



**POLITICAL PERSONAL BRANDING
IN SOCIAL MEDIA UNDER THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTIONS 2014**

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Bachelor's thesis
May 2014
International Business

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ABSTRACT

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Bachelor's thesis 117 pages, appendices 1 page
May 2014

This thesis commissioned by MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen concerns political personal branding in social media. The focus is on adjusting personal branding efficiently in social media particularly in the political field. The thesis is a qualitative study. The study method used is benchmarking with the primary data of expert interviews. The secondary data includes other researches on the topic, books and online publications that are analyzed from the political personal branding point of view. Besides the introduction to the thesis, the commissioner and the research methods, the thesis includes theoretical framework, the study and the conclusions. Lastly, the thesis presents two practical campaign suggestions based on the outcomes.

Being conducted in the fall 2013 and spring 2014, just before the European Parliamentary elections 2014, the study is fairly topical. Personal branding has gained a lot of attention in recent years as digitalization offered new dimensions for gaining visibility. Many successful political campaigns concerning effective personal branding latterly have shown the benefits of utilizing personal branding particularly in social media. However, as the trend is rather new, many extensive studies regarding this specific topic has not yet been conducted.

First of all, the thesis focuses on the theoretical point of view to personal branding in social media by explaining product-based branding, personal branding and social media on the theoretical level. Secondly, the thesis aims to utilize the knowledge and tools of branding and link the outcomes with the political scene and social media. Social media communication, social media channels, content creation process, participation and commitment are separately described and analyzed to understand efficient use of social media for political personal branding purposes.

The outcome of the thesis describes the best practices of political personal branding in social media to successfully convey the brand message and gain visibility. Therefore the study aims in creating a solid ground for maintaining and strengthening a political personal brand presence in social media. As a part of the outcomes, the thesis includes two campaign proposals that are confidential information and marked as classified.

Key words: benchmarking, personal branding, social media, communication, social media channels, social media users, networking

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GLOSSARY

TAMK	Tampere University of Applied Sciences
cr	Study credit points
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
Frame of expressions	The frame of expressions illustrates all the expressions made intentionally to practically convey the brand message.
Para-social relationship	A relationship in which one party knows a lot about the other, but not the other way around. It is a one-sided “para-social” interpersonal relationship.

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis commissioned by MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen concerns political personal branding in social media. Before, studies and theses have been conducted regarding branding from different perspectives, but the thesis now focuses on adjusting personal branding specifically in the political field.

Being conducted in the fall 2013 and spring 2014, just before the European Parliamentary elections 2014, the study is fairly topical. Personal branding has gained a lot of attention in recent years as digitalization offered new dimensions for gaining visibility. Many successful political campaigns concerning effective personal branding latterly have shown the benefits of utilizing personal branding particularly in social media. However, as the trend is rather new, many extensive studies regarding this specific topic have not yet been conducted.

The objective of the thesis is to understand how a political personal brand is successfully conveyed in social media for gaining visibility. Therefore the study aims to create a solid ground for creating and maintaining a political personal brand presence in social media. First of all, the thesis focuses on the theoretical point of view to personal branding in social media by explaining the different variables that need to be taken into account. Secondly, the emphasis is in the utilization of these variables for successfully strengthening the personal brand's presence in social media.

1.1 Research question and framing

The research question for the thesis is *how can a political personal brand be effectively present in social media to gain visibility?*

In order to answer the research question, the thesis focuses on four separate questions that are illustrated in figure 1.

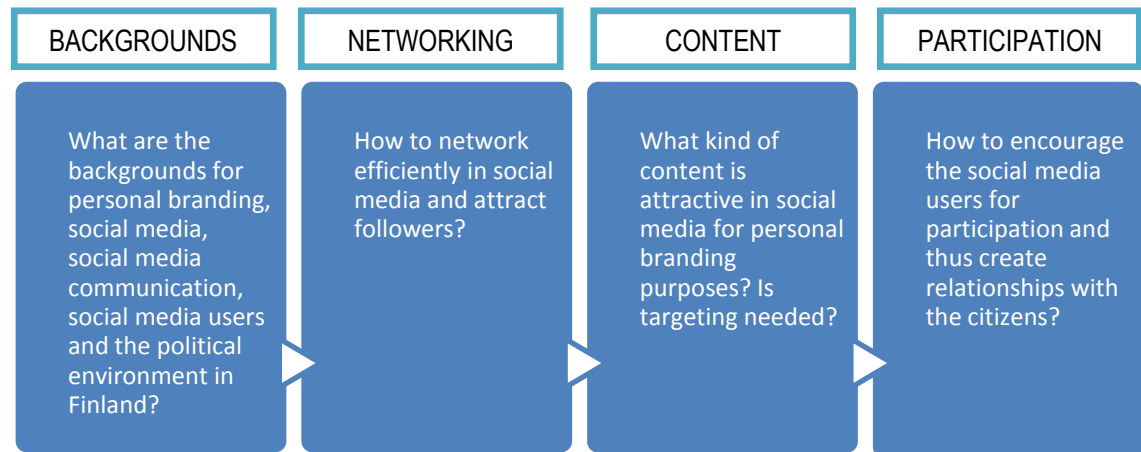


FIGURE 1. Questions to be answered in the thesis.

These questions are thought through together with the commissioner. All of the questions concerning backgrounds, networking, content and participation are to be answered in order to finally find the outcome for the main research question.

All in all, the focus is on the personal brand's essence of being present in social media as well as on participating and conveying the brand's core messages there. However, the thesis emphasizes in gained visibility instead of paid visibility. Consequently, brand marketing is not studied, but instead the interaction possibilities with the audience are emphasized.

1.2 The thesis structure

Besides the introduction regarding the thesis, the commissioner and the research methods, the thesis consists of the theoretical framework, the study and conclusions. Lastly, the thesis presents two practical campaign suggestions based on the outcomes.

Starting with the theoretical framework, the thesis first discusses product-based branding. As the same principles of product based branding apply to high visibility and personal branding, the thesis then moves on to the concept of personal branding. After covering the general branding point of view, the thesis discusses social media and the cho-

sen social media channels. All in all, the theoretical framework consists of first product-based branding, secondly personal branding and thirdly social media as shown in figure 2.

Throughout the study, the thesis is focused on applying the information of personal branding in political scene. The study is made with the upcoming European Parliamentary elections 2014 in mind, and the ideas and results are therefore adjusted to the Finnish political context accordingly.

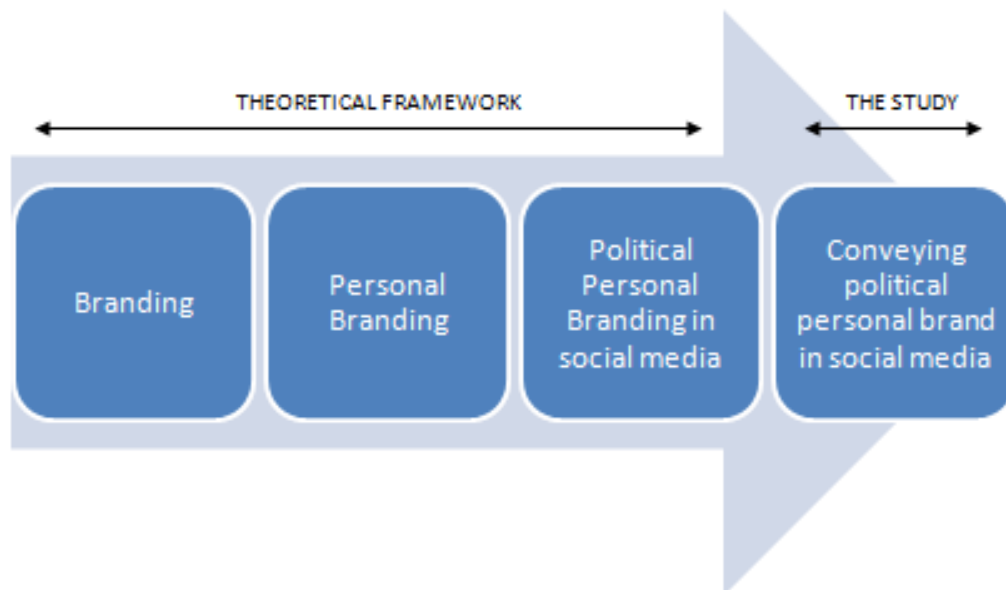


FIGURE 2. The structure of the theoretical framework and the study.

Following the theoretical framework, the thesis focuses on the study of conveying political personal brand in social media. As demonstrated in the Figure 3, the study was divided into 5 stages to finally reach the goal of understanding effective political brand's presence: 1) political personal brand 2) social media communication, 3) social media channels and users, 4) frame of expressions and content to be created and, lastly, 5) the participation and commitment of the audience in social media.

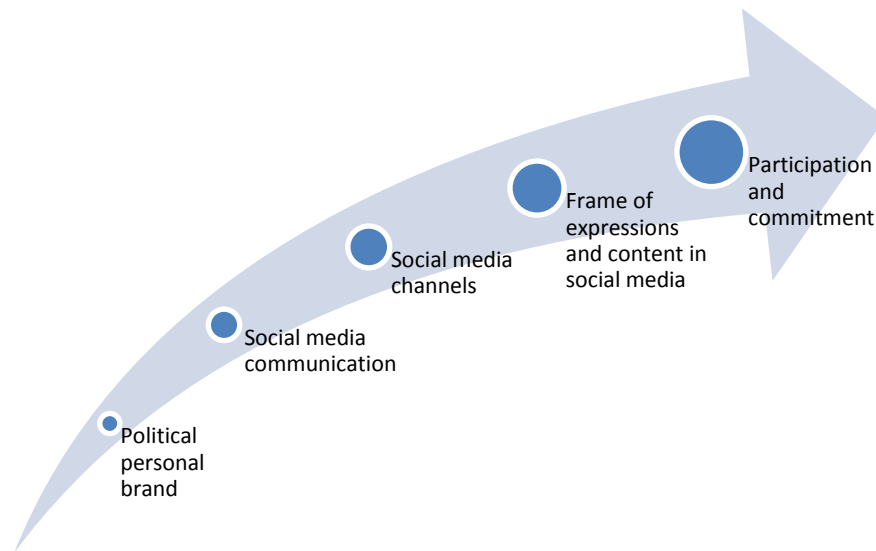


FIGURE 3. The structure of the study to understand effective presence of political personal brand in social media for gaining visibility.

1.3 The execution of the research

The thesis is a qualitative study. The method used is benchmarking and the primary data consists of expert interviews. The secondary data used for the study includes other researches on the topic, books and online publications that are analyzed from the political personal branding point of view.

1.3.1 Benchmarking

The definition of benchmarking might slightly differ according to the field of business. Stapenhurst (2009, 3) differentiates the two common aspects to many benchmarking studies to be “1. Comparison of performance levels to ascertain which organization(s) is achieving superior performance levels” and “2. Identification adaption/improvement, and adaption of the practices that lead to these superior levels of performance.” Therefore, benchmarking refers to comparing performance with other organizations or institutions for ascertaining the high performance level or to identifying the issues to be improved and finding the best practices to do so. Patterson, Keppler and Mapson explain that “benchmarking can be used to identify areas in which you can make significant improvements or matching systems that are proven better.” (1995, 19).

The definition of Patterson et al. describes the benchmarking method used for the thesis quite accurately. As the main objective of the study is to find out how political personal branding is done efficiently in social media, the thesis aims to utilize the knowledge and tools of branding and link the outcomes with the political scene and social media. Also the new insights and possibilities of the social media channels and communicational tools are analyzed from the political personal brand's point of view. As an outcome, the goal of the thesis is to describe the best practices in personal branding particularly for a politician and especially in social media.

1.3.2 Methods used for benchmarking

As said, the methods used for benchmarking are primarily the expert interviews and secondarily the already made nation-wide researches concerning social media, social media channels, social media users and the Finnish political scene. These researches are analyzed from the political personal brand's point of view to give more insight to the issue.

Firstly, the primary method used for benchmarking is to interview experts in the field of social media, personal branding and communications. This empirical part of the research is carried out using semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews are a combination of structured and unstructured interviews, providing more space for the interviewer to direct the conversation. Even though the semi-structured interviews are more flexible, they are done according to the themes that are to be explored. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 47-48.)

The method of semi-structured interviews is chosen as the experts to be interviewed have different backgrounds and hence represent slightly different point of views. By focusing on themes instead of already made questionnaires, the goal is to take into account different interpretations to give more insight to the overall topic. Even though more space is given to the interviewees' interpretations, the structures of the interviews are similar considering the themes to be discussed.

Riikka Kämppi, Head Campaign Manager of the presidential candidate Pekka Haavisto in 2011 and expert in communications, was interviewed in November 2013. Kämppi

was chosen to be one of the interviewees for her experiences and know-how both in politics and campaigning. The campaign of Pekka Haavisto in 2011 was one of the first campaigns in Finland to strongly emphasize in personal branding together with social media. The second interviewee was Katleena Kortesus, an author and expert in communications. The interview took place in January 2014. Kortesus is not only a trainer, consultant and writer, but also a specialist in social media channels. She is an active Twitter and Facebook user as well as a blogger. She was interviewed especially for her knowledge in social media, social media channels and communicational tools.

The interviews were carried out with the support of a framework of questions. (Appendix 1) The length of the interviews was 2-3 hours. Permission for recording the interviews was given by both of the interviewees. The interviews were not transcribed as such but the outcomes were analyzed in the thesis based on the recordings. The interviewees were contacted via e-mail, in which they were informed about the thesis objectives, commissioner and methods. The interviewees were also advised that any kind of preparation was not needed.

Secondly, instead of conducting a separate quantitative study on the issue, the thesis focuses on qualitative analysis of reliable studies conducted nation-wide. This is due to the fact that the thesis author does not have the resources to carry out as many studies covering numerous themes especially with nation-wide results.

Therefore, studies conducted by Statistics Finland (Väestön tieto- ja viestintätekniikan käyttö 2011 & 2012), Finnish Broadcasting Company (Suomalaiset verkossa –tutkimus 2010), Interquest & TBWA\|DIEGO (Dialogi verkossa – yrityksen ja kuluttajan kohtaaminen 2010), Intellecta (Finnish twitter users 2013) and Kemiläinen's (1995) master's thesis are used. Statistics Finland provides studies concerning the overall internet use in Finland, whereas the Finnish Broadcasting Company (2010) has a research from the research agency 15/30 Research focusing on the different internet users online. Interquest & TBWA\|DIEGO (2010) also focuses on the internet users and particularly on the online participation, whereas Intellecta's (2013) study particularly emphasizes the Finnish Twitter users. Kemiläinen's (1995) master's thesis on the other hand concerns the para-social relationships between a candidate and a citizen. All of the studies are used and the outcomes analyzed to gain new perspective to the political personal branding.

As social media is changing continuously, also other articles and online publications are used to provide up-to-date information. Together with the interviews, studies and online publications the thesis creates a qualitative analysis to find the best practices for political personal branding in social media.

1.4 The commissioner

The commissioner of the thesis is Sirpa Pietikäinen who currently is a member of the European parliament. She first replaced Mr. Alexander Stubb as a MEP in 2008 and later was elected in the European Parliament elections of 2009 to continue her work in the European Parliament.

The European Parliament is a parliamentary institution for the European Union. It is one of the three European Union institutions that have a legislative function; the other two being the Council of the European Union and the European Commission. There are 754 directly elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who represent the citizens of the European Union. In June 2009, 13 MEPs were elected to the European Parliament from Finland. Besides the 754 MEPs and their approximately 1500 assistants, more than 5000 civil servants work for the Parliament along with 800 employees of the political groups.

The EP has legislative power but, compared to the Commission, the parliament does not formally possess the right for legislative initiatives. Thus all the initiatives come from the Commission for the Council and the Parliament to support, amend or reject. The EP shares equal legislative and budgetary powers with the Council (that represents the Member States) and likewise, it has equal control over the EU budget. The commission is accountable to the Parliament and the parliament has the right to approve or reject the appointment of the Commission as a whole or a separate commissioner.

Martin Schultz is currently the president of the European Parliament and he works with the 8 political groups that include European People's Party (EPP), Socialists & Democrats (S&D), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), Greens-EFA, European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), European United Left-Nordic

Green Left (GUE-NGL), Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) and the Non-Inscrits who are not a part of any group. The parliament has three places of work. Luxembourg is the headquarters for administrative offices; Parliamentary Committee meetings take place in Brussels and the plenary sessions in Strasbourg.

The commissioner of the thesis, MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen, is a part of the Finnish Coalition Party and, along with 3 other Finnish MEPs, she represented the European People's Party (EPP) in the European Parliament. Within the EP, she serves the Internal Market Committee (IMCO), Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee (FEMM) and Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (ECON). She is also involved with many non-parliamentary groups that are involved with environmental issues.

The office of MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen has three permanent assistants and one temporary intern at a time. The Committee work has been divided and all of the assistants are in charge of one of the committees.

The idea for the thesis came up when the thesis author was working as an intern in the MEP Pietikäinen's office in the fall 2012. Being a student of international business emphasizing on marketing, the idea for a thesis focusing on the upcoming elections came naturally, as branding is a crucial part of election campaigns as well. Spicing up the political brand by utilizing the tools of personal branding gave the inspiration for the study.

1.5 European Union Parliamentary Elections

Since the thesis discusses particularly the social media presence under the European Union Parliamentary elections in 2014, the nature of the elections from the personal branding point of view are briefly explained.

In the European Parliamentary elections, during their decision making the voters are considered to have their prior the emphasis on the candidate and thereafter on the national party that the particular candidate represents. The person is not emphasized as much as in presidential elections, but still there is a strong focus on the actual candidate in the European Parliamentary elections as well. When European Parliamentary elec-

tions are compared to the national parliamentary elections, the significance of the party behind has a greater influence in the voting decision in the latter. Therefore the candidate running for European Parliament and the person behind has more influence on the voting decision than solely the political party. (Kämppi 2013.)

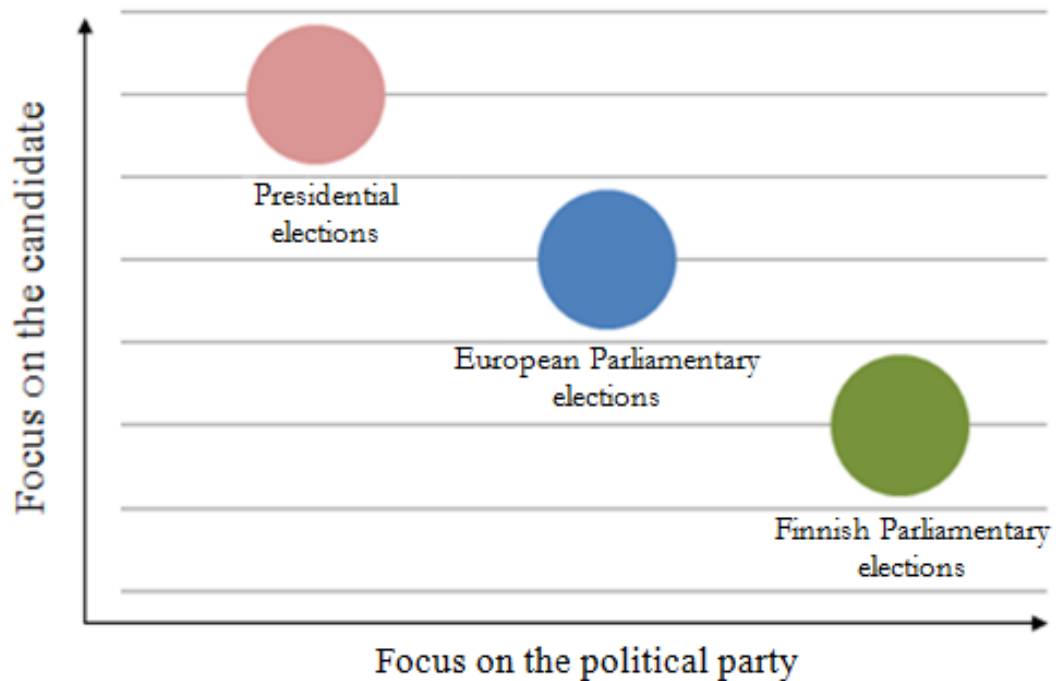


FIGURE 4. Rough demonstration of the comparison between the focuses of different elections in Finland.

As said, in most cases the voter first considers the candidate and then the political party the candidate represents. However, during the European Parliamentary elections, not only does the national party matter but also the party in which the Finnish national party belongs in the European Union Parliament. For example, the candidate Sirpa Pietikäinen, represents the Finnish National Party which is a part of EPP in the European Parliament. In his blog post, Mr. Stubb (2014) points out that the party in the European Parliament that the particular national party is a part of plays a rather important role as well. An MEP representing a larger party in the European Parliament has also more relative power compared to a member of a smaller party.

As focus in the European Parliamentary elections is for a relatively large part in the person in question, the candidates therefore should consider their personal branding carefully. Secondly, the persons running for the European Parliamentary elections are candidates on a national level instead of division according to different geographical areas

like in the national parliamentary elections. Therefore the visibility must be wide to gain enough votes for the election.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Product-based branding

Personal branding is practically product-based branding in which the product is replaced with a person. Therefore, to understand personal branding, also the basics of products-based branding need to be understood. The thesis thus begins by explaining product-based branding mostly by using the seminal work of David Aaker (1996).

2.1.1 A brand

The Oxford Dictionaries explain a brand to be “a type of product manufactured by a particular company under a particular name.” (Oxford Dictionaries) This is a brand in all its simplicity and explained from the product-based branding point of view. However, the Oxford Dictionaries also give another definition for a brand: “A particular identity or image regarded as an asset”. These two definitions mirror how the thesis studies the topic of a brand: first by understanding the product-based branding point of view and then by taking it further to the image of a person to be created to gain assets.

2.1.2 Brand equity

David Aaker (1996, 7-8) defines brand equity as a “set of assets (and liabilities) linked to a brand’s name and symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) the value provided by a products or service to a firm and/or that firms customers.”

Put in other words, brand equity consists of different assets that need to be recognized, created and sustained. All of the assets create value, but in different ways and forms. The value is two-sided, both from the firm to the customer and the other way around. Finally, the aim is to make these assets recognizable under a particular name and/or symbol of the brand.

The assets can be divided into different categories including 1) Brand name awareness, 2) Brand loyalty, 3) Perceived quality and 4) Brand associations (Aaker, 1996, 8). All of the four categories are briefly explained to give a better grasp on understanding a strong brand. Even though brand equity is reviewed with more of a product-based branding point of view, the thesis discusses how these approaches can be utilized also in personal branding in the political scene.

2.1.3 Brand awareness

Brand awareness illustrates the presence of a brand in consumers' minds; the presence can be strong, weak or nonexistent. To picture the strength of the brand presence, Aaker (1996, 10) concentrates on how consumers remember the brand. The brand presence, if there is one, can be either *recognized* or *recalled*.

Recognition mirrors a feeling of familiarity of past exposure. In other words, the consumer simply remembers an encounter with the brand without any more specific details of the situation. However, recognition alone can be a crucial variable that seals the deal. It has been studied that consumers have the tendency to associate brands they recognize with an idea of a company that uses money for supporting the brand. Brands that are supported with a lot of money o give the consumer an image of quality. Ultimately this gives the recognized brand an advantage in the consumer's decision making process. (Aaker, 1996, 10.)

When *recalling* a brand, the brand has a stronger presence in consumers' minds compared to recognition. Once a consumer can recall a brand, he/she is also able to mention the product class of the brand. In such cases the consumer can, for example, write down a shopping list with a brand name in it before even before seeing the products, which gives the brand a special advantage compared to its competitors. (Aaker, 1996, 11.)

In some cases the presence can even be "top-of-mind" or dominant, the dominant being the ultimate awareness level. The brand name dominance occurs in situations in which a consumer recalls only one brand name of a specific product class. However, the consumers are surrounded by so many brands daily that creating brand awareness for a new brand can be extremely difficult. However, Aaker (1991, 16) explains two factors that

support the creation of brand awareness. First factor is to have an already existing and broad sales base. Secondly, the ability to be creative by e.g. operating outside the normal media channels eases the struggle of getting a dominant brand presence. However, it is also essential to remember not to seek general awareness but strategic awareness instead. General awareness can lead to a situation in which the brand is recognized or recalled for the wrong reasons. (Aaker 1991, 16.)

The essence of brand awareness also exists in personal branding of a political candidate. As with brands, the strength of the candidate's image in the minds of voters affects the voting decision. For example, in the Finnish presidential elections in 2011, the candidate most likely to win the elections according to the Gallup polls – being Sauli Niinistö – had also the largest sum of money for the campaign. Compared to the other candidate, Pekka Haavisto, who also made it to the second round, the amount of money used for campaigning was remarkably smaller. (Vaali- ja puoluerahoitusvalvonta 2012.) Mr. Niinistö had the advantage of using big money for advertisements to gain at least recognition effect in the minds of the voters. The recognition might have resulted in Niinistö's favor when considering the final voting decision. Brand recall stimulates can add to the brand's equity by being positive, as in the Niinistö example, but they can be also neutral or even negative and decrease the equity instead of increasing it, in which case they do not enhance the brand equity.

2.1.4 Perceived quality

Perceived quality is actually a part of brand associations, but Aaker (1996, 17) gives it a status of a brand asset because of three reasons that are exceptionally relevant regarding the brand equity. First and foremost, perceived quality is the only brand association that can be proved to support financial performance by studies that use for example PIMS data base (PIMS gives annual data on measuring more than one hundred variables for over 3000 business units.). Besides the provability, perceived quality plays in most cases a major role in business strategies and it consolidates also the other elements that consumers perceive of the brand. (Aaker, 1996, 17-19.)

To strengthen the perceived quality among the consumers, the brand needs to carefully consider what quality actually means to a specific customer segment, to surrounding

business environment and to the quality improving process of the organization (Aaker, 1996, 21). The first setback in creating perceived quality can be the fact that, as perceived quality is formed by consumers, the actual quality measuring might surprise the businesses. A bookkeeper can focus on being super accurate with the actual bookkeeping but the consumers might also pay a lot of attention on how they are being treated as customers. Thus the bookkeeping matters, but so does the customer service. With the combination of the aspects, a perception of quality is being created. Furthermore, the development process of perceived quality should be considered as well. Was there a previous image of poor quality, the recovering phase is long and ruthless. Therefore a once a good perceived quality is gained, it should be protected and valued.

Second trap to step into is to achieve quality on a dimension that is of no importance for the customers. To illustrate, office workers do not need their laptops to be equipped with high tech audio systems. This addition would be a waste of time and money for both the provider and customer especially as in this case there is no contribution to the perceived quality. Finally, the third setback might occur when the consumers might not have the necessary information - or interests to look for it. Consequently the purchase decision might rely on random cues that they link with the quality. The answer lies on managing all the cues carefully and in a proper manner. (Aaker, 1996, 21.)

The citizen value perceived quality in a political candidate or group just as consumers value service quality. In their seminal research study, Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry (1990) defined service quality to be the discrepancy between customers' expectations and perceptions. They also created a SERVQUAL model, in which 10 dimensions of quality are being presented: reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding the customer and tangibles (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990, 139). Later they reduced the amount of dimensions to only five. However, in the political environment and personal branding, the four most important dimensions would be credibility, security, communication and reliability /competence. All of these dimensions are a combination of different features. Certain political events allow customer judgment concerning these different dimensions.

For example, to start with credibility, it has potential influence on the perceived quality of the party or the candidate with its features of trustworthiness, honesty and believabil-

ity (French & Smith 2010, 7). In the Finnish presidential elections Mr. Haavisto gained credibility in the minds of many by being honest about e.g. his sexuality from the very beginning. If it was kept a secret and later revealed by external parties, the candidate would not have appeared trustworthy and therefore there would have been a risk of losing both creditability and consequently perceived quality. (Kämppi, 2013.) The dimension of security on the other hand refers to the customers feeling of freedom of danger, risk or doubt (French & Smith, 2010, 7). The customers in political scene value the fact that their security has been taken into account. Previously made decisions and promises regarding for example the security of Finnish schools after the school shootings are important aspects for the citizens (and candidates) considering the dimension of security. Communication on the other hand includes especially listening and keeping consumers involved (French & Smith, 2010, 7). Obama's presidential campaign was a great example of creating a feeling of "being there" by e.g. using actively social media. Last but not least, reliability/competence is about being able to perform the promised services (French & Smith, 2010, 7).

According to the promises, the voters have their expectations on what should be achieved if the candidate is being chosen. Should the expectations meet with the outcome, the experience will strengthen the perceived quality of the candidate and should they not; there is a risk of losing reliability and perceived quality at least to some extent.

2.1.5 Brand loyalty

Since a brand's value to the company is linked with the customer loyalty, it is wise and useful to consider brand loyalty as an asset among the other brand assets. Besides supporting the brand's value, customer loyalty boosts different loyalty building programs that, if successfully managed, create and strengthen brand equity. The main idea behind brand loyalty building in is the fact that it is far less costly to retain a customer than to attract new ones (Aaker, 1996, 21). However, many firms make the mistake of neglecting the already made relationships with customers and eventually lose them while strongly focusing on the new ones.

Aaker (1996, 22) focuses on loyalty segmentation to provide more detailed insight in understanding the different stages of customer loyalty. He believes that strategic and

tactical ways of creating and improving brands can be supported with a more proper knowledge of the customers' images of the brand.

The different customer loyalty stages are noncustomers, price switchers, the passively loyal, fence sitters and the committed (Aaker, 1996, 22). Hannu Laakso (2003, 265) demonstrates that typical behavior for noncustomers is to be indifferent considering the brand. The brand does not give any added value to the product or service in the mind of the consumer and therefore there is no motive for purchase. In most cases the decision is made according to simple variables e.g. the price or availability (Laakso, 2003, 265). Such behavior applies to the price switchers, who make the decision based on the price as the brand does not affect them strong enough. However, Laakso (2003, 265) believes that the most common type of a loyal customer is the passively loyal. A customer that falls into this category does not feel the need to change the brand as the one he/she is loyal to meets with the needs in question (Laakso, 2003, 266).

The fourth level of customer loyalty includes the fence sitters who are satisfied with the brand and stick to it since it would be costly for them to change it. Examples of products that have fence sitters as customers are durable goods that include technology. The chance for competitors to win the fence sitters over is to offer some kind of additional value that would cover the expenses of the brand change. The first real signs of special attachment and relationship are on the last stage of being a committed customer. The attachment to the brand can be based e.g. on the preferences considering the look of the brand or the perceived quality. The special relationship between the brand and the customer can be invisible to others, as the customer does not share the preferences to others. On the other hand, the most committed customers are proud of the brand and willing to also recommend the brand for others. (Laakso, 2003, 266-267.)

Different types of voters

In the political scene, the different stages of loyalty can be understood by considering the citizens commitment to vote and support a certain party or candidate. The rough division between the voters can be demonstrated by segmenting the voters to loyal voters, swing voters and nonvoters (EVA 2003, 26). The loyal voters can be related with the committed customers as explained earlier. According to the survey made by the Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA in 2003, 49% of the respondents identified

themselves as loyal voters who are relatively stable with their party choices in elections throughout time. On the other hand, the swing voters may not be affiliated with a certain party, but will vote across the party lines. In the survey roughly one third of respondents considered to be swing voters (EVA 2003, 26). In other words, swing voters act as the price switchers and fence sitters in the political scene. Accordingly, when considering the personal brand building and personal brand loyalty, distinguishing the two groups of loyal party voters and swing voters is important. The third group of voters includes the nonvoters who do not vote but might still take part in the political discussion. Thus they should not be forgotten both when creating and maintaining a consistent personal brand.

Voting behaviour and party loyalty

Different models on what makes citizens to vote and support a certain party has been presented over the time. The use of these models helps to understand the different reasons behind party loyalty. One of the models links party loyalty with party identifications. By referring to the work of political scientist Andrew Heywood (2002), Matti Wiberg (2003), professor of political sciences in Turku University, has presented four different models in his article “Unpredictable voter” published in Tiede 1/2003 to explain the voting habits of citizens. One of the models presented is the identification model according to which people vote for the party that they identify themselves with. This party is in most cases chosen already at a young age and therefore the family is in a great role in influencing the decision. Identification model considers voting as an expression of loyalty that is not much affected by political party programs, the personality of the candidate, campaigning or media. (Wiberg, 2003.) In other words, the model suggests that the party loyalty is learned younger and maintained older. For marketers this point of view would be important to consider for sustaining these relationships between the party and the loyal citizen.

On the other hand, the sociological theory states that people vote according to their economic or social class. Instead of psychological identification, the decisions considering the parties and candidates are explained by the need and want to belong to a certain group. The model highlights the division between different social classes and the variables defining the class such as age, gender, ethnical background, religion, location and social standing. (Wiberg, 2003.) In this case, the loyal citizens considering brand man-

agement of a candidate would be found from within the group of people that seek to promote the same values important for their social class.

The third model of rational choice emphasizes individual consideration. Thus the voter chooses the party and candidate that suits best for representing the topics and issues important for that particular individual. The choice is made by *homo politicus* who considers the elections as a tool for reaching his/her own goals. (Wiberg, 2003.) Unlike the other two theories, this is model creates challenges in segmenting and targeting the personal branding goals for the truly potential supporters.

Even though these models give a deeper insight to the voting behavior and segmentation of voters, the models do not tell the entire truth in modern day elections. First of all, the amount of swing voters is increasing, making the rough voter divisions difficult. Social classes have also started to lose their strength in the minds of voters even though the democratic system in many countries is based on parties related to the social classes. As a response to the fall of social classes, the parties have begun to line their political views more to the direction of common parties without a certain relation to a particular social class. As a result of strong individualism and pluralism, also the popularity of issue-voting has increased. (Wiberg, 2003). Wiberg (2003) also admits that the gained votes do not always tell about the voters interests directly. The citizens are more or less influenced by advertising and branding, therefore the results can reflect the success of the election campaign as well (Wiberg, 2003).

2.1.6 Brand associations

Brand associations are the fourth asset considered to give more value to the overall brand and enhance brand equity. The associations are the images in the consumers' heads that they associate with a particular brand. Brand associations are managed by creating a brand identity – it is what the organization wants to be identified like in the minds of consumers. (Aaker, 1996, 25). The brand associations will be explained more thoroughly in the next “brand identity” chapter.

However, to continue the brand associations in the political scene and especially in the minds of the voters, Marjut Kemiläinen (1997) has done her research study of the para-

social relationships between the voter and the candidate in Finland related to the European Parliamentary elections. Para-social relationship is a relationship in which one party knows a lot about the other, but not the other way around. The study is referred to in the thesis as it is one of the few researches that concentrates the relationship and associations between the voter and the candidate in the political scene of Finland. Even though the elections Kemiläinen (1997) has discussed have been among the first European Parliamentary elections in Finland, the findings of different dimensions of para-social relationships between the Finns and their candidates are worth to mention as the results give direction for the positive political personal brand associations.

Briefly explained, Kemiläinen (1997) suggests that there are five different dimensions for para-social relationships under the European Parliamentary elections: imagined friendship, ideological similitude, public representativeness, the reality of the relationship and competence. These five dimensions could be also linked with the brand associations that the voter has of the political personal brand.

The imagined friendship reflects the idea of having a friendly image of the candidate. Based on this image, the voter considers it possible that he/she would be able and willing to be actual friends with the candidate. Thus the voter experiences that the candidate has similar thoughts on issues as the voter and the candidate might be similar to the voter's friends. All in all, the candidate is associated to be pleasant and friendly. The second dimension, ideological similitude, refers to the similarity between candidate's and voters political views. The political party behind the candidate responds to the choice of the voter. The voter also feels easier to shape his/her political opinions with the example of the candidate. The third dimension is the public representativeness referring to a situation where the voter associates the candidate to have a natural and professional appearance. The voter enjoys watching and following the candidate. Fourthly, the reality of the relationship means that the voter would like to personally meet the candidate. The association in this sense is that the voter finds a good chemistry between the candidate and the voter. Therefore the voter feels like wanting to meet in person. Lastly, competence refers to the situation where the voter finds the candidate to be professionally competent candidate and a good representative for Finland. This highlights the associations of candidate's substance know-how. (Kemiläinen, 1997,72.)

2.1.7 Brand identity

David Aaker (1996, 68) describes brand identity as follows: “Brand identity is a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members.” A brand identity is, in other words, how the brand seeks to be portrayed in the minds of the customers. The identity provides the whole organization direction and purpose.

Aaker (1996, 69) presents a model of identity planning that takes in to consideration the constant core identity but also the different perspectives that create the extended identity for completing the brand. There are three important dimensions to take in to account when creating a brand identity: instead of being narrow it should be broad, the identity is more strategic than tactical and the brand creation has to have both internal and external focus. (Aaker, 1996, 69.)

As mentioned, brand identity includes both the core and extended identity. The core identity reflects the timeless fundamental nature of the brand. It is constant over time even when the brand is trying out new markets. The core identity mirrors the soul, fundamental belief and values of the brand as well as the competences and building blocks the organization. It is what at first hand makes the brand unique and valuable. Extended identity is to complete the core identity with elements that the core identity cannot cover. It completes the brand for example with slogans, pricing and marketing strategies. (Aaker, 1996, 85-88.)

Aaker’s (1996, 78) identity planning model demonstrates four perspectives that the brand should be considered as: brand as a product, brand as an organization, brand as a person and brand as a symbol. Brand as a product is an image created for consumers to associate the product or service with a certain class. The association creates functional and emotional benefits to the customers with attributes such as quality and value. The image of quality and value can be reached by linking the product to a certain pleasant occasion that reminds the consumers of the product or by associating the brand with a person or country of origin. Brand as an organization on the other hand gives the brand the extra edge compared to its competitors. When focusing on the attributes of the organization and communicating these selected values such as innovation, quality and

environmental concerns, the brand gains depth in the minds of the consumers and it is harder for competitors to copy. (Aaker, 1996, 78-82.)

The product as a person perspective provides the brand with more personal characteristics. The brand can thus be associated to be e.g. funny, trustworthy, happy etc. With the associations of brand as a person, consumer can identify himself/herself with the brand. For example, a girl using Channel fragrance can identify herself as stylish and elegant. Such identification deepens the connection and relationship with the customer creating two-way benefits. Brand as a symbol on the other hand gathers the symbolic references of the brand. Connecting the brand with a symbol the brand can gain more recognition and recall among the consumers. The symbols should be memorable and powerful, though. (Aaker, 1996, 82-85.)

2.2 Branding people

2.2.1 The new era of personal branding

The idea of a personal brand has become a revolutionary concept. With the more and more connected and constantly fluctuating economic and working environment personal branding has changed and adapted accordingly in the modern way of life.

Over the history there has been different terms describing high visibility. Celebrities, fames, idols and icons have been enjoying the luxury of being in the center of attention. These words reflect standing out from the crowd, the capability of mastering attention and receiving premium for different services. However, with time the process of attaining high visibility has become more complex and the amount of people seeking for more visibility has grown. (Rein, Kotler, Hamlin & Stoller 2006, 5-6.) Also the rather easy and inexpensive communication possibilities enabled by the developing advances in technology has provided a wider set of possibilities for creating and maintaining high visibility in different marketplaces (Rein et al., 2006, 8).

Commercial marketers have recognized product-based branding long before Tom Peters famously created the concept of “A Brand Called you” in 1997 and these marketers

have taught people how to build brands for products. However, the same principles of product based branding apply to high visibility and personal branding for the most parts as well. Both, product and personal branding aim to differentiate the product, service or person from competitors. Hence sustainable relationships are being created between the person or company and the audience later resulting in some kind of premium or additional value.

2.2.2 A personal brand

As explained in the product based branding section, a brand tries to respond to the gap between perception and reality. It is a tool for businesses to communicate with the customers and a way to convey the message of what to expect. Brand communication aims to eliminate the conflicting perceptions and experiences. By filling the gap between perception and experience, a brand forms a bridge between the businesses and its customers potentially leading to long-term and mutually beneficial relationships. (McNally & Speak, 2002, 4.)

At this point it is important to explain the difference between a personal image and a personal brand. A personal image is a collection of the qualities of a person that are identified by others. A hairstyle, sense of humor can be examples of the qualities that people consider in personal image. A personal brand on the other hand is a reflection of what a person is including e.g. values and characteristics. When there is a connection between the value systems of the brand and the audience, a certain relationship is created between the two. (McNally & Speak, 2002, 4-5.) A brand image in the mind of a customer is of great value. It is an already given answer, a reflection that enables a situation where a name is not only letters but ideas, images, values, characteristics and attitudes. People buy a premium for products and services of brands they trust but they also make vital decisions based on the personal brand perceptions.

McNally & Speak (2002, 4-5) concentrate on communicating what a person is to others and creating relationship between the two. So does Katleena Korteso, (2011, 8) a Finnish author specialized in professional communications, social media and personal branding. She defines a brand to be a perception of a person (except for the characteristics, goals or fears that the person in question hides intentionally or not) maintained by a

specific group of people. In addition, she points out that there are as many personal brands as there are people; however some concentrate more on building a strong personal brand than others. (Kortesuo, 2011, 8.)

Kortesuo (2011, 10) also explains the different dimensions of a brand reflection and perception. From one point of view a personal brand could be described as a combination of reputation and image, but Kortesuo believes there is more to it. A brand is a more intricate complex than just reputation and image together since it includes also publicly expressed goals, values and strategy. Reputation and image on the other hand are comprised of only a reflection of the brand. (Kortesuo, 2011, 10.)

Kortesuo (2011, 8) uses two concepts to explain how the experience of a personal brand is received: direct experience (a personal experience with a face-to-face meeting or telephone, email, Internet, live-TV or radio conversation) and indirect experience (an experience filtered by others such as a newspaper interview, edited TV conversation or a story told by a friend). Using these two concepts, a reputation is formed by indirect experiences and thus the information of the brand is gained mostly by others who have had direct experiences with the brand. Reputation can of course include also direct experiences with the brand as well but to a smaller extent. (Kortesuo, 2011, 9.)

In other words, reputation is formed within the community with the interaction between the brand and people but the interaction concerning the brand continues among people. An image, on the other hand, includes both the direct and indirect experiences as well but it also comprises the personal attitudes, feelings and prejudices of the interpreter. (Kortesuo, 2011, 9.) The personal reactions added to the indirect and direct experiences might twist the perception of the brand even though this particular perception would not reflect what the brand truly is. Therefore Kortesuo (2011, 10) illustrates the situation with a picture of a tree that forms a shadow and a reflection on a mirror. The tree is what the brand actually is, but the reflections (shadow being the reputation and mirror reflection being the image) are inevitable parts of it. A shadow gives the idea of reputation being structured by indirect and direct brand experiences and the mirror on the other hand represents the interpreter that might falsify the reflection and what the brand really is. (Kortesuo, 2011, 9.)

In business, the brand tries to mirror the premium for customers. However, the same concept of a brand can be utilized in personal level as well. Personal branding is a natural outcome for displaying the premium there is for one person's services (Rein et al., 2006, 17). Successful people can do what successful businesses do. Using the same principles that businesses apply for their branding can have great impact in successfully creating and delivering personal and professional brand as well (McNally & Speak, 2002, 2). Advanced brand management techniques can be therefore utilized for one's one personal and professional brand. A personal brand consists of more than prior visibility terms such as celebrity, idol etc. that were created to describe historical figures and entertainers (Rein et al., 2006, 17). Consequently, Rein et al. (2006, 18) explain that "As high visibility became more of a profit-generating and managed institution and the relationship between products and people became more apparent, branding has become a defining term that signals successful aspirant's quest for visibility in his or her sector."

With the basis of understanding product-based branding, the thesis aims to discuss what the importance of a personal brand is, what a strong brand is and what elements and tools of branding are to be considered also in personal branding. Rather than concentrating on building a brand, the thesis focuses on the cornerstones of branding and the ways of applying branding techniques in political scene. The goal is to find new approaches and angles of view to enhance a political personal brand in the modern day and new communication channels that creates new possibilities for direct interaction with people.

2.2.3 The importance of high visibility

The world is filled with intelligent and talented people that deserve to be accredited for their work. However, those who are not only intelligent and talented but have converted their skills into a highly visible brand have been able to step up from the crowd and differentiate themselves from the competition. There is a pay differential in the two different situations where a successful brand is created and when there is a lack of good personal branding. (Rein et al., 2006, 18.) For example, the current foreign minister of Finland, Alexander Stubb, started out as a bright and extrovert person who engaged himself with politics at a young age. The career of Mr. Stubb has been only booming, one of the reasons being his ability to differentiate himself from the other politicians in the minds of citizens. By being active and communicating this natural characteristic of his also to

others, he has won the hearts of Finns. The constant cheerful and positive statements, not only in the traditional media but also in the online social media, have formed a connection between him and the citizens. Stubb has gained the reputation of being positive, energetic and trustworthy. This gives premium not only for Stubb himself in form of getting voters and support but also for the citizens as they can count on their representative. He created a strong brand to convey his values, capabilities and characteristics in a clear package and he has been able to successfully maintain his brand. The pay differential is obvious when comparing the situation of Stubb to someone who is interested in politics and capable of working in the political scene, but have not got the career up and running because of the lack of personal branding.

The example of Alexander Stubb gives an idea how important and effective successful personal branding is. It is essential for one to be a professional in his/her own sector. However, in most cases, the know-how is enough only for reaching the level of being an average specialist (Kortesuo, 2011, 12). When the goals are set high, no one wants to be average. Branding gives the missing edge to raise the stakes and to stand out from the crowd. For example, a politician could take to a course on presentation to improve his personal brand. This eases the communication with the citizens and thus the encounters are much more pleasant also for the citizen when the politician can express the ideas in a more understandable way. (Kortesuo, 2011, 12.)

The importance of branding and the ongoing search of visibility is an apparent reflection of the crowded and competitive market place giving pressure on all of us. The increasing premium attached to high visibility together with the easier and more inexpensive communication opportunities of advanced technologies has resulted in a situation where more and more people are willing to compete for their own visibility. (Rein et al., 8-9.) In sectors that naturally command high level of public and media interest the brand image making is emphasized even more. To illustrate, as people have a higher interest in sectors such as entertainment, sports and politics, also the aspirants in these fields command more media coverage. People have a will for seeking information about these individuals and therefore e.g. politicians have a great need for the visibility. (Rein et al., 2006, 76.) Personal branding in the political scene is an effective way of packaging the characteristics to a form that appears interesting and compelling.

2.3 A strong personal brand

The chapter “A personal brand” has explained how personal branding is defined and what the concept includes in general. “The importance of high visibility” –section, on the other hand, reveals the highly competitive environment and the need for gaining visibility by personal branding. The following chapter concentrates on the building blocks that create the ground for a strong personal brand in the demanding marketplace.

McNally and Speak (2002, 2), like many other branding and personal branding professionals, believe that successful people can do what successful businesses do. To give an example, a product-based brand has its identity with its characteristics, fundamental nature and values. Similarly, a personal brand consists of skills, traits, appearances and behaviours that people value or desire. (Rein et al., 2006, 113.) Besides brand identity, all the other product-based branding aspects explained in the thesis should be taken into account when creating and maintaining a personal brand as well. Examples on how these aspects are to be utilized in personal branding especially in the political scene were already described along with the product-based branding theory. Thus the focus of a strong personal brand in this chapter is more on the key components that determine the strength of a personal brand.

Edwards and Day (2005, 21) have put together 5 different symptoms that they believe are of malaise of consumer-led brands: an increased similarity with the brands; an inconsistent brand image and offer; a lack of real innovation and surprise; an increasing gulf between brand offer and brand capability and something hollow at the heart of the brand. These five symptoms also reveal the five fundamentals a brand needs to have for reaching the objectives of a good brand. McNally & Speak (2002, 13) on the other hand list three key components that a successful personal brand has: distinctiveness, relevance and consistency. Together with the works of Edwards & Day (2005) and McNally & Speak (2002), the thesis first turns the five symptoms conversely to benefits and strengths and combines them with the McNally & Speaks’ list. The outcome is a list of five factors describing what a strong personal brand is like: different, relevant, consistent, distinctive and innovative.

2.3.1 Differentiation

Keller, Sternthal and Tybout (2002, 4) recognize the similar signals sent by the different brands in one sector as *points of parity*. To be considered as a legitimate player in the field, a brand needs to carefully consider these points of parity. To illustrate, Alexander Stubb (the Minister for European Affairs and Foreign Trade of Finland) and Jyrki Katainen (Prime Minister) are both politicians who aim in reflecting approximately the same values of the citizens who support the national coalition party and its core values. Therefore the two fall under the same category with the same points of parity. For example, both of the politicians support the EU membership as one point of parity similar to the other group members of the national coalition party. By doing so, the Stubb and Katainen are associated to be trustworthy in the minds of the group members. In other words, points of parity can be considered to be the minimum requirements for the brands existence in the particular sector.

However, the brand needs to take the *points of difference* into account as well. The points of difference give the consumers the association of uniqueness. They distinguish a brand from the other players in the field. Katainen and Stubb might reflect the same core values, but, for example, Stubb has strongly focused on communication on social media besides the traditional channels, whereas Katainen keeps to a more formal presentation and communication style via the traditional communication channels. The brand communication is just one example on how Stubb and Katainen differ from one another in delivering their brand to the public.

With the two kinds of associations (points of parity and points of difference) the brand is identified to a certain frame of reference that indicates the consumers what to expect from using the brand (Keller et. al. 2005, 4). By selecting a particular frame of reference and creating the points of parity as well as the points of difference, the brands seek to gain competitive advantage compared to its competitors in the highly competitive markets of today.

2.3.2 Relevance

Having a unique and different message alone does not make a personal brand successful. The message needs to be also relevant to the audience. A deeper connection between two people begins when there is a feeling of being understood and a belief that the values are being respected (McNally & Speak, 2002, 15). Consequently, after reaching the point of figuring out the attribute that supposedly differentiates a person from the competition, the attribute should be carefully considered to have a relevant nature to actually support the personal brand.

Keller et al. (2005, 6) describe two main fundamentals to be considered when carefully analyzing any point of difference: Desirability and Deliverability. The *desirability* includes both relevance and believability. The brand's attribute presented should be of some kind of relevance to the audience. In other words the attribute should mean or give something to the consumers. Believability on the other hand ensures that the attribute that is in fact provable. When it comes to *deliverability*, the point of difference should meet three deliverability criteria. First of all the attribute in question should be feasible and the brand should be able to deliver the promise in all circumstances. Secondly, the benefit positioned should be actually profitable meaning that the attribute will deliver profit. Thirdly, the positioning should be preemptive and defensible, something that is not easily copied by the competitors. (Keller et al. 2005, 6-7.)

All in all, the target audiences' needs and interests need to be understood before focusing on any selected differentiating attribute. These needs and interests are then to be linked with the strengths and abilities of the person seeking for a stronger personal brand. This enhances the desirability of the overall brand, as the attributes are considered relevant by the audience. Consequently, a deeper connection evolves between the person in question and the audience. However, there is a risk of losing desirability without deliverability that ensures the brand attributes to be realistic. With both of the two, desirability and deliverability, the audiences interest will be raised and they will not be let down as the expectations meet with the perception.

2.3.3 Consistency

Since a personal brand is a certain kind of relationship with the audience, trends affecting the values and interests should be followed and brands adjusted accordingly. However, people are fickle, which makes the forecasting and anticipation considering the next trends, interests and hypes complex. The environment is constantly changing and the target moving – resulting in tough decision making considering the personal brand focuses. (Edwards & Day, 2005, 28-29.)

Balanced decisions in regard to the ongoing changes in the environment are the key to consistency. If a brand is following all the detected mood swings of the audience, it is already a step behind. However, neither should the brand be blind to these changing trends as in that case it would lose the touch with reality. (Edwards & Day, 2005, 29.)

A brand has to build its cornerstones on a more steady ground, creating a stable strategy to follow. Yet it is essential to distinguish the difference between a strategy and tactics. Whereas the strategy describes the overall objective, the master plan or the desired goal, tactics are the tools on the operational level. If strategy answers to the question “What”, tactics respond to the question “How” by giving tools to support the overall strategy. With this in mind, tactics can be altered to some extent for the brand not to be blind for the changing trends but the alterations should always contribute to the stability of the strategy to keep the brand consistent. (Edwards & Day, 2005, 29.)

With persons such as politicians who have people working for them, it is essential that the strategy and tactics are adopted throughout the team. This highlights the importance of communications. In brief, communications need to be considered as a function penetrating the team, including the internal communication as well as the external communication with the interest groups. Such comprehensive communication structure also includes the marketing know-how and brand management. A holistic, complete and well-integrated communication system supports also the consistent brand image. (Malmelin & Hakala, 2011, 39-40.) For the comprehensive communications and consistent brand strategy it is first and foremost important to let the brand values, visions and goals to lead and govern the team as a whole. The entire team builds the brand and the other way around. (Malmelin & Hakala, 2011, 41.) In the case of politicians, especially under the elections, there is a larger crew that creates, transforms and maintains the personal

brand of the politician. The entire team needs to be aware of the core strategy and the tactics to be able to convey consistent message for the audience.

2.3.4 Distinctiveness

Edwards & Day (2005, 38) call it belief. McNally & Speak (2002, 14) call it distinctiveness. It is all based on the core values and beliefs of the person who aims in creating a strong personal brand. After these most important values and beliefs are recognized, a certain commitment to the values is made. The commitment is one of the steps towards standing out from the crowd as there is a will to choose a certain path to follow despite the obstacles. (McNally & Speak, 2002, 14.)

Distinctiveness is somewhat connected to differentiation and consistency but not entirely. By being distinctive and choosing the values and beliefs one is committed to, the particular personal brand is different from others already at this stage. These values and beliefs should be consistent instead of contradicting, as explained earlier. However, distinctiveness highlights the ability to stay true to oneself. Even though personal branding focuses on understanding the audience and their values, the needs of others should be met without sacrificing the values on which the brand is based. (McNally & Speak, 2002, 15.) It is not about long term strategy or short term tactics, but it is a “lifelong” or at least a “brandlong” commitment to those beliefs that one truly respects and values. McNally and Speak (2002, 15) capture distinctiveness in personal branding well with the following sentence: “Your personal brand is based on your values, not the other way around.”

The previously mentioned example of Mr. Haavisto, candidate in the Finnish Presidential Elections, and his honesty about his own sexuality illustrates not only creditability but also distinctiveness. Even if the general atmosphere and political climate had been rather quiet on the issue and though many expected Mr. Haavisto’s stumbling block to be his decision to publicly announce to be a homosexual, he never turned his back on his core values that he believed in. He gave a public statement concerning his personal life and sexuality. Later he was chosen for the second round. His campaign manager, Riikka Kämpö (2013), strongly believes that one of the cornerstones of a personal brand is to be distinctive and true to oneself – in good and bad.

2.3.5 Innovation and surprise

To continue with the Haavisto example, his actions could have also worked as a surprise factor bringing forward peoples' deeper emotions and connecting them with Haavisto's personal brand. People sharing the same values started to get involved and spread the word in Haavisto's favor. In most cases personal brands might focus too much on the desire to please. The fear of making mistakes should not take over. Instead, one should stay distinctive and earnest with the audience but also keep in mind that the creativity should not be limited to the average person's imagination (Edwards & Day, 2005, 30). Surveys and Gallup polls reveal only half the truth or at least only the common opinion. However, there is much more. Edwards & Day (2005, 33) illustrate a brand that follows consumers as a birthday present from a life-partner who has asked beforehand what to get. Therefore one will not be disappointed on the present but neither will there be any bitter-sweet thrill of surprise. Personal brands can include a surprise factor by for example unexpected actions and exceeding the expectations.

2.4 Changes in the media environment, marketing and branding

The explained rise of Internet use has influenced the media and therefore also both marketing and branding. The internet revolution has led to new communication channels online. The power of traditional media has started to wobble as the amount of social media users has increased. The most dynamic social media networks have become platforms to which also traditional media has integrated.

The thesis now discusses first the shift from mass media to digital media. It is demonstrated in Figure 5. First the emphasis is on the changes in the media environment that naturally affect also branding. The second focus is on the changing trends in the branding field. The third part gives an insight how these trends have to be taken into consideration in the practical level and four dimensions for branding in digital channels are presented. Along with the rise of Internet, also the changing forms of branding and marketing need to be understood in order to create effective personal branding online.

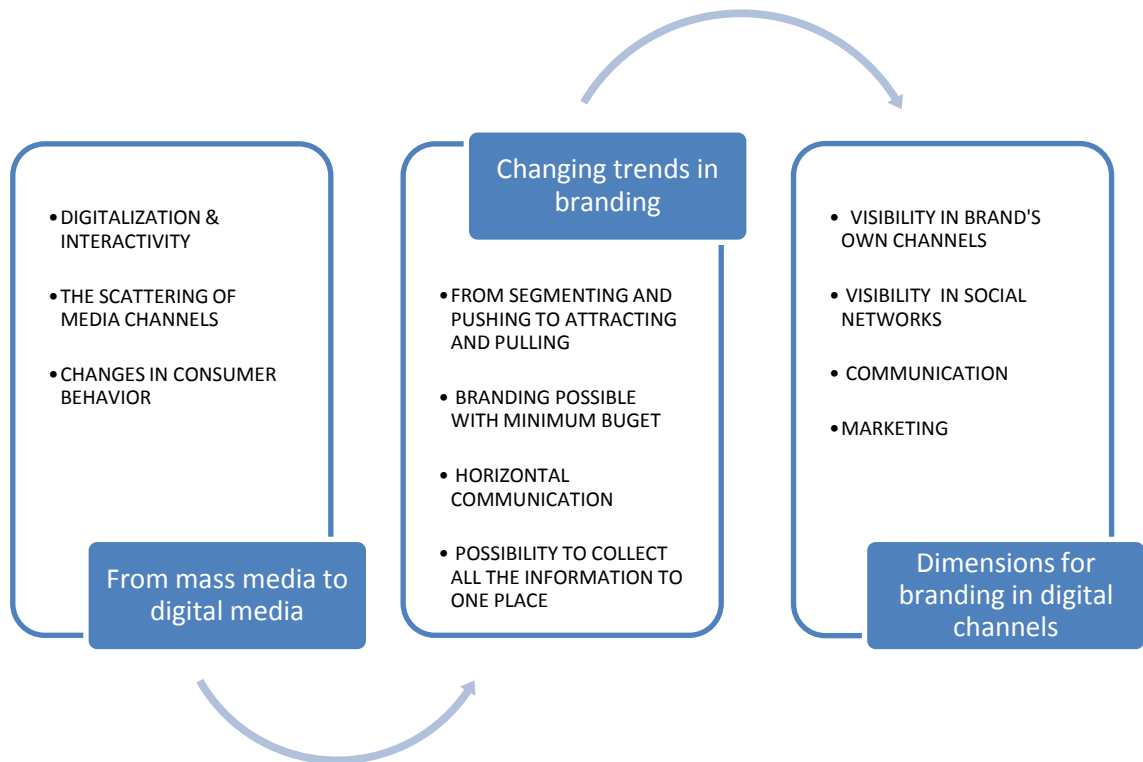


FIGURE 5. The changes in branding caused by the digitalization. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2008)

2.4.1 From mass media to digital media

Both the environment of traditional media and marketing are at a turning point. The roles are changing and we are moving from mass media towards the digital media. Consequently also branding needs to pay attention to the new media channels and adjust to the new situation. Traditionally marketing has been based on the idea of creating a product or service line that the consumers are convinced to purchase. However, today the key for effective marketing and branding is two-way communication. The communication takes place increasingly in digital media and therefore it is vital to know what makes the modern day communication channels so important, who is in control of the channels and how to approach the users. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2008, 59.)

Even though the politicians have always had to have communication with the citizens to even gain the possibility and legitimacy to be their representatives, the two-way communication plays a much bigger role now also in the political scene with the new communication channels that enable more efficient interactive participation. The digital me-

dia offers an effecting and inexpensive communication platform to create stronger relationships in which there is much more included than only information exchange. All in all, the change of media environment has to be taken into account and focus has to be on the new interactive media channels. The politicians have always come to the people, and now that the people are online, it is a must for the politicians to be present there as well.

Salmenkivi and Nyman (2008, 61) describe that the turning point of marketing and branding is a cause of three different phenomena: *digitalization and interactivity*, *the scattering of the media environment* and *the changes in consumer behavior*. Firstly, digitalization and interactivity offer the possibility to create, share and distribute media content online faster than anyone could even consume it. The rapid information flow creates possibilities but also threats to the brand as the power of consumers increases accordingly. Secondly, the media environment is scattering and the number of media channels is growing. This results in a decrease in the coverage that is possible to gain with tradition mass media. Thirdly, the consumer behavior is changing and segmenting is more difficult as for example the income level no more relates as strongly to the consuming habits as before. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2008, 60-61.)

2.4.2 Changing trends in branding

The described causes resulted in a revolution of marketing and branding. However, the most relevant aspect for a brand is to understand what actions the new situation demands from the business but also what new visibility possibilities there are. Therefore branding has evolved along with the changes in media environment.

With the online information overload and the inefficiency of marketing through traditional media channels, it is more and more challenging to reach the “ordinary people” that do not strongly belong to any subcultures (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2008, 63). For political candidates, the “ordinary people” were once found rather easily by using television commercials or by visiting the marketplaces of different cities. Yet now people use money for watching TV shows online without the commercials and do online shopping instead of the physical marketplaces. Therefore the potential swing voters, kindred spirits and supporters that were once reached with mass media channels are now more

difficult to get in touch with. Consequently, also the candidates need to have a presence online.

However, traditional segmenting or even finding the “ordinary people” as a whole is not easy with the numerous digital channels that exist. Therefore besides finding the right target segments, one should utilize the right digital media channels for being easily found by others instead (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2008, 63). In spite of using the time and energy for attracting people to come to the candidate, it is more important for the candidate to go to the people, be visible and found.

The second thing to be understood is what the new digital channels do not demand: money. The new media actually makes it possible to gain visibility without high expenses (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2008, 64). The already mentioned example of Mr. Haavisto’s presidential campaign illustrates well the potential of digital media with a low campaign budget. Reputation can be built with smaller amounts of money by communicating the brand message online.

Thirdly, branding online demands interactivity with the audience. It is the two-way communication that includes both the person and the audience. Therefore the horizontal communication where the brand pours ads on the audience is turned upside down. Instead of using the old marketing way of pushing information to the audience via mass media, people are attracted to participate and pulled to closer to the brand. In other words, a brand needs to be found. Because Internet is based on voluntariness; people seek the information they want to seek and spend time on web pages that they want to spend time on. Therefore the brand needs to utilize the most significant online media channels for their branch and create relevant content to attract people to engage. The nature of Internet, power of consumers and interactivity have lead to a situation in which the brand should focus more on relevance over repetition and enable the audience’s participation by capturing their interest and activate them. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2008, 65.)

Lastly, as Internet gives the advantages of using not only text but also images and video in addition to the extensive communication possibilities, it becomes the place where all the information can be collected. The digital media will not completely replace the traditional media, but it has taken a certain form of ultimate library and information source

where the audience is being directed to by using the other media channels (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2008, 66-69). The trend can be seen in the political scene noticeably as for example when the webpage of a candidate is built to act as the most informative source of the candidate. To illustrate, most newspaper advertisements of political candidates contain the webpage address for the audience to find all the information they might need and that is wished to be conveyed to them.

2.4.3 Dimensions for branding in online media channels

Firstly, the brand can develop a web page gathering all the necessary and extra information into one place. This is one of the 4 dimensions that Salmenkivi and Nyman (2008, 70) highlight. In other words, visibility in the brand's own channels demonstrate the communication and marketing that takes place in the brand's own web pages, blogs, campaign pages etc. that the crew administer themselves.

On the other hand a brand should also step out from the comfort-zone of own channels to the open social networks such as Facebook and twitter etc. to gain more visibility. The third dimension includes both the external and internal communication that the online channels allow. Newsletters, podcasts and other communication with the interest groups can be counted as external communication whereas internal communication online is within the company/brand crew. The fourth dimension consists of marketing: banners, other ads on web pages and search engine marketing such as Google Adwords. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2008, 70.) Today also the different social networks offer tools for marketing in the particular network for the users.

The thesis focuses on the external communication tools and the visibility in social media channels. Taken that the personal brand message is already created and information in the brand's own web pages are present, the thesis digs more into how to convey the message effectively in the social media networks. Thus the thesis does not involve the dimension of social media marketing and having paid visibility.

2.5 Social media and branding

Social media is all about communication and interactivity. The following chapter analyzes the functions, different natures and characteristics that the different social network platforms are based on to understand what kind of presence is to be created for conveying the brand message to the audience.

2.5.1 Functions of social media networks

The key concept in social media is networking. Normally, people who know each other tend to interest in the same topics and, based on the already made contacts, communities are being formed. Internet, on the other hand, brings together the people who might not know each other beforehand but are interested in the same topics and issues. Consequently, in Internet the importance lies in the topics, not in already made contacts. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2008, 78.) One can utilize the knowledge on a certain topic and find himself/herself surrounded by unknown people because of the information possessed and not for the connections made outside the online world.

Naturally, on the other hand also the activity and formulation of groups in online networks might reflect the groups formed outside Internet. For example the Lions group members might set up a group online with the same members that exist in the real world. However, for personal branding the idea of topic-related community formation is important to be understood.

The Internet therefore mirrors the already existing groups outside internet but also give the opportunity of forming new and wide networks online. Another factor from the networking point of view is the fact that devices and platforms can be connected as well. The possibility of linking the used platforms is an advantage to be considered in the branding field.

The opportunity of finding people and networking online demonstrates one of the characteristics of digital media. Besides finding people, the online networks also include other different objectives and functions they are used for. Salmenkivi and Nyman (2008, 111) have listed the functions of social media networks as follows: *finding peo-*

ple, communication, cooperation, information distribution, information filtration and time management.

As mentioned, the core heart is both to find new contacts sharing the same interests and to discover old acquaintances online. The platforms enable communicating and cooperation with these contacts. The function of information distribution also plays a huge role as the users are able to share their knowledge and forward their findings. Therefore the cooperation and information distribution together possibly lead to collective intelligence. In other words, the collective intelligence is a result of cooperation and information sharing creating new information of the specific topic that would have been impossible to create by an individual. In the upcoming part “Power of the users and social media challenges” the thesis explains the concept of collective intelligence more.

Different social media platforms also give the possibility of filtering the information flood to focus only on the specific field that the users are interested in. As for the time management, the social media channels enable also networking around different happenings. People inform others of events they are going to participate, discover other participants and find other happenings that might interest them.

2.5.2 Different natures of social network platforms

People create networks and communities online. The difference between the two is good to understand. In communities, there is a common factor linking the members together. The factor can be e.g. an interest in photography or books. On the contrary, a network can be formed without a common factor (Salmenkivi & Nyman, 2008, 113). One can find a new contact even based on a random coincidence. For example, a connection could be made just by seeing a comment that the other has posted. This might lead to communication between the two and a new contact is made. Therefore online communities are indeed online networks, but not the other way around. For example, Facebook offers a platform of networking in general, but also smaller communities are formed e.g. when groups focused on certain topics are created.

From branding point of view, smaller or medium-sized communities are found interesting as they have the common factor linking the members of the community. In this

sense they are rather easy to be set as a target group. It is also beneficial from the branding point of view if the topic stays quite focused on certain issues and does not extend wider. If the community begins to grow, the problem is that the core topic tends to fade and smaller communities within the particular community start to form. All in all, small online communities are attractive for branding purposes as they offer a possibility for active communication with a group of people sharing a similar interest. The challenge is to contribute to the balance of the community: aiming to keep the community focused in the topic and being careful not to let the too loud participants take over the conversation.

However, if the user's motive is to utilize the online communication platforms for gaining benefits from extensive networks instead of being a part of a smaller community, the larger and wider user base the platform has, the more beneficial it is for the person. Such larger and more fragmental social network platforms offer a wider audience with the possibility of extensive networking also from the branding perspective. When a politician is concerned, wider networks are beneficial as the reach is bigger. However, it is also useful to target certain groups and communities that are interested in the same specific topics as the candidate. This was the key to the Pirate party's growing popularity among the ones interested in computers: being present in the computer professionals' forums and channels.

It is important for the branding crew to choose the right type of social media networks for the brand's purpose. As explained, factors such as the size of the network and the topic connecting the users need to be considered when making the channel decisions.

2.5.3 Power of the users and social media challenges

One of the significant characteristics of social networks is the power of the users. It is something a brand cannot ignore in order to actually gain the attention. The following part concentrates on the power of the users and the new challenges it creates for online branding.

The social media channels give the power to the audiences and, as mentioned earlier, the communication is horizontal instead of being hierarchical only from the brand to the consumers. Salmenkivi and Nyman (2008, 93) separate four different reasons for the

power of audiences in internet societies: *collective intelligence, possibility to share consumer experiences, the switch of data management from businesses to the chaos of internet and consumers' possibility to control the channels.*

To explain these four reasons for online consumer power a bit more in detail, the *collective intelligence* is developed when there is activity within a certain society with large amount of people producing information that cannot be produced by only one person (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2008, 94). An example of such collective intelligence is the process of creating Linux –operating system with an open source code for other people to develop. Another example of the utilization of collective intelligence is Wikipedia, the encyclopedia in which anyone can add, alter or delete information. The motives from taking part and producing information online with others range from just pure interest to gaining reputation.

The second reason for the audience's empowerment is *the possibility to share opinions, thoughts and experiences*. Even without the knowledge of a product gained from the company, an active internet user might know more than the person in the customer service of that specific brand. The online networks enable comparison that makes the features of the product, service or a brand transparent. Both the praises and criticism spread widely and fast online. With the feedback, the audience also has the power to influence the brand and campaigns. However, the power of people, and especially the power of those who appear anonymous, might cause the brand headaches. Therefore the brand should either use reputation management systems or be able to recognize those who can be trusted and those who cannot. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2008, 97-99.)

Thirdly, *the data management* has shifted from being controlled to the online word's chaos. Most people might feel like finding the information needed is easier from other online channels instead of e.g. the brand's website. However, this is something that cannot be controlled by the brand crew; it is a fact that needs to be accepted. This leads to the last reason for the consumers' power online. People find the information from sources they want. They also have the possibility to control the channels in which they spend time. In Internet, the consumers decide what they see, when and how. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2008, 101-104.)

Consequently, there are some factors that the brand needs to recognize when dealing with the social media channels in which the authority has shifted to the users. To begin with, as the information flow online is fast and new information is created, opinions shared and ideas given by people from every field of life, the brand needs to make sure the first priority considering online presence to be transparent and acknowledging the audience.

The challenges for personal branding in social media therefore mostly include understanding the nature and characteristics of the users, platforms and the horizontal communication that empowers the users. From the practical point of view, the personal branding crew needs to include right kind of people that have the experience of the social media channels as well as the interest and time for participating in the conversation with the audience online. Therefore the real challenge is to have the right people and tools to motivate the audience for active participation.

Creating a platform such a webpage or a blog might be first of all time consuming but it might also take money if the webpage creation is outsourced and therefore the maintenance costs need to be considered as well. Time is money and consequently the time and contribution used for online personal branding costs in the form of the work that is being done for boosting the brand. The relation of costs and benefits are difficult to estimate.

The main goals are 1) reaching the target audience, 2) attracting them to participate and 3) maintaining the interest in the brand demand quality content. What is being said and done by the users as well as the direction different networks are heading in the future is hard to anticipate. The content that the users create is difficult to control and the challenge is to direct the users' behaviour towards being topic-related and to maintain the transparency of the community.

A good example of a too big a challenge resulting in a failure in branding via social media is JPMorgan's attempt to expand its online presence, participate with the audience and strengthen its brand. On November 17th 2013, The New Yorker published an article "JPMorgan's twitter mistake" (Greenhouse 2013). According to this article, JPMorgan launched a campaign under the hashtag #AskJPM. The man responsible for answering the question was Jimmy Lee, also called as the "trillion-dollar dealmaker",

who had been greatly contributing the finance and advises considering the most historic transactions in the States. Representing the company on Twitter as well, he was believed to handle the career seeking young people asking for advices. However, the tweeters' welcome for JPMorgan's campaign was not as warm-hearted and career-focused as expected. The questions ranged from "Do you have any self awareness?"; "Did you have a specific number of people's lives you needed to ruin before you considered your business model a success?"; "What section of the poor & disenfranchised have you yet to exploit for profit, & how are you working to address that?"; "Why aren't you in jail for sending a literal ton of gold bullion to Iran in violation of sanctions?" and the list goes on. (Greenhouse 2013.)

The social media campaign of JPMorgan's turned out to be a real example of what not to do in social media. The campaign's first tweet by JPMorgan (in which the Q&A session was told the public about) was retweeted nine times. After the flood of questions with a negative nature, JPMorgan gave up and tweeted: "Tomorrow's Q&A is cancelled. Bad idea. Back to the drawing board." In short period of time the number of retweets considering JPMorgan surrender was 1500 times.

To sum it up, mistakes were made. The choice of social media channel could not have been worse. As explained before, the power of the users is different in social media compared to the existing structures outside internet. In her article, Emily Greenhouse describes the space and user power as follows: "This is Twitter's very purpose: to allow any individual to share the same space with, for instance, a hugely powerful bank. With this space comes attention and authority. Unlike at JPMorgan's Park Avenue headquarters, there are no security guards keeping undesirable elements out of Twitter." (Greenhouse 2013.)

Another challenge to point out is that in social media networks, particularly in Twitter, the users use the channel to tell something about themselves. One might mention a brand in a tweet to associate himself/herself with the brand. To illustrate, a girl tweeting about her new Michael Kors bag is not all about the bag, but more about positioning herself as a stylish chick. The same goes the other way around. People position themselves with their tweets and let their opinions be heard of things they are not happy with, such as JPMorgan as an institution. The user power and the user's tendency for seeking to position oneself put JPMorgan in a tough place. The career-minded graduat-

ing students were not found in Twitter. Why not try LinkedIn, the career-focused social network? From this point of view the personal brand should aim on positioning oneself according to the core values that the target audience identifies with. This creates a will to participate with the political personal brand in order for the target person to convey others his/her values and position himself/herself.

Obviously the channel choice was questionable, but two other things JPMorgan forgot were the earnestness and timing. The core values of the brand should be clear and there should be nothing to hide. JPMorgan started the campaign but gave up easily, making the brand look dishonest and even more suspicious. Secondly the timing for the campaign with the ongoing recession was absolutely wrong. People sought for someone to point a finger at for the bad economic situation, not to mention the advantage JPMorgan gave it to its competitors on Twitter.

2.5.4 Social media networks in Finland

After understanding the overall characteristics and nature of social media today, the thesis focuses on those social media channels that would be suitable for a politician's personal brand. To give an example, the Internet gathers different types of people together similarly to the different meeting points in real life. If one wants to meet people interested in travelling, he/she participates most likely in a travel fair. If the travelers are wished to be met online, one would join a forum focused on travelling. It is essential to pick the right social channels to suit the field of business and the goals of the personal brand.

The Finnish Broadcasting Company (2013) has made a summary of the Finnish social media scene. According to the study, in Finland the social media networks that have the largest number of registered users are Facebook, Suomi24, IRC-Galleria, LinkedIn and Twitter. The following chart illustrates the comparison between the networks according the amount of registered users.



FIGURE 6. The social media networks with most registered users in Finland. The areas of the boxes in which the names are included are proportioned according to the comparison of the amounts of registered users. (Yle 2013) (modified)

The chart points out that Facebook is the favorite social media channel for Finns. In his blog, Harto Pönkä (2014), a professional Finnish researcher in social media, has estimated the amount of Finnish Facebook users to be around 2 million, being 55% of the 13-64 year-old Finns. Hence, Facebook gathers almost the whole spectrum of Finns into one place. The latest trend has been the increase in the amount of elder users. To point out, for example the amount of 64-year olds has grown more than 40% in 1,5 years. (Yle 2013.) However, even though the total number of Facebook users has not shown signs of decreasing, many of the users have claimed to be ready to give up using Facebook (Yle 2013). This might be due to the growing number of elder users pushing out the younger ones as the friend circle expands from actual friends to relatives. Thus the associations of Facebook being a place to have fun with friends is in contradiction with the reality as relatives and acquaintances are present in Facebook as well.

Suomi24 is a social media channel reaching around 1,7 million Finns, of whom approximately 40% log in within a year (Yle 2013). The main difference between Suomi24 and Facebook is that in Suomi24 one can take part in the conversations without registration. The anonymity is somehow found problematic, as it increases the probability of inappropriate online behavior to some extent. On the other hand, separate community pages can be done also in Suomi24, enabling a specific group of people discussing a particular topic.

IRC-galleria and LinkedIn are on the other hand much more focused on more specific segments. IRC-Galleria's user base is strongly emphasized on the young, and the channel reaches around half of the 15-24 year old Finns. (Yle 2013.) What comes to LinkedIn, the main idea is considerably different than the other channels mentioned since LinkedIn focuses on professional knowhow. The more professional one is and the wider network one has, the higher are the chances to find a job via LinkedIn. Therefore LinkedIn is very career-oriented.

Twitter is the fifth popular social media channel for Finns according to the amount of registrations (Yle 2013). Nevertheless, there is a strong hype around the channel and it is gaining more and more popularity every day. To mention an example, the Finnish celebrity cook Henri Alén started a huge hype around crushed tomato sauce by tweeting a recipe in Twitter mentioning the brand called "Mutti". Later people rushed into grocery stores and emptied the shelves of Mutti sauces. The phenomenon got even media coverage on the afternoon papers, which illustrates the potential media attention Twitter might offer.

As it is crucial for a politician to reach a wide audience, it is therefore important to have visibility in channels where the majority of the potential supporters can be reached. Therefore the chosen networks to be discussed in the thesis are Facebook and Twitter. Blogs are also briefly referred to. The three different channels and the reasons for choosing them are separately discussed in a more theoretical and objective manner. Later the thesis analyzes the social media channels more in detail from the perspective of the channel's suitability for personal branding in the political scene.

3 PERSONAL BRANDING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

3.1 Political personal brand

In the theoretical framework the thesis has gone through the basic elements of a good personal brand and the relevance of the personal brand's visibility also in the political scene. The following chapter digs into the main points that are especially essential under the European Parliamentary elections.

The points are gathered using the wide theoretical information already presented; the interviews with the branding and communication professionals; large scale question survey researches as well as the personal notions of the thesis author.

3.1.1 The Finnish political context

First of all, the field, environment and context of the personal brand need to be taken into consideration. During the discussion with Riikka Kämppe (2013), who had a clear image of the political atmosphere in Finland as she was leading the presidential campaign of Mr. Haavisto, 4 relevant points were brought forward to be paid attention to when building and strengthening a political personal brand in Finland. To begin with, the nature and values of Finns need to be recognized. A critical point is that it is hard to win the trust of a Finn, but when the trust is there, the Finns show loyalty and value the trust and the relationship that has been created. Lying and cheating are the kryptonite for creating and maintaining the trust with the Finns and the bond between the personal brand and the Finnish audience. Therefore honesty and being true to both oneself and to others is the key.

Secondly, the political atmosphere in Finland includes a strong secrecy of the polls. The secrecy is considered to be one of the cornerstones of democracy and has long historical roots. In his article published in Tiede 4/2011, Mikko Puttonen, (2011) explains the historical aspect and that the secrecy was to prevent malpractice, such as bribes for voters.

Today, under the Finnish parliamentary election, Kouvola Sanomat (2011) published an article stating that according to their online Gallup poll a little less than one third of the respondents shared the information of their candidate selection with their spouse and 40% of the respondents with more than one person. The numbers are still quite low and the secrecy continues to have a strong influence on the openness of the voting decisions. However, Kouvola Sanomat (2011) also argues that the secrecy of the polls is no longer as much a taboo as it used to be and claims that social media has been part of the change.

In the radio discussion of Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE Puheen aamu 2012), Mika Rahkonen, the chief of internet activity and Gallup polls in YLE, also believes that the social media has influenced the openness of voting decisions. To give an example, the amount of profile pictures including a political statement has increased under the elections as well as the sharing of campaign material on social media channels. Rahkonen (YLE Puheen aamu 2012) believes that the young are playing a big role in the more unrestrained secrecy. For a large amount of young adults in social media, the digital media has brought openness to the political discussion along with the young users.

All in all, the strong secrecy of the polls still exists and has to be taken seriously. However, the slightly more open discussion in social media can be used as a benefit; just like with the Haavisto's campaign, where people become active with sharing their thoughts on Haavisto and taking part in the online campaigning.

The third factor to be considered regarding the Finnish political context is the increasing amount of the swing voters. Maija Setälä (MTV 2012), a researcher in politics, also sees that today it is more common to share political opinions. She reckons that this is due to the dimming lines between the ideologies of the political parties, the increasing amount of swing voters and the trend of voting according to the person in question instead of a political party. In the 21st century around half of the people have changed the political party they support and find closest to their own political views (Kämppi 2013).

The fourth merging trend that Riikka Kämppi (2013) notes during the interview is that even though finding out the information of potential candidates has become easier with the Internet, the people have become lazier in searching for it. Back in the days people

needed to participate in different events to find out what the candidate was like as a person. Now this can be conveyed with the messages through digital channels, but this information search is not done even close to the extent that the new digital media offers. Yet again, it is crucial for the candidate to be easily found.

3.1.2 Political context and personal brand

When considering the characteristics of the Finnish political context, certain features of the personal brand should be highlighted. The following figure demonstrates the 5 core components that a strong personal brand should possess and the features that should be highlighted in considering the different trends in the Finnish political environment.

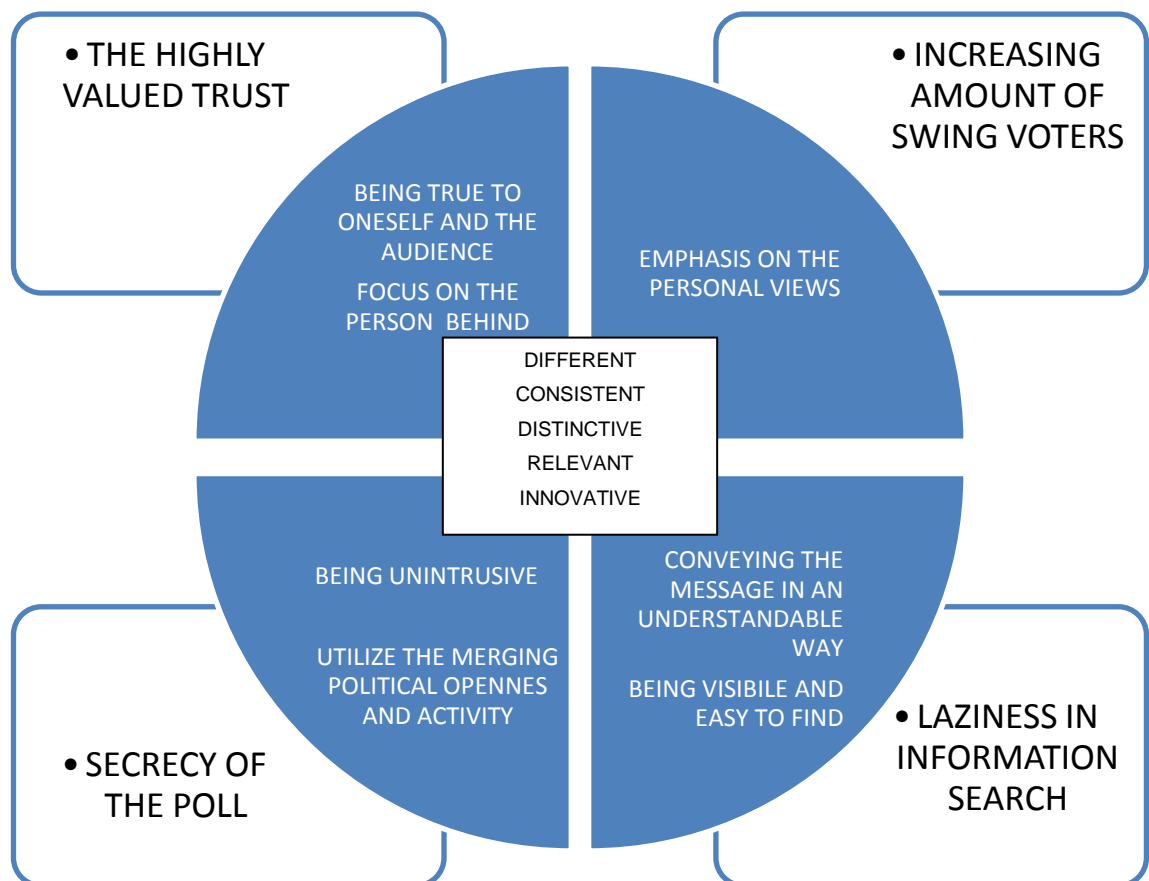


FIGURE 7. Ways of a personal brand to adjust to the characteristics of the Finnish political context.

The features to be highlighted stem from the core components of a strong brand. However, as these components have been already explained earlier in the theoretical framework, only the features to be highlighted are now briefly gone through. Firstly, both the points of *highly valued trust* and *the increase of swing voters* demand the brand to convey the person behind the brand clearly, transparently and in an attractive as well as interesting way in order to the audience to bond with it. To reach the connection with the audience, one needs to be completely true to them. By being true to oneself in the first hand, one enables the reflection of the person to be truthful as well.

According to the interview with the expert of communications, Katleena Kortesus (2014), there is an emotional bond that a voter feels towards a candidate. Therefore it is essential, to convey the image of the ordinary person that lies behind the political brand. Kortesus (2014) also underlines, that the emotional bond could be used as an innovative function for the political personal branding – revealing something more than the political exterior to create a deeper understanding between the candidate and the people who share the same values. Therefore the politician actually should step away from the traditional political context and convey the feeling of being an ordinary person like everyone else. What is missing in the political personal branding is the person – not the politician – communicating with people of everyday topics such as hobbies. Even if political, a personal brand is a collection of all the characteristics and features of a person.

Another example of being close to people by mirroring the fact that a politician is a normal person similarly to everyone else is the presidential campaign of Obama in the USA. The campaign focused on getting close to the ordinary people by being present where the citizens were found: social media. With demonstrative pictures and texts his human characters, individual interests and hobbies were visible. A personal brand is neither only political views nor solely hobbies but a complex. The most significant point of bringing these features forward is when the image of a person is being formed: the first encounter. To give an example, Kämppi (2013) explains that in the beginning of his campaign, Mr. Haavisto took part in the Finnish TV show “Korkojen kera” where the focus was not only in his political views but also interests and values as a person.

For *the secrecy of the poll* in Finland, the personal brand needs to be careful not to be too pushy when conveying their message. Just like in real life, the Finns need their personal space that should not be intruded even online. Democracy and the secrecy of poll

are incredibly important for the Finns, especially for the older generation, and therefore it should be honored.

However, as the openness related to the political views has started to increase especially among the young. The personal brand should make the best of the situation by activating the young persons. Social media is a good environment for doing so, as a lot of the conversations take place there.

Lastly, to pay attention to the *laziness in the information search* of the people, the brand should basically be visible and convey the messages in an understandable way. With a clear communication, the audience does not have to make efforts on understanding the main ideas.

3.2 Social media communication

Based on the theoretical framework, the following part digs into the topic of social media communication deeper first by studying the phenomenon of horizontal communication in social networks. The goal is to find out what the communication is like and how the users are connected. The information gives the basis for then choosing the right channels and finding the right people for conveying the brand message effectively.

3.2.1 Possibilities of horizontal communication

First of all, the change in the media environment and the dissolution of information filtering elements along with the horizontal communication enable different and direct communication possibilities.

A good example is the rising visibility of Halla-Aho, a politician that was before shunned by the traditional media for the rather extreme opinions. However, with a clever utilization of social media channels, especially blogs, Halla-Aho was able to gain publicity first among the blog readers, who then forwarded Halla-Aho's message. After the increased attention towards the blog and the opinions also the traditional media had to bend and include Halla-Aho in the news of traditional media.

Even in situation where the politician is not shunned by the traditional media and the opinions are not as extreme as in the case of Mr. Halla-Aho, the horizontal communication gives the chance to clearly convey the true personal brand messages and possibly alter the incorrect image the traditional media has reflected as shown in figure 8. The horizontal communication actually fits perfectly in the political scene, as it empowers people, who the politicians indeed represent. Of course the power of traditional media should not be totally forgotten, but the new possibilities offered by the social media should be paid attention to.

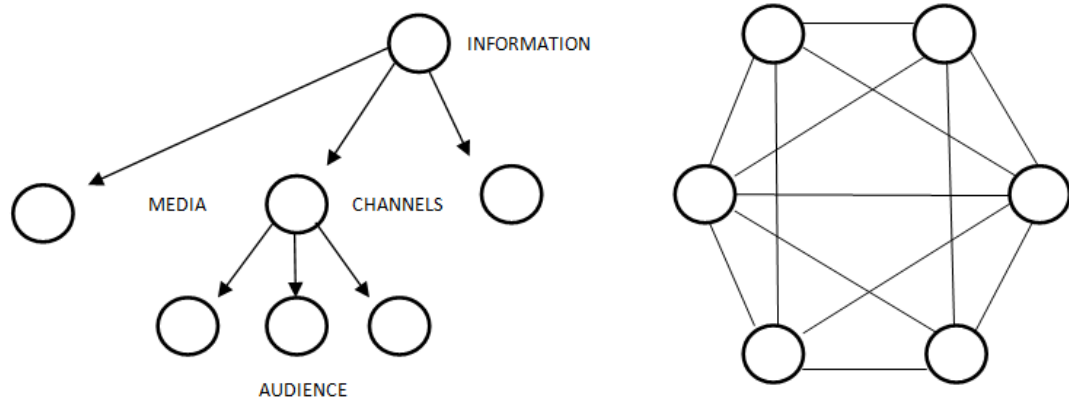


FIGURE 8. Hierarchical vs. horizontal information flow within a community.

3.2.2 Networks and the advantages

When the horizontal information flow mentioned in the previous chapter is put in to a bigger picture with more participants, a certain web of networks can be seen. For the networking and communication to be effective, the formation of the networks needs to be recognized and understood. The following chapter therefore explains how networks form as well as the actual benefits of the networks.

To give a simple demonstration, a network can be created around only three people. First there is a person who is interested for example both in environmental issues and women's rights. When participating in online conversation concerning the environment, one finds another person with interesting views. The new acquaintance makes a Face-

book friend request and the two will become friends sharing more information on the topic. At the same time the person in question is discussing the issues related to women's rights elsewhere and a connection with a third person being made similarly to the first example. Thus a small network has been established, the person interested in both topics being the link between the two others. The networking continues and the connections start to create a complicated web of networks.

As said, the person interested in both of the issues, environment and women's rights, acts as a link between the two others. Similarly when put in a larger scale and the complicated web of networks is being analyzed, such links connecting a lot of people can be found. These links are the nodes in the web. The nodes linking masses of other people together have certain power, for example, in information sharing. Therefore they are useful for gaining visibility. To give an example of the Haavisto campaign once again, the crew succeeded incredibly well in utilizing the potential visibility via the web nodes connecting large amounts of people. The campaign collected a group of "messengers" that were well-known from different fields of life. The messengers then forwarded Mr. Haavisto's personal brand message to a wider audience. (Kämpfi 2013.) To mention one example of the messengers, Anssi Kela, who is seemingly active on Facebook and has thousands of likes there, shared his thoughts on Haavisto through the channels he uses.

As with the Anssi Kela example, it is important to have the nodes and bridge-builders from different fields of life. Promoting another politician would be senseless as the two politicians are competing for visibility. With people from different fields of life, the online message can reach a wider audience fast and efficiently. Finding, participating and activating the bridge-builders is therefore of great advantage. However, the chosen bridge-builders should be selected with consideration as the people with wide networks outside the Internet might not be the same people that have wide connections online.

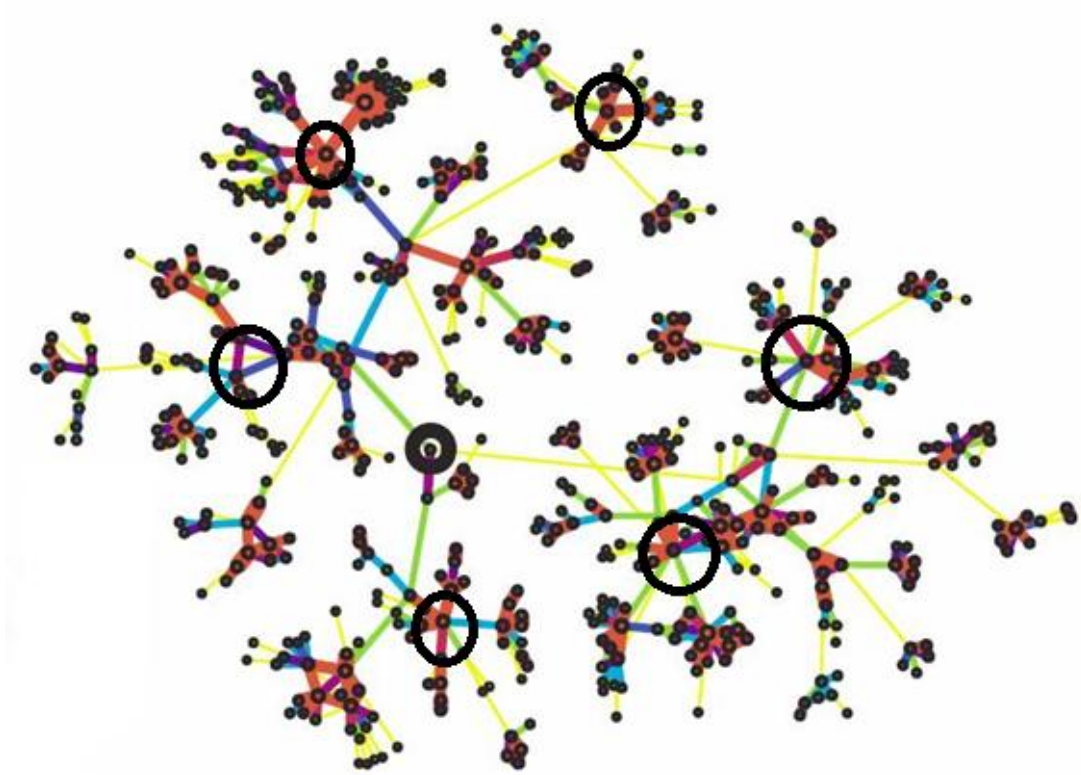


FIGURE 9. A demonstration of a web of networks and the nodes (bridge-builders).

3.3 Social media channels

After understanding the background for the internet use (described in part 2.4. Internet, social media and chosen networks) and the communication in social media, the next step is to analyze the chosen networks with a more practical touch. Thus, based on the outcomes of the expert interviews, large-scale studies made regarding the social media and the different platforms, the thesis analyzes and reveals the benefits and disadvantages of the chosen social media platforms specifically for the political personal branding.

3.3.1 Different approach between channels

One of the questions concerning effective social media use for personal branding purposes in the political scene is to find out whether to have different and strong emphases in different channels. By using the literature and the expert interviews (Kämpfi 2013, Korteso 2014) it was found out that the fundamental goal should be to keep a coherent

image of the personal brand in all of the social media channels. Therefore there is no need for strong differentiation between the three chosen social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, blogs) especially content-wise. Kämppi (2013) also points out the good communication between different social media platforms. For example one can tweet and post a Facebook status at the same time.

However, both of the experts agreed that the different natures and limits of the platforms need to be recognized and taken into consideration. Therefore, instead of strong and differing focuses between networks, different approaches should be considered due to the different natures and practical characteristics of the platforms. There are certain features that differs the platforms from one another. To illustrate, Facebook is more focused on the user's friend circle whereas all the content on Twitter is public and targeted to a wider audience.

Therefore, even though the content of the messages in different channels would be relatively similar, there might be a slightly different approach. For example, a web page and a blog can be considered to be places where all the needed information is gathered. The other channels such as Facebook and Twitter might then function as a way for attracting people first and then directing them to the webpage. Thus the message in Facebook and Twitter are created to be attractive and inviting whereas the webpage and the blog give a deeper insight to the issue. The content of framework to be conveyed does not differ but the message is only adjusted according the environment of the network with different communicational tools.

To sum up, when dealing with platforms with such wide audiences, one should not separate the focuses of different topics according to the channels but concentrate in creating a coherent image of the brand in all of the networks. Consequently, the content should be consistent in all of the channels but the communication tools might differ and create the appropriate approach.

3.3.2 The natures, benefits and limits

To dig more deeply in different natures of the platforms, Facebook and Twitter are now gone through separately. Because blogs can be tailored and administrated by the brand

itself, there is a special focus on the challenges of Facebook and Twitter in which the brand needs to adjust its presence to the particular social media environment. Using examples and studies the thesis aims to give an insight to the approaches that are beneficial to use in the networks for political personal branding purposes. Thus the basic natures, practical benefits and limits of the chosen networks from the personal brand's point of view are analyzed.

Facebook

As said before, Facebook is the most popular social media channel among the Finns. From the personal branding point of view it is startling if a strong personal brand is not present in Facebook. Therefore the presence is essential but only a presence is not enough to gain special attention.

The first decision to make when joining Facebook is whether to create a group, page or a profile. A profile is considered to be more personal compared to the public page that is more commonly used for professional purposes. Whereas with the profile one can see the content of others, the page does not enable such two-way openness and thus the page owner will not be able to see the content of the fans. For those using Facebook for professional purposes, a Facebook page is still a more sensible solution. For example, having a Facebook profile limits the amount of friends one can have and the marketing tools are targeted only for pages. Therefore getting paid coverage with a profile is impossible.

However, there are of course some disadvantages or challenges in Facebook use for personal branding. The main challenge is to find a personal touch to the Facebook activity. This means creating context-related, relevant and attractive content to add on the Facebook page. Besides creating content, the participation in conversations is very important and time-consuming. Thirdly, the Facebook page is part of publicity just like other actions. This might also create challenges. The fans are able to see each other and it cannot be controlled how they react to one another. The page might also draw the attention of people one would not like to be close to.

Commerciality is one of the biggest challenges of Facebook as it continuously alters the entire Facebook. Facebook has before distributed a rather huge proportion of the total

information targeted at a user. Based on likes, follows or friends from different pages and profiles the user has been able to find the information in the front page's newsfeed. Nevertheless, the new EdgeRank algorithm now filters the information and forwards only selected messages that are believed to interest the target person. Facebook seeks to keep the users active on Facebook by offering content that is considered to interest the target person the most. The filtration is based on the previous activity of the user.

The information shared on Facebook by companies, users and other actors is increasing. Most of the users like and follow pages as well as belong to different groups but will not receive the information posted by these pages and groups. Of course, for Facebook it is practically impossible to show the approximately 1500 posts that are estimated to be targeted for one person at a time in the newsfeed. In December Facebook (2013) announced that hence people are sharing more and more content, pages will face changes in distribution; meaning a decline in the organic reach of a page. Facebook (2013) explains the changes as follows: "We expect this trend [the increase of shared information] to continue as the competition for each story remains strong and we focus on quality."

The optimization of the newsfeed has caused challenges for the visibility seekers. After the Facebook algorithm reformation in the fall 2012 the free visibility coverage possible to gain on Facebook plummet (MindJumpers 2012). According to Minna Valtari (2012), the social media consultant and trainer of Someco, the visibility to be gained on Facebook without paid marketing is now 15%. In other words, approximately only every seventh user that has liked a Facebook page will see the message put forward by it. If the brand wishes to reach the rest of the followers, money needs to be used. (Valtari 2014a.)

Besides the organic reach, the algorithm change affects the visibility of different types of stories. Before, the posts including only text were emphasized but now Facebook (2014) reckons that the textual posts of brand pages are not as popular as those of friends. Therefore the visibility of posts including only text published by pages will decrease. The product manager of newsfeed ranking on Facebook, Chris Turitzin, hints that the emphasis will be more on the other story types by commenting as follows: "Page admins can expect a decrease in the distribution of their text status updates, but they may see some increases in engagement and distribution for other story types." (Fa-

cebook 2014) Minna Valtari from Someco (2014b.) has analyzed the new changes and recommends the pages to add a picture or a link to the posts for gaining more coverage in distribution and newsfeed space. First of all, the posts with images are more probable to reach the users. In addition, if the posts reach the user's front page, the "physical" visibility is much more noticeable compared to only text.

For the decline of organic reach, Facebook (2013) recommends the administrators of the pages to use a combination of the engaging page posts and targeted advertising to keep the page promotion on a broad base. These two functions are marketing tools that Facebook offers for companies and brands to purchase for more visibility coverage. Indeed, the organization called Inside Facebook (2013) follows closely the activities of Facebook and declares that according to the studies the organic reach of pages has decreased by 40 percent.

When using Facebook page, Facebook provides the administrators the basic information regarding the organic reach. This information includes for example the amount of likes of different updates. Using the paid marketing tools, the more detailed information of the users' participation and activity is provided. Moreover, the marketing tools offer the possibility of targeting the message to a specific segment of people according to the information Facebook has gained of the user's Facebook activities and published personal information. For example, when targeting an ad, one could choose the environmentally friendly nurses that with children from a town with 10 000 – 70 000 inhabitants. This demonstrates how targeted the marketing in Facebook can be. After the ad campaign, Facebook gives the results of how many clicks, likes etc. the campaign has had.

Facebook is a relatively practical platform to test different marketing campaigns as the marketing is rather cheap and the budget can be easily controlled. The price is formed by variables such as the amount of people to be reached. However, the variables need to be considered carefully not only from the budget's point of view. To give an example, for some the purpose of using Facebook is solely to communicate with friends and the intruding of ads in the newsfeed might irritate the users. Therefore Korteso (2014) believes that placing ads in the right side of a Facebook page is a more "sincere" way of advertising on Facebook. When the ad is placed in a space that is generally perceived for the ads, the user can decide whether to pay attention to the ad or not.

In her blog post, Minna Valtari (2014a.) analyzes the efficiency of Facebook use for gaining visibility today. She claims that Facebook no longer is the same social media tool as it used to be. Now the users do not feel the joy of finding new and interesting groups, companies, communities or brands as before. Instead, Facebook has become a strong marketing channel. The newsfeeds are filled with several offers and marketing campaigns. Facebook does not enable the distribution of attracting and free content to the same extent as before. (Valtari 2014a.) All in all, if the company or a brand is ready to pay for the visibility, the coverage is higher.

At this point where the visibility possible to obtain in Facebook is mainly paid, the brand needs to understand and separate the difference between gained and paid publicity. As the name of the concepts suggest, gained publicity is obtained by other means than costly marketing tools. Gained publicity has an essential advantage in the minds of the audience compared to the paid publicity (Kortesuo 2014). People are irritated by commercials and ads. Thus the paid publicity has a rather negative image whereas gained publicity is valued. Facebook used to be extremely effective platform for gaining respected visibility, but now that the means for distributing the message has been cut down, the paid visibility is more present. As the thesis concentrates on the gained publicity in social media, the research does not focus any deeper the issue of Facebook marketing.

The personal opinion of the thesis author is that Facebook has lost its power of open horizontal communication and therefore might not be the most effective way of gaining visibility. On the other hand it is also the most used social media platform in Finland, and therefore it is of course essential for a brand to have a presence there. However, the outcomes of the visibility campaigns might not be as positively surprising as before. Facebook is a corporation that has to do business even at the cost of the users. Kortesuo (2014) summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of Facebook well: “do not use Facebook but abuse Facebook”. In other words, do not let the Facebook take over and use the brand for its own purposes, but do the other way around and abuse Facebook with innovative and creative campaigns, ideas and events.

To sum up, all the focus of social media personal branding should not be on Facebook. The changes in the field are rapid as shown with the examples of the algorithm altera-

tions and therefore it is hard to keep up with visibility coverage possibilities there. Active presence and content distribution in more than one social media channel enables the users to discover the brand also outside Facebook.

Twitter

Twitter is similar to Facebook with the large user base and therefore also wider visibility coverage possibilities. Twitter is based on tweets. The length of a tweet is at maximum 140 characters. It is common to add a link to the tweet to give background information to the issue. In addition, tweets can be retweeted by others. When retweeting, the original tweet is also seen to the followers of the retweeter. Hence the visibility of the tweet increases and probably the follower base as well. All in all, Twitter offers the possibility of spreading smaller notifications incredibly fast.

Twitter has increased its power on being a news media. To give an example, on May 1st 2011, Sohaib Athar was annoyed by the helicopter noise above his residence in Pakistan. He tweets about the event: "Helicopter hovering above Abbottabad at 1 AM (is a rare event)". If he only knew, that it was US army getting ready for their mission. And if only Osama Bin Laden had been active on twitter and seen the tweet, he would have known that he was going to be captured by these Special Forces. (Chuchmach 2011.) Later, the US Minister of Defence tweets "So I'm told by a reputable person they have killed Osama Bin Laden. Hot damn." These tweets started a larger flood of tweets. People were aware of the situation before president Obama began his television speech of the situation. (Stelter 2011) This is an example how the information flows real time on social media, and in this case, in Twitter. It shakes the status of traditional media.

The viral information flow spreads both in Facebook and Twitter. In Facebook it is easy to follow what friends are up to, but Twitter on the other hand offers a platform where rising trends can be trailed and the hot topics in general discussed with a larger audience including more people than only friends. Therefore it is anticipated, that the real social media revolution in a larger scale is happening particularly in Twitter.

The idea of micro-blogging originally was to spread public text messages. This characteristic of short messages is quite clever, as internet use has gone more towards rapid browsing, and the short tweets support the condensed and relevant short messaging. The

tweets are shown in the mobile or computer screens of the people that are following the tweeter. The one being followed is not required to accept the followers and anyone can follow whoever they wish to. The tweets can be found also by others by adding a word with a hash-tag. Hashtag enables the tweet to join the spring of tweets under a certain topic and therefore the tweet takes part in the conversation. The tweets can also be targeted at a person with a “@” sign in front of the username.

According to a statistic portal, Statista (2013), in the last quarter of the year 2013, there were 241 million monthly active users in Twitter worldwide. The ongoing growth also in the amount of Finnish tweeters is even more remarkable. The following chart is made up by a Finnish IT specialist and expert in social media, Toni Nummela (2013), and it demonstrates the increase in the number of Finnish Twitter users. The blue line represents the information gathered from Intellecta’s finnishtwitter.com website, but the line ends at the year 2012, as that is till when the sample was collected.

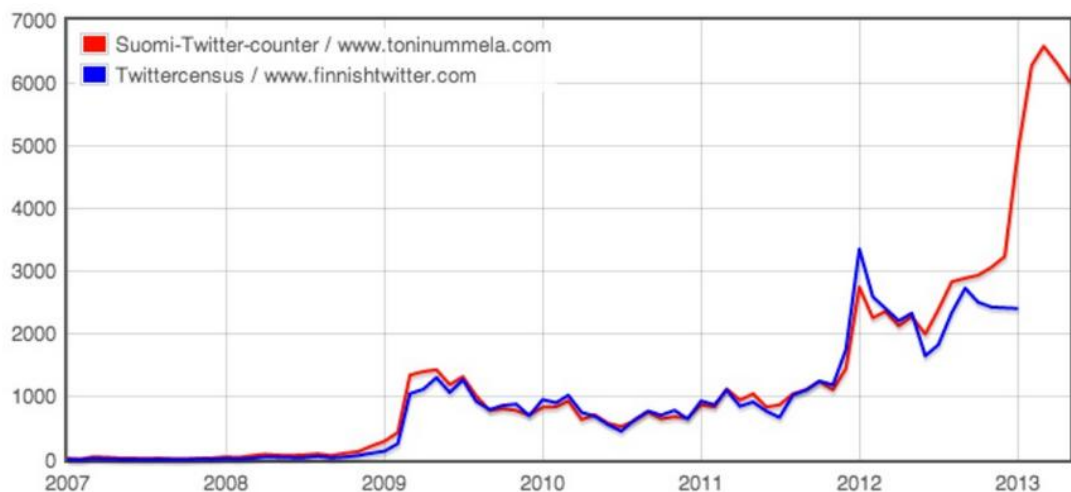


FIGURE 10. The number of Finnish active Twitter accounts. (Nummela 2013)

The number of Finnish active tweeters is still lagging way behind compared to that of the Swedish tweeters. In Sweden, the amount of active users has been estimated to be around 300 000. (Yle 2013.) However, the number is growing in Finland and an important notion is that the active users in Twitter indeed create content in Twitter. To be exact, there are around 26 000 active and 5200 very active Finns tweeting new information content (Yle 2013). These people share the happenings in the surrounding world in real time and participate in conversations considering the topics.

In his article in Helsingin Sanomat, Saska Saarikoski (2013) analyzes the Finnish Twitter culture. He points out that the users of Twitter are not only youngsters seeking to have fun, but mostly adults. Whereas Facebook can be taken as an online network of friends, Twitter attracts opinion-sharers and people with more power in their special fields. The most interesting posts in Facebook regularly are friends' life stories, whereas the messages spreading most rapidly in Twitter include news and sharp opinions. (Saarikoski 2013.) Like in the case of Sohaib Athar, the world rocking news spread within minutes to almost all corners of the Earth.

A Swedish company, Intellecta (2013), created a graph illustrating the Finnish Twitter scene. The idea is to demonstrate the networks between the users using the tweets, followers and following features. The result is the following graph, in which the approximately 30 000 active twitter accounts are shown. If the graph is zoomed out, different colors can be separated. According to Hampus Brynof, the data and digital content analyst, the different colors could be separated according to the different topics the users are involved with.

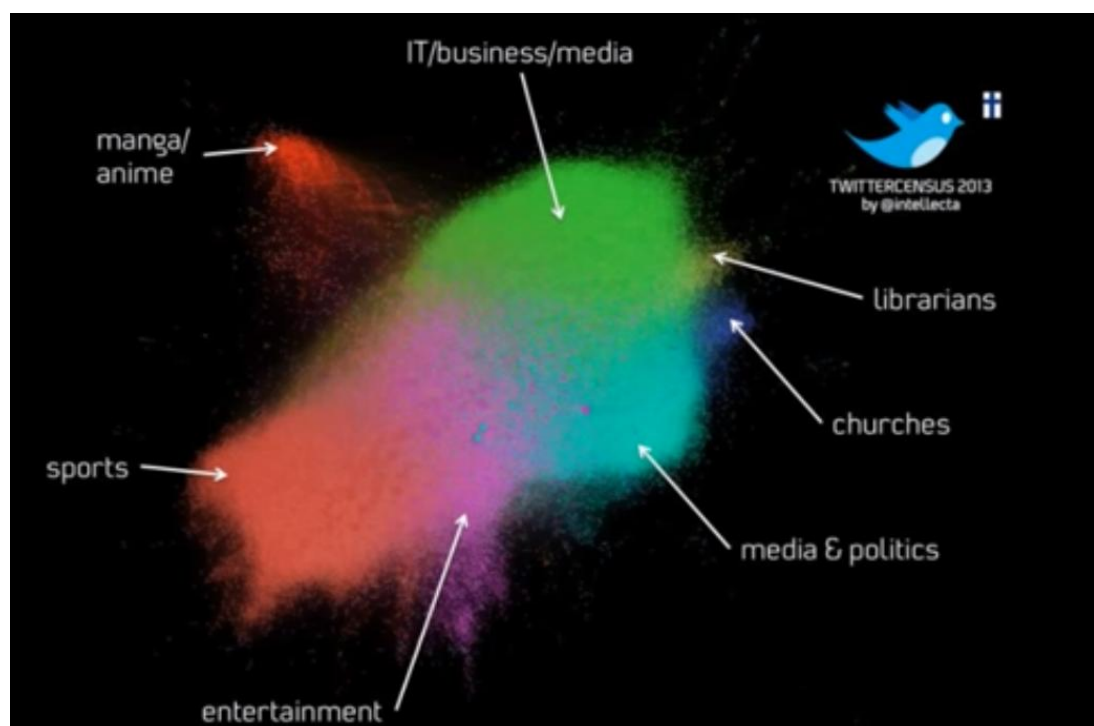


Figure 11. Graph of Finnish Twitter users and the topics they are interested in. (Intellecta 2013)

If the graph is zoomed in, separate balls can be found representing the users. The size of the ball demonstrates the activity of the user. What is rather interesting is that the balls

of the individual users are bigger compared to those of the huge media companies. This illustrates that in Twitter people talk, not organizations or institutions that used to filter the information. The figure 9 (p. 57) showed the bridge builders of networks in theoretical level, but the graph of Intellecta (2013) demonstrates the networks in practice. Indeed, with the graph it is possible to find the actual nodes or bridge builders of networks that have a lot of influence on other users by finding the larger balls in the graph.

The importance and the power of the nodes and bridge builders cannot be highlighted enough also in Twitter. To give an example, according to the study of EBU (2013, 9), 60% of people are more willing to click on a news link if it is received from someone they know compared to a link from somewhere else. The links are often shared in social media, 55% in Facebook, 33% in Emails and 13% in Twitter. (EBU 2013, 9) Naturally, people with more followers have more visibility and therefore the links and messages are more likely not only to reach people but also to be noticed and processed by others. By choosing the links and contents of their messages they have a power to direct people.

The following image shows the larger balls that can be seen even when the picture is zoomed out. The two balls quite in the middle are the accounts of Sauli Niinistö and Tarja Halonen. The Finnish twitter guru, Tuomas Enbuske, is located a bit more to the right. MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen is naturally found in blue area of the media and politics.

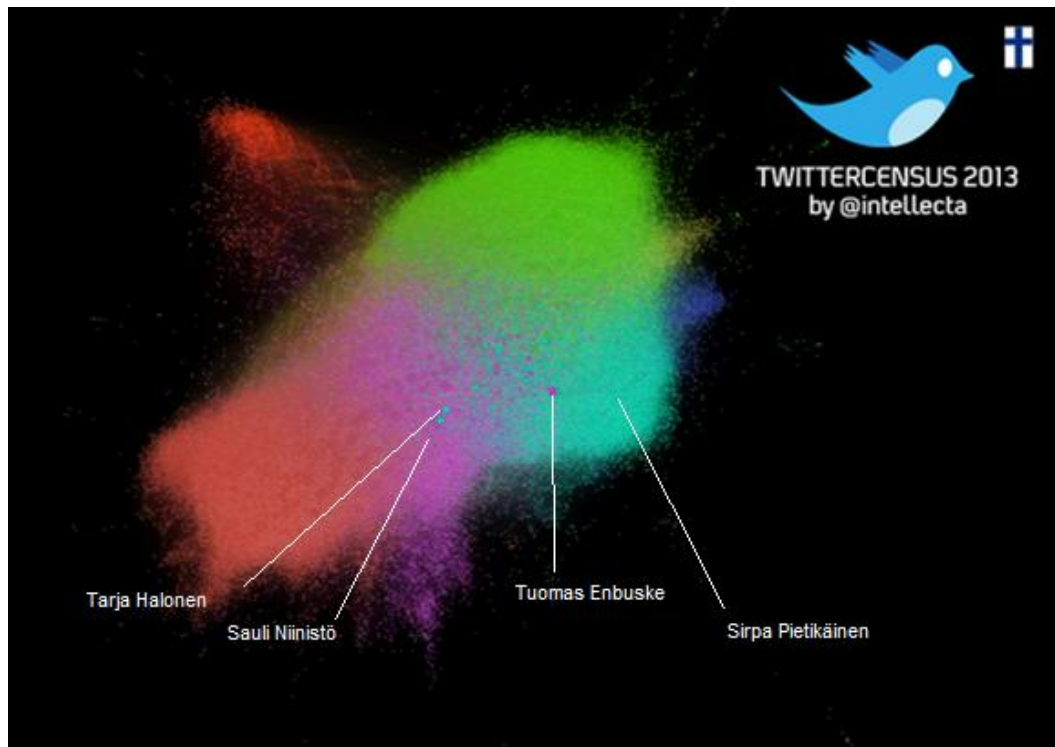


FIGURE 12. Graph of Finnish Twitter users illustrating also the popular Finnish twitter accounts of Niinistö, Halonen and Enbuske. The location of Pietikäinen's account is also shown. (Intellecta 2013) (modified)

Intellecta (2013) also enables to see the follower base that an account has. The next image demonstrates that the followers of MEP Pietikäinen's account are located mostly in the areas of technology, media & politics and entertainment. However, it needs to be taken into consideration that these are rather rough segmentations.

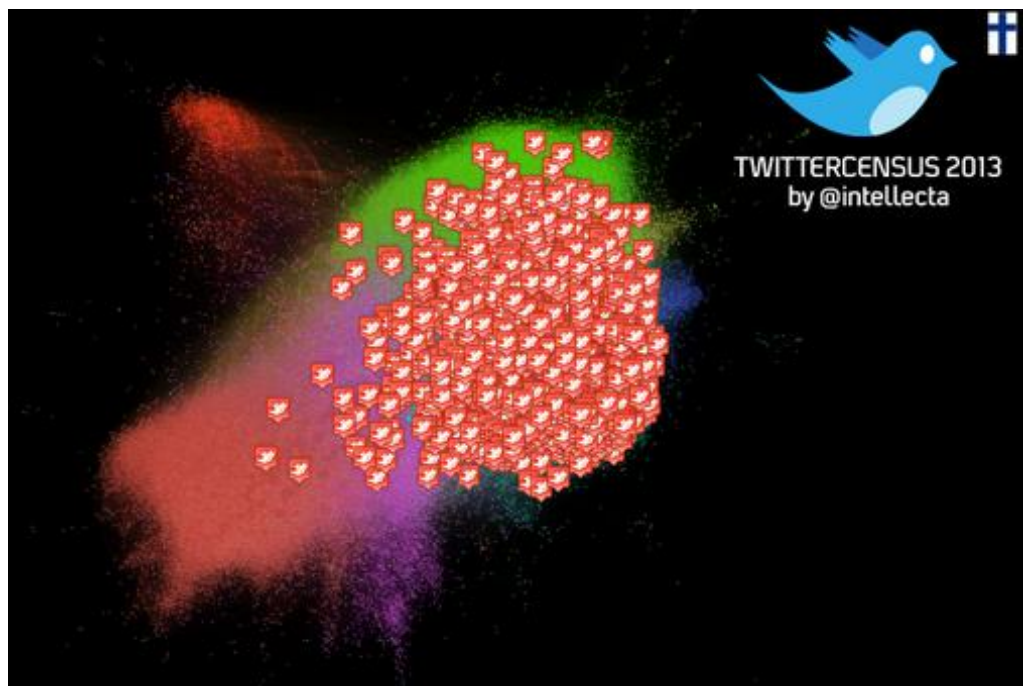


FIGURE 13. The followers of MEP Pietikäinen's account. (Intellecta 2013)

Even though the twitter user base of Finns is increasing, it is still very much behind Sweden and Norway. The two neighboring countries are around 3 years ahead of Finland. (Saarikoski 2013.) Twitter in Finland is now in the edge of shifting from the geeky conversation platform to a real mass media. When considered larger groups, athletes and celebrities are important since when they start to take over Twitter, there is also an increase in the amount of Twitter users as the fans follow.

Another “Twitter –moment” can occur is when an event of larger scale takes place. For example, during the earthquake in Japan 2011 and the hurricane Sandy in the US 2012 even those who had had rather reluctant thoughts on Twitter were rushing to see the real time tweets of current happenings. Twitter offered a platform for everyone to share their information to the public. News channels in between the happening and the audience were not needed.

In Twitter an emphasis on views instead of news can be seen. Saarikoski (2013) shares his Twitter history by explaining that he began at first to follow the larger media houses such as Al-Jazeera, BBC and the Economist. However, he considered this to be a mistake as these institutions shared large amount of news and information. It was impossible for him to follow all the articles and dig into all of the issues. Instead, he realized that he should rather follow other people that do the research and information filtration for him and finally give him a view on the issue. (Saarikoski 2013)

Indeed, in most cases people pick a topic or several topics in Twitter that they specialize in. For example, one could be interested in travelling and food, therefore he/she picks the two topics to tweet about. This gives a clear idea for the followers what to expect from the Tweeter. With the topic choices, a certain group of followers interested in the same issues emerge and a specific network is created. Therefore it was easier e.g. for Saarikoski (2013) to pick experts from different fields to follow instead of having to see the effort of being expert himself to gain the information he was interested in. Another important point can be condensed into the following sentence: “Share views, not only news.” It is easy to do a Google search and find objective information on different issues but it is more challenging to see the big picture and form a respected opinion. Saarikoski (2013) considers that it is good to be involved with Twitter, but one should then also have something to say.

For the politicians therefore it is beneficial to be present in Facebook but more importantly one should have something to say and not be boring. There is a huge potential in the political Twitter scene as Mr. Stubb has shown. However, Stubb's example has not got the other politicians to activate themselves in Twitter. Therefore there is still a lot of space for other politicians' Twitter visibility as well. The Twiplomacy (Burson-Marsteller 2013), one of the leading global studies of world leaders on Twitter, describes the activity of Finnish politicians as follows: "Finland's government leaders are not active on Twitter with one big exception: European Minister @AlexStubb who has single handedly put Finland prominently on the Twitter map."

Even though it was shown that the Finnish president, Sauli Niinistö has a lot of followers on Twitter, around 30 000, he stopped tweeting after the presidential campaign was over. Tarja Halonen and Pekka Haavisto tweet, but extremely rarely. The incumbent Minister for Culture and Sport, Paavo Arhinmäki takes it easy on Twitter by tweeting approximately once a week. Even a tweet a week has gained him a follower base of 16 000. Stubb explains his popularity on Twitter by saying: "I try to convey the feeling. Be yourself. No one is interested in hearing that an important international decision was made." This demonstrates the potential a politician could have if having the right approach, message, values and activity on Twitter. (Saarikoski 2013.) Twitter can be considered as a more beneficial tool for a politician compared to Facebook because in Twitter the politician can reach a wider audience and the other way around; a larger amount of people can reach the politician.

If the traditional media opens the doors for the audience to see what is happening in the cabinets of politicians, social media on the other hand offers the possibility for the audience to understand what is happening also elsewhere, at the sports gym or at home. It all depends on of course the approach that the politician has to the Twitter and the information that is wished to be shared. However, the benefits of creating a deeper relationship with the audience using twitter as a tool to bring out for example facts about the normal everyday routines and character the politician. By stepping out of the super professional role of being a politician and revealing other aspects of the person, the audience can find a feature they can bond more strongly with.

However, like Facebook, Twitter is a commercial business. All the traces lead to the headquarters in San Francisco, where the plans of listing the incorporation to the New

York Stock Exchange has been already made. The truth is that twitter is there to make money to its owners and it is a fact that the twitter users should also recognize. Twitter has already gained money from selling sponsored tweets and visibility. For example, a TV-show could buy their hashtag topic to be mentioned among the popular tweets. (Saarikoski 2013.)

The twitter users however have the image of twitter as a quite stable platform where the commerciality is not focused. Therefore the Twitter needs to be careful with the reformations not to lose its credibility in the eyes of users. There is always the risk of e.g. twitter pointing out a paid hashtag and get caught of doing so. The users most interesting users might shift to other platforms if the transparency and uncontrolled conversation is in danger.

All in all, there is a hype of Twitter going on in Finland. By selecting few topics to tweet about and giving interesting views instead of only news, Twitter offers a great possibility also for a politician to gain visibility. With Intellecta's (2013) charts, one can also follow where the followers are placed in the twitter map and offer information accordingly. Considering the commerciality, Twitter is a more stable platform compared to Facebook.

Blogs

The thesis takes into consideration the blogs as they are an effective platforms for exchanging thoughts; giving more deeper insight to the different topics; receiving the opinions, knowhow and information and finally for building the brand. However, the blogs are not as carefully gone through as Facebook and Twitter in the thesis since blog as a communication channel has been already used in Ms. Pietikäinen's personal brand communication for a longer period of time. Blogging therefore has developed to a rather good stage with good content and effective participation considering Ms. Pietikäinen's personal brand.

To give an insight to blogs, blogs consist of posted texts, images and videos showing the most recent post on top of the list. Similarly to the online diaries, also the older posts remain readable in the archives. Katleena Korteso (2011, 75) considers a blog to be the most effective way for strengthening the personal brand. The blog reaches the target

audience as mostly the ones interested in the topics end up in reading the posts. The challenge therefore lies mostly in attracting those potential readers to the blog. But blog itself however is a great social media platform that can be customized to the needs and goals of a personal brand.

Another advantage of blogs is that it is easier to control and administer. Being in charge of the blog and able to alter the content, delete comments and direct the discussion, the personal brand crew has more power in controlling the overall discussion. Of course the discussion should be open and transparent but the power of administrator is beneficial especially in a case where there are inappropriate anonymous comments taking over the healthy discussion.

3.4 Frame of expressions

After the social media channels to be used are chosen and approaches analyzed, the brand should focus on creating a practical frame of expressions reflecting the core person including attractive, informative and flexible content that inspires the audience to participate. The frame of expressions illustrates all the expressions made intentionally to practically convey the brand message. The following chapter explains the building blocks of the frame of expressions.

To give an insight on the importance of the overall frame of expressions, the thoughts of the social media and communication experts Korteso and Kämppi are presented. In addition the chapter discusses how the frame of expressions enables the strengthening of para-social relationships with the audience. Kemiläinen's (1997) studies of the para-social dimensions are put in the modern day context.

Lastly the communication with the audience based on voluntariness and participation is discussed. According to the findings the chapter illustrates the relations between the variables mentioned: personal brand, expressions, social media channel and social media users.

3.4.1 Establishing frame of expressions

The brand team should focus on the person and the core values. According to these basics, it is important to convey the brand through practical expressions that are particularly present in social media. The overall frame of expressions should be flexible, providing space for activity and participation of the audience. This flexibility enables the participators to direct the discussion according to their interests and approaches making the conversation more interesting and attracting.

Kortesuo (2014) emphasizes first and foremost the person behind the brand. Kortesuo (2014) explains, that the online personal brand consists of the “core me” and the core values. The core values are included in the overall frame of expressions, but when observing the expressions from the online user’s point of view, the user runs into separate expressions and the overall frame of expressions and brand message cannot be understood completely at once. Instead, the overall picture of the personal brand forms after the user has met different separate expressions made online, like demonstrated in figure 14.

For example, one could be a specialist in environmental issues, economic issues and gender equality, like Ms. Pietikäinen. When the online user comes across with an expression in which the personal environmental opinions are stated, the user sees the environmental values that the personal brand has. In another occasion the user might find a link between the personal brand and the economic issues. With the different separate expressions made online, the user can figure out the “core me” of the brand and the values. Therefore the strategic focuses should be set beforehand and conveyed consistently with the expressions. (Kortesuo 2014.)

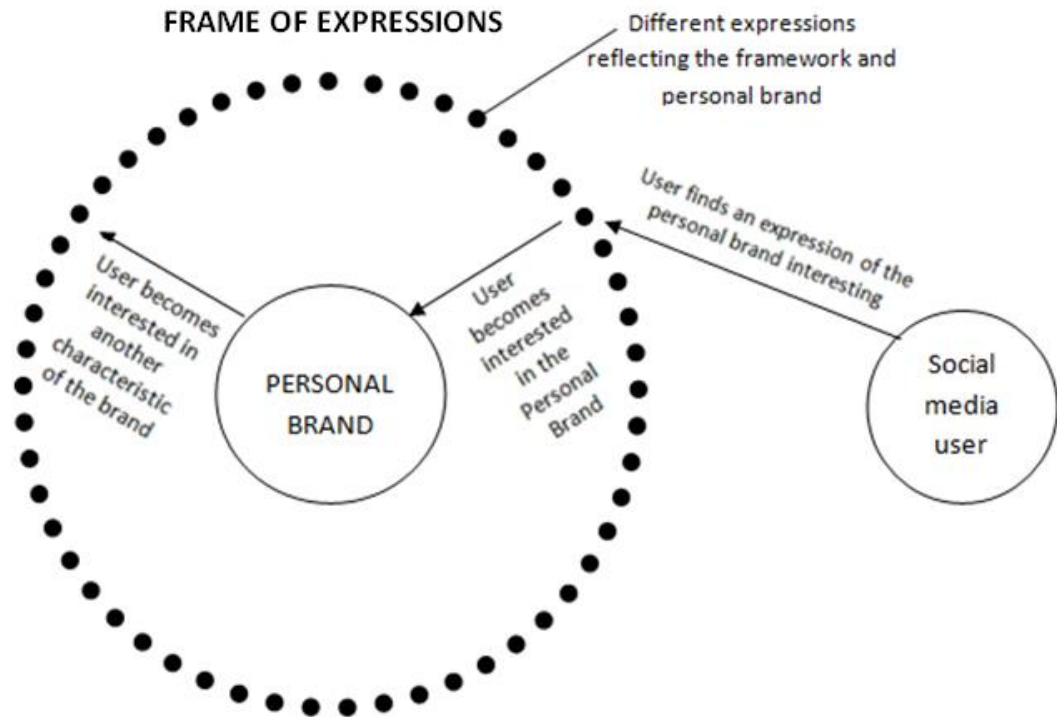


FIGURE 14. The picture illustrates the targeting of a personal brand as a whole through framework and the different expressions as well as the way of a social media user understanding the personal brand in its entirety.

Therefore the personal brand can be seen as an ambassador of the topics that the person is interested in. A fan of the personal brand's opinions concerning environmental issues can also get interested in the gender equality or even cooking if the two topics are linked by the personal brand. The brand should keep in mind that the audience interested in the brand is not paying attention to the objective information about the issue but rather on the view of the personal brand considering it. Therefore the personal brand should not be afraid of losing the audience by being true to oneself. Instead, one should fiercely keep the core values in mind and convey them to the people as a whole by the different expressions.

The personal brand should be able to convey the complete person behind the brand to the audience. Consequently, besides such professional opinions, values and views, the brand should also focus on expressing the core person behind as an ordinary person. (Kortesuo 2014.) However, one should be careful not to underline the characteristics in an overly positive way. In other words, personal experiences should be conveyed to the audience but not by creating a feeling that the person is superior compared to others. Instead, expressing the person's characteristics in a manner that is not disturbing, the audience can find similarities and create emotional connections to the person. (Kortesuo 2014)

3.4.2 Strengthening para-social relationships through the frame of expressions in social media

Regarding the emotional connections mentioned by Korteso (2014), Kemiläinen's (1997) study focusing on the para-social relationships between the candidate and the voters support the idea of creating a certain loose frame of expressions that conveys the personal values, characteristics and ideological opinions enabling a para-social relationship to be formed.

The 5 dimensions of para-social relationships were explained in the part 2.1.6. Brand associations. However, now the study of Kemiläinen (1997) is taken further to the time of new media channels and especially social media. As Korteso (2014) pointed out, the emotional connections can be created through social media as well. This can be linked to the results of Kemiläinen's research (1997), where for example the imagined friendship is seen as one of the para-social dimensions. By being oneself and expressing the values and characteristics via social media and online participation, the audience can form the emotional association in form of a friendly image of the candidate. This example refers to Kemiläinen's (1997) dimension of "imagined friendship". Thus the voter identifies the candidate as a person that can be a potential friend.

However, social media can also take the relationship further. It offers the possibility of creating the feeling of a stronger friendship with the communicational tools such as "friending" on Facebook, "following" in Twitter or subscribing blog posts. These are the modern social media ways of strengthening a para-social relationship online that Kemiläinen (1997) refers to as the "reality of the relationship". In 1997 the voter might have felt a good chemistry with the candidate and thus he/she had the will to meet the candidate in person. However, nowadays this para-social relationship could become more concrete also in Internet with the possibility to interact and meet online. The two mentioned dimensions underline the importance of expressing the person's personal characteristics and true values to emotional connections.

When providing content and creating expressions for personal brand in social media also the other three dimensions of Kemiläinen's (1997) research should be considered.

In other words, social media provides also grounds for focusing on the para-social dimensions of “ideological similitude”, “competence and “public representativeness”. If the first two mentioned dimensions (“imagined friendship”, “the reality of friendship”) were more related to the emotional and personal characteristics, the other three clearly concentrate on the political point of views. First of all, the ideological opinions should be included in the frame of expressions and conveyed in the social media to give the audience and image what kind of thoughts the candidate has on the political topics. According to the expressed opinions, the voter can find similarities between the ideas of the voter and the candidate. Thus a para-social relationship is being formed based on the ideological similitude. Secondly, the competence can be expressed in the social media environment simply by, for example, participating in the conversation and answering the questions of the audience. Therefore the candidate can illustrate the knowhow he/she possesses and interact with the audience. Of course the competence can also be passed on to the audience by stating e.g. the achievements the candidate already has gained. However, this should be done carefully and not in a disturbing manner.

Lastly, also the public representativeness is present in social media. A candidate can have a natural and professional appearance online the same way when meeting face-to-face. The ways of conveying the professional appearance online however might slightly differ compared to meeting in real life. To illustrate, when performing publicly in a happening it is of course important to act naturally, express oneself clearly, use proper language and have an appropriate appearance. In social media on the other hand certain rules of behaviour have also evolved. This online “netiquette” should of course be followed to give a professional image also in social media.

The example of how Kemiläinen’s (1997) research regarding para-social relationships can be analyzed in the social media context illustrates also that relationships can be formed with the audience online. The formation of the para-social relationship in social media includes not only the professional point of view but also the personal characteristics of the person behind the brand. Therefore the results also support the idea of creating a frame of expressions that comprehensively reflects the person.

3.4.3 Expressions and interaction with the audience

Finally, after certain frame of expressions to be conveyed is thought through with all the para-social dimensions taken into consideration, the actual expressions should be done in an attracting way. To first give an example, Kämppi (2013) explains that with the Haavisto campaign set values were conveyed to the audience also through social media but not by pushing an already fixed package of information for the audience's knowledge. Instead the crew made a frame of expressions concentrating on the core values and thus letting the additional information to be found out along with the conversation with the audience. By making the participation voluntary, the active participants felt they had the decision to be part of the communication.

Therefore, besides being flexible, the content provided should not be imposing but encouraging for participation. According to Kämppi (2013) such attracting and innovative frame of expressions creates a snowball effect when it is successfully established and maintained. The social media gives good ground for the snowball effect to take place as the networks spread the word like explained previously.

To recap, a certain frame of expressions with the essential content needs to be first created and maintained for conveying the personal brand's values and characteristics online. However, there should also be space for the audience to participate and to be innovative.

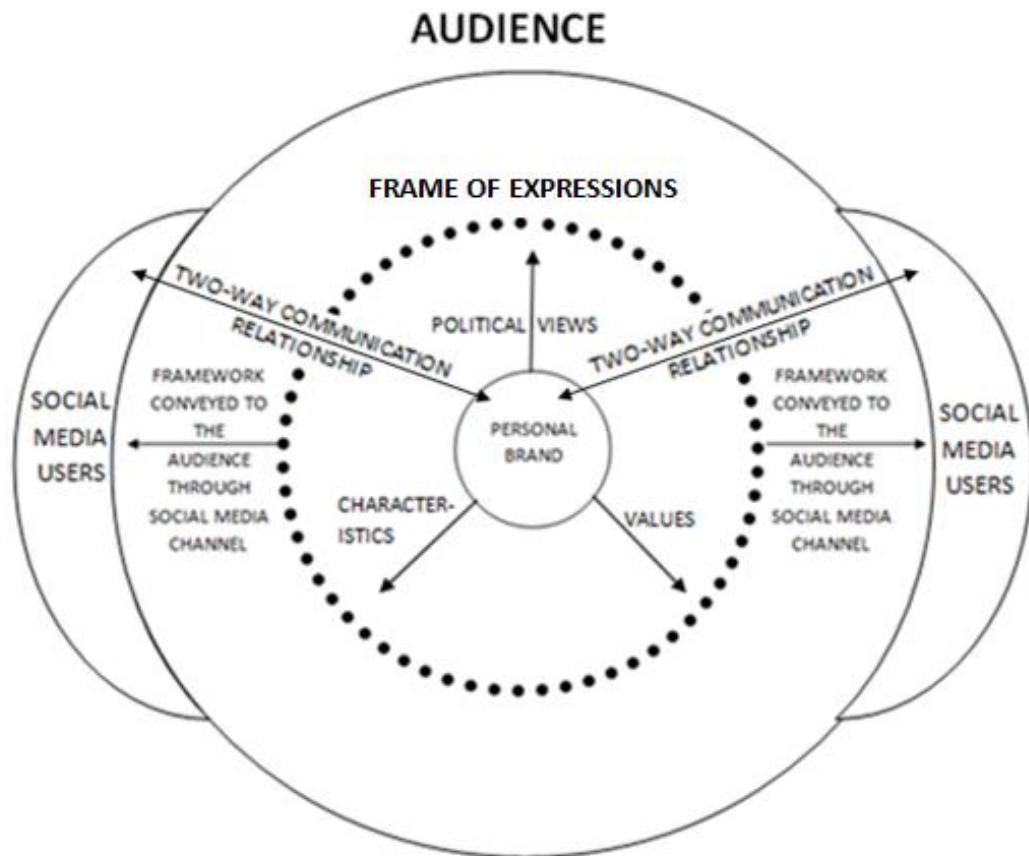


FIGURE 15. Relations between personal brand, frame of expressions, social media channel and social media users.

3.5 Participation methods based on different users

When the general frame of expressions reflecting the core values and characteristics of the person is thought through, the next step is to adjust the message and tune it to answer the needs and wants of specific groups of social media users.

The chapter begins with explaining the importance of conveying the personal brand as a whole when creating the message. Later, the thesis discusses the situation of creating the expressions to answer the characteristics of the audience: the social media users. Regarding the social media users, the thesis first describes the different segments of internet users and then separates those segments that are particularly present in social media. By understanding the different motives for interaction, the thesis demonstrates three different kinds of beneficial emphases for creating content.

3.5.1 Different internet users

After understanding how the frame of expressions function, the the next step is to tune the brand messages (expressions) to attract those segments of internet users that are present in social media. The chapter first describes the different segments of internet users and then separates those segments that particularly use social media. By understanding the different motives for participation, the thesis demonstrates what kind of content is beneficial for a personal brand to produce accordingly.

Salmenkivi & Nyman (2006, 27) divide the internet users into 2 different groups: the passives and the actives. The passives are pictured as tourists who see the Internet as a destination they visit every now and then. As for the active users, Internet has become a part of their lives and everyday routines. (Salmenkivi & Nyman 2006, 27.) As said before, the amount of active users has increased enormously in a relatively short period of time. According to the survey made by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle 2010) about the segmentation of Finns online, already 72% of the respondents aged 15-74 year olds considered Internet to be either an important or very important media whereas the number for TV had decreased to 39%.

The survey (Yle 2010) also categorized the users in a more profound way by dividing the users into 6 different user segments: satisfied, functional, inquisitive, social, technological and active. The first three categories include mostly people aged more than 45 years. The order in which the segments are listed reflect the versatility and experienced importance of Internet use – satisfied being the most passive users and the user activity increases as the list goes on. (Yle 2010)

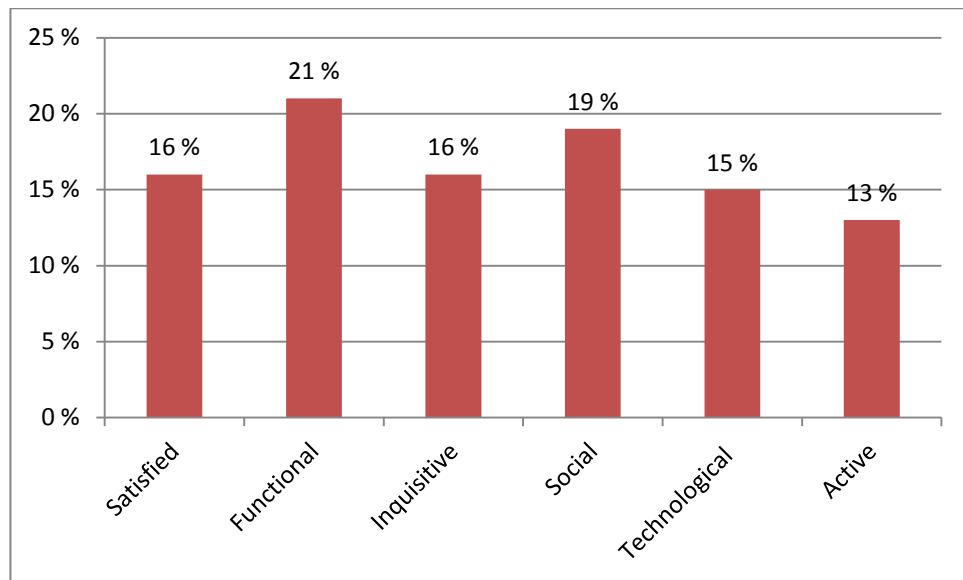


FIGURE 16. The different segments of internet users. (Yle 2010)

Almgren and Jokitalo (2012) have collected a series of articles related to customer service. One of the articles is written by Tuija Aalto, who has studied the results of the survey made by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle, 2010). The following characterizations are based on her thoughts about the motives for Internet use. The first group of the *satisfied* is comprised of elder people, one third being pensioners. In this segment people consider Internet to be less significant compared to the other segments. The internet use is mostly limited to reading news online. People included in the *functional* segment, on the other hand, use Internet as a tool for ordinary routines that need to be taken care of such as paying bills and shopping online. They also seek for new information and learn new skills or find solutions for their own specific practical problems. From the demographic point of view they are mostly over 45-year old and in working life.

The next group of people, called the *inquisitive*, includes also mostly people of same age as with the functional group but the majority are men. The habits for using internet however differ. People in this particular group share a strong orientation for gaining new knowledge. The most popular topics for them to follow are travelling, cultures, health and wellbeing as well as economic and societal issues. However, more than half of the group also enjoys online humor. (Aalto 2011, 46-47)

The last three groups, (social, technological and active) use social media the most. People included in the *social* category consider Internet to be a tool to keep in touch with people important to them and therefore it is natural for them to use often social networks and other online communication tools. It is the segment with the highest portion of women (83%). The segment of *technological*, on the contrary, consists of mostly men (90%). It is also the youngest segment. Internet is present in their everyday life and the topics that interest them the most deal often with technology and electronics. For them, Internet is an instrument for educating oneself, finding answers for problems, spending time and keeping in touch with friends. Last but not least, the group called the *active* includes people who stretch the limits and possibilities of internet and utilize the web in a versatile way. Internet is also a relatively important part of their lives. They are the most active internet users who also often produce and participate. Among this group, news are often heard on Facebook or other social media channels before even published in online news. (Aalto 2011, 44-45.)

3.5.2 Social media users

After understanding the different segments of internet users, the focus is on the social networks. The social networks are not only social media forums, but more like channels for general socialization where social relationships and networks are created and maintained. In spring 2010, 42% of 16-74-year-old Finns had registered into one of the social networks such as Facebook, Twitter etc. The young and young adults are particularly interested in social networks since 83% of 16-24 year olds and 76 % of 25-34-year-olds had an account in social networks. Among people aged 35-44 the percentage of people registered was 44%. In the elder groups, the percentages drop noticeably. (Tilastokeskus 2010.)

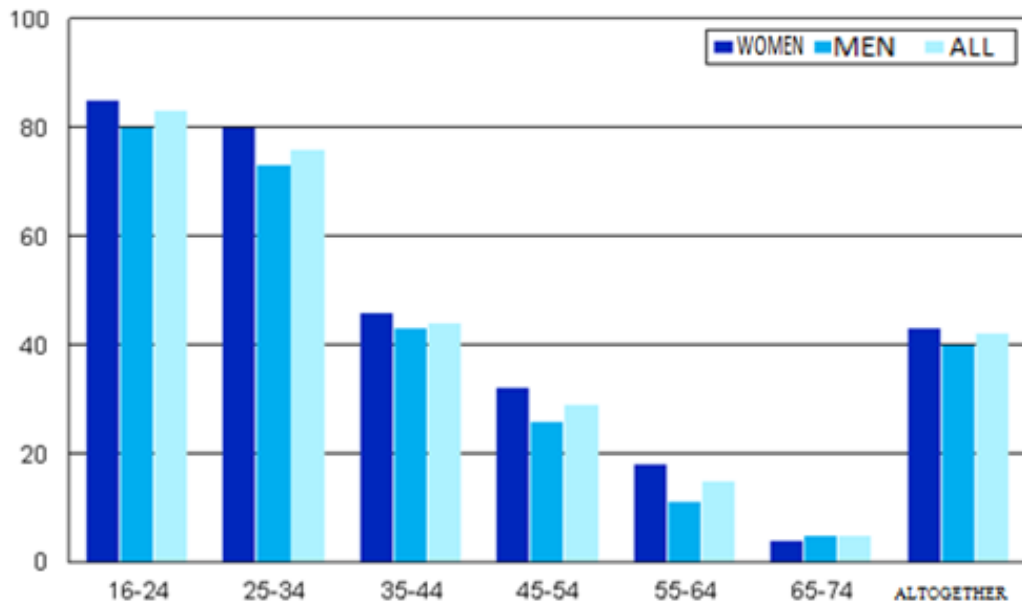


FIGURE 17. Registration in social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter etc. according to age. (Tilastokeskus 2010) (modified)

However, registration itself does not reflect the user activity in social media. In general, social networks are used rather actively, especially among the young. Altogether 8% of the Finns follow at least one social media several times a day and one fifth daily. The young consider social media as a part of their social life. Nearly 20% of people aged 16-24 years follow social media several times a day. Those following daily comprise 44% of the group. 25- 34-year-olds reach approximately the same percentages. The elder age groups use social media considerably less. However, in all the age groups women use social networks more often than men. (Tilastokeskus 2010.)

Using the segmentation presented earlier as a basis, the internet user segments that are mostly involved with social media are *social* (85% of them are in social media), *active* (84%) and *technological* (71%). The less important segments regarding social media are *inquisitive* and *satisfied* in which social media users comprise only 16%. (YLE, 2010.) In other words, the three segments that are in big role in social media are *social*, *active* and *technological*. Therefore these people mostly shape the expectations on what kind of interaction is desired and what kind of communication is beneficial from the personal brand's point of view. Also their needs, wants and interests need to be recognized and answered also with the personal brand's presence and targeting in social media.

With in mind both the three above mentioned segments and the characterizations explained earlier, certain conclusions on different essential emphases in personal brand's

online presence and targeting can be presented. First of all, as people segmented in the *social* category use internet to keep in touch with people they have a certain emotional attachment with, it is important for the personal brand to bring forward and convey the distinct and relevant nature as well as the core values of the brand and the person. The communication should focus on creating a certain emotional attachment with this kind of particular audience such as the social. If it is clearly expressed that the person and the personal brand is true to oneself and has credible and respected core values, the brand might be able to create a strong relationship and a deeper communication with a person of the social segment.

The *active* segment had second biggest portion of social media users. Considering this specific group, it is important for the brand to be able to attract the users to participate in an interesting and tempting way. Focusing on the distinctive and different perspectives of the personal brand combined with new ideas and campaigns the active users take part in the communication on social media more readily. Being active themselves, the users also expect active replies and reactions to their actions also from the personal brand and the person in question. The users of this segment also want to be in the vanguard of progress and know the information at first-hand through different social media channels. Therefore it is good to offer them new information if possible. However, the actives spread the word, contribute to the brand, give new ideas and utilize their previous experience and knowledge of social media. They are of great help for personal brand dissemination through social media.

The third important group for personal branding on social media is the *technological* segment. This group of people value innovations and seek to educate themselves and to find new information. Just like with the segment of the active, it is also crucial with the segment of technological to offer new, first-hand information if possible. They also enjoy challenging tasks, think tanks and, most of them being men, different situations where they can have possibilities of self-fulfillment. By giving ideas of their own and utilizing their technological knowledge, the users of this group can give to the personal brand significant new information, ideas, feedback and suggestions.

The relationships between the personal brand and the internet user segments are illustrated in the following mind map.

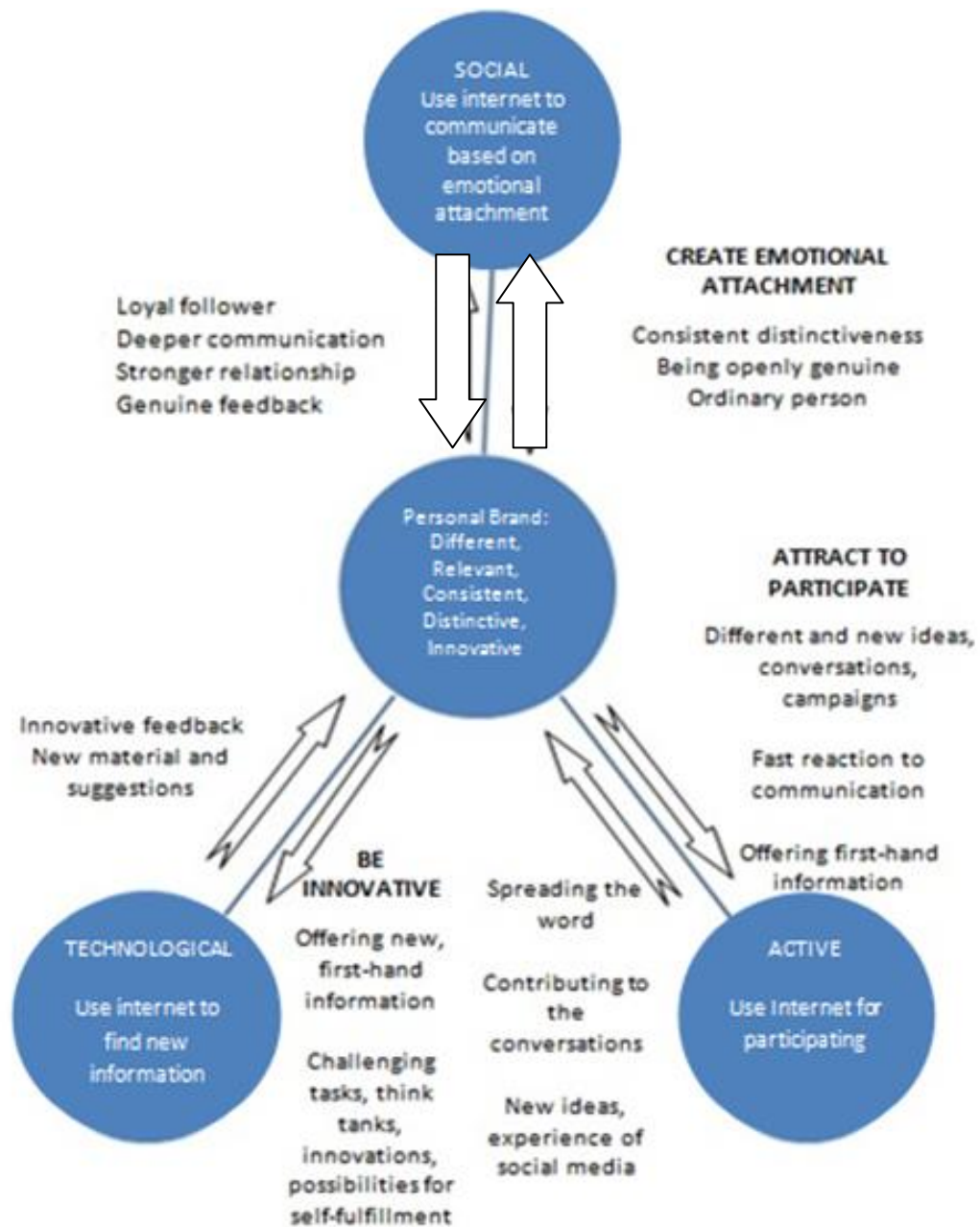


FIGURE 18. The picture demonstrates what kind of content is beneficial for a personal brand to target at different segments of social media users.

In conclusion, the personal brand should take the characteristics of social media users in consideration when putting the core message in words. The brand should convey the brand message in ways such as by being innovative, creating emotional connections and attracting to participate. Doing so, the brand answers to the specific wants of the social media users and gains their attention. By offering pleasant communication for the audience, the audience also contributes to the brand as demonstrated in the figure 18.

3.6 Participating people and commitment to the brand

Now when the core values of the personal brand has been set and the content-wise emphases considered based on the social media users, the thesis discusses the practical communicational tools for fine-tuning of the messages to be encourage the audience to participate to interaction with the personal brand. First the different communicational tools are briefly described, later the actual ways of online participation are explained and lastly the thesis discusses how the relationship between the brand and the social media user becomes concrete.

3.6.1 Communicational tools

When digging the online presence and the ways of providing content deeper, also the communicational tools online need to be considered when tuning content to be attractive for the audience. As mentioned, a certain code for online behaviour has taken shape over time. Kortesuso (2014) emphasises these communicational tools and the careful consideration regarding the online interaction. Even a word related to the online behaviour has been created: “netiquette”. As the word suggest, it gives direction on what kind of behaviour is appropriate in the Internet. More precisely, there are conventions and rules also that should be followed. Kortesuso (2014) gives several examples on the matter. For example, it is considered to be shouting when capital letters are used, the comments and posts should always be signed with a real name, proper language should be used and both flooding and trolling are not considered to be of good behaviour.

Kortesuso (2014) also points out other communicational hints. As for example when tweeting, there should not only be a link but also text accompanying and explaining both the link and the purpose of the tweet. The borders of the communicational hints are a bit shadier and it is not compulsory to use them, but they support the effective way of conveying the core message. In other words, if the communicational hints are not used, the message does not arouse neither interests nor condemnation but possibly ignoring. In social media, especially for politicians, ignoring actually might be more harmful for effectively conveying message compared to condemnation. (Kortesuso 2014)

Moreover, the online content has to pay attention to the social media users that are beginners. It takes time and effort to understand all the traditions of e.g. Twitter and tweets. Therefore it is good to make the message clear without difficult shortcuts or signs. Other communicational tools such as creating an interesting and attractive headlines or the use of humour, rhythmic, antitheses or ambiguity in the posts make the text more interesting and appealing for the audience (Kortesuo 2014). These communicational hints should be considered, but the thesis will not go through them in detail.

As mentioned, the communicational tools are for the fine-tuning of the message to be sent out for the public. It is beneficial to consider the right tools to fit the online communication purposes. The brand needs to be aware of the netiquette used online not to irritate the audience. The message should also adjust to the specific social media channel and the characteristics there by, for example, always adding an accompanying text to a link or picture in Twitter. Thus the message should be suitable considering the context but also beginner-friendly.

3.6.2 Participation of the social media users

The motives for the internet use have been explained in the part 3.5.3 Social media users, and based on these findings the next step is to analyze how the actual participation differs among these users to be able to create interaction with the brand. The next chapter focuses on what are the expressions of the users' participation. Using the survey of InterQuest and TBWADIEGO (2010) on the dialogue between companies and consumers, the goal is to realize what exactly the main ways for the participation and communication are and what kind of actions the participation includes in practice.

The study conducted by InterQuest and TBWADIEGO (2010) gives an insight on the online participation via social media channels. First of all, the results uncover that 20% of the users are not interested in participating online, 43% only observe, 20% forward links and information every now and then, 8% forward most of the times and 10% actively seek for new information, contribute in conversations and forward material to others. (InterQuest & TBWADIEGO 2010.)

Consequently, 90% of the social media users are interested in participating, either by only observing or by other, more active, means. The crucial group for the personal brand dissemination naturally is the one with active users who have the interest and will both to participate and to produce content. If the active information messengers comprising 11% of all the social media users are properly reached, the word can be spread further onto the forwarders and finally till the observers. Basically this is the greatest opportunity social media can offer to a personal brand: wide ongoing hierarchal networks.

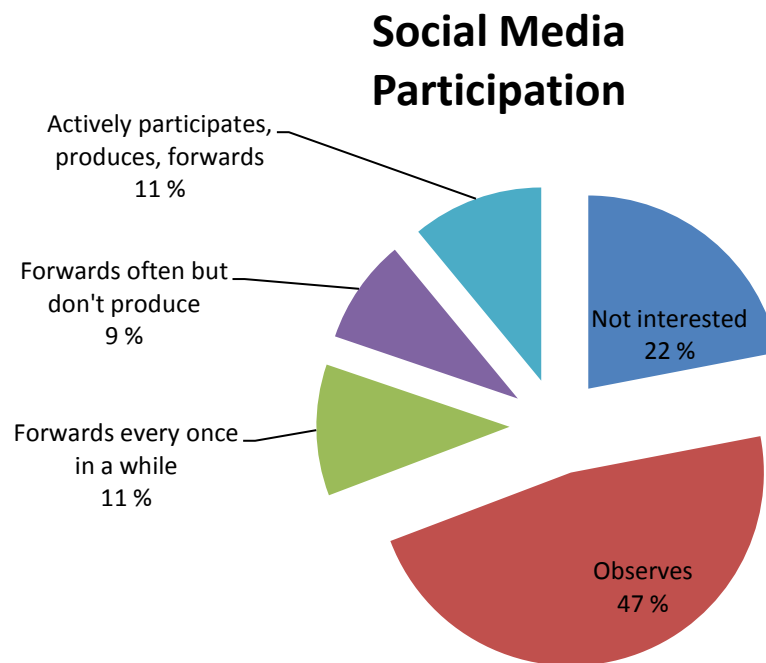


FIGURE 19. The different ways of participation.

The survey of InterQuest and TBWADIEGO (2010) also points out that every second social media user has actually participated in companies' or brands' activities online. The ways of participation differ from following a blog or status updates to deeper communication with a certain brand. When focusing on the other half comprised by those who do not participate on such social media activities, the reasons behind the passive behavior culminate in the lack of time and interest as well as dull brands. Considering the active participants, the study revealed 5 different segments that illustrate the motivators for participation:

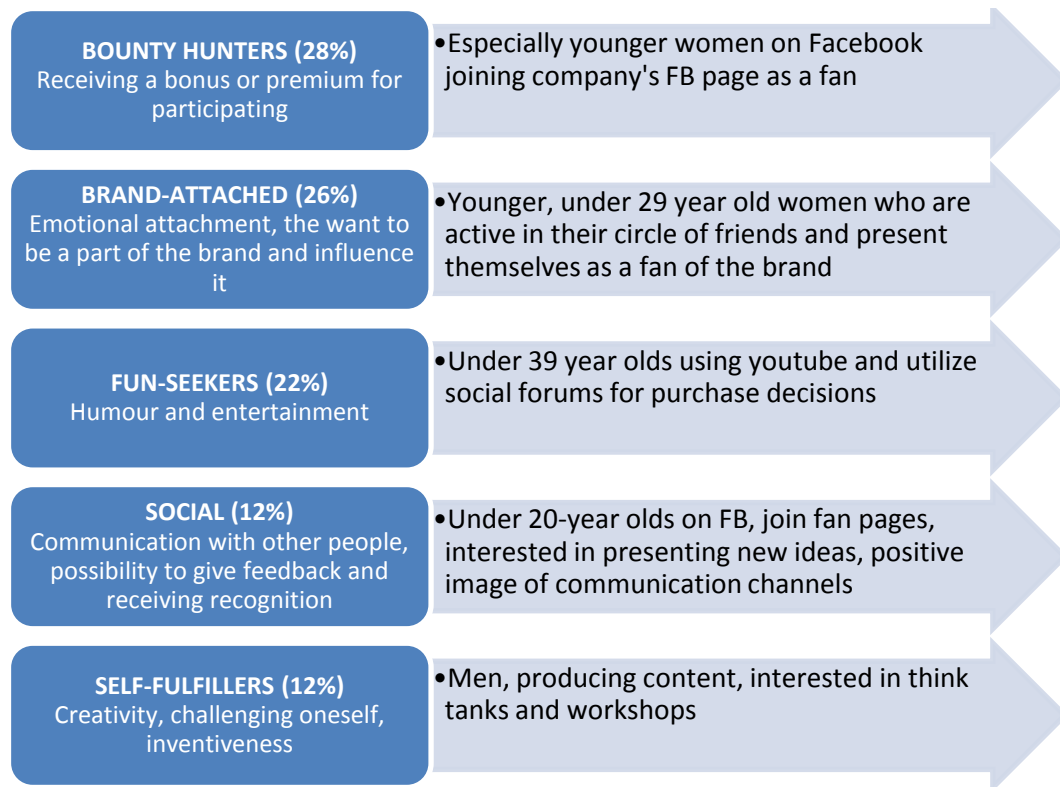


FIGURE 20. Motives for participation. (Interquest & TBWADIEGO 2010)

The three main motivators for the active participants are fun and entertainment; the possibility to affect issues considered important and self-fulfillment. The survey demonstrates also three other relevant aspects considering the social media participation. First of all, the active participants influence others outside the Internet, in real life as well. Secondly, the most active participant and messenger of viral marketing is a woman aged 30-60. Thirdly, men are more interested in participating in workshops and think tanks. (InterQuest & TBWADIEGO 2010)

It is essential to find and reach the most active social media users who can spread the message of the personal brand in their own specific way. The figure 20 gives good examples on how to encourage the users for participation. The personal brand has to choose the most suitable way for it to attract the audience. It does not matter whether it is by offering the users the possibility of being creative, having fun, attracting for conversation, offering a premium or giving the chance to express the attachment with the brand. The main goal is to adjust to the environment and find the best solution by understanding the audience the personal brand has.

Under the elections, it is beneficial for the personal brand to create a feeling for the audience to be part of the campaign team. The explained concept of a flexible frame of

expressions supports the idea, as the audience has the change to share their input instead of pushing an already fixed information package for the online users. As there are different ways of participation, the expressions of the personal brand should offer a wider set of participation opportunities. For example, the observers might seek for interesting views and information whereas the actives search for participation possibilities by e.g. commenting, forwarding, sharing ideas etc. With the wider set of possibilities, the messages also interest a wider audience.

3.6.3 Different stages of loyalty and social capital

From the participating audience it is quite difficult to recognize the different loyalty stages of the users. In the theoretical framework, the thesis has explained the brand loyalty stages from a more product based branding point of view. On the contrary, when the branding is personal branding and taken in to social media environment, it is harder to collect enough information of the individual users to understand the different stages of brand attachment. However, if the loyalty stages online can be recognized, the personal brand can utilize the information by sharing more online social capital in participating with the brand and the campaign. Therefore the thesis now discusses first the direct and indirect communication with the brand and later the benefits of recognizing the loyalty levels online for sharing social capital within the online community.

To begin with the two ways of communicating with the brand, Kortesuso (2014) separates direct communication from the indirect one. Direct communication refers to user comments that are directly addressed to the brand. In other words, the communication is exactly between the brand and the user. Blog comments, tweets targeted to the brand with @ -sign and direct Facebook messages are examples of direct communication. On the contrary, indirect communication takes place when the brand is mentioned by the user but the message is not targeted to the brand. In social media such indirect communication in most cases is however public and it can be found by using search engines.

Nevertheless, it is not important to recognize all the users and their level of participation but only those who are actively interacting with the personal brand. The most important factor for the personal brand is to recognize the direct messages that enable acknowl-

edging the extremely active users. These active users can be identified for example by observing who actively comment a blog, tweets or Facebook statuses.

Like in real life, a certain hierarchal levels within the conversation evolve. Those who are actively communicating with the brand obviously share a certain attachment with the brand. This attachment can be deepened and the users bound more to the personal brand by granting privileges. In other words, after the recognition of the active users, the personal brand can share social capital.

Miettinen et al. (2006, 5) describe social capital as follows: "Social capital is seen to be formed out of reliable relationships of the network. The relationships enable to reach new and strategically essential information and knowhow. Thus social capital is transformed to economic capital." When social capital is considered in social media and personal branding, the idea is to grant more responsibility for the active social media users and thus gain more benefits from the user's participation. In practice, the social capital can be granted e.g. verbally by commenting on the activities of the user. "Welcome to the blog, thank you for your comments, they were of great help and much appreciated" is an example how attention is shown to the user and therefore the user gains more credit in the social community.

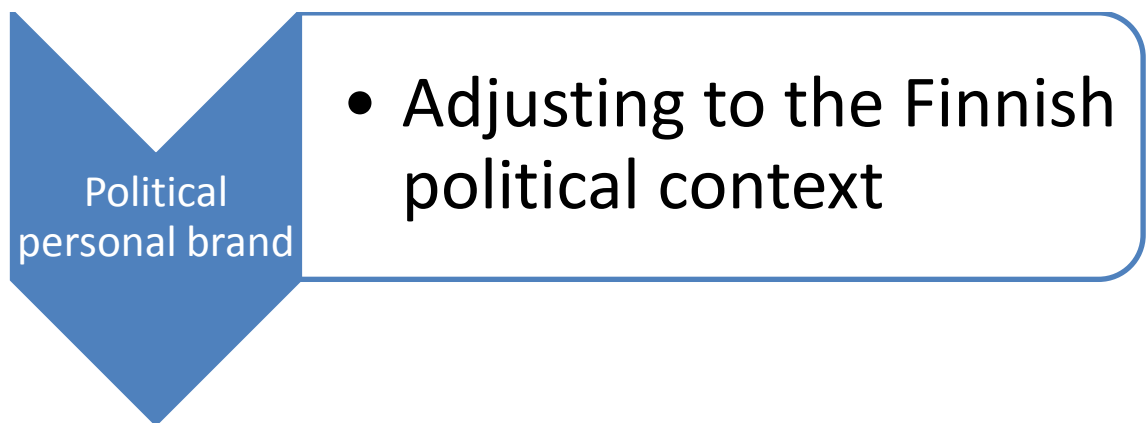
Some platforms enable for example giving the status of a "sheriff" for those who are active participants and contribute to the communication to a large extent (Kortesuo 2014). During the presidential campaign, Kämppi (2013) was astonished how the active supporters took bigger roles when they were given the space. In situations when the conversation was taking the wrong path, these active users that had the social capital created an internal code for the user community in Facebook. "Mitä Pekka sanoisi?" (translation: "What would Pekka say?") was shortened to MPS and used by the active users, the "sheriffs", when the conversation got heated. (Kämppi 2013)

The example of the MPS code –creation illustrates well the benefits of flexible but attracting expressions and granting social capital to the active users for creating deeper relationships with the audience. With the social capital the users contribute to the cause and strengthen the brand's online presence.

4 CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion, all of the studied dimensions for political personal branding in social media are separately gone through from the Ms. Pietikäinen's political personal brand's point of view. The thesis explains the main points by starting from the personal brand in the Finnish political context and then continuing to the social media communication, social media channels, frame of expressions and participation. Finally, two practical campaign proposals are presented based on the findings.

4.1 Political personal brand



At first the thesis has discussed those 4 factors the personal brand should keep in mind when trying to gain visibility in Finland. Based on the characteristics of the political environment, certain features of the personal brand have been highlighted. The thesis has demonstrated 4 components that the personal brand should take into account considering the characteristics of Finnish political environment:

- 1) Trust is highly valued
- 2) The trend of increasing amount of swing voters
- 3) Secrecy of the polls
- 4) Laziness in information search

As an outcome, both the points of *highly valued trust* and *the increase of swing voters* demand the brand to convey the actual person behind the brand clearly, transparently and in an attractive as well as interesting way in order for the audience to bond with it.

This underlines the emotional bond that the voter feels towards the candidate. Therefore it is essential, to convey the image of the ordinary person that lies behind the political brand for the ordinary Finns.

The highly valued trust and the increase of swing voters also highlight the fact that it is easier to maintain old relationships than acquiring new supporters. This applies also to the campaigns of politicians. Thus social media can be utilized to cherish the old relationships and trust with interactive communication. Giving the followers the feeling they are being noticed strengthens the relationship further without the supporter slipping into a swing voter or a nonvoter.

Consequently, in campaigns such as Ms. Pietikäinen's, there needs to be active participation in all the selected and used social media channels. If the candidate has a profile in one channel but the account is not in active use, the particular followers in this channel get a feeling of being neglected as there is no response for their communication efforts. The connection between the voter and candidate can be there, but it also has to be brought to light, maintained and strengthened with active communication. As said before, in today's world it is essential to have a presence e.g. in Facebook, but it is even more important to be easily found with continuous active participation there.

For *the secrecy of the polls* in Finland, the personal brand needs to be careful not to be too pushy when conveying the message. Just like in real life, also the Finns online need their personal space that should not be intruded. Democracy and the secrecy of the polls are still incredibly important for the Finns, especially for the older generation, and therefore it should be honored. The same applies for a political personal brand campaign in social media. Especially Facebook has been discussed in the thesis to be focused more on the different circles of friends rather than open discussion. Therefore harsh invasions to the personal space - especially in the field of politics - can be considered to be uncomfortable for the most. Once again the pulling strategy instead of pushing is consequently more beneficial in this case. The pulling strategy is more based on voluntariness and thus there is a natural selection of participants: those who are willing to participate in the discussion can easily find the candidate as well as take part in the discussion and, on the contrary, those who wish not to be part of the conversation do not feel uncomfortable as there is a choice not to participate.

The honoring of personal space is important especially in Facebook as it is based around the friend circle and the average user age is getting older each year. Twitter on the other hand has an entirely different basis because of its public nature. Thus the secrecy of the polls does not affect that much the Twitter activity of Ms. Pietikäinen. In Twitter, the free choice has been already made at the point where the user takes part in the hashtagged conversation. Only in the case of using directed messaging with the @ - sign, the message can be considered intruding.

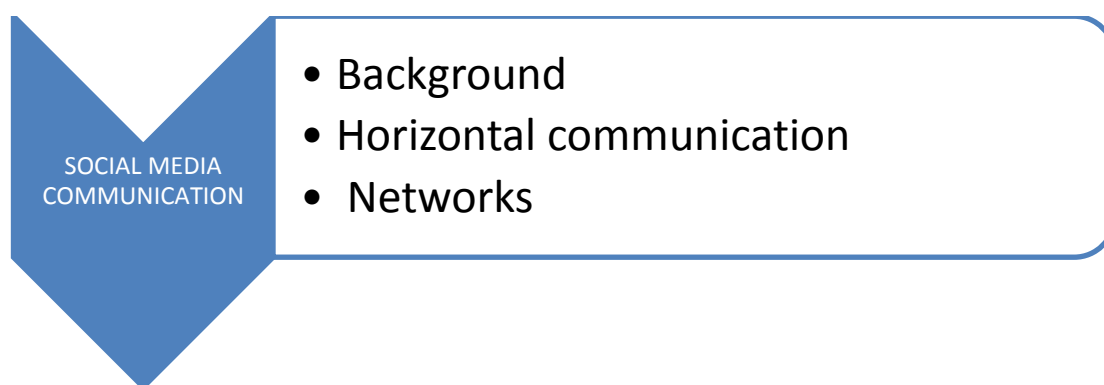
As the thesis has discussed, the political openness has started to increase especially among the young. The personal brand should make the best of the situation by focusing on the activation of the young persons. In practice the openness has become concrete for example with the trend of attaching smaller pictures (PicBadges) into the profile picture as a sign of support. Therefore it is favorable for the candidate in question to have created a Picbadge in the Facebook/Twitter application for the citizens to have a choice to express their support openly. With the pull strategy of attracting people to share the PicBadges, the campaign can create a certain domino effect within the circles of friends. As the report of EBU (2013, 9) showed, the social media users are more willing to click a link if it is shared by a friend. The same should apply to the PicBadges: friends are trusted and their example is followed more readily compared to e.g. marketing campaigns and advertisements. The gained publicity is more valuable than paid.

Lastly, when paying attention to the *laziness in the information search*, the brand should basically once again concentrate on being active and therefore easily found. In addition, the messages need to be conveyed in an understandable way and the communicational tools adjusted to the particular social media channel. In Facebook the quickly browsing –type of users are attracted by pictures. Images “say a thousand words” with one look and get the most space in the newsfeed.

Having the active social media users sharing the attractive information is another way to reach the lazy information searchers. Pictures are favorable in Twitter as well but the emphasis is on sharp and to the point messages with a point of view and topic-related hash-tags. With a clear communication fit to the social media environment, the audience does not have to see extra effort on understanding the main ideas.

The political environment in Finland and the characteristics of the Finnish voters are to be kept in mind when aiming to gain more visibility for a political personal brand. The explained ways to adjust to the characteristics of Finnish political context gave ground for finding out the most efficient ways for personal brand to convey the brand message throughout the thesis.

4.2 Social media communication



The developing technology, interactivity, scattering of media channels and changes in consumer behaviour resulted in the shift of mass media to digital media. The digital media on the other hand affected also branding and new trends appeared: branding moved from segmenting and pushing to attracting and pulling, low-budget branding is emphasized, horizontal communication is utilized and online information storages emerged. Consequently also new dimensions regarding how to use the new branding trends emerged for reaching gained visibility: visibility in brand's own channels, visibility in social networks and communication.

In practice the political personal brands have been utilizing the visibility in brand's own channels by creating informative and attractive websites for quite a long time. The websites are in significant role even now, but the emphasis has been moving towards the social media channels acting as "gateways" to the information bank of the websites. Communication on the other hand works as the gatekeeper welcoming the audience.

When focusing on the nature of the communication in social media, the horizontal communication has been explained in the thesis. The horizontal communication specifically enables the direct interaction with the audience without having the information

filtered, which fits perfectly in the political scene, as it empowers people, who the politicians indeed represent.

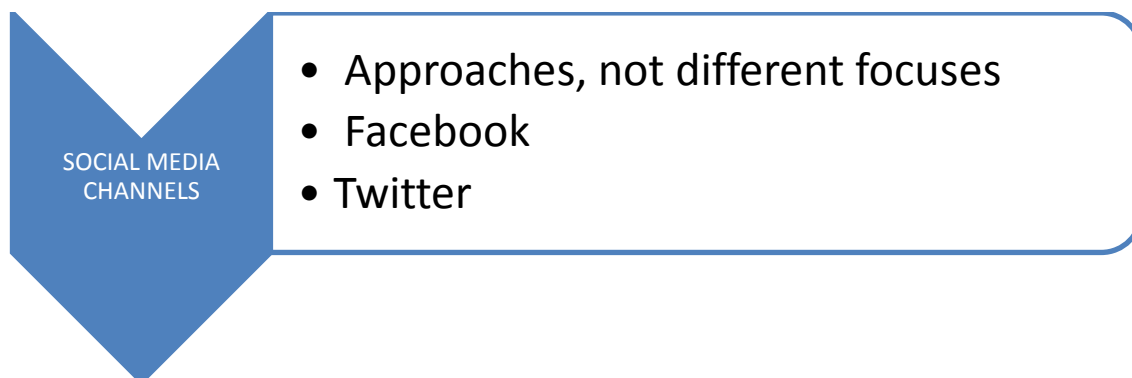
Practically the most useful characteristic of horizontal communication is the bridge-builders. These nodes linking masses of other people together have certain power, for example, in information sharing. The key for political personal brand to utilize the social media communication network in a whole new way in the digital era is to find the bridge-builders and gain publicity by interacting with them. Basically, what is the most beneficial approach for utilizing the wide networks of the bridge-builders is e.g. for Ms. Pietikäinen to look for those with a large number of followers in the field that both Ms. Pietikäinen and the bridge-builder are interested in – except for politics. Co-operating with people from different fields of life enables the word to go out to a much wider audience in the online world.

The Facebook co-operation with the bridge-builders can include for example a campaign together. Such campaign could be online or in real life, just as long the activities are communicated to social media as well. Pictures of events can be posted and content shared.

In twitter the two-way direct @-conversations with those who have a large number of followers will also reach a large audience. In addition, creating interesting tweets that are retweeted by the bridge-builders will have the same effect. Bloggers, on the other hand, are all bridge-builders to different extents. Having a guest blog post in one of the most read blogs in Finland will reach effectively the target audience depending on the topic of the blog.

In the case of Ms. Pietikäinen, the various topics her brand is associated with are different from each other but all raise feelings. In most cases separate groups under such topics have been formed in the society. Especially the topics of environment, animal rights, food and equal rights are good examples of the topic-related groups that many share similar thoughts with and want to participate in the group activities. These groups as such already work as bridge-builders and thus cooperation with them enables wide visibility reach. Another example of utilizing the groups as bridge-builders is presented in the part 4.6. Campaign suggestion, where the topic-related groups have a significant role in participating, forwarding the message and reaching shared goals.

4.3 Social media channels



The chosen social media channels to be observed in the thesis were those of large user base. These were seen as the most beneficial channels for visibility seekers such as politicians as the channels reach masses of people. Therefore the chosen channels - Facebook, Twitter and blogs – have been considered as the most efficient tools for Ms. Pietikäinen’s social media campaign.

The conclusion concerning different emphases between the social media channels is that the fundamental goal should be to keep a coherent image of the personal brand in all of the social media channels. In other words, the campaign should not consider different focuses content-wise. For example, Ms. Pietikäinen already has a good brand and tight package of messages wished to be delivered. The brand package should be kept coherent in all of the used channels. Instead of different emphases, the political personal brand should take into account the different characteristics and limits of the networks and adjust to the environment with communicational tools. The communicational tools for creating the right approach are e.g. sending opinion-based, sharp and interesting microblog posts in Twitter or capturing and attractive texts accompanied by picture in Facebook.

When digging into the more practical point of view regarding the chosen channels, the thesis has analyzed and revealed the benefits and disadvantages of the chosen social media platforms specifically for the political personal branding in Finland. The blogs have been left out of the analysis at this point as blogs can be tailored and administrated by the brand itself. Therefore the thesis has discussed the challenges of Facebook and

Twitter in which the brand needs to adjust its presence to the particular social media environment.

First of all, the main conclusion concerning Facebook is that it is an essential platform for a personal brand's visibility in social media also in the political scene, but it should not be the only channel used. Since the amount of Facebook users in Finland is still extremely high, the brand naturally should have a presence there. However, for an ambitious campaign such as Ms. Pietikäinen's, solely a presence is not enough. Active participation is crucial for the personal brand to be easily found. Nevertheless, even active participation might not be enough today, as the latest modifications in the platforms algorithms have changed the nature of the channel and paid visibility has been emphasized.

Indeed, the incredible amount of information being shared in Facebook has led to the new optimizations to the newsfeed. The coverage for posts including only text published by pages such as Ms. Pietikäinen's will continue to decrease whereas those with pictures and will gain more visibility. Therefore, to reach even the minimal amount of gained visibility that is offered by Facebook these days, the personal brand of Ms. Pietikäinen should always include a picture or a link with a post. This will increase the probability of the post to be shown in the newsfeeds of the followers but also the size of the post in the newsfeed is remarkably larger.

Facebook used to be extremely effective platform for gaining respected visibility, but now that the means for distributing the message has been cut down, the paid visibility is more present. Even though the thesis did not focus on the paid visibility, the use of rather low-cost marketing tools of Facebook are recommended to be utilized to support the goals of Ms. Pietikäinen's personal brand due to the continuously lowering organic reach of regular posts.

Whereas Facebook has slowly started to fade out, Twitter has increased its power on being a news media. Twitter offers also a new kind of possibility for a visibility seeker to participate in the conversation and gain more followers. Moreover, it is a platform where rising trends can be trailed and the hot topics discussed in general with a larger audience including more people than only friends. The ongoing growth also in the

amount of Finnish tweeters was shown to be remarkable. This enables the Ms. Pietikäinen to reach her target audience in a new way.

If Facebook can be taken as an online network of friends, Twitter on the other hand attracts opinion-sharers. Therefore the political personal branding campaign of Ms. Pietikäinen in Twitter should include posts with views instead of news. By doing so the personal brand gives a certain contribution and opinion to the issue discussed. Views also attract those followers who seek for a certain information filtration in the new era of horizontal communications. Large amounts of information and news are being shared, but what makes the tweet more valuable is the view.

With its solely public content, Twitter offers the political personal brand campaign a possibility to really execute the pulling strategy. The personal brand should participate in the topics that the brand is especially associated with. In Ms. Pietikäinen's case, naturally the selection of the topics being tweeted about would be the ones she is politically interested in. By selecting certain topics, the personal brand is able to send clear message to the audience what the personal brand is about. Therefore a solid follower base will be formed out of those who are already brand attached but also new followers with a topic-related interest to the brand will emerge.

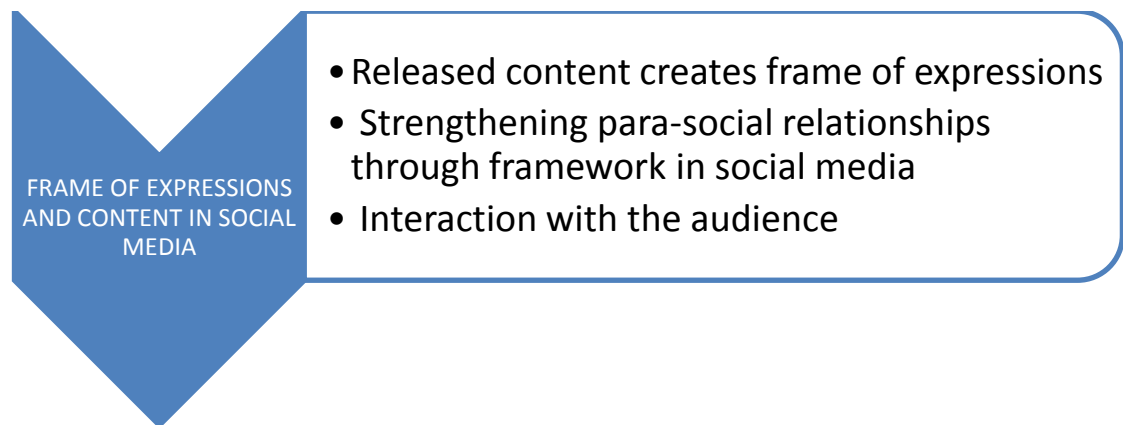
By taking part in the conversations of selected topics with hashtags it is easier for the personal brand to find other people who have interesting views. The same applies the other way around: through conversations people are able to find the personal brand. Moreover, as said, trends are being trailed in Twitter. In addition to using hashtags of the selected topics, especially a political personal brand such as Ms. Pietikäinen's should actively find the most popular hashtags at the particular point of time. The most used hashtags naturally also have a lot of followers and therefore the visibility possibilities for personal brand increase. The account @Twiitit reveals the most used tweets in Finland every hour. By following @twiitit, the personal brand can have up-to-date information on the latest hot topics in twitter and take part in the conversation.

The importance and the power of the nodes and bridge builders cannot be highlighted enough in Twitter. The bridge-builders are rather easy to find in Twitter just by following the conversations and picking up the most active participants. However, as demonstrated in the thesis, Intellecta (2013) offers the possibility of concretely seeing those

Finnish tweeters with large follower base. What is more, Intellecta (2013) enables the political personal brand to find out the bridge-builders also from those fields of life that the personal brand wouldn't normally be following. As explained before, by direct @-messaging, content-sharing (e.g. a picture together), hashtag-campaign (creating a new hashtag together with a bridge-builder) or retweets, the co-operations with the bridge-builders enlarge the visibility coverage. For example, as Tuomas Enbuske is an extremely active Tweeter with a large number of followers. The other users fight for the attention of Enbuske, for him to address a tweet for them or retweet their thoughts to gain publicity.

All in all, the thesis demonstrates that there is a hype around Twitter going on in Finland. By selecting few topics to tweet about and giving interesting views instead of only news, Twitter offers a great possibility also for a politician to gain visibility. Considering the commerciality, Twitter is a more stable platform compared to Facebook.

4.4 Frame of expressions and content in social media



The frame of expressions includes all the content created in social media that can be found by the audience. One expression on a certain topic can be considered to be the contacting link between the citizen and the personal brand. Therefore at first the expression and the topic are a link for the citizen to find the personal brand. But later, after the personal brand is found, the brand can then act as a link for the citizen to find another expression of another topic and raise interest on that matter as well. The thesis explained this trend by illustrating the personal brand as an ambassador of different topics,

gathering the topics under one “umbrella” – in this case the umbrella being the personal brand.

The frame of expressions thus is the overall reflection of the brand for the audience. Now, when considering the content to be created in the separate expressions, all of the expressions should be in line with the core values and include a part of the core person. As explained, for example the tweets can be considered as separate expressions and the political personal brand of Ms. Pietikäinen should therefore include views in the tweets to bring out the core values of the brand.

Besides the core values giving the basis for the expressions, the expressions should be flexible and provide space for activity and participation of the audience. To demonstrate, when creating a post giving views on specific issue, the personal brand of Ms. Pietikäinen can include flexibility in the expression by activating the audience with an encouraging message to share experiences on the matter. The flexibility consequently occurs as the participation is attractive but voluntary and the active participants feel they have the decision to be part of the communication. The attractiveness of the message and content reflects the encouraging touch in the message instead of putting pressure on the audience to participate (pull strategy).

After considering the attractiveness and topic-related messages reflecting the core values of the brand, emotional connections with the audience should be also paid attention to when creating the separate expressions. The brand attachments rely on different para-social connections and therefore all the para-social dimensions should be covered with the frame of expressions. The thesis explained the different para-social dimensions using Kemiläinen’s (1997) work.

The first conclusion of practically taking into account the two dimensions of “imagined friendship” and “the reality of the friendship” is to allow the audience to have a peek to the actual person behind the brand instead of only conveying the professional aspects. Considering these two dimensions the importance of reflecting the true person and e.g. Ms. Pietikäinen’s natures and characteristics is emphasized. The other three dimensions (“ideological similitude”, “competence and “public representativeness”) are more focused on appreciating the professional and political point of views. An example of pos-

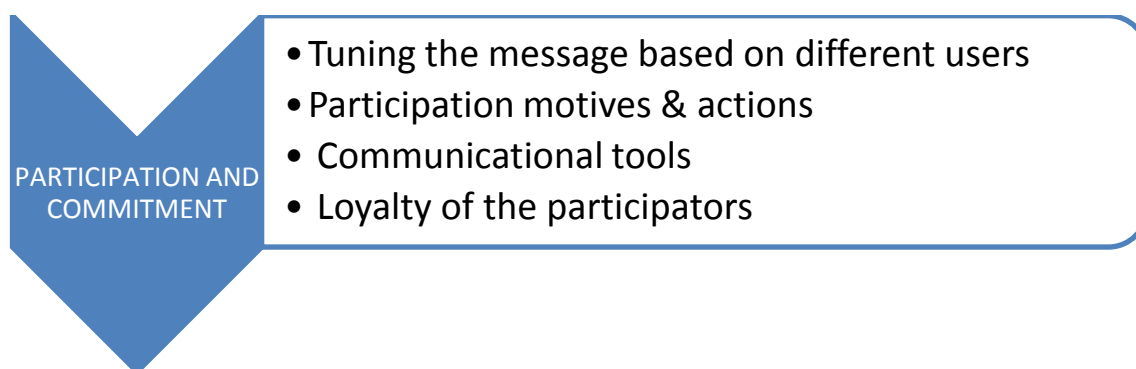
sible different expressions of Ms. Pietikäinen taking into account the topics, flexibility and para-social dimensions are shown in Figure 21.

		PARA-SOCIAL DIMENSIONS				
		Imagined friendship	The reality of friendship	Ideological similitude	Competence	Public representativeness
TOPICS	Animal rights	Posting a picture with an accompanying text bringing forward the history of being an animal owner. Emphasize the understanding of the animal owners' situation. Encouraging to share experiences.	Posting an invitation to meet for a discussion regarding the topic of animal rights. Using Facebook events, promoting the events with separate posts in Facebook, Twitter and Blog	Giving views on the situation on animal rights. Co-operating with the animal right groups. Starting new discussion on a hot topic.	Bringing forward the results of the work being done considering laws and regulations of animal rights.	Using proper language in social media, including representative pictures of events participated in.
	Environment	Co-operation with the environmentally active groups, pointing out the co-operation, bringing forward the everyday life decisions made concerning the environment. Encouraging others to share experiences.	Friending on Facebook, taking part in events concerning environmental issues, inviting people to join, direct communication with the audience concerning the topic.	Post views on the environmental topics, comment on the views of the audience, take part in the conversation in groups or hashtag-discussions.	Stating the results of the work done concerning the law and regulations of environment. Bringing views supported by substance knowhow.	Using proper language in social media, including representative pictures of environmental events participated in.

FIGURE 21. Examples of possible expressions of Ms. Pietikäinen with emphasis on attractiveness, flexibility and para-social dimensions.

All in all, the different expressions are the contacting surfaces for the online user to find out about the personal brand. After running into several expressions, the user is able to understand the brand with the frame of expressions. Concerning Ms. Pietikäinen's brand, the separate expressions should be different from each other covering varying topics that are in line with core values. In addition, different para-social dimensions should be taken into consideration to strengthen different types of relationships with the brand.

4.5 Participation and commitment



As said, the brand is conveyed to the audience through different separate expressions that are attractive, flexible and topic-related as well as take the para-social dimensions into account. As the expressions take place in social media, they also need to specifically answer the needs and wants of the social media users. The content should not be targeted at different segments of people e.g. according demographics. Instead, the personal brand should fine-tune the messages and use campaigns that encourage the participation by utilizing the knowledge of the actual social media users' behaviour. Therefore, besides the already mentioned factors, the expressions should also consider the different social media users.

The fine-tuning should be based on the six different internet user segments that are discussed in the thesis: the satisfied, functional, inquisitive, social, technological and active. To be more exact, the three segments mostly involved with social media are social, technological and active. These groups of people shape the expectations on what kind of interaction is desired and what kind of communication is beneficial for the political personal brand of Ms. Pietikäinen.

Taken the motivators for the social media use of the group called the social, the aim of the political personal brand is to convey the distinct and relevant nature of the brand as well as the core values of the person behind the brand. By doing so, Ms. Pietikäinen widens the generally perceived boundaries of political personal brands as politicians in general stick to only professional factors with their brands. Considering the group of the actives, it is important for the political personal brand not to only preach about the issues considered important but instead attract the users to participate by different activi-

ties and discussions. By focusing on the distinctive, different and innovative perspectives of the political personal brand of Ms. Pietikäinen, the active users take part in the communication on social media more readily.

For the users called the technological it is crucial to offer new, first-hand information if possible. They also enjoy challenging tasks, think tanks and, most of them being men, different situations where they can have possibilities of self-fulfillment. By giving ideas of their own and utilizing their technological knowledge, the users of this group can give to the political personal brand of Ms. Pietikäinen significant new information, ideas, feedback and suggestions.

The division of users to social, active and technological represents the motives for using the social media. However, motives for actual participation differ among people as well. Therefore the political personal brand should pursue to encourage the participation in different ways including fun and entertainment; the possibility to affect issues considered important and self-fulfillment. These are the factors based on which larger campaigns can be created to attract different type of participators.

However, besides active content-wise participators there are also those who wish to participate with less input. Therefore the frame of expressions of Ms. Pietikäinen's brand should offer a wider set of participation opportunities. For example, the observers might seek only possibilities to read interesting views and information whereas the actives search for participation possibilities by e.g. commenting, forwarding and sharing ideas. With the wider set of possibilities, the messages also interest a wider audience. Figure 22 includes examples on how to efficiently reach the different social media users.

		Motives for using social media		
		Social	Technological	Active
Ways of participation	Content-wise producing	Taking part in and starting discussions on emotionally important topics. Encouraging others to comment and share thoughts.	Creating campaigns with think-tanks and possibilities to contribute to the outcome. Challenging the readers to think and comment with the posts and difficult issues. Possibility for giving feedback and suggestions	Ask for new ideas and individual contribution to different campaigns. Give the possibility to participate in the execution of a campaign.
	Forwarding	Creating attractive messages with pictures of topics that raise emotions. Encouraging to share in order for the user to feel part of the group.	Offering first-hand information on hot topics with different views.	Offering first-hand information and encourage sharing by letting the user participate in a competition.
	Observing	Creating photoalbums, interesting posts with views, ongoing campaigns to be followed.	Creating on-going campaigns that focus on particular topics providing news and views regularly.	Actively create content to be followed on a regular basis. Include photos, links and texts in an innovative way.

FIGURE 22. Different ways of utilizing the knowledge of social media users and ways of participation in different expressions.

Another factor to consider is that especially under the elections, it is beneficial for the political personal brand such as Ms. Pietikäinen's to create a feeling of the audience being part of the campaign team. The explained concept of a flexible frame of expressions supports the idea, as the audience has the chance to share their input instead of pushing an already fixed information package for the online users.

To make the last touch after there is an idea of a campaign or post to be done, the political personal brand needs to consider the proper communicational tools. The political

personal brand of Ms. Pietikäinen should follow the practical communicational codes such as the “netiquette” at all times. As the name suggests, the netiquette gives direction on what kind of behaviour is appropriate in the Internet. More precisely, there are also conventions and rules that should be followed. The other communicational tools consist of fine-tuning the message to be attractive and pleasant to receive by the audience. The message should be adjusted to the specific social media channel and its characteristics by, for example, always adding an accompanying text to a link or picture in Twitter. Thus the message should be suitable considering the context but also beginner-friendly.

Last but not least, the thesis discusses the loyalty of the online users considering the brand. From the participating audience it is quite difficult to recognize the different loyalty stages of the users. In the theoretical framework, the thesis has explained the brand loyalty stages from a more product based branding point of view. On the contrary, when the branding is personal branding and taken into social media environment, it is harder to collect enough information of the individual users to understand the different stages of brand attachment.

Nevertheless, the result is that it is not important to recognize all the users and their levels of participation but only those who are actively interacting with the personal brand. Therefore, in this case the most important goal for the political personal brand of Ms. Pietikäinen is to recognize the direct messages that enable acknowledging the extremely active users. These active users can be identified, for example, by observing those who actively comment blog posts, tweets or Facebook statuses. If the loyalty stages online can be recognized, Ms. Pietikäinen’s brand can utilize the information by sharing more online social capital for the active. In practice this means a written comment to compliment for the participation or giving more privileges by e.g. granting the status of an admin. Such actions let the active supporter climb higher in the social capital and hierarchical ladder. With the social capital the users feel a stronger connection with the brand, contribute to the cause and strengthen the brand’s online presence.

4.6 Campaign suggestions

4.6.1 Classified

4.6.2 Classified

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Structure of the interviews

Personal Branding:

What is a good personal brand?

What are the key components of a good personal brand?

Horizontal communication and networking:

How can a team reach efficient internal communication?

What are the communication methods in social media?

Are there new trends in communication in social media?

What are the key factors to efficient communication in social media?

Social media channels:

What are the reasons for emphasizing social media channels today?

Does social media fit in political campaigning?

What are the special characteristics of different social media channels?

Should there be different emphases between different social media channels?

Frame of expressions and content:

Should there be different emphases on different channels?

What are attractive messages like in social media?

What is the role of pictures and symbols in social media?

Can different norms or codes of behavior be found in social media?

What are the communicational tools to be considered in social media?

Participation and commitment:

What are the participation methods in social media?

How can the different types of users be taken into consideration?

How is the audience encouraged to participate efficiently?

How are different loyalty stages visible in social media?