

KYMENLAAKSO UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
Master's Degree Programme in International Business Management

Tanja Rautavirta

ONE IN A MILLION – Experimenting Entrepreneurship

Master's Thesis 2012

ABSTRACT

KYMENLAAKSO UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

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RAUTAVIRTA, TANJA

One in a Million – Experimenting Entrepreneurship

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Ari Lindeman, Senior Lecturer and
Sinikka Pekkalin, Senior Lecturer

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Entrepreneurship in general but especially in small and medium size companies is challenging. In addition to challenges the thesis is presenting a birth story of a business. The thesis investigates ways to operate in practise by the means of narrative and qualitative research. The entire process of establishing a company has been experienced, evaluated, and explained in the thesis.

This thesis aimed to investigate the path of becoming and being an entrepreneur. By investigating steps on the way of becoming an entrepreneur the study aimed to present alternate perspectives and possibly locating gaps during the process. The study focused on the actual process of establishing a business and later on to the concepts of differentiation, positioning, marketing and networking.

The empirical study of the thesis was implemented by participating and collecting the data from the actual circumstances. The research was mainly executed with journal notes during three years of experimenting entrepreneurship. Interpretation thus has been accomplished with narrative style of approaching. Several discussions, conversations, interviews, customer circumstances and events attended regarding the topic were utilized for the thesis to provide diverse and useful information.

The final results were reached by experimenting entrepreneurship, evaluating own actions and comparing them with already existing theories, perspectives of colleagues and other entrepreneurs. Essential factors to successful business operating were managed to locate to an extent. Some special means regarding marketing and differentiation were discovered and opened for further discussion and investigations.

TIIVISTELMÄ

KYMENLAAKSON AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

Liiketalouden laitos

RAUTAVIRTA, TANJA

One in a Million – Yrittäjyyttä Elämässä

Opinnäytetyö

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Yrittäjyys, etenkin PK-yrittäjyys on haastavaa. Haasteiden läpikäymisen lisäksi tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on jakaa erään yrityksen synnyintarina. Opinnäytetyö tutkii käytännön toimimista ja keskittyy toiminnan erilaistamiseen narratiivisen ja kvalitatiivisen tutkimuksen keinoin. Opinnäytetyö läpikäy yrityksen perustamista prosessina kokemuksien kautta arvioiden ja esittäen.

Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on selventää yrittäjyyden polkua. Tutkimalla yrittäjyyden askelmia opinnäytetyö pyrkii tuomaan esiin erilaisia näkökulmia ja samalla toivottavasti mahdollisuuksia markkinoilla. Tutkimus keskittyi todelliseen yrityksen perustamiseen sekä myöhemmin erilaistamisen, asemoinnin, markkinoinnin ja verkostoitumisen käsitteisiin.

Opinnäytetyön empiirinen osuus on toteutettu itse osallistuen ja samalla tietoa keräämällä todellisesta ympäristöstä ja tilanteista. Tutkimusta suoritettiin kolmen vuoden yrittäjyyden ajalla kokemuksia hyödyntäen päiväkirjamerkinnöiden avulla. Tästä syystä narratiivinen ote valittiin tutkimuksen tulkinnan välineeksi. Useita aiheeseen liittyviä keskusteluja, haastatteluja ja tapahtumia on hyödynnetty monipuolisen ja hyödyllisen tiedon saamiseksi.

Lopputuloksiin päästiin itse yrittäjyyttä kokemalla, omia tekemisiä arvioiden, vertaamalla niitä jo olemassa oleviin teorioihin sekä kollegoiden ja toisten yrittäjien näemyksiin. Olennaiset tekijät menestyvään yrittämiseen tapauksen kannalta onnistuttiin paikantamaan. Markkinoinnin ja erilaistamisen saralta löydettiin erityisiä aiheita jatkokeskustelua ja –tutkimuksia ajatellen.

I can't get no satisfaction - PROLOGUE

I have been an entrepreneur for three years. These three years have been full of events, feelings, opportunities, advantages, disadvantages, but most of all a full range of feelings; joy, happiness, satisfaction, excitement, sorrow, frustration, exhaustion, tiredness, just to mention a few. I started from an empty table with an idea but also a passion to express myself and my values. I proceeded with the idea by creating a web store first, and after that a boutique; offering clothing and accessories dedicated to the values of sustainable development.

One cannot predict what the future will bring to one's business. Some calculations, plans and analysis can and should always be executed. In my case the paths my business followed, were not in my hands in every case. In the beginning my vision and aim was to offer clothing made from recycled materials supporting values of sustainable development. When actually establishing the company quality, selected pieces of vintage clothing were more effortless and straight ahead ready for merchandises. Later on collections of clothing and accessories made from recycled materials were easier to add to the selection of products.

Sewing and dress making services were added value to the actual products in the beginning. After the company moved premises the amount of sewing and dress making services rapidly and considerably increased. The development of sewing and dress making services changed the direction of my company for good. It also rushed my own decision on the future of the business and my own role in it. One can determine one's business but sometimes incidents in and from the environment have a huge influence on the direction one's business is leading to. The study of micro and macro environments is advisable in order to be more aware of all the possible directions your business might take.

A good idea is not always enough. Polishing the business idea regularly is advisable. One should avoid making hasty decisions, especially in the beginning. A throughout planning is a key to a success. All the significant parts of a business plan can be found and recognized from this thesis, too.

Altogether entrepreneurship for me has been a learning experience. I consider myself lucky because I had the chance of combining studies and entrepreneurship. On the ba-

sis of these matters this chapter in my life is described as experimental entrepreneurship. Because of the nature of my entrepreneurship I believe I have much to offer for all those considering on becoming entrepreneurs and why not to those who already are. This is one of the reasons I have chosen narrative style as the method of this research. By choosing this method I believe this thesis to be easier to approach, concentrate on, provoke and raise questions and maybe even to launch new researches on the matter.

For the thesis I have been keeping a diary, a business journal, on the actions and incidents in my entrepreneurship for three years. During the process of journal keeping there have been industrious seasons in my writing process but also more lazy ones. In this context I would like to point out that I was not only establishing the company at the same time with the studies and research but also being a mother to my son, who was born in the same year my studies at Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences (later on this thesis abbreviated as KyAMK) started, 2008.

I am hoping the narrative style of approaching together with taking advantage on my journal notes during the process will keep this development project thesis (later on abbreviated as thesis or DPT) as simple and practical as possible to read and absorb. Because of the nature and method of the thesis, an unusual diminutive amount of theory has been utilized. After discussing on the matter of the amount of theory we agreed on with the supervisors of this DPT; it should be concentrating more on the actual journal instead of going through different theories. Nevertheless, comparison between theories and my experiences as an entrepreneur can be found from several chapters in the thesis.

I have had the pleasure to achieve many new contacts and become a part of a number of networks. Networks and interest groups play a significant, if not vital, role in entrepreneur's everyday life. In this thesis I have researched the meaning of networks; what different types of networks exist and what kind of a role do networks actually play. The study on the networks investigates the network systems in my company, introducing and explaining them and their role in my business. More questions rose during processing the chapter; which networks would be the most beneficial for my purposes, how to choose the right ones and last but not least, could profound networks substitute or even displace advertising?

In final conclusions of this thesis I will come to a closure which at the same is an end of an era in the story of my experimental entrepreneurship as well. When placing the last dot to the last page of this thesis something significant for me has hopefully reached its happy ending. I hope that in the end there will be someone else but myself gaining something from the research done.

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1 WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE – INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

1.1 Purpose of the research

When I started thinking about and sketching up my thesis 2008 at KyAMK it was about establishing my own business. That is about all that has remained the same after that. I decided to actually establish a business and at the same time with that decision I determined that to be the “red wire” for my thesis. After that decision I started to study and investigate entrepreneurship in general but also in the field I had chosen to locate my business in, gather pieces of information, build networks and contacts, and prepare myself and my family for changes to be.

With this thesis I am hoping to lighten up the mystery of entrepreneurship: The role and amount of bureaucracy, the importance of throughout planning, the wide range of feelings in the path of entrepreneurship and most of all; the significance of learning by doing.

Recently I have become attached and very familiar with the idea that both establishing my company together with my studies at KyAMK have played roles in a bigger play. This play I have named *experimental entrepreneurship*. It will be used in this thesis, hoping that the reader will also understand why the name has been chosen to represent the path of this thesis and entrepreneurship, separately but together.

The theory part of the thesis mainly concentrates on my own actions, experiences and information earned in the process of becoming an entrepreneur. Auto ethnographic style has been utilized in the process together with narrative style. Resources on branding, sustainable development, value adding, networking, marketing, advertising, and market analysis have been researched and reflected to incidents and observations in the case of my own company, Autiotalo.

One of the aims was not to present already existing theories and literature but to share my own experiences, events and lessons learned during the three-year-process. The study aims to open new views to the matter of entrepreneurship and learning from actually doing so but to researching as well. Keeping a journal was considered to be the

best possible way to remember all the significant incidents and cornerstones on the way to entrepreneurship.

1.2 RESEARCH METHODS

1.2.1 Introduction to the research

From the beginning at KyAMK, the idea for the thesis was about establishing a business. The aim was to establish a company that would operate in the field of clothing with sustainable development values. That is about all that has remained the same after that. The idea was to study sustainable development as a value in textile and clothing business and after that to create a new brand based on this idea. At this point the approach style for the research was considered to be action research.

The more I studied and the more I developed my own company, the less did action research feel valid. After having heard opinions and ideas from supervisors, teachers and colleagues a decision to change the approaching style was made. The approach style now outlined was narrative approach. A significant issue that also led towards this approach style was the decision to pay sustainable development less attention.

1.2.2 Narrative research with a sense of auto ethnographic style

Narrative research does not aim at objective or generalized knowledge, but at a local, personal and subjective knowledge. Narrative research is experimental writing, constructivism and epic accounting – a story of a participant. (Heikkinen, 2003)

Creative writing is known as narrative writing. A narrative writer writes to entertain the reader. Therefore a fully developed narrative fiction or nonfiction should have a central theme that has to be introduced in the beginning, followed by the development of the theme and an eventful middle and a memorable end. (Pillai, 2012)

Hence a business journal had been kept from the beginning it finally became very clear that the narrative approach would therefore be the most suitable one for the thesis. As Heikkinen and Pillai are noting above, with narrative style it would be possible to reflect feelings and emotions at the same time with actual, real life happenings

would be presented. Choosing the narrative style instead of action research became clearer when the process; the combination of the thesis and a business evolved and proceeded. Action research as the approaching style would have been more and too systematic when comparing to narrative style that would instead provide this investigation and thesis with more creativity and openness.

As it is said in the above extract by Sikes and Gale, narrative style gives the thesis more a personal point of view than action research. With narrative style methods one is able to include the reader to the actual events and tell the real story in which one has played the leading role. When compared to the methods of narrative research the methods of action research could not reveal feelings and emotions involved in the process of establishing company; being an entrepreneur, a researcher and a student making observations of all that at the same time.

Narrative style of approaching is used to make sense of the world as we perceive and experience it. It is used to tell other people what we have discovered and about how the world is for us. Narrative research is a style of approaching that is concerned with stories. These can be stories as told or stories that we enquire into: narratives as data, data as narratives. (Sikes and Gale, 2006)

Narrative is the type of discourse that draws together diverse events, happenings and actions of human lives (Sikes and Gale, Polkinghorne, 1995, 5). Narrative research is commonly associated with qualitative methodologies and methods, both in terms of the sorts of data qualitative research collects and works from, and with regard to how that data is analysed or interpreted and then re-presented. (Sikes and Gale, 2006)

The style of approaching of this thesis can also be considered partly influenced by ethnographic style of research. The aim of the thesis has been to research the process from inside, being present at all times during the process and ethnographic methodology seemed to have many things in common with my studies and experimental entrepreneurship.

The style of narrative approach on the thesis can be considered to be very close or related to *auto ethnography*. Auto ethnographies are accounts in which writers and researchers tell stories about their own lived experiences, relating these to broader con-

texts and understandings. The stories are told in much the same way as life historians analyse life stories in the light of historical, sociological or psychological theories and perspectives. Auto ethnographies focus on reflecting on the writing process and the researcher's experiences in the field (Sikes and Gale, 2006)

Devotion to the process from the beginning would have to be taken seriously and as a significant issue when considering the reliability and information given on this thesis. Narrative and auto ethnographic style of approaching can be described as an innovative, human and observant style of researching and studying. The methods of research utilized in this thesis can be seen continuing their evolvement as approaching styles in the future of business studies.

1.2.3 Qualitative research

Qualitative research focuses on natural settings. Qualitative researchers are interested in life as it is lived in real situations. A researcher constructs a model of what might be and then test that model in a real life situation. Researchers of qualitative methods usually prefer quite long and deep involvement in the natural settings in order to discover the innermost meanings. (Woods, 2006)

Since this thesis is about establishing a company, it is considered fruitful and instructive to tell a growth and development story of the process. With the studies and research proceeding qualitative research felt like the most appropriate. Forms of more journal and diary like styles of approaching became more obvious. The style of approaching was then agreed on with supervisors and lecturers. Qualitative approach would give more practical and real-life information to a reader and make it more interesting and easy to come closer to the subject and the thesis.

Qualitative research has an emphasis on the process. It has a focus on how things happen, how they develop, and how they become the way they are. Qualitative methods can reveal in fine detail just how change occurs in day-to-day activities, negotiations and decisions. (Woods, 2006)

By choosing the qualitative and narrative methods the thesis is considered to be easier to approach, concentrate on, provoke and raise questions and maybe even to launch new studies on the subject or a side subject.

Nevertheless, aims and goals being realistic and stuck to everyday business life, it can be pointed out that experiences, visions and lessons learned during the process might just be very appropriate and confident ways of learning, presenting and reflecting information obtained. The aim has been to be honest on own experiences on the field and tell the story of experimental entrepreneurship truthfully and like it actually was.

1.2.4 Data Collection

The main methods employed in qualitative research are observation, interviews, internal documents, notes and documentary analysis. The aim of this study was to investigate what really happened in the actual company and circumstances, not just supposing through scenarios what would have happened according to various different theories.

As Heikkinen (2003) notes narrative analysis is creative and experimental writing and it can be placed somewhere between fictional and academic writing. For this thesis keeping personal diaries and journal notes during the time of entrepreneurship and studies have been effective ways of collecting data. Journal writing has played an important role; without it having done so, it would have been very hard to remember even the half of all the events and incidents on the path of experimental entrepreneurship.

Interviewing has played a fundamental role in data collecting. Some of the interviews have been made in a formal way and some of them more informally. Friends, family, colleagues, partners and other interest group representatives have been interviewed with different types of methods. The outcome of these interviews has been utilized in various connections during the process of the thesis.

A great amount of qualitative material comes from talking with people, both through formal interviews and casual conversations. Ideal outcome of an interview of a conversation is a natural course of discussion as the interviewee talks. Care is needed, therefore, to avoid leading questions or suggesting outcomes, and skill is called for in discovering what the interviewee really thinks. The style of interviewing is seeking comparisons, searching for opinions, asking for further information and explanations. (Woods, 2006)

Diaries are frequently used in qualitative research. The journal and diary notes are observing and interviewing myself as an entrepreneur, the environment of my company and how it is all functioning together. My choices have been qualitative and narrative styles of research hence the opportunities that perspectives, conveying feelings and experiences can give to the research of establishing a business.

1.2.5 Project plan and collaboration

The project plan is to tell the story of Autiotalo from beginning to the end with the methods of qualitative and narrative approach styles. The thesis grounds its information mostly on diary and journal notes but also on some selected theories but to a certain extent and amount. It has been determined that the focus is on actual, real life events and lived life as an entrepreneur.

An important role and weight on this thesis is on opinions, experiences and feelings on personal choices of other people and especially entrepreneurs. Interviews have taken place face to face, think-tanking, by conversations and discussions over a cup of coffee, inquiries and interviews via facebook or other forums and places to network. Information and results received from the interviews have been used in different sections of the thesis.

Collaboration with colleagues, other entrepreneurs and students has existed throughout the entire process. One of the most significant ones for this thesis has been collaboration with Jaana Laaksonen, a friend and a colleague from KyAMK department of design. Mutual aims and goals were to open some doors of entrepreneurship, networking and searching for the networks, interest groups and channels for our purposes. One of the aims was to develop co-operation of two different faculties in the way that everybody would gain something.

Some parts of the thesis are executed in collaboration with the faculty of design and Jaana Laaksonen. Interviews, think-tanking, networking, journal keeping and continuous conversation on the issues concerning entrepreneurs were explored, investigated and accomplished in this collaboration.

By these means of collecting data, the thesis is proving the meaning and importance of co-operation and joining strengths but also the differences in seeing, feeling and deal-

ing with everyday life and challenges as an entrepreneur, a student and a researcher. It is important to point out that the thesis aims to locate common and mutual goals for the parties involved but it also seeks differentiation.

The study was accomplished by conversations and debates, analyzing some common issues and points of interests, finally focusing on the points arisen during the process. The goal was to capture new points of view. One of the aims was to reveal something that lies in between the point of planning possible entrepreneurship and the point when already and actually dealing with the issues of entrepreneurship. This thesis proved that researching by feeling and living entrepreneurship in practice is truly an effective way to learn.

1.3 Introduction to the case: Autiotalo – the first three years

Autiotalo was established in 2008. Studies at KyAMK were started the same year. Back then, Autiotalo was just a business idea among others but there was something special to it. After a rather short time of consideration and handling thought bureaucracy, Autiotalo was established and opened as a web store in the fall of 2009. In February 2010 Autiotalo opened its first premises at Lahti. In March 2011 Autiotalo moved and re-opened in new premises.

In the beginning the business idea of Autiotalo was to supply clothing and accessories made from recycled and environmental friendly materials. After getting started it soon became clear that vintage and second hand clothing would play a natural role in the selection. The inventory was based on recycled materials and majority of those materials were consisting of trendy vintage textiles, clothes and accessories. At the time vintage was a rising star, a trend and therefore new vintage stores were popping up in many cities in Finland.

It was easy and natural to proceed with a selection of vintage clothing and accessories. The first premises were opened in the spirit of vintage and right after opening Helsinki Vintage was the first fair attended as an entrepreneur and an exhibitor. Shortly after these events Autiotalo quite soon became locally but also nationally known for its vintage collection. As a part of the strategy of Autiotalo, several fairs, events and fashion shows were attended during the first two years. Interviews and stories were published

in local newspapers and radio shows. The first year was fast and full of events but it was not enough.

After the first year it had become obvious that Autiotalo had failed with its location. New premises were fortunately found in the next building which made the actual moving process a little lighter. New premises were half the size larger and offered more window space to the street. With this change it was time to make a few more of them at the same time: Autiotalo changed its strategy and decided to open up a small cafeteria in the new premises. Opening a cafeteria, even a small one, required more bureaucracy and more lessons to learn. Finally in March 2011 Autiotalo re-opened at new premises as a diversified store offering products and services in four different areas;

1. Quality, selected pieces of vintage and second hand clothing and accessories,
2. Clothing and accessories made from recycled materials,
3. Dress making and sewing services and
4. Cafeteria services.

Immediately after opening the new premises, the amount of sewing and dress making customers started to grow fast. After the first three months in the new premises the revenue of sewing services was 10 times bigger than before. It soon also became clear that personally I could not take advantage of this opportunity even as a founder hence the lack of sewing talent.

A subcontractor then came to a question. Autiotalo had been operating with trainees from the beginning. There was one specific trainee who had been almost as a member of personnel at Autiotalo for quite some time. This person was a natural choice to propose the possibility of subcontract when fast decisions to the challenges were required.

A subcontractor was then found and collaboration was launched first with another trainee period, then changing it into a subcontract. Already before signing the contracts a feeling that this would not be a long-term situation was present. It soon became apparent that with revenues rather small the business could not reach the level of supporting two individual entrepreneurs. Still, Autiotalo had been introduced to its survival package; concentration on sewing services.

Macro environment sometimes operates from the backstage while an entrepreneur is trying to manage and concentrate on subsistence and entrepreneurship. In the case of Autiotalo, market niche was found almost accidentally. Appropriate and plain sewing services were missing from the area and Autiotalo had accidentally located this niche. All it took was the relocation of the company and handing out a few flyers in the neighborhood.

From the beginning, a significant part of strategy was to spread the business to other cities as well. Autiotalo was intending to develop its functions into a chain model. The plan was to provide the products and services first in Lahti then in Kymenlaakso. Unfortunately this part of strategy gradually started to fade away. It demanded enough effort to try to be successful in the first premises of Autiotalo. Hence the circumstances, it would have been too much to try to divide the operation into several different places. The mission, in the first place, was to get the first premises to run.

The strategy was first to survive as an entrepreneur, then to offer work and job opportunities to others sharing the same passion, and later on spreading the business, seeking co-operatives and business partners even globally. Of course the strategy did include international sales and success as well, at least a dream of it. All in all; I was one of many who would like to dedicate to and actually be able to support yourself with a work that you actually enjoy doing.

Today Autiotalo is a business that is not supporting the founder and the situation has become even worse with the growth of sewing services and subcontracting. If I as the founder would happen to be a talented dressmaker then there would be no problem; I could easily make my living with my own business. After careful consideration and wrestling with my principles and values, the decision to give it up had to be done.

The options after three years were continuing with the similar, barely surviving way of living or giving it up and finding another path. The struggle for the everyday subsistence wears out and squeezes the juice out of the entrepreneur no matter how much one tries to think positive and look towards the future. All the ideas, innovations and energy to approach something new again unfortunately will suffer from the lack of financial capital. No matter how much innovation, ideas and energy one would have in the beginning the struggle for subsistence finally takes the lead.

Today, in spring 2012 I am still the owner of Autiotalo but at the same time already and again working under someone else to provide my subsistence. In the end of 2011 the decision had to be done and it was about attempting to sell Autiotalo. It has been for sale for three months now and negotiations on the possible trade are proceeding. Autiotalo is now in a condition where it could support one person but this person is not the founder. All in all, my own feelings on the possible trade are positive. There is a time and place for everyone and everything. Autiotalo has been a valuable lesson. I have grown again and experienced something I could not have done anywhere or – how else.

2 TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

2.1 From an idea to an actual business

As a true Finnish idea Autiotalo was born in a sauna. It was midsummer festival in Finland. I was relaxing but also having a quite intense conversation with a colleague and friend, Jaana Laaksonen. Our conversation had started from Laaksonen's talent of designing and producing unique and interesting pieces of clothing for herself and her friends. My vision was about sustainable development meeting textile business, my own ability to forecast and recognize phenomenon, talent in people and incidents and match them up. When the conversation proceeded it became obvious that we would join forces somehow combining our talents.

On the basis of our conversation that midsummer we agreed on really focusing on the matter, uniting our abilities and talents and proceeding with this idea as a target. Our conversation functioned as a starting point for Autiotalo. Thus it honestly can be said that Autiotalo was delivered into this world in a traditional Finnish way; in sauna.

In that same summer of 2009 the first step on becoming an entrepreneur was taken. The plan was to open a web store and it would have something to do with sustainable development and clothing. The first vision was to sell Laaksonen's clothing and accessories but it quite soon became clear that this would not be enough; it would require more time, financing, assistance and more research as well to launch this type of a new collection.

At this point financial support for starting up the business had already been granted so there was already quite a rush and a proper starting point was still missing. Clothes and material to work and start up the business with was already bought and received. The business was studied with the help of internet, fairs, networking and simply asking around nationally and internationally. The more investigation was done the more convincing it was to start with selling vintage clothes and accessories. It was a fast and easy way to exploit the inventory of recycled clothes already gathered. Vintage was also an ascending trend as a bonus.

The basic products and inventory to start the web store with already existed. The next steps were finding the perfect name for the business and creating a web store that would differentiate from others. Not the type of issues you create by forcing. The search for the perfect name was frustrating but one day it appeared suddenly like lightning from the sky. Differentiation is a task that inquires time and financial capital or both of them. This thesis will investigate the task of differentiation more carefully in the following chapters.

At the same time when I was getting familiar with the vintage world, Jaana Laaksonen got approved to KyAMK to study to become a designer-stylist. Now she had a great opportunity to create her own collection of clothes based on her own personal style and sustainable development. Our common goal was a little closer.

2.2 The warm up - How to get started and where to concentrate

The main product or service supplied has to be defined first. In Autiotalo's case it all started from the concept of sustainable development and usage of recycled materials. All that was known was that something had to be actually done about the amount of already existing (textile) material in the world and that the actions of the business would support sustainable development.

The goal and mission of the business has been from the very first beginning to create something unique, different and unforgettable. Today competition is high on every level. In textile and clothing business supply is boundless and fast-changing. This is why one will have to come up with something authentically fresh or dramatically different to distinguished from the competitors. One of the challenges is to overcome and partly avoid the global over flow of products, services and information.

Deciding where to concentrate is a significant question for any entrepreneur. One might eliminate the business from the competition in the beginning if concentration and focus happened to be on direction that would lead the business to a dead end. This might be the case when operating with trends. For Autiotalo the process took three years. I am satisfied with my achievements, all the hard work and efforts in the beginning of the business. After the first year, frustration, pressures and trend decline came to the picture. It is said that a year is a short time in entrepreneurship. It will require 2-5 years before it will be discovered if the company survives or not.

Today's customers do value ethical and environmentally friendly products but such products are still quite laborious to locate. It is still less trouble to head to a shopping center where everything you need can be found from the same building; one stop is all you need. In a documentary film *From oil to renewables* scientist Outi Kuittinen from Demos Helsinki presented an example of how customer acts when choosing consumer goods and the role of environmental friendly products and services; "A customer buys a dishwasher that has an eco-friendly program on it. After a few times washing the dishes with the eco-friendly program and the dishes remaining partially dirty, the customer then changes back to using a normal program. Why? Well, the mission of the dish washer is to get your dishes clean, not the environmental friendliness"

When choosing environmental friendliness, ethical and recycled material usage values and aims, a challenging and demanding path is chosen. There would be easier ways to establish a business on the field of textile and clothing. The combination of green values and successful business is not necessarily the most ideal one. Price, quality, availability and functionality are factors in today's ever growing competition that an entrepreneur should be ready to face with the products.

Seija Lukkala from Globe Hope has managed to successfully and partly hide the green message of their collections Globe Hope's mission has been to provide customers with quality, fashionable and usable everyday clothing and accessories instead of pushing hard with their values added; sustainable development, ethical production and environmental friendliness (Lukkala 2009b). Having followed Globe Hope and other similar but smaller companies, it has become clear that riding with the values of sustainable development are already old fashioned. Instead one should concentrate on the actual products, offering their best qualities and just slightly adding green values.

2.2.1 Dreaming and visioning

One of my dreams has been to wake up the sleeping talent of textile industries in Finland. It can be stated that the concept of textile industry in Finland was buried some time ago. There were many successful textile industries and businesses in Finland some decades ago. One by one they faded away after the crazy blooming years in the 1970's. Those industries might be gone but the talent and passion still can be found in Finland.

Today Marimekko is representing the only brand still having their functions, including production still located mainly in Finland. Other brands the same size, Nanso and Luhta among others, have, some time ago, centralized their functions abroad. It would be truly great if the new age of Finnish textile industry would be using recycled, environmental friendly and especially, those famous "Made in Finland" materials and textiles.

Some new, some old doors would have to be opened so that Finnish talent would flourish again. Great opportunities could be caught and utilized for textile industry in the field of recycled, nationally made material usage accompanied with Nordic and Slavic designs. We already do have the talent, imagination, ability to design, efficiency, productivity and materials around us. A huge benefit is the know-how of running textile industries; it has not been that long since we still had it here. All of this is waiting for us to capture it again. Although this time we would be wiser and dedicating our work to right directions with means of co-operation, networking, differentiation and of course, that famous Finnish strong will.

With the biggest international brands today, many small and medium-sized companies, sole traders and artisans can be found concentrating on the field of textile business. A growing amount of these smaller parties are concentrating on the usage of environmental friendly and recycled materials. The real challenge in the future is to bring these parties together, select the actual talent out of the parties and unite the forces.

There are already facets; organizations and people working on this challenge: House of Eco, Yalo, GreenStreet and MadeBy offer opportunities for separate and individual parties to supply their products under a same roof. The amount of this kind of organi-

zations and directions is increasing internationally and nationally; both as on-line stores and actual, traditional stores. These types of channels can be considered easier ways to test products in the real life circumstances. This way the author can concentrate on actual production without any large efforts, sacrifices or dedications.

Seija Lukkala, the founder of Globe Hope, probably the biggest “green” brand in Finland today, has a dream of a whole shopping center for environmental friendly, ethical, national and organic only products and services (Lukkala 2009a). The plan sounds tempting for the consumers to find ethical and environmentally friendly products all under the same roof. The biggest problem is most likely timing; the time might just not be mature enough yet.

2.2.2 First moves

I wanted to begin my business with starting up a webpage and a web store. The first plan was to offer a decent amount of clothing made from recycled textile materials in the store, but since getting the stock voluminous enough took too long, the easiest way to get started with the actual business was to offer vintage and second hand clothing and accessories as the first items of the store. It was a decision made in a rush and as a second option, but it was also good decision. The demand for selected vintage clothing was very good and on the rise for the first year of business. Vintage had become a trend, not only in clothing but in decorating business as well.

With all the vintage and second hand clothing and textile material inventories were getting big enough to proceed with the original plan of re-producing and offering new clothing made from recycled textile materials. So far the production has been mostly unique pieces of clothing and collections of other designers have been presented and sold from the store. One of the missions of the company is to be a selective channel for those parties operating on the field of recycled clothing and fashion. At the moment Autiotalo is offering products of six other parties including Jaana Laaksonen designs.

2.2.3 Planning marketing for e-commerce

In the beginning of Autiotalo there were high expectations regarding the actual sales and the final revenue of the web store although one of the consultants had noted that

opening a web store is not an easy way (and he was right). If one seeks to be a successful web store trader and manager, the massive amount of marketing has to be seriously considered. I was advised to spend some extra money on marketing the web store but to be careful and picky when deciding which channels to use. There are many questions involved and to be solved in the process of considering e-commerce marketing. I have asked a few important questions to myself and at the same time I am hoping them to assist those considering their own businesses.

Are my target market specified to certain area?

In the beginning for Autiotalo the target market was considered to be first nationwide, then international with the idea of web store. It soon became clear that the web store would require much more investments, both financial and time-related and the main target market shrank. The actual store specified the target market more local and centralized mainly in specific area. A successful, international web store requires major financial and personal assets and resources.

How do I define segments?

It is not easy to define which one is the most important segment. Because of the diversified selection of products and services in this case there are also several segments. It can be pointed out which are the main segments for sewing services, vintage wear and to clothing made from recycled materials. It still has to be admitted that the most vital and business supporting segment still remains indefinite.

What kind of media does the segments defined use in their everyday life?

In this case most of the sewing clientele response to basic newspaper ads, simple and right-to-the-point types of advertisements but also to flyers that are handed to them directly or delivered to their mailboxes. The results of these types of marketing can be seen very soon after placing the advertisements.

As for vintage and recycled material clothing, the media use is harder to investigate; the segment is harder to reach with the amount of information flow today. Most in the segment are heavy users of social media. This being the case, frequent use of Facebook has proven to be a proper and very competitive way of reaching these segments.

Events and fairs have also turned out to be effective ways in locating and confronting these segments.

How do I differentiate marketing from all the others on the markets?

This is a difficult issue and question to which probably every entrepreneur would like to know an answer to. Autiotalo has concentrated on creating colorful and visual effects on its marketing. Also the ingredients of the company marketing have always included some mysterious and strange effects. The aim has been to catch the eye with something out of ordinary.

Am I willing and able to use rather money or my time to marketing?

Lack of financial capital usually forces the entrepreneur to rather use time than money. This was the case for Autiotalo as well. The amount of time used in the process of marketing a company is not measurable in money. In order to get attention one has to be present and available in many different occasions.

These five questions are good to begin with. Finland is not a big country but it is still hard to decide where and how to market. The amount of time that it will take the consumers to recognize or even notice the business is surprisingly long. Although Autiotalo has been on the same street for two years, there are still customers coming to the store every week noting how they have never seen the place before.

2.2.4 The name

Discovering the right name is not an easy process. Name really matters; it should not be too long nor too difficult to pronounce, it should also have some meaning to it, cause associations and easy to remember. The name of the business and the meaning of it is a significant part of branding strategy and process. Miller and Muir (2005, 14) have stated that brand plays a bigger role than just growing and retaining market share; brands actually grow out of what you do but also out of how you do it.

The big issue with the web store was to find a name, logo and a brand that would stand for its meaning but most of all, to differentiate in appropriate way. Many sleep-

less nights thinking about the name, the web store and all the surroundings and conditions, analyzing competitors and the actual field of operation were involved.

For Autiotalo name had to be something different, something that would look or feel a little like the entrepreneur herself and something that would arise feelings, good or bad; it had to be memorable in its own way. Fortunately Autiotalo's name has been collecting quite a lot and mostly positive feedback.

There are also disadvantages and threats on trying to have an impact, no matter what kind on clientele which have to be taken into consideration and further evaluation: Everything your company does has the potential to impact the brand you are creating; with this in mind the company has to be very careful with its actions constantly. Even one bad word or a tiny but relevantly significant mistake concerning the brand can grow into a snowball effect causing massive damage to the brand and the image. (Miller and Muir 2005, 22)

The name of the company; Autiotalo occurred to me one summer evening at our terrace. There was already a vision of a house offering different rooms and different pieces of clothing on them. Then it hit me; Autiotalo (abandoned house), a house but not in a typical sense but with a certain feeling to it. Thoughts and new ideas filled me and I actually ran to get my laptop to check if the name was available. When founding out that it was, the domain was instantly reserved. Autiotalo as a name and as a basis for a web store was finally born.

Finding the right name settled down parts of the plans for differentiation. Now in mind was clearly an abandoned house, with its rooms filled of mystery, old fascinating surroundings and a bit of fear as a value added. It felt like the perfect name was found for the business. It also cleared out the methods of competing in the markets; the strength of the company was to differentiate strongly from competitors, starting from the web store, logo and image in general.

2.3 Getting familiar with bureaucracy

It sounds dull but is facing every entrepreneur, the war with the papers. In this chapter some important issues for any starting entrepreneur are pointed out. If the paper works

are properly and with consideration done there should not be any kind of wars involved then.

There are various officials and authorities that a starting entrepreneur has to know, or get to know. This chapter is to introduce these authorities, opening the perspectives of an entrepreneur but the officials as well. The aim is to ease up the war with the papers that many starting entrepreneurs seem to be a bit afraid of and like in some cases, the threat of the amount of paper work might even prevent from being an entrepreneur.

2.3.1 Creating a proper and secure basis for the business

One should start the war with papers by sketching both a proper business and financial plan. Models and basis for these purposes can be found from several locations on the internet. In this case the models of Finnvera were utilized. Kouvola Innovation Oy (later on this thesis abbreviated as Kinno) is also a useful, local organization offering assistance for those planning to become entrepreneurs or those already taken the first steps.

Finnvera also grants loans for entrepreneurs in different phases and occasions of the business. For Autiotalo, Finnvera did not grant financing for the company. The loan was applied twice, for two different purposes. In the first case, Finnvera stated that there already was enough and too much competition in the field of clothing business in that specified geographical area. Hence I was stubborn and dedicated on my company I was not satisfied with the decision of Finnvera and proceeded with the plan.

Financing was then applied from a local bank which was already familiar, and received some to start with. Without this loan it would not have been possible to launch the business. In most cases at least some financial capital to launch the business with is required. In this case there were no savings for that purpose thus liabilities were the only option.

The second time funding and loan were applied from Finnvera was when the business had actually existed for over a year. This time Finnvera's again negative decision was based on the matter that there was not enough proves existing yet that the business would survive and that the company's turnover was not big enough. These two decisions were disappointing and frustrating to receive. It seemed that the small and micro

sized companies were left quite alone and the bigger ones with bigger plans and innovations were the ones achieving assistance and support; human and financial capital.

When thinking about Finnvera's decisions afterwards it has to be admitted that they really did have a point at both of the times funding was applied. In the first time the business plan was not impressive enough and the business field was already crowded. In the second time the turnover of the company really was too little. Finnvera deals with hundreds of applications and hundreds of businesses in a year, they should know better than a starting entrepreneur. Afterwards it feels quite good to be capable of admitting own weaknesses and the fact that it should have been given more thoughts before applying.

An entrepreneur really has to be persistent enough to make through the first phases. One also has to be eyes and ears open all the time to provide her with the latest information on business and entrepreneurship. There are foundations that grant funding for different fields of interests and business, the hard part is to get the information on their existence. It is not exaggerated that the information flow today is overwhelming.

2.3.2 Start-up support

One vital and usually a crucial step in getting started as an entrepreneur is to get finance to start up the company with. A starting entrepreneur has the opportunity to apply start-up money for the first six months. After the first six months, it is possible to re-apply and receive another six-month period of this funding. It is possible to receive altogether 18-month-period of the support, but it is not common. The funding is government based and not refundable. The start-up support is created and granted for subsistence of the entrepreneur, it is not intended to cover the costs of the company or to give the company any sort of competition advantage.

The start-up support is not as easily granted as it used to be. The fact that it was not an easy access anymore, gave me the first actual, real touch to what could the reality be like as an entrepreneur. This was the first time to really think hard about the purpose of the company and what was seek to achieve in the process of becoming an entrepreneur.

A good advice on financing was obtained from consultant Heikki Lintula. It was as simple as: "Create a zero-calculation." With zero-calculation Lintula (2009) means a calculation that presents all the costs necessary to your company. As obvious it may seem all that is required is to sum the costs to see how much the company really has to make to cover the costs. Creating a zero-calculation and carrying it out among the first steps before starting anything significant yet, will be worthwhile.

2.3.3 Case: Consulting

Entrepreneur is asked to visit at least two different business consultants, to present a business and financing plans and last but not least, to already have some funding arrangements settled. These funding arrangements are to be seen black in white. In the case of Autiotalo, the funding was already applied and approved from a local bank ready to be transferred into the business account.

For the actual business and financing plans the best help received was from Kinno. An entrepreneur is provided with 1-2 free consulting hours and it was worth going there. Actually, it was more like a must-do since they really advised on what are the right issues to do and to concentrate on. Also besides the pure bureaucracy, Kinno pointed a right direction and actually calmed one down if too eager and too unaware of certain issues that should have been more important to the case.

One of these issues was the web store. Kinno's consultants warned about the amount of marketing that a company would have to dedicate to get the first incoming orders and customers. They were right. Autiotalo has been operating as a web store for almost three years now and it still takes time and efforts to market. Movements of consumers are hard to predict. Kinno and their services are something that are advised every starting entrepreneur to use for their own benefit.

TE-office which grants, or does not grant, the start-up money also provides the entrepreneur with a consultant meeting. This particular consultant appointment, or interview, is probably the most significant one for the entrepreneur candidate for that simple reason that this appointment either crucifies or will let one continue the business with start-up support. In other words, this session and this particular consultant defines an entrepreneur candidate to TE-office stating whether s/he would be suitable for the role of entrepreneur and thereby granted with start-up support.

The consultant meets up with the entrepreneur candidate and asks her/him many significant questions that the candidate is not aware of beforehand. Some of the questions may sound surprising but after thinking about them afterwards they make sense. To give a better idea, one of these questions was: “What are the colors of your company?” Consultant also makes sure if the candidate is really aware of all the costs involved when establishing a business. The matter of funding, financial capital, costs, incomes and outcomes have to be carefully considered before meeting up with any consultant, advisor or anyone who will be investigating or analyzing the case.

At some point it felt like that nothing else mattered than the financial matters. Unfortunately that is the way it goes, with no financial capital an entrepreneur would be quite helpless out there. When Autiotalo was being introduced to several consultants, advisors and decision-makers, it would have been great if more weight and advice would have been put into marketing plans, segmentation, value adding and positioning. These things are very crucial starting from the very beginning of the business.

Before meeting up with a consultant it would be strongly advisable for the candidate to learn her/his own case deep enough and to get as much background information on the matter as possible. Before meeting any consultants the following questions would be good to try to answer quickly, shortly but thoroughly enough:

- Why do I want to become an entrepreneur?
- What and how much efforts am I willing to put into the business? (time and money)
- What kind of products or services would the company offer/sell?
- To whom would the company be offering its products or services?
- How would the company be competing? Product, price, promotion, place..?
- Why am I applying the start-up support? How would I be utilizing it?
- How have I planned to cope with the off-seasons or slow seasons?
- What are my strengths and my weaknesses?
- How is the marketing strategy like?

2.3.4 Taxation, insurance policies and costs

An important issue when handling the papers is the matter of taxation and insurances. As an entrepreneur one is obliged to cover oneself for the days of retirement and old-age benefits. For this insurance will have to be provided to entrepreneur him/herself. Another insurance types entrepreneur will have to consider are insurances for the

premises and equipment, casualties and accidents, damages, vehicle etc. For employees, insurances are obligatory (and expensive) in Finland. Insurances can easily cover a large percentage of the total costs.

As an entrepreneur one is obliged to register to tax register as well. The types of taxation that will come into question are withholding tax and VAT. Taxation in Finland is high, no doubt to that. The situation of the finance policy will still probably change dramatically and micro sized entrepreneurs are in the first row to take some hits.

Withholding tax is taken from the profit of a company. It is a certain percentage of the profit. VAT has increased regularly now rating 23% at the moment. Although one is aware of VAT and other obligations to the Finnish government, it is still quite shocking every month to calculate how much the share of VAT is from the sales. The consultants still do not give enough information on these issues, instead it will have to be learned about independently and they still might come as surprises.

3 CRYING GAME – BUILDING A WEBSTORE, ENDING UP BEING HACKED

Many people seem to think that establishing a web store is the easiest way to start a business. I was one of those people in the beginning of my business. I still believed in e-commerce and establishing a web store after a couple of consultants had told me differently. I had to see and witness it with my own eyes to believe that building an e-commerce that actually will support you takes a lot of work and continuous efforts.

This chapter presents the options and alternatives on different types of e-commerce bases and starting packs. There are several other issues concerning e-commerce which would need further presentation and research but the aim of this chapter is to assist on picking up a functional, economical and trustworthy web page and store base. When building up a web store it is good to understand that branding, differentiation, image and network factors are all playing major roles.

3.1 The wide range of options in the colorful world of web stores

When having decided to open up a web store it will then have to be decided how to establish it. Today there are too many options to choose from when opening a web store. Below a listing of some alternatives to start e-commerce with is introduced.

- Create e-commerce independently

One can choose to perform everything, including every little detail alone. This means that the entire basis for the web store has to be created from the beginning, starting from getting a domain. It should be carried out on one's own, if one happens to be a natural talent and knows the surroundings in the world of internet and computers.

- Purchase the whole package

One of the alternatives is to purchase the full package; a ready web store from a company specialized to the field. This being the case, one should be prepared to pay a decent amount of money for service, design, delivery of the actual store and domain. There is usually a fixed price for this starting package. After that most of the companies have rates that are charged monthly. This option can be referred to be the most effortless for you as a buyer when it comes to time but most expensive option on the other hand.

- Trainee work / thesis subject

Students and trainees are always a comparable option. One could try to find students specialized in computing and internet, who could build the web store for the company's purposes for a smaller fee. There are more risks to this option than to the one an actual specialized company would establish. Students cannot be considered as trustworthy as an official company nor devoted to the project.

- Use a base designed for e-commerce in general

There are several already existing bases for web stores. One of these options is OsCommerce which was also a choice for Autiotalo in the beginning. These types of layout and bases for web stores are available and many of them for free. The problem is that you still have to have the knowledge and talent with computers and programming. Kotisivukone is a popular Finnish version of this type of basis for web pages and e-commerce's.

- Already existing brokerage or retailer pages

One can always join forces in e-commerce as well. There are plenty of options to choose from both national and international ones in types of retailer pages. National ones include Huuto.net, House of Eco and MadeBy. International ones commonly known are Ebay and Etsy.

This is probably the easiest way to quickly establish e-commerce. The matter of financial capital is neither a problem, these models are usually commission based. The down side of these retailer pages is the difficulty to stand out from the competition, there are many other e-commerce sellers trying to sell side by side. As in everything in life, there are positive sides and negative sides to every matter. So is the case with selecting the right way and tool to open up a web store.

3.2 Establishing e-commerce for Autiotalo

After recovering the perfect name for the business it was easier to proceed. The company now had an idea where to build its operations. The next step was to get together the group who would make it all happen. Someone with the talents of designing and a bit of arts as well was required. That “arty-kind of a person” was already in a close range: Jaana Laaksonen who had been co-developing the whole idea for the business from the very first beginning. She already had the knowledge and understanding on the business and on the products the company would be offering. Laaksonen also had the opportunity to use this experience to help her own studies and collection-to-be. The web page, logo and a huge part of the total image for Autiotalo was created in collaboration with Jaana Laaksonen.

After the designing and graphic work the plan was ready to proceed with. A deal was already negotiated with a student from Lappeenranta Polytechnic who had promised to create the actual web page for Autiotalo. Unfortunately this person withdrew from the project in a very last moment when everything was scheduled to be ready in a week or two. That left the business under a lot of pressure and a desperate need to find someone else to take over the job.

A help of the networks at the university was then utilized and finally some talented people who would be interested in this kind of task were found. Ville Konka from KyAMK as well took over the challenge and after a week of mutual hard work, the webpage and e-commerce for Autiotalo was finally ready to welcome its first visitors.

It is important to prepare a schedule and to stick with it, otherwise things tend to extend too much and that might have its effects. When setting up targets and schedules the goal will be easier to reach. Also valuable is to remember to take and keep the charge in the whole process; acting like a true manager trying to meet the dead line set.

Autiotalo was aimed to officially open its webpage and store in Helsinki Vintage fair held in fall 2009. It did happen and that was the first time and place Autiotalo was promoted. After about two weeks the first order came in and I have to admit that I felt proud and like something important was already achieved. Even more proud it felt when Autiotalo sold a piece of clothing that was a unique, recycled material product that was personally designed. That felt really good.

3.3 Marketing e-commerce

Having the store ready and doors open for the customers was just the beginning of the process. And that process is still going on. The matters of marketing, networking, promoting and finding the proper ways to operate are all parts of the ongoing project of e-commerce but entrepreneurship in general as well. From the beginning it was decided not to spend too much financial capital on marketing. This decision was due to the high prices of marketing. To cover some of the ways of marketing Autiotalo was presented and offered to various blogs available on the internet. Some of these efforts were rewarding and brought many customers to the site. It did not involve money, but it did involve and require time and effort.

Other ways for marketing in the case of Autiotalo were different fairs and events; Helsinki Vintage, Ofelia Market, Tampere Vintage, Burlesque happenings, a variety of concerts and festivals. Fairs brought Autiotalo immediate customers but they also provided Autiotalo with marketing on their web pages and publications for a longer range.

These are all good ways of marketing but the best possible way of marketing for small and medium sized companies is word-of-mouth. Word-of-mouth marketing can be defined as advertising that occurs when people share information about products, services or promotions with friends, colleagues, associates and family.

After the web store had been operating for a few months it was investigated how people were receiving and feeling Autiotalo and its web pages. The main reason for the investigation was the amount of actual orders. There were too few orders and a reason for that was hoped to find. Many associates and friends noted that the store might be suspicious looking; too shady and therefore arising mistrust.

Some more time flew by and the amount of orders remained the same. Some serious changes would have to get conducted with the web pages if improvement in the actual sales was pursued. Positive and supporting feedback considering the web pages had been received but it was not enough. There were obviously too many people suspicious and doubtful on actually placing an order. This was the fact that demanded serious acting to it; to get the e-commerce more reliable and too tempting to be without ordering something from it.

The decision on re-designing and re-establishing the web store was then executed. Something else had to happen first to accelerate the process of re-creation of the web store. A hacker broke into Autiotalo, twice and it forced to a re-creation of the entire web page and store if the e-commerce was to continue at all.

3.4 Build yourself a web store – just to end up being hacked

Hacking today is common but at the same it is treated with a certain respect as well. People do not seem to consider that hacking could actually happen to them too. Hacking is considered to be something that happens to larger companies and institutes maybe, not to small time players like Autiotalo. Like the case was for Autiotalo, it did happen. And it happened twice.

The first hacking case took place in the spring 2012, only about half a year after Autiotalo was finally established and opened as a web store. Somebody broke in to Autiotalo and made a mess out of the store. The ingredients of the web store were re-organized but no actual harm was done with customer information or other security factors. The damage done could be operated and repaired with assistance of the author of the web page, Ville Konka and his associate. It seemed that someone had just trained his/her talent as a hacker or just showed off with Autiotalo.

In this case the unpleasant incident of hacking was successfully kept as a secret from the customers and users of the web page. This had quite a lot to do with fast reacting and repairing the pages immediately. It is obvious that hacking incidents would cause mistrust and suspiciousness among customers and public in general. No entrepreneurs would want hacking happening to them. It has been researched that news on hacking, credit card numbers stolen and viruses decrease consumer's trust toward e-commerce. (Ahola, 2002, 39).

In the second case of hacking the hacker was probably the same person who had hacked into Autiotalo earlier. There was half a year's break between the two incidents. In the second time the hacker put more efforts to the process ending up totally wrecking the store into pieces. Nothing was left to do after the hacker had finished. S/he had the courage to place victory flags and songs under the domain of Autiotalo so that everyone visiting the page could see what had happened.

In the second and last time the hacker also left a message: "One Turkey against the world." After Autiotalo's web page had experienced a total destruction, as the founder, entrepreneur but most of all as a human being I was comfortless. The year had not been an easy one for the business in general and hacking was the last drop; I really was ready to give it up.

Somehow I managed to pull myself through and find some more energy to continue with the process of web pages and e-commerce. The hacking cases made me consider of other options instead of maintaining the domain to my business. It was figured that in shelter of an already existing base for the store it would be more reliable and safer to operate the e-commerce from. Kotisivukone offered a two-week testing period for their services. It was then realized that it was less trouble and work to outsource the e-commerce like this.

The basic ideas and innovations I had with Autiotalo in the process had to be given up but benefits with this alternative were still gained. After changing to Kotisivukone the amount of visitors maintained about the same, but fortunately the amount of incoming orders increased. This confirmed the conclusion that utilizing a common, already known base for the business really helps with the questions of trust and reliability.

4 INTO THE GROOVE – GETTING INTO THE GAME

When the demanding phases of the beginning were finally and happily over, it was possible to concentrate more on the actual business. Now challenges of everyday life as an entrepreneur had to be faced. Since it had been decided that the operations would be started up by the means of a web store it had now to be concentrated on marketing to draw attention and bring the first customers in. Like it was already noted, financial capital invested in marketing was decided to be low. Instead of investing pure money on the operations, the amount of working hours has been great.

Participation in fairs, events and happenings, writing letters and press releases to bloggers, newspapers, magazines, radio and television, in other words; sacrificing time instead of financial capital, have been cost efficient ways of marketing Autiotalo. From the beginning until today every possible opportunity to market the company has been utilized. Financially many of these opportunities have been free, but the hours and work sacrificed to the processes have been massive.

The strategy has been putting both the entrepreneur and the company available and reachable. The amount of actual time invested on these operations would be almost impossible to measure regarding the fact that as an entrepreneur one is presenting the company all the time and everywhere one goes to. If that same amount of time would be transferred as money to a regular employee, the over hours would be quite expensive for the employer. When being an entrepreneur nobody else pays for the investments both on time and on money but the entrepreneur her/himself.

4.1 Well Hello World

It is strongly recommended to any starting entrepreneur to make some noise on the existence and actions to make sure that the company represented will be noticed. Sometimes even not-so-good attention might turn out as a benefit in the end. For instance a true story concerning Autiotalo's web store; somebody told a friend that she had just visited a web store that was just odd and creepy causing with her statement and strong opinion the other (and her friends) to visit the same pages and store. This friend had another opinion and point of view and with time she and her friends became regular customers to Autiotalo.

There are plenty of ways of achieving attention; press releases, promotion, public relations, attending fairs, festivals and happenings. Still success is not guaranteed only by performing everything on the list; attention has somehow be withdrawn to the company.

In order to get press releases published, invitations to fairs and happenings and foot on different doors, all possible contacts and networks will have to be taken in use but also to make new contacts. No one is going to come and knock on your door. One has to stay focused all the time; to know the environment and what is happening around and in it. Only by testing and experimenting will be learned which are the most proper places and happenings for the company to be presented. It can be frustrating and tiring but with time the right answers will be obtained.

There are quite many small and medium sized companies and entrepreneurs on the area of sustainable development and recycling of textile materials in Finland. One of the problems is that they are all separately around and thus not easily found. In other words, these products and businesses are missing a channel. Some efforts on establishing these types of channels have already taken action but there is still quite a lot of work to do with the issue.

Globe Hope and Secco, both from Finland, are the two most advanced and successful ones in the area of recycling in clothing business, spreading their operations and products both nationally and internationally. Globe Hope has been a leader in the way for many similar businesses in Finland. Seija Lukkala, CEO and founder of Globe Hope has been successful and the first to be stubborn enough to follow her dream in creating and producing clothing from recycled materials at the same time offering consumers something beautiful and wearable. The most significant in the actions of Globe Hope is that the products can really be producible in large amounts, as collections.

I attended a seminar held at KyAMK, Kotka premises in 27 November 2009. The seminar was about sustainable development and businesses supporting sustainability in their operations. Seija Lukkala from Globe Hope was one of the speakers in the seminar. The seminar and Lukkala's speech was a great opportunity to ask some relevant questions in mind. I was pleasantly surprised having noticed that both Globe Hope and my company had the same ground rules and basics where to start – "*Globe*

Hope became fed up with material waste and wanted to do something about it” Stated Lukkala in her slide show in the seminar. (Lukkala, 2009b)

Before establishment of my company I had already been following a couple of years what had been happening in textile businesses and more specifically the fields of recycled materials and sustainable development. This period of observing the background was very useful; by the time I was ready to establish a business I already knew many players from the field by their names, reputations and products. After these couple of years of investigation it was felt that there was a place for my business and its products.

As an entrepreneur I will have to grow more but as a person one of my strengths has always been perseverance. I am ready, willing and very eager to go forward as far as possible with dreams of mine. These types of characteristics can help on the way of entrepreneurship but on the other hand they could make it tougher as well. Sometimes it might be wiser to pull back and not to push through in every step taken.

One of my goals is to build a channel for those well designed, unique and special products that are using recycled materials as their main sources of production. This kind of clear channel is still missing from these businesses, authors and entrepreneurs. Although, like it was mentioned earlier in this thesis, today there are few of them already existing. Another step would be to launch this kind of channel internationally, introduce Scandinavian design in another, modern way of producing clothing and accessories.

Thirdly (a dream that is far away in the future but still does not feel impossible) someday it would be great to be affecting in the process of waking up the sleeping talent of Finnish textile industries. Surely there is a way to start reproducing clothing and accessories in larger scale as a true industry devoting to sustainable values, employing talented, handcraft personnel and designers, people from Finland with their unique talent.

4.2 Location, location, location

Location was not in the list of significant factors when producing a business plan for Autiotalo. After re-consideration it should have been there. Instead I was more con-

cerned about the brand and its positioning. Location is mentioned in the business plan but there should have been more concentration to it. Most of the consultants and advisors met on the way had emphasized the factor of location. For some strange reason I recall them highlighting the fact but still not enough attention was paid to it.

Autiotalo's first premises were searched with too much eagerness and the assumption that "the right people" would find the premises no matter where the premises would be located. At least it was then taken into consideration that the premises should be located near the city center but it was still not realized that a couple of blocks away from the center could be too far already.

Today shopping centers and malls tend to lead the markets and create the rules. Many small and medium sized businesses have faded away when a big shopping center has appeared to the picture. It is a shame but understandable, natural and easier for consumers to choose the ones offering several services and products under the same roof. In my case there were too many issues against premises in a shopping center.

Shopping centers do not represent similar values to Autiotalo, and equation in that combination could not be seen. Shopping centers are very demanding; hours are long and rent is high. The amount of risks increases in the case of shopping centers; although they might bring the business window shoppers and visitors, it would still not guarantee actual sales for the company. Thus a fast changing variability can be seen in shopping center tenants.

Fortunately there are still other options to shopping centers. One can choose from a variety of alternatives but the search is not easy. That is why a few issues that should be taken into consideration when choosing premises are pointed out below. For Autiotalo there was too much anxiousness to open up the store. It is hoped that this fact will work as a warning example in the matter of searching for premises and locating the business.

Questions for further investigation considering the location of the premises:

- What is the amount of traffic like in the neighborhood; will there be many people passing by every day?
- Is there public transportation close by; buses, trains, stations or stops?

- Are there parking places to be found near the premises?
- Is there movement in the area in general? Buildings of residences? Grocery stores? Other businesses that would pull people in the neighborhood?
- Are there public institutes close by; schools, universities, libraries, post-offices, banks, police station or big shopping centers?

A company should be easy to locate but also possible to locate by accident. In Autiotalo's first premises the store was located too far away from the center but most of all too far away from the street where people were passing by every day. With moving to other premises Autiotalo solved this problem and also accidentally gained new customers from unexpected direction.

What was not realized was the fact how Autiotalo's re-locating would affect to the business. It was not known that Autiotalo soon would be making half of the revenue with its secondary and value added service; sewing services. Sometimes an entrepreneur could not predict or take into account all the movements or changes in the environment and surroundings.

The sewing services were neither the main services nor products for Autiotalo in the first place but with moving to other premises they soon became a significantly large part of the business. Because of the role of added value and secondary services background information and location in the sense of sewing services were not investigated. Obviously there was a gap in the markets for sewing services in that certain area.

The intension of Autiotalo in the beginning was not to offer sewing services. That is also why the business was not prepared to these changed conditions. Personally I was not a dress maker nor was I going to be one in future. Still it was required to find the ways to provide the customers with services of good quality. For this reason and demand the decision of subcontracting a dress maker was made.

5 ROLLERCOASTER (OF INVESTIGATING YOUR OWN ACTIONS)

In this chapter some commonly known methods of measuring and researching business are introduced and utilized for Autiotalo's case. The chapter will introduce *SWOT-analysis* and conclusions in the case of Autiotalo both in the beginning and three years after, in personal and business levels.

The chapter will also deal with basic consumer needs with the help of *Maslow's hierarchy of needs*, *classification of consumer needs* by Engel, Blackwell and Miniard and my own ideas and conclusions based on Autiotalo's customer behavior. *Porter's five forces competition model* is also introduced and compared to the case of Autiotalo.

It is relevant to locate correlations to anchor the business with. After having carefully created a SWOT-analysis one should then focus on how to maximize the benefits achieved by the strengths of one's business (or personality) and how to minimize threats affected by weaknesses. SWOT-analysis together with business plan is suggested to re-produce twice a year to keep on track with entrepreneur's own actions and with what is happening around.

The four models have been chosen to assist and work together with the research and investigation on the business and the thesis due to their simple manner of approaching but also facility to understand own actions with the assistance of these models.

The chapter also investigates marketing, differentiating, positioning, timing and season variations effecting on business. After first having concentrated on analyzing the business and entrepreneur as an individual and a person with four different models it is more facile to understand and plan on strategies of the business. The idea of this chapter is not to present marketing to the volume of entire concept but to concentrate on certain issues considered and experienced significant to the case.

5.1 SWOT-analysis

The SWOT-analysis headings provide a good framework for reviewing strategy, position and direction of a company or business proposition, or any other idea. SWOT analysis can be utilized in various situations. For its multipurpose nature it can be used to investigate just a simple, individual idea or a whole organization. (Chapman, 2012a)

In this chapter SWOT-analysis is used to investigate both personal factors as an entrepreneur and the business. Two different versions of SWOT-analysis have been produced; in the beginning of establishing the company and three years after the beginning. The aim is to prove and hopefully also benefit from the development between the two SWOT-analysis.

Table 1. SWOT-analysis for the business 2008

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Co-operation and net-working	No experience on entrepreneurship	Co-operation and net-working	
Creativity	Fashion “overload”	Diversity; competition is very “similar”	Fashion “overload”
Studies accompanied with the business	Limited financial capital	Co-operation with competitors	Failure in differentiation
			Consumers getting bored

Table 2. SWOT-analysis for the business 2012

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Co-operation and net-working	Lack of funding and financial capital	Personality; diversification	Financial capital runs out
Creativity	Myself getting bored	Competition	Competition
Trust on my own doings	company vs. family values	Focusing and specializing to certain products/services	Costumers getting bored
Visuality	Growing amount of competition	Spreading the business to retailers	Too many products/services
Personality; diversification		Internationalization	Entrepreneur getting bored
		Variety of products	Variety of products

As it can be seen, there are changes between the tables, table 1 and 2. The new version in Table 2 shows that some of the strengths from the earlier version (Table 1) have now re-organized as possibilities. More personal strengths have come to the picture in the 2012 analysis. Financial capital as weakness has changed to a serious threat. Competition is more present in the 2012 table than in the 2009; It would have been stated otherwise if the tables would have not been personally created. Sometimes putting your thoughts to paper helps in solving your mind and ideas.

Table 3. SWOT-analysis on personal level

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Visuality	Anxious, impatient	Internationalization	Anxiousness
Full of ideas	Sensitive	Visual tasks in life	Trying to achieve too much at one time
Active	Easily frustrated	Combination of family and business	Disappointment
Energetic	Overflowing	Strong will and determination	Family not mixing well with business
Knows and recognizes different types of people	Prone to stress	Networking skills	
Customer service expertise		Gets along with different types and cultures of people	
Likes to win	Likes to win	Forecasting skills	
Experience and knowledge on foreign cultures			

Personal strengths can be seen strongly increasing their power and moving also to the business SWOT-analysis. As an entrepreneur one is presenting the company but it is good to remember that the company is also presenting one. With this in mind strengths should be utilized every chance available and situations and circumstances where weaknesses could take over avoided. Measuring and researching through

SWOT-analysis twice a year and in every special occasion would be recommendable for everyone.

5.2 Michael Porter's five forces model

Michael Porter's five forces model is probably the most utilized model of evaluating and analyzing the external business environment. The five forces model divides the business environment into five different areas or forces. These forces are presented in Figure 1. Five Forces model market factors can be analyzed so as to make a strategic assessment of the competitive position of a given supplier in a given market. (Chapman, 2012b)



Figure1. Porter's five forces model (Loughran 425's, 2009)

Porter's model acquires knowledge and experience on the areas and forces. Sometimes some of the forces might be irrelevant to the case in question. When using and utilizing Porter's model it is important to internalize which and what line of business is being analyzed. For Autiotalo the forces that were utilized were the ones easy to understand and interpret. Therefore the forces considered not so relevant are not presented with perspective to Autiotalo. (Chapman, 2012b)

Force 1 - competition

- How mature is the field of business you are (aiming) at?
- How many competitors there are?
- What is the role of your company in the field of competition?

All of the questions are relevant and important. As an entrepreneur one should first be able to answer then justify and analyze the answer given. In Autiotalo's case the field of business in Finland was not mature enough; the problems Autiotalo was facing were mostly concerning the immaturity of the business in general. Finland was not yet seriously ready for this kind of business. Unfortunately this was realized when it was already too late.

When it comes to competitors, a vital issue is how to scale them: Whether one considers competitors to be just those operating on the exact same field or all of those operating in the field of textile business. The role of the company is not an easy question; it takes quite some time to figure out where the company stands in the field of competition. Today Autiotalo can be seen as one of the leaders in alternative clothing in the area but not nationally, at least not yet.

Force 2 - customers;

- How many customers do you have compared to your competitors and others on your field of business?
- How easy would it be for your customer to change to your competitor?

The second question is a good one. An entrepreneur will always have to remember that the customers, even the one that have been loyal to the company, have every right and opportunity to change to a competitor. Therefore an entrepreneur will have to have some aces on her sleeve for the loyal customers to maintain them as they are.

Force 3 - suppliers;

- How many suppliers can be found compared to the businesses in the field?
- How easy would it be to change the supplier?

Force 4 - new entrants to the field of business

- How desirable does the field seem for an outsider?

- How easy it is to enter the field of business and how easy to get off?

Entering to the field of business can be considered to be rather easy but to differentiate from the competition is the more challenging phase. When the idea of Autiotalo was started creating it seemed almost too easy to start the business up in the field but it later really turned out to be a wrong feeling and impression. Hence it can be noted that entering the field could seem desirable for this reason for an outsider.

Force 5 – substituting products and services

- What are the substitute products and services for your customers?
- What alternate products and services do your customers have to choose from?

These questions are asking to judge the products supplied through the eyes of a consumer. They are attempting to investigate what makes the products in question special and suitable for the customer. The questions can be considered tough ones especially in the field of vintage clothing. Hence the basic vintage items are hard to make more interesting than competitors do, the concentration will have to be on service, adding value and differentiation instead of the actual products.

In Porter's model there are also the factors and questions of legislation, demographic factors, social unions and combinations, trends and megatrends that will all have to be taken into consideration and for a closer investigation. Investigating and interpreting Porter's model gives again a deeper insight to the field of business that is being entered in. The forces Porter is presenting are easy to understand and translate to various purposes.

5.3 Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is very interesting merely because of its simple nature and straight answers on human behavior. Thus it is also included in this thesis. It is still a strong indicator on how and why people and consumers act like they do. A comparison between Maslow's hierarchy of needs and a classification of consumer needs (Nummikoski, 2000) has been accomplished in the end of this chapter.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow first introduced his concept of a hierarchy of needs in his 1943 paper *A Theory of Human Motivation* and his subsequent book, *Motivation and Personality*. This hierarchy suggests that people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to other needs. (Cherry, 2012)

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is most often displayed as a pyramid. The lowest levels of the pyramid are made up of the most basic needs, while the more complex needs are located at the top of the pyramid. Needs at the bottom of the pyramid are basic physical requirements including the need for food, water, sleep and warmth. Once these lower-level needs have been met, people can move on to the next level of needs, which are for safety and security. (Cherry, 2012)

As people progress up the pyramid, needs become increasingly psychological and social. Soon, the need for love, friendship and intimacy become important. Further up the pyramid, the need for personal esteem and feelings of accomplishment take priority. (Cherry, 2012)

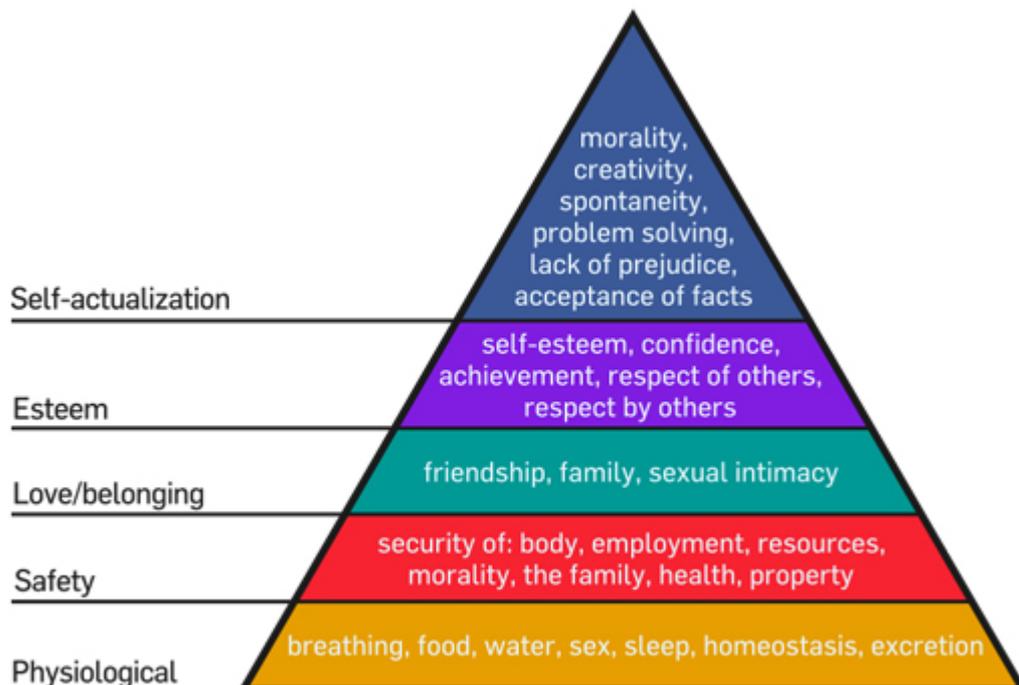


Figure 2. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Wikipedia, 2012).

5.4 Classification of consumer needs versus Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Below, in Table 4, a listing of classified consumer needs (Nummikoski, 2000) is presented. Nummikoski's lecture material has been produced utilizing Engel, Blackwell and Miniard's *Consumer behaviour*. Classification of consumer needs is on the left side of the Table 4 and personal notes and opinions on the right side.

The idea is to compare Maslow's hierarchy to a classification more commercial. With a personal point of view and notes the aim is to explain both the meaning of the hierarchy and the classification in everyday life and in consumer behaviour. With the assistance of own experiences as an entrepreneur the comparison is aimed to point out why understanding this equation is relevant.

Table 4. Comparison between classification of consumer needs and entrepreneur's personal notes

Classification of consumer needs	Notes from entrepreneurs point of view
Physiological; <i>eating and drinking</i>	These needs can be utilized at least as value added; a cup of coffee during shopping
Safety; <i>family, resources, health, property</i>	As an entrepreneur the meaning of safety reaches a higher meaning; you are the only one responsible of your own subsistence
Affiliation, belonging; <i>family, work, friends</i>	Entrepreneur needs to belong to networks, interest groups, neighbourhoods, competition to
Achievement	Self respect and respect of colleagues, interest groups and customers
Need for authority	As an entrepreneur need for authority is normal if not even recommended. If an entrepreneur succeeds on achieving authority of others s/he can be considered as a role model or a market

	leader
Self-expression	To learn how to make oneself clear to others is one of the challenges of an entrepreneur. Truly.
Cognition	I am the one in charge but also the only one responsible of everything involving the business
Seeking alternation	How does an entrepreneur devoted to her business avoid of being bored herself? Entrepreneur must be open-minded and willing to try and experience alternatives
Attribution of causality	Entrepreneur will have to understand that things happen for a reason; if there is an off-season, entrepreneur has to know (or learn) why

Many businesspeople contend business networking is a more cost-effective method of generating new business than advertising or public relations efforts. This is because business networking is a low-cost activity that involves more personal commitment than company money.

Both Maslow's hierarchy of needs and classification of customer needs base on human needs. When prior needs are satisfied more developed needs come to the picture. There is always a need that a consumer or a customer is fulfilling. If no basic need exists, a customer easily makes it up to give her/him a reason or an excuse to act like s/he is acting.

5.5 Advertising versus networking

Autotalo's marketing has been performed with a low budget; word-of-mouth, placing ads to newspapers and magazines, Google advertising, assistance of social media; mostly Facebook, fairs and events, flyers and posters, changing business cards, networking and public relations.

Financing has been covered with equity and liabilities but it has not been much, everything has been accomplished in a low scale when it comes to financing, but even the more with heart and soul. Marketing and advertising have been in the picture from the beginning and been considered as major factors for the business but hence the financial capital has not been in a solid base the marketing and advertising processes have both been limited.

The next chapter is about creating marketing and advertising your company with low assets. Money usually solves many problems but is not necessarily the only business defining factor. There are ways to operate in the field of marketing without spending too much or practically nothing in the process. The aim of this chapter is to assist on locating these ways but also to compare advertising to networking and attempting to investigate when it is advertising and when networking.

5.5.1 Case: blogs, bloggers and forums – Advertising or networking?

In Autiotalo's case the first actual marketing efforts took place in a fair of Helsinki Vintage in the fall of 2009. Brochures were handed out to the public and visitors of the fair. 500 brochures were printed and they were all handed out. After the fair all there was to do was to wait for the first order to come in. To a great disappointment it never did. Autiotalo was visited but none of the visitors actually ordered.

There first time actual money was spent on promotion and marketing purposes was when at Helsinki Vintage fair in 2009. The actual investments were the flyers, a return trip to Helsinki and entrance ticket to the fair and of course time on handing out the flyers. First lesson on marketing was learned: All the efforts and investments do not always pay back. This is an important fact that an entrepreneur has to know and be ready to face; sometimes there are days that nobody comes in.

The first order came in to Autiotalo about two weeks after the web store was opened. It did not happen because of the flyers handed in the Helsinki Vintage fair but somebody had seen blog writing about the store in a webpage and forum called Tyylitaivas, which is one of the biggest trend-following forums in Finland concentrating on clothing and fashion.

After the first order it was then decided to aim at the fashion blogs and bloggers, who today seemed to be very much a trendsetters. Some emails to some bloggers I had investigated and ran into at fairs and events were sent, letting them know about the company and the products. Some of these bloggers agreed to mention Autiotalo on their blog. One of these bloggers and her writing about Autiotalo caused the web store to collapse because of the massive amount of visitors on the site at the same time. All that had been agreed on was to send the blogger two free-choice pieces of clothing from Autiotalo.

Some fashion bloggers are popular and therefore useful. Writings and notifications on blogs and forums writings at their best could affect straight to the orders but most of all they can be work as effective ways of marketing. Reference letters and emails to bloggers, forum and site administrators are effective ways of marketing the business. If they find the subject interesting enough and suitable for their purposes it is a win-win situation; the blogger gets gratitude and the entrepreneur probably new customers or visitors to the site at least.

Unfortunately today many of the bloggers are already “sold out” by bigger brands and companies: Many of the famous bloggers have agreed on exclusivity with specific brands and products, in other words they have sold themselves out. A good example of this kind of co-operation and targeted marketing is Indiedays, a Finnish collective of bloggers gathered under a same roof by a commercial direction. The bloggers writing for Indiedays are not allowed to advertise any other brands than the direction has provided them with.

5.5.2 Word-of-mouth

An important area of marketing is called word-of-mouth marketing, which relies on the added credibility of person-to-person communication, a personal recommendation. Word-of-mouth is passing information from person to person by communicating orally. Storytelling is the oldest form of word-of-mouth communication where one person tells others of something, whether a real event or a story made up. Word-of-mouth is considered very effective and cost efficient way of marketing.

Consumers talking and sharing information is almost always a good for the business. There are days when a company might be the topic of the day but then there are those

when the publicity would not be welcome. Word-of-mouth marketing's worst part is that the entrepreneur cannot much effect on what people are saying about the company nor to the fact that the original message sent in the beginning might get distorted. A notable issue on word-of-mouth marketing is that it takes quite some time to proceed.

Reicheld (2003) claims that the most important number a company must know comes from the following equation:

$$\textit{Recommenders} - \textit{Spreaders of bad reputation} = \textit{Net recommenders}$$

According to Reicheld and research accomplished by Anne Törhönen (2004) the amount of net recommenders correlates strongly to the profits of a company. It can thus be stated that these loyal customers (net recommenders) can be achieved as the most important and significant marketing department of the company. (Koski, 2005)

Word-of-mouth marketing in the case of Autiotalo can be considered having best affects on the following situations:

- The consumer lacks sufficient information to make a choice; - when trying to find an original 1950's dress for our firms Christmas party it is common to ask a friend or a colleague or search the internet.
- The product is difficult to evaluate using objective criteria or the person attempting to evaluate the product lacks ability. It might also be the case that other sources are perceived as having low credibility
- An influential person is more accessible than other sources – a familiar face, someone that is trustworthy or known to be wise or highly educated or just someone that is a celebrity usually nowadays does the trick and is used commercially very often.
- Social ties exist between transmitter and receiver – siblings, good friends, even a friend of a friend could have be effective it the environment and timing are right. The individual might also have a high need of social approval.

5.6 Differentiation and positioning

A challenge on succeeding and differentiating in the markets and field Autiotalo has been attempting to enter is that the collections created would have to be producible in

large amounts but still supporting the principles of sustainable developments. The same dilemma has been present in interviews, conversations and think-tanks with colleagues during the entire process. It seems that just a few of us has recovered the answer to it.

In the thesis the markets and the possible gaps for clothes and accessories produced with principles of sustainable development are investigated. The point of view was first planned to focus on global business but after a short time it soon became more specialized in the national field of business. Research on the matter has been executed via internet and media but also by interviewing and discussing over the matter with colleagues and customers. Fortunately there are many companies already operating on the field; most of them small and medium sized but some of them are already getting bigger and that give hope to others of course.

In order to be successful in differentiation one will have to have something uncommon or extraordinary in the business; whether it would be brand, style, technique, location or strategy in general. Terho Design is a good example of a business that has been successful in its diversification process. Marleena Terho has been studying and now utilizing her studies to her work in creating fashion with zero-waste technique.

Zero-waste design strives to create clothing patterns that leave not so much as a scrap of fabric on the cutting room floor. This is not some wacky avant-garde exercise; it's a way to eliminate millions of tons of garbage a year (Rosenbloom, 2010).

Timo Rissanen from Finland has been the engineer and a pioneer for zero-waste fashion and design. Marleena Terho saw her chances and was in the right place at the right time. Marleena's face and designs have been in almost every (trendy) Finnish newspaper and magazine during this year.

There are many different ways of differentiation. Technique, like in Terho Design's case is just one of them. In the case of Autiotalo differentiation has been attempted to reach by the means of positioning; more specifically personality and attitude. From the beginning Autiotalo has been following its own path; it can be stated that it has been distinguished from its competitors on the field of vintage fashion in Finland.

“Positioning is about clearly differentiating the brand from its competitors: Find a gap and then fill it. However, positioning-led strategies often overlook the importance of awareness and of establishing points of parity.” (Miller and Muir, 2005, 14). A serious difference between Terho Design and Autiotalo is the revealing of an actual gap and filling of it; Terho Design located that gap no-one was not really utilizing yet from the Finnish markets and filled it but Autiotalo had no actual gaps to be located which would be comparable with the case of Terho Design.

Autiotalo first intended to differentiate by the means of value adding. Green, environmental and ethical values were the ones that Autiotalo wanted to present and utilize on its marketing. After a short time it was realized that these values unfortunately were getting old already. There was also the fact that Autiotalo was not seeking to be the one to preach to costumers on their decisions in life and their consumer behavior. That would finally drive away the costumers instead of attaching them to Autiotalo.

It was then decided to focus more on differentiation with image, personality and attitude. Autiotalo wanted to send the message that its customers are unique, independent and definitely walking their own path. Every picture taken and every story told on Autiotalo had a meaning from that moment on. A deeper meaning and a real message to be signaled out had been found. Finally a clear vision on Autiotalo’s image and personality had been visualized and settled and it was decided to stick with this vision.

In positioning brand or a company, one of the biggest problems for an entrepreneur is that the entrepreneur does not have strategy for positioning at all. If this would be the case then positioning is totally without direction. It does not matter how this strategy is called; it could be marketing strategy or business plan in general but it would have to be created to outline how does the company and the products offered differentiate from competition. (Laakso, 2003, 243)

Positioning as a part of your strategy might be easier to understand and pay further attention when it is compared to segmentation: With segmentation a company is locating a place in the markets but with positioning a company is attempting to locate a place in the mind of consumers. (Laaksonen and Rainisto, 2009, 86)

In reality we make our decisions according to images and feelings. After already having made that decision we start looking for convenient arguments to justify our deci-

sion to ourselves. In business life we behave the same way, although there are certain limitations and rules that I have to take into consideration before justifying my decision. (Laaksonen and Rainisto, 2008, 88)

Getting closer to customer with offering them feelings, atmosphere and images has been a strategy of Autiotalo. Forwarding with this strategy would require more time and financial capital: When realizing what would have been the best strategy to proceed with and concentrate on, time had already run out for me in Autiotalo. I still consider myself a lucky one having found a way to differentiate with positioning brand, services and products. I can proudly say that I have learned something by experimenting.

Terho Design and zero-waste designing have both been topics in Finland recently. There are other factors to the success of Terho Design as well. Timing is one of these factors that definitely come into a question when launching a new business. Timing is also something cannot be predicted; sometimes a week might be too early but two weeks after too late. Fortunately the time was right for Terho Design.

5.7 Timing

Actions can be either timed right or timing could just happen to be right. Timing is essential. Timing might be just on time, too late or too early. The challenge is to interpret the markets and trends so that timing would be right. In the cases of Facebook and Google the timing has also played a huge role; it would most likely have been too late if launches would have delayed for half a year. Neither of the two would probably have the same position in the markets that they do now. Timing is always slightly a matter of luck and destiny (if one happens to believe in it) but also a matter of serious consideration and strategies.

In Autiotalo's case the timing failed in two different ways: The concept and business field of vintage clothing was discovered too late but at the same time it was too early to attempt to create fashionable and wearable clothing out of recycled materials. The concept of recycled fashion already existed but it was not the time for it yet in that certain geographical area.

Positioning might be too far sighted in some cases. The saddest stories might be those when brand building has failed because the founders have been too ahead of time. In these cases forecasting and seeing the future have not paid a prize nor caused respect but instead claims on marketing budgets thrown garbage bins. (Laakso, 2003, 244)

In these cases the marketer is acting like salesperson though s/he should be acting like a buyer. A salespersons mission is to be far sighted but s/he also has to be able to tell about what s/he sees in a way by which every consumer will understand the message. If the positioning is based on a vision that will not open up to a consumer, the investment is useless. (Laakso, 2003, 244)

A question of timing comes to the picture in various occasions during entrepreneurship. Strategies and decisions are questioned by the entrepreneur her/himself many times. The most frustrating is to notice afterwards that you should not have done so or you should not have participated somewhere; the what if- and what if not -situations will become more than familiar with every entrepreneur. Timing is essential when discussing and deciding on co-operations and networking as well.

It cannot always be predicted what type of a network will give the most advantage but it is always worth developing networks around your business. For someone that has just been thinking about establish a company or creating a brand this uncertainty might feel extremely frustrating. When trying to build up and develop networks; one after another, attending all kinds of envelope openings, the result of it all might (or might not) be seen after a year or two. In the end it seems to be a mixture of coincidences, making the “right” contacts and successfully operating with timing and positioning (Laaksonen, 2012).

5.8 Timing and actions in variation of seasons in business

There are high-seasons, low-seasons and in some cases total off-seasons in entrepreneurship. For Autiotalo high-season has been spring and summer seasons and low-seasons January and February. The difference between a high-season month and a low-season month can be great. Sales for June could be three times bigger than sales in February. There could be months that barely cover the costs and an entrepreneur has to find ways to survive these seasons as well.

An entrepreneur's way to cope with season variations is to save for the low-seasons to become. Autiotalo never was able to fight the low-seasons; there were not yet enough sales to be saved up from during the high-seasons. I was waiting for it to happen and when it did the benefit was not for me nor for Autiotalo, it went straight to the subcontractor's pocket.

During a low-season it would be recommendable to have a vacation then and work as much as possible during high-seasons. July, most common holiday season in Finland, has been the bestselling month in the short history of Autiotalo. Therefore it would be recommendable to keep the business running and store open for that season and entrepreneur's own vacation when it is most quiet.

Off- and low-seasons are great opportunities to proceed with products or services in progress or produce new material for the next high-season. The third year has been most progressive time for Autiotalo. Past years have taught some lessons and products for this spring and summer have now being produced throughout the winter and low-seasons.

To diminish the financial damage off- and low-seasons tend to cause, a plan B would be good to create. Plan B could be a part time job, secondary occupation, new strategy for attracting customers during the off- and low-seasons or maybe a trendy pop-up store in more busy location just for those months. Collaboration and networking might just as well offer some answers to these questions.

6 KEEP IT TOGETHER – ROLE OF NETWORKING

In this chapter the main networks, interest groups and collaboration with these parties in the case of Autiotalo are introduced. Research of the concept of networking is executed; what sort of roles networks represent; what can be considered as a network for a business when starting up a company or thinking about doing so. This chapter has been accomplished in collaboration with Jaana Laaksonen from KyAMK's faculty of design. There are paragraphs written together and paragraphs written separately comparing and sharing opinions, experiences and theories.

6.1 The power of networking

Networking becomes more significant the day one decides to start up a business. Networks of all kinds are required; different contacts, people, entrepreneurs, small time players, bigger ones, individuals, friends, family, organizations, municipalities, universities, schools, those who used to be your friends, those who used to be your enemies. Help and assistance should be applied and accepted of them all.

One of the main issues an entrepreneur is dealing with is the talent of getting along with different interest groups, accepting their values and ways of acting and working; this will have to be manageable even though in personal levels would not necessarily “meet”. Understanding this is a crucial part of networking. There lies also a paradox — a company or a person you are networking with might have totally different values in some context but still share most of yours. (Laaksonen, 2012)

One of the questions is if the leading market forces affect on the confrontation negatively; if two entrepreneurs with different values join their forces networking together, will it actually work for them? If main values are not shared it does not mean that some benefits by the means of networking could not be provided. The world is not black and white. You just have to find the right level of communicating. (Laaksonen, 2012)

Networks have to be earned and this can be managed only by doing, participating and making sure that is seen and noticed around. The only way to learn is by doing and networking. A concept of a typical, single model of entrepreneurship does not exist. It is more a question of surrounding oneself with the right people. In other words, building the right networks and interest groups is definitely crucial. One of the most significant features of an entrepreneur at the growth stage is the ability to surround him/herself with people who have skills to complete his/her own. Not everything is or can be done alone, just by oneself. Different types and skills have to be appreciated.

A list of networks is advisable to create. To benefit from the list the most it should be created by grouping and categorizing the networks. It is also good to remember that somebody always knows somebody else and this person might be able to provide some valuable information, actual goods, inventory, financial support, new contacts etc. Friends, family and foes should be included to the list. It may feel foolish at first,

but one might be amazed when realizing the power these networks and people possess. By carrying out the list one will pay closer attention on things these people and the networks they stand for are capable of implementing.

Next step for a more in-depth study could be an analysis to micro and macro environments. I believe it would be a convenient and suitable way of continuing investigating networks and interest groups. More useful information on networks and actual network opportunities could be localized from surprising directions.

“When sharing our own experiences and listening to other people sharing their own, something new can be found: That new can be something that will change the world.”(Haavisto, 2010, 15, translated from Finnish by Tanja Rautavirta)

6.2 Concept of networking to an entrepreneur

Networking and especially networking using social media as a tool seem to have earned the title of a trend today. Many young and starting entrepreneurs or people seeking to become entrepreneurs have found themselves participating some type of an organization; collective, group or team. In social media these networks are found and based today in communities and sites like Facebook, Google+, Twitter and LinkedIn. This kind of a model of networking and putting yourself available can be easier to reach or less risky to start up your business with than the more traditional models of company forms.

These types of groups and organizations can be also very effective ways to brainstorm; test ideas with colleagues, people with same kind of interests and willingness to invent, design or create something new, fresh and suitable for the needs of more people. With Hub arriving to Finland it can be proven that a need or a movement towards this type of organization exists. Hub Helsinki was established in 2009 and then started to act as full-time organization in spring 2011. Hub is already expanding further in Finland (Kelhä, 2011).

When building and developing networks one has to be conscious at all times, gathering information and seeking for alternatives for one's needs and requirements. There are a variety of alternatives for an entrepreneur (or a private person in most of these alternatives) to be taken under consideration when searching proper networks, help in

joining forces or collaborating in general. In the next paragraph a list with short explanations of example groups which could be useful in the path of entrepreneurship is introduced and explained.

6.3 Available networks and groups for a starting entrepreneur

This chapter introduces common models of networking. The aim is to present alternatives for the phase of increasing contacts and networks and also to prove that an entrepreneur has options for choosing to become a sole trader. Note: Only the first two alternatives are actual company forms, the rest on the list do not require actual company form from its members.

- Co-operative society; a company form that is owned by its members. Each member has one vote in co-operative society's assembly. Being a member of co-operative society does not mean that you would have to be a sole trader or a commercial name, private persons can operate as members of co-operative societies.
- Hub; international co-operative society, a co-working space, member community and a place for events. The goal of Hub is to bring people from diverse backgrounds to find solutions to social challenges through entrepreneurial approach. Hub is a part of the global network of Hub.
- Collective; a form of a network or a group dedicated to a particular cause or interest.
- Cluster; network for talents of different industries/business or discrete items that are close to each other
- Workshop; a series of educational and work sessions. Small groups of people meet together over a short period of time to concentrate on a defined area of concern or mutual interests.
- Incubator; a start-up center for starting entrepreneurs which is usually located at university premises.
- Other university supported networks and organizations; as examples, R & D services and LCCE® project both from KyAMK are introduced below;

The aim of R&D is to produce services in cooperation with companies, municipalities and other development organizations. New knowledge and experiences also develop and renew the educational side. Students as part of development projects is also an

important challenge and development area. Entrepreneurship during studying periods or afterwards in incubator are possible options for students. (Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences, 2012a)

LCCE® (Learning and Competence Creating Ecosystem) is a new pedagogical and organizational approach to studies where the role of the school is to enable and facilitate learning, not dictate strict curricula to be followed. LCCE® is about integrating more and more practice into studies, less listening to the lectures but getting your hands on real work with real working life tasks. The school is the place to develop your own ideas and skills. Especially if you already have a business idea, you can work on it at the school instead of the garage and utilize all the resources and know-how LCCE® has got to provide you with (Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences, 2012b)

- General networking with entrepreneurs and individuals working on the same field, on the basis on similar values or some other reason

Each of these alternatives of collaborating has their benefits and there is a need for each of them. It can be said that the bottom line and basic intention of each of these alternatives is to offer as fruitful networking system as possible for every member belonging to it. Intending or belonging to one of these groups does not exclude belonging to another as well.

The entire network seeking and comparison process requires a lot of time and resources. Therefore for a starting entrepreneur it would be useful to get a grip from just one group of people who share similar interests and after that maybe dig some more. The key word is active. Especially in the growth stage of entrepreneurship it is advisable to be very active. Without activeness there is no entrepreneurship (Laaksonen, 2012)

Keeping it all together and the focus on the right issues requires a certain amount of intuition, trust on yourself but trust to others as well. To survive in a stream of information and different networks available it requires certain qualities from the entrepreneur. In order to succeed in that stream an entrepreneur has to have nerve, mature point of view and human capital in different forms. Mixture of those will probably offer the main tools for survival. Sometimes all of those tools are required, sometimes going with the flow is the answer.

6.4 Networking in the case of Autiotalo

In this chapter the main networks and interest groups for Autiotalo are presented. The networks will be presented separately giving them each a title. With the title an explanation of the choice is also presented. In the same context discussions with Jaana Laaksonen and other sources are also introduced and compared with my own experiences, beliefs and thoughts. The presentation of these networks will start with the most surprising and maybe the most challenging one as well.

6.4.1 Competitors

The concept of competitors is wide. When discussing on e-commerce competition can be found and determined globally. Then when discussing on clothing business in general the competition can be defined to every business offering clothing for the same target groups you are. Instead of making a list of the entire variety of competitors for Autiotalo, concentration was aimed at something much more up-to-date; networking with competitors, no matter whom or where they are.

As it was mentioned before, when starting the business basic knowledge on the business field and the people working on it already existed, to some extent internationally too. Thereby it was a little easier to start the process of networking with the colleagues and the environment. These operators were mainly competitors but from the beginning it was founded vital to team up and find some kind of a network or a connection with them.

At some point it was attempted to develop an actual functioning network for all of us operating on this particular national field of business. After having approached to these colleagues, most of them immediately were interested and saw the common advantages and potential this kind of a network could probably offer us all. The project finally suffered from mainly lack of time but also uncertainty on how to proceed.

When discussing networking, important part to understand is to see the common aims. To be more precise to realize that one will not lose what one has if one shares it. Of course the core of the business should be kept as a secret, but there are plenty of things around the core useful to share. Understanding that even with the competitors there could be more benefits than harm if ideas would be shared. Unanimous atmosphere

concerning issues of trust is required to reach a satisfactory level for all the parties involved. (Laaksonen, 2012)

Fortunately the trend of working together and developing network systems seems to hang on tight and gaining more and more ground. The atmosphere today encourages entrepreneurs to network with even competitors instead of staying alone in the corner and polishing business ideas with no help from outside. LCCE® is a brilliant example of the kind of opportunities networks could offer you: *Especially if you already have a business idea, you can work on it at the school instead of the garage and utilize all the resources and know-how* (Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences, 2011)

6.4.2 Local entrepreneurs and neighborhood

Networking with local entrepreneurs is vital. It makes no difference what business field do they present; it is crucial to get to know the actual working environment and neighbors. Word-of-mouth marketing functions the best in the case of networking with local entrepreneurs and neighbors. The amount of your stakes does not have to be big; by simply giving something will be getting something as return.

For Autiotalo co-operation with various entrepreneurs in Lahti area has been reached and is developing continuously, almost independently. Some of these contacts and co-operations have also been quite successful ones. The following list introduces some of these local contacts and neighbors just to give some taste on how different companies and organizations can be useful to each other, no matter what is the field of their business. Below the company names an explication on the nature of co-operation has been explained.

- Atelier Anneville, a part time dressmaker right across the street
Attending to fairs, sharing a department, rides, marketing materials and costs
- Vintage Potpouri, vintage furniture, interior design store few blocks away
Attending to fairs, sharing a department, rides, marketing materials and costs
- M-art Art design, graphic designing, happenings, jack-of-all-trades, a home-based company

- arranging a fashion show in collaboration
- Dark Art, printing services, same street, couple of meters away in the same street takes care of Autiotalo's marketing material, including window tapings and as return Autiotalo is promoting Dark Art's services every change it gets
- Ruusun Aika, local florist, couple of meters away in a building across the street handing out flyers and word-of-mouth information
- Lahden Kodittomat Kissat ry., charity organization, across the street
- Anjan Puoti, sewing and gift shop other side of the town forwards some of its customers direct to Autiotalo
- Painajainen, graphic designing, printing services, happenings, jack-of-all-trades arranging an event and a fashion show
- Marakattimarssi, clothing for children, e-commerce, fairs and happenings
- Lahti Roller Derby League, sports club

Collaboration with Lahti Roller Derby league has been a great assistance. Autiotalo agreed on sponsoring the league with participating on the costs of their league t-shirts. It was agreed that the league would get t-shirts and printings for free and Autiotalo with another company would get their logos printed on the t-shirts. Free usage of assistance of the roller derby girls was included to the contract. Autiotalo took all the benefits out of the contract and used the girls for photo shootings, handing brochures and other promotion tasks during the contract year.

6.4.3 Public institutes and organizations

The third paragraph introduces and explains the role of public organizations; universities, schools, associations, authorities and other relevant sectors and factors to Autiotalo. The role of these networks has been one of the most meaningful ones in the path of my entrepreneurship.

- Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences, Faculties of business and design
- Lahti University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of design
- Salpaus, Lahti, faculty of textile and clothing
- Lahti Institute of Art
- Environmental office, Lahti
- Oldsmobile club of Finland, Lahti
- Pikku teatteri, Lahti
- Lahden Muotohuoltamo, part of the project World Design capital 2012

A relevant and important network in the case of Autiotalo has most definitely been KyAMK and all the connections offered to my case. I have been a part and co-

operating in the project LCCE®, teachers, supervisors and colleagues at the university have been very supporting and inspiration providing during the entire process of my experimental entrepreneurship. Via university there have been interviews on Innoste and Alumni magazines which have been great publicity for the company. Some of the lecturers at the university have been using my company as example on their teaching material which is of course highly appreciated.

Lahti University of Applied Sciences on the other hand has become familiar to the business of Autiotalo in other context. Autiotalo was the first genuine store specialized in vintage clothing and it was then right on the trend. Many design students from the university very curious and interested in the store and many of these young talents introduced themselves at the same time they came shopping to Autiotalo. With some of these students relations were built and quite soon many other students knew about the store. Autiotalo had the privilege to use these students for photo shootings, graphic designing and image processing for the web store and commercial usage.

Salpaus Learning Center has provided the business most of all with trainees; talented young people in the need of customer service and sewing experiences. From the beginning it became very obvious that using trainees in the store would be then included to the strategy of the business. Salpaus learning center has also provided the business with collaborating with the personnel. Some events and meetings concerning Salpaus have been visited and thus some new, interest people connected with.

Environmental office, Lahden Muotohuoltamo (World Design Capital centre at Lahti 2012) and Pikku teatteri among others have provided Autiotalo with either premises for free; for fair and events purposes. With Oldsmobile club of Finland and Tanssiteatteriyhdistys Ryhtivika ry. a trade on services was made; In the first case it was agreed on styling their fair premises two years in a row at Lahti spring car show and they allowed placing of ads to the cars present on the show and handed out Autiotalo's flyers to the visitors in the fair. It was also agreed to provide the actresses of Ryhtivika with 50's style costumes for their photo shooting and as a return Autiotalo received free marketing space on their posters, flyers and other commercial material produced for their show.

6.4.4 Trainees

When the networks of schools and universities are introduced the matter of trainees is appropriate to bring under the scope as well. Trainee co-operation has been a valuable and effective way of operating. The value of trainees is mutual to the company, university and to a student: A true win-win situation where everyone gets something out of the pact. Autiotalo has been fortunate to receive trainees from Salpaus learning center. Each trainee has brought something fresh, something unique and something of her own to the business. Of course the level of their talents varies but this has to be realized and taken into consideration before you make any contracts with the learning center on training periods.

Trainees are very suitable in the field of business and the case of Autiotalo. This does not mean that the situation would be similar or the same for some other company. Trainees may save some costs but at the same time they will evidently bring ones to the company as well. Trainees may save some time when you one can share and delegate some of the tasks. On the other hand no one learns the policies, everyday routines and tasks of a company immediately. Teaching these matters to a trainee requires devotion and time. At the same time when devoting to a trainee, the time is lost from other tasks and routines.

Regardless of the issues just were presented it would still be recommended to use trainee co-operation and networking. There are more benefits to trainees than disadvantages. A definite benefit to the issues already mentioned is the amount of word-of-mouth trainees will provide the company with. Their friends, family and colleagues at their school or university will also learn about the company during the process of traineeship. In the most cases; they will end up shopping in the store.

6.4.5 Blogs and forums

This chapter discusses and introduces some directions that have been offering their networks to present Autiotalo to their customers, followers and readers. Many of these directions and their founders have been the ones starting the co-operation. It does not mean that a web store or any actions will be noticed without any effort from your side. When bloggers, forums or sites chose to mention Autiotalo, the amount of investments (both time and money) on marketing was rather large.

In one case I was contacting a certain blogger who had quite many followers. A deal was made with the blogger: The blogger agreed on mentioning and advertising my store to her followers if she could pick up two of her favorite clothes or accessories from my web store. When she then wrote about Autiotalo on her blog, the site collapsed. There were too many visits via her blog to the website and it was not capable of carrying all those visitors hitting the pages. The web store was very young then and I was unaware that it could collapse. Luckily the web store was managed to get running again the next day. Orders came in after the blogger had mentioned my web store but the percentage of the orders compared to the actual hits was still rather low.

The beauty of blogs and blogging is that most of them could be promoting the business while one is not even aware of it. When keeping track of visitors on a web store one might just realize that there has been a peak last week but the reason to the peak remains unsure. The answer is usually that someone or something has mentioned the web store on a blog, forum or a site.

The coin always has its downside as well; the promotion may not always be the type y appreciated. As blogs and bloggers have become more significant for advertisers, the more a small time player, like Autiotalo, has to do to get mentioned on a famous blog. Mostly this means placing money to table, sending products to the blogger or having connections to the blogger. To my knowledge Autiotalo has been mentioned in about ten different blogs and sites during the three first years. Luckily the case for Autiotalo has been quite bright. The notes (that I have bumped into) have been positive and in some cases they have been successful enough to increase the sales of my company.

6.4.6 Social media

Business networking can be conducted in a local business community, or on a larger scale via the internet. Business networking websites have grown over recent years due to the internet's ability to connect people from all over the world. Networking with the help of internet is a trend and it is growing fast. Facebook, Google +, LinkedIn, Twitter are most common channels in social media today.

There is a fine line between networking and advertising when it comes to social media. When Autiotalo was born, Facebook already had footsteps in Finland but it was not in use to the volume it is today. It has honestly to be admitted that Facebook has

clearly been one of the top promoters of Autiotalo during these years. Direct sales have also been executed but everyday marketing done via Facebook takes most of the credit. In April 2012 Autiotalo had 470 fans in the social media of Facebook.

Usage of social media brings value added to customers. They will be the first ones to get information on what is happening next or they could be offered with special promotions aimed only for those using that certain social media. In addition to this quite a lot of financial capital will be saved when substituting majority of the company's advertising with the means of social media.

On the other hand concentration and activeness with the tools of social media will have to be high and accomplished side by side with all the other functions and activities the business requires. Again, if it is not money that is needed, it is time then. Adding value with the help of social media has to be executed like advertising and marketing in genera: Surprise customers, offer them with something extra and repeat, remind them on your existence at least once a week.

Autiotalo has been offering the customers promotions, offers, sales, specials, first information of the new arrivals on the store by using mainly Facebook. Workshops and fashion shows have also been executed by inviting and recruiting people from Facebook. As a social media channel Facebook is the most common at the moment but the change is already around the corner and can be felt approaching already; some new channel will be replacing Facebook any time now.

6.4.7 Networks with entrepreneurs and individuals working on the same field

In spring 2011, I operated as a founder for a local organization in Lahti area that was gathering local entrepreneurs and their products and services under the roof. This organization was later named as "Aatekaappi". The purpose of the organization is to gather local talent and know-how of small companies and to offer their products and services with more volume than a single entrepreneur could do by herself. The parties in Aatekaappi share similar and common interests and values like recycling, sustainable development, devotion to domestic production, arts, design, uniqueness and lifestyle.

There are 12 authors in the network of Aatekaappi: *Autiotalo*, vintage clothing and sewing services; *AnneVille*, dressmaker, Re-Glam clothing; *Florenzia*, flower & vintage store; *Gloomy Moon*, clothing and sewing services; *Höö*, design clothing for children; *Jaana Laaksonen*, design clothing and accessories; *Kamala Design*, Trashion, accessories and interior design; *Marakattimarssi*, clothing for children; *Minka*, Jewelry and accessories; *Päivi Ilen*, accessories, clothing, glass design; *Re-Do*, clothing and accessories; *UnaNah*, clothing and accessories

Business networks like Aatekaappi may agree to meet weekly or monthly with the purpose of exchanging information, ideas, knowledge and activities and happenings in the near future with fellow members. Referrals and references are general in these types of networks; once again, someone always knows someone. To complement this activity, members often meet outside the circle as well, on their “own time” and build their own one-to-one relationship with these selected fellow members.

Combinations inside the network are more than common; for instance a school class that is already a network and a team to itself. A class always divides to a few separate groups where common values and personal chemistries meet and alliances and teams are born. When summarizing this example it can be proved that a group or a network too extensive is too hard to handle; distribution to smaller teams is inevitable. Smaller groups inside of larger networks can function inside and outside the roof network then.

When a couple of entrepreneurs now participating Aatekaappi, in Lahti area were contacted, the interest towards this kind of society, where costs could be shared and work together for common goal possible, was great. The query was appreciated and it came to a need. The actual launch for the organization took place in May 2011 with an event, a small fair in the center of Lahti. The main intention is to provide parties of the community with a network that offers opportunities, assistance, mutual co-operation and contacts that are worth sharing. Once again, you give something and as return you will receive something, if not immediately then at some point.

6.4.8 Media

Today probably the most valuable networks are the contacts to media. Every little contact to someone that presents media is highly appreciated. With these contacts I as

well have been able to receive some radio, newspaper and television time for the business. Great efforts have been put on sending press and media releases and information on the business and its actions. Autiotalo has been lucky enough to get media attention several different times. Media attention can never be taken for granted. If something has been learned then it is the fact that the received media attention and publicity can easily beat any ad placed to a magazine or a newspaper. The amount of money spent on placing ads compared to the amount of visitors and customers to your store influenced by that ad do not meet. It would have to be repeated again and again to get any attention in the first place.

Autiotalo has been in local newspaper of *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat* two different times, *City* magazine in Lahti area, two smaller publications in Lahti area; *Omalähiö* and *Iso Magneetti*, three times in radio interview; *Radio Voima* and *Yle Lahti* and one time in Yle local TV-interview. Each one of these times were priceless but superior to them all was the story about the store in *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*. It happened to be in the weekend paper and on that day the store was packed with people. The results of that publicity were easy to measure.

Theme parties, for instance burlesque festivals have also been useful for Autiotalo's business and products. In these occasions Autiotalo has been producing and presenting fashion shows as a part of the event. Events, fairs, concerts, theme parties and others can be useful and effective ways to market. The more fairs attended the more attention achieved. Autiotalo is now at the state that the ones organizing fairs and events are sending invitations without Autiotalo having look for information on events so much anymore.

There cannot be too many places where to advertise the company. This is a place where networking plays a huge role. More different groups the business is linked to, the more information and possibilities obtained. The more available the business is with its networks the more publicity will be achieved.

Networking and collaboration gives an entrepreneur different kind of points of views, ones that might vary significantly from your own. Entrepreneur gets a second opinion if s/he wishes so and is asking for it. Sometimes you become blind to your own business, actions, innovations, designs among others and you will value a second opinion, although it would not please you in the beginning.

6.5 Strengths and weaknesses in the case of business networking

This chapter displays lists of strengths and weaknesses on networking as a concept based on experimental entrepreneurship and experiences in life in general.

Strengths in networking:

- more powerful than a single entrepreneur or an individual
- possibility to teamwork and joining forces
- offers second opinions of other group members
- connecting people with different talents; matchmaking
- wide contacts
- possibility to start your business slowly and carefully
- protection and support of a group
- cost sharing and cost efficiency
- value added

Weaknesses in networking:

- networks might be hard to find
- individual chemistries inside a network are not corresponding
- too many chefs cooking the soup leading to a mess without results
- size of a network; too little or too many participants
- focus on wrong networks

Networking can provide an entrepreneur with many successful contacts, products or services. It can be very fruitful when all the pieces of the puzzle find their places. In the worst scenario networking with wrong groups, individuals or facets can lead to a totally opposite direction you were hoping to go. All in all, looking for the most suitable networks for one's purposes introduces one to different options, people and connections. Every entrepreneur needs networks and co-operation. No one can do everything just by oneself. The difficulty is to find the right and most suitable connections and networks.

Helge Keitel (2008) has investigated movements of “new age” entrepreneurship and has noted that several small, independent clothing brands were on the rise already on 2008:

Young designers and authors are uniting their talents, placing their own stamp to price tags and hope for the best; that their products will sell. This model reflects new procedures: Today you work together with friends and say no to organizations, bureaucracy and financial pressures. Actions, responsibility and decision making are now taken to your own hands (Keitel 2008).

Helge Keitel continued his study by creating a list on characteristics that businesses and entrepreneurs like Autiotalo have in common and what characteristics he sees on the rise;

- *New way of creating and doing (networking can be seen here)*
- *Joint creating and doing (publicity is built together)*
- *One matter teams – everyone deals with their own property, but go public together*
- *Together with friends and colleagues -> more coverage*
- *Team work for mutual goals; a lonely marathon runner vs. team play*
- *Talent of working together as a group is learned during studies and workshops*
- *Many new clothing businesses are just dealing with cents instead of euros; turn-overs are modest.*
- *Success = combination of timing, differentiation and pure luck*

(Keitel 2008)

7 THIS IS MY TRUTH TELL ME YOURS – INTERACTING AND INTERVIEWING

This chapter has been created by interviewing, interacting, discussing and think-thanking with representatives of interest groups, including customers. The aim and purpose of the chapter is to bring entrepreneurship closer with as many points of views as possible. The purpose is also to compare my actions to the actions of others. Many of the statements and notes from customer point of view are taken from separate

discussions without the customers really knowing that their statements or opinions would be utilized in this thesis. That is why these notes are rather unattached and used in fluctuating circumstances.

7.1 Interacting and interviewing with colleagues

Actions as an entrepreneur have been investigated and reflected to colleagues, other entrepreneurs on the field, local entrepreneurs and those who have just entered the markets. Reflecting is hard but it is also satisfying and comforting when recognizing similarities in actions with colleagues. Recognizing the same financial struggle others are in almost every day both comforts but frustrates at the same time. Entrepreneurship (in Finland) is tough. No matter how you are performing it you will have to fight for your existence.

The aim of this chapter is to reflect the operations of others and their ways of managing with their entrepreneurship and everyday life. Hearing and reflecting the backgrounds, situations, opinions and emotions on entrepreneurship is comforting and eye opening. Every entrepreneur comes from very different circumstances and has very different purposes and goals on their strategies.

7.2 Questionnaire on entrepreneurship

During the three-year-process on experimental entrepreneurship a questionnaire to colleagues and other entrepreneurs was created. The questions are introduced and selected below. The answers are presented almost as they originally were to give a reader a full view on how these entrepreneurs felt on the issues. Most of the answers were pure, honest and got into the topic without acquiring any further explications. (The questions and answers were presented in Finnish; they have been translated in English afterwards.)

The following entrepreneurs answered the questionnaire:

Marleena Terho, founder of Terho Design, sole trader for two years

Toni Haataja, founder of DarkArt Design, sole trader for eight years

Ida Vadelmainen, founder of Planet Ida, individual entrepreneur, operating via a co-

operative society for three years

Anukka Laine, partner at Tatuata, soletrader as Anakai Tatuata for six years

Questions were sent or given to ten entrepreneurs from different geographical areas and fields of businesses. What they have in common is the size of their companies; small or medium size and a rather short time in entrepreneurship. Only four of them answered, two of them were in a rush and could not find time to properly concentrate and answer the questions. The rest did not send any response. The ones not sending any type of response were my direct competitors and hence it is assumed that they felt threatened by the competitor.

Why have you chosen entrepreneurship?

Planet Ida: I wanted to actually carry out my own ideas and do something of my own

DarkArt Design: Because I could not work under anyone else than myself. This way I can express myself the best and no one else is telling me what to do next

Terho Design: I get to decide how do I handle issues in my work (design, ethical and ecological values on their places) and I do not have to work against my own beliefs and conscience. Freedom is probably the biggest advantage in being an entrepreneur. That I am exactly my own boss and doing exactly the things I wish to do. I would not want to work for a giant corporation. For this I feel that my work matters; at least for myself.

Anakai Tatuata: Why not? I can do a work that I actually enjoy doing and I do not have pay rent for anyone else (commission free)

Most of starting entrepreneurs are chasing a dream or fulfilling themselves or their values and ideas. Also most of them agree on the freedom of an entrepreneur; you get to be your own boss but you are also the one responsible for every move your company makes.

What is the objective of your brand/products/services today?

Planet Ida: I would like to have my products on sale in as many different boutiques and stores as possible (by the means of commission). My goal is to reach a level of good and quality products. An entrepreneur can always and continuously develop, refine ideas and create new products.

DarkArt Design: I hope to sell as much as possible and as fast as possible. Seeing people wear my products satisfies me.

Terho Design: My mission is to create and produce interesting, wearable, ethical and ecological clothing for women. And of course have them selling!

Anakai Tatuata: To create nice tattoos in the same village.

None of these entrepreneurs talked about internationalization or globalization. It made me wonder if I was too ambitious in the beginning with my big plans on spreading the operations internationally. Maybe that has been one of the reasons I have stumbled with my business; maybe I was aiming too high when the answers were much closer and much simpler. It might also have been that my colleagues were too modest on their answers. All in all, there is nothing wrong in aiming high.

What is the objective of your products/services in the future, five years from now?

Planet Ida: Same as today; I tend to live one day at a time. It may be that in five years I am doing something totally different but right now it feels that I am doing the right thing for the moment. I have also been considering to maybe returning to studies someday. If I will end up continuing with my products and business, I hope it will get bigger, or maybe evolve more to a underground brand.

DarkArt: I wish and seek to be bigger and better

Terho Design: I would sure hope that after five years my label/brand would have settled its position and that the collections would actually sell to a rather large extent.

Anakai Tatuata: Five years from now I see myself creating awesome tattoos and getting a decent salary for doing so. I still have not expanded the business nor moved to bigger premises.

Advantages and disadvantages in being an entrepreneur?

Planet Ida: Good is the fact that you are your own boss and you can decide the hours and schedules you wish to work. You can have a break or a holiday whenever you feel like (or can). On the other hand these are also bad sides of being an entrepreneur; sometimes the rush is overwhelming and you work 24/7. There is the matter of stress and making money when you realize that it all comes back to you eventually. DarkArt: I am doing things like I want to. I do not think that I could even do anything else anymore than be an entrepreneur.

Terho Design: Good is freedom to your work, schedules and decision making. Bad is

instability and the fact that everything has to be done by yourself.

Anakai Tatuata: One can operate independently and without explaining anything to anyone. I dislike taxation and other fees.

What is your company form? What is your company form in the future? Why?

Planet Ida: My operations are run via a co-operative society. That basically means that I am not an entrepreneur but I still operate and act like one. When operating on a co-operative society you are entitled to unemployment benefits which really makes it easier for you if your salary is not enough. In the future I see myself operating via co-operative society as well. I would not even want to try to be any other kind of entrepreneur. I experienced it already in the year 2009; I was left with bad memories and financial problems.

Terho Design: Sole trader at the moment. If the business tends to grow like I am hoping it to, I guess it would have to be turned into a joint-stock company.

Anakai Tatuata: Sole trader and let it be so in the future as well. I do not even want to know the deeper meaning of limited companies and others.

How have you implemented/thought of implementing product branding of your products/services?

Planet Ida: In my case branding I have been executing branding and not even realizing doing so. All my products have a label. I am trying to accomplish as much as possible by myself so that it would give the feeling and image of "the same touch" I am trying to differentiate with colours; all my products are very colourful, playful and joyful. I am also trying to bring value added by adding a story to each product.

DarkArt: I am my own brand.

Terho Design: Branding is so difficult! Now I have been creating my brand by being as honest as I possibly can; telling about my business as thorough as I can. I have also been exposed as an individual and founder of the brand in media concerning the launch of my collection. That is why you could state that I brand my products through myself.

Anakai Tatuata: I have not

Like it can be interpreted from the answers it is very common to focus and draw attention to the entrepreneur her/himself. On the minds of entrepreneurs they are the brand they represent. This is the case for Autiotalo as well. I do see and feel myself in the

brand and image created on Autiotalo. With time the concept of brand enlarges evolving and taking other forms in the way. Marimekko, for instance, still tends to lead some people thinking about Kirsti Paakkanen, a strong woman and image behind the brand. It is natural to connect a brand to an individual and it is just human to seek for a face or other human features behind a brand.

What is/are your competition advantage(s)?

Planet Ida: My products are ecological and extremely colourful. Selections and models are unique, personal and the work is concentrated on Finland. Price for a product has to be right; not too cheap but not too expensive either. I believe and strongly feel that I clearly have my own thing going on which consumers will either love or hate.

Terho Design: Well, I hope them to be national brand, good, quality material usage, clear design, interesting zero-waste modelling and techniques of designing.

Anakai Tatuata: I am a girl and I have been on the field for a long time already.

Answers on this question were a pleasure to read and interpret. They all have the message that your strategy of competing on the markets does not have to be a complicated and challenging one. Sometimes it might be enough if you are a girl.

Which and what kind of networks and interest groups do you consider the most valuable ones for you and your business?

Planet Ida: Operating in a co-operative society gives you advantage on networking. I believe that almost every network is worth trying out; only by networking and being available you can find new connections and make new, useful contacts.

DarkArt: Every financially stable company or entrepreneur that could offer me some kind of benefits.

Anakai Tatuata: I would have to say that the notice boards of the local markets and grocery store. And facebook of course.

The amount of utilizing social media as a network but also as marketing model and strategy has grown massively in these past three years. By the means of social media especially small and medium sized businesses benefit. Marketing and advertising had not been inexpensive for a long time. The assistance of social media came to the picture and offered free solutions to many small time players.

Groups, networks and societies also bring new perspective for small and medium sized entrepreneurs. Together we are able to achieve more and by joining forces we are more powerful than as individuals. The assistance and aid received from both networking and using social media is significant and relevant to the operations.

7.3 Comparison and evaluation with colleagues and competitors

Quite a lot can be learned just observing the environment but especially competitors and colleagues. The most effective way of learning for an entrepreneur would probably be learning from somebody else's mistakes. When observing the environment and especially competitors, the talent of recognizing strengths and advantages on the object monitored can be considered worth gold.

observations and analyzing of the environment regarding businesses supporting values of sustainable development especially in clothing business but others as well, have been made for over three years now. The coming and going of different names, products and brands have been witnessed. Even with these types of softer values the competition is hard, if not harder. But something is for sure; some of these names and brands are alive and well. One of these names is Globe Hope which has been on the markets from 2001 and is still going strong.

7.3.1 Case: Globe Hope

Seija Lukkala from Globe Hope is both nationally and internationally a pioneer for ecological and ethical clothing business. Globe Hope has been observed very carefully during the recent years. Comparison to Autiotalo is easier today than it was two year ago when too much eagerness to launch the business and during the process prevented a thorough observation and the conclusions on what globe hope had done differently.

With the assistance of journal notes during experimental entrepreneurship it is quite simple to sum up the differences between Autiotalo and Globe Hope. Autiotalo does not aim to be or evolve to be like Globe Hope. Seija Lukkala, her determination and passion to her matter are admirable but it is not the goal to create a copycat version of her ideas.

According to and interpreting my journal notes Globe Hope has been stronger than Autiotalo in the following matters:

- *Pushing forward very strongly and continuously*; Seija Lukkala has been very determined and stubborn from the beginning fighting for her principles, values and for her brand.
- *Skills and expertise*; Seija Lukkala has been involved with textile industry, business and entrepreneurship for 13 years before getting started with Globe Hope.
- *Taking more and bigger risks*; although Lukkala was turned down by many authorities, funders, co-operatives and colleagues she was still willing to take risks and take a chance with her vision. She was not afraid of being the pioneer.
- *Funding behind the company*; Autiotalo's the background was not safe enough, there was not enough room for a few mistakes or wrong decisions.
- *Being there at the right time attracting media attention*; Seija Lukkala stated in an interview in 2009 that she has never attempted to persuade media attention to Globe Hope; media has come to Globe Hope. Like it was discussed earlier on this DPT the matters of positioning and timing are crucial. In Globe Hope's case there was also a bit of luck involved (if what Seija states is true) because they have been very well presented and available on media.
- *Going international*; Japan has been Globe Hope's first target markets right after Finland because its still growing interest towards Finnish design and quality. It was almost like a trend at one time; every textile designer in Finland was aiming to the markets in Japan. Some of them succeeded some of them did not. In the case of my business I did not consider anything out of EU-borders. Afterwards thinking maybe I should have and maybe I did not because I thought it would be too much for my business at the time. In other words I did not consider myself ready yet.
- *Having celebrities wearing their products and talking about it in public*; Globe Hope's strategy on having celebrities wear their brand is an effective and cost efficient way. To manage celebrities to market your brand for you is to indicate that

you are appreciated and recognized. The more your brand is seen on celebrities the more attention received.

- *Utilizing trainees and students as part of business strategy*; although Autiotalo has been utilizing the assistance of trainees from the beginning it has not been in the same level with Globe Hope. Globe Hope has been more planned with its strategy involving trainees. Some of the trainees in Autiotalo have had experiences with Globe Hope as well. They all have told me the same; Globe Hope has been treating them with distance and almost with disrespect. Trainees have worked for Globe Hope designing new products to their line and brand but have paid enough attention and respect even if they would have succeeded on creating something useful to Globe Hope.

Frustration of the trainees is understandable but as an entrepreneur it is also easy to understand Globe Hope's strategy and acts on these incidents. Sad but true the circumstances in Finland are keeping ones acts as some might experience them, rather cold and egocentric. After comparing Globe Hope's and Autiotalo's strategies with trainees and students it has to be pointed out that both businesses have been utilizing trainees in their own ways but both very efficiently.

7.3.2 Comparison with a colleague: Jaana Laaksonen

Jaana Laaksonen has been operating side by side with me from the very first breath Autiotalo took as an idea. Laaksonen is a dear friend, a fellow student, a colleague but more than any of those, a person that I admire. Jaana Laaksonen has been very persistent with the design, general style and message she wishes to send with her collections. This is what will push Laaksonen forward with her brand; she knows what she wants and is not afraid of it.

Jaana Laaksonen is an exception to the crew observed, interviewed, discussed with and researched: Laaksonen is a student creating her own brand, not an entrepreneur. Her studies have been focused on creating a brand and heading towards possible entrepreneurship. The thesis she is working on is concentrated on her collection. It has been an advantage for both of us to be able to combine studies, entrepreneurship but friendship as well. Fruitful and eye-opening conversations, interviews and collaboration have assisted us on our separate but partly similar paths.

Jaana Laaksonen feels that it has been a definite advantage for her to witness and follow from a close range Autiotalo's fight for its existence from the beginning. She has learned quite much on entrepreneurship through my experiences and our mutual interests. Being part of LCCE®-project at Kymenlaakso University has also played a significant role especially in Laaksonen's case. We both agree on the fact that studies in general should be more related to the actual practice, real life examples and experiences. (Laaksonen, 2011)

The three-year-process in the case of Autiotalo has taught both of us as individuals and entrepreneurs to see things in different light. Three years ago we both believed in the opportunities that sustainable development could provide to a clothing and textile business. Today sustainable development as value added has already suffered from inflation in the field of clothing business. People were losing interest quite soon and therefore it has been getting harder to compete or create something actually new and fresh on the field. (Laaksonen, 2012)

One can be successful in differentiating if one is able (or lucky) to offer consumers something to a clear need, something exceptionally different or fresh from others and hard to copy as well or something that will add value to the product or service in a way that has not been experienced yet. Marleena Terho's case is a good example of this. Terho has taken advantage on value adding in her case by offering consumers a fresh technique of creating fashion.

7.3.3 Comparison with a colleague: Terho Design, Marleena Terho

Marleena Terho from Terho Design is uncertain on how to reach the segments desired. In other words segmentation in marketing has not been properly considered or analyzed yet. Marleena sees and recognizes serious hesitation in this certain area of business in her case. On the other hand Marleena feels that the target markets are quite wide in her case; she considers that it is altogether a good thing if every woman hears about her brand and collection of clothing. It is partly easy to agree with Marleena after having watched and followed her career and path from close range with similar interests in mind. Segmentation is not the easiest task to concentrate on and develop. Sometimes the right segments can be located as a result of a large campaign and sometimes by a lucky coincidence or a long shot. (Terho, 2012)

Marketing in the case of Terho Design has been accomplished mainly in the form of briefing. With the means of briefing a decent and versatile amount of publicity and media attention has been reached. (Terho, 2012)

I have been following Terho Design's entering to the markets with great interest and curiosity and I do admire Marleena's proceeding matters and style. She is definitely determined and dedicated to her matter and causes. These are one of the best qualities of an entrepreneur.

At the same time Marleena found a niche from the markets: Zero-waste design and technics of clothing. Although the subject is not new innovation anymore, it is new for most of the consumers. In order to get media attention and publicity Marleena was strongly focused on the zero-waste techniques in producing fashion. This caught the eye of the media and functioned as a magnet for the benefit of Terho Design.

Terho says that she would have to concentrate more on her segmentation. She has divided the target markets and groups which her collection of clothing is aiming at. There are two of these target groups; younger design-oriented women and "culturally-oriented ladies" like Marleena has named the second group. (Terho, 2012)

I believe that with more careful consideration Terho Design could reach more potential consumers. By analyzing and researching more the markets the possibilities for Terho Design (and for other businesses as well) would most probably grow considering the fact that Terho Design has already had a notable amount of media attention. I strongly advice Terho Design to pay more attention to her segmentation and market analysis when she has already gained publicity and media attention: Not the most facile ones to achieve these days.

Like in many other cases Marleena has not yet been successful on supporting her only with her collection of clothing. There are other means, operations and actions one has to do in order to survive. In Marleena's case she is supporting herself being an entrepreneur but it requires more than just the collection of zero-waste designed clothing. Marleena is also operating as a freelancer designing clothes, design assistant and some graphic designing. The same procedures seem to be in common among many other entrepreneurs in the field of business. (Terho, 2012)

Terho Design has financed its operations with equities which are rather small own savings. Terho has not been leaning to loans or credits of any kind, at least not yet. The first year of entrepreneurship Terho was also granted with start-up support from the Finnish government and for the past two months she has been contributed with housing benefit for her living. (Terho, 2012)

It is harder for an entrepreneur to supply for government based supports or loans than it is for other fellow nationals, but it is your right as a Finnish citizen as well. As an entrepreneur one will have to be tough and persistent to achieve the same rights others are receiving just by doing nothing. Like Marleena's case proves, even a great amount of publicity nor media attention does not necessarily support enough. It requires much more efforts to reach targets. Entrepreneurship requires all the company, all the possible networks and assistance from outside as well.

7.3.4 Comparison with a colleague: Anneville, Anne Myyry

Anne Myyry, dressmaker and founder of Anneville believes that one of the challenges a dressmaker is facing is the attitude towards sewing. Many people seem to think that a dressmaker can produce a dress by sewing it properly but not really having much pressure on the actual designing phase. Myyry considers this to be frustrating and on false basis. (Myyry, 2012)

Myyry, among many others, would like to see herself as a dressmaker who could devote her actions to designing and creating unique pieces of clothing that would sell. The issues keeping her away from her dream, besides the attitudes of people, are mostly due to her own choices and uncertainty on her talent. Myyry is a typical Finnish worker/entrepreneur who wishes not to show off too much nor get too conscious on her own talent. (Myyry, 2012)

Anne Myyry has been a sole trader from 1998 but she has not solely been an entrepreneur all that time. At the same time with entrepreneurship Myyry has also worked as a welder and a mother for her two daughters. She believes this way she is gaining more experience in life and her self esteem and respect to a higher level. Myyry comments that being on a pay-roll helps you to stay focused as an entrepreneur as well hence you do not have to worry all the time about money related problems and situations. Work-

ing as a welder has been providing Anne Myyry with certain amount of freedom and possibilities to exhibit her talent in a way she appreciates herself. (Myyry, 2012)

In the future Myyry would like to see herself as a talented, designer dressmaker, not only a local someone who fixes your zipper and cuts your jeans shorter and occasionally custom tailors a dress for a summer wedding. Anne feels very strongly that it is hard to get rid off the label of “just a dressmaker” no matter how hard you would be concentrating on your own designs and collections. (Myyry, 2012)

In Anne´s case marketing has never been her strong sides or benefits. Anne considers her work itself to be the best possible business card. “*Although facebook has opened up a new range of possibilities as a new channel of marketing.*” Anne adds. Anne has had a vision on designing and utilizing recycled materials on her products from the beginning; she could have been a serious pioneer if she would have acted on her vision. She still believes that one day this type of designing and creating new from old could be her job. It is good to hold on your dreams and visions no matter how many years are passing by. (Myyry, 2012)

Many similarities among Anne Myyry and the other entrepreneurs have been interviewed during the process and experimental entrepreneurship are recognized. All of these entrepreneurs and individuals are waiting for certain locating or discovering to happen. They all believe that there lies a talent in them worth discovering. Unfortunately it is most likely that majority of them will not end up being discovered. The question of diversification then comes to the picture. Immediately after that the question of who will succeed on diversification and by which means.

7.4 Observations and interactions with customers

After having realized that personality, image and feeling could be the suitable differentiation variables for Autiotalo´s purposes it also became easier to research the topic. The front page of Autiotalo´s web store was shown to audience at a DPT plan seminar held at KyAMK´s in January 2010. In the seminar while presenting the ideas considering the DPT process the audience was asked to write down the first adjective came to their mind. Quite interesting, surprising and eye opening information was achieved. The adjectives were both positive and negative but the negative ones were the kind possible to turn into benefits in the end.

The results varied but one thing was definitely in common; apparently Autiotalo's front page gave multidimensional and visual image. This observation was satisfying and it was more than was hoped for. From the beginning the mission was to evoke feelings, no matter if they were good or even bad, but feelings. Feelings and emotions make people act in certain ways. After having felt something because of a visit to a webpage, makes the visitor needing to share the experience. Even if the feeling was negative, it might make the visitor needing to share it even more. The more people the visitor forwards his feelings, the better for the web page and the company behind it.

Observations on bloggers writing about Autiotalo were conducted. Usually opinions were mild but the followers of the blogs might express their feelings about the page quite strongly. One of these statements of the followers was: "I find this web store creepy. I am afraid of it." This opinion was satisfying and it meant that maybe this visitor would not end up ordering anything from the store but most definitely she had already told about it to many more people, to many more possible buyers who would get impressed by the atmosphere and visual style of the web store.

7.5 Reflection with customers and interest groups

The aim of this paragraph is try to locate possible gaps on the field and area of business with the help of customers and other interest groups. The saying "*Customer is always right*" does not necessarily apply but it does not mean that one should not listen to your customers. Autiotalo has received many useful notes and hints from customers. Actions on each feedback nor hint are not possible but they are useful for further investigations.

Autiotalo's customers are mainly women but there are men too and most of these men complain that there is so little to choose from when it comes to clothing. Many men feel that there is only Dressman nowadays and that is about it. Men would also be interested in unique, personal and special clothing but the only supply seems to be located in bigger cities; Helsinki, Tampere and Turku maybe. Autiotalo has a few male customers who are using Autiotalo for re-tailoring their clothes. This short of service and product could be a hit but it would require quite a lot more investigation before taking any further actions.

Another notable shortage are women on the age group of 50-something and over. They would require quality, wearable clothing for different purposes. One of their requirements is the clothing to be simply bigger sized than the ones sold on all the chain stores in every city. 50-something women also feel that the sizing 36-42 is not enough; we are not one size, our upper body might be unfit to the down part.

Another requirement for the clothing is timeless and quite simple style. During my entrepreneurship the matter has been discussed with many women and they all seem to feel sad and frustrated on it. True concentration on the matter and a possible gap seeking on the markets has been processed but unfortunately a decent outcome has not been located.

This segment of 50-something women would be a great starting point for someone to investigate more and evolve a business from. The segment would also be financially more securing than for instance the segment for Autiotalo's vintage customers (women aged 16-35). New line of fashion with yet ecological and ethnic values could be born with the help of this rather secure but challenging segment.

7.6 Locating gaps and niches

This chapter introduces some gaps and niches located in the process of this thesis and experimental entrepreneurship. This could not been possible without assistance of colleagues, competitors, customers and real life experiences. Gaps and niches for Autiotalo are presented here but not many actual operations have been taking place yet.

During the period of experimental entrepreneurship visits to quite a few fairs and events have been made. One of the first visits when already seriously planning and establishing the business was a visit to *Kierrätystehdas* in Helsinki in April 2009. This visit already revealed some shortages on the field of the business that should have been turned as advantages:

- Every company present at the fair were very similar to each other
- Narrow supply for men
- too much retro styled recycled material usage

- no shoes available on recycled materials (Note done later on: Today there are also shoes available; Globe Hope was pioneer in Finland for this too and designed and created shoes that had three different purposes and uses for them. Again; the question of timing comes to the picture)
- Many of the products were attempting too hard, the products were too much, too detailed or odd or just too special

Often demand controls supply. Opening the boutique clarified some issues. With the first months it became clear that sewing services would be rational to include to boutique's services. Also renting the vintage dresses was soon realized to be included in the services. These new services functioned as adding value but at the same time bringing some more financial support needed.

In the case of rental business the amount of word-of-mouth has proven its efficiency again. Advertisements on renting business have never been placed anywhere but almost every week somebody comes in seeking for a costume for a theme-party or an event where vintage clothing and accessories are required. Diversification sometimes happens accidentally and by demand. Further investigation on the field in general would increase the understanding of diversification too.

Differentiation has plenty of potential in the vintage field. Supply and suppliers seem to be very similar and no real exceptions to the competition exist. Instead of offering the same retro design over and over again, the focus should be on fresh ideas, like utilizing recycled knits in a new way like Jaana Laaksonen is doing. A good idea does not have to be a complicated one.

There is a definite demand on the field of men's clothing and clothing for middle-aged women. These groups or segments are saying it aloud but no-one is not acting on it still. It is a challenge but the one actually realizing and jumping to it with true visions and ambition would most likely profit from that decision.

8 FINAL CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Methodological and critical reflection

Like with every method there are certain conflicts to the subject researched. In this thesis the methodologies used have been in the form of narrative and qualitative researches. It is obvious that the researcher must work hard to achieve analytic distance from the role as the entrepreneur being investigated and the researcher herself at the same time.

As a researcher I have had to adjust to various different and specific roles. A certain mixture of them all has helped in keeping the research scope where it should have been. None of the roles has risen above others. Interest towards developing the field of business in general has been a benefit for the research; issues have not been seen just by the eyes of a sole trader but an individual, student and a mother that is concerned about the future. The last year of the research was operated from long distance, in the same time when working for another employee. This assisted with the struggle of financial troubles but as well with having a different point of view to the subject of the research. When this being the case it can be noted that the last half-a-year was investigated sort of like an outsider.

Personal diaries have been kept during the three years of experimental entrepreneurship, investigation and research. The usage and interpretation can be considered narrow, showing just one person's point of view and experiences. On the other hand diary keeping can also be considered natural, consistent and based on actual happenings and therefore giving an honest and truthful scope to the subject. Some parts of the thesis were accomplished with assistance of other entrepreneurs investigating their actions and experiences as entrepreneurs. This will give more points of view than just researcher's own to the subject.

There is a possibility of conflict between one's role as a main participant and one's role as a researcher. Questions about this sort of methodology being reliable enough are justified because of the personal touch of the method. Data collected was based on actual experiences, studies, interviews, discussions and real life face-to-face situations with clientele, associates, colleagues and competitors. A personal touch in the thesis is

strong but it seeks balance by the means of reflecting and comparing to other entrepreneurs and cases.

The researcher has been active on interacting and interviewing with representatives of different interest groups. This having been the case other people than the entrepreneur herself have been asked to share their experiences and points of view on entrepreneurship and the field of business. The dilemma of not imposing researcher influence on the interviewees has been decreased by sending the questionnaires via email instead of asking the questions face-to-face.

8.2 Personal conclusion

The period of my experimental entrepreneurship was tiring, exhausting, stressful and frustrating but I am definitely not regretting anything. I am happy that I got the guts to attempt how it feels to be an entrepreneur, running a micro-sized company in Finland. It has been demanding but I still feel that the process has given more than taken. I would not want to recommend entrepreneurship to just anyone. If I would do it again I would now know much more than I did three years ago. I am quite confident that the same mistakes would not be repeated.

When struggling with your problems as an entrepreneur, in the end one is alone with the problems. No matter how many contacts or friends one might have, one has to make the final decisions. Consulting costs and usually the problems faced as a starting entrepreneur tend to be financial. Even though one could afford a consultant for advices, they might not be proper or usable in every case. Opinions of others may be needed and achieved but closures have to be made by oneself.

Almost immediately after having started as an entrepreneur I faced the weird assumption that somehow as an entrepreneur I am not entitled to a salary or a fee for the work done for my company. Other sort of twisted assumption was that I am somehow immediately wealthy or rich when being an entrepreneur. It is assumed that you do not have any costs and everything that comes in goes straight to your own pocket. It feels extremely frustrating when one is in a need of all the support available from others and that is what is received.

Some of my personal relationships have grown to be stronger and some of them diminished during the time of entrepreneurship. I have made new friends and contacts, not only in business sense but in personal as well, during this period. My family has been very supporting with me and my entrepreneurship and I owe much to them. If your family, marriage or other close relationship survives your being an entrepreneur, it is definitely on a strong basis.

8.3 Personal conclusions on the field of business today

During the recent years sustainable development has earned a title of a trend, if not a megatrend already. Businesses concentrating on sustainable lifestyle are established and companies in general are trying to be more ecological and nature friendly in their operations. The concept of “green wash” has been on the table quite some time already.

A slight problem at the moment might be that the consumers favoring sustainable lifetime are still a limited and quite narrow segment. This is one of the challenges the study and the business is facing; sustainable lifestyle is considered to be more alternative than a common lifestyle. It would have to be generalized and diversified. People still seem to think that actions of just one person do not count even though in the end it is all about actions of individuals.

Consumers are already tired to the whole fuzz on sustainable development. Media and information flow have affected on this heavily and unfortunately quite negatively. Entrepreneurs are forced to find other ways to differentiate; green values, sustainable development or eco-friendliness just are not the thing anymore. They can still be values added but not the core competition advantage any more.

One of the tasks and problems is to provide customers with high quality, fashionable clothing without pricing it too high. It is impossible to compete with chain stores with prices that are raced to the verge. Businesses are forced to find other solutions and options. In the case of Autiotalo differentiation and positioning have been the proper ways to compete and locate own strengths. Competition for a business dedicating to clothing business is tough and demanding: we are living an era of fast-fashion and low-priced clothing. Everyone in the field of clothing is your competitor; not just the ones specialized to green values and sustainability but the huge global brands as well.

Networking is a trend today. Networking and collaboration are adjustable alternatives to traditional advertising, especially for an entrepreneur starting up operations. Today there are several ways of networking and collaborating, picking up the suitable and actually functioning ones could be a problem. Working together and networking offer an entrepreneur chances to join forces, cost efficiency and more channels.

9 ADVICE FOR THE ROAD FOR ENTREPRENEURS STARTING THEIR BUSINESSES

To conclude the thesis some golden advice based on experiences as an entrepreneur are shared. The aim of the advice is to ease the load in the beginning of entrepreneurship and guide to a shorter path, maybe taking some short cuts. It is important to remember that all in all, we are just humans and we do make mistakes. Luckily at some point by making mistakes we learn. I hope that some of my mistakes will teach something to someone, including me.

- Try not to do everything by yourself. Take advantage of all your contacts, use the assistance of your friends, family, university, old school teachers, former employees, authorities
- Bookkeeping should be operated by a professional to avoid sleepless nights and to save time. Everything is not measurable financially.
- Tender everything. By tendering out everything regularly it is possibly to save up remarkable amounts. It does require time and effort first, but afterwards only updates every now and then are needed.
- Be strict and precise. There are always people attempting to benefit from other people's efforts.
- Only purchase to a need. Make a shopping list categorized into four sections; 1. What is really needed in order to operate and get the business started; 2. What is needed in the near future; 3. What is needed in the future and finally; 4. what might be needed at some point
- Utilize students and trainees giving them responsibility and challenging tasks; the advantages of collaboration are mutual
- Create a timetable and stick with it
- Make a list of and categorize all the networks and interest groups
- Create a zero-calculation; be financially prepared

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