006, 145.)

Essentially, PR is no different to other elements within the sales and marketing mix. Management must determine what message(s) they wish to communicate, where it shall be directed to and in what form it may take, as well as considering what resources they can allocate towards this aim. These decisions will be interrelated and can crossover into many operating areas, such as direct sales, advertising and sales promotion, becoming part of the integrated marketing communications realm where a clear, consistent and compelling message about the company's organisation, its brands and products is communicated. (Albaum & Duerr 2011, 778-779; Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 429-430.)

PR-inspired activities should see credible communication being made to core publics – and not just media representatives – that can support the power and value of an organisation's brand, its products and services which, in turn, can lead

to greater sales opportunities and other underlying benefits. (Mikáčová & Gavlaková 2014.)

Companies increasingly feel pressure managing aspects of their sales and marketing chain due to “digital capabilities” changing their customers’ behaviour (Kovac, Chong, Umbeck & Ledingham 2015.) and this clearly has ramifications towards how they can communicate proactively and reactively and this may also resonate deep through its operational structure. Very few companies (12 per cent) are said to be prepared for the new realities that digitally enabled and alert customers create. (Ibid.)

When a buyer wants to learn about virtually any product or service, an internet search yields thousands (if not millions) of results, including online articles, videos, white papers, blogs, and social media posts. In addition to supplier websites that showcase specific solutions, there are likely to be online sources (ranging from the self-serving to the unbiased) to help buyers learn and compare solution alternatives. Buyers can also use self-service digital channels for new or repeat purchases and for training and support. Using information technology and digital channels, buyers can take over many steps of buying that salespeople once cherished as their source of value. (Zoltners, Sinha & Lorimer 2016.)

Communication is not optional. Buyers are increasingly becoming self-sufficient with their information needs and will present themselves to a potential supplier as a better-informed, knowledgeable and demanding customer (Ibid.) with a degree of pre- or self-qualification. Companies that fail to sufficiently communicate, through a multiple of channels, may be arbitrarily filtering themselves out of requests for proposals and potential sources of business by the act of omission. PR and other marketing activities form part of this mix and availability of information that will assist this qualification process.

The Internet’s memory is legendary, so a buyer in the future could be influenced by a company’s communications-led activities today because of background immersion, awareness and information retrieval. Potential buyers can come from any source, often with the most tenuous of connection, but something got them aware of a company and its products and drew them in to learning more before the

conventional sales cycle could take over. Satisfied customers may not only be repeat customers but often are the company's strongest advocates and in our ever-connected world customers will talk to other customers, even if at times they do not directly know they are doing it.

2.2.2 Theory and practice: together not separate

There is a theory espoused that links several important issues to do with PR within product marketing. (Stone 1995, 37-43.) This is topicality (linking the product to real-time events), credibility (the endorsement of a third-party commentator who generates a degree of trust) and involvement (the creation of interactive opportunities. PR can create a powerful part of any positivity through the marketing mix. (Millward Brown 2007, 1-2.) Through the theory, marketers can combine elements together to obtain a unified, powerful impact within its broad marketing campaign, yet once-clear demarcation lines between elements within the marketing and communications mixes are becoming increasingly blurred, with significant overlap and sometimes conflict emerging between areas (Blythe 2009, 174.). Another criticism is that the communications mix concept fails to consider the true nature of communications, wrongly assuming that it is something that is done to consumers rather than something that is a "co-creation of reality between the consumers and the company". (Ibid., 176,178.)

There are benefits in using several tools or approaches as part of an eclectic mix, all arguably contributing to each other's impact. It could be a case of several different methods being used to communicate a redundant message (so if someone doesn't read a news article in magazine X, maybe they will see an advertisement in newspaper Y) as well as receiving a unified, powerful impression if the recipient sees the total output of several different campaigns. (Ibid., 177.)

Awareness can also vary and change. If viewed as a "ladder of effects" (Blythe 2012, 223-225.) there will be some consumers at the bottom of the ladder who are totally unaware of the company and its products ranging up to the top with

consumers who are active customers, vocal brand ambassadors and key advocates for your organisation. There will be a lot of other levels in-between and, of course, PR and other marketing-related activities can influence matters.

Very few companies have products that may command a global, simultaneous product launch or announcement. Instead a country-specific or regional approach would usually be more appropriate. This can also be critical or highly recommended when it concerns possible cultural differences. (Usunier & Lee 2005, 473.) A gradual PR campaign could allow resources to be better managed, cultural issues considered, possible mistakes be resolved within specific territories and so forth, as long as the heinous crime of “reheating old news” is not carried out, possibly with a degree of subterfuge or omission, since the company’s publics no longer live or operate in a vacuum.

There are also legal and regulatory requirements, collectively known as disclosure, for publicly traded companies (NASDAQ OMX Helsinki 2013; New York Stock Exchange 2015.) who may need to make a simultaneous release of news when it is market-making or sensitive, both for proactive and reactive announcements. There is a difference between McDonald’s Corporation revealing a financial turnaround plan, which may warrant frenzied stock market activity and global news coverage, and a small town franchisee-operated McDonald’s restaurant introducing a temporary age restriction for customers due to the bad behaviour of some patrons that will probably only get local news coverage or appear as a “strange but true”-type story elsewhere.

2.2.3 It is, but it isn’t, advertising

PR activities will seek to focus on key stories, such as product launches or special promotions, and the nature of the message may vary between the actual media outlets targeted and their audiences. (Black 2014, 68-71.) The activity will seek to inform potential customers and intermediaries in target markets about a product or service, to persuade them to be buyers and to engender positive attitudes towards

the company. The activity will be used to hopefully achieve objectives that cannot be obtained by other means or achieved as cheaply, such as gaining awareness for a new product or to showcase its ethical, quality method of manufacture. The long-term objective is, of course, to increase sales and thus contribute towards a profitable operation and thus any PR activities are a contributory element within the marketing mix and an aid to a potential sales cycle. (Albaum & Duerr 2011, 795.)

Advertising, of course, allows the company to directly control and focus its message, yet it can be a very imprecise, costly and ineffective medium if not heavily managed and strategically controlled. (Belch & Belch 2004, 193-194.) For many years the death of advertising has been forecast, although its fortunes are transforming with the marginalisation of print and broadcast television advertising and ever-increasing use of digital and social media advertising through a much wider spread of outlets. With diversity of reach comes the problem of effectiveness and whether the message is being lost in the noise.

Industry observers have noted for some time that many companies overspend on advertising and underspend on PR (Kotler 2003a, 145.) yet maybe advertising agencies are hedging their bets as many of the world's largest advertising agency groups also have PR companies as subsidiary or group company members. (Ibid.; Morley 2009, 949-950.) What can make a brand (and thus initiate interest in a product) is debatable, but many are of the opinion that it is PR, and not advertising, that is the more powerful tool. It may be a question of subtlety.

What others say about your brand is much more powerful than what you say about it yourself. That's why publicity in general is more effective than advertising [...] public relations has eclipsed advertising as the most effective force in branding. Yet for years public relations has been treated as a secondary function to advertising. PR people even used to measure their successes in terms of advertising space. Publicity stories were converted into equivalent advertising expenditures. Even worse, marketing strategies were usually formulated first into advertising slogans. Then the public relations people were asked to reinforce the advertising by creating PR program[me]s to communicate those slogans. Not anymore. Today brands are built with publicity and

maintained with advertising. The cart is now driving the horse. (Ries & Ries 2002, 15-16.)

Editorial coverage has a perception of credibility or authenticity that advertising does not have (Albaum & Duerr 2011, 813; Burnett & Moriarty 1998, 346.) and people who do not believe claims made in advertising can believe them when they appear as a news story in a newspaper or similar venue. As well as traditional media coverage, companies can nowadays generate content for their own website as well as potentially sharing this with industry partners, social media and other uses through content marketing - an organic PR tactic focused on creating non-promotional, educational information. When done correctly it has the potential to educate whilst building confidence (in the company doing it) as an authority, giving prospects and customers information needed to make an informed purchase decision from a trusted partner. (Morgan 2016.)

Advocates of content marketing say that it helps potential customers find a source of useful information, which in turn allows a company to share its expertise and puts it in the middle of a conversation. It is not a pushy sales conversation but educational and informational. It might not lead to an immediate boost in sales, yet it does position the company as a trusted, authoritative source of information and possibly provider of needed products or services at the same time. Research suggests that by 2020 customers may manage 85 per cent of their relationships without talking to a human, so funnelling possible sales prospects through a company's website or other presence that is not just an online brochure could be beneficial in the long term. (Ibid.) Content marketing can also act as a gateway back to traditional media, such as a contributed article, or it may get the company on the radar of a journalist due to the authoritative corporate voice they have projected. Keeping it credible and interesting remains key.

Despite the plethora of additional communications channels available, this does not mean that traditional media (often referred to as earned media) is irrelevant, since the right sort of quality traditional media is still capable of having an impact. Surveys continue to show that earned media has influence within purchasing decisions and other business outcomes, (Ogilvy PR 2015.) although it is a

sensible approach to adopt a multi-channel communications strategy. The printed page's impact might be waning, but companies that produce quality content can still be doing this through other media formats.

Some companies may have more "PR friendly" brands than others, which may make PR activities appear easier. For those that don't, maybe they have a bit more work to establish themselves and here content marketing may provide assistance. A PR-first strategy can yield dividends, as Volvo discovered when it used it for the launch of its XC90 sports utility vehicle, that saw a hand-picked group of journalists being "involved" in the entire development process. This privileged preview access allowed Volvo, via the journalists, to get influential articles in front of key influencers, which led to significant pre-sales and several industry awards - all before any real advertising expenditure was made or the vehicles had entered the retail channel. (Kotler 2004, 100.) Yet advertising can provide a supporting role, being a broad canvas to display messages upon that augment in many cases stories that have just appeared in the news.

Most of us got to hear about Palm, Amazon, eBay, The Body Shop, Blackberry, Beanie Babies, Viagra and Nokia not through advertising but through news stories in print and on the air. We started to hear from friends about these products and we told other friends. And hearing from others about a product carries much more weight than reading about the product in an ad. (Kotler 2003a, 146.)

Other publics can also be moved by PR activities, such as distributors and retailers, who may be influenced by a company's perception that has been shaped through PR-sourced activities and in the case of a known brand this can be particularly relevant if it drives additional interest or closes avenues of potential opportunities. (Axelsson & Nordberg 2005.)

Some companies have the balance between advertising and PR down to a fine art, such as Apple, so you would be forgiven for thinking that the company advertises "everywhere" when it, in fact, doesn't, because it has so much "free advertising" in the shape of PR-led activities and incredible word-of-mouth marketing and customer advocacy. That said, the company recorded USD1.8

billion in worldwide advertising expenses for the financial year to September 2015 (Apple 2015.), although this only represents 0.77 per cent of revenue over the period. By comparison the company invested 3.47 per cent of revenue into research and development over the same period.

Interestingly, Apple has a somewhat fractious relationship with the press (Gurman 2014.), with journalists who are “out of favour” tending to be left out of the inner circle of receiving pre-launch exclusives, evaluation units etcetera. Many observers wonder if this is healthy - for readers at least - when there can be a culture of self-censorship or overt compliance with the company’s unstated but clearly understood desires. In the past there has been considerable friction with some specialist media and some customer interactions, although in more recent times the company appears to be adopting a more modified, restrained approach, at least on the surface, following some internal changes. (Hamill 2014.)

When you are the big 800-pound gorilla that is in favour, things can be a lot easier and any perceived transgressions may be overlooked – especially when you have news that people want to read and consume. In other cases, it can take time to change the impression generally held about a company, particularly if this perception has been created by a clash of cultures or poor strategy, such as the reputation LIDL got in Finland when various critical news stories emerged in the years after its establishment in the country. On orders from head office in Germany local representatives followed a strict ‘no comment’ policy and focussed solely on growing the business. (Skippari, Geppert, Williams & Rusanen 2014, 6-7.) Latterly, when the company’s Finnish subsidiary did start to focus on its PR activities it admitted that significant mistakes had been made with its communications processes. (Parviainen 2011, 52.) Even today, years later, many members of the public still criticise the company for activities reported over a decade earlier, as well as often assuming what happened then continues to occur.

With some PR activities, it is quite conceivable that the public impression could have been different as, after all, if you don’t comment, only your accuser’s voice can be heard. The effects of negative publicity can diminish over time, yet this is

not guaranteed, and how a company responds and reacts to a negative episode can have long-reaching consequences. (Millward Brown 2007, 3.)

The lasting effect of negative PR can depend to a very large extent on how the company responds. Trying to ignore bad news stories, or retaliating inappropriately, can make the problem worse; whereas, with a more considered response and an acceptance of corporate responsibility, the negative coverage may soon lose impetus and “image rehabilitation” may begin to take place.

2.2.4 Advocacy, viral marketing or hidden advertising

Advertising is generally not so amenable to word-of-mouth customer advocacy, with some exceptions to certain classic television and poster advertising campaigns, although social media has started to open up a new vector to share interesting campaigns (Sutherland & Sylvester 2008, 137-138.) as well as hybrid media campaigns built around advocacy. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 430-431.) However, the phrase “the exception rather than the rule” is eminently apposite here. Chief marketing officers at many companies observe that customers are often “getting ahead of their sales efforts”, even within the B2B sector, due to the mass of information online for prospective customers. The information flows from both the company with its website, advertising/marketing and social media activities and media activity, whether planned or otherwise.

There may be some success with advocacy, particularly for B2C marketers, with one good example of the fusion and co-existence of marketing, PR, advertising and social media activity being when the J.M. Smucker Company sought to boost a heritage brand of cat food called “Meow Mix” in the United States. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 629-630.) In the 1970s a television advertisement was made (YouTube 2007; YouTube 2015a.), based on a song written in 1970 with a very repetitive set of lyrics (Gorfain 1979, 52-53.) that existed to use up a few feet of film that was left on the cutting room floor. (Pussy 2002.) The company brought the advertisement up-to-date, utilised broadcast and social media opportunities,

and seemed content with the results. Yet the reimaged advert predictably brought a series of unofficial derivations that appear to have the tacit approval of the brand, since they are linked from the company's own YouTube site (YouTube 2015b.), as well as some less-desirable performances. (Parry & Foster 2015.)

This goes to show the arguably circular, contributory nature of integrated marketing communications. It is a sign of the deep impact this advertisement must have left in contemporary society that this author recalls the original campaign with "abject horror" many decades later, plus it appears, that the audio from the advertisement has purportedly been used as a means of enhanced interrogation (or torture) by U.S. forces (Barnes 2014; Worthington 2008.). However, in the B2B-focussed market very few people are going to share an advertisement or become enthused about a range of 15mm rubber washers. In today's modern climate you have to be very careful about how an otherwise "humorous, ironic or different campaign" may be received (Glenday 2012.) and even initiatives such as the Pirelli trade calendar can be a risky proposition. Yet there is scope to reinvent and reimage (Klara 2015; Sherwin 2015.), although for every successful Pirelli calendar initiative there is tremendous scope to create more reputational and brand damage in the process. (Alsop 2004; Pavel 2014.)

A single word-of-mouth interaction can overthrow the entirety of pre-existing brand effect on purchase intention. Brands do not only influence consumers directly, but by introducing a persuasive influence into the network: the more virulent the idea, the greater the number of *transmissions*, which is a measure of *collective* brand salience. (Kendall 2015, 159.)

2.2.5 You can't control the fire hose, but what about its pressure?

A strategic plan to seek favourable editorial mentions in relevant media outlets, where hopefully your customers and influencers will congregate, can be considerably more effective than advertising, although the company usually does not have control over the message and can be at the whim of the media outlet, who at its discretion determines the nature, scope and scale of any coverage.

Those who can see past the unpredictability to the value of the credibility that comes from a media mention, however, know that publicity is an essential and affordable component of a complete marketing plan. (Czinkota & Ronkainen 2011, 139.)

The downside is that the context and source of the message (e.g. article) can play an important role in how it is perceived by the recipient (reader) and these things can be outside the direct control of the company. (Albaum & Duerr 2011, 795; Burnett & Moriarty 1998, 346-347.) “There is no such thing as bad publicity” is a proverb with an unclear origin and many variants exist, although this view should be strongly discouraged. In the past a problem that generated negative media interest could have been forgotten over time, or its exposure limited by geographic area, yet in today’s connected world the news article can be shared online through social media and it will also never be forgotten by the ever-watchful eye of Internet search engines.

The risk for potential damage to both a product’s brand and the corporate brand is high when things go wrong or when things are even misinterpreted (Ping, Ishaq & Li 2015.) and whilst reputation recovery strategies can be deployed, it can never be a guaranteed process even when an effective and ethical rehabilitation programme has been executed. (Ferguson, Wallace & Chandler 2012.) Even innocent situations can spiral out of control thanks to social media storms.

The media might have lost interest and trying to get them to feature positive articles can be a struggle. The company’s key audience, its other publics, may have formed strong impressions and opinions that need to be recognised and changed (Cafasso 2013.) and thus the necessity for proactive PR and other activities should be clear.

2.2.6 A question of propriety

When a company is seeking to “sell” a story to a media outlet it may use marketing techniques to achieve its goal. However, a degree of caution can be advised. Naturally other elements of good behaviour – honesty, truthfulness and politeness

– should be a given, but many companies manage to shoot themselves in the corporate foot through their clumsy attempts at media handling.

Journalists generally are fairly independent creatures who invariably assert their independence and neutrality, whether individually or through their professional associations (Finlands Journalistförbund 2013; NUJ 2011; SPJ 2014.), although some media outlets and individual journalists can be more malleable or accommodating, dependent on the story, the industry and even the country. For example, some business-to-business publications that are dependent on advertising may be more accommodating to positioning an uncritical message compared to a regional daily newspaper. There is a well-known “uneasy alliance” between fashion magazine editors, advertising departments and editors too (Jackson & Shaw 2009, 163.) as each party needs each other and when you are in a small pond, does it help to create undue waves? Many journalists are quite concerned at this situation but are mostly powerless to react. (Turvill 2015.)

It can be permissible to “oil the wheels” at times and a fine line exists between providing hospitality to a journalist, such as a dinner or a theatre show, facilitation such as travel and accommodation to a trade show or factory visit and giveaways such as branded T-shirts and mouse mats. Some media companies have very strict and clear rules about what a journalist may or may not accept so there is no scope for misunderstanding. (The New York Times 2004.) Yet some reported occurrences give a different impression to suggest that standards are not universally applied. (Aggarwal & Gupta 2001, 162; Blodget 2014.)

As a former working journalist, the author certainly could sense “feelers” being placed out at times by PR contacts - who did not know the author so well - and subsequently observe coverage given to the pitched story by certain other journalists who had, it can be said, a bit of a reputation for being “overly accommodating”. Certain offers could help sway many otherwise busy journalists, who might find it *agreeable* to go sailing in the middle of summer or be *forced* to go to New York for a briefing with return flights arranged so there was *conveniently* some dead time to go Christmas shopping. What price ethics and reputation?

2.3 Doing PR

It sounds easy. Write a few words and send them to a journalist, before sitting back and waiting for them to have reserved the front page or a similar piece of prime digital real-estate for your announcement. The real world, on the other hand, tends to shatter the most optimistic illusion and pessimistic expectation alike.

In its simplest form, the most basic tool available to someone charged with handling PR activity is the press (or news) release; this is a document that sets out a company's announcement in its own words, hopefully in a form that will be adopted by the media outlet within its reporting. The press release is sent out to different media outlets, usually as part of a coordinated release schedule.

Consideration has to be given to the destination media (or the eventual end-user "reader" since press releases are no longer something exclusively accessed by the media). There can be many constraints or potential issues for writing even a simple press release, especially if the activity is coordinated by head office without recourse to local resources, partners or assistance as cultural, religious, linguistic, tradition and possibly even legal matters must be considered. (Omar 2009, 379.)

2.3.1 Relationships matter

The best form of PR activity is where coverage is generated by personal connection, possibly even without the use of a press release. An executive with responsibility for PR would, or should, be maintaining contact with journalists with whom they have an existing professional relationship with and know their areas of interest and seek to "sell" the story idea, possibly with the offer of an exclusive or other non-financial inducement (Blythe 2006, 136.) Frequent two-way, personal interactions will yield the best benefits (Sheth & Parvatiyar 2000, 345-347.) due to the customised information content of the communications flow (Mohr & Nevin 1990, 37-40.) but these will be different in approach to a more mass-market, bulk communications strategy (Sheth & Parvatiyar 2000, 345.) that can be utilised for

second-tier PR activities. Being a credible source of information about an organisation should be the goal for any PR executive. (Hendrix & Hayes 2010.)

This relationship building and execution can also allow for other “coverage opportunities”, such as feature articles that have no current news value but provide broader coverage, e.g. a travel feature might mention the importance of taking a set of noise-isolating headphones on-board an aircraft, so if Company X, who makes headphones, can be featured instead of Company Y there is a clear advantage. If the journalist is aware of Company X and how they can also comment with authority on many matters, the company itself may be contacted to comment on non-contentious matters, so a British magazine might write about different workplace environments in Europe, and feature Company X, a Finnish company they have knowledge of, who will be able to promote their brand of noise-isolating products and articulate why selective use of them can improve the “workplace experience”. All these extra mentions can strengthen the company’s brand, its public appearance and provide background strength or noise that can be interpreted by the reader subconsciously. (Mikáčová & Gavlaková 2014.)

The way in which relationships are built and maintained can vary between cultures (Zhu, Nel & Bhat 2006.) and should be an area of consideration common with all communications-related activities, as if a significant proportion of a country or group react or respond in a certain way, it is worthwhile making one’s own approaches to be harmonious to the cultural norm. Other research has noted that even PR strategies and activities vary within multinational companies, affecting how they communicate to their publics. (Sriramesh & Verčič 2012, 17.) It was observed that domestic PR activities would work to match the values of the local culture whilst global activities would be more culturally relativistic (Kim, Hyo Sook 2003.) evidencing the benefit of a more individual, focussed marketing approach.

Closer, more personal relationships with media representatives can also reduce the risk of cultural differences or misunderstandings, although it has to be acknowledged that journalists are under ever-increasing time and work pressures (Willnat & Weaver 2014.) and will not necessarily have the opportunity to even

consider the creation of a relationship, unless the company is incredibly central to their news agenda, due to the transformation of the media to an increasingly “production line”, commodity being. Yet the media in every country is generally under pressure; frequently undermanned, poorly resourced and not as campaigning or as independent as it may like its readers or media consumers to believe.

Journalists perceive that up to 80 per cent of their reporting can be influenced by PR activities (Obermaier, Koch & Riesmeyer 2015.), even if they may be professionally reluctant to reveal this to their readers, viewers or listeners. Therefore, a well-timed, relevant and actionable story may be accepted and subject to less scrutiny or ‘stress testing’ than in previous times, underlining the importance of PR activities and the core, deep PR/media relationship. (Lewis, Williams & Franklin 2008; Lewis, Williams, Franklin, Thomas & Mosdell 2008; Sallot & Johnson 2006.)

2.3.2 A shotgun or a laser-targeted approach?

It can also be strategic to distribute news in bulk through a targeted social media campaign and possibly through the use of a press release distribution network that radiates material to the media and various online services, although the actual audiences and their perceived needs and calculated individual value will vary. It is hard to deny that some criticism may be quite valid (Parker Wayne & Kent 2010.) particularly when bulk distribution services are used as the primary means of dissemination and the issuer may get an apparent impressive distribution of its news, yet it can be questionable who may be reading it and whether they are strategically beneficial to company objectives. There can be other benefits using bulk distribution as an additional, secondary mechanism, especially if suitably managed, yet it is not a panacea. (Conner 2013.)

On the other hand, you cannot just send a press release and expect it will be picked up with velvet gloves and given the “front page treatment”. A story that

might get picked up on one day will be ignored on another, especially if there's a bigger or better story on offer. Journalists may evaluate your press release within seconds (Shearman 2014.) and they rarely go back for a second look, so it is important to have the message carefully crafted, notably relevant, timely and have a good relationship network in place. (Wynne 2014.)

The press release itself, in many ways is dying, and not just in the form that it is delivered. (Drabent 2016.) It will remain important as a means of communication, yet changes within the media market, greater usage of content marketing, social media and other upcoming formats will shift its balance. It is clear the media is mostly not just waiting for a company's press release to arrive before being vaguely edited (if at all) and sent out to waiting readers.

Many times, as a journalist, has this author taken a telephone call from a known contact who promised just to take just a minute to alert to something coming up, which led to a much longer call and a fairly large story as a result. Equally, with depressing regularity, you would receive a badly-written, incoherent, late or irrelevant release from a specific company and time after time it was the same end-result so after a while they got automatically filtered out for being the equivalent of PR excreta or spam.

2.3.3 Social media knocks down some media walls

Changes in the media landscape, the growing take-up of social media and the trend of forming a direct contact relationship with "end user" customers or prospects through blogs, mailing lists and the Internet, mean that the shape and form of PR is changing and these new outlets may be vital communication channels (Baker 2014, 410; Niemi 2013.), yet the basic principles remain and there will still be a need for traditional PR for the foreseeable future, it is just not going to be such a regulated, ordered relationship as in previous times.

Journalists are increasingly active on social media and reportedly find it an invaluable tool, letting them keep “in tune” with their markets, its participants and their readers. (CISION 2015.) It also brings PR back full circle, since the skilled PR executive will, through social media, be connecting with their other publics whilst much of the traditional media is gradually seeing reduced emphasis. (ING 2014.) There will still be a place for journalists and media contact for some time to come, even if the media’s relevance is changing and automation is slowly taking over low-level journalistic activities. (Miller 2015.)

2.4 Active management

Finland has a lot of wonderful products, but hardly any international brands. Finns have great national industries but something disturbing is missing. After decades of industrial development in machinery, technology and forest industry, Finns have built strong production knowledge. But I am wondering why most Finnish brands remain unknown around the world. It seems that the true potential of powerful branding is totally underestimated in Finland, not only in the marketing departments but also on the board level of Finnish companies. (Peitersen 2015.)

As stated, the art of PR is more than just sending a press release to as many media outlets you can find. It can be highly desirable to seek a balanced media mix (Albaum & Duerr 2011, 806.) for press coverage as some outlets or media types will be more strategic and important than others (Ellis 2011, 304-306.) and where resources are finite you must prioritise. It also requires active, ongoing, focussed and ideally quality management. This is not an optional extra.

One good benefit of PR is that it can be relatively immune to a specific, individual product life cycle (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders & Wong 1999, 626-629.), even if the detail of individual activities may vary. Many forget that there is more to proactive PR activity than just new product launches. Clearly, a company will strive to have a portfolio of products with different growth rates and different market shares, along with an active research and development programme to hopefully come up with the ‘next great thing’. These may also be supported by a strong

brand and possibly several sub-brands. When Brand X does something, people should be listening and ready to react. Branding is not just a label you get on a sports shirt or pair of training shoes, after all!

As part of its active management, a company may be monitoring individual products through tools such as the Boston Consulting Group's growth-share matrix (Henderson 1970.) to assess their actual market share and market growth potential. Even if "dog"-categorised products are in existence, with a corresponding cut to marketing expenditure, it is not a given that any investment in PR activity would be wasted; it may just require a different focus (Copley 2014, 298.)

Use of frameworks such as the Ansoff Matrix (Ansoff 1957.) can also be beneficial to help identify and shape the type of PR opportunities available (Copley 2014, 298-299.) and analysis of cultures and audiences can aid the export process and the underlying method of communication utilised. These tools can be helpful, yet not infallible or even essential. Theoretical models can often be replaced (or supplemented) by a PR executive with a journalism background; a so-called "poacher turned gamekeeper" (OED Online 2015a.), who has a great degree of "news sense" (Schudson 1989, 277.) and awareness of the market in which their employer or client operates and great internal visibility throughout the company. Sometimes you just know there is a great story to tell, if just someone would listen!

3 THE ROLE OF EXPORT

From an operational perspective, exports challenge companies to design, develop, manufacture and supply products to discerning customers in global markets. This in turn motivates companies to scale up the value chain, which results in higher realisations. (Philip 2013.)

Exporting is beneficial, both for the exporting company and also for the country of origin. Not every company may have a structure or a product range that is “export ready” but many who could be actively exporting appear to adopt a somewhat passive, half-hearted approach to the process, treating the whole export business as something they must endure instead of an opportunity they should be seizing.

3.1 The importance of export

On a macroeconomic level, exports influence economic growth, employment and the balance of payments. It can also be a political device and contribute towards the branding of a country, such as Germany’s reputation for engineering and the “Mittelstand” concept. (Financial Times 2016.) There are also microeconomic benefits as it forces domestic companies to compete on the international stage, driving innovation and generally improving the quality and delivery of products and services. To use a sporting analogy, you lose the benefit of any “home advantage” and you may need to be even better than normal to win the away fixture; this in turn will trickle down naturally to your home fixtures.

A company must attempt to sell goods into an export market. In some circumstances the size of goods exported into a specific country can be so large that eventually it makes commercial sense to establish production facilities in the country or near-region. (Kotler & Kotler 2013, 117.) Some countries place great focus on export-orientated business activities, such as Germany and Japan, and others are present in world export rankings due to their low labour costs, making them the workshops of the world. (World Atlas 2015.)

Many companies can have the majority of their business coming from export, yet they are relatively unknown to end-user customers. One example of this is Prevox Oy in Nykarleby, Finland that exports about 85 per cent of its production. (KWH Group undated.) The products are sold through intermediaries such as Ikea (Plastnet 2006.) as part of a complete Ikea-branded package. Prevox recently won a sizeable long-term order from Ikea for water siphons, a product group that accounts for about 90 per cent of its business, and this order is expected to account for over half of its entire turnover through to 2021. (Sund 2015.)

3.2 Size is not everything

Many companies have succeeded in gaining worldwide dominance for their products or services despite the smaller size of their country of origin, a limited home market and even their own relative size (Lascu 2002, 5.). To get to this stage they needed an international presence, be exporting and be actively talking about their products. Smaller enterprises can be more agile and aggressive, albeit on a reduced scale, should they be involved with export activities.

Even though the research for this report focusses on larger enterprises, it does not necessarily mean that participants are established, mature exporters who are following best practice and maximising their potential to the full. Individual circumstances can vary. Characteristics such as core corporate competencies, efficient production, executive leadership and effective management are signals that track enhanced export activity. (Daniels, Radebaugh & Sullivan 2013, 530.)

A company's size and confidence towards exporting and even its successes or failures to date in different markets can be relevant. (Lascu 2002, 168-169.) The attitude of senior managers and past performance can shape a company's approach to exporting in ways that might not be as obvious. (Lages & Montgomery 2004.) There may also be various demands placed on the production and logistics process where products require localisation or conformity with local norms and standards.

3.3 Reasons for, excuses against and helping hands

Some of the reasons why a company would or should export can be quite clear. It may be being “attacked” by foreign firms in its home market and it needs to retaliate and fight them on their home front, or it believes it can earn higher profits on exported goods than it could at home. (Kotler & Kotler 2013, 120.) Technological advances, quality differences, price competitiveness and even unified industry support and cooperation within one’s own country can assist an export drive, although care must be taken to avoid any cartel-like restriction of trade behaviour from occurring. (Katz 1998, 161-163.)

The upside of exporting is not just hopefully an increase in turnover and profitability that can lead to company growth and expansion, employing more staff or securing the enterprise’s viability. Export business can lead to greater production volumes that may achieve economies of scale, reducing overall per capita costs, as well as reducing dependency on the home market or a dominant export country. (Armenter & Koren 2015; Vuorela 2015, 28.) With increasing globalisation, many companies are establishing a presence overseas and thus customers may have “gone abroad” and expect their suppliers to follow suit. (Kotler & Kotler 2013, 124.)

Small and medium-sized businesses have an important part to play when it comes to exporting and this is particularly visible in countries that are particularly export-focussed. For example, in the United States even though 66.3 per cent of all exports in 2010 were made by larger companies employing over 500 persons, this figure only represented 2.2 per cent of all exporters: showing a major untapped potential for growth and it said that “global marketing is now a necessity in the age of globalisation” (Ibid., 120.) About half of German exports are made by companies employing 19 or fewer employees. (Czinkota & Ronkainen 2013, 15.) A similar situation exists in Finland and this is examined in section 3.5.

Larger companies have broadly understood the need to export and the benefits that may follow. Smaller and medium companies are more polarised. Micro and

small companies can be more agile with their product and service development and they may enjoy some limited success exporting, which is not to be under-appreciated, yet the medium-sized companies can be hidden performers and yield greatness.

In the United States a general lack of awareness was cited as the key barrier to exporting by 46 per cent of small businesses, followed by a lack of suitable products or services (30 per cent) and fears about not getting paid (26 per cent) (NBSA 2013.). In the United Kingdom, 56 per cent said that they had no suitable export products, 25 per cent said that exporting was not part of their business plan and seven per cent said that they had enough business from domestic sources. Only one per cent admitted a lack of knowledge about how to export. (BIS 2015, 60.) It may be reasonable to speculate that excuses are being made, as it appears inconceivable that small businesses in two well-developed, SME-friendly and export-experienced countries could vary so much with regards to their attitudes to exporting. Finland's experiences are detailed in sections 3.6 and 3.7.

Governments sponsor many initiatives to try and boost exports, ranging from local support and education programmes to high-level overseas trade missions and political assistance. These are backed by many private initiatives, through bodies such as trade associations and chambers of commerce. So-called export marketing groups also exist that allow many companies to pool their resources in pursuit of a common goal. (Bradley 2002, 271-273.) There are some signs to suggest that reluctance to export could, in part, be a generational thing, with younger SMEs being more export-aware. (Citrix 2014.)

3.4 Export, as part of a bigger strategic plan

Exporting is hopefully a strategic function of active corporate management, rather than a reactive afterthought. Export would be thus part of a bigger vision, rather than a silo-based activity, with different business functions being interdependent.

A company's philosophy towards internationalisation can be described through the use of the EPRG Framework (Perlmutter 1969.) as being either ethnocentric (belief that one's home country is superior to the rest of the world), polycentric (each country is unique), regiocentric (bias towards a regional structured arrangement) or geocentric (bias towards a globally structured arrangement). (Keegan & Green 2015, 40-42; Lascau 2002, 6-8.) The theory being that a company's strategies will be influenced by its underlying views and values and by extension of this, a company's senior executives can undoubtedly nudge or change a company's philosophy through their own opinions, biases and prejudices, just as they otherwise can transform and redirect a company over time. (Aiken & Keller 2007; Farkas & Wettläufer 1996; Rothaermel 2014, 35.)

A study of the framework also found that companies exhibiting an ethnocentric orientation tended to focus on the home market and export to "psychologically close" markets with no marketing adaptation, in contrast to other orientations whereby marketing adaptation increases as psychological distance between home and host markets increases. (Onkvisit & Shaw 2004, 14-15.)

Exporting may also be viewed not just as a means to sell one's surplus capacity away from the home market. It can signal a commitment to internationalisation, allowing at first tentative steps be taken to establish a foreign presence that can develop to the other extreme of having a company-owned subsidiary or joint-venture operation in the country. (Bradley 2002, 265-266.) However, many companies tend to fall passively into exporting. (Geetanjali 2010, 16.) They may be relatively happy servicing a domestic market and have no desires to expand internationally. Some enquiries and orders may come from overseas and these may either be declined, dealt with as an irritation or viewed as an unexpected, unplanned bonus. This may in turn transform into an export stage where little effort is made to market and sell products until something triggers a reaction to management that they are getting much interest and business from a given country or region and thus they start to focus on these areas and enter territories sequentially, albeit without a strategic plan, little learning and uncoordinated marketing efforts (if any).

Some companies are content with indirect exporting (Ibid., 168.), going through a middleman and thus having little or no contact with end-user customers and possibly even having little or no marketing communications efforts in a given territory. On the other hand, some companies tend to aggressively embrace internationalisation and exporting, but that comes with many risks of over-reach and potential failure. (Nummela, Saarenketo & Loane 2014.) In some situations, smaller companies operating in specific sectors – such as the music and culture areas – can be effectively forced to internationalise and export due to a restricted domestic market (Paakkanen 2012.) and focussed, sector-based export promotion efforts have made an impact and there could be scope for this model to be expanded into other areas.

3.5 What happens in Finland should not stay in Finland!

People are less likely to want to “buy a product” that has no clear, positive image in their mind. In fact, it is a rule of marketing that if prospective buyers cannot remember the brand (in this case, made in Finland), it is unlikely they will buy the product. If the businesses in the country make great products, the economy should be booming [...] that is currently not the case in Finland. Finland needs to communicate more effectively. To overcome the “best kept secret” syndrome, it would help Finland to realize that the concept of “if you make it, they will come” is only found in movies. The benefits of Finland need to be actively marketed. That means they need to be highlighted in headlines, and not buried in the body text of communications. It would help if Finns learned to overcome their shyness, and not be afraid to tell others how Finland can help them. The Finnish government and its bigger, better-known companies need to lead the charge to communicate the great things that have come out of Finland. (Kalb 2014.)

Finland is, in many ways, a country of contrasts. Excluding agriculture, 98.9 per cent of businesses are employing less than 50 people and 93.4 per cent have fewer than 10 employees (Yrittäjät undated.) and consolidated turnover accounts for 16.2 per cent (fewer than 10 employees) or 33.6 per cent (fewer than 50 employees) note statistics from 2013. (Tilastokeskus 2015b, 531.) Micro and small businesses play their part. The larger companies may have greater resources and opportunities at their disposal and be capable of setting a good example to their

smaller peers, yet they can also be encumbered with internal problems that restrict their agility and flexibility. A micro company can, in theory, decide they want to try and sell in Dubai in the morning and be doing it before lunchtime.

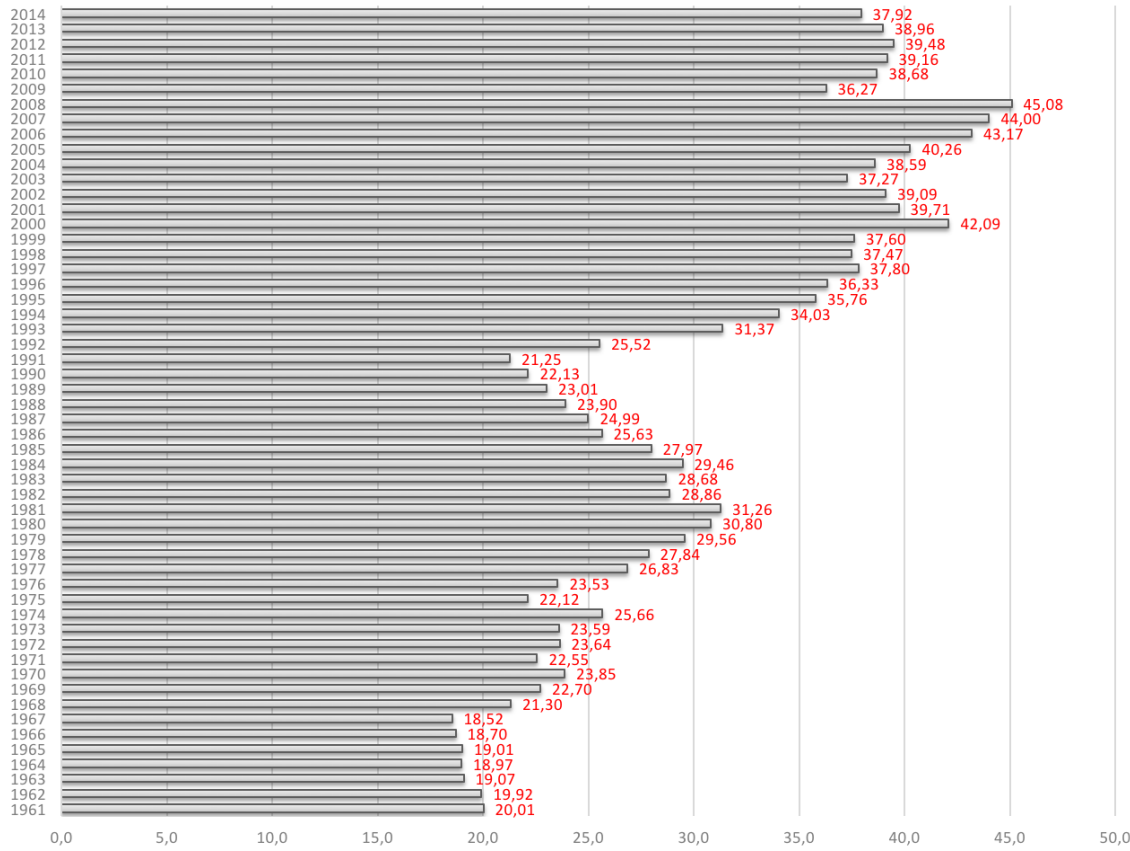
In an ever-globalised society, whether a company can be defined as truly Finnish is a moot point, as “Finnish companies” can be owned by foreign shareholders and many companies in Finland are affiliates of foreign corporations, accounting for nearly 23 per cent of all enterprise turnover (Tilastokeskus 2015c.), or around 87.4 billion euros. Clearly these companies will be employers, consume products and services and pay taxation on profits (unless legal tax reduction strategies have been deployed) yet capital may be repatriated back to the parent company and country and their strategic significance may be subservient to the national long-term interest.

Globalisation is also responsible for major changes and changing in export fortunes. For example, the United States accounted for nearly one-quarter of all world merchandise in the 1950s yet a half-century later this had declined by two-thirds (Czinkota & Ronkainen 2013, 11.) with no significant recovery in sight. Finnish industrial output has been cyclical and rather sensitive and at the mercy of international economic and political trends. (Tilastokeskus 2007.) Observers such as the OECD suggest that a structural adjustment is necessary within many industrial sectors, with productivity growth, greater utilisation of human resources, and improved exploitation of innovation, entrepreneurship and research and development. (OECD 2013.) Attempts to get the country back on a sound economic footing have led to an ongoing conflict between the trinity of government, employer organisations and trade unions, with reform appearing to be a concept rather than an action at the time this thesis was concluded.

3.6 Finnish effects

Export has an important part to play within the Finnish economy, even though its fortunes change, as an examination of its exports as a share of gross domestic

product (GDP)¹, as shown in graph 1. In the past 15 years the share of exports in relation to GDP has fallen faster than in any comparable country. (Vikkula 2014.)



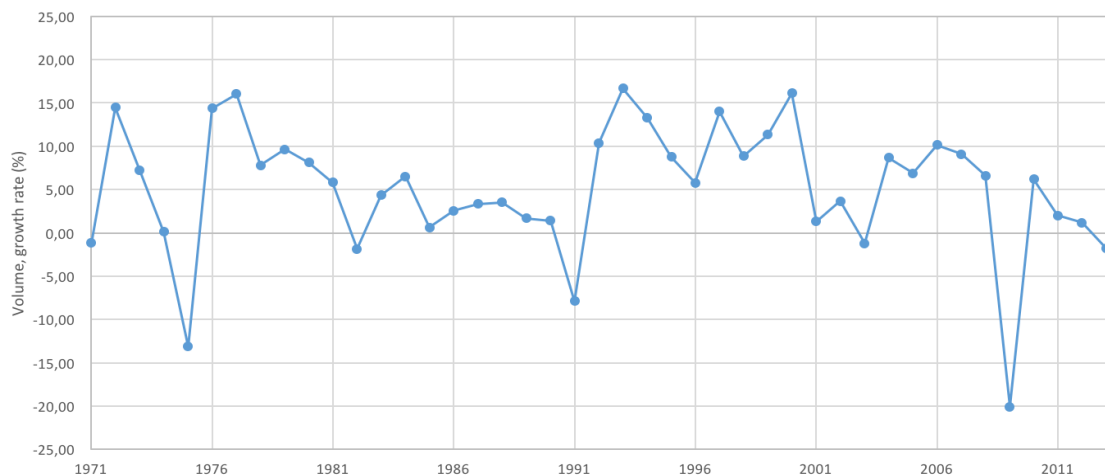
GRAPH 1. Finnish export of goods & services (% of GDP) (World Bank 2015c.)

Financial market observers are generally pessimistic about the near-term future. Aktia Bank expect very modest growth, based primarily on expected improvements to the country’s competitiveness (YLE 2015c.) and Nordea Bank believes that structural problems in export industries will contribute to the economic malaise. (YLE 2015d.) However the statistics are analysed, they make for grim reading, with Finnish Customs noting falling export prices as well as falling

¹ World Bank statistical data describes exports as being the value of all goods and other market services provided to the rest of the world, including the value of merchandise, freight, insurance, transport, travel, royalties, license fees and other services, such as communication, construction, financial, information, business, personal and government services, whilst excluding compensation of employees and investment income (formerly called factor services) and transfer payments.

export levels, such as a four per cent drop in January to September 2015 compared to a comparative period in 2014. (Finnish Customs 2015.)

The longer-term trend for exporting has been positive in Finland, although it can be somewhat cyclical and when demand for exports falls, for whatever reason, it can fall quite hard and recovery is slow to react. Graph 2 shows the average annual rate of growth for exports and periods of recession are clearly noticeable.

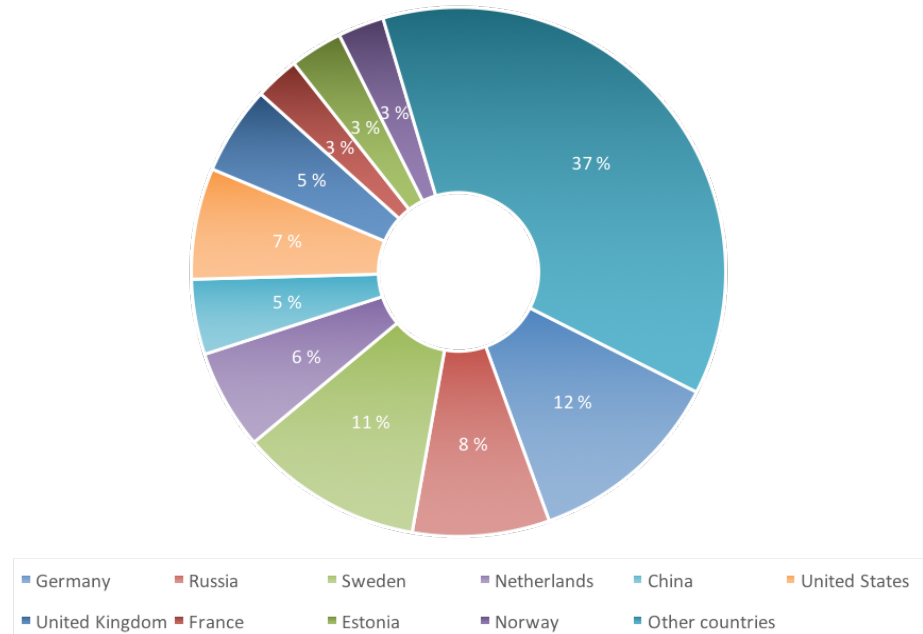


GRAPH 2. Finnish exports of goods & services: Annual average rate of growth (United Nations Statistics Division 2015.)

Even if Finland is not exporting as much as it should be, it is interesting to examine its core markets (graph 3) and consider whether there is scope to boost trade to these areas as well as developing new market areas. Exports are principally made to EU28 countries, it is noted (Tilastokeskus 2015a.), accounting for 57.3 per cent, followed by the rest of Europe (14.4 per cent), Asia (13.9 per cent) and North & Middle America (9.1 per cent). Africa, South America and Oceania in total account for 5.3 per cent.

What has Finland got that it can export, affordably, around the world; and if it doesn't have "it" today, can it have "it" ready any time soon? Is there scope to improve less-performing export destinations, such as Latvia which was the 20th-largest export country in 2014, representing a 39 per cent year-on-year improvement, or Indonesia in 30th place and a 101 per cent year-on-year rise, or

are these statistical anomalies, even if both countries account for about one billion euros in business. (Tilastokeskus 2015b, 142.)



GRAPH 3. Finnish foreign trade 2014 (Tilastokeskus 2015a.)

For many key trading partners, graph 4 shows that there can be quite a trade imbalance, yet if the economy was otherwise working and exports flowing, it should not be necessarily viewed adversely. Clearly on a selfish economic level it makes sense for a country to have a positive balance or trade surplus on its balance of payments (it exports more products and services than it imports). Deficits, if unchecked, lead to greater economic instability, make the cost of government debt higher and can have significant impacts on the domestic economy. (Dunn & Mutti 2004, 331-333.) It can be a question of balance, as even too much surplus can create its own pressures such as domestic inflation and money supply issues. (Ibid., 333-334.)

From 1995 to 2010 Finland managed a trade surplus, although this was dwindling year-on-year from its peak in 2000. (Tilastokeskus 2015b, 140.) In 2011 there was quite a significant deficit and subsequent years have continued to record a significant, but reduced, imbalance. Examining the past 115 years of imports and

exports by sector notes the changing fortunes of the country, (Ibid., 141.) but it could also give clues to possible areas of trade development for the future. One example is the importation of products for the metal industry could possibly be cut since the country has increased its exports of the same category significantly over time, thus is there scope for greater self-sufficiency.



GRAPH 4. Key trading partners in balance 2014 (Tilastokeskus 2015a.)

As a small country, Finland can be ideally placed to seek to focus on several highly-profitable industries that could have great export potential, which would effectively “subsidise” the domestic economy. However, it is easier said than done and may require great structural change as well as a fair share of good luck. A detailed examination of this nirvana is outside the scope of this report, although it should be noted that a change of fortune can be found by a business developing a product that is in global demand, such as LEGO’s impact on the Danish economy. (Case, Fair & Oster 2011, 691.) It is also conceivable that a company could change its domicile so that all revenues are booked through its Finnish parent company and thus impacting on the country’s economy, although a more ‘company friendly’ environment may need to first exist.

Some economists suggest that Finnish industry is, on the whole, failing to produce products that add significant value (Fagerholm 2015.) and that this, along with other factors such as cost structures and competitiveness (European Commission

2015, 21.) create additional barriers to industry as a whole and export demand in particular. A switch towards desirable, high-profit, value-adding products would benefit the national economy, it has been noted, but the 'solution' found by some companies to restructure and relocate their production overseas to increase 'global value' had a limited impact. (Ibid., 26.)

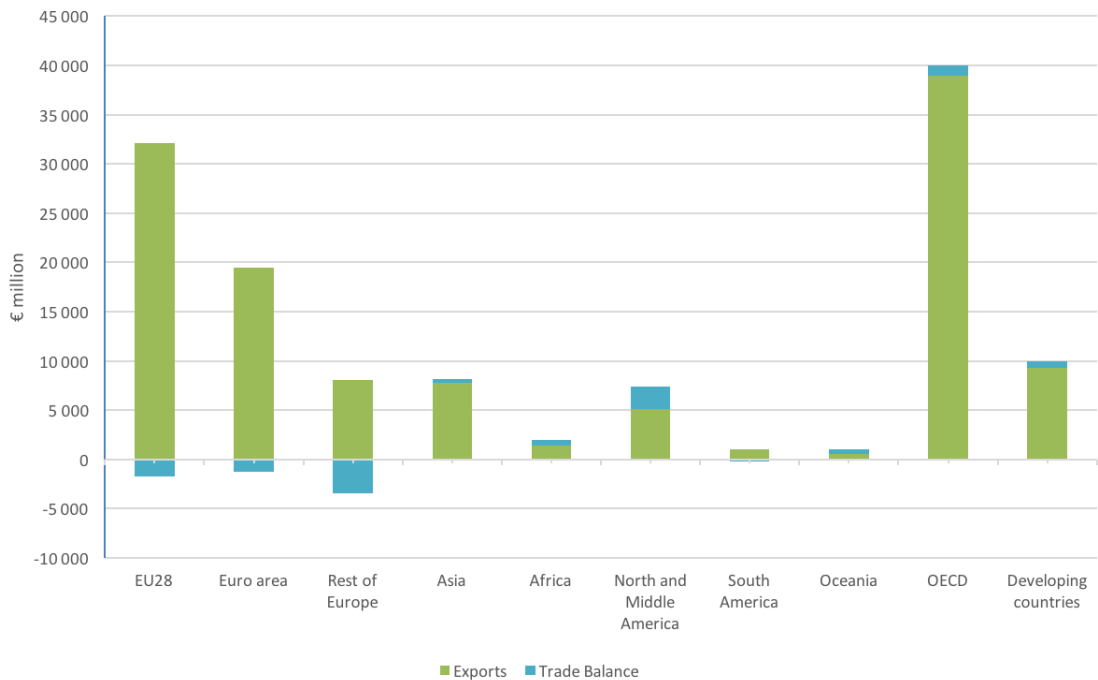
It can also be questioned whether Finnish industry is taking advantage of geographic proximity (Ghuri & Cateora 2014, 159-160.) to the Nordic region ("looking west") rather than its past habit of "looking east" to Russia. Some companies certainly get this, particularly in the Swedish-speaking area of the country, where they historically have used their common language to use the Swedish market as a bridgehead to the Nordic region. (Enlund 2015.)

Initiatives towards this aim have already been implemented and others are ongoing. Investment into general research and development (R&D) is amongst the highest in the EU, yet the country still faces challenges to convert this investment into successful export products and services. (European Commission 2015, 5.) The structure of Finland's export sector is today 'more balanced' or less concentrated to fewer industry sectors than it was at the end of the 20th century, although it still is comparatively high and vulnerable due to a specialisation in products that have a relative low share in international trade. (Ibid., 14-15.)

When you refocus and examine the global view things are not as bleak as it may seem, even though it is not a perfect position to be in. Graph 5 shows exports and trade balances for geographic trading areas and most of the entries are in positive territory. Achieving balance and moving towards a surplus may not be insurmountable if exports can be increased which, in turn, would provide other benefits for the domestic economy.

Through remitted profits and taxation, the government could (or would) be able to repay some of its sovereign (EDP) debt – standing at about 128.1 billion euros (Tilastokeskus 2015d.) - as circumstances permit. The Bank of Finland has also expressed its disquiet that debt has more than doubled since 2008 (Bank of

Finland 2015.) whilst observing that thus far Finland's economic recovery is significantly trailing the very modest increases recorded by other EU member states. Export trade has been important for Finland in the past century, although the previous and liberal use of currency devaluation, that could be used to kick-start the economy and improve international competitiveness (Tilastokeskus 2007.), is no longer at the country's disposal.



GRAPH 5. Global trade in balance in balance 2014 (Tilastokeskus 2015a.)

Russia has previously been a key export market for the country although this has been affected by a European Union-mandated trade embargo from July 2014 and retaliatory action by the Russian state. Exports to Russia fell, for example by one-third in the January to September 2015 period. (Finnish Customs 2015.) and this did send shock waves through many business sectors. However, it has been suggested (Vuorela 2015, 28.) that some opportunities may come out of adversity, with some streamlining occurring to existing export processes and reduced costs due to the removal of middlemen and agents.

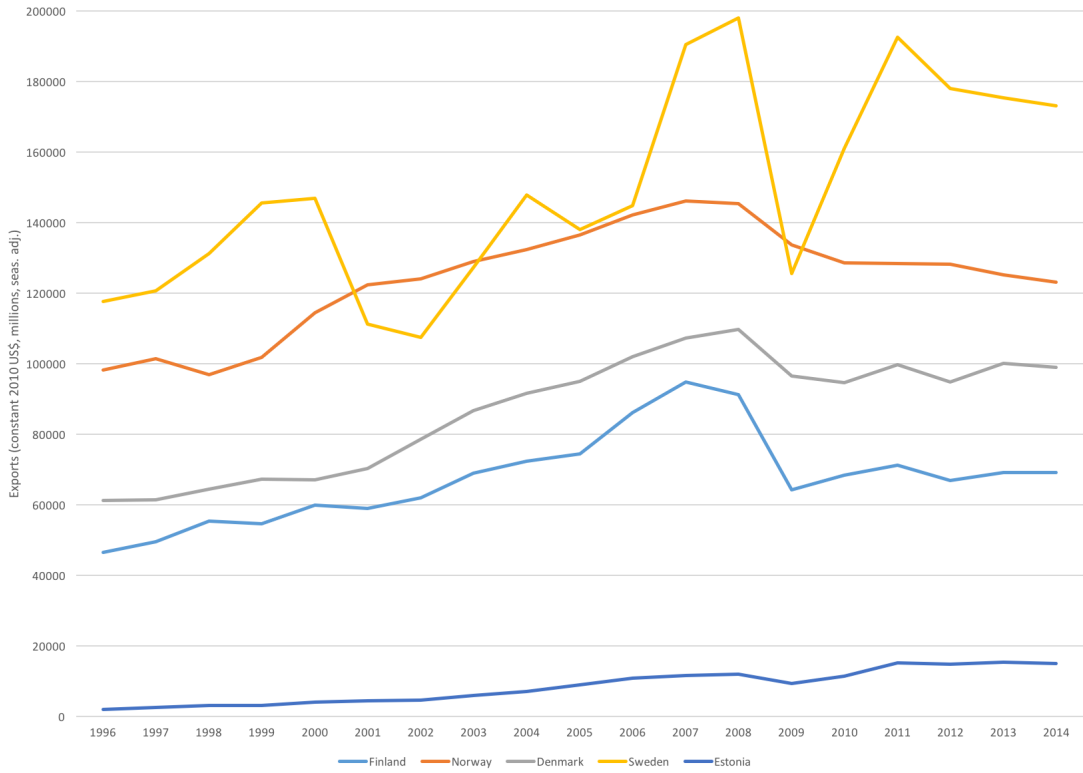
The lack of a broader Russian export market may lead to different opportunities being discovered, although this should not be viewed as a temporary measure, since the consumption of Russian (domestic) consumers is decreasing all the time

and this will have long-term effects on businesses in Russia, who in turn will be importing less. (Ibid.) Danske Bank believes that the economy would have probably grown if it were not for the Russian sanctions and related uncertainty, although the negative impact should fade in 2016 as export priorities shift westwards. (Danske Bank 2015.)

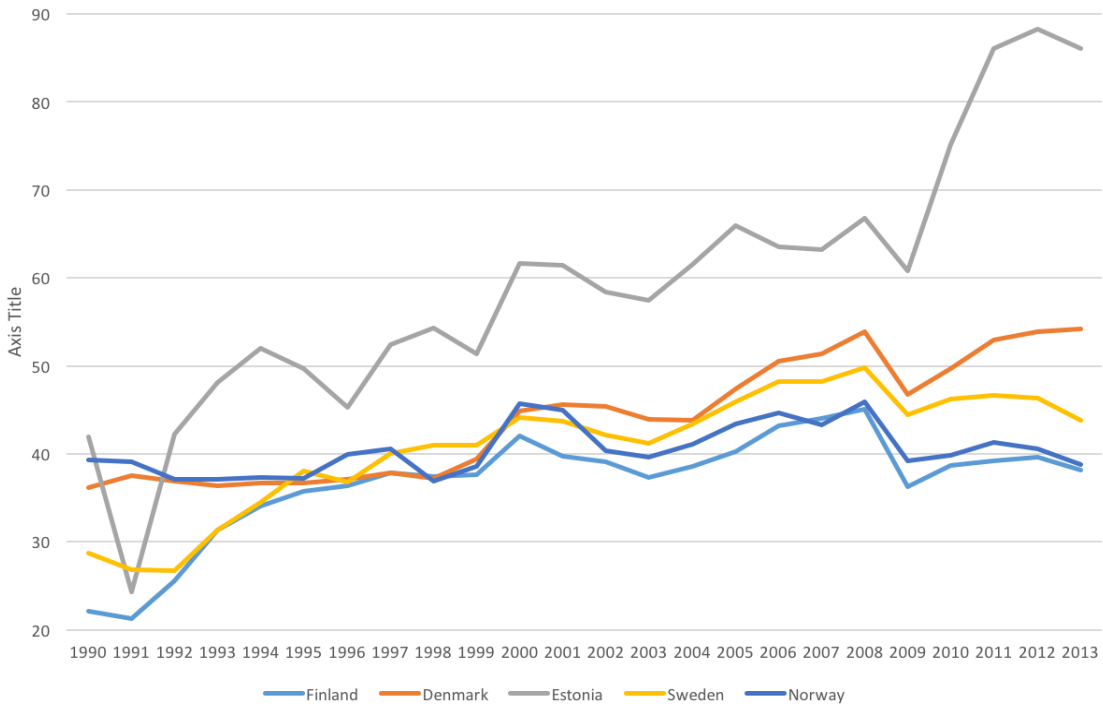
Doing business with Russia has been a bit of a love-hate relationship for many Finnish companies, mostly due to instability over time, and thus current difficulties may be a blessing, rather than a curse, in the long-term as they are forced to diversify and broaden their export reach. In the short-term with the current global economic conditions, it can be a very stressful cold shower. Companies with operations in Russia or large export business to the country remain upbeat, despite present-day sanctions, when it comes to the long-term future, particularly after sanctions are eventually removed. (Mård 2015.).

Some companies have existing open orders with Russia, yet they are not permitted to fulfil them. (Ulfvens 2014.) One such company is Transtech, with an order for 900 railway carriages and wagons for a Russian railway operator, yet it could only deliver around 160 before sanctions came into force, leaving 740 in limbo. (Toivonen 2015.) Contract terms were not disclosed, although an estimate based on another contract (RGI 2010.) could imply an unfulfilled contract worth in excess of one billion euros over time, even allowing for significant discounting.

Comparisons to different countries with different economies and industries can be of less direct value, even if they can sometimes give interesting insight or perspective. Graph 6 compares seasonally- and currency-adjusted exports from 1996 to 2014 between Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Estonia. Graph 7 meanwhile, takes the same countries examined in the previous graph and examines the share of exports relative to GDP.



GRAPH 6. Comparing Finland’s export performance to selected near-neighbours, 1996-2014 (World Bank 2015b.)



GRAPH 7. Comparing Finland’s export performance by GDP contribution to selected near-neighbours 1990-2013 (World Bank 2015a.)

No doubt economists will make various conclusions dependent on their own interpretation and analysis of key economic theories, yet it is noticeable that relatively advanced, first world economies are quite dependent on exports due to over-capacity within their limited domestic markets, yet they cannot compete on low-margin, high-volume bulk products whose supply is dominated by countries with significantly lower labour costs. Higher margin, more advanced products and services are a niche that the Nordic region increasingly needs to locate itself into. Structural problems and a polarisation between smaller and larger companies is noticeable, with the issues becoming exacerbated with the changing economic fortunes of the world and a shift in manufacturing and industrial sectors. In Finland, one-third of all exports are made by ten companies – and only 100 companies make 67 per cent of exports. (Vikkula 2014.)

There is a danger in putting “all your eggs in one basket”, whether it is focusing on the activities of a few companies, sectors that can suffer from changing demand as well as geopolitical issues. (Gorodnichenko, Mendoza & Tesar 2012; Gulan, Haavio & Kilponen 2014; Powell 2011; YLE 2014.)

It should also be noted that it can be dangerous pursuing a small number of export markets. There may be practical reasons, such as sales support and logistics, to concentrate on specific regions, although where possible a broad export strategy is desirable to account for eventual changes and disruption.

There are 2,548 medium-sized companies in Finland which employ 250,000 people. These companies have already gained experience from the international markets. They just need encouragement to grow. Medium sized companies generally generate quicker results from their international growth projects as no time needs to be spent on building the basic export competencies. The impact of a project is also bigger. A ten-percentage growth in exports for a medium-sized company outperforms in euros a similar growth of ten small-sized companies. (Vikkula 2014.)

Even though smaller companies should not be viewed as merely scaled-down versions of their larger counterparts, due to differences such as structure, attitude

and opportunity (Williams 2003.), SMEs can learn many things from how the larger companies communicate and export and undoubtedly vice versa.

*As a footnote, at the time this thesis was completed, provisional export data for January 2016 was released, (YLE 2016.) showing that export fell in all main sectors, compared to a comparable period in January 2015. EU exports fell in value terms by nine per cent and non-EU markets by 12 per cent. Despite an overall drop and an increase in the trade deficit, exports to China have risen.

3.7 A drive to boost exports: does the drive need a kick-start?

Goals can be set to attempt to inspire an increase in export activity, particularly in small and medium-sized companies. The Finnish government also encourages entrepreneurial activity, both as a means to boost the country's economy and to reengineer its industrial base and reduce relatively high levels of unemployment. Yet bureaucratic red tape, a feature of Finnish public sector administration, is still extant and in need of reform. Finnish companies are praised for being amongst the most innovative and many products that are exported are of a high quality, but this is so far not enough. (European Commission 2015, 28.)

Public funding and financial support schemes have been described as a jungle that suppresses even the strongest, with new programmes being added on top of existing ones, all with different targets and conflicting support criteria. (Vikkula 2014.) The system needs to be changed, but is there the political will and ability to effect this, particularly with so many other demands fighting for attention. On top of this, there can be many initiatives from the European Union available to member-state companies that could potentially help, yet the barriers to access can be formidable due to administration. A clear, unified, one-stop-shop approach may be necessary.

Export promotion agencies and other bodies such as trade associations and chambers of commerce can have a key role to play in assisting within the export

process (Kotler 2002, 364-370.) in roles such as informer, broker, expediter, trainer and counsellor, financier, host, promoter, facility developer and new technology developer. Naturally this is not a de jure obligation but a series of mutually advantageous support offerings. Research notes that the use of market development-related export promotion activities can influence a company's export performance both directly and indirectly through its management's perceptions of the export market environment, export knowledge and commitment. (Gençtürk & Kotabe 2001; Shamsuddoha 2005, 158.) Additional sales and growing customer demand can also help influence, although this may not be an immediate event.

In Finland there are many public initiatives to assist exporters, such as Team Finland and its network which exists to promote Finland and boosts the success of Finnish companies abroad by bringing together all state-funded bodies and the services they offer to promote the internationalisation of Finnish companies. The aim is to attract foreign investments to Finland and to promote Finland's country brand (Team Finland undated.) by strengthening the country's trademark of being an educated, design-led, exotic and high-technology land. (YLE 2013b.) Regional development bodies funded by municipalities additionally provide various services and many private companies can offer consultancy and other practical assistance.

There is a general perception that most public sector help is orientated towards larger enterprises, with bureaucratic overhead and reporting requirements making it either virtually impossible or not cost-effective for SMEs to seek assistance. (Paakkanen 2012, 48-49, 76-77.) For the smaller company, a lot of the advice might be theoretical, telling you broadly what you need to do but not exactly helping you achieve the goal with practical assistance. Maybe there is scope for greater public-private partnerships in this area, even if any assistance is latterly reimbursed in the event of measured success being realised.

Of course, it is not just physical products that can be exported. Services and knowledge (know-how) are important streams and it is quite conceivable that agile Finnish can take a part of a market that might be ripe for picking. Dr. Jan Feller, deputy general manager of the German-Finnish Chamber of Commerce, believes

that the digital transformation of industries creates tremendous opportunities, noting that the German mechanical engineering industry is strong but it needs to be transformed into 'the digital century' to defend its leadership position, and here Finnish companies could have "huge opportunities" to enter this market, work with established sector leaders and eventually use their cooperation as a stepping stone to even greater things. (Salo 2015.)

Other research points towards possibly systemic issues with export confidence within organizations, even if management is "talking the talk" and appearing confident. (Jin-Kuusirinne 2014.) On a global level competition can be fierce and thus companies need to react to this yet retain a certain flexibility since the environment is littered with unknown and uncontrollable factors. Communication, if central to a company, can be an aid here since an integrated communications strategy "connects the organization to a strong market orientation and thus higher degree of export readiness which is among those controllable factors that lead to a more successful export performance." (Ibid.)

Yet most companies seem to be unacceptably slow to see into the future, anticipating, identifying and meeting changes both within the market-at-large and customers. (Blomqvist 2015.) Tough international competition, fragmented markets, outdated business behaviour, over-supply and attitudinal issues further work against Finnish companies and their attempts to export. Greater investment in sales and marketing education, knowledge and professional usage is also viewed as a route to future success.

"We need a clear view of the entire customer service chain management in a constantly changing business environment. A simple sales skill is not enough. Organizations must lead to be flexible and use completely new ways through the entire chain from product development to marketing, sales and delivery." (Free translation of a comment by sales and management trainer/consultant Pekka Sinervo from Adeptus Partners) (Ibid.)

Finnish companies are said, on the whole, to have no problem competing with global peers, notes Professor Pertti Haaparanta from Aalto University's School of Business, but they are struggling with innovation and have major issues when it

comes to their sales and marketing endeavours. Poor management and leadership deficiencies further handicap the entire enterprise. (Pantzar 2013.) Professor Jaakko Aspara from Hanken School of Economics believes that Finns are more of engineers than salespeople, with marketing not belonging to the collective ambition, yet they could be very good at it if they did it. (YLE 2015b.) Professor Aspara highlighted one general difference between Swedish and Finnish companies: in Sweden they think about export when they begin to develop a product, whilst in Finland they start to think about selling a product when it is finally ready. (Ibid.)

Whilst one should be cautious about taking research looking at one sector and applying it uniformly to another, there is a certain validity in considering this as a possible cause and effect unless compelling evidence can be shown to suggest that one sector operates in isolation and effectively does things differently, whether rightly or wrongly.

Finland's current prime minister Juha Sipilä, a business executive and entrepreneur by background, has been stating that the country's businesses need to look into different markets and examine other opportunities for some time, noting that Finland's underlying structure needs to be changed for the future whilst seeking to retain important social elements that have shaped the country thus far. In a speech to international diplomats and heads of Finnish diplomatic missions Sipilä underlined his own thoughts and noted how they intertwine with his government's broader recipe to get Finland back on its feet, despite a challenging global economic situation.

In years past, when I worked in international business and travelled the world, I thought a lot about the unique special expertise of Finns that distinguishes us from others. That special expertise that may also be our competitive asset, open up to us new markets and help boost our exports. To my mind, this factor is [...] our ability to resolve tricky problems. We have the talent, the education and skills, even the creative madness required for this. This problem-solving ability is now obviously being put to the test in Finland itself. But this is all the more reason why we must now ensure that we do not ourselves build unnecessary barriers to our problem-solving ability, that we do not ourselves clip the wings required to fly. We must go boldly out

into the world, also outside our comfort zones. For Finland to prosper, it is of paramount importance that we find new markets for our exports, work in export promotion with the ever-closer Team Finland-spirit of cooperation, and transmit a memorable message about Finland. This applies to both Finnish businesses and to you ambassadors [...] (Sipilä 2015.)

Other politicians have made similar claims that more should be done. The-then foreign trade minister and present-day finance minister Alexander Stubb said in 2012 that Finnish companies are just failing to sufficiently export. (Gustafsson 2012.) Stubb gave, during a television debate, an example of the Swedish clothing company H&M and the Finnish equivalent Seppälä that were established around the same time: one company has over 3,900 stores in 61 countries (H & M 2016.) and one is primarily known in Finland and has been suffering from severe financial pressures (Gustafsson 2014.) and was sold last year in a management buyout. (YLE 2015a.) Marketing activities have been a core component of H&M's activities, featuring a lot of press coverage that is PR-orientated.

3.8 Finnish innovation, management, know-how...

Is the quality of Finnish innovation, management and know-how a myth or at least highly-overrated? It is outside the scope of this thesis to analysis this, even though it can have a meaningful impact on the potential to develop, sell and deliver exportable products and services. Knowledge is a competitive advantage and the greater the knowledge and technical intensity of a company's output, the greater the likelihood that it can distinguish itself in international markets and benefit from its presence there. (Bradley 2002, 39-42.)

A study of Finnish, Russian and Chinese companies (LUT 2013.) noted that Finnish companies are suffering from "knowledge management" issues. Less than one-third of Finnish companies were satisfied with their ability to utilise competences, even though they mostly considered knowledge to be an important factor in competitiveness and estimated that up to 95% of value creation is based on knowledge and competence. It is safe to state that no meaningful positive

transition could have occurred in such a short time after this study, yet anything that stands in the way of exporting should be ameliorated.

Can the “Finnish reputation” be used to help boost exports? Is there a cachet for “Made in Finland” labelling or branding? Are exporting companies making the most of this potential? Certainly this area is ripe for further investigation. In the past Nokia’s reputation ruled or dominated the mobile telecommunication industry sector and many observers felt a transitional change between the products designed and manufactured in Finland and the mix of products designed in Finland but manufactured overseas and even the products designed (albeit with Finnish supervision) and manufactured overseas with the Nokia brand. Apple has used, for many years, a “Designed in California, made in ...” label on its products. Whether “Designed in Pietarsaari” or “Designed in Finland” brand style would yield justifiable rewards remains unclear.

Where possible, Finland should be looking at what it does well and seek to enhance the commercial opportunities and related activities around this area (Porter 1990, 79.), with export sales being just one element of this. There are many precedents, whether it is the broad range of Silicon Valley that attracts like-minded companies to flock together, or the narrower focus of Denmark’s hospitals that lead diabetes research and an industry that leads insulin export and Holland that is both a world leader in research for the cultivation, packaging and shipping of flowers and a key exporter.

In Finland there are positive signs of resource concentration that attracts both existing companies and start-ups in areas such as healthcare (Taloussanomat 2015.), health technology (Fagerström 2015.) and sustainable energy (YLE 2013a.). TEKES, the Finnish funding agency for innovation, has set up five so-called innovation cities clusters (that encompass more than five cities) to “...create internationally attractive innovation clusters [...] based on top-notch talent [that] include companies aiming for growth that are capable of creating brand-new products and services for the international market.” (Tekes 2014.) Other great things are expected to come from start-up activity, aided through incubator

processes such as Nokia Bridge (Wessman 2015, 15-18.) that was formed following the retrenchment of Nokia's business operations in Finland as well as many city-level initiatives such as Takomo (Leskinen 2012.), which was formed in Oulu, a city hit very hard by Nokia's cutbacks.

Even on a smaller scale, many companies are trying to export. One niche can be natural Finnish products such as food products, tree sap (Linderborg 2015.) and berries (Suni 2015.), and assistance is being promised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry with consideration given to securing additional trademark and country-of-origin protection for certain names and product types. (Grönholm 2015.) Many other unexpected product and service groups are making a small contribution to the export footprint, whether it is pop music (Von Kraemer 2008.), microbrewery beer (Wallendahl 2014.) or nappies (Lindholm 2012.). The size of their potential markets might be small, yet there can be strength in numbers if they succeed, which would make a positive contribution to the country's economy.

In some cases, Finnish companies are helping other countries export their products (which brings some income to Finland and does not directly compete against Finnish companies), such as Finnair flying hundreds of tonnes of salmon every week from Norway to Japan and other Asian countries. (Holmström 2014.)

3.9 Finns MUST get talking and share their pride and successes

Smaller-scale entrepreneurial activity needs to be encouraged and assisted to "think global" and export, since Finnish entrepreneurs are said to be quite pessimistic and less export-focussed on internationalisation (European Commission 2015, 30-31.), yet there is a correlation between export-orientated early stage entrepreneurship and positive macroeconomic success for host countries. (Koellinger 2008.)

PR activities and generally aggressive marketing can help both individual businesses and the country-at-large, although it won't be a sudden overnight

transformation. Finnish “shyness” or reticence is not a secret, and whilst modesty and humility can be viewed as a positive attribute compared to the effervescent, faux confidence displayed by other countries, sometimes you can have too much of a good thing.

Everything can be, or appear to be, interlinked depending on where you stand. Countries as well as the companies based within them, are competing against each other globally, and there is a theory that countries send messages through a so-called hexagon of communication channels and through their behaviour, (Anholt 2003, 214.) which has a direct relationship both on domestic matters that can affect society and their companies as well as affecting how foreigners view the country and its companies who are seeking to sell products and services.

In the global marketplace products and services are ever-increasingly being introduced with a clear place-brand origin (Kotler 2002, 359, 376-378.), with many brands becoming synonymous with a specific country or region within a country, in the case of predominantly food and drink products that have been granted exclusive labelling protection through various geographical indications. (Parry 2008, 361-367.) It forms also an important part of a brand’s identification. (Keegan & Green 2015, 329-330.) Visibility to the company and its products and services becomes ever-essential, with customers knowing that they are dealing with a company that has a reputation for innovation and quality, coming from a country which has a trustworthy, dependable reputation. (Ibid., 330.)

4 MARKETING + EXPORTS = MARKETING EXPORTS

Because it is its purpose to create a customer, any business enterprise has two – and only these two – basic functions: marketing and innovation. (Drucker 2012, 32.)

This is where you put marketing (and PR) together with export activity. You can, of course, export with marketing and PR, but it can be easier and more beneficial for the company-at-large if you do both activities. PR remains an important tool within the marketing mix and should be actively deployed, since PR can support other marketing activities and marketing activities in turn may support PR. For companies that are eschewing PR, maybe they are barely marketing either and thus they should be doing something, marketing first and using PR as a specific tool. For many companies they may be literally starting from the beginning.

Any company undertaking marketing-related activities as part of its export programme will face difficulties when dealing with foreign markets and this can be often one reason why it may be less enthusiastic about export activity. (Czinkota & Ronkainen 2013, 13, 15.) The problems may be mitigated by using local or regional subsidiary companies, agents and external resources such as PR and advertising agencies, yet many cultural and practical issues can still exist. This presupposes that the products or services being promoted are even suitable for the intended markets and that there is a potential demand for them. Whilst it is true that marketing campaigns can create markets or demand, it is by no means a guaranteed proposition or reality.

4.1 International is different

International marketing is more involved and complicated than domestic marketing as there are at least two levels of uncontrollable uncertainty instead of just one, namely the domestic market and international markets (and international markets can vary, as what may be relevant for country X can be different to country Y)

(Ghauri & Cateora 2014, 9-10.) Uncontrollable factors include the competitive forces, levels of technology, structure of distribution, geography and infrastructure, cultural forces and political/legal forces and, of course, these can be different to each and every intended export market country.

The connection between export and marketing is clearly known and understood, with Google returning over 25 million entries to the (English language) search term “how marketing can help exporting”; by contrast there are only 2.19 million entries for “how public relations can help exporting”. The connection can be so obvious, yet the published literature is hardly overflowing with focussed contributions into this area. What can be more troubling is the rhetorical question “why are so many companies seemingly ignoring an obvious, core activity”. There is no shortage of research into exporting and marketing is just one of many entry-modes that is actively studied (Kotabe & Jiang 2011, 137.), yet the method of communication and the motivation behind it appear to be less considered.

The nature of a business relationship in a given country can also determine the scope of marketing activity. If a pull strategy (preselling a product that buyers seek out or ask for at the point of purchase) is used, many marketing attributes can differ to that called for by a push strategy (the buyer depends on the advice or guidance of a salesperson). Most situations will have a mixture of the two strategies, albeit one is dominant, and PR activities can also sit over the entire process, building brand and product recognition. (Albaum & Duerr 2011, 779-780.)

4.2 Communications constipation: laxative needed

There can be barriers to effective promotion and communication with people in foreign countries, who may have different values or attitudes, over and above any obvious linguistic or cultural differences (Ibid., 780.). This problem may be mitigated by using in-country assistance, yet if the company insists on a fairly inflexible, centrally steered process it could be wasting a lot of potential resources.

These challenges are not restricted to PR activities, as it can be easy to overlook the significance of a symbol or colour. (Axelsson & Agndal 2005, 565-566.) Product names can also be a challenge (Cervi & Wajnryb 1992.), even if all material is correctly and sensitively translated into local languages as required, (Smith & Zook 2011, 214.) as it might not be easy marketing a product with a brand name that is a slang term for masturbation. (Haig 2003, 165.). One Finnish company (Aspo Oyj 2004, 21.) learned this the hard way, as they assumed that "Super-Piss" would be universally understood, as it was, albeit for the wrong reasons. (Solomon, Marshall & Stuart 2011, 85.)

Finnish companies do appear to have a problem with communicating. Many theories exist why this is, invariably linked around the national psyche or stereotype. Exceptions exist, of course, yet far too many areas involving communications seem to struggle, whether it is internal communication and management ("the Management by Perkele" syndrome is still quite common) (Lämsä 2010.) or more proactive, external communications. If there is a problem communicating, whether to employees, partners or even customers, the same problems will surely exist to the media and potential customers.

There might be an element of delusion or self-denial to the extent of the problem with communicating. When it comes to external communications, particularly outside of the country's borders, the status quo opinion appears to be that Finnish companies' communications are on par with their international peers. There might be a concession that, of course, some improvement or refinement is possible. A few voices "dare" to directly dissent, a few more voices may suggest that the problem is a by-product of excelling elsewhere (focussing on product development, for example, instead of communication). (Ibid.) This situation was similarly observed whilst conducting research for this thesis.

Finnish entrepreneur and branding expert Lisa Sounio-Ahtisaari stated that Finnish companies invest too much in product development and too little on communication. (Ibid.) Finland was relatively late developing a trading economy compared to many rivals, since it had an over-reliance on farming and forestry.

Structural corporate problems such as weak or non-existent branding, poor internal cooperation and under-resourced core business functions also contribute towards the problem. (Ibid.)

“[A company can] have a marketing department and a sales department. The problem is that these departments are not working so closely with product development, customer service, service, logistics and personnel. This means that you get a finished product that you then will market somehow [without coordination]”. (free translation of a comment made by Rasmus Östman, managing director of marketing company Genero. (Ibid.)

4.3 Supporting the export process

In most situations an exporting company will probably be undertaking marketing activities to support its overseas distribution channels and partners, adding to general external awareness of the company, its brand and its activities. Some companies may have a greater exposure to the end consumer or business user, such as a software company or a foodstuffs producer, and here a different dynamic may be employed with B2C-focussed activities that can vary tremendously in their application compared to more mainstream B2B activities. The benefit of using foreign-based news opportunities to bolster the company’s domestic PR activities should not be overlooked. (Albaum & Duerr 2011, 797.)

In a functional corporate environment, PR activities should be a forethought rather than an afterthought, with all departments being alert to possible “good opportunities” to further project the company in the best-possible light. In other words, all corporate decisions and activities should be viewed for their “PR benefit” or “PR risk”, with this intelligence being shared throughout the enterprise. Internal communications within many companies are sadly sub-optimal or restricted, which acts as a barrier to the exchange of much useful low-level knowledge that could be otherwise employed to good use, such as a sales representative in a distant office might be aware of a sponsorship activity that might only cost a few hundred euros, yet it could reap positive-PR “worth” considerably more and the potential for increased sales can be immeasurable.

Exporting is good at any time, but it can be particularly important as a means of counteracting the negative effects of the economic crisis. (Rao, Erramilli & Ganesh 1990.) Companies should be seeking to increase their export efforts and thus increase their communications and marketing activities. Clearly short-term exports can be made although the greater benefit comes from long-term, strategic planning and extensive relationships being formed. Communication with consumers is of special importance, utilising elements as part of a promotion-centred general marketing strategy. (Haluk Köksal & Özgül 2007.)

For companies who are exporting or trying to export, media channels such as social media will assist in the aim of communicating to its publics. Companies generally are increasing their use of social media in many different areas as this gravitates to a key part of its marketing communications activities. Social media is part of the new media generational shift. Old structures such as traditional media and its hierarchical, one-way, broadcast manner that are often expensive, ineffective, restricted and fragmented (Czinkota & Ronkainen 2013, 551-552, 559-563.) are being replaced and/or augmented by social media and user-generated content. Despite the benefits that can be realised, social media and new media generally also come with a host of challenges. (Ibid., 563-565.) The phrase PR may be missing from the description of the activity, yet it has not disappeared from the activity.

Finnish companies are no exception, with a study forecasting increased usage and investment into the social media marketing and advertising. (Fonecta 2015.) Social media does not necessarily respect national boundaries, which can be a blessing and a curse, yet for those companies that can benefit by using social media, it is a worthy outlet that can support domestic and international sales as well as other masters such as customer support, PR and even recruitment.

4.4 Measuring success and validating the need

The simplest, most obvious way of measuring export success is the number of incoming orders the company receives. This success is further reinforced by repeat orders, hopefully increasing in value. Measuring the success of PR activities within the broader marketing context is much harder. (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 566.) Dependent on the type of the company and the products being sold, it may be possible to get an indication, possibly with a high-degree of confidence, that activities have been beneficial. Although if the results are due to a multitude of different elements within the sales and marketing mixes, conducted by several organisations, with the product being at a different stage of the product life cycle, things can be a lot more different.

Determining a contribution of influence or the presence of a cause and effect reaction may be a very inexact science. A small company selling its own products via a website direct to customers can see the direct effects of its marketing activities. It might be possible to roughly gauge inward interest to a website by geographic location, so is 0.1 per cent of visitors come from India before the launch of a (first) targeted campaign and afterwards a tenfold increase in visitors from the country occurred, you may reasonably conclude a cause and effect. Unless the activity was only, for example, a PR campaign, you would have difficulty establishing which element within the deployed marketing mix met or exceeded its expectation (and budget) and conversely which underperformed.

Any company may, however, be restricting its potential when its website fails to correctly and adequately communicate details about its products and services to potential customers. A lack of cultural awareness may also be a problem, at least subconsciously to the potential customer, (Zhu 2015.) as even if a company's website is translated into a local language, it might be failing to adapt to the needs of the local cultures and norms. This issue can also be extended to other marketing materials. This can be a significant issue for B2C companies, yet even B2B companies may be affected since the potential customer is still a consumer and they react to expected norms and clear omissions. Zhu notes a difference

between formal and informal cultures and how they can be deal-focussed or relationship-focussed and this can underline differences in how they may react to information and images used within marketing materials. It is more than just translating the same text into a local language or relying on the international business lingua franca.

A lot of the potential benefits from PR may not be directly measurable or attributable to the PR activity and thus it is important to note that PR could be better viewed as a support function that can impact upon many different areas within a business.

In the past it was quite common for companies to look at the perceived value of their PR (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 567-568.) by equating a value to an equivalent cost of advertising in the same media outlet (or a near comparison). It was quite an inexact means of calculation, with no specific formula, that was known by many names such as Advertising Equivalent Value. (Stone 1995, 234-236.) With recent changes in the media landscape, it is tending to fall out of usage, and its utility has been widely criticised by many industry participants, academics and researchers due to a multitude of serious practical and ethical flaws (Macnamara 2005.), although alternative metrics are proposed and investigated such as a 'weighted media cost'. (Jeffrey, Jeffries-Fox & Rawlins 2010.)

Traditionally, securing a front page spot with a colored photograph in a daily newspaper or magazine was the Academy Award for PR pros. Slapping the media coverage in front of your CEO could keep him or her satisfied for quite a while. [...] It's time to enter 2016 and realize that these reports lack a substantial method of aggregating value from media coverage. PR pros must leverage the technology that's available at your fingertips and fuse it with a mentality focused on correlating earned media with social conversion and engagement, website traffic that leads to tangible results and other modern marketing metrics. When this happens, the ways in which we communicate the extrinsic value of earned media will drastically change. (Huddleston 2016.)

Some metrics can be utilised to give a degree of feedback about marketing and communications-related activities and general sentiment or feeling about a

company or product, although they are by their nature often restricted, narrowly defined or of limited utility (Kim 2000; Spiller & Tuten 2015.), although there is a lot of ongoing industry and academic research to find suitable models that can be used as a benchmarking tool. (Likely & Watson 2013; Macnamara 2014.) Any evaluation of specific media and the methods of communicating to or via them should be undertaken as part of the planning process. (Proctor 2000, 229.)

The importance of being able to track and analyse results through metrics is important. A survey of Finnish communications professionals (STT Viestintäpalvelut 2016.) noted measurement to be important or very important by 98 per cent of respondents, with 62 per cent of respondents believing that communications metrics will be even more important in the future, particularly within the business sector. Interestingly the survey's respondents were nearly equally split as to whether communications are definable qualitative goals (50 per cent) versus quantitative goals (49 per cent). Some organisations set rather rigid communications-related targets for their communications departments, although these were primarily within NGO and public sector areas. General communications-related objectives were, of course, extant and primarily linked to the company's own objectives (84 per cent), yet many areas seemed to be barely monitored, such as communications effectiveness and ROI (19 per cent), brand impact (22 per cent) and impact on business (31 per cent). Areas getting the greatest degree of scrutiny were website traffic (96 per cent), budgetary compliance (91 per cent), messaging effectiveness (52 per cent) and impact on business objectives (49 per cent). That said, over half the respondents (52 per cent) to the survey (ibid.) noted that the measurement of the communications function was not clearly designed or optimal.

Who set the objectives? Forty-nine per cent of respondents said a communications director or similar senior person was responsible for the key objectives, compared to a senior management team or executive board (34 per cent) or president/CEO (12 per cent). Only five per cent of respondents reported that objectives were set by other parties, including regular communications professionals themselves.

Post-campaign and ongoing monitoring will still have a valid role to play, allowing strategies to be modified and refined, but they are not infallible measures or a guarantee of success. Ten million website page views, a front page article in “Widget Weekly” or an interview by a podcast host may not translate into hard, immediate business but it could contribute to eventual, long-tail business. A company’s best, most influential customer could come from anywhere and might not appear to be as powerful or lucrative at first sight.

In order to accurately evaluate PR activity, it is necessary to have quantified the objectives, something many organisations do not sufficiently do or they adopt a haphazard approach, viewing media coverage as the primary result. Many objectives, on the other hand, can be harder to measure due to their subjective nature. (Stone 1995, 228-231.) A director might be pleased to see a brief mention of a company in a prestigious financial newspaper in a target country, yet if the objective is to increase sales it is debatable whether this would have greater impact and potential than a comparable article in a trade magazine or website. (Kotler, Armstrong, Wong & Saunders 2008, 761-763.)

The only way to get clear, unambiguous feedback about a company’s export activities is to look at the sales ledger and discuss with the sales department the reasons for their success or the lack thereof. Clearly supporting processes can be examined, considered and stress-tested, albeit without any real measurable data points to assist the process.

5 RESEARCH PROCESSES

Three separate elements of research were carried out for this thesis. Prior to this, it was desirable to get as many support organisations as possible involved with the research stage of this thesis. It was felt that their participation, by association, may underline the importance they place on exporting generally, with PR being one of many tools used (or not used) to further this goal and thus their tacit endorsement of the research programme may encourage their members and customers to cooperate. It would also give them the option of helping shape the research so that it might give them additional insights and thus benefits in the future post-publication.

To that end a detailed invitation and project summary was sent on October 26, 2015 (appendix 1) to 16 managing directors (or equivalent) within the research area, representing all relevant regional development bodies and member-funded organisations. A follow-up inquiry was sent on November 2, 2015 and a further inquiry one week later (through a separate email service in case of spam-blocking issues). A copy of the same invitation was sent in late November by postal mail to several organisations in the area local to the author.

The silence was effectively deafening. One organisation promptly responded to the first invitation and affirmed their wish to cooperate. A couple - by the third inquiry - gave vague promises to consider matters and never responded further despite further inquiries. It is appreciated that such organisations receive many requests for cooperation and resources are finite, yet the invitation was clear in that their endorsement was the key and that they could otherwise be as passive or active as they wish plus, at the end of the research, receive various free-of-charge services to possibly benefit their members and customers. In the author's own professional life, he and his companies have received many requests for academic and industry research cooperation and differences exist. Some can appear very serious and focussed, whilst others are almost screaming out "please design, research and write my thesis for me." It is hoped that this author's approach would appear to be more at home in the former category.

5.1 Research into export-led company PR activities

Central to this thesis was structured quantitative research (Aliaga & Gunderson 2003.) that sought to identify the attitudes, opinions and operating behaviour of major Finnish companies who should, on the whole, be active with export activity and acquainted with best practice and have significant practical experience in this matter. Smaller companies, of course, do export too, but they can face different challenges and problems and their experiences and actions may vary significantly to make a broad comparison impractical. (Lönnbäck & Helsing 2011.)

5.1.1 Research definition and implementation

Businesses on the west coast of Finland and particularly in the Ostrobothnia region have been praised for being fairly go-ahead and innovative, seeking to benefit from export-based activities. (Ingves 2015.) Ostrobothnia recorded a very high level of per-capita GDP growth between 2000 and 2012, thanks in no part to exports (Enlund 2015.) and other regions in the area selected for examination noted similarly high levels of growth. (Koistinen 2015.) Therefore, it was felt that this would be a valid region to observe.

A decision was taken to send a detailed questionnaire to the top 500 companies, based on 2014 turnover, who are either headquartered in or have a significant business presence in western Finland². The sample size was viewed as being reasonable and meaningful, based on a projected reduced response rate that should still make any collected data to valid. (Malhotra & Birks 2006, 235, 237.) The objective was to gather both structured quantitative data as well as interpretive qualitative data.

² Western Finland has no specific legal definition and could not be directly mapped to Statistics Finland's own data, thus an approximation was made using the regions of Varsinais-Suomi, Satakunta, South Ostrobothnia, Ostrobothnia and Central Ostrobothnia as visible at http://tilastokeskus.fi/meta/luokitukset/maakunta/001-2015/index_en.html.

Statistics Finland provided a structured data set³ in December 2015 that identified the companies but provided no specific contact information to target senior executives responsible for PR activities. Extensive desk research was conducted in late December 2015 and early January 2016 to provide targeting information and at the same time a basic media audit was conducted (see section 5.2) to identify other areas of interest concerning how companies communicate online.

The data set of 549 entries was cleaned up to remove deficiencies, such as multiple entries featuring the same registered company number. Related subsidiary companies were merged to one record for the parent company. Companies that acted as merchants (Finnish: kauppiat) for larger chains such as Citymarket and K-Rauta and selected special purpose vehicles such as property ownership companies were removed since they have no export-focus and act within the guidance of their chains. This left 396 columns for processing and forming the respondent group. During the data processing and media audit it emerged that a minority of identified companies clearly had no export function and in some cases no actual trade (such as larger property owning companies) although these were left within the dataset for the reason of completeness.

The questionnaire (appendix 2) was designed to follow best available practice and seek to balance the need of gathering usable information and being user-friendly and not an arduous process for respondents. (Ibid., 325-329, 331-344.) Intended respondents were advised both in the questionnaire and all e-mail communications that their responses would be used in a bulk, anonymised form and where questions posed a potential for sensitive, identifiable information to be disclosed, respondents were reminded to make references in a general, non-identifiable format. Respondents were also invited to identify whether they would be amenable to follow-up discussions, both “on the record” and “on background” to permit deeper investigations into specific points and to respond to any notable conclusions from collected research.

³ The exact data definition was the top 500 companies listed by turnover in 2014, with their place of domicile or significant nexus, in regions 02, 04, 14, 15 & 16.

As responses to questionnaires cannot be mandated and respondents are free to skip questions (any attempts to regulate a questionnaire's completion would lead to even-lower response rates) any in-person interviews can provide additional valuable data points that might not otherwise be obtainable (Barrow 2016, 284-285.) and these would be a supplement to planned qualitative interviews (see section 5.3). Even if there is a degree of self-selection and self-determination, such responses would not devalue any data in any case. This qualitative research would also allow complex issues to be analysed, separating out and measuring individual factors that can provide an understanding to underlying matters, as well as acknowledging that respondents may have contrasting opinions that might otherwise get lost within the aggregated nature of quantitative data. (Ibid., 293.)

5.1.2 Research justification and methodologies

A decision was taken to use the Webropol survey platform after a basic investigation had been made into competing alternatives that offered similar features. The decisive factor was Webropol's presence in Finland, meaning that survey respondents may subconsciously be more responsive towards a survey platform they know of and possibly use themselves. As the survey was quite comprehensive and detailed, seeking information that might be sensitive to respondent companies, it was felt that any perceived potential advantage should be taken. The survey platform provided a means for a dynamic survey to be carried out with responses stored in a structured format for later evaluation and analysis. (Gaiser & Schreiner 2009, 97, 121-129.)

Despite the questionnaire being lengthy, which could be a barrier to completion for many (Keller 2014, 161.), the design utilised many branches and conditional logic and the majority of questions were dichotomous or multiple-choice in nature. Where open-ended, free-text responses are solicited, these were designed to build upon already stated answers and thus if these were skipped over, as undesirable as it might be, it should not devalue the overall research process. Attempts were similarly made to phrase questions in a way to avoid response error (Mann 2013,

A7.) and other systemic errors. The survey platform would record all attempted questions, so even a partially abandoned submission, for whatever reason, may provide some value.

A conscious decision had been taken to defer sending out the questionnaire until the extended Christmas and new year holiday period had elapsed, hopefully allowing for potential respondents to have “caught up” with deferred work matters. There can never, of course, be a perfect time to send out a survey, yet providing a one-month response window at this time appeared reasonable to hopefully secure compliance from busy executives, with a planned series of reminders (that also would impart relevant information to the recipient) planned.

The respondent group was sent a personal pre-survey email (Gaiser & Schreiner 2009, 70-71.) on January 22, 2016 (approximately one week ahead of the survey period) to inform them of the research programme. Links to background information about the researcher were provided in an attempt to underline that this is not a “tick box” cursory piece of work to merely satisfy the requirements of academia, in an attempt to ensure data sources were clean to reduce the risk of error and to hopefully incite interest in the project and ensure a greater likelihood of participation in this research and possibly future episodes. It is not conclusive whether linking the researcher and their host institution would have had any quantitative benefit in theory or halo-effect (Allen & Roberts 2016.) and in practice, in this case, it is difficult to ascribe positive impact.

Even this pre-advisory yielded useful data, noting that contact information taken as part of the media audit was incorrect, with approximately eight per cent of contacts failing to reach their destination, requiring alternative contacts to be sought or diversion via a general contact address.

As respondents would be communications professionals working within an international environment, it was felt unnecessary to translate the questionnaire into Swedish and Finnish, even though respondents could freely write responses in the language of their choice. In larger organisations, it should not be assumed

that the respondents would even be Finnish nationals, conversant with the country's official languages. All email correspondence featured a brief text in Finnish and Swedish explaining the contact was concerning academic research and in keeping with good practice full contact information, an explanation of the data source and an opportunity to unsubscribe was featured.

Sizeable risks existed. Principally the response rate for the survey as clearly respondents in larger companies are a target for eager researchers seeking their opinion on a whole range of matters. The size and scale of the research is also a concern but unavoidable, as otherwise you have an overly simplistic questionnaire that does not really get to the heart of anything. It was felt that the subject was sufficiently important to justify this risk, balancing expectation and pre-conceived opinions formed by the researcher. It can be appreciated that respondents have a finite amount of time and the researcher has to hope that the recipient is equally enamoured with the subject and has the opportunity to cooperate.

The entire project and underlying processes can also be viewed as a form of marketing research and it is capable of similarly being misunderstood. Yet marketing research (or this thesis) does not make decisions – it replaces hunches, impressions or a total lack of knowledge with pertinent information and it does not guarantee success but it can, at best, improve the odds of making a correct decision. (Malhotra & Birks 2006, 20.) It is hoped that this research has, in any case, avoided many of the common problems that can taint research and lead to it being disregarded. (Ibid., 21.) Use of secondary data was necessary and consideration has been given to the nature of published information sources and the perception or influence that certain sources may give over others. A balance has been struck between academic, peer-reviewed literature and relevant material from industry participants and the mass media. (Ibid., 86-94.)

The survey was launched on January 26 with respondents invited to participate by email. Separate reminders and updates were sent on February 17 and February 29 with primary text in Finnish and English. The survey was closed on March 1.

5.2 Media audit of corporate web presence

As part of gathering contact information for possible survey respondents for the quantitative research as described in section 5.1, it was necessary to visit the company websites for the companies identified by Statistics Finland as part of the data analysis.

Thus it was possible to undertake a further piece of quantitative research that examined just how well individual companies communicated, as viewed through the eyes of a journalist who may be trying to determine the company's latest news and/or gather information about the company for a possible article. Much of the same requirements for information could equally exist for a potential customer who finds that "Company X" may sell "Product X" that they are seeking, allowing them to get basic information about the company before determining whether they needed to take contact to discuss pricing and availability.

5.2.1 Research definition and implementation

Apart from collecting the contact information for the survey as detailed in section 5.1, being the most senior listed person with a marketing responsibility in their job title, or failing that the managing director and as a last resort the general contact address, the media audit sought to examine a range of elements about how the companies communicated their news to website visitors.

Captured data (appendix 3) examined their visibility on the Google search engine, the languages present within the web site, the presentation of company news and investor relations information on both the index page and within any defined section, update frequency and social media visibility. A subjective evaluation of the whole being, as a means for providing timely media information was also made.

This research was carried out over several days due to the scale of the undertaking. Clearly the data gathered would be a mix of quantitative, measurable responses such as recording the language(s) used within the website as well as

qualitative, personal observation that would clearly feature an element of subjectivity (Malhotra 2015, 165-166.), such as how well information is presented and its apparent suitability for its intended purpose. In any case, there should be no risk of bias with the personal observation element since all companies were being held to a common standard and if anything a less-strict series of evaluation was employed. Issues with data accuracy, as revealed in section 5.1.2. also impacted the research.

This audit yielded interesting figures and it would be desirable to repeat the process at a later stage, making it part of a more detailed research programme that could possibly separate the evaluation by language and possibly feature two or more researchers undertaking a similar blind evaluation process, with the results jointly analysed and a common ranking given. Different languages had different qualities of information and frequency of updates in many cases and this alone could be an interesting examination in its own right. The findings in this research remain valid, although with most collected data they have their understandable limitations.

5.3 Personal interviews

As part of a desire to get as many different opinions and interpretations to gathered information as possible, a limited qualitative research programme was also initiated. This was felt to be a necessary approach due to concerns about response rates to the research detailed in section 5.1.

Interviews were sought by email, with a number of senior executives at companies who had export activity. No specific selection methodology was taken to identify the interview subjects. The research programme detailed in section 5.1 gave respondents the opportunity to identify whether they would be amenable to discuss matters further, and this additional research sought interview subjects who had not explicitly indicated their willingness to participate in the research programme. Many invitations remained unanswered (whilst inferences should not

be made, when analysing how a company may communicate, even a small valuation can be given to an ignored invitation and polite follow-up, versus a short “thanks, but no thanks due to availability” response that may be received).

Eight personal interviews were carried out by telephone and in person, (Barrow 2016, 294-295; Malhotra 2015, 154; Malhotra & Birks 2006, 228.) between March 1-22. The primary objective of this research phase was to gain additional insights and understanding into the subject under investigation. Based around a free-form, unstructured style, the interviews examined the broader topic raised by this thesis as well as areas covered by the questions posed in sections 5.1 and 5.2 and indicative answers that the research had given to date. No formal questions were provided ahead of the interview, since no formal questions existed save for informal guidelines for the interviewer (appendix 4), although a copy of the questionnaire used in section 5.1 (appendix 2) was offered to give guidance as to the area under consideration upon request (only one interview subject had requested to know the type of questions that may be raised).

Clearly this section of research is limited by the number of respondents and, to a wider scale, by time and other resources. Questions can be raised about the validity and reliability of this research strand and in normal circumstances this may be more valid. If the sample size was increased by a factor of ten or 100 it is debatable whether there would be a corresponding diversity of opinion. There may be a reinforcement of opinions given, but without conducting an extensive survey that is then split by demographic factors to ensure balance (and how would this balance be derived in the context of the wider project would be an interesting question) it is unlikely that any meaningful improvement may be achieved.

If the nature of the questioning was changed from a free-form, narrative style to a fixed-form, effectively reading out the questions raised in section 5.1 and recording the answers and coding them in accordance with academic norms (Creswell 2007, 147.), the benefit and utility of the responses may be brought into question. As it is, this strand of research was designed to complement that detailed in sections 5.1 and 5.2 rather than be a specific additional analytical input. It forms part of the

general intention of using mixed method research (Hesse-Biber 2010, 3-6.), within the constraints and expectations of a thesis at this level. The findings are similarly presented in a manner to underline this approach and is located at the end of this thesis, appearing just before the concluding chapters.

In an ideal world, perhaps as part of a more-focussed, detailed research programme, it could be desirable to focus the entire research on a smaller overall sample size, weighted between representative industry sectors, which would allow one to consider whether industry sector X is better at communicating than industry sector Y and analysing why this might be. This is something under active consideration for the author's Master's thesis.

6 DATA ANALYSIS

The individual research as detailed in sections 5.1-5.3 is individually analysed below within their own sections.

6.1 Research into company attitudes concerning PR

Response to this survey was very poor (circa 1.3 per cent) for unknown reasons, as many attempts were taken to solicit participation. Even if the size of the questionnaire was daunting or a perception that many elements do not apply to the recipient's company, it does not explain the scale of non-response. With this in mind, considering that the responses are statistically invalid, no detailed analysis has been made. Some highlights are provided (with a degree of numeric rounding) that can be indicative at best, adding to a base of other circumstantial evidence and observations.

Sixty per cent of respondents said that their company exported products, with exports accounting for 46 per cent of total turnover (the lowest recorded 10 per cent and the highest 85 per cent). With the limited samples, the European Union region was the dominant export market for respondents with one country accounting for the lion's share of any export activity.

All respondents indicated that their company had a B2B brand that is "actively sought" by customers. Within this group 40 per cent believed that their company also had a similarly in-demand "B2C" brand.

The majority of companies had a dedicated PR executive and/or department and in most cases this function was given senior management responsibility and/or visibility within the company up to board-level. There was a rough 60:40 split between keeping separate domestic and international PR teams versus one team handling everything. Four out of five respondents believe that the PR function gets clear visibility throughout its business, with all employees understanding the

necessity for a uniformed company image and work to identify “good PR” and “bad PR” issues.

All respondents reported having restrictions over who is authorised to talk to the media on behalf of the company, with 80 per cent of companies giving guidance or instructions to employees considering the company’s media handling and image policies. Offering media training to employees who are authorised to deal with the media is relatively common, although quite a few respondent companies have yet to consider this.

Just over one-third of respondent companies used an external PR agency (or agencies) to assist with activities, although there was a clear preference to handle matters in-house with a “lack of need” commonly cited. When an external agency was used, they were clearly in a supportive role rather than a specifically outsourced core function. There was similar reluctance to have one agency coordinating all global PR activity and where foreign PR agencies were retained no company had used a Finnish agency as a coordinating interface. Some companies split their PR activities by narrow industry vertical or end-user segment, although the sample size does not permit inferences to be drawn here. Some respondents were from multinational companies that were headquartered in Finland and it appears that individual countries or regions were given significant freedom to run their own PR operations, with limited head office guidance with the exception of financial reporting, brand identity and clear group matters.

PR activities are given necessary resources by many companies, with one or two per cent of turnover being typical responses. Unless required to do so by market disclosure regulations, most companies do not simultaneously release relevant press announcements into foreign markets, but preferring to roll out news on a piecemeal, case-by-case basis.

Just over one-third of respondents reported that their PR activities sought to emphasise the design, manufacture or origin of products as coming from Finland. Common reasons for not doing this were that they were a subsidiary of another

company or that products were not made or designed in the country. Where relevant, respondents believed that there is value in emphasising the “Finnishness” of products and that this can make a measured, positive difference to results. Quality (compared to the products from other countries) was one key reason cited for emphasising the domestic production of products, although none of the respondents used the Nordic Ecolabel and 20 per cent used the “Finnish Key” symbol as marketing devices.

When it came to news originated by respondent companies, a clear majority sought to make as much use of its news and potential audiences as possible, both targeting the media and financial analysts (as relevant) and employees, partners and the general public/potential customers. Distributing news through their website and e-mail is a given; only 20 per cent additionally used a press release distribution service.

Foreign media were not routinely targeted for every announcement by the vast majority of respondents, preferring instead to focus on specific events or occurrences. Every respondent reported that they would translate press releases into a local language, as required for regional distribution, as well as produce an English-language version for global consumption. A similar version would also appear in Finnish for the domestic market.

Text-based press releases and regular images remain king although nearly half of respondents have also deployed multimedia press releases and at least one respondent had used animations to support their PR activities.

Despite the low response rate, a clear majority stated that it is important to establish personal contacts with journalists that represent key publications in their target markets (7.6 average on a scale from 0-10) although this has not always been so successful as they may like, with a 4.8 average success rating being recorded on the same scale.

Naturally all respondents seek to track their PR activities through metrics such as incoming press inquiries, articles produced and a possible change in customer traffic or inquiries, yet less than one in five admitted to having a formal mechanism to benchmark the overall benefit of their PR activities despite 60 per cent believing that they can measure the impact of their activities through existing means.

The research sought to identify whether respondents believed that there was a benefit in conducting PR activities as a means to drive export-based business. A clear majority of respondents believed that there was, with the “no” and “don’t know” group being roughly equal in size. Positive reasons included that it adds consciousness, boosts brand image, aids product recognition and makes product acceptance (amongst customers) easier. Negative reasons included that the company does not export or that they only export to “chosen partners” and roughly half of the “negative group” admitted that part of this reticence could be because they lack the knowledge about how to achieve this. A smaller section believed that they may do more if they could source a practical, affordable source of assistance. Less than half of exporting respondents have sought to cooperate with other companies, regional trade bodies or industry groups to explicitly promote their marketing message, although of those who had, nearly two-thirds believe that there was a clear benefit in doing so.

Doing business overseas can be fraught with problems due to cultural clashes and other impediments. One respondent admitted that they had been requested to pay a fee to secure press coverage (whether direct or in the form of a bribe) and they report that they declined.

Social media is making its inroads into how respondent companies appear to communicate, with roughly half admitting to using it as one of many avenues to promote corporate activities and products to customers, or potential customers. So far social media activity is primarily reusing traditional media-sourced material, rather than leading to significant social media exclusive content.

Respondents all agreed that social media is blurring the boundaries between traditional media and how they will communicate externally. Many companies actively monitor social media, although employing a person or agency to actively engage social media followers is less common. Surprisingly, only half of the respondents admitted to having guidelines in place as to who can communicate on behalf of the company on social media, although three-quarters of respondents did have procedures in place to state how employees communicate on social media, despite not being spokespersons, when they can be otherwise identified as company employees.

Problems can occur, or nearly occur, with some respondents indicating that there have been issues with social media activity by employees, with one example being how a “close-call accident” was shared online with thoughtless comments.

In conclusion, despite the disappointing level of responses that have no statistical viability, the insights given appear apposite and encouraging, even when taken as mere indicative data points.

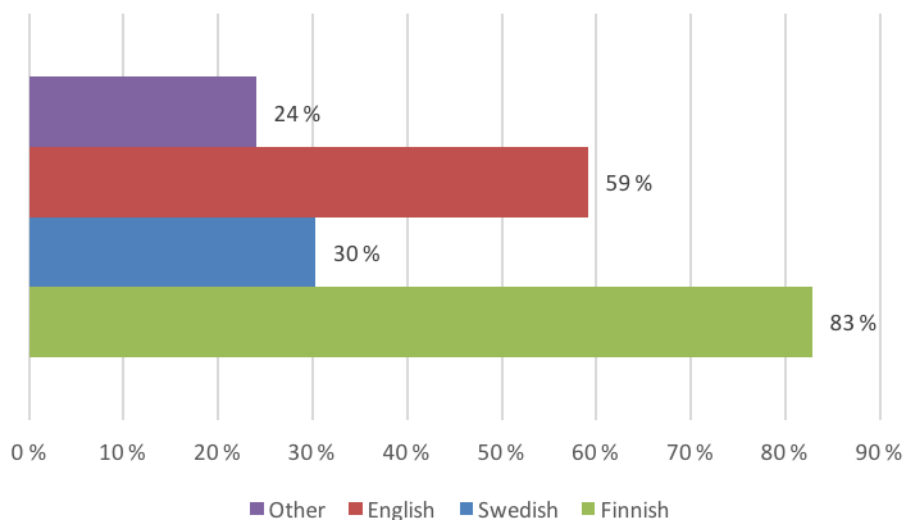
6.2 Media audit of corporate web presence

It was hardly a surprise that nearly every company (98 per cent) could be located in the Google search engine when their formal company name was entered as a search term, with an appearance on page one. Some companies were hosted within a different domain, perhaps within a parent company or other branded entity, yet they were indexed and thus easy to find. A few companies could not be located but a brief examination of their details in the trade register suggested that they may not have had a specific need or benefit for a public website.

As may be expected, the vast majority of Finnish companies who had a web presence had content in the Finnish language (83 per cent), although some exceptions existed, primarily where the company was owned by a foreign

company or where the company itself had English as its corporate-wide language and had dispensed with local language microsites.

It was more surprising to note that multilingual websites were less common (graph 8), with only 54 per cent of sites featuring two or more languages. It was also surprising to note that English, said to be the international language of English, only featured on 59 per cent of all sites. Swedish, the second official language of Finland, appeared on 30 per cent of sites, followed by “other” languages, such as Chinese and Russian, on 24 per cent of sites.



GRAPH 8. Language distribution on surveyed websites

It is very worthy to note that few sites had a 100% like-for-like translation or anything remotely close to this between the languages, although some notable exceptions exist. In many cases non-Finnish language support was superficial or non-existent, deficient or poorly implemented. A “briefly in English”-type page that might provide out-of-date information about the company’s operations and contact information is not entirely sufficient or attractive when this may be the first information a visitor can reach. Some companies tried to use microsites, steering to locally provided information often in local languages, although these appeared to be often out of sync with the main corporate website and deficient in many areas.

Earlier research of eight Finnish companies that relied on export for between 75-100 per cent of their revenues noted a greater degree of English language being present than this author's audit but a mixed range of other languages. (Tauriainen 2012.) This suggests a less than consistent, focussed approach may be deployed by companies at-large and be worthy of closer examination.

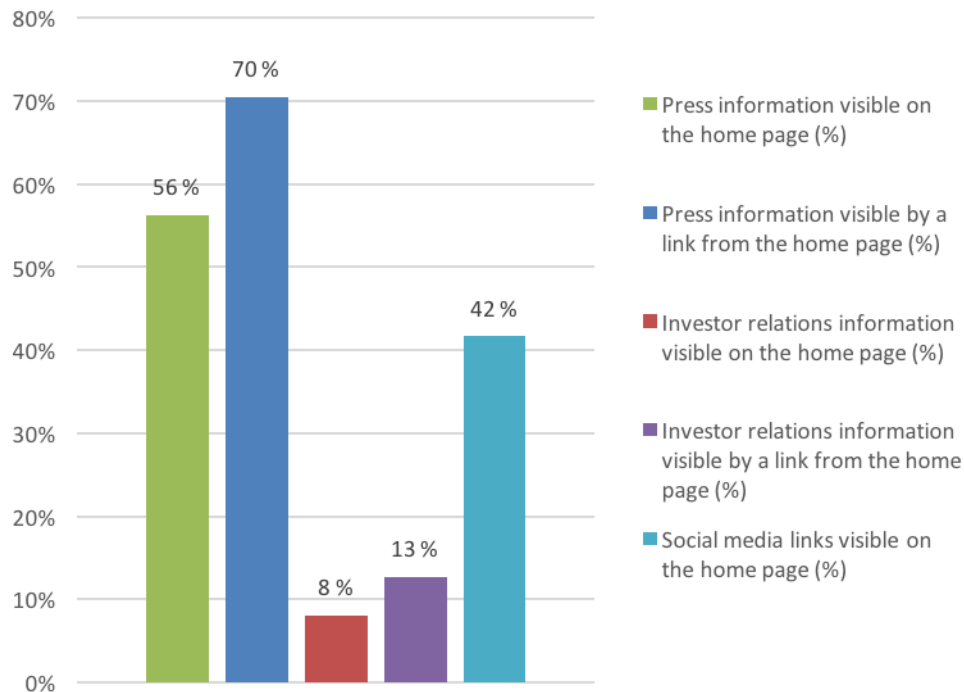
When it came to examining how a company presented its latest news, only 56 per cent of companies chose to explicitly highlight their news on their main web page (graph 9). Within this category a liberal interpretation of news was taken, rather than a strict definition of a press announcement, since many companies mixed up their news and other "happenings" into a single stream, often under the headline "ajankohtaista" in Finnish (the plural of ajankohtainen, freely translated to "in the news" or "of current interest") and in English this would be invariably lumped under a "news"-style title.

Some companies (70 per cent) chose to also have a separate link to a news section, whether in the form "ajankohtaista", "medialle" (English: for the media) or a mixture of both, even if they had, or had not, featured some headlines on their main page (graph 9). This meant, of course, that 30 per cent did not feel it worthwhile highlighting any news or "happenings" at all – even though in many cases "happenings" could be a Christmas greeting or notice of a changed telephone number, rather than real, hard news such as a product launch, new appointment or winning a contract.

Investor relations-specific information was less visible, even though a separate calculation was not made to compare the number of publicly listed companies compared to privately owned companies. In total eight per cent of companies gave investor relations-specific news headlines on the front page and 13 per cent had a link to a specific investor relations section on their website (graph 9).

Social media is growing in popularity with even established B2B companies having some degree of social media presence – whether they update it regularly or maximise its value is outside of the scope of this research. Facebook, LinkedIn

and Twitter were the most popular social media sites for surveyed companies, with 42 per cent displaying one or more social media logos on their home page as a means to possibly solicit connections and followers (graph 9).

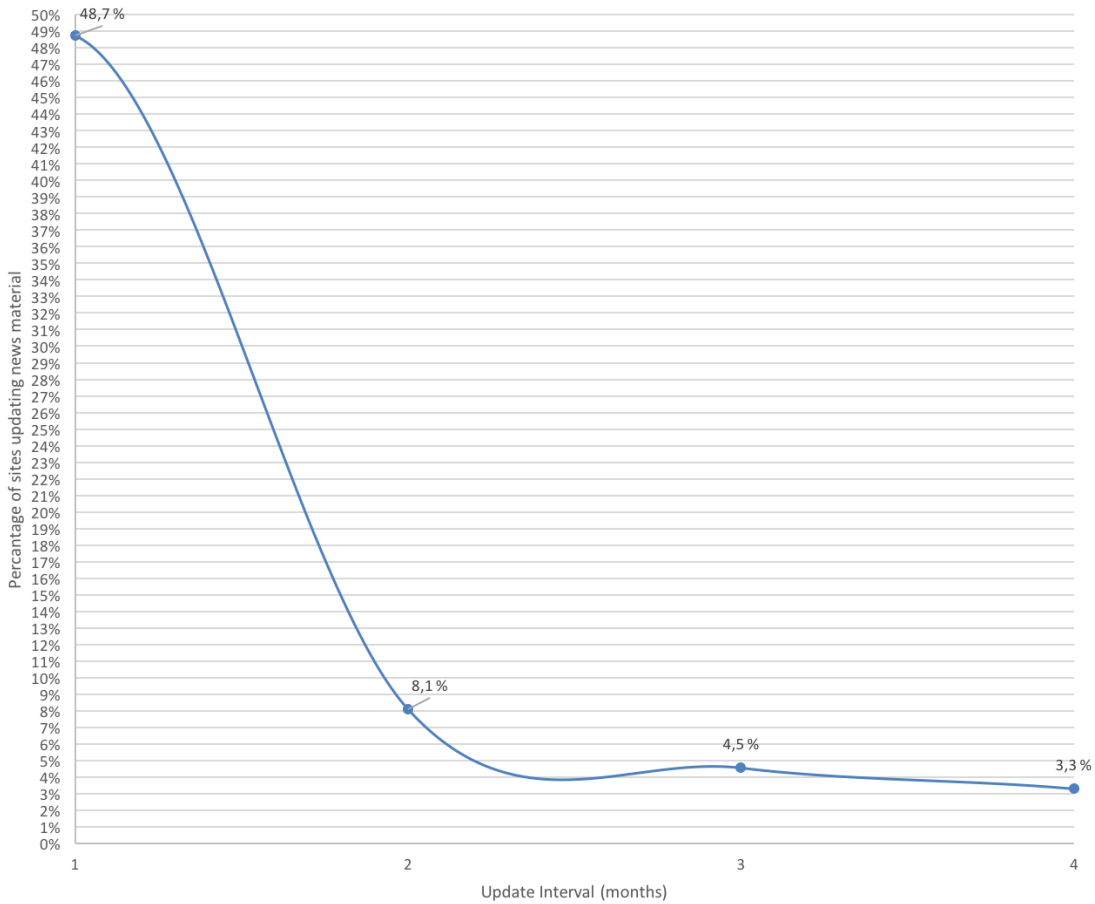


GRAPH 9. Data display on homepage

Examining how frequently a company would post news (or “happenings”) was slightly problematic, since there was no consistency between the languages that may feature, although where possible one sought to focus on the English language version as that would be the natural destination for a foreign journalist or potential customer where their “own” language was not present and updated. It was noticeable that many companies just had no real news, filling their news feed with what could be politely described as “scrap” or “irrelevancies”. It would be worthwhile conducting a smaller, more aggressive research programme into this area, perhaps comparing to comparable companies within the same sector in other countries, based on domestic and international-orientated stories.

In any case, even with a generous interpretation, 26 per cent never updated their news section at all – including some with a lovely placeholder and no news to offer up! Forty-nine per cent had some update within the past month (bolstered markedly by “Christmas greetings”). Then the update frequency began to tail off,

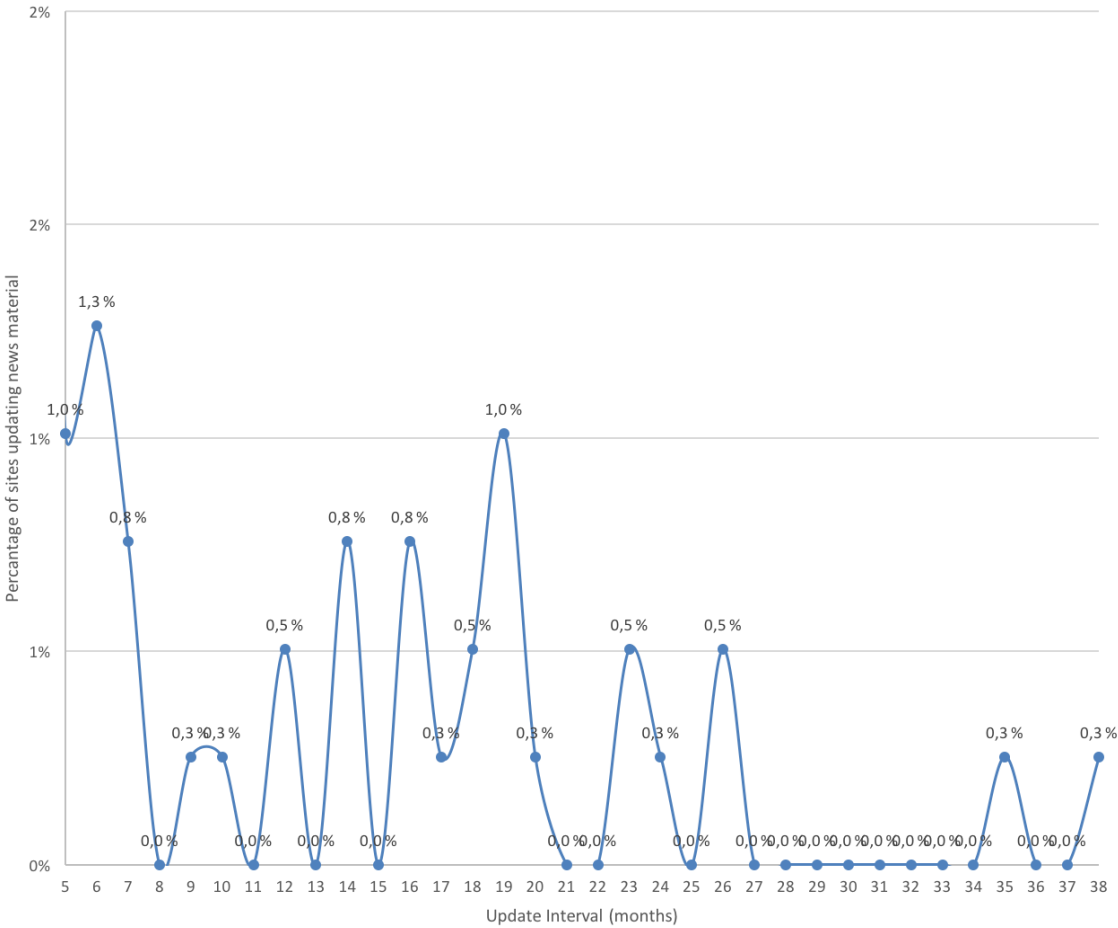
with eight per cent updating between one and two months, four-and-a-half per cent updating between two and three months and so on, with the oldest “latest update” being 38 months old. So in all, 67 per cent updated at least once within the past half-year, with the mean update interval being 2.3 months (and median/mode of up to one month) as visualised on graph 10 (covering the first four months) and graph 11 (covering the fifth month to the last month).



GRAPH 10. Frequency of update for news materials: months 1-4

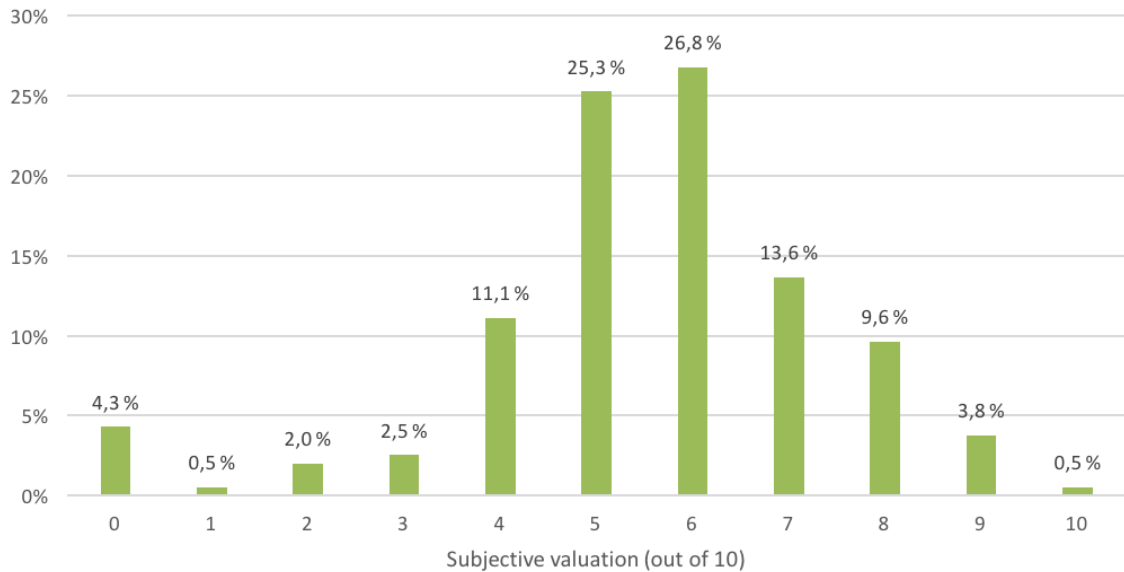
A subjective evaluation was given to the information provided on a company’s website, considering how much use it may be to a journalist looking to write about the company (as well as, it is argued, how an unknown possible customer might view the information provided if they just found “Company X” as a possible source for “Product X” somehow online). Using a baseline that every company’s website should at least feature basic corporate and product information as well as contact

information, no matter how deficient this may appear – in other words a basic website, yet “only” 91 per cent of sites managed this objective.



GRAPH 11. Frequency of update for news materials: months 5-38

A wider evaluation considered factors such as usefulness and timeliness of information as well as access (for the media) to background information, photographs, statistics and other useful information including accurate, relevant contact information, and was measured on a scale from zero to ten. Graph 12 notes that, alarmingly, 20.45 per cent scored four or less, 25.25 per cent achieved a five and 26.8 per cent achieved a six. This left 27.5 per cent achieving a seven or higher. This can be expressed as a mean of five-and-a-half and median/mode of six.



GRAPH 12. Subjective journalistic analysis of website content

Fortunately, a once popular activity of “hiding” press information behind a password-protected page has fell out of favour, with only three sites (0.8 per cent of the sample or 1.07 per cent of those who had any form of visibly-linked information) continuing with this habit.

6.3 Personal interviews

Interview subjects (respondents) have been granted anonymity in order that they can speak freely, possibly even criticising their own employer and their industry peers. Interviews held in March 2016, lasting between 30 and 60 minutes on average, were semi-structured in nature, with the aim that the subjects express themselves freely within the core area under consideration instead of answering a pre-set list of questions (that could replicate the questionnaire described in section 5.1 and analysed in section 6.1).

A summary of the key findings is presented. No specific interpretation has been made of their findings, save for noting that it broadly tends to support the hypothesis (or core belief) raised at the start of this thesis. Rather than group the responses under several artificial headlines or attempt to make statistical

references from coding a limited data set, it was felt better to present a summary from each interviewee, since their contributions are effectively a form of vox populi, adding colour and personal impression to the subject. Attention is drawn to the limitations of this research stated in section 5.3. They are capable of being reliable and valid data sources in any case for the reasons previously given.

There was a great degree of unity between interview subjects in any case, despite there being no specific targeting or profiling when they were approached for an interview. No interview subject believed that “everything was perfect” or that no changes would need to be made. Based on the relative lack of interest, availability or silence (however you wish to describe it) from businesses-at-large to the entire research process, for possibly many reasons already espoused, perhaps the only inference that may be drawn from the interview subjects and their willingness to be interviewed is that they felt that “more could and should be done” and thus saw a benefit for this research.

6.3.1 Respondent ALPHA

Respondent ALPHA is managing director of a long-established, production company that exports worldwide.

ALPHA believes that it is a myth that Finnish companies today do export marketing and PR badly. Previously many companies were thought of as being technically very competent but were often poor when it came to sales and marketing. ALPHA has noticed a lot of positive changes over the years and believes that Finnish companies today operate on a comparable level to other international peers, once they have understood the need and benefits of exporting. ALPHA conceded that there can be much scope for improvement within many companies, yet the picture is not as bleak as it may have once been painted.

One big change has been noticeable since 2008 and the downturn in the domestic market, said ALPHA, with companies who were struggling to survive were forced

to look towards exporting and those who have survived and/or prospered have been successful with export activities. There is still resistance to export, noted ALPHA, particularly amongst smaller companies, which make up the vast majority of all companies in the country. Of the companies that do export, ALPHA estimates that a good one-third or more of them are doing export marketing “at an acceptable level”, leaving a large potential group that may need or would benefit from external assistance (from different bodies such as chambers of commerce, consultants, Finpro etcetera) to improve. Getting external assistance is not necessarily trouble-free, noted ALPHA, particularly when the company itself has not “done its homework” and failed to treat the appointment process as one would (or should) have handled the recruitment of staff, meaning problems that ensued would probably be primarily a failure of the contracting company itself rather than a fault of the service provider.

It can be a catch-22 situation, admitted ALPHA, when a company feels they may want to export but don't necessarily know exactly how to go about it. Everything depends on the level of commitment, so ALPHA recommends hiring “competence” into the company, employing someone who has experience and a proven track record in doing export and then allowing them to use their network to identify and recruit help as required. It does demand a certain mindset and adequate financing. ALPHA stated that “If you don't have money to hire someone then you should really seriously consider if you have money to do the export.”

On the question of whether Finnish companies can lack confidence in exporting and telling the world just how great their products can be, ALPHA admitted this may inhibit some. “When you have the national character of modesty being a virtue, I guess you tend to have a problem with the confidence. They [companies] have confidence in the product but they probably lack understanding of the fit of the product into the new markets. What fits into Finland may not fit to Sweden, to Norway or other countries,” said ALPHA.

It takes time to gain entry into some markets, particularly when selling products that may be more “traditional” in nature or the market has many established

participants, even if the company has developed what might be a superior product, noted ALPHA, adding that the market must be given the opportunity to be exposed to the services or products and that means one way or the other, the company has to be present in the market. It can be beneficial participating in joint marketing activities within trade exhibitions with organisations such as Finpro. “When you have a product and you bring it to the local potential customers to touch and feel it, then you get the first hand feedback about what is the potential and you have to be honest and believe the feedback you get,” said ALPHA.

Measuring success within export-based communications activities can be difficult, even with metrics such as website visits, press coverage and inward inquiries being valid measures. “You basically have to believe in the need to communicate rather than trying to find a justification through metrics. I think the only metric is revenues. It [revenues and seeing a response] has encouraged us to do more and it has, of course, encouraged us to invest into our brand and the visual image of how brand is and how we are seen in the market,” said ALPHA, noting that they handle PR on a country-by-country basis when needs dictate, giving local agencies a lot of freedom to achieve the desired objectives rather than seeking to centrally steer things from Finland. ALPHA said, “When we launched our new product into the Swedish market we took a Swedish communications company to look at how our product fits there, what are the features and benefits and how they should be communicated and then they made the whole project that looked quite a bit different from the Finnish market’s [marketing approach].”

Attitudes to communications can vary and this may have a wider subconscious impact on activities than many imagine. ALPHA said: “Even if the company believes in the needs of communication and PR and they spend money on it, they typically view it as a cost rather than an investment and by taking it as a cost, they immediately create a stress to themselves and to the organisation that it is a negative thing. As I see it is an opportunity and investment and should be considered that way.”

ALPHA was very surprised to learn about some of the findings from the media audit conducted for this thesis, particularly the relative paucity of English language information on websites. ALPHA expected the figure to be much higher. ALPHA's own company actively translates its website into many languages, seeking to synchronise as much content as possible and adding specific local material as necessary.

6.3.2 Respondent BRAVO

Respondent BRAVO is an executive with sales and marketing responsibilities for an industry systems supplier with global exports.

BRAVO believes that Finnish companies vary tremendously with how they handle their export-related marketing and PR activities, noting that companies on the west coast are particularly export-aware due to their trade with Sweden (and as a gateway to the Nordic region and beyond). Yet companies are, on the whole, not in the "premier league" when it comes to export marketing, with BRAVO accepting that there is much work to do to improve, although gradually improvements are noticeable, particularly with growing internationalisation and foreign influences.

Companies should be more active and more self-confident to talk about their products, noted BRAVO, whilst admitting that achieving this may be more difficult although it can be a combination of cultural and generational changes that lead to improvements occurring. The stereotypical Finnish culture of being more introverted and less keen to talk about oneself is also a handicap to marketing efforts. BRAVO agreed that even a perceived shyness in reading about oneself in a trade publication, for example, can invisibly inhibit proactive marketing efforts, compared to how companies in other countries may react in similar circumstances. In general, BRAVO noted that companies need to think about marketing and their own image, as that may lead to them perhaps appreciating the value and need to do more marketing activities.

There can be some resistance for many companies to exporting on the whole, speculates BRAVO, particularly in regions that have less experience with export. Language competency may also play its part, or at least contribute to the general level of resistance. Smaller companies may be struggling with exporting, even if they are aware of the need to export and have a desire to do this, said BRAVO, suggesting that they should take greater use of external assistance through regional development agencies and chambers of commerce, even though they may be of variable quality and efficacy.

BRAVO believes that marketing and PR can help the export process, since companies need to spread information about their activities, whilst noting it can be a long and arduous process. Participation at trade fairs remains a key marketing activity for BRAVO's company and the company seeks to track all marketing efforts. Other PR efforts take a less prominent share of activity.

Senior management's commitment towards marketing and PR is questioned by BRAVO, with activities often being viewed as less important, leading to them being recorded as a cost that must be endured rather than a core function to be exploited. Such validation may resonate throughout the company and further defocus such activities, it was noted.

BRAVO was surprised to learn the results of the media audit and the low level of foreign language use on company websites, describing it as "very poor" for companies on the whole that are aiming to attract foreign interest.

6.3.3 Respondent CHARLIE

Respondent CHARLIE is employed as a sales manager within an export-led company where proactive marketing appears noticeable by its absence.

CHARLIE stated that Finnish companies may have a relatively poor reputation when it comes to marketing and PR, particularly with regard to exporting,

speculating that this may be because companies typically focus on their products (an engineer's mindset) rather than also considering to tell others about them. The companies may produce top-quality "premier league" products that can compete against the best in the market and in many cases they may make the market's best, they may even send out salespeople to try and sell the products, yet there is a missing element of marketing that could support and maybe even make easier the sales process, noted CHARLIE.

There has been a slight, gradual improvement over recent decades, admitted CHARLIE, yet things are still being held back (corporately) by the national stereotype of being introverted, shy and even apologetic that they have produced something great and need to talk about it. CHARLIE compared Finnish companies to Swedish companies, as an example, noting that the "small talk" and whole culture is different between the two countries when compared like-for-like.

Companies are also viewing marketing and PR as a cost and less-strategic function, adopting a short-term view rather than viewing it as a long-term, slow process that the entire company may benefit from. Many companies may feel that they have an export marketing strategy, said CHARLIE, although this might be over-optimistic or naïve at best and possibly badly implemented or even ignored in real-terms at worst. This is largely a function of poor leadership within the company at a senior level and propagates throughout the entire enterprise, noted CHARLIE, questioning the purpose of employing a person as a marketing manager when they have no educational or practical background in the area as he has observed in one peer group company.

Investment priorities can be wrongly skewed, particularly when a company's individual circumstances are considered, with participation at an exhibition being viewed as the pinnacle of marketing activities when, in many cases, such participation is a costly and barely effective means of gathering leads and future business. With a typical trade show's participation easily costing tens of thousands of euros (and more) for a relatively small presence at a European exhibition, it is questionable whether a suitable rate of return is achieved in many cases and much

more could be achieved if the same budget was applied in other areas of marketing and PR, stated CHARLIE.

CHARLIE admitted that his company's name or brand is barely known outside of Finland, with exports being channelled through a select number of larger accounts. This can create problems for new potential customers when they search for information about the company and even if they should stumble across CHARLIE COMPANY AB on a list of several hundred exhibitors at a trade fair they attend (and overall people are attending fewer exhibitions nowadays) there is no expected likelihood of brand association and a visitor with one day to go around several large exhibition halls may never even stumble upon the company. With an element of industry- and market brand awareness, obtained through marketing activities, it is more likely that a connection may be formed and discussions about possible business entered into.

Many Finnish companies could benefit from somebody, whether it is a consultant, a marketing communications agency or even a government/municipal-funded body to audit a company's marketing activities, possibly comparing to peer group members (especially those that do not directly compete against each other), and show them elements of best practice and practical examples of export-based marketing, noted CHARLIE. This may help companies that are lacking the competency or vision in-house, believes CHARLIE, although it may still suffer from myopic leadership and the attitude that can be prevalent within inhibits transparent, goal-determined development and advancement.

CHARLIE has observed that many companies lack even basic research about their desired sales markets, which could have been supplemented by export marketing activity and even taking feedback from sales operatives, agents and customer responses. Internal collaboration and processing of such rich sources of data could augment many areas of the business from product development and design through to sales and marketing, if only such activities would be truly implemented.

CHARLIE also observed that a combination of poor leadership and a lack of internal communications and collaboration culture can work against companies. A past employer talked about their product development processes, yet a salesperson could come back from a customer visit and tell what a customer would like to have (the customer may have even said directly that they would take tens of thousands of this product as an initial order with follow-on orders to probably follow and they want to know a possible delivery time and price), only to be told in an open group meeting that the idea was stupid, unworkable or just something to ignore without any real grounds other than the superior (who also had responsibility for some larger accounts) was not the person to feed this back. The difference or product enhancement could be to use a different colour material or make a minor cosmetic change that did not create any engineering or production overhead, so what should be “money in the bank” was instead left, in pieces, on the conference room table.

CHARLIE admitted that this placed the sales person in a difficult position, having to diplomatically translate the comment from a superior that “it is a shit idea and something we will not do” to their existing customer. It is quite conceivable that such would not inspire loyalty in the mind of the customer and maybe make them consider alternative suppliers for the other products they purchase, where alternatives exist. Neither would such a situation help the internal group dynamic to hear such putdowns because they come from the wrong person who has the wrong clients. When the response can depend even on whether the superior is in “good spirits” or not, noted CHARLIE, is hardly a base for sound management decision-taking and professional leadership, yet it was further evidence that “Management by Perkele” is still prevalent in far too many Finnish companies, leading to subordinates being passive and less innovative or inspired to take the initiative over something. Such restrictions are hardly good for the country’s future, noted CHARLIE, with so much time and resources being wasted when “only one person” in the company seemingly can do everything right and how they are effectively forced to do everything due to the inability of others to correctly handle their responsibilities.

CHARLIE was very surprised to learn about the media audit and the revelations about language use.

6.3.4 Respondent DELTA

Respondent DELTA is a former export manager and is a senior executive within a company providing services to Finnish companies.

DELTA feels that marketing can be a challenge for many Finnish companies, with quite a few struggling to see even the difference between the types of marketing disciplines as well as PR. Finnish companies marketing products to Finnish consumers and companies seem to have a better understanding of the need for marketing-related activities when operating domestically, compared to their export-focussed international operations, although no doubt there is scope for improvement in all areas.

Learning by example, possibly examining best practice and proven success from other companies could be one way for companies to improve their marketing-related activities, believes DELTA, although companies can also learn from the mistakes other companies may make. Companies may be understandably shy about sharing their successes and failures with others (yet there might be scope for a third-party “clearing house” to exist to facilitate such information exchange). A public scandal or known failure, on the other hand, can be illustrative for many, as long as the uninvolved recipient company is perceptive enough to actively follow, understand and learn from someone else’s mistakes, even if they only have information that is in the public domain to consider.

A lot falls down to strategy, namely whether the company has one or not for marketing-related activities, as well as the importance the senior management team ascribe to it both in theory and in practice, said DELTA. The strategy has to be something that exists in practice, rather than being a fine line or two on a mission statement or similar internal document. The quality of leadership within

many Finnish companies does leave a lot to be desired in many companies, said DELTA, and whilst there can be many positive highlights to buck the trend, there will be a lot of lowlights to counterbalance this. Even within many otherwise “functional” companies, especially the medium-to-larger entities, recalled DELTA, it is not necessarily evident that a marketing director may be a member of a senior management team, even if the company proclaims that it is serious about its marketing activities. They might be consulted as a specialist, but they are clearly given, whether by intention or omission, a subsidiary status within the company and this sends tremendous signals within the organisation.

Cultural issues can impact on how many Finnish companies communicate, or don't communicate, agreed DELTA. The stereotype about being modest and shy can be contributing towards the lack of marketing activity, at least when compared to companies in other countries and their equivalent stereotypes. Individuals think the “less we are in the newspapers or the media the better, because if we are doing good why should we boast about it or tell everybody... then our competitors don't know we are doing good,” concluded DELTA.

Today, DELTA notes that things are different and customers are increasingly active to use social media, online resources and other media channels to learn about products they may seek and the companies that may provide them, so an alert company should be servicing this increasing desire and communicating more, not necessarily seeking to control the conversations in the various media channels but to participate,

DELTA believes that there is much scope to help get companies communicating externally, delivered through private specialist companies as well as business development agencies and chambers of commerce, although the latter's role may be better utilised to spread awareness about the need to communicate better and market more, allowing the specialist providers of assistance to develop and execute plans in conjunction with customer requirements. DELTA noted that Finnish communications agencies may need to improve the quality and scope of their service delivery with thought to international marketing and communications.

This may be achieved by greater foreign exposure as well as increasing international cooperation with specialists in different worldwide markets as client needs dictate.

DELTA was careful to stress that international (export-led) marketing and communications is no simple task. Dependent on the company and their products or services it can be an immensely challenging subject, yet with challenges comes the necessity of having a clear, focussed strategy, underlying system and plan, with sufficient financial resourcing and senior management endorsement, cascading this support that communications is key throughout the enterprise. Cooperation with as many partners as possible can be a help, such as foreign sales agents, local offices, customers, suppliers and even industry peers, but it is still a longer-term process rather than a short-term solution.

Learning about the results of the media audit and its revelations about multilingualism, DELTA was “not that surprised” despite probably hoping for better results. DELTA did not believe it was acceptable, especially noting the relative poor support for English – the international business language - yet notes it is a further data point to support the need to be thinking more about how a company communicates and latterly what it does to achieve that goal.

6.3.5 Respondent ECHO

Respondent ECHO is a marketing manager for a medium-sized company that exports.

Many Finnish companies do not understand how to communicate through marketing and PR, asserts ECHO, with cultural issues being one large impediment - introversion and shyness can hold many back and communication just does not come naturally. Exceptions exist, of course, noted ECHO, although these still stand out for being positively different. ECHO believes there can also be a lack of confidence, possibly subconsciously, within many companies with what little

marketing and communications they do. ECHO believes that there has been an improvement in recent times, people are travelling more, there is greater cross-cultural interaction and so forth, yet there is still much scope for improvement.

Other elements of the Finnish stereotype, such as honesty and modesty, are to be applauded when used as part of communications, said ECHO, compared to other citizens of some other countries that may be more hype-laden and artificial. Respondent ECHO has lived and worked extensively overseas and when they returned to Finland it enabled them to view their homeland in a different light, particularly when it comes to communication in general. ECHO highlighted Latin America, a region they have much experience of, where the image of Finland is incredibly positive. "They (Finns) are all almost saints, they are always honest, everything they do is always great. If you say you are from Finland, you automatically have a "green card" for almost anything. There Finland has a very good reputation," said ECHO, noting other countries that, in their experience, have a very positive stereotypical view of Finland, even if they also comment about the Finnish shyness and silence.

ECHO's company strives to mention the Finnishness of their products. Sometimes they receive feedback that their products are expensive (the company's products are priced as a premium product with premium-quality production standards). The company is not able to automatically win business by its products coming from Finland or being made to a certain technical standard, yet they do succeed by combining these attributes with the flexibility of their product portfolio and the product's application to customer requirements. That said, ECHO believes that the Finnish "trademark" helps rather than hinders business in the majority of cases.

At ECHO's company, senior management supports the need to market and there has been a marked positive change over the years. When ECHO first became involved with the company's marketing affairs, the marketing budget was very small, indicating a less-active attitude towards marketing and a feeling that "the product is so good it will sell itself", yet ECHO was given free-reign and a suitable

budget to considerably expand the company's marketing function and this continues to get significant visibility and support from senior management.

Trade shows are important for ECHO's company, particularly as the products sold are things that business customers often should see, feel and discuss integration strategies direct. The company focusses on smaller, industry-specific conferences where maybe 500 delegates are paying 1000€ to participate, and during breaks they can visit a stand within a "mini exhibition" and talk direct to ECHO's sales and technical staff and directly focus on possible business applications that may lead to future sales. This gives a significant pre-qualification compared to a general trade show that may attract tens of thousands of mixed visitors.

One problem with ECHO's company is that they do not develop many entirely new products (since the existing products are refined and satisfy a need) and this can inhibit traditional PR activities. Customers are often declining to be identified in PR activities (telling their competitors that they are using ECHO's solutions may reveal a competitive advantage) and the trade press in this sector is often focussing on "pay for print" coverage, suggesting that an article will only be written if a suitably large amount of advertising is purchased. PR activity is undertaken where possible, including seeking coverage in industry-vertical publications that can be relevant for their target customer groups and their influencers or specifiers, rather than just focussing on the industry-vertical for ECHO's own industry segment.

Content marketing is an area that ECHO's company is considering, although it is handicapped by the same problems in identifying its customers and the lack of new products, although it is considering this as a route to establish its broader industry expertise and influence. The company is also refocussing itself from merely supplying a certain range of products to providing a wider range of integrated solutions, and ECHO believes that content marketing will become more commonplace as this transition occurs.

ECHO's company works with many external communications-sector companies, both in Finland and internationally. ECHO stated that if their company was to

review and re-evaluate its external communications strategy and supplier needs, it is likely that the majority of work would be given to non-Finnish agencies or consultants, primarily because ECHO does not feel (from observation and experience to date) that the best or latest ideas are to be found within Finnish communications agencies. Another consideration is that since the majority of its products are exported worldwide, they require a multifaceted, international approach, taking into account local norms, cultures and preferences and selecting local agencies or consultants and working directly with them would be preferable, rather than through a “coordinating” local Finnish agency.

Details of this research’s media audit was also provided to ECHO and they initially expected, with some trepidation, that about half of the companies surveyed would have had a multilingual website, despite their size and export market potential. ECHO admitted that their company had a monolingual website – in English – despite being a Finnish company with technical reasons lying behind this, although work is ongoing to introduce a new content management system that would provide a multilingual website. ECHO revealed that they have received a lot of requests from overseas agents and distributors to have a website with material in their local languages. In any case, defaulting to English rather than Finnish when technical reasons prevent a multilingual solution may appear to be the most sensitive, suitable solution.

6.3.6 Respondent FOXTROT

Respondent FOXTROT has worked both within public- and private-sector organisations to promote and aid the export and investment processes and today is a senior executive within one such organisation.

Cultural issues and a general lack of internationalisation are still holding Finnish companies back, said FOXTROT, with companies remaining stuck with a mindset that they first develop and produce a wonderfully engineered, quality product and then people will flock to buy it. Marketing aspects are relatively undeveloped,

especially for the export market, since companies relied often on domestic customers and sold products through existing (often personal) connections, said FOXTROT. The newer-generation of executives are more familiar with the need to market and communicate and are better-placed to leverage new technologies and techniques, yet it is not leading to a massive change overnight. As a group, the younger generation may also be more gifted linguistically, are more confident (than their forefathers) and are a little more internationally orientated and familiar, yet it will take time for them to be in the right positions within a business to effect change, said FOXTROT.

Within the B2B sector there is great untapped potential, noted FOXTROT. This has become more prominent in the Internet era and thus there is a need to undertake marketing, yet companies still appear to assume that marketing is mostly something for B2C sector activities and that somehow B2B business manages itself, perhaps by a salesperson knocking on doors and/or participation at a trade fair. International B2C operations, coming from Finland, are likely to pale into insignificance compared with the B2B potential, based on current-day observation.

FOXTROT admitted that Nokia was, in its time, an exception to the general rule, but noted that over a decade has passed since the company's heyday and yet still most companies are failing to maximise their external communications opportunities. Some exceptions exist and some companies really do try to focus on their export activities and internationalisation, yet they are still the exception rather than the rule. Far too many companies are still inward-looking or are seemingly paralysed and not proactively seeking to export. FOXTROT believes that lengthy, poor economic conditions affecting the country are also inhibiting the potential for export with companies being afraid to invest in non-essential projects and activities with no guaranteed return. Yet it can be a catch-22 situation as you have to also speculate to possibly accumulate (business and thus eventual profit).

FOXTROT was very critical towards some of the government and municipal bodies charged with helping businesses operate and export. Many of these

organisations seem to focus on their own structure and bureaucratic empires and FOXTROT suggests they don't really know what services they should be providing and how it could be best implemented. What services they do provide – without charge – is not sufficient to help their client companies. This also creates an unreasonable expectation as companies assume there is no need for specialist, structured (and chargeable) advice from professionals. Combine this with a reluctance to invest or commit, whether due to fear, ignorance or even economic issues, and it is little wonder that any attempts are, in many cases, abortive, poorly executed or just haphazardly implemented.

The money being invested by the Finnish government today on export promotion activities is not generating a return, said FOXTROT, who advocates a wholesale review of the impact, expected deliverables and value-for-money that current-day assistance programmes achieve. Government money could be better spent, for example, as a post-implementation credit or subsidy for services provided by professional companies, based on reviewable criteria, yet FOXTROT inferred that this may require a radical shift in current thought processes.

6.3.7 Respondent GOLF

Respondent GOLF is a senior professional working within a communications capacity for a multinational company.

GOLF believes that the Finnish character stereotypes or traits are holding many companies back, particularly concerning how they communicate externally. GOLF has noted a gradual improvement over time with communications proficiency and outward willingness, especially with new generations coming into the workforce and progression with their more open, global focus; although there is still a lot of work to be done and improvements to be made. Younger employees are particularly aware of social media and the impact and reach that online activity can have, so they can be particularly open to the concept of marketing and communications (some of the older generations also understand this need).

Much of the same traits may also affect other elements of a typical Finnish company's operations, so whilst they can develop good products to a high standard, sales and marketing can be inhibited in many ways and this can even impact on future innovation or research and development due to less-effective communication.

Many companies are failing to see the benefits of, or the need to export, said GOLF, particularly when a company has already found its niche within the domestic market. This can contribute, along with the aforementioned communications hesitancy and a risk-adverse approach to business, to companies being content with their lot and not overly seeking to expand through export.

GOLF believes that PR and marketing can certainly assist export activities, although it may not necessarily be the most dominant, focussed tool that sets the export ball rolling. It can be a powerful aid, working in a support function, but invariably export will not happen by PR alone.

Support programmes operated and financed by the EU, national and local government and regional development bodies can have their part to play in many situations, observed GOLF, whilst ironically noting that some programmes state that funding cannot be used for marketing purposes whilst at the same time seeking to improve how companies function when there may be underlying issues at play that can be related to non-existent or poorly-performing marketing and communications activities.

GOLF believes that there is competency within the Finnish communications industry to help companies communicate their marketing messages internationally, although they believe that these agencies and professionals as a collective can lag behind their peers in many other countries when it comes to overall creativity, drive, direction and "new thinking". This may partially be a generational issue, as well as being influenced by culture, and may be improved upon over time with natural changes and greater international exposure and experience.

GOLF reacted with surprise to many elements identified within the media audit, such as the low level of multilingual websites and the overall quality and performance of media and marketing-related information being presented to both members of the foreign media and prospective export customer alike.

6.3.8 Respondent HOTEL

Respondent HOTEL is the managing director of a company that exports the majority of its products, yet it is aiming to aggressively increase this in the coming years.

HOTEL noted the importance of export for most companies, save those that have a sufficiently strong position and demand for their products from the domestic market with scope for growth. HOTEL warned that markets can quickly contract due to many reasons (referencing as well their company's own operating sector) and thus export provides a secondary source of income as well as demand for product development, since the needs or usage from a customer in one country can vary to that of another.

Exporting is, in itself, not difficult said HOTEL, as long as the company possesses a certain competency and willingness to invest in this endeavour. There can be additional challenges or pressures on exporting companies that can make the purchase of Finnish products less attractive, such as high production and freight costs, thus product differentiation and innovation is essential, particularly in a crowded market, to make any extra costs of acquiring Finnish products more palatable or acceptable.

HOTEL stated that a broad contact network is essential for successful export and communications forms a critical part of maintaining and expanding this, whether it is communicating with importers, distributors, sales outlets, customers or even the media. For smaller companies with less of a marketing budget, intimate "word of mouth" communications and marketing can be more essential than traditional

marketing communications campaigns, said HOTEL, noting that their own company does undertake PR and marcomms activity within its export markets, although in many cases they are coordinated through or conducted by local importers with their local market knowledge, contacts, language support etcetera. This approach has yielded good results for HOTEL's company.

Low self-confidence and inexperience with international trade seems to be holding many Finnish companies back, particularly with their export activities, said HOTEL, and this impacts on what are otherwise capable and good companies. Add in often poor language skills and a general introverted attitude and this creates difficulties in creating a broad contact network, something HOTEL states is essential for success with export activity. These issues clearly affect other sales and marketing activities too. Waiting for potential customers to find your company is just not a viable option. The problem is primarily cultural, believes HOTEL, when you consider the country's high academic level, combined with the aforementioned inexperience. The country's businesses can produce great products, it is just the sales and marketing of them that seems to suffer.

HOTEL was quite critical overall about the various government and municipal bodies that exist to assist companies in many areas, but particularly with export activities. The assisting organisations are frequently creating "mini empires" that cost a lot of money to support whilst overly-bureaucratic procedures often stop the companies that could benefit the most (from assistance) from getting it. Even smaller organisations such as chambers of commerce and regional development agencies received similar critique from HOTEL, who compared experiences between Finland and Sweden, as an example, with Swedish authorities and organisations being more primed for "big action" and displaying an outward willingness to help, whilst their Finnish counterparts are often (seemingly) more focussed on their own empires, issuing fine words and holding seminars but falling short on the practical, actual provision of help. HOTEL was also critical of the situation that sees the necessity of companies existing solely to help other companies apply for support and assistance; access to such support should not need intermediaries to just help fight through a bureaucratic jungle.

HOTEL noted that even when practical help is offered, it is often more based in Finland, such as helping participate in a trade fair that can attract foreign visitors, yet there is a lack of on-the-ground, practical help, such as helping find customers in (for example) Nigeria, backed up by local assistance who know the market, its customs, language etcetera. A real end-to-end chain of assistance is missing.

Companies exporting must plan for the long-term and not expect an immediate short-term payback, warned HOTEL, noting that in many situations products may need localisation, amending or being sold in a different manner, possibly seeing a change in strategies and possibly partners mid-way through the process. A planned export strategy is a lot more than just selling a few products to one company in a foreign country and then assuming that the market will automatically open without any real effort being expended. The activity can be capital and resource intensive; add in the bureaucratic overhead that accompany most support activities as well as the other previously mentioned export-inhibiting factor, and HOTEL is not surprised that Finland loses out on a lot of export activity.

HOTEL was over-optimistic in their estimation of how many companies have a multilingual website and surprised to learn the details of this research's media audit, adding afterwards the importance of having marketing material and other communications in as many languages as possible; or at least in key languages such as English and common languages that may be used in a region under focus.

7 AGENDA FOR CHANGE

It is not possible to make specific recommendations for improvement or change that would be relevant for every company that may export, as well as inspiring companies that could, but do not, export to do so. Clearly “talk more” and “sell more” would be an over-simplified slogan or mantra, even though these phrases would be at the heart of any recommendation.

This research started out to consider an opinion that this author had held for many years, namely that collectively Finnish companies are not so proactive with their external communications. This was noticeable as a journalist, who dealt with companies spread all around the world, and it came into sharper focus when one started to concentrate on the Nordic region for a different publication. As the author moved to Finland, moved away from daily journalism and became immersed within Finnish culture this nagging feeling didn't go away. It became strengthened when viewed through a different lens, that of a potential customer.

Whether looking to buy products from Finnish companies, being inquisitive about companies in general that one followed in the domestic news or even seeking information for other purposes, it was natural to take the lazy option and search for information in English, due to the still-developing Finnish language competency of the author. There could be a distinct and significant difference between the quality of information offered to a visitor selecting English on a company's website – should it exist – and that offered in Finnish.

This problem still exists today. There is no excuse. When the author entered the world of journalism there was no such thing as a web browser. Email was a rarity and paper and telex was king. Fax came along and the Internet revolution changed things during the 1990s. Excuses for not communicating and selling anywhere and everywhere that may have existed in the 1980s, 1990s or even the early 2000s are not valid in the mid 2010s. It was a simpler time back then for those companies who did communicate, especially to the media.

Finnish companies need to do more to communicate. It is even harder to do business today in a global market. A person can sit in Dublin, decide they need a certain product and find potential suppliers worldwide within a few clicks on Google. Dependent on the product, maybe the purchase can be examined and completed online straight away. In other situations, it may require liaison with the company or its distributors and traditional negotiation but distance is not necessarily a barrier.

Even if a Finnish company and its products are discovered and shortlisted, it is highly probable that they will be checked out online, possibly through several channels such as a corporate website, traditional media and even social media. If a company is somewhat reticent or poorly equipped to communicate, there will be less information to check out and what little that exists may be insufficient. A competitor with a noisy media presence and extensive information on its own website and social media channels may obliterate a less-communicative but technically better rival.

The research for this thesis only underlined the perception (or reality) that many Finnish companies have a problem with how they communicate externally. Many may believe that they value export and/or marketing activities, although it is questionable whether they understand the real impact this can have to both their company and the country-at-large. There is a feeling that they collectively have buried their head in the sand, whether it was the lack of interest from chambers of commerce and regional development bodies to consider the problem at hand or the apparent unwillingness of companies to talk about their communications activities, it just contributes to the impression that things are not right.

The media audit of the same companies that collectively declined to communicate showed that there is a lot of work to be done. Getting quality media coverage is hard today, yet there is no excuse for having a website with often poorly updated information (or no relevant information). A company should make it easy for a potential customer (or journalist) to know everything about its products and services with the hope that it may lead to future business.

Whilst one should be cautious of directly ascribing a cause and effect to these matters, it is hard not to note a growing degree of circumstantial evidence which infers that communications-based activities are, on the whole, not very optimal within Finnish companies, particularly when they concern communicating outside of the country's borders. It is very frustrating, particularly since Finnish companies can develop and produce some of the world's best products and services, if only they would be more active in promoting them. Maybe some of the organisations that purportedly exist to help need to improve too. A "joined-up" approach linking a company to public and private-sector initiatives may be needed, focussing on the practical and proactive rather than the theoretical and passive.

In some ways it is a case of "where should one start"? Clearly having a systemic approach with communications at the core is obvious. As a product is developed consideration should be given to how it will be marketed and sold. For some companies it seems they equate marketing with making a brochure, vaguely updating a website and attending a trade fair. If a purchaser of a product doesn't know your company by name, you have to work harder to attract their attention.

Getting the content right for one task, such as a website, makes it easier to utilise it for other purposes, whether it is a printed brochure, press release campaign, social media entry or whatever. Material may be reused or adapted, possibly for internal training, press communications, dealer information and even a customer newsletter, both offline and online. Everything starts from something small, yet there must be a willingness and desire to communicate and communicate frequently, with this desire backed by practical, ongoing, repeated action.

A company has to be practical. Most companies are not going to get a mention in the Financial Times or feature on CNN when they launch a new product. Coverage in traditional media such as the trade press still has value. Social media mentions can have their part to play too as people instinctively search online. The more mentions about a company's "ABC123 thesis writing machine" or the company in general can make the difference between a company appearing on page one or two of Google compared to page 50 when a search is made for "automatic thesis

writing”. The first post might be a forum or a social media post but it can be enough to get the searcher reading and then entering the company name in Google and going direct to its website.

Even if the media and social media cannot be controlled, the company’s own website, its brochure to the world, can be. Sadly, as the media audit showed, many companies are wasting this opportunity. If they cannot be bothered to produce an informative, updated website in English that can gush about every product and service on offer and how to buy it, in 2016 one must question whether they are really hungry for business, despite commercial realities suggesting that they should be. It was not a question of just language either but the entire content and in many cases this was lacking even in Finnish, the default language of the organisation. They are not only under-selling themselves internationally but domestically too!

Are companies seemingly sticking to a safe, conservative option? The same might be said for the countries they export to. Concentrating on the same old, safe countries closer to home can have its benefits, yet it is a global world. If Sweden is a key market for purchasing rubber grommets, the world’s grommet manufacturers will be rushing to get a piece of the action. Looking at secondary markets and hoping to develop with them is also a valid option. It is not an alternative but a parallel process.

For the companies that are not exporting but could be, they need help to change this. A few seminars and brochures are not enough. The country is suffering from a depressed economy and sadly many talented people are without employment; maybe some of these people could be seconded to companies to help kick-start or develop export, backed with financial support from the government when justified. It might lead to more export and greater employment opportunities, not just for the seconded.

There does seem to be a lot of validity to the idiom “actions speak harder than words” and there does appear to be a lot of words expressed about how important

communications can be, yet the visible results often appear to be different. Exports would be flying out of the country, economic problems would be reduced, Finnish products and services would be in demand and the country struggling to produce enough. It comes back to communication. Whether communicating to the media or to a prospective or existing customer. Companies should examine how and why they communicate (or don't). They should acknowledge more could be done, possibly in a different way to meet the changing way business is being done and how it is expected to be done.

Even if the larger organizations do have a strategy and systemic process in place, the majority of the medium-sized companies and particularly their smaller-sized counterparts do not. Since the media landscape is changing along with how communications are taking place, this is an ideal opportunity to create a strategy. Yet it is less clear how one can get participants to understand the importance of this need for change. Kudos must be given to those companies who really get the need to communicate. Those who really get it remain the exception rather than the rule, followed by a group of also-rans and never-rans. The same goes for those companies who aggressively seek to export, building out partner networks around the world.

It is worthwhile to repeat that there is no simple roadmap or list of suggestions about how to improve. For those companies who need this, it might be literally starting from scratch, doing the fairly basic, rudimentary elements of public relations (and marketing) and research that are well documented. It may require a cultural change and this must come from within, led by a determined company leader and/or senior management team.

8 CONCLUSION

The author has found this thesis process both enlightening and frustrating. The process started out with a belief, built on prior personal observation, that many Finnish companies are rather poor with their PR activities and that this can have a detrimental effect on export success. The objective of this thesis was thus to examine what larger companies in a particularly export-active region of the country were doing with PR and how this relates to, or impacts, their export activities. Gathered data could be then analysed and various conclusions formed with the objective of making various recommendations for possible change, improvement or refinement.

Being objective, it would have been preferable to have come to the conclusion that previous observations and opinions were invalid and that Finnish companies are, in fact, leading the way in communicating and exporting. It would have then been possible to take these positive examples and use them as examples for other less-performing companies to follow. Instead, all available evidence, whether actual or circumstantial, does suggest that there is a problem and that this does need addressing.

Unfortunately, there is no magic wand to wave with fine-tuned recommendations for the typical company thus far, other than “get the basics sorted out, before you even consider anything more advanced.” There are many areas for future research to examine how Finnish companies could communicate better and use this as an aid to exporting products and services. It is something this author hopes to undertake in the future.

Maybe Finnish companies will develop the next “great thing”, yet based on experience to date it is not guaranteed that they will suitably communicate this and be sufficiently reactive to take advantage of the market interest, allowing other more-reactive companies in other countries to jump ahead and seize the market. The Finnish reputation of trust, dependability and honesty can be used within communication, without recourse to hyperbole and other negative connotations

that can emerge from other countries when taken as a whole. Having confidence in what you do and a preparedness in telling everyone about it is not a character flaw but a positive attribute.

What to conclude? On the positive side, the country is home to a highly educated workforce that has not forgotten the art of innovation and R&D. The country can produce great products. Yet collectively it seems that companies have difficulties talking about their products and that this must have an impact on export activities. Clearly PR is not the only tool available, yet there is a certain communications constipation that does seem to be negatively impacting companies and society as a whole on many levels.

There is hope. Where there is a will there's a way, after all. Even if the problems can be addressed one step at a time, with gradual improvements made in certain areas, it is better than doing nothing! The challenge may be discovering why companies can be somewhat tight-lipped with their communications-related activities. One problem is, however, that many are remaining tight-lipped about what they are doing, or not doing.

It is time for companies to find their collective voice and let the Finnish lion's roar be heard around the world. At the moment, is the lion even whimpering? *Maasta se pienikin ponnistaa*⁴.

⁴ Even the smallest will take off of the ground (literally "Out of little acorns (grow mighty oaks)")

REFERENCES

- Aggarwal, V.B. & Gupta, V.S. 2001. Handbook of journalism and mass communication. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Co.
- Aiken, C.B. & Keller, S.P. 2007. The CEO's role in leading transformation. New York: McKinsey & Co. Available: http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/the_ceos_role_in_leading_transformation. Accessed 31 December 2015.
- Albaum, G.S. & Duerr, E. 2011. International marketing and export management. Seventh edition. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- Aliaga, M. & Gunderson, B. 2003. Interactive statistics. Second Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall/Pearson Education.
- Allen, P.J. & Roberts, L.D. 2016. The impact of academic sponsorship on web survey dropout and item non-response. *First Monday* 21(2). doi:10.5210/fm.v21i2.6144
- Alsop, R.J. 2004. Corporate reputation: Anything but superficial - the deep but fragile nature of corporate reputation. *Journal of Business Strategy* 25(6):21-29. doi:10.1108/02756660410699900
- Anholt, S. 2003. Branding places and nations. In Clifton, R. & Simmons, J. (eds.) *The economist: Brands and branding*. London: Profile Books.
- Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism. 2014. Generally Accepted Practices. GAP VIII: Eighth communication and public relations generally accepted practices study (Q4 2013 data). Los Angeles: University of Southern California. Available: <http://ascjweb.org/gapstudy/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/GAP-VIII-Presentation-Final-6.12.2014.pdf>. Accessed 2 January 2016.
- Ansoff, H.I. 1957. Strategies for diversification. *Harvard business review* 35(5):113-124.
- Apple. 2015. Form 10-K annual report pursuant to section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 for the fiscal year ended September 26, 2015. Cupertino, CA: Apple Inc. Accessed 28 January 2016.
- Armenter, R. & Koren, M. 2015. Economies of scale and the size of exporters. *Journal of the European Economic Association* 13(3):482-511. doi:10.1111/jeea.12108
- Aspo Oyj. 2004. Vuosikertomus 2003. Helsinki: Aspo Oyj. Available: http://www.aspo.fi/files/attachments/aspo_new/media/vuosikertomukset/aspo_ar_03_fi.pdf. Accessed 23 December 2015.

- Axelsson, B. & Agndal, H. 2005. Professionell marknadsföring. Second edition. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Axelsson, D. & Nordberg, H. 2005. The role of PR: In the introduction stage of a new brand. Master's thesis. Jönköping University. Jönköping International Business School. Master of Business Administration.
- Baker, M.J. 2014. Marketing strategy and management. Fifth edition. London: Palgrave.
- Bank of Finland. 2015. Pace of debt growth disquieting. Economic Outlook: Public Finances. Helsinki: Bank of Finland. Available: <http://www.bofbulletin.fi/en/2015/5/pace-of-debt-growth-disquieting>. Accessed 22 December 2015.
- Barnes, T. 2014. 11 popular songs the CIA used to torture prisoners in the war on terror. Mic. New York: Mic Network. Available: <http://mic.com/articles/87851/11-popular-songs-the-cia-used-to-torture-prisoners-in-the-war-on-terror#.HouU3sRgr>. Accessed 19 Decembr 2015.
- Barrow, C. 2016. The 30 day MBA: Your fast track guide to business success. Fourth edition. London: Kogan Page.
- Belch, G.E. & Belch, M.A. 2004. Advertising and promotion: An integrated marketing communications perspective. Sixth edition. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- BIS. 2015. Small business survey 2014: SME employers. BIS Research Paper. London: Department for Business Innovation & Skills. Available: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414963/bis-15-151-small-business-survey-2014-sme-employers_v1.pdf. Accessed 18 December 2015.
- Black, C. 2014. The PR professional's handbook. London: Kogan Page.
- Blodget, H. 2014. Tech companies are trying to bribe journalists with pre-ipo stock. Slate. New York: The Slate Group. Available: http://www.slate.com/blogs/business_insider/2014/05/09/tech_company_arista_networks_ceo_jayshree_ullal_tries_to_bribe_adam_lashinsky.html. Accessed 1 January 2016.
- Blomqvist, M. 2015. Suomen vienti taantuu, koska myyntiä ja markkinointia ei osata johtaa. Helsinki: Vipu International. Available: <http://www.vipunet.com/blog/bid/187393/Suomen-vienti-taantuu-koska-myynti-ja-markkinointia-ei-osata-johtaa>. Accessed 12 March 2016.
- Blythe, J. 2006. Essentials of marketing communications. Third edition. London: Pearson Education.
- Blythe, J. 2009. Key concepts in marketing. London: SAGE Publications.

Blythe, J. 2012. Essentials of marketing. Fifth edition. London: Pearson Education.

Bradley, F. 2002. International marketing strategy. Fourth edition. London: Pearson Education.

Brandirectory. 2015. Best brands in Finland. London: Brand Finance. Available: <http://brandirectory.com/brands/country/FINLAND>. Accessed 31 December 2015.

Burnett, J. & Moriarty, S. 1998. Introduction to marketing communication: An integrated approach. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Cafasso, E. 2013. After the crisis: Managing the 'scandal attention cycle'. The Public Relations Strategist. New York: Public Relations Society of America. Available: http://www.prsa.org/intelligence/thestrategist/articles/view/10386/1084/after_the_crisis_managing_the_scandal_attention_cy. Accessed 7 December 2016.

Case, K.E., Fair, R.C. & Oster, S.C. 2011. Principles of economics. Tenth edition. Boston, MA: Prentice Hall.

Cervi, D.A. & Wajnryb, R. 1992. Coping with Aussie English. English Today 8(2):18-21. doi:10.1017/S0266078400006283

CIPR. 2015. CIPR State of the Profession 2015. London: Chartered Institute of Public Relations. Available: <http://www.cipr.co.uk/content/policy-resources/research/our-research-and-reports/cipr-state-profession-2015>. Accessed 22 March 2016.

CIPR. undated. What is PR? London: Chartered Institute of Public Relations. Available: <http://www.cipr.co.uk/content/careers-advice/what-pr>. Accessed 15 December 2015.

CISION. 2015. New research from Cision and Canterbury Christ Church University highlights social media's impact on journalism. Chicago: CISION. Available: <http://www.cision.com/us/about/news/2015-press-releases/2015-global-social-journalism-study-finds-journalists-increasingly-rely-on-social-media-to-complete-daily-activities-and-improve-productivity>. Accessed 6 January 2016.

Citrix. 2014. Going global: 6 out of 10 UK SMBs will be trading internationally by 2016. London: Citrix Systems. Available: <https://www.citrix.com/news/announcements/sep-2014/going-global-6-out-of-10-uk-smbs-will-be-trading-internationally-by-2016.html>. Accessed 19 December 2015.

Communication Director. 2012. Visibility of communications at board level. Brussels: Helios Media. Available: <http://www.communication-director.com/facts-figures/visibility-communications-board-level>. Accessed 16 December 2015.

- Conner, C. 2013. Press releases still matter, but not for the reasons you think. *Forbes*. Jersey City, NJ: Forbes Media. Available: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/cherylsnappconner/2013/08/28/do-press-releases-still-matter-yes-but-not-like-you-think>. Accessed 6 January 2016.
- Copley, P. 2014. *Marketing communications management: Analysis, planning, implementation*. Second edition. London: SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J.W. 2007. *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Czinkota, M.R. & Ronkainen, I.A. 2011. *Global business: Positioning ventures ahead*. New York: Routledge.
- Czinkota, M.R. & Ronkainen, I.A. 2013. *International marketing*. Tenth edition. Mason, OH: South-Western/Cengage Learning.
- Czinkota, M.R., Ronkainen, I.A. & Moffett, M.H. 2005. *International business*. Seventh edition. Mason, OH: Thomson/South-Western.
- Daniels, J.D., Radebaugh, L.H. & Sullivan, D.P. 2013. *International business: Environments and operations*. Fourteenth global edition. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Danske Bank. 2015. Research Finland: Some growth is better than none. Helsinki: Danske Bank. Available: http://www.danskebank.com/en-uk/ci/Products-Services/Markets/Research/Documents/FlashComment_FinnishOutlook_161215.pdf. Accessed 22 December 2015.
- Drabent, J. 2016. Why the printed press release is all but dead. *Ragan's PR Daily*. Chicago, IL: Ragan Communications. Available: <http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/a14b5c8a-53d9-4c86-a4aa-6c17b9e7ad47.aspx>. Accessed 12 March 2016.
- Drucker, P. 2012. *The practice of management*. Second revised edition. London: Routledge.
- Dunn, R.M. & Mutti, J.H. 2004. *International economics*. Sixth edition. London: Routledge.
- Edwards, L. 2012. Defining the "object" of public relations research: A new starting point. *Public Relations Inquiry* 1(1):7-30. doi:10.1177/2046147X11422149
- Ellis, N. 2011. *Business-to-business marketing: Relationships, networks & strategies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Enlund, P. 2015. Österbotten leder tillväxtligan. *YLE Nyheter*. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2015/03/13/osterbotten-leder-tillvaxtligan>. Accessed 1 January 2016.

Erkkilä, M. 2009. Markkinointijohtaja johtoryhmässä on harvinaisuus. Markkinointi & Mainonta. Helsinki: Talentum. Available: <http://www.marmai.fi/uutiset/markkinointijohtaja-johtoryhmassa-on-harvinaisuus-6274184>. Accessed 19 March 2016.

Etzel, M.J., Walker, B.J. & Stanton, W.J. 2001. Marketing. Twelfth international edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

European Commission. 2015. Country Report Finland 2015: Including an In-depth review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances. Commission Staff Working Document. _Brussels: European Commission. Available: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/cr2015_finland_en.pdf. Accessed 31 December 2015.

Fagerholm, M. 2015. Nationalekonomens julklapp till regeringen: Så börjar hjulen snurra. YLE Nyheter. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2015/12/25/nationalekonomens-julklapp-till-regeringen-sa-borjar-hjulen-snurra>. Accessed 31 December 2015.

Fagerström, N. 2015. Hälsoteknologi ny framgångsbransch för finland. YLE Nyheter. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2015/03/10/halsoteknologi-ny-framgangsbransch-finland>. Accessed 19 March 2016.

Farkas, C.M. & Wetzlauer, S. 1996. The ways chief executive officers lead. Harvard Business Review. Boston: Harvard Business Publishing. Available: <https://hbr.org/1996/05/the-ways-chief-executive-officers-lead>. Accessed 31 December 2015.

Ferguson, D.P., Wallace, J.D. & Chandler, R.C. 2012. Rehabilitating your organization's image: Public relations professionals' perceptions of the effectiveness and ethicality of image repair strategies in crisis situations. Public Relations Journal 6(1).

Financial Times. 2016. Mittelstand (definition of). FT Lexicon. London: The Financial Times. Available: <http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=Mittelstand>. Accessed 22 March 2016.

Finlands Journalistförbund. 2013. Journalistreglerna. Helsinki: Suomen Journalistiliitto. Available: <https://www.journalistiliitto.fi/pa-svenska/spelregler/journalistreglerna>. Accessed 1 January 2016.

Finnish Customs. 2015. Monthly statistics on the foreign trade of goods, September 2015. Helsinki: Finnish Customs. Available: <http://www.tulli.fi/en/releases/ulkomaankauppatilastot/tilastot/kktilastot/201509/index.html?bc=5555>. Accessed 21 December 2015.

- Fonecta. 2015. Tähän suomalaisyritykset panostavat markkinoinnissaan tulevaisuudessa. Helsinki: Fonecta. Available: <https://hyoty tieto.fonecta.fi/medialle/tahan-suomalaisyri tykset-panostavat-markkinoinnissaan-tulevaisuudessa>. Accessed 4 January 2016.
- Gaiser, T.J. & Schreiner, A.E. 2009. A guide to conducting online research. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Geetanjali. 2010. International marketing. New Delhi: Oxford Book Company.
- Gençtürk, E.F. & Kotabe, M. 2001. The effect of export assistance program usage on export performance: A contingency explanation. *Journal of International Marketing* 9(2):51-72. doi:10.1509/jimk.9.2.51.19886
- Ghuri, P.N. & Cateora, P.R. 2014. International marketing. Fourth edition. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Glenday, J. 2012. Coffin company angers catholics with topless campaign to die for. *The Drum*. London: Carnyx Group. Available: <http://www.thedrum.com/news/2012/11/05/coffin-company-angers-catholics-topless-campaign-die>. Accessed 19 December 2015.
- Gorfain, L. 1979. Jingle giants. *New York Magazine*. April 23 1979.
- Gorodnichenko, Y., Mendoza, E.G. & Tesar, L.L. 2012. The Finnish great depression: From Russia with love. *The American Economic Review* 102(4):1619-1643. doi:10.1257/aer.102.4.1619
- Grönholm, P. 2015. Suomi haluaa brändätä perinneruokiaan: Mustikasta ja viilistä koko maailman herkkuja? *Helsingin Sanomat*. Helsinki: Helsingin Sanomat/Sanoma. Available: <http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/a1440299379859>. Accessed 19 March 2016.
- Gulan, A., Haavio, M. & Kilponen, J. 2014. From Finnish great depression to great recession. *Bank of Finland Bulletin. Economic Outlook* 88(3).
- Gurman, M. 2014. Seeing through the illusion: Understanding Apple's mastery of the media. *Akron: 9to5 Mac*. Available: <http://9to5mac.com/2014/08/29/seeing-through-the-illusion-understanding-apples-mastery-of-the-media>. Accessed 17 December 2015.
- Gustafsson, L. 2012. Stubb: Företag dåliga på att marknadsföra sig i världen. *YLE Nyheter*. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2012/05/02/stubb-foretag-daliga-pa-att-marknadsfora-sig-i-varlden>. Accessed 19 March 2016.
- Gustafsson, L. 2014. Hälften av jobben vid Seppälä hotade. *YLE Nyheter*. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2014/10/29/halften-av-jobben-vid-seppala-hotade>. Accessed 19 March 2016.

- H & M. 2016. H&M worldwide. Stockholm: H & M Hennes & Mauritz. Available: <http://about.hm.com/en/About/facts-about-hm/fashion-for-all/sales-markets/hm-worldwide.html>. Accessed 19 March 2016.
- Haig, M. 2003. Brand failures: The truth about the 100 biggest branding mistakes of all time. London: Kogan Page.
- Haluk Köksal, M. & Özgül, E. 2007. The relationship between marketing strategies and performance in an economic crisis. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 25(4):326-342. doi:10.1108/02634500710754574
- Hamill, J. 2014. Architect of Apple's total-silence public relations policy leaves. *The Register*. London: Situation Publishing. Available: http://www.theregister.co.uk/2014/05/08/worlds_best_paid_mute_leaves_apple_after_18_years. Accessed 17 December 2015.
- Henderson, B. 1970. The product portfolio. Boston: The Boston Consulting Group. Available: https://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/classics/strategy_the_product_portfolio. Accessed 16 December 2015.
- Hendrix, J.A. & Hayes, D.C. 2010. Public relations cases. Eighth edition. Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Hesse-Biber, S.N. 2010. Mixed methods research: Merging theory with practice. New York: Guilford Press.
- Holmström, P. 2014. Norsk lax med blåvita vingar. *YLE Nyheter*. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2014/01/06/norsk-lax-med-blavita-vingar>. Accessed 19 March 2016.
- Huddleston, E. 2016. How data can help earned media coverage shine. *Ragan's PR Daily*. Chicago, IL: Ragan Communications. Available: <http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/a0f92f6a-2083-4393-be25-7b0544a9a13c.aspx>. Accessed 22 March 2016.
- ING. 2014. 2014 study impact of social media on news: More crowd-checking, less fact-checking. Amsterdam: ING Group. Available: <http://www.ing.com/Newsroom/All-news/NW/2014-Study-impact-of-Social-Media-on-News-more-crowdchecking-less-factchecking.htm>. Accessed 5 January 2016.
- Ingves, B. 2015. Exportregion mot alla odds. *Forum*. Helsinki: Forum för ekonomi och teknik. Available: <http://www.forummag.fi/exportregion-mot-alla-odds>. Accessed 1 January 2016.
- Jackson, T. & Shaw, D. 2009. Mastering fashion marketing. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Jeffrey, A., Jeffries-Fox, B. & Rawlins, B. 2010. A new paradigm for media analysis: Weighted media cost. Gainesville, FL: Institute for Public Relations. Available: <http://www.instituteforpr.org/weighted-media-cost>. Accessed 2 January, 2016.
- Jin-Kuusirinne, T. 2014. Communication optimisation for education export: Export readiness examination from an integrated marketing communication perspective of the University of Tampere. Master's Degree. University of Tampere. School of Communication, Media and Theatre.
- Kalb, I. 2014. Finland needs to start advertising how great it is. Business Insider. New York: Business Insider. Available: <http://www.businessinsider.com/heres-how-finlands-marketing-problem-has-turned-into-an-economic-problem-2014-10?IR=T>. Accessed 1 January 2016.
- Katz, R. 1998. Japan, the system that soured: the rise and fall of the Japanese economic miracle. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- Keegan, W.J. & Green, M.C. 2015. Global marketing. Eighth global edition. London: Pearson Education.
- Keller, G. 2014. Statistics for management and economics. Tenth edition. Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.
- Kendall, N. 2015. What is a 21st century brand? London: Kogan Page.
- Kim, Hyo Sook. 2003. Exploring global public relations in a Korean multinational organization in the context of Confucian culture. *Asian Journal of Communication* 13(2):65-95. doi:10.1080/01292980309364839
- Kim, Y. 2000. Measuring the bottom-line impact of corporate public relations. *Journalism & Mass Communication quarterly* 77(2):273-291. doi:10.1177/107769900007700204
- Klara, R. 2015. In 24 hours, Pirelli's calendar showed how quickly a brand can modernize its image. *Adweek*. New York: Mediabistro Holdings/Prometheus Global Media. Available: <http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/24-hours-pirellis-calendar-showed-how-quickly-brand-can-modernize-its-image-168381>. Accessed 18 December 2015.
- Koellinger, P. 2008. Why are some entrepreneurs more innovative than others. *Small Business Economics* 31(1):21-37. doi:10.1007/s11187-008-9107-0
- Koistinen, A. 2015. Maakuntien välillä huimat erot talouskasvussa – Pohjanmaa porskutti, Kymenlaakso kynti. YLE Uutiset. Helsinki: YLE. Available: http://yle.fi/uutiset/maakuntien_valilla_huimat_erot_talouskasvussa__pohjanmaa_porskutti_kymenlaakso_kynti/7863185. Accessed 1 January 2016.
- Kotabe, M. & Jiang, C.X. 2011. Contemporary research trends in international marketing. (eds.) *The future of global business: A reader*. New York: Routledge.

- Kotler, P. 2003a. *Marketing Insights from A to Z: 80 concepts every manager needs to know*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Kotler, P. 2003b. *Marketing management*. Eleventh edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. 2010. *Principles of marketing*. Thirteenth global edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Kotler, P., Armstrong, G., Wong, V. & Saunders, J. 2008. *Principles of marketing*. Fifth European edition. London: Prentice Hall.
- Kotler, P., Keller, K., Brady, M., Goodman, M. & Hansen, T. 2009. *Marketing management*. First European edition. London: Pearson Education.
- Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L. 2012. *A framework for marketing management*. Fifth international edition. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L. 2016. *Marketing management*. Fifteenth global edition. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Kotler, P. & Mindak, W. 1978. Marketing and public relations. *The Journal of Marketing* 42(4):13-20. doi:10.2307/1250080
- Kotler, P. 2002. *Marketing Asian places: Attracting investment, industry, and tourism to cities, states, and nations*. Singapore: Wiley & Sons (Asia).
- Kotler, P. 2004. *Ten deadly marketing sins: Signs and solutions*. Hoboken: Wiley.
- Kotler, P., Armstrong, G., Saunders, J.A. & Wong, V. 1999. *Principles of marketing*. Second European edition. London: Prentice Hall Europe.
- Kotler, P. & Kotler, M. 2013. *Market your way to growth: 8 ways to win*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Kovac, M., Chong, M., Umbeck, T. & Ledingham, D. 2015. *Bought not sold: Marketing and selling to digitally empowered business customers*. Boston, MA: Bain & Company.
- KWH Group. undated. *Divisions of KWH Group*. Vaasa: KWH Group. Available: <http://www.kwhgroup.com/home/divisions>. Accessed 31 December 2015.
- Lages, L.F. & Montgomery, D.B. 2004. Export performance as an antecedent of export commitment and marketing strategy adaptation: Evidence from small and medium-sized exporters. *European Journal of Marketing* 38(9/10):1186-1214. doi:10.1108/03090560410548933
- Lamme, M.O. & Russell, K.M. 2010. Removing the spin: Toward a new theory of public relations history. *Journalism and Communication Monographs* 11(4):280-362. doi:10.1177/152263791001100402

- Lascu, D.-N. 2002. *International marketing: Managing worldwide operations in a changing international environment*. Cincinnati, OH: Atomic Dog Publishing.
- Leskinen, K. 2012. Oulu nousee nokian kuopasta. YLE Uutiset. Helsinki: YLE. Available: http://yle.fi/uutiset/oulu_nousee_nokian_kuopasta/6308398. Accessed 25 December 2015.
- Lewis, J., Williams, A. & Franklin, B. 2008. A Compromised Fourth Estate? UK news journalism, public relations and news sources. *Journalism Studies* 9(1):1-20. doi:10.1080/14616700701767974
- Lewis, J.M.W., Williams, A.J., Franklin, R.A., Thomas, J. & Mosdell, N.A. 2008. The quality and independence of British journalism. MediaWise. Available: [http://orca.cf.ac.uk/18439/1/Quality & Independence of British Journalism.pdf](http://orca.cf.ac.uk/18439/1/Quality%20&%20Independence%20of%20British%20Journalism.pdf). Accessed 2 January 2016.
- Likely, F. & Watson, T. 2013. Measuring the edifice. In Sriramesh, K., Zerfass, A. & Kim, J.-N. (eds.) *Public relations and communication management: Current trends and emerging topics*. London: Routledge, 143-162.
- Linderborg, L. 2015. Hela världen vill dricka finländsk björksav. YLE Nyheter. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2015/06/20/hela-varlden-vill-dricka-finlandsk-bjorksav>. Accessed 19 March 2016.
- Lindholm, M. 2012. Finska blöjor säljer utomlands. YLE Nyheter. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2012/08/22/finska-blojor-saljer-utomlands>. Accessed 19 March 2016.
- LUT. 2013. Finnish companies make poor use of their knowledge capital. Lappeenranta: Lappeenranta University of Technology. Available: http://www.lut.fi/web/en/news/-/asset_publisher/lGh4SAywhcPu/content/finnish-companies-make-poor-use-of-their-knowledge-capital. Accessed 22 December 2015.
- Lämsä, T. 2010. Leadership styles and decision-making in Finnish and Swedish organizations. *Review of International Comparative Management* 11(8):139-149.
- Lönnbäck, J. & Helsing, J. 2011. *Exportstrategier bland österbottniska företag*. Bachelor's Thesis. Vaasan ammattikorkeakoulu.
- M&M. 2015. Kolme neljäsosaa viestintäjohtajista kuuluu organisaationsa johtoryhmään - "Viestinnän arvo ymmärretään Suomessakin yhä paremmin". *Markkinointi & Mainonta*. Helsinki: Talentum. Available: <http://www.marmai.fi/uutiset/kolme-neljasosaa-viestintajohtajista-kuuluu-organisaationsa-johtoryhmaan-viestinnan-arvo-ymmarretaan-suomessakin-yha-paremmiin-6294729>. Accessed 19 March 2016.
- Macnamara, J. 2005. *Advertising 'value'*. Sydney: CARMA International. Available: <http://www.pria.com.au/sitebuilder/resources/knowledge/files/1870/advertisingvalue.pdf>. Accessed 20 December 2015.

- Macnamara, J. 2014. Emerging international standards for measurement and evaluation of public relations: A critical analysis. *Public Relations Inquiry* 3(1):7-29. doi:10.1177/2046147X14521199
- Malhotra, N.K. 2015. *Essentials of marketing research*. Global Edition. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Malhotra, N.K. & Birks, D.F. 2006. *Marketing research: An applied approach*. Second European edition. Harlow: Prentice Hall/Pearson Education.
- Mann, P.S. 2013. *Introductory statistics*. Eighth edition. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Mikáčová, L. & Gavlaková, P. 2014. The role of public relations in branding. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 110:832-840. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.12.928
- Miller, R. 2015. AP's 'robot journalists' are writing their own stories now. *The Verge*. Washington, DC: Vox Media. Available: <http://www.theverge.com/2015/1/29/7939067/ap-journalism-automation-robots-financial-reporting>. Accessed 6 January 2016.
- Millward Brown. 2007. *How can PR affect my brand?* Knowledge Point. Royal Leamington Spa: Millward Brown.
- Mohr, J. & Nevin, J.R. 1990. Communication strategies in marketing channels: A theoretical perspective. *The Journal of Marketing* 54(4):36-51. doi:10.2307/1251758
- Morgan, C. 2016. *Above the noise: Creating trust, value & reputation online using basic digital PR*. Melbourne, FL: Motivational Press.
- Morley, M. 2009. How to manage your global reputation the public relations agency. (ed.) *The global public relations handbook*. New York: Routledge.
- Mård, A. 2015. Finländsk tro på ryska marknaden. *YLE Nyheter*. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2015/10/22/finlandsk-tro-pa-ryska-marknaden>. Accessed 18 March 2016.
- NASDAQ OMX Helsinki. 2013. *Rules of the exchange*. Helsinki: NASDAQ OMX Helsinki. Available: http://www.nasdaqomx.com/digitalAssets/87/87944_rules-of-the-exchange_02102013.pdf. Accessed 1 January 2016.
- NBSA. 2013. *2013 small business exporting survey*. Washington: National Small Business Association. Available: <http://www.nsba.biz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Exporting-Survey-2013.pdf>. Accessed 18 December 2015.

New York Stock Exchange. 2015. Disclosure and reporting material information. Listed Company Manual. New York: Intercontinental Exchange. Available: http://nysemanual.nyse.com/LCMTTools/bookmark.asp?id=sx-ruling-nyse-policymanual_202.06&manual=/lcm/sections/lcm-sections. Accessed 1 January 2016.

Niemi, T. 2013. Utilizing social media in marketing and in strengthening the corporate image. Bachelor's thesis. Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulu.

NUJ. 2011. NUJ code of conduct. London: National Union of Journalists. Available: <https://www.nuj.org.uk/about/nuj-code>. Accessed 1 January 2016.

Nummela, N., Saarenketo, S. & Loane, S. 2014. The dynamics of failure in international new ventures: A case study of Finnish and Irish software companies. *International Small Business Journal* 31(1):51-69. doi:10.1177/0266242614539363

Obermaier, M., Koch, T. & Riesmeyer, C. 2015. Deep impact? How journalists perceive the influence of public relations on their news coverage and which variables determine this impact. *Communication Research (OnlineFirst)*:1-23. doi:10.1177/0093650215617505

OECD. 2013. Finland fit for the future. Paris: OECD. Available: http://www.oecd.org/finland/Finland-Fit_for_the_Future.pdf. Accessed 22 March 2016.

OED Online. 2015a. Poacher, n1b. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Accessed 16 December 2015.

OED Online. 2015b. Public relations, n. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Accessed 15 December 2015.

Ogilvy PR. 2015. Survey finds earned media more essential than ever in today's modern communications model. PR Newswire. Available: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/survey-finds-earned-media-more-essential-than-ever-in-todays-modern-communications-model-300115249.html>. Accessed 22 March 2016.

Omar, O. 2009. International marketing. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Onkvisit, S. & Shaw, J.J. 2004. International marketing: Analysis and strategy. Fourth edition. London: Routledge.

Paakkanen, M. 2012. Best practices of public export promotion in the Finnish music industry: case MOI! Sounds from Suomi. Master's thesis. Aalto University School of Economics. Department of Management and International Business.

Pantzar, M. 2013. Professorin yllätysväite: Vientiongelmat johtuvat huonosta yritysjohdosta. YLE Uutiset. Helsinki: YLE. Available: http://yle.fi/uutiset/professorin_yllatysvaite_vientiongelmat_johtuvat_huonosta_yritysjohdosta/6526885. Accessed 9 March 2016.

- Parker Wayne & Kent. 2010. Press release newswires - a circulation without a readership. London: Parker, Wayne & Kent. Available: http://pwkpr.com/downloads/PR_newswires_a_circulation_without_a_readership.pdf. Accessed December 21, 2015.
- Parry, B. 2008. Geographical indications: Not all 'champagne and roses'. In Bently, L., Davis, J. & Ginsburg, J.C. (eds.) Trade marks and brands: An interdisciplinary critique. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Parry, R. & Foster, E. 2015. Horror show at top high school as dead cats are made to 'dance' to Meow Mix theme song by anatomy students. Mail Online. London: Associated Newspapers. Available: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3078482/Horror-high-school-dead-cats-dance-Meow-Mix-theme-song-anatomy-students.html>. Accessed 19 December 2015.
- Parviainen, K. 2011. Institutional strategy and corporate social responsibility of the new entrant in the grocery retail market: Case Lidl Finland. Master's Thesis. Aalto University. School of Economics.
- Pavel, C. 2014. Shock advertising: Boundary between strategy and insanity. *Calitatea* 15(S2):232.
- Peitersen, A. 2015. Finland, the land of a thousand unknown brands? Helsinki: REPUTATION Helsinki/Publicis Worldwide. Available: <http://reputation.fi/finland-the-land-of-a-thousand-unknown-brands>. Accessed 31 December 2015.
- Perlmutter, H.V. 1969. The tortuous evolution of the multinational corporation. *Columbia Journal of World Business* 4(1):9-18.
- Philip, L. 2013. Innovation is key to manufacturing revival: Baba Kalyani, chairman Bharat Forge Group. *The Economic Times*. 7 December 2013.
- Pickton, D. & Broderick, A. 2005. Integrated marketing communications. Second edition. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Ping, Q., Ishaq, M. & Li, C. 2015. Product harm crisis, attribution of blame and decision making: An insight from the past. *Journal of Applied Environmental and Biological Sciences* 5(5):35-44.
- Plastnet. 2006. Ikea lägger vattenlåsproduktion i Finland. Lidingö: Mentor Communications. Available: <http://www.plastnet.se/alla/plastnet-se/ikea-lagger-vattenlasproduktion-i-finland>. Accessed 31 December 2015.
- Porter, M.E. 1990. The competitive advantage of nations. *Harvard Business Review* 68(2):73-93.
- Powell, N. 2011. How Finland's economy became hooked on Nokia. *The Globe and Mail*. 26 October 2011.
- Proctor, T. 2000. Strategic marketing. London: Routledge.

- PRSA. undated. About public relations. New York: Public Relations Society of America. Available: <https://www.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/PublicRelationsDefined>. Accessed 15 December 2015.
- Pussy. 2002. How the pussy learned to sing. Classic Themes. The Media Management Group. Available: <http://www.classicthemes.com/50sTVThemes/singingPussy.html>. Accessed 20 December 2015.
- Rao, C.P., Erramilli, M.K. & Ganesh, G.K. 1990. Impact of domestic recession on export marketing behaviour. *International Marketing Review* 7(2):54-65. doi:10.1108/02651339010005168
- RGI. 2010. Rolling stock. *Railway Gazette International* 166(7):19.
- Ries, A. & Ries, L. 2002. *The 22 immutable laws of branding*. New York: HarperBusiness.
- Rothaermel, F.T. 2014. *Strategic management*. Second edition. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Saario, K. 2015. Suomen suurimmissa yrityksissä viestintäjohtaja kuuluu johtoryhmään harvemmin - verrattain usein miehiä. *Markkinointi & Mainonta*. Helsinki: Talentum. Available: <http://www.marmai.fi/uutiset/suomen-suurimmissa-yrityksissa-viestintajohtaja-kuuluu-johtoryhmaan-harvemmin-verrattain-usein-miehia-6271177>. Accessed 19 March 2016.
- Sallot, L.M. & Johnson, E.A. 2006. Investigating relationships between journalists and public relations practitioners: Working together to set, frame and build the public agenda, 1991–2004. *Public Relations Review* 32(2):151-159. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2006.02.008
- Salo, J. 2015. Europe's growth engine as a stepping stone to succeed globally. Helsinki: ArcticStartup. Available: <http://arcticstartup.com/article/europes-growth-engine-as-a-stepping-stone-to-succeed-globally>. Accessed 21 December 2015.
- Schudson, M. 1989. The sociology of news production. *Media, Culture and Society* 11(3):263-282. doi:10.1177/016344389011003002
- Shamsuddoha, A.K. 2005. Antecedents of firm export performance: The role of export promotion programs. Doctoral Thesis. Queensland University of Technology. School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations, Faculty of Business. Doctor of Philosophy.
- Shearman, S. 2014. Greentarget: Seven in 10 journalists spend less than a minute reading press releases. *PR Week*. London: Haymarket Media Group. Available: <http://www.prweek.com/article/1303889/greentarget-seven-10-journalists-spend-less-minute-reading-press-releases>. Accessed 6 January 2016.

Sherwin, A. 2015. Pirelli Calendar 2016: Supermodels replaced by 'women of achievement' in Annie Leibovitz shake-up. *The Independent*. 30 November 2015.

Sheth, J.N. & Parvatiyar, A. 2000. *Handbook of relationship marketing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Simmons, S. 1991. *How to be the life of the podium*. New York: Amacom.

Sipilä, J. 2015. Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's speech at the meeting of Finnish Heads of Mission 24 August 2015. Helsinki: Valtioneuvosto. Available: http://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset_publisher/paaministeri-juha-sipilan-puhe-suurlahettilaspaivilla-24-8-2015?_101_INSTANCE_3qmUeJglxZEK_groupId=10616. Accessed 21 December 2015.

Skippari, M., Geppert, M., Williams, K. & Rusanen, O. 2014. The dynamic interaction between internal and external pressures for MNCs: HR management practices: the case of Lidl Finland. *Threats and Possibilities Facing Nordic Working Life: The 7th Nordic Working Life Conference*, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, June 11-13, 2014. *Book of Abstracts and Programme*.

Smith, P.R. & Zook, Z. 2011. *Marketing communications: Integrating offline and online with social media*. Fifth edition. Philadelphia, PA: Kogan Page.

Solomon, M.R., Marshall, G.W. & Stuart, E.W. 2011. *Marketing: Real people, real choices*. Seventh edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Spiller, L. & Tuten, T. 2015. Integrating metrics across the marketing curriculum. *Journal of Marketing Education* 37(2):114-126. doi:10.1177/0273475315587103

SPJ. 2014. SPJ code of ethics. Indianapolis, IN: Society of Professional Journalists. Available: <http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>. Accessed 1 January 2016.

Sriramesh, K. & Verčič, D. 2012. *Culture and public relations: Links and implications*. New York: Routledge.

Stone, N. 1995. *The management and practice of public relations*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

STT Viestintäpalvelut. 2016. Viestinnän mittaamisen tila suomalaisissa organisaatioissa. Helsinki: STT Viestintäpalvelut/ProCom. Available: http://procom.fi/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Viestinnän-mittaaminen_tutkimusraportti.pdf. Accessed 22 March 2016.

Sund, B. 2015. PreveX får megaorder. *Jakobstad: Österbottens Tidning*. Available: <http://online.osterbottenstidning.fi/Artikel/Visa/56547>. Accessed 31 December 2015.

- Suni, J. 2015. Finska blåbär åt världen! YLE X3M. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2015/08/25/finska-blabar-varlden>. Accessed 18 March 2016.
- Sutherland, M. & Sylvester, A.K. 2008. Advertising and the mind of the consumer. Third revised edition. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- Taloussanomat. 2015. GE Healthcarelta iso investointi Suomeen. Taloussanomat. Helsinki: Sanoma Media Finland. Accessed 25 December 2015.
- Tauriainen, A. 2012. Corporate online presence: A study of eight Finnish exporting companies' corporate websites. Master's Thesis. University of Jyväskylä. Department of Languages.
- Team Finland. undated. Team Finland in brief. Helsinki: Prime Minister's Office (Valtioneuvoston kanslia). Available: <https://www.finpro.fi/web/eng/about-export-finland;jsessionid=BF2C92ABF082D6045F3F757A9D976B5D.webapp1>. Accessed 1 January 2016.
- Tekes. 2014. Innovative cities. Helsinki: Tekes. Available: https://www.tekes.fi/globalassets/julkaisut/inka_esite_engl.pdf. Accessed 25 December 2015.
- The New York Times. 2004. Ethical journalism: A handbook of values and practices for the news and editorial departments. New York: The New York Times. Available: http://www.nytc.com/wp-content/uploads/NYT_Ethical_Journalism_0904-1.pdf. Accessed 1 January 2016.
- Tilastokeskus. 2007. The growing years of Finland's industrial production. Helsinki: Tilastokeskus. Available: http://www.stat.fi/tup/suomi90/toukokuu_en.html. Accessed 21 December 2015.
- Tilastokeskus. 2015a. Foreign trade 2014. Helsinki: Tilastokeskus. Available: http://tilastokeskus.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk_kotimaankauppa_en.html#tradebalance. Accessed 21 December 2015.
- Tilastokeskus. 2015b. Suomen tilastollinen vuosikirja 2015. Helsinki: Tilastokeskus.
- Tilastokeskus. 2015c. Turnover of foreign affiliates in Finland grew by 18 per cent in year 2014. Helsinki: Tilastokeskus. Available: http://www.stat.fi/til/ulkoy/2014/ulkoy_2014_2015-12-18_tie_001_en.html?ad=notify. Accessed 31 December 2015.
- Tilastokeskus. 2015d. General government EDP debt decreased by EUR 2.5 billion in the third quarter of 2015. Helsinki: Tilastokeskus. Available: http://www.stat.fi/til/jyev/2015/03/jyev_2015_03_2015-12-21_tie_001_en.html. Accessed 22 December 2015.

Toivonen, J. 2015. Kohtalo, elämä ja kuolema – tervetuloa Otanmäen kaivoskylän arkeen. Helsingin Sanomat. Helsinki: Helsingin Sanomat. Available: <http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/a1437189153311>. Accessed 21 March 2016.

Torossian, R. 2011. For immediate release: Shape minds, build brands, and deliver results with game-changing public relations. Dallas: BenBella Books.

Turvill, W. 2015. Journalism survey 2015: B2B journalists flag Up concerns over commercial influence on editorial. Press Gazette. London: Progressive Media International. Available: <http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/journalism-survey-2015-b2b-journalists-flag-concerns-about-commercial-pressure-influencing-coverage>. Accessed 5 January 2016.

Ulfvens, H. 2014. Inga godstågsvagnar från Kajanaland på grund av Ukrainakrisen. YLE Nyheter. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2014/07/18/inga-godstagsvagnar-fran-kajanaland-pa-grund-av-ukrainakrisen>. Accessed 19 March 2016.

United Nations Statistics Division. 2015. Finnish exports of goods and services: Annual average rate of growth [custom query]. New York: United Nations. Available: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/snaama/Introduction.asp>. Accessed 22 December 2015.

Usunier, J.-C. & Lee, J.A. 2005. Marketing across cultures. Fourth edition. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.

Vikkula, K. 2014. SME's to accelerate exports. Helsinki: Finnish Trade Organisation FINTRA. Available: <http://www.fintra.fi/en/blog/91-sme-s-to-accelerate-exports-154945-27012015>. Accessed 18 December 2015.

Von Kraemer, M. 2008. Staten stöder export av popmusik. YLE X3M. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2008/04/11/staten-stoder-export-av-popmusik>. Accessed 18 March 2016.

Vuorela, P. 2015. The impacts of Russia's instability on Finnish exports to Russia. Bachelor's Thesis. Saimaan ammattikorkeakoulu. International Business.

Wallendahl, M. 2014. Småskalig ölbusiness jäser. YLE Nyheter. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2014/02/21/smaskalig-olbusiness-jaser>. Accessed 19 March 2016.

Wessman, R. 2015. Managing the Nokia shock. Magma Pamflett. Helsinki: Tankesmedjan Magma. Available: <http://magma.fi/uploads/media/study/0001/01/c65b60e92de8819211e03eb115988cb3ad225484.pdf>. Accessed 1 January 2016.

Williams, J.E.M. 2003. Export information use in small and medium-sized industrial companies: An application of Diamantopoulos' and Souchon's scale. International Marketing Review 20(1):44-66. doi:10.1108/02651330310462266

- Willnat, L. & Weaver, D.H. 2014. American journalist in the digital age: Key findings. Bloomington, IN: School of Journalism, Indiana University. Available: <http://news.indiana.edu/releases/iu/2014/05/2013-american-journalist-key-findings.pdf>. Accessed 6 January 2016.
- World Atlas. 2015. Exports by country- 20 largest exporting countries. St. Laurent: World Atlas. Available: <http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/exports-by-country-20-largest-exporting-countries.html>. Accessed 17 December 2015.
- World Bank. 2015a. Comparing Finland's export performance by GDP contribution to selected near-neighbours 1990-2013 [custom data query]. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/snaama/Introduction.asp>. Accessed 23 December 2015.
- World Bank. 2015b. Comparing Finland's export performance to selected near-neighbours, 1996-2014 [custom data query]. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available: <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/global-economic-monitor>. Accessed 21 December 2015.
- World Bank. 2015c. Exports of goods and services (% of GDP) in Finland [custom data query]. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.EXP.GNFS.ZS/countries/FI?display=graph>. Accessed 21 December 2015.
- Worthington, A. 2008. A history of music torture in the "war on terror". Available: <http://www.andyworthington.co.uk/2008/12/15/a-history-of-music-torture-in-the-war-on-terror/#sthash.pKRuRE6k.dpuf>. Accessed 19 December 2015.
- Wynne, R. 2014. What journalists really think of your press release. Forbes. Jersey City, NJ: Forbes Media. Available: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/robertwynne/2014/02/24/what-journalists-really-think-of-your-press-release>. Accessed 6 January 2016.
- YLE. 2013a. Vaasa gains state funds to boost energy cluster. YLE News. Helsinki: YLE. Available: http://yle.fi/uutiset/vaasa_gains_state_funds_to_boost_energy_cluster/6722235. Accessed 25 December 2016.
- YLE. 2013b. Finlandsbilden marknadsförs hårdare än någonsin. YLE Nyheter. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2013/03/31/finlandsbilden-marknadsfors-hardare-nagonsin>. Accessed 19 March 2016.
- YLE. 2014. Russian sanctions could adversely affect Finnish economy. YLE News. Helsinki: YLE. Available: http://yle.fi/uutiset/russian_sanctions_could_adversely_affect_finnish_economy/7397422. Accessed 19 December 2015.

YLE. 2015a. Stockmann offloads Seppälä chain in management buyout. YLE News. Helsinki: YLE. Available: http://yle.fi/uutiset/stockmann_offloads_seppala_chain_in_management_buyout/7774880. Accessed 19 March 2016.

YLE. 2015b. Nya produkter behövs i skogsindustrin. YLE Nyheter. Helsinki: YLE. Available: <http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2015/07/29/nya-produkter-behovs-i-skogsindustrin>. Accessed 18 March 2016.

YLE. 2015c. Aktia forecast: Feeble export growth next year. YLE News. Helsinki: YLE. Available: http://yle.fi/uutiset/aktia_forecast_feeble_export_growth_next_year/8476826. Accessed 21 December 2015.

YLE. 2015d. Nordea forecasts continued slump for Finnish economy. YLE News. Helsinki: YLE. Available: http://yle.fi/uutiset/nordea_forecasts_continued_slump_for_finnish_economy/8517039. Accessed 21 December 2015.

YLE. 2016. Finland's exports slump – except to China. YLE News. Helsinki: YLE. Available: http://yle.fi/uutiset/finlands_exports_slump__except_to_china/8731098. Accessed 9 March 2016.

YouTube. 2007. Meow Mix song. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTunhRVyREU>. Accessed 18 December 2015.

YouTube. 2015a. Meow mix commercial history (1974-present). Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AWCk7HIG4o>. Accessed 18 December 2015.

YouTube. 2015b. Meow Mix records. Available: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgM_HOgnO43hwbqypLa2NQzDuxr2PtXvM. Accessed 18 December 2015.

Yrittäjät. undated. The small and medium-sized enterprises. Helsinki: The Federation of Finnish Enterprises. Available: http://www.yrittajat.fi/en-GB/federation_of_finnish_enterprises/entrepreneurship_in_finland. Accessed 18 December 2015.

Zerfass, A., Verčič, D., Verhoeven, P., Moreno, A. & Tench, R. 2012. European Communication Monitor 2012: Challenges and competencies for strategic communication: Results of an empirical survey in 42 countries. Brussels: European Association for Communications Directors/European Public Relations Education and Research Association. Available: <http://dare.uva.nl/record/1/379193>. Accessed 22 March 2016.

Zhu, P. 2015. Impact of business cultural values on web homepage design that may hinder international business. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* 46(1):105-124. doi:10.1177/0047281615600644

Zhu, Y., Nel, P. & Bhat, R. 2006. A cross cultural study of communication strategies for building business relationships. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 6(3):319-341. doi:10.1177/1470595806070638

Zoltners, A.A., Sinha, P.K. & Lorimer, S.E. 2016. How more accessible information is forcing B2B sales to adapt. *Harvard Business Review*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing. Available: <https://hbr.org/2016/01/how-more-accessible-information-is-forcing-b2b-sales-to-adapt>. Accessed 27 January 2016.

The body of the email featured the following text (the salutation and valediction has been removed):

The purpose of this letter is to seek your organisation's cooperation with my final thesis work, being undertaken as part of the Bachelor of Business Administration, Business Management programme at Centria University of Applied Sciences in Jakobstad.

Details are enclosed on the attached letter.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Attached to the email was the referenced (personalised) letter (two pages) and a summary of the project and its plan (two pages) as additional information.

A specimen is presented within this appendix.

Stallgrundsv. 9
68570 Larsmo

27.10.2015

XX RECIPIENT NAME
XX RECIPIENT EMAIL ADDRESS

Dear XXX RECIPIENT NAME

REQUEST FOR CO-OPERATION

The purpose of this letter is to seek your organisation's cooperation with my final thesis work, being undertaken as part of the Bachelor of Business Administration, Business Management programme at Centria University of Applied Sciences in Jakobstad.

External communication is an important part of a company's business activities and can directly contribute towards public (customer) awareness and opportunities for sales, amongst many other things.

It is my intention to investigate and examine the attitudes of companies in western Finland¹ towards external communications and public relations, with a specific focus on their use of these tools as an aid for export sales.

Respondents will be invited to participate in a comprehensive anonymous/confidential online survey², completed by a senior executive, to honestly self-determine their current actions, beliefs and expected future plans over a range of communications-based activities. The analysis will be backed up by some in-person interviews (hopefully "on the record" but consideration will be given to those who require anonymity) as well as routine industry research and theoretical/literature analysis.

It is expected that this research and subsequent findings will also form an element of my planned Master of Business Administration thesis in 2017-2018.

¹ The actual data set has yet to be defined and may vary slightly, although the intention is to focus on the top 500 companies ranked by turnover in western Finland (the former Länsi-Suomen lääni).

² An external survey platform will be used for survey responses to ensure anonymity.

Your organisation's endorsement of my research project, possibly backed by internal publicity through your own networks, may improve response rates and generally assist the project. Your organisation may also have some input towards the scoping of questions as well as have valuable insights towards the analysed data.

Please find attached additional information that I hope may answer any questions you may have. Additional information about the undersigned can be found at <http://DarrenIngram.com> and <http://Linkedin.com/in/DarrenPIngram>.

Should you have any specific questions from Centria University of Applied Sciences concerning this project, you are invited to contact my supervisor and degree programme head - Sara Ahman (Sara.Ahman@Centria.fi or 040 7299973).

I hope that you will be able to participate and support this research project, since I believe that this has great scope and relevance for our region and country as a whole.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darren Ingram". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

D P Ingram

Additional Information concerning Darren Ingram / Centria UAS research project 2015-2016

Description:	An extensive survey of major companies in western Finland, examining their attitudes towards external communications and public relations that focuses/impacts on their export activities. The research shall examine many factors surrounding this topic, building up on findings from the survey.
Sample size:	<p>Dependent on data availability, the top 500 companies (by turnover) in western Finland will be invited to participate in a confidential, online survey, conducted through a third-party survey platform. A senior director-level executive, working ideally within marketing or communications, or failing that the managing director shall be contacted by email/the survey platform.</p> <p>Initial data shall be purchased from Statistics Finland and expanded through desk research to provide additional data points for subsequent analysis.</p>
Data collection/usage:	<p>Standard statistical data shall be collected, along with specific questions ascertaining the respondent's attitude to certain statements in the surveyed field. The respondent shall be invited to assess broadly their company's activities as well as project future operational plans.</p> <p>A separate section will invite (or redirect to another platform) the respondent to consider a series of on-the-record comments that <u>may be published</u> dependent on the content, or it shall be used as a primer to request a personal meeting to gather both on-the-record/attributed and unattributed material and respond to the interim findings of the report.</p> <p>At all times the respondent will be informed proactively of the intended usage and, in the case of seeking to identify them on-the-record, they will be asked to sign a release.</p>
Cooperation partners:	It is envisaged that all regional development organisations in western Finland will be invited to jointly cooperate in this research programme. A select group of chambers of commerce may also be invited.
Cost for cooperation:	<p>There is no cost for the cooperation partners, save for any internal staff time in helping promote the research to their members/network, giving feedback or helping scope any research they may like to see possibly included.</p> <p>Should any partner wish to voluntarily contribute a token sum towards the costs of undertaking the research, analysis and other activities, it will be gratefully accepted but is not a condition or expected.</p> <p>Full disclosure of assistance will be made in the final report. Should any funding be provided it will be referred to according to academic norms to remove any conflict of interest concerns.</p>
Cooperative events:	Once the research is completed and the thesis accepted by Centria University of Applied Sciences, consideration is being given to arrange a separate briefing of the key findings, recommendations and other guidance, without any admission fees, to the cooperation partners and their own members. The event would be held in Jakobstad.

Should demand exist, consideration could be given to holding a briefing closer to the cooperation partner's location, perhaps as part of a theme day for their other members. In such a circumstance, consideration to paying travel expenses (and any venue hire costs should they fall to the researcher) would be appreciated.

Timetable:

November 2015 – cooperation partners confirmed, outline of survey questionnaire designed, input from cooperation partners invited to see if they have any specific questions concerning the entire region and questionnaire transferred to survey platform.

December 2015 – survey source data purchased from Statistics Finland, once received individual contacts identified and other statistics produced.

January 2016 – target is to release questionnaire in mid-January with a request to complete within a week or two, reminder after two weeks/update.

February 2016 – data analysis, preparation of follow-up interview requests and other material.

March-April 2016 – on-going analysis, interview, drafting.

May 2016 – target for draft completion/review/Centria processing.

Summer 2016 – liaison with Centria, liaison with cooperation partners to discuss presentation event(s) to commence after the holiday period.

Autumn 2016 – process to determine future roadmap for Master-level research to commence, building on research findings and discussions to date with various parties.

(Editorial note: this questionnaire is an offline version of that hosted on Webropol and includes all response-sensitive branches which may appear as duplicated content herein. Minor editing changes have been made on the grounds of style).

Business Attitudes Towards Public Relations (PR) as an Export Tool

PLEASE NOTE! This is a "control question".

If you answer "no" to this question, there will be many questions that you should skip and not answer.

It would be appreciated if you could answer other questions that are not specifically related to export, such as social media usage and attitudes to general public relations, as this will still give valuable information as part of this research.

Does your company export products or services? *

Yes

No

Your company and exporting.

What percentage of your company's export turnover is for physical product?

What percentage of your company's turnover comes from export? *

Note: turnover is also known as annual sales (liikevaihto).

What is your company's most important (by value) export country?

What is your company's second most important (by value) export country?

What is your company's third most important (by value) export country?

What geographic region represents the largest (by value) share of your export business?

Of your company's three largest (by value) export countries, what percentage of turnover does export to these countries represent?

Example: You may export €1m in total, yet three countries may account for €750,000 of exports, so the answer would be 75%.

Considering the following regions of the world, please estimate the split of your company's export (as a percentage of all exports).

European Union (EU28) _____

Rest of Europe _____

Asia _____

Africa _____

North and Middle America _____

South America _____

Oceania _____

Your Company's internal processes.

Do you have a dedicated in-house public relations (PR) person or department?

Yes

No

Is public relations given its own dedicated senior management executive with responsibility/visibility up to board level?

Note: This task may be shared with other related duties, such as a sales and marketing director with specific responsibility for guiding public relations activities that are delegated to other colleagues.

Yes

No

As public relations activities are not supervised by a specific board-level director, what is the job title of the most senior executive with responsibility for public relations activities?

Note: This position might be a secretary, country manager or sales assistant who has to manage public relations activities as one of many job functions.

Concerning your public relations activities conducted by employees, do you have dedicated resources for handling domestic and international countries?

Yes (different people handle different countries/regions)

No (the same team work on all countries/regions)

Does your company use an external public relations agency (or several agencies) to assist with public relations activities?

Yes

No

Why do you not use an external public relations agency?

Please explain your key reasons for this decision.

Approximately what percentage of the public relations function does an agency (or agencies) take responsibility for?

Please do not calculate any internal management overhead for maintaining the relationship. If you entirely outsource all public relations functions the answer would be 100%. If you use an agency on an ad hoc basis, please try and calculate an approximate value based on 2014 activity (time saved).

Do you consider that a public relations agency adds value to the process rather than just taking over tasks from internal resources?

Yes

No

Do you have a public relations agency to handle all of your affairs globally?

Yes

No

Do you use a Finnish public relations agency to act as coordinator with your foreign agencies?

Please answer "no" to this question if you coordinate in-house your foreign public relations activities with your foreign agencies, leaving any Finnish agency to handle domestic matters.

Yes

No

Do you use a single public relations agency (that may be part of a larger group with individual country offices) to handle regional public relations activities?

Yes

No

Where your company is multinational in nature, but headquartered in Finland, do you allow subsidiary companies in other countries to manage their PR activities under their national business unit's own determination?

Yes

No

Not Applicable (no overseas subsidiaries)

Do they have any board-level guidance from headquarters, with the exception of financial reporting, brand identity and group activities concerning public relations and marketing activities within their operational environment?

Yes

No

Is the local public relations operation or contracted agency, arranged through the subsidiary company, having to clear all announcements with head office?

Yes

No

Do you split your public relations activities by narrow industry vertical or end-user segment?

Examples: industry verticals might be plumbing industry or architects; user-segment can be B2B or B2C.

Yes

No

As a percentage of your company's turnover, how much might be assigned to the public relations activity budget?

If you maintain separate budgets, what percentage of the overall public relations budget controlled by the Finnish-based company, is allocated for international public relations activity?

Is your company publicly listed, where news announcements that may be considered market-sensitive or market making must be disclosed in a certain way by law or practice?

Yes

No

Do you simultaneously release relevant press announcements into foreign markets?

Note: if you delay announcements for more than one working day (providing for time zone differences) please answer "no".

Yes

No

Does the public relations function get clear visibility throughout the business, so individual employees understand the necessity for a unified corporate voice, corporate image, how to identify "good PR" opportunities and warn about potentially "bad PR" issues?

Yes

No

Why did you answer no to the preceding question?

Do you control who can speak on behalf of your company to the media, e.g. senior management team or public relations department?

Yes

No

Why did you answer no to the preceding question?

Do you offer guidance or instructions to employees concerning the media, your corporate image, media handling and so forth?

Yes

No

Do you offer media training to senior management/those authorised to speak to the media?

Yes

No

Is your company using a multiple of sub-categories within your brand portfolio, so you might be marketing different brands to different countries?

Yes

No

Do you believe that your company has a brand that is actively being sought out by B2B customers?

Yes

No

Not Applicable (no relevant customer group)

Do you believe that your company has a brand that is actively being sought out by B2C customers?

Yes

No

Not Applicable (no relevant customer group)

Does your company value its "Finnish identity"?

In your company's public relations (and marketing) activities, do you emphasise the design, manufacture or origin of products as coming from Finland?

Yes

No

Why does your company not emphasis the Finnishness of its products?

Please explain in your own words.

Do you believe that emphasising the Finnishness of your products makes a marked, positive difference?

Yes

No

Can you estimate (in terms of percentage of turnover) what additional sales you may have achieved in a given year by emphasising the Finnishness of your products?

Please explain why you feel emphasising the Finnishness of your products has made a difference and what sort of feedback you receive from customers?

Do you use the Nordic Ecolabel within your marketing activities?

Yes

No

Do you use the "Finnish Key" symbol within your marketing activities?

Yes

No

How you conduct your public relations activities.

For your Finnish corporate website, do you provide access to press releases to the following groups?

Note: This question relates to your website aimed at visitors based in Finland.

Media

Financial Analysts

Employees (via an Intranet if necessary)

Partners (via an extranet if necessary)

General Public

How do you routinely distribute your press releases to Finnish recipients?

Website

Email

RSS feed

Press release distribution service

Facebook

Twitter

Other social media

Fax

Postal Mail

How do you routinely distribute your press releases to foreign recipients?

Website

Email

RSS feed

Press release distribution service

Facebook

Twitter

Other social media

Fax

Postal Mail

Concerning your press announcements intended for foreign audiences/markets, do you translate them into a local language?

Yes

No

Why did you answer "no" to the previous question?

Where you originate a press release in a foreign language, which is not a version of a global announcement, do you translate this local foreign release into English for access/distribution via your website and other channels?

Yes

No

Why did you answer "no" to the previous question?

Where you originate a press release in a foreign language, which is not a version of a global announcement, do you translate this local foreign release into Finnish and/or Swedish for access/distribution via your website and other channels?

Yes

No

Why did you answer "no" to the previous question?

What delay may exist typically between issuing a press release to a domestic audience and it being sent to a foreign audience (number of days) when it is something getting a 'simultaneous release' but where you are not forced to issue it simultaneously because of disclosure requirements or similar?

Please enter an average number of working days (same day = 0, following day = 1 and so forth).

How many press releases did you issue in 2014 aimed at the domestic market?

How many press releases did you issue in 2014 aimed at the international market?

Do you target foreign media generally, other than for highlighting presence at a trade fair or more one-off news events?

Note: answer "no" if you only target foreign media as part of attending a trade show, a "yes" answer indicates a more planned international public relations campaign strategy.

Yes

No

Why not?

Can you briefly explain your targeting strategy, such as why certain media are selected over others and how you go about the task?

Other than sending press releases, how do you first contact the foreign media when you have a story you wish to publicise?

Email

Telephone using English language

Telephone using local language

Through a PR agency

Through a subsidiary company

Thinking about your foreign public relations activity, do routinely use the following resources as part of your campaigning?

Text press releases

Multimedia press releases

Photographs

Animation

Multimedia

Sponsored content

Supplied articles

On a scale of 0 (unimportant) to 10 (essential), how important do you believe it is to establish personal contacts with journalists representing key publications in your target markets?

On a scale of 0 (unimportant) to 10 (essential), how successful have you been in establishing sufficient contacts with key publications in your target markets?

Can you briefly describe how you initiate contact with new journalists?

Can you briefly explain how you monitor the success of your public relations activities in foreign markets?

Do you use a similar mechanism to monitor the success of your public relations campaigns in Finland?

Yes

No

What are the differences between how you monitor domestic and international public relations activities?

Do you have a mechanism to benchmark the overall benefit of your public relations activities?

Yes

No

Do you believe that you can measure the impact of your public relations activities?

Yes

No

Can you briefly explain how?

In case of problems, does your company have a clear crisis management and communications plan that can be enacted?

Yes

No

Value and other determinations.

Please estimate the value (as a percentage of turnover) that was added as new business in 2014 through public relations activities?

Value _____

Do you believe that there is a benefit in conducting public relations activities as a tool to help drive your export-based business?

Yes

No

Unsure

Can you briefly explain why there is a benefit?

Can you briefly explain why there is not a benefit?

Do you believe that this benefit assists the general sales cycle?

Yes

No

Do you believe that this benefits the general marketing and advertising cycle?

Yes

No

On an effort scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 is no effort, 5 is the absolute minimum you might be able to do through presence at trade shows and very major new product launch to trade titles, and 10 is an intensive campaign), please value your company's own public relations activity level.

Value _____

Please value your success in implementing and executing the goal referred to in the previous question on a scale from 0-10.

Can you describe how you believe public relations plays a role within your company with specific thought towards your export activities?

Has your company entered into cooperation with any other company such as a regional trade body, industry group, etc. as a means to explicitly promote your public relations or marketing messages?

Yes

No

Can you briefly share how it has helped?

Can you briefly share why you have not taken this opportunity?

Would your or does your company benefit from help to identify and build up media presence, perhaps through a government body, local embassy or trade association?

Yes

No

Who has been of greatest external help to your company?

As part of your foreign public relations activities, have you even been requested to pay a fee to secure press coverage, such as a bribe or other inducement (regular commercial entertaining and activities do not count here)?

Yes

No

Did you pay it?

Note: please remember that your answers are not individually identified!

Yes

No

Could you briefly give more details?

Note: please write in general terms, such as "a government official in a western European country" or "a journalist working for a professional publication in North America" and any other information should not be capable of identification, i.e. a fee of USD500, a new car, a night in a brothel etc.

Do you believe that your company understands the benefits that public relations can have as part of the overall marketing mix for your export markets?

Yes

No

Unsure

Is this because of a lack of knowledge about how to achieve this?

Yes

No

Is this because of a lack of practical, affordable help to achieve this?

Yes

No

Is this because of a lack of internal support from senior management to achieve this?

Yes

No

Can you describe your most memorable, negative experience with overseas public relations activities to date?

Do you personally think that public relations could influence the potential for future business?

Yes

No

Social media: is it the future or just another tool to leverage?

Does your company use social media as a means to promote its corporate activities?

Yes

No

Does your company use social media as a means to promote the products exported to customers (as a means of influencing sales)?

Yes

No

If social media is used, do you ensure that any material generated as part of a traditional public relations campaign is reused within social media?

Yes

No

Within your website, do you use "share buttons" to make it easier for users to pass on your content?

Yes

No

Do you believe that social media is blurring the boundaries between traditional media and how you communicate to possible customers and partners?

Yes

No

Do you generate social media-exclusive or social media-first content?

Yes

No

Does your company employ somebody to actively monitor social media?

Yes

No

Does your company employ somebody to actively engage users on social media?

Yes

No

Concerning social media, do you have procedures to route media inquiries or items that could possibly generate PR interest/negative sentiment?

Yes

No

Do you repurpose social media content as a secondary outlet for traditional public relations activities where possible?

Yes

No

If applicable, do you coordinate social media and public relations activities to share a common timetable or planning strategy?

Yes

No

Do you have guidelines in place to state who can communicate on behalf of your company on social media?

Yes

No

Do you have procedures in place to state how your employees communicate on social media (despite not being a spokesperson) when they can be identified as being as employees?

Yes

No

Have you had any problems so far with your company's reputation being damaged or at risk in social media due to the actions or activities of your employees?

Yes

No

Could you give some brief details in an anonymised form?

That's It! Thank you for your help!

Is there anything you would like to add? You may also add a further opinion or viewpoint overlooked.

Please remember that your response will be anonymised!

Would you be willing to consider taking part in a further deeper interview, whether "on the record" or as "background" at a later step to discuss the initial findings of this research and related matters prior to the research reports being finalised?

If you are willing, please enter your email address.

If you would like to receive a free-of-charge summary of key research findings, please enter your email address.

Please enter the name (or a web address) of a charity you would like a token donation be sent to, should your entry be picked in a random drawing, as a token of gratitude for participating in this survey.

Note: since survey entries are anonymised, it will not be possible to identify your name or your company as the indirect source of the donation.

Thank you once again for your participation in this survey! Should you have any questions please get in touch!

The following data was encoded within an Excel spreadsheet and used within the media audit's data collection phase and subsequent analysis.

Column	Description
A	Official company name taken from Statistics Finland data set.
B	Internet address as returned by Google (Internet search engine) as a match to the data in column A.
C	Numeric value to confirm if the company was visible on the first page of the search engine's results.
D	Numeric value to confirm if the company offered a multilingual version of its website at the address given in column B (latitude given where a landing or redirection page was presented).
E	Numeric value to confirm if the website featured Finnish language content (as a proactive language choice).
F	Numeric value to confirm if the website featured Swedish language content (as a proactive language choice).
G	Numeric value to confirm if the website featured English language content (as a proactive language choice).
H	Numeric value to confirm if the website featured other language content (not Finnish, Swedish or English) (as a proactive language choice).
I	Numeric value to indicate if press information was proactively displayed on the first website page.
J	Numeric value to indicate if a hyperlink was given to press information, being displayed on the first website page.
K	Numeric information to indicate if investor relations information was proactively displayed on the first website page.
L	Numeric value to indicate if a hyperlink was given to investor relations information, being displayed on the first website page.
M	Numeric value to indicate if links were given to various social media accounts and/or any embedded social media presence, being displayed on the first website page.

N, O	Fields used to record the first name and family name of an identified press or communications contact (or other person) that would be targeted for questionnaire completion.
P	Identified email address for the aforementioned target.
Q	(Reserved for internal use)
R	Numeric value to indicate the length of time in months or part thereof, since the last update of press information (latitude was given for other elements of “news” per the research design).
S	A binary value to indicate whether the website passed a cursory and subjective “journalist test” as to information provision on a first visit.
T	Numeric value (scale of 0 to 10) to rate overall the usefulness of the information provided through the eyes of a foreign journalist who may be wishing to write about the surveyed company and is searching for information. The same value may be applicable to a prospective customer who has only been given a lead of a name to a possible supplier.
U	Numeric value to indicate whether press information was hidden behind a password-protected login or similar impediment.
V	Internal field to record the date of survey.
X	Internal field to record any relevant notes (primarily in the case of a problem).

(Editorial Note: these are written in a concise format since they were an aide memoire to guide the semi-structured interviews as necessary.)

How well do you think Finnish companies do PR and marketing (non domestic)?

Changes over recent years? Reasons?

Areas for improvement and how could this be achieved?

Resistance to export? Why?

Are companies doing export well?

Is marketing/PR helping? Could it? Should it?

Own company experience/How committed are senior management to export/PR/marcomms activity: is it "talk" or "action"?

Can anyone help? How?

Are confidence issues within Finnish companies inhibiting their export/comms?

Measuring success? Do they?

Mistakes made? Lessons learned?

Language support/views on my media audit (info revealed on the day)?