PUBLIC SECTOR BRANDING AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Public sector, along with the rest of the world, is facing changes. The sector is expected to provide more open and efficient communication and to include citizens in their processes. At the same time, new technologies are changing the operating environment. The academia is referring to this time as "hyper-connected world". In addition, the public sector must always balance with the duality caused by the economical limitations and serving of utilitarian values.

For this endeavour, brands can be of use. Brand is a rather new concept for public sector, but the existing literature on public sector branding demonstrates many ways in which brands can be truly beneficial for the sector.

A new possibility for branding is social media. The public sector organizations seem to already have noted the effectiveness of information dissemination through social media, but there are also other ways to benefit from social media, including branding.

Prior research offers little suggestions for practical ways in which public sector could brand and utilize social media. Thus, the objective of this thesis is to identify the ways in which the forerunner organizations of public sector are already building brands and using social media. For this cause, multiple case study method is applied. The interview data from 10 interviews with professionals of the field is analysed with theme-based methods.

The findings of the study show that the concept of brand is a rather novel but fast-growing subject in public sector, and that the public sector organizations are adapting a holistic view of branding: the brand displays the key organizational attributes and the organizations' aim is to display their brand in everything they do, including social media. Social media seems to be a powerful tool through which the organizations can express themselves in new ways. In the end, both branding and social media can help public sector organizations in executing their missions and better serving their customers.

Key words

Public sector; Public sector branding; Social media

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Tiivistelmä

Julkinen sektori, kuten muukin maailma, on murroksessa. Julkiselta sektorilta edellytetään yhä avoimempaa ja tehokkaampaa kommunikaatiota sekä kansalaisten osallistamista. Samalla uudet teknologiat muuttavat toimintaympäristöä, ja tiedeyhteisö käyttääkin nykyajasta termiä "ylisosiaalinen maailma" (hyperconnected world). Kaiken lisäksi julkisen sektorin on tasapainoteltava yhteiskunnallisten arvojen ja toisaalta taloudellisten reunaehtojen välillä.

Brändit saattavat olla ratkaisu tähän tasapainotteluun. Brändi on julkisella sektorilla uudehko teema, mutta aiempi tutkimus julkisen sektorin brändinrakennusta koskien osoittaa, että brändit voivat todella olla hyödyksi julkisen sektorin organisaatioille.

Sosiaalinen media voi toimia tehokkaana työkaluna brändinrakennuksessa. Julkisen sektorin organisaatiot hyödyntävät jo sujuvasti sosiaalista mediaa esimerkiksi tiedon levittämisessä, mutta julkinen sektori voi hyödyntää sosiaalista mediaa myös monella muulla tapaa, muun muassa brändityössä.

Aiempi tutkimus ei tarjoa juurikaan käytännön malleja siitä, miten julkinen sektori voisi käytännössä rakentaa brändejä ja samalla hyödyntää sosiaalista mediaa. Siten tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on monitapaustutkimuksen keinoin selvittää, miten alan edelläkävijät näitä toimintoja työssään hyödyntävät. Tutkimuksen aineisto on kerätty kymmenen alan ammattilaisen haastattelulla, ja aineiston analyysi on tehty teemoittelun keinoin.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että vaikka brändi on konseptina melko tuore tulokas julkisella sektorilla, kiinnostus sitä kohtaan lisääntyy nopeasti. Julkinen sektori on omaksunut kokonaisvaltaisen lähestymistavan brändeihin: brändien tarkoituksena on edustaa organisaation tärkeimpiä ominaisuuksia ja brändejä pyritään tuomaan esiin kaikessa organisaation toiminnassa, myös sosiaalisessa mediassa. Sosiaalinen media vaikuttaisikin olevan tehokas brändinrakennuksen työkalu, jonka kautta organisaatio voi tuoda esiin uusia puolia itsestään. Sekä brändit että sosiaalinen media voivat parhaimmillaan auttaa organisaatioita toteuttamaan missiotaan ja palvelemaan asiakkaitaan.

Asiasanat
Julkinen sektori; Julkisen sektorin brändinrakennus; Sosiaalinen media
Säilytyspaikka
Jyväskylän yliopiston kirjasto

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

Public sector, along with the world around it, is in transformation. Digitalization is undeniably and irreversibly changing the world. Due to development and availability of new technologies, the world is rapidly changing. We live in a world where there is more information available than anyne could consume, and the information is easily accessible for nearly all. People can access each other any time, anywhere, as well as connect with their devices, not only computer or mobile phones, but even domestic devices. Researchers have labeled this era of instant availability of information and constant interaction in networks formed by people, devices and other entitites as *hyperconnected world* (Quan-Haase & Wellman, 2005; Fredette, Marom, Steiner & Witters, 2012; Gielens & Steenkamp, 2019; Swaminathan, Sorescu, Steenkamp, O'Guinn & Schmitt, 2020). Fredette et al. (2012, 117) even argue that "hyperconnectivity is arguably the single most important trend in today's world".

While adapting to the accelerating digitalization and hyperconnectivity, the public sector is also facing other changes in their operating environment. As public sector operates with public financing, naturally the economical limitations always exist. Besides balancing with the economical limitations and succeeding in their original missions, public organizations are also expected to constantly improve in many other fronts. For example, communication efforts of the public sector have in the recent years received a lot of general interest in societies, and the organizations are expected to shift their communications into more dialogic and cooperative direction. These increasing demands are portrayed for example in the future predictions presented by The Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra. Sitra predicted in its Megatrends publication for the year 2020 that relational power in societies is strengthening (Dufva, 2020). Sitra suggests that the current events of the world, such as ecological crisis and other rapid societal changes, require fast actions, but also participation and dialogue. The fund also predicts that engagement might become more and more utilized in decision making in the future (Dufva, 2020). This might mean the rise of social

media in civil issues: social media could offer the public sector abilities to engage the citizens and enable them to participate in decision making.

Societies and countries are also setting new standards and expectations for public sector. In 2011, the US Government launched the Open Government Initiative, that "*aims at promoting more transparent, effective, and accountable public administration*" (Open Government Partnership, 2020a). The initiative launced a global cooperation called Open Government Partnership, which now includes 78 countries and 20 local partners, which are all commited to enhance governments' transparency, accountability and public participation (Open Government Partnership, 2020a). Every two years, each member of the partnership submits their own action plan that includes concrete commitments to support the objectives of the initiative (Open Government Partnership, 2020a). Finland joined the partnership in 2012 (Open Government Partnership, 2020b). Finland's latest plan, which was submitted in 2019, in addition to many administrative actions, obligates the Finnish public sector to improve public participation in decision-making, and the accessibility of information and open data (Open Government Partnership, 2020b).

To adapt to these changes and increasing expectations, the organizations may find themselves in need for stability, cohesion, and continuity. In this pursuit, the research community suggests branding as an answer. Most commonly branding principles are applied in public sector to enhance awareness and support among stakeholders (Leijerholt, Biedenbach & Hultén, 2019a). However, the possibilities are much wider: branding can, for example, offer control (Marland, Lewis & Flanagan, 2017) and help public sector organizations to build loyalty and trust, and enhance relations with both internal and external stakeholders (Leijerholt et al., 2019a).

Another tool for public sector to answer to the occurring obligations and new challenges is social media. The organizations have already discovered the effective information dissemination properties of social media (Olsson & Eriksson, 2016), but social media has many other advantages to offer as well. Social media has for example the power to increase accountability, provide legitimacy, improve processes, and improve public organization's decision-making and problem solving in cooperation with citizens, while still being cost efficient (Bertot, Jaeger & Hansen, 2012; Picazo-Vela, Gutiérrez-Martínez, & Luna-Reyes, 2012).

In addition, social media can be a useful tool for branding. Even though marketing research surely has recognised the possibilities of social media in branding, the focus has mainly been on private sector. However, the exact same procedures that are developed for the private sector are not directly applicable for the use of public organizations (Leijerholt et al., 2019a; Whelan, Davies, Walsh & Bourke, 2010; Kallinikos, 2006; Luoma-aho, 2007). In fact, the whole topic of branding is rather new one in public sector, in both academic and managerial perspectives (Leijerholt et al., 2019a), despite the fact that public sector is indeed a considerable actor. In OECD countries, public sector covers over 20 % of total employment (OECD, 2016), and in Finland in 2018 general

government expenditure covered 53 per cent of gross domestic product (OSF, 2020). Aside from economic importance, public sector also provides national and economic stability via taxation and welfare structures (Luoma-aho, 2007). Considering the societal magnitude of the sector, it seems justified to bring the academic research around it up to date. By investigating the concepts of public sector branding and public sector social media use, the academia can support the sector into adjusting to the changes of the modern world.

1.2   Research objectives

As stated above, the context of public sector is quite unique for branding and social media use. In addition, the circumstances are rapidly changing with social and technological changes. Public organizations, whom in any case do not have longstanding roots in branding activities, can find it difficult to keep on building their brands alongside with these changes in operational environment. This study intends to shed light on this occurrence and provide insights on public sector branding for both academic and managerial purposes.

The objective of the study is to define how the forerunners of public sector are already implicating branding activities, and what implications social media has in this work. By looking into the existing habits useful procedures can be identified, and further suggestions can be provided.

To fulfil this objective, this study first investigates how branding is done in public sector. Existing literature demonstrates that traditional branding principles do not transfer well as such from private sector to public (Leijerholt et al., 2019a; Whelan et al., 2010; Kallinikos, 2006; Luoma-aho, 2007). A feature of public sector that has a major impact in branding, is the duality of nature of public sector: serving both normative and utilitarian, i. e. ideological and financial values (Leijerholt, Biedenbach & Hultén, 2020; Rainey, 2009; Cullinan, Abratt and Mingione, 2020). This duality poses special needs for all operations in public sector, including branding. This paper investigates how branding can be done, considering these preconditions. Accordingly, the first research question is: How public sector organizations are building brands?

Secondly the paper investigates the role that social media has in this equation. To what extent social media is used for branding purposes, or are there other, more important reasons for public sector organizations to use social media? Following is the second research question: How brands portray in public sector social media use?

By seeking answers to these questions, the study aims at expanding the understanding of branding efforts conducted by public sector organizations in social media and to describe how public sector organizations are utilizing social media in their branding activities.

To fulfil the study's purpose and to answer these questions, a qualitative research approach is applied for this descriptive, multiple case study. Data is gathered with semi-structured interviews with communications and marketing specialists and managers from four case organizations. The case organizations are selected as forerunners of public sector branding and especially of social media use.

This thesis complies with the following structure: first, the key terms will be defined, and existing literature concerning the topic will be reviewed to present the theoretical framework. Next, the research methodology and data collection will be introduced, followed by analysis and interpretation of the data and results. Finally, the paper is concluded with final thoughts and research limitations. The extensive list of references, as well as appendices are provided in the end.

No content generated by AI technologies has been used in this thesis.

2 PUBLIC SECTOR BRANDING AND SOCIAL ME-DIA USE

2.1 Varied definitions of a brand

Through decades of academic research as well as managerial experiments, the concept of a brand has grown up from a simple, fixed entity managed by one actor to a complex, malleable system constructed in co-creation by multiple actors (Bastos & Levy, 2012). In the roots of branding, we can observe such basic human desires as belonging with other people but also standing out and being your own person (Bastos & Levy, 2012). In marketing research, branding emerged as a central concept in early 1900's, but with impact of various forces, such as media, economic development, and marketing research, its development has actively continued through the century into the entity it deemed as now (Bastos & Levy, 2012). Contemporary marketing research considers brands as devices of learning and communication (Bastos & Levy, 2012), through which people express themselves (Schultz & Stout, 2010), and their status (Bastos & Levy, 2012), or even national identities (Dong & Tian, 2009). In this paper the main interest is in brand as a construct defined by modern marketing research: a multidimensional, multifunctional, and malleable interdisciplinary creation identifying items from one another (Bastos & Levy, 2012; Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004), or as American Marketing Association puts it, "*a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers*" (AMA, 2021).

Besides brand, marketing literature also utilizes several other intangible constructs to understand the relations between organizations, their operating environment, and stakeholders. These constructs include for example corporate identity, organizational trust, and reputation (Luoma-aho, 2005, 319). Even though these terms are widely discussed in academia, they rarely are systematically defined (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012) and often mean different things for different people (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004). As all these elements can act as strategic resources for organizations, understanding them is quite necessary

(Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). As stated before, brand is a system that identifies an item from others, whereas corporate brand is a similar idea covering a whole organization. Corporate identity, like personal identity, composes of strategic choices of expression, whereas image is something that the stakeholders perceive of the organization. Related to image is reputation, but whereas the assessments that form an image are imminent, a reputation forms over time and actions. A summary of these terms is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Related terms

Term	Definition	References
Brand	Multidimensional and malleable system that is constructed in co-creation by multiple actors in order to identify a product, a service, or other item, as distinct from others.	AMA, 2021; Bastos & Levy, 2012; Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004
Corporate brand	A holistic visual, verbal, and behavioural manifestation of the entire organization, that consists of expressions and images of the organization's identity, reflecting its ability to satisfy customer's needs	Abratt & Kleyn, 2012; Bick, Jacobson & Abratt, 2003; Knox & Bickerton, 2003; Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004
Corporate identity	Composition of organization's expression and strategic choices such as people, products, and services	Abratt & Kleyn, 2012; Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004
Image	Immediate assessments of an organization as perceived by the stakeholders	Bick et al., 2003; Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004
Reputation	The overall assessments of the organization formed by its stakeholders, that is built up over time and based on the organization's performance and identity programs	Bick et al., 2003; Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004; Luoma-Aho, 2007

2.1.1 Corporate branding

Drawing on the theories of branding, the concept of corporate branding covers the holistic branding of an entire organization. Traditionally, a corporate brand has the same objectives as a product brand: creating differentiation and preference (Knox & Bickerton, 2003). The difference between a product brand and a corporate brand is that the latter is shared by the whole organization (Knox &

Bickerton, 2003). A corporate brand can be utilized to support product brands; provide credibility; aid brand management to become easier and more effective; and reinforce both internal and external communications (Aaker, 2004). Compared to product brands, the management of corporate brands needs to be more holistic: it requires high levels of focus and coordination over the entire organization to be successful (Harris & Chernatony, 2001).

The broad level of operation of a corporate brand can create some challenges. Organizations might find it demanding to maintain relevance, create value propositions, manage the brand in different contexts, and make the corporate brand identity emerge (Aaker, 2004). Corporate branding also carries some risks: when the whole organization is unified under one brand, the reputation of it all is at risk when the organization is facing difficulties (Aaker, 2004). However, the benefits are also notable: leveraging the corporate brand can provide credibility, facilitate brand management, support internal brand-building, and support communications (Aaker, 2004).

The significance of branding has been widely accepted in private sector for quite long (Bestos & Levy, 2012; Abratt & Kleyn, 2012; Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004). In modern markets, success of a company can be achieved through expertise of creation, development, and management of brands (Bastos & Levy, 2012). But why should public organizations brand, as there is in no need for selling products or attracting customers?

2.2 Public sector branding

2.2.1 Reasons for public sector to brand

The concept of brand has clearly raised interest among public sector (Leijerholt et al., 2019a). The holistic, long-term view that the branding theories emphasize suites the needs of a public organization as well. It has taken some time for the management of public sector organizations to discover the broad benefits of branding, as marketing research in general has long been overlooked in public setting, and for quite long it was seen as peripheral to the public sector management research (Walsh, 1994). However, nowadays increasing numbers of public organizations have in fact begun to utilize corporate branding principles (Leijerholt et al., 2019a). For example, the marketization of the sector, as well as increasing competition have driven public organizations towards branding (Leijerholt et al., 2019a).

As the interest towards branding in the public sector has increased among practitioners, increasing numbers of scholars have also begun to study branding from the perspective of public organizations (Leijerholt et al., 2019a). The theories regarding public sector branding first appeared in 1990's, but until 2000's the volume of research was very low (Leijerholt et al., 2019a). According to the systematic literature review conducted by Leijerholt et al. (2019a) the academic

interest toward public sector branding peaked in 2010's. Next, the theoretical framework of public sector branding is investigated further.

In short, public organizations, as any other organizations, need to invest in intangible assets such as brand, because of the stakeholders' perceptions about the organization affect their behaviour towards it (Davies, Chun, da Silva & Roper, 2004). The survival of the organizations, as well as their legitimacy is depending on these stakeholder assessments (Luoma-aho, 2005, 14). Paying attention to stakeholders has become more vital, as the operating environment for public organizations is becoming more difficult due to changes in political and media environment (Marland et al., 2012), as well as declining general trust towards the sector (Luoma-aho, 2005, 13). As branding can facilitate stakeholder relations, it can help the public sector to navigate these changes.

Another major change in the operating environment of public sector is the evolvement of digitalization. In fact, the world is already stepping forward from digitalization to what researcher call hyperconnected world: an environment defined by instant availability of information and constant interaction in networks formed by people, devices and other entitites (Quan-Haase & Wellman, 2005; Fredett et al., 2012; Gielens & Steenkamp, 2019; Swaminathan et al., 2020). Hyperconnectivity is one of the biggest trends changing our world currently (Fredette et al., 2012). In this world, operation is very much different and new strategies must be found to keep up but also to utilize the opportunities that this hyperconnectivity has to offer.

In hyperconnected world, the key is speed: there are no time limits for information exchange. Digital media requires fast actions, and for public sector especially this may be a challenge: balancing between the everchanging operating environment and more static legislation adaptation is not easy. However, the sense of urgency caused by digital media and hyperconnectivity can be slowed down with the help of controlled messaging, which can be achieved with branding (Marland et al., 2017). Public sector branding can replace conflicting, fragmented messages with penetrating message reinforcement and provides organizations with control, simplicity, and consistency (Marland et a., 2017), much needed assets for finding balance in the hyperconnected world. Unifying all communication into a brand has become practically necessary due to environmental and cultural dynamics of the digital media age (Marland et al., 2017).

With branding, public sector can achieve three main advantages: (1) their central assets, such as trust, credibility and legitimacy can be strengthened and better communicated; (2) they can build better relationships with their external stakeholders such as customers and other authorities; and (3) they can consolidate their internal relationships, thus supporting their employees (Leijerholt et al., 2019a)

2.2.2 Characteristics of public sector branding

To understand how branding in public organizations can be done, some main principles of the sector must be considered. In the heart of public sector operations is duality: public organizations' role is to serve public interest and to live up to public values band ideologies, but at the same time they are publicly financed and owned and so they absolutely need to meet their financial objectives and economical concerns (Leijerholt et al., 2020; Rainey, 2009; Cullinan et al., 2020). In other words, public organizations must live up to both utilitarian and normative expectations (Cullinan et al., 2020). This creates some unique issues to acknowledge, as for private sector this type of duality does not exist in the same extend. Cullinan, Abratt and Mingione (2020) have noted that because of this duality, the nature of corporate brand identity in public organizations is dual in three aspects: (1) mission, (2) stakeholder prioritisation, and (3) decision making (Cullinan et al., 2020). The mission is split, as utilitarian and normative concerns can be conflicting; different stakeholders can be prioritized depending on the viewpoint, as customer is the key for utilitarian values, whereas meeting normative values may value other stakeholders, such as government and other authorities higher; and there can be inconsistencies regarding decision making, as different levels in hierarchy may value utilitarian and normative concerns differently (Cullinan et al., 2020).

This duality causes two major challenges concerning corporate brand: the corporate identity might be unclear, and the corporate branding strategies may be fragmented (Cullinan et al., 2020). On the other hand, as Marland et al. (2017) suggest, branding can be the answer to the issues raised by the dual nature of a public organization: branding can enforce conformity inwards and project a cohesive image outward (Marland et al., 2017). Whether the dual nature is a challenge or a possibility, it highlights well the core difference of branding in private and public settings. The causes and results of the duality are demonstrated in Figure 1.
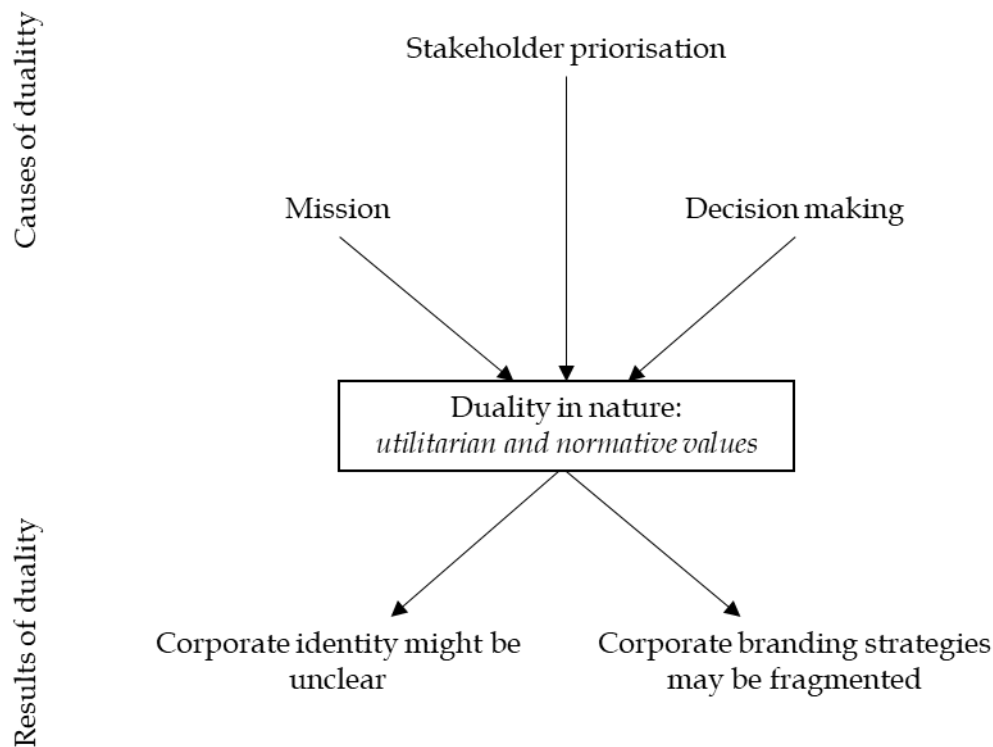
FIGURE 1 Causes and results of duality in nature of public organizations (adapted from Cullinan et al., 2020)

In practical setting, five main differences between the private and the public sectors regarding branding are (1) The customers of public organizations are all citizens, rather than some selected target customer group; (2) Unlike private organizations, public organizations do not necessarily aim to have more customers, but rather for example organizational attractiveness and positive brand perception; (3) Employees place quite different expectations towards the employer in both sectors; (4) The sectors have different kinds of stakeholder groups that need to be reached and convinced with the marketing efforts; and (5) The public sector must live up to the values expected from them, such as security, equality, pluralism, democracy and health (Leijerholt et al., 2019a; Kallinikos, 2006; Whelan et al., 2010; Leijerholt, Chapleo & O'Sullivan, 2019b).

As the starting points of branding differ in public sector from private sector, the traditional strategies of corporate branding may not be effective, and in some cases, they can be rejected. For example, Sataøen & Wæraas (2015) discovered while studying the Norwegian public hospital sector that the communication managers of these organizations reject the idea of differentiation: presenting their services as unique and excellent might happen at the expense of other organizations, whereas the hospitals want to underline equal services and gen-

eral solidarity. They also aim at supporting legitimacy with this coherence of message (Sataøen & Wæraas, 2015). The organizations and their management might be reluctant to incorporate traditional branding strategies, and thus branding principles and strategies should be adapted to their needs.

Swaminathan et al. (2020) have noted how existing perspectives on marketing literature should be refocused or rethought in reply to these differences. However, while interest towards branding in the public sector has increased, theories and suggestions in this context are lacking (Leijerholt et al., 2019a). Further research is needed to understand how the characteristics of public sector effect branding and public sector -specific models should be defined (Leijerholt et al., 2019a). As branding is expected to become a necessity in public sector (Marland et al., 2017), theoretical models should follow.

Public sector branding can also create societal risks. Alon-Barkat (2020) studied the effects of government branding on citizens' trust and discovered that branding efforts have the potential to influence and possibly even manipulate citizens' perceptions. Besides the possibilities, these findings also point out a risk: such powerful tools should not be applied without consideration. For this reason, as well, further research on the topic is needed.

2.3 Public sector social media use

Social media has inarguably changed our lives in many ways: the ways we communicate and interact, the access and supply of information, the habits of business and working life; the implications are endless. In this study we examine the ways that social media is affecting the interaction between public organizations and the society.

Social media is a set of Internet-based applications that allow users to create and exchange content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). With social media internet has turned back to its original mission: facilitating information exchange between users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Not just social networking sites are deemed as social media: for example, blogs, online content communities, and virtual worlds can be categorized as social media as well. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). On social media, the authorship rights are distributed to all users: all can reuse, comment, and forward the content (Mergel, 2013). Thus, the operation is quite different from traditional forms of media.

As was stated before, digital operations are basically a necessity for an organization to operate in modern world. Next, we will review the potential that social media has to offer for this adaptation for the public sector.

2.3.1 Reasons for public sector to utilize social media

The benefits of implicating social media use in public sector are numerous: utilization of social media might increase accountability and democracy, provide legitimization and credibility, support user convenience and citizen inclusion,

contribute to better organizational structure and processes, as well as interorganizational collaboration (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012). Through social media, public organizations can extend their services, solicit new ideas, improve their decision-making and problem solving (Bertot et al., 2012). In addition, social media as a tool is scalable and relatively low cost and has excellent data collection properties (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012).

As Knox (2016) puts it, *"social media platforms not only allow public administrators to be part of an ongoing conversation with an engaged, networked citizenry but also provide tools that are relatively inexpensive to implement, accessible from multiple devices, and can potentially reach an unlimited number of individuals."*

Looking back into the duality of nature of public sector that was presented previously, it seems that social media is quite a useful tool for public organizations: it supports engagement and helps to display legitimacy and accountability, while still being cost-efficient and effective. Both utilitarian and normative expectations can be met.

All in all, utilizing social media does seem beneficial for public organizations. However, it seems that the strategic opportunities of social media are not used to the fullest in public sector (Mergel, 2013). Next, these strategies for public sector social media use will be revised.

2.3.2 Social media logic

To understand the dynamics between social media platforms, mass media, users, and social institutions, Van Dijck and Poell (2013) have drafted the framework of social media logic: a mapping of processes, principles, and practices, through which social media platforms process information. Their mapping includes four main elements: programmability, popularity, connectivity, and datafication, demonstrating the main mechanisms of social media. This mapping was adapted to public sector context by Olsson and Eriksson (2016). From the original four elements of the social media logic, they included three concepts in public context: *connectivity, programmability,* and *popularity*, and formed social media logic for public sector (Figure 2).

Regarding the concept of connectivity, they discovered that the targeting of public organizations' communication has shifted from mass-communication towards more individualistic approach. The organizations depend on the communication actions of their social media followers, and sometimes have difficulties in reaching the right audiences.

About the concept of programmability, the public organizations are utilizing the information dissemination properties of social media; social media makes the organizations less dependent on mass media, as they can effectively disseminate information on their own. However, this raises the question whether it is appropriate that a public organization takes a journalistic role?

Concerning the last concept, popularity, Olsson and Eriksson argue that the organizations face both external and internal demands to participate in social media, but there is some difficulty in defining the correct tone. In addition, performing in their employer's social media might affect the personal life of the

employees. Together these three attributes describe the uses and challenges so-cial media contains from the perspective of public sector.
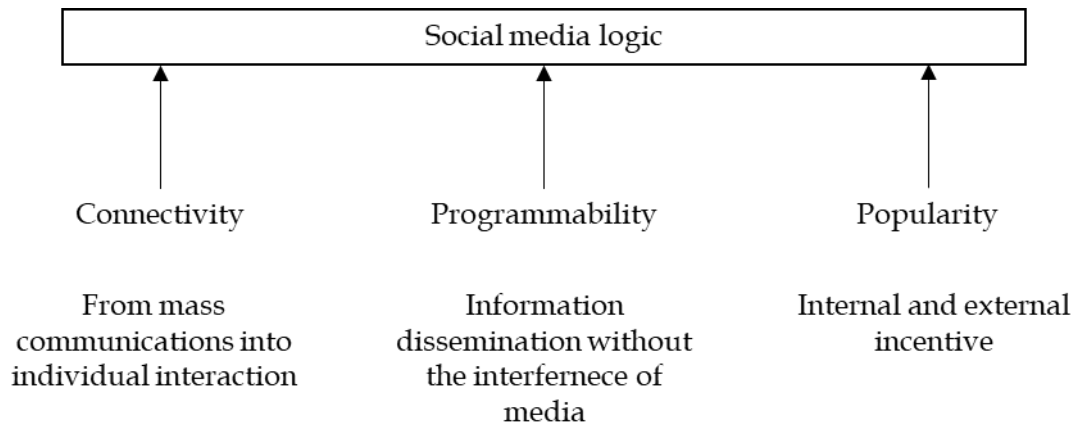

FIGURE 2 Social media logic, adapted from Olsson & Eriksson, 2016

To best utilize this logic, public organizations should invest in their social me-dia strategy. Picazo-Vela et al. (2012) suggest the following guidelines for strategizing public sector social media use:

1. Being context-aware and monitoring the surrounding conversation.

2. Understanding the problem that is being solved by social media usage.

3. Developing a plan and incorporating it into the formal government plans.

4. Developing guidelines for social media use. These guidelines are to be used by the employees at work and in private life.

5. Building capacities by employee training, process integration, interorganiza-tional collaboration, and knowledge sharing.

(Picazo-Vela et al., 2012 (adapted))

2.3.3 Challenges and risks of social media in public sector

Despite the notable advantages that social media carries for the public sector, it also brings up some new issues and risks that need to be considered. One major risk involves security: utilizing third-party platforms poses an imminent risk for data privacy (Bertot et al., 2012). Also, social media can be used to dissemi-nate wrong or distorted data, so there are risks related to data reliability, integ-rity and validity (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012).

Public organizations also need to consider communal and societal effects of social media. Societal risks of social media use are related to for example ac-cessibility, lack of regulatory framework and policies; centralization of power; and negative impact of bureaucratic operating methods (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012; Bertot et al., 2012). The term digital divide is being used to describe how social

media carries the potential risk of reinforcing existing societal problems, such as social exclusion, inequality, and polarization (Knox, 2016; Margo, 2012; Marland et al., 2017; Bertot et al., 2012).

As social media carries many risks, good planning and strategy is important (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012). Mergel (2013) also recognizes the importance of measuring, and notes that metrics can often be overlooked in this context. Using social media as any other information dissemination channel while neglecting metrics can in fact harm the organization's reputation, rather than support it (Mergel, 2013). However, utilizing online data and measuring social media impact can be controversial in public organizations: using the data could make governmental processes more efficient, but the organizations might be reluctant, or even incapacitated to do so by legal restrictions and regulations (Mergel, 2013). Thus, we circle back to the unique characteristics of public sector: restrictions of law or societal expectations might prevent the organizations from doing what would be economically and strategically efficient.

2.4 Use of social media in public sector branding

Previous research shows that branding can indeed support the public sector to balance with their utilitarian and normative expectations while existing in the modern, quickly changing hyperconnected world. Public sector branding can help unify objects and messages and offer cohesion. However, the strategies and guidelines of how exactly this can be done in action, is not quite defined in the scientific community.

To build the brands in public sector, a useful tool can be social media. Even though utilizing social media does carry some risks, its connectivity, programmability, and popularity make it a compelling option for interacting with the vast number of stakeholder groups of public sector. Even though public organizations have begun to take advantage of the properties of social media, the ways in which social media can support public sector branding, are not yet well known, but possibilities have been recognized.

This study aims to shed light on these topics and to portray, how branding and social media are already used in public sector organizations. In the next chapter, the empirical research will be introduced.

3   METHODOLOGY

With this study, the aim is to widen the understanding related to branding ventures and social media use of public organizations. In this chapter, the methodology used to pursue this goal is described in detail.

As was presented in the introduction, this study adopts a qualitative approach. As qualitative research provides deep, context related understanding of the phenomena (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015) and portrays reality as experienced by the respondents (Adams et al., 2014, 6), it serves the research topic well. The research is descriptive in nature: the aim is at describing the phenomena (Adams et al., 2014, 2). Next, the methodological choices of the study are justified in more detail.

3.1   Multiple case study

The study applies a multiple case study strategy. Case study as a research approach helps understand the dynamics withing single settings (Eisenhardt, 1989, 534) and provides diversity and complexity (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 116-117). Yin (2009, 18) defines case study by two aspects:

"1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when

- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

2. The case study inquiry

- copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result

- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result

- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis."

A research form should be chosen according to the needs of the study (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2014, 6). With research questions that address real-life phenomena and closely involve important contextual conditions, the use of multiple case study is justified (Yin, 2009, 18). In this study, the research questions are highly contextual and involve real-life phenomena. A multiple case study enables deep understanding of the phenomena, rather than focusing on one case or isolating the subject from its context. Thus, multiple case study serves the purpose of this study well, as there is no need to exclude the effects of the context, but rather to include them and study them.

Case studies can be divided in two categories: intensive and extensive (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 118). This study falls in the category of extensive case study research, as the aim is in elaboration of generalizable theoretical constructs by comparing cases, is interested in common features and models emerging in the data while aiming at developing new ideas through comparison of multiple cases, rather than understanding a single case in a more holistic manner (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 118; Eriksson & Koistinen, 2014).

In the center of case study are naturally the case(s) (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 115). In case study research, the researcher in fact defines *a case* by studying it: through research the *object of study* becomes an *object of interpretation and understanding*, thus being defined as a case (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 117). Therefore, the criteria of a case must be carefully thought out by the researcher (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 117). In extensive case study the cases can be selected according to theoretical interest and relevance (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 122). Next, the selection of cases for this paper is presented with justifications.

3.2   Case selection

Case selection of the study was done with theoretical sampling: cases selected were expected to be theoretically useful (Eisenhardt, 1989, 533). The organizations pursued for the research are Finnish public sector organizations that are active in multiple social media platforms. The aim was to find the most relevant cases to the study: organizations that have experience with both branding and active social media utilization. It was expected that with these types of cases the study could shed light on how branding in public sector can be done and what role can social media play in the process.

The case organizations for the study were selected with two criteria: (1) the organization operates on a national level in Finland, and (2) the organization has active social media accounts on multiple different social media platforms.

National operation level was a requirement, so that the case organizations are somewhat comparable concerning for example target audience and communications/marketing budget. The case selection was limited to Finnish organizations because roles of public sector do vary among countries, and for example authority and legislation can be quite different. Also, in Finland the public sector is rather influential and the public sector organizations have important roles in society. Studying strong, authoritative organisations was expected to provide useful information about the phenomenon, which is rather new and unestablished.

Active social media use was selected as a criterion, so that by searching for typical cases presenting the phenomena, the study can offer a cross section of public sector organizations that already are active in social media (Patton, 1990). Thus, the case sampling is a mix of typical case sampling and critical case sampling (Patton, 1990).

When active social media use was reviewed, the platforms included were Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (later known as X), LinkedIn, and TikTok, as they are some of the most popular social media channels (Statista, 2022; Niinimäki, 2020) that enable open, public communications, rather than channels that are focusing on one-on-one or private conversations such as WhatsApp or Snapchat. These apps were excluded from the case sampling, as verifying organizations' actions in them would have been difficult. In addition, YouTube and Pinterest, although popular channels as well (Statista, 2022), were excluded from the sampling, because their main operating points are not in open communications, rather than one-way content sharing.

Finally, four organizations were selected and contacted. Due to confidentiality and privacy of not only the organizations but the interviewees as well, the names of the case organizations are concealed. Also by excluding the names of the organizations, the focus is drawn to the public sector as whole, rather than singe organizations.

3.3 Data collection

When the desired case organizations were identified, the communications and marketing executives of the organizations were contacted through available contact information. The first inquiry included basic information of the content of the research, as well as ethical notifications concerning voluntarily participation and consideration of data privacy. Interviews with managers and employees working with the organizations' communications, marketing, brand, and social media were requested. Given the theme of the study, the people contacted were asked to suggest suitable colleagues to interview. The final composition of the interviewees is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2 Interviews

Organization	Interviewee's title	Duration
Organization 1	1. Communications planner	54 min
	2. Communications manager	63 min
Organization 2	3. Service specialist	61 min
	4. Marketing manager	57 min
	5. Communications manager	69 min
	6. Development specialist	61 min
Organization 3	7. Communications director	66 min
	8. Communications planner	64 min
Organization 4	9. Communications director	60 min
	10. Senior officer	75 min

The data was then collected with interviews, which is common way of gathering information in qualitative research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 78). Despite the popularity, collecting good and reliable information with interviews requires planning and structure (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

The interviews of this study were individual and semi-structured: the theme and question pattern were similar in all interviews, but the interviewees answered them in their own words (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). All questions were carefully composed with the main goal in mind: the interview questions should ultimately help answer the research questions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 79). Simple, open, neutral, and direct questions were preferred (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 87).

The interview template was composed with the support of the theoretical framework, and three topics were covered: the main topics include (1) branding, and (2) social media use. In addition, a third topic of (3) public sector was included, which contained questions related to the specific nature of public sector. In addition, the interviews began with warm-up questions related to the interviewee's personal role and background in the organization and related to the topics. 25 interview questions were composed, with supportive questions that could be used if necessary. The interview template is presented in Appendix 1.

As the time of the interviewees was in most cases limited, not all questions could be answered in each interview in detail. To save the interviewees time and avoid overlapping, different topics were emphasized in the interviews. The

composition of questions was altered according to the role of each interviewee: with managers and directors, more questions related to management of the issues was covered, and with employees, the day-to-day operations were emphasized. However, all questions were covered with at least some interviewee from each case organization.

Ethicality of data collection was considered not only in preparation, but also during the interview situation. The interviewees were informed of the research policy and purpose. Again, at this point, it was reminded that participation in the research is voluntary, and the interviewees were given directions on how they can change their consent at any part of the process. Before the interview, all interviewees were provided with briefing and privacy notice of the research.

The interviews took place in spring 2021. They were carried out remotely with video conferencing platforms, as attending interviews in person was not possible due to restrictions related to COVID19 pandemic. The interviews were conducted as individual interviews, so in total 10 interviews, approximately one hour in duration each, took place. The durations of the interviews are also presented in Table 2. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, as it is the native language of both the interviewees and the interviewer.

3.4   Data analysis

The interviews were all recorded, allowing the interviewer to focus on conversation and follow-up questions. The recordings were then transcribed literally, only excluding external disturbances and irrelevant sounds.

The transcribed data was analyzed with theme-based methods. With this method, themes occurring from the data are analysed in interaction with pre-existing theories (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998).

The first step of data analysis was coding of the collected data (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 128). The coding followed the rough categorization of the interview template. When coding utilizes the original thematization of the interview framework, all material gets processed systematically (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). Also, as the interview themes were derived from the theory, basing the coding on the same framework ensures that the codes are not derived from the data as such (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 129).

For the analysis, an abductive logic was used: the existing theoretical framework helps to describe the features of empirical data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 129; Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). For analysis, the main themes were branding in public organizations and social media use in public organizations. The topic of public sector, that was included in the interview template as a third topic, was not analysed as an individual theme, as the topic did not provide enough information to form another theme for the analysis, but rather support for the two main themes.

Under the initial topics there were several subcategories, such as objectives, perceived benefits, difficulties, etc. The subcategories were adjusted accordingly as the analysis proceeded. The final composition of themes is presented in the following chapter. The analysis was conducted with Excel.

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the results of the empirical research are discussed in more detail. The results are presented under following themes: (1) branding in public organizations and (2) social media use in public organizations. With the analysis, three subcategories were found relevant: (a) reasons, (b) actions, and (c) challenges. After presentation of these themes, their connecting points will be considered.

Quotations from the interviews are presented to support and demonstrate the findings. Irrelevant sections in quotations are excluded and marked with two lines [- -]. Also, the names of the case organizations are concealed from the citations and marked with [organization's name]. The source interview are marked in the bottom of the quote. As the quotations are translated from Finnish, they are numbered to help find the original quote from Appendix 2.

4.1 Branding in public organizations

Firstly, the very definition of a brand was a relatively new concept for the case organizations. As was seen in the literary review, branding does not yet have similar prominence in the public sector that it holds in private sector. This is clear in the results of the study: the organizations are only starting to internalize the term brand. Instead, the concept of reputation is more established, and the term has been used concurrently with the term brand. The interviewees noted, that in the public sector, it is not common to talk about brands and branding, as it has been deemed more as private sector terminology. However, there seems to be a shift in dialogue, in some organizations the change is already further along, but all in all it seems that the organizations are slowly but surely adopting brands and branding as a part of their day-to-day lingo.

The interviewees did recognize, that even though the term brand has not been around for that long, actions that can be labelled as branding have been taken for much longer. It seems that the change is in the intention: before, repu-

tation was something that became as a side effect of executing the organization's main commission. Nowadays, building brands and managing reputation is deliberate, and the organizations are making plans and strategies regarding the topic.

> Well maybe the biggest - - thing is that for the first time we are saying the word brand. Yes - - agencies have done branding all the time unconsciously, but maybe during the recent years we have got new tools and convenient ways of measuring and research that we began to use, and now we are talking about these things with the right words. (Interview 7) [1]

Similarly, other wording related to branding seems to be changing as well: words as stakeholders and customers are becoming stabled. Talking about customers, rather than citizens, is a conscious choice that the organizations have made to emphasize customer orientation.

> A person cannot choose whether they are our customer or not. But for me it is a state of mind. We talk about customers, we talk about making the lives of the customers as easy as possible, - - so that the person would have a positive experience. (Interview 2) [2]

The definitions of a brand were diverse: some interviewees saw brand as a tool for communications, some deemed it almost as a synonym for reputation. The ideas of branding were also tied with advertisement in some interviews. It portrays that the term brand is not yet quite established in the public sector. Despite the novelty of terms, activities that can be seen as branding are being done in the organizations, and have been for longer, just under different terms.

4.1.1 Reasons to brand for public sector

Next, the reasons for branding in the case organizations will be inspected in detail. In the heart of branding, for all four case organizations, is the customer. The reasons to brand revolve around helping and supporting the customers and building better relationships with them. The organizations aim to build brands that are supportive, approachable, and trustworthy. Thus, helping customers becomes easier: the customers dare to approach and seek help with the organization that has a good brand.

> But indeed, we are a public authority, - - even though it easily sounds so distant, official, yet we are an authority, but we want to be approachable, so that the people would feel that we help and side with people, rather than in many cases people notice our actions only when issues occur. So, in a way, if we could build a brand that is well perceived by all, and if you have a problem then we are here to help. (Interview 8) [3]

A major purpose for branding activities for all case organizations is building and maintaining trust. Having stakeholders trusting the organization helps it to execute their original commission. It facilitates interactions with customers and other stakeholders. Trusting customers are more approachable and cooperative.

More trust also means less suspicions against legality of operation, meaning less energy spent on justification of actions.

> Well, we see that the trust we need to operate, that we need in order to be a competent authority, we need to earn that trust every day, and that is why it is very important what kind of image customers and Finnish people in general have about us, and these images in my mind attach to the brand. (Interview 9) [4]

Another, rather important reason for branding is facilitating communications. The organizations all have multiple important stakeholder groups that require constant communications with. To succeed in their core duties, there are several ways in which the organizations must communicate: informing customers, engaging in societal dialogue, upholding media relation, just to name a few. The interviewees remark that a good brand can be truly beneficial when it comes to communication.

> Maybe that when we have a good reputation and good relations for example with media, then our news, our current topics are taken into account - -. So surely that is beneficial. (Interview 8) [5]

Effective communication with the help of a reliable brand comes extremely necessary when facing crisis: a strong brand can protect the organization when facing difficulties.

> And then again good reputation does protect us also when something unexpected and unfortunate happens, for example we had this unfortunate case that happened all of a sudden, an employee of ours was a suspect of a malfeasance, and in that context, I feel that our strong ground and the solid trust that we were enjoying helped us overcome that crisis. (Interview 9) [6]

In addition, successful brand relates to a positive employer image. This helps the organizations to attract competent employees: especially in fields that have scarcity of employees, a good brand can provide useful competitive advantage. A brand can also help build better organizational culture.

> We are an interesting employer, we have been pretty well able to fill all positions with good employees, which for its part allows us to evolve, when we get new workers and new talent in the house. (Interview 8) [7]

Becoming more renown is a motive for branding as well. The organizations have recognised that their stakeholders could better acknowledge the organization and the work they do. Even though, the name of the organization might be familiar for all, their actual role and all the things they do, might be vague for some. The organizations saw that their expertise in their field of work could be better understood, and so strengthening roles as societal experts was seen as a goal for branding. Communicating their role helps the organization to execute it.

> In a way the kind of expertise, how much we have valid information here, that is something I see that would be so important, that those who really make the laws and the political decisions, that they would understand that you should ask us for the information we have and ask for that expertise. (Interview 5) [8]

All things considered, the reasons to brand for the case organizations are considerable and worth pursuing. Branding can truly help the organizations in executing their original duties and missions. Next, the ways in which the organization build their brands are discussed.

4.1.2   Branding actions in public sector

When building their brands, there are several stakeholder groups for the case organizations to consider: in addition to customers, stakeholders also include partners, media, businesses, employers, government and politicians, ministries, international partners, non-governmental organizations, networks of professionals, scientific communities, other public sector organizations, and the organizations' employees. To take all these different groups into account, the organizations seem to hold quite holistic view of brand, and their aim is to keep the brand in mind in everything they do. The interviewees described how they utilize communication plans and strategies to hold cohesive tone and thus build the brand in all interactions. These communication guidelines stem from organizational strategies.

> But for example, all our - - communication policies are directed from there, and then for example our communication plans are directed from the strategy, so in that sense - - it pretty strongly directs us in what we do. (Interview 5) [9]

The desired brand attributes are derived from the values and strategies of the organizations. Having the desired brand close to the organization's core values helps making the brand clear and bringing it into reality.

For all organizations customer orientation seems to be a key feature of the brand. Also being reliable and stable is something that all case organizations want to be associated with, as well as conducting their legal obligations and tasks well, effectively, and righteously. On the other hand, the organizations want to be approachable and make working with them as easy as possible. In addition, all these organizations possess major information and knowledge concerning their fields of activity, and they work as societal influencers, and this expertise they want to portray with their brands.

> For us in customer relations it is very important that the organization appears trustworthy and caring, and so that we do our job well and want to side with our customers. (Interview 3) [10]

Many concrete examples on how branding is done were not presented in the interviews, but rather the idea of advocating the brand in all every-day activities. Some of the more factual ways of building brands include designing materials that uphold the brand, such as logos and other visual aids.

> Then again, we of course try to offer some hands-on tools, for example we have coherent slide layouts and such, everybody knows how the logo is used, these kinds of simple basic stuff (Interview 9) [11]

In the case organizations, measuring brands was not yet a common practice, but reputation measurements and research are valued and have been in use for longer.

> Well, in our performance agreement we have trust and reputation indexes, that are being monitored at ministry level, - - we use the T-Media's trust and reputation index - - and there are different dimensions, so those we do follow and we think about procedures related to them. (Interview 9) [12]

It seems, that being a public operator does set some ground rules on how branding can and should be done, as the operations in all organizations are remarkably similar. The public role does put some limits on branding. Following, these limitations and challenges of branding in the public sector are reviewed.

4.1.3 Challenges of branding in public sector

The interviewees saw that being a public authority does pose some difficulties for branding. The substances that the organizations work with can be quite delicate and sometimes not very pleasant. Often the organization itself does not have say in whether or how the matters are executed, but they are ordered by the law. However, the negative impact on image often falls on the organization executing these decisions. Public organizations can thus be in a difficult position where they face disgrace from the public for decisions they have no power over.

> Our task is to execute and regulate that legislation that the ministry composes. And sometimes that is an unpleasant task, and we just need to do our task, we are not members of the parliament, they are the ones that make the laws, and we only execute them. So that is a challenging task and, in some ways, requires balancing from us. (Interview 9) [13]

The interviewees mention that the organization being very well-known has some effects on branding. This can sometimes be an issue regarding branding, as the customers have their own existing, strong impressions, sometimes negative, and they are not that easily transformed.

> Everyone knows our organization, each and every Finnish person, and everyone has something to do with us (Interview 2) [14]

As was stated before, the stakeholder groups of the case organizations are quite vast. Building a brand that serves all these connections can be quite challenging.

> Then, we do a lot of the upholding of our reputation and cooperation and appreciation in interactions and meetings, there are lots of these kinds of collaborations and meetings and networking and such, in any way our brand or reputation efforts cannot go that deep in this diverse domain, so we have many different methods to upkeep that in many levels. (Interview 9) [15]

Another considerable challenge related to branding in the case organizations was the internal resistance to change. The value of branding is not always rec-

ognized within the organization, and for some the use of limited resources to branding can be seen as waste, an unnecessary frill.

> It is new that in public administration we talk about brands at all - - so overall the internal dialogue about why it even is important to think about these things, what relevance do they have. (Interview 9) [16]

In general, the scarcity of resources is a challenge for branding. Time and labour in the organizations are limited.

> Maybe the lack of time, even though we have a decent amount of people working, but that we need to be able to deepen and focus. (Interview 7) [17]

Branding does not seem to be an easy task for public sector. Considering all stakeholders, including internal ones, taking into account the legislative restrictions, while balancing with limited resources, poses quite an assignment for the organizations. However, the general view seems to be that branding in the public sector is beneficial and even necessary in the modern world. Table 3 summarizes the findings related to public sector branding.

TABLE 3 Results regarding public sector branding

Public sector branding	Changes in terminology and definitions	Newness of the term brand
		Changes in other terms as well
		Diverse definitions of the term
	Reasons to brand	Customer orientation
		Building and maintaining trust
		Facilitating communications
		Preparing for crisis
		Employer image
		Spreading awareness to customers
		Portraying expertise
	Branding actions	Holistic view of brand
		Utilization of organizational and communicational strategies

		Defining of brand attributes
		Visual designs
		Brand measurements are not largely in use
	Challenges of public sector branding	The organizations' influence over the substantial topics is limited
		Complexity of substances
		Being very well-known limits the ability to influence perceptions
		Number of stakeholders
		Internal resistance to change
		Scarcity of resources

A rather new tool to help build brands is social media. In the following chapter, the uses and possibilities of social media in public sector will be reviewed.

4.2 Social media use in public organizations

4.2.1 Reasons to use social media for public sector

In this section, answers to multiple interview questions are revised: why the organization began to use social media in the first place; are the reasons for social media use still the same; did the organization face any external pressure to start using social media. Using multiple questions allowed the interviewees to deeply reflect the theme. As the answers to both the beginning of social media use as current reasons were not that different from each other, they are not reviewed separately in the results.

From the research data, multiple reasons for social media use of public organizations can be recognized. The reasons can be divided into two categories: the external reasons that stem from the operating environment of the organization, and the internal reasons, the ways in which social media benefits the organization directly.

First, the external inducements are reviewed. As a reason to use social media, all the interviewees mentioned the legal obligation of public sector or-

ganizations to communicate with the public. The law demands the public sector to communicate and inform the public about their operations. Communication in general is a core reason for the organizations to use social media. For public organizations, it seems that interaction with multiple stakeholders, such as other public organizations and other affiliates, is quite fruitful: it for example provides useful information about the operating environment and allows the organizations to distribute information effectively.

> And surely the organization also has communicative responsibility and legal responsibility to communicate about our services, so that is also an important factor and one important channel. (Interview 6) [18]

Secondly, social media was seen simply as a necessity for operating in modern world. In all case organizations it was acknowledged that the society is increasingly based on electrical solutions and communications. The professionals interviewed saw it almost unnatural not to be on social media in the modern world. Furthermore, as one interviewee stated, the organizations are talked about on social media whether they choose it or not; it is better to take control of the presence and participate in the conversation proactively.

> I think, for an organization like this, it is not a question about whether you exist in social media or not, it is about how you exist and how you gain interaction, how you get the people interested about our content. (Interview 9) [19]

The interviewees also highlighted the needs and requests of the public as a reason to use social media. Multiple interviewees told that their audiences had not necessarily suggested that the organization should go into social media, but once it did, they received lots of positive feedback, and maybe some further suggestions for some other channels or other ways to use the platforms, such as private messaging.

> Maybe it does not come to mind for many, when they go to some social media channel, that I wish that [the organisation] was here [laughs], but it clearly has been liked, and then especially private messaging, that has been something that the customers have asked for. (Interview 5) [20]

The case organizations also recognized benchmarking as an inducement to use social media. The interviewees mentioned that seeing other public organizations using social media inspired them to try as well.

> But surely, we always must keep an eye on what the others are doing and learn from example, so we do not fall behind. (Interview 6) [21]

From the organizations point of view, the most crucial benefit from social media use seems to be accessibility: in all interviews, social media's indisputable ability to reach people was brough up as a great advantage. The interviewees highlighted that social media can reach masses quickly, but on the other hand it can also be used in a more targeted manner for groups that are hard to reach, for example young people. Social media helps the organizations to help their

customers and other stakeholders. Also, accessibility can become useful in crisis situations.

> Well, yes, social media is a good channel to reach, especially citizens. (Interview 2) [22]

The interviewees did also acknowledge the benefits that social media can have to brand and image of the organization. They described that using social media could make the organization more approachable and casual in the eyes of stakeholders. Social media enables the organization to talk about the work they do and express themselves in more versatile manner than, for example, their own websites or other more traditional channels could do.

> We have created that positive surprise, that it is great that [the organization] too can be funny and casual - - it lightens our image and brings that feeling that it is easier to approach - - they noted that hey, you are doing this, now I dare to ask you about this. It makes it easier for the customers to contact us, and that is an important reason for us to go there and make the content that we do. (Interview 6) [23]

In general, the reasons to use social media seem to be very similar for all case organizations. Social media helps public sector to fulfil their obligations related to communication and informing in hyperconnected society and responds to the needs of the public. The organizations have recognized the potential of social media through their own experience but also by benchmarking. Social media provides great accessibility. The case organizations also appreciate the branding and image building benefits that social media has to offer.

4.2.2 Social media actions in public sector

The development of the use of social media in the case organizations is quite similar: the interviewees described the organizations' first ventures on social media to have been small, cautious, and experimental tests. The initial social media experimentations were not high-stake, strategically planned projects, but rather small investigations derived from the initiative of employees working in communications. The interviewees did describe some cautiousness within the organizations regarding the first social media attempts. However, the change of operating environment and need for development in communications finally overcame concerns, and slowly all organizations grew their social media actions into more strategic and purposeful directions.

> We have been building this for quite long - - there has been many evolutions and many faces. (Interview 1) [24]

From the beginning, the interviewees did recognize some resistance against using social media, both external and internal. In all case organizations it was recognized that support from the management is necessary to be able to utilize social media.

> What is important in this brand building and social media work, is that there is support from the management, and that management deems it important. There will be

discord from both outside and inside, but the support from the management is important, and seeing this as strategic work, having the same goals as the organization has, that is important. (Interview 9) [25]

Following, we will further examine the current state of social media utilization in the case organizations. When it comes to social media strategies, all organizations base them on their organizational strategies. From the organizational strategy the communication strategy is derived, and so on the strategies and guidelines of social media. These strategies guide the organizations in daily social media activities regarding for example tone and objectives. For the interviewees the ideal is to have the organizational strategy so well internalized that social media actions align with strategy naturally.

> And maybe more so that, in a way, our strategy and desired image would be internalized, so that they would automatically be always present in our communications, without needing to think about it. (Interview 5) [26]

In all case organizations, the main department operating social media is the communications unit. There is also cooperation with units such as customer service, marketing, and human resources. Also, the organizations have special units consisting of employees of the organizations that are producing their own professional social media content.

> Our social media is divided into - - three parts, we have the communications that we do in social media, we have the customer service that we do in social media, and we have all those employees that represent us in social media. (Interview 5) [27]

All case organizations use the same main social media channels: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Furthermore, these channels are also used in similar ways: Facebook and Instagram are directed to the customers, the public in general, Twitter is used for communications with more professional stakeholders and the conversation revolves around societal topics; and LinkedIn is targeted for other affiliates, along with employer communication. As the interviewees saw it, use of different channels is somewhat determined by the channels nature, and following the general culture of the channels gives best results.

> We always analyse which of our customer groups are in a channel - - and that of course affects what kind of content we make for that channel, and then there is also the nature of the channel - - we cannot create our own [rules], we go with the same rules as anyone else. (Interview 6) [28]

As the target groups of social media channels are different, so is the tone of voice and culture in general. According to the interviewees, same exact content does not function well across different channels, and each channel has its advantages as well as disadvantages. Finding the right tone for each channel offers best results.

> We have learned that for example it is not necessary to take each and every party into account in everything we do, we rather aim to execute different cultures in different channels, for example. (Interview 1) [29]

Regarding tone of voice, humour was seen almost as a necessity, as to gain interest in social media requires differentiation. On the other hand, using humour allows the organization to show an approachable side of themselves. However, in some cases humour is not the best approach, for example when addressing serious safety topics or other sensitive matters. Aside from humorous, the interviewees described the organizations' tone of voice in social media for example as appropriate, approachable, playful, brave, and fun.

> The world of social media is bold, fast, exaggerated, using humour and other devices. Firm and matter-of-fact does not stand out. (Interview 2) [30]

Besides humor, the interviewees valued usefulness of content, interactive features, and quick reactions to changes. The usefulness of the content was an important theme: all organizations aim to always having some substantial feature in all social media posts. This relates to legitimation of social media actions in whole: always keeping the key mission in mind when creating content for social media allows the organizations to be playful and try novel things in social media while still fulfilling their original tasks.

> We have defined that we want our content always to have something that values the customer. (Interview 3) [31]

When producing content for social media, the interviewees aim to create interaction with the stakeholders by for example using different functionalities of the channels. For all organizations, having meaningful conversations on social media was seen as advantageous and worth pursuing, even though gaining interactions was also described as demanding.

> For example, in Instagram we have lately been using stories quite actively - - we produce interactive content, answering questions. (Interview 8) [32]

When it comes to strategies and planning, the interviewees did recognize that having intricate guidelines or policies for social media did not pay off. The operating environment in social media is so rapid and always changing that guidelines quickly expire. For the interviewees it was seen more useful to have more guiding directions for social media rather than creating detailed plans far into the future.

> We have these guidelines for social media that we are starting to update - - we had them drafted a few years ago, but all these things are evolving with such a fast cycle these days. (Interview 9) [33]

According to the interviewees, lower organizational hierarchy suits the needs of social media best. Social media requires rapid reactions and flexible manoeuvres, and having tight communications teams and autonomy allows social media efforts to succeed in this. What the interviewees deemed important, was to stay alert of changes in social media culture. New tools and channels can prove

to be quite successful, and less fruitful trials can be abandoned. Openness and ability to change are crucial in social media.

> It is rather easy for us to try new things, our hierarchy is very low in this case - - if we decide to try something new, then we just do it. (Interview 3) [34]

The interviewees also note the importance of resources. Having the right tools and enough people with adequate skills helps build social media in professional manner.

> During the last few years, we have recruited more people - - and by that we have got to improve our work. (Interview 8) [35]

These findings demonstrate that the ways in which the case organizations use social media are quite similar Each organizations seems to have found their own ways in which to use social media and are constantly evolving their ways. In addition, the limitations they face as public organizations are quite similar. Next, these challenges are presented.

4.2.3 Challenges of social media use in public sector

Despite the undeniable advantages that social media has to offer, the interviewees did recognize some major challenges and difficulties related to it. One of the biggest challenges seems to be the coordination of substances that public organizations are working with, such as livelihood or safety matters, with the nature of social media. The contradiction between seriousness and complexity of substances, and content that social media consumption and algorithms favour creates some obstacles for public sector organizations.

For example, finding correct tone of voice seems to be quite problematic: social media tends to favour bold styles, but the topics that the organizations need to discuss can be quite sensitive and controversial. Light and humorous content may even make the audience question the organization's legitimacy, and whether they take the matters seriously.

> It is very challenging in a way to be funny with for example things that are not funny at all to our customers. - - So in some way - - we want to be close to people - - and humane, but you need to balance all the time so that it does not - - feel like we dismiss the things we work with in any way. (Interview 5) [36]

Social media tends not to favour content with long texts and elaborate details, but rather short, easily consumed posts. However, the topics public sector organizations are posting about do not necessarily fit into short posts or quick videos. Condensing the message too much might even endanger correctness of information.

> Maybe I would like to be more direct in some posts, but then a substantial specialist thinks that no, we need to tell every single detail, then it kind of flattens, and people do not grasp them if there is not a sharp punchline in the issues. (Interview 10) [37]

Obviously public sector organizations also need to be particularly strict regarding data security and privacy protection. Especially when an organization offers customer service via social media, security must be well thought. While it is clear for the organizations that sharing private information in social media is not safe, even with private messaging, it is not as clear for the customers.

> Then - - introduction of private messaging, that is something that the customers have asked for - - then, that either is not a simple thing for us, we must consider information security and privacy so carefully. (Interview 5) [38]

With these limitations, the interviewees have indeed noticed that gaining attention on social media can be quite challenging.

> That the content is also drawing attention - - that is surely always a challenge. (Interview 6) [39]

All in all, the negative attributes of social media are a challenge for public sector as well. The negativity, inappropriate commenting, spreading of misinformation, and even dangers such as doxing are serious questions that need to be prepared to. Dealing with such grave issues is demanding for the people working with social media.

> And maybe the whole discourse in a way, the negativity that swells in some channels, that might be a risk for the organization, it is pretty tiring, both for the specialists engaging in those conversations, but also for the people working with social media. (Interview 10) [40]

Yet again, a major challenge that was recognized in all case organizations was limitations of resources. Social media demands a lot of work, and not having enough work power inevitably limits the possibilities. Especially interactions through social media are difficult to build without enough working hours, as it would require active participation and monitoring of conversations. In addition, creating novel and insightful content for social media cannot be done in a rush, all the while other daily tasks need to be done as well. As an interviewee puts it, it is a demanding task to balance limited resources with creativity and daily tasks.

> Maybe that - - we would have sufficient resources, sufficient tools, opportunity to flexibly buy enough external elements, how could we have enough time to follow the external operating environment, external world, how could we have enough time for creativity, like refining content, all the developing, when at the same time we constantly face different conversations, situations either stemming from our own organization or situations coming from the external world. How do we balance the hectic daily labour, and on the other hand the sort of developing and creative generation of ideas? (Interview 2) [41]

In conclusion, the ways in which the organizations use social media are rather similar, and all case organizations deal with similar limitations. Despite converging baselines, the end results are all their own, each organization has their

own style and tone in social media. Table 4 compiles the findings related to public sector social media use.

TABLE 4 Results regarding social media use

Public sector social media use	Reasons for social media use	External reasons	Legal obligation to communicate
			Adaptation to modern world
			Needs and requests of stakeholders
			Benchmarking
		Internal reasons	Accessibility
			Brand benefits
	Social media actions	The first actions were small, cautious experiments	
		Need for managerial support	
		Social media strategies are based on organizational and communicational strategies	
		Cooperation of multiple units (e. g. communications, customer service, etc.)	
		Different channels for different target groups	
		Different tones for different target groups	
		Usefulness of content	
		Interactive features	
		Quick reactivity	
		Fluidity of guidelines	
		Low organizational hierarchy	
		Need for resources	

		Coordination of difficult substances with the nature of social media
		Data security and privacy
	Challenges of social media use	Gaining attention is hard
		Negative features of social media in general, for example the general negativity, inappropriate messages, misinformation, and doxing
		Scarcity of resources

Completing this chapter will be the consideration of ways in which branding seems to be present in public organizations' social media use.

4.3   Branding in public sector social media

The findings of the study show that branding is quite strongly present in public sector social media. The starting point for social media use for the case organizations was not in fact to build brands, but even so, branding has in time become an inseparable part of social media actions, whether it was initially intentional or not. As for now, the ideal is to have the brand so well internalized that all actions in social media are in fact displays of the brand. This happens by for example defining brand attributes, such as approachability, expertise, etc.

> I think that of course it is there all the time, the brand is built of all this content, and there in the content it always exists. Maybe I think more that everything we do should come back to our brand attributes - -, then in a way these individual messages should always display the brand. (Interview 4) [42]

Comparing to the interviewees' thoughts on brands described earlier, how talk about brands is new and the concept has not yet put in roots, it is rather unexpected how much the brands in fact are present in the social media work of the organizations: clear, recognizable acts of branding are done in all case organizations. With social media, the organizations can portray a different side of them: approachable, fun, engaging. The barriers between the organization and stakeholders are decreasing, as social media offers a direct, instant channel for conversation. Even though social media has to offer many other strategic uses, such as effective information dissemination properties, the impact on image and brand were clearly highlighted by the interviewees. Despite numerous risks and challenges that are related to social media use, its benefits, especially related to branding, seem to be significant, and the interviewees all accentuate the positive effects and possibilities that social media has to offer. It appears that

both public sector branding and social media use have advanced hand in hand into a serious matter for all public sector organizations to consider.

> Well then of course one objective for us, for why we are in social media, is that we try to update our image, and bring forth that we are approachable, and we are there were our customers are, and we want to be approachable, and people can ask us when they need to. So maybe people can have ideas that [the organization] is bureaucratic or unapproachable, so what we do in social media is something that we try to do to change that. (Interview 6) [43]

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Theoretical implications

The results of this study demonstrate that the utilization of brands in public sector is still in its primal face. The term brand is yet a novelty in the field, and the organizations are more used to talking about reputation. For long, the sector has trusted that by doing their work well their reputation will follow. Now, the change seems to be in intentionality: the organizations are beginning to actively work towards building better perceptions of themselves among stakeholders.

Behind this shift in intention appears to be the concurrent changes of the operating environment. Societal issues and technological changes are driving public organizations to change as well. While complying with increasing expectations and serving both utilitarian and normative values, while adapting to the speed of conversation and information exchange of the modern world, the organizations can find themselves in a difficult position. To adapt to these challenges, branding can be of use. Branding helps building organizations main assets, such as organizational trust, credibility, and legitimacy (Leijerholt et al., 2019a). It offers tools to support relationships with both internal and external stakeholders (Leijerholt et al., 2019a). The possibilities of public sector branding are distinct.

In this study, the results show that the public sector organizations identify several reasons to brand, first being the ways in which a brand can support customer orientation. The essence of public sector is the customer: the customers' needs are the reason these organizations exist. As branding can help the organization to help their customers, it essentially can help the organization to meet its objectives. Also, branding can help the organization to build and maintain trust, which also relates to better serving the customers. With brands, the organizations can spread awareness of their work and, yet again, thus assist the customers. Brand can also facilitate communication, help the organization to manage crisis, and improve employer image. Brand can bring forth the expertise that the organization carries about its field of work, and so help make better decisions in society.

Despite the recognition of the possibilities that brands can offer public sector, the ways in which strategies of branding can and should be applied in public sector setting are yet to define by academic research (Leijerholt et al., 2019a). With little support from academia, public organizations are in fact already applying many branding operations. For example, the organizations utilize organizational and communicational strategies, by which the brand work is directed. The organizations have set brand attributes and are actively working to portray them. These attributes display features such as reliability, expertise, and approachability. Visual aids are applied to support the brands.

To conclude and circle back to the first research question of this study of how public sector organizations are building brands, the results of this study show that the organizations are adapting a holistic view of a brand, the brand displays the key organizational attributes, and the organizations aim to display their brand in everything they do in order to fulfil their mission and serve their customers. The interest towards branding seems to be growing and evolving in public sector.

In brand work, one major tool is social media. With social media, the organizations can directly contact their stakeholders and engage in conversation and show a new, more humane, approachable side of themselves to their audiences. The organizations surely have noted the advantages that connectivity, programmability, and popularity of social media (Olsson & Eriksson, 2016) have to offer. Especially the programmability and popularity aspects of social media are well utilized by the organizations: the organizations have recognised how social media can be used to disseminate information directly and efficiently, and how wide reach of stakeholders social media has to offer. Concerning connectivity aspects, the organizations are struggling with strict demands of information security and privacy: utilizing all communicative aspects that social media has to offer is not necessarily possible for public sector due to data safety issues of the platforms.

Aside from branding, the research identifies several other reasons for public sector organizations to use social media. The organizations have a legal obligation to communicate about their work and actions, and in this task social media is very powerful, as it offers great accessibility to target audiences. Social media helps the organizations to adapt in the modern world, where information is disseminated instantly and interaction is constant (Quan-Haase & Wellman, 2005; Fredett et al., 2012; Gielens & Steenkamp, 2019; Swaminathan et al., 2020).

Even though the public sector social media use may have begun as small and cautious ventures, the organizations have now discovered many useful ways in which they fluently utilize social media in their everyday work. To do this, the work needs the support of the management and sufficient resources. The organizations are basing their social media use on organizational and communicational strategies. However, strict guidelines are avoided, as they quickly expire, as social media changes so fast. Social media is operated by a joined venture of many units, including for example communications and cus-

tomer service. To factor in all stakeholders, the organizations are adopting different channels and tones for different target groups. When generating content, the organizations emphasize interactive features and reactivity to the environment. A key attribute for content is usefulness: the organizations always aim to keep the customers' perspective in mind, so that all content does bring some value to the customer. This seems to be the way, in which the organizations justify the legitimacy of producing all kinds of content: as long as they are in some way helping the customer, they allow themselves to experiment and maybe act silly or use humour.

Regarding the second research question of how brands portray in public sector social media use, this study shows that brands do seem to have quite strong impact on public sector social media use. The idea of expressing organizational identity over social media seems to be built in the organizations' actions, and the intent to portray brand attributes over social media is strong. Social media does seem to be a highly useful tool for branding, as it allows the organizations to express themselves in new ways and engage in conversation with their numerous stakeholders.

With both branding and social media use, the organizations are facing challenges. The substances that these organizations are working with, are not necessarily easy to brand or talk about in social media. These matters are not for the organizations to decide, and their legal roles oblige them to talk about even the negative and difficult matters. Especially in social media, making viral content about difficult societal issues is not an easy task. Yet again, the dialogue of normative and utilitarian needs is present. Also, the vast amount and scope of target audiences to consider are challenging both branding and social media work, as well as scarcity of resources. In social media, securing data protection and privacy is difficult, yet something that public sector needs to be utmost careful about. These challenges portray the special characteristics of the public sector regarding branding and social media use.

5.2 Managerial implications

From the results, many useful tactics for branding and social media use can be identified. As the case organizations are the forerunners of their fields, other organizations could benefit on benchmarking these findings. In addition to the manners identified in this study, some actions could be further developed in the public sector.

First, measuring of brand work or social media actions and their results is not yet widely applied. Possibly these topics are so new that the metrics have not been yet established. These types of intangible assets tend to be difficult to measure. Some of the case organizations are utilizing social media tools, which surely offer numeric information about reach and engagement, but qualitative results of these actions may still go unidentified. This could be worthwhile for the organizations to investigate in the future,

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Another managerial suggestion is to clarify the terminology. The management of corporate brand, reputation and identity as strategic assets calls for a clear understanding of definitions of the terms (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012), and so it is recommendable for the organizations to accept these new terms into their everyday conversation, to be able to fully benefit from them.

As has been discussed, the research concerning public sector branding is in many ways lacking compared to its private sector counterparts. However, from some perspective, there could be some things that public sector could in fact teach private sector. In public sector, brands can be seen as acting agents of social change, rather than mere cultural symbols (Swaminathan at al., 2020), as was demonstrated in this study as well: with their brands, the organizations want to make their customers lives easier, and on the other hand, advocate their expertise and thus drive forward issues that they find important. In the process of broadening the spectrum of a brand, public organizations may be further in the process than private sector. Possibly these findings could be something that private sector could benefit from as well.

While the topics of branding and social media use of public sector can offer interesting managerial implications for the organizations, they can also offer views for larger societal conversation. Both branding and social media can be powerful tools influencing opinions and conceptions. The ways in which the society communicates are evolving, while traditional communication channels are losing their dominance. Applying brands and communicating through social media offers public sector new ways in which they can participate in societal conversations and advocate their own agenda, and maybe change the ways societies essentially function.

5.3   Research limitations

As any research, this one too has some limitations to consider. A major limitation is the contextual nature of the findings: the results produced in qualitative research are contextualised: they are specific to time, place, people, and culture studied (Belk, Fischer & Kozinets, 2012, 3; Sataøen & Wæraas, 2015). These finding demonstrate only Finnish public sector, and as was discussed previously, the legislation and general arrangement of public sector, as well as opportunities and resources for branding and social media use differ greatly between countries and regions. Finland is an example of a country that has quite large public sector, so ways in which branding and social media can be utilized there may not transfer to other countries, where the role of public sector is lesser.

From Finnish public sector organizations, only a small part was studied in this paper. Public sector is a vast field of different organizations with different missions and roles, and just as branding or social media principles used by private sector do not directly translate into public sector, they may not also translate as such from one public organization to another. Organizations such as hospitals or local emergency services may have very different needs, objectives,

and limitations for branding and social media use compared to the case organizations of this study. In this study, the selected case organizations were limited to those that operate on a national level. However, there are several cases of very interesting social media use from local public organizations as well. In further studies, it would be interesting to see comparative results from organizations that operate locally.

Also, the case organizations were limited to only organizations that already are active on social media, for the purpose of recognizing existing operating models and to hear the professionals who have expertise around the matter. Thus, possibly some objections of public sector social media use might have been missed. There might be some organizations that have found the risks of social media greater than the possible benefits, and thus have not begun to use, or are very restrictedly using social media. Possibly future research could identify organizations that are opposing social media use in public sector and learn their reasoning.

Also, a limitation for this study is the contemporary nature of the subject: social media as a concept is ever evolving, and describing its use and nature is at best a capture of a current situation. Even during the course of this study, the social media channel Twitter, that is widely utilized by the case organizations, has been though a great transformation: the channel is nowadays known as X, and some of the functions have been changed completely. This is a great example of how not only for research, but for managerial implications as well, the ever-changing nature of social media must be considered. On the other hand, circling back to the other key topic of this paper, branding might be the solution for adapting into the unsteady world of social media: branding can offer stability and continuity in the hyperconnected, fluctuant operating environment of modern-day public sector.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview template

1. Interviewee background
   - Name
   - Role in the organization
   - Former experience concerning brands and social media
2. Topic: Brand
   - How would you describe the brand of the organization?
     o What are the brand's mission and vison?
     o What are the brand values?
     o How does the brand fit a public sector organization?
   - Why has the organization begun to invest in a brand?
     o What is the purpose?
     o How did the organization end up with this brand?
     o How has the brand building process been?
     o What roles mission, vision and values have had in brand building?
     o What kinds of challenges there have been?
     o What benefits has the brand produced for the organization?
   - Who is the brand directed to?
   - Who are the stakeholders of the brand?
     o How are the stakeholders noted in brand building?
     o How are employees noted in brand building?
     o How are the stakeholders receiving the brand?
3. Topic: Social media
   - Social media background
     o Why did the organization start to use social media?
       ▪ When did the organization start to use social media?
       ▪ Are the reasons still the same?

- Did the organization face external pressure to go into social media?
  - o How have the organization's actions changed along the way?
    - How has the content been developed?
    - Has the organization acquired more expertise for this purpose?
- Social media actions
  - o How is the use of social media organized in the organization?
    - What social media channels are used and why?
    - How is social media coordinated in the organization?
    - To what extent are social media actions planned?
  - o What stakeholder groups are targeted in social media?
    - How are the stakeholders affecting the content?
  - o What kind of content the organization is sharing?
    - Where do the ideas come from?
  - o How does the organization's brand portray in social media content?
    - What does the organization want to message about the brand in social media?
  - o How does the organization interact through social media?
    - Are followers encouraged to engage? How and why?
  - o Can you describe a successful case that the organization has executed in social media?
  - o Can you think of a case that was unsuccessful? Can you describe it?
- Social media objectives
  - o What goals does the organization have for social media?
    - What does the organization want to reach with social media?
    - How is the fulfilment of the goals monitored?
    - What metrics are utilized to monitor the objectives?
    - What makes you think the social media work is successful?
- Benefits, risks, and challenges of social media
  - o What benefits does social media bring to the organization?
  - o What disadvantages does social media bring to the organization?
  - o What challenges are related to social media?
  - o Are there risks related to social media?
  - o How are employees receiving social media?
    - Are you encouraging employees to participate in social media work?
  - o How are your customers reacting to social media?
  - o How are other authorities reacting to social media?
4. Topic: Public sector

- Do you find that your ways to brand and use social media differ from other public sector organizations? If so, how?
- How do you find your social media content matching the organization's role and mission?
- Has it been difficult to justify the use of resources into branding and social media?
5. Closing of the interview
- Do you have anything to add or specify to these topics?

Appendix 2. Original citations

1. No ehkä se suurin - - asia on että me tuota sanotaan ensimmäistä kertaa brändi. Että kyllähän - - virastot on tehny brändityötä koko ajan tietämättään, mut nyt ehkä sitten viimeisten vuosien aikana on saatu työkaluja ja on käteviä mittaustapoja ja tutkimuksia sitten mitä on ryhdytty tekemään, ja sitte puhutaan sillä tavalla asiasta niinku oikeilla nimillä. (Interview 7)
2. Ihminenhän ei voi valita onko hän meidän asiakas vai ei. Mutta se on mun mielest mielentila. Me puhutaan asiakkaista, me puhutaan siitä että asiakkaiden elämä olis mahdollisimman vaivatonta - - että siitä jäis positiivinen kokemus. (Interview 2)
3. Mut tosiaan ollaan tota viranomainen, - - vaikka se helposti kuulostaa kauheen niinku kaukaselta, viralliselta, mutta ollaan silti viranomaisia, mutta halutaan olla helposti lähestyttäviä, ja että olis sellanen olo että me autetaan ja ollaan ihmisten puolella, sen sijasta kun ehkä monesti sitten ihmiset huomaa vasta tavallaan meidän toiminnan siinä vaiheessa kun tulee ongelmia. Eli tavallaan pystyttäs rakentamaan sellanen brändi, joka näyttäytyy kaikille hyvänä, ja jos sulla on ongelma, niin täällä autetaan. (Interview 8)
4. No me nähdään että se luottamus joka me tarvitaan tässä toiminnassa, jotta me pystytään - - olemaan toimivaltanen, vakavasti otettava viranomainen, niin se pitää ansaita joka päivä, ja sen takia niinkun on tosi tärkeetä että millasia mielikuvia ihmisillä meistä on, millasia mielikuvia asiakkailla ja ylipäätään suomalaisilla meistä on, ja nää mielikuvat ehkä sit mun ajattelumaailmassa kytkeytyy siihen brändiin. (Interview 9)
5. Ehkä se että - - kun meillä on hyvä maine ja on hyvät suhteet vaikka mediaan, niin meidän uutisiin, ajankohtaisiin aiheisiin tartutaan - -. Et totta kai siit on niinku hyötyä. (Interview 8)
6. Ja sit toisaalta kyl se hyvä maine suojelee meitä myös sitten kun tapahtuu jotain sellasta odottamatonta ja ikävää, et esimerkiks - - meillä oli tällänen valitettava keissi joka tuli ihan yllättäen, et meidän työntekijä oli epäiltynä virkarikoksesta ja siinä yhteydessä sitten niinkun nään että se meidän niinku vahva perustyö ja se vahva luottamus mitä me silloin nautittiin niin autto meitä myös sen kriisin yli. (Interview 9)

7. Ollaan kiinnostava työnantaja, et kyl meillä aika hyvin on saatu täytettyä kaikki paikat hyvillä tekijöillä, mikä osaltaan myös auttaa sit siinä että saadaan kehityttyä, kun tulee uusia tekijöitä ja uutta osaamista taloon. (Interview 8)

8. Tietyllä tavalla semmonen asiantuntemus ja se et miten paljon meil on niinku tärkeetä tietoo täällä niin se on tietysti sit semmonen jotenki et ite ainaki nään et se ois hirveen tärkeetä, että ne ketkä tekee oikeesti ne tekee ne lait ja ne poliittiset päätökset, että ne ymmärtäis että meiltä kannattaa pyytää sitä dataa mitä täällä on, ja pyytää sitä asiantuntemusta. (Interview 5)

9. Mut esimerkiks me tehdään kaikki meidän - - viestinnän linjaukset on ohjattu sieltä strategiasta ja sit viestintäsuunnitelmat - - ohjataan sieltä strategiasta et se on siinä mielessä - - se kyllä aika vahvasti ohjaa sitä mitä me tehdään. (Interview 5)

10. Meil asiakasviestinnässä on tosi tärkee se että organisaatio vaikuttaa luotettavalta ja välittävältä, ja semmoselta et me hoidetaan meidän tehtävät hyvin ja halutaan olla meidän asiakkaiden puolella. (interview 3)

11. Sit tietysti pyritään tarjoomaan sellasia ihan käytännön työkaluja, et meil on yhtenäiset vaikka kalvopohjat ja tällaset, kaikki tietää miten logoa käytetään ja tällaset ihan niinku simppelit perusjutut. (Interview 9)

12. No meillä on ihan tulossopimukseen kirjattu yhdeks mittariks, jota ministeriötasolla seurataan, luottamus- ja maineindeksit, - - me käytetään siinä semmosta T-median Luottamus- ja mainetutkimusta - - Ja siinähän on näitä eri dimensioita, niin niitä kyllä seurataan, ja pohditaan toimenpiteitä niihin liittyen. (Interview 9)

13. Meidän tehtävä on toimeenpanna ja valvoa sitä lainsäädäntöä, mikä ministeriössä saatetaan voimaan ja laaditaan. Ja se on välillä semmonen tosi epäkiitollinenkin tehtävä, ja meidän pitää vaan tehdä se tehtävämme, et me ei olla kansanedustajia, et kansanedustajat säätää lait ja sit me niinku toteutetaan niitä. Niin se on sellanen haastava ja osittain tasapainoiluakin vaativa asia meiltä. (Interview 9)

14. Kaikki tuntee meidän organisaation, ihan joka ainoa suomalainen, ja kaikki myös jollakin tavalla on tekemisissä meidän kanssa. (Interview 2)

15. Sithän me paljon niinkun ylläpidetään sitä mainetta ja yhteistyötä ja arvostusta just tälläsessä vuorovaikutuksessa ja kohtaamisessa, et on paljon tälläsiä asiantuntijoiden välisiä yhteistyöpalavereita ja kokouksia ja verkostoja ja tän tyyppisiä, että missään nimessä se mainetyö tai brändityö niin ei pysty menemään niin syvälle täs meidän moninaisessa toimikentässä, että meil on monia erilaisia tavallaan keinoja ylläpitää sitä sit eri tasoilla. (Interview 9)

16. Julkishallinnossa on uutta että puhutaan ylipäätään brändistä - - niin ylipäätään se semmonen sisäinen vuoropuhelu siitä, että miksi julkishallinnossakin on tärkeetä miettiä näitä asioita ylipäätään, mikä merkitys niillä on. (Interview 9)

17. Ehkä se ajanpuute, vaikka meillä on näitä tekijöitä nyt aika hyvin, mutta siis se että meidän pitää vaan niinku syventää ja pystyy tarkentamaan. (interview 7)

18. Ja toki organisaatiollahan on myös viestinnällinen vastuu ja laillinen vastuu viestiä meiän palveluista, nii se on toki myös yks tärkee tekijä ja yks tärkee väylä. (Interview 6)

19. Musta niinkun tän kaltaselle organisaatiolle ei nykyään enää oo kysymys että ollaanko sosiaalisessa mediassa, vai eikö olla, vaan ehkä se että miten siellä ollaan, ja miten saadaan sellasta vuorovaikutusta, ja miten saadaan ihmiset kiinnostumaan meidän sisällöistä. (Interview 9)

20. Ehkä se ei tuu monellekaan ekana mieleen et ku rupee käyttään jotain sosiaalisen median kanavaa et kumpa [organisaatio] olisi täällä [naurahdus], mut et on siit silleen selvästi pidetty, ja sit ehkä just varsinkin noi yksityisviestien käyttöönotot niin ne on ollu kyl semmosii mistä on tullu asiakkailta toiveita. (Interview 5)

21. Mut toki meidän pitää koko ajan seurata myös sitä mitä muutki tekee ja ottaa myös koppii, et ei me jäädä niin sanotusti ajassa jälkeenkään. (Interview 6)

22. Niin kyllä sosiaalinen media on hyvä kanava saada kii etenkin kansaa. (Interview 2)

23. On saatu se että se positiivinen yllätys, että hienoo että [organisaatio] osaa olla hauska ja rento, - - myös keventää sitä meiän imagoo, tai tuo sitä just et on helpommin lähestyttävä, - - he huomasi että teki teette tällästä niin nythän mä uskallanki tästä asiasta kysyä teiltä. Et se niinku helpottaa myös sitä asiakkaiden yhteydenottoa meihin päin, ja se on tärkee myös pointti et miks me siel ollaan ja miks me sitä sisältöö siel tehään. (Interview 6)

24. Tätä on rakennettu aika pitkään - - siinä on monenlaista evoluutiota ja monenlaista vaihetta ollut. (Interview 1)

25. Mikä täs kaikessa brändin rakentamisessa ja myös sometekemisessä on tosi tärkeetä on se, että sille työlle on johdon tuki, ja että johto näkee ne tärkeenä. Et kyl niit soraääniä ulkoa ja sisältä - - mutta kyl se semmonen johdon tuki on tosi tärkeetä, ja myös se et se nähdään strategisena tekemisenä, et sillä on sama tavoite kun organisaatiolla muutenkin, niin se on tärkeetä. (Interview 9)

26. Ja ehkä enemmänki jotenki niin et se, tavallaan niinku ne, se meidän strategia ja toivotut mielikuvat et ne olis niin sisäistetty että ne tulis vähän niinku automaattisesti aina sinne viestintään ilman et sitä tarvis niin hirveesti miettiä. (interview 5)

27. Meillä sosiaalinen media jakaantuu - - kolmeen osaan et meil on se viestintä mitä me tehdään sosiaalisessa mediassa, meil on se asiakaspalvelu mitä me tehdään sosiaalisessa mediassa, ja sit meil on kaikki ne työntekijät jotka edustaa meitä sosiaalisessa mediassa. (Interview 5)

28. Aina analysoidaan myös sitä et ketä ne meidän asiakasryhmät siel kyseisessä kanavassa on - - ja se toki vaikuttaa siihen et miten me sitä sisältöö

sinne myös tehdään, ja sitte myös vähän se ehkä se kanavan luonne - - eihän me siel sit pystytä luomaan mitään omia erilaisia [sääntöjä], vaan mehän mennään aika pitkälti samoilla säännöillä millä ne muutki. (interview 6)

29. Me ollaan se opittu, että se ei oo ihan välttämätöntä ottaa joka ikisessä teossa ja viestissä iha joka ikistä tahoa huomioon, vaan että pyritään noudattamaan erilaisia kanavakulttuureja vaikkapa. (Interview 1)

30. Somemaailmahan on räväkkä, nopee, kärjistävä, huumoria, ja muita tehokeinoja käyttävä. Niin ei sellaset tiukan asialliset siellä erotu. (Interview 2)

31. Me ollaan ite määritelty se että me halutaan et meidän sisällöis on aina jotain mist asiakas hyötyy. (Interview 3)

32. Esimerkiks Instagramissa ollaan nyt viime aikoina otettu tarinapuoli aika aktiivisesti käyttöön - - eli tuotetaan sitä vuorovaikutuksellista sisältöä, vastataan kysymyksiin. (Interview 8)

33. Meillä on ollu myös sosiaalisen median linjaukset joita aletaan nyt päivittää - - meil on edelliset tehty tossa tota muutama vuos sitten, mutta nää kehittyy nää kaikki asiat niin nopeella syklillä nykyään. (Interview 9)

34. Meil on siis aika helppo lähtee kokeileen uusii juttuja että, et meil on tosi matala organisaatio täs kohtaa - - jos me päätetään kokeilla jotai nii me voidaan kokeilla sitä. (Interview 3)

35. Viime vuosien aikana saatu tosiaan enemmän porukkaa rekryttyä, - - ja sitä kautta ollaan niinku saatu kehitettyä tätä tekemistä koko ajan paremmaks. (Interview 8)

36. Se on tosi haastavaa tavallaan olla hauska esimerkiks semmosissa asioissa jotka ei sit taas näille meidän asiakkaille oo yhtään hauskoja. - - Eli tietyl tavalla - - halutaan olla jotenki ihmisläheisiä ja - - inhimillisiä, mut sit siinä täytyy kuitenkin vähän tasapainotella koko aika ettei - - se tuntuis siltä et me väheksytään jotenki niitä asioita minkä parissa me tehdään töitä. (Interview 5)

37. Ehkä et ite haluis mennä suoremmin asiaan jossain vaikka postauksessa, ja sit asiantuntija on sitä mieltä että ei ku tässä pitää jokanen yksityiskohta kertoa, nii sitte vähä sillein lässähtää, ja ihmiset ei sitte tartu niihin jos niis ei oo tarpeeks napakkaa kärkee, niis asioissa. (Interview 10)

38. Sit - - yksityisviestien käyttöönotot niin ne on ollu kyl semmosii mistä on tullu asiakkailta toiveita, - - et sekään ei tietenkään meillä oo ihan semmonen niinku ykspiippunen juttu, että täytyy tietosuoja ja tietoturva huomioida niin tarkkaan. (Interview 5)

39. Et se sisältö on myös kuitenki semmosta että se herättää kiinnostusta - - sehän on aina varmasti se haaste. (Interview 6)

40. Ja koko toi ehkä keskustelukulttuuri tietyl tavalla, niinku negatiivisuus mikä siellä velloo joissaki kanavissa, nii se on semmonen ehkä riski sen organisaation kannalta sitte että se on aika väsyttävää, sekä niille asiantuntijoille jotka joutuu niihin keskusteluihin, et sit niille henkilöille jotka sitä sometyötä tekee. (Interview 10)

41. Ehkä se - - et meillä ois sit riittävät resurssit, riittävät työkalut, mahdollisuus ostaa sitten tarvittavia elementtejä ulkoa ketterästi, miten meillä ois aikaa seurata tarpeeks sitä viestinnällistä toimintaympäristöä, ulkoista maailmaa, miten meillä ois tarpeeks aikaa luovuudelle, niin kun sisältöjen jalostamiselle, kaikelle sille kehittämiselle, kun samanaikasesti meillä on jatkuvasti päivittäin käsissämme erilaisia keskusteluja, erilaisia joko omasta organisaatioista lähteviä tai ulkoisesta maailmasta tulevia tilanteita. Et millä me tasapainotetaan se hektinen päivittäinen työ, toisaalta sellanen kehittäminen ja luova ideointi? (Interview 2)

42. Mä ajattelen että totta kai se siellä koko aika, näistä kaikista sisällöistähän se brändi rakentuu ja siellähän se koko aika kulkee mukana. Et ehkä mä jotenkin enemmän aattelen sitä kautta että tavallaan kaikki mitä me tehdään niin pitäis palautua niihin meidän brändiattribuutteihin tai - -, nii tavallaan se aina, näitten yksittäisten viestien pitäis aina näyttäytyä jotenkin sen brändin valossa. (Interview 4)

43. No tietenki yks tavote meil myös et miks me somessa ollaan niin on se et me yritetään, myös päivittämään sitä meidän imagoo, ja tuomaan just sitä että me ollaan helposti lähestyttävä ja ollaan siellä missä meidän asiakkaatkin on ja halutaan olla helposti lähestyttävä ja semmonen keneltä asiakkaat voi kysyä kun tarve tulee. Eli ehkä voi olla asiakkailla, tai ihmisilläki semmosia käsityksii [organisaatiosta] että on byrokraattinen tai jotenki vaikeesti lähestyttävä niin tää mitä me somessa tehdään niin on kyl yks semmonen väylä millä me yritetään kyl tätäki auttaa. (Interview 6)