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# Development of Customer Engagement: Case Company Best in Hel

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Tämän opinnäytetyön aiheena oli asiakassitoutumisen kehittäminen kilpailukykyistä benchmarkingia hyödyntäen. Kohdeyritys Best in Hel kamppaili asiakkaiden sitouttamisen kanssa, eivätkä nykyiset asiakassitoutumisstrategiat olleet tehokkaita. Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli kehittää suunnitelma tehokkaista asiakkaiden sitouttamisstrategioista Best in Hel yritykselle. Markkinajohtajia/kilpailijoita ja Best in Heliä verrattiin asiakassitoutumiseen. Kehittämissuunnitelma tuotettiin sitten johtavien yritysten onnistuneiden asiakassitoutumiskäytäntöjen ja aihetta koskevien tutkimusten pohjalta. Tuloksena suunnitelma toimi ohjenuorana Best in Helin asiakassitoutumistilanteen edelleen parantamiselle.

Teoreettinen viitekehys perustui sekä asiakassitoutumiseen että benchmarkingiin. Tässä opinnäytetyössä käytetty metodologia liittyi tiedonhakuun, kilpailukykyiseen benchmarkingiin ja kehittämiseen eli työpajaan, jossa tutkija validoi kehittämissuunnitelman Best in Helin toimitusjohtajalle Andrey Uverskiylle.

Johtopäätöksenä työstä voitiin todeta, että se mahdollisti kohdeyritykselle tilaiseeden tarkastella liiketoimintamallia eri näkökulmasta. Kehittämissuunnitelmat toimivat väkaana pohjana asiakastyytyvyyden parantamiselle.

Avainsanat: vertailuanalyysi, benchmarking, asiakassitoutuminen

## Abstract

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The topic of this thesis is customer engagement development by utilizing competitive benchmarking. The case company, "Best in Hel", struggled with customer engagement, as current customer engagement strategies were not effective. The purpose of this thesis was to develop a plan for effective customer engagement strategies for the case company.

The thesis utilized action research as its research approach. The theoretical framework focused on both topics, customer engagement and benchmarking. The data was gathered from internal interviews, discussions, a workshop, and analysis of internal documents and available public information about competitors. The action research methodology used in this thesis was visible in data collection, competitive benchmarking, and actual development. The study started with the current state analysis. In this analysis, the market leaders, competitors, and the case company were compared to each other on the subject of customer engagement.

The development part included a workshop where the development plan was co-created by the researcher and the management including CEO of the case company. In addition to the inputs from the key stakeholders, the development plan was also based on successful customer engagement practices of leading companies and studies on the subject. As a result, the plan served as a guideline for further improvement of the customer engagement situation for the case company.

As a result of the thesis, the case company was able to look at the business model from a different point of view. Suggested development strategies and ideas served as a solid basis for better customer engagement, which should lead to improvement in customer satisfaction and better future of the company in general.

Keywords: Customer engagement, benchmarking, competition

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## 1 Introduction

Customer engagement is one of the key factors of a successful company. A customer who is engaged with a specific company generates more revenue than a customer who does not have such a connection to the same company. A strong emotional connection to the brand created before and after purchases will help to retain customers, who form the basis for any business. At this point, companies have to track and monitor customer engagement regularly. Failure to do so could result in unforeseen events and ultimately endanger the entire enterprise.

Best in Hel faced the situation where current strategies of customer engagement were not effective and consequently affected the whole business in a negative way.

A new development plan of customer engagement strategies was required. Competitive benchmarking, in this case, served as a perfect tool to compare performance and successful customer engagement strategies of competitors in order to identify areas where the case company was lagging behind. Benchmarking allowed to identify the riskiest aspects of the business and then formulated a set of best strategies to address them. As a consequence, it led to continuous improvement and to goal achievements. Benchmarking is not only cost-effective, but can also be an essential value in a decision making process.

The research determined and compared strategies that competitors use in terms of customer engagement to help Best in Hel modify and apply those to achieve similar or even more successful results.

### 1.1 Business Challenge

The business challenge is that Best in Hel needs to improve customer engagement. However, this is not an issue for competitors – Kurio, Hasan and Part-

ners, Dagmar and the Generation AB. In order to understand where the customer engagement strategies of the case company are lacking, there is a need to compare them to the ones that competitors are implementing.

The goal of the study is to develop suitable customer engagement strategies by using competitive benchmarking (performance benchmarking). Thus, the benchmarking process was applied on different metrics in order to measure and compare the success of companies and identify areas where Best in Hel is lagging behind.

The objective of the thesis is to create strategies and formulate recommendations on how to improve customer engagement at Best in Hel. The research is beneficial for the case company to develop customer engagement and consequently compete on the market.

## 1.2 Outline of the Thesis Report

The thesis begins with an introduction and continues with theoretical studies on customer engagement (including an introduction to benchmarking, metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs)). After those, there are a methodology part and a current state analysis of Best in Hel. Then a competitive benchmarking process is presented, followed by a development plan and conclusions.

The benchmarking process, presented after the current state analysis, as well as the studied literature served as a basis for the development plan.

The validation of the research was done through a workshop, where the development plan was presented and discussed with the CEO of the case company - Best in Hel.

## **2 Theoretical Studies**

### **2.1 Customer Engagement**

Customer engagement is the interaction between brands and their customers. It begins with a first interaction with a brand and extends beyond the point of purchase. The higher number of interactions between the brand and its customers tells about high customer engagement. However, there are several studies that discuss customer engagement more deeply (Schuller, 2016).

For example, Hollebeek and Chen determine customer engagement as a customer's willingness to invest resources into interactions with a company both as an online and offline engagement. Those resources can be different, starting from cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social knowledge and skills, and even equipment (Hollebeek, Srivastava, Chen, 2019, pp. 161-185).

According to the statistics provided by Salesforce in 2023, the main provider of customer relationship management systems, 80% of customers find experiences provided by companies as important as their product and services. Thus, the level of customer experience quality determines business success. Companies should compete with experiences created for customers rather than with companies that offer similar products (Salesforce, 2023).

Marketing practices affect customer behavior in different ways: successful practices increase customer engagement and unsuccessful ones may decrease customer engagement that consequently brings inevitable outcomes. In general, customer engagement stands for long-term interactions, encouraging customer loyalty and defense. The internet is the basis for marketing efforts, even though customer engagement marketing consists of both online and offline sides (Eisenberg, Eisenberg, 2006, pp. 45-53).

In conclusion, improved customer engagement increases brand loyalty and word of mouth. Additionally, it provides companies with competitive advantage, increased lifetime value, improved customer trust and retention, etc.

### 2.1.1 Strategies of Customer Engagement

In the past, customer engagement was achieved through television, radio, media, outdoor advertising, and other touchpoints. The only measure of such customer engagement practices was the volume of sales and return on investment figures. Adoption of the internet increased processes of customer engagement and made it possible to measure in different ways engagement at different levels (Eisingerich, Kretschmer, 2008, pp. 20–21).

Nowadays, as the internet has become an integral part of our lives, customers tend to rely on information obtained online. For instance, in 2011, 80% of online customers relied on reviews and feedbacks. Negative feedback made customers change or even eliminate their purchase decision (Eisingerich, Kretschmer, 2008, pp. 20–21). In 2023, the number of customers reading reviews and feedbacks has grown to 95%, which means nearly everyone relies on online reviews and feedbacks (Zhou, 2023).

An effective customer engagement strategy determines the success of the whole company. Delivered experiences, as an integral part of customer engagement, should be personalized and consistently connected in real time. However, there are several other elements that create a successful customer engagement strategy.

For example, personalized customer experience refers to the fact that customers want to have tailored experiences as they proceed from brand awareness to purchasing. According to the statistics of Salesforce, 68% of customers wish companies would understand their needs and expectations, and 37% of customers are actually satisfied with their customer journey (Salesforce, 2023).

### Companies Fall Significantly Short of Customer Expectations

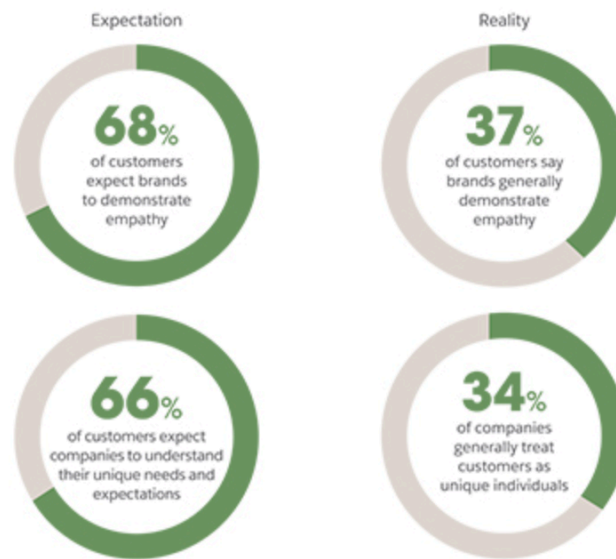


Figure 1 The research conducted by Salesforce on customer expectations (Salesforce, 2023)

Another important aspect is that the customer experience should be implemented across all the departments within the company. Generally, it refers to the fact that each department of the company should use the same message i.e. the same voice. Every department should have access to customer data in order to serve and fulfill their needs accordingly. (Vesterinen, 2021)

Customer service should also solve efficiently customer requests in a timely manner. Queues and long waiting times create impatience and decrease customer satisfaction that leads to low customer engagement (Vesterinen, 2021).

Engagement across different channels is also effective. Webpage of a company should be strategized, simple, full of important information and provide a possibility to get in touch with the company. Additionally, social media platforms should create a positive impression (Vesterinen, 2021).

As a conclusion, each company decides on customer engagement strategies independently, and they are considered successful if customer expectations are met.

### 2.1.2 Measurement of Customer Engagement

Measuring customer engagement can be complicated since it is applied to multiple channels as email, social media platforms, mobile applications or webpages. Also, measuring customer engagement is strongly dependent on the metrics that were chosen as important indicators.

A measurement of metrics definitely has benefits that define the success of any company. Those can be related to understanding customers, identifying strengths and weaknesses, adapting strategic approaches and even improving decision-making processes.

There are a variety of metrics available in order to measure customer engagement. Those include Net Promoter Score (NPS), Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT), Customer Lifetime Value (CTLV), Number of Active Users, Customer Engagement Score (CES), First Week Engagement, Social Media Engagement, Stickiness Metrics, Conversion Rate, Pages Per Session, Average Session Duration, Bounce Rate, Churn Rate and others (MoEngage, 2023).

Metrics are selected in accordance to the company's needs and desired results. Thus, each company decides on the metrics selection in private. However, there are some common ways to measure customer engagement, which include: Google Analytics, surveys and email campaigns, feedback surveys, comments, shares, likes, app usage and downloads, event participation, monthly user activity (Kumar, 2013, pp. 17-43).

The current study is limited by the fact that there is no access to inside information about the case company, or its competitors. As a consequence, metrics and KPIs were chosen in accordance with the possibilities of the research. A range of chosen metrics is introduced in the next section.

## 2.2 Competitive Benchmarking

"Best practice benchmarking" or "process benchmarking" relates to the process in which companies evaluate various aspects of their activities in relation to best-practice companies' activities. Usually the purposes of comparison are defined before the actual process begins. As a consequence, companies are able to develop a plan on improvements or adapt specific best practices, usually with the goal of increasing performance. Benchmarking can be implemented as often as needed, but usually it is as a continuous process in which companies continually are looking for improvement of their practices. Additionally, in project management benchmarking supports the selection, planning and delivery of projects (Invernizzi, Locatelli, Brookes, 2017, pp. 155-164).

Currently, there is no single benchmarking process that could be adopted to any situation and purpose. Consequently, it leads to the emergence of different benchmarking methodologies. Different studies are available, but the general 12 stage methodology was offered by Robert Camp in 1989. The methodology consisted of the following steps: subject selection, process definition, potential partners, data sources, data collection, partner selection, gaps definition, process differences, future performance targeting, communicating, goal adjustment, implementation, reviewing and analyzing (Camp, 1989).

As was stated before, this thesis is based on competitive benchmarking. Performance benchmarking as one of competitive benchmarking types allows to determine how well the strategies and processes of competitors are working and adjust those to the case company.

Thus, measuring metrics are strongly depend on the purpose of benchmarking. Due to the limitations of this research towards the data required, the following metrics were selected: customer satisfaction, brand awareness, social media engagement, share of voice.



### 2.2.1 Metrics and KPIs

#### *Customer satisfaction*

Customer satisfaction (CSAT) is a measure of customer expectations or how products and services supplied meet expectations. Customer satisfaction is defined as a number of customers whose experience exceed satisfaction goals. Customers are an essential aspect of any business and, as a consequence, businesses have to ensure customer satisfaction and build loyalty. Customer satisfaction can be considered an essential part of a company. It brings such advantages as improved customer retention, increased customer loyalty, simplified decision making process and others (Farris, Neil, Phillip, David, 2010, pp. 157-185).

Measuring customer satisfaction is highly important since it allows to control customer experiences over time. Additionally, it helps to monitor progress, identify areas of improvement, address critical issues by allocating resources of the company in a reasonable (Farris, Neil, Phillip, David, 2010, pp. 157-185).

Customer satisfaction can be measured in different ways. It can be done through surveys, feedbacks, satisfaction ratings, etc. KPIs depend on customer satisfaction metrics, which can be, for example, following: CSAT (customer satisfaction score), NPS (net promoter score), CES (customer effort score), etc. (Jochen, Meng, 2023, pp. 345-355).

The data required for the measurement of customer satisfaction was collected through online searches.

The measurement of customer satisfaction in this research is implemented qualitatively, meaning that the data obtained from customer reviews and feedback was measured and analyzed by the researcher.

#### *Brand awareness*

Brand awareness can be described as an extent to which customers recall or recognize a certain brand under different conditions. Brand awareness is at the core of the purchasing decision-making process. An actual purchasing cannot happen if a customer is not aware of the product category and the brand. Recalling a certain brand name is not as important as an ability to recall distinguishing features. Creating brand awareness is the starting point for advertising a new product or refreshing old brands. Moreover, brand awareness plays a massive role in such areas as customer behavior, advertising management and brand management (Keller, 1993, pp. 1–22).

Brand recall and brand recognition are the main components of brand awareness. Brand recall is mostly associated with memory retrieval and brand recognition is related to object recognition. However, both of them play an essential role in a customer purchase decision making process and in marketing communication. There are three to seven brands in customer considerations, when they are thinking of making a purchase. Specifically, customers buy from the top three brands in their considerations as those are considered as familiar and well-established brands (Rossiter, 1987, Keller, 1993, pp. 1–22).

According to the David Aaker' brand awareness pyramid, there are four levels of brand awareness that categorize customer perception towards the brand. Those are zero awareness, recognition, brand recall and top of the buyer's mind (Aaker, 1991).



Figure 2 Brand awareness pyramid by David Aaker (Press Office SP, 2017)

### *Social media engagement*

Social media engagement refers to the extent to which an audience interacts with social media accounts and content. Engagement in this case can include likes, comments, replies, shares, saves, clicks, mentions, etc. Engagement measurement is an effective way to understand whether the content is reasonable and appealing (Evans, 2010, p. 15).

Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing (2016) reviewed marketing literature on social media with attention to customer engagement. According to the study, there have been a number of studies conducted since 2010 with no common consensus. As a consequence, this led to the disintegration of the discipline. The research, however, combines later studies on customer engagement and social media and provides a conceptual framework for future research. One of the examples is presented in Figure 3, where the relationship between customer engagement and company was described (Barger, Peltier, Schultz, 2016, pp. 268-287).

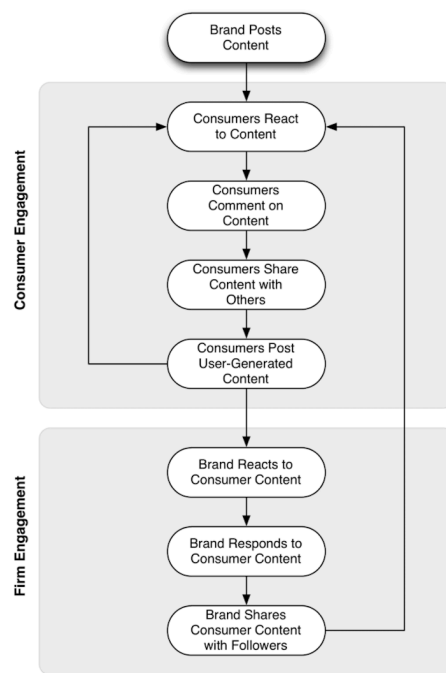


Figure 3 Customer and company engagement (Barger, Peltier, Schultz, 2016)

The diagram shows a strong connection between customers and brands in terms of social media engagement. An ability to interact has mutual benefits: reaching a broader target audience for companies and receiving support for customers.

Measuring social media engagement in order to identify general customer engagement requires the measurement of such KPIs as reposts, comments, replies, participants, etc.

Nowadays, social media platforms offer built-in analytical services, which makes it easier for companies to keep track of the situation.

The current study measures social media engagement by analyzing the social media platforms of the case company and its competitor. The main attention was paid to the number of participants, likes, shares, etc.

*Online share of voice*

Share of voice refers to the measure of the market that the brand has compared to its competitors. It represents the extent of brand visibility and how much the brand dominated the conversation. Greater market share results in greater popularity and authority among existing and potential customers. Share of voice is related to not only the brand's share of paid advertisements but also to mentions and search results online. Awareness of the share of voice gives a better understanding of the problems and the company's position on the market, as well as the possibility of facing obstacles and achieving growth lately (Zote, 2021).

The current research explores the popularity and presence of companies in different channels. This involves the extent to which companies are popular across internet.

### 2.3 Customer-Centric Approach

According to the information mentioned above, customers have become more demanding and aware of what they are actually buying. They pay attention to reviews, feedbacks, and the opinions of other purchasers. Nowadays, traditional selling practices are not as effective as the innovative ways companies are adapting. Traditional sales techniques are failing when those that focus on providing a superior customer experience become more promising (Murray, 2021).

Customer-centric selling is a way of promoting a product in favor of a more personal approach with consumers. Rather than promoting goods and services themselves, companies promote the experiences customers will get after they buy the product (or service). Thus, customer-centric selling focuses more on listening to the customers, asking them questions, and creating stable, long-lasting relationships. In general, this approach is fully described by its name: the main focus is on customers and their emotions (Murray, 2021).

There are many benefits a customer-centric selling can provide. Starting from a better understanding of customers, stronger relationships and even improved competitiveness in the market (Murray, 2021).

According to Murray (2021), a customer-centric selling embraces many aspects, which allows this technique to achieve the greatest level of success. The points that are considered to be the most important ones are presented below. These points were taken into account when the development plan was formulated. Indeed, the customer-centric approach was at the core of this thesis.

- ➔ A company should be able to study, understand and address customer concerns. These are the starting points of a customer-centric technique. Connecting with customers implies an ability to understand what customers actually think, feel, etc. It gives a possibility to avoid a problem from the very beginning and even turn this specific problem into an opportunity. There are different ways a company can study customer concerns and problems. For example, a customer journey map represents the touch points between a company and a customer where different problems may arise. Also, customer support specialists play an essential role in this process as they directly get customer feedback.
- ➔ A company should ask customers questions frequently in such a way that the received information provides answers to questions that may be worrying or interesting to know. One of the best ways to do so is to conduct surveys and questionnaires regularly. Those can be done in creative ways to catch customers' attention and make them provide feedback.
- ➔ A company should be able to affect customers, which allows it to show or tell the customers what they will actually get. It goes without saying that they are getting products or services, but this point is mostly related to external benefits. For example, some after-purchase bonuses play an effective role in keeping customers coming back.
- ➔ A company should be open about itself. It makes a company attractive in customers' eyes. Companies that speak up about their missions, visions, highlights or

even concerns get more trust from customers, which consequently leads to higher interest.

Thus, in general, a customer- centric approach should be implemented by each department of the company. Moreover, companies should operate in a customer-friendly way.

The development plan presented at the end of this paper discusses strategies that would be most effective for the case company, Best in Hel.

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Data Collection**

The data in this research was obtained from various sources, including interviews and online research: social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok), publications, corporate webpages, newspapers, articles, published reports, etc.

Internal interviews were conducted with the CEO of the case company, Andrey Uverskiy. The main goal was to understand the organizational situation and current customer engagement strategies from the CEO's point of view. The interview questions can be found in Appendix 1.

Online research was applied in order to obtain information about competitors and the case company. The data served as an essential input into the current state and benchmarking analysis.

Additionally, online tools were utilized for analysis of competitors and the case company: 01 Brand24, Google Trends, and Google Keyword Planner.

### 3.2 Competitive Benchmarking

Competitive benchmarking is a methodology applied in this thesis. The introduction to the benchmarking process was described in the previous chapter. The benchmarking process of competitors and the case company gives an understanding of the current situation as well as ideas and solutions on how to develop customer engagement strategies at Best in Hel.

As was mentioned before, the data for competitive benchmarking analysis was obtained mostly online through online searching. All information about the case and competitor companies was taken into account. Thus, it covered information on webpages, social media platforms, publications, and mentions. The data was obtained constantly during the whole benchmarking process. Data related to the case company, Best in Hel, was also obtained also offline by interviewing the CEO of the company (Appendix 1: Interview Questions).

The data for the benchmarking process was analyzed in different ways: descriptively, diagnostically, predicatively and prescriptively.

### 3.3 Creation of the Plan

The development plan served as an outcome of the benchmarking process and will be presented in a separate chapter. The plan was based on benchmarking results and a study of the literature. It included strategies, ideas and suggestions on further customer engagement improvement for the case company, Best in Hel.

Thus, the plan was produced in accordance with the needs and requirements of the case company, Best in Hel. The content of the development plan consists of eight strategies, which are presented in order of importance. Starting with customer engagement calculation, the most important strategy the company is missing and moving to other strategies such as customer journey maps, personalized interactions, customer service, value content creation, recruiting new



talents, optimization and service range. Those strategies are discussed more in detail in the corresponding chapter “Results and Implementation”.

The actual development plan is attached to the thesis as Appendix 3: The Development Plan. It is presented as a timetable, where strategies and corresponding timing are introduced. The timetable is advisory and can be modified by the CEO.

At the final stage, the development plan was presented and discussed with the CEO of the case company.

### 3.4 Validation of the plan

As an outcome, this research provides a development plan consisting of recommended strategies on how to improve customer engagement at Best in Hel.

The validation of the thesis was implemented through a workshop, an online presentation of the study, and the development plan. The main target of the validation was to present the development plan and get feedback.

## 4 Current State Analysis

This section discusses the current state of the case company, Best in Hel.

### 4.1 Introduction to the Case Company: Best in Hel

Best in Hel Oy is a social media marketing agency established by Andrey Uverskiy, the current CEO of the company. The organization was founded in 2019 as a join-stock company (osakeyhtiö). In Finland, a joint-stock company is usually abbreviated “Oy” and considered a limited company.

Best in Hel specializes in the food and beverage market, delivering content creation, social media management, strategy and influencing marketing. In other words, the goal of the company is to deliver the client’s (B2B) message to the

target audience by using social media. One of the missions is to cooperate with local Finnish companies that want to reach their customers through social media channels. Best in Hel works on such platforms as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and YouTube. Andrey Uverskiy, the CEO of the company, is responsible for the company's operations, marketing and sales. Vesa Veijo Juhani Inberg is the shareholder of the case company.

The information below shows the services and their descriptions provided by the case company. The services are presented in filtered order, from the most attractive to the least attractive. The order of the service table was proposed by the CEO of the company.

Content creation is the first service of Best in Hel. The company has an in-house team of photographers and videographers who produce content with a social mind. It offers photography and videography services to suit any need. The main users are restaurants, cafeterias, bars, startup companies, and gyms.

Corporate PR is the second service offered by Best in Hel. The purpose is to help brands define what they want to be known for and advise on the most effective ways to communicate their central purpose. Making sure the clients are featured in newspapers, magazines, and websites. The main users are new brands and companies that have just entered the market and want to be recognized.

Collaboration is the third service of Best in Hel. It includes unique photography and a one-off feature on the Best In Hel account feed, stories, and TikTok to promote through the support of brand development, increased engagement, and traffic driven to the target social media account. The main users are Oppa Korean BBQ, Shinobi, Momotoko.

Highlights of this service were, for example, the following:

Oppa Korean BBQ was opened on November 20, 2021. In just a month, it received social media exposure of over 500,000 views on TikTok in total and was

included on the list of the best new restaurants in Helsinki in 2021 by My Helsinki.

Best in Hel started partnering with Shinobi in April 2022, just 3 months after its opening. During the collaboration, Shinobi was featured in Kauppalehti (2022) and Scan Magazine (2022) as "a sophisticated yet informal breath of fresh air in a growing Finnish food scene."

Momoko has been a Best in Hel's client since 2019. A good amount of high-quality content both in Finland and Estonia. In October 2022, Scan Magazine featured Momotoko in its Scandinavian Travel category.

Thus, there are three main services provided by the company. Oppa Korean BBQ, Shinobi, Momotoko are key customers of the company. Also, the company works with smaller customer groups such as restaurants, cafeterias, bars, startups, etc.

Best in Hel promotes their services via the main website (bestinhel.com), Instagram (@bestinhel), Facebook (facebook.com/bestinhel/), and Tiktok (@bestinhel). Table 1 below looks at the social media accounts of Best in Hel. The social media presented in the table are in filtered order, from the most popular to the least popular, according to customer engagement.

Social media	Engagement	Description	Strength	Weakness
Instagram	12.1k followers 589 posts	Posting every second day Collaborations Pictures were Best in Hel was tagged	The most popular social media page Frequently used	Low follower's interactions (100-500 likes; 0-2 comments) Low response level
Facebook	406 followers 392 likes	Important information and updates Mentions in other sources	Company info Posting Promotion of the services	Low follower's interaction Rare posting

Corporate Webpage		Information about the company, services Gallery Cases	Appealing and up-to-date, contains necessary information	Not on the first page results
TikTok	39 followers 17 likes	One video of the Best in Hel	Presence in the most popular platform	Low followers rate Absence of activity

Table 1 Social media channels of Best in Hel

As can be seen from Table 1, the company has social media channels where it promotes its services and engages with customers and potential clients. From Table 1 it can be seen that the company is not very popular on social media and does not attempt to increase customer engagement. The case company promotes its services through social media and word of mouth.

#### 4.2 Analysis of the Challenge and Description of the Current State

The challenge of this paper was insufficient customer engagement at Best in Hel. The research question was as the following:

*How to develop customer engagement at Best in Hel?*

There are many ways to answer the question. Indeed, there are many techniques and approaches that could be utilized in finding the answer. However, as stated earlier, the benchmarking process was chosen and applied in this paper as its main approach. Taking into account the case company, the current situation and other related points, the process of benchmarking is a suitable technique for this thesis.

Table 2 below presents research problems, their possible causes and possible solutions. The table sums up all the possible problems and their consequences. The provided solutions are effective methods to address those problems.

Problem	Cause	Solution
<p>Customer engagement with the company is not measured and analyzed</p> <p>Customer engagement is low</p> <p>Growth metrics are down</p> <p>Lack of progress</p>	<p>Communication channels are lacking or have poor communication with customers</p> <p>Customer engagement strategies are ineffective</p> <p>The engagement model is reactive</p> <p>Customer feedback is not measured</p> <p>➡ Competitive ability decreases</p>	<p>Competitive benchmarking in order to compare the case company to its competitor and find solutions for customer engagement development</p> <p>Explore customer engagement strategies that competitor companies are using, then adapt and modify them according to the needs of the case company</p> <p>Study the literature on effective customer engagement strategies</p>

Table 2 Problems, causes and solution of the study

According to the table above, the company's customer engagement is caused by different factors as well as not being measured and analyzed. The connection between the company and its customers is weak. As a consequence, the company cannot differentiate itself in the market in terms of competitiveness. The process of benchmarking helps identify successful strategies used by competitors, as well as gaps and failures in the case company's engagement strategies. As an outcome, it is possible to find ways to develop customer engagement development.

### 4.3 Preliminary assessment of the problem solving

Table 3 below represents the preliminary assessment of the problem-solving process.

Possible beneficiaries	Preliminary benefits from the research	Preliminary results
Customers	Smooth interaction with the company Customers' problems are resolved promptly	Improved customer engagement Expectations are met
Employees	Involvement in the strong and stable organization Better corporate culture and compensation	Personal development Clear goals
CEO	Understanding of where to move Opportunity to formulate customer engagement strategy Competitive advantage of the company	Increased profit
Shareholder	Increase of stock valuations/financial profits	Increased profit
Researcher	Opportunity to improve analyzation and development skills	Personal improvement

Table 3 Preliminary assessment of the problem-solving process

As can be seen from the table above, the research has mutual benefits for all parties involved. It will provide the CEO of the company with clear suggestions that would improve customer engagement, which will consequently lead to higher revenues, growth, brand awareness, etc. Shareholders also gain benefits from increased stock valuations, for example. As for the researcher, the current study enhances her analytical and development skills, leading to personal improvement.

#### 4.4 Benchmarking metrics

According to Chapter 3, research metrics were chosen as follows: customer satisfaction, brand awareness, social media engagement and share of voice. Companies were benchmarked according to the metrics.

### 5 Introduction to the Case Company and Competitors

#### 5.1 Best in Hel

The case company, Best in Hel was described in the previous chapter. The main problem is that the customer engagement within the company is lagging behind. There are no specific customer engagement strategies the company implements.

SWOT analysis was utilized in order to define the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Table 4 below represents the SWOT analysis for Best in Hel.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
Affordable prices Small business -> respond to requests and adapt to marketing changes quickly Fast decision-making process CEO reputation Loyal customer base Brand merchandise (Clothes with the Best in Hel brand logo is being sold by HETZUKOTO) Instagram -> the most powerful platform has Best in Hel account popular Relationship selling -> knowing customers personally	Not enough brand recognition Little market's reputation Small workforce -> one person leaving or getting sick can affect operations Cash flow is still unreliable Company events are missing Absence of collaborations with popular brands and influencers Customer feedback is not measured Poor differentiation from competitors The social share of voice is weak
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
Competitors tend to refuse their smaller customers due to the large volume of projects they handle Opportunity to attract those customers	Economic crisis -> companies save money but not willing to spend it on social media agencies

Popularity of TikTok is growing	Tight competition New start-up companies with fresh and unique ideas
---------------------------------	---

Table 4 SWOT analysis of Best in Hel

As can be seen from the SWOT analysis, the company has the potential to become successful. One of the interesting points of this analysis is that the weaknesses presented are mainly caused by a lack of customer engagement. Thus, the current study would definitely bring benefits to the company.

## 5.2 Kurio

Kurio Oy is a social media marketing agency established by Opas Tommi Juhani in 2010. Being on the market for 13 years, the company has strong brand recognition. Kurio is listed internationally and has won several industry awards around the world. Some highlights of the company are the following:

VUODEN VIESTINTÄTOIMISTO 2020 (Finnish Comms Awards)

DIGITAL CONSULTANCY OF THE YEAR 2020, SABRE AWARDS

WORLD'S LEADING INDEPENDENT AGENCY 2020

2 x Silver EFFIE-Winner 2020

MOST CREATIVE AGENCY (EMEA-region, Holmes Report 2019)

2nd BEST PR-AGENCY IN FINLAND (Taloustutkimus 12/2018)

AGENCY OF THE YEAR 2018 – FINALIST

The company is also known for its unique and fresh ideas as well as its implementation of unforgettable brand creations. According to the corporate webpage, the company is being intensively discussed on the internet as well as



often mentioned by different newspapers and magazines. Social media is full of discussions, likes and reposts.

Additionally, it is important to mention that Kurio often organizes offline and online events, presentations, etc. Also, one of the features is that the company publishes news, articles, etc. that provide information regarding up-to-date trends in the social media world.

Kurio has three main directions: insight and strategy, content and campaigns, and paid social. As well as in Best in Hel, the goal of the company is to deliver the client's (B2B) message to the target audience by using social media.

The information below shows the services and their descriptions provided by Kurio. The information about the services as well as their description was taken from the official webpage, kurio.fi.

The name of the first service of Kurio is "Insight and Strategy". The main directions are social brand strategy, content strategy, buyer persona mapping, research and studies, and Kurio AI.

Kurio describes its content strategy service as a solution for brands that need a plan to succeed on social media.

Brand strategy is described by Kurio as an opportunity to have the creative concepts that social media is lacking.

The buyer persona mapping is for those whose main problem is targeting their audience. The company assists in mapping out the social media profiles of customers' target audiences.

Kurio AI assists companies that are willing to utilize AI as a part of their marketing communication strategy. Fresh ideas and cooperation with the "hottest" AI startups make this service attractive.

The name of the second service is “Content and Campaigns”. It includes global social media management, creative campaigns, always-on social media, and inbound content marketing.

The main purpose of a global social media management service is to provide streamlining and firm processes for customers’ global setup.

A creative campaign strategy provides unique and fresh social media campaigns, which are delivered from production to distribution.

Always-on social media helps customers maintain communication all year round and make the most of their marketing communication budget.

Inbound content marketing is described as the process of creating content that engages and converts niche professional audiences.

The name of the third service is “Paid Social”. It covers social first media planning, paid social insight & analytics, paid social for marketing, content distribution for communications, social PR, and influencers.

Social first media planning assists its customers in setting the right KPIs for social media and targeting the audience.

Paid social insight & analytics provide customers with an opportunity to know their social media by studying the analytics of social media insights.

Paid social for marketing is related to optimization and improved content performance. Kurio promises to deliver the service until a customer is satisfied.

Content distribution for communications provides contents that create communication in social media.

Social PR & Influencer offers a cooperation with PR and influencers that provides brands with more awareness and a greater share of voice on the market.

The main users are Elisa (co-creation challenge) Fazer, Tutti-Frutti (Nordic Berries), Nokia, Wärtsilä

In order to compare companies, there is a need to conduct a SWOT analysis for Kurio as well as for other competitors. Table 5 below represents the SWOT analysis for Kurio.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
Long history of the brand Brand awareness on the market Leading position on the market Co-operation with famous brands, personalities International orientation Ability to manage big volumes (projects, budgets) Diverse workforce Awards	Lack of time and resources to manage small projects (low-budget customers) Instagram platform Customer service in two languages (eng, fin)
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
International growth International customers Leader position on the domestic market Acquisition of smaller businesses Web design and development	Economic crises Bargaining power of customers Emerging startups with fresh ideas

Table 5 SWOT analysis for Kurio

According to the SWOT analysis of Kurio, it was detected that the company has more strengths than weaknesses. Additionally, there are many opportunities for Kurio to succeed further. At this point, the company is a great example for Best in Hel in terms of customer engagement development.

### 5.3 Hasan and Partners

Hasan and Partners is a Helsinki-based advertising agency founded in 1991. Hasan and Partners belongs to the Hasan & Co group, whose other subsidiaries are Frankly Partners in Finland and Perfect Fools in Sweden. The founder and long-term leader who gave the company its name was Ami Hasan, who

died in 2021. Hasan & Co group had a total of almost one hundred employees in Helsinki and around 40 in Stockholm. Riku Vassinen has been the CEO of Hasan & Partners since 2022. Since 2020, the entire group has been led by Simo Kajaste.

Hasan & Partners' customers have included large international companies as well as Finnish companies. These include, for example, H&M, Metsä Group, Kone, Valio, Kesko, Helsingin Sanomat, Nokia and Ikea. In addition, the office has become known for its pro bono work for Plan International, for example.

Hasan & Partners' work has been awarded several Cannes Lions and other international recognitions in the marketing industry. The campaign "Machine Conversations", made for the machine, won Epica and the Golden Hammer in 2017. In 2016, Hasan and Partners won gold in the Golden Drum competition with their tribute video for Valio about Lemmy Kilmister. Also in 2017, the campaign "The Lick-hikers Guide to Inner Strength" carried out for Valio brought the office a Golden Drum and Cannes Grand Prix bronze.

Hasan and Partners is presented as a team of four companies: Hasan and Partners, Frankly, Perfect Fools, and Hasan and Partners Design. All the services provided by the main company are divided among partners, who are responsible for certain projects.

One of the key benefits is that the company builds customized teams of experts for each customer request.

Hasan and Partners offers services in five directions. The information below represents the services of the company and their description. The information about the company and services provided was obtained from the official webpage, [hasanpartners.fi](https://hasanpartners.fi)

Brand strategies and platforms are the first service name. The service covers such areas as brand strategy and purpose, strategic segmentation, brand concepts and platforms, future casting. The main purpose is to plan and develop

platforms for bringing value to experience, product or company. Close cooperation with customers in accordance with the company strategy to ensure digital and ecological transformation.

Brand experience and design is the second service of the company, and it includes brand audits, identification of design and systems, customer journeys, experience design and branding. It gives brands a unique personality and a chance to express their purpose and positioning. It also facilitates consistency across customer interactions.

Customer-centric companies and brands are the third service, and it consists of customer strategy, design organization, cultural change, and employee experience. It organizes simplicity and drives change by creating participation and communication within companies.

Communication planning and execution is the fourth service, and it includes reputation building and management, brand communication design, communicating execution, PR and media, and ongoing cooperation. The main function is to find opportunities for brands to communicate on the market with clear messages in line with their purposes.

Making and telling stories is the last service of Hasan and Partners, and the main directions are target analysis and setting, creative strategy, campaign ideas and execution, and brand operations. It helps build strong emotional connections with customers.

The main users are Lempi Kodinhoito Oy, OnePlus, the City of Helsinki, Cloetta, Neste and Metsä.

As the services of Hasan and Partners were described, the next step is to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the company by conducting a SWOT analysis, which will contribute to further research on competitive benchmarking.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
Brand awareness on the Finnish market Brand awareness on the Swedish market Wide range of services Skilled and experienced employees Partnership with large companies Active presence on the social media platforms Creative approach	High prices Webpage is lacking information Instagram platform
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
International perspectives Acquisition of partners	Economic crises Bargaining power of customers Emerging startups

Table 6 SWOT analysis Hasan and Partners

Hasan and Partners is considered a successful company on the domestic and international markets. Company strategies towards customer engagement will be analyzed in the performance benchmarking part of the next chapter.

#### 5.4 Dagmar

Dagmar is a marketing communications company founded in 1973 and owned by Salomaa Group, a Finnish marketing communications group. Dagmar also works as a partner of the global media agency chain, Starcom Mediavest Group. The office is located in Annankatu, Helsinki. The CEO of the company has been Krista Elopuro since 2019.

In the financial year 2020-2021, the turnover of the marketing agency Dagmar was 162.2 million euros, and the company had an average of 202 employees.

Dagmar specializes in consulting, planning and implementing information-driven marketing. The company serves its customers in the areas of business development, marketing technologies and marketing communications. Experts at Dagmar develop new ways to combine data, technology, analytics, and customer

understanding, accelerating growth. The content marketing expert team plans the concepts and contents of the companies' own digital channels and social media, as well as takes care of channel-optimized productions. Marketing communications and growth marketing services at Dagmar use data and technology to build marketing solutions and effective encounters for all stages of the customer path, from strategic entities to channel selection and analysis of results. Dagmar also owns Radly Oy, which helps B2B companies with the development of digitalization.

In September 2021, the international research agency Recma, which evaluates media agencies, rated Dagmar as the number one media agency in Finland with the strongest resources and client portfolio (Dagmar Twitter 2021).

Dagmar has also been rewarded by AdProfit, Effie, Grand One, the Global Search Awards, the European Excellence Awards, Cannes Young Lions, and the European Advertising Certificate (EADC) in the Hall of Fame competition. In Kauppalehti list of the largest marketing communication agencies in Finland, Dagmar has been at the top for several years.

Table 7 below represents the SWOT analysis of the Dagmar company.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
Brand awareness on the local market Wide range of services Unique services (AI) Team of 200 experts Successful cases with large customers Outstanding social media platforms Sustainability Blogs, webinars, podcasts Effective advertising campaigns Brand Recognition	Webpage is lacking information Size of the company

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Internationalization Becoming a leader of AI marketing services	Economic crises Bargaining power of customers Emerging startups

Table 7 SWOT analysis of Dagmar

As can be seen from the SWOT analysis, Dagmar is a successful company with a strong brand image and brand recognition. The company has quite great potential for growth; however, it is not considered a priority, or the company's attempts to grow are insufficient.

## 5.5 The Generation AB

The Generation AB is a Swedish company founded in 2014. The main office is located in Sweden inside the Grönstedtska palace, which makes the location of the company highly attractive. The company also offers services in six other locations in Sweden, which are implemented by partner companies.

The Generation AB is one of the largest agencies in Sweden, with 30 employees onsite. The company has been awarded the Gazelle price by Dagens Industry and the Super Company by Bisnode in the years 2019-2020.

There are several services the company provides. WordPress' design and development, design and UX visual impact, and long-term website maintenance.

WordPress' design: development of web projects from scratch, where messages of companies are reached by the target group. The main feature of this service is safety, as the company is working with open source, which means that customers do not have to set aside money for expensive license fees. The Generation company has many cases of successfully implemented projects for large B2B companies, which include, for example, Budbee, Absolut, SWEA, Vitamin Well, and others.



Design and UX visual impact connect internal and external communication. The service focuses on logos, graphic profiles and other marketing material. Successful cases include such companies as Simplex, Aives, Trippus, Peak and others.

Impact and long-term maintenance conclude the set of services provided by the Generation, where the company engages in statistical partnerships with its customers.

The Generation is not a direct competitor of Best in Hel, but the customer engagement practices implemented by the company are very intense and will be analyzed further in the next chapter.

Below, Table 8 represents a SWOT analysis of the Generation AB company.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
Local understanding Strong brand on the domestic market Brand recognition Partnerships across Sweden Cooperation with WordPress Webpage Successful cases	Lack of information online Internationalization
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
Growing Industry New advertisement concepts New social media trends Growing interest towards WordPress	Competition from local and international agencies

Table 8 SWOT analysis of The Generation AB

One of the main advantages of the Generation AB company is its partnership with WordPress. The possibility of utilizing WordPress services gives the company a great competitive advantage in the market.

## **6 Competitive Benchmarking**

### **6.1 Performance Benchmarking**

As was mentioned before, the thesis focuses on competitive benchmarking, namely performance benchmarking. The main purpose is to compare customer engagement as well as the customer engagement strategies of the case company, Best in Hel, to those of its competitors. Competitive benchmarking allows one to see how well social strategies for reaching a target audience are working and whether the company reaches more, less, or the same amount as its competitor. As a consequence, analyzed data provides unique solutions and techniques that can be taken into account by Best in Hel to improve customer engagement and increase competitiveness on the market.

Competitive benchmarking metrics and KPIs were discussed in previous chapters. A set of metrics was chosen in accordance with the study targets. The goal of the competitive benchmarking was related to the enhancement of customer engagement.

#### **6.1.1 Customer satisfaction rate**

Customer satisfaction was analyzed using online searches and a study of competitors. Social media platforms, publications, mentions, etc. were analyzed on the subject of customer satisfaction.

#### **Best in Hel**

As was mentioned before, Best in Hel has three key customers, which create the company's main revenue. Those are Shinobi, Momotoko and Oppa Korean BBQ. According to the interview with the CEO, Andrey Uverskiy, these partners remain loyal because of the close relationship and satisfaction with the service received. However, as was mentioned by the CEO, a small group of satisfied customers does not attract new customers.

There were no feedback reviews on social media, and the company does not conduct customer satisfaction surveys. At this point, customer satisfaction levels at Best in Hel cannot be analyzed and measured.

## Kurio

The customer satisfaction level at Kurio remains high. Firstly, following the company's publications, it was noticed that there were many cases of returning customers. At this point, Kurio has customers who have been loyal for a long time and are consequently satisfied with the service they get and the customer experience in general. Secondly, Kurio conducts surveys and customer webinars regularly, which provide feedback and detect issues that could potentially be fixed. Also, online and offline events take place regularly. All these give a deep understanding of the customer's expectations, suggestions, obstacles and other important areas. Thirdly, Kurio has quite numerous online reviews that are positive and convincing. For example, Kurio has a profile at Featured Customers, the world's leading customer reference platform for B2B business software and services. The results of the customer reference rating are excellent, which means that customers are returning and referring the company further. The example can be seen in Figure 4.

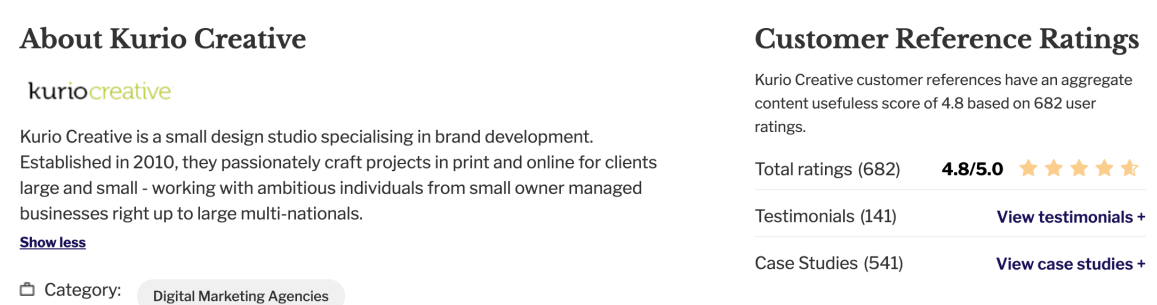


Figure 4 Kurio Customer Reference Ratings (FeaturedCustomers, 2023)

Lastly, according to the report provided by Kurio, Social Media Trends 2023, it can be concluded that the company follows social media trends and pays attention to customer engagement.

## SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TRENDS 2023

- B2B buyers spend 27% of their purchase consideration time conducting independent research online. Compare that to only 5 to 6% with any sales rep.
- 44% of millennial B2B customers would prefer not to interact with a sales rep at all.
- 83% of B2B content marketers use B2B social media ads and/or promoted posts, up from 60% last year.
- 40% of B2B content marketers increased their investment in social media and online communities in response to COVID-19.
- 76% of B2B organizations use social media analytics to measure content performance.
- By 2025, 80% of B2B sales interactions will occur on digital channels.
- With 86% of B2B brands who use influencer marketing reporting it to be successful for their business

**What is the most important trend regarding the measuring and metrics of social media marketing in 2023?**

As social media is evolving, its measurement metrics are evolving too. Beyond just likes, comments and shares. Some of the established ones are still relevant and are becoming more specific.

Some of the new ones are emerging as well. Which not only allow for better measurability but cost optimization

Below is a list of metrics which could be of use for social media marketers:

**Social Media Engagement Rate** - Engagement has been a crucial metric for understanding social media performance.

**Overall Engagement Rate** - Also helps take a microscopic look at user interactions with your brand across all platforms. Giving an idea of what content resonates most with the audience and what needs improvement.

For e.g., depending on the content and target audience, one might discover that there is more engagement on Instagram than on Facebook. Measuring overall engagement rate will help create more relevant content for each platform.

One can get reach, link clicks, video views, reactions, comments, shares & post clicks depending platform to platform. With a dashboard providing post insights and daily data.

**Site and Social Media Traffic** - Your social media content/messaging should help lead to more website traffic. If you're getting major part of your web traffic from social media, it can be attributed that your digital strategies are working.

**Conversion Rates** - The goal of many social media campaigns is to increase conversion rates. The more lead conversions you get, the more data you can have in your portfolio to draw new clients.

**Click Rates** - Clicks are key! If users are clicking on your content, it means your thumbnails, titles or both are on target. You can track link clicks, ad clicks, and more to see what's working and what's not. A high click-through rate from your promoted content strongly indicates that you should increase your ad budget.

**Post Types and Frequency** - Videos are on the rise and seem to be performing better than photos when it comes to clicks and engagement. If you notice a connection between content types and engagement rates, you can propose solid content plans backed by data and trends.

An important metric on videos on Facebook is ThruPlay. It allows advertisers to optimise and choose to only pay for ads that are played to completion for videos shorter than 15 seconds.

**Reach and Impressions** - Keep track of your reach and impressions to see how well your content is performing and reach a larger audience! Reach lets you see how many potential unique viewers you have, while impressions show how many times your

72



KURIO 9  
The Social Media Analyst

Figure 5 Social Media Marketing Trends 2023 (Kurio, 2023)

Indeed, Kurio reports regularly, where all the latest trends and up-to-date information are presented. Generally, keeping track of the market situation allows the company to stay competitive and adapt to potential changes more easily.

## Hasan and Partners

Hasan and Partners is considered to be a company with high customer satisfaction. According to the data, the company has positive customer feedback.

As was mentioned before, the services of the company are divided among partner companies, and all of them have positive customer feedback across the internet. Hasan and Partners, the main company, has many reviews on Facebook, which makes the company look appealing. One of the examples can be found in Figure 6.

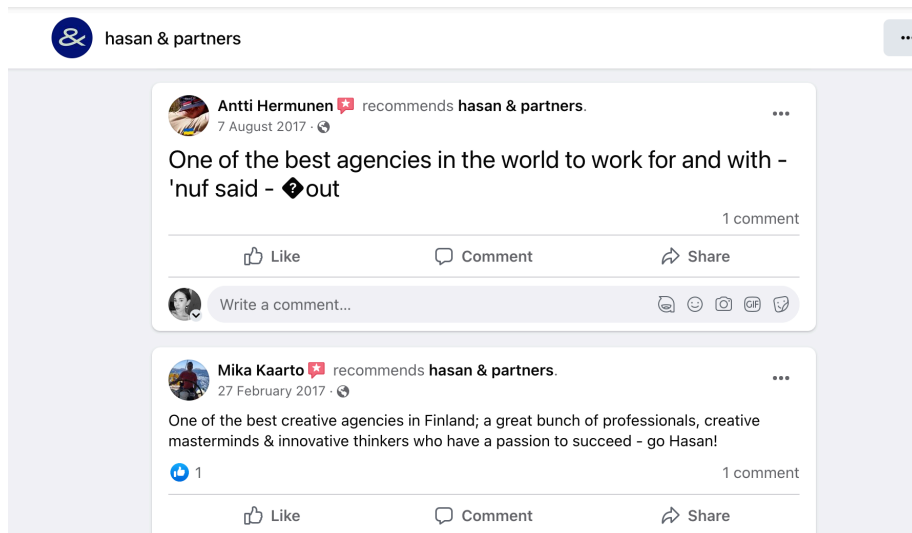


Figure 6 Customer feedback on Hasan and Partners (Facebook Hasan and Partners, 2023)

Other partners of the company also maintain a high level of customer satisfaction, which can be seen from the highest positive feedback rating on Facebook.

According to the Featured Customers, where the company has a profile, the customer reference rating remains high. Customers are satisfied with the services and refer the company to other potential customers. The rating information can be seen in Figure 7.

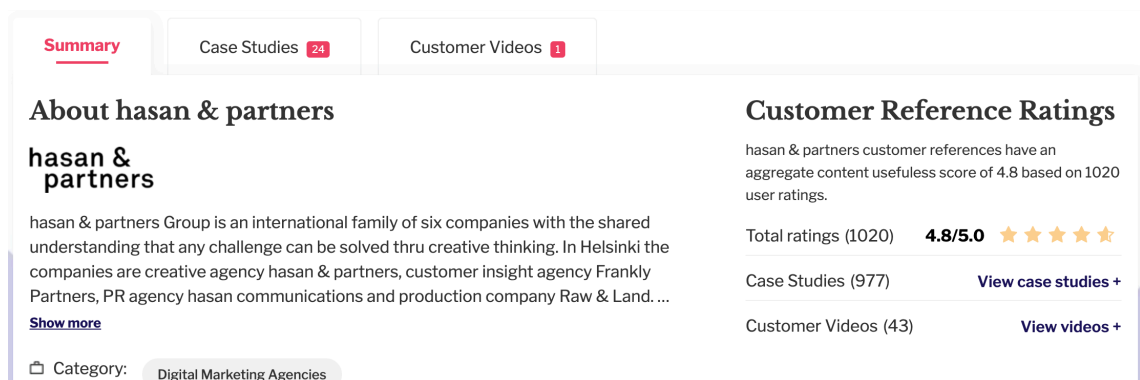


Figure 7 Hasan and Partners Customer Reference Ratings (FeaturedCustomers, 2023)

According to Kauppalehti, Hasan and Partners' financial information, the company's turnover has been growing for the past few years, which means the company operates successfully with a profit over its costs.

## Taloustiedot

Hasan & Partners Oy

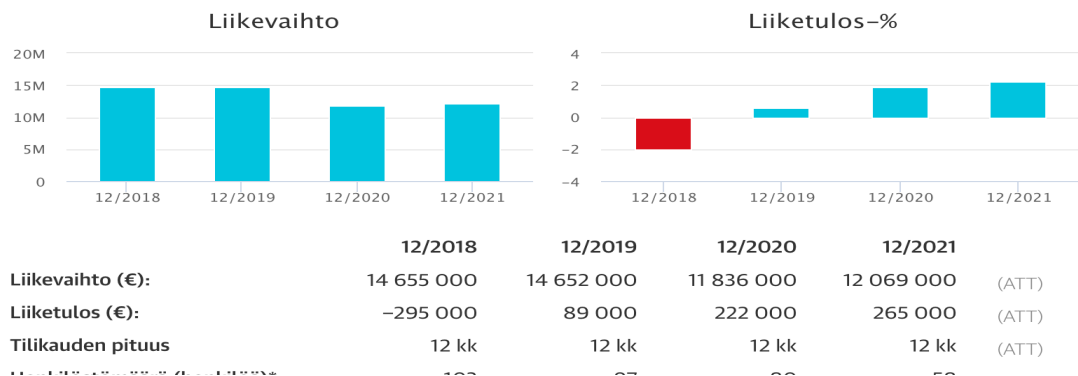


Figure 8 Hasan and Partners Financial situation (Kauppalehti, 2021)

Growing revenues as well as positive customer feedback provide evidence that Hasan and Partners is operating successfully.

## Dagmar

Dagmar's turnover in the 2021–2022 financial year was 180.4 million euros, and the gross margin was 20.3 million euros (Dagmar.fi).

Dagmar is one of the biggest agencies in Finland in terms of sales margin when all media, advertising, digital, communications and brand agencies are broadly taken into account in the comparison. A strong position means having the ability and responsibility to show direction and move the entire industry forward.

Dagmar has a strategy of transparency: customers always know what they are paying for.

Dagmar is part of Finland's largest marketing, communication and consulting company group, Salomaa Group. The main partner is Publicist Media, one of the world's largest marketing conglomerates.

All these tell us about the massive importance of the company in the market, its strong customer focus, and its high level of customer satisfaction.

Dagmar measures and analyzes customer satisfaction with multiple practices: webinars, podcasts, research, surveys, etc. This gives the company a great advantage in knowing its customers and facing potential challenges quickly.



Me Dagmarissa haluamme asiakkaidemme menestyvän.

Siksi koemme, että meidän tehtävämme on tuottaa ymmärrystä tässä jatkuvasti muuttuvassa maailmassa. Kysymme suomalaisilta kuluttajilta säännöllisesti mitä heille kuuluu, mikä heidän kulutustaan ohjaa ja kuinka he mediapäivänsä viettävät. Jotta sinä asiakkaanamme voit reagoida muutoksiin mahdollisimman nopeasti.

Markkinoinnin maailma uudistuu ja muuttuu niin kovalla vauhdilla, että kaikkea kiinnostavaa ei kukaan pysty seuraamaan yksin. Markkinoinnin muutoksessa tiedolla johtamisen merkitys kasvaa.

Pyydä asiantuntijamme käymään, mietitään yhdessä, miten tuorein tieto markkinasta ja kuluttajista käännetään yrityksenne kasvun voimavaraksi!

Figure 9 Dagmar tells about its customers (Dagmar, 2023)

The company follows current trends and changes in the market, which allows it to adapt to challenges more easily and effectively.

### The Generation AB

The Generation AB has a high level of customer satisfaction, as can be seen in different channels. The company has a lot of positive feedback and promotes customer feedback on its official webpage. For example, the company presented a set of reviews from customers who are large companies. Figures 10 and 11 show the feedback on the Generation AB.

### What our customers think!

Amongst our clients are banks and large construction companies, IT-businesses, recruiters and other mixed branches. This is what a few of them say about us:

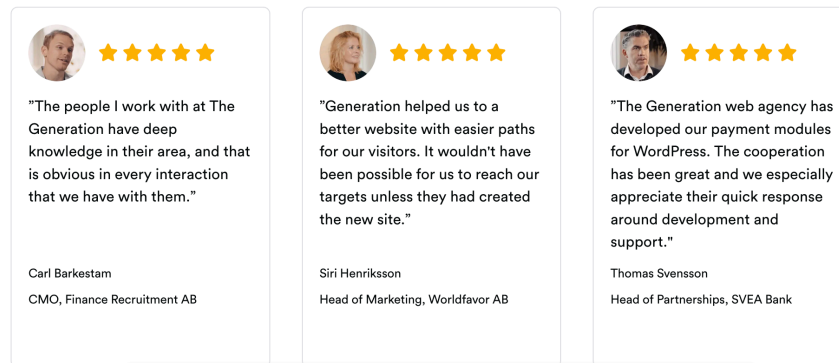


Figure 10 The Generation AB webpage reviews (The Generation AB, 2023)

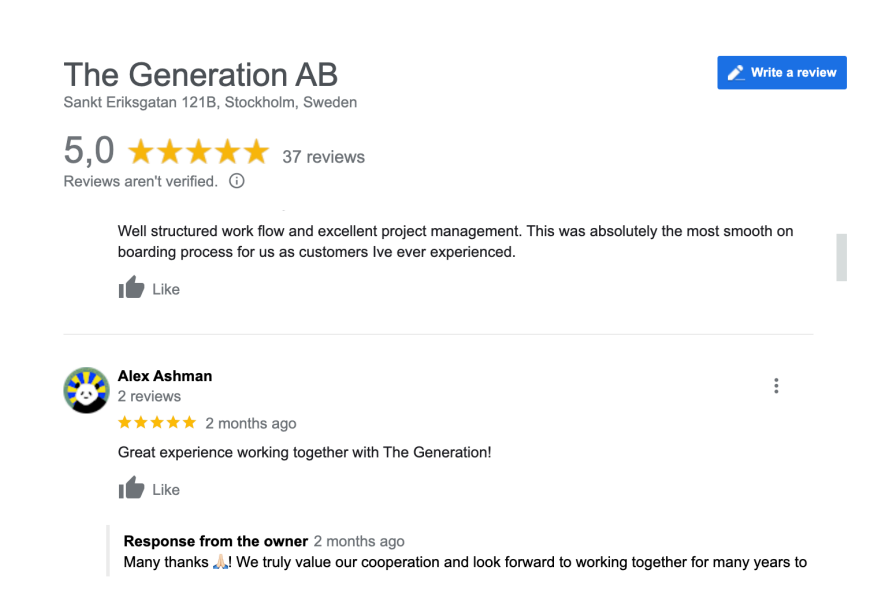


Figure 11 The Generation AB Google reviews (Google, 2023)

The Generation AB also shows good results in financial aspects. According to Bizzdo, a Swedish company that provides official information about companies, the turnover of the Generation AB grew by 6.8% in 2022. Figures 12 and 13 show information on the company's financial situation.



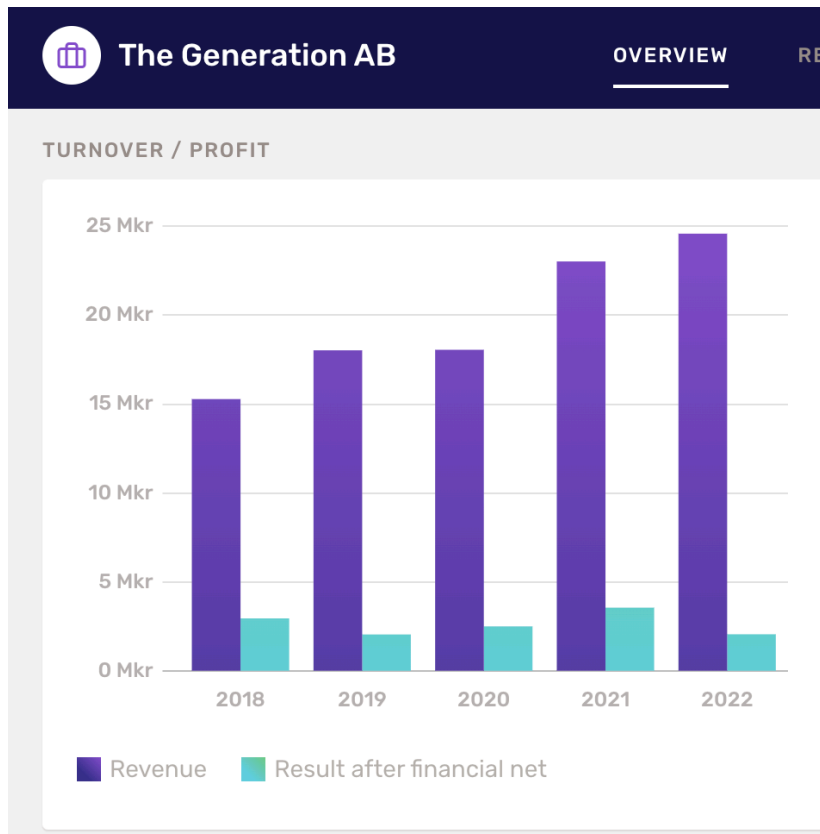


Figure 12 The Generation AB turnover/profit (Bizzdo, 2023)

Key figures (SEK thousand)				
	<	2022-12	2021-12	2020-12 >
Growth ▼				
Revenue growth %		6.8	27.5	0.2
Staff growth %		3.6	27.3	4.8

Figure 13 The Generation AB key figures on growth (Bizzdo, 2023)

The Generation AB operates successfully, and as a consequence, customer satisfaction remains high. Customers are satisfied with the services and the company in general.

### 6.1.2 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is a significant part of customer engagement. In order to benchmark Best in Hel and competitors, the following action was taken: brand awareness was measured by Google Trends data. It searches the internet for mentions of the brand, so it is possible to check if those conversations are getting more or less frequent over time (Aquino, 2022).

#### **Best in Hel**

Unfortunately, Google Trends was unable to analyze the data for Best in Hel since there were only a few search requests. As a result, Best in Hel has very low brand awareness on the internet and is consequently known by a narrow group of customers. It is also impossible to find the Best in Hel with the help of keywords such as “digital marketing agency”, “marketing agency in Helsinki” and “social media agency”. The company can be found online with a clear search of its name and description.

#### **Kurio**

The awareness of the brand Kurio can be found in Google Trends, which means there was enough data for the search (the engine does not make an analysis when the search does not have enough data). Interest over time looks to be fluctuating, with picks of its popularity (numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time). A value of 100 is the peak popularity of the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. A score of 0 means that there was not enough data for this term. According to the information below, interest in the brand Kurio stays stable.

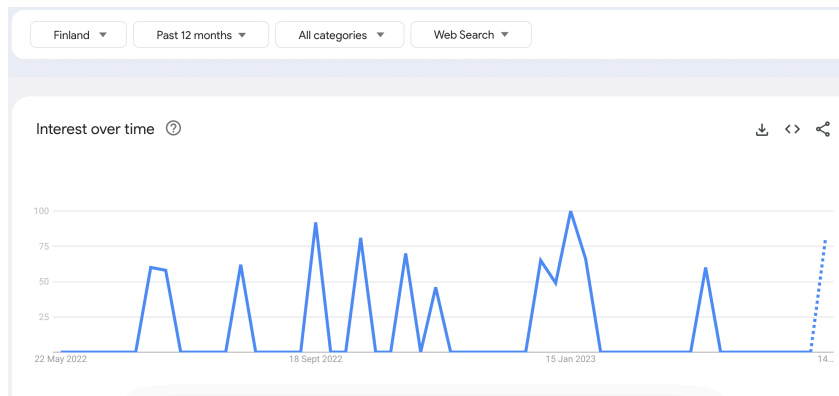


Figure 14 Kurio interest over time (Google Trends, 2023)

However, the information presented in the chart above shows that people search for Kurio services directly, meaning that they are aware of the company and its activities. Also, the ability to use Google Trends tells about the high number of search requests.

### Hasan and Partners

Google Trends successfully identified the search situation for Hasan and Partners. Consequently, it means that there is enough data and search requests to analyze the brand awareness of the company.

Interest in the company fluctuates over time, there are peaks and valleys in the search requests for the company. Figure 15 represents the brand awareness situation for Hasan and Partners.

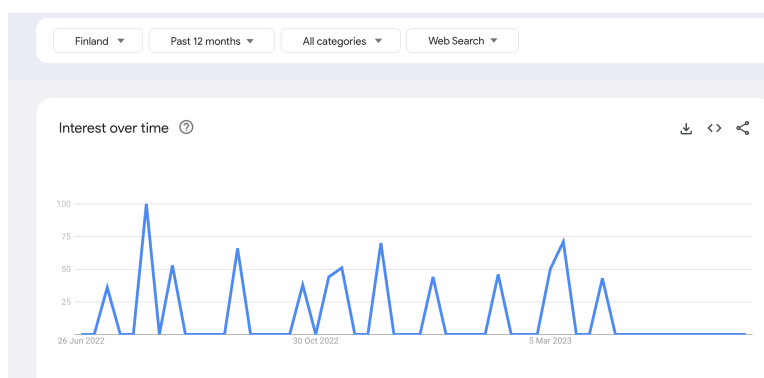


Figure 15 Hasan and Partners Interest over time (Google Trends, 2023)

The company operates efficiently, with fluctuating interest over time. Customers know the company as well as its services.

## Dagmar

Dagmar has a high level of brand awareness, which can be noticed with an online search. The search for marketing agencies in Helsinki refers to Dagmar right away. Customers know and can easily reach the company and its services.

According to Google Trends information, there is always interest in the company. Over time, the interest fluctuates but rarely drops to zero, as other competitors might have. Bar Chart 3 below provides the interest over time for Dagmar.

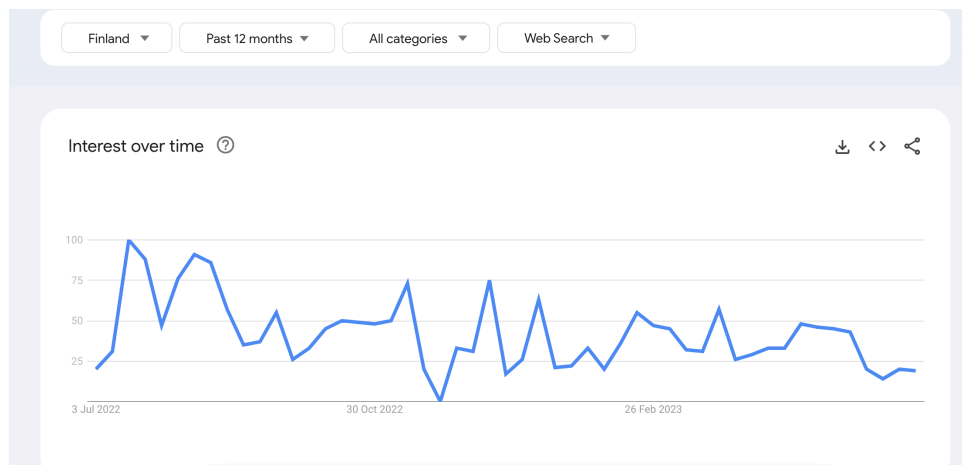


Figure 16 Dagmar Interest over time (Google Trends, 2023)

The search volume for the brand remains high, meaning that people are searching directly for Dagmar, meaning that people are aware of the brand and its services.

## The Generation AB

The Generation AB is an international company, and the analytics from Google Trends were considered globally. The company has strong brand awareness in the domestic (Sweden) and international markets. For example, figure 17 represents search volume for the company for the past 12 months. There is always interest in the company.

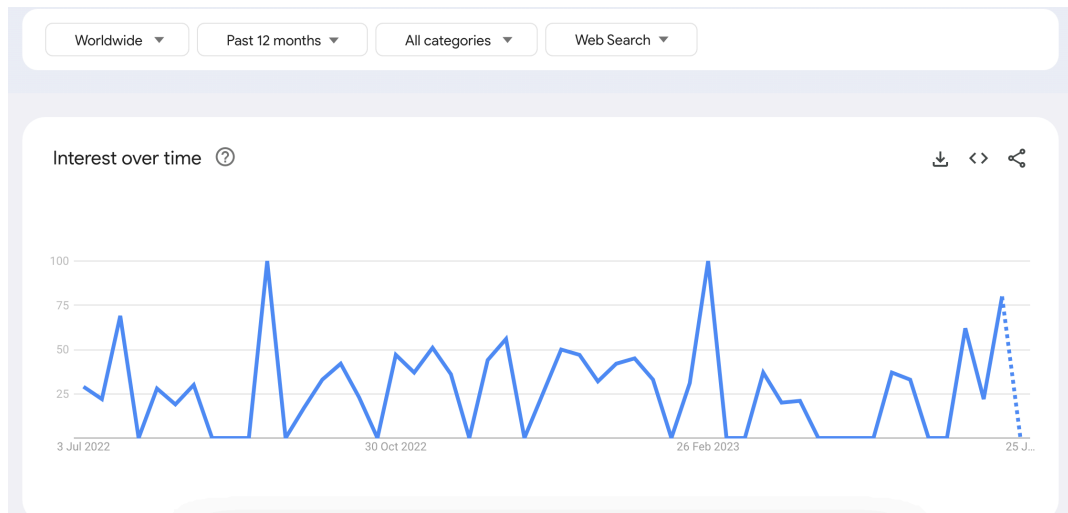


Figure 17 The Generation AB interest over time (Google Trends, 2023)

Additionally, when searching for marketing agencies in Sweden, the Generation AB is shown up on the first page, which indicates that the company is popular.

Brand 24, a platform that identifies brand mentions, has shown that there are many mentions of the Generation AB online. Figure 18 shows the results of the Brand 24 analysis. The search was implemented in Swedish language, and Brand 24 analyzes only web results, eliminating social media platforms, where brand awareness is also high.

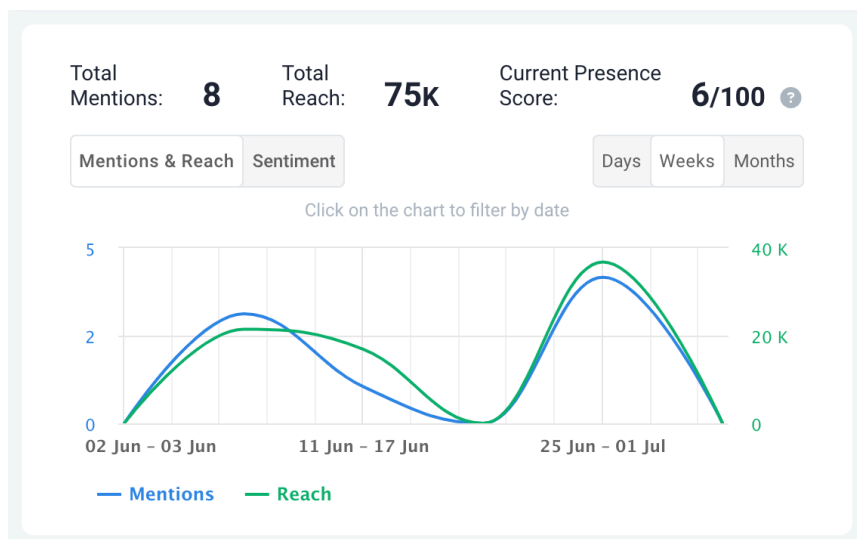


Figure 18 The Generation AB mentions from Brand 24 (Brand 24, 2023)

Thus, brand awareness among the Generation AB is high. Especially on the Swedish market, this company is popular.

### 6.1.3 Social Media Engagement

Social media engagement, as was mentioned before, is the measurement of shares, likes and comments on a social media post. Social media engagement was analyzed on the following social media platforms: Instagram and Facebook.

#### Best in Hel

Instagram tends to be a powerful social media platform for Best in Hel. As was mentioned earlier, Best in Hel's account has more than 12k followers, but the user engagement is low. According to Figure 19 below, the engagement rate is 0.05%, which is a very low engagement rate.


 <p>           @ bestinhel  <b>Best in Hel</b>            Showcasing the best of Helsinki            Business enquiries: hello@bestinhel.com            Tag us to be featured            #bestinhel         </p>	592 Uploads	0.05% ? Engagement
	12.2k Followers	1.01% ? Average users activity

Figure 19 Engagement rate Best in Hel (Inflact, 2023)

Best in Hel does not invest in Instagram development, as can be seen from its irregular posts. For example, in May 2023, there was only one posting, which is extremely low for a company specializing in social media marketing.

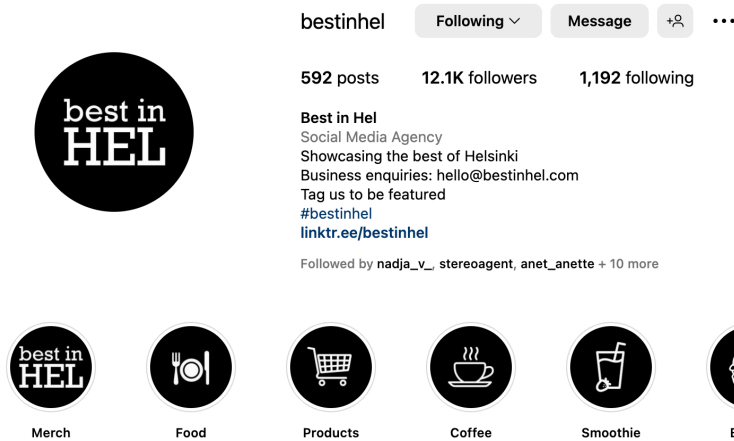


Figure 20 Instagram Best in Hel (Instagram Best in Hel, 2023)

The main reason for the large number of followers is interesting content; the main idea is that the company posts pictures made by people who tag Best in Hel. So, there is no direct connection to the company's activities; however, users like eye-catching content. In this case, there are many tags for Best in Hel, but those people might not even know that the company is also providing social media marketing services and not just posting beautiful pictures.

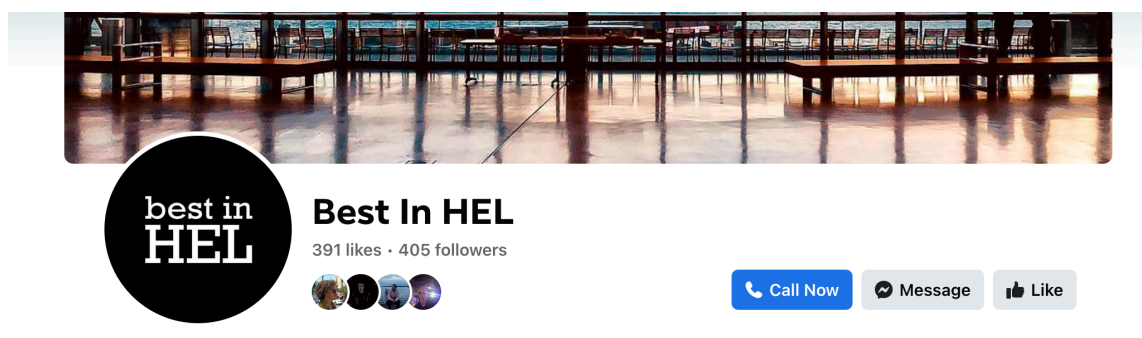


Figure 21 Facebook Best in Hel (Facebook Best in Hel, 2023)

As well as Facebook, there is an official account of the Best in Hel company; however, the last posting was done in 2022. Information presented on Facebook is more related to the company's activities and achievements. During the existence of the Facebook account, there were 10 mentions of Best in Hel, which is a relatively small amount for the period of 4 years.

## Kurio

Instagram is not considered a strength for Kurio. The Instagram page does not look as good, as it has lower number of followers compared to Best in Hel. Despite this fact, the company implements posting regularly, which gives people the opportunity to follow the company's activities and achievements. The content is related to the company's highlights, news and offers.



Figure 22 Kurio Instagram account (Instagram Kurio, 2023)



Figure 23 Kurio Facebook profile (Facebook Kurio, 2023)

Facebook is considered to be a powerful platform for Kurio. Posting happens regularly, and customer engagement is high. The number of followers and likes is the same, which means followers interact with every piece of content the company posts. Similar to Instagram, Facebook has information about a company's activities, news, publications, etc. There are many mentions of the company as well as positive feedback. Overall, the customer engagement on this platform is excellent.



## Hasan and Partners

The Instagram account of Hasan and Partners looks appealing - the company posts regularly, reports on the latest trends and updates, etc. The content consists of different pictures and videos, which keeps customers entertained and engaged. Additionally, the company has many tags, which means people are tagging it or mentioning it regularly. Tags and mentions are mostly related to feedback and stories connected to the company, as well as how people react to publications and news.

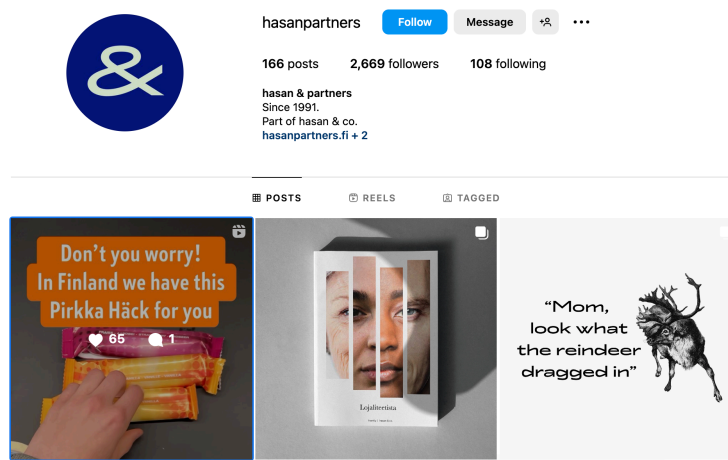


Figure 24 Hasan and Partners Instagram account (Instagram Hasan and Partners, 2023)

Facebook is also full of creative and interesting posts. The company also provides content related to its activities, including the latest news and highlights. There are many positive comments and likes, which sums up customer engagement.

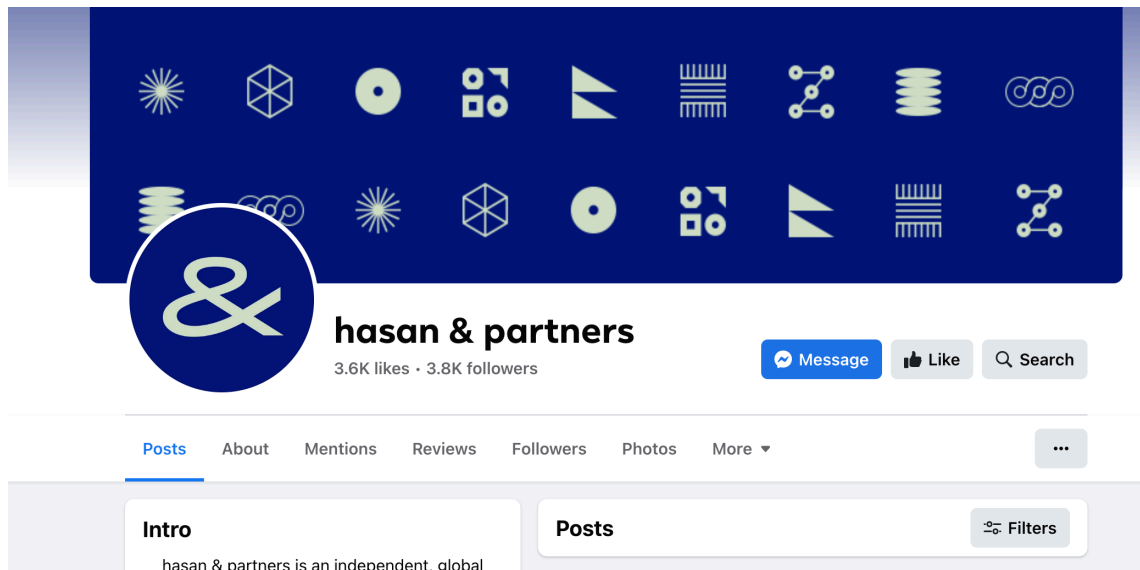


Figure 25 Hasan and Partners Facebook account (Facebook Hasan and Partners, 2023)

Active posting and interactions with followers tell about high engagement level in social media of Hasan and Partner.

## Dagmar

The Instagram account of Dagmar is a colorful and creative profile where eye-catching, appealing content is presented. One of the main strengths is that Dagmar has a verified account, which can be seen as a check mark (tick) next to the name. All this creates a strong image of the brand as trustworthy. Dagmar posts regularly and covers different topics: important announcements, highlights of the company, the latest news, discussions and more. Currently, the company's campaign is to tell customers about its employees, so they know who they are dealing with.

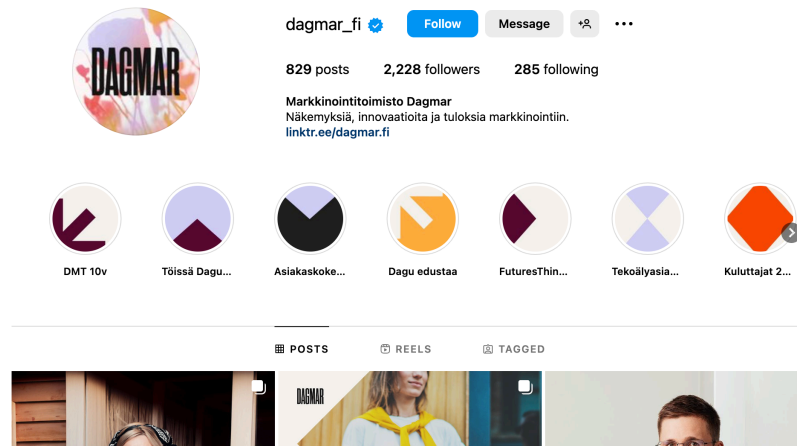


Figure 26 Dagmar Instagram account (Instagram Dagmar, 2023)

There are many tagged posts, which means the brand is being tagged regularly. Tagged posts are mostly feedback on the company, its services, and the latest events.

Facebook is also full of appealing content. The posting happens regularly, as does the company's providing information on different sources where the company was actually mentioned or involved. The number of followers is the same as the number of likes, which means almost every follower likes the company and follows the account regularly.

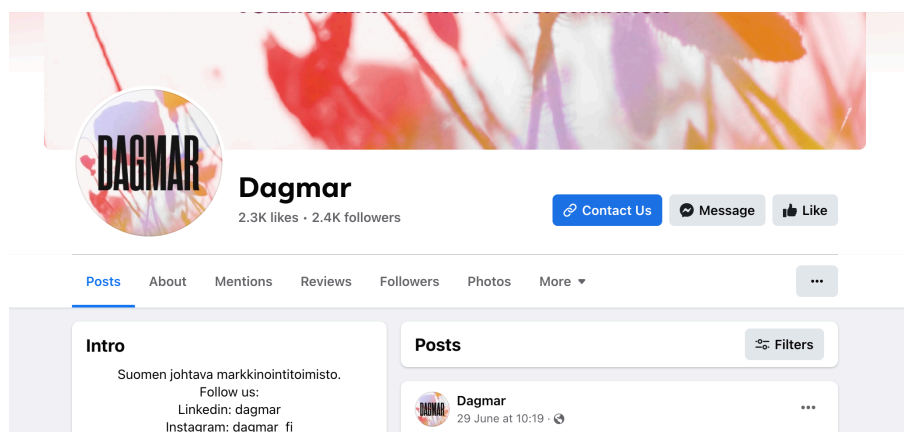


Figure 27 Dagmar Facebook account (Facebook Dagmar, 2023)

One of the features is that Dagmar provides customers with bright and appealing content, which can be noticed from the first look. All these factors contribute to the company's high level of social media customer engagement.

## The Generation AB

Social media engagement is not considered the strongest part of the Generation AB. Regarding Instagram, it clearly has a strategy that the company follows. There is regular posting, where the company shares pictures of its events and information about its employees. Thus, there is no information about the services, current situation, or latest highlights. As a consequence, the number of followers and interactions is low. Facebook has a similar situation, the number of followers and interactions is three times less than on Instagram. The figures below represent the Facebook and Instagram accounts of the Generation AB.

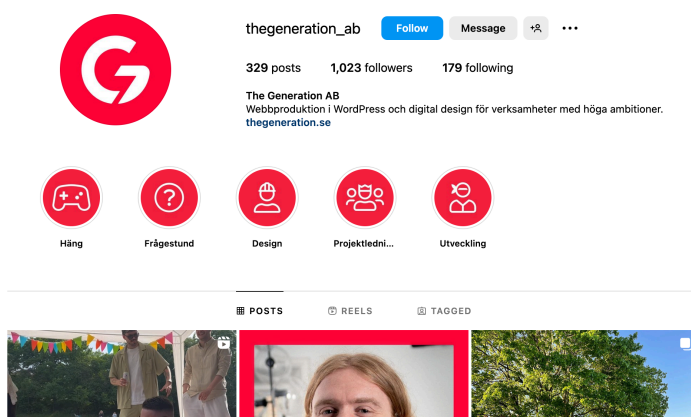


Figure 28 The Generation AB Instagram account (Instagram The Generation AB, 2023)

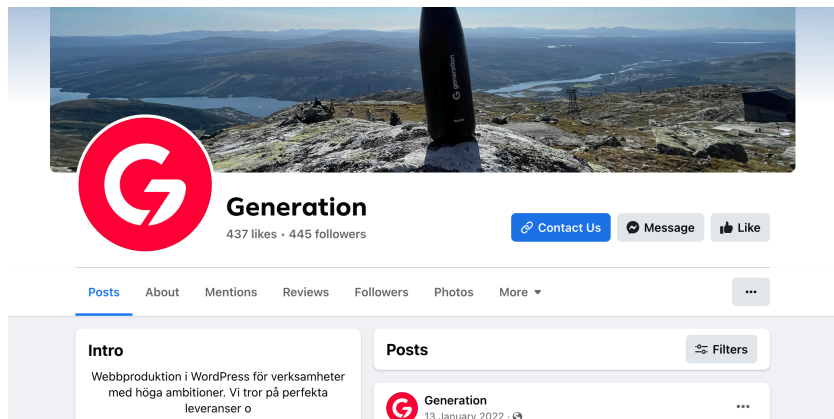


Figure 29 The Generation AB Facebook account (Facebook The Generation AB, 2023)

Despite the fact that social media engagement is weak, the strategy the company implements on its corporate webpage is outstanding.

Firstly, the structure of the webpage is clear and consistent. The webpage does not look overwhelmed, rather, only important information is located.

Secondly, from the first look, it is clear the company knows what it is doing and promotes itself as a market leader in media marketing. There are many successful cases and examples of services provided. Additionally, as was mentioned earlier, there are many customer feedbacks on the services and the company in general.

The webpage of the Generation AB is considered a perfect example of what the case company should strive for.

#### 6.1.4 Online Share of Voice

Share of voice, as was mentioned before, is a measure of the market share a brand owns compared to its competitors and how much it dominates the conversation in the industry. This paper implies an online share of voice. The share of voice was mainly determined by internet searches of publications in newspapers, magazines, blogs, etc. regarding companies. The higher the number of mentions, the higher the share of voice.

## Best in Hel

Best in Hel does not have as many mentions online as other competitors do. However, there are some articles mentioning pictures taken by the company. One of them, for example, is presented in Scan magazine, telling the story of Shinobi restaurant (the big client of Best in Hel). As can be seen from the article, the picture was taken by Best in Hel, which gives brand recognition to the company. Figure 30 below shows an example of the article mentioning Best in Hel.



Figure 30 Best in Hel at Scan Magazine (Scan magazine, 2021)

Also, as was mentioned earlier, Best in Hel has brand merchandising in collaboration with the Hetzukoto store. At this point, when searching for the Best in Hel company on the internet, there are mentions of the brand in Hetzukoto store, which can make people who do not know the company to find out more. Figure 31 below shows the Hetzukoto collection of Best in Hel merchandise.

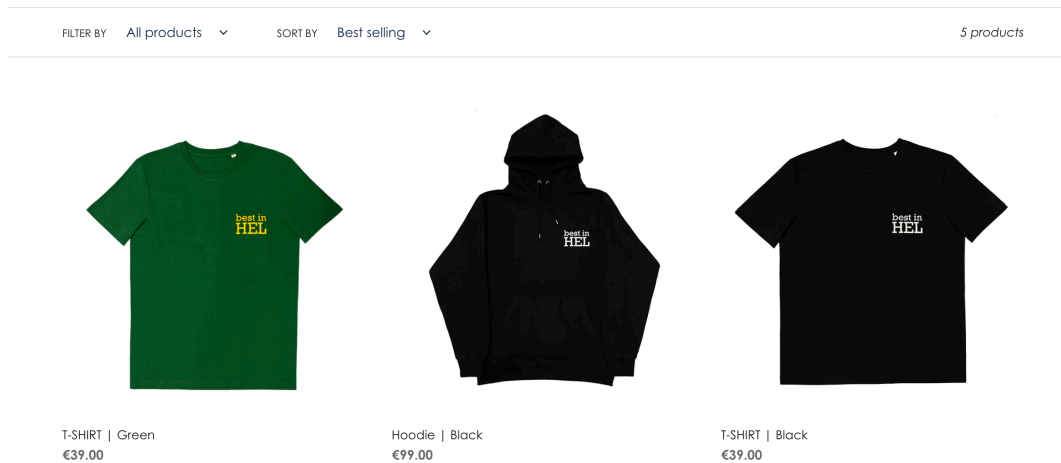


Figure 31 Best in Hel at Hetzuko store (Scan magazine, 2021)

However, as the current situation was checked, the items are not available for sale now.

## Kurio

Kurio has many mentions on the internet. One of the successes is being listed in the Leading Independent Agencies 2020 (which was digitally published by Campaign in April 2020 by thenetworkone company located in the UK). The publication promotes Kurio, even though it was presented in 2020. Figure 32 shows the outlook of the webpage.

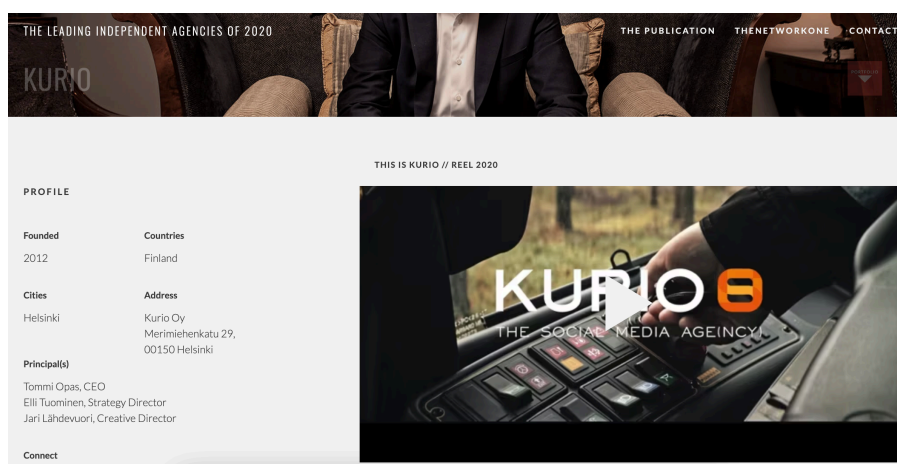


Figure 32 Kurio profile (Leading Independent Agencies, 2020)

Kurio also uses the services of STT Info, which gets a huge amount of mention on the internet. STT Info (STT Viestintäpalvelut) is a tool in a communicator's life. STT Info allows you easily and comprehensively reach the media, bloggers, your own contacts and other stakeholders. At this point, information about Kurio is published regularly, giving it a brand voice on the internet.

### **Hasan and Partners**

As was mentioned before, Hasan and Partners consists of four companies that cooperate in providing services for customers. In this case, knowing one of these companies allows customers to be aware of Hasan and Partners in general. This fact definitely keeps the voice of the company at a high level.

Additionally, Hasan and Partners is a member of Amcham Finland, which promotes its members at the international level. Amcham Finland is the voice of international businesses in Finland. Being a member of Amcham Finland gives Hasan and Partners a big advantage in being known on the international market. The organization also creates events for its members where companies can create mutual benefits or negotiate potential partnerships.

Hasan and Partners has also been mentioned by YLE, the main Finnish news portal. YLE was posting information about company activities as well as the main highlights. For example, the death of the main leader of the company, Ami Hasan, was reported in the news. Hasan and Partners is also a member of The Leading Independent Agencies of 2020. All the information on the internet tells about the high share of voice of the company as well as its importance in the market.

### **Dagmar**

Dagmar is not widely presented in newspapers and publications. However, there are several mentions of the company that formulates share of voice.



Firstly, the company is a member of Behance, the world's largest creative network for showcasing and discovering creative works. This gives a large volume of share of voice since Behance is considered a large social media platform. On the platform, Dagmar publishes its cases, which allows the target audience to be reached.

Secondly, Dagmar publishes articles on STT Info, a platform where announcements can easily and comprehensively reach the media, bloggers, contacts and stakeholders. STT Info offers a comprehensive media database, a unique delivery system for distribution, and an easy way to export news releases to your own websites. The platform helps to achieve communication goals. Thus, an example of Dagmar's published research can be found in Figure 33.



**STT INFO** Tiedotteet Tilaa tiedotteita Julkaisijat Tietoa palvelusta Osta kertatiedote KIRJAUDU

## DAGMAR

### **Tutkimus: Suomalainen hyödyntää nyt kaikki säästökeinot punalapuista ja tarjouksista kaupan omiin merkkeihin – näistä tuotemerkeistä ei haluta luopua**

20.3.2023 06:40:00 EET | [Dagmar Oy](#)

Figure 33 Dagmar's article (STT Info, 2023)

Thirdly, Dagmar publishes podcasts and webinars. The company creates interest in covering interesting topics in media marketing, which attracts new customers.

Although Dagmar is not widely presented in newspapers, it has its own voice and makes itself visible on the market.

## The Generation AB

The Generation AB is not presented in news and publications; at least, it could not be defined by searching for keywords in English. However, according to the webpage, the company participates in sponsorship programs (I love Venezuela Sweden), which gives it the possibility of being spotted in news not directly related to media marketing. The figure below represents one of them, mentioning the Generation AB.



Figure 34 The generation AB as a sponsor for Ilovevenezuelasweden (Instagram Ilove-venezuelasweden, 2022)

Thus, the company does not have a great share of voice, but it remains well known due to the unique services it provides.

## 7 Results and Implementation

### 7.1 Results of Competitive Benchmarking

A comparison of media marketing companies based on competitive benchmarking proved to be challenging. One of the main limitations is the incomplete data

in terms of financial reports, surveys and internal information. Data obtained online is reasonable but limited.

In general, all five companies were compared on the subject of customer engagement. Competitors implement strategies that result in better customer engagement than Best in Hel has. Thus, the benchmarking process compared companies on customer satisfaction, brand awareness, social media engagement and share of voice, which sum up overall customer engagement. Table 9 below summarizes the benchmarking process's results.

	Best in Hel	Kurio	Hasan and Partners	Dagmar	The Generation AB
Customer satisfaction	na	4	4	4	5
Brand Awareness	na	5	3	5	3
Social Media Engagement	4	3	3	4	4
Share of Voice	3	5	3	2	2

Table 9 Results of benchmarking process

The table above describes the results of the benchmarking process. The numbers in the table represent the extent to which a certain metric has been developed. The rank-order scaling methodology was applied, where number 5 refers to developed and number 1 to less developed.

Some competitors have shown good results in different metrics. For example, Kurio has good brand awareness and share of voice, and Generation AB has satisfied customers and a great webpage, which enhances social media engagement.

In general, all competitors have developed customer engagement. The customer engagement strategies vary, but all of them are effective.

Based on the benchmarking process and the literature studied, a development plan for customer engagement strategies for the case company was suggested.

## 7.2 Suggestions For Customer Engagement Development

In order to improve customer relationships and enhance customer retention, there is a need for a powerful strategy to engage customers. As was mentioned before, customer engagement happens through various channels, both online and offline, and serves to strengthen customer relationships, which increase customer retention and brand loyalty. One of the most important facts is that it covers any company's communication with customers during the entire customer's journey with the brand. The main goal of customer engagement is to provide value to customers beyond the product or service. A good engagement strategy encourages customers to continue purchasing from the company. A customer engagement strategy helps accomplish the goals of different business areas. The most important areas are the company's revenue, business growth, customer loyalty, customer retention, increased brand awareness, shorter buying cycles, and competitiveness on the market.

Thus, in order to improve customer engagement at Best in Hel, the following development strategies were suggested.

Strategies were developed based on the studied literature and benchmarking process results. Successful customer engagement strategies of the competitor companies were studied and, as a consequence, modified and adapted for the case company, Best in Hel's needs.

The list of strategies was developed by the researcher after the competitive benchmarking process was finished.

### 7.2.1 Customer Engagement Calculation

The main reason why the current customer engagement strategy is not effective at Best in Hel is that the company does not measure and analyze its customer engagement. In order to understand the situation within customer engagement, a set of key metrics should be considered. Those should be analyzed and measured on a regular basis in order to understand trends in customer engagement.

On-site metrics show the amount of time a customer spends on a webpage or other social media platforms. The higher time spent indicates that the content catches customers' interest and attention. There are many analytical tools presented that help to follow and study on-site metrics. According to the current company situation and limited financial sources, one of the best solutions is Google Analytics, a data collection software that helps analyze metrics and provides analytical reports. The outlook for the program is presented below. After signing in, the company's data will be shown and ready to be analyzed.

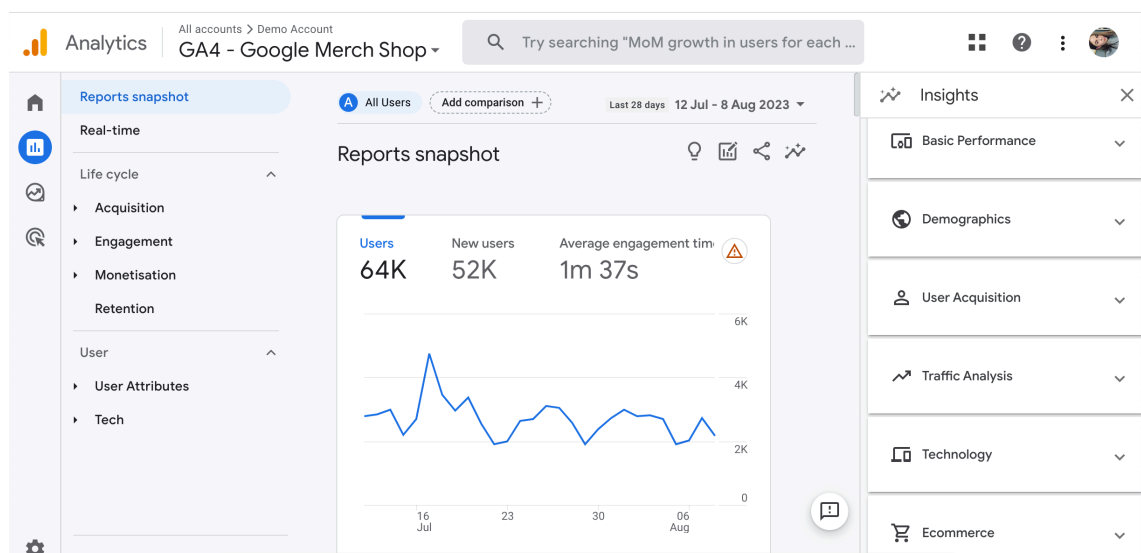


Figure 35 Demo Account at Google Analytics (Google Analytics, 2023)

The wide range of services provided by Google Analytics and Google Trends might be used for different purposes, and there is an opportunity to generate reports in some categories such as real-time, audience, acquisition, behavior and conversion. With the help of this program, the company will always have access to up-to-date information and be able to notice any changes immediately.

According to the company's needs and current situation, the following metrics are suggested for consideration: social media interaction and customer satisfaction rate. Those can be measured and analyzed at the beginning as well as later on.

Social media interaction refers to the extent to which a company interacts with customers. Nowadays, social media is the main channel through which interaction happens, which makes this metric a significantly important one. Measuring and analyzing social media interactions provides data on current social media engagement. A high level of interaction, meaning likes, shares, mentions, views, etc., tells about a high engagement rate and successfully implemented social media campaigns. Social media interaction is a metric that covers a wide range of metrics to choose from (including different KPIs, which are chosen in accordance with the chosen metrics). The development plan for the case company Best in Hel suggests paying attention to an audience analytics (target audience) and performance metrics (followers, clicks, interactions, etc.). Besides Google Analytics, there is a wide range of software available online that makes it simple to choose from. Additionally, social media platforms have built-in services for analytics. Below is an example of the program. Brand 24 is a very popular software that allows any company to analyze all social media platforms a company has. The same program was used in this research; however, as there was no access to social media platforms, the program was not used in full.

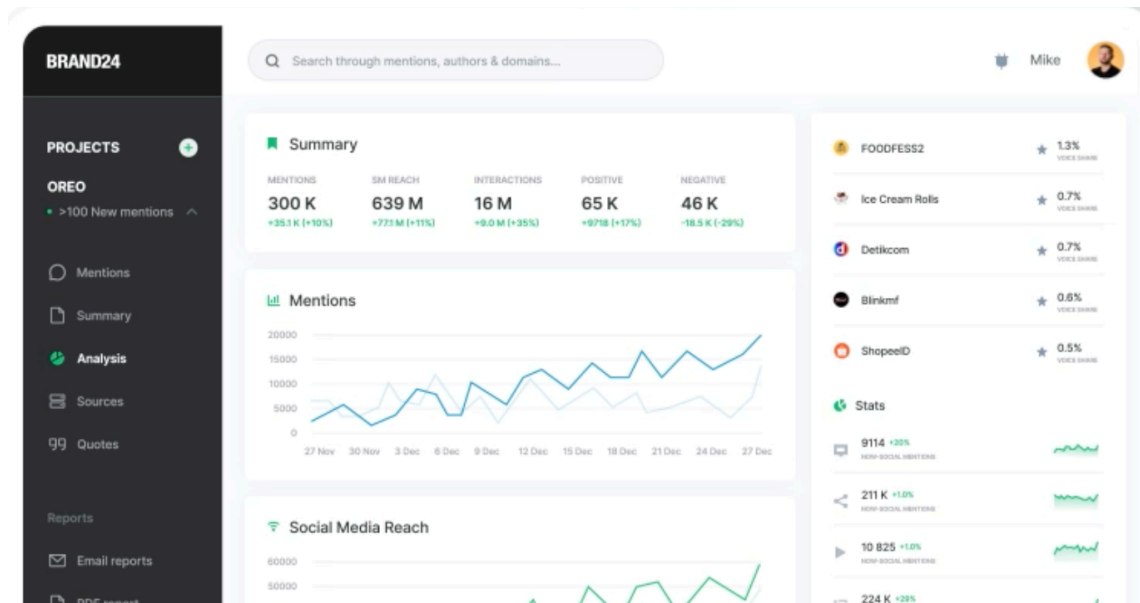


Figure 36 Demo account Brand 24 (Brand 24, 2023)

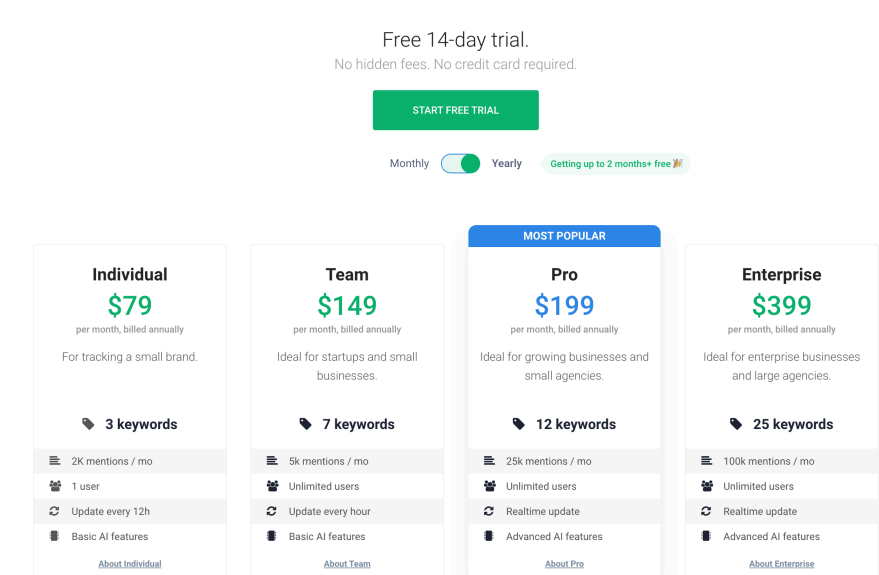
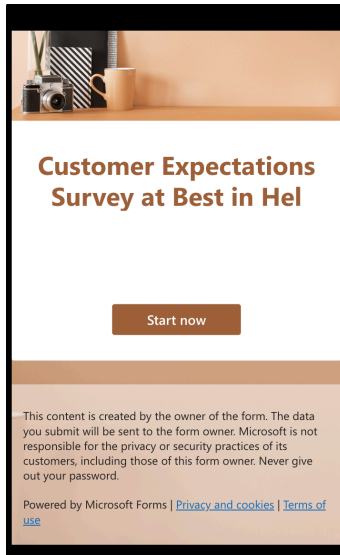


Figure 37 Billing plan of Brand 24 (Brand 24, 2023)

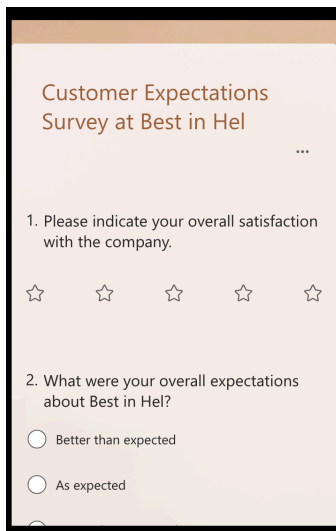
Customer satisfaction rate is also one of the important metrics. Although customer satisfaction was covered in this study, the research was limited due to the limited data available. Thus, customer satisfaction at Best in Hel was not calculated properly. The customer satisfaction rate should be measured regularly with the help of the program or, alternatively, by conducting surveys and questionnaires. Customer satisfaction can be calculated not only as a numerical value but also as a qualitative one. Speaking about Google Analytics, following

customer reviews, mentions, etc. will also provide an inside look at customer satisfaction. Surveys and questionnaires could provide answers to the specific questions the company would like to have answered. An example of a survey can be found in the pictures below.



The image shows the introduction screen of a customer survey. At the top, there is a header image of a desk with a camera, a cup, and some papers. Below the header, the title "Customer Expectations Survey at Best in Hel" is displayed in a bold, orange font. Underneath the title is a large, orange button labeled "Start now". At the bottom of the screen, there is a small disclaimer in a light gray font: "This content is created by the owner of the form. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner. Microsoft is not responsible for the privacy or security practices of its customers, including those of this form owner. Never give out your password." Below the disclaimer, it says "Powered by Microsoft Forms" followed by links for "Privacy and cookies" and "Terms of use".

Figure 38 An example of customer survey – Introduction (Campaign Monitor, 2023)



The image shows the inside screen of a customer survey. At the top, there is a header image of a desk with a camera, a cup, and some papers. Below the header, the title "Customer Expectations Survey at Best in Hel" is displayed in a bold, orange font. Underneath the title is a large, orange button labeled "Start now". At the bottom of the screen, there is a small disclaimer in a light gray font: "This content is created by the owner of the form. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner. Microsoft is not responsible for the privacy or security practices of its customers, including those of this form owner. Never give out your password." Below the disclaimer, it says "Powered by Microsoft Forms" followed by links for "Privacy and cookies" and "Terms of use".

Figure 39 An example of customer survey – Inside (Campaign Monitor, 2023)



Best in Hel could conduct surveys and questionnaires on different topics according to desired results. As the topic of this thesis was related to customer satisfaction, a customer expectation survey was presented as an example.

Also, it is important to mention that engagement metrics should be measured and analyzed on a regular basis, at least monthly.

### 7.2.2 Customer Journey Map

In order to improve the customer experience, it is important to understand the moments that customers go through to create an experience. Those moments, or touchpoints, define experiences. The development plan suggests creating a proper customer journey map in order to define touchpoints when customer engagement occurs.

A well-mapped customer journey can help to visualize what customers feel and do. Moreover, insights on customer emotions, along with actions on them, will contribute to customer satisfaction as customers feel they are being treated well. The customer journey map will also help to define points where customer engagement is lacking or needs improvement. With the help of the customer journey, Best in Hel will be able to take a look at the whole path customers are taking before and after the actual purchase.

A figure below represents a customer journey that was created as an example for Best in Hel. Indeed, the customer journey plan is a massive part to work on that should be done more in detail.

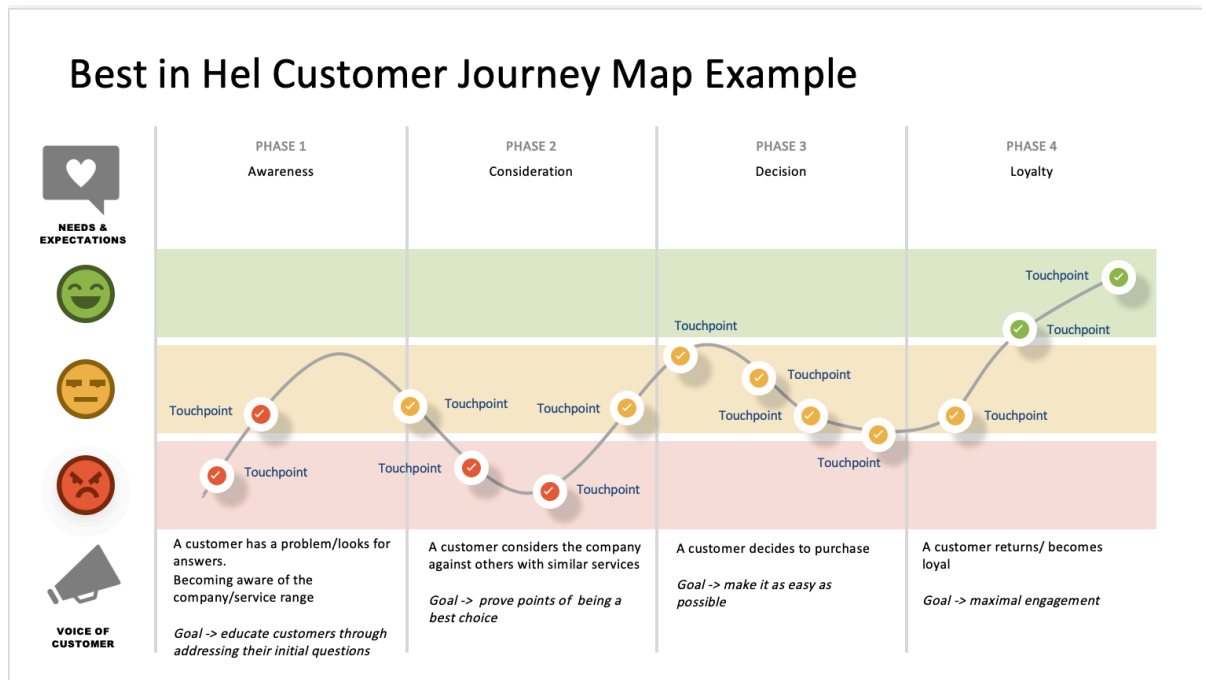


Figure 40 Best in Hel Customer Journey Map Example (SlideModel, 2023)

A customer journey map is a fundamental part of marketing. The stages presented in the example are common and could be considered in more detail in further research.

### 7.2.3 Personalized Interactions

Based on the benchmarking process results, personalized interaction is one of the best strategies implemented by competitors. Indeed, personalized service would be beneficial for the case company, as it provides customers with experiences that are tailored to their individual needs. Personalized interactions make customers feel valued, which consequently leads to better brand loyalty. Personalized interaction is part of a personalized marketing strategy. Such marketing includes different types of personalization. However, this thesis gathered best practices that would help Best in Hel improve customer engagement.

Email marketing enables the company to send personalized emails to customers with messages and offers that can be based on their purchase history or browsing behavior, for example. Thus, these emails should be created for the individual's needs and preferences and can include personal information (e.g.,

name) to generate personal relationships. Below are examples that Best in Hel could implement further.

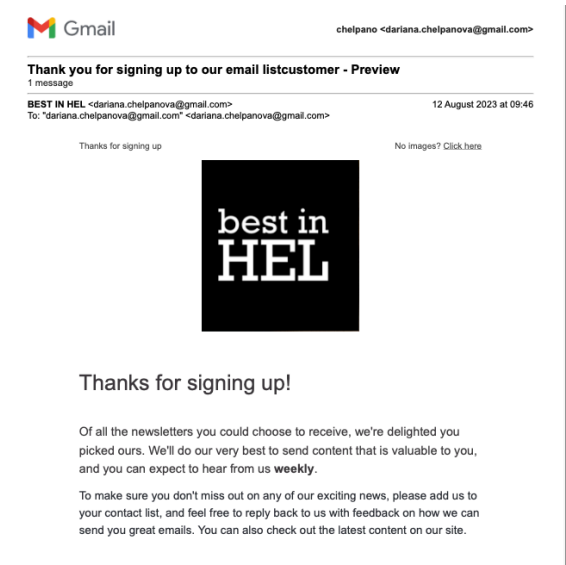


Figure 41 Email marketing example “Thank you for signing in!” (Campaign Monitor, 2023)

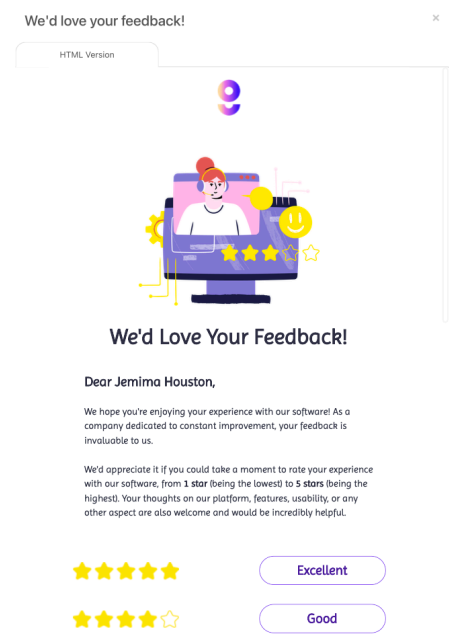


Figure 42 Email marketing example “We’d Love Your Feedback!” (Campaign Monitor, 2023)

Reasonable content implies displaying different content for distinct customers based on their interests, for example. For example, the webpage of the case company could display different offers for different customer groups.

A recommendation of the product to a certain customer can be implemented by analyzing purchase history or browsing behavior. A product recommendation can then be presented through email or webpage.

#### 7.2.4 Customer Service

The introduction of customer service would be a great option for Best in Hel to avoid or control bad customer experiences. Customer service represents emotional experiences that customers build with the company. Thus, one of the suggestions would be customer support. As Best in Hel is a relatively small company, customer support could be managed by one person. The hiring of an experienced specialist, who can efficiently address customer cases would be a favorable prospect for the case company to pursue. The main goal is to create customer support that consistently meets customers' expectations.



Figure 43 Customer support channel options (Revechat, 2023)

Before hiring a customer service agent, it is important to decide about support channels. Based on the information about the case company, the research offers channels such as phone, email, social media and chat, which can be introduced on the official webpage of the company. Customer support creates a significant improvement in customer engagement of Best in Hel as well as defines problem areas and gives opportunities to manage customer experiences.

As a suggestion, Best in Hel could start using CRM (Customer Relationship Management), a software that tracks information between the company and its customers.



Figure 44 The CRM process (Global.hitachi-solutions, 2023)

Besides customer support, CRM could offer many other services including tracking customer interactions, monitoring satisfaction, etc. CRM also enables to send automated personalized emails, which supports the previous chapter “Personalized Interactions”.

### 7.2.5 Value Content Creation

One of the main issues detected was the published content of the case company. A suggestion is that Best in Hel should focus on delivering valuable content that gives customers real value. This includes, for example, the introduction of case studies, news and interactive content (polls, questions, etc.). Later on, the company will be able to decide to conduct webinars or other events both online and offline.

The starting point could be related to posts, where the company tells about itself and opens up about its current situation. Customers know the company better, which increases their interest in it.

One of the outcomes is that value-creating content will definitely enhance the competitiveness of the case company.

### 7.2.6 Recruiting New Talents

Employees are the foundation of any strong and successful company. For now, Best in Hel does not have any employees, since it considers itself a small company. Based on this study, it was obvious that only one person handling an organization can be challenging. Thus, as was mentioned before, the company should fill at least the position of a customer service manager who would be responsible for customer relationships.

Hiring at least one employee would definitely help the company increase customer engagement. Although Best in Hel is not financially ready for new employees, it can consider taking students as interns, for example. An internship is a good opportunity to decide whether a customer support coordinator would be effective in terms of customer engagement development. Thus, this research highly recommends hiring a customer relationship manager.

Students looking for internships are a great option for Best in Hel and the main reason is cost-effectiveness. For example, the company could post a job ad on

such headhunter platforms as Hub, Atalent, etc. These headhunting platforms are specially created for students who are looking for internships or entry-level positions.

### 7.2.7 Optimization

Optimization is the process of utilizing resources effectively. In this current situation, one of the suggestions would be the optimization of all company channels, including the webpage and social media platforms. Customers find and come to the company through different channels, and they can begin their journey on one channel and then switch to another. As a consequence, it is highly important to deliver the same value, no matter the channel.

### 7.2.8 Expanding Service Range

Best in Hel offers services in four directions: social media management, content creation, corporate PR and collaboration. However, only two services remain popular among customers: content creation and collaboration. Thus, expanding the service range or modifying current services would help the company attract new customers. One of the solutions is that Best in Hel could focus on SMM (social media marketing) as a service. In a simple way, customer social media can be managed by Best in Hel as a part of a social media marketing strategy.

## 8 Validation of the Development Plan

### 8.1 Validation Process of the Development Plan

The validation of the development plan, as a main part of this thesis, involved a workshop that was arranged with the CEO of Best in Hel, Andrey Uverskiy. The workshop was held on September 24, 2023, as a private meeting in the office of Best in Hel (Kasarmikatu, 26). During the workshop, the development plan was introduced as a presentation. The agenda included an introduction, a presentation of the plan, discussions, feedback and final thoughts. The outline of the agenda can be found in Appendix 2. In general, the presentation involved a

draft of the development plan, where each development strategy was discussed in more detail.

The workshop was divided into three parts: presentation of the plan, discussions, and final comments, including suggestions for improvement.

Overall, the validation procedure was successful, and the development strategies were positively commented on by the CEO. According to the CEO, the presentation revealed previously unseen problems and made it possible to look at the company's problems from a different perspective. As a result, the plan was accepted by the CEO as a revised version with minor adjustments that are described below.

## 8.2 Summary of Comments of the Development Plan

To start with, customer-centric selling was a key concept of the presentation and the whole thesis in general. The importance of customer-centric techniques was observed, and their significance for the company was also mentioned. As a consequence, the development plan was full of strategies fulfilling a customer-centric approach, and generally, it received very positive feedback from the CEO.

All the comments received during the validation of the development plan were focused mainly on three aspects: financial, timing and tracking of the development process. The financial aspect was related to whether the company is financially able to accept the plan. Timing represented a set of comments about timetables. The tracking of the development processes was focused on the question of how, when, and why to track the process of the development plan.

Comments on the development plan are presented below, where discussions on each strategy were reported accordingly.

### *Customer engagement calculation*



Customer engagement calculation strategy was commented as one of high importance. Even though the strategy is very obvious, it has not been seen as having potential before. More detailed information was required in order for this strategy to be adapted by the company. Specifically, there was a need to provide more intelligence on the Google Analytics program and possible topics for surveys. Thus, the Google Analytics program was studied with the CEO, and an account of Best in Hel was created at the same time. The set of metrics that were going to be measured and analyzed was accepted by the CEO, and those were customer satisfaction and social media engagement. Possible contents of surveys and questionnaires were also discussed, and it was decided that customer satisfaction should be studied as a first priority.

In general, the strategy of customer engagement calculation was successfully approved by the CEO, and the first steps were implemented (e.g., creation of a Google Analytics account, survey content, etc.).

#### *Customer journey map*

This strategy was seen as not really needed and simple at first. According to the CEO, there is no need for the customer journey map as all the touchpoints are clearly visible, and it is unlikely they contain any issues. As was mentioned before, the presented customer journey map is very general and does not provide a deep understanding of problematic points. After discussion, the strategy was also considered vital. From the CEO's point of view, the main advantages of this strategy are simplicity and cost-effectiveness.

#### *Personalized interactions*

This strategy was pointed out as a highly crucial one. According to the CEO, the company is ready to implement a personalized interactions' strategy. The strategy is going to be introduced stepwise in the upcoming year, 2024.

#### *Customer service and recruiting new talents*

The customer service strategy received very positive feedback, as it was one of the main aspects the company was lacking. However, the company cannot afford to hire a customer support specialists due to limited financial resources. There was a discussion about alternative possibilities, such as hiring a specialist as a part-timer or otherwise hiring a student with the required skills and competencies. Headhunter webpages were presented and observed, and the main employee requirements were discussed. According to the CEO, the customer service strategy is going to be implemented at the earliest possible time, in autumn/winter 2023.

#### *Value content creation*

The CEO agreed on the fact that current content is not at the desired level, and consequently, this strategy received positive comments on his behalf. There was a discussion about the value of content and its significance. As was mentioned before, the company should be more open about itself, its missions and visions, and other related topics. The current content of Best in Hel is going to be revised with attention to the earlier suggestions.

#### *Expanding the service range*

Expanding the service range required adjustments, as the company could not financially afford the introduction of new services for now. Thus, other alternatives, namely old service upgrades and revisions, were discussed. Social media management and corporate PR are going to be revised, and their lagging areas will be assessed through, for example, surveys. SMM as a service, for example, would be considered in the future as the company gets more financially stable.

### 8.3 Adjustment to the Initial Development Plan

As previously stated, the development plan was accepted by the CEO as a draft with small modifications. Those adjustments were already made, mainly within the presentation.

- ➔ The Google Analytics program was introduced to the CEO. Best in Hel account was created.
- ➔ The Brand 24 program was introduced to the CEO. Best in Hel account was created.
- ➔ The recruitment proposal for customer service specialists was replaced with hiring an intern.
- ➔ The strategy of expanding the service range was changed to the old service upgrade process.

## 8.4 The Final Development Plan

The final development plan was approved by the CEO and is ready to be implemented. The development plan can be found in Appendix 3.

# 9 Discussions

## 9.1 Executive summary

The objective of the study was to propose a customer engagement development plan that would improve the customer engagement situation of the case company, Best in Hel. The customer engagement side of the business was lagging behind, which made it impossible for the company to grow and progress further. The outcome of the study, namely the development plan, allowed the case company to have a clear picture of the current situation in customer engagement and to define guidelines for further improvements. Adapting the strategies presented in the development plan provides a company with an opportunity to become a high-performing business.

The approach in this paper was a benchmarking process using qualitative methods. The study included four stages. Firstly, a literature review was an effective tool in terms of deeper knowledge and understanding of customer engagement,

customer engagement strategies and effective techniques. Secondly, the current state analysis of the case company was an effective starting point to define the company's strengths and weaknesses and get an insight into the current situation with customer engagement in the company. The third stage was related to the benchmarking process, where the case company and its competitors were benchmarked on customer engagement. That was an essential part of defining working practices by looking at competitors. The last stage was related to the validation of the development plan, including the finalization of the plan.

In general, the development plan answers the research question, "How to develop customer engagement at Best in Hel by using competitive benchmarking?".

## 9.2 Self-Evaluation

The topic of customer engagement and the particular company, Best in Hel, were of personal interest. I have known the company from the time it was founded, and the CEO, Andrey Uverskiy, is the person I have known for a long time. Being aware of the company's problems, I decided to set customer engagement as a topic and Best in Hel as a case company for this thesis.

This thesis provided me with an opportunity to explore the topic further through literature reviews and reality-based practices. After this process, I have learned a lot more about other related areas, even though I have had certain experiences with customer engagement. Furthermore, the topic is specifically related to the start-up company, so it is also valuable to gain knowledge from this aspect. During the process, I have improved my project management skills. To be honest, it was challenging to keep up with the timeline, and I am proud that I managed to follow my schedule and deliver the plan to the organization on time. Additionally, I practiced my problem-solving and negotiation skills when compromising the expectations of the case company and the scope of my master's thesis. The theoretical framework was a bit challenging due to the fact that the

topic is broad and there are various sources and a wide range of information. In the beginning, I dealt with choosing which information to include in the thesis.

In general, I feel a strong personal improvement as well as a deeper knowledge of the topic. I will definitely watch the case company and its upgrades during this and the next year.

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## **Interview Questions**

The content of the appendix: interview questions for the CEO of Best in Hel, Andrey Uverskiy. The interview was conducted in spring 2023 during a private meeting in Helsinki.

### **Current situation**

Describe the current situation at Best in Hel company?

How is the company different from its competitors?

What is the competition on the market nowadays?

What are the main achievements of the past couple of years?

What are your expectations from this study?

### **Future at Best in Hel**

What are the main goals the company wants to achieve in the future?

What are main the obstacles that prevent the company from achieving those?

Does the company plan to operate internationally?

### **Customer engagement**

Describe the current situation with customer engagement at Best in Hel?

What are the strategies used for customer engagement?

Who is responsible for customer engagement?

What channels does the company use for communication with customers?

What channels are used for promotion?

How is customer engagement being measured?

How is customer engagement being analyzed?

What metrics and KPIs are used for tracking customer engagement?

### **Customers**

How does the target audience look?

How many customers does the company have nowadays?

How does a perfect customer look?

How many returning customers does the company have?

Who is responsible for customer service and support?

Why, in your opinion, do customers choose Best in Hel?

## Meeting Agenda

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**Date:** 24.09.2023    **Time:** 10:00 am    **Location:** Kasarmikatu 26, Helsinki

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### **Topic 1: Introduction**

Introduction

Research question

Benchmarked companies

### **Topic 2: Validation of the plan**

Background of the plan

Content of the plan

### **Topic 3: Discussions and Feedback**

Discussions and feedback

### **Topic 4: Conclusion**

Final conclusion

### **Notes and Action Items**

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## The Development Plan

Assessment	Goal	Strategy	Resources	Timeline
Engagement is not measured and analyzed	Monthly measurement and analysis	<b>Customer engagement calculation</b>	Google Analytics  Brand 24	October 2023
Touchpoints are not studied	Extensive and detailed customer journey map  Visible touchpoints	<b>Customer journey map creation</b>	Online studies  Videos on an effective customer journey	October 2023
Engagement is low	Personalized emails and campaigns	<b>Personalized interactions</b>	Campaign Monitor App	November 2023
Absence of customer support	Call center/chat support	<b>Customer service</b>	Salesforce/CRM programs	January 2024
Unreliable and useless content	Everyday presence on social media	<b>Value content creation</b>	Online studies on value content creation  Online courses on value content creation	February 2024

Lack of employees	At least one extra employee is on-site	<b>Recruiting new talents</b>	ATalent Monster Indeed	Spring 2024
Lack of growth	Company application	<b>Optimization</b>	App creators or freelancers	Spring 2024
Some services are not in use	One new service or an updated old service	<b>Expanding service range</b>	CEO	Spring 2024

Figure 45 The Development Plan