ARCADA

How brand identity and corporate image are delivered in different markets

Case Company X

Saara Arolainen

EXAMENSARBETE	
Arcada	
Utbildningsprogram:	International Business
Identifikationsnummer:	5678
Författare:	Saara Arolainen
Arbetets namn:	**How brand identity and corporate image are delivered in different markets** Case Company X
Handledare (Arcada):	Susanna Fabricius
Uppdragsgivare:	

Sammandrag:

Detta examensarbete undersöker branding och företagsbild av ett internationellt företag inom turismnäringen. Företag X bjuder sina tjänster under två varumärken som är väl bekanta på lokala marknaden. Syftet med denna undersökning är att ta reda på om varumärkesidentitet och företagsbild Företag X bjuder till den internationella marknaden motsvarar företagets interna riktlinjer.

Den teoretiska referensramen består av litteraturrecension och behandlar viktiga definitioner som företagsbild, branding och marknadsföringskommunikation. Också företagets marknadsmiljö, som företagets konkurrenter och turistmarknaden i områden granskas. Undersökningen är genomfört som ett fallstudie med hjälp av kvalitativa forskningsmetoder, och det empiriska materialet är samlat genom en skrivborsundersökning och en fokusgruppintervju.

Resultaten visar att brandstrategi för Företag X styr huvudsakligen den lokala marknaden. Det finns skillnader hur varumärket och företagsbild förmedlas i olika marknaden, men på basis av fokusgruppintervjun ansluter olikheterna till företagets produkt och branschen. Det föreslås att företaget planerar en skild brandstrategi endast för den internationella marknaden, eftersom företaget skall hänga med på tillväxt av marknaden samt utveckling av trenderna inom branschen.

Nyckelord:	Branding, företagsbild, turism, marknadsföring
Sidantal:	43+1
Språk:	Engelska
Datum för godkännande:	15.5.2017

DEGREE THESIS	
Arcada	
Degree Programme:	International Business
Identification number:	5678
Author:	Saara Arolainen
Title:	**How brand identity and corporate image are delivered in different markets** Case Company X
Supervisor (Arcada):	Susanna Fabricius
Commissioned by:	

Abstract:

This thesis examines branding and corporate image of an internationally operating hospitality company, Company X. Company X provides services under two brands, that are well-known in the local market. The purpose of this study is to find out if the corporate image and brand identity Company X provides in international market corresponds to the company guidelines.

The theoretical framework and the literature review covers key concepts, such as corporate image, branding and marketing communications. The company's marketing environment is reviewed, including the competitors of the company and the tourism and travel market in the region in general. The study is carried out as a case study and qualitative methods such as desktop research and a focus group interview are used to gather the empirical material.

The results show, that the brand strategy of Company X mostly guides the local markets. There are differences in how the brand and the corporate image is delivered, but as for the focus group discussion, those are related to the nature of the product and the industry. It is suggested, that a separate brand strategy should be composed for the international market only, in order to keep up with the rapid growth and the changing trends in the industry.

Keywords:	Branding, corporate image, tourism, marketing
Number of pages:	43+1
Language:	English
Date of acceptance:	15.5.2017

OPINNÄYTE	
Arcada	
Koulutusohjelma:	International Business
Tunnistenumero:	5678
Tekijä:	Saara Arolainen
Työn nimi:	**How brand identity and corporate image are delivered in different markets** Case Company X
Työn ohjaaja (Arcada):	Susanna Fabricius
Toimeksiantaja:	

Tiivistelmä:

Tämä opinnäytetyö tarkastelee kansainvälisesti toimivan matkailualan yrityksen, Yritys X:n brändäystä ja yrityskuvaa. Yritys X tarjoaa palveluitaan kahden paikallisella markkinalla hyvin tunnetun brändin alla. Tutkimuksen tarkoitus on selvittää, vastaavatko Yritys X:n kansainväliselle markkinalle tarjoamat yrityskuva ja brändi-identiteetti yrityksen sisäisiä suosituksia.

Teoreettinen viitekehys ja kirjallisuuskatsaus avaavat tärkeitä käsitteitä, kuten yrityskuva, brändäys sekä markkinointikommunikaatio. Myös yrityksen markkinointiympäristöä, kuten yrityksen kilpailijoita ja alueen matkailumarkkinoita tarkastellaan. Tutkimus on toteutettu tapaustutkimuksena käyttäen laadullisia tutkimusmenetelmiä ja empiirinen aineisto on kerätty kirjoituspöytätutkimuksen sekä fokusryhmähaastattelun avulla.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että Yritys X:n brändistrategia ohjaa pääosin paikallisia markkinoita. Brändin ja yrityskuvan välittymisessä on eroja markkinoiden välillä, mutta fokusryhmäkeskustelun perusteella erot liittyvät kuitenkin yrityksen tuotteeseen ja toimialaan. Erillistä brändistrategiaa ehdotetaan suunniteltavaksi koskemaan ainoastaan kansainvälistä markkinaa, sillä yrityksen tulisi pysyä mukana markkinan kasvussa sekä toimialan trendien muutoksessa.

Avainsanat:	Brändäys, yrityskuva, matkailu, markkinointi
Sivumäärä:	43+1
Kieli:	Englanti
Hyväksymispäivämäärä:	15.5.2017

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1 INTRODUCTION

Corporate image is a foundation for a successful marketing communication. It sums up what the company stands for and the position the company has established. The benefits of a strong corporate image can also be applied to brands. A brand signals the source of the product to the customer, and shields both the customer and producer from competitors who would challenge to provide similar products. (Clow and Baack, 2010)

Brand identity is how a company wants to be seen by the consumers. Apéria and Back (2004), refer to Kapferer (1992) according to whom a brand's identity must precede its image and it must be identified and managed by the brand owner.

In this thesis, branding and corporate image of an internationally operating hospitality company, Company X, will be examined. The company operates worldwide in several markets, and its sales in international markets have an increasing significance for the company as more distant markets have been targeted alongside of working with the local ones. Company X has divided its services under two brands, that are well-known in the local markets. However, since the company operates also in the foreign international markets, it would be beneficial to investigate the brands and the corporate image provided to the distant markets and to discuss the similarities and differences found in relation to the company guidelines.

My interest in this topic and in Company X stems from my employment history within the company and my experience from working with the examined markets. Throughout my studies, I have considered branding and the development of corporate image an interesting field and have been willing to work with these concepts in the future.

1.1 Research problem and research question

Company X has established a solid position in the local market during its overall 60 years of operating history. The international market is rapidly growing, and has grown for approximately 25% for a second consecutive year in a row. There are however differences in how the company's brand is positioned and what kind of a corporate image is provided in these different markets. Surely, the cultural differences influence

also the corporate image and all in all what appeals to the consumers in these different markets. From the researchers point of view, it is however interesting to look deeper into the differences of the corporate image and branding provided in separate markets, especially when the guidelines and strategies are similar for all markets.

The research question for this study is following:

Does the brand and corporate image Company X provides for its international market correspond to the brand and corporate image provided for the local market according to the company guidelines?

1.2 Research purpose

The purpose of this study is to find out if the corporate image and brand identity Company X provides in international market corresponds to the company guidelines.

1.3 Demarcation

The demarcation of this thesis will have an influence in the final results. This study is narrowed only to Company X and its printed marketing material produced for the international market. If the study would have included also some electronic material or would have compared Company X with some of its competitors, the study would have been too wide and time-consuming to conduct. By narrowing the study into specific market and specific marketing material, some more accurate results and observations are likely to rise from the study.

With the help of the company's brand strategy, I will first evaluate the chosen material myself as a desktop research. I will then conduct a focus group interview with three informants, who all have some five to ten years of experience of working within the company in different positions, but have not been a part of designing the material examined. The informants have been chosen due to their understanding of the volume of operations of Company X and their product-knowledge.

1.4 Method and material

Because in this thesis I want to find out some characteristics and differences in a narrowed down area, I have chosen to do a case study research and use qualitative methods such as desktop research and a focus group interview for gathering the empirical material. These methods were chosen for being cost-effective and time-saving.

The theoretical framework in chapter 2 will go deeper into defining the key concepts that are essential in understanding this study, such as corporate image, branding and marketing communications. Also, the company's marketing environment will be considered more carefully in chapter 3, including the competitors of the company and the tourism and travel market in the region in general.

2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, the theories that lie in the background of the study will be introduced and looked deeper into to understand the definitions and the research and its results better.

2.1   Corporate Image

A clearly defined corporate image is a starting point for effective marketing communication. The corporate image summarizes what the company stands for and the position the company has established. The goal of corporate image is to create a specific impression to the clients and customers. What consumers believe about the company is more important than how the company itself sees the image. A specific version of the image may vary in the minds of the customers, but the overall image of a company is determined by the combined views of all publics – this can have either a positive or a negative influence on customers. (Clow and Baack, 2010)

A corporate image contains tangible and intangible elements. These elements are shown in figure 1 below.

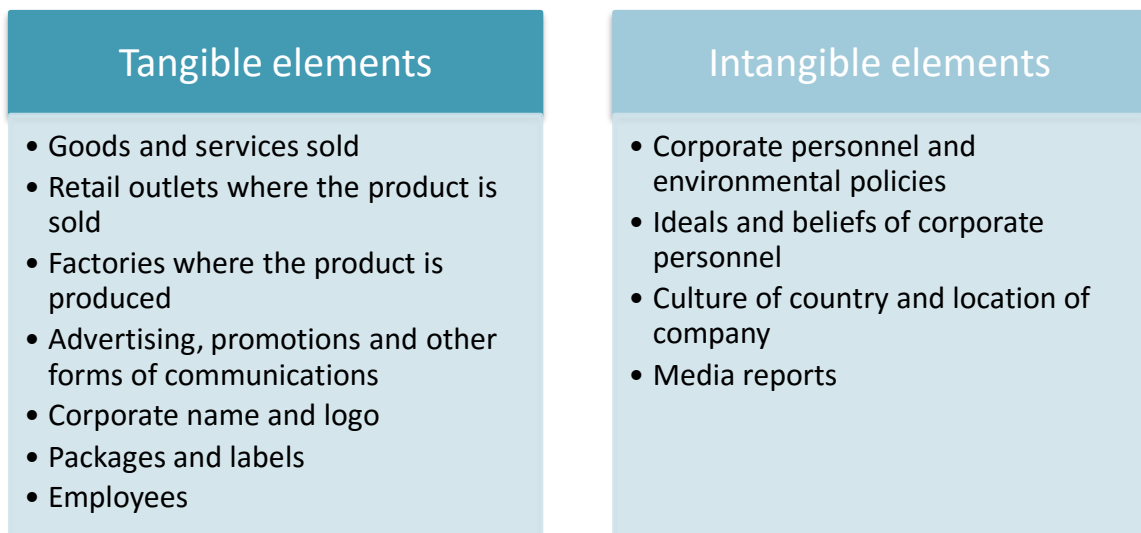| Tangible elements	Intangible elements
• Goods and services sold • Retail outlets where the product is sold • Factories where the product is produced • Advertising, promotions and other forms of communications • Corporate name and logo • Packages and labels • Employees	• Corporate personnel and environmental policies • Ideals and beliefs of corporate personnel • Culture of country and location of company • Media reports

Figure 1: Elements of Corporate Image (Clow and Baack, 2010:27)

From a consumer's perspective, the corporate image serves following functions, it:

- Provides promise regarding purchase decisions of familiar products or services in unfamiliar settings
- Gives promise about the purchase when the buyer has little or no previous experience with the product or service in question
- Reduces search time in purchase decisions
- Provides psychological reinforcement and social acceptance of purchases

A well-known corporate image provides consumers with positive assurance about what to expect from the firm. (Clow and Baack, 2010)

From the company's perspective, a positive company image generates following benefits:

- Extension of positive consumer feeling to new products
- The ability to charge a higher price or fee
- Consumer loyalty leading to more frequent purchases
- Positive word-of-mouth endorsements
- Higher level of channel power
- The ability to attract quality employees
- More favourable ratings by financial observers and analysts

A positive and of quality corporate image provides the basis for developing new goods and services. When the corporate image is already familiar to the customers, the introduction of a new product or service is much easier. A strong corporate image allows a company to charge higher prices, because better quality is often associated with a higher price. Companies with developed corporate images have more loyal customers and the loyal customers are less likely to make substitution purchases from other companies offering similar products or services. Also, a dominant corporate image helps to attract quality employees, who are willing to stay with the employer and this reduces recruiting costs and employee turnover. (Clow and Baack, 2010)

Many benefits of a strong corporate image also apply to brands. The main difference between corporate image and brands is that of scope. Brands and branding are defined more in detail in the following chapter.

2.2 Branding

A brand is a name, symbol, sign, design or a combination of these intended to identify the goods or services of a seller and to differentiate them from their competitors. A brand name is the part of a brand that can be expressed. A brand signals the source of the product to the customer, and shields both the customer and producer from competitors who would challenge to provide products that are alike. (Aaker, 1991)

An effective brand name allows a company to charge more for its products and services, which in turn increases gross margins. Strong brands provide customers with a promise of quality and reduction of search time in the purchasing process. (Clow and Baack, 2010)

For many companies, the brand name and what it represents are its most important asset. It is the basis of competitive advantage and of future earnings streams. (Aaker, 1991) Consumers may identify the two similar products or services differently depending on how it is branded. Consumers learn about brands through their past experiences with the product or service and its marketing, figuring out which brand satisfies their needs and which do not. The brand name can be protected through registered trademarks, copyrights and registered designs. These rights ensure that the company can safely invest in their brand and gain the benefits of a valuable asset. (Kotler et al., 2010)

According to Kotler et al. (2010), branding is providing products and services with the power of a brand. The core is to create differences between the products and services. Branding creates mental structures that help consumers organize their knowledge about products and services in a way that simplifies their decision making and provides value to the company.

Looking closer into the travel and tourism business, the brand image or "position" always plays an important role in customers' minds in how valuable the service is experienced. In the case of a group company, e.g. hotel, this is closely related to the corporate image and branding of the group. Branding plays an essential role in developing a marketing strategy, since a brand image stations the company or the destination to its competitors. The benefits delivered by travel and tourism products are

broadly intangible must be communicated in ways that effect the consumers' perceptions. (Middleton et al., 2009)

According to Middleton et al. (2009:199-200), branding has the following importance especially in the travel and tourism business:

1. Branding helps to reduce vulnerability to the unexpected external events that so overcome the tourism industry. Recovery time after a crisis may be shorter, at the same time as resistance to price wars or occasional hiccups may be improved.

2. Branding offers a hidden or open guarantee to the customer at the point of purchase by signaling the expected quality and performance of an intangible product.

3. Branding facilitates accurate marketing segmentation by attracting some and sending negative signals to other consumer segments – compare e.g. families and couples.

4. Branding provides the focus for the integration of stakeholder effort, especially for the employees of an organization or the individual tourism providers working within a destination brand. A strong brand can help provide a common understanding and some harmony of purpose for staff, residents and businesses alike.

5. Branding is a strategic weapon for distant development in tourism, a means of altering the way that the country is perceived as a destination. For example, Singapore Airlines has repositioned itself as a global airline as well as the key airline for South East Asian destinations.

6. Clear international branding is an essential attribute for effective use by businesses of the internet. With lots of websites available, consumers tend to choose and trust the ones of recognized and trustworthy brands over those of unknown. The linking of brands and banner advertising to important portals and sites depends on consumer's awareness of brands for its effectiveness.

7. Branding is an essential part of distribution strategy. For example, in holiday tourism, customers may be more familiar with the brands of the retailers rather than those of the producers. They may accept whichever airline or hotel because they trust the retailer brand. If a supplier wants to by-pass the retail channel, they

must invest in advertising and direct marketing to establish their own brand as a symbol of quality and reliability.

2.2.1 Brand Equity

According to Aaker (1991:15-16), brand equity is

> "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers. For assets or liabilities to underlie brand equity they must be linked to the name and/or symbol of the brand".

The assets and liabilities on which brand equity is based, can be according to Aaker (1991) grouped into five categories:

1. Brand loyalty
2. Name awareness (brand awareness)
3. Perceived quality
4. Brand associations in addition to perceived quality
5. Other proprietary brand assets – patents, trademarks etc.

These assets can add or subtract value for customers and for the company. They can help customers to interpret, process and store information about the products and brands. They can also affect customers' confidence in the purchase decision making process, due to past experiences or familiarity with the brand or product in question. Both perceived quality and brand associations can enhance customers' satisfaction with the use experience. As for the company, brand equity can help to attract new customers as well as recollect old ones. A promotion will be more effective if the brand is already familiar and if there is no need to battle a consumer who is sceptical of the brand quality. (Aaker, 1991.)

For all businesses, it is expensive to gain new customers and relatively inexpensive to keep the existing ones. Higher brand loyalty means greater trade leverage, since the customers expect the brand to be always available. A recognised brand is often selected over the unknown brand among the customers. The awareness factor is important especially when the brand must first enter the customer's consideration set, it must be one of the brands that are evaluated. An unknown brand has relatively small chance to succeed in that sense. Perceived quality affects purchase decisions and brand loyalty,

especially when the customer will not conduct a detailed analysis. It can also support a higher price, which can create a greater gross margin that can be reinvested in brand equity. Perceived quality can also be the basis of a brand extension. The value of a brand is often based on the associations linked to it. If a brand is superior in the product class, the competitors will find it difficult to attack. (Aaker, 1991.)

Kotler et al. (2010:241) refer to brand equity as "the added value endowed on products and services". It might reflect the way customers think, feel, and act with respect to the brand as well as the prices, market share and commands for the company. A brand has a positive customer-based brand equity, when the customers react more positively to a product and the way it is marketed when the brand is identified than when it is not identified. A brand has a negative customer-based brand equity if the customers react less positively to marketing activity of the brand under same circumstances.

2.2.2 Brand Awareness

Aaker (1991) describes brand awareness as the consumer's ability to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category. It is a link between product class and a brand. Brand awareness contains a continuum varying from an uncertain feeling that the brand is recognized, to a belief that it is the only product or service of a certain kind in the market. Brand awareness can have four levels, illustrated after Aaker (1991:62) in figure 2.

The 'top of mind' is the first brand the consumer thinks of in a certain product category. 'Brand recall' is the brand that is spontaneously named in the product category, but it is not the first brand mentioned. 'Brand recognition' means that the customer recognises the brand name and the product or service category it belongs to, but only when encouraged to do so. Finally, 'unawareness of brand' refers to the

Figure 2: The Awareness Pyramid (Aaker, 1991:62)   15

customer not knowing the brand. According to Apéria and Back (2004), the objectives of 'brand recognition' and 'brand recall' are dependent on the consumer's buying process. If the consumer has not decided on which brand to buy before visiting the store, brand recognition becomes important. On the other hand, if the consumer makes the decision before the visit to the store, brand recall should be the goal.

Brand awareness is important for three reasons (Keller, 1998:91, cited by Apéria and Back, 2004):

- It is more likely that the brand will be chosen among the brands on offer if the consumer thinks about the product or service when they think about the category.
- Awareness can affect the buyer decision even if the other brand associations are missing.
- Awareness affects understanding of the brand associations and how strongly they are acknowledged.

Consumer must be aware of a brand's existence in order to develop attitudes towards a brand – therefore awareness must come before efforts to shape attitudes towards a product or service. Impulse buying clearest illustrates the importance of recognition. In these cases, the consumer has no intention to make a purchase before they face the brand in the store. For the brand owner, the most desirable possibility is to increase both 'brand recognition' and 'brand recall'. This is also the most difficult to achieve. The goal is to have consumers who spontaneously remember the brand and then recognise at the point of purchase. Brand recall increases the possibility of recognition at the moment of buy decision. (Apéria and Back, 2004)

2.2.3 Brand Identity

Brand identity is how a company wants to be seen by the consumers. Apéria and Back (2004), refer to Kapferer (1992) according to whom a brand's identity must precede its image. Brand identity must be identified and managed by the brand owner. However, to fully understand brand identity, also the current image of the brand must be understood.

Apéria and Back (2004) define for example the following questions, that help to find platform for brand identity:

- Why does the brand exist? Would the consumers miss it if it wasn't on the market?

- From what starting point does the brand speak?

- What is the brand's vision for the product or service category and the outer world?

- What are the brand's core values?

- What changes does the brand want to bring into people's lives?

As a helpful tool to illustrate brand identity, Kapferer (1992, as cited in Apéria and Back, 2004) has proposed a prism with six facets. Each of the facets represent one component of identity which supports the others. The brand owner can use the model to study the brand identity in depth and find its strengths and weaknesses. The brand identity prism gives a full picture of how the brand owner wants the target group to see the brand's identity.

Apéria and Back (2004) interpret Kapferer's (1992) aspects as follows:

1. Physique: the sum of brand's basic characteristics.
2. Personality: the brand's personality can over time develop a character, the brand owner can help this by giving the personality a spokesperson.
3. Culture: the product is a personification of the culture, from which all the products or services within the brand frame originate.
4. Relationship: a brand's relationship to its consumers – offers interpersonal exchanges.
5. Reflection: a brand reflects its consumer's image and become an identification. Target groups external reflection.
6. Self-image: Consumer's internal mirror – we create a picture of ourselves through our attitudes to the brands we use.

2.3 Marketing Communications

Marketing communications are usually referred to as advertising or promotions. During the past few years, the preferred term has been marketing communications and the term entails, according to Pickton and Broderick (2005),

"all the promotional elements of the marketing mix which involve the communications between an organization and its target audiences on all matters that affect marketing performance."

Pickton and Broderick (2005) take up the common problem of marketing communications being confused with advertising. Important is, that advertising is only a part of marketing communications. As advertising is a part of marketing communications, also marketing communications is a part of marketing. Describing marketing more in detail, usually the marketing mix and its 4 P's is referred to.

Marketing mix was first described by E. Jerome McCarthy in 1960, and the theory is still dealt with by marketers daily. According to Blythe (2005), the marketing mix describes marketing as the four P's:

- Product – the product should meet the task the consumers want it for and what they expect to get.
- Place – the product should be available where the target group of customers find it easiest to shop.
- Promotion – advertising, sales promotion, public relation and other communications tools should deliver the company's message in a manner that the desired group of consumers would like to hear, independent from the form of messaging.
- Price – the product should be seen as value for the money. It doesn't have to be the cheapest available in the range of similar products, since the consumers are usually willing to pay more for the products that fit their needs.

Along with the increase in service provision, the 4 P's model does not provide sufficiently factors. Therefore, Booms and Bitner proposed in 1981 a 7 P's model, that according to Blythe (2005) includes additionally the following factors:

- People – all services rely on people performing them, often dealing directly with the consumer.
- Process – the services being carried out with a consumer present; the process of service delivery is of importance. The consumer decides the kind of a process they want to participate in, whether it is a fast or a slow pace process; compare a fast food and a fine dining restaurant.

- Physical evidence – almost all services contain physical elements, such as the actual meal in a restaurant.

According to Pickton and Broderick (2005), there is a marketing communications mix lying at the foundation of marketing communications, exactly as the marketing mix sets up marketing as a whole. The marketing communications mix includes four elements illustrated in figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Marketing communications mix (Pickton and Broderick, 2005)

Pickton and Broderick (2005) state, that in order to this classification to have value, all of the various marketing communications activities should fall into one of the categories presented. Usually this cannot be done in an acceptable way, since there are activities that fit more than one category mentioned, such as direct response advertising and sponsorship. The categories overlap, and it would be more suitable to illustrate them as follows in figure 4:

Figure 4: Marketing communications mix, overlapping categories (Pickton and Broderick, 2005)

The overlapping categories can be better understood with the help of Karjaluoto (2010). Karjaluoto (2010) defines the different instruments of marketing communications as the different sectors of marketing communications mix or promotions mix. These sectors are usually divided into five different categories: advertising, public relations, sales

promotion, direct marketing and personal selling. In integrated marketing communications, a company designs their communications so, that all of these categories and areas are communicating with each other. For example, in personal selling, the sales personnel must use the same sales arguments than the company uses in their advertisements. In the integrated communications, combining the strengths of each sector gives out the best possible outcome.

2.4 Printed material as a part of Marketing Communications

Middleton et al. (2009:320) provide following definition for information materials:

> Information materials are part of marketing communications. They may be defined as comprising any form of printed or electronic information materials, paid for out of marketing budgets and designed to create awareness among existing and prospective customers, simulate interest in and demand for specified products, and/or facilitate their purchase, use and enjoyment.

On top of promotional use of information, this definition covers also a "facilitation" use of information, helping the tourism businesses to assist their customers in purchase decisions and achieving the full benefit from using them. Rarely, some printed items of promotional and/or informational use, e.g. maps and guidebooks, can be sold at a cover price. In these cases, it is rather a contribution towards marketing costs, and not the main reason for production. Majority of all information materials are aimed at consumers, but also to achieve promotional and reprieve objectives targeted at a distribution network. Trade directories and promotional materials are important elements in marketing budget when using intermediaries for reaching customers and providing booking access. (Middleton et al., 2009)

Types of printed material used in marketing travel and tourism can be divided into promotional print and facilitation and informational print. Promotional print entails brochures, leaflets, posters and printed letters for direct mail. Information print entails material such as orientation leaflets or guides, maps, "in-house" guides and magazines, menus, show cards and timetables. (Middleton et al., 2009)

In modern marketing, the information materials serve multiple roles. The characteristics of travel and tourism products cause the need for information materials and emphasize their importance in conducting marketing materials. Middleton et al. (2009) examined

these important roles – especially in travel and tourism business – more carefully as follows:

- The information materials are used as product substitutes. The travel and tourism products cannot possibly be inspected and assessed directly on point of sale, often far away from the place of origin.
- Information materials can be used to give some additional information for consumers, who have grown an interest towards a certain product during an advertising campaign, or to trigger the recall of product or brand at the point of sale.
- Consumers wish to receive full information about, for example, their holiday destination or the hotel. It is ideal to provide as much information as possible beforehand for the consumer – that reduces the customer contact time and therefore expenses.
- Information materials serve both the facilitation, sales promotion and merchandising roles – a greater marketing benefit can be reached once communicating with the customer already in the decision-making phase.

In addition to their several roles, the printed information materials also serve multiple purposes in marketing. They create awareness as some first-time buyers become aware of the products through advertising, PR and online. The effect of advertising is mainly to create awareness of the brand. This awareness can be triggered once seeing a brochure. The front cover of the print material and brochures is equivalent to the importance of packaging of products – they must attract attention. Brochures are designed to stimulate customers and to motivate them towards purchase. The brochures identify needs, demonstrate the image, positioning and branding of the products – all the time carrying the key message. Brochures and moreover the cover of them, should be as appealing and inviting for the customer as possible. Some additional "hooks" such as special offers and promotions can be added. Brochures also serve a tangible product-substitute role, when the purchase decision is made often far away from the actual product. The brochure then "becomes" the product at the point of purchase – it endorses the branding message and company values, creates expectations of quality or value for money. Also, the product image must be matched when the product is delivered. (Middleton et al., 2009)

The traditional brochures also act as a substitute for the product during the period between purchase and consumption. The consumer possibly re-reads the brochure again and again as a reminder for themselves and to show for example to relatives and friends. It helps any post-purchase anxiety through reassurance. The consumer will be provided several types of printed materials once the product is delivered – they receive some information materials in hotel rooms, seat backs of an airplane, at the information desks or at a restaurant or a bar. This material is designed to give as much information about what's available as possible. The material also provides information about where the customer is visiting, what they can do. The print materials can help the consumer to discover for example some attractions in a destination they didn't know existed. The material can also provide some actual guidance towards better choices for when it comes to the environment and culture. (Middleton et al., 2009)

Middleton et al. (2009) summarize, that for the commercial travel and tourism businesses, the information distributed in print expresses all aspects of the marketing mix as follows:

- They represent the product in customer terms, and communicate the company's positioning and branding.
- They state the price of the product.
- They are a key channel of communication.
- They represent the "place" for customer
- They help the customer experience and value for money.
- They help the process with desired repeat customers.

Given the nature of travel and tourism products, the communication of information is the most important – and expensive – element within a marketing campaign. Growing use of internet offer some opportunities for cost saving, but still internet and the printed communications rather serve a complementary role for most consumers. (Middleton et al., 2009)

3   COMPANY X AND ITS MARKETING ENVIRONMENT

To better understand the choice of Company X as a case for this study, the marketing environment for the Company X will be looked deeper into in the following subchapters. First, the brand strategy of Company X will be reviewed to understand the variety of brands within the company better. Thereafter the competitors will be considered, followed by an analysis of the tourism and travel market in the region. To be able to understand the significance of the study and to be able to analyse the results, it is important to understand the market that is investigated closer.

3.1   Company X

Company X is a hospitality company operating in the Baltic Sea region. As already stated, the company's products are mainly distributed and promoted through different tour operators and travel agencies and as a part of the agencies' own products. The company operates internationally all over the world and in the local markets. This study compares the company's international market's branding and brand to the whole company's view and guidelines in the local markets. The company operates its services under different brands, and the brand strategy in group level behind the brands is looked into more in detail in the following chapter.

3.2   Brand strategy for the Company X

Company X has established a brand strategy, which should guide the development of the desired future brand positions. The strategy includes following factors: vision, value proposition, core purpose, brand benefits, competitive advantage, brand personality and brand feeling.

The vision reflects the future of the company and the future customer experience they wish to deliver. Vision is a guideline for all the future actions in Company X's marketing. The vision is:

- To be "the industry innovator and provider of easy-going and memorable experiences"

- To be "the Nordic travel experience providing value in every detail."

The value proposition inspires the core existence of Company X's brands and summarizes the value the company wants to deliver to their customers. Core purpose identifies the core purpose of the brands in people's lives. Company X operates their services under four different brands. The value propositions and core purposes of the different brands are illustrated in figure 5 below:

Brand A:	Brand B:	Brand C:	Brand D:
•Value proposition: "Enjoyable journey to enrich everyday life." •Core purpose: "To create memorable experiences."	•Value proposition: "Effortless shuttling to your top destinations." •Core purpose: "To guarantee easy and enjoyable access"	•Value proposition: "Be pampered on the exclusive city break on the sea." •Core purpose: "To create an international quality cruising experience."	•Value proposition: "Good times at sea with top treats and entertainment." •Core purpose: "To create a special cruising experience with a local twist."

Figure 5: Value propositions and core purposes of the Company X brands

The brand benefits identify Company X's brands' benefits behind the value proposition and the competitive advantage prioritises those brand benefits that are both relevant to the company's customers and help to differentiate from the competitors in the field. When describing these features, Company X's services are divided into three different brands or brand categories. These categories are illustrated in the figures 6-9 below:

Brand category 1:

Competitive advantage:

- Modern forerunner in travel
- Best price-quality ratio
- Joyful and energizing travel and transportation
- The easy-going choice

Competitiveness:

- Baltics as the top destination
- Easy to approach service
- Genuine and true people: easy to blend in
- The travel experience for people of all kinds
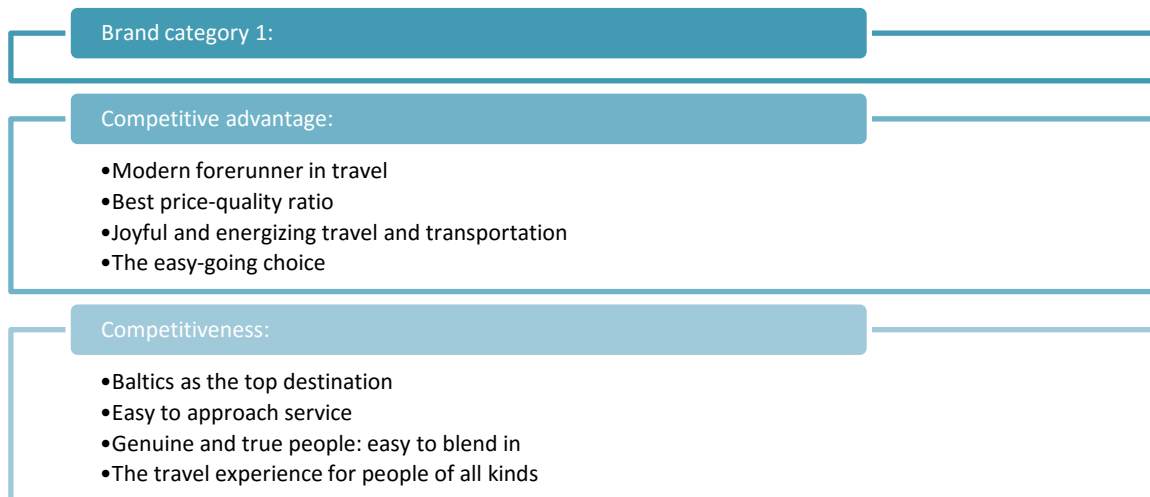
Figure 6: Competitive advantage & Competitiveness, Brand category 1.

Brand category 2:

Competitive advantage:

- The top regional player with modern fleet and a wide variety of services and routes
- The most wanted experiences in one: shopping, dining, entertainment delivered by the best team
- Fourth biggest duty-free in Europe
- The responsible choice

Competitiveness:

- Enables exploring new places close to home
- To be on-board, is the destination
- An effortless mini-vacation, quality time with the loved ones
- Safe and secure way to travel

Figure 7: Competitive advantage & Competitiveness, Brand category 2.

Brand category 3:

Competitive advantage:

- Heritage as a trusted and beloved cruising brand
- Top quality travel experience and customer service
- Excellent food and beverage product
- Best vessels and overall infrastructure
- Authentic Nordic cruising experience

Competitiveness:

- Family-friendly traveling
- Quality worth paying for
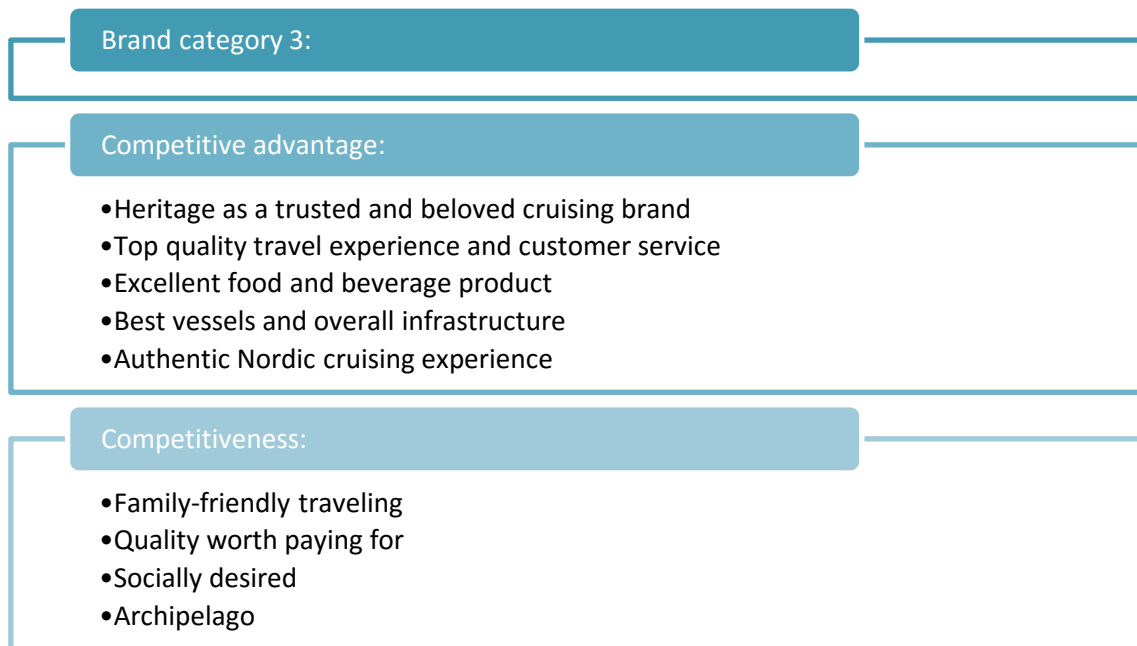- Socially desired
- Archipelago

Figure 8: Competitive advantage & Competitiveness, Brand category 3.

Brand personality describes the behaviour of the brand; the style, the tone and the attitudes. The brand personality has two core elements, shown in the figure 9 below:

Lively:

- Excited and bubbly
- Full of life and happy
- Easy-going and spontaneous
- Energetic and dynamic
- Individual and different
- Adventurous and bold

Welcoming:

- Comfortable
- Safe and trustworthy
- Stylish and sophisticated
- Makes you feel special
- Professional and pleasant service
- Easily approachable
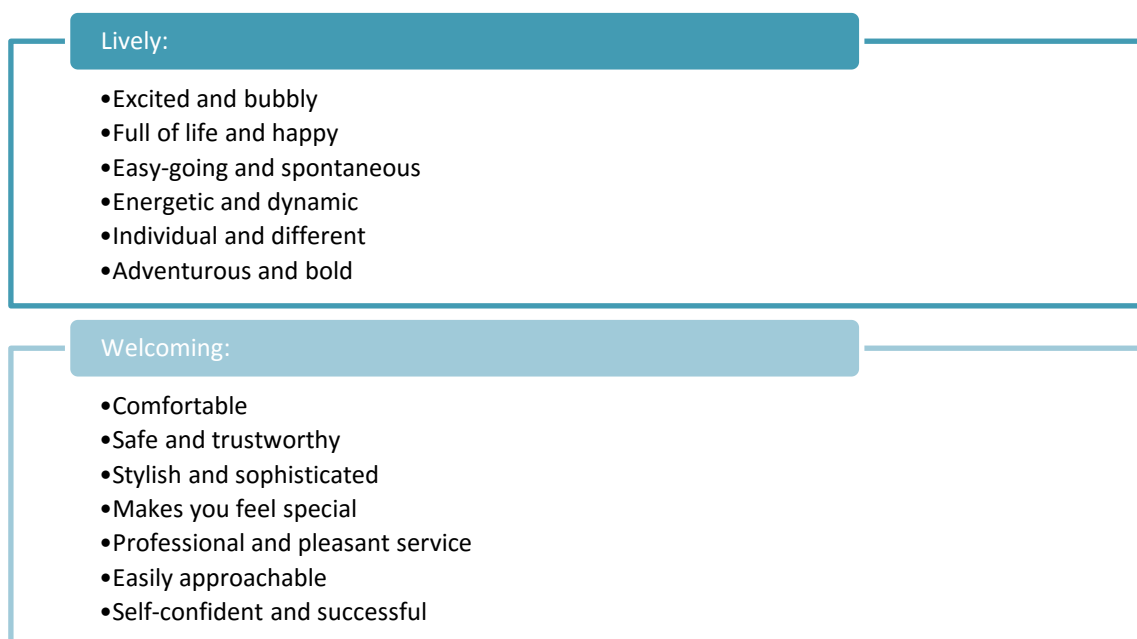- Self-confident and successful

Figure 9: Core elements of Company X's brand personality.

Brand feeling refers to the unique feeling the brand evokes in its target groups. These features are presented in figure 10 by dividing Company X's services into two brands (this is the way the company advertises and is seen by the consumers):
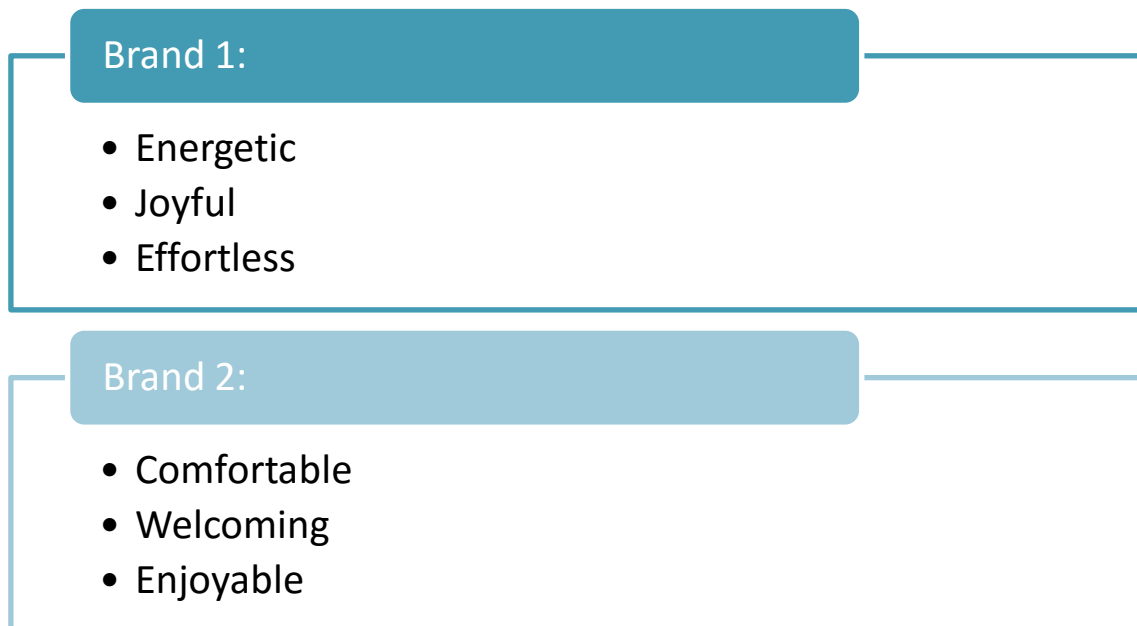
Brand 1:

- Energetic
- Joyful
- Effortless

Brand 2:

- Comfortable
- Welcoming
- Enjoyable

Figure 10: Company X's brand feeling.

3.3 Competitors

As for the Company X examined for this thesis, there are company's Y and Z with a similar product and operating in the same region.

In addition to these competing companies with similar products, there are also other potential competitors when it comes to the Nordic countries' region and the hospitality sector in the region. These competitors do not specifically operate in the same market and with a similar product, but as we discuss the travel and tourism industry, it is obvious that there are many competitors when it comes to spending your free time. These competitors can include other hospitality/tourism companies, other destination countries, local service providers in the origin country and nowadays even the social media and the Internet can be counted as a competitor for any company performing in the travel and tourism industry.

3.4 Overview of the Tourism and Travel Market in the region

To understand the trends in travel and tourism, it is important to additionally understand the nature of the tourism and travel market in the region Company X operates in. First,

international tourism will be examined worldwide, moving closer to the Nordic countries' region and finally to Finland as the chosen local market in this study.

According to United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (2016), the number of international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) increased by 4,6% in 2015, reaching a total of 1186 million worldwide. The increase to previous year was over 52 million. International tourism receipts grew by 4,4% in real terms, with total earnings in the destinations estimated at € 1136 billion worldwide. The top three regions leading outbound tourism in their respective regions were China, the United States and the United Kingdom – driven by their strong currencies and economies.

International tourist arrivals grew by 5% in Europe in 2015 and reached a total of 608 million – 51% of the world's total. Europe was the fastest growing region, with 27 million more tourists than in 2014. This result can be considered remarkable, considering the size and age of the European destinations. (UNWTO, 2016)

International tourism receipts grew by 3% in real terms to € 406 billion, representing 36% of worldwide receipts. A weaker euro in 2015 supported the region's demand to non-euro markets, and the recovery of European economies has increased intra-regional tourism. Norther Europe recorded a total growth of 7% in international arrivals in 2015, with most destinations turning in strong results. Picture 1 below shows the statistics in detail. (UNWTO, 2016)

Destinations	Series	International tourist arrivals (1000)				Change (%)			Share (%)	International tourism receipts (US$ million)				Share (%)
		2010	2013	2014	2015*	13/12	14/13	15*/14	2015*	2010	2013	2014	2015*	2015*
Europe		489,359	567,109	580,238	607,727	4.8	2.3	4.7	100	412,183	492,764	513,535	450,731	100
Northern Europe		62,845	67,243	70,799	75,948	2.4	5.3	7.3	12.5	59,853	75,440	82,478	78,395	15.3
Denmark	TF	8,744	8,557	10,267	..	1.4	20.0	..	..	5,853	7,028	7,632	6,623	1.4
Finland	TCE	2,319	2,797	2,731	2,622	0.7	-2.3	-4.0	0.4	3,051	4,050	3,594	2,750	0.6
Iceland	TF	489	807	998	1,289	20.0	23.6	29.2	0.2	561	1,077	1,362	1,579	0.4
Ireland	TF	7,134	8,260	8,813	..	9.4	6.7	..	..	4,118	4,476	4,857	4,793	1.1
Norway	TF/TCE	4,767	4,778	4,855	..	5.3	1.6	..	..	4,707	5,642	5,639	4,952	1.1
Sweden	TCE/TF	4,951	10,980	10,522	..	-11.3	-4.2	..	..	8,671	11,544	12,856	12,235	2.7
United Kingdom	TF	28,296	31,064	32,613	34,436	6.1	5.0	5.6	5.7	32,892	41,624	46,539	45,464	10.1

Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) ©. Please see below for symbols and abbreviations.

(Data as collected by UNWTO, July 2016)

Series of international tourist arrivals and departures:
TF = International tourist arrivals at frontiers (overnight visitors, i.e. excluding same-day visitors)
VF = International visitors arrivals at frontiers (tourists and same-day visitors)
THS = International tourists arrivals at hotel and similar establishments
TCE = International tourists arrivals at collective tourism establishments
TD = Departures of tourists (overnight visitors, i.e. excluding same-day visitors)
VD = Departures of both overnight and same-day visitors

* = Provisional figure or data
.. = Figure or data not (yet) available
I = Change of series
n/a = Not applicable
. = Decimal separator
, = Thousands separator

Picture 1: International overnights & tourist receipts 2015 (UNWTO, 2016)

Most international travel takes place within the travellers' own regions, with about four to five arrivals worldwide originating in the same region. Source markets for international tourism have traditionally been focused largely in the advanced economies of Europe, the Americas and Asia and the Pacific. However, with rising levels of disposable income many developing economies have also shown fast growth over recent years, especially in the markets of Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. (UNWTO, 2016)

Europe is still the world's largest source region, generating half of the world's international arrivals, followed by Asia and the Pacific (24%), the Americas (17%), the Middle East (3%) and Africa (3%). The table in below picture 2 illustrates the international tourist arrivals by region of origin. (UNWTO, 2016)

Destinations	International tourist arrivals by region of origin (million)										Market share (%)	Change (%)		Average a year (%)
	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*	2015*	14/13	15*/14	2005-15*
World	435	527	674	809	950	994	1,040	1,088	1,134	1,186	100	4.2	4.6	3.9
From:														
Europe	250.7	304.0	390.3	452.3	497.0	518.8	537.7	560.7	571.7	594.1	50.1	2.0	3.9	2.8
Asia and the Pacific	58.7	86.3	114.1	152.8	205.9	220.6	236.5	253.7	271.6	289.5	24.4	7.1	6.6	6.6
Americas	99.3	108.1	130.6	136.5	156.0	163.5	170.8	175.9	188.8	199.4	16.8	7.4	5.6	3.9
Middle East	8.2	8.5	12.8	21.4	33.3	31.7	33.3	35.1	36.8	36.3	3.1	4.9	-1.6	5.4
Africa	9.8	11.5	14.9	19.3	28.3	30.0	31.0	32.0	34.4	35.4	3.0	7.3	2.9	6.2
Origin not specified[1]	7.9	8.6	11.1	26.7	29.8	29.5	31.2	31.0	30.8	31.5	2.7			
Same region	349.1	423.1	532.9	632.3	728.9	767.0	802.1	838.7	872.0	912.7	76.9	4.0	4.7	3.7
Other regions	77.6	95.3	129.8	149.9	191.5	197.6	207.2	218.7	231.3	242.0	20.4	5.8	4.6	4.9

Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) ©.   Please see page 9 for symbols and abbreviations.   (Data as collected by UNWTO, July 2016)
1 Countries that cannot be allocated to a specific region of origin. As information is derived from inbound tourism data, this occurs when data on the country of origin is missing, or when a category such as 'other countries of the world' is used, grouping countries together that are not separately specified.

Picture 2: International tourist arrivals by region of origin. (UNWTO, 2016)

Looking closer into the Nordic countries, Germany is the most important market with 6,2 million overnights in 2015. In 2015, Finland was the number one Nordic destination in Russian and Japanese markets with 73% share of the Russian market's and 44% of the Japanese market's overnights in the region. Summer is the peak season for the Nordic countries with 50% of the overnights recorded in high summer season (June-August). Finland however stands out as a winter destination with 38% of Finland's overnights recorded in the high winter season (December-April). (Visit Finland, 2016a)

Results of Visit Finland's Visitor Survey 2015 show, that Finland welcomed 7.4 million foreign visitors in 2015. They brought all in all €2.4 billion to Finland. (Visit Finland, 2016b)

In 2015, accommodation establishments in Finland recorded almost 19.8 million overnights, of which domestic tourists accounted for 14.2 million and foreign tourists for 5.5 million. The foreign demand for accommodation services declined by 3,5%, while the domestic demand grew by 1,1% compared with previous year. Total demand for accommodation services declined by only 0,2% in 2015. The largest countries for overnight stays were the neighbours Russia and Sweden, followed by Germany and the United Kingdom. Overnight stays by Chinese visitors increased the most in 2015 – they spent nearly 182 000 nights in Finland, which was 41,3% more than previous year. (Visit Finland, 2016b)

According to Visit Finland's (2016b) accommodation statistics, the foreign overnights in Finland by country of origin were divided as follows:

1. Russia 782,848
2. Sweden 549,870
3. Germany 543,294
4. United Kingdom 471,869
5. France 230,090

6. Japan 203,411
7. USA 202,546
8. Estonia 188,899
9. Norway 185,995
10. China 181,862

Picture 3 below illustrates the tourism and income flows to Finland in 2015.
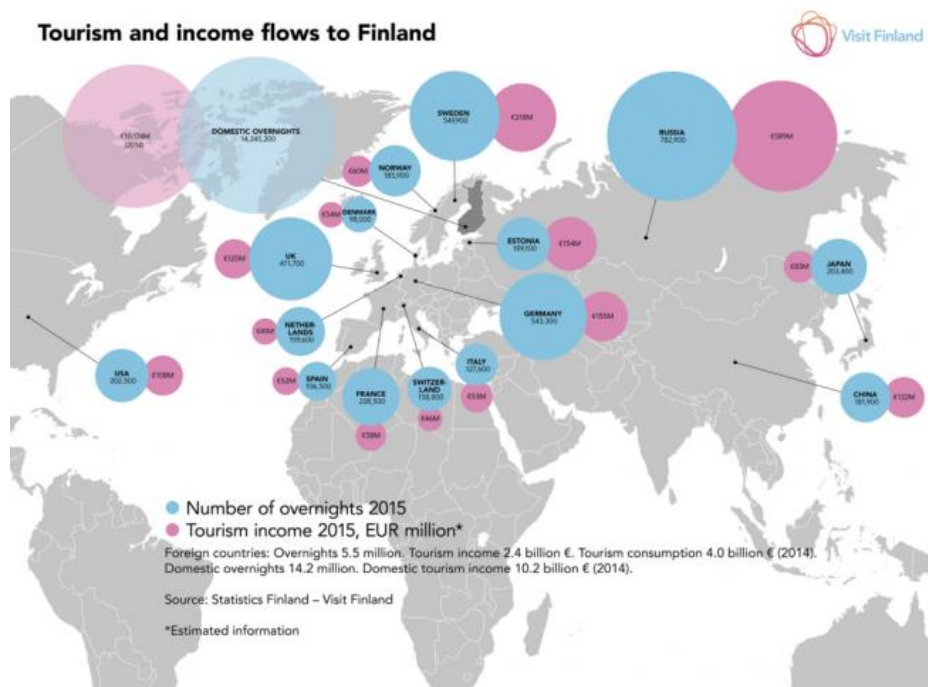
Picture 3: Tourism and income flows to Finland (Visit Finland, 2016b)

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The structure of tourism from each main market has their own features related to the season, area and preferred activities. Southern Finland and the archipelago are the number one area for most tourists (63% of overnights). The Lakeland area has become increasingly attractive over the years (17% of overnights). Finnish Lapland has maintained its popularity with 21% of overnights. (Visit Finland, 2016b)

4 METHOD DISCUSSION

In general, research methods are usually divided into quantitative and qualitative methods. However, both methods are approaches that can be difficult to differentiate from each other.

Factors typical for quantitative research are inter alia conclusions and theories from earlier studies, presentation of hypothesises and expressing definitions. The data collection usually is proposed to correspond to quantitative and numeric measuring and there are often strict definitions for the test subjects – usually a universe or a population is defined and a sample is taken from this population. Other central features for quantitative methods is the ability to array the variables and place the data into form of statistical analysis. The conclusions are usually made based on the statistical analysis, usually with the help of percentages or testing the significance of the statistical results. (Hirsjärvi et al., 2004:131)

Qualitative research is characteristically comprehensive information retrieval, and the material is gathered in natural and tangible context. Qualitative methods favour humans as a source of information and the researcher often trusts their own acknowledgements and discussions with informants rather than knowledge acquired with the help of measuring equipment. Researcher often wishes to find out some features that are unexpected, hence the starting point is not theory or hypothesis testing, but complex and detailed analysis of the material. The target audience is carefully selected, not by random selection. In qualitative research, the research plan can often change along the research advances. Also, the cases are unique and the material is interpreted accordingly. (Hirsjärvi et. al., 2004:155)

Hirsjärvi et al. (2004:125) state, that there are three common research strategies used – experimental research, quantitative survey research and case studies. Experimental research measures two different variables' effect on each other. Typically, a sample is chosen from a population and the sample is analysed in form of different experimental arrangements. Survey research gathers information from a group of people in a standardised form. Typically, a sample is chosen from a population, and material is gathered in structured form from each individual informant. Usually a questionnaire or structured interviews are used for material gathering. Case study presents detailed,

intensive information about a sporadic case or a small number of related cases. Typically, a specific case, circumstances, or a set of cases are chosen. Interest often lies on processes and the case is examined in relation to its nature, in which the individual case is a part of. The material is gathered with help of several techniques – by observations, interviews and reviewing documents. The goal of a case study is to describe a phenomenon.

4.1 Research Process

Since in this thesis I am studying a specific case and the research problem and research question are narrowed down pertaining only Company X's corporate image and brand, the research strategy used is case study.

There are several possible approaches for case studies, but for data collection I chose desktop research and field research in a form of focus group interview. Desktop research utilises only information and material that is already available, for example internal and external sources of information in Company X. These can be e.g. company's annual reports or customer feedback. It is cost-effective and time-saving to use the already existing material. Often the material gathered in desktop research is not representing the case to its extent, and then it is necessary to approach the subject from another angle and obtain some new material in the form of field research. In practice, desktop research and field research complete each other and give access to wider understanding of the phenomenon studied. Field research is carried out for example in form of surveys or personal interviews. (Lahtinen et al., 1998:48-49; Mäntyneva et al., 2008:29-30)

4.1.1 Data Collection

As for the desktop study, I have reviewed some internal survey results, brand guidelines and brochures. Company X has conducted a broad research about brand positioning in different markets and actions according to the results have been started to implement in the daily operations and in marketing plans for all markets. As the international market was not particularly targeted in the survey, rather than the local markets and market

review of the competitors, it is justifiable for me to take a closer look into that and to possibly find some additional ideas.

4.1.2 Focus group interview

Focus group interviews can be used to create an understanding of e.g. behavior of certain consumer groups, and to closer examine a definite phenomenon. The bottom line for a successful focus group interview is to choose the right amount and the right type of informants and the behavior of the interviewer, who acts as a moderator for the discussion. Usually the ideal size of the group is 6-12 participants, as a smaller group might not be enough to keep the discussion going and a larger group size might harm the results, as the discussion might be more difficult to moderate. (Mäntyneva et al., 2008.)

For this focus group interview, a smaller but most qualified group of three informants were chosen. All of the informants have some five to ten years of experience of working within the Company X in different positions, but have not been a part of designing the marketing material examined. When examining a certain aspect of the marketing material produced, it is important that the informants understand the phenomenon and that they can produce honest and objective answers.

The focus group interview, or discussion, was held at the author's apartment. Discussion was recorded and transcribed for analysis. First, the informants were asked to familiarize on spot with the brand strategy of Company X, and the discussion started with some questions based on the strategy. Thereafter, the informants were asked to get acquainted with two print brochures intended for the international market. This was followed by the rest of the discussion, with the help of some half-structured questions. The interview guide designed for leading the discussion can be found attached in appendix.

5 RESULTS

The focus group discussion resulted satisfactory material from the author's point of view. The group's answers and opinions about the subjects discussed were quite unite and followed similar pattern to the author's own ideas. However, as the moderator of the discussion, the ideas of author were not given out before or during the focus group discussion, as the situation was built to create as objective and non-biased answers and discussion as possible. The informants' demographic background is quite similar to each other, however their work experience in the company examined and earlier work experience and educational background are differing.

5.1 Branding

The first part of the discussion was based on the brand strategy of Company X. The informants were cohesive on the opinion that the strategy as such is comprehensive, inclusive, goal-directed and diverse. One of the informants states the strategy taking up the company's strong urge and belief of being the innovator in their field. It was discussed, that the company has created clear and modern visions for the present-day and future of their brands. As for the comparison of the strategy and the actual corporate image delivered, the informants were not as like-minded. One of the informants stated that the corporate image is mainly delivered clearly, but as the product range is quite versatile and large, this needs continuous development and maintaining the quality. Another informant takes up the company values, and the actual customer experience which they think is not necessarily fully delivered in all products – meaning the vision does not necessarily correspond to what actually is delivered. It is mutually discussed, that the brands A and B still need some more efforts to reach to the level of the strategy, but on the other hand brands C and D have succeeded in delivering the novelties, excitement and quality – the brand image – that is envisioned in the strategy.

When taking up the comparison between the impression the informants have about the differences or similarities in the actual advertising in local market vs. the international market, the informants are of the same opinion – there are differences for sure, but these are mostly dependent on the nature of the product and the tourism business overall. The local market can and does advertise the products in more detailed measures, because of

the long history and overall conspicuousness of the brand in the market. For international market, the advertisements must be more ambiguous, as the operating region itself might not be familiar to the audience. Also, the fact, that the local market for sure knows and recognizes the different brands and products offered, as for the international market only the brand name most likely does not "ring a bell" and the advertisements must build a bigger picture as well. One of the informants also takes up the fact that the international market needs more of universal measures in the marketing of the products of Company X, even though the brands are quite different from each other – advertisements taking up mostly the brand feeling are not necessarily effective since the company and their products are not overall known just by the name. The local market can easier rely on the fact that the company and its brand is known, but for the international market some groundbreaking facts must be delivered first: what is the actual product, where does the company operate or why should this product be chosen.

The overall opinions about the brand strategy is briefly discussed, and all the informant agree that the elements in the strategy are good guidelines, but there still is some work to be done to reach these goals and visions. One of the informants adds that as the strategy is quite ambitious, it is beneficial for the company to pursue these visions – one should always aim higher in order to develop the product.

5.2 Printed material as a part of Marketing Communications

The second part of the focus group discussion covered analysis or review of some print brochures produced for the international market. Overall the informants agree, that the product comes across as high-quality, welcoming and memorable. One of the informants notes, that the brochures deliver overall the kind of "brand feeling" described for brand 2 in the brand strategy and the brands are not clearly separated from each other. Highlighting the destination or the region is noted by another informant and all discuss the fact that the region itself must be described as quite tempting in order to attract the international customers to even try out the product – the attractiveness and different features of the product is combined with the attractiveness of the region.

All the informants agree and discuss about the differences the reviewed brochures deliver to the international market compared with the local market. All in all, the

destination and the overall experience is highlighted in the brochures produced for international market – the local market uses more inspirational advertising. One of the informants takes up the fact, that the local market clearly advertises the two brands separately as for the international market it is advertised more clearly as the "Company X experience". This evokes again discussion about the fact that when the product or brand name is not familiar, the product itself or for example the destination is also important to highlight. All agree, that changing seasons and the midnight sun are examples of the things that can only be experienced in the operating region of the company and are valuable assets in marketing, especially for the international market.

Finally, the discussion leads to print material in marketing. The opinions about print material in marketing in general divides the informants a bit, however the author could already predict that, considering the current work tasks and positions of the informants. All the informants do agree that the hands-on feeling a brochure creates cannot be exactly imitated in digital channels. Also, it is more likely that the potential customer spends more time on the brochure when it's printed, comparing to the fast "swiping-culture" of digital channels. The distribution and reach of a print brochure does not however measure to the power of digital channels and the costs – it is much more expensive to design, print and distribute a print brochure than to do a digital campaign. The digital version can be also distributed faster, and might reach multiple times more potential customers than a printed brochure.

6 DISCUSSION

Overall, the focus group discussion covered the subjects and questions that came up from the desktop research carried out by the author. The opinions of the informants were quite similar to mine, and some interesting aspects arose from the discussion.

6.1 Branding

As for the research purpose, I wanted to find out if the brand and corporate image Company X provides for its international market corresponds to the brand and corporate image provided for the local market according to the company guidelines. Already from the beginning, while the existing research data conducted by the company was reviewed, it was clear that the brand strategy is mostly guiding the local markets. Middleton et al. (2009) state, that especially for the travel and tourism industry, the brand image plays an important role in customers' minds in how valuable the service is experienced. Branding also plays an essential role in developing a marketing strategy, as the brand image positions the company or the product to its competitors. This could be interpreted also from the focus group discussion – according to the informants, there are differences in how the brand and the corporate image is delivered, but as for the discussion, those are mostly related to the nature of the product and the industry.

According to Aaker (1991), brand awareness is the consumer's ability to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category. It is a link between a product class and a brand. But when it comes to international marketing of travel and tourism, a brand or company name does not necessarily say much about the actual product. Also, using different "feelings", inspirations or very specific components can be challenging, when the audience is not familiar with the service provider at all. Then, a lot more information is needed – especially in print material.

According to Apéria and Back (2004), the consumer must be aware of the brand in order to develop attitudes towards it – therefore creating brand awareness must come before efforts to shape the attitudes towards a certain product. Impulse buying behaviour clearest exemplifies the importance of recognition. The goal is to have customers, who both spontaneously remember a brand and then recognise it at the point

of purchase. For the brand owner, increasing the two middle levels in Aaker's (1991) Awareness pyramid, are then the most important but also the most difficult to achieve.

What could also be interpreted from the focus group discussion, the surrounding environment, climate, nature and other factors can be seen a threat or competitor for a certain product. This can also be utilised positively – bringing out the best in the region not only helps the consumer to understand where and what the product is, but appeals also to the consumer and attracts them more likely to consider the product as a part of their next travel plans. In the focus group discussion, it was stated that Company X has succeeded in highlighting also the appealing features of the region in the brochures. Middleton et al. (2009) state, that the printed information materials are often used as product substitutes by the consumers. By highlighting the appeal of the region, Company X most likely succeeds to attract more consumers to try out the product, hence the distant location, as the pictures chosen to the brochures bring out the best in the product and the region.

6.2 Tourism and Travel Market in the region

Overall, the international tourism has increased and according to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (2016), the number of international tourist arrivals increased by 4,6% in 2015, reaching a total of 1186 million worldwide. The increase to previous year was over 52 million. The top three regions leading outbound tourism in their respective regions were China, the United States and the United Kingdom – driven by their strong economies. The top three countries have shown a continuous growth for Company X's international market as well, the United States continuing the growth for another consecutive year, so these statistics can be considered important for knowing the market.

In Europe, the tourist arrivals grew by 5% in 2015, reaching a total of 608 million – 51% of the world's total. Europe was the fastest growing region and with 27 million more tourists than previous year the results can be considered remarkable – considering the size and age of the European destinations. Also, according to UNWTO, most international travel takes place within the travellers' own regions, with about four to five arrivals worldwide generating in the same region. (UNWTO, 2016) This however is

not the case with Company X's international customers, with China being number one. A great deal follows the pattern of the data Visit Finland (2016a) has recorded, for Germany being the most important market in the Nordic countries and Finland being the number one Nordic destination for Russian and Japanese markets with 73% share of the Russian and 44% of the Japanese market's overnights in the region. For Company X, Russian market has not as important role, but the Japanese market is one of the main international markets for the company.

As for Company X, their products are mostly distributed to the international market by different tour operators and travel agencies. These intermediaries have included the product as a part of their travel packages and own products and they also must lift the attractiveness of the destination in order to appeal to the customers. Therefore, it could be beneficial not only to strengthen the relationship with these intermediaries, but also to do some benchmarking and why not even cooperation with the considered competitors. The Nordic countries and the Baltic Sea are considered as trendy destinations especially in Asia, but also from the Europe. Together with the competitors and by marketing and highlighting the destination, it could be possible to brainstorm some ideas of attracting the consumers to the region and finding the variety of products also Company X provides in the region.

6.3 Printed material as a part of Marketing Communications

Middleton et al. (2009) state, that the printed information materials serve multiple important roles especially in travel and tourism business – roles, that may not be possible to be replaced by digital materials. These roles include for example utilizing the material as the substitute for the product until the product is delivered and informing customers of certain products or promotions. However according to this research, it would be beneficial for the Company X to digitalize some of the now printed information materials to some extent, and to consider extending their marketing strategy to some new channels as well. The international market in general is much more ahead in technical development than the local market, and rearranging the resources would be a good idea for Company X to stay along with the development.

7 CONCLUSION

Finally, the strategies lying behind Company X's branding can be considered very efficient and diverse for the local markets. The brands are well known and the product has some valuable assets in the market. With this research, a conclusion can be drawn that the corporate image and brand delivered to the international market does stand out from the ones delivered to the local markets. In order to build a similarly strong brand and company image also for the international market, some planning and focus areas should be rearranged to be able to deliver the similar feeling also to the international market.

While the potential and the rapid growth from the international market has been noticed, this kind of planning should be started at some extent as soon as possible. A separate strategy could be one option in order to be able to react to the rapid growth and to be able to keep up with the trends. The strategy should be even distributed for specific parts of the international market, as for example different social media channels are used in different parts of the market. The print material is still valuable for the travel and tourism industry, but as everything and everyone is getting increasingly online, Company X should also follow the trends and reach for the maximal visibility in different channels in the international market.

7.1 Suggestions for Company X

Based on the results of this study, I would suggest that Company X takes into serious consideration a further research on the presence of their brand and corporate image in the international market. It would be beneficial to conduct a separate brand strategy, which would consider the variety of this particular market, the trends both in travel and tourism industry as well as in technology. The international market is much more trend-sensitive, and the trends also reach the market in an earlier phase than the local market. In order to continue growing and attracting the international customers, it would be essential to be up to date of what is happening and most importantly what will next happen in the industry and in respective parts of the worldwide market. The company should also focus on an e-marketing strategy and spread their presence into some new

channels, that would help to collect awareness and build the much-desired brand awareness to the "top of the mind" –level.

7.2 Limitations and recommendations for future research

Because the informants of the focus group discussion were especially chosen by me, there is a great chance, that the choice of informants limits the results of the study. The results would have been quite definitely different, if other informants would have been chosen to participate the discussion. Also, the small size of the group is another limitation for this study – if more participants would have been chosen, the discussion would have probably resulted some different opinions and points of view.

To keep the research manageable, it was chosen to specifically examine the international market as a whole, and not to separate it into smaller markets. However, this could have resulted some more specific information and results from a specific market. Although different results would have been reached with more specific markets, but as a comparison of the current situation in the local market vs. the international market, this approach was chosen.

There are several opportunities for further research – specific parts of the international market could be approached in forms of surveys or interviews and even a basis for the separate brand strategy for the Company X's international market could be created with the help of further studies. Rather a quantitative approach could be used to be able to generate more reliable and general results, that can be of help when contemplating the possible separate brand strategy for the international market.

7.3 Final words

From my point of view, the purpose of this study was fulfilled, and recommendations for development were given accordingly. Changing some factors might have increased the reliability and representativeness of the study, but I am overall happy with the results and the thesis. The process itself has been long and sometimes even overwhelming, but above all rewarding – especially in the end and I am delighted to see the results of my work.

I would like to thank the informants participating in the empirical part of the study for their contribution and for sharing their views. Also, a special thank you goes to my thesis instructor for her understanding, patience and her help throughout the process.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview guide for focus group interview

About the brand strategy

What are the topmost ideas/feelings after reviewing the strategy?

Knowing the company's products, how do you think these brand strategies refer to the actual corporate image delivered?

Do you think there are any differences in how Company X advertises on local market vs. international market? What kind?

What could be the reason for different kind of advertisements comparing international market/local market?

Do you agree with the statements/elements in the brand strategy?

Do you think the brands are successfully delivered to all markets?

After reviewing the brochures

What kind of brand/company/product comes across from the brochures?

Compare your thoughts with what's stated in the brand strategy – brand feeling, brand personality etc.

Do you see a difference in what is delivered to the international market compared with your experience from local market?

What are the most important differences?

Are there any surprises? How about similarities?

Do you think these brochures reflect the product/brand/company effectively? Are they effective?

Print material

What do you think about print material in marketing? Pros/cons?