VALUE OF EXPERT BRANDING IN IMPROVING COMPANY CAPABILITY

Case: Avosorsa Oy

Abstract

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VALUE OF EXPERT BRANDING IN IMPROVING COMPANY CAPABILITY Case: Avosorsa Oy

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Abstract

The purpose of the development project was to investigate how the reputation of an expert influences a company's performance and to identify the strategic requirements for the development of expert reputation development. The objective of the development project was to provide information on the impact of an expert brand on the company's success and to clarify the strategic requirements for expert branding. The study was commissioned by Avosorsa Oy, a software company specialised in Google advertising and marketing services.

The theoretical part of the study examines brand and branding was based on literature and electronic sources. The theory was used to build an understanding of a brand, branding and the development of an expert's reputation. A qualitative study was selected as a research method and the data was gathered by interviewing selected experts.

The results of the study indicate that the reputation of an expert has a significant impact on the success of a company under certain conditions. Success requires the training of an expert's professional skills training from a company perspective, and the most significant measures from a specialist's point of view were interactive capability and relevant content production.

Keywords
Brand, branding, branding strategy, expert brand

Tiivistelmä

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ASIANTUNTIJAN MAINEEN ARVO YRITYKSEN SUORITUSKYVYN EDISTÄMISESSÄ Case: Avosorsa Oy

Tutkinto
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Tiivistelmä
Kehittämishankkeen tarkoituksena oli tutkia, miten asiantuntijan maine vaikuttaa yrityksien tulokseen, ja tunnistaa mitkä ovat asiantuntijan maineen kehittämiseen liittyvät strategiset vaatimukset. Kehittämishankkeen tavoitteena oli kerätä tietoa siitä, miten asiantuntija brändin avulla voidaan vaikuttaa yrityksen menestykseen, ja selventää asiantuntijan brändille asetettuja strategisia vaatimuksia. Tutkimuksen tilasi Googlen mainonta- ja markkinointipalveluihin erikoistunut Avosorsa Oy. Tutkimuksen tietoperusta käsitteli brändiä ja brändäystä kirjallisuuteen ja sähköisiin lähteisiin perustuen. Teorian avulla muodostettiin käsitys brändistä, brändäyksestä ja asiantuntijan maineen kehittämisestä. Tutkimusmenetelmäksi valittiin laadullinen tutkimus, ja tietoja kerättiin haastattelemalla valittuja asiantuntijoita. Tämän tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että asiantuntijan maine vaikuttaa merkittävästi yrityksen menestykseen tietyin edellytyksin. Menestys edellyttää asiantuntijan ammatillista taitoja koskevaa koulutusta yrityksen näkökulmasta, ja merkittävimmät toimenpiteet asiantuntijan kannalta olivat valmiudet vuorovaikuttamiseen ja merkityksellisen sisällön tuotanto.

Avainsanat
Brändi, brändäys, brändistrategia, asiantuntijabrändi

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ABBREVIATIONS

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1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the study

Technological developments and digitalisation have been rapid and have contributed significantly to the business environment in the past decades. This change is evident, for example in improving access to new international and local digital services. The new approaches to digital services have resulted in the democratisation of knowledge and increased transparency (Kiiski-Kataja, E. 2016, 6, 11). Technological developments have resulted in a significant change in trade between companies. The acquisition of information needed for the purchase decision and the conclusion of the purchase decision has changed significantly. The purchase decision will be taken further before the potential tenderers are in contact (Hernberg, K. 2013, 131.).

The interaction between the seller and the customer during the traditional sales process has changed. The customer is currently in contact with only the companies they choose. In many cases, other companies in the same sector do not disclose the existence of a potential customer at all. Businesses meet customers in different contexts more often than before, for example, a company that tracks customers' conversations on internet forums and reaches new potential customers based on people's conversations.

Changes in purchasing behaviour can be observed by monitoring the activities of customers and potential customers. The changing process of purchasing and understanding the customer's response is a prerequisite for customer encounters at the right place and at the right time. A change in buying behaviour may require an undertaking to change the sales methodology used by the company. Communication to the customer should be directed to the customer at all stages of purchasing, for example through social media, before the customer is even aware of future needs.

The company that participates in the offer request process can control the customer's decision-making during the buying cycle less than before. The decline in the interaction between the seller and the customer negatively affects the ability of companies to modify

customer perceptions. For businesses, this poses a real risk of losing potential customers. The loss of potential customers negatively impacts the market share and the profits of the companies. Companies that adapt to market changes will gain an advantage over their competitors and deserve the opportunity to succeed in the market.

The interaction allows companies to influence the customer by participating in the purchasing process. The purchase process can be influenced by, for example, Internet forums and personalised meetings. The entities that affect the customer's purchasing process have prerequisites for forming a new customer relationship. Meeting customers in different channels also imposes requirements on company personnel and personnel management. Managing new approaches and methodologies is likely to require an increase in the skill level of the company's personnel.

1.2   Objective and approach

Avosorsa Oy has been operating since 2015. During the first year of operation, the company approached potential customers through telephone sales. As customers grow and as the business develops, a significant proportion of new customers have been reached based on the recommendations of existing customers. The company's ability to serve customers has grown faster than new customer relationships. The company's goal is to build new customer relationships and leverage available resources to develop business and increase profits.

The growth of the company's industry has been significant over the last decade. The company expects the growth trend to continue in the future (Tilastokeskus 2018). Technological changes in the market have been positive and business-enhancing from the perspective of the company. Development of technology is expected to strengthen the company's operating conditions in the future. The company's customers only have limited knowledge of advanced technology exploitation.

The starting point of the company's product portfolio is the use of modern technology to develop business. Utilising technology in business requires advanced technology

management and extensive expertise. The reduction in the number of products and services has allowed the development of specialist skills. From an operational point of view, this means strong service capacity for products in the portfolio.

The company has found situations where corporate customers purchase services from the company's competitor. The reason for lost orders is estimated to be due to lack of communication or limited communication between clients and the company. Due to lack of communication, the customer has not been made aware of the available services and has ordered the service from the company's competitor. The company has decided to review the business strategy and practices to remedy the situation.

The starting point for reaching customers is to reinforce a proven approach where customers recommend companies to their partners and related parties. In support of the method, it is also decided to clarify the conditions for reaching new and existing customers through online communication by the company's employees.

The purpose of the development project is to provide information on strategic development targets and critical methods for forming customer relationships through an expert brand. The development project produces detailed information on the development of the company's strategy. The data is collected by reviewing related literature, articles and studies. Interview research is a key part of the development project. The interview is conducted by interviewing experts who have formed themselves as an expert brand. The result of the development project is to provide information on critical success factors and strategic business requirements. The interview method is a semi-structured theme interview. The interview is conducted using a qualitative research method.

1.3 Research problem and research questions

The strategic objective of the target company is to implement digital marketing across channels through company personnel and reach potential customers through communication. The main problem with the company is that the company's potential customers are not always aware of the company's existence and service offerings. The development

project will identify an effective strategy to enable communication with experts to increase the reputation of the company and reach potential customers. Research questions that respond to the company's strategic goals are:

- How can expert branding improve company capability?
    - What are the strategy requirements for expert branding?

The theoretical reference framework for the development project is the role of the expert brand in the company's strategy. The project draws attention to methodologies and approaches that can be set with clear objectives and have a statistically measurable outcome (Alasuutari 2001, 78).

1.4   Methodology

The research methodology was used for qualitative research, and a semi-structured thematic interview was conducted. The theme interview is suitable as a method because the answers to the discussion are based on the personal experience of individuals and are therefore unpredictable. The content of the conversations sought to detect the profound significance of the interpretations (Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. 2018, 85.).

1.5   Definition of terms

Brand architecture = The structure consists of brands and sub-brands.

Brand awareness = The ability of consumers to identify a brand from other brands.

Brand building = Generating awareness and promoting the company using strategies and tactics.

Brand consideration = Describe the proportion of consumers who are considering a brand in a given purchase.

Brand credibility = The credibility of the branded product information as experienced by the consumer.

Brand differentiation = Strengthening the positive aspects of the brand.

Brand elements = Externally identifiable elements of the brand.

Brand entertainment = Branding through entertainment and sports.

Brand equity = Value of brand name, based on brand recognition

Brand extension = Utilising an existing brand to raise awareness of the new brand.

Brand hate = Negative brand-related emotion

Brand hierarchy = Positioning of brands between different brands of a company.

Brand identity = The visible elements of a brand, that identify and distinguish the brand in consumers' minds.

Brand imagery = Describe the external features of the brand.

Brand imago = Stakeholder consensus on the brand.

Brand loyalty = Customer loyalty to the brand.

Brand love = The strong emotional bonds between consumers and brands.

Brand management = Brand management is a function of marketing that uses techniques to increase the perceived value of a product line or brand over time.

Brand mix = A pre-designed portfolio of customer brands.

Brand name = A recognisable brand name.

Brand partnership - A strategic alliance of two or more brands to name a new product.

Brand personality = Human characteristics that are associated with the brand name.

Brand portfolio = Selected set of brands and sub-brands.

Brand positioning = Describes how a brand is different from its competitors and how it sits in the mind of customers.

Brand promise = Brand key promise to the customer.

Brand quality = Customer perception of brand quality.

Brand recognition = The consumer's ability to identify the product or service through external identifiers.

Brand value = The value added by a brand to a named product or service.

Branding = A marketing practice in which a company creates a name, logo or model that is easily identifiable as belonging to a company.

Customer-based brand value = The value of the brand to the customer, which is reflected in the buying behaviour.

Family brand = A group of different products belonging to the same brand and marketed under the parent brand.

Ingredient branding = Creating a brand for an ingredient or component of a product that goes into other companies' products.

Parent brand = An existing brand that helps brand extensions succeed by sharing a current identity.

Sub-brand = Are connected to the parent brand and take advantage of the parent brand's reputation.

1.6   Document structure

The thesis consisted of five chapters. The first chapter introduced a development project and defined the terminology and methodology used in work. The development project information base was presented in the second chapter. The knowledge base dealt with brand and branding and brand theory from a company perspective. The third chapter described the implementation of the development project and the collection and analysis of research material. The fourth chapter addressed significant findings from the perspective of the company. The fifth chapter included the conclusions of the development project, the summary and the critical evaluation of the results. Particular attention was paid to the quality and reliability of the study and the necessity of further research.

2   EXPERT BRANDING

2.1   Overview of the brand

This chapter contains a description of the brand definition and the brand's multi-stage history. The review of brand history helps to understand the brand's current state.

The company's main task is to generate value for its customers and thereby profit for its owners (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 43). The brand's most important role is to help the company grow profitability (Ahto O. et al. 2016, 32). A strong and clear brand crystallises the company's strategy. Confirming the value of a brand in the company's strategy is thus a firm value and contributes to the company's profits for its owners (Ahto O. et al. 2016, 34). The brand therefore plays an important role in increasing the value and profitability of the company. The studies suggest that brands have a significant impact on the profits of companies (Aaker, D.A. 2011, 162).

According to Aaker (1991, 21), the brand must bring added value to the buyer and seller. The brand has a wide range of definitions, studies and theories available from literature and various publications. There is no established perception and the way in which all parties have accepted. The information available on this topic is not consistent, and the publications also differ in terms of basic concepts (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 28.). According to Busche (2015, 4), the brand is a unique story that consumers retain in to their minds when thinking about you. According to Keller (2008, 10), brand awareness resides in the consumer's mind.

The customer's purchasing decision is strongly based on mental images and emotions (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 15). The brand allows a company to lead customer expectations and perceptions. Ahto (2016, 89) suggests that the brand's focus is always on a product or service that is sold. In general, a brand can be created in the same way as a product or service for a person and organisation (Keller, K. L. 2008, 21). There are also differing opinions about the need for a brand, and some think brands are just a means of fund customers (Sipilä, J. 2003, 317). Despite divergent opinions, consumers decide between

alternatives and brands have a significant impact on decision-making (Keller, K. L. 2008, 10). The brand's personality and reputation distinguishes the company's products from the competition, and this creates customer loyalty and growth (Kotler, P. et al. 2006, 51).

The construction of brand names is an investment that aims to create long-term intangible assets. The brand allows companies to ensure success in the future (Kotler, P. et al. 2006, 51). A thriving brand is typically timeless and unique. With a successful brand, customers pay a higher price for the product, helping the company to achieve a better result (Kotler, P. et al. 2006, 51; Uusitalo, P. 2014, 32.). Leading international brands are thus better placed to cope with the changes and challenges that occur in the market (Keller, K. L. 2008, 29). Successful brands are backed by a promise that meets customer needs (Busche, L. 2015, 25).

The energetic brand also recognises the reason for its existence and stands out from its competitors with a good business idea. The brand appeals to intelligence and emotions. Emotional reactions are more pronounced than rational (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 30- 31). According to Sipilä (2013, 313), the purchase decision is made with emotion, and the facts are used to support the decision.

Brand Equity

The brand's equity includes the brand's assets, liabilities, and features that increase or decrease the brand value for the customer (Aaker, D.A. 1991, 15). Brand capital can help to improve the profitability of the company because the brand provides value for the customer and the company. The brand's equity consists of five feature classes (Aaker, D.A. 1991, 16.).
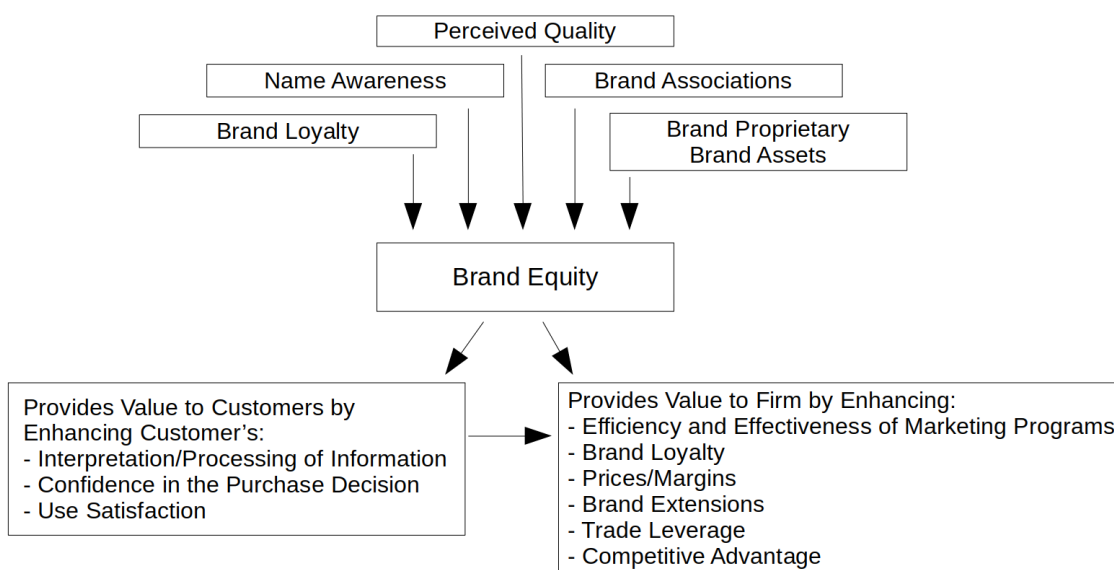
Figure 1. Brand equity components, according to Aaker 1991, 17.

Products are more comfortable and cheaper to sell to an existing customer than a new customer. Reaching a new customer consumes a company's limited resources and is often slow. Existing customers create prerequisites for businesses. Customer acquisition can, therefore, be considered a company investment.

People often buy a well-known brand simply because they know the brand in advance. A pre-renowned brand is likely to be of sufficient quality and reliability and a sufficiently secure choice. An unknown brand has thus a slighter chance of being elected than a well-known brand. Brand quality is a measurable image that directly affects purchasing decisions and customer loyalty towards the brand. The quality of the brand is capable of supporting a price that makes it possible to improve the profitability of the company. Besides,

the observed quality can be the basis for Ingredient branding, sub-brands or brand exten-sions (Aaker, D.A. 1991, 19.).

The customer-based brand value has been based on the association between the brand and the customer. With the association, the company is able to increase its competitive-ness and brand credibility through extensions (Aaker, D.A. 1991, 20.). The link between the brand and the customer can be mentioned as an example of the formation of a safety sensation when acquiring home insurance. A company can increase brand loyalty, for ex-ample by creating a trademark, brand family, or brand partnership (Aaker, D.A. 1991, 39).

Trademarks allow the company to protect itself from competitors seeking to produce a similar look to their products and services. Trademark protection and patents can prevent competition and strengthen brand value. The distribution of products to companies is only possible in situations where the brand value is high (Aaker, D.A. 1991, 21). By improving customer loyalty, the company is protected from competitors and directs the customer to recommend the business to their friends and colleagues (Aaker, D.A. 1991, 41).

The higher loyalty between the brand and the company is reflected in customer satisfac-tion. Loyal customers are typically more satisfied with the brand, and they are also more likely to remain satisfied with the brand. Satisfaction is a significant obstacle to new com-petitors arriving on the market (Aaker, D.A. 1991, 47.). Investments in brand equity will in-crease the value of the brand and thereby enhance the company's assets (Aaker, D.A. 1991, 22).

Brand leadership model

The theory of traditional brand management (Aaker 1991) has been important for the development of the brand over the past decades. With the classic brand model, the brand was developed according to the needs and requirements of the international market. The model focused heavily on the tactical aspect of brand management. The brand leadership model explores brand development from a strategic management and predictive design perspective (Aaker, D.A. & Joachimstahler, E. 2009, 13.).
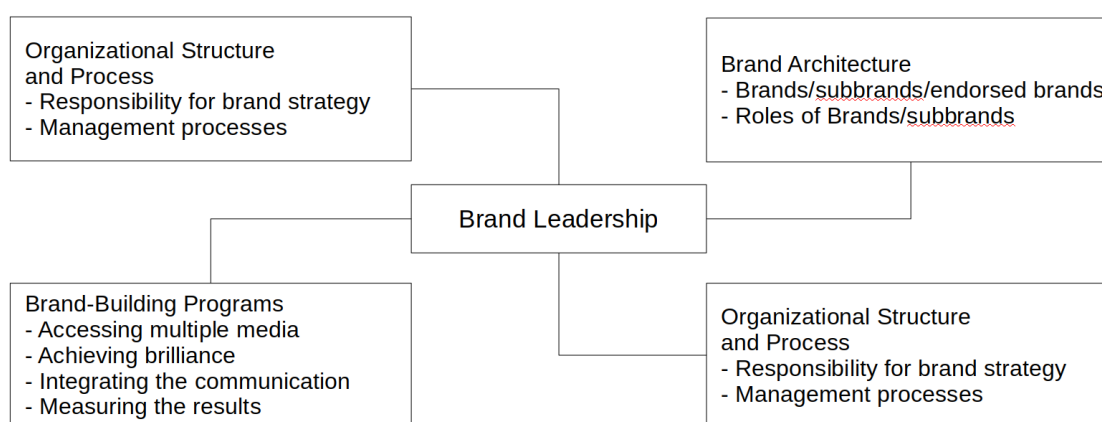
Figure 2. Brand leadership model (Aaker, D.A. & Joachimstahler, E. 2009, 25).

The brand management model provides a view of the strategic management of companies to build and develop strong brands and effective brand hierarchy. The model is designed to form a brand-supportive organisational structure and an overall brand architecture that defines the strategic direction. The key brands must be a distinctive brand strategy for competitors that resonates and interacts with customers. (Aaker, D.A. & Joachimstahler, E. 2009, 13.)

The model aims to create an organisational structure and process that leads to successful brands. The organization shall establish an operating environment that supports the design and development of brands. Organizational change may be challenging above all for international companies operating in several continents and a multicultural environment. The brand architecture must take into consideration the management of parent brands and sub-brands and their mutual relations. The goal is to build an architecture that

eliminates overlapping functions and provides an evident supply of the disciplined guidance of brand policy and plan-based branding (Aaker, D.A. & Joachimstahler, E. 2009, 26.).

Brand identity is a vital component of the brand management model. The role of brand identity is to help the organization prioritize brand identity by setting communication objectives. To strengthen the brand identity, the organization should implement branding development programs to implement brand identity (Aaker, D.A. & Joachimstahler, E. 2009, 27.). Successful brand management requires short-and long-term goal measurement and monitoring. The analysis should reflect the brand's assets and dimensions, considering the brand's personality and relationship with the organisation (Aaker, D.A. & Joachimstahler, E. 2009, 28).

The strategic brand management process

The strategic brand management process includes marketing, operations planning and implementation to develop and manage brand capital and measure (Keller, K.L. 2008, 38). The strategic brand management process begins with identifying the brand's positioning. The objective is to understand the brand's core promise and brand essence and position in the market. The brand position will determine what place a brand should be in the target customer's mind to maximize the benefits to the company. A visual description of the brand-related success factors can be described using a mental map. The mental map is used to represent the brand's success factors from the perspective of the consumer and business (Keller, K.L. 2008, 39.).

Designing and implementing marketing measures requires an organisation to create or develop a brand. A typical way to brand development is to strengthen the brand imagery. The target is to change consumer opinions about the product and service by integrating brand marketing. This contributes to strengthening the association of the brand's external identification marks to the customer. Measuring brand performance enables the company to recognise the sources of brand equity and detect ways to increase brand equity. The goal is to create a marketing program to combine and validate brand names. Brand equity management is the management of trademarks and sub-brands between different market

segments. Brand equity measurement means using research methods to gather infor-
mation to support decision making to increase the equity of the brand (Keller, K.L. 2008,
40.).

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│           STEPS             │
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┌────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Identity and Establish Brand Positioning and Values │
│ - Mental maps                                    │
│ - Competitive frame of reference                 │
│ - Points-of-parity and points-of-difference      │
│ - Core brand associations                        │
│ - Brand mantra                                   │
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│ Plan and implement Brand Marketing Programs      │
│ - Mixing and matching of brand elements          │
│ - Integrating brand marketing activities         │
│ - Leveraging secondary association               │
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│ Measure and Interpret Brand Performance          │
│ - Brand value chain                              │
│ - Brand audits                                   │
│ - Brand tracking                                 │
│ - Brand equity management system                 │
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│ Grow and Sustain Brand Equity                    │
│ - Brand-product matrix                           │
│ - Brand-portfolio and hierarchies                │
│ - Brand expansion strategies                     │
│ - Brand reinforcement and revitalization         │
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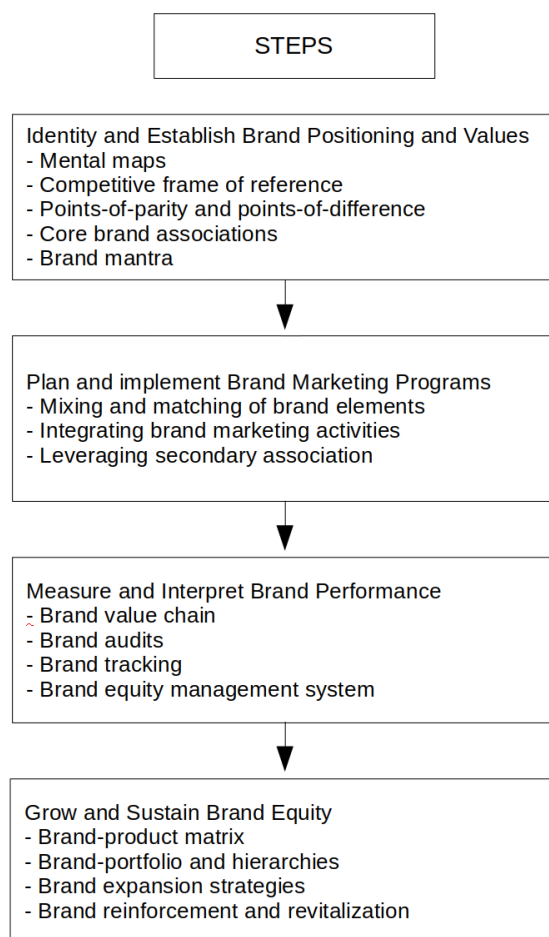
Figure 3. Strategic brand management model (Keller, K.L. 2008, 39).

In some situations, companies may have mistakenly imagined owning a brand. The brand
is a promise given by a company to the customer. In the customer's mind, the brand is a
unique image that the company cannot own (Kotler, P. et al. 2006, 278, 294; Keller, K. L.
2008, 74). It is possible to realise the economic value of the brand by selling the brand
(Gad, T. and Heinämäki, M. 2001, 49; Mäkinen M., Kahri A., Kahri T. 2010, 131). The
company owns the brand's economic value, which it is possible to grow by developing the
brand. It is not possible to accurately measure the brand valuation, and the brand value is
a rough estimate (Aaker & Joachimstahler 2009, 16; Kotler, P. et al. 2006, 123).

History of brand

The calling of church bells began 4,000 years ago, and the calling has had a significant religious significance, typically interned with the connection between heaven and earth. The voices produced by the ritual have formed a recognisable relationship to the bells caller. As an example of the association, is the calling of bells to indicate the beginning of worship. There are characteristic features of the playing of bells in towns and religious buildings and communities (Bronner, K. & Hirt, R. 2009, 27- 28.). The distinctive features will probably strengthen the brand even today, provided that the community still exists.

The ancient Egyptians marked their cattle with a hot iron as a sign of ownership. Artisans marked plates and dishes as a sign of quality (Airey, D. 2019, 7; Hertzen P. von 2006, 17; Sipilä, J. 2003, 315.). At a later stage, the label of ownership began to use the trademark. The trademark became widespread after 1860, and it was used to mark the product for sale (Moffitt, S. & Dover, M. 2011, 8). The first trademark was registered in the United Kingdom in 1876, and it was a red triangle logo, which was identified by Bass Ale beer (Brown, P. 2018; Airey, D. 2019, 7). The oldest U.S. trademark was issued to the Samson Rope company 1884 (Airey, D. 2019, 7; Samson Rope Technologies 2019).

Over time, the trademark consisted of a brand mark which sought to describe the high quality of the products. The trademark was used in marketing until the 1920s until brand marks on the mass market developed and began to grow. The aim of the brands intended for the mass market was to create a customer's need and desire for products (Moffitt, S. & Dover, M. 2011, 8.). The primary purpose of brands on the mass market was to meet the basic needs of consumers.

Neil McElroy caused a change in the mindset of brand development in 1931 when he was Junior Marketing Manager at Rrocter & Gamble. Together with his duties, he collected notes on people's ideas for brand development. The memorandum has contributed significantly to the business mindset for developing brands (Aaker & Joachimstahler 2009, 5.). The memo increased awareness of brand development and people's impact on brand development was better understood.

The importance of the brand for the business was first presented in a newspaper announcement published by McGraw-Hill (1958) publishing house. The importance of awareness was questioned and used to facilitate the customer's purchasing decision (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 21). The advertisement was first discussed in the history of brand and market awareness and the importance of the recommendation in the same context.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the economy developed mainly from the point of view of developing product manufacturing. The toughening of competition meant difficulties for unknown products and highlighted the value of the brand. Compared to competing poorly known products, the brand products had better demand (Drucker, P. F. 2010a, 56.). The brand has been featured in consumer marketing since the 1970s (Hertzen P. von 2006, 17). Since the 1980s, the brands began to change from the satisfaction of the basic needs to the satisfaction of social needs and desires (Moffitt, S. & Dover, M. 2011, 8).

According to Kotler (2006, 297), in the late 1980s, a structural change occurred in the industry due to globalization and reduced regulation. During a significant structural transformation, the equity of the brand was stabilised in the development of brands. Brand capital is a set of assets and liabilities related to the brand, representing the value proposition of a business strategy (Aaker, D.A. 2011, 162.). Changes contributed significantly to corporate structures and practices during the 1990s.

The first significant milestone in the transformation of the brand into a social object occurred at the end of 1990 (Metz, A. 2012, 3). The role of the social object was to help people form social contacts. A highly illustrative example of a social object is football. Playing football requires a group of people in the same place. Quart (2003) notes that the commercialisation of young people, in particular, picked up significantly in the 1990s. The change in the market remains in the same direction, and no signs of slowing down are noticeable (Kiiski-Kataja, E. 2016, 6). Consumer brands that are currently known were born the middle of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century. The personal brand concept has been highlighted at least by Tom Peters in the article 'The Brand Called You' in August 1997 (Peters, T. 1997).

After the millennium, companies began to reduce the number of brands by forming brand mix. The products in the brand portfolio benefit from the well-known brand, and this helps to move new products to consumer awareness (Hertzen P. von 2006, 18.). Digitalization and the new approaches made by the Internet mean that there is a similar transition period in progress than the industrial revolution or the large-scale deployment of electricity meant for humanity (Kiiski-Kataja, E. 2016, 9).

2.2 Theory of branding

Branding is the ability to build and manage brands. A trademark is a name, term, sign, symbol or model, or a combination of those that identifies a product or service to a manufacturer or vendor (Armstrong, G. et al. 2009, 239.). Brand development is often slow, and the brand is considered to be formed when it strengthens the company's market position and produces better profitability for its owner (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 17; Sipilä, J. 2003, 319).

Branding creates spiritual structures and helps consumers perceive their knowledge of products and services in a way that furthers their decision-making. The critical goal of branding is to create a mental image that will enable consumers to perceive the differences in brand names. The differences between the brands may relate, for example, to product features or benefits or image-related aspects (Keller, K. L. 2008, 10).

The supply of new products and services has grown faster than ever before. The increase in the availability of products and services has resulted in rapid growth in product development costs and reduced the chances of success in product development investment (Keller, K. L. 2008, 36.). For brand management, this means challenges, and it is noticeable that achievements in development will require more resources in the future compared to the past (Keller, K. L. 2008, 30). According to Uusitalo (2014, 122), customers can quickly acquire a competing brand product or service from different locations. To avoid failure, companies need to pay attention to brand development methods that support the company's strategy.

Intangible services pose challenges to brand development. The critical brand development element for service products is the reputation of the service (Sipilä, J. 2003, 317). In

the development of the product brand, the functional benefits of the product must carry less weight than the emotional benefits (Aaker & Joachimstahler 2009, 81). The brand reputation will be reduced if the product becomes a general commodity (Pearson, T. R. 2011, 94). Sustainability in the development work is to focus on the departure points of the company's activities and its differentiation, avoiding the excessive copying of the market leader (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 47).

Brand development may run into unimportant development targets, the significance of which the customer does not understand or does not encounter during the purchase process (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 23). By refining and reviewing the identity of the brand, we achieve the conditions for producing content based on the brand promise. By improving and examining the integrity of the brand, we meet the requirements for creating content based on the brand promise. Fulfilling a promise requires an investment that is a prerequisite for brand success (Aaker & Joachimstahler 2009, 72.).

The brand must produce a relevant brand imagoe, and factors that are of interest to customers and stakeholders. In brand building, it is necessary to avoid overly precise instructions, such as attaching a logo or a selected ad phrase to all communications. Intelligent communication is capable of controlling the client without an external and client-underestimate token (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 24).

The brand's communication must provoke the reference groups in which the brand is mentioned, and the brand is combined (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 82). Consumers want to participate in the debate and create something new (Busche, L. 2015, 4). This imposes requirements on companies to monitor and control communications across channels. Customer encounters happen everywhere, and in advance, it is impossible to know all future meetings (Ahvenainen, P., Gylling, J. & Leino, S. 2017, 64- 65).

As brand awareness grows, the brand likely faces hatred among consumers and stakeholders. Brand hate depicts a customer or group of customers who experience anger in the brand (Kucuk, S. U. 2019, 25). The feelings and manifestations of anger are recommended to be identified early. Measures to eradicate hatred must be initiated as quickly as possible to eliminate the phenomenon (Kucuk, S. U. 2019, 88.). Eliminating or reducing

anger contributes to the success of the brand and the growing anger damages the brand's reputation (Kucuk, S. U. 2019, 98). A powerful emotional emotion-importing brand can also get fans who order new products and talk on behalf of the brand (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 83). Brand love is the opposite of brand hate (Roberts, K. & Lafley, A.G. 2004, 202). The emotions appearing on the brand are manifested as very singular sensations, and their precise determination is challenging.

There are many different instruments for brand development. The Brand Thinking Canvas, presented by Miltenburg, is an advanced method for brand development. The technique is used to set out the brand's holistic anatomy. Brand Thinking Canvas helps the developer understand the brand's anatomy and build a strong brand. The basic idea of the method is to present brand development in the same way as human skills development (Miltenburg, A. 2017, 62- 63.).
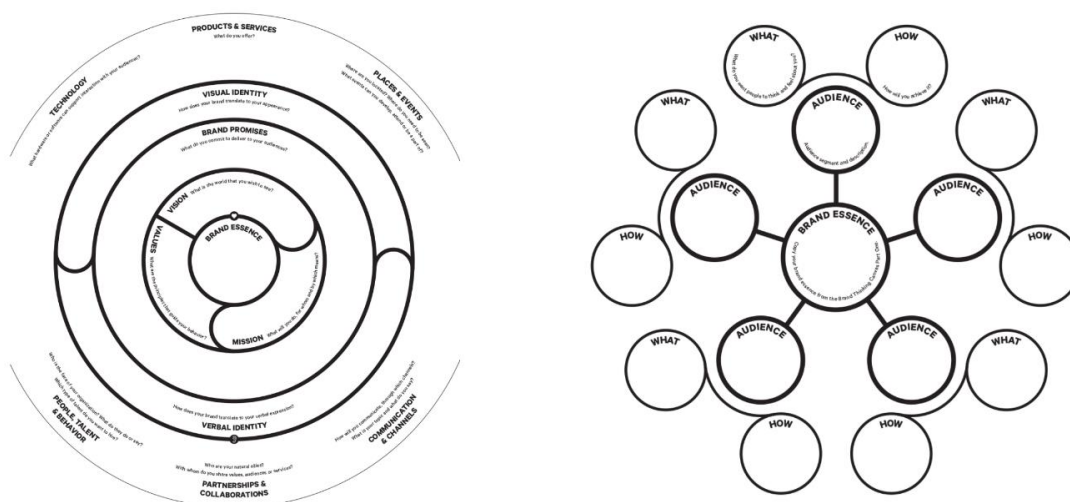

Figure 4. Brand thinking canvas (Miltenburg, A. 2017, 123).

The starting point is the essence of the brand, which is called the core. The core consists of three main elements, which are the brand's vision and the brand's mission and brand values. Brand promise and brand identity are formed based on these three main elements (Miltenburg, A. 2017, 122- 123.). Brand Thinking Canvas helps the developer identify the brand's primary and secondary audiences and create ideas for building brand recognition. Attention should be paid, above all, to what the company wants customers to think and feel about the brand (Miltenburg, A. 2017, 137- 138.).

A logo can be used to create a distinctive, externally identifiable identifier for a brand (Bronner, K. & Hirt, R. 2009, 27- 28). Externally identifiable features can be enhanced with emotionally-arousable traits such as dog barking or car engine sounds. Identifiable traits can also be created from geographic or time-linked associations (Bronner, K. & Hirt, R. 2009, 65).

2.3   Theory of expert branding

The brand is developed for a person or organisation in the same way as a product or service (Keller, K. L. 2008, 21). A brand developed around the company's vision is stronger than a person's brand. Human factors are influenced by the development of a person's reputation. Due to human factors, the development of a person's reputation is harder to predict than the company reputation (Lindberg-Repo, K. 2005, 96). Like a product or company brand, a personal brand is formed based on content produced in different channels (Poutanen P. et al. 2019, 43.). The importance of expert brands for the success of companies is continuously increasing due to changes in customer behaviour. Customers are increasingly following the best experts and the most trusted businesspeople. The trend is to commit to exciting people, not to the company (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 27).

Strong personal brands attract interest in jobseekers. Expert brands enable or facilitate the recruitment of desired people and help employees engage with the company (Ahto O. et al. 2016, 54; Pääkkönen, L. 2017, 87). Interested people are significantly more interesting to follow than those represented by the company (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 51). A person known as an expert is also interesting from the recruiter's point of view, as he has demonstrated qualifications for his skills (Hernberg, K. 2013, 129). An expert may also negatively influence the visibility of a company by exporting its attention to itself (Kurvinen, J. & Sipilä, L. 2014, 81). There is a risk of intentional or involuntary failures caused by persons. As a result of this error, the company's reputation may be damaged. The brand of experts may also generate personnel risk for companies (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 198; Kurvinen, J. & Sipilä, L. 2014, 18).

A person has a brand that has been formed as a result of the activity. The brand is uncontrollably formed unless the brand's development is controlled (Poutanen P. et al. 2019, 54). The person's brand awareness varies, and the basis of awareness is the closest co-workers and colleagues. The relationship between network size is based on a person's social activity. People rarely have a real understanding of themselves and their knowledge. People tend to judge their own personal characteristics incorrectly because the strengths are underestimated, and weaknesses are overestimated. Collecting feedback from the social network allows for identifying strengths and weaknesses. Feedback allows a person to develop personal strengths. The development of powers has implications for action and results (Drucker, P.F. 2006, 4.).

A specialist who bases communication on their own experience is called a knowledgeable expert. The knowledgeable expert communicates without restrictions in comparison with a scientific expert. The absence of a scientific basis enables the production and sharing of false or selected information. For example, a person who produces brand entertainment may base claims on individual cases. The expert researcher justifies claims based on statistical facts. The researcher communicates typically with the audience, and the knowledgeable specialist conveys the message at an individual level (Poutanen P. et al. 2019, 57.). Knowledgeable expertise is a growing part of free-form content published online without a scientific background (Poutanen P. et al. 2019, 23). The expert is therefore not required to be highly trained, and in principle, anyone can be a valued knowledgeable specialist.

In brand management, an individual's experience cannot be led or controlled. From an enterprise perspective, this means the ability to manage experience environments. Management of experience environments means working with consumers and consumer communities (Prahalad, C. K. & Ramaswamy, V. 2004, 213.).

By monitoring the brand discussion, it is possible to detect positive and negative opinions from individual customers (Metz, A. 2012, 9). The information gathered through the discussions will allow the implementation of informed decisions to strengthen the brand. Creating a social customer relationship requires a dialogue with the audience. It is recommended to share information in a comfortable atmosphere. The development of social

customer relationships affects the company's customer relationships and an increasing number of customer types (Metz, A. 2012, 14- 15.).

The brand can be distinguished from competitors by an influencer. The influencer can also be called a marketer. Influencers want to reach out to consumers and communicate with them. Influencer marketing attention must be focused on message content and selected channels to achieve the goals (Pearson, T. R. 2011, 142). The influencer reaches potential customers with active marketing communications, which enables meeting demand and supply (Hernberg, K. 2013, 128). The influencer is an expert with the ability to help the company to be involved in as many competitions as possible (Hernberg, K. 2013, 133). Reaching customers through influencers sets requirements for tracking and planning goals.

Reaching out to customers and managing change requires companies to deploy new methods. Customer outreach with experienced experts sets requirements for tracking and marketing planning. Companies have the opportunity to exploit different targeted channels more broadly than before. For this reason, experts are able to share their talents with widely targeted segments through several methods (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 19.). This change is significant compared to the means of communication commonly used in previous decades. Traditional communication tools for the brand building have been ones such as newspapers and radio commercials. Influencer marketing has changed brand building significantly.

A person operates in various working environments in different ways. The differences consist, for example, of values and practices in the working environment. A worker who respects the values of a company and has the same values helps the company succeed. The employee's and company's different values affect the worker's job performance negatively (Ahvenainen, P., Gylling, J. & Leino, S. 2017, 77.). The employee's experience and values should be as close as possible to the company's communication to achieve results. The closer the company's communication with the employee's experience, the better the goals will succeed (Hertzen P. von 2006, 228.).

The core reason for content generation is to remove barriers to purchasing (Kurvinen, J. & Sipilä, L. 2014, 98). The managers of listed companies consistently sell expectations and expected value to investors. A person who wants to achieve fame is worth selling, in the same way, the expectation values of their followers (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 15). Expert communication is recommended to be performed in a group, as a group message usually reaches a wider audience (Poutanen P. et al. 2019, 45). A broad network of contacts is required to create an expert's reputation, and the creation of a social network is profitable. People in the network can ascertain the expertise and communication skills of a specialist (Hernberg, K. 2013, 150).

In many cases, customers are not aware of all the services where companies have the opportunity to serve them (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 63). With a broad social network, the expert has the opportunity to share up-to-date information about the services of the company they represent. The sharing of information contributes to the success of the company and the achievement of objectives. The needs and desires of the target groups must be ignored to ensure the success of communication. Where channels are inadequately selected, messages reach the desired target audience with minimal distribution efficiently (Poutanen P. et al. 2019, 34.).

The most desirable form of earned media is customers who recommend company services and products to other companies. During the recommendation process, a person may experience a feeling of pleasure. The customer can be guided to recommend the company by building a strong customer relationship. A strong customer relationship will create a situation in which talking about a company produces pleasure (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 92.). For example, earned media is a discussion of the brand's customers on social media or free communication published by the press. Earned media and free discussion is challenging to manage by a company or expert (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 88).

In companies, the number of diverse competences is increasing, and the importance of interaction between different stakeholders increases (Vierula, M., Vierula, M. & Schultz, D. E. 2014, 30, 33). The collective strengths of the company's employees or teams should be viewed from different perspectives (Drucker, P. F. 2010a, 112). Persons entrusted with their responsibilities should be carefully selected, considering their personal

characteristics (Drucker, P. F. 2010b, 104-107). The achievement of results requires the coordination of business objectives and communications (Kurvinen, J. & Sipilä, L. 2014, 95).

2.4   Branding expert area

The construction of a personal brand is relevant to improving the appreciation of the expert and the presentation of knowledge (Pääkkönen, L. 2017, 87). Notable people have typically been content creators (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 226; Kurvinen, J. & Sipilä, L. 2014, 75). When we work with quality and interact with our environment, the personal brand or expert brand is built alongside our operations (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 24).

The personal brand and the expert brand differ in the content of the communication. The expert seeks to convince the audience, for example, by helping others (Pääkkönen, L. 2017, 89.). An expert can help other people by providing information. By providing information, the expert shares knowledge and develops his reputation. This allows the development of the social network and awareness of the desires and needs of different people (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 18.). An online influencer is a person who shapes others' decisions about purchasing and thinking. Influencers communicate effectively, and they are good allies or tricky enemies (Moffitt, S. & Dover, M. 2011, 131.).

According to Poutanen (2019, 19), the development of an expert's brand is part of the expert's daily work tasks. Hernberg (2013, 140) presents an expert brand creation as a gradual process. The four phases of the process are supposed to conquer the whole nation. The conquest begins with conquering a person's working environment. The idea is to increase the reputation of a person from nearby colleagues until reaching a broad audience.

The expert is able to discuss and comment on a very broad topic by directing the answer around the chosen theme (Poutanen P. et al. 2019, 89). Participation in discussions contributes to the growth of a person's reputation (Poutanen P. et al. 2019, 44). The expert

strengthens trust among stakeholders by helping people (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tol-vanen, V. 2017, 228).

Poutanen (2019, 75) recommends the use of the pyramid scheme for expert communication as a basis for communication. The starting point is to listen to the target group's thoughts and insights. According to the model, the expert develops its reputation by distributing content and generating content. The model is used to build interactions between stakeholders to help construct a brand image of an expert.

The work of the model begins with the following of other specialists and the learning of their activities. Monitoring other activities is going to the next stage and joining social media channels. On social media channels, the expert is initially present and then distributes the content created by others. Content creation and communication are started after understanding the needs of the audience. Influence is possible when a person has gained enough awareness among the audience.
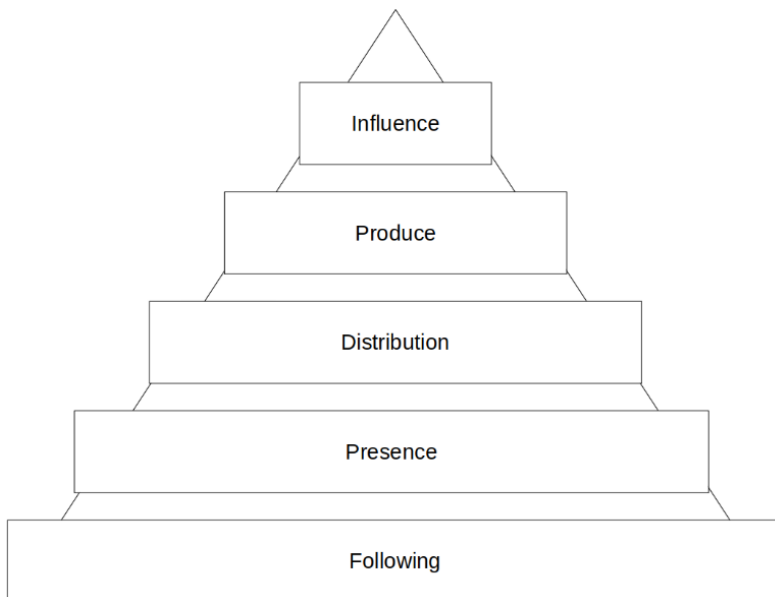

Figure 5. Pyramid model for expert communication (Poutanen P. et al. 2019, 75).

The pyramid scheme aims to understand the essential needs and interests of the target audience. Influence is initiated by sharing the content produced by others and by being present in the interaction. Content production starts when the expert's abilities are at an

adequate level. This influence is achieved by understanding the needs of the target group and by managing adequate interaction methods.

The expert focuses on communicating the content related to the key themes, and other communications outside the key themes must be avoided (Poutanen P. et al. 2019, 88). Reputation development requires identifying the problems, needs and desires of the target group (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 64). The expert's audience is rarely known as the best solution for solving their problems (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 72). The expert forms his brand by telling his work in a meaningful way and at the same time helping other people (Hernberg, K. 2013, 125). The expert brand consists of interaction between people (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 24).

An expert should concentrate on the things and phenomena that interest him, and he should be self-approachable and accessible (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 20- 21). It is desirable to incorporate personal features into the expert's brand, such as hobbies or other interests (Poutanen P. et al. 2019, 43). According to Uusitalo (2014, 145), learning by doing is an effective method if a person does not know where to start. Low self-esteem may also lead to obstacles to the development of an expert and to complicate communication with stakeholders (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 46). There is also a need to prepare for negative feedback and inappropriate comments, and it is possible to learn new insights and different ways of thinking from all feedback (Hernberg, K. 2013, 180).

It is recommended that an expert be active in several different channels. Goals are best achieved by understanding how different channels communicate (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 99). Irrelevant things are not interesting, and this is understandable, although the expert's own view of the message is important. The importance and simplicity of the message is a prerequisite for reaching the audience and for understanding the message (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 100.). The clearness and consistency of the message shall be considered if more than one person is responsible for the communication and distribution of the message (Uusitalo, P. 2014, 26).

The definition of an expert's target group should reflect the situation of people's lives, hobbies, values and preferences (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 73). An expert should create and implement a content strategy and a content mission. The content strategy helps to achieve the goals and content mission, depicting an expert's core tasks and importance from an audience perspective (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 70, 78).

The value of an expert's brand may be the expert's most significant property (Kurvinen, J., Laine, T. & Tolvanen, V. 2017, 18). The digital labour market is continuously growing, and the exchange of work is increasing internationally, and this provides experts with new opportunities for success (Kiiski-Kataja, E. 2016, 19).

A specialist can become an opinion leader who is a pioneer in his industry and a trendsetter. The opinion leader is an expert who, through insights, helps the whole industry move forward. Typically, the opinion leader understands the changes and can anticipate customers future needs (Kurvinen, J. & Sipilä, L. 2014, 11, 14.). The opinion leader must identify the megatrends so that he can act in the role of influencer (Kurvinen, J. & Sipilä, L. 2014, 26).

3   IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This chapter sets out the implementation of the study. The beginning introduces the study subscriber and the mandated background. The chapter also outlines the implementation of the study and the main findings, results and recommendations.

3.1   Case Company

The research subscriber, Avosorsa Oy., offers online marketing and application development services to companies in Finland. The company's main products are search engine optimisation and search engine advertising, as well as the development work of search engine-friendly online services. The company's goal is to generate profits for its owners and customers through online communication. The company was founded in 2015, and the company's office is located in Hollola.

The company's long-term goal is to be the primary and easy-to-reach partner for small and profitable business customers, as a provider of websites, e-commerce and search engine optimization, as well as Google Ads advertising in Finland. The company's customers are small and medium-sized companies that are privately owned. The target customer is a 35-60 year old entrepreneur, or a person in the deciding position, who has completed mid- or upper-level training. The target company's age is at least three years, and net sales exceed EUR 200 000. The target company is required to engage in the long-term development of the online business.

The company's products are fixed-price service products that are possible to expand in the future. The products are priced at a fixed price, and it is possible to acquire extensions for all products. Products are available from the company's sales service via phone or email. Products and services have been delivered to customers via an Internet network. Online services are provided as a cloud service. Communication with the client is performed via the Internet network.

The company's competitors are advertising agencies and companies that develop search engine advertising or online services.

3.2   Competitive strategy

A pre-agreed and easy-to-understand complete service package is produced. During the service delivery, the client is only required to perform the necessary tasks. In communicating with the client, we seek simplicity and avoid professional vocabulary and professional terms. Service products will be delivered to the customer within four weeks of ordering at a pre-agreed fixed price. Additional services and extensions ordered during delivery will be delivered after the original delivery is completed.

In delivering service products, the company uses commonly used applications and methods. The use of methods commonly used in the industry enables transparent business operations. Transparency protects the customer, for example by enabling the supplier to tender in the future. Customer satisfaction is pursued with rapid response to service requests and contacts. Preference is given to customers who feel that they are experiencing a problem.

The communication seeks to distribute information to the customer that will safeguard and increase customer sales or cause cost savings. The advice provided by the company is a contract for the customer free service, and the invoiced work is always clearly agreed in advance to avoid ambiguities. Customers are served in the evenings and on weekends if necessary.

Company customers are offered a contract to redirect potential customers to the company's sales service. By recommending a company's services through its personal contact network, the customer has the opportunity to earn a reward for the leading tip of the order.

3.3   Factors data mining

The basis for the research implementation is the end-result information expert on the brand's impact on the success of the company. The interview is conducted by twelve people who have developed their reputation as an expert in online visibility.

Surveys and interviews

Experts were interviewed by semi-integrated open individual interviews. The interview was chosen as a method of gathering research material in order to allow interaction during the study (Hirsjärvi, S. & Hurme, H. 2000, 27; Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. 2018, 83). The objective of qualitative research is to gather essential information on key success factors and the impact of measures on business development in the short and long term. In the short term, the follow-up period is less than a year and the long-term objectives are measured with a three-year follow-up period.

The questions were divided into two thematic activities, which were the experts and the strategic implications for business. The themes were used to guide the interview to gather significant answers (Hirsjärvi, S. & Hurme, H. 2000, 48; Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. 2018, 87- 88). In addition to this, a quantitative question was presented to the individuals, which explained whether the interviews with the companies to increase the reputation of the experts was recommended. Questions were selected according to the question of the study and the aid question. Attention was paid to the recurring themes and topics highlighted in the interviews. The research was selected by experts from different industries to reach multiple perspectives. An expert is considered to be a person who has substantially more information on the subject than others (Hyvärinen, M. et al. 2017, 216). The privacy of the person who participated in the study and the individual claim cannot be combined with the person. Ensuring privacy will probably reduce the expert's threshold for research participation and safeguard the person's reputation (Hyvärinen, M. et al. 2017, 227.).

The survey was conducted using a telephone interview, and the calls were recorded for the purpose of the study on the computer using the phone's speaker and microphone. The telephone interview was suitable for interviews with people in different geographic locations. Preparation for the interview does not require any significant intervention from the parties, and participation is possible without prior preparation. The weakness of the method is the restriction of interaction to the speech level. The limited interaction was accepted as the study investigated the potential of the company's success and not the individuals themselves (Hyvärinen, M. et al. 2017, 271- 273.).

Interviews were recorded with metadata including a name, number, time, external factors, and notes and recordings. The data was recorded in the Hyvärinen (2017, 422- 423) recommendations for describing the interview material and managing the files. The research data management plan will be implemented on the basis of a data management plan provided by the Academy of Finland (Academy of Finland, 2019). The guidance for data management during the study is set out in annexe three (Appendix 3). The material of the interview was destroyed when the thesis was completed. Data destruction was carried out according to the instructions published by the Tietoarkisto (Tietoarkisto 2019).

Expert Interviews

The study was conducted by interviewing twelve specialists with a semi-structured and open interview. The individuals represented a wide range of industries and had varying degrees of experience in online communication and the development of the reputation of the expert. Varied professional experience and a different level of experience in the development of personal reputation enabled a broad research base and a broad spectrum of different perspectives.

Interviewed experts:

• Jose Ahonen, TMI Jose Ahonen

• Petri Fagerström, TMI Referenssipalvelu Petri Fagerström

• Henrik Hopea, Sales Phoenix Oy

• Elina Koivumäki, Lexperience Oy

• Mikko Kyle, Lahden Seudun Kehitys LADEC Oy

• Tea Latvala, Teatiamo Industries Oy

• Antti Merilehto, Story Board Oy

• Jarkko Saari, Toisintekijät Oy

• Jesse Sarkkinen, Limono Oy

• Ville Tolvanen, Digitalist Group Oyj

• Suvi Uski, Cohentamo Social Psychology Oy

• Joose Vattenranta, Posti Group Oyj

3.4   Experiments

Three people were selected at the beginning of the interview contact list and the people on the list were invited to the interview. The interview request was conducted personally via the phone. A request to participate in a telephone interview with a duration of approximately 30 minutes was asked to investigate the impact of the expert's brand on the success of the business. The person attending the interview was promised a summary and recommendation on the development of the expert brand by email after the completion of the study.

At the end of the interview, the question was which person would be interviewed for this study? After the interview, persons whose names were mentioned were contacted by telephone or email. The referrer's name was mentioned during the interview request. A total of 13 interviews were agreed by telephone. Two of the interviews were canceled because they could not be settled before the end of the interview phase. Persons who were contacted by telephone were willing to participate in the study. The interview requests sent via e-mail resulted in two negative replies and one affirmative reply.

The phone interview proved to be cost-effective and enabled flexible scheduling changes. The participant in the telephone interview was not required to attend a meeting in person. The duration of the interview was appropriate, and the interview did not take an unreasonable amount of time from the person who participated in the interview.

The number of questions submitted during the interviews was appropriate. The number and quality of questions were sufficient to solve the research questions of the study. During the interviews, more than 700 different findings were recorded, classified in sub- and main categories. Based on the information gathered in the interviews, responses to the research questions were gathered.

The methodology chosen for the study was chosen based on the theory of study. In the theory of research, the weakness of the interview performed over the phone was a limitation of interaction. In all interviews of the study, the interaction between the persons was confidential and the atmosphere was open. For the results of the interview, it could even be beneficial that the interview was not organised in a personal meeting or through a video call. During the telephone conversation, the interaction was concentrated in the processing of the study questions. The methodology used in the interviews was proper for collecting the research material.

4   DATA ANALYSIS

4.1   Data collection and analysis

The study data were analysed by a theory-based analysis based on inductive reasoning. Previously acquired knowledge and theory were utilised in interpreting the results of the study. The analysis was based partly on theory, and the theory had a guiding role in supporting research results (Hyvärinen, M. et al. 2017, 271- 273.).

The results of the study were analysed through content analysis, which is the basis for the implementation of qualitative research. The content analysis was applied to the research being used, as it allows for the achievement of high-quality research outcomes for the novice researcher as well (Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. 2018, 145). The content was grouped and distributed with themes that could be used to find descriptive insights (Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. 2018, 103- 107). The content analysis was conducted according to the content analysis model presented by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018, 123).

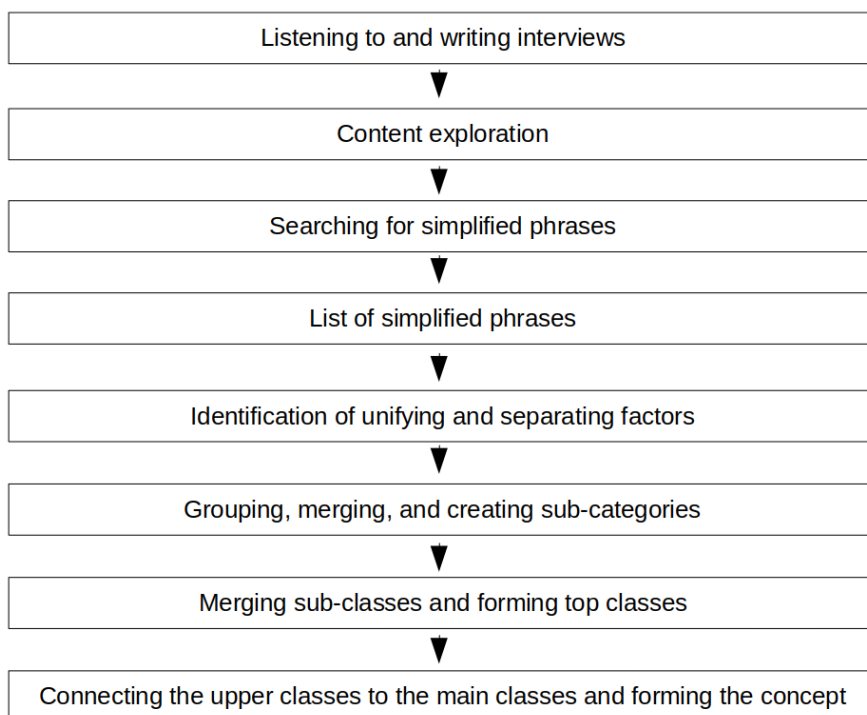| Listening to and writing interviews |
| :---: |
| ▼ |
| Content exploration |
| ▼ |
| Searching for simplified phrases |
| ▼ |
| List of simplified phrases |
| ▼ |
| Identification of unifying and separating factors |
| ▼ |
| Grouping, merging, and creating sub-categories |
| ▼ |
| Merging sub-classes and forming top classes |
| ▼ |
| Connecting the upper classes to the main classes and forming the concept |

Figure 6. The content analysis model (Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. 2018, 123.)

According to the model, irrelevant information was removed from the source material. The simplified phrases resulting from the reform were listed, and one or more expressions were accepted in the sentence. The phenomena observed in the material were grouped and categorised into clusters. The upper classes were formed based on the theory in this work and subcategories based on the content analysis of interviews (Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. 2018, 127- 133.).

How long have you developed your reputation online, and how do you think your reputation has been formed?

Interview no.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
answer 1	1											
answer 2	1											
answer 3			2									
answer 4			2									
answer 5				3								
answer 6				3								
answer 7					4							
answer 8					4							
answer 9						5						
answer 10							6					
answer 11							6					
answer 12								7				
answer 13									8			
answer 14										9		
answer 15										9		
answer 16											10	
answer 17												11
answer 18												12
answer 19												12
answer 20												12

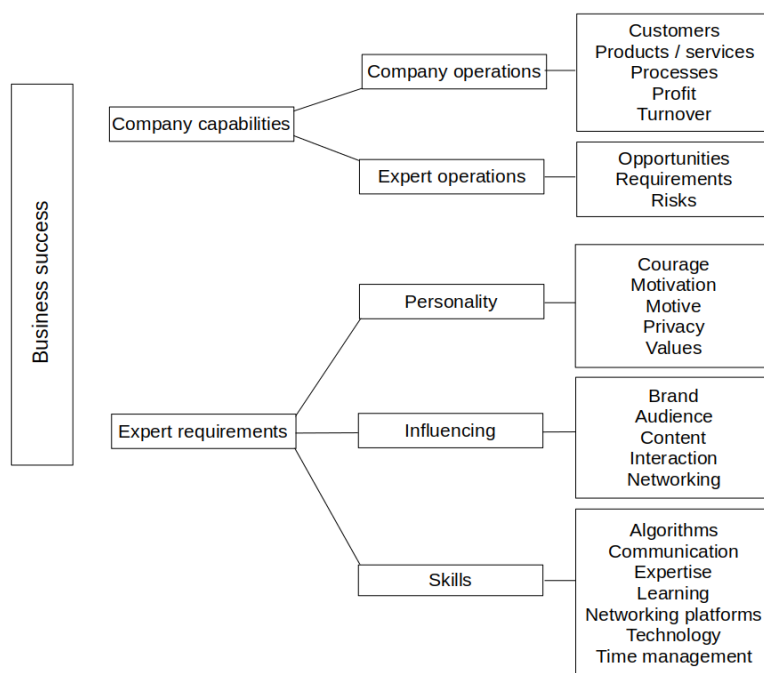Figure 7. The example of quantification worksheet

Figure 8. The classification of information

The findings were written on an MS Excel worksheet, where the observed phenomena were concentrated and classified. The themes were formed from sealed material. The phenomena were merged into a concise set to simplify findings in line with the Alasuutari (2001, 43) recommendation.

The study approached the subject from a theoretical point of view, and the subjective information generated was dependent on the researcher's understanding (Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. 2018, 25). The layout of the questions and the answers received were interpreted from the theoretical reference framework (Alasuutari, P. 2001, 40).

4.2 Research reliability

The reliability of the study was evaluated based on selected criteria, and a reliability assessment established the outcome. A reliability assessment is an entity that evaluates individual criteria and their mutual relationships. The qualitative criteria, according to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2018, 99, 163- 164), are as follows:

- Research target and the significance of the research

- The role of the researcher in the research

- Gathering information

- Adequacy of research material

- Research data sources

- The relationship between the researcher and the data source

- Duration of the study

- Analysis of data

- Reliability of the research

- Reporting the research

4.3   Results

The survey data was collected by interviewing twelve people from different industries. Interviews started on 29 October 2019, and the duration of the interview phase was eight days. Interview questions were forwarded beforehand to the participants in the interviews. A total of 711 written observations were recorded in the interviews along with seven hours of voice recordings. The duration of the individual interview averaged 36 minutes. The time spent during the interview and the duration of the interview had an obvious connection with the experience of the interviewed person. The time limit for the interview seemed to stem from the fact that the participant had to think about the significance of the question from their own point of view.

The people who participated in the study had developed their reputation appropriately on the web and on social media for an average of three years. The interviews confirmed the fact that there was a link between the period used to influence online and the results achieved. People who have actively developed a reputation reported a positive impact on their results. Respondents who did not actively develop their reputation have not experienced the benefits of developing an expert brand for themselves or for their business. However, the significance and potential benefits of the expert's reputation were generally identified in all interviews.

The person's activity and reputation development had an obvious connection. According to respondents, the development of reputation was mainly the result of a person's activity. The development of reputation can, therefore, be considered to have affected all the actions and tasks performed by the person. Critical activities in reputation development were related to producing and distributing content across channels.

Based on the interviews, it was noticeable that the development of reputation had been very individualised. Those who participated in the interview and actively developed their reputation felt that the workload used to develop the reputation was significant. Based on the study, the workload needed to develop reputation is likely to increase in the future due to continued competition growth. The increase in competition meant, in this context, a constant increase in supply, which implies the difficulty of separation.

Respondents suggest that the key content of the communication should be related to the expert's work, and the interest of the message can be increased by content that helps solve the problem. A significant proportion of participants (67%) in the interview experienced the production of their specialisation and personal content as one of the prerequisites for success. On the other hand, several respondents (25%) recommended avoiding copying others. The information gathered suggests that sharing a person's knowledge is an appropriate method of developing a reputation.

The courage and up-to-date expertise was, according to the study, the most significant features required by a reputation-developing expert. The respondents mentioned the expertise as a highly relevant feature in the reputation development of 83% of respondents. The importance of courage was highlighted by 67% of responses. The research material also shows the significance of the expert's authenticity and values. Almost half of the respondents (42%) said that a person should be honest and should be genuine in all situations.

The critical personal requirements were focused on professional skills and content production. The challenge was to produce and distribute content at the right time to the audience. In addition to content production, difficulty produces the subject selection and message compaction or crystallisation. The intensification and crystallisation of the message generated difficulties for at least one-third of respondents. The observation was highlighted in the topic, which was scientific or unknown to the general citizen. In terms of skills, the most important requirements were focused on information technology management, professional skills and the active exploitation of different communication channels.

As a result of the increase in reputation and awareness, 92% of surveyed respondents reported that the work tasks had changed. A very significant change was experienced by 67% of all respondents. In all cases, the change in job responsibilities had been perceived as a positive change. In general, the change in employment seemed to be attributed to the exploitation of new opportunities as part of the business.

Research evidence shows that there has been a change in the use of social media channels in companies. The exploitation of social media as part of a job is more acceptable, according to 25% of respondents. All respondents to the survey felt that their company accepted social media exploitation as part of their job responsibilities. The use of social media applications is considered to be part of the expert's work, as has been demonstrated in theory. Half of the respondents (50%) identified the LinkedIn app to be an essential tool for communication with the target group. The key benefits of social media channels were networking and participation in closed or open groups, which were found to strengthen social relations.

The challenges of the future focused on continuous learning and the development of professional skills, and 58% of respondents made professional skills a major development target in the future. Professional knowledge was considered to include technology and social media management of different channels. Information technology was considered to be part of an expert's knowledge and an essential condition for carrying out the expert's duties. Policy development targets were related to content production management and operational planning. Understanding the potential of technology and continuous learning was perceived as meaningful. According to respondents, understanding the algorithm was one of the crucial prerequisites for reaching the target group.

The development of reputation was perceived to contribute to reaching new opportunities, according to 83% of respondents. The possibilities were generally related to the development of new business activities and new career opportunities. The most significant challenge to reputation development was the use of time and time management. At a general level, it is noticeable that people who follow the chosen strategy or method do not experience a significant problem of time management.

Networking and the development of the social network were beneficial to a significant proportion of respondents. The development of the social network was significant for 83% of respondents, and 17% of respondents had experienced that networking had a limited impact on their activities. The key benefits of networking were cooperation opportunities and learning from other activities — people who have actively developed the network experienced the importance of the networks much more than other respondents. The social network was also found to benefit the parties in developing business and reaching new

opportunities. The most significant advantage observed was the increase in sales resulting from the discovery of new customers.

Cooperation within the social network was found to be relevant to reaching the audience and improving communication outcomes. The sharing of co-produced publications among all authors was found to be a success factor for the social network. Sharing the audience with another expert is helpful according to a study, and 50% of respondents said they were producing and sharing content with other experts. Audience sharing meant joint publications or the conscious and active sharing of publications.

Based on the results of the interview, it was found that the discussion was conducted both publicly and in closed groups. The role of closed expert groups was highlighted in the responses of people who had developed their reputation for several years. In terms of interaction, the main findings were related to feedback and interaction management. 42% of respondents reported little or no negative feedback. The negative feedback amount and the person's awareness seemed to be related. However, the evidence cannot be established unequivocally. The amount of negative feedback was found to be low in scientific and expert communication. Feedback seemed to be more related to a person's representative service or product. A person serving a broad audience and acting in a general sector is likely to receive more negative feedback than a specialist who communicates with peers.

According to respondents, the reputation of the expert has had a significant impact on the success of the companies. The company's profit improvement detected that 63% of respondents and 42% of the persons who participated in the interview had established a company. It was possible to initiate business operations in the above cases as a result of the development of a specialist reputation. On the basis of the interviews, it can be noted that the reputation of individuals has had little or no impact on the strategy of companies.

The reputation of the expert has had an impact on the pricing model of the companies, and 50% of respondents reported the pricing changes that resulted from the reputation. In this context, the pricing changes meant an increase in the prices of products or services. As for the expert's work, the effects were noticeable as a reduction in the time spent on

trading, which also means cost savings. Of the respondents, 50% stated that the customer base of the company they represented had changed as a result of the reputation. However, there was no connection detected between the change of customer base and the pricing model.

Experts experienced the most significant benefit of content production and content distribution. 75% of respondents made the most significant contribution to the company represented via the production and publication of content. This probably means that by generating content to the audience, it is possible to achieve interaction. Through interaction, demands and desires connect, contributing to the development of business. As a result, companies have the opportunity to influence and create customer's demands before the customer selects companies as their partner.

The value of the expert's reputation for the company was very significant for 83% of respondents, and 17% did not describe their values for the company's perspective. The existence of the risk had detected 58% of respondents and 42% of respondents believed that their reputation does not pose a risk to the company. The values between companies and individuals were consistent among respondents, and 83% of respondents reported that there was no conflict between their own personal values and the values of the company they represent. The adverse situation had identified 17% of respondents, and the company's operating environment generally influenced the situation.

The importance of the reputation of experts for business purposes was questioned from all the individuals involved in the study. They were asked to provide a recommendation on a scale of one to ten on whether companies should use resources to develop experts' expertise. The average response to the study was 9.08. The result means that respondents recommend companies to use resources to develop their expert's reputation. The loss of resources used to develop an expert's reputation was not seen as a significant threat to companies. It, therefore, seems that the lack of reputation may be a higher risk for businesses than the loss of reputation.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Evaluation

The research was necessary from the point of view of the company that has commissioned the investigation. The results of the research are expected to affect the business strategy of Avosorsa Oy. The researcher conducted the study according to the research plan, and all interviews were conducted with the harmonised method. The research data sources represented different business environments. The sources of research were suitable as the target group for the interview, as the objective was to understand the strategic opportunities for business in general. The number of interviews ensured the creation of reliable research results.

The researcher of the investigation has not influenced the opinion of the person involved in the interview, and the researcher does not have any business with the persons involved in the research. The work time allocated to the study responded to the project scope. The resources assigned to the study implementation were following the requirements of the project. The analysis of the interviews was reliable, as the questions asked gave answers to the research questions. The outcome of the study is reliable for answering research questions. In this context, success refers to the growth of businesses and improved profitability. According to respondents, the reputation of the experts was relevant for the business operations, and they recommended companies to use resources to develop the reputation of experts.

Success with experts will require companies to be more likely to practice changes and commitment to staff development. The improvement in profitability is a consequence of the content published by experts in different channels and the interaction it has achieved. With interaction, it is possible for an expert to reach different stakeholders and share information about their skills. The consequence of the action is the development of new customer relationships and the structural changes in the clientele. A change in the clientele may guide the company to change the pricing model, resulting in a profitability improvement.

Through experts, the company has the opportunity to network extensively with experts active in different industries. Through discussion and interaction in closed and open groups, experts can influence people's opinions. Company experts learn about the activities of others and represent their businesses. As a result of the representation, the company's awareness and reputation develop.

Through continuous content production and social interaction, the expert delivers the most significant benefit to its business. However, maintaining interaction requires constant activity and sustained commitment. Interaction with the achievement of results is recommended to be defined as part of the expert's daily duties. Companies should also consider coordinating expert work tasks and company processes to maximise results. A change in the work tasks may require reorganisation and reallocation of duties in companies.

Developing the reputation of experts requires a firm commitment to developing the knowledge and technical skills of selected persons. The development of professional skills appears to be of paramount importance for achieving the objectives. In addition to professional knowledge, companies must support their experts in technology management and interaction skills. The potential risk posed by a person's reputation was found to be real, and the companies are recommended to consider the reputation risk. Any differences in the value of companies and experts may have a negative impact on the objectives set by the company and, therefore, it is advisable to identify disputes as early as possible.

Based on the results of the research, we can respond to the sub-question "What are the strategy requirements for expert branding?". The expert is required to have the courage and expertise and communication skills. The management of channels and applications used for communication was found to be a key requirement for performing expert duties.

An expert is best suited to a person who wants to help other people in solving different problems at their own volition. The development of the reputation of an expert was found to be a process lasting several years based on interaction with the person's activities.

As a result of the expert's reputation and skill development, the person's duties are likely to change over time. The enlargement and awareness of the social network increased new personal opportunities. According to findings, companies have been established as a

result of the reputation of the expert, and a direct link to the development of the new business was found.

5.2   Recommendations

The brand improves profitability and the company brand is formed as a result of people's activities. The reputation of the company's employees therefore, also contributes to brand awareness from a company perspective. The communication by the employees of the company is, therefore, a method that should be considered to improve the reputation of the company. Content shared by individuals reaches a broad audience compared to the content published by the company.

Reputation development is part of the expert's work, and some individuals have the ability to succeed better than average. The company should consider the use of a specialist's reputation as business support provided that a suitable volunteer person is available for the assignment. However, the development of the reputation of persons occurs as a result of all activities. This means that all employees in the company should clarify the importance of the expert's reputation for the business.

A change in the expert's duties can affect the company's short-term performance because reputation development is an ongoing process and requires perseverance. The company should start with the development of the reputation of the CEO, the board members and the managers. An expert's reputation is a feature of a person who helps the company succeed. The list of recommendations is listed in annexe (annexe 4).

Future research

The study should be replicated by interviewing the staff of international companies that would allow the impact of business scope to be assessed for the results of this research. The study found a lack of information to understand the functioning of algorithms. Investigating the functioning of algorithms, for example, by analysing the content produced could

bring valuable information to facilitate the development of the reputation of experts. The repetition of the study using a larger sample would allow comparisons of results across different sectors of industry. Examining the subject in the long term would allow more accurate information on the impact of expert reputation development.

5.3   Limitations of the study

In qualitative analysis, deviations are caused by different interpretations, and this requires a reevaluation of the dossier (Alasuutari, P. 1999, 42). The main cause of the deviations in this study was the relationship between the person and the company they represent. The results of the study are based on knowledge from experts who have successfully developed their reputation. The experience of the research target group may not describe reality exactly as reality occurs to us.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questions of qualitative research

1. Can your name, business or title be mentioned in the thesis?

2. How long have you developed your reputation online, and how do you think your reputation has been formed?

3. Describe what features are required of an online expert.

4. Describe how your tasks have changed due to the development of web visibility.

5. Describe what types of work, practices, or skills you need to develop your reputation?

6. What skills do you think you need in future to build your reputation?

7. What are the significant challenges and opportunities for developing your reputation?

8. Describe the benefits of collaborating with other online experts.

9. What negative things have you encountered as a result of improving your reputation?

10. How has your reputation influenced the strategy or the result of the company you represent?

11. How has your reputation been affected by your company's processes, customers or pricing model?

12. Do you recognise that your company has gained new success factors or new business with your reputation?

13. Describe which of your actions will deliver the most significant benefit to your business?

14. Are your personal goals or values inconsistent with your company's goals and values?

15. Do you think your reputation can pose a risk to your company?

16. Describe your expert reputation as a value for the company you represent?

17. Which persons would be interviewed for this questionnaire?

Appendix 2: Questions of quantitative research

1. Do you recommend that companies use resources to develop their expert's reputation on a scale of 1-10? arguments?

Appendix 3: Guidelines for information management based on instructions from the Academy of Finland.

1. General description of data

1.1 What kinds of data are your research based on? What data will be collected, produced or reused? What file formats will the data be in? Also, give a rough estimate of the size of the data produced or collected.

Data is collected through a telephone interview. Interviews are recorded using the phone's speaker and an external microphone to the personal computer. Files are typed into text, and the findings are stored in a Microsoft Excel file for grading. The data is stored in an MP4 and Microsoft Excel format. The amount of data stored is up to 10GB.

1.2 How will the consistency and quality of data be controlled?

The interview method is consistent, and the data is backed up.

2. Ethical and legal compliance

2.1 What ethical issues are related to your data management, for example, in handling sensitive data, protecting the identity of participants, or gaining consent for data sharing?

Personal data is not stored. Any personal data mentioned in the recordings will be erased at the time of writing. Audio recordings and transcriptions are destroyed after the end of the study.

2.2 How will data ownership, copyright and IPR issues be managed? Are there any copyrights, licenses or other restrictions that prevent you from using or sharing the data?

There are no known constraints in this regard.

3. Documentation and metadata

3.1 How will you document your data to make them findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable for you and others? What kinds of metadata standards, README files or other documentation will you use to help others understand and use your data?

Information gathered from interviews is not shared to protect privacy.

4. Storage and backup during the research project

4.1 Where will your data be stored, and how will they be backed up?

The material is stored on the computer, and the data is secured to the memory stick.

4.2 Who will be responsible for controlling access to your data, and how will secured access be controlled?

The storage of data and the person responsible for processing is Keijo Mämmi. The information is stored in an encrypted form to avoid misuse.

5. Opening, publishing and archiving the data after the research project

5.1 What part of the data can be made openly available or published? Where and when will the data, or their metadata, be made available?

The study report, including the annexes.

5.2 Where will data with long-term value be archived, and for how long?

The data is permanently deleted after completion of the thesis.

6. Data management responsibilities and resources

6.1. Who will be responsible for specific tasks of data management during the research project life cycle? Estimate also the resources (e.g. financial, time and effort) required for data management.

Keijo Mämmi is responsible for data management and the estimated working hours for data processing is 120 hours.

Appendix 4: Recommendations for developing the reputation of an expert

Based on the study, the use of a specialist's reputation in business may necessitate changes in company methodology and expert work. This annexe sets out recommendations on the issues that companies should consider when developing the reputation of experts.

1. Reputation development is part of the expert's work, and some individuals have the ability to succeed better than average.

2. The development of the reputation of an expert is based on voluntary and willingness.

3. The expert's success factor is helping others by sharing information.

4. The expert needs resources to interact and produce content.

5. The development of expertise is a prerequisite for success.

6. A change in the expert's duties can affect the company's short-term performance.

7. Positive and negative situations must be prepared in advance to maximise the benefits and minimise the harm.

8. Reputation development is an ongoing process and requires perseverance.

9. An expert's reputation is a feature of a person who helps the company succeed. The feature is not a threat.