
EMPLOYEE BRAND ADVOCACY

Case: The Marketing Agency Expression Ltd.



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ABSTRACT

The focus of this thesis is to find out how the employees of the company see the corporate brand and how they communicate it externally. The commissioning company in this research is the author's employer, The Marketing Agency Expression Ltd. (also known as The Sales Promotion Agency Expression), which is a medium-sized marketing agency. The company operates in the field of marketing and sales promotions providing promotion personnel, implementation and planning.

Theory applied in this thesis consists of employee brand advocacy and the stages of brand advocacy. These issues are discussed and examined from different point of views, as from the psychological and experiential point of view.

Quantitative research was conducted as a part of this thesis to find out the company's part-time employees' level of brand advocacy. Quantitative research was chosen as a research method because of the amount of the target group; Survey was sent to 200 part-time employees of the commissioning company. The main objectives were to research thoroughly the stages of brand advocacy; conduct a brand survey to determine the level of employees' knowledge, attitude and behavior to identify their stage of brand advocacy; and to make development ideas how to increase employee brand advocacy.

Expression has put a lot of time and effort to build its strong brand during its history and it has created results. Now Expression has a strong group of employees, who act as brand advocates for the company. The brand is seen youthful and innovative and the company has bright future ahead of them.

Keywords Employee brand advocacy, brand, stages of brand advocacy

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämän työn tavoitteena oli selvittää, kuinka työntekijät näkevät yrityksen brändin ja puhuvatko he brändistä myös työn ulkopuolella. Toimeksiantaja on kirjoittajan työnantaja, Markkinointitoimisto Expression Oy (tunnetaan myös nimellä Myynninedistämistoimisto Expression), joka on keskisuuri markkinointitoimisto. Yritys toimii markkinoinnin ja myynninedistämisen parissa suunnitellen ja toteuttaen erilaisia promootioita ja tarjoten myynninedistäjiä.

Työssä sovellettu teoria perustuu yritysten brändin puolestapuhumiseen ja sen eri tasoihin. Näitä asioita tutkitaan eri näkökulmista, kuten psykologiasta ja kokemuksellisesta perspektiivistä.

Kvantitatiivinen tutkimus toteutettiin osana tätä työtä, jotta saatiin selville toimeksiantajan osa-aikaisten työntekijöiden asenteet ja käyttäytyminen brändiä kohtaan. Kvantitatiivinen tutkimus valittiin tutkimusmenetelmäksi otoksen olla yli 200 henkilöä. Työn tavoitteena oli tutkia brändin puolestapuhumisen eri tasoja, määrittää tutkimuksen avulla yrityksen työntekijöiden tiedot, asenteet ja käyttäytyminen brändiä kohtaan ja tehdä kehitysehdotuksia tulevaisuutta varten.

Expression on panostanut oman brändinsä rakentamiseen ja tämä on tuottanut tulosta. Tällä hetkellä Expressionin brändin takana seisoo vahva joukko, joka levittää positiivista viestiä yrityksestä. Yrityksen brändi nähdäänä nuorekkaana ja innovatiivisena ja sillä on kirkas tulevaisuus edessään.

Avainsanat Brändin puolestapuhujat, brändi, brändin puolestapuhumisen tasot

Sivut 42 s. + liitteet 7 s.

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	4
1.1	Research question and the main objectives	4
1.2	Commissioning organization The Marketing Agency Expression Ltd.	4
1.3	Empirical research	6
2	EMPLOYEE BRAND ADVOCACY	7
2.1	Introduction to the topic	7
2.2	Stages of Brand advocacy	7
2.3	Benefits of brand advocacy	10
2.4	How to transform employees into brand advocates?	11
2.5	Tools for building brand advocates	14
2.6	How to turn negative commenters into brand advocates?	15
2.7	Psychology of brand advocacy	16
3	RESEARCH PROCESS AND THE SURVEY RESULTS	19
3.1	Employee survey	19
3.2	Research Methods	20
3.3	Fact section	20
3.4	Brand image section	27
4	ANALYSIS	33
4.1	Analysis of the results	33
4.2	Stages of Expression's employee brand advocacy	34
5	RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	38
5.1	Recommendations	38
5.2	Conclusion	39
	SOURCES	42

Appendix 1 Employee survey, English

Appendix 2 Employee survey, Finnish

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research question and the main objectives

The research question of this thesis is the following: How do company's employees view the company as a brand and how do they communicate the brand to others?

Main objectives

- Research thoroughly the stages of brand advocacy
- To conduct a brand survey to gather vital information for the commissioning organization
- To determine the level of employee' knowledge, attitude and behavior to identify brand advocates, believers, learners and resisters.
- To analyze the results according to the stages of brand advocacy
- Making development ideas how to increase employee brand advocacy

1.2 Commissioning organization The Marketing Agency Expression Ltd.

The case company in this research is The Marketing Agency Expression Ltd. (also known as The Sales Promotion Agency Expression), which is a medium-sized marketing agency originating from Tampere and currently operating nationally from offices in Tampere and Helsinki. Expression operates in the field of sales promotion services. It has a full-time staff of four, and a staff of 250 freelancers to implement sales promotion activities for clients such as Hewlett-Packard, Nikon and Sony.

The company's strength is in planning and implementing concepts which actually promote sales. The company emphasizes result-orientedness, joy of working and constant development. Its clients include large corporations, growing SMEs, advertising and marketing agencies, wholesalers, retailers, trade fair and event marketing companies and media agencies. Expression has readymade concepts for e.g. cosmetics, consumer electronics, sports, life style and bar promotions.

The Managing Director of Expression Ltd., Päivi Salminen, pointed out in an interview 3.1.2012, that from the earliest days of the company's history, they have emphasized the value of a strong brand. It seems Expression has taken a lot of action to build its unique brand and succeeded.

"Expression and its workers know the elements of a successful promotion in theory and in practice and are able to apply that knowledge in different fields and in different market situations." (Salminen, interview 3.1.2012)

Experience of seven years seems to have given vital information on how to implement effective sales promotion activities. All promotion work is carefully reported and analyzed with the help of custom-made promotion

management software eKansio. Company also has systematically collected data about events and locations, so that they know where to reach target groups effectively.

Personnel influence the success of a sales promotion significantly, and the company is aware of that fact. In their nationwide network, their goal is to find young adults who appreciate sales work, take it seriously and are willing to develop and take on a challenge. They screen, interview and test all of their applicants in person.

Benefits for the commissioning organization

Part-time employees, promoters, of the company, are like “actual business cards” for the company. They work in the field and are actually in contact with the consumers and new, potential customers. If promoters do not bear advocating behaviour towards the brand, it is important to the company to be aware of it.

Promoters always primarily represent the customer company, but Expression’s own brand comes second. During every promotion there are passers-by, who want to know which company has planned the execution or to whom the promoters work for. At this point, it is vital that promoters can actually act as advocates. With the results of this research, the company will know in which stage of the employee brand advocacy their part-time employees are, hence facilitating improvements in that area.

The questionnaire aims at finding out, whether the employees have enough information to be brand advocates or whether the information lacks some vital parts. If the questionnaire shows that many of the employees do not for example know the company’s operating areas, some improvements should be done. Hence the main benefit is that the company finds out employees’ level of knowledge.

It is also important for the company to know, whether the employees feel happy and satisfied while working. The research will also find out what are the main reasons people are working for Expression. If the most usual answer is people, the company will know that there is room for improvement more actively somewhere else than in the operation of the staff. Besides people, other options for the answer are facts that consider wage, the brand, working schedules and other practical issues are discussed in the questionnaire.

If employees are defined as brand advocates, the company will know that they have their own sales crew in the field during each promotion. If the research shows that employees are more brand resisters, company needs to start selling their services even more actively as the word-of-mouth is not working.

In the case of small- and medium-sized enterprises, it is especially important that the employees know the basic facts of the company, as usually consumers expect that. In a four person office, the influence of a one per-

son on the brand is much higher than in large corporations. In SME's the CEO can actually be the brand, but in large corporations, all the employees may not even know the name of their co-workers.

Corporate brand

The company's brand seems rather strong. Expression has its own eBrand, which strongly communicates company's own philosophies and the ways of thinking and acting. eBrand includes several concepts:

- ePromo-training program
- ePromo-examination
- eKansio
- Expressionist
- Expressionism

ePromo training system combines web and contact teaching, and aims at inducting new employees into the company and its line of activities and also into the actual promoters' tasks in practice. With this training system, company can give quality assurance of promoters' minimum skills and knowledge to the customers. ePromo-training also includes a theoretical part, ePromo examination, which tests promoters' knowledge about the work and the company itself. ePromo examination also has questions regarding company's intranet, eKansio. eKansio is an intranet of the company and a vital part of the feasible working environment, where the promoters can see for example their working schedules and fill in the reports after shifts.

Expressionism is the company's philosophy. It is a way of working, thinking and thinking about work. All true Expressionists are committed to the things important to the company: joy of working, willingness to improve and enthusiasm. Expressionism is evident in all that company does and they have proved that it is a smart approach to work and life in general.

Company's employees are called Expressionists, which also communicates the company's strong brand image. The goal is that Expressionism as a philosophy gives instructions and guidelines to Expressionists on how to work and think about work. Company also actively highlights their own brand image in their blog and Facebook page, which are both continuously updated.

The way of thinking, which combines business, technical, media and psychology skills, aims to be a successful combination in planning and implementing sales promotion. Let company's slogan speak for itself: *We shake things, not ass!*

1.3 Empirical research

An employee survey was conducted as a quantitative research as a part of this thesis. It was conducted in Finnish, in order to avoid any misunderstandings that a foreign language might have created. It was addressed to the 200 part-time employees of the company to find out their level of

brand advocacy. The survey was divided into two separate sections: first section was fact-based and scaled, and the second section was about the brand image employees have on the corporate brand. The fact section was scored according to the correct answers. Each correct answer was worth one point, and some questions included several correct answers. Wrong answers didn't decrease the gathered points and were scaled as zero. At the end of the questionnaire each answerer was able to see their points gathered from the fact section

The brand image section was not scored, because there were no correct answers to define the opinions of the brand image. Brand image section was still seen as valuable as the fact section; each employee has their own images and opinions, which are important to know to the commissioning company. The brand image section included seven questions.

2 EMPLOYEE BRAND ADVOCACY

2.1 Introduction to the topic

Consumers are increasingly more eager to let other people affect on their purchasing decisions. People behind the change of opinion are usually brand advocates, who are devoted ambassadors of a certain brand. Brand advocacy builds up, when the right brand and the right people meet. People start speaking about their positive experiences and that way start to spread the brand advocating message. Usually the message is spread first to the closest people, friends, relatives and co-workers, and later on at the highest stage of brand advocacy people distribute the brand information to everyone, e.g. via internet discussion boards. (Commander 2007.)

There are four different stages of brand advocacy: Brand advocates, Brand believers, Brand learners and Brand resisters. Starting from the lowest stage, knowledge and the attitude towards the brand are minimal and start to increase stage by stage. At the top there are brand advocates, who know all the needed information to act actively in a brand-favouring manner. Following chapter describes each of the stages more specifically. (Commander 2007.)

2.2 Stages of Brand advocacy

Figure 1 shows, how the stage of brand advocacy is defined according to employees knowledge, attitude and behaviour.

Stage of brand advocacy	Knowledge	Attitude	Behavior
Brand advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share knowledge of brand internally and externally • Participate in driving direction of brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel empowered • Excited to shape future of brand • Believe in differentiation of brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active word-of-mouth marketing • Live brand at work and in community • Model behavior for others
Brand believers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand brand relevance to specific job • Understand customer needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passionate about brand • Believe in brand • Believe that the customer is always right 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in word-of-mouth marketing • Try to live the brand but feel constrained
Brand learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in training • Know brand messages, values, and stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy when things are going well in the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet basic customer needs • Live job to the letter of law description
Brand resisters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of understanding of brand • Misconceptions of brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indifference • Apathy • Unhappy at job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent behavior • Put self-interests first

Figure 1 Stages of Brand Advocacy (Commander 2007.)

Brand advocates

At the highest stage of brand advocacy, there are brand advocates. In this stage the employee has the best possible knowledge, attitude and behaviour towards the brand. The advocate has enough knowledge about the brand and is eager to share the information to others. Information is shared both internally inside the company and also externally outside the company. Employee can be a brand advocate only if enough information about the company is available, and only if there is a supporting atmosphere around the brand. Employees at this stage also act as ambassadors for the brand, when they lead other people towards the brand and encourage them to learn more. (Commander 2007.)

Employee's own attitude is an important determining factor on the stage of brand advocacy. At the highest stage, employees feel empowered and their attitude towards the brand is always positive. Their attitude also communicates the excitement towards the brand and its future. Brand advocates believe in the brand unconditionally, even if there would be changes around it. (Commander 2007.)

Behaviour is the last feature, which defines the stage of brand advocacy. With their active behaviour, brand advocates spread word-of-mouth about the brand, and that way also market the brand. Brand advocates also live

the brand not only at work but also in private life. Brand advocates also exemplify the brand advocacy to others with their behaviour. (Commander 2007.)

Brand believers

The second stage of the brand advocacy is brand believers. As the name of the stage indicates, at this stage employees believe in the brand. They understand why the brand is relevant and why it is important to the customers. At this stage the level of knowledge is still high, but the information is not actively shared anymore. Still the employees at this stage understand customers' needs and wants, and they have enough knowledge to act as brand advocates. (Commander 2007.)

Brand believers' truly believe in the brand and their attitude is passionate about the brand, but not at the same level as actual brand advocates. They believe that the customers are always right, even though it would mean something negative about the brand. (Commander 2007.)

Brand believers' behaviour communicates brand advocacy, but they might feel constrained while trying to live the brand. Believers might also be engaged in spreading word-of-mouth, but without being proactive. As a conclusion, we could say that brand believers have all the vital information to act as brand advocates, but they lack the interest and the proactive brand-advocating behaviour. (Commander 2007.)

Brand learners

Brand learners know the vital information about the brand and its messages, values and stories. As the name of the stage says, employees at this stage are able to learn the basic facts about the brand and its features, but they do not actively seek the information. Brand learners participate in training, which focus on the brand but are not that interested in developing the brand. (Commander 2007.)

Brand learners' attitude towards the brand is neutral. They are happy when everything is going well around the brand and the organization, but still don't feel low or despondent if the brand is not doing well. They will do their job, but only the things which are appointed to them. (Commander 2007.)

Brand learners' attitude focuses on trying to accomplish customers' basic needs, not exceeding them. They do their job as it is exactly written in the contract, but do not actually live the brand. (Commander 2007.)

Brand resisters

At the lowest stage of brand advocacy there are brand resisters. Brand resisters lack understanding of the brand and they also have wrong assumptions relating to the brand. Their knowledge has huge gaps and they do not seek information about the brand at all. (Commander 2007.)

Brand resisters' attitude is negative and passive towards the brand and the organization. They are not willing to learn anything and feel unhappy while working. Also the customers can see the apathy and are unhappy about the service they are getting. Brand resisters are hard to motivate or teach, because their attitude and opinions are strongly negative. (Commander 2007.)

At this stage the employees' behaviour is very inconsistent and their interests towards the brand are very poor. Brand resisters put their self-interests at first and that also affects the service they give to the customers. Customers can observe their lack of interest, which affects their purchasing decisions negatively. (Commander 2007.)

2.3 Benefits of brand advocacy

Benefits of brand advocacy are obvious. The brand will get valuable marketing through word-of-mouth. People speak to others when they have positive experiences about some brand; hence brand advocates are walking advertisements, who will lead other people towards the specific brand.

In social media brand advocates create communication and discussions about the brand. They share vital information about the brand and hence spread the positive feeling. Brand advocates also influence their friends' opinions in purchasing situations and might even change their mind at the moment of purchase. They want to help others to make the right decisions, but also they want something in return; companies need to be ready to give the advocates some recognition in order to get the benefit out of the situation. (Mershon 2011.)

Talking about the brand is one characteristic of a brand advocate. When someone continuously speaks about the brand in stores, online, at their work and to their friends, the benefits are obvious; positive, brand advocating information is shared and that way new consumers reached. (Commander 2007.)

“Brand advocates are 83% more likely to share information than the average internet user. What's more, 54% of advocates view information-sharing as a form of relaxation.” (Mershon 2011.)

In social media, the benefits got from the advocates are the most apparent: “--brand advocates are 83% more likely to share information than the average internet user” (Mershon 2011.). Brand advocates feel relaxed after sharing the information, so the benefits are both-sided; Positive brand information is shared and the advocate gets a positive feeling about it. (Mershon 2011.)

Brand advocates themselves want to be known for their dignified insights, what makes them spread the brand message even more. Company benefits from this, but they also need to give acknowledgement to the advocates before they are motivated to do so. (Mershon 2011.)

There are many different places, where the advocates can share their information and company can get the needed benefit from it. Still, social media arises as the primary source, where the brand advocates act as messengers for the brand. Even though brand advocates are proud to be ones, still they tend to prefer sharing the information anonymously, hence making social media and internet the most vital channels. (Mershon 2011.)

Many speak positively about some specific brand to their friends without being actual brand advocates. A huge benefit for the company that comes with the actual advocates is that they will share the positive brand information also to strangers and not only to their friends. Hence brand advocates have a much wider target audience, when they are acting as brand ambassadors. (Mershon 2011.)

As a final and maybe as the most vital benefit comes brand loyalty. Brand advocates are always loyal to the brands they advocate and also encourage others to do so. In the end, brand loyalty is what all companies are hoping for. (Mershon 2011.)

2.4 How to transform employees into brand advocates?

Creating employee brand advocacy is a long term plan, which needs time to be comprised. There are several steps in the process (Figure 1), and all these steps support each other and enable the creation of brand advocates. Employer needs to evaluate the level of knowledge, attitude and behavior that employees have at the beginning. Executives need to provide the main support and encouragement in order to create positive brand experiences to their employees. Identifying current brand advocates, keeping communication in function and personalizing the brand to the employees will empower them to start acting like an advocate. Executives must also remember to reward and measure the level of advocacy in order to sustain it. (Com-mander 2007.)



Figure 2 Employee brand advocacy process (Commander 2007.)

There are five key issues which help in the process of transforming employees into brand advocates (Commander 2007). With the help of these factors employees can become brand advocates. This chapter focuses on transforming those employees, who do not have a specific, at least not negative opinion about the brand into brand advocates. How to transform negative commenters into brand advocates will be discussed later (Book 2011).

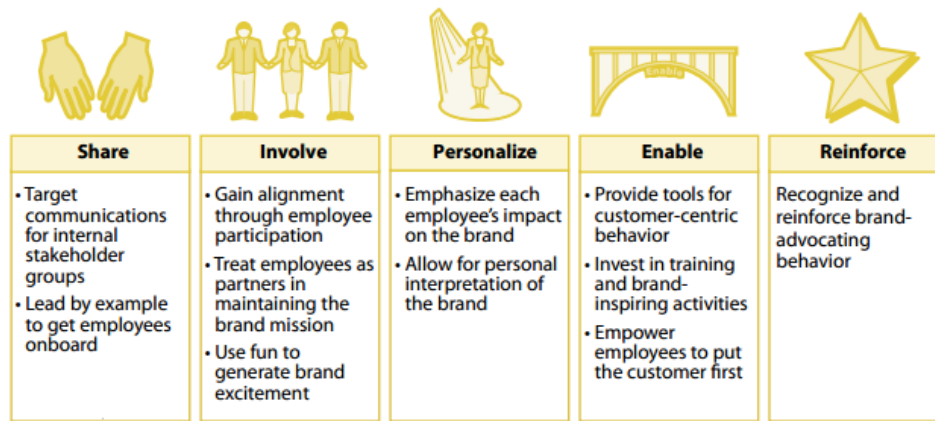


Figure 3 How to transform employees into brand advocates? (Commander 2007.)

Share

Sharing information is vital, in order to give the needed knowledge about the brand for the employees. Information should be shared both internally and externally. The company's webpage and different social media are important external online sources, where employees can gain the needed knowledge. Even though external media are important ways to share the brand image, internally shared information about the company is the most valuable aspect when considering employee brand advocacy. Knowing about company's campaigns, brand insights and other vital issues is the core of being a brand advocate. Employees can be brand advocates without a slight of negative attitude, but without the shared information inside the company, it is not possible. (Commander 2007.)

It is not enough for the employer to share the information but also lead by example to get the employees interested. If the employer itself won't act as an advocate for the brand, it is impossible to employees to learn how to follow. (Commander 2007.)

Involve

Employee involvement gives courage and some sense of pride of the brand; they feel that they are respected and honoured inside the company. For the employee it is extremely important that their opinions are listened and they feel they are part of the development process of the brand. Whether it is a tiny change that the brand is facing, taking the employee as a part of the decision already creates gratification. (Commander 2007.)

Employees should be treated as partners, in order to get them truly interested in the brand and its image. Also generating different and funny excitements around the brand will increase the feeling of involvement. More employees get positive feeling around the brand, more their attitude changes into brand advocating way. (Commander 2007.)

Employees feel involved if they are aware of the decisions made inside the company. Feeling involved also includes participating on planning, goal setting and on the actual decision making. Employer needs to tell to the employees what to do and when, and then they can “sell” the positive aspects of the decision to the employees. Consulting and monitoring the employee through this process is also very important part of creating employee involvement. Employee involvement requires a lot from the employer, but also gives back when employees commit to their jobs. (Heathfield n.d.)

Personalize

Creating personal connections to the brand brings the employee and the brand much closer. By emphasizing each employee’s personal impact on the brand, employer can increase the level of understanding the brand. It also creates self-confidence to the employees, when they understand why they are doing their job, and what the connection is between their daily tasks and the brand. (Commander 2007.)

At this point employer should also allow employees to interpret the brand independently, in order to give them the most positive feeling about it. When employees can interpret the brand according to their own preferences, the results will more likely please them. (Commander 2007.)

Enable

Employer needs to enable the brand advocacy by providing needed tools, investing in training and inspiring the employees and empowering to the customer-focused behaviour. Employer sets the behavioural guidelines and trains the employees to cherish customer-centric behaviour, and also inspires them to be ambassadors for the brand. Employees get their inspiration from various issues, and finding out those can be a notable challenge. (Commander 2007.)

As mentioned, customer-centric behaviour is very vital in the transformation process. Employees can’t be seen as brand advocates if they don’t behave according to customers’ needs and wants. They actually need to be encouraged to do the right thing for the customer in order to be a credible brand advocate. (Commander 2007.)

Reinforce

When employees have transformed into brand advocates, the behaviour need to be reinforced to keep the process on-going. Recognition of brand

advocating behaviour is one way to maintain the advocacy. When employees are rewarded from their brand-advocating behaviour, they will more easily continue acting like one. (Commander 2007.)

2.5 Tools for building brand advocates

There are a lot of different tools, how to inspire and enable employee brand advocacy. Various tools are used to increase brand advocacy depending on employees' stage of brand advocacy. Tools used will be defined according to employees' knowledge, attitude and behaviour. (Commander 2007.)

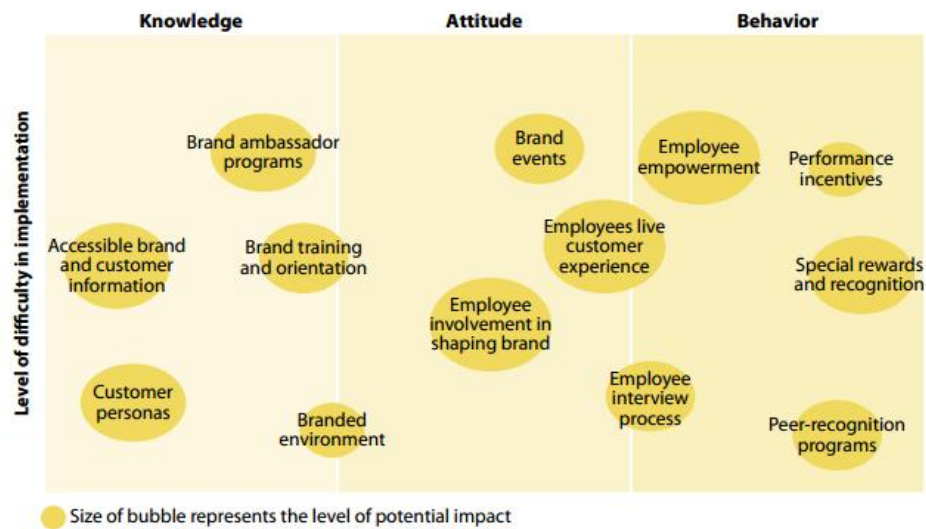


Figure 4 Tools for building brand advocates (Commander 2007.)

For those employees' whose stage of brand advocacy lacks knowledge, it needs to be ensured that the brand information is widely available to them. Whether the information is given hand-in-hand or in the internet, has a huge impact on the level of knowledge. Brand training and orientations can also increase the level of knowledge, when the employees will get the needed knowledge from their co-workers or managers. By creating branded environments, such as brand-focused events, employees can get the needed brand knowledge and a slight of attitude change at the same time. Other brand advocates are also a great way to increase the knowledge on how to be an actual brand ambassador. (Commander 2007.)

Employees might not have the best possible attitude towards the brand and hence they are not acting as brand advocates. Attitude can also be changed by getting employees more involved in the positive and interesting brand focused actions. As mentioned before, organizing brand-focused events will create positive atmosphere around the brand and that way also brand resisters' attitudes might change. (Commander 2007.)

Some employees might have all the needed knowledge and the best possible attitude, but they need some behavioural guidance to act as brand ad-

vocates. Behavioural tools for building employee brand advocacy are different kind of rewards, incentives and recognitions, which will motivate employees to act as advocates. Employees need to be empowered so that their behaviour will change into more brand-focused manner. Employees should live through a positive customer experience, in order to get their behaviour to genuinely communicate brand advocacy. It is also important that employees are asked what and why they think and behave the way they do. (Commander 2007.)

2.6 How to turn negative commenters into brand advocates?

There are always some consumers that spread the negative word-of-mouth and experiences about the brand. These brand resisters are of course vital source of feedback about the improvement ideas on the brand, but still the goal is to turn them into brand advocates some day. Receiving feedback and actually dealing with it is very important. There is never chance to make improvements if negative feedback is never dealt with. (Book 2011.)

When some negative comments are received, companies need instantly act and respond to the comments, whether the comments were done in a in their store or Facebook. The most important issue is that they will demonstrate their interests publicly also to the negative comments, and not only to the positive ones. When people see their feedback is answered, it is easier to try to influence on their opinions. Companies should also actively angle feedback, so that the consumers get the feeling they are cared and that the brand is trying to be improved continuously. (Book 2011.)

Response time can also have an influence on the negative commentators' opinion about the brand. Whether company actually answers the negative feedback, and does it in a short amount of time, it communicates the value of the given feedback. This also makes the commentators feel cared and make them to think: "At least my feedback was answered quickly". And after that, it is easier to start trying to misplace the negative brand images. Whether the feedback is not answered in a certain amount of time, the level of dissatisfaction gets even higher and higher. Then also the actual process of turning a consumer from negative commentator into brand advocate stops and it becomes even harder to change the opinions later on. (Book 2011.)

The way of responding into the negative feedback is also seen as an important issue; whether you just answered that this cannot be improved or just take the blame even if it wouldn't be your fault. Giving in and even agreeing on some false accusations might bring you hundreds of customers and on the contrary, you might lose hundreds of customers if the accusation is denied. Going deeper the surface and giving in with some negative commentators, might transform them into brand advocates in the future. (Book 2011.)

After responding and dealing with the feedback, a follow-up needs to be done in a little time. Companies need to make sure that the issue has been adjusted in the customer's mind, and also impress that each customer's

opinion matters. It will show to the customer that the company is actually committed to take bull by the horns, in order to create a most likable and positive brand image to all customers. By taking every single feedback as an important one, consumers might more easily transform into brand advocates if their opinion and negative feedbacks are taken seriously, responded quickly and responsively and then finally followed-up. (Book 2011.)

2.7 Psychology of brand advocacy

When it comes to marketing and connecting brands and consumers, Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Figure 4) explains a lot about the consumer behaviour. Before trying to make your employees act as brand advocates, you need to make sure that the psychological issues are considered. It is interesting to see how the stage of brand advocacy moves hand in hand with the scale on the pyramid; As the motivation and knowledge of the brand arises, consumers rise in the pyramid. (Brinton 2010.)

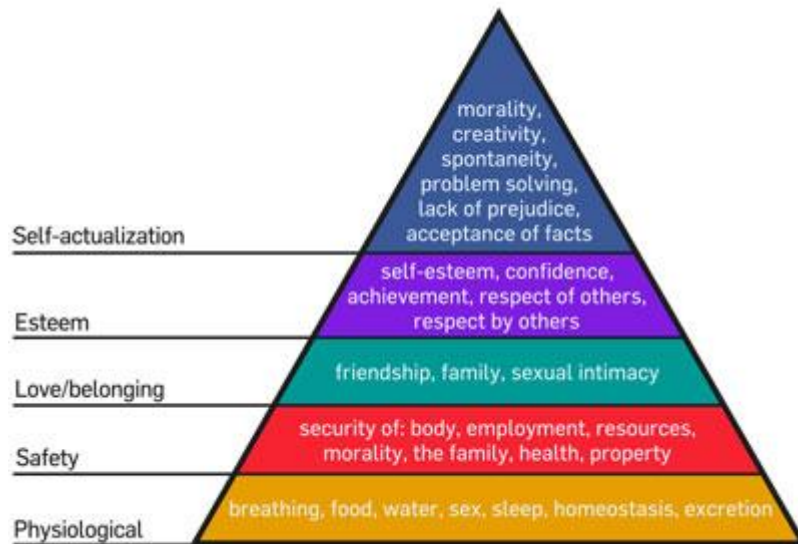


Figure 5 Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943)

Physiological

At the bottom level of the pyramid, consumers buy only things that meet their physical need as water, clothes and food. People don't focus on the brand, because they only buy the necessary things that don't create visible or strong brand associations, or if they will, still people don't speak about it. At this level, the purchased goods serve the common needs of a human being and there are no connections to the brand what so ever. At this level, people are not that much of brand resisters neither brand advocates, because they only want to fulfil their basic physiological needs. (Brinton 2010.)

Safety

As the next level Maslow appointed Safety. When people's physical needs have been met, the next most important issue is safety. Safety means a lot of different things to different people, but when considered from marketing point of view, safety means buying the same, before bought brands again and again. These brands make the consumer feel somehow safe and hence they are purchasing the product continuously. (Brinton 2010.)

There are several issues effecting on the purchasing decision at this level. The most visible affect is that people follow others by buying the same products as their neighbours and friends. They have heard positive and recommending comments about a specific product, and then they just start to buy it, just to make sure they do not make mispurchases. Also a lot of purchasing decisions are made according to status quo or before learned habits. (Brinton 2010.)

Many people learn their purchasing habits from their parents. In particular case, it is harder to change the opinions and transform brand resisters to brand advocates whether they have learned to use only specific brands. At his level of the pyramid, people still lack the motivation to be brand advocates, because they only trying to achieve the feeling of safety (Brinton 2010.). Hence, people at this level of hierarchy are at the brand learners stage of brand advocacy (Commander 2007.).

Belonging

At the next stage, the focus starts to move towards the brand. It is obvious, that people have a need to love and acceptance and this will easily lead people towards some specific brand. This need affiliates with different social groups, as school classes, sports teams and other friendship connections. (Brinton 2010.)

This need effects on the purchasing decisions if the groups' interests are mutual and connecting the members of the group to each other. Brand advocacy becomes relevant at this stage, when the groups appearance is much bigger than one of an individual. Strong brand-like behaviour and the actual living of the brand are usually connected to the groups more easily, because in the group people feel that the brand is the fact that connects them, even though it would be the similar interest. (Brinton 2010.)

At this level of hierarchy of needs, consumers start to act as brand advocates. At this People start to talk about the brand, because the common interests make the discussions easier. People feel bigger commitment when they share similar interests and prefer similar brands. Whether the similar interest is a beer brand or a work related tool, the feeling of a commitment can be strong. (Brinton 2010.)

Esteem

When people feel that they belong somewhere, they start not only to desire respect from other people but also from their selves. With achievements and recognition, people gain the needed status and self-esteem. At this stage the brand starts to have even more purpose, when people start to buy something because they can and because it looks good. When people are feeling successful, they want to be connected to the luxury brands; Hence they more easily start to act as advocates. Luxury brands fulfil this need very well, because being exposed to those brands is very easy. For example, luxury brands are noticed more often than ordinary, daily bought consumer brands. Usually also the luxury brand owners like to brag about their purchases and show off their personally preferred brands. (Brinton 2010.)

At this stage, there is a huge need to make others believe in your preferred brands, and this is one of the biggest changes compared to the previous stage. If a brand is not believed, you are not either and this brings the brand advocating behaviour to the maximum level. When a brand advocate gets someone to buy the brand they have recommended, they feel respected, which again increases the brand advocating behaviour. Even though the ultimate brand advocates are a positive issue to the brand itself, the materialism and insecurity that often are the reasons for this kind of behaviour, might create mental problems if the needed acceptance and recognition is not gained. (Brinton 2010.)

Self-actualization

When employees have reached a certain level of self-esteem and recognition, the next need that will occur is that they want to be seen as real life contributors. At this level employees' needs focus on not only acting innovatively and morally, but also creating new for the future generations. When they get the feeling they are connected in a greater good they start to feel more relaxed and comfortable. Their need is fulfilled when they have room for creation, problem-solving and self-actualization. (Brinton 2010.)

Employees themselves are not the only ones getting the advantage, when their needs are met. When self-actualization is at the highest level, employees focus their energy to something that avails other people, e.g. to help underprivileged or the people in underdeveloped countries. It can be creating an innovative product to help to decrease the scarcity of water in dry season areas or making important decision to prevent the greenhouse effect. (Brinton 2010.)

At this level, the price of the product loses its significance, if the product or a brand will make the difference and the person is that way connected to a greater good. At this point, people might buy a certain brand if it is that time connected to something good, for example to a notable charity donation. The focus of advocating behaviour is on those brands which have some kind of a mission to help people. At the top of the hierarchy,

the brand advocating behaviour has the most valuable influence on other people, because there are no ulterior motives behind the behaviour and the advocates are truly doing what they do for the greater good. (Brinton 2010.)

3 RESEARCH PROCESS AND THE SURVEY RESULTS

The following chapter introduces the employee survey conducted as a part of this research.

3.1 Employee survey

The main questions to be answered in the research are:

- How do employees act as brand advocates? Or do they?
- Do employees seek information proactively?
- Stage of brand advocacy?
- Brand champion or ignorant?

While building the survey, there were several things to consider. Everyone who took part in conducting this survey has worked as a promoter and know what kinds of questions are asked in the field. The issue was considered both from the promoters' point of view as well as from Expression's point of view; what does a promoter need to know to act as a brand advocate and what does Expression want them to know?

The questionnaire was sent to 200 part-time employees of the company. One hundred answers were expected. In the end there were 87 answers, which made the answer per cent to 44%. The fact section of nine questions was scored: each correct answer was worth one point. Maximum points were 22. Brand image section consisted of eight brand image related questions. These questions were not scored, because they define the personal opinions of the employees.

The brand image section was the core of the whole survey. To define the level of employee brand advocacy, we need to know if the employees would recommend Expression to others and if they are willing to act as brand advocates. With the answers of the questions in this section we can see if Expression already has existing brand advocates and are they actually actively spreading good word-of-mouth about Expression.

Questionnaire was sent to promoters through the commissioning company's new intranet, eKansio, at the time of the intranet's introduction. Whether the promoters prefer the new intranet or the old one might have a small effect on the answers. However, this intranet should not change the brand image of the company, so effects on the survey should be minimal. Later the data was reordered e.g. to bar charts, histograms, pie charts, etc. to show proportions, distribution of values and trends. The objective was to determine the level of promoters' knowledge, attitude and behavior to identify brand advocates, believers, learners and resisters.

3.2 Research Methods

Quantitative research was conducted as a part of this thesis. Quantitative research was selected as research method because of the large amount of respondents; 200 employees of the company wanted to be reached. In this research the goal was to find out employees' overall level of knowledge, attitude and behaviour towards the brand, and not go deeper or try to understand the reasons of this certain type of behaviour, because that was not seen important. Data needed to be collected easily, because of the large amount of respondents. Most of the survey questions can be answered in few words or with multiple choices, which also are typical to quantitative research. (Lewis, Saunders & Thornhill 2007, 406-463.)

In quantitative research, distinct and numerical measures are used to analyse the data. Data is collected and recorded usually into numerical codes, but there are also some exceptions where other forms of data are allowed. (Lewis et al. 2007, 406-463.)

Data is studied by using several different methods: tables, bar charts, pie charts, pictograms, histograms, line graphs, scatter graphs, box plots and percentage component bars. Whether to use diagrams or tables will be defined mainly according to the research question of the project. Also earlier defined objectives and the facts that are wanted to be emphasized in the research, have an influence on the choice. (Lewis et al. 2007, 406-463.)

Tables are used to show and describe specific values of the data. Bar charts, histograms and pictograms are used to describe highest and lowest values, whereas line graphs are used to show and exemplify trends. Scatter graphs are used to exemplify and show the relations between different variables and box plots, pie charts and percentage component bar charts are used to show different proportions of the data. (Lewis et al. 2007, 406-463.)

In the following results, the charts will show the amount of respondents and/or the percentage of the respondents.

3.3 Fact section

As mentioned earlier in chapter 1.3, the survey was sent to 200 part-time employees of the company. In the end there were 87 respondents, which made the answer per cent 43.5%.

Specific identification of the answerer was left out in order to get the most truthful answers and to get the answering percent to a maximum level. By defining the answerers' gender and age some differentiation could be done, e.g. to find out whether men leave instructional material more often unread than women or vice versa. Age of the answerer was seen as a vital factor to find out whether the level of brand advocacy depends on age, e.g. are older promoters more active to find out the information by themselves. This can be an important fact in the future when the company plans their

recruitment campaigns and information sharing channels, e.g. whether to post an advertisement in a news paper or in Facebook.

Gender division was comprised unequally as expected; 66% (equals 57 respondents) from 87 answerers were female and only 34% were male. Sales promotion agencies employ more women than men, partly because women see themselves as promoters more often than male (Salminen 2012). Expression employs relatively many men when compared to other sales promotion agencies: 31% of the overall amount of employees is male. The reason for this is simple: one of Expression's biggest clients is electronics supplier Hewlett-Packard. HP's products are mainly related to computers, which are more in the interests of men. HP promoters create their own group which consists of over 90 % men and c.a. 10% women.

Respondents' age varied between 16 to 50 years old. Expression has intentionally employed promoters from various age groups, when there is a need for everyone between 16 and 50 years old. The average age resulted as 23 years old, which proves that the majority of the employees are less than 30 years old.

Knowing the managing director of the employing company is crucial in small and medium-sized companies, because the MD has a big role in small companies; Expression's brand builds up around the people who work for the company. The false alternatives were familiar names from Expression's past or from the media.

Knowing of the managing director of Expression was expected to be in a good level. As seen from the Figure 6, 85% (74 respondents) knew that Päivi Salminen is the managing director of Expression. The change of managing director happened in 2009 and this can also be seen from the results; nine per cent of the answerers still thought that the former MD (Tero Ylönen) is still operating. Less than five per cent answered that the HR Manager of Expression (Päivi Luomanen) is the MD of the company. Only one person marked Marketing Agency Deeper's MD Karoliina Lehtonen as the correct answer to this question. Last alternative, Kalle Keskinen, who does not relate to Expression at all, did not fool anyone and no-one answered him to be the MD of Expression.

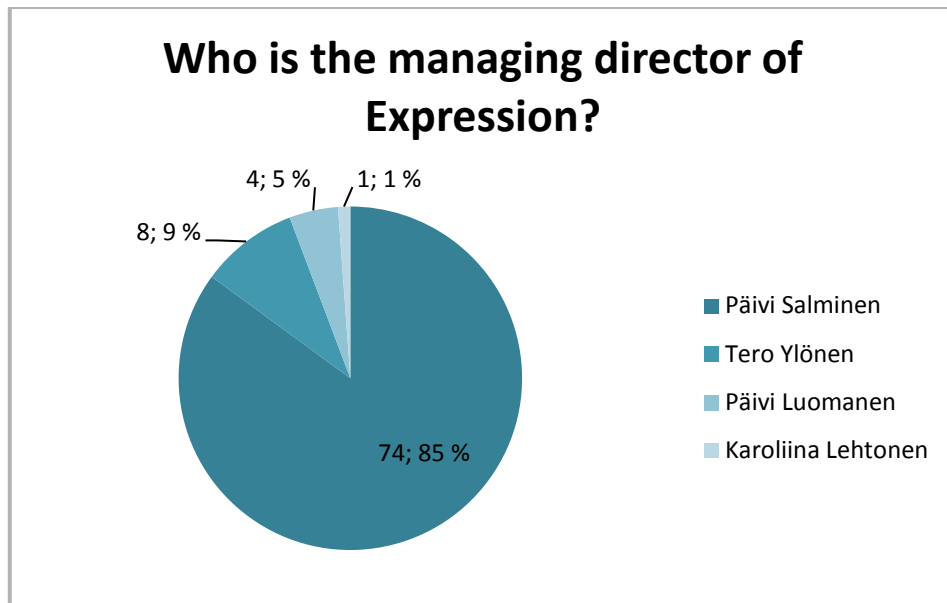


Figure 6 Question 3: Who is the managing director of Expression?

As Expression is a rather small company it is also crucial to know the other people who work for the company in addition to the MD. This next question created a lot of deviation and it seems that employees are confused who still works at Expression and who does not. Figure 7 shows that promotion planner Ilona Kymäläinen and the MD Päivi Salminen are seen as the representatives of Expression's full-time office workers; Almost 83% (72 respondents) answered that Kymäläinen and 77% answered that Salminen works at Expression's Pasila office. This communicates the fact that Kymäläinen and Salminen are mostly in contact with the employees from the beginning. Fifty six percent of the answerers knew that Expression's other promotion planner Henrik Sippel also works in the Pasila office. It was also expected that Sippel might not be that well-known, because he is a part-time employee, who handles only few customer cases and is in contact with only part of the employees.

Figure 7 also shows that 42% of the answerers said that the former promotion planner Annariina Tolvanen still works at Expression even though she left from Expression already four months before the survey was launched. Almost 22% of the answerers also thought that Expression's former intern Jesse Pellikka still works at Expression even though his internship ended already seven months before the launch of the survey. Only two of the answerers said that Kati Syrjälä, who was a promotion planner of Expression before Tolvanen until 2009 still works at Expression.

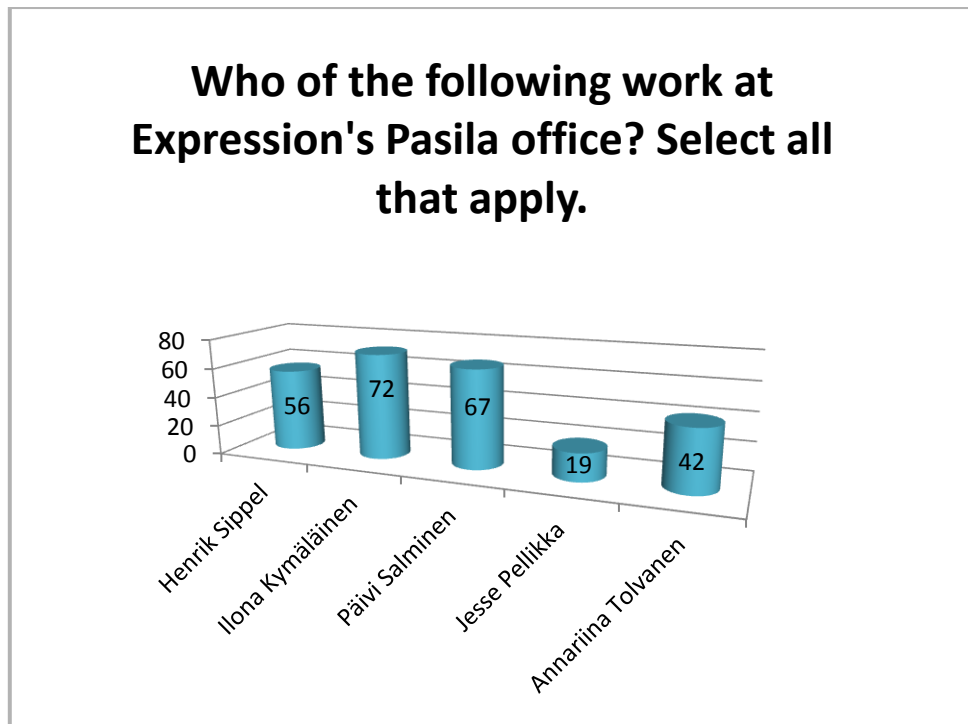


Figure 7 Question 4: Who of the following work at Expression's Pasila office?

Sales promotion- and small marketing agencies are usually coming and going each year. It is not unusual that the companies last only a few years, and that is why Expression wants to emphasize its relatively long history of seven years. Expression's full-time office employees are fairly young, which might make promoters think that the company is also young.

The results showed that 80% of the answerers (69 respondents) knew that Expression was founded in 2005. Sixteen percent answered that it was founded in 2001 and only four answered that it was founded in 1996 or 2008. It was expected that more answerers would think that Expression was founded in 2008 because only a year later Deeper was separated as its own agency. However it was a positive surprise that almost 80% knew the long history of Expression which is an important issue.

Offices in Helsinki and Tampere create opportunities for the promoters to attend trainings and other activities in both cities, hence it is important to be aware of them. Results showed that one hundred per cent of the 87 respondents knew that Expression has an office in Helsinki and almost 92% knew that Expressions also has an office in Tampere. These percentages communicate that Expression has succeeded in the information sharing in this area. Expression also operates strongly in Turku area, which made over three per cent to think that Expression also has an office in Turku.

The next question focused more on the geographical areas that Expression operates in. One of Expression's competitive advantages is that the company operates nationally all over Finland and to be a true brand advocate it is extremely important to know this. As the Figure 8 shows one hundred per cent of the 87 respondents knew that Expression operates in Helsinki

Metropolitan area and 86% that Expression operates in Pirkanmaa area. This 86% is not in relation with the previous question, which resulted that 92% knew that Expression has an office in Tampere. Reason for this difference can be that promoters assume that Expression has an office in Tampere only together with the sister company Deeper or just simply inattention of the answerers.

Figure 8 also shows that only 64% knew that Expression operates in Western Finland, 45% in Eastern Finland and 51% in Northern Finland. These results are completely understandable because the operations in those areas happen more rarely than in e.g. Pirkanmaa or Helsinki Metropolitan area. 10% thought that Expression also operates in Åland area, which is false. On the basis of these results we can infer that Expression's image as a national company is rather good, but still improvements in the level of knowledge could be done to maximize the level of brand advocacy.

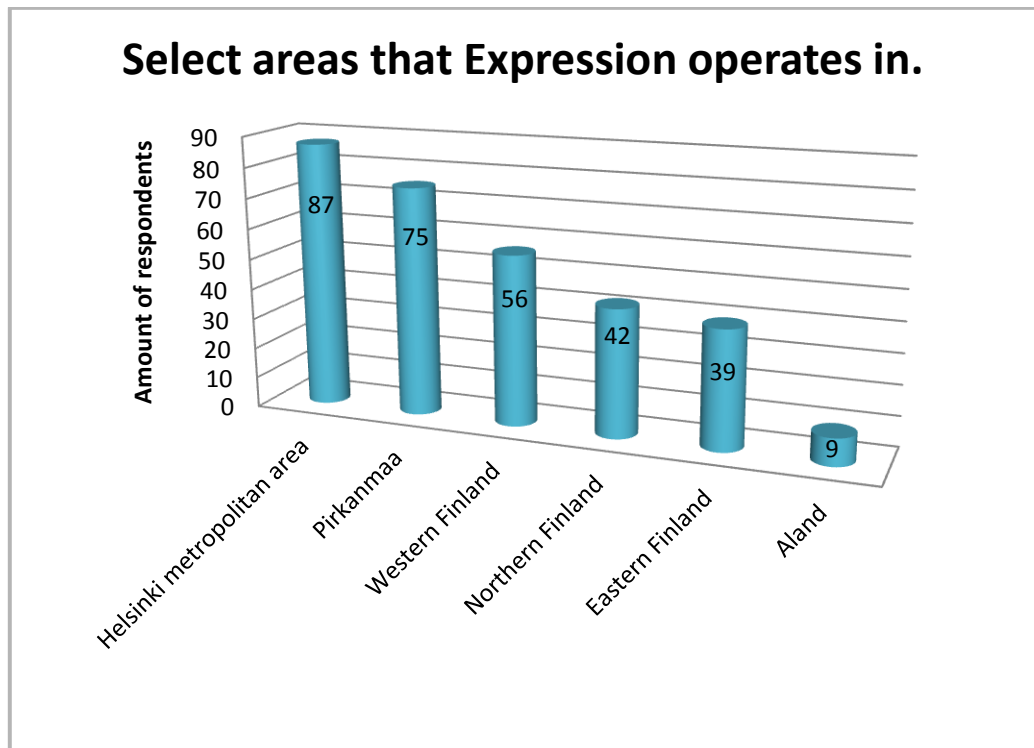


Figure 8 Question 7: Select areas that Expression operates in.

Expression finds it very crucial that the employees can name some of their most well-known customer brands, which are clearly indicated in company's web page and blog. Expression also has various well-known international brands, which are also familiar to people outside the company even though the company itself might not be. It is important that promoters can do some brand name dropping. Some well-known brands (not Expression's clients) which are often seen promoted were given as alternatives.

Figure 9 shows that the overall knowledge of the biggest customers is in a good level: 94% (82 respondents) selected HP as a customer of Expression and the percentages for other brands are 84% for Sloggi, 69% for Panda

and 62% for both Sony and Nikon. These results show that HP is strongly related to Expression and vice versa. Even though Sloggi promotions are done only few times a year, the brand is also very strongly related to Expression because of their rather long history. Nikon and Sony were equally known to be Expression's clients even though the length of the co-operations is distinct: co-operation with Nikon started in 2011 and with Sony already in 2006. False alternatives also got some support: Valio 18%, Elovena 16% and Acer, Helsingin Sanomat and Nike all with nine per cent. These brands are often seen promoted and therefore also chosen to this list. Overall, answerers are widely aware of the Expression's brands when the percentage differences between the correct and the false alternative are significant.

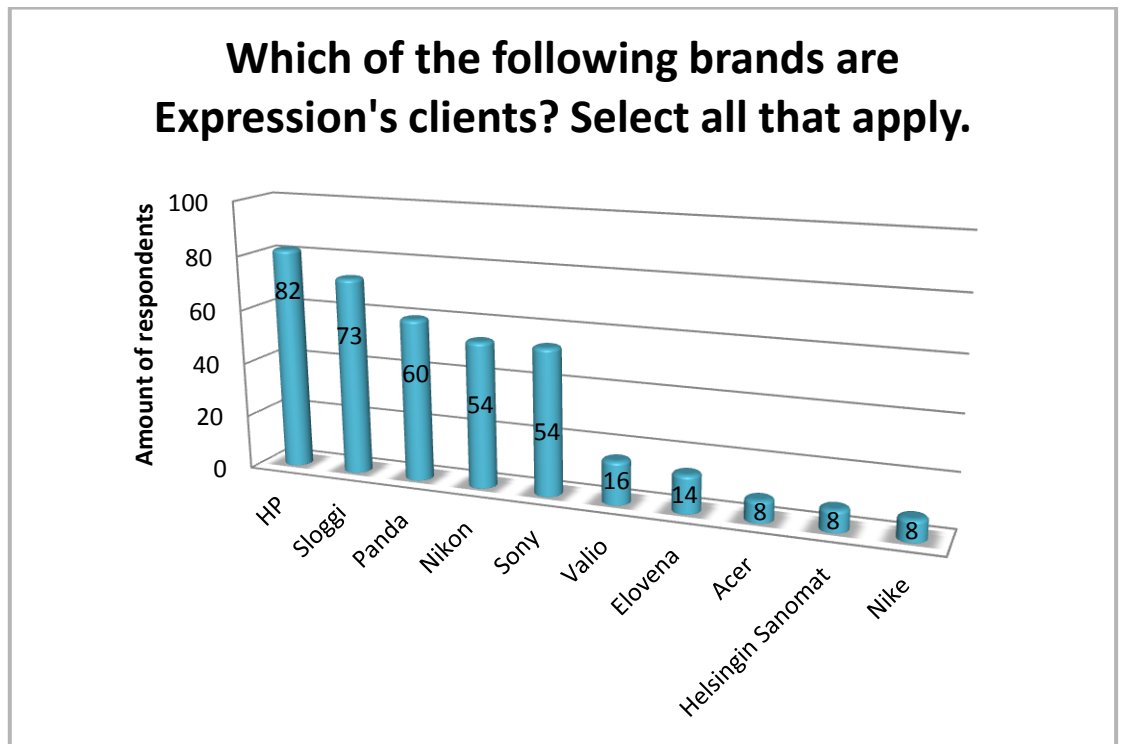


Figure 9 Question 8 Which of the following are Expression's clients?

To act as brand advocates promoters need to know what the employing company offers. Many sales promotion agencies only provide promotion personnel, but Expression also offers planning and execution.

As Figure 10 shows Expression's employees are well aware of the business areas company operates in. As expected, one hundred per cent of the 87 respondents knew that Expression executes promotions. In addition, 95% knew that Expression offers promotion planning and 82% knew that Expression offers also promotion personnel. These results prove that there has been a misunderstanding while interpreting the question, because only 82% of the answerers know that Expression provides promotion personnel, even though the promoters themselves are promotion personnel.

Less than six per cent (5.7%) answered that Expression also offers TV-commercials, which is false. This percentage of false answers compared to

the percentages of the correct answers is very small, which strongly communicates the level of knowledge that promoters have about Expression. The other false choice Show Dance was left without any selections, which is seen very positive; Expression does not want to be imaged as an entertainment company. Expression's slogan *We shake things, not ass!* is the core of the company's operations; Expression aims at being the stylish and innovative company, which emphasizes these facts also in the promoters essence.

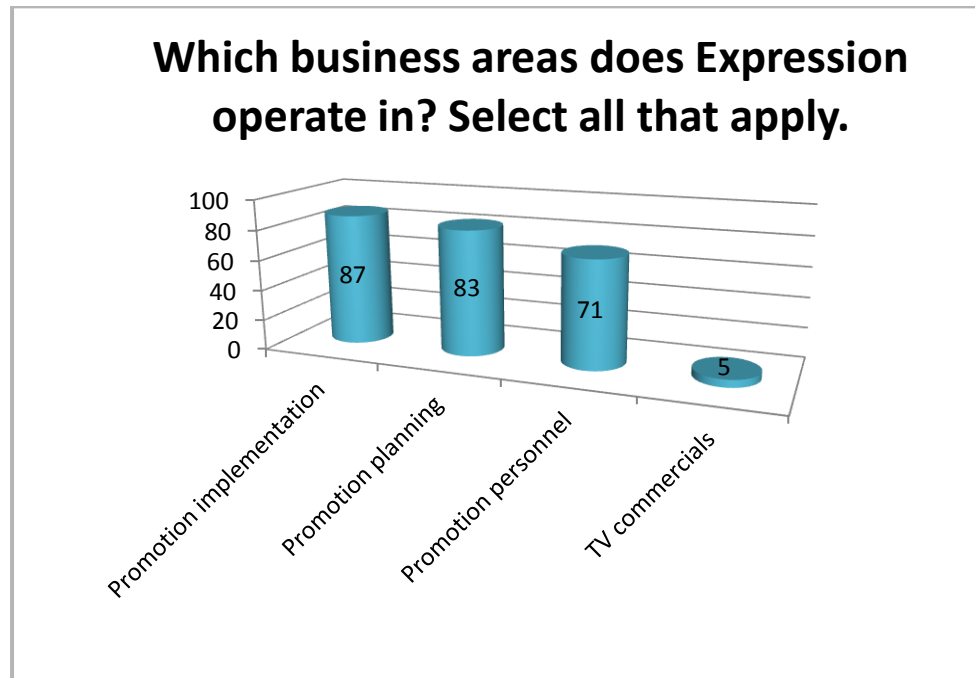


Figure 10 Question 9: Which business areas does Expression operate in?

The question about the culmination of Expression's corporate culture, Expressionism was important because the whole eBrand builds up around it. The meaning of Expressionism is repeated in several different places, and this again tests whether the promoters have gathered background information about the company. The company's objective is that all true Expressionists respect the philosophy and act as brand advocates.

As Figure 11 shows more than 94% of the answerers knew what Expressionism means when the multiple choices were given. It is possible that the percentage would have been smaller if the multiple choices were left out. Only less than six per cent answered that Expressionism is *Seeing the results of your own work*. Other false alternatives did not get any selections. These results show that the message Expressionism has strongly left into promoters' minds.

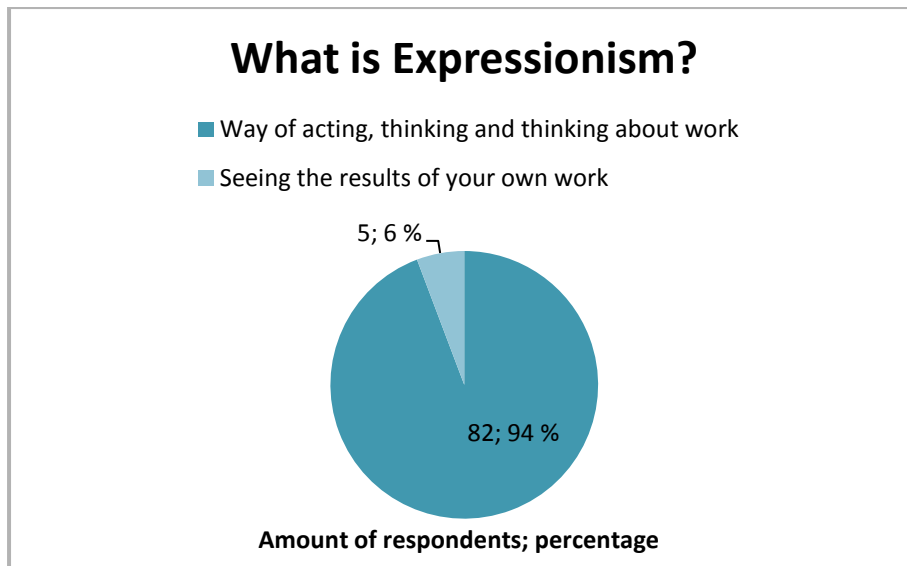


Figure 11 Question 10: What is Expressionism?

The last question of the fact section was about Expression's sister company Deeper, which is strongly a part of Expression's corporate brand. Deeper and Expression collaborate continuously; Deeper provides marketing materials for Expression, and Expression provides promotional staff for Deeper. It is an advantage if promoters can also mention that customers can get marketing materials via Expression, even though Expression itself does not produce them. Results showed that 87% of the answerers (76 respondents) knew what Deeper is. Again in this question the results might have been different if the multiple choices were not given.

Results of the fact section

The fact section tested if the employees have enough knowledge to act as brand advocates. The results of the fact section varied from nine points to full 22 points. The average of the results was 18 points, which was seen as good result, when the questions were quite specified.

As a conclusion we can say that knowledge wise employees have all the requirements to act as brand advocates. In the following chapter we will find out whether they have the needed brand advocating attitude and behaviour to act as brand advocates.

3.4 Brand image section

The first two questions of the brand image section are the core of the whole survey; these questions define whether the employees are brand advocates or not. As can be seen from Figure 12, almost 98% of the answerers would recommend Expression to other people. This strongly communicates the brand advocating attitude. Figure 13 focuses on the brand advocating behaviour and shows whether the employees have recommended Expression and to how many people. It shows that 66% of the answerers have recommended Expression to two or more people. Thirty three per-

cent of the answerers chose an alternative which said that they have recommended Expression to none or one person. The limitation of this question is that we cannot find out if there are some people who would not recommend Expression to others at all, when the first selection is 0-1. Most of the answerers (40%) have recommended Expression to two or three people, over 10% to four or five people and 16% to over five people. Despite the earlier mentioned limitation, the level of brand advocating behaviour and attitude seems to be very positive.

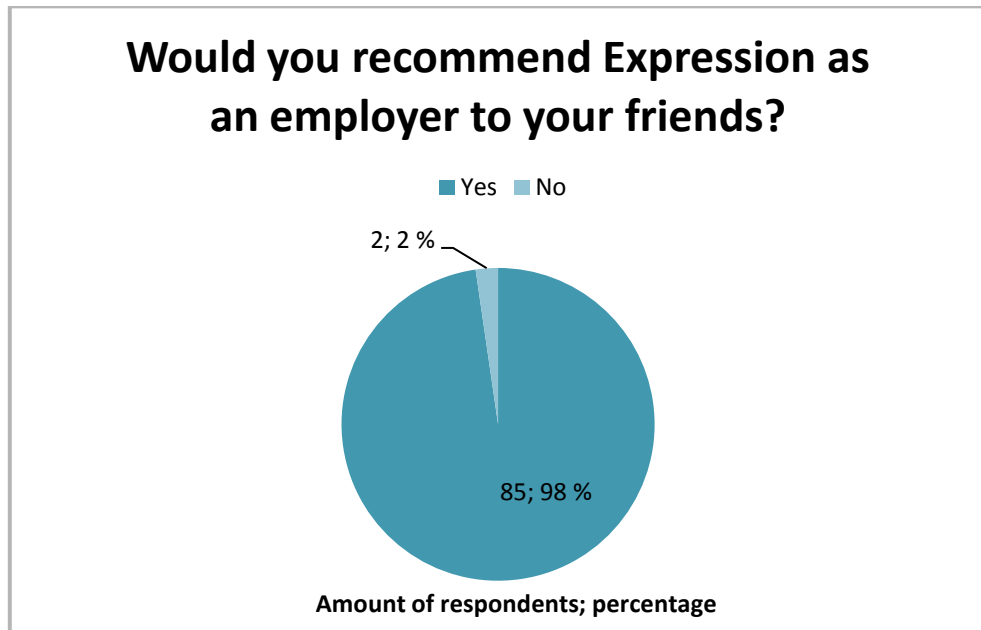


Figure 12 Question 12: Would you recommend Expression as an employer to your friends?

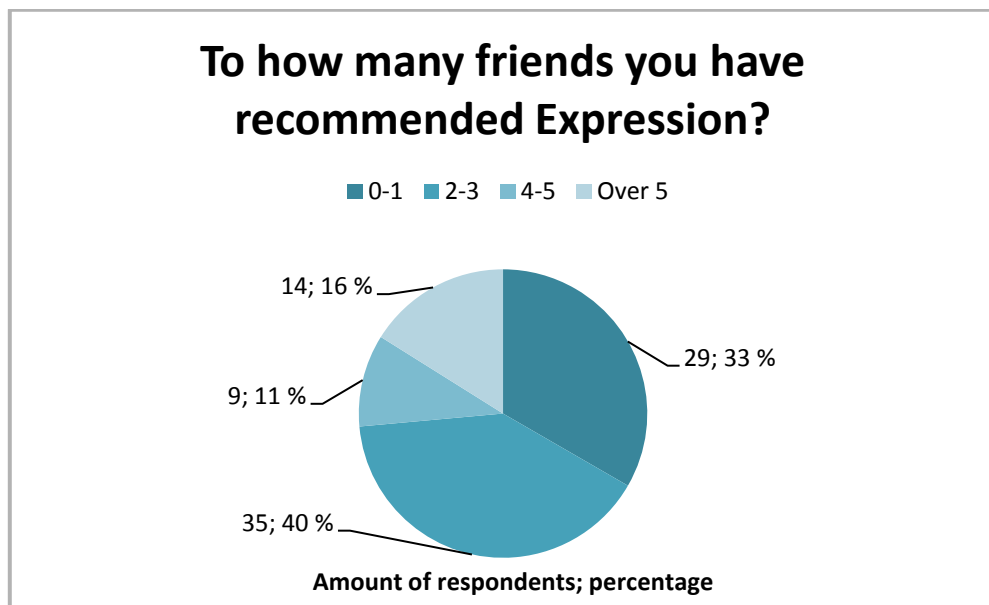


Figure 13 Question 13: To how many friends you have recommended Expression?

Expression seeks an innovative, commercial and youthful image. The answers of the following questions will show whether promoters' opinions match the desired image. The answers to questions 14 and 15 will be compared to see the relation between them. In question 14, respondents were asked to describe Expression in three words and the most often mentioned descriptions were youthful (32%), trustworthy (13%) and functional (9%).

As Figure 14 shows, also in question 15 the result was that Expression is seen as a youthful company: 57% of the respondents said that youthful describes Expression best. In this question the answerers were able to select only one choice, which describes Expression best in their opinion. Circa 22% of the answerers describe Expression as a professional company and 13% describe Expression as an innovative company. These descriptions match rather well with the desired brand image of the company. The results of this question also match with the previous results (question 14) when also there the majority (32%) of the respondents answered *youthful* to describe Expression even when answering alternatives were not given.

Expression advertises itself and its activities as *freshly commercial* (fin. raikkaan kaupallinen) company and hopes that promoters would also see the company that way. However, only six per cent described Expression as a commercial company.

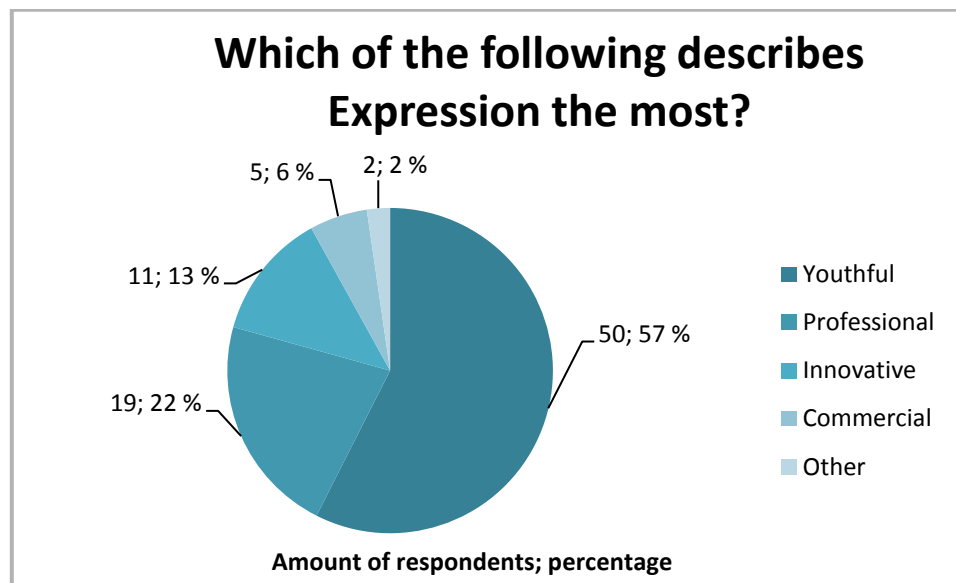


Figure 14 Question 15: Which of the following describes Expression the most?

Expression uses different animal figures in their marketing and hence also the classical brand analysis question was asked: if Expression would be an animal, what would it be? Answers to this question were expected to indicate whether some of those figures have stayed in promoters' minds more than others. Expression's logo also includes a scratch mark of a tiger and this clearly had an effect on the results: nine per cent of the respondents answered tiger. This percentage also was the biggest one of all the animals answered. Other animal figures (as owl and giraffe-snake) that are used in company's marketing were also found from the answers.

The result of the next question gives interesting information for the future improvements to be done. As Figure 15 shows, 69% of the answerers work for Expression because of the tasks. This communicates the fact, that Expression executes interesting and enjoyable promotions also from the promoters' point of view. Fewer than 13% of the answerers selected Expression's interesting clients and 10% selected the people inside the company to be the reasons they work for Expression. These results indicate which direction Expression should focus their recruitment campaigns to: the company should emphasize their interesting and innovative promotional activities to get potential promoters interested, only if the similar promoters are also wanted in the future. Only two answerers (equals 2.3%) selected that salary is the main reason they are working for Expression and three answerers (equals 3.5%) selected alternative *Other*, which gave these reasons: "All earlier mentioned", "Diversity" and "People and tasks".

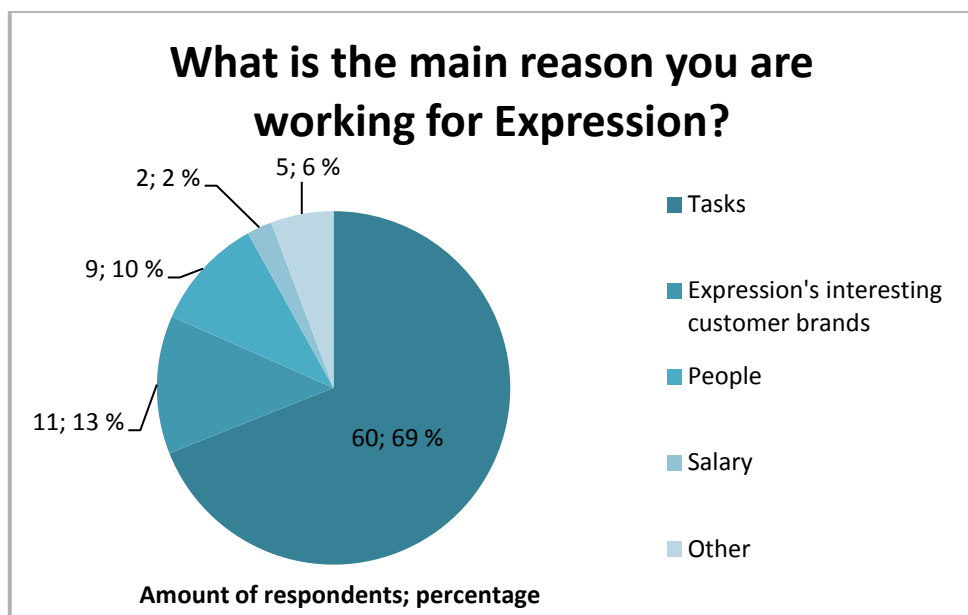


Figure 15 Question 17: What is the main reason you are working for Expression?

Comparing the level of knowledge with the answers to the following question will show whether those who have visited in the offices, blog, etc. have relatively more information than those who have not have visited them. Figure 16 shows where promoters' knowledge of the brand has come from. One hundred per cent of the 87 respondents have visited Expression's web page, which is very important information sharing channel. Expression's recruitment forms are also located in the web page, which might have effected on this result.

Other important information sharing channel is Expression's blog, which 76% of the answerers have read. Expression's Facebook page is also actively updated, and as seen from the Figure 16, 64% of the answerers like and follow Expression in Facebook. Almost 61% of the answerers have visited Helsinki office and 32% have visited Tampere office. This might indicate the answerers' origin; we can presume that most of those 61% are

from the Helsinki Metropolitan area. The same presumption cannot be made for the 32% who have visited Tampere office, because ePromo trainings and job interviews have been organized there also for people from e.g. Jyväskylä.

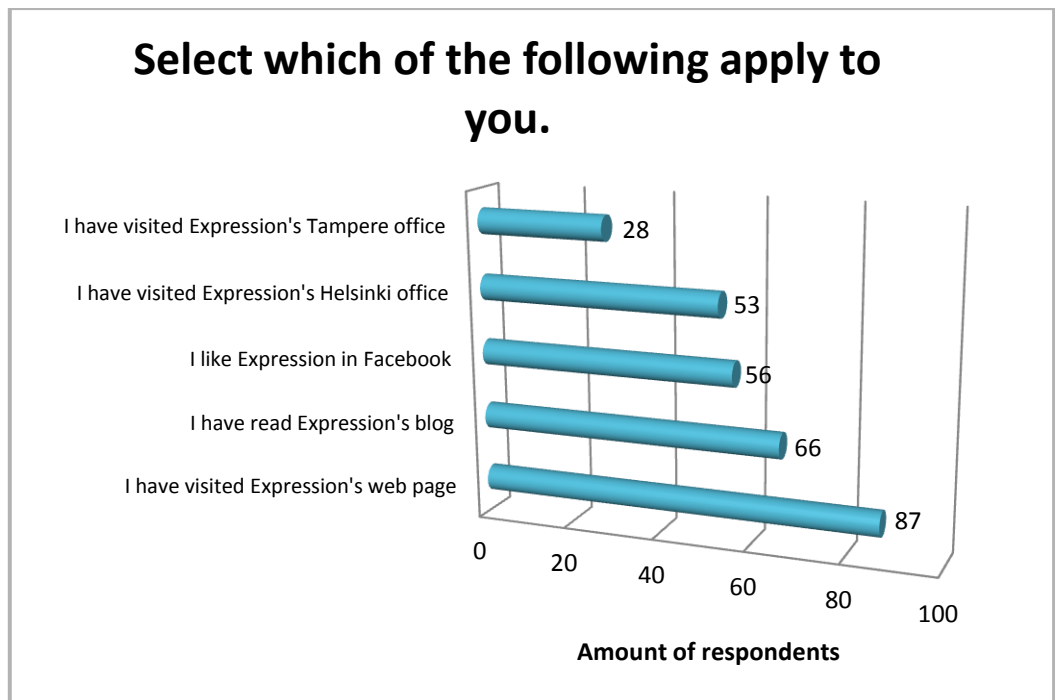


Figure 16 Question 18: Select which of the following apply to you.

Figure 17 shows how promoters see Expression's brand. All described alternatives (youthful, trustworthy, modern, high quality, interesting, innovative and well-known) have been objectives of the company from the beginning. As Figure 17 shows, 94% of the answerers totally agreed on Expression's brand image being youthful. This corresponds with earlier analyzed results of question 15 (Figure 14), where the majority (57%) of the answerers selected *Youthful* to best describe Expression. The remaining six per cent of answerers somewhat agree on the youthful image of Expression.

Expression's trustworthy image was also agreed on: 75% of answerers totally agreed on the trustworthy brand image of Expression. However, this alternative induced more deviation when 22% somewhat agreed and the remaining three per cent somewhat disagreed or totally disagreed on this fact. Expression also has a modern image; 70% of the answerers agreed on Expression's brand being modern and the remaining 30% would somewhat agree on that.

The high-quality aspect of the corporate brand is seen as important for Expression. As seen from Figure 17, 72% of the answerers totally agreed and 24% somewhat agreed on the claim that Expression is a high-quality brand. Less than four per cent of the answerers somewhat disagreed and

no-one totally disagreed on the fact that Expression’s brand and services are high-quality.

As seen earlier in Figure 15, Expression’s interesting promotional tasks are one of the major reasons why promoters work for Expression. As Figure 17 shows, almost 67% of the answerers totally agreed and 32% somewhat agreed on the claim that Expression’s brand is also interesting. Remaining percentage (less than two per cent), somewhat agreed on the claim that Expression is interesting. Expression’s innovative image was also strongly agreed on, when 64% totally agreed and the remaining 36% somewhat agreed on the claim that Expression is innovative. No-one disagreed on the claim that Expression’s image is not innovative.

Expression seeks to be a well-known brand, and achieving this objective has been in the process since the early days of the company. As Figure 17 shows, this alternative created the biggest deviation in the answers. Most of the answerers somewhat agreed (54%) or somewhat disagreed (36 %) on the claim that Expression is well-known. Less than five per cent (4.5%) totally agreed and less than six per cent (5.7%) totally disagreed on the claim that Expression is well-known.

As seen from Figure 17, Expression is seen as a strong brand; 42% of the answerers totally agreed and 52% somewhat agreed on the claim that Expression has a strong brand image. Remaining percentage is distributed as follows: five percent somewhat disagreed and one percent totally disagreed that Expression’s brand image is strong.

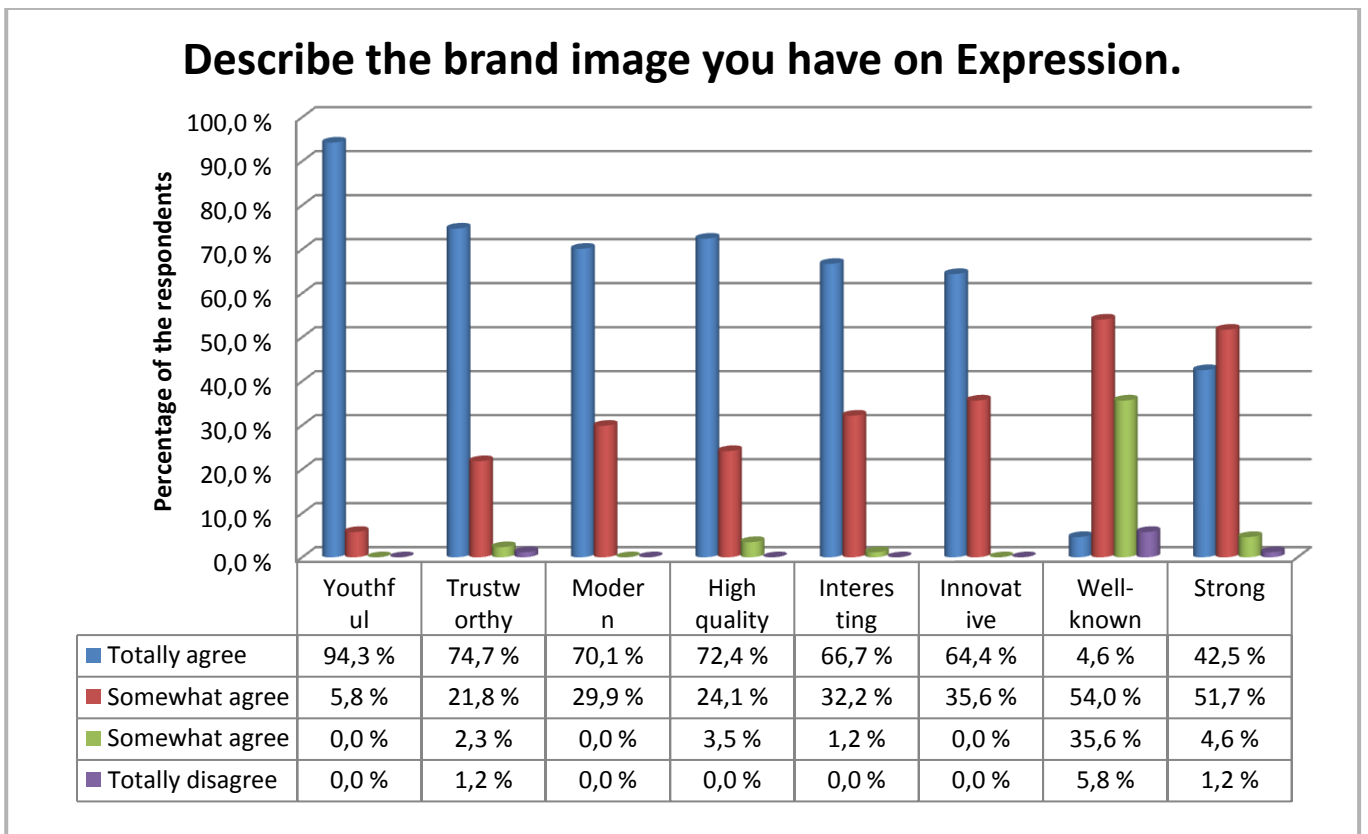


Figure 17 Question 19: Describe the brand image you have on Expression.

4 ANALYSIS

4.1 Analysis of the results

Following chapter focuses on analyzing the results more thoroughly and categorizing the results into different stages of brand advocacy. Fact section of the survey was done to measure the respondents' knowledge about the company. Questions were scored and each correct answer (seen bolded from Appendix 1) gave one point. Incorrect answers equalled zero and did not decrease earlier gathered points. Maximum points were 22, when in some questions it was possible to collect more than one point.

As seen earlier from the results of the fact section in chapter 3.3, the overall knowledge of the respondents was in a good level at the time of the survey. The average result of the fact section was 18 points, which is 82% of the full 22 points. Brand image section was not scored, because these questions were focused on the own opinions and images of the respondents. Brand image section was done to find out the respondents behaviour and attitude towards the brand.

Respondents were divided into four different profiles according to their answers. Results of the fact section and answers from the questions 12 and 19 were the factors which defined to which group each respondent belongs to. Stage of brand advocacy (Figure 1) is defined according to the knowledge, attitude and behaviour of the employee (Commander 2007.). As mentioned earlier, results of the fact section defined the brand knowledge of the respondents, when the questions were based on company related facts. Question 12 defined the behaviour and question 19 defined the attitude towards and around the brand.

Deviation was done in order to define each respondent to one stage of brand advocacy. Deviation was successfully executed when only one respondent did not directly belong to any stage; this respondent had the least knowledge (nine points from the fact section), but still had brand advocating behaviour. Knowledge wise this respondent would have belonged to the lowest stage of brand advocacy, brand resisters. However, the attitude and behaviour of this respondent was at the same level as at the brand learners' stage, which turned out to be the most suitable stage for this respondent. That way every respondent was profiled.

Question 12 was the core of the whole survey, when it defined whether respondents would recommend Expression as an employer to their friends. Undoubtedly this issue defines the stage of brand advocacy the strongest. Question 13 was also seen important, but still left out from the definition of the stage, because there are factors that have an influence on whether employees have recommended the company to their friends; Employees may not have friends who fulfil the requirements for this job or who are from the right age group and bear the needed personal characteristics.

Question 19 focused on the brand image that respondents have on Expression. As mentioned earlier, this defined respondents' attitude towards the

brand. In question 19, respondents were able to select whether they totally agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or totally disagree on certain claims. Claim, whether Expression is well-known, was left out from the analysis because it was more a fact-based image than respondents' own image.

Following deviation was done in order to define respondents' stage of brand advocacy:

Brand Advocates

- Over 17 points from the fact section
- Question 12: Yes
- Question 19: Totally agreed or somewhat agreed on each alternative

Brand Believers

- Over 14 points from the fact section
- Question 12: Yes
- Question 19: Totally agreed-totally disagreed on each alternative (but does not belong to brand advocates)

Brand Learners

- 12-14 points
- Questions 12: Yes
- Question 19: Totally agreed-totally disagreed on each alternative (but does not belong to brand advocates or brand believers)

Brand Resisters

- Over eight points
- Question 12: No
- Question 19: Totally agreed-totally disagreed on each alternative (but does not belong to brand advocates, believers or learners)

4.2 Stages of Expression's employee brand advocacy

Figure 18 shows how the respondents were profiled into four stages of brand advocacy according to the previously defined division. The first three stages are seen positive, because in those cases respondents would actually recommend Expression to other people. Only two percent of the respondents were profiled into brand resisters, who would not recommend Expression to other people at all. This percentage compared to the other stages is very minor, hence from these results we can assume that Expression's stage of employee brand advocacy is in a good level.

As Figure 18 shows, majority of the respondents, c.a. 51% were profiled into the brand advocates, who will spread the positive word-of-mouth about the company. This amount is rather strong when compared to the other stages' percentages; c.a. 32% of the respondents were profiled to brand believers, c.a. 15% to brand learners and as mentioned c.a. two per cent to brand resisters.

Survey results communicate company's success in their internal affairs. Expression has succeeded in creating a strong and visible brand image, which also comes across internally. Company had also succeeded in providing enough knowledge about the brand to their employees. Overall result, over 50% of advocates is a very good result, even though all the respondents were part-time workers (Salminen, interview 1.3.2012). However, these 87 employees can be seen as the most interested and active people from the 200 employees, when they were the ones who even answered the survey. Worst case scenario could be that the 113 people who did not answer to the survey at all are brand resisters, but Salminen does not believe so.

The fact, that over 32% of the respondents were profiled to brand believers and almost 15% to brand learners, also communicates that the brand is seen interesting and likable, even if the employees would not proactively practise advocating behaviour.

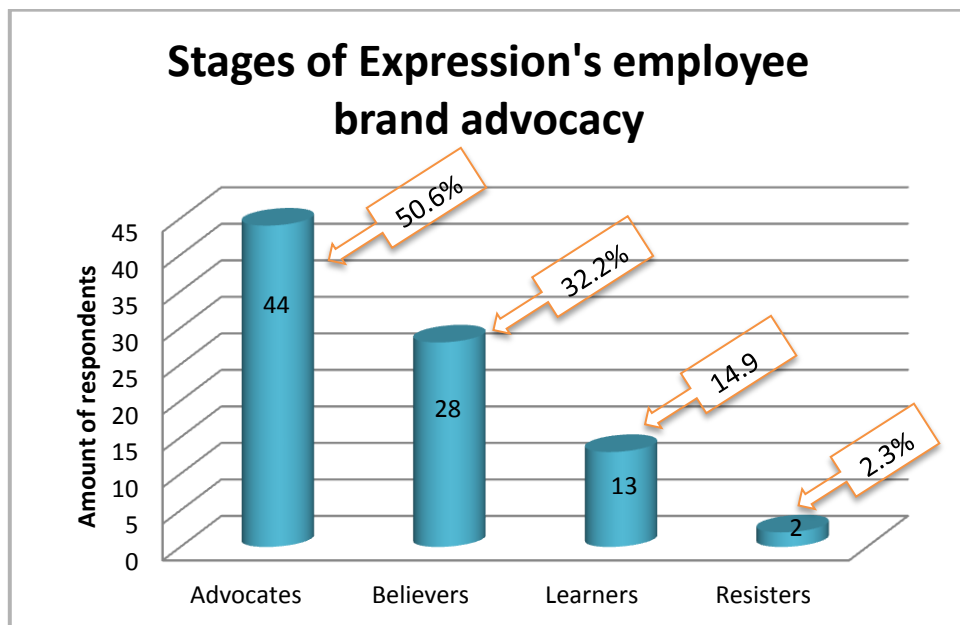


Figure 18 Stages of Expression's employee brand advocacy

Expression's brand advocates

Almost 51% of the respondents are Expression's brand advocates. Brand advocates have the best possible knowledge, attitude and behavior towards the brand (Commander, 2007). What is then the best knowledge attitude and behavior in this case?

Expression wants their advocates to know the basic facts about the company. As the definition of the profiles in chapter 4.1 shows, Expression's brand advocates got almost 82% (over 17 points) of the answers correct in the fact section. From the results of the fact section, we can assume that the level of their knowledge is good and they are able to act as advocates.

As seen earlier from the Figure 1, brand advocates tend to share their brand-related information actively to others (Commander, 2007). Expression's brand advocates share their brand knowledge during their promotional tasks and they are able to represent their information in a brand-advocating manner. Expression's part-time employees are the business cards of the company, hence the level of their knowledge is extremely important. During their promotional activities employees might face potential customers, representatives of the clients and also potential, new promoters to Expression.

Attitudes of Expression's brand advocates are positive towards the brand; they agreed that Expression's brand is youthful, innovative, professional, trustworthy, modern, high-quality, interesting and strong. Both brand advocating attitude and brand advocating behavior, that Expression's brand advocates have, are extremely important. They would recommend Expression as an employer to their friends, which also are potential, new employees for the company.

Expression's brand believers

As Figure 18 showed, 32% of the respondents were profiled into brand believers. Expression's brand believer's level of knowledge is still good: Their results from the fact section were between 15 and 17 points, which equals 64%-77% of the correct answers. Their level of knowledge enables brand advocating information sharing, but their behavior is not that active anymore. They understand and believe in Expression's brand, but active information sharing starts to decrease. In practice, this can mean active promotional behavior which relates to the consumer brand, but promotion of Expression's brand is done because they feel obligated to do so.

However, their attitude towards the brand is mainly positive; they agreed on most of the claims, whether Expression is interesting, modern, innovative, high-quality, etc. in question 19, but also few disagreements were seen. Expression's brand believers would recommend Expression as an employer to their friends, but also this recommendation can be done because they feel obligated. The biggest difference between Expression's brand advocates and believers is the level of knowledge and attitude. Advocates have better brand knowledge than believers have. We can also assume that Expression's brand advocate's behavior is also very passionate while believers feel a bit constrained while advocating the brand, as these are defined in Figure 1. However, behavior of the employees in these levels is the same. In both stages employees recommend Expression as an employer.

Expression's brand learners

The percentages decrease as we go towards the lowest stages of Expression's brand advocacy; 15% of the respondents were profiled into brand learners. As the name of the stage describes, employees at this stage are

still eager to learn the brand-related information, but their level of knowledge starts to be weaker than needed to be a brand advocate. Expression's brand learners' results from the fact section were between 12 and 14 points, this indicates that they answered correctly to 54%-63% of the questions. Knowledge wise they are not able to act as brand advocates, but still they actively want to learn the brand-related information.

Expression's brand learners would still recommend Expression as an employer to others if someone would ask about it, but they would not proactively share that information. Their attitude is more positive than negative towards the brand, but still their behavior does not send a brand advocating message. Expression's brand learners are still seen somewhat advocates because they still answered 'yes' to question 12, which asked if respondent would recommend Expression as an employer to their friends, who are seen as potential new employees for Expression.

Expression's brand resisters

The last stage of brand advocacy is brand resisters, where employees lack the needed knowledge, behavior and attitude to act as brand advocates; they do not understand the brand, feel unhappy at work and their behavior is inconsistent (Commander, 2007). As seen from Figure 18, only two respondents (equals 2.3%) were profiled into Expression's brand resisters. Their brand knowledge is minimal: Expression's brand resisters' results from the fact section were between nine and 11 points when the maximum was 22 points. These amounts equal only 41%-50% of correct answers from the fact section.

Their attitude towards Expression's brand is negative: Brand resisters would not recommend Expression as an employer to their friends. Their behavior also follows the negative attitude, hence they do not share brand-related information about Expression to others. Reason for these two brand resisters can be unsuccessful promotional events, where something has gone wrong and the employee has felt disappointed. Mainly Expression's promotional activities are functional and also pleasant for the employee to conduct. However, in some cases factors which are not in Expression's control, such as weather, might affect the success of the promotional events. These unfortunate factors can influence the promoters own feelings about Expression. However, we can assume that these misfortunes and obstacles happen rarely or do not usually affect the feelings of the employees as only two respondents were profiled into brand resisters.

Overall results communicate the company's success in their internal affairs. Expression has succeeded in creating a strong and visible brand image, which also comes across internally. Company has succeeded in providing enough knowledge about the brand to their employees. Overall result, over 50% of advocates is a very good result, even though all the respondents were part-time workers (Salminen, interview 1.3.2012). Ninety eight percent of the respondents would recommend Expression as an employer to their friends. One of the main reasons for this high percentage

can be that promoter's job is something that people choose to do mainly because of the tasks and the attractiveness of the job, not because of money.

These 87 employees can also be seen as the most interested and active people from the 200 employees, when they were the ones who even answered the survey. Worst case scenario could be that the 113 people who did not answer to the survey at all are brand resisters, but Salminen (Interview 1.3.2012) does not believe so.

The fact that over 32% of the respondents were profiled to brand believers and almost 15% to brand learners, also communicates that the brand is seen interesting and likable, even if the employees would not proactively practise advocating behaviour.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Recommendations

Even though the overall result satisfied the commissioning company, some improvements can also be done. Expression's ePromo training system is an excellent way to ensure that every employee has the needed knowledge to act as brand advocates. ePromo training system is combination of online and face-to-face teaching and it focuses on the promoters' tasks in practise. ePromo training also includes a theoretical part, ePromo examination, which tests promoters' knowledge about the work and the company itself. ePromo examination should be done to every new employee, hence they would gain the needed knowledge to act as brand advocates. ePromo training is also an apparent part of the brand and organizing ePromo training to every employee would already create strong brand image to the employees.

Access to Expression's new intranet, eKansio, is through company's web-page, which also creates more visitors to the web page. When the starting page would have interesting and updated news, visitors would more easily start to look at the site more carefully and not just right away click the Sign in box for the intranet. Changes inside the personnel of the company could be informed even more in every media, in order to reach every employee. As the survey showed (Figure 7), still 42% of the respondents thought that Expression's former promotion planner works at Expression, even though she has not worked for Expression for four months.

One hundred per cent of the respondents (seen from Figure 16) have visited in Expression's web page, which also indicates that it could be a very useful way to spread the newest information about the changes inside the company. Continuously updated news section in Expression's web page could include for example interesting new from the fields of marketing and sales promotion. Expression's web page as well as blog and Facebook could be the source of up-to-date marketing ideas and the newest market-

ing trends. News could include interesting and successful promotions around the world as well as funny marketing related videos.

Creating a news page for eKansio could also work, when also the former intranet's front page had news section. Every employee who is actively working in Expression's promotional events visits eKansio at least once before the event to check the working schedules and at least once after the event to fill in the report.

Employees' attitudes are harder to affect, but for example keeping the company's Facebook page and blog continuously active can help the employees start to live the brand. Usually people are more daring to take part in conversations online and more discussions are held and comments are given when compared to face-to-face meetings. Increasing comments and discussions in online media can happen first through different competitions and lotteries, when people have some kind of incentive why they should take part in conversations. Previously mentioned videos could for example be used for lotteries and competitions by arranging a competition 'Vote for the most interesting marketing video' or 'Vote for the best promotion implementation'. These lotteries and competitions would easily create more visitors to the Facebook and blog. The prizes of the competitions and lotteries do not need to be outstanding, even tickets to movie theatre could create the wanted action to the visitors of the pages. Small prizes could even be better than big ones, if the prize would be for example a huge flat screen TV no-one would think that it is even possible to win something that valuable.

Even though promoter's position is not a full-time job where people go every day, living the brand is possible by organizing active and brand-advocating events around the brand. ePromo trainings are a good example of branded events, hence maybe organizing other eBrand events could help the brand and its image to become even stronger. Expression has previously organized PolExpression, which was a pole dancing event where promoters could come to try pole dancing for free. This event was a success and everyone who took part in it has asked for more similar events. The right combination of work and pleasure could also create even better atmosphere around Expression's brand.

As mentioned earlier, the results of the survey were extremely good, Expression could improve and develop their actions to create even more attractive and interesting brand image to their employees. By maximizing the level of knowledge Expression can already enable the process of transforming all employees into brand advocates. Attitudes and behaviour of employees will change more slowly, but within time, these can also be changed to be as brand advocating as possible.

5.2 Conclusion

Employee brand advocacy is something to which every company aims at. The benefits of brand advocates are obvious; brand actively spoken about and positive word-of-mouth is spread. Brand advocating behaviour is seen

in different social media, when advocates tend to comment and share their feelings about the brand.

There are four different stages of brand advocacy, to which the employees are divided according to their knowledge, behaviour and attitude. At the highest stage, there are brand advocates, who share their knowledge about the brand actively and live the brand in their everyday life. Brand advocates have the needed knowledge and the best behaviour and attitude towards the brand. Brand believers also have the knowledge and passion to act as brand advocates, but the brand is not affecting their attitude and behaviour that much.

The next stage is brand learners, where employees are still eager to learn about the brand, but the passion is gone. Their attitude starts to be careless towards the brand and behaviour is defined by the rules. At the last stage, brand resisters, employees do not understand or even want to understand the brand. They lack the needed knowledge, behaviour and attitude and always put their personal interests first.

Transforming employees into brand advocates includes several issues, which need to be considered. Employer needs to share the brand information, involve the employees in decision-making, personalize the brand into employees' minds, enable the brand advocating behaviour and give recognition about brand advocating behaviour. With the help of these steps, employees are able to transform into brand advocates, if they have they have the needed attitude and passion towards the brand.

Different tools are also used to build create brand advocates. These tools will ensure that employees have the needed knowledge, attitude and behaviour by providing information, modifying the attitude with brand-focused events and creating positive behaviour with recognition and rewards. These tools are also used to turn negative commenters into brand advocates. Negative comments need to be always dealt with and replied in order to minimize the negative feelings.

The psychology of brand advocacy is based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It is psychologically impossible to be an advocate if the consumers are only fulfilling their physiological needs at the lowest level of hierarchy. When entering the self-actualization level at the top of the hierarchy, the advocating behaviours is possible.

Expression's level of brand advocacy needed to be defined with quantitative research. Research focused on whether the company's employees have the needed knowledge, attitude and behaviour to act as brand advocated. Survey was divided into two parts, where the first section defined the knowledge of the respondent and the second section defined the attitude and behaviour of the respondent.

Results of the fact section came out to be good, when the average result of the fact section was 18 points from 22 points. These results were used to profile the respondents into four different stages of brand advocacy. Few

other questions were also chosen from the second section to define the profiles for the respondents. Question whether the respondent would recommend Expression to others or not, was the core of the whole research and strongly defined the stage of brand advocacy.

The overall results satisfied the commissioning company: about 51% of the respondents were profiled into brand advocates. Only around two per cent of the respondents were profiled into brand resisters. These percentages show that the efforts that Expression has taken to build its strong brand during its seven year long history has created results. Expression has a rather strong group of employees, who act as brand advocates for the company. The brand is seen youthful and innovative, and these issues also have also been one of the goals for Expression; from the early days of company's history, they have defined that they want to be seen as youthful, innovative, interesting, commercial, trustworthy, modern, high quality and well-known brand.

Living the brand and being an actual brand advocate usually happens after many years of positive experiences and it might be more difficult to reach all the employees if they are not daily involved with the company-related issues. However in this case, the part-time employees are also strongly involved in spreading the message of Expression as a youthful and innovative brand.

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Expression's employee survey

1. Gender
 - a. Female
 - b. Male

2. Age
 - a. Under 18
 - b. 18-20
 - c. 21-23
 - d. 24-26
 - e. 27-29
 - f. Over 30

Facts about Expression

First we will find out how much you know about Expression. This questionnaire will not affect your employment, so please be honest and do not cheat.

3. Who is the managing director of Expression?
 - a. Tero Ylönen
 - b. Päivi Salminen**
 - c. Päivi Luomanen
 - d. Karoliina Lehtonen
 - e. Kalle Keskinen

4. Who of the following work at Expression's Pasila office? Select all that apply.
 - a. Henrik Sippel**
 - b. Annariina Tolvanen
 - c. Jesse Pellikka
 - d. Ilona Kymäläinen**
 - e. Kati Syrjäjä
 - f. Päivi Salminen**

5. When was Expression found?
 - a. 1996
 - b. 2001
 - c. 2005**
 - d. 2008

6. In which cities does Expression have offices? Select all that apply.
 - a. Tampere**
 - b. Helsinki**
 - c. Turku
 - d. Jyväskylä
 - e. Lahti

7. Select the areas Expression operates in.
 - a. **Helsinki metropolitan area**
 - b. **Pirkanmaa**
 - c. **Western Finland**
 - d. **Eastern Finland**
 - e. **Northern Finland**
 - f. Aland

8. Which of these brands are Expression's clients? Select all that apply.
 - a. Nike
 - b. Acer
 - c. **HP**
 - d. **Nikon**
 - e. **Sony**
 - f. **Panda**
 - g. **Sloggi**
 - h. Elovena
 - i. Valio
 - j. Helsingin Sanomat


9. Which business areas does Expression operate in?
 - a. TV commercials
 - b. **Promotion implementation**
 - c. **Promotion personnel**
 - d. Show dance
 - e. **Promotion planning**

10. What is Expressionism?
 - a. Working hard
 - b. Seeing the results of your own work
 - c. **Way of acting, thinking and thinking about work.**
 - d. Management system

11. What is Deeper?
 - a. **Expression's sister company; a marketing agency**
 - b. Expression's intranet
 - c. Owner of Expression
 - d. A competing sales promotion agency

Expression's brand

This part focuses on the actual brand and brand images.

12. Would you recommend Expression as an employer to your friends?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 

13. To how many friends you have recommended Expression?
 - a. 0-1
 - b. 2-3
 - c. 4-5
 - d. More than 5

14. Describe Expression in three words.

15. Which of the following describes Expression the most?
 - a. Youthful
 - b. Commercial
 - c. Sexy
 - d. Business like
 - e. Professional
 - f. Innovative
 - g. Other?

16. If Expression would be an animal, what would it be?

17. What is the main reason you work for Expression?
 - a. Salary
 - b. People
 - c. Tasks
 - d. Expression's customers/customer brands
 - e. Other?

18. Select which of the following apply to you.
 - a. I have visited Expression's Helsinki office.
 - b. I have visited Expression's Tampere office.
 - c. I have visited Expression's web page.
 - d. I have read Expression's blog.

19. Describe the brand image you have on Expression. Scale: Totally agree - Somewhat agree -Somewhat disagree - Totally disagree
 - a. Youthful
 - b. Trustworthy
 - c. Modern
 - d. High quality
 - e. Interesting
 - f. Innovative
 - g. Well-known
 - h. Strong

Expressionin työntekijäkysely

Sukupuoli

- Nainen
- Mies

Ikäsi



Faktat

Taustatietojen täyttämisen jälkeen kartoitamme tietojasi Expressionista. Tätä kyselyä ei arvostella eivätkä vastaukset vaikuta työsuhteeseemme, joten ethän luntaa nettisivuiltamme.

Kuka on Expressionin toimitusjohtaja?

- Tero Ylönen
- Päivi Salminen
- Päivi Luomanen
- Karoliina Lehtonen
- Kalle Keskinen

Ketkä seuraavista työskentelevät Expressionin Pasilan toimistolla?

- Henrik Sippel
- Annariina Tolvanen
- Jesse Pellikka
- Ilona Kymäläinen
- Kati Syrjälä
- Päivi Salminen

Milloin Expression on perustettu?

- 1996
- 2001
- 2005
- 2008

Missä kaupungeissa Expressionilla on toimistot?

- Tampere
- Helsinki
- Turku
- Jyväskylä
- Lahti

Millä alueilla Expression toimii?

- Pääkaupunkiseutu
- Pirkanmaa
- Länsi-Suomi
- Itä-Suomi
- Pohjois-Suomi
- Ahvenanmaa

Mitkä seuraavista brändeistä ovat Expressionin asiakkaita?

- Nike
- Acer
- HP
- Nikon
- Sony
- Panda
- Sloggi
- Elovena
- Valio
- Helsingin Sanomat

Mitä palveluita Expression tarjoaa?

- TV-mainostuotanto
- Promootioiden toteutus
- Promootioiden henkilöstöpalvelut
- Show dance

- Promootioiden suunnittelu

Mitä on Expressionismi?

- Kovaa puurtamista
 Oman työn tulosten näkemistä
 Tapa toimia toimia, ajatella ja suhtautua työhön
 Johtamisjärjestelmä

Mikä on Deeper?

- Expressionin sisaryhtiö; markkinointitoimisto
 Expressionin intranet
 Expressionin omistaja
 Expressionin kanssa kilpaileva myynninedistämistoimisto

Mielikuvat

Tämän osion tarkoituksena on selvittää millainen mielikuva sinulla on Expressionin brändistä. Vastaathan kysymyksiin rehellisesti.

Suosittelisitko Expressionia työnantajana kavereillesi?

- Kyllä
 Ei

Kuinka monelle ihmiselle olet suositellut Expressionia? 0-1

- 2-3
 4-5
 Yli 5

Kuvaile Expressionia kolmella sanalla.

Mikä seuraavista kuvailee Expressionia parhaiten?

- Nuorekas
 Kaupallinen
 Seksikäs

- Ammattimainen
- Innovatiivinen
- Muu:

Jos Expression olisi eläin, mikä eläin se olisi?

Mikä on pääsyy miksi olet Expressionilla töissä?

- Palkka
- Ihmiset
- Työtehtävät
- Expressionin mielenkiintoiset asiakkaat
- Muu:

Valitse kaikki vaihtoehdot, jotka pätevät sinuun.

- Olen käynyt Expressionin Helsingin toimistolla.
- Olen käynyt Expressionin Tampereen toimistolla.
- Olen vierailut Expressionin kotisivuilla.
- Olen lukenut Expressionin blogia.
- Tykkään Expressionista Facebookissa.

Millainen mielikuva sinulla on Expressionista?

	Täysin samaa mieltä	Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	Jokseenkin eri mieltä	Eri mieltä
Nuorekas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Luotettava	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moderni	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Laadukas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mielenkiintoinen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Innovatiivinen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tunnettu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vahva	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Tulos

