

Service branding: driving customer engagement and growth through brand image?

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Master's Thesis
Degree Programme in
Hospitality Management
2018



Abstract

19.5.2018

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Degree programme Service Management (Master's)	
Report/thesis title Service branding: driving customer engagement and growth through brand image? Case: Egencia Finland Oy	Number of pages and appendix pages 114 + 12
<p>Service branding differs from product branding in that it is largely composed of intangible elements like employees' attitude, culture and values. In the B2B market the service brand's role is highlighted due to its role as a risk reducer and thus it has a key role in building trust amongst B2B customers. The service brand has also a crucial role in creating a competitive advantage through differentiation and it is recognised as an important part of a company's success.</p> <p>This thesis is centred around the brand of the case company, Egencia Finland Oy. It focuses on B2B customers and other key stakeholder groups for the case company. The thesis aims to understand how the stakeholders view Egencia Finland Oy as a service brand and which factors make a good service brand. The main objective is to define the best way to execute a good service brand development plan and to find out what kind of process serves the service brand development plan best. The thesis forms a basis for the service brand development plan for the case company.</p> <p>An applied research process was used in the thesis study and the data was collected using quantitative methods. Systematic survey studies using pre-structured forms were conducted during 2018 to Egencia customers and other key stakeholders. Benchmark data was gained through market research and the research study was supplemented by discussions with the case company. The research findings suggest that there is a correlation between the level of awareness, market share and brand position. The organisational culture, role of management, values and vision also play a central part of the service branding and have a significant impact on the company image.</p>	
Keywords Brand, Service Brand, Brand development plan, brand awareness, brand image, brand building, business-to-business (B2B), brand equity	

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1. Introduction

The service economy has become the most dominant part of the developed countries economies and it keeps growing further. The majority of future jobs will most likely be in the service sector. From an economic perspective, services are hugely important and a source of significant economic growth and employment (Kotler & Keller 2012, 377; Skaalsvik; Olsen 2014, 1209.) in Finland. In 2017 the service industry contributed to half of Finland's economic growth. This growth applies to the total service industry but also specifically, the airline industry, business services, consultancy services, IT and technical services. In short, the private service sector is becoming more and more important for the Finnish economy. In 2016 the private service sector employed 941 000 people and is expected to further increase in 2017. (Kempas 2017.) Today's and tomorrow's companies need to be innovative, agile, able to change and renew quickly due to internationalization and global competition. (Kotler & Keller 2012, 377; Skaalsvik; Olsen 2014, 1209.)

The level of available information has increased exponentially and it has become a necessity to have specialists who know how to use it. Service Management will be more and more important in all the business sectors. (Norman 2014.) Further on, services are no longer restricted to service companies but are also provided by product companies that have become solution companies or hybrid product-service companies and are adding service elements around their products. In addition, there are also hidden services and thus, the service management is considered as being a competitive advantage for any company. (Grönroos, 2007, 1-2.)

The shift towards a service dominated society is also contributed by the increase in people's income which means that the services are used more than ever before. Further on, companies are also realising that it is more efficient to outsource some of the functionalities to specialist service providers rather than doing everything in-house. This frees up company resources to concentrate on their core business. Companies also recognise the benefits of training and consultancy in order to improve their business performance. (Linton, 2017.) One of these outsourced services is travel management. In a highly competitive service industry, like travel management, it is crucial to stand out from other brands.

1.1. Key stakeholders

There are many stakeholders and stakeholder groups that have an influence in and are influenced by, the actions of Egencia Finland Oy. Some stakeholders are key to the success and future growth of the company and thus are classed as key stakeholders. These key stakeholders are considered to have the highest impact on brand development plan in terms of failure or success. The stakeholder groups considered by the researcher to be key are:

- Customers
- Potential customers (companies where employees travel on business)
- Business partners (suppliers, travel network like FBTA)
- Employees

These stakeholders play an important part in the branding process to support Egencia's strategy for 2017 – 2020 which is strongly focused on increasing the market share and sales acceleration. There are number of ongoing projects, on a global level, to align the company better for growth. To support the global strategy this study focuses on Egencia Finland's brand image and brand awareness so that a better understanding of the company's brand equity is formed.

1.3. Brand Egencia

Egencia belongs to Expedia Inc. and is part of its brand portfolio. As the 4th largest travel management company (TMC) in the world, Egencia invests in marketing and branding. The Egencia logo has a picture of a bird on it and it is used in all the communications which makes the logo recognizable. Egencia's brand promises to lead the transformation of business travel by empowering customers around the world to drive compliance and cost savings to their bottom line, while meeting the needs of the modern business traveler. Egencia aims to be approachable and conversational in its tone and the brand expresses in its narrative that it lives and breathe business travel. Brand personality attributes are innovative, fresh, forward thinking, trusted, savvy, engaging, approachable and respectful. (Egencia brand guidelines 2013).

Most travel booking is now centralized online and Egencia has brought the leisure travel user experience into business travel. Being part of the world's biggest travel company provides Egencia a unique position in terms of resources and data such as trends and user experience that can be gained from the other Expedia brands.

1.4. Definitions of terms

Brand has numerous definitions and it is widely used in different contexts and perspectives. In this work the focus is on service branding which means that the brand is looked at from a service perspective throughout the dissertation. The service brand consists largely of intangible elements such as values, emotions, experiences and culture. The definition best suited to describe service branding and the definition chosen to apply to this thesis, is Berry's service brand definition which captures, in the researcher's opinion, the essence of service branding: "A strong service brand is essentially a promise of future satisfaction. It is a blend of what the company says the brand is, what others say, and how the company performs the service – all from the customer's point of view." (Berry 2002, 13.) Berry's service-branding model will be reviewed later in chapter 2.2.1.

The brand development planning and its processes form a key part of this thesis and is seen as continuous process where the service brand is evaluated, measured, tracked and developed in order to stay relevant. Brand development and brand building share similar elements in their processes, the biggest difference being that the brand building is something that happens every day in an employee - customer encounters, whereas brand developing requires historic perspective and strategic analyzing.

1.5. Objectives for research and research questions

During the 6 years of employment with Egencia Finland the researcher encountered situations where the lack of brand awareness was visible. Implementation of a new global clients was often challenging at a local level as they quite often were unaware of the Egencia brand. Thus, the cooperation required a lot of work to establish trust and ensuring that the client was comfortable to consolidate all their local business to Egencia Finland. It was also visible that Egencia Finland had less regular cooperation with the partners than some of the competition. The level of brand awareness and image may have also played a part in recruiting; the number of applications for Sales Manager positions with industry knowledge were quite limited even during the economic downturn.

After launching a new global strategy, Egencia set up new ambitious targets for growth and it became clear that Egencia Finland could not continue approaching business in the same way as it had been doing for the past 6 years. This was supported by the fact that the only significant growth during 2015 – 2017 came from global sales. Local sales were very minimal although the market had the potential and the company had a very competitive technical solution in place.

The lack of brand awareness, and consequently local business, was the main driving force behind the decision to delve deeper into the branding and its effects. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis was to analyse the current brand image and brand perception amongst the stakeholders in order to find a good process to develop the brand, both internally and externally. The objective was to understand how the brand image and brand awareness can affect the company's brand equity, growth and stakeholder engagement as well as to establish the current situation so that a development plan could be put in place to achieve the growth targets by 2020. The secondary object was to understand the service brand as a concept and how the service brand can create a competitive advantage through brand recognition and differentiation.

This topic combines varied content and audience, also allowing the researcher to use her expertise in business travel while developing new skills. The researcher's Master Thesis project offered a good opportunity to try and solve a problem with a real challenge and start the development work. This study will give recommendations and guidelines that could help the company increase its brand awareness and develop its brand identity in Finland, so that in return it would have a positive impact on organic sales, growth and brand equity.

Based on the objectives, the main research question of this study is:

"How should Egencia Finland Oy develop its brand?"

The research question can be divided into four sub-questions:

RQ1: What is service brand and what are the unique characteristics of it?

RQ2: How is the Egencia brand perceived externally and internally?

RQ3: How is Egencia positioned currently towards the competition?

RQ4: How is a service brand built and how is a good brand development plan created?

RQ5: How should RQ1 – RQ4 be taken into account in the Egencia brand development?



Figure 1. Research process.

2. Literature review

In this chapter, the key areas of the research are discussed in more detail. This includes service branding as a concept, differences between the service brand and a product brand, areas that have an impact on brand perception and the service brand development process. The literature is summarised at the end of the chapter discussing how it contributes to this research.

2.1. Brand

Brand is the core of this thesis so it will be discussed before service brand building, brand equity and brand development planning. After reviewing the various brand definitions, a defined brand definition, for this particular work, is then introduced. This section of the review also considers how the product brand and service brand differ. Corporate market environment is introduced due to B2B perspective and as the corporate branding strategy is most common in the service sector, an overview follows.

2.1.1. Defining brand

There are a vast number of different interpretations of a brand found in literature which are based on different perspectives. Some of the definitions are more product centric than others. For example, AMA definition leans heavily towards product branding by saying that brand is; “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers.” (AMA 2017.) De Chernatony & Segal-Horn argue that it is not the definition of the brand which distinguishes product branding from services branding, but the execution strategy. (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn 2001, 1098.) However, based on the literature it can be said that generally the above definition is not fully applicable for service brands as it bypasses important service brand qualities like the service process, employees, customers, stakeholders, values and emotions.

In services, customers and the staff delivering the service usually participate in the actual service process and therefore both parties also participate in creating the brand. For this reason, a strong brand view during the process is created in customer’s mind. (Grönroos 2007, 330.) In addition, emotions play an important part in service brand development as the functional components of the service brand become more understandable when the emotional side of the brand is developed first. (De Chernatony & Dall’Olmo Riley 1999, 186; Berry 2000, 134.) Furthermore, values also have an essential part in service brand

creation. De Chernatony and Dall’Olmo consider brands as value systems (de Chernatony & Dall’Olmo 1998, 437- 438.) which are the basis of branding. De Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2003, 1100) add to the definition by stating that “brand is a cluster of functional and emotional values which promise a particular experience”. (De Charnatony & Segal- Horn 2001, 1100.) In 2009 De Chernatony adds that “after the customer’s perceived risk is reduced and the identity-image gap is narrowed the brand will bring customer value.” (De Chernatony 2009, 105.) De Charnatony and Dall’Olmo also define that the brand can act as “the link between the set of functional and emotional values created by the company and the way these are perceived by consumers applies to both physical goods and services.” (De Charnatony & Dall’Olmo 1999, 189.) Including the values within the brand definition, especially when talking about service branding, makes sense because service branding consists largely of intangible elements. In service branding not only the brand values play a part but also company values have a key role through the corporate branding strategy.

It is clear that the brand is much more than just its visual aspects which is clearly demonstrated in the picture of an iceberg. It shows that considering brand as a logo or name is just the tip of the iceberg and to build a successful brand, it is important to understand the brand’s values, organisational culture and other underlying factors contributing to the brand. (De Chernatony 2010, 15.)

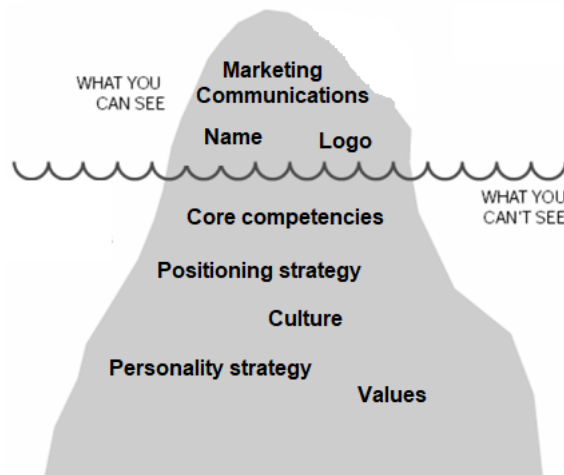


Figure 2. The brand iceberg (De Chernatony 2010, 15).

To summarise the literature, it can be said that there is not one single correct way to define the brand. With the service brand perspective which is applied to this thesis, it is clear

that taking into consideration the nature of the services, factors such as values, emotions, employees and culture seem to be central to it.

2.1.2. Characteristics of the service brand

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the brand, whether it is product or service based, consists of functional and emotional values. The difference between the product brand and the service brand is the intangible nature of service brands which makes them more difficult to control. Another specific service brand element is their perishable nature. Unlike products which can be stored, it means that the challenges service brands face is the greater difficulty to synchronize the supply and demand. Neither is there any exchange of ownership between the service and the customer. (De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo 1999, 183; Vincent 2012.)

The service brand also differs from the product brand by how it achieves heterogeneity. As the service brand is largely built by the front office staff, consistency might be difficult to achieve unlike in product brands where the consistency can be achieved with suitable process and necessary equipment. (De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo 1999, 182 -183.) Furthermore, as De Chernatony & Segal-Horn state the concept of brands as a promise is particularly applicable for service branding due to their nature of intangibility and heterogeneity. (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn 2001, 1098.) It is the intangible nature of services, that draws the biggest difference to product branding, as the service brand largely consists of service experience and image which in turn have an impact on each other. (Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri 2010,63). Therefore, as Kotler & Keller note, in services the challenge is to "tangibilize the intangible". (Kotler & Keller 2012, 380.)

Brodie in turn, brings another perspective into service branding by saying that the service brand can also be understood in a much broader context. This is due to the research focus that has been put on brand roles over the recent years, creating value added processes contributing to customer experience. From this perspective, the brand's role is much broader than traditionally thought and thus the brand has a contact surface with a broad audience such as customers, employees, company and other stakeholders. This branding perspective is referred to as the service brand but does not always mean only branding of services but also a display of service acting as a subordinate to the branding of goods or services. (Brodie 2009, 107.) Kotler & Keller also note that service is also an element in the manufacturing sector where employees are providing services such as accounting, legal advice and IT help. (Kotler & Keller, 378.)

Further on Ballantyne & Aitken challenge the whole concept of product brand and service brand, outlining that customers in fact want to buy services even if a physical product is involved. From the service dominant (S-D) perspective, customers judge goods based on their ability to service and bring value-in-use. In this theory, the service experience includes interaction with the service provider as well as usage of the actual product thus becoming service dominant and making the exchange more than just transaction bound. In the S-D perspective products become service appliances rather than just products. (Ballantyne & Aitken 2007, 363 - 364.) Ballantyne & Aitken believe that the customer experience is formed by the brand acting as a tangible reminder mark to help the customer to identify the company's promise. These values or any other additional values are then projected back to the brand by the customers and other stakeholders. (Ballantyne & Aitken 2007, 364.)

To support the S-D theory, service branding has become more and more important in today's competitive landscape and as the mere product or innovation is easy to copy it is even more important to have good service around it. In addition, to become successful, the brand needs to demonstrate how the brand is going to bring a solution to something or how it is going to benefit the customer in some way. The importance of the brand is highlighted in highly competitive markets such as business travel; products and services are not that different but the brand is. (Ahto, Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri 2016, 31-32.)

Hatch and Shulz (2003) introduced a corporate brand framework that is suitable with S-D thinking and with the service brand generally as it is the corporate brand rather than product brand that the services are associated with. It consists of three main elements which are; strategic vision which is the brand's idea, organisational culture which consist of company's values, beliefs and norms and corporate image which is the views of the outside world and stakeholders about the company. All these three elements play a part in service branding. (Hatch & Schultz 2001, 1047 – 1048.)



Figure 3. Foundation of corporate branding. (Hatch & Schultz 2001, 1047).

In accordance with the above model De Chernatony & Segal-Horn agree that unlike in product branding, the corporate culture and company image play a significant role as it acts as an influencer to staff behavior and motivation. (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn 2003, 1100.) To be successful, a company's unique culture should not only show in the service brand but also in the employees' daily life as an attitude and behavior when they have brand confluences with the client. (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn 2002, 1107.)

However, the above model by Hatch & Shultz is missing customers and employees and Brodie argues that by adapting the former models by Calonius (1986), Bitner (1995), Grönroos (1996, 2006) a broader theoretical framework of service brand can be defined. This framework takes into consideration customers', organisations' and employees' impact and perspective on the service brand. In this model all key participants communicate and contribute together towards the service brand. Communication between the organisation and customers is seen as external marketing whereas interactions between employees and customers are seen as interactive marketing. Internal marketing is created between employees and the organization by the company enabling employees to deliver the promised service through processes and resources. (Brodie 2009, 109.)



Figure 4. Types of marketing and their influence on the perceptions of the service brand. (Brodie 2009, 109.)

Finally, it can be concluded that the core of the service brand is the customer service which builds the brand equity and through day to day operations brings the brand's vision to brand reality. (Berry 2000, 135.) The customer facing staff not only receive valuable information about the clients every day, they also have a bigger impact on brand perceptions than any communication or marketing campaign can ever have. If the customer service experience fails to live up to the brand promise it will hinder the brand credibility. (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn 2003, 1100; Vincent 2012, 26.) De Chernatony & Segal-Horn

summarize this as a self-reinforcing process where employee satisfaction equals high customer service which in terms equals increased sales and through that creates brand equity.



Figure 5. The process of successful services management. (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn 2001, 1097.)

As De Chernatony quotes “Your people are as much of your product in the consumer’s mind as any other attribute of that service” (De Chernatony & Mosley 2010, 182) Thus, it can be concluded that the role of the staff is emphasized in the service brand.

2.1.3. Corporate brand

The most used branding strategy in service branding is corporate branding which means that the company is the main brand. As the company acts as a brand it is crucial that the whole organization is aligned and participates in the brand building. Internal communication and staff training is also critical to ensure that employees know what the brand stands for and thus, deliver the service which is consistent according to brand promise. (Ahto, Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri 2016, 132.) A consistent and uniformed corporate culture also contributes towards motivating employees to enact brand values so that the customer experience is consistent. (De Chernatony & Riley 2010, 181; Temporal 2010, 247, 249.) It is also important that the company’s brand is communicated in a way which tells customers what they are about, which could be otherwise difficult for the customer to identify. Customers might not even want to know about the specific services provided by the company.

Often the customers associate with the corporate brand itself not with the separate services that the company provides. If the brand image is positive it will reduce customers' perceived risk and increases willingness to buy. (De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley 1999, 181 - 184.)

As all the products or services are under the company name it means that the brand has a wide array of touch points both externally and internally. Internal touch points are employees, shareholders and partners. External touch points are parties like investors, the market place and regulators. This means that all these audiences will base their expectations on the perception they have of the corporate brand. (Gregory 2004, 4-5; Vincent 2012, 21.) Gregory also defines that "your corporate brand is the sum of everything your company says and does" (Gregory 2005, 5.) meaning that in corporate branding strategy the positive and negative events will always reflect the whole company. In other branding strategies, where the company is not connected to a brand and thus cannot be associated with it, this is not the case. The necessity of controlling the corporate brand in order to achieve corporate clarity is therefore highlighted and crucial in order to be successful. (Gregory 2005, 5.)

2.1.4. B2B market from a brand perspective

Travel Management companies have two types of customers; corporate travelers and decision makers who ultimately are the ones who make the high level buying decision. Corporate travelers are then the users who need to be kept satisfied and loyal to the contract. Thus, in this section a role and impact of the B2B market from branding perspective is reviewed.

The biggest differences between B2C market and B2B market is the higher volumes per customer, long term customer-supplier relationships, higher price pressure and lesser number of clients. The purchasing process is also more complicated and time consuming which correlates with the cost of the purchase; the costlier the purchase the longer is the buying process unless a brand is involved which can shorten the purchase time significantly. In addition, globalisation increases the importance of branding due to supply of similar products and services, complexity and increasing number of mergers and acquisitions which enable businesses to enter new markets easily. Furthermore, the key factor of the B2B market is the role of perceived risk. The buyers will not only consider the price but also the trustworthiness and reliability of the service which will affect the end user. The role of the brand is highlighted as a risk reducer in B2B market where it is classified as the

most important brand function. Brands reduce the perceived risk by providing credibility, trust, predictability and continuity. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 20-60; Kapferer 2012, 81 - 86.)

As with the service branding also in B2B market the corporate brand has a key role. Again, bearing in mind the brand's role as a risk reducer, the corporate brand creates trust of continuity and most of all the corporate reputation has clout. The reputation consists of awareness, image, innovation, commercial dynamism and ethics and plays a part in decision making. The recognition and company image are key contributors in decision making process and decides whether the brand will end up on a buyers' consideration set. Brand and the corporate reputation can, in the best situation, add an intangible dimension that will increase the brand's attractiveness and brand loyalty. In addition, in a highly complex environment, the brand can be the only true differentiator. (Kapferer 2012, 81-86.)

2.2. How to build a service brand?

Brand building plays a central part in this thesis in order to create an understanding on the components of a good service brand and thus, it forms a basis of this section of the review. As the brand identity and brand image also play a significant role in the service brand building they are then reviewed in more detail in separate section (2.2.5.) followed by a review of brand building models suited to service brand building. Brand building requires a strategic decision, long-term vision and planning, supported by top management with a 360-degree view of the brand and executed thoroughly across all managerial processes. (Mäkinen Kahri, Kahri & Ahto 2016, 50 -51; De Cernatony, Drury & Segal-Horn 2003, 7; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006,158-160.) To align with the long-term vision, brand consistency, brand clarity and brand leadership, the brand building should follow a five-step brand building process: (1) brand planning, (2) brand analysis, (3) brand strategy, (4) brand building, and (5) brand audit (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006,158-160.).

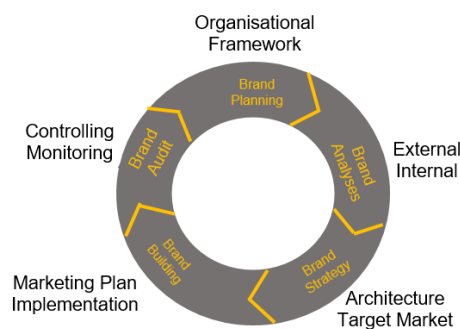


Figure 6. Brand building process (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 160).

One of the key elements within service brand building is an organisational involvement with the brand building. (De Chernatony, Drury & Segal-Horn 2003, 6; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006,158-160.) This seems to be key especially with the service brands where the successful brand building requires organisational commitment, otherwise a gap will materialise between the brand and organisation and thus an unmanaged image will materialise. (Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri 2010, 50 – 51.) Each department should have a specific role in brand building as the below table by Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri shows:

Department	Brand building role	Main focus
Executive Team	Defining the direction of the company and the goal image	Communicating the target image and strategy within the company. Branding strategy.
Marketing Management	Defining the direction of marketing and making sure marketing is efficient	Allocating marketing investment, managing brand portfolio
Marketing Function	Customer representation in the company and target image communication	Building a target image and buying interest through a marketing process.
Sales Function	Maximising commercial potential	Sales to customers with the best potential margin.
Purchase, Production, ICT, Finance, Customer service	Function specific strategy carry out	Acting according to target image chosen by company
All staff	Acting as brand ambassadors	Acting according to target image chosen by the company at work and outside work

Figure 7. (Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri 2010, 50 – 51).

The emphasis on these roles vary depending on the type of business. However, it can be said that generally with the service brands the role of customer service is highlighted. (Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri 2010, 50 -51.) This is supported further by the literature where the significance and centrality of the employees is a common denominator in the service brand building. De Chernatony, Drury & Segal-Horn state that with successful service brands HRM function has a vital role and that recruiting, training and motivating the employees is key because the essence of the service is in the interaction between the customers and employees. (De Chernatony, Drury & Segal-Horn 2003, 6; Vincent 2012, 194.)

Furthermore, the employees build the service brand both internally and externally because it is the actual service experience that the customer gets which has the most power

and so it can be said that all the other elements contributing to a service brand are in a supportive role. (Berry 2000, 136.) Thus, internalizing the brand is important and requires an ongoing process of selling the brand to employees, visualising it, making sure the brand's essence is understood and most of all involving employees in the process so that they can then in turn verbalize, visualise and sell the brand to customers. (Berry 2000, 135.) In addition, service brand building is not solely an internal activity because the staff opinion about the employer can spread to clients and other stakeholders. From an external view as Grönroos and Temporal both state, the brand is always built in the mind of a customer through service encounters and interaction with different brand contacts like information, communications, service processes and ongoing relationships between two parties. Therefore, instead of talking about brand building in his opinion we should be talking about creating brand relationships. (Grönroos 2007, 290; Temporal 2010, 243.)

There are a number of different branding and brand building models by different authors. Several models were explored for this thesis and the ones chosen for this study were chosen for their customer centric perspective and moreover to suit service branding. It is clear, based on the literature, that the service brand building differs from product centric brand building. According to Berry, the service branding differs from product branding only to a degree by the great importance of service performance. (Berry 2002, 130.) The important part of service performance is agreed by many but it is also argued that additional differences exist. De Chernatony, Drury & Segal-Horn for example state that the service branding can't be confined in a rigid process defined by steps as its nature is fluid, emergent and loose and that a good service brand building model should have a balanced internal (employees and processes) and external (customers and competitors) focus as opposed to product brand building models that have external focus. (De Chernatony, Drury & Segal-Horn 2003, 2 - 6.) The service brand building models will be reviewed in more detail in chapters 2.2.2. and 2.2.3.

2.2.1. Ingredients of a strong service brand

As discussed in section 2.2. the employees are at the center of the brand building so it is clear that their role is also an important element of a strong brand. Thus, it can be said that to build a strong service brand everything starts with the employees. Employees are the maker or the breaker of the service brands and they have a significant effect on service brand image and equity. Shared values are key factors within service branding and to be successful the values need to be embedded into the brand and company culture so that they influence staff behavior and attitude in a positive way. Management is also an

important part of a strong service brand and thus, it is the management that should reinforce the values with genuine conviction so that it leads to internal loyalty, staff commitment, brand understanding and consistency across stakeholders. Management's responsibility is also to create a culture where management commitment precedes staff commitment (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn 2001, 1114-1115; Temporal 2010, 211; Vincent 2012, 51; Vincent 2012, 193; Mosley 2014, 1, 234.) because as stated before, the company culture plays an important role.

Further on, leaders should reinforce a unique and supportive culture that attracts employees to believe in the company's brand, provide positive brand contacts and a service process that contributes to achieving intended brand identity. Moreover, if the employees understand the brand, strategic goals and also share the values, they are able to build the brand the way the company aims to. After all, employees are building the brand by interacting with the customers, stakeholders and even in their free time, so it is crucial that it happens in a way that strengthens the brand. Customer and the company values need to complement each other's so that the intended brand can emerge. (Grönroos 2007, 291; Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri, 74-75; Mosley 2014, 233.)

The principles of strong brands can be viewed through Keller's brand report card which details the characteristics that the strong brand should have. Brand performance and brand comparison can be valued in a systematic and uniformed manner and the characteristics, although being part of an audit tool can be viewed as branding principles that every strong brand should have in place. The ten characteristics are stated as phrases and need to be scored from 1- (extremely poor) to 10- (extremely good). The same process can be done to major competitors in a way that it helps the company to identify the areas that need development and give more insight of the brand overall. (Keller 2008, 674 – 675; Keller 2000.)

1. The brand produces the benefits that customers want.
2. Brand maintains its relevancy.
3. The pricing matches the perceived value of the brand.
4. Brand has an ideal position.
5. Brand is coherent in everything it does.
6. Brand portfolio and hierarchy are a good match.
7. The brand invests and coordinates all the available marketing resources to build brand equity.

8. Customers understand the brand meaning.
9. The brand is developed and maintained in the long-term with suitable support behind it.
10. Brand equity and its sources are monitored.

Companies should aim to balance all the characteristics even though it might not always be possible as Keller admits. Therefore, the company should evaluate and monitor all the characteristics regularly and if there is a change, such as new competitor in a market place, the impact on the characters should be evaluated first before making any changes. All ten characteristics have a positive impact on each other; being exceptionally good in one aspect makes it easier to be good in another. (Keller 2000). Berry's service branding model is based on customer perspective and crystallizes it saying that "brand is a blend of what the company says the brand is, what others say, and how the company performs the service". It consists of six elements which show the relationships with the main components of a service brand both with primary impact and secondary impact. This model takes into consideration how the customer experience has a direct impact on brand equity.

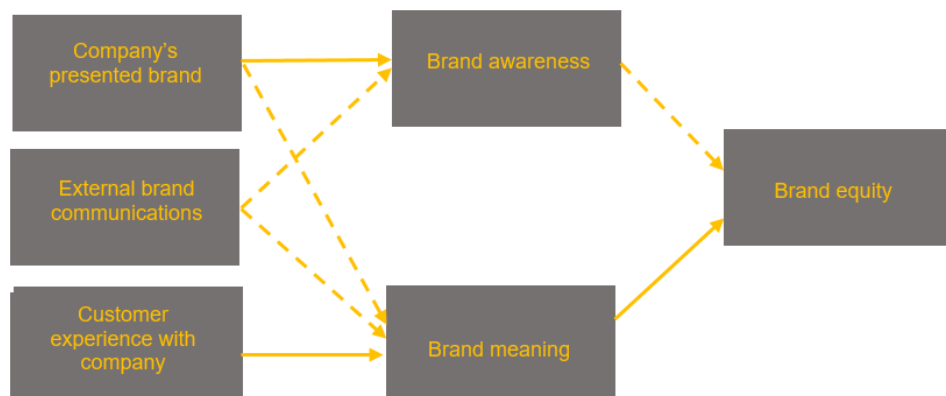


Figure 9. A service-branding model. (Berry 2002, 130.)

The presented brand is a way to customer to recognize and recall the brand and it contributes directly to brand awareness. It is also a controlled aspect of the brand which will communicate its identity and purpose through advertising, service facilities and appearance of the service providers. External communications are an uncontrolled aspect of the brand that refer to communications customers have with the company for example through word-of-mouth communication or publicity. External communication is not usually as effective as the company's controlled communication as that is focused to strengthen

the brand. Brand meaning is about the customer's primary perceptions of the brand and is closely related to brand awareness. The main difference between these two is that brand meaning can only be created after the customer has experienced the brand and thus, the communication and presented brand is most powerful only on new clients who don't have any other evidence of the brand. A presented brand can't save bad service as the reality always wins. Finally, both brand awareness and brand meaning contribute to brand equity. The biggest difference to product branding is the centrality of the service performance's role in branding. According to Berry, successful service brands use four approaches which are brand internalization, emotional connection, being different and taking ownership of the company's fate. (Berry 2002, 130 – 131; Temporal 2010, 247.).

Lastly, to ensure the growth and sustainability, a regular tracking and measurement of the brand performance and brand equity is needed. Regular tracking and measurement also ensures that adjustments are made if necessary. There are two types of information sources for the tracking and measurement; brand audit which is for in-depth information gathering and brand tracking which is suitable for short-term decision making. Customer behavior, customer perceptions, customer strengths and weaknesses can be measured by qualitative and quantitative tracking studies. Tracking studies should be issue specific and based on the challenges the brand is facing. Measuring the awareness and image is needed if the tracking applies to a specific product or service. The measuring includes recognition and recall, first on a more general basis then moving on to a more detailed view. Questions aim to understand which brand usually comes to mind in a certain situation, then measuring brand recall based on category cues, moving on to a test of recognition.

When measuring the characteristics of the brand or the brand identity the same logic applies. As the brand always has a number of associations attached to it, associations should be measured. Because the corporate image is dominant in service branding it should be tracked simultaneously or separately. Factors to include in the tracking are credibility and associations on a suitable level for the responder's likely experience with the company. Associations such as "How well is Company x managed", "how easy it is to do business with Company x", "how concerned is Company x with its customers", "how approachable is Company x", "how accessible is Company x", "how much do you like doing business with Company x?" can be used. Tracking is usually done for regular customers but it is also useful to track nonusers. Tracking loyal users against users who are loyal

to other brands, heavy users against light users, other stakeholders and especially important in the case of service brands, employees, gains more insight of their view about the brand. The frequency of tracking is usually based on frequency of purchase. Brand equity reports and charters can provide useful guidance to the business and stakeholders thus, the tracking study and audit results should be collected accordingly. (Keller 2008, 325 – 332.)

As a conclusion, for the strong service brand to occur the role of the employees is key, thus it is very important that in service branding the focus is put on organisational values and culture. Staff training is important and the company should make sure that the staff know the company strategy, understand what the brand is about and share the company values. Also, for the service brand to be strong and successful it should aim for internal and external consistency not only with customers but across all the stakeholders. Focused positioning is important without forgetting the well working systems to support the brand. Contributing service brand factors should not be looked at in isolation but seen as a continuous process where, when coordinated, they will create greater consistency and more coherently integrated service brands. Finally, regular brand performance and brand equity tracking and measuring should be in place to make sure that the brand continues to perform and bring growth.

2.2.2. Brand image and brand identity

As stated before the brand image is an important part of the service brand and a key concept for building strong brands as it crystallizes what the stakeholders think of the brand. Keller, Apéria & Georgson define the brand image as “how people think about a brand abstractly, rather than what they think it actually does.” (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 72.) Grönroos states similarly; “Brand image is the image of the goods, or service, which is formed in the customer’s mind” (Grönroos 2007, 286). Barrow & Mosley note “Brand image is also a way to anchor and differentiate the brand in the mind of a consumer” (Barrow & Mosley 2010. 62). Therefore, the image should be closely bound to the company’s mission, values, vision and business strategy and should envisage things that the company wants to be known for. It should also clearly tell the customers what is important for the company and why it differentiates from others and thus, create competitive advantage. (Mäkinen, Kahri, Kahri & Ahto 2016, 144 – 148.)

As opposed to brand image, which largely consists of customer perceptions, brand identity is strategically formed by the company or organization and acts as a strategy guide

representing what the brand wants to be about, alongside short-term measures such as sales and profits. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2002, 13; Aaker 2002, 68; Kapferer 2012, 151.) Based on the literature it can be said that there are two main views to brand identity; either it is seen as a set of brand elements – such as brand name, symbol, slogan, and packaging – or as a more complex concept with different perspectives. (Grönroos 2000, 330 – 331; Aaker 2002, 78 – 93; Keller 2008, 140 -178; Aaker 2002, 71 – 200; Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, 33 – 93; Kapferer 2012, 149 -177). One of the best-known brand identity theory is probably Aaker's brand identity model which is graphically displayed in the Appendix 1. The identity model sums up Aaker's understanding of brand equity and creates consistency in brand building.

According to Aaker in the beginning of the brand identity development, value proposition, position and a strategic brand analysis is often sought. This analysis should be focused around three different groups, the customer, the competitor and a self-analysis. A customer analysis should look at market trends, customer motivations, segments and also customer needs. The competitive analysis should look at the competitors' brand image, position and their strengths and weaknesses. Lastly, the self-analysis, should look at existing brand image, company heritage, strengths, weaknesses, links to other brands and the brand vision. The strategic brand analysis for all of the groups can be undertaken by using three different sets of data. First, the existing data can be used, then new research should be executed to fill in the gaps and finally brand identity, value proposition and brand/customer relationship should be used. (Aaker 2002, 189 – 201.)

Aaker defines 12 categories of brand image elements and 4 different perspectives that should be considered for brand identity development. The four perspectives are product, organization, person and symbol. However, no brand has to have touch points with all the categories although all of them should be considered. In addition, the brand identity structure consists of core identity, an extended identity and a brand essence. To adequately describe the brand's aspiration, the brand identity often has six to twelve dimensions associated with it. The core identity dimensions should be derived from strategy and organizational values and it should also bring focus and resonate with the customers. A differentiating factor should also be part of the core identity as it is important that the customers perceive the brand by its core identity because it is relatively stable and stays the same even though the products or markets might change. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2002, 43; Aaker 2002, 78 – 85 & 115 - 150.)

Further on, the brand identity can be heightened by having an extended identity which helps to convey what the brand stands for. The strongest brand identities provide functional and emotional benefits according to Aaker and they can also supply self-expressive benefits which should be stated in the value proposition. The value proposition should, as it is entitled, provide a value proposition to the customer, strengthen the brand to customer relationships and favorably drive the buying decision. Brand to customer relationships can also be based on other brand identities and instead of driving the buying decision will endorse the decision, providing credibility. (Aaker 2002, 85-103.)

Brand identity implementation is the final part of the brand identity planning model according to Aaker. This consists of three phases; positioning, execution and tracking. For the brand to be positioned, the brand identity and value proposition need to be communicated to target customers so that company's competitive advantages become visible. The brand identity also needs to be communicated within the organisation and to partners. Execution and therefore a brand building program will be achieved by a range of marketing activities such as advertising, public relations, direct or indirect marketing, flagship stores etc. but it is important that these excel in excellence and execution. The third phase is the tracking as it is important to know and be able to measure the effects through quantitative and qualitative measurement. (Aaker 2002, 176 – 189.)

Another way to look at brand identity is through communication which is the idea of Kapferer's brand identity prism. The brand identity prism has two main parts and six aspects: what the company sends to customer and what the customer receives which depends on internal and external factors. The bridging factors bringing internal and external factors together are relationship and culture. The aspects are divided into social aspects (physique, relationship and reflection) which create an external manifestation and into core aspects (personality, culture and self-image). All the aspects are interrelated and reflect each other. Further on, according to Kapferer the brand identity building should start with the physical aspects as it is the physique that creates a backbone of the brand identity. After establishing the physique, the brand personality is defined to make it possible to engage and be identifiable by the customers. The third aspect is the culture, which according to Kapferer is the most important part of the brand identity as it acts as the key differentiator between two similar brands.

Brand relationship in turn, is especially important with service brands due to holistic nature of the customer, brand and the business transaction. The fifth element of customer reflec-

tion is the way the customers see the brand's key users or buyers. They are important because the customers can use the brand to reinforce and build their own identity and thus, the brand creates value. The last aspect of the brand identity prism is the self-image which is the way customers are seeing themselves or want to see themselves as. (Kapferer 2012, 158 – 163.)

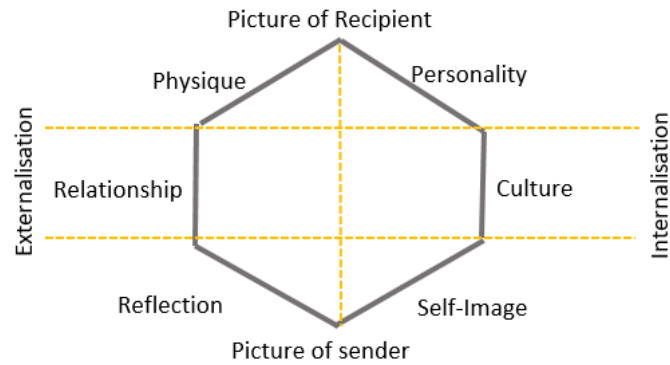


Figure 10. Brand identity prism. (Kapferer 2012, 158).

The difference between brand identity and brand image can be simplified with the below picture. In simple terms, the brand identity is how the company would like their brand to be perceived as and it is always on the sender's side. The brand image is the reality of how the customers actually perceive the brand and it is always on the receiver's side. (Kapferer 2012, 151; Cobb 2014.) The ideal situation is somewhere in between these two views:



Figure 11. Brand building vs brand image. (Cobb 2014.)

It can be concluded from the literature that the brand image is about intangible aspects of the brand rather than tangibles and that (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 72.) the brand image is not something that can be solely created by the company itself and given out to the customer. The company merely builds frames for the development in the customers

mind by offering a suitable service, product or service process and the communication that supports it. If the company manages to do this successfully the desired brand image has been achieved. To be successful the image can't conflict with the company's values, strategy and targets. (Mäkelä, Kahri & Kahri 2010. 34) Thus, the company's real performance and the communicated image need to live up to it because if they don't, as stated before, reality always wins. Moreover, if the possible problem with the image is caused by problems with service, the only way to improve image is to improve the service process. (Grönroos 2007, 296.)

2.2.3. Service brand building models

Not many service brand building specific models exist and a reason for that could be due to corporate branding strategy, which is most common with service brands. In corporate branding the new services are generally integrated into the existing corporate identity rather than rebuilding a new one. (De Chernatony, Drury & Segal-Horn 2003, 5.) According to De Chernatony et al. the traditional brand building models are not ideal to service branding and instead, due to importance of the employees as part of the service branding, the service branding models should be based on a bottom up model where the staff is integrated into the branding process. (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn 2003, 1100.)

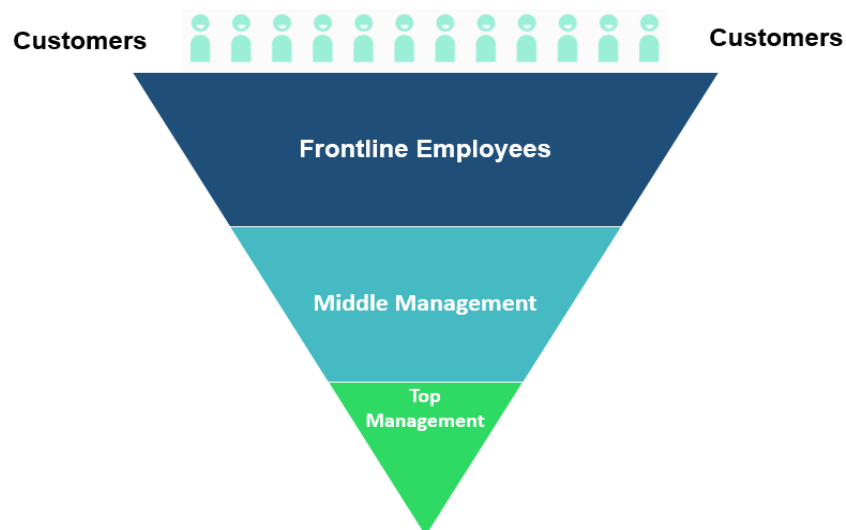


Figure 13. Inverted management pyramid (Spector & Reeves 2017, 19).

One of the few existing service brand building models is by De Chernatony which is based on staff commitment and the ability to deliver a well-defined brand essence which is enabled by company culture and a well-defined brand vision. This model also captures both

an external and internal balance which is one of the key elements of service branding. (De Chernatony, Durry & Segal-Horn 2003, 4-5.)

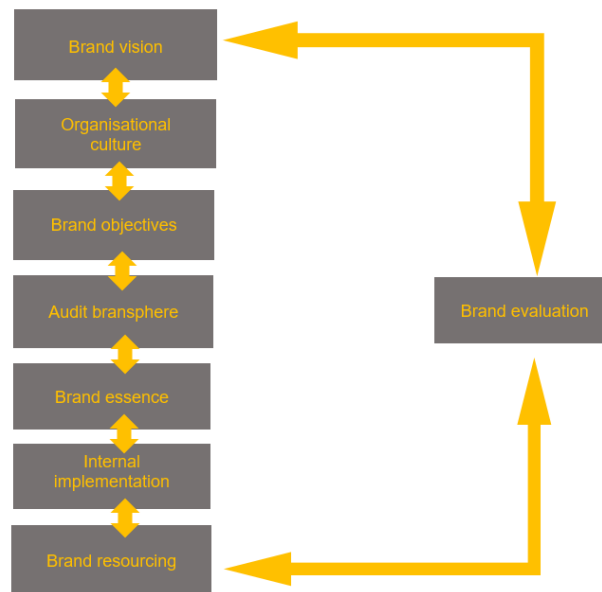


Figure 14. The process of building and sustaining brands (De Chernatony, Drury & Segal-Horn 2003, 4; De Chernatony 2010, 99 – 104.)

There are 8 elements in this model and it starts with defining where the company wants to be in the future. After that the model moves on to assess the company culture which needs to be looked at carefully as the culture can either help or hinder the brand development. Assessment should include artefacts, values, assumptions and sub cultures to make sure they won't affect the brand building. Suitable and realistic objectives should then be set so that the staff delivering the brand will know what the brand is wishing to achieve and what they are to aim for. To reach the set targets and align all the actions, a possible catalyst should be considered such as sales incentive or bonus for good customer service. If any barriers are encountered in the visioning phase, auditing a brand-sphere will help to identify where the greatest challenges are. The brandsphere has five different forces to take into consideration which are corporation, distributors, customers, competitors, corporation and macroenvironment. Auditing might lead to revisioning of the values and set goals. This stage also helps to identify how to improve success and the aim of the process is to create ideas and a clearer picture of what the brand essence might be and how to summarise the brand. The brand essence stage should use a ladder-ing process that can be expressed in a brand pyramid (Figure 15) in order to define, conceptualise and communicate the brand essence. Brand essence is the core of the brand

and communicates its uniqueness and enables delivery of the brand promise. Brand essence can be expressed visually as a brand pyramid and from the pyramid verbally as a statement which summarises the distinctive core promise.

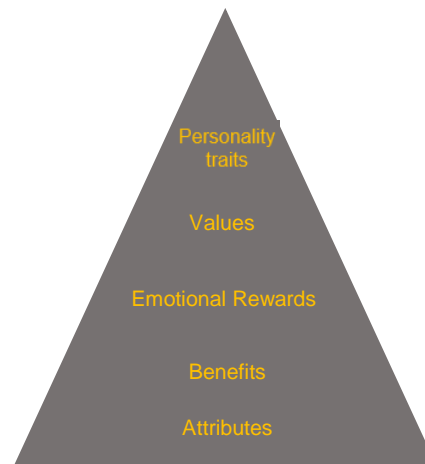


Figure 15. The elements of brand essence using the brand pyramid. (De Chernatony 2010, 259)

The result of the process should give guidance towards the ideal brand positioning and the personality that best portrays the brand vision. In the implementation stage it is important to consider an outcome which takes into consideration both functional and emotional values as well as the best process to deliver the brand promise. Organisation's core competences need to be defined which should also include from the employee aspect, factors such as values, relationships between employees and stakeholders and the level of empowerment. The brand resourcing stage brings a more detailed view into how to implement the brand essence. Things to consider at this stage are the name of the brand, quality and relationship creation with the stakeholders. Finally, the brand performance need to be monitored on regular basis against key criteria. The results of auditing will act as a guide about future actions thus the model is evolving and can also be used to monitor existing brands. The assessment against each aspects of the model should be done on a yearly basis so that the brand relevancy of an existing brand can be ensured. (De Chernatony 2010, 99 – 104, 213 – 215, 257 - 259.)

Another brand building model was developed by De Chernatony, Drury & Segal-Horn. It is presented as a cogwheel and it was developed specifically for service branding which derives from existing models but is solely focusing on service brand building and thus has fine tuning and emphasis from the service brand perspective. The model is not linear because the steps are not in chronological order and the idea of it is that the companies can

pick and choose different steps from it. (De Chernatony, Drury & Segal-Horn 2003, 10; De Chernatony & McDonald).



Figure 17. The development process of a successful services brand (De Chernatony, Drury & Segal-Horn 2003, 9).

The cogwheel model consists of 9 different elements which are:

- **Identify external opportunities** by extensive research (competitors, supply and demand, cost-benefit analysis, political and economic environment, current segmentation within the sector and available resources) using both quantitative and qualitative methods.
- **Identify internal capabilities** by identifying the company's key competences facilitated by benchmarking.
- **Define the brand** by developing a brand concept either involving defined terms of values and consumer beliefs or using more creative judgement, visual representations, language and symbolic representations. Identifying brand essence using few words might help with the task.
- **Consider feasibility of brand** taking into consideration the company's financial resources and practical considerations such as the company's existing track record, scale and timing.
- **Ensure internal commitment** so that genuine belief into the brand can be established and the brand will be communicated to customers more effectively. Closely linked to company culture. A strong inclusive culture creates the most likely internal commitment.
- **Positioning and differentiation** will help the service brand to gain a competitive advantage and appear unique to the customer.

- **Structure organizational resources** which in the service brand's case most of time is employees, thus the focus should be in recruiting right people (skills, personality, abilities) and effective training.
- **Market testing** will require a pilot phase so that the brand can be perfected. With the service brand's nature being public, the pilot will need to be out in the open.
- **Operationalization** of communications and delivery often merge in a service context which means that a message needs to be unified, consistent and strong across all media and employees.

(De Chernatony & McDonald 217 – 219.)

2.2.4. Keller's CBBE model and brand building

Finally, the Customer based brand equity (CBBE) acts as a roadmap and a guide for brand building, helping companies to assess the brand building process. The CBBE model establishes a number of steps for building a strong brand which are: 1) Establish the proper brand identity 2) Create the appropriate brand meaning 3) Elicit positive brand responses 4) Forge strong brand relationships with customers. Each step needs to be completed successfully in order to continue to the next level because they each contribute to one and another. The brand meaning cannot be established if there is no identity, there can be no responses without the right meaning and it is impossible to establish relationships without evoking proper responses. (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 103; Keller 2008.) Keller also defines a set of questions and corresponding brand steps to help with the brand building. These invariably refer to questions that customers are bound to ask, directly or indirectly, when encountering brands:

- Who are you? (brand identity)
- What are you? (brand meaning)
- What about you? What do I think or feel about you? (brand responses)
- What about you and me? What kind of association and how much connection would I like to have with you? (brand relationships)

(Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 65.)

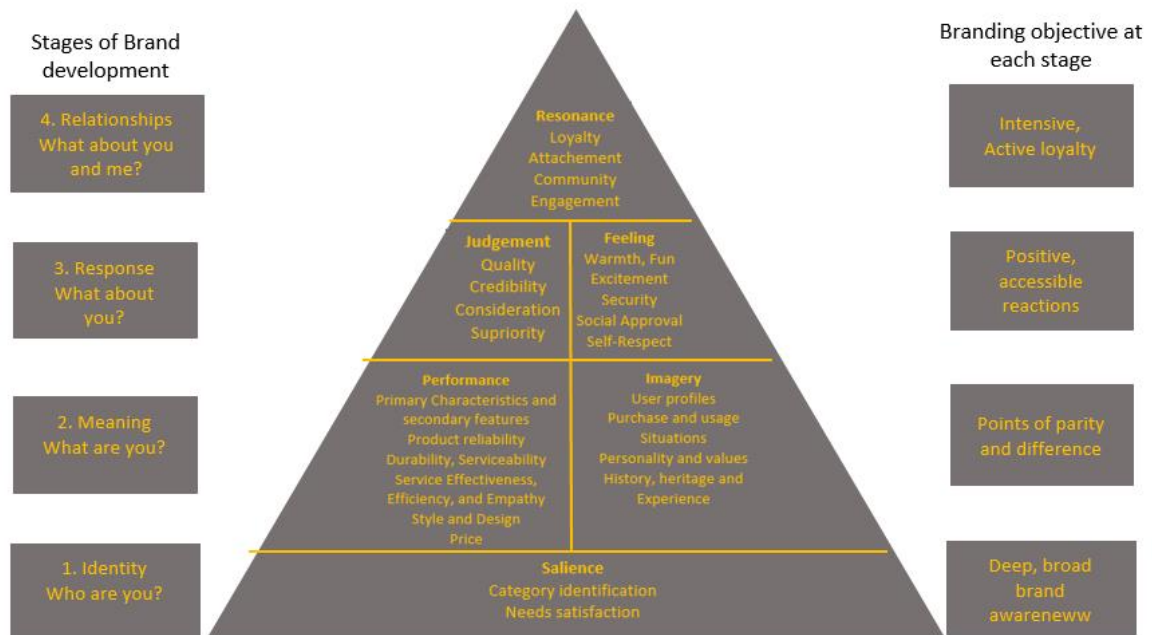


Figure 18. CBBE brand equity Pyramid (Keller 2008, 60 – 61).

The CBBE has steps that correspond with the brand building blocks and their sub-dimensions. (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 54.) The idea of the pyramid is that without reaching the top, no significant brand equity is created. Building the brand from the left side of the pyramid represent a rational route whereas the right-hand side of the pyramid represents emotional route. According to Keller, generally for the brand to be strong both sides are needed. The foundation for successful brand development is established by its six brand building blocks – brand salience, brand performance, brand imagery, brand judgements, brand feelings and brand resonance. (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 103; Keller 2008, 60-61.)

Brand awareness is measured by brand salience which is needed in order to gain the right brand identity. Questions like how often, how easily and to what extent can be used to measure brand awareness by brand salience. Brand awareness in turn tells how well customers can recall and recognize the brand. By building the brand awareness it is easier for the customers to identify the service category where the brand operates in, what services it provides and what needs it will satisfy. Further on, the depth of the awareness is measured by identifying how easily the brand comes to mind and the breadth of the brand awareness in turn, is measured by identifying when and in what range the brand comes to mind when purchasing or using the brand. Brand awareness is used as a meter to measure the easiness and likeliness of the brand coming to customers mind. The breadth and

the depth of brand awareness are equally important as the brand needs to be in the front of the mind in the right situation and at the right time. (Keller 2008, 61; Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 66-67.)

In the CBBE model the product or service is the core of the brand equity and delivering a product or service that satisfies customers' needs is a requirement for successful marketing. Thus, the brand performance measures how well the product or service meets customers functional, aesthetic and economic needs and how well it rates in an objective quality assurance. The brand performance is often based on features and benefits. Keller lists five important types:

- Additional and primary features
- Product characteristics such as durability
- Service quality such as efficiency and empathy
- Appearance
- Price

Customers can rate the primary features based on the performance (low, medium, high). Some of the features can be customised whereas others are fundamental for the product or service. In addition, customers rate the performance through reliability (consistency of performance), durability (expected economic life of a product), serviceability (ease of repair), service effectiveness (service requirement satisfaction), service efficiency (speed and responsiveness of customer service) and service empathy (how interested the service provider is in customer). (Keller 2008, 64-65.)

Customers can also have associations apart from functional abilities such as size, shape, materials and colour and therefore performance might be affected by sensory aspects like how a product looks, feels, sounds and smells. Another important association that the customer might have is one of price. Customers will rate the brand based on its pricing policy for which they will form an opinion whether the product or brand is relatively expensive compared to other brands in the same market. They might also organise the brands in terms of pricing. (Keller 2008, 64 – 65.)

Brand imagery is the second element of the brand meaning and is measured by customers thinking about the brand on an abstract level. Customers form their opinion of the brand through experiences or indirectly through some other source of information like marketing and word of mouth. Imagery is an intangible element of the brand which is based on customers experiences or some other information like word of mouth. Keller lists

four main intangibles related to brand: “User profiles, purchase and usage situations, personality and values, history, heritage and experiences.” (Keller 2008, 65 – 67.)

Brand imagery is closely related to brand personality which can be formed through advertising. (Keller 2008, 65 – 67.) Brand personality is an important part of branding which De Chernatony defines as “set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands” (De Chernatony 2010, 47). Thus, it can be said that it is important for the brand to have a personality as it helps to identify with the brands and create a relationship with them. Some brands can even be defined by their owner or a well-known person to make identifying with the brand easier. Turkish Airlines for example uses Kevin Costner in their advertising, Norwegian uses pictures of famous Nordic people on their aircrafts and Virgin is known for its personality as enterprising, daring and fun – qualities which are linked to Richard Branson. (Barrow & Moseley 2010, 61; Vincent 2012, 60.)

In short, the brand personality allows the customers to associate the brand with personality characteristics that enables the use of descriptive functions and more contextual information. (Keller et al. 2012, 73.) Keller, Apéria & Georgson define that brand personality has five dimensions; sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. (Keller et al. 2012, 73.)



Figure 19. Aaker’s brand personality measures in the USA as quoted by Keller. (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 468.)

Further on, the most simple and direct way to measure brand personality is to make open-ended questions of a brand like “if the brand was a person; What would it be like? What would it do? Where would it live? What would it wear? Who would it talk to if it went to a party and what would it talk about?” (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 465.) However,

brand imagery and brand personality are not always unified which is the case when performance-related functions are significant to customer decisions like in food products. The discrepancies might also happen without intent like when the company aims the personality to be something and the actual imagery is perceived differently. User imagery and brand personality are more likely to link if the brand personality is an important part of the buying decision, for example when buying cars and cosmetics. Customers tend to buy products and a service brand which is closely related to their own persona. (Keller 2008, 65 – 67.)

Brand judgments are opinions and evaluations of the brand that customers make based on different associations related to brand performance and imagery. Customers judge whether the company is good at doing what it is doing and whether it is likeable and interested in its customers. According to Keller brand quality (perceived quality), brand credibility (how credible is the company behind the brand), brand consideration (brand relevancy) and brand superiority (degree of superiority over other brands) are the most important judgements.

Customers emotional reactions and responses to the brand are brand feelings. The feelings can be varied from strong to mild and from positive to negative and might also touch the social side of the customer. In addition, brand feelings can have an impact on the customer behaviour if the associations with the brand are favourable. Keller lists six types of brand feelings which are warmth, fun, excitement, security, social approval and self-respect. Feelings can be divided into two categories; either they are private and durable (warmth, fun, excitement) and increase the level of intensity or private and enduring (security, social approval, self-respect) and they increase the level of gravity. (Keller 2008, 68 – 71.)

Brand resonance is placed on top of the pyramid and thus, is the final step of the CBBE model. Brand resonance tells how in depth and how well the customer recognises the brand and what kind of relationship he has with it. Brand resonance can be measured with attributes like repeat purchase rate and the level of activity in seeking information about the brand, events, and other loyal customers. Brand resonance can be divided into four categories: 1) behavioural loyalty (how often customers purchase and how much) 2) attitudinal attachment (deep attitudinal attachment which makes the client more loyal and not likely to switch brand easily) 3) sense of community (kinship towards other users which creates positive brand attitudes and intentions) 4) active engagement (requires strong attitudinal attachment or social identity and is the strongest dimension of brand loyalty).

2.3. What is brand equity?

Without brand equity the brand can't be successful and it is therefore one of the key components of the brand. There exists a plethora of brand equity definitions for different purposes and not one common viewpoint seems to exist. (Keller et al. 2012, 42.) There are two ways to look at the brand equity; customer perspective which focuses on customer and a financial perspective which focuses on the financial value of the brand. (Kapferer 2012, 5 – 15.) The customer based view is defined by Strandvik & Heinonen as “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing brand.” (Strandvik & Heinonen 2013, 503) Grönroos on the other hand agrees that the brand brings the company value but it is actually the value that the company brings to the customer that matters most because that is the basis in creating value back to company. (Grönroos 2007, 290.)

The financial view of the brand is defined by De Chernatony & McDonald as representing various factors which increase the brand value on the company's balance sheet. (De Chernatony & McDonald 2005, 237.) Thus, the brand equity can be associated with the future incomes provided by customers through generating the product or service. Previously developed brand assets enable the brand to exploit its strengths and generate value in the future of the brand. It can be said that the brand equity connects the past to the future. Thus, Kapferer identifies three levels of brand equity that have conditional consequences which are displayed in Figure 20. (Kapferer 2012, 13 – 15.)

Brand assets -> Past	Brand Strength -> Present	Brand value (financial equity) Future
Brand awareness	Market share	Net discounted cashflow attributable to the brand after paying the cost of capital invested to produce and run the business and cost of marketing
Brand reputation	Market leadership	
Brand personality	Market penetration	
Brand deep values	Share of requirements	
Brand imagery	Growth rate	
Brand preferences	Loyalty rate	
Patents and rights	Price premium	

Figure 20. From awareness to financial value (Kapferer 2012, 14.)

Brand equity value can be captured in below customer statements:

1. Decreased threshold to try a new product or service
2. Faster sales process
3. Increased purchase probability of a service or product
4. Larger purchasing volume
5. A more probable opportunity to charge price premium
6. Price increase not likely to endanger the customer relationship
7. Less interest in competitors' offering

(Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006,69.)

Further on, positive brand equity is an advantage that is created by the brand through brand recognition and brand awareness. It is easier for the customers to trust strong brands, especially when it comes to invisible services. A strong brand also helps customers to visualize more easily what they are buying. (Berry 2000, 136.) A company with a strong service brand needs to have a valuable market offer in addition to differing from the competing brand. It needs to communicate clearly what the company is about. According to Berry, a way for a service company to strengthen its brand equity is through focusing on underserved market needs and to perform better than its competitors at the same time providing value for the customers. (Berry 2000, 132.)

As a conclusion, no matter what perspective or definition is in question there seems to be a common agreement that the brand equity offers a significant market advantage and value which is due to the brand. (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 42.)

2.3.1. Aaker's brand equity model complemented with other theories

This section of the review introduces Aaker's brand equity model as a basis complemented by other authors to bring more holistic and service based view into equation. Aaker & Joachimsthaler define the brand equity as "the brands assets or liabilities linked to a brand's name and symbol that add or subtract from or to a product or service." (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, 17.) Aaker's brand equity model which is graphically displayed in the Appendix 2. has four main dimensions which are: Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality, Brand associations and Brand loyalty. These deliver a positive or negative value to stakeholders and the company. All the dimensions can be seen as brand assets bringing value to the brand. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, 17.) Brand Awareness is an important dimension of brand equity and it has an influence on perceptions. Brand awareness is a key element of this thesis so it will be discussed further in the chapter 4.3.2.

Perceived Quality which is the third element of brand equity means, according to Keller, Apéria & Georgson "customers' perceptions of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service relative to another and with respect to its intended purpose." (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 208.) A purchasing decision and brand loyalty can be directly influenced by perceived quality. Thus, a high perception of quality can help as a positioning criterion and make it acceptable to pay a premium price for the product or service and therefore increase profitability. (Aaker 1991, 85 – 100; Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, 17; De Chernatony & McDonald 2005, 445; Chekitan 2012, 83 - 84.) The perceived quality can be measured by ROI, stock return and against relative competitors determined by customers. Measures such as are average, above average, below average, consistent quality and inconsistent quality can be used. In addition, perceived quality can also be measured by attaching value to it; Do you think Finnair represents good value for money? Why did you book through Trivago rather than through some other channel? Perceived quality is proved to increase profitability. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, 17; De Chernatony & McDonald 2005, 445.) It is more and more difficult to achieve a satisfactory level of perceived quality as customer's have bigger expectations due to ever faster product improvements. (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 209.)

Brand association connects the customer to the brand through things like product attributes, brand personality, organisational associations, user imagery and symbols. Brand management involves deciding which connections to develop and creating programs to build the association. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, 17.)

Brand loyalty is the last stage of the brand equity evolution and it measures how attached the customer is to a certain brand. The degree of a client's commitment shows directly in the company's balance sheet because a committed customer provides a steady income for the company and guarantees future income. Loyal customers are also not likely to switch from brand in the case of a price increase and in the case of a price decrease, they are more likely to buy more than before. (Keller et al. 2012, 91.) According to Kotler & Keller there are four loyalty groups:

- 1) Hard-core loyals; customers who buy only one brand at the time
- 2) Split loyals; customers who are loyal to two or three brands
- 3) Shifting loyals; customers who shift loyalty from one brand to another
- 4) Switchers; Customers who are not loyal to any brand

To gain insight, the company should analyse the different levels of loyalty as it can help to identify the brand's strengths and weaknesses. (Kotler & Keller 2012, 250.) Kapferer also recognizes the importance of loyalty in connection with the brand. To exist, a strong brand needs to have a strong base of loyal customers. Furthermore, the loyal customers decrease the risk of the company's future income and they spend more than occasional customers. Their spending could even increase through loyalty programs and they are five times less costly than prospect/non-customers. (Kapferer, 2012, 234 – 235.)

De Chernatony & McDonald add that a committed customer is also likely to transfer their positive association to possible brand extensions thus making it possible for the company to grow its equity by maintaining the customers' loyalty. Brand loyalty is also a culmination of different factors such as the brand image, perceived quality and value, brand trust and customers commitment. (De Chernatony & McDonald 2005, 439.) Barrow & Moseley also look at brand loyalty as a competitive advantage, as the brand loyalty is costly and difficult for the competitor to overcome despite of the cause of loyalty. (Barrow & Moseley 2010, 20.) Furthermore, a loyal customer is likely to become a brand ambassador and talk about the brand positively and possibly influence others to buy. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2002, 264.)

According to Aaker, price premium is the indicator of brand loyalty and the best measurement for brand equity. (Aaker 1996, 319 – 323.) A repeat purchase is often used as a measure of brand loyalty. This is not sufficient a measure for brand loyalty as the repeat buy does not always mean loyalty. Customers might buy regularly a certain brand without having any deeper meaning behind it thus they might easily switch to another brand if there are enough compelling reasons for it. However, a repeat buy is part of the brand loyalty even if it is not a sufficient condition for customer's brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is one of the "by-products" of a company's brand equity and positive brand image. (Keller, Apé-ria & Georgson 2012, 91.)

There are five loyalty segments that help a company to increase its customer insight for decision making and strategic planning:

1. Noncustomers
2. Price switchers
3. Passively loyal customers
4. Fence sitters

5. Committed customers

The fence sitters, committed customers and the customers with no brand preference are the customer groups whose loyalty should be enhanced. Brand loyalty programs, perceived brand quality, brand awareness and a well-managed brand identity could leverage brand loyalty within these groups. (Aaker 1996, 22-23.)

2.3.3. Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is the starting point in brand building and a key ingredient in brand power. Without brand awareness there is no brand power. Brand awareness is also a key element in Aaker's brand equity model as discussed in chapter 2.3.1. and also, a key element to this thesis. The customer's ability to recall or recognise the brand is the key factor in the buying process as the actual buying can't happen unless the customer is first aware of the brand. Brand awareness is defined by Keller, Apéria & Georgson as the "customers' ability to recall and recognise the brand, as reflected by their ability to identify the brand." (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 66 – 67.) Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri state that "The first step in the customer relationship is when the company reaches the customer's consciousness as a potential provider of the product or service" (Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri 2010, 47.) when Aaker in turn says that "Awareness refers to the strength of a brand's presence in the consumer's mind" (Aaker 2002, 10).

There are different types of brand awareness and the category to pursue depends on the resources and the industry. Kapferer divides the awareness into three categories;

- Top of mind (What brand comes to your mind first?)
- Spontaneous (What are all the brands that come to your mind?)
- Aided or prompted (Here is the list of brands. Which ones do you recognise, even if only by name?)

Low budget airlines like EasyJet and Ryanair pursue spontaneous awareness due to a business model where they only operate through the Internet and people make purchase decisions by the first click first serve basis. Spontaneous awareness is similarly important in more corporate worlds where the bid winner is more likely to be a company that comes to a decisions maker's mind first rather than the company that is not recognised. (Kepferer 2012, 188.)

The way the customer remembers the brand can be used to measure the brand awareness. The attributes are defined by Aaker as follows: 1) Brand recognition (past exposure and familiarity), 2) brand recall (first brand that comes to mind unaided in its product class) 3) brand name dominance (highest level of awareness) (Aaker 1996, 10-16) Brand awareness varies whether the brand is recognized or recalled, the latter meaning the client has a deeper level of brand awareness. (Keller et al. 2012, 67 - 68.) If the brand comes to the consumers mind when thinking about a particular category, it has recall. Recall is crucial when making a buying decision as the recognition does not guarantee that the brand will end up in the customers' consideration group. The relative power of recall versus recognition can be measured in the Graveyard model where the graveyard area represents the market saturated with highly recognizable brands with low recall. This means that the brands are recognizable but they do not enter the customers' mind when making a purchase decision. Being in the graveyard area also means reduced market share and sales. (Aaker 2002, 11-15.)

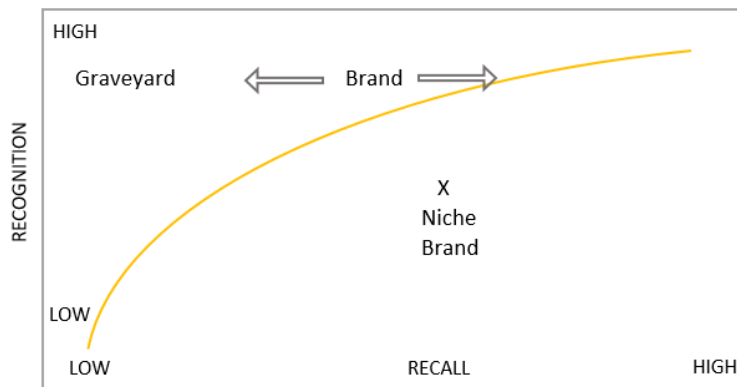


Figure 21. The Graveyard Model (Aaker 2002, 11-15).

Virgin Atlantic can be used as an example of a very good brand recall even though it is a very small airline. Despite its size, it has succeeded in Britain extremely well over the years and bears an image and reputation of a bigger airline than it is. Already back in 1994 90% of British consumers were familiar with the brand. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2002, 36.)

2.3.4. Keller's customer based brand equity model

The foundation of the CBBE model, displayed in Appendix 3, is the customer's feelings, learnings and things they have seen and learned based on the experience with the brand. (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 53 – 54.) Thus, the model aims to understand customer needs in order to build above attributes around the brand. Keller, Apéria & Georgson also

state that “the power of a brand lies in what resides in the minds of customers.” (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 54.) If the brand equity is positive customers are more likely to tolerate price increases, lesser marketing activities and brand extensions. The brand equity can also be negative which means that clients would react more positively to an unnamed version of the same product being advertised by the company of the brand. (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 54.)

CBBE model defines 6 blocks to build a strong brand. The aim is to reach the top of the pyramid which is only possible if the right blocks are in use. (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 56.) The first block is salience which is also a measure of brand awareness. For the brand to have a high salience it needs to have a high-level of awareness first. For deep awareness, easy brand recall is required. The customer based brand equity can't occur without it and thus, the customers need to have a favorable, unique and strong association with the brand which is also needed in the first stage of brand building. From a brand strategy viewpoint, it is also important that a differentiator can be provided to create brand equity. (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 59 – 60; Keller 2008, 59-64.)

Performance and imagery are the building blocks that correspond to the second stage of brand equity. During the second stage, a brand meaning is defined as well as intangible and tangible associations are established. Further on, points of parity and points of difference are also created during this stage. Brand performance is measured by intangible components like customer satisfaction based on customer needs. Reliability, durability, serviceability, service efficiency, effectiveness, empathy, style and price are more tangible components linked to brand performance. Intangible components are related to brand imagery and can be for example, associations linked to users and relate to things like usage and purchase situations, brand personality traits, brand value, brand history experiences and events. (Keller 2008, 65 - 67.)

Brand judgements and brand feelings are the building blocks that correspond to the third stage of the brand development and the object at this stage is to create positive responses to brand identification and meaning. Brand judgements are customer's opinions and evaluations of the brand and they can be things like brand credibility, brand superiority, brand quality and overall evaluations of worthiness of the brand reaching the consideration set at all. Brand feelings consist of emotions and feelings created by the brand and they can be things like security, fun, excitement, self-respect, and social approval. (Keller 2008, 67 – 71.)

The last and most valuable building block according to Keller is brand resonance because it reflects holistic customer-brand relationship. The aim at this final stage is to turn brand responses into an active and loyal relationship between the customer and the brand. Brand resonance can be divided into two categories which are intensity, which refers to the intensity of the customer's attachment and activity, which refers to the customer's behavioral loyalty and active engagement. (Keller 2008, 72 -74.)

In general, it can be said that varied opinions of the brand need to exist otherwise the brand can be classified as a commodity and the only differentiator and main factor with the competition is the price. The easiest way to understand customer based brand equity is through product sampling and product comparison like blind tests as these illustrate what the customer based brand equity is about. When two parties sample a product where the other group can see the brand and the other can't, the results differentiate even though the same product is in question. This is due to customers perception based on past experiences and the knowledge of the brand. (Keller et al. 2012, 54-55.)

2.3.5. Brands increasing value and bringing growth

The strongest asset to any company is its brand. There are two types of assets that bring income; tangibles and intangibles. The brand belongs to intangibles. Capitalizing the brand helps to reach growth targets quicker and with bigger profit margins and (Scott 2000, 3.) if the brand is well managed it will also increase the stakeholder value. Further on, out of the average businesses' value, 80% comes from intangibles. For example, Google is worth \$390 billion out of which most comes from intangible assets. (Juetten 2014,1.) Further on according to Sherman, 88% of the assets of Fortune 500 companies come from intangibles, of which the brand plays a key role (Sherman 2014).

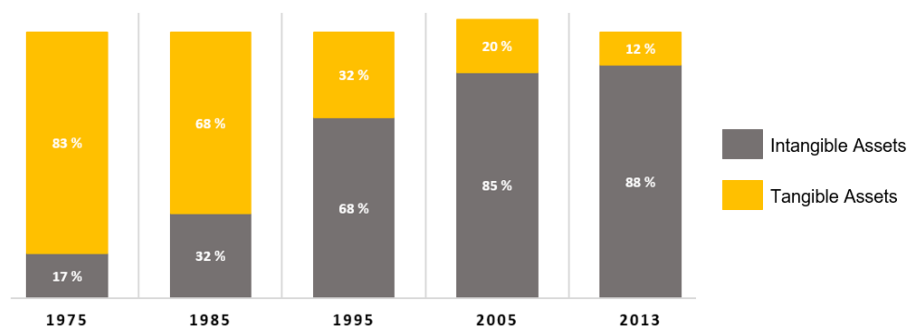


Figure 23. Increase of intangible assets over the years (Sherman 2014).

Customers are likely to become more loyal if the brand consistently delivers satisfaction which in turn helps the company to build a good reputation which will have a positive impact on staff, buyers and users. In a study by Chernatony, 79% of investors stated that the brand and marketing messages influenced their opinion and 51% were also influenced by company's corporate culture. (Chernatony 2010, 3-5.) In a very competitive market the role of the brand becomes exceptionally crucial. The brand helps to differentiate the brand from other companies especially in business areas such as business travel where the offer does not differ greatly from one company to another. Brand helps to build loyalty and a long-lasting customer relationship. (Ahto, Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri 2016, 31- 32.) Strong brands also gain a greater market share than weaker brands (De Chernatony & McDonald 2003,59).

Furthermore, a need to be profitable is merely a hygiene factor, a condition for existence. To be successful, the brand needs to be relevant, genuine, react to the recipient's world, rely on feelings and bring a solution. Commercialisation and brand management are, from the management's standpoint, the key to increasing the company's value. This needs to be in balance with operational efficiency; without operational efficiency the company cannot invest in growth and without growth there is nothing to streamline. The focus needs to be on the customer experience that covers the customer's entire journey and the innovations should be based on real customer needs that are implemented cost effectively. (Ahto et al. 2016, 19-20.)

Further on, developing a brand increases the company's value as it crystallises the company's strategy. The company's value can be measured by calculating the difference between what is on the company's balance sheet and the market value of the company. Goodwill consist of intangible values such as future launches, customer relationships, brand and tangible values such as technology, licenses, patents, production and logistics. However, the company's real value is only measured when it is sold and the real-time measurement of brand value is not possible. The brand's value should still be calculated regularly, for example every second year, as that enables the company to value the work performance. One way to measure this is the Interband model which is based on brand revenue generated by the brand and is depicted by the brand's strength factor which is influenced by the brand market position and different markets, brand security and market trends. It is also important to understand the factors that influence brand value development so that they can be used as a guiding factor in the management decisions (Ahto et al. 2016, 34- 37.)

2.4. Service brand development and planning

Brand planning is crucial for success. The reason why many brands never succeed is because the brand planning is overlooked. Brand planning should be part of business planning and as brand changes take a long time to realise, annual planning is not enough. Planning should be continual, take place gradually and be consistent from vision to execution. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 160 – 161; Robertson 2014.) The task of the brand plan is to bring together the necessary measures needed to reach the set goal and to give the organization the direction, choices and strategy that are necessary if it wants to achieve its goals. (Robertson 2014.)

Furthermore, the brand plan unites different departments such as marketing, sales and product development and gives an action plan for each department so that the goals can be reached whilst setting tasks that require support from finance and operations. The brand plan also helps to develop an action plan for internal stakeholders so they can implement the plan accordingly. For the Brand Manager it brings focus and works as a reference for staying within the set strategy. As the brands have significant financial value it is crucial they are managed efficiently to achieve a return on investment and thus, management should be accountable for it with their approval of the strategic choices and financial aspects. (Robertson 2014; Chernatony & McDonald 2005, 53.)

According to Skaalsvik & Olsen, service branding should involve the whole organization. In addition, the customers should also have a high involvement in the service brand development as it will create trust and commitment to the brand as a co-product. The process should also involve and empower the employees through training and expanded decision-making power and have a high focus on service orientation. Furthermore, the organisation should apply the bottom up principle in order to organise itself to suit service brand development. (Skaalsvik & Olsen 2014, 1217 – 1219.)

Internal and external market research as well as evaluation of the company capabilities are the most essential elements of the brand development and also the starting point for brand building. For the effective market research, the company must establish in depth knowledge of its business, products, services, brands, employees, competition and the industry. Most often what the company thought was important to customer turns out to be something quite different when asked and thus, will give a new perspective. After that, objectives need to be set and a strategy put in place to achieve the goals. However, the

brand development should not touch the brand's core values as these are the ones customers appreciate and are loyal to. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2002, 40 – 41; (De Chernatony & McDonald 2005, 402; Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 163 – 164.)

Brand plan can be framed by guiding questions and then structured to create a basis of the brand plan:

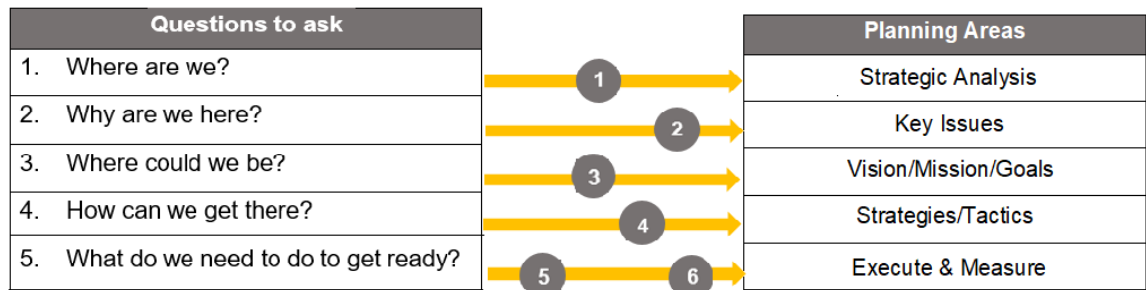


Figure 24. Framing questions (Robertson 2014).

To complement the framing, below questions are needed in order to establish the current situation:

- What is the company's current market share?
- What is the brand's core strength that brings competitive advantage?
- How involved are the customers to the brand?
- What the current business situation is like?

(Robertson 2014.)

2.4.1. Vision

The brand planning starts with the brand vision stage where the desired brand future is determined. Brand development should start with the definition of the key components of the brand. These are then defined by using a model best suited for the brand, for example a brand diamond, brand key or brand pyramid. The defined model is the vision of the brand as you would like it to be perceived. (Barrow & Mosley 2010, 64.) The key component of a travel agency could be for example the customer service which means that the brand should be built around the service attitude and the ability to solve problems. (Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri 2010. 52.)

According to De Chernatony & McDonald there are three interrelated components constituting the brand vision:

- an envisioned future
- the purpose for the brand, i.e. how the world could be a better place as a consequence of the brand

- The values that will underpin the brand

(De Chernatony & McDonald 2005, 99.)

The vision should be relevant for 5-10 years and it can include financial and positional elements as long as it is important from a vision framing perspective. The vision should ideally be qualitative and measurable. In addition, it should also be a balance of inspiration and reality and at the same time bring focus but also be inviting and motivational. Vision should answer the questions as to why (why do you exist), how (how do you deliver against purpose) and what (what do you do to deliver purpose). The purpose defining why should be defined first, followed by strategic how and then purpose driving what. (Roberts 2014.)

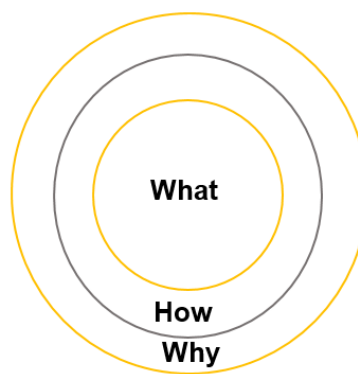


Figure 25. Golden circle (Robertson 2014; Sinek 2010).

2.4.2. Strategic Analysis

The objective of brand strategy is to make sure that the brand is using its own strengths against competitors, exploiting at the same time competitors' weaknesses. The brand strategy also aims to make sure that the brand resonates with the customers and avoids the competitors' strengths. Another object of the brand strategy is to improve strategic decision making of the brand and recognise the uncertainties that may affect the brand strategy. For this a strategic brand analysis is needed. (Aaker 2002, 190-191.) In addition, the brand strategy should include a brand mission, personality and brand values which are aligned with the company's mission and vision thus the brand analysis should provide and answer for the questions such as:

- What is your identity about?
- What do you consider important?
- What is your company about?
- What your customers consider important?

- How do you differ from competition?
- Where do you see the company in five years?

(Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 163 – 164.)

The planning process should start with defining the current situation that answers the question “where are we” which requires looking in detail at everything connected to the business including the category, consumer, competitors, channels and the brand. This requires a competitor analysis, customer analysis, brand analysis and a self-analysis to establish what could be the brand’s core values. Further on, from the deep dive business review the business drivers can be established as well as the factors that are holding the business back. After that, the risks and opportunities can be established. The drivers are factors or inertia that accelerate brand’s growth and thus, need to be maintained and enhanced further. Inhibitors are factors like weakness or friction that prevents growth and should be minimized if possible and the opportunities identify the areas in the market that would contribute to future growth. Finally, threats are anything that changes the current circumstances and thus, may turn into a threat. Focus should be on the top 3-4 points for each section:

Drivers	Happening now	Inhibitors
Brand assets, successful programs, favorable market trends, new products, advertising.		Competitive pressure, specific segments, unfavorable market forces, channels, weakness in specific area.
Opportunities	Could happen	Threats
Unfulfilled consumer needs, new technologies, regulation changes, new distribution channels, removal of trade barriers.		Consumer needs, new technologies, competitive activity, distribution changes, potential barriers to trade that create potential risk to growth.

Figure 26. Force field analysis of drivers and inhibitors. (Robertson 2014).

As stated before the strategic brand analysis should include three perspectives and thus, Aaker’s strategic brand analysis model can be utilized for this purpose. Three perspectives are needed because to resonate with the customer a customer analysis is needed, to maximise the competitor insight to benefit the strategy a competitor analysis is needed and lastly, to neutralize the weaknesses and utilize the strengths to full potential, a self-analysis is needed.



Figure 27. Strategic brand analysis (Aaker 2002, 190).

2.4.3. Key Issues and strategy

The objective of the third stage of the brand plan is to find the right key issues to help with strategy. Robertson recommends using four questions in order to establish them:

- How is the brand currently positioned from competitive perspective?
- Which key element of the brand brings competitive advantage?
- What is the level of loyalty within your customers?
- What is the brand's current business situation?

A combination of the answers of the strategic analysis and the answers of the key questions can be used as a starting point. Viewing possible obstacles that hinder the value achievement should be brainstormed from as many possible angles as possible and then narrowed down to 3-5 key issues. The strategy options can then be outlined by turning the issues into strategic questions. (Robertson 2014.)

In order to achieve the set goals there needs to be a strategy. The core of the brand, its values and brand associations (Figure 27) form the strategy which gives guidance of how to get there and what decisions should be made. Further on, the decision-making process should always be backed up by the top management to ensure the strategy is executed. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 168 – 169; Robertson 2014.) The brand plan should have three top strategies combined with three tactics which deliver the chosen strategies. (Robertson 2014.)

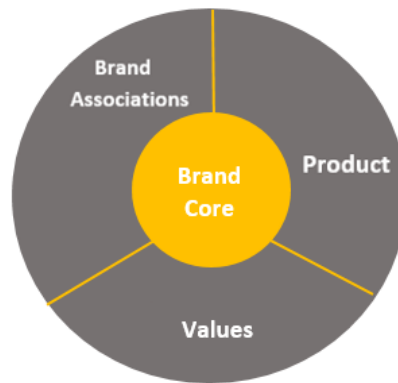


Figure 28. Brand strategy model (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 170.)

Robertson introduces a set of questions to help to frame the brand strategy which are: How is the brand currently positioned from competitive perspective (leader, challenger, flanker, guerilla), which key element of the brand brings competitive advantage (product, concept/idea, service/experience, price/value), what is the level of loyalty within your customers (indifferent, like it, love it, beloved) and what is the brand's current business situation (continue momentum, turn around, re-focus, startup). (Roberts 2014.)

2.4.6. Execution and measurements

The last two phases of the brand plan are the execution and the regular ongoing tracking and measuring. The execution depends largely on the brand strategy which defines all the actions needed. The execution phase should bring the customers closer to the company which in turn puts the brand into a stronger business position. This is achieved by the elements in the brand plan which generally cover things like marketing, employee training, communications and workshops. The execution phase is excluded from this thesis and left for Egencia Finland to complete.

Once the brand development plan has been completed it is crucial to measure progress. Measurements should include metrics like market goals, financial goals, performance, brand health, milestones on the way to the vision, financial results to support the brand, brand funnel data, in market customer data and any executional tracking needed. (Robertson 2014.) Million also suggests that in addition to measure performance the areas to monitor are internal and external behaviour and perception. Internal behaviour monitoring is especially important in service branding where the customer service plays significant role. Regular surveys can be used to get feedback and to make sure that the employees are creating customer experience that is aligned with the brand. The internal behaviour

can be tracked by employee engagement scoring and making sure the strategy is understood. External behaviour in term strengthens the customer experience, brand perception and its value proposition and can consist of multiple different kind of actions like published whitepapers, blogs, public speaking and optimised search engines. External behaviour can be measured by methods such as brand perception and awareness surveys and website traffic.

Brand image and perception should also be monitored closely as it is especially important for the company to understand how the brand is seen to enable growth. Lot of the discussion happens in Internet in the form of reviews, recommendations and discussion forums thus the perception monitoring should also include real time social media data. Media data enables the company to stay up to date of the conversation surrounding them and gain an understanding of its impact on its brand. (Million.)

2.5. Summarising the literature

Figure 28 presents how the literature covered in this thesis contributes to the research. The first step was to understand service brand as a concept and the different perspectives and definitions involved. The role of stakeholders, specifically the role of the employees, was found crucial in creating a strong service brand and thus, the theory moves on to exploring service brand building in more detail. Service brands are intangible in nature and consist of intangible elements such as values, associations and experiences. Service brand building centres largely on elements like employees, culture and the service. The research incorporates key concepts and focuses on exploring how they contribute towards a better understanding of the Egencia Finland brand and further on, to achieve a better knowledge of how to develop the service brand so that the brand strategy could be aligned with the business strategy.

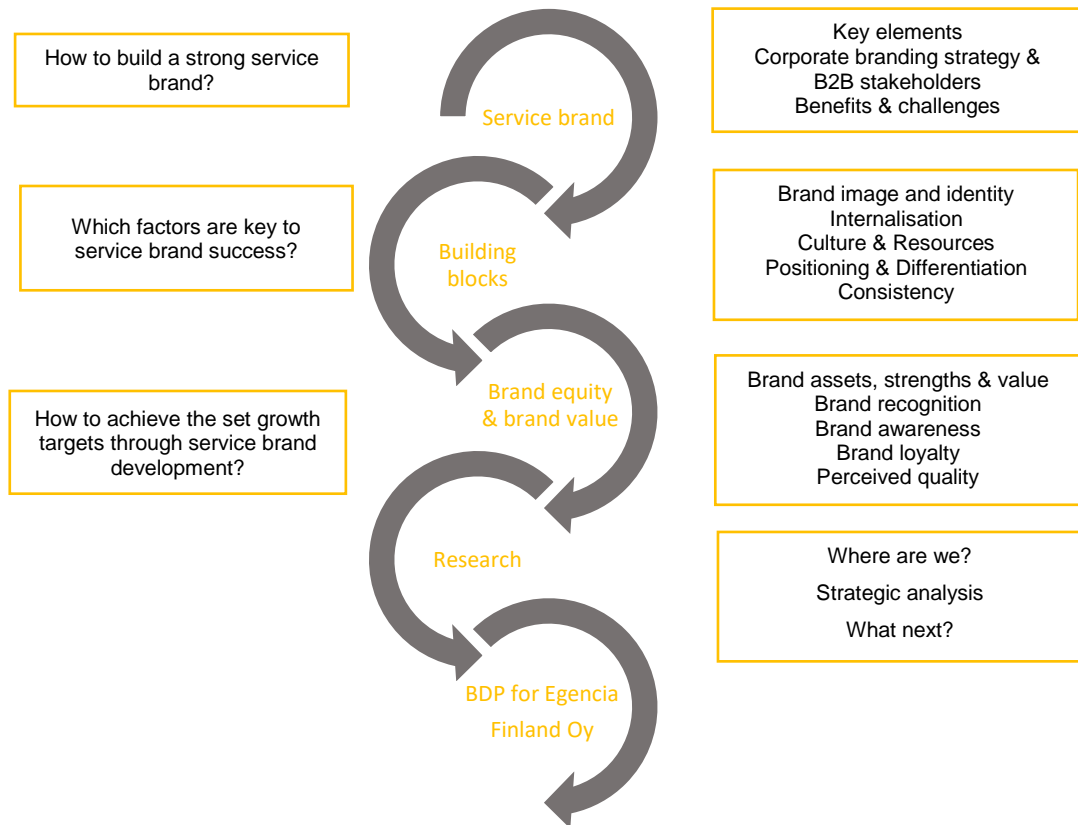


Figure 29. The literature review's contribution to the research

One of the key takeaways in this literature review is understanding the importance of the employees in the service branding. The theory highlights the importance of internalization of the brand in order to avoid a gap between the brand and the organization. The service brand can't be strong and successful without a process that builds on satisfied employees. This creates motivation and in turn results in high customer service and satisfied customers contributing towards the brand equity. The theory suggests that the process should start already in the recruiting phase to make sure that the employees share the values with the organization.

The theory illustrates the complexity of the service brand as a concept. From the literature the researcher can conclude that there is no exhaustive definition for service brand and the line between product and service brand is somewhat blurred due to products having additional services built around them. Thus, the service brand should be understood in a broader context and so the S-D theory perspective was reviewed to get a wider understanding. Keller's brand balance card presents interesting guidelines on strong brands

and even though published as an audit tool it provides useful guidance to key factors that the strong brand should possess.

The literature review also presents that the service brand building requires organizational involvement as well as customer participation. Yet again, the employees are key as the essence of the brand is created in the interaction between the customer and the employees. The customer service is the most critical factor in the brand building and brand equity and thus, it should be consistent with the brand. Further on, the corporate branding strategy is most widely used with services and thus, also the corporate culture and company image play a significant role as a staff influencer and culture creator. Customers in turn generally associate with the corporate brand rather than specific services and so in order to achieve a corporate clarity the corporate brand needs to be controlled.

The main stakeholders in this research are B2B customers and their role was reviewed and compared against B2C customers. The literature very seldom separates consumer customers from corporate customers and the researcher noticed that most of the literature refers to consumers or just customers. Therefore, some of the theory reviewed might not be directly applicable to corporate customers. The role of the customer in travel management context is complex as the role of the customer is twofold; the decision makers are mostly corporate buyers but the end user is a company employee to whom, to a certain extent, applies similar factors than B2C customers in the researcher's opinion. Thus, the chosen literature discusses customers in general through service brand perspective which applies to this thesis and which characteristics are the same whether B2B or B2C business.

Literature indicates that the branding is as important in B2B sector as it is in B2C sector especially due to globalization and increased competition. Perceived risk and through that a corporate reputation is the most important factor in the B2B sector which draws the biggest difference to the B2C sector from a branding perspective where perceived risk doesn't have as much emphasis. In both B2B and B2C sector the brand awareness plays a similarly central role.

The literature regarding the service brand building models is somewhat limited in the researcher's opinion and most such models center around product brands, focusing on an external view. However, the literature indicates that the key aspects to consider in service brand building models is the balance between the external and internal focus. Another

central denominator is the brand building's continuous nature which should be seen as a continuous process rather than a one-off project.

According to literature, brand image is one of the key aspects of brand building so in order to gain a more in-depth understanding, both brand identity and brand image was reviewed. Brand image consists largely of customer perceptions where brand identity in turn is strategically formed by the company and acts as a strategy guide representing how the brand wants to be seen. Image should be closely bound to the company's mission, values, vision and business strategy and live up to communicated image and real performance, otherwise the company's credibility will become questionable because the reality always wins. Literature consists of two views of brand identity which is seen as a set of elements such as a logo and a name but also as a more complex element and so Aaker's and Kepferer's brand identity models were reviewed to gain more insight.

Based on the literature review of service branding in this thesis, the emphasis is on understanding the key concepts of brand development and brand building in order to create the best process to develop Egencia Finland's service brand. Brand equity is the most significant element of the brand from the growth perspective and thus, it is important to incorporate all the necessary building blocks in order to create value for the company and customers. This study aims to clarify how well Egencia Finland Oy is creating brand equity currently and how it could be improved. The available theory provides clear indications of the factors needed. One interesting perspective is the bottom up model where the employees are on the top and management on the bottom acting as enablers for supporting culture and being accountable on the brand planning phase. This again links to the importance of the employees and the culture as discussed throughout the chapter which forms an important theoretical entity for this study.

4. Conducting the research: methodology and data

This chapter introduces the methodology and research approach applied to this thesis study with a justification for the selection. The collection of customer data, internal data, stakeholder data, competitor data and design is introduced as well as the methods used for data analysis. The thesis process is presented in detail through research process. Reliability and validity of the research are also discussed. An applied research aims to solve practical issues and relies on independent and original information exploration. (Holopainen & Pulkkinen 2013, 20.)

4.1. Research strategy

In the survey strategy data collection is based on a pre-structured form and is done as a systematic survey study or interview. It answers to questions such as who, what, what, where, when, how many, how much and thus, are especially suitable for descriptive and explanatory research. (Holopainen, Pulkkinen 2013, 21; Saunders et al. 2016, 439.) The questionnaire is the most used survey strategy in business and management research. Responding to the same questions will allow efficient collection of a large amount of data before quantitative analysis. (Saunders et al. 2016, 436 – 439.) For business research, surveys provide a fast and cost-effective way to collect quantitative data. Respondents' commitment to the subject of the research increases the response rate. Thus, respondents who are committed to the company or survey topic can produce a high rate of response because they feel that by responding to the survey they can influence things. Furthermore, responses are mostly of a high quality and well considered as the respondents can take up as much time as needed to fill the form in. In addition, the benefit of an online survey's benefit is that the interviewer's preconceptions do not affect the results when the questionnaire is made online. (Hague, Cupman, Harrison & Truman 2016, 189 - 190.)

4.2. Research approach

The research approach in this study is quantitative research. According to Holopainen & Pulkkinen quantitative research is suitable for surveys that are using the distance range or ratio scale as a measurement. Quantitative research answers to questions such as why, how and what kind. (Holopainen & Pulkkinen 2013, 21.) Further on, quantitative method requires a bigger sample than qualitative analysis and according to Hague et al. the sample size should be at minimum of 30 completed questionnaires. This however, does not apply for business to business surveys where the number of respondents are much more varied, smaller and limited than in the consumer surveys. Thus, the sample sizes are generally much smaller and rigour of the method, interpretation and judgement may affect the researcher equally. Quantitative research has specific objective and is used in market research to measure market for purposes like product or brand awareness, establishing brand recall and gaining insight for planning. The data is then used further to analyse results to gain more in-depth knowledge on the subject. In order to track changes in the results the research should be repeated regularly. (Hague et al. 2016, 105 - 108.)

4.3. Research design and methodology

The research design is the overall plan of the research and it defines how the research questions are answered and what the objective of the research is as well as the sources where the data is gathered from, how the data is analysed and collected. Further on, the choice of methodological approach also influences the research design. Research designs are divided in four categories; exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, evaluative or a combination of them. (Saunders et al. 2016, 163 – 175.)

In this study a combination of exploratory and descriptive design was applied. Exploratory research aims to gain insight about a specific subject in the present situation and uses open questions that generally start with what or how. Further on, exploratory research is well suited when the aim is to clarify the understanding on issue, phenomenon and problem. The data collection that explores an issue, phenomenon or problem also tends to start with the what and how questions. In this study the exploratory part of the research was done as an open question survey format due to time and resource constraints on the part of the company being research. Most of the study was done by using descriptive research which aims to gain an accurate picture of the situation, event or person as they are at the present. The research questions, as well as data collection questions, are likely to be who, what, where, when or how. To apply the descriptive research, the phenomenon to be investigated must be clear before conducting the data collection. (Saunders et al. 2016, 175 – 176; Dudovskiy.)

A research paradigm guides the researcher and consists of beliefs and assumptions. Paradigms have three elements which can be used in classification; ontology, epistemology and methodology. Researcher's relationship with research is measured by epistemology, while ontology refers to assumptions about the nature of reality. (Saunders et al. 2016, 138.) Ontology acts as a link to epistemology by providing information about the researchers understanding of what something is and the reality of it while the epistemology provides the way of understanding of the reality and causal explanations and as a result observable and measurable data. Epistemologically, objectivism ensures that the data gathering and the knowledge gained is done in an independent and objective way and that it results in measurable facts and real data. (Glynn & Woodside 2009, 38 – 43; Saunders et al. 136, 127.)

The research paradigm applied to this study is positivists as the focus of the study is to produce pure data which is not influenced by bias or human influence. In positivist philosophy the researcher tries to remain objective and detached from the data and to minimise the influence with the research findings. The measurable and quantifiable data supports this approach. (Saunders et al. 2016, 138.) In the positivist paradigm the ontology assumes one reality and the epistemology is objective as the researcher remains distant from the subject. Paradigms influence the methodology approach and in positivist approach the quantitative methodologies are generally applied. The purpose, values or axiological assumptions, the types of conclusions, the research process and the quality of the design of the research have an impact on the practical implications of these paradigms. The objective of the research for positivist is an explanation. (Glynn & Woodside 2009, 38 – 43; Saunders et al. 2016, 138.)

The research aims to find out how Egencia Finland Oy is viewed by its stakeholders and how well known it is. Even though the chosen method acquires data with quantitative research method, the research is not testing a hypothesis but exploring to see if there is a causal effect between brand image, brand awareness and growth. Thus, it can be deduced that this research does not reflect a purely positivist perspective, although it uses most of the positivism philosophy's elements.

The approach used for the thesis is a deductive approach which starts with the theory that contributes for the research strategy design. A characteristic of a deductive approach is that it moves from general to more specific. The research theory and assumptions that relate to theory are evaluated with the collected data. Furthermore, a deductive approach aims to explain causal relationships between concepts and variables and measures concepts quantitatively. Another characteristic for a deductive approach is also that the findings can be generalised to a certain extent. (Saunders et al. 2016, 127; Lewis & Thornhill 2016, 145-146.) Deductive research also has a positivist paradigm. In addition, the starting point in deductive research is theory with subsequent of testing of relevant hypotheses that lead to empirical generalisations. (Saunders et al. 2016, 127.)

4.3.1. Questionnaire planning

A literature review provides the basis for the design of the research method and the theoretic framework should be linked to the survey questions. (Brunt et al. 2017, 104). Questionnaires are best suited for standardized questions that avoid the misinterpretation by

the respondents thus, they are usually used for descriptive and explanatory research. Attitudes and opinions can be researched with descriptive research questionnaires as they will enable description and variability of different phenomena. Explanatory research aims to describe relationships between variables in particular, cause-end-effect relationships. (Saunders et al. 2016, 438.) To gain high internal validity and reliability the questionnaire should be planned carefully considering all the alternative answers, making sure it corresponds with the research and that it uses terms which are easy for the respondents to understand to avoid misinterpretations. (Saunders et al. 2016, 449 - 452.)

Survey questions are classified as either open (free-response) or closed (structured). Open questions invite free responses which are generally collected in their original format and suit especially well for exploratory research. When the response range is not known in advance, open questions can be used. The benefit of the open questions is that they allow spontaneous answers. On the other hand, the challenge with open questions is the difficulty in evaluation and the need for grouping before the analysis phase as well as the need to take the answers as verbatim. To avoid the impact of the disadvantages of this method, the question topic can be asked both ways; as an open and closed question to gain a complete view. (Brunt et al, 2017, 108; Hague et al. 2016, 129; Saunders et al 2016, 425.)

Closed questions provide a choice of replies and have either a single or multi-response answer. Single response questions generally have either a yes or no answer where in contrast multi-response questions allow more than one answer. A typical single question is attitudinal question where the response is chosen from predetermined list of attributes or on predetermined scale. A typical multi-response questions are often aimed to determine the awareness, brand knowledge and brand usage and thus allow the mentioning of a number of brands. The multiple-response questions provide a list of answers to choose from and the predefined questions are built by using industry knowledge, pilot study or qualitative research. (Brunt et al, 2017, 108 – 109; Hague et al. 2016, 129; Saunders et al. 2016, 452.)

Questions were mainly based on Keller's dimension of the brand knowledge model which was complemented in the customer, employee and partner questionnaire with NPS survey to measure loyalty.

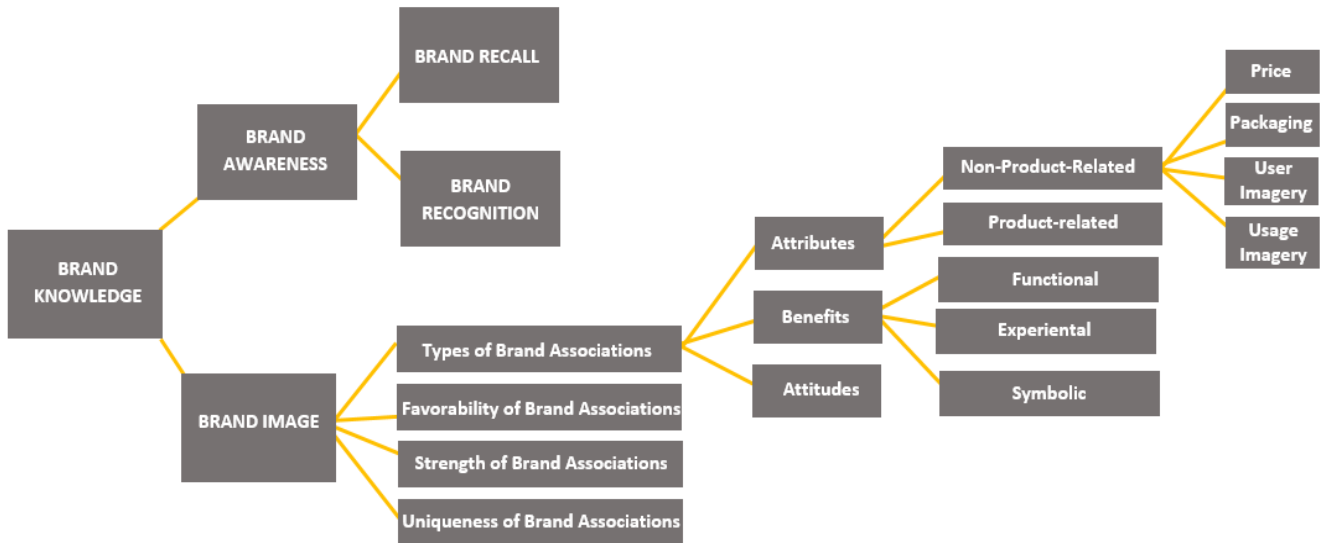


Figure 30. Dimension of brand knowledge. (Keller 1993, 7.)

4.3.2. Potential customer questionnaire

The first question in the potential customer questionnaire (Q1) was an open-ended question and measured brand awareness but more specifically unaided brand recall. The following question (Q2) measured brand recognition by giving multiple predetermined response options. The third (Q3) attitudinal question was designed to measure favourability and in addition to give benchmarking data to the competition. The five-point verbal Likert scale was used to measure how respondents felt about each of the Travel Management Company brands within the survey. The fourth (Q4) question was a descriptive open-ended question aimed to measure what type of associations were linked with Egencia Finland Oy. The last question (Q5) was set to understand what kind of associations respondents had with Egencia. Positive adjectives used to design the question were Egencia's brand personality attributes. In addition, some adjectives linked to Egencia's vision, mission and values. A semantic differential scale with opposite (positive and negative) verbs were used as a measure.

4.3.3. Partner questionnaire

The first question (Q1) in the partner questionnaire was the same as in the potential customer questionnaire. The second attitudinal question (Q2) measured favourability and was designed to cover all the travel management companies in order to gather benchmarking data. Question number three (Q3) was a descriptive open-ended question measuring the

type of associations attached to Egencia. Fourth question (Q4) measured strength of brand associations by using numeric five-point Likert scale. Fifth (Q5) question measured brand image and reputation and used a verbal rating scale. Sixth question (Q6) was designed to understand what kind of associations respondents had with Egencia. The adjectives used were the same as in the employee and customer survey. The last question (Q6) was an NPS question and set to measure respondents' loyalty and overall opinion about Egencia.

4.3.4. Employee questionnaire

The first section of the employee survey was designed to find out how Egencia's vision, mission and values were understood within the staff and if they felt that the values were visible in their everyday work. The section had six questions out of which, three questions were open-ended questions and two questions dichotomous questions requiring either a yes or no answer. The second section of the survey was designed to get a better understanding of how the employees see Egencia's brand, what associations were attached to it and how it shows in customer service situations. The first question (Q7) was a descriptive open-ended question, second (Q8) used the semantic differential scale with opposite (positive and negative) verbs which were the same as the potential customer and partner questionnaire. Last question of the section (Q9) was again an open-ended question. The third section of the survey aimed to gain knowledge of employees' understanding of the company culture and how they saw Egencia's company culture. The first two questions (Q1 and Q2) were open-ended questions and the last one (Q3) was dichotomous and required either a yes or no answer. The fourth section of the survey was about the process and included into the survey to see if the set processes were supporting customer service. The question (Q1) was dichotomous and required either a yes or no answer. The fifth section was about image and identity and aimed to understand employees' knowledge of the brand identity and brand promise and gain their opinion about Egencia's image and reputation compared to the competition. The sixth section of the employee survey concerned brand awareness. The employees were asked how did they see Egencia's position against competitors in terms of brand awareness. The employees were also asked what did they think Egencia was known for and what would Egencia want to be known as. The first question (Q1) was a verbal rating scale and the last two questions (Q2 and Q3) were open-ended questions. The seventh section was measuring employees' opinions about the travel industry's future and Egencia's future. Both the two questions (Q1 and Q2) were open-ended questions. The last section was an NPS measurement of loyalty and had a 10-point Likert scale.

The first question (Q1) of the customer survey was an open-ended question and measured attributes attached to Egencia. The second open-ended question (Q2) was set to measure the uniqueness of Egencia's brand. The third question (Q3) which used a semantic differential scale was designed to get a more in-depth knowledge of the associations customers had attached to Egencia. The adjectives used were same as in the partner and potential customer survey. The next section of the questionnaire was designed to get a better idea of the strength of brand associations. The section had five statements (Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7 and Q8) and a five-point Likert scale was used as a measure. The 9th question (Q9) measured favourability of the brand associations and also used the five-point Likert scale as a measure. The 10th question (Q10) also measured favourability but instead, used a verbal rating. The last question (Q11) was an NPS question set to measure loyalty.

4.3.5. Management questionnaire

All the questions in the management questionnaire were open ended questions. The first section of the employee survey was designed to find out how Egencia's vision, mission and values were understood within the management and if they felt that the values were visible in their everyday work. The second section of the survey was designed to get a better understanding of how the management saw Egencia's brand and image. The first question (Q6) asked the management to describe Egencia brand, the second (Q7) asked to define Egencia's brand promise, third (Q8) to describe how the brand promise is fulfilled and the last question of the section (Q9) asked how the aimed image is visible in practise. Next section was designated to get a better understanding of the management's opinion about the current level of the Egencia brand awareness and image. Section four was designed to get more information about customers and how they were segmented. In addition, Q17 and Q18 asked factors contributing to buying decision. Next sections (section 5 and 6) focused on competition and was set to define how the management saw the competitive market and the competitive advantage Egencia has. In addition, in this section management were asked to value Egencia through SWOT analysis. The last section (section 7) concentrated on future and asked the management to evaluate the travel industry and Egencia in the future.

4.3.6. Customer questionnaire

The first question (Q1) in the customer questionnaire was a descriptive open-ended question measuring the type of associations attached to Egencia. The second (Q2) question

was also open-ended question set to measure uniqueness of the associations. Third question (Q3) was designed to understand what kind of associations respondents had about Egencia. The adjectives used were the same as in the employee and partner survey. Next questions (Q4 – Q8) measured strength of brand associations by using numeric five-point Likert scale. The question nine (Q9) measured loyalty and used numeric five-point Likert scale. The last question (Q10) was an NPS question and set to measure respondents' loyalty and overall opinion about Egencia.

4.3.7. Market research questionnaire

Market research questionnaire was designed to get a benchmark data from the main competitors on the key success factors which were based on the thesis question and the results of the employee, customer, partner and potential customer surveys. The questionnaire had five questions all using the 5-point Likert scale to make comparing and coding clear and simple. The first question (Q1) was designed to measure the level of customer service. Second question (Q2) measured service offer and the question number three (Q3) measured technical solutions. Last two questions (Q4, Q5) measured safety program and communication and the level of pricing.

4.4. Implementation process

The following chapters will detail how the respondents were selected and how the sampling type was chosen as well as how the questionnaire was tested.

4.4.1. Sampling method

Sampling is most often used to conduct surveys as it is very rare that all the data can be collected from every group member. However, if the research group is small this can be done. This method is called census. The advantage of sampling is that the amount of collected data can be reduced by considering only the subgroup rather than all the possible cases or elements. The selection of the sample should have a link to research questions and the objective of the study. For easy management purposes the sample size can be redefined as the total population might not be known or is difficult to access thus, a target population is used.

There are two sampling types, probability sampling which is also known as random sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling refers to a known population with a known chance for an individual to be included into survey. The most important factor in

probability sampling is that the sample must represent the target population. In contrast, random sampling is done when the population is not known. In business research random sampling may not be possible or appropriate so non-probability sampling is used as it provides a number of different ways to approach sampling. Most of the methods will include subjective judgement. To reach the objective and answer the research question it sometimes might be necessary to select a small number of cases for in-depth study. In non-probability sampling there is no optimal size of sample determined as it is all based on the purpose and focus of the research and its relationship with the sample selection. The recommendation is to continue to collect the data until it no longer provides new information or suggest new themes and thus, has reached data saturation. If the research compares different groups, each group needs to be considered as a separate homogeneous population. (Saunders et al. 2016, 275 – 304; Brunt et al. 2017, 85 – 92.)

The sampling type used in this research was purposive sampling also known as judgmental sampling. In this type of sampling the researcher has to use judgement on deciding which cases will help to answer the research question and the objectives of the study and requires careful consideration of the impact of chosen cases. Purposive sampling is usually used particularly when wanting to use the cases that are most informative and when the sample size is small. Therefore, it cannot be considered as a statistically representative target population. It relies on researcher's assessment of most suitable participants with sufficiently diverse attributes to maximize fluctuations in the collected information. Further on purposive sampling is particularly well suited for describing and explaining key themes that can be observed while homogeneous sampling focuses on a particular subgroup where all sample owners are similar in terms of profession for example and thus enables deepening of the data so that smaller differences became apparent. (Saunders et al. 2016, 275 – 304.)

4.4.2. Testing of questionnaire

The questionnaire was tested with several people from the target group and small modifications were done according to the feedback. The customer survey was also reviewed by Egencia's Senior Brand Manager and Customer Communications Manager and small adjustments were made to this survey based on the suggestions.

4.4.3. Invitations to online survey

The stakeholder surveys were sent as a link by email whereas the management survey was sent in Excel form. The first survey email included a picture and question "have you

got a moment?”. This was changed into an email format after a feedback from respondent highlighted that it could be easily interpreted as junk mail.

The partner survey was sent to all the partners considered having cooperation with Egencia. This included hotels, airlines, ferry companies, car hire companies and finance companies. The survey email had a short brief about the project with a link to the survey. The email was sent to 140 and it reached 135 email addresses which means 5 emails were either incorrect or not working for some other reason.

The potential client surveys were sent to all the active FBTA (Finnish Business Travel Association) members which include some of the biggest companies in Finland. In addition, the survey was sent to all the Matka 2018 professional day participants with the exclusion of the people who had registered with their personal email address or people with a foreign email address. The groups were chosen based on the judgement that FBTA members are key members of the Finnish business travel industry and Matka Professional Day attendees can only attend the event with a specific invitation thus, it captures mainly people who have an interest in business travel. The survey email had a short brief about the project with a link to the survey. The email was sent out 180 and it reached 172 email addresses which means 8 emails were either incorrect or not working for some reason.

The customer survey was sent out to Egencia Finland Oy's customers and specifically to company Travel Managers. Travel Managers were chosen as a target group due to their special role as either decision makers or influencers of the buying decision. Travel Managers' also have a unique position as in addition their own cooperation and opinion about Egencia it is also influenced by travelers' opinions about Egencia since most of them will get and ask for feedback from travelers on a regular basis. The researcher considered this as the most efficient sample group for the purpose of this thesis. The questionnaire was sent out by Egencia as it was seen as important from a company perspective that the questionnaire came from the Egencia email address. The survey email had a short brief about the project with a link to survey. The email was sent out 177 and it reached 172 email addresses which means 5 emails were either incorrect or not working for some reason.

The management survey was sent out by email to Egencia Finland Oy's Managing Director and the customer service Team Leader. This part of the data gathering was originally planned to be carried out as a semi-structured interview but due to time constraints on Egencia's side it was completed through survey. The employee survey was also originally

planned to be carried out as a semi-structured interview but due to time constraints on Egencia's side it was completed through survey.

4.5. Data collection

Data was collected using quantitative methods. The researcher collected primary data from customers, partners, potential clients, employees and the management with a predesigned questionnaire. According to, Brunt et al. structured questionnaires are prepared in advance and have specific and concrete questions to facilitate the quantitative analysis. (Brunt, Horner & Semley 2017, 104.) Structured questions enable repetition which ensures reliability. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2016, 147.)

The questions were adjusted based on internal discussions related to the company's brand and customer communication. The researcher also tested the questionnaires with several respondents to gain feedback. Small adjustments were done based on the feedback before submitting the questionnaires to the target groups. The questionnaire email body was also altered at an early stage after feedback from a responder about the email being easily mixed with junk mail. After adjustment the number of responses increased significantly.

Five questionnaires were conducted altogether: questionnaire to customers which gained 18 responses, questionnaire to potential customers which gained 52 responses, questionnaire to partners which gained 34 responses, questionnaire to employees which gained 9 responses and questionnaire to conduct market research to some of the customers, previous customers and travellers who had been using more than one TMC during their career and which gained 22 responses. In addition, two more in-depth questionnaires were conducted to the management.

4.5.8. Employee survey

As stated in chapter 2.2. employees build the service brand internally and externally thus, their view in this thesis is very important. The focus of the employee survey was to understand how Egencia, company culture, identity, image and brand awareness was perceived and were Egencia's values, mission and vision understood. Further on, it was important to understand if the brand promise was known and if the process to achieve it was suitable as they both have impact on the customer service delivery. The questions are presented in appendix 4.

4.5.9. Customer survey

Another key group of the thesis is the customers who build the service brand together with the employees. Their view of Egencia's brand is equally important to employees in order to develop holistic picture of the current situation. The customer survey focused on gaining an insight about customers perceptions of Egencia overall satisfaction and loyalty. The questions are presented in appendix 5.

4.5.10. Partner survey

Partners form the 3rd important group of this thesis as they interact with the company on a regular basis thus it is important also to understand their perspective of the brand as it possibly has an effect on the cooperation and overall word of mouth opinion and in addition gives a more complete picture of how the Egencia brand is perceived. The focus on the questionnaire was on brand awareness, benchmarking Egencia towards the competition, brand attributes, brand image, satisfaction of the cooperation and the loyalty. The questions are presented in appendix 6.

4.5.11. Potential customer survey

The potential customer survey was included into this thesis in order to measure brand recall and awareness amongst possible future buyers and customers and thus, is strongly linked to the company's growth targets and brand equity. Questions about the image of the travel management companies were included to gain benchmark data against the competition. The questions are presented in appendix 7.

4.5.12. Management survey

As stated before, management play an important part in service branding and thus, management survey was included in this research to complement employee perspective and to gain more in depth internal knowledge. Management survey consisted of 8 themes which were vision, mission and values, brand, awareness, customers, competition, communication, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and finally about management's thoughts about the future. The questions are presented in appendix 8.

4.5.13. Market research

Market research was done after the stakeholder surveys as these surveys helped to define suitable responders for the market research survey. The survey was not sent to all Egencia customers, as the number of respondents in customer survey expressed that they had never used another TMC thus, they would not have been able to participate in the market research. The respondents chosen for the market research were chosen on the basis of them having used more than one TMC and being regular travel bookers thus, having a regular contact with the TMC. The questionnaire was sent out to some of the existing customers, previous customers now using another TMC and frequent travelers. The survey consisted of five questions determined to be part of the key success factors aligning with the survey questions and were all semi-structured questions using the 5-point Likert scale to make analyzing and comparing easier for the purpose of benchmark. The questions are presented in appendix 9.

4.6. Strategic analysis of data

The case company is already conducting regular customer satisfaction surveys (NPS) and the data is monitored regularly. However, there has never been strategic or customer analysis conducted in the case company before. From the brand development perspective, it is of primary importance to understand and define the current situation so the key issues can be recognised and strategy can be put in place. This section defines what kind of analysis is needed for the purpose of brand development.

4.6.1. Self-analysis

The purpose of self-analysis is to discover whether the brand is able and willing to deliver and that it has the needed resources in place. In addition, it is necessary to consider the brand's heritage and the current situation as well as the organisation that is delivering the brand, to identify its strengths, limitations, strategies and values. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2002, 40 – 41.) According to Aaker the self-analysis should include five elements which can be all viewed from either product, organization, person or symbol perspective:

- **The current brand image;** concentrates on finding out how the brand is perceived, what associations are attached to it, how it differentiates from competitors, how it has evolved over time, has it got personality and what benefits does it provide?

- **The brand heritage;** concentrates on brand history to understand what the brand was about originally, in order to establish what the identity should include and how to get it back on course again and establish its former strength.
- **The brand's strengths and weaknesses – what can be delivered under the brand's name;** concentrates on understanding the brand's weaknesses and strengths in order to gain an insight into development needs. It is important to concentrate on factors that are doable by the organisation.
- **The soul of the brand and the organisation;** looks to uncover what the brand vision and soul is and what factors bring character and meaning to the business.
- **Links to other brands;** concentrates on defining the brand role within the context of other brands. (Aaker 2002, 196.)

In addition, a SWOT analysis can be used to analyse the company's overall weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats and it enables the company to monitor the external and internal marketing environment. From a SWOT an external environment (opportunity and threats) analysis and internal environment analysis (strengths and weaknesses) can then be derived. The external analysis focuses on macroenvironment forces and significant microenvironment factors that are hindering its growth. The analysis tries to spot opportunities that can be profited and developed from. Kotler and Keller lists three different kind of opportunities:

- Something that is short in supply
- An existing product or service in a new or superior way
- Totally new product or service

The upper-left cell in the opportunity matrix indicates the best marketing opportunities whereas the lower-right cell has the minor opportunities not worth the consideration. The opportunities in the upper-right cell and the lower-left cell are worth monitoring in the event that any improve in attractiveness and potential.

Unfavorable development means a challenge that results in reduced sales or low profitability without defending response from the company. Threats in the top-left cell are significant because they can damage the company and their realization is likely. To deal with them the company needs contingency plans. The threats in the lower-right cell are minor and can be ignored. The firm will want to carefully monitor threats in the upper-right and lower-left cells in the event they grow more serious. (Kotler & Keller 2012, 71.)

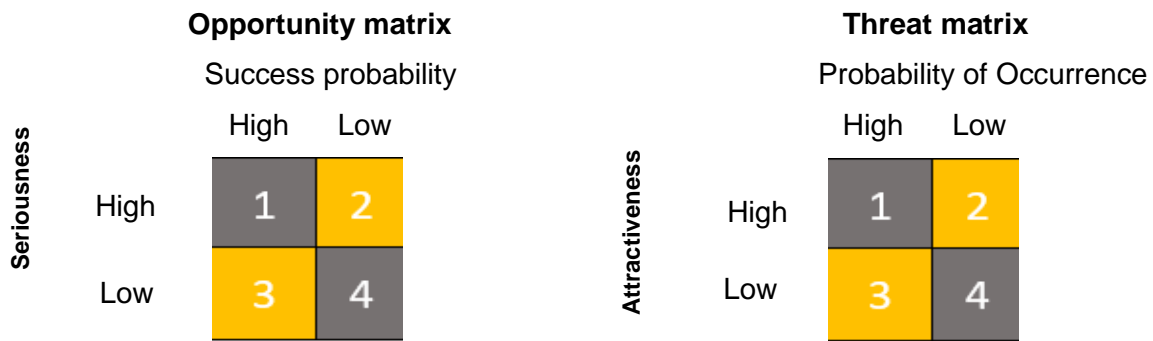


Figure 31. Opportunity and threat matrix (Kotler & Keller 2012, 71).

Once the SWOT analysis has been completed, realistic and consistent objectives can be set. There are usually a number of objectives which need to be put in order of importance. There might also be trade-offs like long-term growth versus short-term profit and high growth versus low risk. The next phase is to determine how to get there so a strategy is needed. (Kotler & Keller 2012, 72.)

4.6.2. Brand analysis

Brand analysis is the basis of defining distinctive brand elements such as brand personality, set brand values and brand mission. Long term brand strategy requires the corporate vision and mission to be aligned and the brand identity to be effective so it portrays how it differentiates from competitors and what it will and can do in the future. In addition, it needs to resonate with the customers. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2002, 40; Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 200.) For all these elements to be in place the company needs to understand the brand itself, customers and competition. To achieve the necessary knowledge, a brand analysis is needed. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2002, 40.)

According to Aaker, a strategic brand analysis consists of three phases. The first phase of the brand analyse consists of existing information like previous customer research data, sales data and patterns, historic positioning of the brand and competitors' known identity strategies. As a result of the analysis possible identity options should surface as well as positioning and execution strategies. The second phase consists of gathering data by using several sources so that the information gaps can be filled and branding options can be considered. During the third phase brand positioning, value proposition and ideal brand identity is created. To test and refine implementation tactics and strategy, another customer study may be executed. (Aaker 2002, 201.)

It is also important to define the degree of the brand health in order to establish whether any adjustments are needed. A holistic view of the brand health will tell the company where its strengths and weaknesses are and whether the brand is healthy and thriving or unhealthy and possibly damaging the business. Using the metrics, the company can find out why it's happening and decide what can be done about it. (Boyd 2017.) Unlike the brand wealth which is visible and consists of things like sales, ROI, growth rate, market position, price premium and stock prices, brand health in contrast, lies under the surface and requires deeper research. Brand health consist of things like customer voice, brand funnel, internal alignment, market trends, competitive advantage, satisfactions scores, new products and regulatory matters according to Robertson. (Robertson 2014.)

There are a number of different definitions about brand health and it can also be measured in a number of ways. According to Aaker the strength and health of a brand can be assessed by using measures based on the following criteria: 1) Satisfaction and a price premium, to indicate brand loyalty. 2) Perceived quality and popularity to measure quality and leadership 3) Perceived value, brand personality and association for differentiation. 4) Recall, recognition and brand knowledge as a measure for brand awareness. 5) Market share, market price and coverage for market behaviour. (Aaker 2002, 116-133.) Firth assess brand health through awareness and usage because if there is no awareness, potential customers cannot consider the brand. Thus, measuring the level of awareness is according to her a critical component of the brand health. (Firth.) Furthermore, to get a complete picture of the brand health the measurement should assess total brand awareness which consists of prompted and spontaneous awareness. (Hague, Cupman, Harrison & Truman 2016, 243 – 244.) Another key element contributing to brand health is the brand positioning which should match the customers and potential customers needs and requirements. The last key factor is the brand delivery which should live up to its promise. The overall brand health score can be calculated by dividing the three main elements into functions and then viewed visually through the brand health wheel:

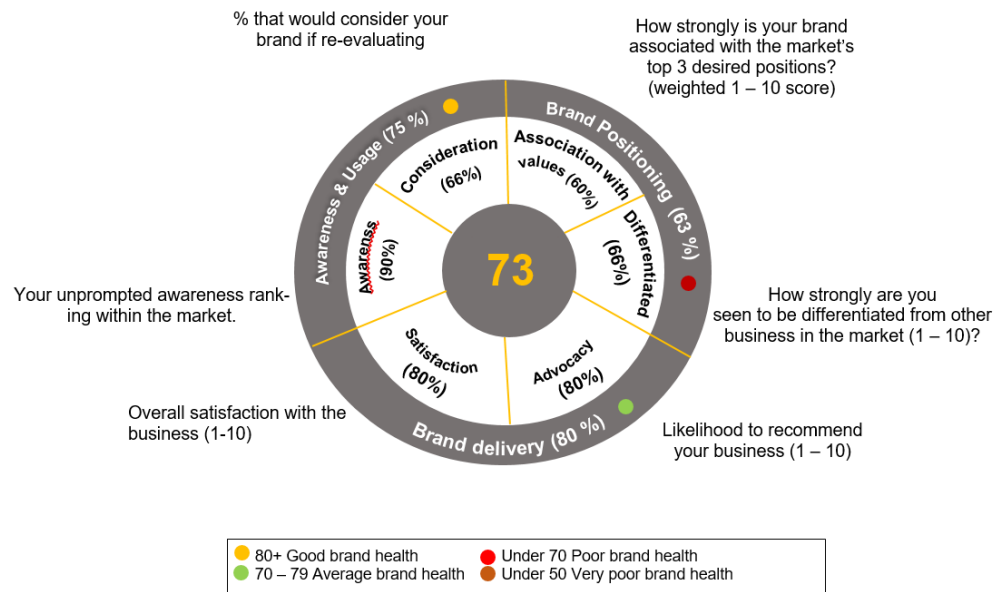


Figure 32. Brand health wheel (Firth).

The first and most important factor with brand awareness and usage is the customer 's knowledge of the brand. However, in addition the company needs to know in more detail what kind of audiences they have. Firth defines six different target groups which are; specifiers, influencers, decision makers, approvers, users and order placers. The importance of the brand awareness is even more highlighted in B2B decision making because the decision requires approval from the other stakeholders within the company or organisation and it is not likely a new contract will be awarded or high value purchase completed if the brand is unknown to the key decision makers. The percentage of the target group who use the brand are the measure of the company's profitability. The key to building and maintaining a profitable customer base is through strong brand penetration and high share of wallet within a category. Customer retention and cross selling is always more profitable than new sales through constantly evolving market. (Firth.)

The second element of brand health is the brand positioning which can't happen without brand awareness. If the customer doesn't know about the brand, it can't have a position in his mind and thus, the brand won't enter his consideration set either. A brand which has sufficient level of awareness linked to a good brand positioning is in a good position to enter B2B consideration set. Brand positioning is directly linked to brand benefits, perceptions and associations. Therefore, to have good positioning, the brand needs to be relevant for the customers and companies, clearly different from competitors and consistent and credible through all the touchpoints.

The third and last element according to Firth is the delivery of the brand promise which needs to be consistent. Consistency means that the brand positioning is meaningful to its audience and that the experiences it delivers, messages it sends and customer knowledge it creates are consistent and thus, contribute credibility to the brand positioning. (Firth.)

According to Boyd depending on the brand health factors that the company find relevant, several different methods can be used to measure brand health such as social listening (positive and negative brand awareness), focus groups (brand awareness, brand positioning and reputation) and customer feedback (customer insight). (Boyd 2017.)

4.6.3. Customer analysis

To understand and be able to influence customer's attitude and behavior the company first needs to understand the drivers behind it. The more you understand your customer, the more in-depth knowledge can be used as a competitive advantage. There are a number of definitions for customer insight but they are all centered around better knowledge of the customer. Arantola for example defines customer insight as "an in-depth understanding of customer needs and behaviors beyond what the customer can describe. Customer insight is a business activity that collects customer information across organizations and consolidates it in one place." (Arantola 2006, 53.) Edwards in turn notes that customer insight is "a revelatory breakthrough in your understanding of people's lives that directs you to new ways in which to serve your customers better." (Edwards 2013.)

There are different methods of gathering customer insight but they are generally based on observing, listening and data gathering and thus, it can be said that the most suitable way to analyse customers is by qualitative research methods when a deeper understanding of the customer is needed. This can be done either online or offline. There are also lot of different kinds of tools to help with this. Most of the companies also collect such information on a daily basis with different tools and information systems. It is important that the information is received from different perspectives in order to help in decision making. The methods should aim to get a deeper understanding of customers and not just limit it to what they are saying. Information can be obtained from business intelligence, distribution channels, customer service and directly from customers. To complement this a more in-depth understanding is needed though. (Arantola 2006, 55 -56; Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2002, 40 – 41; Daye 2018.)

The challenge with surveys is that the customers don't always answer truthfully therefore resulting in inaccurate results. Customers' answers might be influenced by the survey conductor and wanting to please they may answer as they think is expected or desired by the surveyor. Daye calls this as a public and private voice. The private voice is authentic and comes from the heart and feelings, whereas the public voice can easily fabricate answers and comes from ego and intellect. However, some kind of research is required to make decisions about strategy and important questions. For this reason, there is a need to bridge the gap between thoughts and feelings to see when they are aligned, as the customer feelings insight is more predictive of future success than any other research method. Consumer Depth Workshops are one way to tackle this as it enables non-verbal feedback observation by taking advantage of group dynamics thus going beyond scaled survey responses. (Daye 2018.)

Aaker divides customer analysis into four categories that each can be looked at in more detail; 1) Customer trends that give insight into customer's changing motivations and emerging segments. 2) Motivations that give insight of which functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits will motivate customers to buy and use the brand. 3) Segmentation that identifies price sensitivity, sought benefits, brand loyalty and application by segments to identify which segments are most attractive for the brand and its identity. 4) Unmet needs which are strategically important as they may bring company opportunities by discovering what needs are not met by the existing offering. (Aaker 2002, 193.)

Finally, customer perceptions of the service quality can be assessed by using the SERVQUAL instrument that brings together five core dimensions of service quality and is particularly suitable for the service brand:

- Tangibles – Physical aspects of the brand like appearance of the staff and equipment.
- Reliability – The consistency and accuracy of which the staff can deliver the service as promised.
- Responsiveness – The staff willingness to advise and provide prompt help.
- Assurance – the professionalism, politeness and trustworthiness
- Empathy – personalised attention and focus to individual customers

(De Chernatony & McDonald 2005, 409.)

4.6.4. Competitive analysis

Competitive analysis plays a significant role in a brand development plan. The brand is rarely bought without comparison to other brands and thus, it is important to know who the

key competitors are. This is often misjudged by the companies and thus it is essential to find out from customers and potential customers which brands they consider to be similar. Competitor analysis should identify the brand image and position of the key competitors as well as strengths and vulnerabilities. The competitor analysis should take into account both the present situation and the future. (Aaker 2002, 193.)

Once the key competitors have been identified, their objectives and strategies need to be assessed. (De Chernatony & McDonald 2005, 59.) The company should also establish what the competitors real and perceived strengths and weaknesses are. (Kotler & Keller 2012, 301.) This will help the company to develop a point of distinction. (Aaker 2002, 194.) Furthermore, the competitor analysis should also measure current and possible competitors to reflect on strategy and to see whether it is standing out enough. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2002, 40 – 41.) This will help the company to assess its own relative position towards the competitors. (De Chernatony & McDonald 2005, 59.)

The analysis should also establish which are the key components of the product or service; what makes it unique and what attributes should you highlight. There are a number of competitive analysis models to make it easier to arrange the competitors in strategic groups for analysis. (Entrepreneur.)

The best source to get an insight into competitors' current brand images are the customers, through qualitative research or quantitative surveys. (Aaker 2002, 194.) Competitors can be analysed by asking customers to rate the company's three main competitors for example on awareness, quality, availability, assistance and staff:

	Customer Awareness	Service quality	Service availability	Technical Assistance	Selling Staff
Competitor A	E	E	P	P	G
Competitor B	G	G	E	G	E
Competitor C	F	P	G	F	F
E=excellent, G=good, F=fair, P=poor					

Figure 33. Competitor analysis example (Kotler & Keller 2012, 301).

Based on the results, the company should then define a position and competitor strategy so they can attack the competitors where their weaknesses are. If there is a competitor with all-round strengths it should not be attacked at all as that can be risky. It is much easier to approach from the angle where the competitor is not so strong. (Aaker 2002, 195.) Once the main competition is defined the company should find out what the main strategies of the competition are. (Kotler & Keller 2012, 301.) According to Kotler & Keller the company should ask what the competitor is aiming for in the market place and what is the main driver for each competitor. (Kotler & Keller 2012, 301.)

4.7. Reliability and validity of the study

It is important that in any research conducted the reliability and validity is evaluated because, although mistakes are avoided as much as possible, the results' reliability and validity vary. Reliability refers to replicability of the results and the research ability to produce non-random results. This means that if the research was repeated by somebody else using the same processes the research would produce similar results. To reach consistent and rigorous interpretation of logical, consistent and dependable data, the research agenda needs to be transparent and the research needs to apply good practice in showcasing which processes were used and how the conclusions were drawn. (Brunt et al. 2017, 239; Hirsjärvi et al. 2013, 231; Saunders et al. 2016, 726; Holopainen & Pulkkinen 2013, 17.) In addition, if the research uses a questionnaire for data collection the questions and statements need to be unambiguous and the questionnaire needs to be tested prior to sending it out to a target group. The phenomenon should be measured in several different ways within the same measurement in order to form a sum of the variables. In order to achieve consistency, the propositions within the meter should be dependent on each other and measure the same phenomenon. (Liukkonen 2011.)

The reliability or internal consistency can be measured by Cronbach's Alpha method or split sample comparisons (Mora 2011.) Cronbach's Alpha method was used as a measure for the questionnaires as it is suitable method to measure reliability of the questions using Likert scale. (Griffith 2015.) The test defines if the question is testing what it was set to measure. An alpha of 0.8 or above is considered acceptable level whereas 0.7 is the limit of acceptability. The reliability of the five-point Likert scale questions was tested with SPSS in the partner survey (strength of brand associations) Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11 and Q12, Q13, Q14 (brand image), in customer survey Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8 (strength of the brand associations) and Q9 (favorability of the brand associations) and in all the questions in market research.

In the partner survey Q8, Q9, Q10 and Q11 the test produced an alpha of .916 which is an indication of highly acceptable result. Two responses were excluded from the result. Table is displayed as Appendix 11. The scale produced an alpha of .977 for Q12, Q13, Q14 which again is a highly acceptable result. Table is displayed in Appendix 12. In the customer survey Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9 produced an alpha of .917 again acceptable result (Appendix 13) as well as Q1 – Q20 in market research survey which the scale produced an alpha of .950 (Appendix 14).

Lack of resources and limited time prevented application of the splitting-method or different questionnaire versions in this research. Thus, the reliability of this research leans towards an acceptable response rate (employees 50%, management 100%, potential customers 31%, partners 25% and a market research 38%) within carefully planned and defined target group. Exception to the other survey groups the customer survey only resulted response rate of 10% thus can be questioned if the received data is enough sufficient to give a holistic view of the whole clientele. Low customer survey results and limitation of the sample are discussed further in the chapter 6.1. Further on, the results cannot be compared to measure reliability to previously conducted research as such has never been conducted before. However, the mostly acceptable response rate and consistent results give reason to assume that the results are reliable and that they serve their purpose as a base of the brand development plan.

Validity refers to chosen data collection methods' ability to correctly measure what it intended to measure and to what extent research findings are what they say they are. This is important because measures and methods don't always share the same reality with the researcher. This can happen if the respondents have understood questions wrong but the conclusions have been drawn according to the researcher's original research question in mind thus resulting in invalid results. Information should be applied broadly in addition to accurate and credible data as well as making sure the information is well defined and interpreted rather than just simply compared. (Saunders et al. 2016, 730; Brunt et al. 2017, 239; Hirsijärvi et al. 2013; Holopainen & Pulkkinen 2013, 16.)

The questionnaire was conducted by using Keller's Customer-Based brand equity model as a basis and in addition, the questions were reflected to the research objectives. Further on, the questionnaire was reviewed number of times, proof-read by several other people as well as by researcher, carefully planned and the questions were designed so that they

were interpreted unequivocally to avoid misunderstandings. The questionnaire was tested with a number of people with industry knowledge (N8) to make sure the researcher 's reality reflected to the respondents' reality. The results confirmed the content validity. Business to business environment taken into consideration the sample size represented well the main targets of the study. There were 35 partner respondents which can be expected to cover a section of the whole stakeholder field (hotel, air, car rental and banks), 54 potential customer respondents which were travel managers, buyers and people with business travel interest and knowledge and 22 travel bookers and frequent travelers with previous knowledge of several other TMCs for the market research. The only questionable sample size as previously mentioned was the customer questionnaire only covering 18 customers which were companies' travel managers or main travel bookers. Thus, it can be stated that the external and internal validity is at a good level.

All the processes are described in detail and the data stored carefully to ensure the quality of the research. Questionnaires have been included into the thesis study to ensure they are available for anyone to explore at any given time. Theoretical framework is tied to the data analysis that together form a solid entity. In addition, the researcher has chosen theory and data sources carefully. Furthermore, the framework for this research is described in detail, the data collection and data defining fulfills the required transparency requirement.

5. The findings

This chapter will discuss the results of the research. The findings have been categorized based on themes that reflect the research questions and help answering them. The chapters provide answers to the main research questions as well as the sub questions.

The findings have been divided into three parts: brand perception internally which views Egencia Finland internally, brand perception externally which views Egencia Finland externally and current position towards the competition which views Egencia from industry and competitor perspective. The sub questions (Q2 and Q3) have been answered in the following three sub-chapters.

The main research question “How should Egencia Finland Oy develop its brand?” is answered in the final chapter by summarising the findings, linking the data from the questionnaires as well as the theory to discuss how the Egencia Finland brand should be developed.

5.1. Brand perception internally

As stated in chapter 4.6.1 the purpose of the self-analysis is to consider the brand’s current situation as well as the organisation delivering the brand, to identify its strengths, limitations, strategies and values. The self-analysis should also find if the brand is able and willing to deliver and that it has the needed resources in place. Keeping the thesis questions in mind the employees’ perceptions of the brand are also a central part of the self-analysis. Thus, when building the survey, the above criteria was taken into consideration and complemented with Keller’s brand equity frame.

5.1.1. Egencia as an organisation

As stated in chapter 2.1.2. the company culture and values play a significant role with service brands. Thus, the questions related to culture and values played a central role in the employee survey.

As an organisation the local Egencia Finland is relatively small employing 19 people out of which 11 are travel consultants, two are account managers, team leader (1), invoicing (1), implementation (1), marketing support (1), accounting manager (1) and managing director (1) who is also responsible for new sales. The team leader is managing the travel consultants locally whereas implementation, invoicing, marketing support and the accounting manager are part of virtual teams where the management is based in the global organisation. Working as part of the virtual team which communicates electronically, share common goal and work mostly without physical contact in different physical or geographical locations can benefit the company by bringing resources, knowledge and competence that may not have been available before. However, working with the virtual team may also bring challenges such as management challenges, motivation when the face to face interaction is lacking, greater difference in perceptions due to the lack of visibility, geographical time differences, cultural differences which can also show as different ways of perceiving things. All the Egencia Finland’s organisation members are in touch with the stakeholders thus everybody’s role is important and everybody’s input is needed in brand building. (Zhang et al. 2012, 37 – 38; Han & Beyerlein 2016, 351 - 375.)

5.1.2. Mission, vision, values and company culture

The employee and management survey focused first to gain information about how the company vision and mission was understood within the organisation. Thus, the first (Q1) question of the survey was open-ended question and asked the employees (Q1) and management (Q1) to define what the company's vision was.

Egencia vision: *"To be the most business traveler centric company in the world and be the one to shape the travel culture."*

Due to confidentiality reasons, the further content of this section is excluded from the publicly available version of this thesis on Theseus.

5.1.3. Current brand image and identity

When researching the current brand image and identity, it was important to involve all the stakeholders in order to get a holistic view. Thus, the questions related to image were included in employee, management and partner survey. In addition, the employee and management survey included question related to brand identity. The partner survey results will be discussed in chapter 5.2.

Due to confidentiality reasons, the further content of this section is excluded from the publicly available version of this thesis on Theseus.

5.1.4. Brand associations internally

Brand associations were researched by using several differently framed questions to get as complete a view as possible. The employees, partners and customers were asked to choose the adjectives most suited to Egencia. The adjectives chosen for questionnaire were either Egencia brand attributes or related to vision, mission and values. All three survey groups had the same adjectives to make comparing easier. The partner and customer perceptions will be discussed further in chapter 5.2.3. and the associations will be summarised in chapter 5.4. The most chosen adjectives in the employee survey (Q8) were "different", "innovative", "forward thinking" and "professional".

All the stakeholders including the potential customers were also asked to describe Egencia by three words on an open-ended question. The answers were categorised by the similarities in wording and theming and then inputted into Wordle to visualise which words were mentioned most. Other stakeholder results will be discussed further in chapter 5.2.3.

In the employee survey the attributes were more varied than in the other surveys and the most often mentioned attribute was forward thinking.



5.2. Brand perception externally

As stated in the chapter 4.6.3 customer analysis' aim is to understand and be able to influence customer's attitude and behaviour. For that, the company needs to understand the drivers behind it. The more the customer is understood, the more in-depth knowledge can be used as a competitive advantage. It is also important to have knowledge of how the brand is perceived externally in order to prevent too big of a gap to materialise between the brand identity and brand image. Thus, this chapter discusses the questionnaire findings as well as the customers more in detail.

5.2.1. Customer trends and segmentation

Egencia customers have been divided into three different groups by size and importance. The biggest group is small customers that have certain yearly travel spent per year. This category is relatively easy to maintain and does not receive account management nor any preferential service. The second group of customers consists of medium customers whose travel spend is bigger. This group has a named account manager and most will have a set SLA in place thus are more expensive to maintain although they also have a bigger lifetime value than the very small clients. The third group consists of strategically important customers who are not necessarily big in travel spend but are part of a big global customer and thus may have its own SLA and service preferences. The Pareto rule applies to Egencia's customer portfolio where 80% of sales comes from 20% of the clients. (Temporal 2010, 330.) Egencia Finland does not have any clients that are defined as large by Egencia's general standard.

5.2.2. Brand awareness

The unaided brand recall was measured by asking the partners and potential customers which TMC came to their mind first. 58% of respondents in the partner survey said that the first TMC coming to their mind was CWT and 33% said SMT. None of the respondents recalled Egencia. 51% of the potential customers said CWT, 34% said SMT and 4% said Egencia.

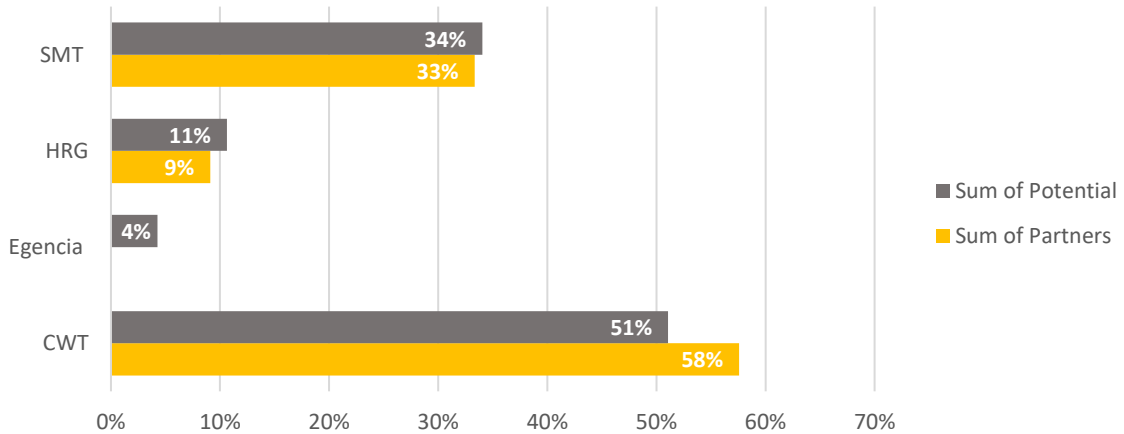


Figure 33. First brand to come to mind.

Brand knowledge was measured only by potential customer survey because the hypothesis was that the partners know Egencia. The potential customers were displayed a list of all the TMCs in the Finnish market and asked to choose the ones they were familiar with. The most known TMC brands were SMT and CWT.

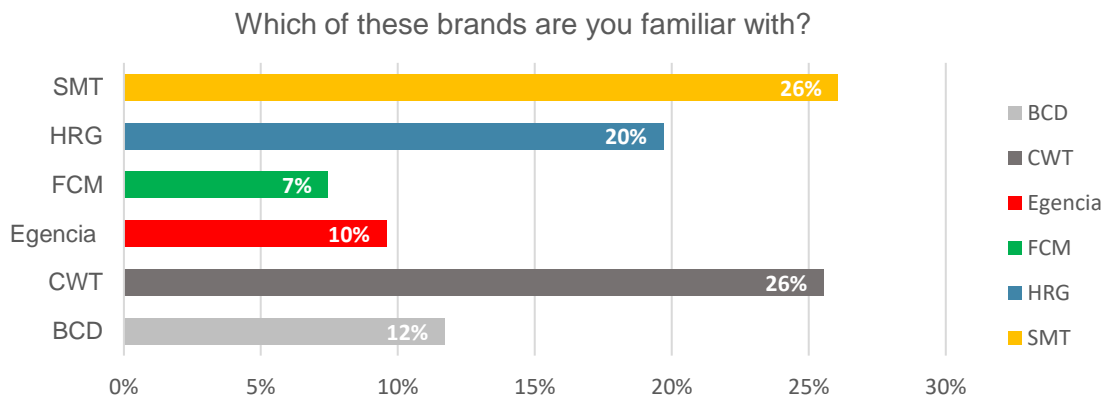


Figure 34. Familiarity of the TMC brand in the Finnish travel market.

5.2.3. Current brand image

In order to assess the external perception of the current brand image the partner survey included questions related to brand, image and reputation.

Due to confidentiality reasons, the further content of this section is excluded from the publicly available version of this thesis on Theseus.

5.2.4. Brand associations externally

Brand associations were first measured in the potential customer survey, partner survey and customer survey by asking the respondents to describe Egencia with three words the same way as in the employee survey. The questions were open ended questions and the words were categorized and then inputted to Wordle to visualize which words were mentioned the most.

In the potential customers' survey, the most mentioned word was unknown by 23 times, second most mentioned word was small by 10 times, International by 5 times and modern by 3 times.



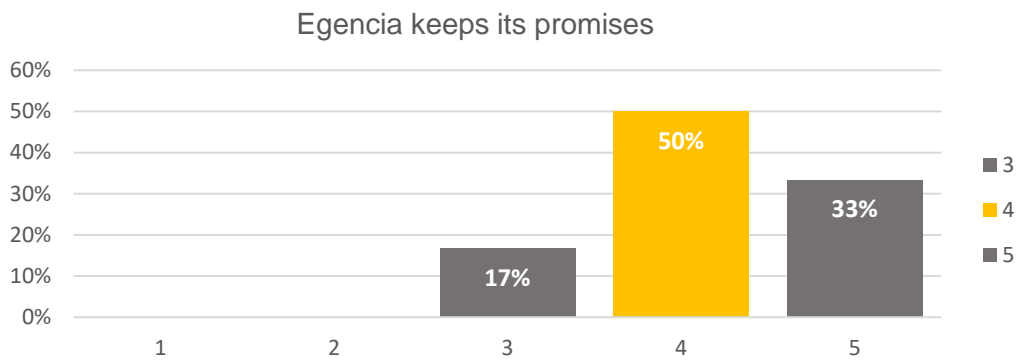
In the partner survey the most mentioned words were International, unknown, professional, unattainable and challenger.



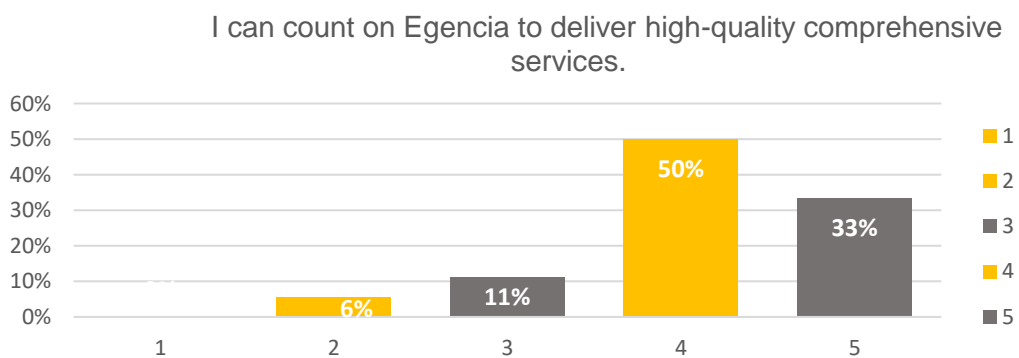
The word skilled was mentioned most in the customer survey and in addition words friendly, easy and efficient were mentioned number of times.



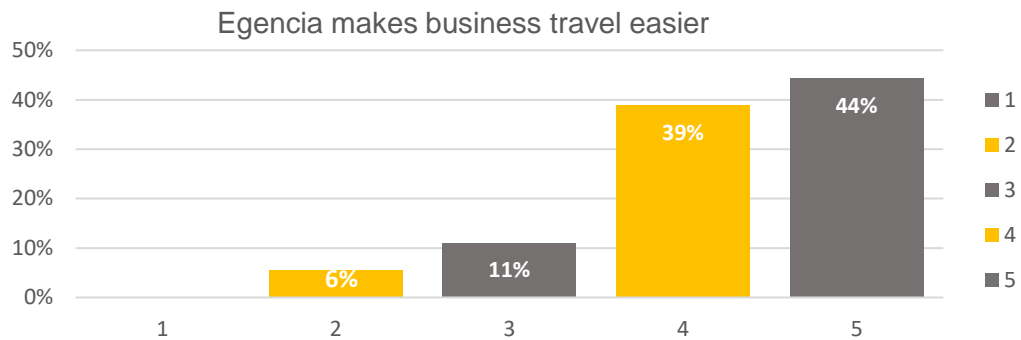
Further on, in order to gain a better idea of how strong the brand associations were, a set of semi-structured statements about beliefs were added to customer questionnaire. The first statement was “Egencia keeps its promises”. Over half of the respondents answered four or five.



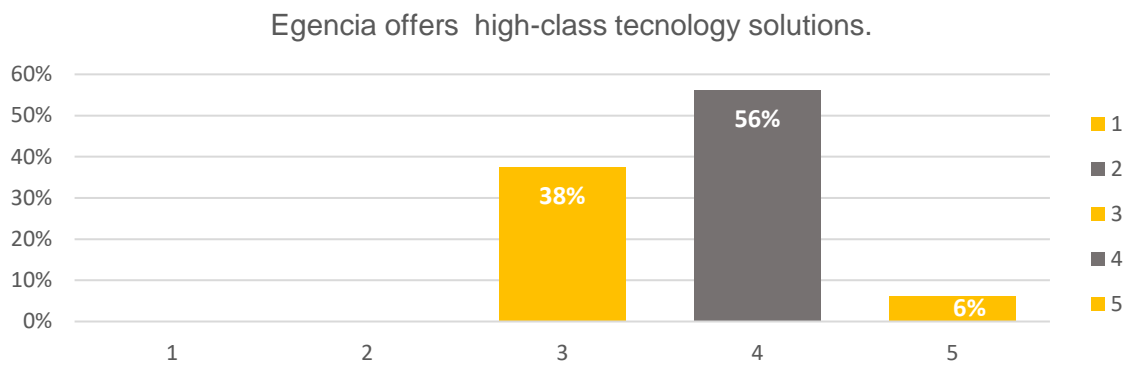
The second statement was “I can count on Egencia to deliver high-quality comprehensive services.” Again, over half of the respondents answered either four or five.



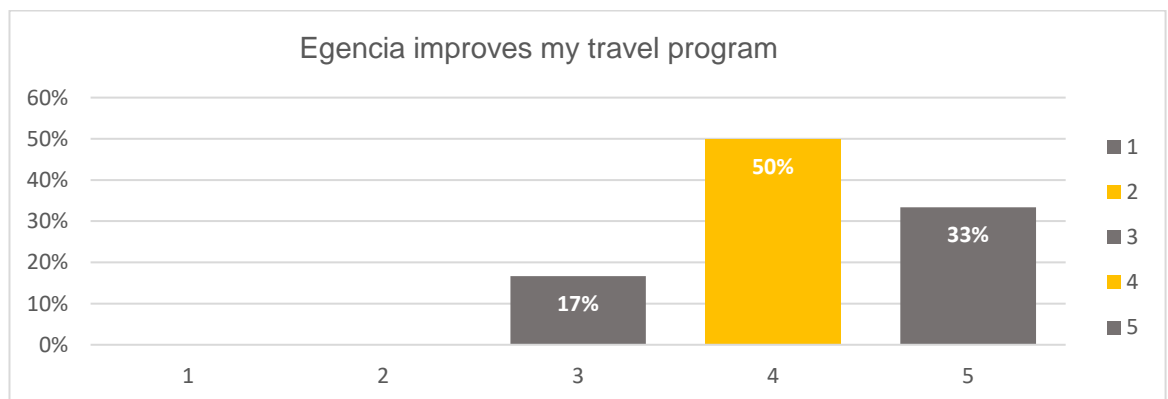
The third statement was “Egencia makes business travel easier.” 44% of the respondents gave five and 39% four.



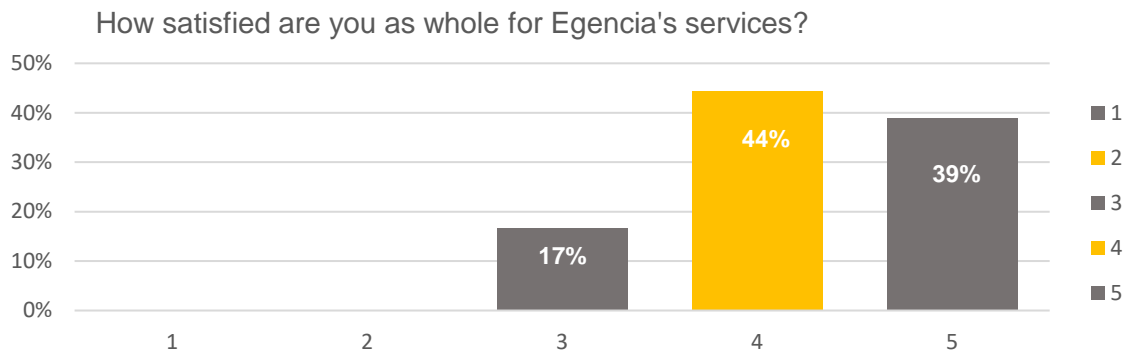
The fourth statement was “Egencia offers high-class technology solutions”. A bit over half gave four, 38% though three and 6% five.



The fifth and last statement was “Egencia improves my travel program.” 83% of the respondents gave either four or five.

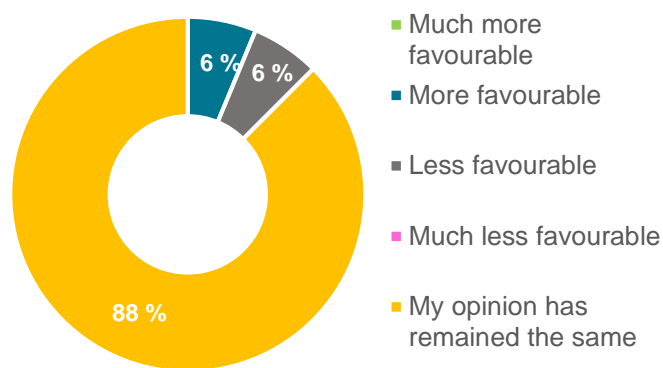


The brand associations were measured further by measuring the favorability of the associations. The customers were asked how satisfied they were overall with Egencia’s services. Over half of the respondents chose either four or five.



The second question measuring the favorability of the brand associations was “how has your perception of Egencia brand changed in the past three months?”. Well over half said that their opinion had remained the same whereas one respondent said that the opinion had changed to more favorable and one said the opinion had changed to less favorable.

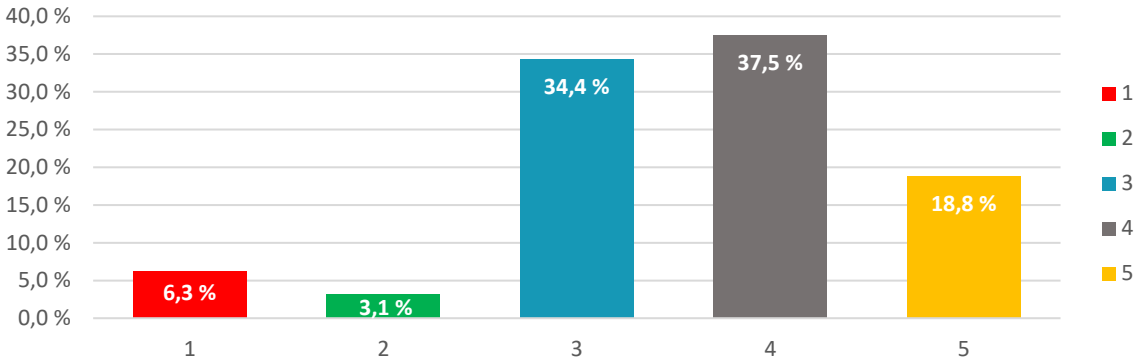
How has your perception of Egencia brand changed in the past 3 months?



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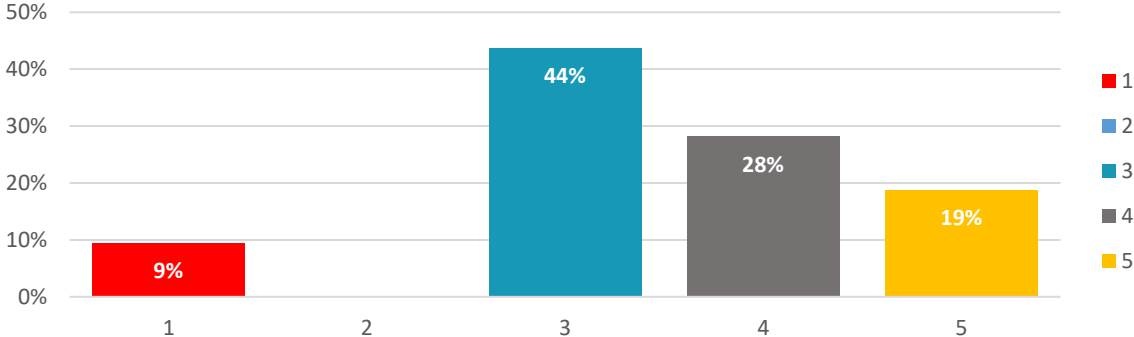
The strength of brand associations was also measured in the partner survey which had a set of semi-structured statements about beliefs for the respondents to rate. The first statement was “Cooperation with Egencia is smooth”. Majority of the respondents answered either four or three.

Cooperation with Egencia is smooth



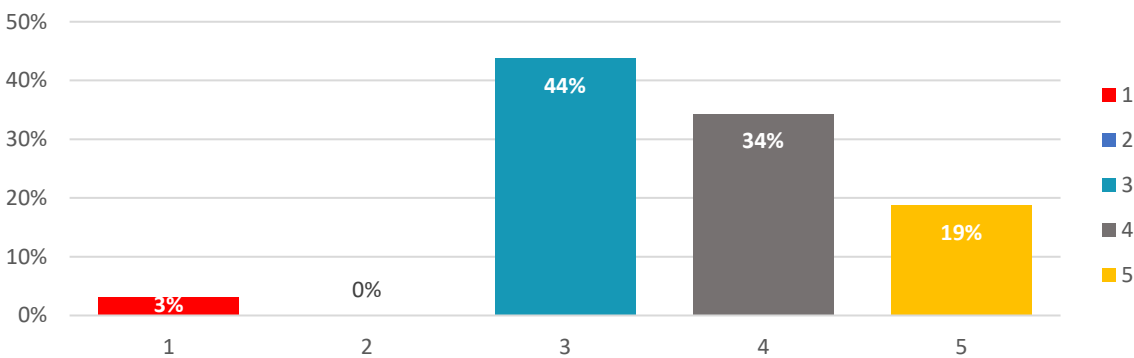
The next statement was “Egencia keeps its promises.” 44% of the respondents rated 3 whereas 28% rated 4.

Egencia keeps its promises

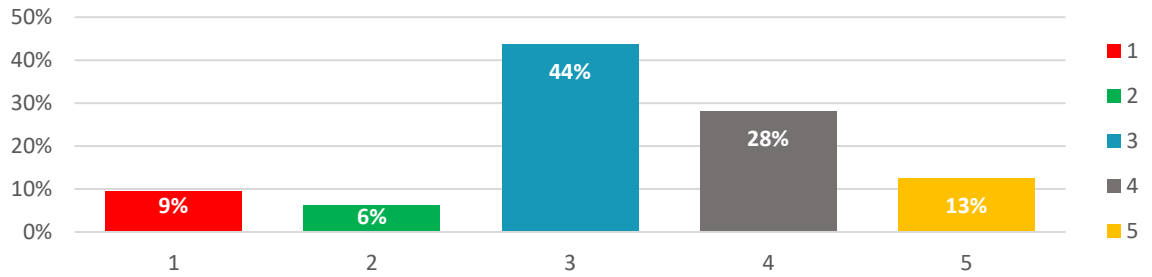


The third statement was “Egencia is trustworthy”. Out of all the respondents 44% gave 3, 34% 4 and 19% gave 5.

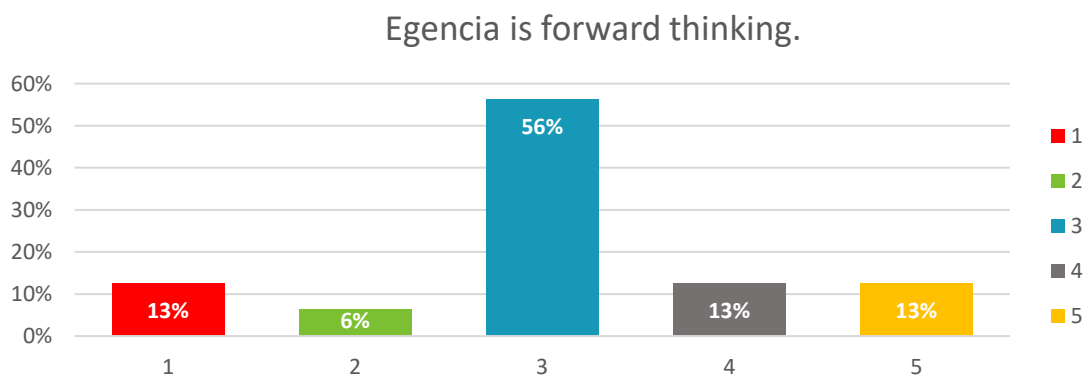
Egencia is trustworthy.



The fourth statement was “Egencia offers unique technology solutions.” Most of the respondents gave either 3 or 4.



The last statement was “Egencia is forward thinking.” Over half of the respondents gave 3.



5.2.5. Customer and partner loyalty

As the customer loyalty is culmination of customer commitment, brand image, brand value, perceived quality, brand trust and also directly contributes to company’s balance sheet the researcher felt it was important to include NPS question into the questionnaire as it is an efficient way to measure loyalty. The Net Promoter Score calculation is generally based on the 0 – 10 scale and the most common question wording is “How likely is it that you would recommend our company to a friend or colleague?”. The NPS score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of responses that are Detractors from the percentage of the responses which are Promoters. The respondents that choose either 9 or 10 are classified as Promoters and are loyal customers willing to recommend the company, service or product. The respondents who choose either 7 or 8 are classified as Passives and are customers who are satisfied but not enough to engage to company, product or service and can easily switch the product or service provider if they encounter something more interesting or cheaper. The responders who choose numbers in between 0-6 are classified as Detractors and are customers who are not satisfied and thus can harm the

brand by spreading negative communication about it. (Ahvenainen et al. 2017, 24 – 26.)
The NPS score can be anything between -100 - +100.

Any number above 0 is considered to be good as that means most of the customers are loyal whereas scoring below 0 means that the company needs to invest in improving the customer satisfaction and gain more insight of its customers. Scoring 50 or above means the company is highly customer centric with loyal customers who are also spreading the positive word about the brand. Cultural differences may play a part in NPS results thus, general standard of a good NPS score is difficult to set. The best way to define a good and valid NPS score is to survey it regularly thus allowing benchmarking to previous studies. Nevertheless, a strong NPS score will play a part in organic growth as it builds a brand image and increases brand awareness. (Toivonen, Yan.)

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5.3. Current position towards the competition

Competitive analysis is part of strategic decision making and helps the company to determine who its main competitors are as well as providing insight into competitors' weaknesses and strengths. (Entrepreneur.)

5.3.1. Industry – nature of the industry, scope and development

Business travel is a highly competitive field and a number of TMCs exist around the world, each of them providing similar services, so it is very difficult to differentiate. Most of the TMCs are now global players and in Finland the coverage of global companies is 96% of the whole market. Therefore, Egencia Finland Oy's competition is mainly global. In addition to traditional TMCs, it is expected that new agile disruptors such as technology companies are coming into the market to challenge the more traditional players. TMCs on the other hand are expected to defend their position by continuing to merge and invest into their own online booking platforms or buying them. (Pridor 2018.)

The business travel market in Finland was worth 625 million euros in 2015 and it is estimated that the business travel will grow in the future. (Floman 2016). However, according to Bureau of Statistics, the business travel in Finland stayed the same domestically during 2016 – 2017 but there was a small decrease in business travel abroad in 2017 when com-

paring to 2016. (Tilastokeskus 2018.) According to Egencia's own study only 50% of business travel is currently managed worldwide which gives a lot of opportunities for the future.

Business travel is dependent on the global economy and the cyclical situation at home and abroad. After a slow global economic growth in recent years, 2017 saw some growth which is expected to continue during 2018 due to increased business and consumer confidence. In addition, industries such as investment, trade and manufacturing have recovered and will most likely contribute to the growth. However, this development may be short-lived if the protectionist rhetoric becomes more defined and widespread causing more restrictions in key markets. Travel pricing is also impacted by inflation and currency strength and it is predicted that the inflation rate should remain on moderate 3% level. In addition, geopolitical risks and European politics might have an impact on the global economy. Other possible risks are geopolitical risks such as terrorist attacks, European politics such as Brexit's possible impact on the economy, impact of US administration policies and the possible risks from emerging countries such as slowed growth which would impact the global economy. (CWT & GBTA 2018,2 -5; Suort 2017.)

Further on, airline and ground transportation pricing is expected to increase in 2018. The airline pricing is largely impacted by increasing oil pricing. The line between different price options such as low-cost or full priced options are going to get more blurred thus making the cost tracking more challenging. On the hotel side the dynamic pricing is driven by the hotel industry which may result in a mix of fixed and dynamic corporate pricing. (Advito 2017; CWT & GBTA 2017, 12.)

5.3.2. Market trends

Business travel trends for 2018 and beyond have been defined by a number of publishers. Some of the trends come from leisure and as such there is a blurred line between business and leisure travel and user experience.



Figure 36. Travel trends 2018 and beyond.

Geopolitical risks and terrorism such as cooled diplomatic relations between USA and Russia as well as increased tension in Korean peninsula expose the business travelers to risk. Further on, changing regulations such as visa and immigration requirements and other safety standards are causing uncertainty amongst travelers. Thus, travel risk management solutions continue to be an important part of travel management. (CWT & GBTA 2018,2 -5; Advito 2017.) Shared economy such as Uber and Airbnb are expected to continue to grow further in business travel even though there still is some degree of concern about duty of care and reporting, the attitudes are more positive than before. (CWT & GBTA 2017, 6; Dyson 2018.)

Technology and digitalization is expected to have an impact on travel in 2018 and beyond. The biggest impact is most likely to be caused by artificial intelligence which enables the use of big data by producing patterns and algorithms and thus will replace some tasks done by humans. Further on, another significant impact is expected from bitcoin technology usage in transactions and the chatbot usage in simple customer service situations. The hotel industry is also going digital and investing into technology such as mobile apps and beacons. (Advito 2017; CWT & GBTA 12.)

In the knowledge industry the employee wellbeing and work-life balance is becoming more important and is one way to attract potential employees. Also, the personal preferences and experiences play a bigger role than before which should be taken into consideration when generating customer experience. Thus, the combination of business and leisure travel has and will become more common for employees thus the companies are taking that into consideration when designing policies. This brings efficiency for time management as the employees don't have to spend one work day traveling back from the business trip as well as a possible cost reduction for the company with longer hotel stay

and off-peak traveling. (Chung 2017; Travel Weekly 2017; Amex; GBTA 2017.) In addition, user experience is becoming more and more important. Travelers are expecting leisure grade experience when booking business travel. They want the same seamless, personalized, fast, easy and light experience across all the devices which preferably uses some other payment method than traveler's personal credit card. (Pridor 2018.)

5.3.3. Egencia and competitors

Egencia Finland Oy is a Travel Management Company (TMC) that has a strong global brand presence. Globally it is the 4th largest TMC and belongs to Expedia group which in turn is the largest Travel Company in the world. Locally Egencia Finland Oy falls under the category of small and medium enterprises (SME) and its market share is 4%. Egencia's strategy is to be an industry leader with its own end user technology and its mission statement is "To revolutionize business travel through the power of technology".

Egencia Finland was operating originally as Travelzone and was then sold to a leading Nordic TMC, VIA Travel Group in 2008 when its name was changed to VIA Travel Finland Oy. After 4 years being owned by VIA it was sold to Egencia and after a brief period of being VIA Egencia Finland Oy the name was changed to the current Egencia Finland Oy. Egencia operates in 67 countries worldwide, has over one million business travel users and employs over 4 000 people.

According to Egencia Finland management all the global TMCs, Google and other online travel companies are Egencia Finland's main competition but to bring in focus, in this survey the main competitors were defined from the potential customer and partner survey. CWT, SMT and HRG had the highest awareness from all the TMC's in the Finnish travel industry and they also share the biggest market share thus, they can be considered currently as the main competitors to Egencia.

5.3.4. SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis was done based on the survey results and discussions with the local Egencia sales organization and management.

Due to confidentiality reasons, the further content of this section is excluded from the publicly available version of this thesis on Theseus.

Figure 34. SWOT analysis.

5.3.5. Key success factors

Key success factors for this research were chosen according to the research objects and by using the researcher's market knowledge. Customer awareness and brand associations' results from stakeholder surveys were coded and scaled as excellent, good, fair and poor. In addition, a separate survey was sent to previous Egencia customers and frequent travelers asking them to rate on a 5-point Likert scale what did they think about different TMCs' service offer, technical solutions, communication, safety and pricing. Survey respondents who according to the researcher's knowledge had been using more than one different TMCs were picked for the research.

	Customer Awareness	Customer Service	Service offer	Technical solutions	Communication/safety	Image	Price
Company A	E	F	F	F	F	E	X
Company B	E	G	G	G	F	E	X
Company C	G	F	F	F	F	G	E
Company D	P	G	G	G	G	P	X
E=excellent, G=good, F=fair, P=poor				C=cheap, Q=quite cheap, E=quite expensive, X=expensive, V=very expensive			

Figure 35. Key success factors.

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6. Conclusions

The researcher wanted to identify how Egencia Finland was perceived in the Finnish travel market and how that knowledge could be processed into a brand development plan so that it would support the growth strategy for 2020. This was done by conducting research on Egencia's brand awareness and image as well as a benchmarking study among the most important competitors. The objective of this survey was to obtain a holis-

tic view of the current situation so that recommendations for future planning could be provided. The following chapters will summarise the findings and suggest a brand development plan and process for Egencia Finland Oy.

6.1. Summarising the findings

Based on the research findings and the literature review in this thesis, this chapter describes the key development needs in order to answer the research question “*How should Egencia’s brand be developed growth targets?*”

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Although the image of Egencia is generally positive it needs developing as it does not convey the image the company is aiming for. In all the image and reputation related questions amongst the partners, the share of neutrality was significant. This can be interpreted in a way that the partners don’t have enough knowledge to rate Egencia either positive nor negative. In addition, throughout the partner questionnaire 12% of the partners expressed that they are not familiar with Egencia. Further on, the second most mentioned word in the potential client survey was “small” and in the partner survey “international”. When given a set of associations the most coherent adjectives between customers, partners and employees were professional, service-minded and fast. However, the most chosen association by partners was “ordinary” which again gives an indication that Egencia’s image is not defined in this group.

When measuring the strength of associations ratings between partners and customers were good on cooperation, keeping promises and trustworthiness. As opposed to Egencia’s vision and mission the statements about being forward thinking and providing unique technology solutions got least fours and fives out of all the statements. Customer survey results were the same where the difference was even more clear; all the other statements about keeping promises, service, making business travel easier and enhancing the travel program got solid 83% of fours and fives whereas the statement about high class technology was the only statement that scored lower. Thus, it can be concluded that Egencia is seen as trustworthy partner that keeps its promises, provides good service and is easy to work with. Technology and being forward thinking is not differentiating factor amongst the partners and customers.

Customers see Egencia generally very positively and this is highlighted by the words “professional”, “service-minded” and “approachable” that were the most chosen associations. Out of these three groups the employees’ associations are closest to the Egencia brand attributes by having “different”, “innovative” and “forward thinking” as most chosen attributes. It seems that even though the values are not clear in the organisation the employees have quite a good idea of the Egencia brand and that they have somewhat internalised it.

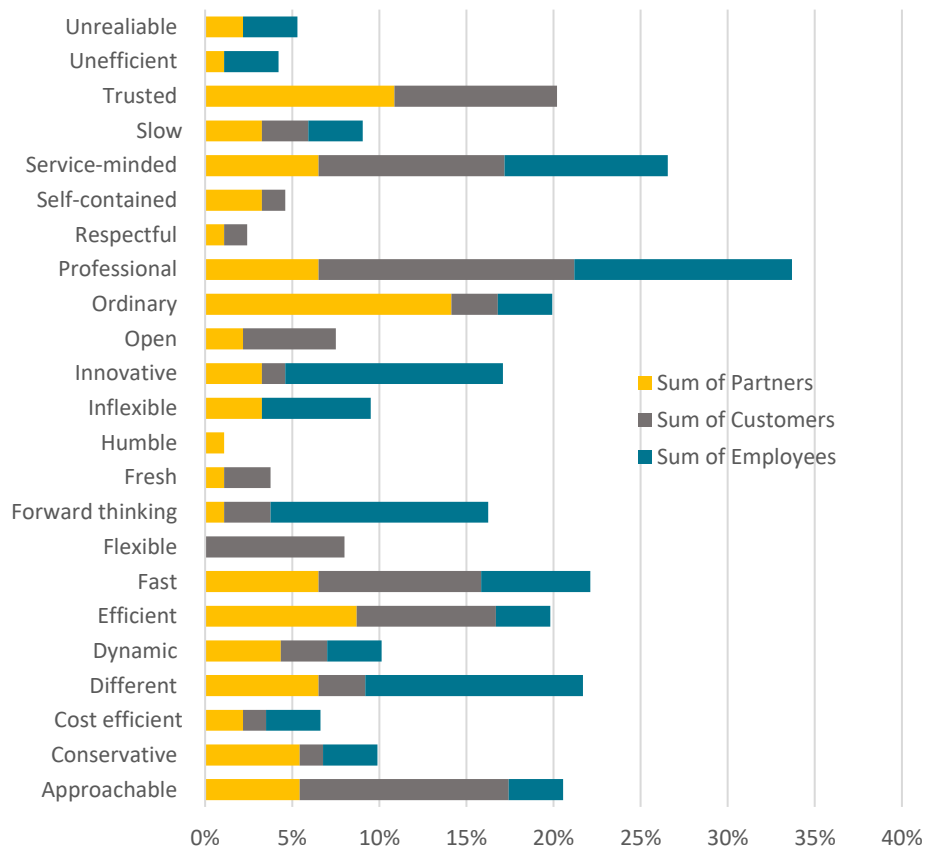


Figure 39. Which of these characteristics describe Egencia best?

Egencia brand attributes were also compared separately between the three stakeholder groups to see how coherent the view of these three groups was about brand attributes. Professional, service-minded and different were the most consistent attributes between all the stakeholders and it is clear to see that apart from the employees nobody else sees Egencia different, forward thinking and innovating which could be again due to lack of brand knowledge and awareness.

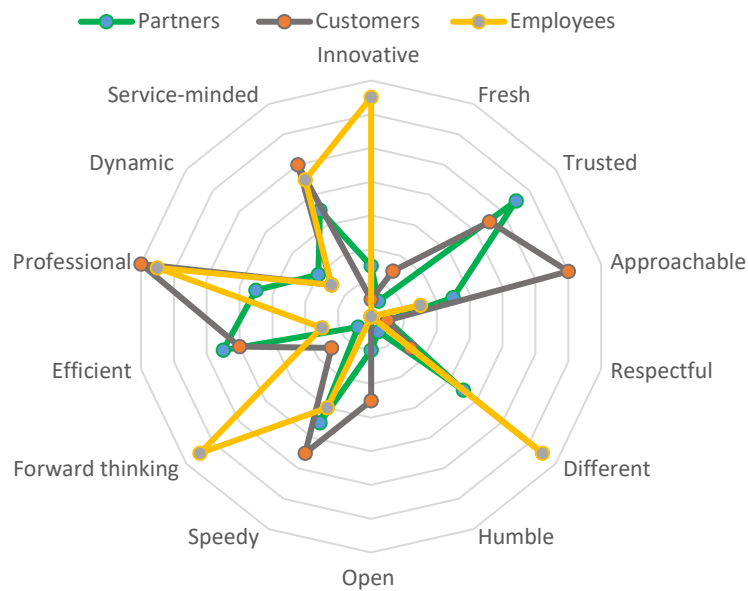


Figure 40. Egencia brand attributes compared between stakeholder groups.

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6.2. Brand development plan for Egencia

As stated in chapter 2.4. the basis for successful brands is brand planning which should be part of the business planning and occur regularly. The brand plan should bring together all the needed resources and give the organization a direction, goals and strategy to reach the desired goals. As the theory clearly pointed out the brand planning and monitoring should be something that happens regularly thus, this has been taken into consideration in the brand planning process which is presented in figure 41. The brand plan process incorporates the findings from the internal and external surveys and builds on it to suggest a brand development plan and process for Egencia Finland.

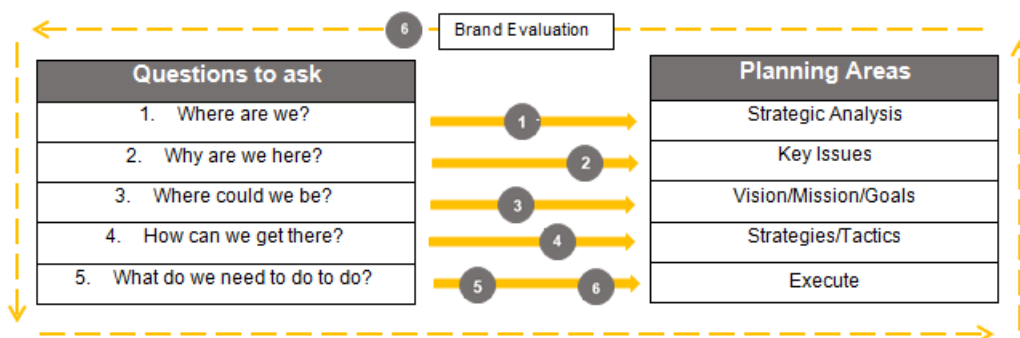


Figure 41. Brand plan process for Egencia Finland.

6.2.1. Brand plan framing

To frame the brand plan, it is important to set the direction and outline the plan by setting strategic questions that the brand plan is built on. The questions correlate with different areas of the brand plan and the answers to the questions are derived from the research.

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The current situation can be summarized with a force field analysis. As it is clear in the literature, in service branding the company culture is a crucial factor in brand development as it has the power to either hinder or help it thus it has been included into the force field analysis as one element. The idea of the force field analysis is to improve, stay focused and enhance the factors that are driving growth and minimize the factors that are preventing the growth. In addition, the threats need to be avoided where possible and the plans should be made to mobilise the brand in order to see if the opportunity is gaining space for it.

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6.2.2. Key issues – Step 2

Step two compliments the strategic analysis based on the survey results and its purpose is to define all the obstacles as a way of achieving the vision and the set goals. This step should be done ideally as a workshop involving people from different parts of the local organization as the employee involvement is important in service brand building as the literature clearly points out. Due to the lack of time from Egencia Finland's side this is done by the researcher and thus, only presents the researchers view which is based on the research results and the strategic analysis. To define the key issues this section first assesses Egencia Finland's competitive position, core strengths, the level of customer loyalty and the current business situation.

Current share position in the market	Core strength the brand can win on	Level of customer satisfaction	Current business situation
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Challenger	Most business traveler centric Service/experience	High	Very tight competition and homogeneous market. Turn around needed.
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Figure 43. Assessing Egencia Finland.

Egencia Finland is the 5th largest TMC in the Finnish travel market with only 4% market share. The position has remained more or less the same for the last 10 years. Therefore, it can be said that Egencia Finland is in challenger position in the Finnish market. The vision statement consists of the brand's values and core purpose. (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 88 – 94.) As discussed in chapter 5.1.2. Egencia's vision statement is *"To be the most business traveler centric company in the world and be the one to shape the travel culture."* Thus, it can be concluded that based on the research the customer service is Egencia Finland's core strength which contributes to the realization of Egencia vision. The level of customer satisfaction is high according to customer survey results and is backed up by very low churn rate over the years. The current business situation is intense due to business mergers, new technology and homogenous market which means it is difficult to differentiate and find a competitive advantage. For Egencia Finland, based on the research results the current situation requires to be turned around in order to reach the 2020 strategy.

The next stage of key issues is to brainstorm possible things that could prevent the vision coming true and narrow it down to the top key issues. Robertson recommends turning the key issues into question mode which enables answering them as a part of the strategy. (Robertson.). After brainstorming all the possible obstacles, the researcher narrowed them down to the most critical factors which have been turned into questions and which are then addressed in the strategy part of the brand plan.

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6.2.3. Vision, mission and goals – Step 3

As stated in chapter 2.4.1. brand planning should start with defining the vision. Since Egencia already has a vision in place this step can be considered after strategic analysis

and key issues as the purpose of the brand plan in this thesis is to try to achieve the already set vision on a local level. The vision should always portray the brand as it wants to be perceived and as stated in chapter 5.1.2. Egencia's vision is *"To be the most business traveler centric company in the world and be the one to shape the travel culture"* and its mission is *"To revolutionize business travel through power of technology."* Thus, it can be concluded that the Egencia brand should be perceived as business centric forward-thinking market forerunner who is the first to bring new solutions and ideas into the business travel market and further on to be the one who all the others follow.

Egencia's local goals can be derived from the Force field and SWOT analysis as follows:

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6.2.4. Strategy and tactics – Step 4

As stated in the chapter 2.4.3. the strategy's purpose is to tell how to reach the set goals which base on the brand core, its values and the brand associations. The strategy should also aim to answer the key issue questions.

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6.2.5. Execution – Step 5

The brand plan execution consists of strategic choices of which action will support each of the goal best and consists of different activities. The best marketing activities can be brainstormed to find the best activities that support different strategies and bring most return on investment (ROI) and return on effort (ROE). (Robertson.) Execution phase is excluded from this thesis and left for Egencia Finland to be implemented.

6.2.6. Brand Evaluation – Step 6

The brand tracking can use different methods and to help to define what and how different elements are measured the S.M.A.R.T system can be used. That means that the measurements should be specific and match with what the company wants to achieve. It should also consist of external measurable results like sales, market share and performance tracking that will guide towards the vision. Measuring also need to establish how to present the results and how they are compared (last year, competitors) The set measurable

goals should also be achievable. In addition, the goals also need to be relevant to strategy and tied to a vision so that yearly milestone goals attached to them. The measurable goals also need to have a time factor attached to them which is linked to major milestones and is broken into quarterly, annual and longer time frame goals. Once the goals and suitable measures have been decided, for visual effect and easier management, a brand score card or dashboard can be built for regular tracking and monitoring. (Robertson 2014.)

In Egencia Finland's case, based on the research it should include brand image, sales, new sales, market share, awareness, share of wallet, customer satisfaction, churn, employee satisfaction with the focus on local organisation culture, brand associations, social listening and website traffic.

Due to confidentiality reasons, the further content of this section is excluded from the publicly available version of this thesis on Theseus.

Figure 46. Example of the brand score card.

6.3. Learning outcomes

This study has contributed towards a better understanding for Egencia Finland about the brand and the associations attached to it. In addition, it has contributed towards the researcher's own learning. The idea of the thesis was based on the researcher's assumptions that the lack of awareness was a contributing factor for the stagnant situation regarding the company's market share and organic sales. The thesis's theoretical part reinforced and deepened the researcher's perceptions about the importance of the brand and the value attached to it. The researcher has acknowledged prior to research that employees are key to a company's success but gaining more understanding about service branding made the researcher realise that the employees, company culture and values create an entity which builds the service brand every day.

Due to this research and the need to grow the business after many stagnant years, it has become clear that investment in increasing Egencia Finland's presence and management of the brand in the Finnish travel market is necessary for future success.

Before this thesis study, the researcher had no previous experience about service branding and the thesis project has given the researcher additional expertise that complement

the researcher's formerly gained business skills. The researcher has learned how important the service brand is for the service business, how a good brand is built and what factors contribute towards a strong and successful brand. In addition, the research has taught to researcher how to plan and develop a brand. The researcher works in a sales organization which is closely related to marketing and branding, thus the researcher feels this thesis project will benefit her career in the future.

6.4. Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research

Limited number of Egencia Finland customers incorporate this thesis study thus their views may not be enough to draw reliable conclusions on behalf of the hundreds of customers Egencia Finland has locally. The low response rate may have been partly due to only a very small reward being offered for a survey response which could have had un motivating effect. The customer survey sample was also limited at Egencia's own request to cover only local clients which may give a biased view. In addition, the local customers have a different kind of decision process where decisions are made at a local level whereas global clients rarely have the decision-making power as to which TMC they can use thus, their view may differ from the local customers' view. Furthermore, some of the biggest Egencia Finland clients are global thus their opinion would be valuable as their interaction frequency with Egencia Finland is generally higher than the some of the smaller local client's.

As the researcher aimed to get a 360-degree view about Egencia's brand the quantitative data collection method was selected due to resources and time limitation. Due to prior business travel market knowledge the selection of respondents for the brand related surveys was simple and the response rate, especially on potential customer and partner surveys was sufficient. The data gathering from employees and customers turned out to be somewhat challenging and the response rate was relatively low on both categories. Market research was challenging due to the nature of it as the only suitable respondents had to have experience in using more than one TMC.

Although organisational culture played a part in this thesis due to the service brand's nature, this research did not focus to gain a deeper understanding of it. The researcher wanted to execute the data collection by a semi structured interview technique to get a bigger response rate and more in-depth knowledge. This was, however declined by the local organisation thus the information gathering was

done by a quantitative survey which limited the quality of the answers and decreased the response rate. The researcher recommends further interviews and workshops to explore the local organisation culture in more depth so that the NPS score can be increased and the organisational culture developed so that it supports the company values and identity. It would also be interesting to explore the differences between the different customer segments to see if there is a variance between them due to the different kind of relationship with the company. More customers should be engaged in dialogue to form a more comprehensive view of expectations among Egencia Finland customers.

This research touched the brand tracking superficially but the researcher recommends that a further project should be done in order to create a brand tracking dashboard or scorecard for further monitoring, tracking and brand planning.

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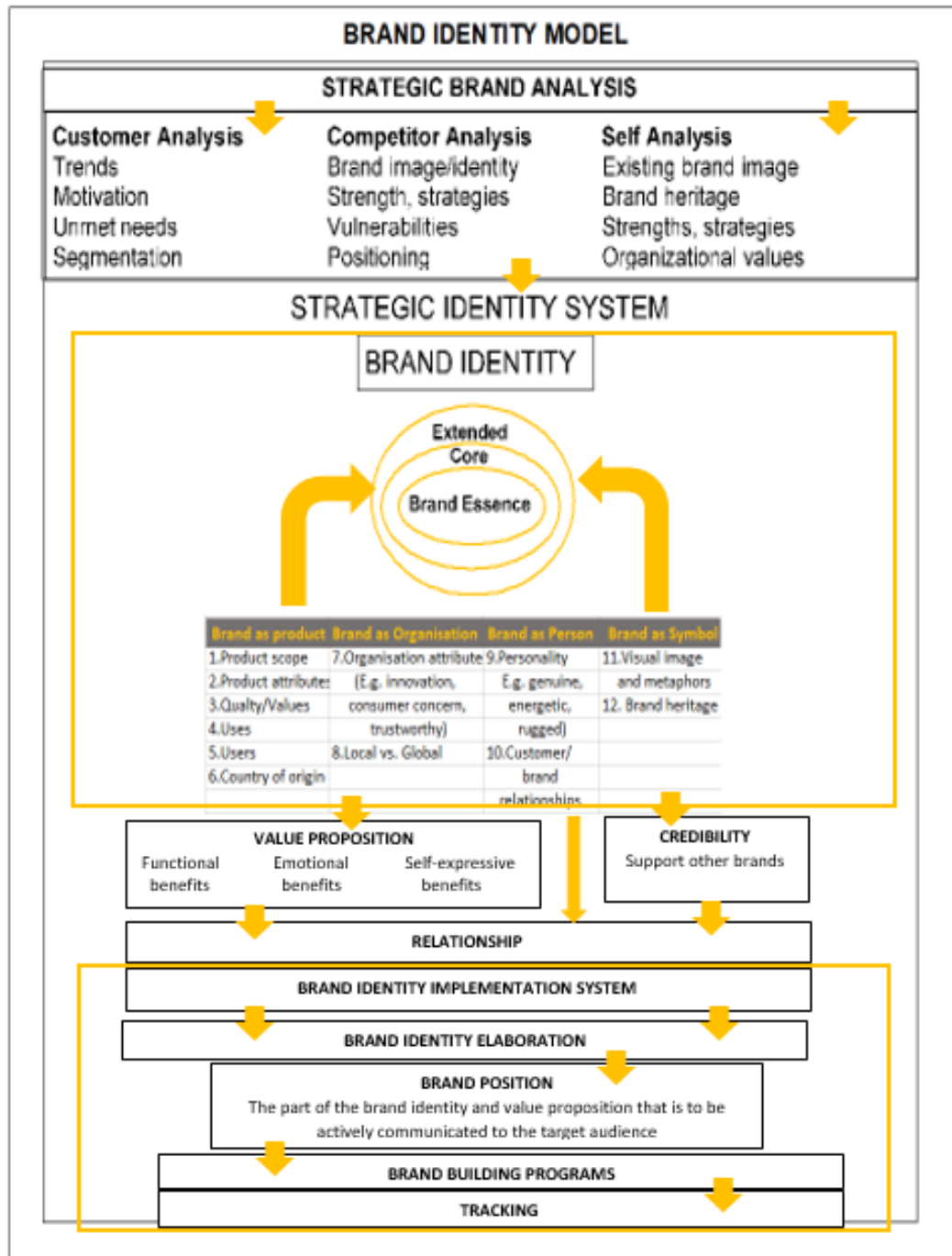
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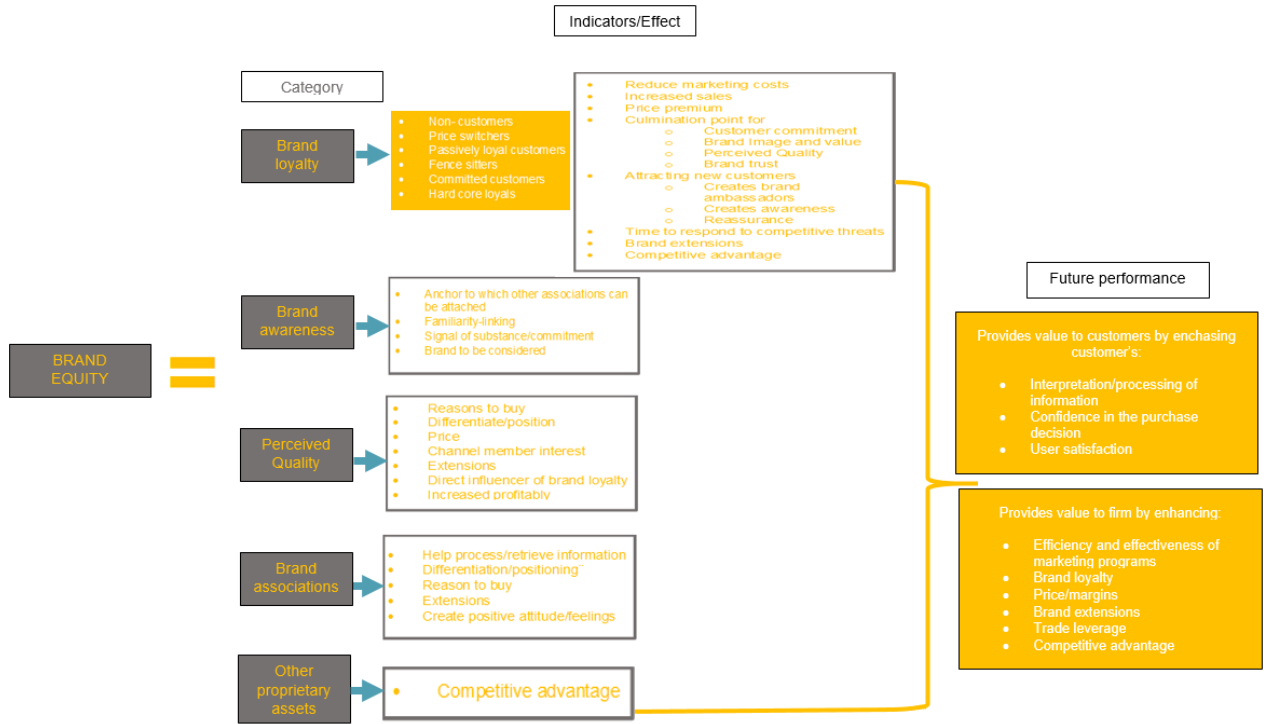
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Appendices

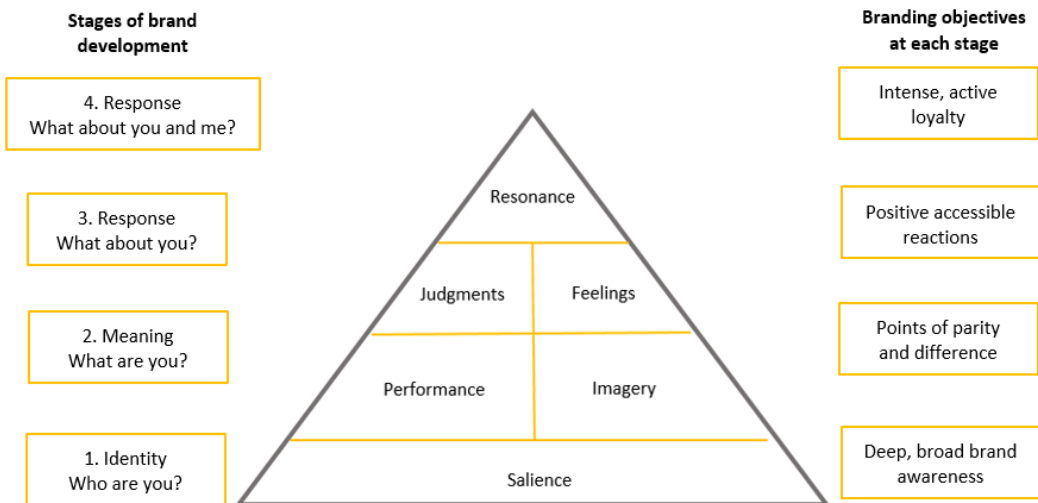
Appendix 1. Brand identity planning model. (Aaker 2002, 79.)



**Appendix 2. Aaker brand equity model complemented by other theories.
(Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, 17).**



Appendix 3. Customer based brand equity pyramid. (Keller et al. 2012, 59 – 60.)



Appendix 4. Employee questionnaire questions.

1. Clarifying general issues
 Clarification of the purpose and implementation of the questionnaire

Clarification of the key concepts of the questionnaire
Clarification of the confidentiality and purpose of the questionnaire
2. Vision, mission and values
What is Egencia's vision?
What is Egencia's mission?
What are Egencia's values?
How do the values show in everyday life?
Are you acting according to company values?
Does your manager encourage you to act according to values?
3. Brand
Which three words would you use to describe Egencia?
Which of these characteristics describe Egencia? Choose all that apply.
How is Egencia's brand reflected in customer service situations?
Do you think Egencia's brand is well known in travel industry?
4. Culture
How do you see Egencia's (local) culture?
Which attributes contribute to corporate culture in your opinion?
How is the company culture influencing your work and is it difficult/easy to identify with?
Is the success celebrated?
5. Process
Are the work processes supporting the work so that it is easy to concentrate on customer service?
5. Identity & image
Is Egencia's brand identity and brand promise defined within the organisation?
What kind of brand identity Egencia tries to achieve according to your knowledge?
What do you think Egencia's current image is like?
How is Egencia's reputation/image compared to competition in your opinion?
6. Awareness
How well is Egencia known and what is it most likely known about?
What does it want to be known as?
7. Future
How do you see the business travel market evolving in the future?
Where do you see Egencia in five years?
8. Other
Would you recommend Egencia as an employer to your friends?

Appendix 5. Customer questionnaire questions.

Brand Image	Question
<i>Characteristics of brand associations</i>	
Type	Which three words would you use to describe Egencia?
	Which of these characteristics describe Egencia?
Favourability	How would you describe your overall opinion of Egencia brand?
	How has your perception of Egencia changed in the past 3 months?
Strength	Egencia makes business travel easier.
	Egencia keeps its promises
	I can rely Egencia to deliver outstanding quality
	I can rely Egencia to deliver outstanding service
	Egencia delivers best in class technology solutions in travel
	Egencia improves my company's travel program
<i>Relationships among brand associations</i>	
Uniqueness	What is unique about Egencia in your opinion?
Customer loyalty	How likely is it that you would recommend Egencia to a friend or colleague?

Appendix 6. Partner questionnaire questions.

Brand Image		Question
<i>Characteristics of brand associations</i>		
Type	1.	Which three words come to your mind about Egencia?
Favourability	2.	How would you describe your overall opinion of these brands (the ones the person identified)?
Type	3.	Which three words come to your mind about Egencia?
Strength	4.	I am satisfied with cooperation with Egencia
		Egencia keeps its promises
		Egencia is trustworthy partner
		Egencia delivers best in class technology solutions in travel
		Cooperation benefits both parties
		Egencia is travel industry pioneer
Brand Image	5.	How would you describe your overall opinion of Egencia brand?
		How would you describe Egencia's reputation?
		What kind of image do you have about Egencia as a partner?
Type	6.	Which of these characteristics describe Egencia?
Loyalty	7.	How likely is it that you would recommend Egencia to a friend or colleague?
<i>Relationships among brand associations</i>		

Appendix 7. Potential customer questionnaire questions.

Brand Awareness		Question
Brand recall	1.	What is the first company that comes to mind when you think of travel management companies?
Brand recognition	2.	Which of these brands do you recognise? (all the TMCs listed)
Brand image		
<i>Characteristics of brand associations</i>		
Favourability	3.	How would you describe your overall opinion of these brands (all the TMCs listed)
Type	4.	Which three words would you use to describe Egencia?
	5.	Which of these characteristics describe Egencia?

Appendix 8. Management questionnaire questions.

Participants	
Marjut Vesander (MD) Tuuli Järvillehto (Team Manager)	
Question	
1. Clarifying general issues	
Clarification of the purpose and implementation of the questionnaire	
Clarification of the key concepts of the questionnaire	
Clarification of the confidentiality and purpose of the interview	
2. Vision, mission and values	
What is Egencia's vision?	
What is Egencia's mission?	
What are Egencia's values?	
What do they mean in your opinion and how are they visible in your everyday work?	
Are you monitoring whether your subordinates work according to brand values?	
3. Brand	
Which words would you use to describe Egencia?	
What is Egencia promise?	
How do you fulfil the promise?	
How is the targeted image of Egencia visible?	
4. Awareness	
How well is Egencia known in Finnish TMC market?	
What would you like to be known about?	
What image Egencia aspires to?	
What do you think the current image is like?	
5. Customers	
How have you segmented the customers?	
Which are the most important segments?	
Is there any potential segments?	
What kind of role the price plays? Is it critical factor?	
Which are the most important decisions factors?	
6. Competition	
Who do you consider being your worst competition?	
Who are the most important stakeholders? Why?	
What is Egencia's competitive advantage and the benefits for customers?	
7. Communication	
Describe your organisation's way to communicate?	
How would you like to develop both internal and external communications?	
8. SWOT - analysis	
Which are the most significant strengths and weaknesses?	
Which are most likely possibilities and treats?	
9. Future	
How do you see TMC market evolving in future?	
Where do you see Egencia in five years?	

Appendix 9. Market research questionnaire.

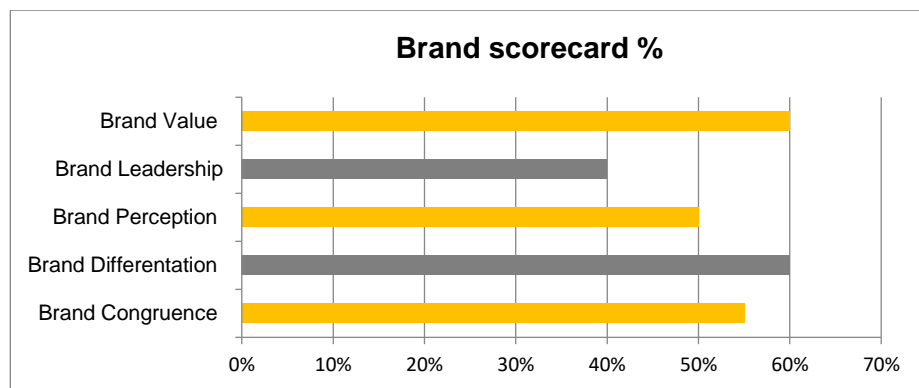
1. How would you rate the personal service of the following business management companies?
2. How would you rate the service offering of the following business travel management companies?
3. How would you rate the technical solutions (online booking system, mobile app) of the following business travel management companies?
4. How would you rate the travel security related services and communication of the following business travel management companies?
5. How would you rate the price level of the following business travel management companies?

Appendix 10. Score card adapted from Fusion Marketing Partner's model.

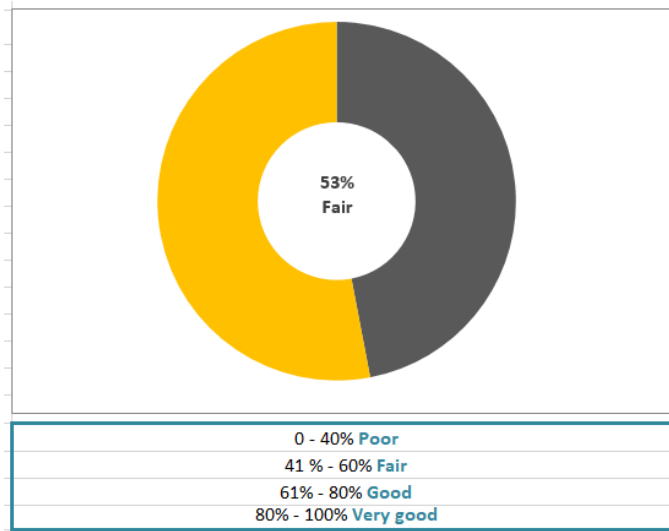
Brand congruence		
1. Is the brand crystal clear to prospects?		Score
1. People exposed to our brand don't understand our value proposition.	1	5 %
2. Between 1 and 3	2	
3. Prospects understand what we do from our brand.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. Our brand makes our value proposition very clear, including who benefits and how they benefit.	5	
4. Does our brand align with our corporate culture?		Score
1. Our culture doesn't match with our brand.	1	10 %
2. Between 1 and 3	2	
3. More often than not, our employees support and deliver on our brand.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. Our employees fully buy into and deliver on our brand.	5	
10. Do our employees take pride in our brand?		Score
1. No, our employees have no particular pride in our company brand.	1	20 %
2. Between 1 and 5	2	
3. Some employees have pride in our brand, others not so much.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. All, or the vast majority of our employees take great pride in our company/brand.	5	
15. Customer satisfaction levels: Ability to deliver on brand promise.		Score
1. Our customers are not particularly satisfied with their experience.	1	20 %
2. Between 1 and 3	2	
3. Some customers are happy while others are dissatisfied.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. Our customer base is very happy with their experience.	5	55 %
Brand differentiation		
2. Is our brand differentiated from competition?		Score
1. We're perceived as offering a commodity product or service.	1	20 %
2. Between 1 and 3	2	
3. Our brand is unique, but not strongly differentiated	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. Our brand is highly differentiated, giving us a strong competitive advantage.	5	
6. Does our brand fit tomorrow or yesterday?		Score
1. Our brand is dated and doesn't present us as a modern company.	1	33 %
2. Between 1 and 3	2	
3. Our brand is somewhat dated but still usable for today's prospects.	3	

4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. Our brand is totally up-to-date and presents as a fresh, current company.	5	
9. Are we well known in Finnish travel industry?		Score
1. No, we are not well known and constantly struggle for recognition.	1	7 %
2. Between 1 and 5	2	
3. We are somewhat known but could do much better.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. Yes, we are very well known among our peers and prospects base.	5	60 %
Brand perception		
5. Are we perceived as we want to be?		Score
1. Others have a different impression of what we do and are.	1	20 %
2. Between 1 and 3	2	
3. Our perception is mixed. Some know us the way we like and others not so much.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. Our perception among the outside world is not far off from what we would like.	5	
11. Does our brand make it easier/harder to sell?		Score
1. Our brand is a definite liability for our sales reps to overcome.	1	30 %
2. Between 1 and 5	2	
3. Our brand is a neutral factor when it comes to selling.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. Our brand is a big plus in enabling sales.	5	50 %
Brand leadership		
7. Are there liabilities to our brand?		Score
1. Our company/brand has serious liabilities that can hamper our growth.	1	15 %
2. Between 1 and 5	2	
3. Our company/brand has moderate liabilities but nothing that can't be overcome.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. We have no company/brand liabilities that would inhibit our growth.	5	
8. Are we knowledgeable leaders in Finnish travel industry?		Score
1. No, we are not considered leaders in Finnish travel industry.	1	5 %
2. Between 1 and 5	2	
3. We are in the middle of the pack as far as industry leadership is concerned.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. Yes, we are definitely considered one of the top Finnish travel industry leaders.	5	
17. Social mentions: How often others talk about us		Score
1. We get few or no social media mentions from third-parties.	1	5 %
2. Between 1 and 3	2	
3. We get some social media mentions but certainly not enough.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. We get lots of social media mentions from third-parties.	5	
18. Share of wallet: Compared to competitors		Score
1. We are losing market share to competitors.	1	15 %
2. Between 1 and 3	2	
3. Our market share is stable but could be better.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	

5. Our market share is growing compared to competitors.	5	40 %
Brand value		
12. The value of our brand and above other assets?		Score
1. Our brand has a negative impact on company valuation.	1	20 %
2. Between 1 and 5	2	
3. Our brand has a neutral or marginal impact on company valuation.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. Our brand has a strong positive impact on company valuation.	5	
18. Share of wallet: Compared to competitors		Score
1. We are losing market share to competitors.	1	20 %
2. Between 1 and 3	2	
3. Our market share is stable but could be better.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. Our market share is growing compared to competitors.	5	
16. Growth in our prospect database		Score
1. The number of queries is flat or declining.	1	20 %
2. Between 1 and 3	2	
3. Our opt-in contact list is growing slowly.	3	
4. Between 3 and 5	4	
5. We are gaining a lot of new queries.	5	60 %



Row Labels	Average of %
Brand Congruence	0,55
Brand Differentiation	0,6
Brand Leadership	0,4
Brand Perception	0,5
Brand Value	0,6
Grand Total	0,53



Appendix 11. Cronbach Alpha of Q8, Q9, Q10 and Q11 (Partner survey)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	32	94.1
	Excluded ^a	2	5.9
	Total	34	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.916	.915	5

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.450	3.219	3.688	.469	1.146	.040	5
Inter-Item Correlations	.682	.441	.925	.484	2.097	.024	5

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I am satisfied with cooperation with Egencia.	14.03	14.483	.587	.508	.932
Egencia keeps its promises.	13.66	12.168	.838	.879	.885
Egencia is trustworthy.	13.78	11.660	.856	.924	.881
Egencia delivers best in class technology solutions.	13.56	12.835	.847	.815	.886
Egencia is forward thinking.	13.97	12.096	.806	.691	.892

Appendix 12. Cronbach Alpha of Q12, Q13 and Q14 (Partner survey)

Scale: Image_reputation_brand

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	32	94.1
	Excluded ^a	2	5.9
	Total	34	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.977	3

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.450	3.219	3.688	.469	1.146	.040	5
Inter-Item Correlations	.682	.441	.925	.484	2.097	.024	5

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I am satisfied with cooperation with Egencia.	14.03	14.483	.587	.508	.932
Egencia keeps its promises.	13.66	12.168	.838	.879	.885
Egencia is trustworthy.	13.78	11.660	.856	.924	.881
Egencia delivers best in class technology solutions.	13.56	12.835	.847	.815	.886
Egencia is forward thinking.	13.97	12.096	.806	.691	.892

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
17.25	19.355	4.399	5

Appendix 13. Cronbach Alpha of Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8 and Q9 (Customer survey)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	17	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	17	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.917	.916	7

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.941	3.000	4.235	1.235	1.412	.215	7
Inter-Item Correlations	.609	.292	.923	.632	3.166	.030	7

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Promise	23.41	12.507	.796	.801	.899
I can rely Egencia to deliver outstanding service	23.47	11.265	.892	.909	.887
Egencia makes business travel easier.	23.35	11.118	.863	.871	.892
Egencia delivers best in class technology solutions in travel.	23.94	14.184	.565	.397	.921
Egencia improves my company's travel program.	23.41	12.757	.740	.810	.905
How satisfied you are overall to Egencia?	23.35	11.993	.878	.877	.890
How has your perception of Egencia changed in past 3 months?	24.59	15.507	.539	.420	.926

Appendix 14. Cronbach Alpha of Q1 – Q21 (Market research)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	21	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	21	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.950	.948	20

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	4.121	3.524	4.619	1.095	1.311	.077	20
Inter-Item Correlations	.478	-.275	.980	1.255	-3.564	.050	20

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Customer service	78.33	319.533	.754	.	.947
Customer service	78.33	320.233	.809	.	.946
Customer service	78.48	323.362	.614	.	.949
Customer service	78.57	328.757	.630	.	.949
Service offer	78.10	310.290	.893	.	.944
Service offer	78.00	334.100	.649	.	.949
Service offer	78.00	315.900	.839	.	.945
Service offer	78.33	346.833	.360	.	.952
Technology	78.19	309.562	.896	.	.944
Technology	78.29	318.114	.847	.	.945
Technology	78.57	311.557	.682	.	.949
Technology	78.67	345.633	.467	.	.951
Safety and communication	77.90	314.690	.863	.	.945
Safety and communication	78.38	323.148	.687	.	.948
Safety and communication	78.10	312.990	.838	.	.945
Safety and communication	78.57	341.657	.358	.	.952
Price	77.81	320.862	.757	.	.947
Price	78.43	339.057	.438	.	.951
Price	78.19	321.462	.757	.	.947
Price	78.90	349.190	.390	.	.951