

# ADOPTION OF A BRAND STRATEGY IN SMEs IN THE JYVÄSKYLÄ AREA

A managerial perspective

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Abstract <p>The objective of the bachelor's thesis was to find out the current perceptions towards adopting and implementing a brand strategy of SME managers operating in the Jyväskylä area.</p> <p>The research approach was quantitative. The research method was a survey with the data collected through a structured online questionnaire which was sent to all (1504) the SMEs operating in the Jyväskylä area. The response rate was 7 %. The questionnaire was adopted from a formerly developed instrument for measuring the adoption of a new innovation. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather anonymous information about perceptions towards implementing a brand strategy. The theory part discusses the concepts such as branding, brand strategy and strategy management literature followed by the Diffusion of Innovations theory by E. Rogers introducing a study of adopting a new innovation and its attributes affecting the adoption process.</p> <p>The results were presented as tables and figures showing the percentages of all citations. The results indicate the current perceptions, challenges and future plans that the SME managers have to face when supervising their company toward implementing a brand strategy. The results indicate that the rate of commitment to implementing a brand strategy was not high. A brand strategy was not perceived as mandatory to implementing although they perceived a company to have a relative advantage and better visibility resulting from implementing a brand strategy. There were varied conceptions of the demonstrability and practical implementation of the results. The conclusions indicate that although the relative advantages are visible to the majority, there are still things that hold managers back when it comes to implementing a brand strategy in their company. It seems that the commitment level is low because the stakeholders do not require that.</p>		
Keywords Brand, branding, brand strategy, strategy, innovation, adoption process, diffusion, innovation management perception		
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Tiivistelmä <p>Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli selvittää Jyväskylän alueella toimivien pk-yritysten johtajien näkemyksiä brändistrategian toteuttamisesta.</p> <p>Tutkimusmenetelmä oli kvantitatiivinen eli määrällinen tutkimus. Aineiston keräys toteutettiin sähköisenä kyselynä survey -menetelmällä. Kysely lähetettiin kaikille (1504) Jyväskylän alueen pk-yritykselle. Vastausprosentiksi muodostui 7 %. Kysely pohjautui aiemmin kehitettyyn ja käytettyyn kyselyyn, joka mittaa uuden innovaation adoptioprosessia. Kyselyn tarkoituksena oli saada nimettömiä näkemyksiä brändistrategian toteutukseen liittyen. Opinnäytetyön teoriaosa käsitteli yleisesti brändi- ja brändistrategiatutkimusta ja esitteli sekä E. Rogersin teorian innovaation omaksumisesta ja siihen vaikuttavista näkemyksistä että instrumentin, joka mittaa kvantitatiivisesti näiden näkemysten vaikutusta innovaation omaksumiseen ja toteuttamiseen.</p> <p>Tulokset on esitetty kaavioina ja kuvioina, joissa näkyvät vastauksien prosenttiosuudet. Tulokset kertovat tämänhetkisistä näkemyksistä, haasteista ja tulevaisuuden suunnitelmista, joita pk-yritysten johtajilla on heidän johtaessaan yritystään brändistrategian toteuttamiseen. Sitoutumisprosentti suhteessa brändistrategian toteutukseen ei ollut korkea. Vastaajat eivät kokeneet strategian toteuttamisen olevan pakollista sidosryhmiin nähden, vaikka brändistrategian nähtiin antavan suhteellista etua ja näkyvyyttä yritykselle. Näkemykset tulosten havainnollistamisesta ja käytännön toteutuksesta vaihtelivat. Päätelmissä nostettiin esiin, että vaikka suhteellinen etu oli nähtävissä suurimmalle osalle vastaajista, jokin silti estää johtajia sitoutumasta strategian toteuttamiseen. Näyttää siltä, että sitoutumisprosentti on alhainen, koska sidosryhmät eivät vaadi sitä.</p>		
Avainsanat (asiasanat) Brändi, brändäys, brändistrategia, strategia, omaksumisprosessi, diffuusioteoria, innovaatiojohtaminen, näkemys		
Muut tiedot		

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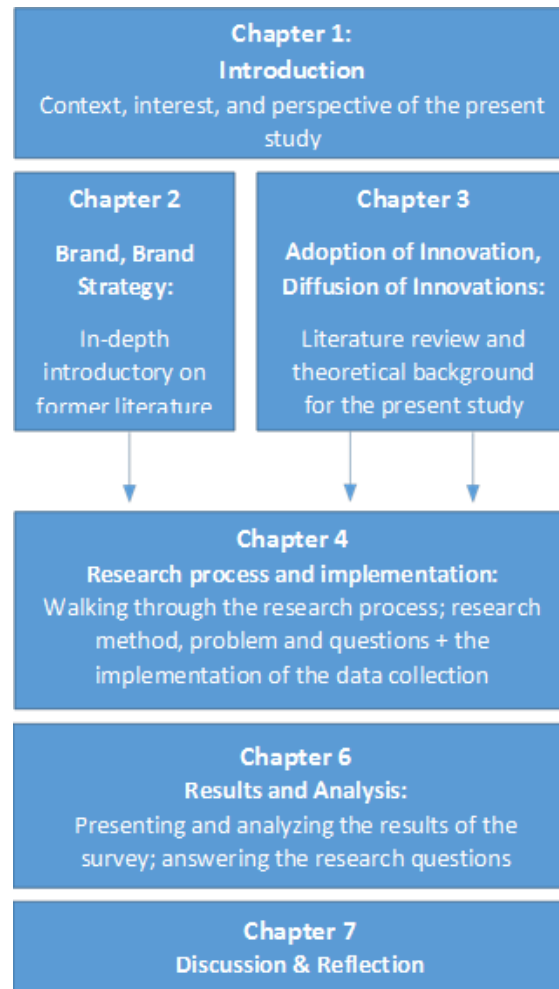
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The present research is in the quest of finding out the perceptions managers in Small and Medium sized Enterprises in Jyväskylä area have currently towards adopting a brand strategy. The interest and the context of the research will be explained in the following paragraphs, but to have a brief view on the structural outlining of the thesis, you may take a look at the figure below (Figure 1):



**Figure 1. Structure and outlining of the present research**

The theoretical framework is constructed in chapters 2 and 3. By introducing a widely applied theory on diffusion of innovations by Everett M. Rogers (1983), chapter 3 will provide the sufficient basic knowledge on attributes of an innovation which affect the rate of adoption of an innovation, emphasizing the receiver's perceptions of innovation's attributes, not of the research experts or the like. After having a closer

look into the concepts of brand and brand strategy and the role in corporate decision making and management in chapter 2, there will be an introduction of the former innovation research and a relevant tool for measuring the phenomenon discussed also applied in the present thesis in chapter 3. The research design section in chapter 4 will be discussing the method, strategy and tool for collecting the data of the adoption of a brand strategy in Small and Medium sized Enterprises operating in Jyväskylä (from now on using the abbreviation SMEJ), focusing on the perspective of the managers. Chapter 5 will go over the data and the results of the conducted research method to answer the research questions asked in chapter 4 and chapter 6 will have a conclusive interpretation of the results.

The aim is to use the literature review and theory in creating a framework for developing a reasoned way to collect information on the current perceptions companies have towards adopting a brand strategy. Supposedly the findings may become relevant when thinking of managers leading their employees into adopting a branding strategy. These findings may become useful insights for a manager when he does not have experience, educational background or the needed resources to overcome difficulties in proceeding in implementing of brand strategies. The goal was to bring out valuable initial information for the SMEJs in relation to their future actions. After becoming somewhat aware of the current situation as well as pointing out the relevant perceptions beneath the surface, it may become useful for those SMEJs.

The motivation and interest for this present research lies in the early adoption process of a new innovation, a new idea for a SMEJ manager, a brand strategy. As the literature review in this research suggests later on, it is crucial to get the marketing and branding right (Kotler et al 1999; Keller 2008). A more future-oriented interest for such research is the willingness to be developing the decision making and planning processes that managers have now. The perspective is of the managers; those supposedly having the main role in final decision making when it comes to strategies (Johnson, Whittington & Scholes 2012, 250). The findings will try to give an initial perspective of managers in SMEs operating in Jyväskylä, the experience within their own company.

## 2 BRANDING AND BRAND STRATEGY

*"Marketing is what you do, branding is what you are."* James Heaton (2011)

There are countless of brands in the world of today. There are brands that we use daily and the ones that we recognize even in our sleep. Some brands are globally well-known but some are lacking visibility and recognition completely. But what is it that makes a brand known among consumers and what are the steps that companies should be taking to build up their brands?

When introducing the context of the research it is worth the mention that marketing is probably one the most recognized business functions for most companies since it is no less than the way of communicating to the customers about a product (Kotler 2004, 7). A business organization should know its products and services along with the message that it wants to get through, and with different media planning the marketing strategies starts to play a vital role in the changing markets (Kotler 2004, 85): companies have to keep up with the communication tools just as with the needs of consumers. With an interesting addition, the world of business is changing along with the desires of consumers due to new innovations: "Marketing was never easy, but technology has made it a whole lot tougher" Greg Satell writes at Forbes.com in 2013.

The studies done about marketing surely have set some universal rules and strategies over time for companies to follow when taking action in marketing. If implemented right, these strategies could enable a business to communicate a sufficiently visible message in a chosen context and environment and, at the most, give a competitive advantage by recognizing the company's strengths in relation to the market (Kotler 2004, 97). When a company identifies an entity that makes specific promises of value for their customers, they have identified themselves a brand. Creating a greater value for their customers through that brand, they have competitive advantage (Nicolino 2001, 29). But how do SME managers link this fact to their adaptation processes of a brand strategy?

Though already over 10 years ago Kotler would argue that a product can hardly go unbranded these days, when it comes to strategically integrate a branding plan, it



might turn out to be a tough cookie for some organization managers. Branding has to be taken very seriously, if a company wants to thoughtfully differentiate oneself from others (Kotler 2004, 571-573) and this research wants to find out what are the perceptions affecting that brand strategy building initially.

Branding as a rather vague, yet fairly old term, can be sometimes misunderstood. James Heaton (2011) shares a misconception that he had learned that especially wealth managers may have: without better knowledge, managers might obtain a slightly negative perspective on branding and see it more as a cost center, not so much as a driver of sales. If it is to believe Heaton's observations, it might suggest that managers encounter difficulties in adapting an idea of creating a brand strategy. While they're asking, why create a strategy to *be* something when it would be easier to focus on planning what to *do*, branding surely seems more of an expense, both time and money, than a source of revenue. (Heaton 2011.)

## 2.1 What is branding?

As to continue with Kotler et al (2004, 10-11), branding itself surely has to be set apart from the definition of marketing. Branding is traditionally part of a company's marketing activities but these two shouldn't be confused with each other. A brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors". For the comparison, marketing is a process, whether it'd be social or managerial, that is for obtaining needs and wants through the creation and exchanging of products and value with others. In other words, marketing is the process of identifying the needs and wants of customers and turning that knowledge into a strategy of how to fill that need and want, while getting the best benefit out of it. (Kotler et al 2004, 10-11; 571.)

As we follow the ideas of Kotler et al (2004, 571-572), a brand has four levels of meaning when it comes to delivering value for a product or service. The first thoughts coming to mind when thinking of a product are called *attributes*. Attributes are yet not the ones that a customer would buy but rather the *benefits* of that particular product. That product initially says something about that buyer's *values* as

well as *personality*. The complexity of a brand gives a challenge: create the identity of a brand, build the wanted set of attributes for a brand that can be directed to it and polishing the values and personality of the brand. All these mentioned levels are to build up a carefully thought relationship with the customer. If well planned, it will systematically start building up customer loyalty. (Kotler et al 2004, 571-572.) Sounio's (2010, 24-63) thoughts may reflect the same as of Kotler: a brand equals to the association which the object creates in a person's minds while delivering the actual service or product.

A brand may be defined also to be the reputation of a company (Moore 2012). In its core, a reputation is something that has to be earned and maintained through daily actions which are closely companioned with behavior and personality, just like the levels constructing a brand by Kotler. The levels of a brand should have the focus in building the customer's understanding on the company's values and why it exists in the first place. At the best, customer wants to be part of that reputation and pay for it, no matter the price. (Kotler 2004, 571-572; Moore 2012.)

## **2.2 Brand strategy: Importance and competitive advantage**

According to Keller, *brand strategy* is the way the brand elements are employed throughout and across the company's products or services. As it should be clear to the manager that having a clear brand strategy might be something essential for their company's success, it still might get less attention and understanding due to its abstract essence. (Keller 2008, 41.)

A brand might be harder to see as a competitive advantage in relation to some other factors of production, such as machines or equipment and the research and development operations. When resources are being divided throughout different departments or business activities it is easier to focus on concrete things than to something intangible, such as customer loyalty, and the challenge is in showing the concrete results and seeing the link between any branding or strategic efforts and the beneficial return (Laakso 2004, 268-270). Even though there is a recognized need for reliable ways for marketing and communication professionals to show any proof

whether their marketing and branding efforts are bringing any wanted results, there's still a lack of them (Hertzen 2006, 213).

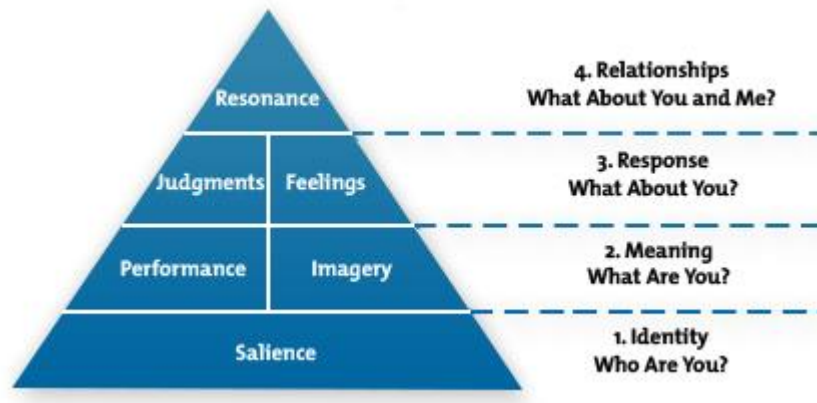
It is fairly difficult to demonstrate the effects of the branding and marketing efforts, though the managerial level and the stakeholders might be aware of the functions' necessity. One of the most important terms in this case, *brand equity*, has its positive and negative sounds to it in terms of a brand strategy. The challenges lie in the conceptualizing and measuring brand equity. (Keller 2008, 37.)

This is even more so in business-to-business marketing, since in business-to-customer marketing it can easier be seen in the increase of sales. A survey made by Incognito Oy in January 2006 asked the participating B2B companies to list some measuring instruments they used for following the results of their marketing communication: following the fluctuation of their 'market share' seemed to be on the top, leaving 'spontaneous familiarity' just a little behind. This may support the fact that branding is important and should be paid attention to. (Hertzen 2006, 214-215.)

If a brand strategy fails to give any obvious or concrete show that it is worth investing, it may cause managers to give only little support to marketers' brand building actions. In the Marketing Budget 2013 report of Econsultancy in association with Responsys, the research statistics show that much of the companies' budgets are favorable to the marketing departments but it's not all straightforward. Simon Robinson, the Senior Marketing and Alliances Director EMEA, Responsys: "Being a marketer in the relationship era will inevitably present challenges and opportunities in equal measure. The research shows that marketing spend in 2013 is healthy, but at the same time there is understandable pressure to show ROI".

Keller (2008, 37-41) states that as branding is about creating difference, it is fundamentally about giving the product "*the power of brand equity*". In his Customer-based brand equity model seen below (Figure 2), we may see visualized some of the core things that build up a brand equity. It places the fundamental questions that the customers will be asking about a brand, and through which they will make up their idea of the particular brand. From the model, we can see how the relationship between the customer and the brand is being developed, as discussed

previously. It has to be taken highly into consideration by the management for it is not only about building a nice external brand, but about building communicative interaction, starting from identifying and recognizing oneself as a company *internally* and going all the way to building the trust with a customer. Brand knowledge is in the core of the build-up and it starts by having a strong brand *within* the company.



**Figure 2. Keller's customer-based brand equity model**

Now, as to define a brand strategy we take the approach of Michael Porter to first define *competitive strategy* (1966, 60): "Competitive strategy is about being different. It means deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value." Though no one strategy suits every company, companies that are implementing a certain, specified strategy are likely to perform better than those that are not following a clear strategy. As management specifies the competitive strategy, pursuing a value discipline and aligns the whole company to it, the strategy will be supported throughout all the business functions. This will make a company think alike and have the same goals with the same values. (Kotler 2004, 516-519.)

Therefore, it could be said that a strategy has the form of being an adopted process or idea of translating the company's ideas, mission and values into a good or service that creates added value and supposedly competitive advantage for the company. Strategic planning is ought to be structured together with the whole company, including each and every department working towards accomplishing the same strategic objectives, but starting with the manager (Kotler 1999, 103). Like earlier mentioned together with the brand equity model, Keller (2008, 41) states that a

brand strategy, being part of brand management, provides the guidelines for choosing the attributes it wants to communicate through their products and services.

### **2.3 Managing a brand strategy**

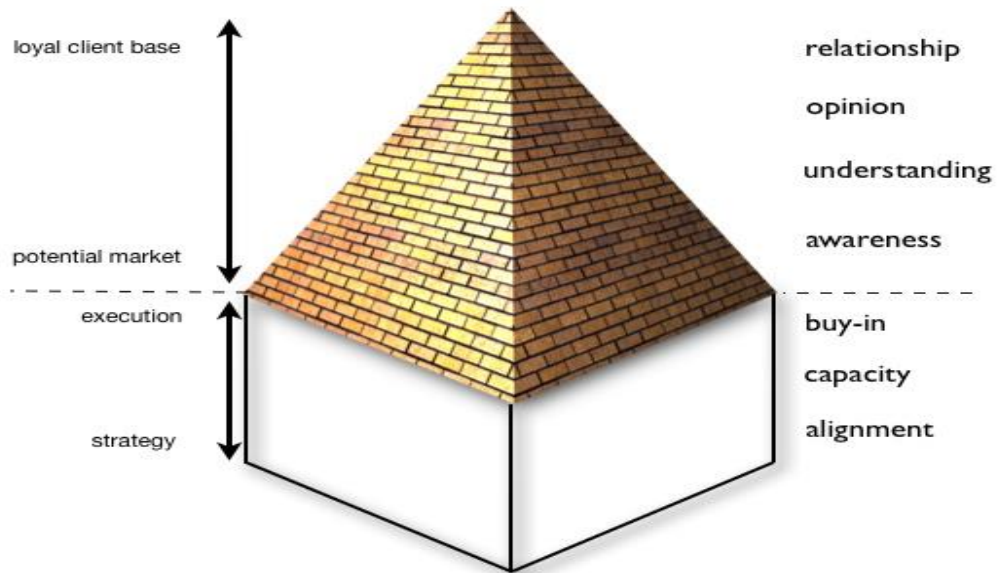
Silén (2006, 88) argues that value management (or leadership, depending on the translation) is a powerful tool, a process through which the manager tries to build and define the reality and values of the members of the organization, and has potentially a relevant approach when implementing a brand strategy. Though, it is obviously important for a manager to bring out to light the desired values and ideas, it is not enough. The manager must breathe those values into life with significance in daily actions and situations. If the values that define the organization are not communicated and people are not willing to commit to them, first by the manager and then the employees, the role of the manager as an executive may fall short. (Silén 2006, 88-89.)

As Silén states (2006, 113), same problems may be detected in corporate marketing communication as in quality management and strategic management: it becomes too complex without unified policies throughout the organization. The cause may be that all the financial resources budgeted for marketing are not being used effectively, although money is needed in many sectors within the marketing and communication departments, just like earlier mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. The building of a brand is a strategic process which should cover the whole organization, not just the marketing department. The values behind the brand and within the organization do not cost a thing, though, as Silén states, brand building may take loads of time, effort and money; in other words it is a complex process (Silén 2006, 113). The value of the brand is measured by the ability of the brand to bring added value to the company without additional expenses. After gaining the high value, the brand value usually remains such if the brand is known and strong. (Silén 2006, 88; 113-114.)

In his work Kamensky (2010) has witnessed that as the company management may be aware of the content of the strategies they want to implement, the process of actually implementing and working with the strategy is left with much less attention.

There is a gap between a plan and implementation, which leads to the fact that in strategic work it is about strategic management above all else. As strategic management has three elements in it – creating the successful strategy, implementing it successfully and renewing the strategy successfully – a majority of the members in an organization find the implementation of the strategy the most difficult and hard to adapt to every day work simultaneously. (Kamensky 2010, 15-27; 319.)

Collins (2007) introduces an approach towards brand building which is in relation to the Keller's model mentioned earlier (Figure 2.), yet giving it some additional perspective. As the Keller's model essentially works its way to build up a strong relationship between the brand and the consumer, Collins introduces the importance of strengthening the brand within the company itself. Sagacite's model for Internal Branding (Figure 3) underlines the process that happens *before* implementing any branding decisions. It suggests that all the corporate strategies must first align with the branding strategy or vice versa. This *alignment* is followed by making sure the *capacity* of the organization, whether it'd be money or other resources, is enough to deliver all the agreed promises made for customers. After these two steps, all the stakeholders including employees and suppliers, must understand the brand message and positioning, and most importantly, believe and see the value in it as well. Otherwise, the internal branding won't carry through the external branding.



**Figure 3. Sagacite's model for internal branding**

The manager's position and role in this process of creating the brand strategy internally is crucial. The responsibility may have been divided by many players within a company or an organization but the nature of a brand will stem from the initial ideas and innovations. Those ideas and innovations run from the top to the bottom. The manager is the first to adopt new. (Nicolino 2001, 26.) As the term itself is not easily defined and the publicly used definitions have different sounds to them, it is not a surprise if managers do not take much of approach when it comes to making branding decisions. In the Finnish context the term 'brand' has had even a negative sound to it as a false promise of a product or service while the discussion has been based on ignorance and old fashioned suppositions and needs to be changed to gain the correct attitude towards branding and the real character of it. (Sounio 2010, 21.)

The corporate strategy planning should include the branding strategy as an essential part as it will become a source of additional value and trust between the company and the customer and will eventually attract investors (Hertzen 2006, 228-229). In reality, the brand and the company image are one and the same thing (Hertzen 2006, 15). Taking those steps towards making strategic decisions, whether it's a new or a current brand, is a complex process. Additionally, as marketing and communication activities are getting more expensive day by day, it would definitely be economically

smart to use and focus resources into systematic and persistent brand building and strategy. (Hertzen 2006, 17; Kotler, P. et al 2004, 571.)

### **SMEs and Brand Strategy**

The term SME, as it is in this research, is defined by the EU definition as following:

*Medium sized enterprises have 250 employees or less, and the small enterprises that have 50 employees or less. The new SME definition comes from the European Commission and since the study will be on the Finnish companies, this research will be using the statistical information collected by Statistics Finland as a base to reflect the volume of the whole population. The statistics is given by the Business Register of Statistics Finland. A listing updated in January 2014 says that there was listed to be 315 566 SMEs in Finland, being 98 % of all the companies in whole Finland.*

The interest is on the SME's particularly with the knowledge that there are certain limitations that they have in terms of growth and success. While large corporations have access to funding for their research and development department as well as to gaining the needed expertise and know-how for setting up a skillful marketing and branding plans, SME's tend to have limited access to both. Small businesses are more likely to struggle with the credibility as they are usually much high risk investments to banks and the establishment of a solid reputation in relation to bigger companies is much less visible. This will affect their division of their current resources and with organizing and prioritizing them. If management skills are limited as the staff is rather small, it may occur that there are no needed skills to effectively market a product. (Sloman & Sutcliffe 2001, 294.) Yet smaller businesses tend to have some competitive advantage over the larger competitors. SME's tend to have more flexibility to follow market changes. This may indicate to the characteristic of being able to adopt new ideas and innovations faster. (Sloman & Sutcliffe 2001, 292-923.)

## **3 ADOPTING AN INNOVATION**

In this chapter we look at the process of adopting a new innovation and its attributes affecting the rate of that adoption. We will define innovation, list the general attributes of an innovation that affects the perceptions of adoption or rejection by the receivers.



To go further with the idea of adopting a strategy as an innovation in the context of this research, we continue to look at a former research that has developed and applied an instrument for measuring the perceptions of adopting a new innovation. As the research strategy of this present research will apply that formerly developed instrument for measuring the perceptions of adopting the innovation, there will also be relevant brief introduction on the application of that particular instrument later on.

### **Diffusion of Innovations**

This research is founding its theoretical framework to Everett M. Rogers' theory on *Diffusion of Innovations* (1983) and eventually applying an instrument to measure the perceptions of adopting an innovation by Moore and Benbasat (1991). The groundings of Rogers' work are in the ever increasing number of worldwide diffusion research as his aim is in revision as well as to introduce new ideas on the subject at hand by going beyond formerly recognized models and their possible shortcoming (Rogers 1983, xv; xix). Moore and Benbasat's work is using Rogers' theory as their initial starting point to develop their instrument and developing it for general use (1991, 192). In theory, in this present study it is argued that this kind of measurement instrument of Moore and Benbasat could be applied also to the context of adopting a branding strategy as an innovation.

Rogers' theory on diffusion of innovation (1983) is explaining the different elements of diffusion, the generation of innovations continuing deeper into the innovation-decision process. In his work, Rogers introduces five fundamental attributes that affect the rate of adoption. (Rogers 1983, 10-24; 135-149; 163-202; 210-232.) As this present research has the interest in finding out the preliminary knowledge what could be the profound perceptions affecting managers to adopt a new strategy, the measurement tool is applied and used for on how those perceptions of adopting can be measured. The five attributes of Rogers will follow.

### **The Innovation-decision Process**

*Diffusion*, as defined in Rogers' research (1983), 'is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members

*of a social system.*' Rogers identifies four (4) main elements that can be identified in every diffusion research and are worth mentioning in the following paragraphs.

The first element is *innovation*, "an idea, behavior, or object that is perceived as new by its audience" (Rogers 1983, 11; 35; 135). If an idea is new to the individual, it will be called an innovation. Newness itself is the special character of the idea and the diffusion includes both planned and spontaneous spread of that new idea. Since the idea is to be new, it withholds uncertainty: there is a lack of predictability. Not only is the idea somewhat unpredictable, the uncertainty of it also has its roots in the lack of information. These things give diffusion its special character. Whenever information is increased, it will remove parts of that uncertainty. Innovation, as being a new idea, is information that reduces lack of information, thus even further, uncertainty. (Rogers 1983, 5-7.)

Secondly, as diffusion is one kind of communication in which the message can be seen as a new idea sent by one unit and adopted or rejected by the other unit or a receiver, the *communication channel* connects these two units. One of the problems in communicating innovation is the heterophilous of the sender and receiver which affects the effectiveness of the communication in the first place, whether it is through mass media channels or face-to-face communication or other. (Rogers 1983, 17-19.)

Adopting the new idea, the innovation is relatively difficult and often time consuming, even when it is seen to have positive advantages to the adopter. Therefore *time* is the third important element in the diffusion process. It is a relevant variable when looking at the time scale in the innovation-decision process in which an individual passes steps from a knowledge stage into the adoption or rejection stage. In total the innovation-decision process includes five main steps: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation. (Rogers 1983, 1, 20-22.)

In the process of adopting or rejecting the innovation, innovativeness is the degree to which the individuals are positioned based on how early they adopt new ideas in relation to the other individuals. These individuals are members of *a social system*, such as a company, the fourth element of the diffusion process, and can be classified to adopter categories based upon a relative time at which an innovation is adopted.

Within a social system, its structure has an important role how the communication flows and decision making evolves and therefore it classifies the innovation-decision into optional, collective or authority innovation-decisions. (Rogers 1983, 24-31.) In some cases, instead of an individual, an organization is in the role of adopting an innovation. Though an individual within the organization may have the will to adopt an idea, one cannot adopt it until the organization has adopted it first. An organization is a system of individuals that are working towards common goals, to achieve stable structure, efficiency in performance and functioning communication patterns. Attributes that affect the innovation-decision process in an organization are closely related to e.g. the organizational structure and leadership, formalization and emphasizing certain established procedures, interpersonal networks and size. (Rogers 1983, 347-349, 355-361.)

### **The Characteristics of Innovation**

Prior conditions to the innovation-decision process are previous practice, felt needs or problems, innovativeness and norms within the social systems (Rogers 1983, 165). Because the primary perspective and attitudes of individuals towards an innovation are different, it will also take a different amount of time to adopt or reject that innovation. The rate of adoption, being the relative speed of adopting the innovation by the members of a social system, is measured by the length of time required for a certain percentage of the members of a system to adopt an innovation. Though depending ultimately on the perceiver, Rogers identifies five general attributes found to be universal in the rate of adoption, thus affecting the diffusion of an innovation. These five main attributes of innovation are listed to be **relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, observability and trialability**. (Rogers 1983, 15; 23-25; 211.)

*Relative advantage* is 'the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes.' The more advantageous an individual perceives the innovation to be, whether it is an economic, social, or some other advantage, the faster its rate of adoption is. (Rogers 1983, 15; 217-223.)

Whereas the individuals are usually motivated to decrease the uncertainty about the relative advantage of an innovation, they are also looking at it through their

established values and norms of their social system. *Compatibility* is ‘the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, needs, and past experiences of potential adopters.’ The less compatible the innovation is with the prevalent values and norms the slower the adoption will be. (Rogers 1983, 223.) If an innovation is perceived complex by an individual and requires new skills and understanding from the individual, the innovation won’t be adopted as rapidly as a simpler innovation which doesn’t require much prior knowledge. *Complexity* therefore represents that degree to which the innovation is seen as difficult to understand and use. (Rogers, 15; 230-231.)

The degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others is considered the attribute of *observability*. Evidently, when the results of an innovation are easier to see the more likely individuals will adopt the innovation. The visibility aspect provokes discussion and enables people to become more familiar with the innovation and its results. (Rogers 1983, 232.) Also, as an individual has the chance to try out a new idea, installment, software, it will become easier and more rapid to adopt the innovation as it is possible to learn while doing. This attribute is the *trialability* of an innovation and will reduce uncertainty towards it as it states the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis before adaptation. (Rogers 1983, 16; 231.)

The mentioned five attributes of Rogers are the ones that are recognized in majority of diffusion cases, but additional attributes will be introduced in the next chapter due to the relevancy found by Moore and Benbasat (1991, 195) as they developed an instrument for measuring those perceptions affecting the decision to adopt an innovation and detected those constructs to be relevant.

#### **4 RESEARCH PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The theoretical framework of this thesis is introducing us to a topic from which we extract the research questions suggesting that it would be relevant to conduct a research on the current situation in SMEs. To clarify the reader with the research problem and questions derived from the theory, the methodological preferences and

further on with the concrete steps that this research took, this chapter walks through the process in more detail (Kananen 2011a, 12).

At its best, it enables someone to replicate the research in the future, and is as much in the quest of gaining reliability and validity for the present research (Kananen 2011a, 79-83). Spearheaded by the research problem and questions we define the objective of this research. The specified research questions are leading the way to find the best possible strategy to collect the data that would generate the answers to the questions. It will eventually show whether the research generates the wanted information or not. (Kananen 2011a, 24.)

#### **4.1 Research problem, research questions & objective**

The theoretical framework defined a structure that leads us to ask the right questions. Answers to those questions will then generate that needed information for further results and analysis (Kananen 2011a, 12). The interest is in the current situation in the SMEs operating in Jyväskylä area, and to be precise, their managers. By observing the situation of managerial level and realizing the lack of knowledge in the brand strategy adoption by high tech SME managers (Neuvonen 2014), the research problem was defined to become relevant for such effort as this research. If the research problem is to find out *what are the perceptions affecting the adoption of a brand strategy in small and medium sized businesses operating in the Jyväskylä area* the following are proposed to be the questions solving it.

The research questions below were applied from the tool of measurement which would outline comprehensively the research problem stated above in the form of questions (Kananen 2011a, 26; 30-39; 2011b, 90-91; Moore & Benbasat 1991, 216-217):

- Is implementation of a brand strategy perceived *voluntary* in the company?
- Is implementation of a brand strategy perceived to give *relative advantage*?
- Do managers perceive implementing a brand strategy to be *compatible* to their everyday work?

- Do managers perceive brand strategy to have an effect to the company *image*?
- How managers perceive the implementation of a brand strategy in practice?
- Do managers perceive results of implementing a brand strategy to be *demonstrable* to others?

The objective would thus be in finding out the SME's managerial perspective and the managers' perceptions in relation to implementing a brand strategy in their company. The interest was in finding out frequencies and popularity of perceptions affecting the adoption or rejection of the brand strategy in general.

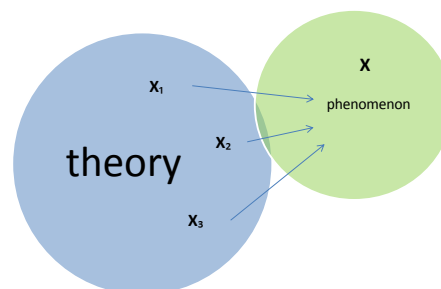
#### **4.2 Research design – Quantitative research methods and strategy**

Since the phenomenon of adopting an innovation is already refined enough, and a theory and basis to develop the research questions already exists, it is possible to take the positivist philosophical stance (Saunders et al 2009, 113). To strengthen this positioning, we mention here, that the phenomenon can be measured with the instrument mentioned in chapter 3 (Moore & Benbasat 1991) and introduced later in this chapter with the focus in finding frequencies of the discussed characteristics and perceptions in relation to the variables used in the instrument.

Before going further into the strategy, we conclude that this research was chosen to be conducted with an deductive approach, in other words using a highly structured methodology indicating towards the quantitative research methods: it enables replication of the research, and since the concepts are operationalized in terms of showing facts in quantities deriving them into statistical results and analysis the sample through categorical type of data, we are left with the possibility to make generalization of a phenomenon throughout the studied population of SMEJ managers (Kananen 2011a, 10-12; Saunders et al 2009, 114-115). Yet, generalization have to be properly tested for population variance to determine whether the sample is representative or not (Kananen 2011a, 47; Berenson et al 2004, 320-322).

The positivist goal is to find an objective truth about the phenomenon in SMEJs, thus the approach is deductive for the purposes of testing a theory frame in practice and gaining insight of the current situation among a population. This indicates towards a conclusive design to describe the characteristics of the relevant sample group and estimate percentages in the population (Malhotra & Birks 2012, 87-90). As a rather descriptive research it should not end there: for more interesting analysis for the present research, we want to go towards an explanatory research with the idea of being a precursor for further explanation if detecting causal relationships in the data (Saunders et al 2009, 124-125).

The attempt, as in a conclusive research, is to examine and explain factors and their effect on the studied phenomenon within the sample group representing the population. It was possible to choose the relevant tool for measurement when sufficient knowledge of the theory together with factors that are affecting the studied phenomenon and the variables were found (Kananen 2011a, 23). Below the general model by Kananen (Figure 4) shows in a general manner the process from the theoretical framework to identify and evaluate the factors affecting the phenomenon (Kananen 2011b). In this research we demonstrate those  $X_1$ ,  $X_2$ ,  $X_3$  (and as many  $X$ 's as there are different factors) to be the perceptions affecting individual's adaptation to a new innovation.



**Figure 4. Kananen's model of theory and phenomenon**

## **Strategy**

The research focuses on collecting its own data on the SMEJ's current situation for generalization purposes. Without a similar study done before, it has no former comparative results to use for the analyzing part. The idea was to measure a phenomenon within the group, and therefore it will utilize the survey strategy to find answers to the research questions in statistical techniques with the relevantly justified structured questionnaire. (Malhotra & Birks 2012, 327; Saunders et al 2009, 144; Walliman 2005, 193.) Within the given time frame and interest in the current situation, the research was conducted as a cross-sectional one focusing on the time being since there was no relevancy to observe people in practice for a long period of time or carrying out a wider range of interviews around the topic (Malhotra & Birks 2012, 333; Oakshott 2006, 66; Saunders et al 2009, 144).

As it may seem obvious, the goal was to get the answers reflecting the reality as good as possible. Attention was paid to reliability and validity throughout the whole research design and process itself since it would reduce the possibility of wrong or misleading analysis of the results initially.

### **4.3 Data collection and implementation**

#### **Sample**

As it should in a quantitative research, the sample is to represent as good as possible the selected population to enable any generalizations (Malhotra & Birks 2012, 495). The group of interest was all the SMEs operating in Jyväskylä area with the target on managerial level and collecting the data would in the best case enable the analyzing and possible generalizations of the whole population (Morris 2003, 47). The questionnaire was sent via email to a population consisting of a list of all companies that have a presence in Jyväskylä area, based on a listing made by JYKES (Jyväskylä Regional Development Company Jykes Ltd) to not exclude any company relevant for the research. The contact information for the email distribution list was gathered from the company records of JYKES with the authority of JAMK as the school would be the superior consigner of the research.



At this point it is clarified that no particular sampling technique was applied, therefore it was not depending upon any rationale of a non-probability or probability theory (Kananen 2011a, 69). Sample errors were not detected since there was no sampling method used in the first place.

The group of interest was from Jyväskylä area with the criteria of being from medium sized enterprises that have 250 employees or less, and the small enterprises that have 50 employees or less (European Commission 2013, The new SME definition, p. 14.) Nevertheless, for the analysis, the data does not exclude micro sized companies with only 9 or less employees or larger than 250 employees nor is there a need to rule out any specific field of business etc. since it generates a broader view on companies in the Jyväskylä area. This evidently makes the population more diverse with more variance between the attributes of variables and variables, and would therefore require a larger sample for the analysis purposes (Kananen 2011a, 71). If all the members in the population were homogenous, the sample would be representative even with one single unit of observation (Kananen 2011a, 71; Saunders et al 2009, 240). Later on there will be a more detailed description concerning the sample.

Though all the 1504 companies contacted had the similar opportunity to take part in the survey, without making any preliminary discrimination when reaching out to the companies, survey errors were detected at early stages. As the population included the companies of all size, it would also include companies that would not fill the criteria of an SME or operating in Jyväskylä area. No search engine defining their size was provided what so ever. It is important to notify that the register hadn't been updated since 2011 and for this reason some of the companies have no longer functions at the area or working emails for that matter. This fact shortened the list drastically to start with.

Coverage error (Berenson et al 2004, 21) was detected as some individuals of the population had no chance of being selected in the final sample due to bad mailboxes and bounces when sending out the questionnaire. Additionally, nonresponse error occurred when only 56 out of 1141 took part in the questionnaire making the (sample)  $n$  of the whole sample group. The low response rate of 7 % due to people

unwilling or forgetful to respond to the questionnaire and hard or soft bounces of any sent items is affecting the relevancy and validity of the research (Saunders et al 2009, 156-157). When analyzing the data, the non-responses and the other survey errors were considered for fully understanding the deficiencies of the research as it affects the ability of the research to make proper generalizations (Berenson et al 2004, 20-21). Taking into consideration the time defects and shortage in any contact database that would be up-to-date, the width of the data falls short. (Kananen 2011a, 22; 73.)

### **Questionnaire**

The online questionnaire which generated the data can be found attached to this report as Appendix 1. In the lay out, they were structured to be clear for the respondent and possible obstacles in answering were removed (Kananen 2011a, 37-43; 2011b, 90-91). The questionnaire follows the design of the developed tool of measurement by Moore and Benbasat (1991) to keep it valid and reliable to generate right answers to the research questions. To briefly introduce the background of the instrument development applied in this research we continue to look at the construction of it here.

The former instruments deriving from research for measuring initial perceptions of adoption and diffusion of IT innovation had lacked theoretical foundations. The constructs weren't adequate enough in terms of defining and measuring the innovation of their interest and therefore Moore and Benbasat (1991, 192-193) decided to develop a new valid and reliable instrument for measuring the potential adopter's perceptions of the new technology within an organization. Though their primary objective was in developing the tool for measuring the various perceptions of an IT innovation called Personal Work Station (PWS), they also wanted it to be applicable, valid and reliable for measuring the diffusion of a variety of innovations. (Moore & Benbasat 1991, 210-211.)

While some researchers would include *Image* within the attribute of *Relative advantage*, Moore and Benbasat (1991, 195) found it to be relevant to distinct them from each other. *Image* was defined to be 'the degree to use of an innovation is perceived to enhance one's image or status in one's social system' (Moore &

Benbasat 1991, 195). *Voluntariness of use* was another construct that they wanted to add to the perceived attributes. It would be measuring the degree to which use of the innovation is perceived as being voluntary or free will. (Moore & Benbasat 1991, 195.) As their development of their instrument went further, they found that Rogers' *Observability* would need to be divided into two different attributes because of its complex construct (Moore & Benbasat 1991, 203). It would be important to generate rather independent focus on two new constructs, those to be *Result Demonstrability* and *Visibility*. These constructs introduced above were seen to fit the context of the employees of a company adopting new innovation within the company. This was found to be relevant and applicable in the present study as the instrument to measure the perceptions of the managers.

Since the questionnaire itself was sent to companies in the Jyväskylä area, it was chosen to be translated into Finnish: any people without the sufficient English skills would be able to take part in the study. With thorough checking, the questions in the questionnaire were formed to be specific and clear for erasing the possibilities of misunderstandings and multiple interpretations. When translating from English to Finnish it was made sure to be readable, reflecting the original design throughout the whole questionnaire. The length of the questionnaire was kept in the least for keeping the interest of every potential respondent until the end. The easiest questions were placed to be the first ones and the most complicated to the later parts of the questionnaire. (Kananen 2011a, 32-35.) The items in the questionnaire were applied from the one developed by Moore and Benbasat (1991, 216-217) as they had been processed through testing several times for accuracy of measuring the right things, reliability and validity of the scale along with the wording for respondent-friendly answering. All the questions follow a logical order for as clear answering process as possible. (Moore & Benbasat 1991, 198-204).

The preferred type of data was to yield categorical responses and therefore the data was measured on a nominal scale and an ordinal scale (Moore & Benbasat 1991, 199; Berenson et al 2004, 17-18). The questionnaire had different kinds of questions to best suit the collection of the needed information and were to be structured questions (Kananen 2011, 26), excluding couple of exceptions for reasoned purposes.

For background information the level of measurement was a nominal scale: the questionnaire started with dichotomous questions that allow answering only two answers such as “yes” or “no” and questions that had categories one could choose from; open field questions were provided in some cases when the respondent wouldn’t find a fit within a given scale, such as education. In some of the background questions were given ranges summing up broader categories, such as company revenue or quantity of personnel in the company (Saunders et al 2009, 376). This generated data within an ordinal scale.

The content part of the questionnaire that tries to generate answers to the research questions utilizes the ordinal scale: the observations can be put into order by the measured characteristics on a rating scale. The Likert-style rating scale advises to answer by the amount of agreement: in the questionnaire there were seven points ranging from “extremely disagree” to “extremely agree” as it has also been applied in the instrument of Moore and Benbasat. (Saunders et al 2009, 378; Kananen 2011a, 21-23; Moore & Benbasat 1991, 199.) All of the questions concerning the perceptions of adopting an innovation were rated in Likert scale.

In each question there was an option for answering “I don’t know/cannot say” or continuing the questionnaire without an answer at all, for one should not feel pressure of answering a question when there is no certainty for an answer. This also enabled a respondent to continue with the questionnaire and not feel any frustration towards it. (Kananen 2011a, 39; Berenson et al. 2004, 10.)

### **Reliability and validity**

Following a structured methodology already facilitates replication and ensures reliability and validity, but by choosing an already tested and validated instrument, we argue the rationale behind the survey method and selection of the instrument used. (Moore & Benbasat, 193; Saunders et al 2009, 156.) Another factor that argues on the reliability and favorable implementation of a survey strategy and the usage of a questionnaire in this research is that it has a good chance for less participant bias in terms of anonymous participation and answering. With standardized questions it will be interpreted in the same way by all respondents. As a self-administered internet-based questionnaire it also gives a respondent the peace

of answering without any pressure for any specific socially desirable responses. (Saunders 2009, 156; 365.)

The usage of the instrument to measure the perception of adopting an innovation by Moore and Benbasat (1991) is widely applicable for innovation research and we chose the strategy of applying it. The scale within the instrument demonstrate adequate levels of reliability: Moore and Benbasat made a final test for the instrument and in addition, the validity of the measurement tool was verified by using factor analysis and further on discriminant analysis (Moore & Benbasat 1991, 192-193, 201). A research technique is argued to be reliable, when it yields same answers and results on other occasions (Phelan & Wren 2005; Saunders et al 2009, 156).

Here, we conclude that the instrument suited the purposes and allowed the collection of numerical information and analysis that match the wanted format of presentation. The data is about quantities with a definite position on a numerical scale, thus possible to analyze with statistical methods and present in the form of a graph. (Kananen 2011a, 12; Morris 2003, 45.)

When analyzing the data generated by the questionnaire, the quantities are presented in the form of percentages, yet always showing the number of cited observations in total. This enables anyone looking at the statistics to calculate any frequencies associated with the particular tables (Kananen 2011a, 42). In the analysis we will find descriptive analysis of frequencies in the sample, trying to find indicative information of the whole population.

The data showed 1-2 nonresponses for almost every question, which affects the testing for the statistically significant relationships in the cross-tabulation of variables. The testing is also affected when expected frequency for a category is zero (0) observations. In a Chi-square test (later also as  $X^2$ ), used in the upcoming analysis of the data for testing the population variance or standard deviation, the data in the population is assumed to be normally distributed and is rather sensitive for departures of the assumptions validating it (Berenson et al 2004; 320-322). In this research, to enable the Chi-square test with at least on (1) observation within a category (and more efficient presentation), it was decided to group up variables e.g.

in the Likert scales (Berenson et al 2004, 44). Still, since the sample was very small (56 respondents) due to time given to answer the questionnaire falling rather short, most of the relationships were not statistically significant. In terms of assumptions for the Chi-square test barely reached with the small sample, we are not able to state that the sample is normally distributed and therefore the generalization of the results cannot be straightforwardly made on the population (Berensson et al 2004, 322). Nevertheless, all the findings presented in the next chapter are directional and giving initial idea on the situation within the population of SMEs operating in Jyväskylä area.

#### **4.4 Implementation of the survey**

The questionnaire consisted of 61 questions altogether, divided into --- sections. Those sections representing different themes derived from the research questions and the background of the respondent: 1. Background information, 2. Commitment, 3. Relative Advantage, 4. Compatibility in everyday work, 5. Implementation in Practice, 6. Result Demonstrability and Visibility, and 7. Future plans.

The data collection itself was conducted as a survey by sending an online questionnaire placed in SphinxSurvey to all the 1504 companies on the distribution list with the help of a mailing program called MailChimp. The questionnaire was launched on 1.4.2014 and with the help of MailChimp it was possible to get constant report of the interactions the respondents had with the sent email. From that report it was also possible to detect all the hard and soft bounces that occurred due to outdated email addresses etc. This information could be used as we defined the sample group and the survey errors. MailChimp also reported the link clicks and whether the email was opened or not.

The recipients could access the questionnaire through a link to SphinxSurvey, an online platform for online surveys, which collects the answers and is able to transform the data into an analyzable format without manually filing them into excel or the like. The platform was chosen to have the most efficient way to collect the answers generated by the questionnaire. Kananen (2011a, 12) recommends SphinxSurvey for this kind of analyzing process of structured questions.

Because it is uncertain up to some point whether the online questionnaire is going to be effective and in the most understandable form, it was tested by a small group of marketing and research professionals in JAMK to actually know if there was something to be changed in it before sending it to the whole chosen population of respondents. (Oakshott 2006, 66; Berenson et al 2004, 10.) With some reasoned changes such as language and length of the questions, the questionnaire was using the same approach of that made by Moore and Benbasat (1991).

When conducting the survey, the participants were informed of the confidentiality: the data collection process and the results were anonymous and none of the people can be linked with the organizations or certain titles. One week ahead of the actual questionnaire, the sample group was sent a marketing email, reviewed and edited by Heidi Neuvonen, to have the potential participants alerted about the upcoming possibility to partake in a survey. As they were sent the actual questionnaire with a longer cover letter they were also informed of instructions and contact information if further interest. The recipients had 10 days to answer to the questionnaire, it was then closed on 10.4.2012. Below you can see a summary of the survey implementation:

Time of access: 1.-10.4.2014

Total of respondents: 56

Sent to: 1504

Hard and soft bounces: 363

Response rate: 7%

Total of questions: 61

Themes in the questionnaire:

1. Background variables
2. Commitment
3. Relative Advantage
4. Compatibility
5. Implementation in Practice
6. Result Demonstrability and Visibility
7. Future plans

### **Background variables and information of the respondents**

The companies were categorized into 3 different industry sectors: trade sector, service sector and industrial sector. Most of the companies identified themselves to be of the service sector, making 56 % (n = 50) of the total sample, whereas the trade sector formed the smallest group with a 20 % of the total. The majority (84%, n = 53) told that their main operations situated in Finland.

With the measuring of the employee number, small and medium sized companies formed the largest group of respondents (n = 50): 94 % were between 1 – 249 employees, and only 6 % of the companies had 250 or more employees. Interestingly we may here compare the percentage with the one in relation to the whole Finland: In January 2014 there was listed to be 315 566 SMEs in Finland, being 98 % of all the companies in whole Finland (Tilastokeskus 2014). Not surprisingly, the majority (68 %, n = 50) had an annual turnover that would fall under the category of 2 million or less. 16 % had a turnover of more than 2 million but under 10 million, and the rest 16 % above 10 million.

A third (33 %, n = 48) of the respondents had an educational background in technology (technical). Respondents with the education in business were the biggest group with 42 % of the total and only 6 % said to have an education in natural sciences. The rest, 19 % had an education of “another field”. The respondents represented somewhat the managerial level since 38 % of them (n = 48) were the CEOs of the companies and 8 % were sales managers. One fourth (25 %) said to be entrepreneurs.

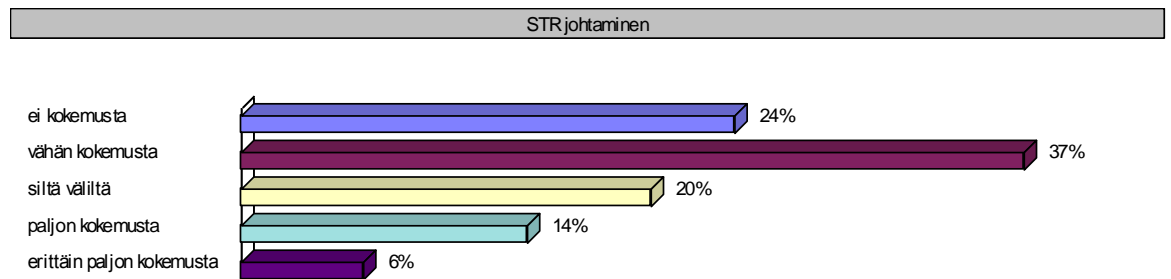
Frequency of working tasks in marketing was highly significant in the sample group: 90 % of the respondents (n = 48) said that marketing was included part or full-time in their working tasks. Considering the whole working career, 83 % (n = 46) of the respondents said that marketing had belonged to their work for 10 or more years. Still, like the Table 1 below shows, majority of the respondents say that they have none (24 %) or little experience (37 %) in managing a brand strategy, those making 61 % (n = 51) all together. A good 14 % had much of experience in managing a brand strategy.

**Table 1. Experience in managing a brand strategy**



Experience of manag. a brand strategy	No. cit.	Percent
No experience	12	24%
Little experience	19	37%
In between	10	20%
Much experience	7	14%
Very much experience	3	6%
TOTAL CIT.	51	100%

The question is a single response on a scale. Values are based on a scale of 1 (No experience) to 5 (Very much experience). The calculations do not take account of non-responses. The table is based on 53 observations. The percentages are calculated in relation to the number of citations. The parameters displayed are no longer valid, non-empty cells have been deleted.



When asking of experience in implementing brand strategy in practice, almost half of the respondents had had none or little experience (48 %, n = 51) where as 37 % had much experience and 16 % identified themselves somewhere in between.

It seems that the sample group represents the target group with the majority of SMEs and managerial level. Marketing background is also nicely represented as the majority had marketing experience now and in the past.

## 5 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this chapter the data is unfolded in a descriptive manner to explain the current situation among the participating SMEJs and relationships between variables by presenting the results in the most relevant way for objective analysis and conclusions. Conclusions are presented after the facts are drawn out along the objective analysis of the data. For clearer proceeding, we will answer the research questions respectively within sub-chapters.

Enabling the testing for finding out whether the results are statistically significant, it was made sure that the numbers of citations within the certain sample were equal in both variables. Categories with nonresponses were noticed and thus they were grouped accordingly in a reasonable manner. All percentages are derived from the citations in the particular table.

### **5.1 Commitment and voluntariness to implement a brand strategy**

The second theme in the questionnaire, after the background questions, had the objective to flesh out the commitment and voluntariness of the managers to implement a brand strategy in their company. Commitment was surveyed by asking whether the company was perceived to be committed to implementation; if there was an appointed person to manage the implementation and; whether their company was measuring and following the successfulness of a brand strategy on regular basis. Voluntariness was mapped out by asking e.g. whether stakeholders expected the implementation.

When asked whether implementing brand strategy was voluntary (non-obligatory) though it would be perceived advantageous, more than half (53 %, n = 51) of the respondents perceived it not to be obligatory; 39 % perceived it to be mandatory in their company. As companies tend to have stakeholders that have their say in strategic decisions (Collins 2007), it was interesting to see whether companies perceived their stakeholders to require implementation of a brand strategy (Table 2). More than half (54 %, n = 50) of the total number of respondents agreed that the stakeholders require their company to implement brand strategy. In comparison of the industries, trade (60 %, n = 10) and service sector (64 %, n = 28) perceived their stakeholders to require it more often than those in the industrial sector (25 %, n = 12). There were statistically significant differences detected between the industries ( $\chi^2 = 12$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = < 0.01$ ), yet the results should be critically considered since all the criteria of the test are not applicable.

#### **Table 2. Voluntariness to implement brand strategy in different industries**

	Trade	Service	Industrial	TOTAL
N =	10	28	12	50
	%	%	%	%
Disagree	20	14	67	28
Not agree nor disagree	20	21	8	18
Agree	60	64	25	54
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Dependence is significant. Chi2 = 12, df = 4, 1-p = 98%. Warning: 4 (44.4%) cases have an estimated value of less than 5 hence the rules of Chi2 are not really applicable. Table values are the in columns percentages established on 50 citations.

When asking the respondents whether they perceived their company to be committed to implement a brand strategy (Table 3), half of them said yes (51 %, n = 49), which represents somewhat the sample throughout the industries. This result did not represent significant dependence between the categories ( $X^2 = 4$ , df = 4, p > 0.05), as not all the rules for testing are applicable.

**Table 3. Commitment to implement brand strategy in different industries**

	Trade	Service	Industrial	TOTAL
N =	10	27	12	49
	%	%	%	%
Yes	50	52	50	51
No	20	41	42	37
Cannot say	30	7	8	12
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Dependence is not significant. Chi2 = 4, df = 4, 1-p = 62%. Warning: 5 (55.6%) cases have an estimated value of less than 5 hence the rules of Chi2 are not really applicable. Table values are the in columns percentages established on 49 citations.

The majority (53 %) of the respondents said that in their case it was not obligatory to implement a brand strategy though it would be seen advantageous. Rogers (1983, 1; 20-22) argues that adopting a new innovation is relatively difficult and time consuming, even when it is seen to have positive advantages to the adopter. That makes the perceptions of our sample group somewhat interesting in terms of adopting the brand strategy in their company and whether it is voluntary to do so.

12 % (n = 49) were not able to say whether their company was committed to implement a brand strategy or not. This may indicate towards the argument that it is difficult to define brand strategy as something important and identify it as a part of business functions (Collins 2007; Keller 2008, 41) and it will affect the rate of commitment since there is nothing tangible to be committed to.

## 5.2 Relative advantage of implementing a brand strategy

The third theme had the objective to find out whether the SME managers would perceive implementing a brand strategy to give a company relative advantage. This was outlined by asking questions respectively about financial advantage, competitive advantage and managerial advantage.

Most of the respondents (83 %, n = 53) perceived implementing brand strategy overall advantageous, leaving only 2 % disagreeing and 11 % not able to say. This makes the difference from reference distribution highly significant ( $X^2 = 65$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). From those respondents who say their company is committed to implement brand strategy all (100 %, n = 26) find it overall advantageous to have a brand strategy (Table 4). Those that are not committed still agree on the relative advantage with over 60 % (n = 18). The difference was significant ( $X = 10$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), but with the notion that too many observations having value less than 5 the rules for testing are not totally applicable.

**Table 4. Perceiving overall relative advantage when committed**

	Yes	No	Cannot say	TOTAL
N =	26	18	6	50
	%	%	%	%
Disagree	0	6	0	2
Not agree nor disagree	0	28	17	12
Agree	100	67	83	86
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Dependence is significant.  $Chi2 = 10$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $1-p = 96\%$ . Warning: 6 (66.7%) cases have an estimated value of less than 5 hence the rules of  $Chi2$  are not really applicable. Table values are the in columns percentages established on 50 citations.

When asking whether a brand strategy is seen helpful in assuring stakeholders and comparing those perceptions between committed and non-committed companies (Table 5) the respondents mostly agree that implementing brand strategy is helpful in assuring stakeholders. Committed companies agree with 92 % (n = 22), whereas non-committed agree with 72 % that it is helpful. The respondents those were not sure whether their company is committed or not, still agreed that it was advantageous in relation to the stakeholders. This dependence was not significant ( $X^2 = 6$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), but along with the cross-tabulation above, gives a suggestive view on perceptions in committed and non-committed companies.

**Table 5. Perceiving advantage towards stakeholders when committed**

Advantage/Commitment N =	Yes 22 %	No 18 %	Cannot say 6 %	TOTAL 48 %
Disagree	8	11	0	8
Not agree nor disagree	0	17	0	6
Agree	92	72	100	85
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Dependence is not significant.  $Chi^2 = 6$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $1-p = 82\%$ . Warning: 6 (66.7%) cases have an estimated value of less than 5 hence the rules of  $Chi^2$  are not really applicable. Table values are the in columns percentages established on 48 citations.

When asking whether implementing brand strategy contributes to reaching economic growth, in other words gaining higher turnover, 83 % (n = 53) of the respondents agreed. Interesting enough, as the following cross-tabulation shows there is differences in perceptions of seeing economic advantages between groups that measure the successfulness of a brand strategy (Table 6). In total, the financial advantage is noticed highly (86 %, n = 50). Those companies that say they are measuring the successfulness of brand strategy, mostly agree (92 %, n = 12) that it contributes to the financial benefit. To mention, those who measure the results from the brand strategy was a slight minority of the total respondents, only 24 % (n = 50). Among those, who did not measure it on regular basis, 84 % see the economic advantages. Still, the dependences between the groups weren't significant ( $X^2 = 2$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), since there were a few observations that got the value less than 5.

**Table 6. Perceiving financial advantage in relation to measuring successfulness**

	Yes	No	Cannot say	TOTAL
N =	12	37	1	50
	%	%	%	%
Disagree	0	8	0	6
Not agree nor disagree	8	8	0	8
Agree	92	84	100	86
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Dependence is not significant. Chi2 = 1, df = 4, 1-p = 13%. Warning: 7 (77.8%) cases have an estimated value of less than 5 hence the rules of Chi2 are not really applicable. Table values are the in columns percentages established on 50 citations.

There was no significant difference in perceiving the financial advantage of brand strategy between those who were measuring the effectiveness of a strategy within their company and those who do not. With over 80 % of both groups agreeing that it does have positive affect in financial growth, indicates that brand strategy is perceived to have a role in company's economic growth and the strategies to gain that competitive advantage. It does not significantly seem that managers that measure the effectiveness of a strategy to have a more positive perception towards it that those managers that have no measurements (Keller 2008, 41; Laakso 2004, 268-270). But overall, it seems that the financial advantage is recognized throughout the whole sample group. Still, with only 12 % of the respondents measuring the effectiveness of their brand strategy efforts on regular basis, it could be suggested that though there is a recognized need for the strategy and those measurements to be made, majority does not commit to them and thus may have difficulties to give any proof whether their marketing and branding efforts are bringing any wanted results (Hertzen 2006, 213).

A little over a half (53 %, n = 51) perceived brand strategy to give protection from competition (Table 7). A third disagreed (31 %), while 16 % of the respondents didn't have an opinion or didn't want to answer.

**Table 7. Brand strategy protects from competition**

Brand strategy protects from competition	No. cit.	Percent
Disagree	16	31 %
Not agree nor disagree	8	16 %
Agree	27	53 %
TOTAL CIT.	51	100 %

The question is a single response on a scale. Values are based on a scale of 1 (Disagree) to 7 (Agree). The calculations do not take account of non-responses. Difference from reference distribution is highly significant.  $\chi^2 = 11$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $1-p = >99\%$ .  $\chi^2$  is calculated with equal expected frequencies for each modality. The sum of percentages is less than 100% because of deletions.

Kotler argues (2004, 516-519) that companies that are implementing specified strategies are likely to perform better than those that are not following a clear strategy. Having a brand strategy, just as having a competitive strategy (Porter 1966, 60), is about being different which means deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value. The perception that a brand strategy protects from competition was agreed by the majority (53 %) of the respondents and thus somewhat suggests that SMEs are aware of the advantage in terms of adopting the brand strategy.

As said in the earlier chapter, the majority of the respondents (90 %,  $n = 48$ ) said that marketing was part or full-timely included in their working tasks, but almost half of the respondents had none or little experience in implementing a brand strategy in practice (48 %,  $n = 51$ ). Also, experience of strategic management of brands was not too common, as 61 % had none or little experience of it. In the cross-tabulation below (Table 8) one can see the perceived advantage of a brand strategy supporting strategic visioning in relation to the respondents experience in strategic management of brands. In total, all the respondents perceived the implementation of brand strategy to support strategic visioning. Though the dependence was not significant ( $\chi^2 = 9$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), and many of the observations had the value less than 5, the table may suggest that the more experience one has the more one can see the advantage, in other words brand strategy supporting strategic visioning in the company.

**Table 8. Perceiving the support of strategic visioning in relation to experience**

N =	None 12 %	Little experience 19 %	In between 10 %	Much exp. 7 %	Very much exp. 3 %	TOTAL 51 %
Disagree	0	11	0	0	0	4
Not agree nor disagree	33	11	30	0	0	18
Agree	67	79	70	100	100	78
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100

Dependence is not significant. Chi2 = 9, df = 8, 1-p = 67%. Warning: 11 (73.3%) cases have an estimated value of less than 5 hence the rules of Chi2 are not really applicable. Table values are the in columns percentages established on 51 citations

The table below (Table 9) takes a look at the relationship between different industries and their managers' perceptions on whether a brand strategy helps to focus operational functions. 70 % (n = 51) of all the respondents perceived brand strategy to be helpful in focusing the operational functions of a company. Service sector was most unanimous with 86 % agreeing on the advantage to be somewhat true – none were disagreeing. Trade sector and industrial sector had more distribution in their answers and indecisiveness can be detected: 40 % of the trade sector and 33 % industrial sector did not agree nor disagree which indicates towards lack of knowledge. The dependence was slightly significant ( $X^2 = 9$ , df = 4, p = < 0.05), but once again there were observations with the value of less than 5 effecting the test reliability. Additionally, 75 % of the respondents agreed that implementing a brand strategy supports the consistent internal communication within the organization, only 2 % disagreed (n = 51).

**Table 9. Advantage in operational functions in different industries**

Advantage11 / Industry N =	Trade 10 %	Service 28 %	Industrial 12 %	TOTAL 50 %
Disagree	10	0	17	6
Not agree nor disagree	40	14	33	24
Agree	50	86	50	70
TOTAL	100	100	100	100



Dependence is slightly significant.  $\chi^2 = 9$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $1-p = 94\%$ . Warning: 5 (55.6%) cases have an estimated value of less than 5 hence the rules of  $\chi^2$  are not really applicable. Table values are the in columns percentages established on 50 citations.

Just as the importance of a consistent and aligned communication, operational functions are daily concerns of a manager and important to weigh when considering implementing any strategies or integrating employees to it (Silén 2006, 113; Collins 2007). The results above are a positive sign in terms of managers seeing the advantage of a brand strategy in focusing their operational functions and supporting their internal communication.

### **5.3 Compatibility in everyday work and brand strategy in practice**

The fourth section was to become familiar with the perceptions towards the compatibility and the practice of implementing brand strategy. This was done by asking whether implementing the strategy would be compatible with other sections of the respondents work; within all the sections of the organization and; with the personal favored ways of working. The practice was outlined by asking questions about the ease of implementation of brand strategy and tasks related to it.

When asked to which degree they perceived implementing a brand strategy to be compatible to their everyday work, the majority agreed it to be compatible with other sectors of their work (71 %,  $n = 51$ ). The difference was highly significant compared to the reference distribution ( $p = < 0.01$ ). In relation to the different industries, implementing brand strategy is perceived by 54 % of all the respondents ( $n = 50$ ) to be compatible with every section of their organization (Table 10). Interestingly, the service sector ( $n = 28$ ) perceived it to be the most compatible (71 %,  $n = 28$ ), leaving trade and industrial sector agreeing only 30 % or little over. This may have occurred since the service sector had the most citations, making the distribution more varied. Yet, the dependence was only slightly significant ( $p = < 0.05$ ).

**Table 10. Compatibility in every section of our organization in different industries**

Compatibility / Industry sector N =	Trade 10 %	Service 28 %	Industrial 12 %	TOTAL 50 %
Disagree	20	11	17	14
Not agree nor disagree	50	18	50	32
Agree	30	71	33	54
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Dependence is slightly significant. Chi2 = 8, df = 4, 1-p = 91%. Warning: 5 (55.6%) cases have an estimated value of less than 5 hence the rules of Chi2 are not really applicable. Table values are the in columns percentages established on 50 citations.

These results indicate that implementing a brand strategy is perceived more as compatible than non-compatible. Still without much statistical significance in the results, we are not able to judge whether it can be generalized to the whole population. With little digging, these results may though indicate that implementing a brand strategy is seen as a part of a whole organization, not just a part of the marketing etc. In other words, as the theory already suggests heavily (Collins 2007; Keller (2008, 37-41), all layers of an organization including every department should be aligning together with implementing brand strategy in every day work for greater strategic advantage.

Of the sample (n = 51) a majority (59 %) perceived the tasks related to implementing brand strategy as rather easy to perform. The dependence was highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Supporting this perception, when asking whether the implementation of brand strategy was found to be difficult, a slight majority disagreed with 45 % (n = 51). Of those, a third (33 %) still agreed with the claim of implementation of brand strategy to be rather difficult. When reflecting these results to the theory, it is rather interesting. If a brand building process is thought to take loads of time, effort and money and in other words is complex and relatively difficult (Silén 2006, 113), the perceptions of the sample might not reflect the reality. Though the perception of an individual may be that implementing a brand strategy is not extremely difficult, the adoption process may take time to integrate the whole organization (Rogers 1983, 347-349, 355-361) and there are always some individuals refusing to adapt to something new and difficult (Kamensky 2010, 15-27; 319).

#### 5.4 Result demonstrability and visibility of a brand strategy

The questionnaire continued with the section in which the objective was to get the managers' perceptions on whether they see implementing brand strategy to be visible and results to be demonstrable to others. The section covered questions on observability and trialability of implementing brand strategy.

The sample was almost unison (agreeing with 94 %, n = 50) when asked whether companies in the same industry would have a better image if implementing a brand strategy (Table 11). Only 10 % (1 citation) disagreed from the trade sector and some hesitation would be detected from answers falling under the "not agree nor disagree". 74 % (n = 49) of the respondents also agreed that in their industry a brand is a status symbol. The dependence was slightly significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 11. Brand strategy giving a better image in different industries**

Trialability1/Industry	Trade	Service	Industrial	TOTAL
N =	10	28	12	50
	%	%	%	%
Disagree	10	0	0	2
Not agree nor disagree	10	0	8	4
Agree	80	100	92	94
TOTAL	100	100% (28)	100% (12)	100% (50)

Dependence is slightly significant.  $\chi^2 = 7$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $1-p = 86\%$ . Warning: 6 (66.7%) cases have an estimated value of less than 5 hence the rules of  $\chi^2$  are not really applicable. Table values are the in columns percentages established on 50 citations.

When asking whether it would be easy to observe other companies and their implementation of brand strategy (Table 12), only 51 % agreed and almost 30 % (27 %, n = 49) disagreed in some extent. The trade sector remained the most varied with its perceptions, yet also had the most few citations all together. Still when comparing the different industry sectors, we can see that in each group closer to half agree that it's rather easy to see the implementation.

**Table 12. Easiness to observe implementation in different industries**

Observability7/Industry N =	Trade 9 %	Service 28 %	Industrial 12 %	TOTAL 49 %
Disagree	22	29	25	27
Not disagree nor agree	33	18	25	22
Agree	44	54	50	51
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Dependence is not significant. Chi2 = 1, df = 4, 1-p = 9%. Warning: 5 (55.6%) cases have an estimated value of less than 5 hence the rules of Chi2 are not really applicable. Table values are the in columns percentages established on 49 citations.

The participants were asked whether the results of implementing a brand strategy are visible and clear to see, 55 % of the total number of citation (n = 51) agreed. The difference from reference was highly significant ( $p = < 0.001$ ). With another question the respondents were asked whether they would experience difficulties in demonstrating results of implementing a strategy where 50 % (n = 50) disagreed and one fourth (26 %) agreed. The difference was statistically significant ( $p = < 0.01$ ).

To conclude from the results, it seems clear that the majority of the respondents view a brand a positive driver for a company image. It could be said that these managers perceive brand strategy to have an effect to the company image and see it in other companies as well. As 28 % were not able to disagree or agree with the claim that it is easy to see results from brand strategies of other companies, it may support the argument that a brand strategy is a rather vague construct and it is hard to be sure if not seeing the concrete results of it (Keller 2008, 41; Laakso 2004, 268-270).

The results and analysis of the last subchapter could be arguing for an indication that the managers perceive results of implementing a brand strategy to be demonstrable to others. This supports the mention in the theory that it's usually clear to the manager that having a brand strategy is something essential for company's success, though being abstract essence. (Keller 2008, 41). If a company has a strong brand, it is undoubtedly also visible to others (Collins 2007), the results of implementing a brand strategy are also agreed to be observable by the respondents in this research and thus supports the theory that inner as well as external marketing and brand building is important (Keller 2008, 37-41).

## 5.5 Implementing a brand strategy in the future

The last section of the survey was identifying the perceptions towards the future implementation by asking the plans and intentions. 62 % agreed that their company had the intention of implementing brand strategy the coming year, yet almost a fourth (23 %, n = 52) disagreed. A little bigger number of 64 % agreed that they could recommend the implementation to their collaboration partners.

These results indicate that the perception towards implementing brand strategy is positive in the sense of thinking about future and spreading the word to others in terms of strategic advantage and development.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The results of this research were anticipated to reveal material for further observation to see what kind of perceptions and misperceptions may be rising among the branding and brand strategy building in the SMEs of the region. As an initial idea it was to serve as a trigger for further studying that may be taken on from the outcomes of the present one.

Drawn from the results, it cannot be said that any industry sector, commitment or experience more than any education background guarantees the perception of agreeing the relative advantage of implementing brand strategy. Still, all the above suggest highly that certain variables facilitate better view in terms of seeing the advantage in practice. The overall perception towards implementing brand strategy is positive and the respondents mainly agree with the arguments in the theory section going over the importance of a brand strategy.

The sample didn't represent a high level of commitment and it perceived it to be rather voluntary to implement brand strategy if implementing any. These findings tell us that lack of commitment won't necessarily erase the agreeing perception of overall relative advantage and other beneficial aspects of implementing a brand strategy. They might still be indicating that it is something that makes it less compatible in everyday work and in practice for the whole organization: when

everyone is not asked to commit to certain strategy, managers and employees take a path of least resistance.

The kind of quantitative anonymous web questionnaire served as a valid source of information and provided the kind of information that doesn't come up in a face-to-face interview setting. At the least, it gives now a wider variety of answers, though not only focusing on individual perceptions on things as it may occur in personal interviews. Due to the fact that there weren't enough resources to contact an updated list of companies and to search a more representative sample of the total population, the sample of this research fell short. Therefore, it is not possible to make desirable generalizations when the dependencies in the data are not statistically significant in most cases. Dependences were fairly high in some cases, but mostly in the frequency tables leaving the more interesting cross-tabulations with a low significance rate due to too little number of citations and observations getting the value of zero.

As said in the conclusions of the analysis, the results support the arguments of branding and brand strategy to be important for building company's competitive advantage and development of the strategic visioning in terms of differentiation in the market (Kotler et al 1999; Keller 2008). It is still not representative enough to give the truth about the whole area and differences between the company sizes etc. The research also fails to give the answer whether the managers are actually implementing a brand strategy at the moment.

Nevertheless, the results reflect quite nicely managerial perception and since they are considered the decision makers (Johnson, Whittington & Scholes 2012, 250) the results become valuable in future discussion about the region and its areas of development. Because there were a significant amount of entrepreneurs among the respondents, it could be noted that this group might need closer study as they have less employees and resources for specific operational functions together with brand strategy issues. Especially those calling themselves entrepreneurs would possibly use shared knowledge and know-how when facing issues in implementing new innovations. Since the objective was to get answers to the research questions and to solve the research problem, it can be generically concluded that the survey gave us

valid data for analysis and material for further inspection, but with a closer look at the answers, we may see that for now they were somewhat optimistic and wishful perceptions towards the issues.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

Screen shot of the online questionnaire:

#### BRAND KYSELY

JAMK Jyväskylän Ammattikorkeakoulu

Tervetuloa vastaamaan kyselyyn!

Haluamme kehittää brändien rakentamista erityisesti pienissä ja keskiuurissa yrityksissä. Saamme tämän kyselyn avulla tietoa siitä, mitä voisimme tehdä asian eteen käytännössä.

Kyselymme on lähetetty lähes kaikkiin pieniin ja keskiuuriin yrityksiin Jyväskylässä. Kysymme Sinun mielipidettäsi, oikeita tai vääriä vastauksia ei siis ole olemassa. Kyselyyn vastaaminen kestää noin 10 minuuttia ja tapahtuu täysin luottamuksellisesti

#### Taustatiedot / taustamuuttujat

Aluksi muutamia kysymyksiä yrityksestänne

1. Millä alalla yrityksenne toimii pääasiassa?

1. Kaupanala  2. Palveluala  3. Teollisuusala

2. Ovatko asiakkaanne pääasiassa

1. Yritysasiakkaita  2. Kuluttaja-asiakkaita  
 3. Molempia

3. Ovatko myymänne tuotteet

1. Tuotteita  2. Palveluita  
 3. Tuotteita ja palveluita  4. Palveluita ja tuotteita

4. Mikä on yrityksenne vuosittainen liikevaihto? Arvio, jollet osaa sanoa tarkasti.

1. 0 - 2 milj. euroa  2. yli 2 - 10 milj. euroa  
 3. yli 10 - 50 milj. euroa  4. yli 50 milj. euroa

5. Kuinka monta työntekijää yrityksessänne työskentelee? Arvio, jollette osaa sanoa tarkasti.

1. 1 - 9 hlöä  2. 10 - 49 hlöä  
 3. 50 - 249 hlöä  4. 250 hlöä tai enemmän

6. Kuinka monta vuotta yrityksenne on ollut toiminnassa?

7. Mikä on yrityksenne markkinaosuus? Arvioi markkinaosuus, jollet osaa sanoa tarkasti.

8. Toimiiko yrityksenne pääasiassa

1. kotimaassa  2. ulkomailta  
 3. sekä kotimaassa että ulkomailta

#### Seuraavaksi kysymme vastaajan taustatietoja

9. Mikä seuraavista kuvaa parhaiten koulutustanne?

1. Tekninen ala  2. Kaupallinen ala  
 3. Luonnontieteet  4. Muu

10. Jos vastasitte kohdassa 4 "Muu", niin mikä on koulutustautanne?

11. Kuinka monta vuotta olette olleet työelämässä?

12. Mikä on tämänhetkinen tehtävänimike?

13. Kuuluuko markkinointi koko tai osaaikaisesti työtehtäviisi?

1. Kyllä  2. Ei

14. Koko työura huomioiden, kuinka monta vuotta markkinointi on kuulunut työtehtäviisi? Arvio, jollet osaa sanoa tarkasti.

#### Brändin rakentamiseen ja johtamiseen liittyvät toiminnot kiteytetään tässä tutkimuksessa yhden käsitteen alle, eli puhumme "brändistrategiasta"

Jos ajattelet omaa työuraa, niin arvioi omaa kokemustasi brändien parissa asteikolla 1- 5 seuraavasti:

GROUP n°1

- |   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 15. Minulla on kokemusta brändien strategisesta johtamisesta        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 16. Minulla on kokemusta brändien toteuttamisesta käytännön tasolla | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

ei kokemusta (1), vähän kokemusta (2), siltä väliltä (3), paljon kokemusta (4), erittäin paljon kokemusta (5).

### Seuraavaksi mielipiteenne yritykseenne liittyen

*Jos ajattelette brändistrategian toteuttamista yrityksessänne, niin*

GROUP n°2

- |   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 17. Onko mielestänne yrityksenne sitoutunut toteuttamaan brändistrategiaa?    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 18. Onko yrityksessänne nimetty henkilö, joka on vastaa brändin johtamisesta? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

*Kyllä (1), Ei (2), En osaa sanoa (3).*

19. Jos vastasitte kohdassa 1 "Kyllä", niin mikä on henkilön asema yrityksessänne?

20. Mittaatteko tai seuraatteko säännöllisesti markkinoinnin/brändäyksen tuloksellisuutta?
1. Kyllä  2. Ei  3. En osaa sanoa

21. Jos vastasit kohtaan 1 "Kyllä", niin miten?

### Esitämme nyt väittämiä brändistrategian hyödyllisyydestä.

*Vastatkaa annetulla asteikolla, oletteko täysin samaa mieltä vai täysin eri mieltä?*

Brändistrategian toteuttaminen

- |   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 22. Sidosryhmät edellyttävät/ odottavat sitä                          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 23. Vaikka olisi hyödyllistä, niin meidän tapauksessa ei pakollista   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 24. Edistää taloudellisen tuloksen saavuttamista (liikevaihdon kasvu) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 25. Parantaa kannattavuuttamme / katetta                              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 26. Brändistrategia suojaa kilpailulta                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 27. Auttaa vakuuttamaan sidosryhmiä                                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 28. Luo paremman neuvotteluaseman suhteessa jälleenmyyjiin            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 29. Vähentää asiakkaiden kokemaa epävarmuutta                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 30. Edistää keskeisille pohjalle rakennettua kilpailuetua             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 31. Edesauttaa strategisessa visioinnissa                             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 32. Tukee asiakasuhteiden rakentamista ja hallintaa                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 33. Tukee viestinnän yhdenmukaista organisaation sisällä              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 34. Auttaa suuntaamaan operatiivisia toimintoja                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 35. Antaa paremman aseman houkutella parhaita työntekijöitä           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 36. Kaiken kaikkiaan, brändistrategian toteuttaminen on hyödyllistä   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

*Täysin eri mieltä (1), Eri mieltä (2), Osittain eri mieltä (3), Ei eri mieltä samaa mieltä (4), Osittain samaa mieltä (5), Samaa mieltä (6), Täysin samaa mieltä (7).*

### Esitämme väittämiä brändistrategian soveltumisesta päivittäiseen työskentelyyn.

Vastatkaa asteikolla, oletteko täysin samaa mieltä vai täysin eri mieltä?

Mieles tani brändistrategia käytännössä	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. Sopii hyvin yhteen työni muiden osa-alueiden kanssa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
38. On yhteensopiva organisaatiossamme kaikilla osa-alueilla	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. On yhteensopiva mieleisteni työskentelytapojen kanssa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Täysin eri mieltä (1), Eri mieltä (2), Osittain eri mieltä (3), Ei eri eikä samaa mieltä (4), Osittain samaa mieltä (5), Samaa mieltä (6), Täysin samaa mieltä (7).*

### Esitämme väittämiä brändistrategian toteuttamisesta käytännössä.

Vastatkaa asteikolla, oletteko täysin samaa mieltä vai täysin eri mieltä?

Yrityksillä, jotka toteuttavat brändistrategiaa	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. On parempi imago toimialallamme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41. Nähdään arvostettuna työnantajana	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
42. Ovat arvovaltaisempia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
43. Vahva brändi on toimialallamme statussymboli	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
44. Koen brändistrategian toteuttamisen hankalaksi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
45. Koen, että brändistrategiaan liittyvien tehtävien suorittaminen on minulle helppoa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
46. Näen paljon vaihua brändistrategian toteuttamiseksi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
47. Brändistrategian toteuttaminen on usein turhauttavaa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
48. Auttaa haluamani lopputuloksen saavuttamisessa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
49. Yleisesti ottaen, mieles tani on helppoa toteuttaa brändistrategiaa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
50. Minun on helppo oppia, miten toteuttaa brändistrategiaa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Täysin eri mieltä (1), Eri mieltä (2), Osittain eri mieltä (3), Ei eri eikä samaa mieltä (4), Osittain samaa mieltä (5), Samaa mieltä (6), Täysin samaa mieltä (7).*

**Esitämme väittämiä brändistrategian tuloksista.**

Vastakkaa asteikolla, oletteko täysin samaa mieltä vai täysin eri mieltä?

Brändistrategian tulokset	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51. Minun ei ole vaikea kertoa/havainnollistaa tuloksia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
52. Mielestäni kykenen viestimään niistä toisille	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
53. Ovat minulle ilmeisiä / selkeästi nähtävissä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
54. Minulle tuottaisi hankaluuksia selittää miksi brändistrategia olisi tai ei olisi hyödyllistä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
55. Olen nähnyt, miten muut yritykset toteuttavat omaa brändistrategiaansa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
56. Brändistrategian toteuttaminen ei ole kovin näkyvää toimialallamme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
57. Minun on helppoa nähdä brändistrategian toteuttamista toimialamme muissa yrityksissä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
58. Minulla on ollut mahdollisuus toteuttaa brändistrategiaa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Täysin eri mieltä (1), Eri mieltä (2), Osittain eri mieltä (3), Ei eri eikä samaa mieltä (4), Osittain samaa mieltä (5), Samaa mieltä (6), Täysin samaa mieltä (7).

**Esitämme väittämiä tulevaisuuden aikomuksista.**

Vastakkaa annetulla asteikolla

GROUP n°7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59. Yrityksemme aikoo toteuttaa brändistrategiaa tulevana vuonna	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
60. Yrityksemme suunnittelee brändistrategian toteuttamista tulevana vuonna	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
61. Voin suositella brändistrategian toteuttamista omille yhteistyökumppaneille	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Erittäin epätodennäköisesti (1), Epätodennäköisesti (2), Melko epätodennäköisesti (3), En osaa sanoa/Ei voida todeta (4), Melko todennäköisesti (5), Todennäköisesti (6), Erittäin todennäköisesti (7).

Kiitos, että osallistuit tutkimukseen. Palautteesi avulla pystymme kehittämään brändin rakentamista pienissä ja keskisuurissa yrityksissä.PAINA LOPUKSI SUBMIT (lähetä vastaukset)

62. Date of data entry

**Appendix 2**

The Finnish copy of the email invitation for the SME managers to take part in the online questionnaire:

*Hei,*

*Jyväskylän Ammattikorkeakoulu haluaa kehittää brändien rakentamista erityisesti pienissä ja keskisuurissa yrityksissä. Lähetämme maanantaina 31.3.2014 teidän yritykseenne kyselyn, jonka avulla saamme tietoa siitä, mitä voisimme tehdä käytännössä asian eteen.*

*Tämä sähköposti on siis vain ennakkotiedotus tulevasta kyselystä.*

*Toivomme teidän suhtautuvan myönteisesti yhteistyöhömmme.*

*Ystävällisin terveisin,*

*Satu Korhonen, opiskelija*

*Heidi Neuvonen, MSc. (econ.), Senior Lecturer (Marketing)*

*JAMK University of Applied Sciences*

*School of Business and Services Management*

*Rajakatu 35, FI-40200*

*Finland*

*+358400230618*



### Appendix 3

The Finnish copy of the email cover letter for the online questionnaire:

*Hei,*

*Tiedotimme viime viikolla mahdollisuudestasi osallistua Jyväskylän Ammattikorkeakoulun liiketalouden ja hallinnon alan osaston kanssa yhteistyössä tehtävään tutkimukseen.*

*Alempaa tästä viestistä löydät linkin **kyselyyn**, jonka kautta voit auttaa meitä tutkimuksessa, jonka keskeisenä tavoitteena on hahmottaa yritysten näkemykset brändistrategiasta.*

*Jos koet, että joku muu yrityksessäsi olisi parempi vastaamaan kysymyksiin, voit lähettää tämän viestin edelleen hänelle. Kyselyyn vastaamiseen kuluu noin 10 minuuttia ja se sisältää kysymyksiä yhteensä seitsemästä, alla olevista, osa-alueista:*

- 1. Vastaajan taustatiedot*
- 2. Sitoutuneisuus brändistrategiaan*
- 3. Brändistrategian hyödyllisyys*
- 4. Brändistrategian soveltuminen päivittäiseen työskentelyyn*
- 5. Brändistrategian toteuttaminen*
- 6. Brändistrategian tuloksellisuus*
- 7. Tulevaisuuden aikomukset*

*Kyselyyn on mahdollista osallistua ja jokaisesta kohdasta voi jatkaa eteenpäin, vaikkei vastaisikaan jokaiseen kysymykseen. **Löydät kyselyn tästä linkistä.***

***Pyydämme sinua ystävällisesti antamaan vastauksen 10.4. mennessä.***

*Jos kohtaat ongelmia kyselyn edetessä tai sinulla herää muuten kysymyksiä kyselyyn liittyen, voit lähettää sähköpostia kyselyn tulosten käsittelijälle, kansainvälisen*

*liiketalouden opiskelijalle Satu Korhoselle osoitteeseen satu.korhonen@student.jamk.fi. Kerättävää aineistoa käytetään vain tutkimustarkoituksiin ja tulokset käsitellään niin, ettei niistä voida tunnistaa henkilöitä tai yksittäisiä toimipaikkoja.*

*Toivomme, että olette kiinnostunut ottamaan osaa tähän yleishyödylliseen tutkimukseen ja olette osaltanne kehittämässä suomalaisten yritysten brändistrategioiden osaamista! Tutkimuksen onnistumiseksi on tärkeää, että vastaatte kyselyyn.*

*Kiitos arvokkaasta ajastasi!*

*Ystävällisin terveisin,*

*Satu Korhonen, opiskelija*

*Heidi Neuvonen, MSc. (econ.), Senior Lecturer (Marketing)*

*JAMK University of Applied Sciences*

*School of Business and Services Management*

*Rajakatu 35, FI-40200*

*Finland*