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THE EFFECTS OF DIGITAL ADVERTISING ON BRAND IMAGE

– Case Study: Company X

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THE EFFECTS OF DIGITAL ADVERTISING ON BRAND IMAGE

- Case study: Company X

The abundance of content we see on digital channels is astonishing, and the time we spend looking at individual pieces of content is very short. Companies put a lot of effort and money on digital advertising to leverage their sells and brand awareness. This thesis aims to reveal what type of digital advertising works and is there a correlation between seeing digital advertising to perceived brand image

The data was collected from e-books, online articles, case studies, videos and an online survey. The theory includes famous brand theories and studies about branding and advertising. The conclusion was drafted based on the literature review and data collected from an online survey targeted to the case company's current customers.

KEYWORDS:

Advertising, Digital advertising, Marketing, Promotion, Organic content, content, Social media, Brand building, Brand image, Digital consumption, Strategy, Brand promise, Tactical advertising, Branded content

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DIGITAALISEN MAINONNAN VAIKUTUS BRÄNDI-IMAGOON

- Tutkimus: Yritys X

Digitaalisten kanavien sisältämä sisällön runsaus on hämmästyttävää ja aika, jonka kulutamme yksittäisten sisältöjen kanssa on hyvin lyhyt. Yritykset käyttävät paljon työtä ja rahaa digitaaliseen mainontaan tavoitteenaan nostaa myyntiä ja brändin tunnettuutta. Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on tutkia, millainen digitaalinen mainonta toimii, ja onko digitaalisen mainonnan ja mieltyneen brändikuvan välillä korrelaatiota.

Tieto kerättiin sähköisistä kirjoista, online-artikkeleista, tapaustutkimuksista, videoista ja online-kyselystä. Teoria sisältää tunnettuja bränditeorioita ja tutkimuksia brändeistä ja mainonnasta. Päätelmä laadittiin kirjallisuuskatsauksen ja verkkotutkimuksen perusteella kerättyjen tietojen perusteella.

ASIASANAT:

Mainonta, Digitaalinen mainonta, Markkinointi, Promootio, Orgaaninen sisältö, Sisältö, Sosiaalinen media, Brändin rakennus, Brändi-imago, Digitaalinen kulutus, Strategia, Brändilupaus, Taktinen mainonta, Brändillinen sisältö

CONTENT

FIGURES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation

Having studied international business for the past three (and a half) years has lead me to comprehend the areas I am most passionate about in business. Being a creative and visual person myself, I have come to the realization that my strengths lay the areas of marketing and advertising. I have chosen elective courses in the areas of marketing, advertising and branding. These fields, in the context of business interest me because of their creative nature where design, copywriting, understanding trends, comprehending people and the human mind all come in handy. Also, I have always been drawn to psychology and human behavior, and brands are all about that. They bring people promises of what to expect of that brand. They work with peoples' mental images and subconscious by different kinds of marketing techniques.

Having spent my practical training in New York in an art consultancy, where I was a marketing intern reinforced my interest for creative fields. After completing my internship, I spent my student exchange in Southern France (University of Montpellier – IUT Béziers) where I studied marketing techniques. After my last Spring completing my courses in Turku, I landed a Social Media Trainee position at TBWA Helsinki. By the end of August, I got offered a full-time position as a Social Media Producer.

TBWA is a global advertising agency network that lives and breathes disruption – seeing what everyone else is doing in the world, and doing it a bit differently (TBWA, We are the Disruption Company, 2018). This worldwide chain has some of the most well-known brands (TBWA, TBWA - Portfolio , 2016) in the world (e.g. Apple, Nike) as its customers. Even after such a short time in the industry, it already feels to be the right career match, so to speak. I enjoy my work greatly, and get to complete a variety of different types of jobs where I can see my input in.

1.2 Objectives of the thesis and research questions

This study explores the effects of digital advertising on brand image. I investigate how content in the digital world can affect the associations inside peoples' minds about a brand.

This study aims to explore what type of content performs well when aiming for a strong brand image.

This study does not include all advertising means, it solely focuses on content in digital world and how those affect the perception of consumers of that content about the brand.

Objectives for my research is to find out how digital advertising affects brand image. It includes to further understanding about advertising trends, which work and do not work in today's world. My objective is to understand how good advertising can shape brand image and the overall significance of a brand. I want to understand which platforms in the digital world work best.

In my thesis, I will use Company X as my case study. Company X is a telephone operator that employs 21 000 people in the world's most connected regions. Company X has around 23.5 million subscriptions and its turnover was around 1,3 billion euros in 2016.

In March 2017, Company X had a brand launch where it changed its company name, visuals, messages, brand promise, target group and tone of voice, to name a few. I wish to gather information how Company X's digital advertising efforts have helped, if they have, to make it a strong brand externally. In my study, I will create a survey for the current customers of Company X to explore the perceptions of customers of Company X's brand image.

I use Company X as an example to demonstrate the effects of digital advertising on brand image.

My research questions are:

What is branding and digital advertising?

In what ways digital advertising affects brand image?

How Company X's digital content has affected its brand image?

Is there a correlation between seen digital content to perceived brand image?

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The research aims to discover how digital advertising affects brand image. The first chapter introduces the topic and its background and talks about the research objectives and research questions.

The second chapter focuses on literature review and explores branding and the key elements behind brand formation. The main characteristics of digital advertising and what makes a good brand are discussed in this chapter. Furthermore, the second chapter introduces successful digital advertising examples around the world and the opportunities and threats of digital advertising.

The research then moves to specifically examine Company X and its digital advertising efforts.

The fourth chapter, which talks about the methodology will focus on how the research was created, concentrating on research techniques, target group and questions implemented to the research survey.

 The final chapter analyzes the results of the survey to see if there are any proven points that Company X's digital efforts have led to a better brand image. Also, a conclusion of the research is presented at the end.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 What is Branding?

Branding, or brand-building is essential to every company. A brand is the sum total of all user experiences and brand-building the process of making those interactions with users. A brand is the tangible; the logo, its visual, color, taglines, fonts etc. that represents the brand. But most importantly, a brand is the promise, personality and a unique selling point of a company, product or a service. (Miletsky & L., 2009).

The advertisement and branding of a company relies on a carefully thought branding strategy. The brand must know its personality, tone of voice, target group etc. when creating its content. Otherwise, the brand image becomes messy or unclear. The key is delivering what is promised and expected, and keeping consistency. If a brand promise is broken, the brand gets a dent and that again affects how it is perceived by the public.

"Branding is the development of trust, and trust is a conduit to revenue." (Miletsky & L., 2009) The way brands build their identity, and that way trust, is a comprehensive process in creating a strategy. Key elements behind brand formation include deciding the target audience, setting a brand promise, deciding how the company wants its brand to be perceived, setting brand values, the brand's tone of voice, and deciding the brand positioning.

A considerable amount of research has been done about consumer behavior and the construct of brand personality. Jennifer Aaker's theory about the five dimensions of a brand personality focuses on the associations made with a brand that align well with human characteristics. Those characteristics might help consumers to associate brands with their own personality traits or characteristics about their ideal self, for example. Personality traits associated with, for instance, Coca-Cola are cool, real and all-American. (Aaker, Dimensions of Brand Personality, 1997).

In Aaker's theory, 5 core dimensions are set to describe brand personality and each of these factors are associated to facets with highest correlations. The five core dimensions and their facets are: Sincerity (down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, cheerful), Excitement (daring, spirited, imaginative, up-to-date), Competence (reliable, intelligent, successful), Sophistication (upper class, charming), Ruggedness

(outdoorsy, tough). Traits to the facets associated with the core dimensions are, for example, with honest – sincere and real. (Aaker, Value Based Management, 2016).

www.valuebasedmanagement.net
5 Dimensions of Brand Personality (Aaker)

Brand Personality
- Sincerity
- Excitement
- Competence
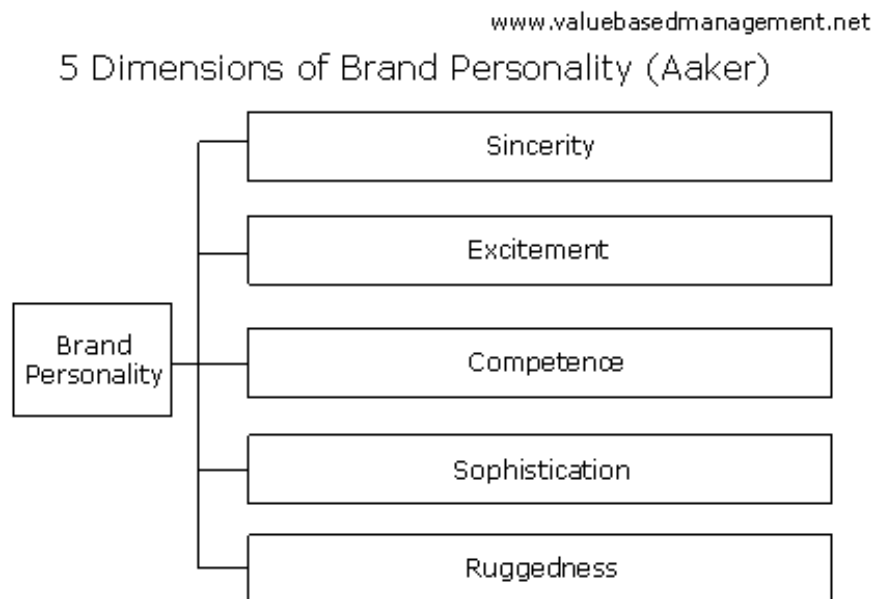- Sophistication
- Ruggedness

Figure 1

(Aaker, Value Based Management, 2016)

Branding is much more than the quality of the product or service that consumers receive. A brand needs to have something distinguishing about it. Take, for instance, Starbucks; It has created a buying experience with a linguistic component, where a large coffee is "grande" and "venti" means extra-large. It serves the Euro-coffee story for its customers well. (Lerman;Morais;& Luna, 2018). On top of that, they have a personalization factor of writing each client's name on their order, making it more personal to visit Starbucks.

Strong brand equity comes from a brand's added value. A good example of this is Nike, who has created associations with star athletes and messaged that anyone can be an athlete with its brand. It has led to perceived quality or emotional attachment, which keeps consumers buying its products. (Williams, 2017).

"The essential difference between emotion and reason is that emotion leads to action while reason leads to conclusion." (Yarnell;Bates;Hall;& Hall, 2012) Some of the most successful brands in the world have established a bond with their customers that is hard to break. This is related to people defining themselves through brands they use.

When brands demonstrate that they understand consumers' needs and motivations, it is easier for them to succeed in winning those consumers on their side. (Commentator, 2012)

2.2 What is digital advertising?

"Digital advertising, also called Internet advertising ("Internet marketing") is when businesses leverage Internet technologies to deliver promotional advertisements to consumers. Digital advertising includes promotional advertisements and messages delivered through email, social media websites, online advertising on search engines, banner ads on mobile or Web sites and affiliates programs." (Beal, 2017)*.*

Digital advertising is interactive, which obviously allows the brand to come closer to people. It reaches more audience and is generally is cheaper than, for instance, billboard advertising. Brands throughout the world rely more and more on digital advertising in their marketing efforts (Minnium, 2014).

Digital advertising can include search engine marketing (SEM and SEO), which refers to buying traffic through paid search listings or earning traffic through free listings (Land, 2018), display ads that are ads on different websites such as traditional banner ads or larger text billboards (O'Brien, 2015), social media ads on different social media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Social media ads can be, for instance, link ads, photo ads or video ads.

There is a great deal of measures for advertising, such as awareness, perceived value & accessibility, emotional connection and loyalty. (VanAuken, 2008). But do some measures hold more importance than others when thinking about an overall brand image? The fact remains that all external opinions about a brand are subjective and therefore rely on each individual's personal experience with that particular brand. However, we can tell spontaneously which brands are performing and perceived well. It might be just a reflection of the market share or awareness of these brands. But how is a good brand image built?

Advertising is usually seen as a mean to directly sell or promote a product or a service, but If we were to divide content into two categories, it could be tactical advertising and branded content. Branded content primarily aims to shape the brand image in people's minds. This can be, for example, content that takes part in relevant events or

community's interests, videos, articles and podcasts. In my discussion and conclusion, I will also include organic content, meaning content that is not financially promoted. Branded content brings real value to consumers by entertaining or educating them. Brand recall with branded content is 59% higher than it is with display ads. Branded content is consumer-focused and creates trust within the customers. (Mission, 2018).

Tactical advertising usually refers to advertising with clear sales figures in the mind of the marketer. Tactical ads are clear and easy to consume. They include clear call to actions, prizes, and pictures of the product or a service. (Kaleva, 2015) Performance marketing goes within tactical advertising and is conducted in a way where the advertisers are paid only when successful transaction are made through the ads. (Pma, 2018) Tactical marketing and advertising is based off of company's marketing strategy. Tactical advertising is more detailed, aiming to fulfill strategic marketing goals. (Shirey, 2016).

What makes digital advertising so interesting, is its constantly changing nature. Because technologies and webpages develop all the time, marketers have to be well aware to adapt new skills to keep the competition up. Digital advertising is now larger than ever, thanks to the "mobile mania", which more or less started with launching of the first iPhone 10 years ago. This lead people to share even more information of themselves through social media channels, consume content "on the go" and through multiple media sources at a time (Widhelm, 2015). Also, because more data is available of consumers, advertising can, and has to be, more targeted than ever. The table below shows the global digital population of 2018 in millions.
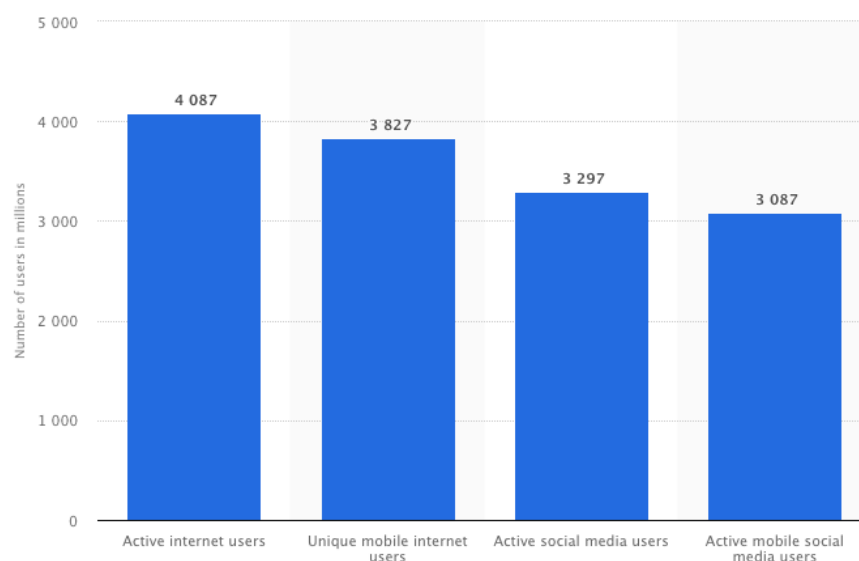
Figure 2

(Statista, 2018)

 "The biggest trends of 2017 will help marketers engage consumers more directly by circumventing distractions and increasing their marketing reach. These tactics appeal to fundamental aspects of human nature. As such, they can help marketers create carefully coordinated campaigns and conversations where brands and consumers coalesce into a shared experience. " (Patel, 2017). Today's digital advertising trends are different from the past, and the possibilities of these trends are endless.

The way advertising has changed over the past 50 years and the way it keeps changing is remarkable. There are many characteristically remarkable changes that keep happening because competition is everywhere. "Fifty years ago, if your brand could afford to get into television, print or radio advertising, you could dominate your category because you were one of the few brands with high top-of-mind awareness." (Sheehan, 2017). Because most people consume the contents of electronic media from the very first moments of the day until the last moments before they go to sleep, a lot of content brought up doesn't affect the viewer. Today, brands need to bring up their uniqueness by disruption and innovation, essentially, what is new about their brand. (Sheehan, 2017).

Digital advertising is essential to brand building because almost everything about a consumer's journey can be tracked, and therefore brands get valuable data about the functionality of their content. For example, instant articles, which are fast and interactive articles on Facebook are better performing because they do not include loading times. Readers are 70% less likely to abandon the article as if they were if the content was on another web site. (Facebook, 2018). A small factor as such can affect so positively to the customer experience that the whole brand becomes more popular. Marketing is about bringing something to people's attention, and all kinds of post published by a company are drawing attention to that specific company, and moreover, to the brand.

We might think that advertising does not need as much effort or money as it used to, since we have all the digital platforms, such as social media, where we can just post

content for free. However, the truth remains that competition is high, and companies are investing a lot of money in advertising, especially in social media. Digital advertising has grown during the past few years, and continues to grow by another 18% in 2017 (Reiss-Davis, 2017). There are already some obvious reasons why social media is used as one of the major platforms for marketing. More than 78% of the U.S population has a profile in social media (Sela, 2016). These digital sites allow brands to flow and live more freely and create content that is relevant to current events. Social media posts can be reactive in real time, they support the brand story and image and are therefore not just about selling products and services.

2.3 What makes a good brand?

Brand image means so much to a company and is something that the focus should be on more than ever, since the overall supply of products and services is so high these days. Everyone can get their share of awareness between consumers' minds with marketing, but why would and why should a consumer choose your brand?

Simon Sinek explains in a TED talk presentation "How Great Leaders Inspire Action" how successful leaders think, act and communicate, and this goes along with well-off brands as well. The core idea is that people believe what you believe. People will purchase products and services from brands that explain "why" they do what they do. Our limbic brain, responsible for feelings, such as trust and loyalty, is the part of the brains that is responsible for all decision-making. Therefore, the reason why we like certain brands is usually based on a gut-feeling that tells us it feels right. (Sinek, 2009).

Gut feeling relates to implicit and explicit brand attribute perceptions. Implicit system in the human brain is more heuristic, which refers to automatic, unconscious and faster thinking whereas explicit system is more conscious and controlled. Consumers are more likely to use brand associations they have fast access to rather than on those that require energy and detailed thinking. (Ipsos, 2016).

Brand image is vital to build credibility and loyalty among existing and potential customers (Thimothy, 2016). A brand needs to have something to stand for and possess core values that gives frames to the whole running of business. A study conducted in an Institute of Marketing Science in Australia compared methods to measure brand image. People were given different task to, for example, to rank how

certain statements associated well with different brands. They were also free to choose any brand that went well with the statements given in the research. (Driesener & Romaniuk, 2006). It is still, however, difficult to measure brand image because it is so intangible and personal. A good indicator is a brand's value. For example, Company X is a well-performing company among the top companies in Finland with a turnover of 1,3 billion (2016) euros.

Brands hold a certain value, and this value that contains quality and credibility outlives products and services that are used in an instant. (Goodson, 2012). Therefore, brand image is very important if a company wants consumers to keep purchasing their products and services. People make buying decisions based on emotional and rational reasons, both of which can be communicated through good branding.

Brand value comes from trademark, logo, packaging, marketing strategy, digital assets, colors, brand promise etc. It is anything that can be associated with the brand. Strong brands always carry value that can be measured through costs, transactions, net earnings and so forth. A good example of this is Apple, that currently is valued at 104.3 billion dollars. (Lake, 2017).

2.4 Examples of good digital advertising efforts strengthening brand image around the world

The world is full of brands that use the available platforms, community, trends and data to their advantage. In order to understand what type of content works in today's world, I want to go through some examples. All the examples are from brands that are performing well and have high net worth (Forbes, Forbes / profiles, 2016) (Forbes, Forbes, 2017) (Thomas, 2017). The examples are to demonstrate how good digital advertising can affect brand image, and moreover, sales.

In 2013, **Dove** conducted a compelling social experiment to light global conversation about the definition of beauty, since it believed that beauty had become unattainable and limiting. Dove Real Beauty Sketches was a 3-minute YouTube video about how women perceived themselves. It asked women to describe themselves to a sketch artist and a stranger to describe the woman to a sketch artist. The results of these two sketches of the same person were so different. This was to show that the way women see themselves is different from the way others see them, and, usually women are their

worst own critics. The film quickly became the most viewed online video ad of all time with over 163 million global views and 4.6 billion media impressions. (Google, 2013) This is a good example of branded content that achieved its goal to build brand love and loyalty.

Campbell's Soup faced a small problem with the sales of soup in Australia, when it had the warmest winter on record. It needed to remind people that they have soups for every occasion. So, what Campbell's Soup decided to do, was to use Google's Vogon tool to launch a dynamic and relative YouTube campaign. Vogon allowed Campbell to create 1700 variations of a single video. For example, when people were searching for Beyoncé's "Single ladies", a bumper ad would ask them if they needed "dinner for one". In this way, Campbell's soup was serving thousands of reasons to buy their soup because they had the perfect soup for every occasion. The sales of Campbell's Soup were increased by 55.6%. (Google T. w., 2016).

"Airbnb is an online community travel marketplace founded in 2008. The company's service allows people to list or rent unique accommodations around the world, in more than 34,000 cities and 191 countries." It wanted to create buzz and interest around its newest feature, Experiences on Airbnb. The way they did it, was through Instagram stories, creating videos of the unique experiences people could enjoy through Experiences on Airbnb, offered by real hosts. The videos were targeted to men and women aged 25-44 living in the US. Engaging with this new format turned out to be successful for Airbnb. (Instagram, 2017).

These are relevant in showing how brands behave in digital channels and want to differentiate themselves from competitors by being creative, innovative and relevant. These are clear results of digital advertising leading to better brand image and/or increased sales.

2.5 Opportunities and threats of digital advertising

People behave differently in the digital world than they would, for instance, when reading a magazine. This is to refer to the behavior that goes along with digital content consumption. The volume of content is perpetual, and usually we do not give too much thought to all the ads we are seeing. On average, people scroll through the height of Statue of Liberty per day. We should be making content at the speed of "feed" (i.e. Facebook feed) because that is the speed of people (Syrjäaho, 2017). This is one way companies can create better digital advertising strategies, by understanding how people consume content.

The future of digital advertising will lead towards more personalized marketing. This is possible due to the amount of data customers are giving away each time they purchase products or services, and sign up for loyalty programs. In digital world, companies like Amazon are taking advantage of personalization. They showcase products and recommend purchases purely based on data they have collected over time based on each customer's action on the web site. (Zantal-Wiener, 2013).

Digital advertising has a lot of opportunities due to improvements in technology (for instance, Internet of Things and Augmented Reality) and innovative solutions to market. For example, live videos engage about six times more people than other content on social media because they give the chance to interact with the viewers on real time and bring that extra excitement of "What is going to happen next?" A lot of possibilities are a head of us and only the sky is the limit when thinking about future prospects of digital advertising.

However, with possibilities, there come threats. Advancements in technology, digital and mobile tools create customer journeys and service features that if managed poorly, can lead to unsatisfied customers and bad customer experiences. (Edelman, 2015). Also, companies who use influencers and celebrities in their digital marketing can face backlash, if the influencer has strong political or religious stances, does something that harms their image or just is not liked by the public. Using these popular figures in digital advertising directly reflects on the brand and its personality. (Commentator, Smart Insights, 2017). Also, sometimes in digital advertising, where targeting options can be very specific, there is a risk of advertising to a target audience that is not at all interested in the product/service. Other risks include having outdated information, links

and services that do not work and spending money on advertisement that does not create results. (Kyle, 2017).

3 COMPANY X

3.1 Company X as a business

Company X is a multinational company and is a result of two merged companies from Sweden and Finland. It offers both fixed and mobile telecommunication services for consumer and business customers. Company X is present in 13 countries and has almost 20 000 employees.

Company X believes in bringing the world closer together with technology. Its strategy is to enhance the core by creating value with superior connectivity, increase customer loyalty through convergence and ensure competitive operations.

Company X's turnover was around 1,3 billion euros as of year-end 2016 for continuing operations. It has around 23 million subscriptions.

3.2 Company X's digital advertising and platforms

Company X uses multiple channels to distribute its content, both tactical and brand-oriented content. These channels include web pages, SEO, SMS, email and several social media channels.

Some of the content Company X distributes is purely tactical, which objectives lay in conversions, such as purchases, made through these ads. These ads are usually filled with pictures of the products and services the company provides along some branded visuals, given they are distributed to web pages or social media. Tactical display ads are boosted on various web sites. Also, SEO is used to ensure better visibility in search engine results pages.

Emails and text messages are usually sent out to inform customers about an important subject or to directly promote an offer. This usually happens around major sale spikes, such as Black Friday, Christmas and Valentine's Day. These are the times when the web pages are optimized to showcase these special offers as well.

Another way Company X raises awareness and operates with its brand identity in mind is with multiple affiliates. The objective of the content that comes from events and

causes where it is hosting or partnering, is to educate and entertain people, and to support the brand's core values.

It also writes articles that are published within its own web sites about topics and services that are relevant for the industry where Company X operates in. This creates perceived expertise and trust to the brand to operate in the teleoperation industry.

Social media is where the content type can change from tactical ads, to shared content articles, to competitions, to videos, and other brand-oriented contents. All boosted content is targeted to appropriate audiences and many times retargeted to those shown interest to prospecting ads.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology for my research was created in a way that it used quantitative primary research to ensure statistics and uncovered patterns to test whether or not, or to which extent digital advertising affects brand image.

Quantitative research is used to quantify attitudes, opinions and other defined variables. It is used to generalize results from a larger sample population. (DeFranzo, 2011). Quantitative data collection methods include surveys, which is the methodology the author was using in the research.

The purpose of the survey was to gain data to further understand the relationship between digital advertising and perceived brand image and the questions were carefully chosen to align them with the research objectives.

4.1 The survey, questions and target group

The survey was a study examining the observed brand image of Company X by its customers. The target group was reached via email advertising, targeting current customers aged 18 to 65. For the purpose of this research, it was allowed by Company X's Marketing Director to send the survey to Company X's customers. The survey was sent out to 10 000 Company X's current customers by random sampling in order to get a variety of profiles to answer the survey. "Random sampling is part of the sampling technique in which each sample has an equal probability of being chosen." The purpose is to get an unbiased sample of a certain population (Times, 2018). The survey was conducted this way to ensure it reaches people who already show interest in related topics to Company X by being their customer, but is a neutral representation to be able to draft conclusions.

The survey was managed in a way where the respondent was first asked to define basic demographic info about themselves, then to look back on the digital advertising they have seen and how they feel about it. The final part consisted of questions of how the respondent sees Company X as a brand.

With this approach, it was aimed to see if there is a correlation between how Company X is perceived as a brand among those who have come across Company X's digital

advertising and follow Company X to those who rarely or ever see content from Company X. The survey also discovered if the aspect of seeing certain type of content (tactical/brand-oriented) had an effect on how Company X was perceived as a brand.

4.2 Results and analysis of the survey

The survey was first drafted and tested among a sample audience (colleagues) to see if the questions were understandable, made sense and were easy to answer to.

A total of 10 000 people was contacted and 132 of them successfully filled out the survey. The survey was sectioned into three parts. The introductory part was aimed to find out the demographics of the respondents to see if certain trends repeat in similar demographic groups. The second part was about Company X's digital advertising and the third part discovered respondents attitude towards Company X as a brand. With this approach, the survey examined the correlations between digital advertising and perceived brand image.

The survey was conducted in Finnish because majority of Company X's customers are Finnish speaking. The survey is translated into English for the purpose of this research.
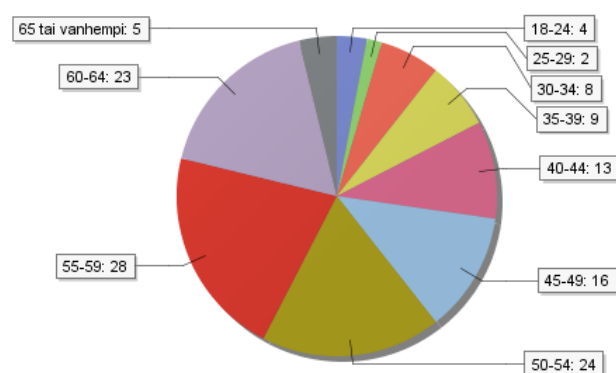
1. **What is your age?**

Figure 3

About 83% of the responses came from people over the age of 40. This might affect the results of the survey, since a higher percentage of millennials (18-24) use multiple social media channels, such as Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter on top of the most used channel, Facebook. (Smith & Adreson, 2018).

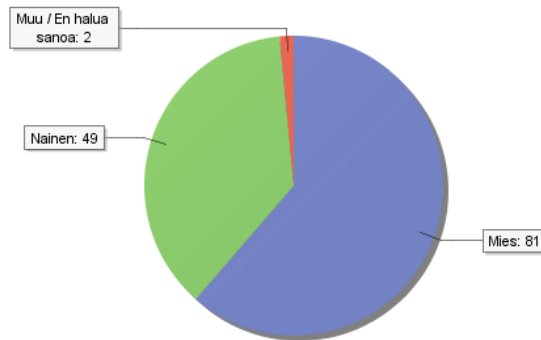## 2. What is your gender?

Figure 4

61% of the respondents were male and 37% female. Few of the respondents marked their gender as unspecified. Based on this, we cannot make the conclusion that most of Company X's followers are male, since Company X has a total of around 185 000 followers throughout its social media channels, and only 132 of current customers responded the survey. However, we might notice some demographic groups to be larger in the respondent base of the survey – males over 40.
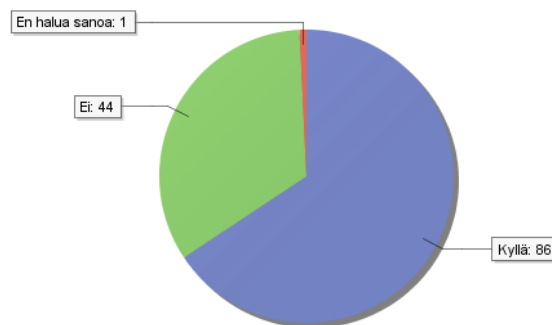
3. Do you have children?

Figure 5

Most of the respondents (65%) said that they have children. This question was put in to see if having children effects the way a brand is perceived (e.g. brand's actions and values).

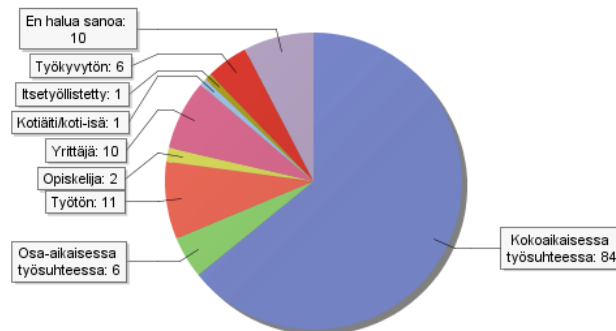**4. What is your current employment status?**

Figure 6

63% of the respondents stated that they are working full-time, few of them were unemployed or unable to work, one self-employed respondent, one homemaker and some didn't wish to specify. Only two of the respondents identified as students. This might tell us a little about the level of monthly pay of the respondents and therefore attitudes towards the brand, for example, perceiving Company X as costly versus sophisticated.

Company X's digital advertising

5. Have you come across Company X's advertising and/or other brand-oriented content online (including SMS, emails, mobile applications, web pages and social media channels)?
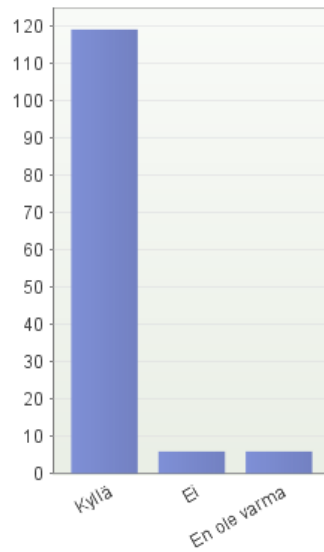
Figure 7

This question dropped 12 people from some parts of the survey by answering "No" or "I am unsure" to this question because the following questions ask more specific question about digital advertising the respondents have seen by Company X. However, 91% stated that they have indeed come across some type of digital advertising by company X.

It was explained to the survey respondents what digital advertising is, as it is written in the first paragraph of section 2.2.: What is Digital Advertising?

6. If yes, through which channels? You can choose multiple answers.

	Jos kyllä, missä kanavissa? Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.
▓▓▓ nettisivut	72
Muiden nettisivut (display-mainokset)	27
Sähköposti	104
Tekstiviesti	71
Facebook	32
Twitter	3
LinkedIn	0
Instagram	3
YouTube	10
Snapchat	0

Figure 8

The channels the respondents could choose were Web sites, Display ads on others' web sites, email, SMS, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat.

It is clear that most of the respondents had been exposed to direct marketing via emails and SMS'. Other rather obvious place included Company X's own website, but surprisingly only 54% had seen advertising in this channel. This could be due to the higher middle age of the respondents, who may prefer to do business or look at offers in actual shops, trough magazines etc. rather than online.

Display ads and Facebook had reached 20-24% of the respondents and YouTube around 8%. Surprisingly, only 2% had seen digital advertising or any brand-oriented content in Twitter and Instagram and 0% on LinkedIn and Snapchat.

It is quite understandable that no content has come across in LinkedIn because higher amount of ad campaigns are run via Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. This can also be due to the demographics of the respondents.

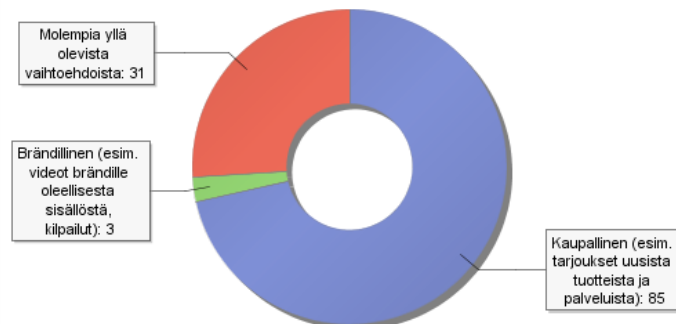**7. In general, what type of content you've seen more of?**

Figure 9

This question shows the distribution of content in digital channels. Most content that is advertised via digital channels is highly tactical, focusing on offers about services and products. 29% of the respondents had either only seen branded content or both branded and tactical contents. A high of 71% had only seen tactical ads, which might affect the way the brand is perceived.

The difference of tactical advertising and branded content was explained to the survey respondents, giving examples of both of the types of content.

8. **In general, what is the overall feel about the content you've seen? You can choose multiple answers.**
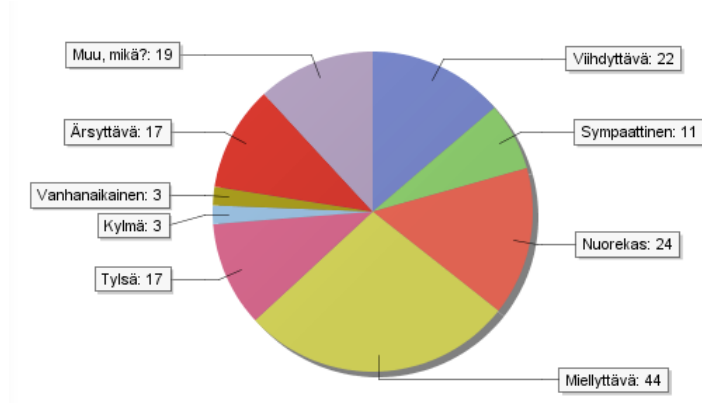

Figure 10

Sympathetic, Youthful, Pleasant, Boring, Cold, Old-fashioned, Annoying and Other were given as the options for this question. The adjectives that got the most votes were pleasant, youthful and entertaining but also boring or annoying were brought up a number of times.

Some respondents decided to leave open comments, and a comment that repeated itself a few times was "neutral, doesn't awake any emotion."

9. **Have you ever received Company X's emails or SMS'?**

Kyllä	115
Ei	0
En ole varma	4

Figure 11

87 % of the respondents stated to have received direct marketing via emails or SMS'. This is not that surprising, since it is easier to reach people directly than on the channels with a lot of competing advertising and other content.

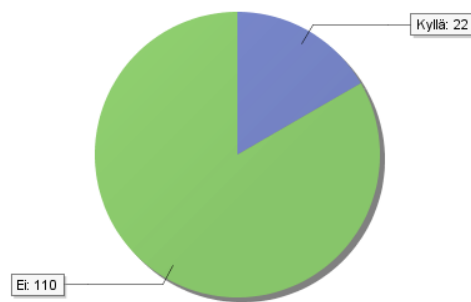10. **Do you follow company X on social media?**

Figure 12

22 responded "Yes" to this question. Which is roughly 17% of the respondents. This is a good representation from the sample audience.

11. If yes, what is the primary reason of following Company X on social media?
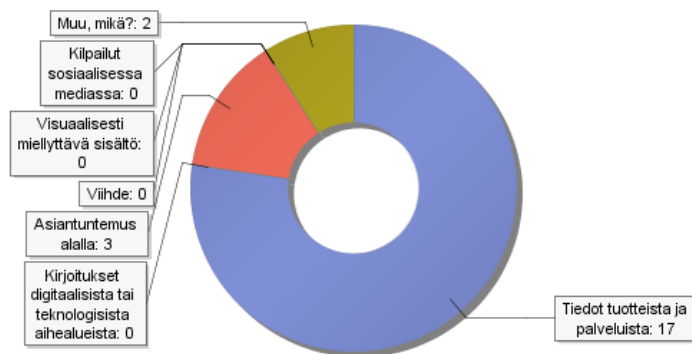

Figure 13

17% of respondents stated to follow Company X on social media, which was a significant drop from the overall number of respondents. 77% of those who do follow Company X marked "Information on products and services" as the main reason to follow Company X. Other reasons answered were "Expertise on the field" and two open comments revealed interest towards very specific content, such as information about optical fiber and the support of eSports.

Surprisingly no one (0%) answered "Competitions on social media", "Visually pleasing content" or "Entertainment" as their main reason to follow Company X on social media.

12. If you follow Company X on social media, on which channels?

Facebook	19
Twitter	6
LinkedIn	1
Instagram	1
YouTube	3
Snapchat	0

Figure 14

The ones who stated to follow Company X on social media were mostly following Company X on Facebook and Twitter.

13. Please rate Company X's visibility on the following social media platforms:

	Ei yhtään näkyvä	Alhainen näkyvyys	Kohtuullisesti näkyvä	Näkyvä	Hyvin näkyvä	En osaa sanoa	Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Facebook	0	1	8	6	6	1	22	3,64
Twitter	1	2	3	2	2	12	22	1,45
LinkedIn	2	2	1	2	0	15	22	0,77
Instagram	1	2	1	3	0	15	22	0,91
YouTube	1	2	4	2	1	12	22	1,36
Snapchat	1	1	1	2	0	17	22	0,64
Yhteensä	**6**	**10**	**18**	**17**	**9**	**72**	**132**	**1,46**

Figure 15

The visibility scale of Company X's social media channels went from "Not at all visible" all the way to "Very Visible". The highest visibility points were given to Facebook at 3,64 (out of a possible 5) which is logical comparing the following in each channel. The runner up at 1,45 was Twitter and after that YouTube. LinkedIn, Instagram and Snapchat were ranked very low on visibility.

14. How often have you come across Company X's advertising on digital channels (including SMS, emails, mobile applications, web pages and social media)?
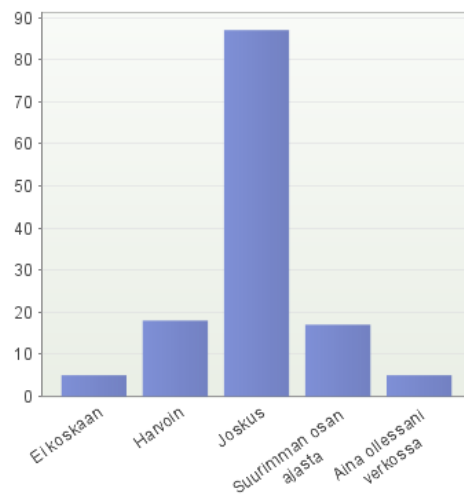
Figure 16

People stated to see Company X's content "Sometimes" the most and quite evenly on the other ends of the scale. This question included again all of the 132 respondents (so all those 110 who do not follow Company X on social media). So, as we can see, there is no clear correlation between the following of Company X on social media to the possibility to see sponsored content when online.

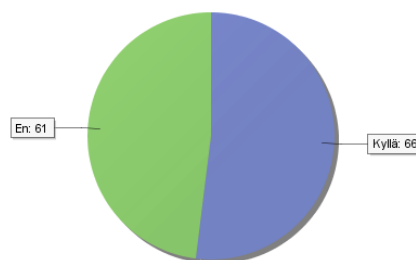15. **Do you recall any of the content you've seen by Company X on digital channels?**

Figure 17

The recall of content seen was spread out quite evenly, leaving a slightly higher percentage with a memory of the content they've seen while other stated to not remember any specific content pieces.

16. If yes, what type of content do you remember seeing? You can choose multiple answers.

	Minkä tyyppistä sisältöä muistat nähneesi? Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.
Taktista mainontaa Facebookissa, Twitterissä tai Instagramissa (kuten tarjoukset uusista laitteista tai palveluista)	29
Jaetut artikkelit Facebookissa, Twitterissä tai LinkedInissä	9
Artikkelit ████ nettisivuilla	30
Display-mainokset (bannerit) muilla nettisivuilla	22
Visuaalista ja/tai viihdyttävää sisältöä Facebookissa tai Instagramissa	4
Kilpailuja Facebookissa tai Instagramissa	8
Videoita Facebookissa, Twitterissä, Instagramissa, Linkedinissä tai YouTubessa	7
Muuta brändillistä sisältöä (joka tukee brändin arvoja)	10

Figure 18

The answers to this question were as follows: Tactical commercials on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram (such as offers on services and products); Shared articles on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn; Articles on Company Xs website; Display ads on different websites; Visual and/or entertaining content on Facebook or Instagram; Competitions on Facebook or Instagram; Videos on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn or YouTube; Other branded content (that support the brand's values).

Mostly people stated to have seen tactical commercials, articles on websites and display-ads, which all fall into either tactical ads or "expertise on the field", since Company X's articles are mostly about advancements in technology etc.

Company X as a brand

17. Please rate your opinion on the following statements:

	Täysin eri mieltä	Vähän eri mieltä	Ei samaa eikä eri mieltä	Samaa mieltä	Vahvasti samaa mieltä	Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
████ on luotettava	7	15	22	66	22	132	3,61
████ on yhteiskunnallisesti vastuullinen yrityksenä	7	7	56	53	9	132	3,38
████ toiminta tukee kestävää kehitystä	7	11	63	45	6	132	3,24
████ toiminta on eettistä	7	14	60	46	5	132	3,21
████ on toiminnoissaan läpinäkyvä	9	17	54	46	6	132	3,17
████ on alan asiantuntemuksen kannalta uskottava	9	11	22	72	18	132	3,6
Yhteensä	**46**	**75**	**277**	**328**	**66**	**792**	**3,37**

Figure 19

The respondents were asked to give opinions on the following statements: Company X is trustworthy; Company X is socially responsible as a company; Company X's

operations are sustainable; Company X's operations are ethical; Company X is transparent as a company; Company X is credible in terms of expertise on the field.

The respondents were given the possibility to agree or disagree to these statements (all the way from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The rates were spread out quite even. The highest scores at 3,61 and 3,6 were given to "Company X is trustworthy" and "Company X is credible in terms of expertise on the field."

18. According to your beliefs, please rate the following statements in terms of importance:

	Ei lainkaan tärkeää	Ei kovin tärkeää	En osaa sanoa	Tärkeää	Todella tärkeää	Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Brändin persoonallisuus	3	21	24	70	14	132	3,54
Brändin äänensävy	3	15	36	64	14	132	3,54
Brändin arvot	3	6	28	63	32	132	3,87
Brändin eettisyys	3	10	27	66	26	132	3,77
Brändin toimintojen kestävyys	3	4	24	64	37	132	3,97
Yhteensä	**15**	**56**	**139**	**327**	**123**	**660**	**3,74**

Figure 20

The statements were: Brand personality; Brand's tone of voice; Brand values; Ethicality of a brand; Sustainability of a brand. The values of a brand and sustainability of a brand were rated the highest in terms of importance. Company X works constantly to improve the sustainability of its operations, so it might be that some customers have chosen this brand for that factor. It could also just be that, overall, people are more conscious that the values and operations of a brand match their beliefs.

19. Company X's values are X, Y & Z. The brand carries out these values in all of its operations.
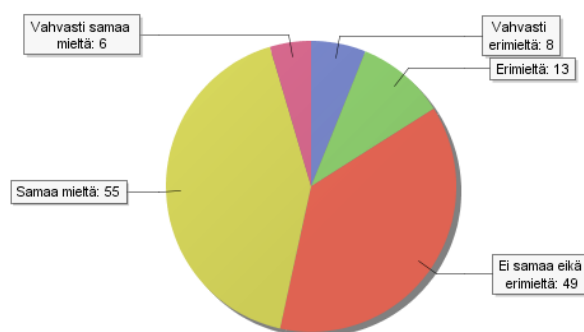
Figure 21

Around 42% of the respondents agreed with this statement and 37% said they neither agree or disagree. This is a good indicator that Company X is able to let its values show in its operations.

20. **Please rate the brand image of each of the following brands according to your beliefs. 5 is the highest score and 1 the lowest.**
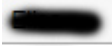
	1	2	3	4	5	Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
	5	4	18	30	75	132	4,26
	5	11	25	57	34	132	3,79
	4	9	77	31	11	132	3,27
	10	95	11	12	4	132	2,28
	108	13	1	2	8	132	1,4
Yhteensä	132	132	132	132	132	660	3

Figure 22

Company X, Company B, Company C, Company D, Company E. Company X got the highest score at 4,26 (out of 5). This might be due to the respondents being customers of Company X and therefore rating the brand image higher.

21. **Which adjectives, in your opinion, best describe Company X as a brand? Choose maximum of 3 adjectives.**
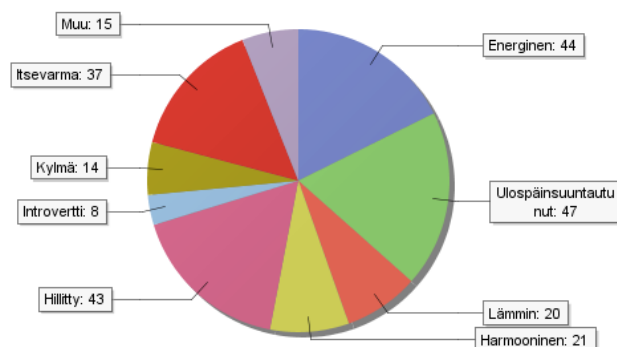

Figure 23

The adjectives given to describe Company X as a brand were Energetic, Extroverted, Warm, Affiliative, Subdued, Introverted, Cool, Assertive and Other. The most votes were given to energetic, extroverted, subdued, and assertive.

The options were inspired from the Implicit Model, giving dimension labels that have a further implicit meaning, the "gut-feeling" people get about brands. For example, according to this model by Marketing Research Forum, Extroverted dimension label would translate into active, lively, independent and free implicit meaning. (Raffel, 1996).

22. Which facets, in your opinion, best describe Company X's personality?
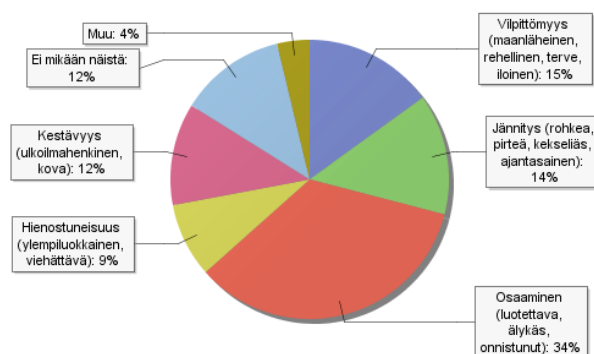

Figure 24

The facets were taken from Jennifer Aaker's framework, which describe the profile and traits of a brand in five core dimensions. The core dimensions are: Sincerity (down to earth, honest, wholesome, cheerful), Excitement (daring, spirited, imaginative, up-to-date), Competence (reliable, intelligent, successful), Sophistication (upper class, charming), Ruggedness (outdoorsy, tough). 34% or the respondents saw Company X as having competence, 15% associated it with sincerity and 14% with excitement.

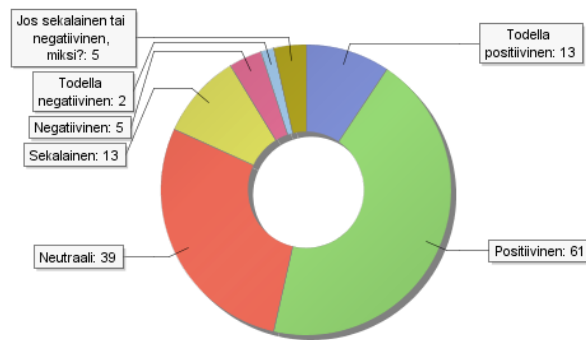**23. What is your overall impression of Company X?**

Figure 25

The overall impression of Company X was divided into Very positive, Positive, Neutral, Mixed, Negative, Very negative and, If mixed or negative, why?

Even though people had different ideas about Company X and its brand image, the overall impression seemed to be either positive or neutral towards Company X – about 76% of people seemed to rate their overall impression as positive.

The respondents open questions to "If mixed or negative, why?" had no comments about Company X's advertising but rather some other issues, which are not relevant to this research.

24. Here you can leave any comments you may have, if you please.

Any of the open comments did not deal with digital advertising or branding, other than a few notes about the brand colors and the logo.

4.3 Reliability, validity and generalization

As the survey was targeted to Company X's current customers, it reached people who already had some opinions and knowledge of the brand, making it easier to respond the questions via personal experience. However, only about 1,3% of those who received the survey actually responded to it. This aspect is important when analyzing the validity of the survey. On average, there is a 10-15% response rate for external surveys. The reason why a response rate might be low can be because of low customer loyalty, low perceived benefit (there was no price associated with the survey,

factors about the demographics and distribution. (Fryrear, 2015) This is all important to knowledge when thinking about the generalization of the responses gathered.

As the sample size is rather small, we cannot draw definite conclusions based on these responses. However, all the responses have been collected from current customers, giving the respondents some definite personal contact with the brand and therefore some importance and or relevance should be given to each of the responses.

The overall way Company X's customer seem to be seeing Company X's brand image is positive and uplifting. However, it is rather alarming that most of the content people tend to see is via email or SMS' and there is a low number of respondents interested enough in following company X on social media. Also, a lot of the channels like Snapchat, Instagram and LinkedIn are not used to their full potential.

The respondents say to mostly see tactical advertising via display ads, having lesser eyes watching the brand-oriented and relevant content, which usually lead to stronger brand identity and perceived brand image. Nevertheless, Company X is ranked high in trust, sustainability and expertise which are all good in terms of professionalism.

5 RESEARCH ANALYSIS

There was a clear correlation between people not liking Company X's digital content, or seeing it as annoying, boring, old-fashioned and indifferent to seeing Company X's brand as annoying, cold or introverted. Based on this, we might draw conclusions that having issues or disliking the content and ads you see or receive have a negative impact on overall brand image. This might, however, be due to prejudice of the brand itself in result of some other factors.

We cannot know what other factors might have affected the way consumers perceive Company X. Bad experiences with customer service or warm feelings gotten from TVC's might have affected the perceived brand image.

Those who saw Company X's digital content entertaining, pleasant and youthful, also found Company X to be described best with the adjectives energetic, extroverted and warm. Again, there is a clear correlation between positive images of digital content to perceived brand image.

About 36% of the respondents selected Company X's personality as Energetic and about 33% selected it to be subdued. This is rather interesting, since these adjectives are rather the opposites. However, this was due to the different content these respondents had seen and in which channels. For instance, 25% of the respondents who voted they had only seen tactical ads on digital channels also voted Company X's brand personality as subdued.

Based on the responses gotten, the assumption of digital advertising having an impact on brand-image is proved. However, it is still somewhat unclear what type of content actually works in leveraging brand image and what does not. Is having too many tactical commercials annoying to people? Or is it exactly what people are expecting and wishing to see, to make their everyday purchase situations easier.

The topic still needs some further research to become completely valid in terms of what type of content brands should display and through which channels. Also, a higher volume of answers is needed in order to draft conclusions about the correlations between digital advertising and perceived brand image.

6 CONCLUSION

The research was aimed to further explore the correlations between digital advertising and brand image. It effectively displayed models of branding and advertising, also giving some concrete real-life examples of successful branding through digital advertising.

Theoretical framework relied on 5 core brand dimensions by Jennifer Aaker, several case studies on digital advertising cases, online books and digital articles from experts on the field. Several factors effect on brand image and branding itself, and digital advertising is always aimed to do to fit the brand and to create added value.

The research methodology was conducted via quantitative survey method and was sent out to 10 000 Company X's current customers. 132 people successfully filled out the survey.

Based on the literature review and the survey, we can make a quick conclusion that digital advertising does indeed affect brand image and furthermore leverage businesses. Digital platforms are so unique and have fewer restrictions compared to more traditional ways of advertising, which makes it possible to try new ways of advertising all the time. Digital advertising is interactive, reactive and relevant at its best, and when consumers can feel the beliefs of a brand and added value its bringing to the table, the consumers start liking that specific brand.

Company X could invest in better content strategy throughout all the digital channels, not leaving people with monotonous content to be consumed. This would lead to possibilities of attracting new audiences.

Further research that would, for instance, show images and examples of advertisements to people and then let them vote brand image would lead to more believable answers than having people reflect on their memory or assumptions.

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