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Online Branding

Case : Insjö Oy

Huynh, Thanh Phuong

2017 Otaniemi



Laurea University of Applied Sciences
Otaniemi

Online Branding
Insjö Oy

Thanh Phuong Huynh
Degree Programme
in Business Management
Bachelor's Thesis
May, 2017

Laurea University of Applied Sciences
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Abstract

Thanh Phuong, Huynh

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Year	2017	Pages	40
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The thesis ideas was supporting Insjö, an organizing and functional accessories company, with online branding development plan. Company has implemented activities for marketing and brand building. However, Insjö branding strategies are outdated and require innovation for brand development. At the present, Insjö is operating online via official website and targeting for new customers outside Finland. Therefore, online branding is critical for company to raise international customer brand awareness and consolidate Insjö position in global market. The target of this thesis is to provide the company with possible branding, which based on company previous branding activities and goals. The content of this dissertation will focus on online branding, which is important for businesses in the new era of internet and is suitable for Insjö to accelerate expansions in new markets.

The thesis theory part will discuss brand, branding crucial elements influences of internet tools to online branding. The primary sources of this study include customer interviews and acquired data through various Insjö sale campaign. The secondary sources are mainly used in the theoretical part and consist of current academic works and articles available both in printed version and on the internet.

Parts of branding development plan are abridged in respect of information confidential, as Insjö's wishes. However, the branding improvements will be presented in the plan. Before thesis publishing, the content, will be evaluated by the company for adjustments. The branding development plan would be used for Insjö brand future development activities.

The suggestions are tailored for sustainable branding process in long term by measuring the online branding results, updating internet tools usage for raising the brand reputation and strategically positioning in global markets.

Keywords: branding, brand, online branding, social media, social networks, Insjö, marketing

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1 Introduction

The global economy has changed drastically with the emergence of new markets together with the expansion of online community. Products and services are offered with diversity in design, quality, prices via offline and online channels to fulfill customer demands all around the world. Brand nowadays is not only a name, symbol and logo for differentiation but also a part of customer preference to choose among the enormous available options. Brands have more significant role in business now than in the past. They are product credentials to customers and competitive advantage for company to reinforce their market position. Products have life-cycles but brands is persistent in conveying a uniform quality, credibility, experience in long-term and reflecting the business culture (Keller, 2008). Therefore, businesses are focusing on not only building but also developing their distinctive public reputation.

With internet booming, the world has experienced a rapid innovation in communication as well as business transformation, which have created lucrative opportunities and challenges for companies. Especially, small businesses with limited resources have more effective opportunities to reach new customers and promote their products and services in lower costs by using online tools than traditional marketing activities. In addition, customers are constantly exposed to products and brands via pop-up, advertises, short product introduction videos and other online commercials tools beside traditional marketing activities. Furthermore, customers have been actively seeking for brands and products from public reviews and discussions in virtual communities, especially before making purchasing decisions. Hence, in new information booming era, online branding has become challenging for organizations to win their customers' hearts.

1.1. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this thesis is to develop an online branding development plan for Insjö, a company offering organizing and functional accessories in Finland. Insjö mainly operates online via company website, together with Finnish consignment retailers' shops chain. As Insjö expansion plan in near future in Europe and North America, online branding is suitable for company to reach for customers with low costs. As the output, the content of the brand develop plan in this study would support the company with suggestions for immediate implementation in their strategies in order to increase the global brand awareness and reputation, especially in target markets. Although Insjö has been planning for new market entering for almost one year, human resource shortage has been detained the progress. Moreover, customers' responses and company's online activities effectiveness have not been tested although Insjö mainly operates via websites and online channels. With internet innovation,

online facilities are crucial for business to communicate with customers and promote their products in more effective way. Therefore, the goal of this study is supporting company with online branding development activities regarding brand positioning and business expanding. Along with theory, a research on customers' responses to company online branding activities in Insjö Christmas Sales campaign in 2016 will be studied in depth to provide suggestions for future campaign in Insjö. The thesis idea was formed in November, 2016 and accomplished in April, 2017.

1.2. Research methods and thesis structure

The intentions of this dissertation is to bring out a practical plan for Insjö to develop their branding process in order to create positive brand reputation and position in global market by focusing on online aspects. Therefore, the study aims to answer the following questions:

- What are aspects in online branding the company should focus on?
- How do social networks and online communities affect or influent brand reputation?
- How can customers' participations in company activities online can benefits brand reputation?

The thesis is divided into 5 main parts of introduction, branding theory, research, online brand development plan and final results.

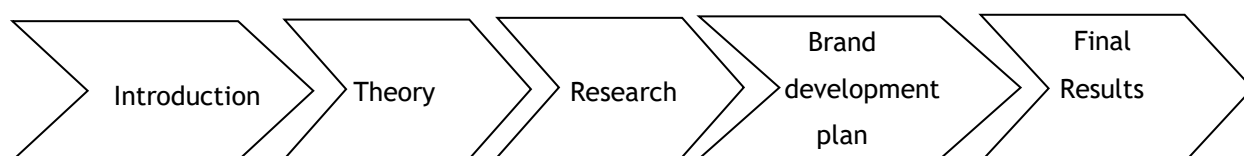


Figure 1. The structure of thesis process

Quantitative and qualitative methods will be applied in the research to ensure reliability and validity for this paper. The research includes face-to-face interviews with customers and analysis of online promotion influences in sales. During the interviews, customers' opinions about Insjö impression will be collected to measure the effectiveness of brand building activities. The promotion code for online shopping published on social networks will be analyzed as customers' responses with company online activities. The data of customers' brand responses gathered from the research will be applied as foundation for the brand development plan.

The research findings will be thoroughly examined and elaborated into a branding plan. The value of this dissertation for Insjö branding. The final results includes conclusion and development suggestions for Insjö branding.

Theory part of the thesis is combined from various internet articles and literatures for updating branding information. Internal materials will be combined for illustrating Insjö branding status.

2. Insjö Oy

2.1. Products

Insjö started as an online business from 2013 and it's headquarter is in Helsinki, Finland. Insjö's main products are organizer bags and convenient accessories for handbags, which are designed and developed by talented group of design students of Aalto University with the concept of Insjö bagINbag. Bag organizer has been popular recently as convenient and fashionable accessories. It is designed with small pockets for organizing belongings and normally put inside normal bags.

Insjö has been operating by a small team of seven employees. The products are available on the official website www.Insjö.com in many different languages, with various options for payment, delivery methods and detailed description about products as the company intent to reach customers worldwide. Insjö products are also offered on Bellapuoti - Finnish online shopping platform as well as in consigned retailers' shops located in Finland big cities and lately available in well-known stores in Stockholm, Sweden.

Company products concept is conveying the convenience in daily activities, especially for women. Women daily bags includes numerous things such as documents, makeups, electronic devices and other necessities. However, handbags and even back bags are often designed with few pockets inside, which is problematic for all belongings to be well-managed and easily found. Thus, it is annoying and time-consuming for women to dig through a lot of things before being able to find what they need. Besides the bag organizers, Insjö has developed other accessories - key rings, cable organizers and card holders etc. - with special and elegant designs as a neat and stylish solution for women daily problems.

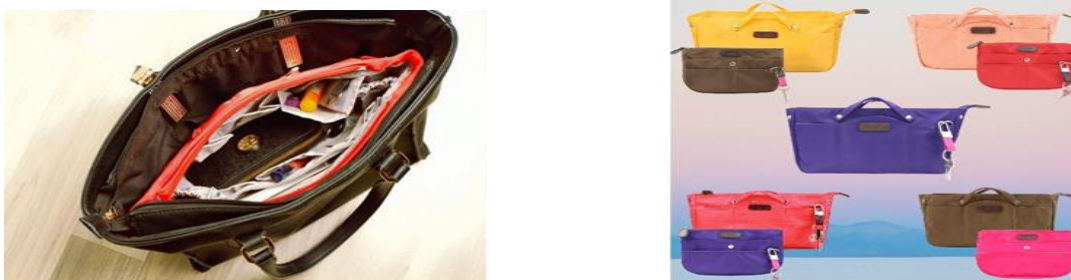


Figure 2. Insjö bagInbag (Insjö Facebook, 2016)

Insjö goal is providing simple solutions for daily belongings troubles in the most elegant and professional way. Most of the bag organizers available are unbranded with unattractive appearances and poor materials. However, Insjö bag organizers have been continuously improved in many aspects: in different sizes, with a wide range of colors together with additional features for various using purposes. All the products have Nordic elegant design made with durable nylon materials and genuine leathers, thereby, offering unique look and high quality to customers. By this time, Nordic design and quality of Insjö products have impressed consumers as a professional organizing solutions.

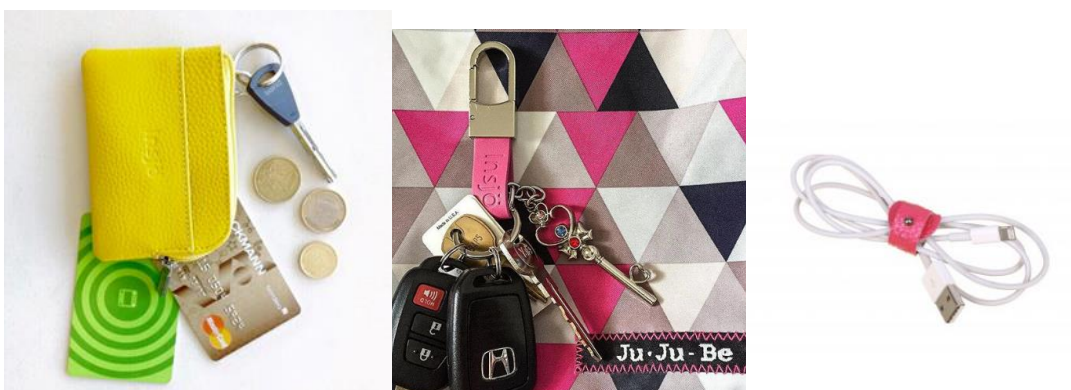


Figure 3. Insjö genuine leather accessories (from left to right: coin purse Lamppi, cable organizer TooLo, keyring) (Insjö Facebook, 2016)

Beside the unbranded manufactures, there are some other online stores providing similar bag organizers made with high quality materials and appealing appearance. However, Insjö offers products deliver the convenience with various options in designs and sizes with washable materials to customers in more competitive prices. Insjö and also their competitors face a common problem of limited customer awareness of the product ideas of bag organizers and difficulty in differentiation in this market niche. Moreover, the advancement in information and communication technology has been provided startups and online businesses with efficient tools for spreading brand and products information globally at low-cost. By using the internet as a leverage, Insjö aims to become a responsible and friendly accessories brand with helpful, durable and elegant products for international customers.

2.2. Operating Status

Although bag organizer is a new products concept, there are emerging professional companies with high quality, attractive designs products. However, competitors are mostly online startups with limited resources like Insjö's situation. They also have been increased their products and marketing activities for raising brand awareness.

Bag organizer products are designed for differentiation and segmentation in organizing and functional accessories market. Insjö products are the combination of elegance, high quality and versatility and reasonable price for consumers.

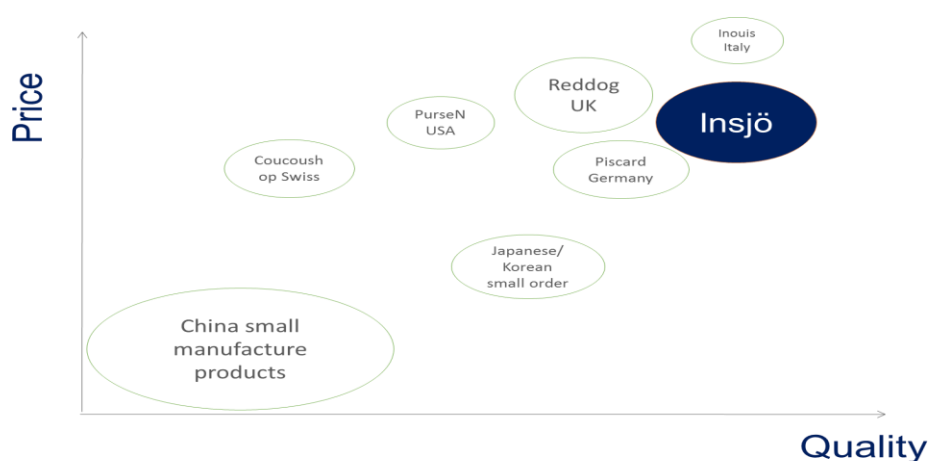


Figure 4. Insjö product price and quality position in 2016 company market research (Insjö internal materials, 2016)

Insjö market research report conducted in the beginning of 2016 showed the company products segments in the global competition of bag organizer manufacturers. Generally, Insjö bag organizers are considered as elegant design and high quality products, which is suitable for wide range of usages and target customers. Durable and washable nylon materials are chosen for Insjö bag organizers. Besides light weight and colorful appearance, Insjö bag products are designed with buttons for adjustable ability and shoulder straps holes on both sides for external usage. These value added features differentiate Insjö products from other bags from competitors. Therefore, the price-value proposition are considered as reasonable.

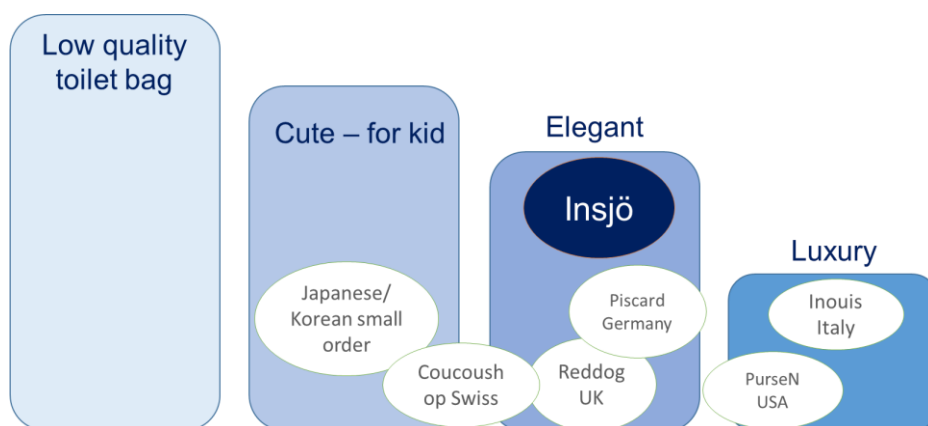


Figure 5. Insjö marketing positioning in 2016 company market research (Insjö internal materials, 2016)

However, the products are in the same price range with luxury products from PurseN and have similar designs with design with other two companies. Therefore, as market of bag organizers and functional accessories is developing, not only Insjö's products but also the company's operating services are being continuously improved to deliver outstanding experiences to customers. Moreover, marketing and branding activities have been fostering for attracting new customers and consolidating companies' positions. Thus, brand building and managing are crucial for Insjö sustainable development but also positioning in global markets.

The popularity of internet presents both new opportunities and challenges for business development. Online activities are essential for companies and products to reach consumers and raise the awareness effectively in large scale with economical investments. In addition, social network and online communities are informative channels for companies to update, communicate and enhance intimacy relationship with their customers. Therefore, online branding has been focused and strategically planned by businesses recently.

3. Brand building and management

3.1. Brand

According to the definition of American Marketing Association in 2008, a brand is described as "a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's goods or services as distinct from those of other sellers". It is considered as the primary element for products demonstrating and reflecting its characteristics and therefore, its position (Serrano, 2008).

A brand is the reason to choose (Cheryl Burgess, 2011). Globalization has presented to the customers countless options (i.e., a mix-and-match game among factors of price levels, product materials, designs, quality) from worldwide manufacturers. Facing with myriads of offers, customers have tendency to consume from the well-known brand, considered them as guarantee for product performance and quality. Satisfactory experiences result in repeated purchasing, which constructs long-term customer loyalties and favorable brand public image. Therefore, good brand name creates barriers of entry for new businesses, which is considered as long-term competitive advantage for the company (Keller, 2008).

The brand story is unique and based on company's own culture and its differentiated products and services. Although the brand is built with specific characteristics by marketers initially, the actual brand image and reputation would be transformed depends on their customers' experiences, knowledge and perceptions. The brands are owned by their customers with distinguishing aspects influenced by the company's culture and activities (Keller, 2008).

Brand equity is commonly known as value of brand, which is based on consumer attitudes about positive brand attributes and favorable consequences of brand use. It is the tangible and intangible value that brand create either positive or negative halo effect on an organization as well as its products and services. Brand equity is derived from customer knowledge, perceptions and experiences with the brand (Susan Gunelius, 2013). As the brand equity represents the brand value to customers and its position in the market, maximizing brand equity is critical for the organization benefits and future growth.

3.2. Branding

Branding is a business process of brand building and managing, which requires long-term integrated cooperation from different business operating functions and continuous investments, especially developed by marketing. Branding is the art of aligning what you want people to think about your company with what people actually think about your company (Jay Baer, 2011). Although the products and manufacturing processes are duplicated, long-lasting impressions in customer minds of organization images from years of marketing activities are not easily to copied (Keller, 2008). Branding strategy should be integrated developed from the early stages and constantly improved.

Although brand is owned by customers, its success is based on the long term strategic plans derived from the company mission and vision (Breinig, 2014). Mission is a brief description of business fundamental purpose, which simply tells why the firm is exist. The organizational and public purposes are included in the company mission, in other words, it "broadly describe and organization' presence capability, customer focus, activities and business makeup" (Fred

David, 2011). Business vision communicates the overall goals and is used for strategic decision-making process across the organization. It simply describes what the company wants to achieve and how it wants to be recognized in the future (Paula Fernandes, 2017). Mission and vision are crucial for foundation and structure of branding as it express the company's core competences to the public. They construct brand unique characteristics from organization culture and brand long-run integrated strategic plans, which is valuable for brand positioning and differentiating.

Main mission statement, "Keeping things beautifully organized", describes the main benefits of Insjö's products, hence, used as brand slogan "Beautifully organized". According to the company mission and vision for 2020, Insjö brand name is aiming for leading position in new global market sector of organizing and functional accessories.

VISION ELEMENTS FOR 2020

TURNOVER TARGET: 7,5 million EUR

POSITION: innovative market leader

TARGET MARKET: organising market, functional accessories

TARGET GROUP: all people, 21-55 old

GEOGRAPHICAL MARKETS: Global online operations, but Europe in focus, maybe Asia

Figure 6. Insjö vision elements for 2020 (Source. Insjö internal branding documents)

As the customer perceived value is the cornerstones of successful brand, the goal of branding is achieving brand loyalty from clients. Brand loyalty is customer tendency to repeating choose one brand's products over others. It shield business from marketing actions of competitors, at the same time, it grants with better margins, more positive reactions in response to price changes, and greater efficacy of marketing communication (Kotler and Keller, 2006).

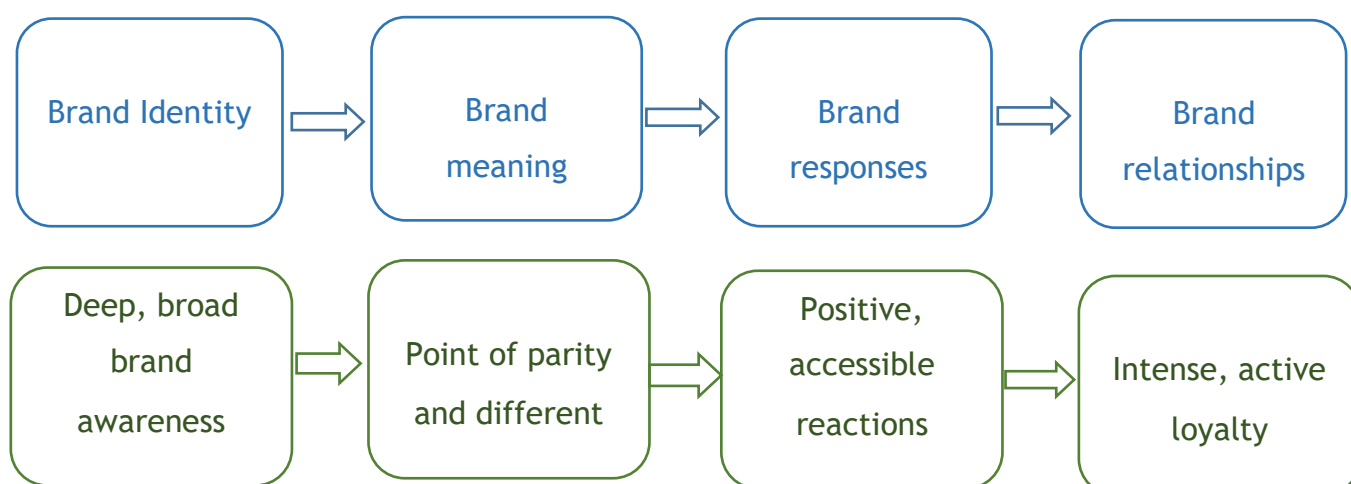


Figure 7. Four steps of brand building with correlative brand objective at each stage (Keller, 2008)

According to Kevin Keller (2008) process of brand building, at the first stage of brand building, the repeated brand display in public is necessary to attract customer and raise awareness. Customer interests and knowledge of the brand is the foundation for any further brand involvement. As the consumers seeking for suitable choice among available offers, the brand familiarity creates a distinctive meaning and differentiated messages to customer minds. Favorable clients responses, after experiencing the brand products requires further encouragement and communication from marketing and customer services to consummate the long lasting brand relationships and develop loyalty. Stages in branding progress have specific objectives in respect of customer perceptions. Branding is conducted in all stages of the process in the same time because customers have different viewpoints and brand recognition at different point of time. Therefore, diffusion of brand identity is the cornerstone for the process of enhancing customer experience awareness via brand experiences. Accompany with marketing activities, the company should also dedicate their efforts to sustain customer relationship and other brand associations for long-term benefits.

3.3. Brand associations

Brand awareness is the main source of brand equity and contributes to the final goal - brand loyalty. Brand awareness includes brand recognition and brand recall performance as the result of constant exposure to brand image and information. Brand recall is especially important for online brands, when customer decisions are mostly made in far away from the point of purchase. It is customer's ability to retrieve the brand from memory associated with a specific product category. Brand recall is unaffected by buying contexts, i.e. shopping at brick-and-mortar stores or online shopping. By repeated brand exposure, customer brand familiarity can be increased (Keller, 2008). The more customers see, hear and think about the brand, the more they are aware of the brand. Brand name, symbol, logo, slogan and appearance are the brand associations exposed to customers through public relations, advertising, promotion, sponsorship, events and other marketing activities. They create the initial emotional impressions about the brand and products, which is fundamental for further brand involvements.

Brand name, logo, slogan and product appearance are essential for customer emotional impression, and consequently form brand association. They are carefully designed for catchy impression and splendid product demonstration. Each elements in brand associations plays different role in building equity, they should be mixed and matched to maximize the brand equity through marketing practices.

3.3.1. *Brand name*

According to Keller (2008), brand name creates the first impression to customers. Impressive brand name stirs up customer interests and leaves memorable feelings with the products. They are blended with outstanding features of product and brand as a notable reminder.

Insjö means lake in Swedish, the brand name is chosen as a hint of Nordic elegant and peaceful lakes beauty. It not only partly describes the geographical origin of the company but also links with the exquisite and high functionality Nordic products. In the beginning, the name was selected to bring familiarity for Finland and Scandinavia market. Gradually, Insjö become interesting and curious for international customers, who have been time and efforts to look for the company and products.

3.3.2. *Logo*

Logo is the abbreviation of the brand name in unique graphic design. The uniqueness and meaning of brand logo is the most memorable element (Keller, 2008). In some cases, logo is literally presents whole brand name for easy recognition.

Insjö's logo is white firm font brand name in dark Blue Square, as expressing the Nordic style. Although Insjö brand logo seemed to be identical with its brand name as a brand name, it makes company brand name is more memorable for customers.

3.3.3. *Slogan*

Firms often use short phrases with concise meaning and implication to describe product notable performance or brand commitments. Slogan is usually found below brand logo in public advertises, banners, websites packages (Keller, 2008). Catchy slogans could effectively attract customers' attentions and remind the brand images.

As mentioned above, "Beautifully organized" is Insjö slogan, which indicates product ideas. It emphasized neat expected experiences after using Insjö products. Although bag organizer is innovative idea for many new customers, they agree the slogan is helpful for imagining product usage.

3.3.4. *Product*

The products performances and experiences create core perceived value with customers. The influences from the satisfied product and brand experiences could strengthen customers' loyalty (Keller, 2008). Moreover, products express brand message to customers by their performance and quality.

In order to fulfill customer expectation, Insjö bag organizers were designed from personal experiences of company founder and were continuously developed according to core brand key attributes. The product key attributes are notable characteristics reminding customers with favorable memories. They differentiate brand products with others and represent the brand with uniqueness meaning. Therefore, products are symbolic of brand to customers in various aspects from designs, functioning to quality.

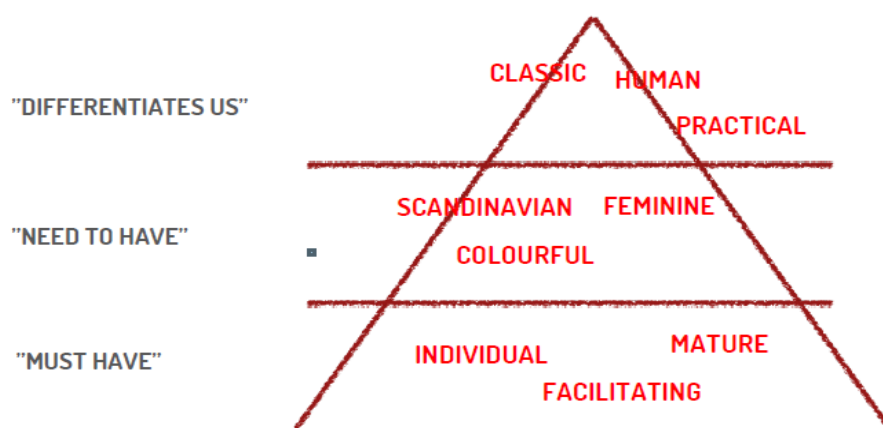


Figure 8. Insjö brand attributes (Source: Insjö internal branding materials, 2016)

The Insjö's products are introduced in various colors and made with washable nylon materials to support customer conveniences. As the consumer concerns about poor looks of many available bag organizers from other manufacturers, the bags are designed with elegant appearance, which makes customers comfortable to use them as normal bags with Insjö exclusive additional accessories. Insjö products are developed with neat design and durable materials, which conveys Nordic inspiration to the customers.

3.4. Online branding

The booming of internet-connected personal handheld devices (e.g. smartphones and tablets) and the popularity of social networks and online media, the speed of communication and sharing information has been accelerated dramatically. For example, the world largest social network, Facebook, reached 1.86 billion of active accounts in the end of 2016 with an enormous amount of daily interactions. Online media and news channels have been developed available around the clock and customized to the users' lifestyle. Consequently, customers have acquired new habit of seeking for brands and products information, especially before making purchase. Their favorite information sources are recommendations and feedbacks of previous customers on websites, online communities and forums as these sources are believed to provide more authentic and honest evaluations than the manufacturer's advertisements.

Moreover, customers' online word-of-mouth has considered as electronic word of mouth, which is able to reach global customers and more effective than conventional promotions. Electronic word-of-mouth is defined as any business action that earns a customer recommendation from a marketing perspective on the internet (Word of Mouth Marketing Association, 2012). Positive recommendations and feedbacks in virtual communities could influence customer satisfactions, increase the brand awareness, contribute to post-purchasing perception and re-buying behaviors (Purnawirawan, 2012).

On the other hand, social networks and online media are valuable sources for business to understand their target customers. They provides marketers with information about their consumers' expectations and feedbacks, which is necessary for improving products features, communication and marketing plans (Martinez-Lopez & Luna, 2008, Powell et al., 2011). Besides public forums and communities, firms have established their official groups and social accounts for customers to get direct updates and feedbacks. Therefore, engaging customers in to conversations allows the company not only solve effectively with customer problems but also to establish and maintain relationships, thereby, resulting in better brand experiences (Fluss and Eisenfeld, 2009).

Social network and online media have created valuable opportunities to communicating with customers. Marketing communications, when being sufficiently utilized, can inform, persuade and remind customers of the brand directly or indirectly. Besides marketing activities for augmenting awareness, online interactions with customers allow quick and effective accessibility to voice-of-customer and enhance long-term relationships (Hughes & Boudreaux, 2010; Webber, 2007).

3.4.1. Websites

Online branding requires for details, useful reviews and effective communication. Beside advertisements with information related to brand and products, people have the tendency to check the company official sources such as website, social network accounts first for detail descriptions. Moreover, bloggers' products reviews and social network posts are useful channels for brand to deliver the authentic product experiences and receive constructive feedbacks from open conversations among potential customers.

Official webpage is an important source of detailed information about the company and its products (Keller, 2008). The consumers usually start looking for details from the brand website by using brand name linked to virtual address or online searching tools. Therefore, official websites are registered with specific brand name URL (uniform resource locator) to im-

prove customer visit rate. Moreover, interface and contents provided on webpage effects customer brand experiences, especially online businesses.

With the development of online shopping platform, customer purchase decisions depends on the information their found from various offers. Accurate descriptive details and images are valuable support to purchasing decision. Besides informative product details, payment and delivery methods also contribute to shopping experiences. Although, visitors may not have suitable choice among the firm's product category, they have high awareness with the brand by brand story and smooth experiences when exploring in the website. They may share their interesting feelings and recommend the company to other customers that may need the products.

Insjö website, www.insjö.com, was constructed in user-friendly interface with white and blue color scheme. Currently, there are seven languages and different currency versions of the website customized for international consumers beside Finland. The front page is designed with medium banners sizes, thus the instant preview links of best-selling and new arrival products are available as helpful illustrations of unfamiliar concept bag organizers for new customers.

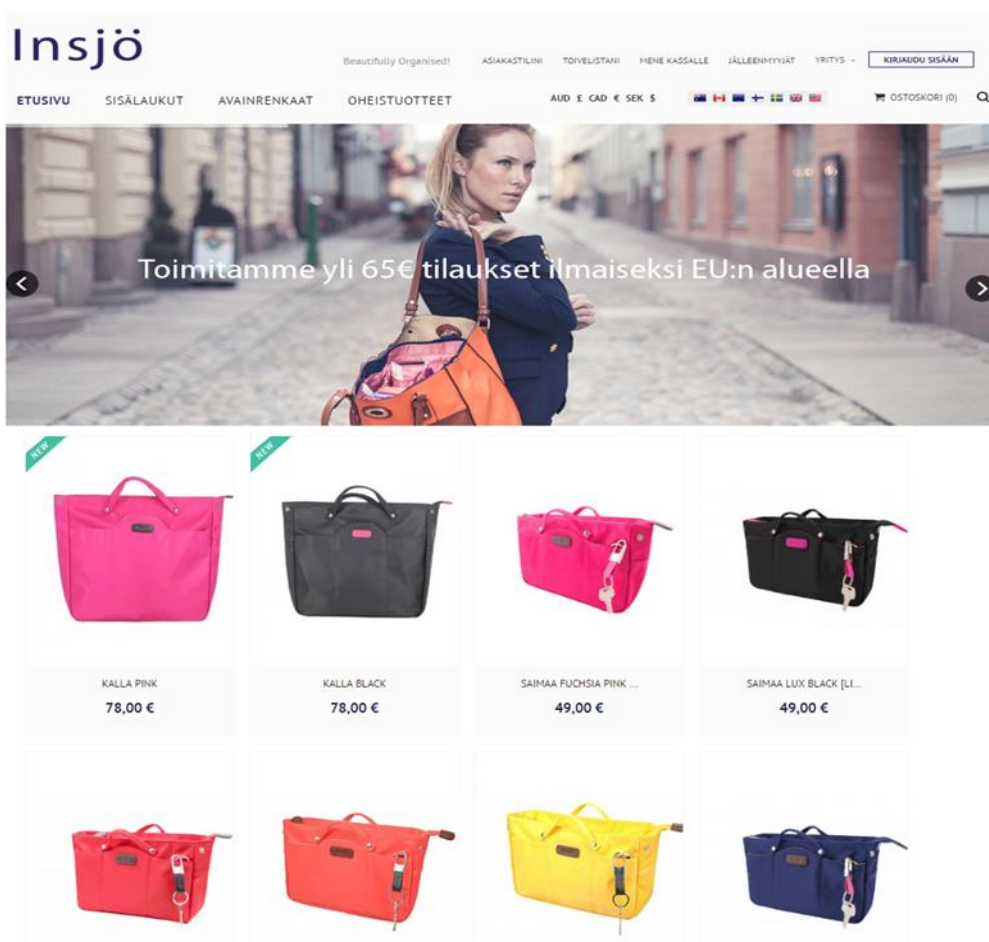


Figure 9. Insjö website structure (Insjö Website, www.insjo.com, 2016)

3.4.2. Social network

Accompanying with the impressive breakthrough in mobile devices and telecommunication technology, the ways of social interactions have been significantly redefined and reformed. Almost everybody joined the social networks for communicating as new daily hobbies. For example, Facebook, the world largest social networks, officially announced reaching 1.86 billion active users in the end of 2016. Other social networks such as Instagram, Twitter, and Snap Chat also host enormous real-time information shared by participants. However, selection of social network for marketing should be chosen depends on brand category and target customers. The more attention company pay on their surroundings, the better they can understand customers. Therefore, they can improve brand message and image embedded in discussions on social networks and provides fresh ideas for future marketing activities (Li and Bernoff, 2009, p.109).



Figure 10. Choosing the right social media platform for business. (Accion, 2015)

Although there are many social network on the internet, active user groups are different for each kind of communities. Hence, depending on company target customers and business sector, social media platform needed to select carefully to support the brand message and gain large attentions. Moreover, companies should participate in many online communities for widely brand public exposure and enrich their communication channels with their followers, which is helpful for marketing activities.

Insjö products are fashion accessories, which are attract attentions by illustration photos. Therefore, Facebook and Instagram is the most suitable to virtual companies like for Insjö to develop marketing and customers communication activities. Besides catalogues and look books, the versatility of functionality of Insjö products in daily life photos have been shared weekly, therefore, customers can have holistic understanding of product usability. Moreover,

marketing information are updates in social networks to get customers involve in the campaign and they are encouraged to share the posts to obtain giveaway rewards.

3.4.3. Blogs

Online blogs are personal website, which consists hobbies-oriented articles, are informally written by the founder and are followed by people with common interests. As customers are overwhelming with advertises and promotions in mass media and various competitive products in the market, experiences of bloggers are considered as reliable sources for the customers to fully understand practical aspects of products. Companies have sponsored famous bloggers for sharing their products experiences and information with their followers to gain more public attention.

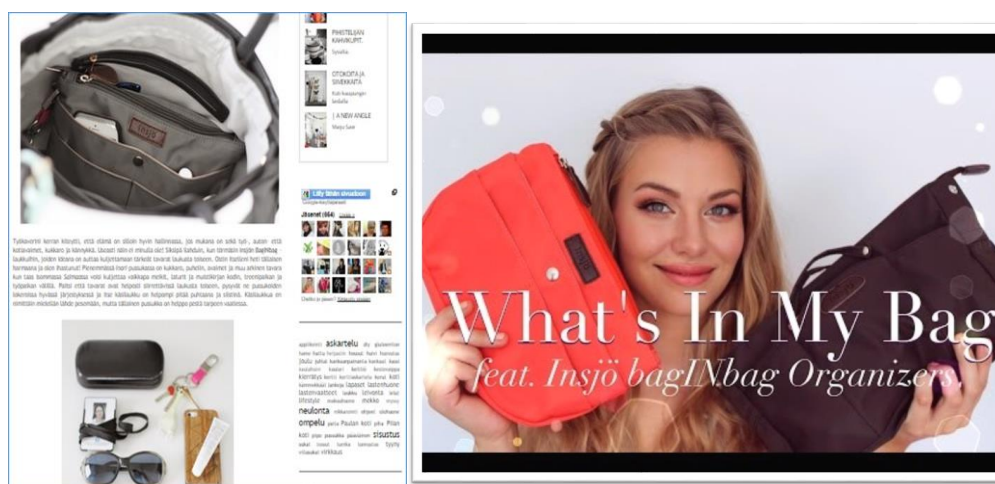


Figure 11. Blog and video Vlog reviews of Insjö products (Source: Insjö Marketing internal material, 2016).

Insjö has been collaborated with many fashionistas and lifestyles bloggers mostly in Finland, Europe and North America for product review to take advantage of their influences on the company's targeting customers. The blog posts have been shared through Insjö social network accounts, which provide interesting inspirations about products presence in daily life. However, bloggers are considered as consumers, also have their own expectations. By expressing their opinions through blog posts, comments and discussions evoked are valuable for company improvements. Moreover, bloggers articles and videos often include products information mentioned and include free shipping code for their followers to order from Insjö websites.

3.5. Inbound marketing

Public exposure and customer awareness are critical for brand reputation. Hence, businesses have been utilized the technology innovation and new marketing techniques to attract cus-

tomer attentions. Inbound marketing is new marketing concepts of focusing on attracting customers through contents and interactions that are relevant and helpful but not interruptive (HubSport, 2017). Inbound marketing feeds the customers to brand information while they are actively searching for product categories. This marketing strategies utilize many pull marketing techniques such as content marketing, blogs, social media and search engines optimization to increases brand awareness (Marketo, 2017). Inbound marketing implementation requires combination of customer understanding, wide-reaching websites, active social networks contents and search engines optimization.

Insjö has improved official websites with different languages for international customers and social networks activities for better customer understanding. However, the results of bag organizers on Google searching tools show that Insjö links are in low rank and Insjö bags images are overwhelmed by other products, which affects company brand awareness. Optimize the searching key words; matching searching words in existing contents of posts on blogs, websites and social media; creating new contents for searching key words by actively advertising on online media channels together with improving the website infrastructures can improved the ranks of company results on online tools. Higher ranks in online search engines encourages customers to visit brand websites and draws in potential customers.

3.6. Social customer relationship management

Besides the traditional customer relationship management technique, since the operating has expanded to internet, new approaches are required. Social customer relationship is an evolution of traditional customer relationship management tactics, of which goals is engaging, monitoring, analyzing and developing relationships with customers via social networks, websites and other digital channels (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2016). Strong social customer relationship management benefits the company with profound customer understanding in finding the most fitting position strategy. In addition, favorable relationship with followers on social networks constructs positive brand reputation and increases brand awareness by customer's satisfied word of mouth. Sustainable customer relationships boosts marketing activities and other brand activities.

Social customer relationship management should align with business goals. Comments and opinions on blogs and social networks should be collected and frequently replied for maintaining and developing healthy relationship with customers. Especially, consumers' feedbacks and problems shared on virtual communities or emails must be addressed in time with, clear explanation and solutions. Moreover, customer data gathered from website visits, marketing reactions, social network engagements should be analyzed for measuring the efficacy and efficiency of social customer relationship strategies.

3.7. Risk of the Social Web for Branding

The social webs have an effect on both branding and reputation of the organizations. Due to customers conflicting opinions and uncontrollable online posts related to the brand and products, some companies are reluctant to permit consumers to participate in the creation and management of their brand images (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2016). Negative comments and feedbacks hurt brand reputation and image in long term, and undermine the company's revenue and growth.

Some companies try to gain control over their brand image by eliminating negative feedbacks. However, customers are smart and able to recognize easily the company's rejections of their opinions, which makes them feel unrespected. It could lead to hostile reactions to and depleting confidence in the brand (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2016).

However, obscuring customer sharing hinders the brand awareness and impedes business developments. Customers' connections will be limited, which sometimes leaves negative impacts for marketing activities and branding results due to customers' lack of interactions with brand. "In any case, internet users will criticize companies when they feel like they are not being treated properly, regardless of whether the company is present on social media" (Spaulding, 2010).

Customer criticism grants the company priceless opportunities to understand the root cause of their unfavorable brand experiences. Maintained online customer relationships are critical for brand to actively fulfill customers' demands and expectations, which increase their intense loyalty. "It is incomprehensible how unaware many companies are about what is being said about them on social media; they do not understand how useful the users' comments can be to them" (Hughes & Boudreaux, 2010). Customer's feedbacks and opinions online are valuable, it is time saving and efficient for company to identify and solve the problems by direct contacting with customers. As the online information flows is fast, quick responses should be made to reduce negative effects on brand reputation. Probably handling negative opinions helps portray a professional, responsible and customer-oriented image of the company.

4. Research

Christmas season is the opportunity to increase sale volume, Insjö enhances their physical appearance by participating in Christmas markets in Helsinki, Finland. At the same time, direct interviews were conducted with customers with relevant questions about online branding activities. Moreover, Finland is still defined as the most important market for Insjö at least in

the next five years, customers' direct feedbacks and influences of online branding activities to customer actions in practice are critical for improvement in brand consolidation.

The research was conducted during the 10th November to 23rd December, 2016, during Insjö Christmas sales campaign. Christmas sales started from the 2nd until 23rd of December, 2016 in six joined Christmas markets in Helsinki area. The 2016 campaign was chosen to evaluate the effectiveness of Insjö online activities and customers' brand awareness and responses. Hence, marketing activities for 2016 Christmas campaign were implemented solely via online tools, e.g. newsletter emails, social network posts, websites banners. It was a modification in comparison with the campaign of the previous year, which had employed a combination of online announcement and advertisement on magazines. Promotion codes for online purchasing were also published on social networks for customers.

The research was conducted by both quantitative and qualitative methods. The customer directs interviews qualitative support the research in the aspects of "conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation" (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p.3). The direct interview was used for collecting customers' feedbacks. The interviews allows direct control over the data structure and clarify certain unclear or confusing when necessary. Therefore, brand perceptions of Finnish customers would be deeply analyzed as foundation for brand improvement in Finland specifically, and other target markets in business expansion. Besides, the promotion codes were used for estimating the order generated by Insjö social media activities, by customers in and outside Finland. Combination of direct interviews and statistics from promotion codes supports the research with profound understanding about customers' responses on social media and possibly distinguishes the branding influences for customers in Finland and other countries.

Company intention was evaluating the influences and effectiveness of Insjö branding and marketing online activities. Due to limited human resource, Insjö did not have chances to obtain customer responses previously. Therefore, this research provides valuable insights for planning adjustments.

The research includes customers' interviews with question about brand perception at Insjö stands in Christmas markets, analysis of order on Insjö webpage generated influences and customers responses on social networks.

4.1. The customer interviews

During the campaign, customers were interviewed with simple questions related to Insjö information and their opinions about the brand. There were 43 women participated in the direct interviews. Not all participants in the interviews had known about Insjö and not all of them bought Insjö products previously. The participants were in company's major target customers group - women with age range from 25 to 65. They were asked 5 to 8 questions which are varied depending on their knowledge about company brand.

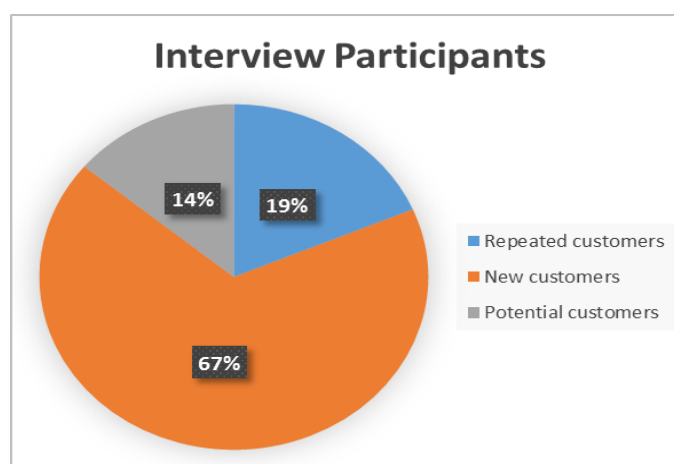


Figure 12. Interview participant structures at Insjö Christmas Markets Sales 2016.

Insjö visitors of the Christmas Markets in 2016 were categorized as repeated customers, new customers and potential customers. Repeated customers are customer previously bought Insjö products regardless of from Insjö websites and other retailers shops. New customers could be those who had already known and those who did not know about Insjö before hand, and they bought Insjö product for the first time at the Christmas markets. Potential customers know about Insjö and bag organizers previously but they did not buy Insjö products at Christmas Markets.

4.2. Online promotion activities

Insjö social networks accounts have been active since late 2015, which have accumulated approximately 4000 followers, over 3254 likes on Facebook account and 798 followers on Instagram in December, 2016. Updates and bloggers' posts have increased the follower base and attention for marketing activities. Insjö's connection via social networks with customers and followers have improved customers relationships, they have been actively participated in giveaway contests of Insjö products, liked and commented on posts about new products line and products colors.

However, Insjö had used promotion codes exclusively for bloggers' followers but not for customers and followers from company sources. Therefore, company applied a special code for

10% off for online customers and published via Insjö Facebook and Instagram for studying customers' interests and effectiveness. The promotion application in customers' online orders were recorded for comparing with the total orders volume and information in order to provide the changes in customer responses. Moreover, the data of Christmas Sales Campaign was used to clarify the business development.

The information about the offline sales was shown on websites banners with details about time and locations. This campaign information did not use bloggers collaboration since it was the test on Insjö online branding effectiveness.

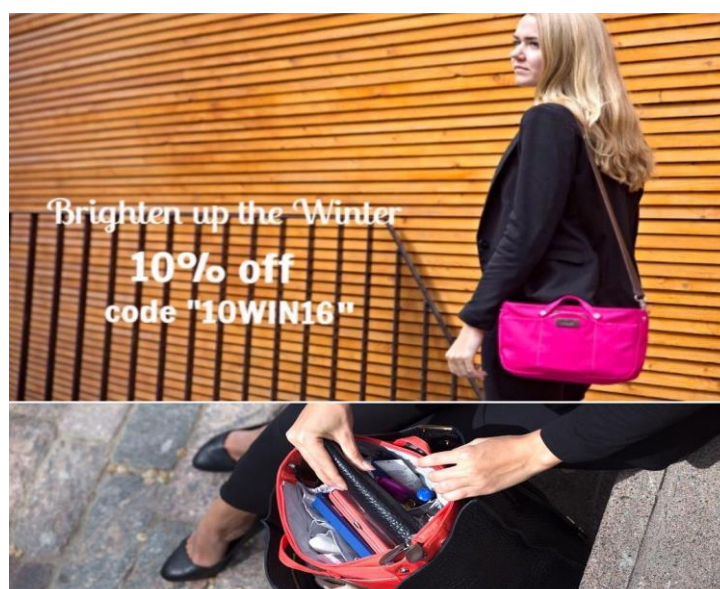


Figure 13. Insjö promotion code post on Insjö Facebook and Instagram for Christmas Campaign in 2016 (Source: Insiö Facebook)

4.3. Research findings

84% of interviewed Finnish customers was familiar with the brand name while others though they did not concern about it. Although the Insjö logo was not attractive to customers (only 15% of interviewed customers could recognize it), 45% of the customers remembered the theme photo. They found it inspiring for illustrating the idea of organizer bags. Moreover, 92% of participants in the face-to-face interviews admitted that the concept of bag organizer was ambiguous to them and the website photos (e.g. as in figure 14), banners did not explain the concept clearly. By the time, the theme photos reminded customer about Insjö as they learnt about the brand by the description and information online and magazine advertisements.



Figure 14. Insjö theme photo (Source: Insjö Marketing internal materials, 2016)

Most of new customers and potential customers joined at Insjö Christmas market sales had searched for Insjö information and products before purchasing. Besides official website, they found comments on Insjö Facebooks, bloggers' reviews and recommendation are constructive. Moreover, they agreed Insjö offline sales was good opportunities for them to feel the products before making final decisions.

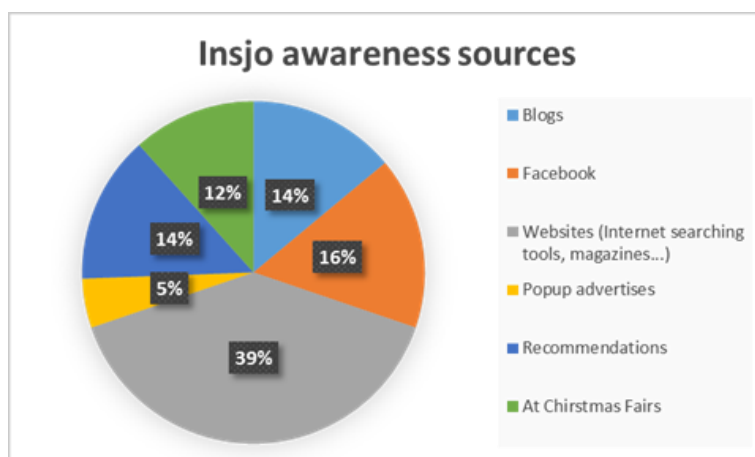


Figure 15. Customers' sources of awareness about Insjö

Insjö has had positive reputation for product quality and experiences according to 73% of customers. By searching for other similar products, 94% customers were satisfied with the price range of Insjö products, its attractive appearance, durable materials and flexible functions although potential customers still thought they do not need for a bag organization soon. Specifically, interviewees think the designs are good and feel comfortable with washable ma-

terials. In addition, a wide range of product colors and material firmness are impressive to all participants. However, 3% of participants propose about larger size of bag organizers for their tote bags.

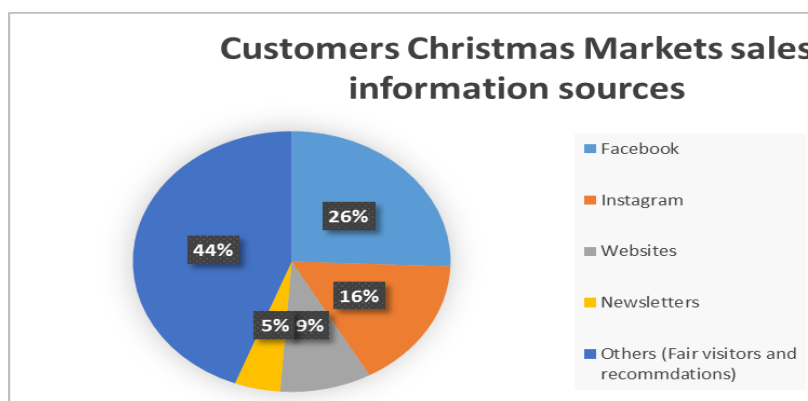


Figure 16. Customers' Insjö Christmas campaign online information sources

Insjö Christ-

mas campaign attracted 55% of interviewed customers via social media activities, Facebook and Instagram announcements, website banners and newsletters. The official websites received positive feedbacks from all interviewees, they found it easy to navigate and search for desired products. The measurements, products descriptions and illustrations on websites are helpful. Thus, the campaign information was easily noticed in the popup banners. Moreover, 64% of customers has been following Insjö Facebook and Instagram. They enjoyed the useful posts and found photos describing product functionality in reality are inspiring. The company's activities on social networks were considered as not disturbing to the customers, some of them even suggested the posts should be updated a bit more often.

There were two promotion codes for customers to apply when making purchase on Insjö website, free delivery code and 10% discount code. The free shipping code published on Insjö social networks brought a considerable increase of 18% for orders outside Finland on official websites in comparison to previous year. However, it did not affect the domestic sales volume because the customers in metropolitan area decided to visit Insjö stands for shopping while enjoying Christmas spirit.

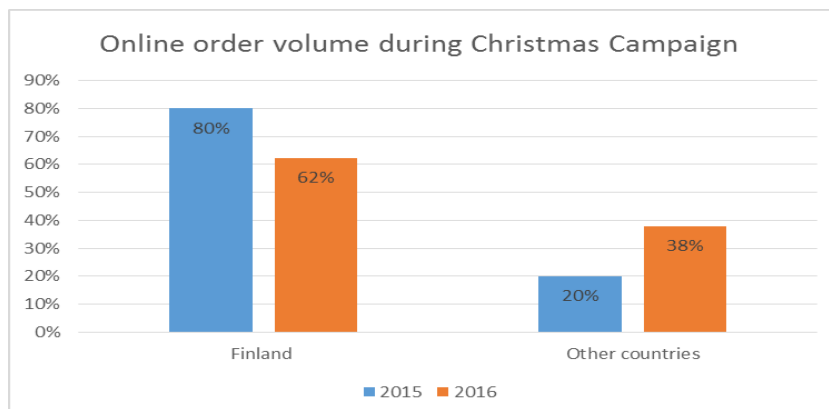


Figure 17. Online order volume during Insjö Christmas Sales Campaign in 2015 and 2016.

Although, the website's domestic sales volume on the website was improved, especially for customers not living in the Helsinki area, the order volume from Finnish customers still experienced an 18% decrease compared to 2015. The promotion code was applied for 74% of online orders via Insjö official websites from customers in other countries while it was only 25% of orders in Finland in 2016 Christmas Campaign.

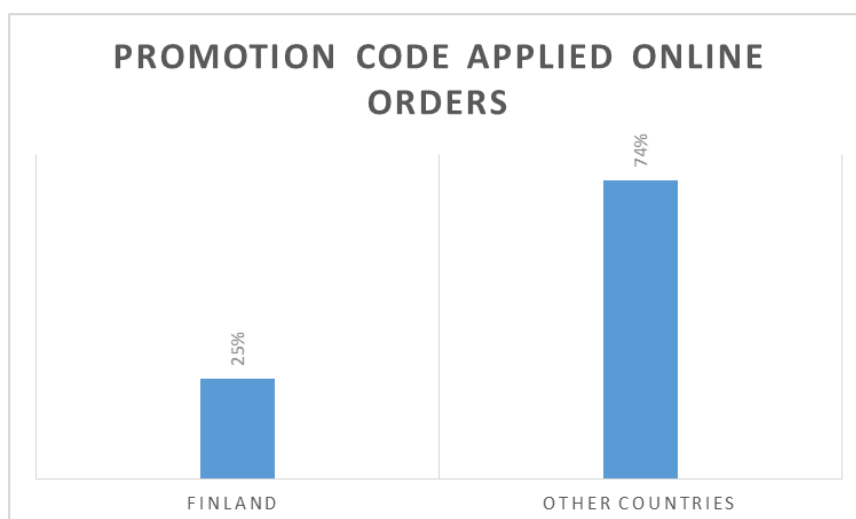


Figure 18. Percentage of promotion code applied online orders during Insjö Christmas Campaign in 2016.

However, most of Finnish customers' online orders were not from Helsinki area customers, which could be explained by 51% of interview participants' visits from Insjö online announcements and a 63% increase in revenue from Christmas Markets Sales 2016 in comparison with 2015.

Insjö Christmas campaign in 2016 was operated without the utilization of traditional magazine advertisements and bloggers' influences. Insjö used influences from social networks, websites and

newsletter to spread campaign promotion. The information created motivations for customers in Helsinki area to visit Insjö stands for their purchases and better experiences with the brand and products.

According to positive responses from visitors during 2016 Christmas Markets, Insjö brand reputation in Finland has been developed in respected with company oriented progress as brand awareness has been improved. Moreover, customers' satisfaction and further interests of other functional products beside bag organizers also increased. The online promotion codes issues revealed customers responses with brand social networks activities. Communications with customers on social networks was improved for attracting customers not only in Finland but also in other countries. The research findings also supports Insjö with valuable information for their future business expansion plan.

4.4. Reliability and Validity

4.4.1. Reliability and Validity of Quantitative research

According to Kananen (2013), the ability to generate similar results in case of duplication is referred as reliability. It is evaluated in the following two aspects: consistency and stability. The methodology of procedures and measuring results contribute the consistency of the research. In this thesis, it is supported by careful record tracking and categorizing online orders by countries and by which social media activities the customers has reacted to. The reasonable variable classification, data collection and analyzing techniques ensure the identical results in repeated research. Moreover, as the stability, the results are expected to remain relevant in at least three years. However, as the rapid advancement of in global communication development and technology innovation will be continued, the results may be changed according to the new emerging change with new online global trends. Therefore, the research reliability is satisfied in this thesis.

Research validity is assessed via internal validity and external validity. The internal validity refers to the correctness of the research conduction. On the other hand, the external validity is related to "the generality of the obtained results" (Kananen, 2015). In this research, the internal validity is fulfilled by reasonable choices of variable measurements. For instance, the customers was divided to classify by the influences of online activities and by different geographical regions. The customer responses in different countries are expected to remain stable in short-term. Moreover, the large data amount from website system allows scientific implementation of analyzing and review the information. On the other hand, the customers responses came from different countries beside Finland, reflects the ability to communicate

with the customers globally. Therefore, the results of the can be applied for companies with relevant and equivalent business status.

4.4.2. Reliability and Validity of Qualitative research

The reliability includes two criteria, confirmability and evaluability in qualitative research to ensure the scientific results. The confirmability is checking the correctness of data interpretation. The evaluability requires substantial documents, which support the right path of the research implementation (Kananen, 2013).

In this research, during the face-to-face interviews, the participants' answers and ideas were clarified directly by follow-up questions and in-the-spot clarification of the answers. Moreover, the results of the research were intensively discussed and closely supervised by the company's representative at every stage of the research analysis. Therefore, every the decisions was revised and adjusted for suitable options. Therefore the reliability of the qualitative research was achieved.

The validity of qualitative research refers to "whether the conclusions drawn by a researcher are correct" (Kananen, 2013). In order to maintain internal validity, the data interpretation was cross-examined by the company to ensure the consistency.

5. Online brand developing plan

Insjö is an online startup with limited resource for business developments. To Insjö, branding is an important part of its long run strategic plan, especially using effective online tools. Even though, the company 2020 target is becoming a leading brand for bag organizers and functional accessories, branding strategy is were outdated and needs to be adjusted. Therefore, this brand development plan aiming to support Insjö with feasible brand building practices in upcoming 2 years and consolidate branding strategies for achieving their targets.

Brand development plan intention is to supports Insjö staffs, shareholders with applicable activities for their future branding and marketing plans. Moreover, Insjö target customers group, including man and women from 20 to 60 year olds, could benefits from the branding results. The branding materials, online media and social network contents should be constantly renewed and updated, together with the application of new tools and techniques for reaching potential customers. Besides, managing and evaluating customers' responses of company branding activities are critical for further improvements as well as maintaining strong bonds with customers.

5.1. Branding materials

Insjö marketing and branding materials, including illustration photos, posters, and advertisements have not been effectively impressed customers. Brand logo and slogan had low responses from customers in the interview, which indicates the ineffectiveness in marketing display. Although customers agreed the slogan was catchy and meaningful for expressing Insjö products idea, it was not recognizable in the advertisements, banners and photos.

Insjö theme photo mentioned previously as noticeable for customers was used in different marketing and advertising materials for long time. Although it reminds customers of Insjö, reposting that picture on social media and marketing campaign reduce public attentions. Therefore, Insjö should have new photos to enrich their marketing and branding materials and inspires their customers with freshness.

5.2. Online media and social networks

Conventionally, Insjö marketing activities were executed conventionally via advertises on local newspapers and magazines. Recently, social networks, newsletters, blogs and websites have been improved with user-friendly interface and photos for attracting people attentions. However, Insjö involvement on virtual channels are limited. Besides the webpage and newsletters systems, Insjö participated only two social networks, Facebook and Instagram.

Although, they are most popular social networks with considered customers' responses and suitable for accessories and fashion businesses as Insjö, other online communities such as Pinterest, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube are ubiquitously utilized as communication channels by others company and have attract followers with diversity type of contents. By constantly changing marketing materials and providing followers with different types of contents on social media, Insjö would not only attracts more potential customers but also will inspire their customers through by interesting posts.

In addition, the popularity level of social communities are different in each countries. Therefore, Insjö should join other social networks for maximizing customer reach. Better customer understanding is critical for future Insjö expansion, as well as necessary for currently development plans involving Sweden and North America markets.

5.3. Technical advantages application for online branding

Internet innovation and technical advantages have supported businesses with valuable tools for understanding customers' responses and behaviors online. Therefore, continuously update

and apply new techniques are necessary for brand and company to deliver the best for their customers. Website infrastructure should be continuously updated and improved to create new appearance and experiences for visitors.

On the other hand, website traffic data from Google Analytics and other online managing tools should be often measured to provide profound understanding customers behaviors online and allows further improvements in the system.

Inbound marketing techniques, search engine optimization as mentioned above should be applied to attract potential customers to company online information, which not only increase brand awareness but also create new opportunities for business development.

5.4. Social customer relationship management

Moreover, customer's relationships would be extend and improved through actively online communication. Social customer relationship management of Insjö was able to create positive impression from customers thanks to rapid replies to customer inquiries and friendly communication on social media. However, more social media posts should be updated weekly to maintain attention from followers. Moreover, the social networks updates should be verified with not only Insjö products pictures and information but also daily short stories to bring intimate and friendly feelings for encouraging followers to participate in the conversations. Interesting contents on social media makes customers more open to comment, discuss and participate in brand related activities. Thus, customer information gathered from social communities supports company with better understanding for effective marketing campaign responses and higher visit rates.

5.5. Risks

Online branding and marketing requires continuous investments in different aspects for increasing brand awareness and customer perceived value in long term. Online branding includes new marketing practices using innovative internet tools, which may cause difficulties for company to adapt and utilize. The implementing of new marketing techniques for Insjö should be applied gradually with frequent evaluations and adjustments. Moreover, contents on social networks and online websites should be designed with clear, concise and inspiring messages for customer to understand easily. Otherwise, misunderstanding posts could hurt brand reputation and effect customer relationships.

Moreover, innovation in technology improves the businesses and customers with fast pace. Therefore, businesses should update the new trends not in only global markets but also in

technology, especially for bolstering the efficacy of online brand developing progress. Keeping up with the trending advantages in technology makes the brand and business benefits from the lucrative opportunities. However, the innovative adjustments should be carefully considered for relevant application in business circumstances.

The implementation of branding process needs to update depends on customer perception brand image. Customers' responses, feedbacks and activities should be carefully observed, collected and analyzed for understanding customer expectations and maintaining strong relationships.

6. Evaluation

6.1. Client company evaluation

The company's initial expectation for the thesis was brand building plan to revamp the previous branding strategy. Online branding strategies, which is suitable for Insjö's operation, were especially highlighted. Moreover, the development plan was expected to have immediate implementation in Insjö's upcoming activities, which would save company times and resources. The company also wanted the plan would enhance the brand position and customer awareness, which benefits could company with favorable reputation and future business expansion.

Referred to the commissioned client, the thesis was accomplished with all requirements and expectation. The online branding plan showed the possibility for applying as it was constructed based on Insjö's branding status and current operating situation. It clarified the necessary of online improvements, which benefits company long-term and sustainable brand strategy.

Although it is impossible for Insjö to implement and measure as suggested in the online brand development at the time of evaluation due to the current shortage of human resources and the company relocations, the branding plan will be implemented in the near future.

6.2. Self-evaluation

The plan was carried out as fulfill the company need for implementation in the near future. Moreover, the plan was created with suitable for company development situation by carefully observed, analyzed and discussed with client. Besides, the research provide company with current brand progress in Finland as well as their online influences with international customers.

Although the thesis was behind schedule due to the delay in discussion with clients, the plan was developed with relevant contents for company. All the requirements were accomplished and possible for immediate use because it was adjusted as the current company plan changes.

Branding is recently interesting business topic, which is inspiring as the business has expanded online. Multiple literature sources were used together with updated online articles. Therefore, the branding knowledge was not only attractive but also helpful for business innovation.

7. Conclusion

Concerning the limitation of this dissertation, the author does not have online analysis tools applications for profound measurement customer online behaviors on websites such as Google Analytics. Despite of the missing tools of online visitor tracking, the thesis is able to conduct a research about Insjö online branding influences for marketing campaign with customers' qualitative interviews and quantitative analysis of promotion codes used orders. It provides customers perception for Insjö brand and its influences of online marketing activities. The increase in brand awareness and customers involvements in company online activities is critical and valuable for development in long-run, which is not only necessary for favorable brand reputation and improved brand position in global market but also important to focus on for future benefits and effectiveness of marketing campaigns.

Online branding and marketing activities should be constantly updated and changed with new contents to create interesting information for attracting public attentions. The brand development plan provides the company with constructive suggestions for immediate implementing in their future branding activities. Due to the limited human resources, Insjö should outsource to specialists for marketing materials innovations to support brand reputation and establishes solid foundation for upcoming new market entry in European countries and North America.

Effective branding requires combination of online and offline activities. Insjö public marketing activities focus should be strengthened via company event sponsorships, banner displays activities together with online updates on websites, social networks and webpages advertisements for achieving the optimal branding results. In addition, assessment of branding activities should be conducted by analyzing online data and customers' feedbacks for appropriate adjustments. Customers' participation and involvements in company activities online are critical for increasing the brand awareness and brand position.

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Insjö websites data - Insjö internal sales report, 2016, Helsinki.

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Figure 7. Four steps of brand building with correlative objective at each stage (Keller K. L. (2008), *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*, 3rd international edition. New Jersey: Pearson Education International).

Figure 8. Insjö brand product attributes (Insjö branding internal materials, 2016)

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Customer direct interview questions	40
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Appendix 1: Customer direct interview questions

- Have you ever heard about bag organizer? Why do you think you need bag organizers?
- Have you know about Insjö? How do you know about Insjö? From social network, website with internet searching tools, blogs, recommendations from other people?
- Have you look for other bag organizer manufacturers? How do you think about Insjö products and other? What is your overall impression about Insjö products after looking up for products online? (design, materials, prices)
- Have you visit Insjö website? How do you think about Insjö website structure (On the scale from 1 to 5)? Are they easy to follow? (On the scale from 1 to 5)
- Have you ever plan to order from Insjö website? Do you think website need to be improved?
- Have you visit Insjö social networks pages? Do you think the posts on Insjö social networks are interesting and useful for your purchase? (On the scale from 1 to 5) What could be improved?
- How do you know about Insjö Christmas Market sales? From social network, website, recommendations from other people? Why you decided to shop in Insjö Christmas market sales instead of websites?
- How do you think about Insjö name, logo and slogan? (On the scale from 1 to 5 as comfortability) Are they concise? Are they confusing or impressive? What remind you about Insjö? (Name or logo, Products, Slogan, Photos...)
- If you bought from our website before, how do you think about the offer and the service? (On the scale from 1 to 5)
- Do you have any suggestion for Insjö to improve our service and website?