Using service design methods for B2b service brand concept development:

Case company

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Acknowledgments

Three years ago, I remember lying on the floor of my room flat on my back, steering at the ceiling and thinking how impossible and difficult it would be to get here. In a deep moment of silence I took one of the most difficult decision I have ever taken in my life. I left my family, my house, I sold my car, I quit my job and I jumped to the unknown.

It has been a long journey, filled with very difficult challenges and sacrifices made. 2 years in Finland without seeing family, I miss them so much…

A mi tía Rosy, te dedico esto tía preciosa. Gracias por todo el amor que me diste, tu cariño y nobleza las seguire llevando en mi corazón y el mi estomago, eres parte de mi personalidad…

Este logro es para mis padres; sus voces me motivaron para llegar hasta aquí. Todo lo que soy se los debo a ellos.

A mis hermanos; Claudia, Markus, Alfonso, Abraham, Rocio… El resto de mi vida no será suficiente para agradecerles todo el apoyo que me dieron. Soy muy afortunado al tenerlos.

A los Marrajos; Que grandes momentos e inolvidables. A Edu, muchísimas gracias por confiar en mi.

To the noble people of Finland,

It has been a real privilege having learned so much from you, thank you for your friendship and kindness; I will take you everywhere I go as part of me. Thanks to Laurea University for having given me this great opportunity and to my dearest professors for having made an important impact in my life.
A short time before this study was initiated, a small B2b service company had just began operating its business without a brand of its own. The company owners were looking to design an innovative brand for their business. The purpose of this thesis was to develop the brand for this service company in the B2b context, using practical service design and Strategic design research methods.

This thesis report represents a framework for developing a B2b service brand using research methods commonly practiced in the Strategic design and service design fields. The framework is based on an extensive literature review in branding definitions and a branding expert interview. The result of the literature review and the field research, provide important findings to be consider for the case company’s brand’s development.

The entire report is divided in two parts; the literature research framework and the practical fieldwork. The literature research describes the most important findings from branding and the B2b branding context. It explores the backbone of academic marketing theories and how these are linked to the branding service practice evolution. Secondly, it reviews the branding models, opinions and research from practitioners to complete the theoretical framework.

The second part of this thesis study describes practical applications of the already mentioned design fields’ methods, that are being used in present days when developing service brands. It also provides detail explanation the steps taken during practical research with case company and some results. The thesis concludes with an overview of benefits obtained from this research for the case company according to the business owner’s perspective and some final comments from the thesis author to be considered for the future in similar research.

Keywords: Strategic Branding, service design, service Branding, service marketing, B2b branding, User-center design
Introduction

In the modern business world, most companies have begun adopting the service business mindset. It is clear that the service economy is predominant now, and will be even more. In practice, the distinctive properties of services such as intangibility, requires a departure from the product based business models in business activities; marketing, sales etc. (Ojasalo 2009, 216.)

A short time before this study was initiated, a small B2b service company had just began operating its business without a brand of its own. The company owners were seeking new ways to improve their service business. Coming from the service design background, I became curious to explore the possibility of applying the service design research methods to develop a service brand concept.

Service design and branding topics are both extensive in theoretical literature and in practical concepts definitions. Nevertheless, I found supporting research in both practices that describe some common objectives in developing services and/or brands; the development of customer experience through touchpoints design being one of these common objectives. (Moritz 1995, 49.) Therefore opening the possibilities to use the service design methods to develop a service brand in the B2b context for this research case company.

General branding literature found in branding research and branding practice, often describe a brand as having tangible and intangible aspects, both equally important in the brand development. (Balakrishnan 2009, 621.) However, some consulting business companies (silver.com, 2014) use a design approach to develop both of these tangible and intangible brand properties to design the whole brand. Interesting enough, some of the tools, described later in the text are used to develop these brand, are commonly used in the service design field.

However, little information was found of the service brand development in the B2b context. This research departs from the described above findings to explore the use of service design tools to develop a B2b service brand concept for the case company Rt-Ratkaisut. Unfortunately, due to several limitations, this exploratory research only focuses in some of the B2b service brand aspects. Nevertheless, the result of the literature review and the field research provide important findings to be considered for the case company’s brand’s development.
1.1 Research Context

The research context maps the location of this research within the academic literature. This chapter tries to provide the reader the core focus of the consulted knowledge. This helps the reader create a mental picture of the areas that were taken into consideration for this report.

To understand better the development of a service brand using service design methods, this research begins by looking back into the theoretical background from which both practices; service design and branding emerge. Figure 1, describes the research context from the theoretical background from which this study departs. The similarities found in the origin of both fields led this research to focus in the marketing theories in a beginning. Supporting research in service branding origins drew the focus of this theoretical background to the service dominant logic. (Merz et al. 2008, 332.)

Looking into to the future for businesses offering services eventually lead to look for possible compatibilities of between service marketing theories. The case company characteristics also obligated to acquire a service logic mindset in theory. This means approaching from a service dominant logic perspective to look into related theories that describe value co-creation. The boundaries the each one of the theories becomes fuzzy. However, the research became more consistent more consistently focus in modern service marketing models and concepts as is a complete practical related to branding and service design.

Figure 1: The research context of this thesis takes into consideration at least five different theoretical perspectives
Branding in general can be covered from many different approaches. Due to the limited amount of research found to suit this exact topic’s focus, which included: B2b service marketing, service design, and Strategic design. This thesis framework tries to broadly define different characteristics of branding in general that will define better the research topic. However, these characteristics extracted from different aspects of branding and related academic fields are later combined during the final research results and provide a united definition of B2b service branding from the design Strategic perspective to create much better understanding.

This research also covers several different areas in the academic as well as the practical fields. The main purpose in providing this literature background is to understand how branding originates and resonates in the modern practical business world. In order to digest the origins of this research topic, the author feels it is important to underline in the framework how this different characteristics from the academic theories correlate to one another forming a brand from a B2b service branding and the marketing theories.

1.2 Thesis Purpose

The purpose of this research was to develop a B2b service brand concept for the case company Rt-Ratkaisut by using service design and Strategic research methods. Due to important limitations described later in the research limitations section; the study modified its aims. The study then focused mainly in using the service design and Strategic design methods to research only parts of the entire B2b service brand concept characteristics. Using the mentioned practical research methods to gathered insight data, this thesis aimed gathered enough new insights for the case company to integrated and used for future’s brand development. These new aims then were intended to understand and view differently the B2b service Business brand context of the Rt-Ratkaisut Company from the design perspective and hoped to contribute in some way to the company’s brand personality and vision.

Research Limitations

Developing a company’s B2b service brand requires a lot of work. It requires a lot of collaboration and support from different departments of the company itself; marketing, Finances, design etc. Unfortunately, due to size of the case company, this research lacked support from specialized departments that provided concrete data from different areas that are essential to complete the brand requirements and thus this research had to adjust in dealing with “one man operation” situations. It is also likely that when dealing with designing the complete service brand this research would have also require different kind of theoretical branding framework that focused more on the tangible or the business aspects of the brand. Neverthe-
less, rather than designing the complete service brand concept of the case company, the author of this research was limited to gathered insight data to contribute for the bigger service brand picture.

This implies borrowing important elements from the brand literature and branding models, use practical tools from the service design and Strategic design fields and apply the results to the company case service brand context. Unfortunate, to this date, there are not sufficient research studies on the subject of B2b service brand that approach this subject from the practical perspective of service design or Strategic design methods. Likewise, there was not enough literature that would also describe cases with same business characteristics of the case company Rt-Ratkaisut. This being said, the literature alternatives used in this research are a consequence of the author’s criteria in finding models that would adapt to the case company characteristics.

It is important that the reader takes into consideration that the models described in this research as the literature background do not represent the ultimate framework for designing the Strategic B2b service brand concept, nor does this study represent the a framework for designing the brand for every company. It would be unlikely to suggest that there is one ultimate guide to design a brand model or that one is more correct than other. This is because even during the application process of current literature, branding theories tend to be subjective to bradding experts or academic’s opinion and choice of practice. For this, it was in the author best consideration to adopt different branding models and academic research studies that are in some way similar to the this specific case company.

1.3 Research Process

This research is divided in two main parts. Each part then divides and describes in more detail elements found in the literature review and field research. The first part is a description of the marketing theories, starting with the service Dominant Logic and it’s relation with branding. The marketing theories build the initial framework of branding in from a wide perspective.

The second part is a collection of important branding elements found in literature review. It’s a representation of only those topics that are relevant for the case company service, brand, and business characteristics. The relevant elements are then transferred to the end of the field research. This can also be seen as an initial reference to build the brand characteristics found in literature.
The branding literature in this research is divided in five themes; Brand equity, business brand, service brand, B2b branding and Strategic branding. This part also addresses relevant aspects of the case company in order to link the theoretical framework with the actual field research to be developed.

The last part describes the field research. Starting with the service design phases and relation with branding, to the Strategic design model in which this study was done. This stage describes in detail the tools from service design and Strategic design that were used during the field research. The service design and Strategic design tools create a filter of the relevant elements found in literature review and marketing theories that fit the company case characteristics. The Final stage of the research describes in detail the practical findings.
2 Case company Description

This chapter outlines in the case company relevant information for this study. The content of this description provides a mental map of the activities and shape of the business, history and vision. The following text tries to provide a neutral voice for the reader’s business evaluation and understanding for the next chapters.

RT - Ratkaisut: Case Company

Rt- Ratkaisut is a company founded by 2 people from Spain living in Finland. It was originally founded as a remodeling, contract and construction company by it’s owners in January 2013, though, by unexpected turns in the life of the owners Rt- Ratkaisut changed drastically it’s business focus by the end of April 2013, when the owners decided to take on different business challenge and rethink the business opportunities found in this country beyond the contract construction and leading more into importing services from Spain.

Some time in the middle of March of 2013 the 2 owners faced with what would seemed to be a long lasting economic recession at the time, particularly in Finland, affecting the construction and house remodeling sector. The 2 owners found this as a sign of opportunity for change in business. After doing some informal market research, the 2 owners started contemplated in importing to Finland. At first, they thought of bringing to Finland typical Spanish consumption goods bringing tomatoes, olive oil, and frozen food such as bakery and sweet desserts. One of the 2 owners made contact with a large size B2b Company in Spain that sales premade frozen bakery and desserts to convenient chain stores and supermarkets around Spain. The Company, (Company X) focus it’s business in selling and distributing in large quantities to its customers, some in other parts of the world.

Rt- Ratkaisut approach Company X in attempt to form a partners and become the official distributor of the frozen bakery goods in Scandinavia, starting with Finland. Company X then gave consent and passed Rt- Ratkaisut the rights of their goods’ distribution. The frozen goods include a variety of frozen bakery and desserts that needs to go through a process of defreezing and some heating before put in display. The catalog of bakery products and desserts includes a wide variety options, considered by many of its consumers very rich in flavor. It also contains higher quality and more ingredients than the average bakery found in Finland. Chocolate filling croissants for example, are perceived to contain twice as much chocolate filling than those sold by similar Finnish brands. The catalog also offers a very distinctive and different variety of product combinations, such as yogurt filling blue berry muffins. With this many options and quality, the product’s distributed by Rt- Ratkaisut can be easily compete in it’s products in the Finnish market.
The starting point

Rt- Ratkaisut started a tryout period and added one more partner in order to start with a small initial investment of 15,000€. From the beginning the company targeted convenient stores, restaurants, cafeterias, supermarkets, and executive representing of store chains. Regardless of having no previous knowledge of the convenient stores business network in Finland, the food industry, business management, business offering or Finnish language for that matter, the 3 owners then initiated business activities going door to door and offering to become suppliers of bakery goods products using temporarily the name of company X as official distributors. The company has then grown adding 3 sales representatives, one of which is also in charge of customer service via telephone and contract other professional services such as, legal, accounting and charging. Rt- Ratkaisut has reported to gain an increased growth of billing 2,000€ in the beginning to 17,000€ in January 2014.

Despite of the changed in the business focus Rt-Ratkaisut has not yet changed the name of the company, neither do they develops their business brand as service providers in the frozen food industry. The 3 owners have yet to come up with a formal business plan and business strategies or a brand structure that defines it’s business new objectives, hopefully the this study helps initiate this process.

3 Marketing Theories

This chapter outlines the theoretical references obtained from the academic world. It combines different marketing theories in order to provide background knowledge of the connection of between brand theory and brand practice. Some of the concepts found in this chapters support in theory the practical branding models and concepts and practical use of the fieldwork study.

3.1 The importance of service Dominant theory to service companies

This research offers to contribute in a small part of the academic, and branding practice discussion by submitting a study that combines both worlds. Marketing theories like the service dominant logic and the value network co-creation for example, provide an important aspect of the branding practice, though the theoretical fundamentals of branding might not be commonly known to the branding practitioners. In any case, both approaches support and contribute to each other. The following section of this thesis aims to provide a brief overview of those academic findings in the marketing theories that are fundamental in creating a connection with the modern branding and its evolution.
3.2 Goods vs. services distinction

The world’s economy is constantly changing, new trends in consumption, marketing philosophies theories among others are defining the way we approach business offerings/strategies and design brands. Marketing ideologies arise to try to make sense and define the new paradigm in the value exchange in present markets. Value exchange paradigms are directly linked to the way we approach business offerings. Likewise, a constant change in consumer behavior trends shifts the business marketing and strategies in the creation of new brands. (Lush et al. 2006, 8.)

The goods-driven marketing theory for example, is now actually recognized as conventional marketing theory among many academics and most marketing practitioners. Present marketing theories highlight and focus the business development from a good’s-driven economy towards service’s-driven economy approach, this causes changes in the way we think and deal with it’s marketing orientation. Table 1 describes the these differences in marketing approaches, the roles customers as well as the roles “goods” change dramatically in the business arena. (Lush et al. 2006, 11.)
### Table 1: Operand and operant resources help distinguish the origin of goods and service-centered views (Lush et al. 2006, 11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of Goods</th>
<th>Traditional Goods-centered Dominant Logic</th>
<th>Emerging service-centered Dominant Logic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Unit Of Exchange</td>
<td>People exchange for goods.</td>
<td>People exchange to acquire the benefits of specialized competences (knowledge and skills), or services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of customers</td>
<td>Goods are end products.</td>
<td>Goods are transmitters of operant resources. (Embedded knowledge). They are intermediate “Products” by customers as appliances to provide a service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The customer is the recipient of goods. Marketers segment them, penetrate them, distribute to them.</td>
<td>The consumer is a co-producer of service. Marketing is a process of doing things in interaction with the customers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Service Dominant Logic

The service dominant logic Vargo et al. (2006, 44), describe the service dominant logic as value exchanged trading cycle in which physical goods are use to provide a service(s). In this context, services are specialized competences of knowledge and skills. This does not mean that “goods” are less important than services or that good’s dominant logic mistakes it’s purpose in the marketing world, rather it creates a distinction for further discussion. In service Dominant Logic, “goods” encapsulate services within. From this perspective it is clear to see
that “goods” provide new value of beyond the tangible, allowing physical goods to become instruments for endless service opportunities.

Furthermore, Lush et al. (2010, 45), provide the S-D logic framework, which favors service opportunities as open opportunities to satisfy the customers’ needs. In this context service facilitators (business) provide their customers with a value propositions. Though different customers have different needs, it is understood that businesses and service providers find themselves trying to understand the dimensions of these needs. Lush et al (2010, 57), suggest the process does require a deeper understanding in the development of a service value propositions and clear understanding of customers’ role in the service as well as their perspective. The same way as services can be a result from value creation (Grönroos 2011, 2). In other words, it requires customers’ context analysis, which includes the customers as active participants in the search for the service value propositions. It is clear then that the business themselves cannot deliver value, only value propositions. (Grönroos et al. 2012, 135). Thus, customers become co-creators. Therefor customers determine value from accepting the offer as a reasonable value proposition, making a distinctions between value added by the businesses or genuine value proposition (Edvardsson et al. 2011, 543).

The description of the customers as co-creation of service values propositions can often create confusion that can only be understood by explaining the principles of services. Keep in mind that traditionally in the goods-centered logic, business provides value proposition assuming what is best for the customers’ needs. Grönroos et al. (2012, 130), describe a deeper customer approach by highlighting that business should go even deeper in the search for this service proposition context and get involve in customers’ lives. He also describes the action of value creation has different spheres in which the customers and business have different roles in the value co-creation. Customers themselves experience the value in service from different perspectives; while interacting with the service or helping co-create the value proposition outside the direct interaction. (Merz 2009, 336.) Service providers must also take into account this diversity formulating their own conclusions of customer’s needs. Same way goes as for creating value for the customer, with the customers. (Grönroos et al. 2012, 135.)

Business have to consider that value is created reciprocally with customers, it essentially departs from two sides; value-in-use for customers and financial value by the provider. For this reason, reciprocal value creation is fundamental basis of business with services as mediation factor (Grönroos 2011, 3). Consumers’ co-creation in service value proposition is extremely important for companies at many different levels. Companies seeking customer satisfaction for example have to pay close attention on customers’ psychological effects. Researchers have found customers’ participation in the service process to have psychological effects in customer satisfaction, for value is always uniquely perceived and determined by the custom-
er. (Bendapudi et al. 2003, 14.) Self-service customers’ are participants of their own goods and service production. Taking into account that customers are well informed and are constantly examining the market offering it becomes obvious that some customers search for value customization. For this, I offer to see it from this perspective; While customers don’t always know what they want it would be more precise to say that customers always know what they don’t want. From this perspective, customers can also be seen as value experts and ideal consultants for value proposition design offering.

To better understand the service dominant logic is important to understand the more concretely what the properties of services are and why they differ so much from products. Here are some practical examples; from the service dominant logic perspective, when speaking of services a service company needs to define it’s service operation: (1) The way in which the service is deliver. (2) A service always generates experiences in their service consumer; therefor the service experience is the customer’s direct emotional experience of the service. (3) A service outcome is not necessarily the completion of the action that takes place to perform a service, rather the benefits and results of the service for the consumer, (4) which, at the same time generates value (again, for the customer), meaning, it generates benefit for the customer. (Grace et al. 2002,123.)

3.4 The network value proposition

Buying a unique value proposition is always the same as buying a solution integrated by several different value propositions (Grönroos et al. 2012). Though one company cannot deliver value by itself. Customers are buying solutions that are composed by different value propositions from different business networks (Gümmesson 2008,10). A customer buys a tire in a store in Helsinki from company A that was delivered by company B from Turku who got the raw material from company C in Saint Petersburg, the list goes on and on. From this perspective, this whole transaction involving several companies is based on partnerships; relationships are heavily concentrated in different value-creation. They all have different objectives for their targets might be different from one another. One company might target car owners, another might target car dealers, and another simply targets logistics for the delivery of such tires. Contemplating this from the S-D logic perspective can lead to the recognition that value creation is can also be described from the context of networks, value network creation (Lush et al. 2010, 20.)

Share value co-creation comes from the complexity of groups of business partnerships and customer co-creation in each business relationships (Wagner et al. 2008, 841). By apply the network theory we can begin to understand better the implication every chain in the design
of service or value proposition generates alterations for other nodes within the same business network. This is important because in the company brand design such alterations among partnerships need to be considered in order to understand widely the ecosystem in which a brand resides. Let’s not forget that a market is self-organized by millions of consumer from distinct entities who are influenced by the context of a network belonging. (Wagner et al. 2008, 842.)

The fact that businesses should co-create the value proposition with their consumers but also with possible business partners and maybe even possibly if not obligatory with the business partner’s customers to build a brand as a storytelling that satisfies the quality of the entire “network”. Boeing for example manufactures planes for in a B2b relation to Airlines. The B2b selling targets rely mostly in B2b technical demands, as could be technology, fuel efficiency, speed, pricing etc. Yet, it is obvious end customers’ demands influence different aspects, mostly located in the interaction elements such as comfort features and facilities to name a few. In this context Boeing must pay close attention and rely in customer’s co-creation design to deliver the right value proposition for the airlines. (Gümmesson et al. 2008, 1.)

In current branding practices for example, research demonstrates that brand value is co-created by community-based negotiations and symbolic interpretations of brand-related information as well as personal narratives based on personal impersonal experiences with brands. (Merz et al. 2009, 332.)

4 Branding Literature Research

This chapter provides a branding framework from different perspectives. The chapter divides different aspects of the branding practice starting with its origins. These branding sections aim to provide an introduction for the brand world in a practical context.
4.1 Branding evolution

Brand design practices have evolved closely linked to the academic marketing theories. From the goods dominant logic to the service dominant logic, brand literature shows us how the S-D logic theory is consistent with the service ecosystem that embraces branding services (Merz et al. 2009, 330). Table 2 demonstrates the evolution of the conventional branding derived from the individual goods’ focus logic to the value focus to the relationship-focus to the stakeholder focus (Merz, et al. 2009, 337.) Following with this reasoning, today the stakeholder focus approach allows for to consider each stakeholder to co-creative participate in the brand value proposition the same way as in a network value proposition (Clatworthy et al. 111).

Branding History

Branding in the marketing field originated after the Second World War, as a way for customers to identify and recognized goods (products), specially manufactured products that target potential customers who remained passive (Merz et al. 2009, 330). Now days, branding not only does that, but also supports the branding identity of the stakeholder value creation (Jones 2005, 2).
Research shows that companies’ earnings outcomes is directly linked with having strong brands. Brand managers are now days hugely responsible for the future of the business. Their responsibility lays in most of the planning, strategy and distribution of the product or service marketing along with all of the brand architecture as well as the financial aspects and earnings of the services supported by the brand and company and providing greater return their stakeholders. (Madden et al. 2006, 224.)

4.2 Branding Literature background

Branding plays an important role in business and marketing. Yet, despite the growing number of brands, the branding literature is still inconsistent and abstract in the terminology. Literature describes different definitions and focus from different branding approaches when it comes to what the brands. (Grace et al. 2002, 8.) One thing remains clear; service brand development process takes more work than goods based business models (Chernatory et al. 2010, 3.)

Other service brand description from brand practitioners describe service brand as being an experience that has consistency in communicating it’s values, design, identity, symbols, people, stories, relationships and it’s customers (Martinez et al. 2013, 44). Though, branding definition can expand in each one of its categories: company branding, service branding, product branding, B2b branding, B2c branding, to name a few. This research study focuses in the B2b service Company branding for the purpose of expand on the appropriate branding framework of the company case study.

Branding services phases it’s own challenges, mainly due to the intangibility aspects of services (Dibb et al. 1993, 25). The tangible value aspects on products are something that can be demonstrated with the physical functions of the product. The intangible value properties of services however are mostly abstract; they can only be demonstrated with ideals and beliefs because the provided service value proposition is merely subjective to the customer. Most services are either experience goods or credence goods (Moorthi 2002, 261).

Service branding aims to represent these customers’ ideals, which is tied with social, cultural needs and aspirations people have (Newbery et al. 2013, 29). It is not surprise that branding now focuses more highlighting the brand value creation process through customers’ co-creation and translate those ideals into brands (Merz et al. 2009, 330).

From its origins, branding in general has been used as a symbol of ownership and reputation. Branding in animals was indeed a mark sign of distinction that incorporates intangibles, identities that associate with personality. (Bastos et al. 2012, 339.) Though there are many varia-
bles within the company, this needs to be considering as something that plays a role in this brand personality. Company culture for example is in a way a framework that postulates the brand values for which the business employees support as their values. (Andriopoulos et al. 2008, 47.)

Designing something as intangible as a B2b service company brand needs also faces time limitations. Developing what the service brand message is trying to communicate includes a whole process behind that need to be aligned in order to support it. Chernatory et al. (2010), 3) for example, suggests that service branding is based partly on building the company culture first.

Ultimately, a brand process guideline varies depending on context and focus of brand. Designing a product’s brand versus a service’s brand differs in many ways. Branding experts from different fields refer to a variety of brand characteristic that address customers’ implications. Aaker (2014, 1), for example, refers to brand personality dimensions when describing important brand factors that have significant implications in for the customers’ brand experience. In other words, it is understood that brands have many different dimensions to be analyzed. Personally, I found no research that talks about branding boundaries or limitations. Therefore, brand literature yields brand practitioners to use different means in the existing brand dimensions, branding models and branding formulas. And apply them within the brand context to design the brands roots.

A tourism industry brand study provides a clear example of how different the branding context can be. Branding tourism destinations faces struggle to finding ways to brand the same characteristics of service intangible properties apply. In the tourism sector for example, the macro-environmental factors that play an important role in branding destinations, though the brand dimension are similarly intangible. The destination branding study, this particular branding must communicate and promote the destination’s value, image, prestige and lifestyle of destination in order to be successful.

The branding tourism the characteristics rely in exploiting the destination history focusing in heritage, values, culture or perceived image (See figure 2). Is up to brand designers to insure and decide the message they want to embed and provide to reflect on potential customers of such destinations whether it is symbolic or functional. Here are some interesting aspects of those characteristics between the tangibles and intangibles used to brand a destination. (Balakrishnan 2009, 621.)
Figure 2: Branding destinations characteristics division from Strategic approach (Balakrishnan, 2009, 619).

Unfortunately in this case, currently there is no existing literature that describes the same characteristics of the business case, necessary to design the brand. Thus, as mentioned in the research objective, this research will use elements from different brand models that are applicable only to the characteristics of the case company Rt-Ratkaisut to develop the brand concept within it’s business contest and meet the research objectives in this research.

Consequently, the following parts of this research will focus on studying the characteristics business described by the Rt-Ratkaisut business’s owners. The result of this part of the research provide a branding framework of the brand development characteristics that Rt-Ratkaisut needs to apply within their own business brand contest. Finally, the author of this research decided to include and review “Strategic branding” in order to find out more about the development process from this perspective as this will define the practical method approach for the case company.

According to business description of the Rt-Ratkaisut business model the company concentrates in providing services, mainly in a B2b environment. Hence, I reviewed several proposed brand design models, however most models lack empirical testing and have different branding focus, non of this models describes all of the characteristics needed for the company case reviewed in this study; B2b, service brand design. For this I provide a summary framework highlighting the most repetitive elements that within branding from different perspectives relating to B2b Branding, service Branding, Product Branding and Company Branding that underline what are the most command B2b service brand descriptions.

4.3 Brand Equity

This first pillar of a brand background concentrates on Aaker (1996) and Keller (2003) definition of brand equity, which provides some clues of the brand definitions taking into account
that even though brand equity can refer to the financial value of the brand it is also a representation of what the brand means for the customers.

Brand equity mainly surrounds the aspects of product branding in the discipline of marketing though it does a good job in highlighting contextually important factors of brand value. Aaker and Keller (1996, 233), both refer to some categories that add provide value for a service or a product. Aaker notes; brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other assets as significant for consumer-based brand equity (CBBE). Aaker’s framework is more inclined towards using customer’s memory association to rate the brand success, in other words, the brand representation for the customer. (Juntunen et al. 2011, 3.)

Service branding literature (Clatworthy, 2012; Grace, 2012; Maiden, 2010), sustains the need for considering the customer’s needs when designing a brand. Considering the brand parameters does exactly that if each parameter is matched with customers’ perspective and the customer’s association with their needs. Keller (2003, 45), argues that this step ensures the correct brand identity, thus ensuring the first step in building a strong brand, one that that will be well associated with customers’ minds with their own needs. (Moorhi 2002, 260). Keller logic relies on the fact that customer awareness and familiarity to the brand hold strong, favorable and unique brand associations in their memories to make a brand successful. (Kuhn et al. 2008, 45.)

In order for this to happen, the company image association must be consistent to the brand message. This includes company values, company culture, logo and anything that can be recognized and perceived or provide brand awareness. In other words, the brand message must be synchronized to be consistent through its different channels, and not only for the customer, but also for other stakeholders in order to generate the same identity we are designing for. (Juntunen et al. 2011, 3.)

Aaker approach to brand design identification considers looking a brand from four different perspectives, three of this I consider concur with the rest of the brand literature and therefore are the backbone of branding:

1. Brand as a product
2. Brand as a person
3. Brand as a symbol
(Aaker 1996, 265.)

Brand as a product to dissect the tangible and intangible aspects and how the customers relate to it. It also involves providing physical infrastructure through different types of goods
that account or validate for the intangible brand message through a more tangible clues. (Moorthi 2002, 266.) This could include more than just one tangible element, like the surroundings in an environment or it could also include what designers refer to as servicescapes.

Brand as a person deals with giving a human connotations, this is in order to relate with it easily. As humans we tend to give human qualities to goods, business and in this case brands. Giving brands human characteristics can help customers associate with a brand better. This characteristics mostly enclose gender, age, socio-economic class but most importantly emotional and sentimental aspects that are merely human or attitudes that want to be portrait customers: happy, sad, energetic, friendly etc. Looking a brand as a person also reveals the brand personality, the social, demographic and psychographic values or the human qualities are; Brand as an organization, brand as a person and brand as a symbol. (Moorthi 2002, 261.)

Contrary to what people generally think, a brand is more than visual aspects and features. Is not to be confused with the styling a brand only physically. New trends in branding call for partnerships within the design disciplines in order to stay innovative. New branding has taking a whole new process. Similar to the design process, new branding relies on Imagination and innovation. Successful brand experts like P&G design their product brands for the human senses. (Light 2006, 2.) They have realized that we need to tap into the human insight in order to speak the same language as our customers.

Brand as a symbol provides the means for an identity to be recognized. Easy to get familiarize with the brand. Aaker (1996, 240) describes the a symbol as something that represents and includes within a message symbolically, and I would even say it triggers psychologically something within the customer: A logo, a color, a gesture, a music note, a package, a program, a visual metaphor, a character, a tagline. (Moorthi 2002, 261.)

4.4 Business Branding

In plain rational terms, a brand of the company is considered both: a sign and a symbol for the company. Yet, brands are design to appeals to the human senses, instinctive natural desires at non rational but emotional level. Company brands are design to create a personal and social identity with a segment of the companies’ customers. (Bastos et al. 2012, 349.) A globalized world push us to be individualistic in our society, yet we can’t deny our basic natural instinct to connect with other humans is stronger. Company brands and marketing design their brands and marketing campaigns specifically to replenish us with that human need, the sense of connect and belong to something.
Customers respond to this need by creating tribes. Tribes that identify with company brands around brands they love. Starbucks and Harley Davison are both good examples of this (Lem-ley 2008, 17). A business brand is also used to provide a value proposition for their customers. The biggest brand component comes from the business value proposition and business goals of from the business model. Marketers must also learn how the business’ brand fits into the customers’ life but over all how customers might respond with changes in the messages the brand reflects. (Larson 2002, 1.) No wonder why some marketing consultant describe the company brand as the most valuable asset of the company. The company brand provides their customers credibility with to other product or service brands they might offer under the company brand. This credibility comes from customers; perception, inferences and beliefs with things like expertise, trustworthiness and liking. It provides a reputation. (Martenson 2007, 546.)

New branding research from the service perspective also suggests the importance in developing branding based on customer experience (Grace et al. 2002, Drury and Segal-Horn, 2003; Hsieh and Yuan, 2010, Clatworthy, 2012), service touch-points and touch-points behaviors. The strongest motivation in this iterates on the fact that the company brand needs to reflect an alignment from the service brand to the customer experience. Likewise, participatory research can effectively convey the development of a brand’s DNA. According to Worthy (2012, 24), the brand’s DNA should portrait within the brand personality, embedded by the customer experience.

Considering customer experience in the brand strategy grounds a sense of congruency in that of the service personality a brand should acquire. Now more than ever I think is an essential for new brands to portrait within their brand voice, a message that is an inclusion of the target customers’ personality. Like in any brand, the business brand relies heavily in word-of-mouth. (Dibb et al. 1993, 29.) It very important business to give serious consideration to this fact as business start building the brand characteristics and integrate it as an important dynamic part of their marketing process.

4.5 Service Branding

As service economy takes over, service offering becomes more popular. According to Ojasalo (2009, 216), product and service based businesses are looking new for ways to offer compelling experiences in their services, trying to gain an image and gain new financial benefits. (Light 2006, 216.) Manufacturing companies are extending into service business in order to differentiate themselves from competitors. Nevertheless, whether the service is from a product base company or a service business the new service offering needs to be branded and follow the service branding characteristics. (Brown et al. 2011, 202.) In fact, is recommended
that business launch different brands for different services because each service might contain different forms of providing each service (Moorthi 2002, 259).

Branding services constitutes dealing with the complex; intangible, heterogeneity, perishability and inseparability properties of services as suppose to characteristics of branding tangible products (Zeithaml et al. 2003, 33). While a product can be branding by its physical characteristics a service cannot. In the case of inseparability for example, a doctor cannot separate his service from his service.

When branding services, is important to design a tangible recognition for customers. This might be hard in product base branding. A study shows measuring differences between product and service branding that affect the customers. Customers’ feelings are associated with the brand image perception. Brand perception is also past experiences associated by the customers in the past encounter with the brand. While for service branding, the service brand (see Table 3) development process features, servicescapes, image of typical user, past experience with brand, word-of-mouth and interactions or relationship with employees were key. (Grace et al. 2002, 106.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIQUE TO PRODUCTS</th>
<th>COMMON TO BOTH</th>
<th>UNIQUE TO SERVICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Core product/Service</td>
<td>Servicescape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self image congruence</td>
<td>Experience with brand</td>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image of user</td>
<td>Employees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Key branding dimensions of products and services (Grace et al. 2002, 108.)

In terms of branding services branding, practitioners identify four possible brand characteristics:

1. Prioritizing quality (of service) - High service quality is the most common ingredient in successful brands.

2. Offer superior service - Brands focusing on proving a higher quality service and highly promoting it.
3. Get there first - Understand the service cycle and relationship with the customer before competitors. The first into consumer’s mind is what is important.

4. Be different - The highly importance fact of finding ways of differentiation from competitors to attract customers. Differentiations need to be somehow illustrated for the customers in clear ways; this is sometimes done with a simple but precise slogan for the right customers’ segment. (Dibb et al. 1993, 29.)

Most service marketing literature from the service marketing perspective agree that service branding characteristics come after finding the business’ market segmentations and deciding the segment that the brand will target. It also agrees on understanding the customers’ expectation of value and has services that fit in these characteristics. Last but not least, select the symbols that motivate and communicate in different ways the target customer (Dibb et al. 1993, 32).

4.6 B2b service Branding

Recent academic research highlights changes in suppliers and customer roles. Customers for example now have a more active involvement role in the interactions with suppliers than before. Academics yield marketers for to apply the service dominant logic or network theories at a practical level to highlight customer’s context to see opportunities in branding and marketing planning. Above all, they ask marketers to foresee the value creation and recognizing that both suppliers and customers operate in complex network contexts. B2b relation reason for being is the end consumer; therefor any B2b relation irremediably ends in B2C (Grace, et al. 2002, 6).

Recent research testing the Keller’s B2b branding equity model has made interesting discoveries in the B2b branding context. The brand characteristics according to in B2b branding context are associated the:

- B2b customers rely more on the business brands rather on than on the product brand suppliers offer.
- Brand slogans and names became irrelevant for comparison
- Association with the brand comes through product performance features or Style and design
- Credibility is relevant to organizational purchasing
- Successful purchases from the B2b suppliers are more rational than emotive. (Kuhn et al. 2008, 45.)
This results lead to the assumptions that the intangible aspect B2b service branding need to outline credibility in B2b business brands from the business brand itself, not the product or service brand they might offer. Other research also supports these same fundamentals, stating that in a B2b marketing context, brand success is specially supported by relationship between service provider and buyer. It also states that building trust in this relationship creates loyalty with the customer, needless to say that loyalty then generates financial profitability and prevents customer loss. (Rauyruen et al. 2009, 117)

Trust, in the relationship with the customer then becomes a key element. Brand experts share the idea that B2b branding relies heavily in building a strong company culture, making employees responsible for building strong bonds with their customers that create brand trust. (Wise et al. 2008, 11.) This type of trust relies on the constant interaction with their customers to assure that service provider is confident about the service the brand represents. It becomes then evident that generating trust in this relationship then generates loyalty for customers, and increases trust in the brand. This is the same as saying that a B2b brand depends on employees to play an important role in maintaining profitable relationships. (De Chernatony et al. 2003, 6.)

4.7 Strategic service branding

Customers will somehow always have something to say, good or bad, about the business through the business brand, it is irremediable. Specially now days with the use of communication tools like social media, it would be wise for business to take very seriously the customers’ voice. Let’s not forget that it can also be a powerful promoting weapon for them. In any case, anticipating this human action communication among customers and potential customers in which ever form it might be before building the brand roots, could clearly a good strategy in the long run.

Building on existing branding theories

Each of the above literate branding findings describes important distinctions that must be taken within the brand context for this business case. However, as mention in the beginning of the brand characteristics description, each of these brand descriptions is only relevant to the context and environment, which they are used (Roscam 2010, 12). Finding the exact model that fits the business brand represents a real challenge to the table.

The gathered brand literature from different context bring to live the examination of those elements that will eventually create the brand concept for this business case within their own
brand DNA identity. These elements within the service brand will be search in the practical approach through the service design and Strategic branding tools in the following sections and match the criteria of those found in the literature review.

The following elements and descriptions are the result of the literature review from different context. This result from different context exposes the pillars of the branding development process description to be search in the practical research to generate the brand concepts for the business case. However, this does not mean that the list presented is the conclusion to design the final brand concept of a business.

5 Design approach in branding

Practical application of the design fields can be very broad. This chapter provides an introduction of design background knowledge used to connect this study with branding development. It provides important characteristics of the design expertise and models to be taken in consideration for the practical research section.

5.1 Service Design

The distinctive characteristics of service properties of services, such as intangibility, promote a very different understanding in handling business activities that contrast with product based business models. Handling service based businesses activities is also part of this change in service mindset; It’s marketing, selling but primarily it’s branding, make path for new fields that are closer to handling these new characteristics in service properties. The service design field stands out as a new field that recognizes the distinctiveness of service dominant business models. It’s a field that promotes the customer experience and quality of service encounters as key values of brand success; service dominant logic such as service encounters and relation between service providers and customers. (Morelli 2009,18.)

The service design as a relevant part of the practical research approach for service branding is best defines by Stefan Moritz’s (1995, 45) diagram. Moritz highlighting the application of the service design discipline working in different areas that are already related to service design, branding is just one of many. Using service design methods as tools that can provide knowledge, resources and experience to defining the service branding. The use of service design becomes clear once we have understood that service design as a tool can very well define and understand the complex intangibles of service properties and service business.

The logic of applying service design tools in branding becomes more apparent as businesses accept that they have a need to define the connection between customers and the services
they offer. In recent times, branding was primarily a marketing function. However, now days, the main distinction between marketing and service design is, as Moritz (1995, 50), points out (Figure 3), marketing functions at the companies’ organizational level. Marketing departments are mostly about providing business-focused solutions from within the business organization, while service design on the other hand also integrates design in it’s multiple dimensions, some much useful than others for branding needs. (Light 2006,1)

Figure 3: The service design expertise areas (Moritz 1995, 45).

Most importantly, service design offers an essential element for todays branding (Clatworthy 2012, 115). Something intangible, irrational and unquantifiable, something that a few other fields could support, let alone through quantified data, service design offers an ability, capacity and the aptitude to extract, perceive, analyze and translate the perspective of the consumers, through in-depth research and business knowledge. (Clatworthy 2012,48.)
According to Ojasalo (2009, 220), service design methods can be used to analyze and examines all points of contact between the customer and the service provider to provide enjoyable experiences for customers. The analysis of these points of contact or touchpoints, between customers and service provider facilitate the understanding for service providers include the brand, the proof of communication, sales channels and the staff. (Ojasalo 2009, 221.)

It’s important to remember that the application of the service design can be flexible, with existent of multiple service design tools to chose from, the result depends entirely on the researcher objectives. In this particular case, the application of the tools will refer with the elements provided by the B2b service branding definition. Much of these elements for brand dimensions can be researched and analyzed through service design methods because it creates a better understanding of the market needs.

Most importantly, as Moritz (1995, 51), points out, the use of service design methods brings important benefits to the service business that in my and branding experts opinion are also essential for general branding design for they also in many ways the pillars to create a consistency in through out the service and therefor the service Brand. Moritz (1995, 57) lists the following as benefit found in service design:

1. True understanding of the market needs
2. Higher value with the resources available
3. Changes organizational culture
4. New perspectives on future development
5. Higher effectiveness
6. Better efficiency
7. Connects Organization and customers
8. Higher quality service experience as basis of success
9. Differentiation against competition
(Moritz 1995, 57.)

Ultimately, let’s keep in mind what do customers really find valuable in a brand? a concept? And how then, does something so intangible like a brand concept but so powerful materializes? Successful service brands are only successful because customers perceive them. Regardless of how the service brand is organized, the delivery message should be seamlessly for customers’ perception. (Meyer et al. 2002, 122.) service design tools, once again can achieve this. More specifically, if we need to design a service brand the branding model process provides monitoring the service development thought the customers eyes, where the essence of the brand meaning is influenced by the customers’ experience with the service provider
(Meyer et al. 2002, 97.) Let us not forget that experience design is also one of the fields of expertise in the design field (Moritz 2005, 54).

This the analysis of the customer experience can be translated as an analysis of the service experience from the service design perspective in order to see the brand concept development and other tangibles such as:

- Advertising
- Service facilities
- The appearance of service providers
- Company name
- Logo
(Moritz 1995, 63).

The perception of the information customers receive from the service is essential to identify the dimensions of the brand in terms of brand affinity (Moritz 1995, 63).

Service design then proposes and multidisciplinary approach to analyze brand characteristics and creates innovation in the brand. The key factor is that service design methods permit the local context by including participation, generating value production process. Branding perception is about people, not machines, there for the integration of service design tools such as; service mapping, Ethnographic research, mapping the actors in the business network or stakeholders, becomes then ideal for this process of conceiving the brand experience. (Lusch et al. 2010, 5.)

5.2 Strategic Brand design

The Strategic brand driven innovation model developed by Roscam (2014), describes the stages needed to connect to the humans relationships. The model is a framework for brand and service design projects that rely on human relationship and trust.
Figure 4: Strategic Innovation Branding Model (Roscam 2014, Zilver.com)

Through Strategic and service design this model (Figure 4), contextualizes the path that a brand design should follow in order to provide the basis for interaction, behavior and culture. The internal and external design research leads to rooted share vision, mission and behavior of the brand promise to keep. The brand promise then is the center base in which the brand creates relationships through the customer journeys. The process is simple; it involves internal and external insight. The context of these insights makes the brand authentic and meaningful (Roscam 2005, 84).

6 Description of the service design and Strategic design tools

This chapter outlines theoretical description of the tools used during the field research. Each design method provides general purpose of the method according to the service design literature. The use context of each method depends entirely on the researcher's objectives. It's
important that the reader knows that the orders in which these methods are describes are also the order in which the methods were used during the field research.

6.1 The Business Model Canvas (or BMC) tool

The Business Model Canvas (or BMC) tool

Figure 5: The Business model canvas (Osterwalder et al. 2012, 33).

The BMC (Fig. 5) is a tool used to describe, analyze and filter ideas in a business model plan. Osterwalder et al. (2010,12), describes the BMC as a tool that can help create business models or change existing ones in from a “single-page blue print”. The BMC’s advantage is that it can generate a business prototype base on the taking into consideration different aspects initial business idea and present market environments. Alternative way of testing business plan hypothesis would be testing it in the business idea once the business has launched.

The BMC allows to opens the discussion and testing different variables in the business, and shapes definitions among business owners before is too late, it also provides a chance to test the ideas with potential future customers and seek feed back in the case that is needed (Blank 2013, 4.) The use of this tool is limitless and it can provide different insight depending on its context of use.

The main framework of the BMC is divided into 9 different business building blocks. Through the 9 building blocks, the BMC provides room to explore the business plan from different extents, zooming in to the vital elements for a business plan; Customers, value provided, channels, customers relationships, revenue, key resources, key activities, key partners and cost (Osterwalder 2010, 33.)
6.2 Stakeholder mapping

Service design is a research field that constantly engages with the stakeholders involve in a service in order to provide value (Segelström 2013, 27). Not surprisingly, service brands and specially B2b service brands need to expand their view on brand relationships and consider different stakeholders where brand value is created. (Jones 2005, 1.)

The stakeholder mapping provides an analytical overview and communicates the stakeholders involved directly or indirectly with the brand. Primary stakeholders are those that are needed for the business survival; customers, employees, suppliers, etc. Secondary stakeholders on the other hand are considered part of the network and may influence the business in some way but do not necessary affect the business directly; media. (Han 2010,87.)

Furthermore, the stakeholder mapping tool is used to identify and map and visualize the relationship around the service provider. The analysis of stakeholder mapping becomes very relevant for developing the B2b service brand concept because the brand should take each of these stakeholders into consideration in order to build meaningful connections in order to provide value for them. (Jones 2005, 1.)

The identification of stakeholders brings to forward the position and participation but more importantly the impact each stakeholder might have in relation to the service. Stakeholders might influence in different ways the service business model and there each stakeholder that influences the service should be identify.

6.3 Personas

As mentioned before, service design is about gathering customer insight. Personas, is a tool used by service designers as a first step to know more details about the customer. Is a way to create a visualization aspect of the customer, acting as a customers’ profile reconstruction tool. This way, the tool provides to service facilitators a way to empathize with the characteristics of their customers.

A persona is in fact, a representation of a customer segment. According to Segelström (2013), Personas should always be based on previous of the regular service users to capture important attitudes from them towards the service. Moritz (1995) defines the use of the personas tool “instead of using people in demographic or interest segments, this way personas help to identify relevant patterns that cluster qualitative findings”. It’s important to note that personas however are not to replace the actual customers, they must only be seen as a way to reflect on the customer’s needs when testing and mapping a service (Segelström 2013,172).
The personas tool includes relevant customers profile description information that depending on the nature of the study could or not be related with the service interaction. Although is not documented in research, from my personal experience using personas I could say that providing a lot of detail in the personality characteristics could be decisive in making final service decisions during the analysis and service design process. Providing a quality description of background information about the customer that might seem unrelated that or is not perceptibly relevant for the service interaction in that moment could later on probe to be crucial information.

6.4 The Customer Journey Mapping

The customer journey mapping tool is used to visualize the customer experience in a timeline format. An important quality of this tool is that is able to capture and communicate visually the moments in which the customer interacts with the service (Stickdorn et al. 2010, 158). Customers’ service-interaction moments generate customer experiences of such service interactions. Service designers refer to these moments as touchpoints (Moritz 1995, 41). Touchpoints are used to engage the journey and analyze the customers’ experience.

In terms of branding however, the customer journey mapping is used to analyze the branding marketing process from the customers’ perspective. An important advantage from this is that the customer journey mapping includes important customer-brand interaction stages such as the after taste or after sales (Newbery et al. 2013, 133). Another very important aspect of analyzing the customer interaction with the brand through the customer journey mapping is to see the surrounding service connections that connect with the brand (Roscam, 2010, 127).

In more detailed, this tool if properly presented, can lay an understandable visualization of interaction of the service Brand, from personal face-to-face contact to virtual interactions and provide customer insight of such interactions. The important thing about this tool is to gather enough data from the touchpoints interactions with the customer and generate an overall view customer experience picture. The entire mapping provides empathetic service-brand journeys (Stickdorn et al. 2010, 158).

6.5 Touchpoints

In almost every customer journey facilitation, of the service design research phase, the division of the touchpoints mapping layer becomes nearly essential. The service interface is really a pattern of contacts that the customer has with the service brand through touch-points (Moritz 1995, 40). Dedicating special focus to the mapping of the touchpoints within the cus-
Customer journey mapping unfolds the true aspects of the customer as we unfold the experience the customer might perceive from the service brand.

In terms of branding, the touchpoints mapping layer within the customer journey mapping brings service designers closer to the experience for they are experience-driven. The touchpoints layer also referred as moments of truth can help dissect many different context: service encounters, service points, service interaction, customer experiences (Moritz 1995, 2).

In the business context, touchpoints mapping help locate new source or opportunities because they can effectively identify the links between the tasks the customer needs perform out of the service. With this in mind, businesses can also understand what are the responsibilities from each department according to that point. How does each department provide hints for the customer to generate that particular touchpoint? After this they can delegate and manage new responsibilities, or design new touchpoints that address that particular gap in the service (Clatworthy 2011, 20).

6.6 Ethnographic Observation

Before moving to the next research phase and take any additional steps in finding the Strategic B2b service brand dimensions of my case company, I decided to take a closer look into Rt-Ratkaisut’s customers for myself. I decided to perform a ethnographic observation study mix with the shadowing tool. I have to say that previously looking into the literature review of both tools, the service design tool of “shadowing and the ethnographic observation tool and my found my approach to be a similar to both and therefor a mixture of both tools. My approach, definition and objective of both tools is consequently comes from both of these tools literature findings.

The Observation/shadowing tool provides the means to get involve in-depth with the customer. During the Shadowing tool, the researcher observes the customer interact with the service without obstructing in anyway the interaction (Moritz 1995, 197). In other words, the tool requires that the researcher steps back and camouflage into the environment to avoid any changes in the interaction of the customer with the service, at the same time it requires that the researcher stays close enough to immerse him/herself in the customer from their perspective. (Stickdorn et al. 2010,156.)

During the observation research/shadowing tool, the researcher is encouraged to improvise in the collection of data. The researcher might use a combination of both active and passive data-collection techniques from handwritten field notes to video recordings of consumer. This type of research includes mastering the obvious, look for and scrutinize the day to day life
environments and activities that might seem of obvious to people (Mariampolski 2006, 109). The important thing is to witness and document those moments of interaction with the customer first hand. Is really about understanding and identifying those moments where often recall of doing one thing but really doing others. (Stickdorn et al. 2010, 156.)

6.7 Gap Model of Service Quality

The Gap Model of Service Quality (GMSQ) tool was originally designed to Zeithaml and Bitner to centralize service quality around customers. The model provides a framework that retraces the service process and looks for gaps in the service quality in the business or corporation. Likewise, the model can help support design new service concepts according to customer expectation (Zeithal et al. 2003, 87). The tool, successfully taps into the key elements of the service experience and service operation strategies by providing a bird’s eye view of the strategies of the service operations and policies (Hsieh et al. 2010, 1128).

The GMSQ brings a good approach to branding services by helping to view the customers’ service experience through the service quality design process thus affecting the brand, a service brand. (Moorthi 2002, 260.) The service GMSQ tool can help to view the service quality development of a service process and thus induce to the customer satisfaction to some extend but not completely. (Zeithal et al. 2003, 85.)

The GMSQ I used is divided into these categories:

The customer gap

Gap 1 Not knowing what customers expect
Gap 2 Not selecting the right service design and standards
Gap 3 Not delivering to service design and standards
Gap 4 Not matching performance to promises

(Zeithal et al. 2003, 43).

Each gap can extend in more detail, though, for this workshop the tool was used to provide the general framework.
6.8 The touch point Wheel

![The Touchpoint Wheel, Davis Dunn (2002)](image)

The brand touch point wheel (Fig 6.) tool is a way to visualize touchpoints found in the service brand journey. This tool is especially helpful during the touchpoints’ orchestration process. This is a necessary process in branding to see how each touchpoint works together (Roscam 2010, 171). Strategic branding innovation practitioners like Mr. Roscam (2005, 35), describes the tool as a comprehensive way to shows the echo of brand identity in the customer. The tool also helps analyze how does the brand impact different customers. Interesting, the wheel sets important boundaries that the services need to take into consideration; before purchase (or brand interaction), during purchase and after purchase.

Although it has not yet being documented, the brand touchpoint wheel could be used in many other different ways. Similar tool such as the “the development process cards” are used to innovate on existing brand and service touchpoints. For example, the cards not only map existing situations in the service or brand considering the relevant touchpoints but also bring alternatives for touchpoint removal and modifications. It also helps analyze and contextualizing whose touch-point is it within the business. Which department is responsible for bringing that touch point to life? (Grönroos et al. 2012, 20).
The use of the touchpoint in this workshop however was used different manner. For this process I took the liberty of combining with several other service design tools.

7 Field Research Description

Chapter 7 provides a summary of the field research during this study in a descriptive manner. Each design method used provides a description of the objective for using that specific method, a brief explanation of the context in which it was applied and the obtained results from the method. The chapter starts with the description of the research and focus approach during the application of the design methods with the case company.

Roscam (2005, Zilver.com), describes this process in 5 steps:

1. Reasoning from the concrete to the abstract and all over again.
2. Build the brand from the inside out as well as from the outside in.
3. Use iterations instead of linear reasoning process. This step requires validity of the steps taken.
4. Generate creative techniques to gather insights.
5. Involvement.

7.1 Field Research Approach

Following the brand innovation design model (Figure 4), this research concentrated in the following actors (Figure 7):

The field research approach is divided in three parts;

1. The internal company Research
2. Internal company factors research
3. External Company Research

Case Company Rt-Ratkaisut owners

Case Company Rt-Ratkaisut employees

Case Company Rt-Ratkaisut customers

External elements and end consumers
Company Interview

An initial interview was conducted with the company owners in order to understand the general background. The interview touched on the companies’ business activities, history, marketing processes, business operations, business objectives but most importantly to learn about the company brand and brand strategy in a open question format. The interview was conducted in Spanish because one of the owners felt more comfortable this way.

The interview was recorded in video format and it lasted exactly 44 minutes and 42 seconds. After careful consideration, I decided to analyzed the information in an informal manner without the use of transcripts, instead I decided to summarized the most relevant information from the answers after watching and listening the recordings numerous times. The reason being is that there were no insights to analyze and gather from the owners information as such would be the case in user interview in an ethnographic research where the researcher is trying to find out more information between the lines from the user. This information is analyze thirdly through transcripts to it was rather to learn the state of the company

After the first interview it was decided to plan research strategy that would cover the literature review

7.2 Business Model Canvas

Objectives

My main objective in this first workshop was to use the BMC as a starting point to generate discussion among business owners and learn more about their business dimensions. I wanted the owners to describe and support their business ideas before we could even consider going any further into developing the B2b service brand concept. It was very important to keep this exercise focus on only those building blocks that pertain to the B2b service branding research, or else this workshop could turn into a management-consulting workshop about the business plan, and that was not the case.

The chosen building blocks for this research context where the following: Key Partners, Key activities, Value Proposition, Customer Relationships, Customer Segments, Cost Structure, Revenue Streams. These last 2 building blocks did not the same relevance as the first 5 for branding purpose, thought they were important to understand the over all picture of the business plan (Moritz 2005, 234).
Business Model Canvas - Description of the tool application

The workshop started with 2 out of 3 Rt-Ratkaisut business owners in a small space. The whole workshop was conducted in Spanish as both of the owners felt more comfortable this way. We started with brief explanation of the building blocks and the dynamics of the BMC: participants need to describe and discuss every building by placing in their own words the descriptions on sticky notes on to the (Fig 8.) BMC sheet on the wall. (Osterwalder et al. 2012, 48.)

The second face of the workshop was analyzing in group the results by filtering and reframing some ideas. Normally, on the first phase of this workshop, the facilitator would keep strict timing of each building block. However, in this particular case, the participants and I agreed from the beginning that we wanted to expand on this exercise as much as possible. Neither the participants or facilitator had time limitations on this day, so worked building block until exhausted our ideas or we had nothing left to say from it which meant we had come to agreed conclusion from it.

![Figure 8: First BMC workshop results before completing the analysis](image)

Business Model Canvas Results

It’s important to keep in mind that I was avoiding at all cost to turn this Workshop into a Business management consulting session. And even though I promised myself not due to it, it affected me a lot to see unfulfilled aspects of what a Business Model should have. It was hard to avoid, and it deviated from my primary objective in seeing the context only in terms of brand dimensions and perhaps into business management consulting.
The total workshop lasted almost 3 hours. On the second phase of the BMC we focused very strongly in understanding the business value proposition, key partners and key activities. These 3 building blocks provided a breakthrough that would later give strong support in developing the business brand concept for this company.

Discussion of Company Objectives - We briefly describe the company current state and define owners' objectives for the short and long term. With this, the owners got opportunity to discuss business priorities from their personal perspective. As a workshop facilitator it was my job to push them as much as I could to think very well through every aspect of their BMC design. I stood in front of their BMC design with them next to me and took away one post-it note at a time and ask them questions, sometimes in the “what if” format.

These suppositions helped the participants to think through in terms of secure their BMC design, anticipate changes and for me who was looking the brand concept I was able to see what were really the value pillars of their service (see Figure 9). The participants were force to really evaluate every post-it note they had posted, realize if it was a fantasy business plan, their own perception of what they would like it to be or the real thing. In other words they were force to validate each business plan post-it to me, but most importantly to them.

![Figure 9: BMC workshop analysis with company case owners](image)

“Can you have this (while taking away a post-it not) without this?”

The participants froze at times, in part because they were so comfortable with their own believe of what the brand was and in part because they panic to think what could happen if that was no longer there. Nevertheless, these questions really helped them to prioritize elements in their business: business assets, services objectives, service strategies. “Is this really what we are offering to our customers?” Even in an abstract way, it helped them see through what they really had.
Another clear example of rethinking what they really had became was when I took away all of the post-in notes in the value proposition block and ask them; “if had to leave only one post-it of your business, which one would it be? Tell me and pick the one you think is most important one”. I repeated that same technique several times. Even though they did not tell me this, I am sure it gave them a headache. Asking this sort of questions can bring an uneasy sensation for the participants. However, I got away in doing so the because I had previously established trust in this method. I had explaining to them that we had no time to lose and much to gain and that nothing was personal. Before the session started I explained to them that I would push to talk and think in a practical way, perhaps even beyond their comfort zone.

Their answer and reaction to those terms was: “we wouldn’t have it any other way.”

The whole process was perhaps excruciating pain for the participants yet it was a faster, honestly realistic. At the end, we manage to fulfill our objectives; they had a brief but much more concise overview of their business plan (see Figure 10) than they had before.

Figure 10: The BMC workshop results after group analysis.
One that they could build on and expand, and I had gathered enough information for some of the brand characteristics according to their business plan. We then ended with a filtered and very clean BMC, one that would help us focus in the B2b service brand further development.

7.3 Personas Tools

*Tool Objectives*

There were to very basic goals in using personas in this workshop. The first one was to provide the business owners (service providers) with a tangible archetype of their customers’ characteristics. We used personas as main characters to reconstruct the customer journey mapping. Using personas in conjunction with customer journey mapping provides us with information about the service interaction from the customer perspective (Segelström 2013, 95). Particular in this workshop, it provided us with the means to fulfill three very important common aspects in the service analysis (Segelström 2013, 71).

The second objective was to communicate customer insight and portrait service opportunities by empathizing with the customer, communication and visualizing data about the customer to generate customer insights (Segelström 2013, 88).

As a service design facilitator I wanted to gather as much characteristics from their customers to provide better inside in the service journey experience. In practice, having a detailed personas profile will help me gather information from the customers to design the brand development. One of the most important aspects for me was not only to build the customers from qualitative data, rather to force the participants (service providers) see at a human emotional level what are those non rational characteristics of their customers. In doing so, I was aiming to provide an alternative for their brand perspective and their personal mindset in forcing them empathize with their customers through this tool.

*Personas description of the tool application*

During the workshop, 2 out of 3 business owners were given 5 minutes to think of the most typical customer in silence. They were told that they would later describe this customer and give him or her a name that was not copy from a real customer. The same way with other information regarding his or her profile they were told that the information written would not be a copy rather a representation of all of their customers, meaning the collective trait of their customers. 5 minutes later the participants were told to discuss between each other and describe their customers.
Participants were specifically asked to provide customers, name, gender, age, a drowned picture of their face and a brief but meaningful description of their customers personality and likes. Once finished, the participants repeated the same steps and provided a second persona. Extra time was provided to conclude the exercise. The entire personas exercise took 20 minutes, 10 minutes each.

**Personas results** -

The participants provided some details about their customers’, research information they had previously gathered show the basic clusters of information among their customers, such as gender, average age. Beyond the basic information however they were able to provide more detail about their customers. According to the participants day-to-day relation they were able to reconstruct characteristics that they’ve have perceived about them but had not considered relevant to their business relationship or service experience. In the open description part, participants then were forced to remember cultural characteristics to emotional about their customers. Participants assigned traits to their personas that they considered were relevant; names, gender, age, education level, personality traits; happy, angry, etc.

During this phase of the workshop the participants had a breakthrough that would later on become an important characteristic about their customers and that would change the service and sales peach for their customers approach; “their customers’ time limitation and space characteristics, specially during sales pitch”. This breakthrough became later on more apparent once the participants generated the customer journey mapping of their service during the sales pitch (See results on customer journey mapping).

The key discovery from this tool however, was not easily realized at first glance neither the participants nor the service design facilitator. Although it was obvious for me, being a service designer I first neglected to see beyond the obvious. Interesting enough, both participants referred to their customers as a whole entity with no emotions, in other words; “a business made out of concrete or wood”. Before this exercise both participants had failed to their customers as people, people with emotions and feelings who held a position of power buying from their services, perhaps maybe even based on those same emotions. People whom they had a relationship, a business relationship that could be perhaps built thoughtfully on basic human characteristics in which lasting human relationships are built, and loyal business relationships built. In any way, people, people who had very similar characteristics for all of them held the same position and there for dealt with the same issues and needs.
Results in customer perception

Figure 11: Personas' workshop results; the change in perception.

This change in the perception in seeing their customers could create not only an entirely differently approach to customer segmentation (see Figure 11) but it could change the way they initiate a sales pitch, design their business value proposition in the business model or take such characteristics obtained from the personas tools into their business model to generate a very focused different service offer.

Regardless of this service value proposition based insights discoveries, the difference in seeing customer in from this perspective generated very important insights to consider when developing the Strategic service B2b brand concept. Overall, the personas tool workshop set the roots for what could later generate a mayor change in mind set and business approach for the participants, owners of Rt-Ratkaisut Company but it also set the ground roots to for this service designer. After this witnessing this tool, I applied the same mind change as the participants and began to see difference in my thinking. I no longer thought of the need of designing “the service brand” but rather “branding the relationship”, among the participants and their customers.
7.4 Customer Journey Mapping

1st Customer Journey Mapping Objectives - Workshop with case company owners.

The objective of using the customer Journey Mapping tool mainly as a visual tool was to convey it’s fundamental action of bringing the brand experience of the customer visually. (Stickdorn et al. 2010,158). Explore the customer interactions in its different phases to be analyzed by the workshop participants. It was important for the workshop participants to develop a self-awareness of how their service affect the customer emotions and how this reflects the service brand that they provide.

The objective of analyzing the experience was a also follow-up towards making the workshop participants’ a structured a visual representation to analyze the value of the brand experience in terms of business focus. What does the brand really bring to the customer’s business? What is the value of the brand?, Under what conditions? At what cost? Most importantly, using this tool was aimed to seeing the service gaps linked with the customers’ needs, not only personal but the customers’ business needs for their own consumers.

More specifically, the customer journey-mapping tool was aimed at visualizing;
- Interactions customer with the brand
- Generate customer insight
- Provide touch points of the customer interaction with the brand
- See surrounding services that affect the brand experience for later design
  Opportunities in Strategic brand thinking.
- Generate moments of truth that would later on serve as inspirational engagements for the business owners.
Generate data that could possibly anticipate future customer reaction to service brand.
Analyze customer emotion of the service process with the brand objectives or brand promise (Stickdorn et al. 2010, 158).

1st. Customer journey mapping- description of the tool application

It was important that previous to this workshop the personas profiles were clear to the participants, for the customer journey mapping would address the journey of the customer in the personas profile throughout the customer journey. This is an important detail because the customer journey could change its context completely if the workshop participants loose focus of the journey they are trying to retrace and instead imagine it with different characteristics.

In this particular workshop, time was no limitation. The participants were interesting in obtaining, as much information from the workshop as they could therefor the workshop took longer than usual. When the workshop started, the three participants would then starting re-tracing step by step thinking of the personas profiles they had developed. There were some moments of discussion (see Figure 13) where all 1 out of 3 of the participants showed difficulties in empathizing with the journey the persona profile most likely would take.

Figure 13: Customer journey mapping discussion with the 3 case company owners

With the help of post-its notes, the 3 participants joined in the same criteria to see every aspect of the customer’s journey experience; the bread manager, the restaurant owner, the chef and the cafeteria owner. The customer journey was then divided into 3 phases; the pre-
service, during service and after service. The customer journey then divided into layers that would convert into touchpoints layers or moments of truth, feeling layer. This tool was also combined at times with the service brand concept idea, which was the result from the Business Model canvas. At the end, during the analysis of the customer journey each post-it was carefully discussed to see the link, gap or comparison with the service brand concept idea.

1st. Customer Journey mapping workshop result

From this customer journey mapping we focused on the activities the customers usually take before, during and after our service approach. This tool gave way to discover interesting insights about our customers. The owners started seeing in detail relevant information about the services from the client’s perspective.

During this tool we also:

- Discover critical Touch points and analyzed them in a discussion.
- Prototyped Concept servicescapes

7.5 Stakeholder mapping Tool

Objective

The stakeholder mapping principal objective was to ensure stakeholders integration throughout the service concept, in this case the brand support the brand development process throughout the service requirements No stakeholder, internal or external should be left out in this brand development process (Stickdorn et al. 2010, 64).

The use of stakeholder mapping tool was program to understand the links between stakeholders and the brand to be design. Most importantly, in the B2b environment, it was important to analyze and understand the relationship to try to pin point how is could the brand provide value according to those stakeholders views (Ritter et al. 177). The main objective in applying this tool for this workshop was to create a visual map of the complexity of relationship as well as segment customers and provide focus on the brand target groups. (Stickdorn et al. 2010, 151).

Stakeholder mapping description of the tool application

For this workshop it was important to maintaining the analysis of relationships in the network clear. For this, a different kind of tool used during brand innovation workshop by Erik Roscam (2014, zilver.com), from Zilver consulting. This specific checked every requirement in terms
of brand relationship analysis. The tool allowed participants to think and describe to each other their own needs in terms of the business context and move to analyze how those needs affected their relationship with their partners.

![Stakeholder Mapping tool design by Zilver consulting, Roscam (2014, zilver.com)](image)

Figure 14: The Stakeholder Mapping tool design by Zilver consulting, Roscam (2014, zilver.com)

The 3 key participants (the owners), took time to discuss the direct and indirect partners in relation to their business. The participants first discuss and wrote with whom they had relationship with and why. This allowed to describe their inner circle in the network to understand the resources they had and what they needed. The participants took 20 minutes describing this first layer because they also took the time to describe important tasks they currently have in their due to list that are related with some of the partners (see Figure 14).

Finishing the first layer was no easy task. The second and third layer became somewhat easier as the workshop started to take more meaning. Each stakeholder contained a lot of new information for the participants because each time the participants came wrote in a piece of post-it note a new stakeholder it was the workshop’s objectives to describe the relationship with that new stakeholder. The participants where given over all 40 minutes to finish the 3 circles and end the discussion about their relationship with the stakeholders.
Results

The workshop gave the company owners the chance among others, to reflect on steps that needed to taken in order to save costs. The discussion deepened around the business network. Every stakeholder brought somehow significant value to the brand development components; resources, participation, planning, needs. All of these were examples that they felt needed to be taken into consideration. Ironically, in some cases, the participants felt that some of the resources had been over value and needed less focus than others.

Event though at first the participants struggled to see tangible values from other partners, the tool exposed successfully the partners active rolls in the network. Most importantly, the participants were able to decode concrete strategies towards developing new relationships with the stakeholders mapped. In the short term, the participants created new to-do lists that needed their immediate attention to develop a better business brand practice.

7.6 Ethnographic field observation/Shadowing

Objectives

The use of ethnographic research in the field is as important as theoretical validation. The main goal was to observe customers in their own space and environment (Moritz 2005, 51). The observation and take notice of every task performed by the subject (in this case the customer) is crucial to gather customer insight that will help clarify their needs for whom we are designing for, the information to consider that we haven not taken to account previously. It was also expected that this exercised provided me as in other cases design drivers and clear limitations for designing the branding parameters.

In terms to develop the brand concept, this tool was used to bring customer’s perspective and their understanding of value creation and co-creation to the brand design guidelines (Grönroos et al. 2012, 15). In my personal experience coming from the design background, the ethnographic field research can tell us much more than a theory. Keep in mind that theories about a specific phenomenon have certain constrains. Live ethnographic studies show the real characteristics of the research that is being studied. Thus, provides more accurate and up to date information.

Using observation in this particular study was vital, the objective remain in maintaining spontaneous reaction from the customers to avoid altering any natural responses from the sales/interaction process (Elliott et al 2003, 217.) Thus the observation option method needs avoid revealing or give any hints of the action of observation and preserve authenticity (Mariampol-
This is primarily important because it allowed me to document possible service gaps as they happen. Also, by taking this step I would be able to collect customer insight of the service surroundings and decode further customer needs.

It was important that the method utilized for this study provided a way to gather visual representation. It is often the case, especially in branding related performed research that customers needs to see additional proof the brand does not functions the way they customers portraits it. Authenticating the identity the use of the brand through more visible, rather than the researcher’s word. This particular study needs to provide photo records that can help communicate the observation results better for the customers (Elliott et al. 2003, 219).

**Description of the tool application**

A field observation of the sales approach was conducted in three different occasions. The research first targeted sales process of the company. I accompanied one of Rt-Ratkaisut sales representatives to three different meetings with their customers. I arranged to take a cellphone camera as to provide visual documentation and further analysis for the case company own analysis (Mariampolski 2006, 50).

During the study, my research objectives previously established prevented me from informing the sales representative of the nature of the study, this was clearly necessary in order to avoid changes in his behavior. Additional preparation for the sales pitch on his behalf would had resulted in a way a research failure (Mariampolski 2006, 64). Ironically, the sales representative did in numerous occasions enquire the nature of my visits. His managers had not informed him of the objective of my exercise. Instead, he had gotten instructions take me along to the sales meetings as normal because I was studying the business market. Truth to be toll, I was of course studying everything, trying to observe, listen and analyze his speech, behavior towards the costumers and his sales approach. As we began I kept silence next to him and wrote my notes.

When a sales meeting started, the sales representative introduced me as his trainee, thus avoiding further inquiries about my presences in the meetings and my notes. This allowed me to truly become invisible to both; the sales representative from my case company. I was able to observe, listen and analyze every aspect freely. Most importantly, I took special noticed in looking for possible constrains and service opportunities. Clues from the customer indicating needs; personal and business needs from the service being offered. (Stickdorn et al. 2010, 156.)
Results

The non-participant observation allowed me absolute freedom in the observation and analysis process. I was able to gather enough data that helped me understand the customers’ behavior during the sales pitch. Most importantly, it allowed me to witness first hand some of the problems the customers see during the service, during the service offer or first sales pitch. Sharing my findings with the company owners helped them understand the importance of supporting their employees in building the brand relationship.

I was able to gathering visual and contextual data about the initial sales pitch process. Through this observation sessions, I was able to listen first hand and search for clues the customers’ needs, though this way, I also able to developed a more tangible context of the necessities. In this 30 minutes (average time) meetings, I was also able to plot the dimensions and traffic of an environment, attention to the social ecology, a workplace successfully and although there were not enough customers at the times the meetings took place, the customer provided a good by giving clues about their consumers descriptions.

After a quick analysis of the three sessions, I was able to spot similarities and patterns in the customers’ service process. This provided interesting insight because it not only gave us clues in how to support my Rt-Ratkaisut brand promise but also create a brand promise that will take into account the support of the customers’ business. Thus once more demonstrating that ethnographic findings can demonstrate the opportunities the products and services play in a given environment.

7.7 2nd. Customer Journey Mapping

The Objectives

A second Customer Journey mapping workshop was conducted. Most of the objectives remain the same as the first customer journey mapping though this time the participants were only employees and not the owners of the case company.

The objective of using the customer Journey Mapping tool mainly as a visual tool was to convey it’s fundamental action of bringing the brand experience of the customer visually. (Stick-dorn et al. 2010, 158.) This helps the workshop participants to explore the customer interactions in its different phases to be analyzed by the. In terms of branding, it is also important to understand the process of human-center branding in practice, and learn the relationship links that employees have with their customers (Roscam 2010, 96).
The purpose of applying the customer journey mapping for the employees is also addresses the experience and interaction the employees might perceive differently from the business owners. Employees engage the customers and can at times provide more concrete knowledge about the customers. It was important then to understand the same questions as in the previous workshop and compare the results. What is the value of the brand? Under what conditions? And at what cost? Company employees are exposed to their own perception of business brand, therefor this workshop would provide them with a understanding of the experience the customers go through when dealing with their services. (Newbery et al. 2013, 139.)

More specifically, the customer journey-mapping tool was aimed at visualizing;
- Interactions customer with the brand
- Generate customer insight
- When does the customer first become aware of the brand?
- How do the customers become aware of the brand?
- Do the customers at any point an understanding of the brand? What the brand is, and what does it stand for?
- Analyze customer emotion of the service process with the brand objectives (or brand promise) (Stickdorn et al. 2010, 158).

Figure 15: The 2\textsuperscript{nd} Customer Journey Mapping - Employees Only

2\textsuperscript{nd} Description of the tool application process - Customer Journey Mapping

The same as in the previous workshops, we had no time limitations. This time, the 2 sales representatives (See fig 15) were the participants for this workshop. First the workshop participants re-traced step-by-step the customer journey taking the personas profiles for the exercise. Then they retraced the customers’ steps through the whole service process. At the
end we followed the same process as in the previous customer journey mapping workshop that was done with the owners. Then customer journey then divided into layers that would convert into touchpoints layers or moments of truth, feeling layer.

2nd Customer journey mapping - Results

The workshop generated a lot of data; the workshop’s participants in this case were key elements because they were the business brand elements exposed to the customers. It was clear that the employees’ perception of the customer was somewhat different from those of the owners. While the discussions occurred, it became also discovered that the employees had very different objectives from the owners while performing their duties to supply the goods to their customers. The value they provided to the customers was most significant for them in a matter of presenting new products for the customers and making the sale, rather than seeing it as performing a service. It was interesting to hear that the employees had no notion of what was the value the service brand was creating for the customer.

7.8 Touchpoint wheel Objectives + Personas + service Gap Model

Objectives

designing the brand touchpoints meant designing the brand journey experience for the customer. This for me meant to include and put the customer at the center at all times during while designing of the touchpoints process. In other words, I needed to keep in mind that the touchpoints would be a result of our previous gathered insights from all of our workshops. Thus, I decided to combine several tools to come as close as possible to something that would reflect our findings, so I design a workshop that would combine the touchpoints wheel + the personas tool + part of the service gap model.

The touchpoints wheel workshop was the final step to complete in the developing the brand concept through the Strategic design methods. Its main objective is to close the gap of the brand message and the customer. The objective during this workshop is that participants orchestrate and design the brand experience journey through the touchpoints they design keeping in mind all the previous data insights that they have learn so far from their customers (Roscam 2010, 169.)

It’s important to keep in mind that the brand’s touchpoints can be tangible and intangible, however, it was important to keep in mind that the final objective was to design for the customer the overall final brand experience journey. The workshop needed to combine other tools that would keep the result of the brand experience consistent with the rest of the brand
message. For this, I decided to combine with other tools that would bring us closer to the brand we wanted to create.

Combining the touchpoints wheel with personas tool aimed to remind workshop participants of whom they are designing for. Thus including the personas tool here would prevent the business owners from designing new touchpoints for themselves instead. It also brought vivid and tangible characteristics about the customers, in case they had been forgotten, needed for the creativity and innovation process. Same way, combining these two tools with the service gap model was considered the service quality and consistency (See Figure 16).

![Figure 16: Gathering the touchpoints from the Customer Journey mapping discussion.](image)

The workshops' participants began by describing a list of touchpoints of the service they provide. The touchpoints were divided 3 phases; before the service phase, during the service phase and after service phase. Each phase described the most important touchpoints. These touchpoints were the result from the previous findings in the previous customer journey mapping workshops. Participants described the first layer of touchpoints in a broad manner and without giving too much detail about them (Roscam 2010, 171).

Once the first touchpoint layers was completed, I decided it would be a good idea to go further wit the tool and give more concrete examples in a second layer. So the participants created a second layer on the outside, around the first layer of touchpoints, expect this time the
participants started giving ideas of more tangible solutions that would address this first touch point layers. Then we decided to go even further and create a third outside layer that had very specific and concrete additional services from the second layer.

When creating the first touchpoint layer, the participants simply recalled the touchpoints obtained from the customer journey mapping. In other words, the first layer was a description of the existing brand service experience according to the service offer. However, once the participants started designing the second layer and third layer which addressed the first touchpoint layer, (See Figure 17), they had to refer to do it in complete sentences, including the personas profile name and take into account the brand promise. Participants constantly had to ask themselves: does this service address this persona profile? And if so, is it a reflection of our brand promise?

*Touch point wheel Objectives + Personas + service Gap Model - Results*

The touch Point Wheel tool in combination with personas and service gap model was used to provide means of making servicescapes tangible in respond to the critical touchpoints. This tool comes from the Strategic design field and is often rather for Strategic and positioning branding. In the application process, I made some improvements to the tool, which proved effective for our workshop objectives.

![Figure 17: Touchpoint Wheel Workshop final results](image)

The service brand experience can also come from the service encounters, therefor use of the GMSQ to see the helps assure the service encounters deliver the appropriate service quality. This is because the brand is experienced through the customer perception. In other words, a service brand is experience by the customer through the service quality. The GMSQ perceives
the customer perception, in this workshop, it became an strong service brand quality framework or point of reference when designing services or analyzing existing service faults.

The use of the personas tool in this combination kept the workshop participants on their toes by constantly reminding them in very visual way characteristics of the customers that would not otherwise be possible. In my opinion, these additional improvements of touchpoint wheel, adding the gap service model and personas in the workshop addressed the helped support a better design of the brand journey experience and it was a very important expansion tool. After the workshop the participants had a very clear idea of where they wanted to go next to make this experience tangible.

7.9 Branding expert interview-

A branding expert was interview to provide further feedback in field research. Markus Kramer, former Aston marketing operations director, and Harley Davidson marketing Director, is currently a branding expert, helping small business and corporations built Strategic growth and brand management in all aspects of communication and retail development.

Objective of the expert interview

Through the brand design process, it’s evident that not all branding practitioners conduct branding practices the same way. Most marketing practitioners have their own way of thinking, operating at an organizational perspective with an organizational approach (Moritz 2005, 48). Some branding practitioners have not even considered or service design as a approach to design brands. Either way, the author of this research considered it was important to bring a different perspective, one that would bring much more expertise on the field and less in the theory, especially coming from a non service design background.

The objective was to connect the branding practitioner’s inputs as service design connects expertise and knowledge through multi-disciplinary teams, considering experience from multiple backgrounds and different ways of thinking in the practice (Moritz 2005, 48).

I must note that this interview was initially schedule to be done before any field research was performed and serve as a baseline for my field research plan. Unfortunately the branding expert participant was reschedule 2 times making it impossible to give his input on the field research steps. During this interview however the branding expert was able to give some input on the case study results. With this interview I was able to gather branding definitions from a practical perspective, this gave me greater understanding of the academic research and very
valuable practical knowledge. It also gave me a chance to reflect on the field research results.

7.10 Final meeting with the case company

During my last meeting with the case company owners I presented to them the final results of our workshops and compared it my academic findings gathered from the literature review. We also had a chance to discuss what had been the most significant findings about their brand development process and discussed future objectives and areas to develop.

In this meeting I presented to them 20 slides that demonstrated tangible differences of before we started our meetings and after. We went together through some of the questions and presented 3 (See Figure 20) very clear brand strategies to follow according to our workshop findings. We discussed current constrains and possible ways to solve them. The owners discussed next steps to follow in order to create a better service experience that would reflect the brand values and mission.

At the end of the meeting, the owners wrote a list of ideas to test for the tangible brand aspects; logos, brand promise, brand slogan and brand materials such as business cards, catalogs etc. At last, the Rt-Ratkaisut saw the need to change the company name that would reflect the service they provide to their customers.

The group workshops and client’s research findings created an important impact in the mindset of the company. We did not only managed to construct what can perhaps might be just the very brand boundaries in the near future, but we have also certainty manage to put in place a brand strategy plan to follow that aligns with the customers and customers.

The research has certainly identified key stakeholders that should reflect on. We’ve taken their necessities, context and backgrounds to develop part of the brand characteristics of a B2b service brand that will little by little construct and realigned on the services that needs to provide as a business. Thanks to this, the company has managed to set the very baseline of the company values that will be put into place from here on.

Additional services and products the company decides to add will reiterate in this initial ground base work and therefor will be consistent with the identity of the company values. The future process will not be easy though the company has showed interest in working for their customers and being customers-centered. In building this process the company has showed and dedicated a lot amount on effort being flexible to innovate base on customer
preferences, and this in my opinion will bring them success because is the main way that leads companies to constant innovation.

Results

Despite the limitations reached, two things remain clear; First, the achieved goal of including different fields in this research process as the service design theory describes, “service design integrates and links various fields of expertise, representing a new practice of work that utilizes the best and most suitable experience, tools and knowledge from various backgrounds”. Notice that the last quote addresses the need to integrate a new practice of work, rather than comply with theory as one specific field guidelines. Second, it executes the service design methods in a practical manner.

During the brand usability, the main objective is to explore costumers’ interaction with the service provider to highlight the customer important aspects of the service brand experience. Using information about the customers provides better chances of future brand usage, this of course highlights customers aspirations and motivation for brand usage that require context mapping and other techniques.

This being said, I would like to remind the reader to consider that this research study was written with the aims to bring service design to a new frontier and demonstrate it’s abilities and benefits in designing not only services but something else. In this case service brands from the service design perspective.
8 Conclusions

Despite the limitations reached to complete a full brand development concept this chapter presents the final conclusions of this thesis underlining tangible results that are to be evaluated by the reader.

First, even though the academic literature findings showed the use of service design in branding to a certain extend, it did not provide concrete evidence to support the development of service branding in the B2b business context. However, the exploratory application service design and Strategic design methods in this research provided enough evidence to show that these practical methods can be use in service branding, and generate valuable insights for service branding development and B2b service branding.

The practical knowledge gathered from exploring the use of service design research methods in the B2b service branding helped this research understand B2b in a completely different context. In practice, I understood that the context of B2b branding is not only designing and developing a positive B2b brand experience; rather designing “the relationship” concept. Furthermore, it was discovered that the case company sales approached (through the sales representatives) had only one objective in mind; to complete the sale. Sales representatives only exercised a one-way communication.

The company was failing to see the opportunity use that chance to gather valuable information from the customer’s needs to develop lasting loyal relationships. This research gave the company owners the means to develop a brand strategy that supported a sales engagement for the long run from the first sales pitch. The sales representative final objective changed completely from trying to gain one time sales transaction to gaining long relationship. And the brand needed to provide proves of these.

In terms of brand results its important to remember that before this research was performed, the company case owners were operating service business that lacked identity of its own. The business had no real business strategy support. Company owners were basing their business operations success purely in sales results but lacked the business management strategy, a solid business model, and business identity. Most importantly, the business was failing to see clearly the essential element in any business; the customer. This research helped company owners to define their customers in a humanistic approach that allowed them to connect them. No longer does the company refer to their customers as companies, but as people. Rt-Ratkaisut has now been able to identify exactly who the customers are, what do they do and what problems they phase in the daily life. Hence the new brand message needs to address this in the future.
Through this study it also became clearer that the customers couldn’t identify the actual purpose of the company. Thanks to this it was understood that the customers needed tangible probes of the brand purpose. An important example of this became that Rt-Ratkaisut will be addressed differently in the near future by changing its name to a name that supports the business value proposition and its identity and a message.

Through the research results, the importance of the having consistent brand message. They understood that the brand that did not have was transmitting some kind of message anyways but it was not they one they wanted to transmit. The research results analysis and gathered insights helped shape and provide information for the brand development in the near future.

The following is a table shows the answers provided by the company owners before and after this research took place. The answers on the right are in many ways are tangible results of the research. Although the complete brand development process is still taking place to this date, these results provide tangible results of this research main purpose. The company case owners with the guidance of this thesis author have changed and improved some of these answers from date this thesis was written.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case company brand evolution process results (According to the business owners)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case company</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evolution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name ?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B2C?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mission</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motto</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>target group</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
References


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