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INDUSTRIAL BRANDING USING DIGITAL MEDIA
Case: The Switch

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Organizational Communication and PR
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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The shift from traditional marketing channels to the digital channels has been rapid which has generated new challenges and opportunities for business-to-business (B2B) communication and brand building processes. In general, studies of B2B branding are scarce, since branding has been approached as a business-to-consumer (B2C) function. In future B2B branding and brand management may well become a critical success factor in the market, since competition brought by globalization and market liberalization assisted by the internet revolution.</p> <p>This research will combine these previously presented themes; B2B branding and digitalization, and hence try to understand the phenomena of industrial branding in the digital age. The main objective of this study is to enhance understanding of how to build an international industrial brand with digital media. The research is descriptive and explorative in nature and conducted from the company management perspective. The phenomenon is approached through one case study concerning a Finnish-based growth company called The Switch. The Switch is also a great example for other young Finnish companies who need to be encouraged to think big and pay attention to marketing and communication as a strategic asset.</p> <p>The findings of this study suggest that it is beneficial to build an industrial brand in the digital environment in a consistent manner, as a strategic asset by integrating genuinely different operational functions. Branding should be market driven but diligently consider the company's internal capabilities and affairs. To keep the brand relevant and active, branding should be seen as an ongoing process requiring continuous adjustment of the brand through monitoring of the environment and reacting to weak signals. In the age of digitalization, branding should include planning, coordination and participation rather than controlling. Branding in the digital age requires stories to be told, not marketing messages to be sent.</p>	
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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Nopea muutos perinteisistä markkinointikanavista digitaalisiin on asettanut myös uusia haasteita ja mahdollisuuksia business-to-business (B2B) viestinnälle, markkinoinnille sekä brändin rakentamiselle. Yleisesti B2B brändäyksestä on niukasti tietoa saatavilla, sillä brändin rakentaminen on liitetty pääasiassa kuluttajamarkkinointiin. Globalisoituminen, markkinoiden vapautuminen, sekä maailman pienentyminen internetin myötä, on kiristänyt myös B2B yritysten välistä kilpailua merkittävästi. Brändistä onkin ehdotettu tulevaisuuden menestystekijää myös B2B markkinoilla.</p> <p>Tämä tutkimus yhdistää aiemmin esitettyjä teemoja; B2B brändin rakentaminen ja digitalisoituminen. Tavoite on ymmärtää, miten rakentaa kansainvälinen teollisuusyrityksen brändi hyödyntäen digitaalista mediaa. Tutkimus on luonteeltaan kuvaileva sekä teoriaa laajentava, ja tehty yritysjohton näkökulmasta. Ilmiötä tarkastellaan yksittäisen tapaustutkimuksen keinoin, suomalaisen kasvuyrityksen The Switch avulla. The Switch on myös loistava esimerkki muille suomalaisille yrityksille, jotka tarvitsevat rohkaisua tähdätä korkealle sekä ohjausta nähdä markkinointi, viestintä sekä brändäys osana strategista päätöksentekoa.</p> <p>Tutkimustulosten mukaan, teollisuusyrityksen brändi digitaalisessa ympäristössä olisi hyödyllistä rakentaa osana yrityksen strategiaa, integroiden yrityksen eri toimintoja. Brändi pitäisi rakentaa markkinavetoisesti, mutta huomioiden yrityksen sisäiset tekijät. Brändin rakentaminen on jatkuva prosessi, joka vaatii jatkuvaa brändäys työtä, jossa brändiä muokataan ympäristöstä saatavan palautteen perusteella. Brändin pitäminen ajankohtaisena ja aktiivisena vaatii jatkuvaa ympäristön tarkastelua ja reagoimista heikkoihin signaaleihin. Digitaalisella aikakaudella, brändäys pitäisi olla prosessi, joka sisältää suunnittelua, koordinointia sekä osallistumista kontrolloinnin ja hallitsemisen sijaan. Brändäys digiaikakaudella vaatii tarinoiden kertomista ja keskustelua, ei markkinointiviestien lähettämistä.</p>	
Asiasanat Business-to-Business, teollisuusyritys, markkinointiviestintä, digitaalinen media, brändi, brändäys	
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<p>Muita tietoja</p> <p>Tämä pro gradu -tutkielma on hyväksytty molempiin oppiainesiin; Markkinointi (Jyväskylän yliopiston kauppakorkeakoulu) ja Yhteisöviestintä (Viestintätieteiden laitos, Humanistinen tiedekunta) ja on osa DIMAR -tutkimushanketta.</p>	

CONTENTS

ABSTRACTS

CONTENTS

FIGURES AND TABLES

1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Introduction and justification for the study	1
1.2	Research problem and objectives.....	4
1.3	Structure of the study	4
2	CHOOSING AN INDUSTRIAL BRANDING STRATEGY IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT	6
2.1	Business-to-business and industrial -marketing	6
2.1.1	Special characteristics	7
2.1.2	Benefits of a brand and branding.....	9
2.2	Concept of brand.....	10
2.2.1	Brand identity in the B2B context.....	12
2.2.2	Brand image and brand equity	13
2.3	Company identity, brand, reputation and image	14
2.3.1	Company identity.....	14
2.3.2	Company brand and product brand.....	15
2.3.3	Company reputation and image	16
2.3.4	The logic of the concepts	17
2.4	Digital media	18
2.4.1	Adoption of digital technologies in B2B	18
2.4.2	Taxonomy of digital media	19
2.4.3	Requirements of the digital age.....	21
2.4.4	I-branding	24
2.5	A brand and branding strategy in the digital age.....	26
3	CREATING BRAND VALUE.....	29
3.1	The evolving logic of B2B branding	29
3.1.1	The relationship focus brand era.....	31
3.1.2	The stakeholder focus brand era	31
3.1.3	Network focus brand era.....	33
3.1.4	The era of digitalization – Time for issue arenas	34
3.2	Three components affecting brand value in the digital age	36
3.2.1	Branding inside.....	36
3.2.2	Branding outside	37
3.2.3	Branding in issue arenas.....	37
3.3	Branding in the digital age	38

4	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	41
4.1	Case study as a research strategy	41
4.2	Collecting and analyzing empirical data.....	45
4.2.1	Semi-structured theme interviews.....	46
4.2.2	Content analysis	47
4.2.3	Web page analysis.....	48
4.2.4	Stakeholder questionnaire	49
4.2.5	Linking the data with the existing theory.....	51
5	EMPIRICAL STUDY.....	52
5.1	Decision to brand	52
5.1.1	Branding as a self-evident decision	52
5.1.2	Market insight as a foundation of the brand.....	54
5.2	The brand	56
5.2.1	Brand dimensions.....	56
5.2.2	Target of the brand.....	61
5.2.3	Branding channels.....	62
5.2.4	Brand and internal communication.....	64
5.3	Brand and branding in the digital environment	66
5.3.1	Digital tools as a strategic decision.....	66
5.3.2	Branding on the internet	69
5.4	The company web page	70
5.4.1	Brand and the company's webpage	70
5.4.2	Taking brand promise online	72
5.5	The main tools adopted on the internet to create content	73
5.5.1	Newsletters.....	74
5.5.2	The Blog	77
5.5.3	Talking points	80
5.6	Branding in social media	82
5.6.1	Usage of social media tools.....	82
5.6.2	Twitter.....	83
5.6.3	Facebook.....	85
5.6.4	LinkedIn.....	88
5.7	Brand Management and development.....	88
5.7.1	Brand management.....	88
5.7.2	Brand development.....	90
5.7.3	Managing the brand in the digital environment	91
5.7.4	Challenges in the digital environment.....	92
5.8	Stakeholder questionnaire	93
5.8.1	Perception of the brand	94
5.8.2	Channels and received information	95
5.9	Evaluation of success.....	100
5.9.1	Strength of the brand	100
5.9.2	Weaknesses of the brand.....	101

6 CONCLUSIONS.....	103
6.1 Answers to research questions.....	103
6.2 Discussion of the propositions.....	107
6.3 Theoretical contributions.....	113
6.4 Managerial implications.....	116
6.5 Evaluation of the study.....	118
6.6 Suggestions for further research.....	120
REFERENCES.....	123
APPENDICIES.....	130
APPENDIX 1 General interview structure.....	130
APPENDIX 2 The usage of different tools.....	133
APPENDIX 3 The importance of different channels in receiving information about The Switch.....	134
APPENDIX 4 The importance of different channels in receiving information about the renewable industry.....	135

FIGURES

Figure 1 Guiding principles of B2B brand management (Kotler and Pfoertsch 2007, 361).....	2
Figure 2 Factors impacting the B2B decision making process (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 30).....	8
Figure 3 Understanding the nature of brand (de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004, 240).....	12
Figure 4 Corporate level marketing mix.....	17
Figure 5 An age of digital environment.....	21
Figure 6 Aspects to be considered when taking a brand online (de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004).....	24
Figure 7 The four pillars of I-branding (Simmons 2007, 545).....	25
Figure 8 Stakeholder model for brand equity (Jones 2005).....	32
Figure 9 Network actor participation –model in B2B SME branding (Mäläskä et al. 2011).....	33
Figure 10 Issue arena –approach.....	35
Figure 11 Branding in the digital age.....	39
Figure 12 Research design.....	42
Figure 13 Growth in turnover MEUE (Annual Report 2010).....	44
Figure 14 Data collection.....	46
Figure 15 Cornerstones of The Switch brand.....	56
Figure 16 Examples from the annual reports.....	60
Figure 17 Value chain of the wind industry.....	61
Figure 18 The UpDate 360° 2011.....	64
Figure 19 The Switch’s main web page.....	71
Figure 20 Example of the newsletter front page.....	75
Figure 21 Subjects in newsletters.....	76

Figure 22 Example of a blog posting	78
Figure 23 Writers on The Switch’s blog.....	79
Figure 24 Subjects of The Switch’s blog	79
Figure 25 Talking Points –section on the web page.....	80
Figure 26 Subject of Talking points.....	81
Figure 27 Experts in Talking points	81
Figure 28 The Switch’s Twitter page.....	84
Figure 29 The Switch’s tweets in 2011	85
Figure 30 Postings from Facebook	86
Figure 31 Subjects in The Switch’s Facebook page	87
Figure 32 Primary impression of The Switch	94
Figure 33 The frequency of use of tools to communicate with The Switch	96
Figure 34 Importance of different channels in receiving information about The Switch	98
Figure 35 Importance of different channels in receiving information about the renewable energy industry	99
Figure 36 Managing the content on the internet.....	105
Figure 37 Revised model for Branding in the digital age	113

TABLES

Table 1 Benefits of a B2B Brand	10
Table 2 Evolving logic on branding in B2B context.....	30
Table 3 Collected data from the semi-structured theme interviews	47
Table 4 The units of analysis	48
Table 5 The Corporate Image Measurement Model (Vos & Schoemaker 2006, 84)	49
Table 6 The Switch’s steps to becoming an international player (CEO of The Switch presentation materials 2011)	55
Table 7 Values of the company and the brand (adopted from the Company’s web pages).....	58
Table 8 Demographic characteristics	93
Table 9 Stakeholders perceptions of The Switch.....	95

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and justification for the study

Today every company can be found on the internet, whether by choice or not. As social media expert Erik Qualman (2010) has stated: “We don’t have a choice on whether we do social media, the question is how well we do it.” The shift from traditional marketing channels to the digital channels has been rapid and many companies have had to react fast without time to think through any further consequences. Some of them have succeeded, some of them have not. One thing is clear, however; things are not like they used to be. Now the development of digital media needs to be investigated and understood better. It is time to slowdown and explore what has happened and what is still happening, by reviewing the theory and learning from those who have succeeded in the digital era.

Digitalization has also generated new challenges and opportunities for business-to-business (B2B) communication and brand building processes. There is little knowledge of pure B2B brands and branding and it is not easy to acquire, although most exchanges occur in a B2B environment (Roper & Davis 2010, 568). In B2B, branding has not been considered relevant and managers usually see branding as a business-to-consumer (B2C) function (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 357; Leek & Christodoulides 2011, 830). Recently, B2B companies have also started realize the potential of the brand, although in the B2B field, branding is mostly related to big business (Merrilees 2007, 403). In future, B2B branding and brand management will become critical success factors in the market, since tightening competition by reason of globalization and market liberalization (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 361) to which the internet revolution has contributed.

The majority of academic studies on B2B branding have been published in the last decade, and most of them within the last five years (Leek & Christodoulides 2011, 830). Literature does not provide many explicit descriptions of B2B branding (Juntunen, Saraniemi, Halttunen & Tähtinen

2010, 116), although there are a few studies on the subject. Especially studies concerning small and medium sized enterprises (SME) and branding have been rare (Merrilees 2007, 404). Corporate¹ brand and corporate brand building have been described in the literature (see e.g. Balmer & Greysher 2006; Fiedler & Kirchgeorg 2007), mostly related in major companies (see e.g. Urde 2003; Aspara & Tikkanen 2007). As an example, 'a roadmap for industrial branding' discusses differences between B2C and B2B branding (Webster & Keller 2004), but do not to provide any clear guidelines for B2B branding. Despite the lack of clear guidelines, it is stated that branding should be a strategic process, which is led by top management. It should start from the vision and integrate cross-functional activities in the value adding process, although the reality usually does not follow this pattern. (de Chernatony 2001, 32.) Corporate branding is described as a goal oriented process to manage the corporate brand. As a process, it includes planning, coordination and controlling, as well as focusing on all relevant stakeholder groups. (Fiedler & Kirchgeorg 2007, 177.)

Kotler and Pfoertsch (2007, 361) provide guiding principles when considering B2B brand management, presented in figure 1, where the main steps are decision to brand and branding dimensions. Depending on how well the company manages to do those, the brand will succeed or fail.

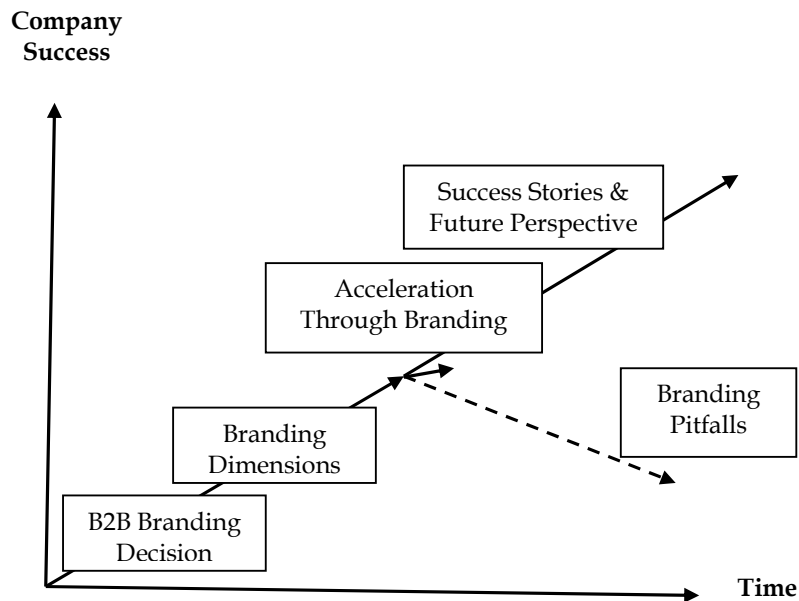


Figure 1 Guiding principles of B2B brand management (Kotler and Pfoertsch 2007, 361)

¹ Terms "company" and "corporate" are used as synonymous in the literature although they are not exactly the same. In this paper I have chosen to use "company" without making any difference between these two concepts, unless the name of the model or content requires usage of the term "corporate".

The first step, decision to brand, seems to be well covered in the literature. Most of the B2B brand research is focused on rationalizing the overall decision to brand by presenting the benefits of B2B branding. Branding in B2B markets has been confirmed empirically to have several benefits for the companies (see e.g. Baumgarth 2010; de Chernatony 2009; Juntunen et.al. 2010; Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007; Leek & Christodoulides, 2011; Lync & de Chernatony 2007; Merrilees 2008; Merrilees, Rundle-Thiele, & Lye, 2011; Ohnemus 2009; Pandey, 2007; Wong, Low & Blois, 2002).

The second step, branding dimensions, references branding as a function and hence tries to answer to two questions: How is the company going to brand itself? How will it create brand equity? (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 361). This step remains largely unexplored (Leek & Christodoulides 2011). The suggestions on how the company should brand itself are covered in a few B2B branding studies (see e.g. Baumgarth 2010; Aspara & Tikkanen 2008; Balmer & Greysler 2006). The second question, how to create brand equity, references branding logic, which seems poorly covered.

Despite the growing understanding of B2B branding, further research is needed especially concerning branding on the internet. For now, the current knowledge on i-branding (meaning branding in the internet context) is fragmented. A comprehensive understanding of how the different tools available on the internet come together to assist the successful development of a brand is needed (Simmons 2007, 544; Simmons, Thomas & Truong 2010, 1261). In addition, the lack of research into social networking sites (SNS) in a B2B environment (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides 2011, 1153) contributes to the need to understand B2B branding in a changing environment.

The Marketing Science Institute has also noted the need for further research on the new and constantly-evolving environment and hence listed "Managing Brands in a Transformed Marketplace" as one of its research priorities in the period 2010–2012. The institute has noted the shift towards social media and states that the role of brand and brand strategies needs to be investigated in this new and challenging environment. (Marketing Science Institute, 2010.) The internet and other digital technologies, which have changed the communication patterns from being asymmetric to become more symmetrical (at least in appearance) have forced brand managers to think of branding activities differently. Previously, companies were able to control the information available from the company, but not anymore at least with the same force (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, 60). The role of brand manager has shifted from that of a "guardian" to become a brand "host". Those who have been agile enough to build and manage an e-brand in new ways have achieved an enormous amount of brand equity. (Christodoulides 2009.)

1.2 Research problem and objectives

This research will combine these previously presented themes; B2B branding and digitalization, and hence try to understand the phenomena of industrial branding in the digital age. The main objective of this study is to build an understanding of how to build an international industrial brand using digital media. The research is descriptive and explorative and conducted from the company management perspective. The phenomenon is approached through one case study concerning a Finnish-based growth company called The Switch, which won the Internationalization Award of the President of the Republic of Finland in 2010. The Switch has been a brave adopter of digital tools by integrating digital elements on a daily basis and into the company's strategy and hence has been able to build a noticeable brand and make a successful market entry. The aim is to provide a thorough description of the case and also explore the limits of current knowledge and provide direction for future theory and practices concerning B2B branding in the age of digitalization.

The Switch is also a great example for other young Finnish companies that need to be encouraged to think big and pay attention to marketing and communication as a strategic asset. Many Finnish companies have winning technology, but lack the marketing skills and courage to think big and use marketing tools to push the company forward (see e.g. Tikkanen & Frösén 2011; Tikkanen & Vassinen 2007). What would happen if all those other Finnish companies with winning technology realized the potential of building a brand to ease their way into international markets?

To serve the goal of the research the following research questions have been formulated following Kotler and Pfoertsch's (2007) guiding principles on B2B brand management presented above. Special focus is on the usage of digital tools.

1. How has The Switch rationalized its decision to build its brand?
2. How has The Switch built its brand?
3. How has The Switch rationalized its decision to use digital media in branding?
4. How has The Switch used digital media in branding?
5. How has The Switch created brand equity?

1.3 Structure of the study

Having introduced the subject by providing a short review concerning the topic and a justification of the study, the purpose and motivation of this study was presented. The theoretical part will comprise chapters 2 and 3.

These will follow the structure of Kotler and Pfoertsch's (2007) guiding principles to consider B2B brand management (presented before) by focusing on the branding dimension; how to brand and how to create brand equity. The question of how the company is going to brand itself will be approached in chapter 2 by explaining the concept of the brand and its functions as well as providing information on the digital and B2B environments and their special characteristics. This will facilitate understanding of the strategic decisions that need to be considered when applying branding insights in the digital age. In addition, the overall decision to utilize branding in the B2B sector will be discussed by presenting the benefits of B2B branding. At the end of the chapter propositions concerning the strategic decisions of brand and branding in the digital age are suggested.

The second question from the guiding principles, of how to create brand equity (chapter 3), will be addressed by presenting the evolving logic of branding considering the requirements of the digital age. The chapters end with a suggested theoretical model for this study and propositions.

In chapter four, the methodological choices will be discussed, and chapter five presents the results of the empirical research. Finally the findings and theoretical implications are discussed and explained and the propositions will be revised in chapter six. Based on this, further directions for research will be suggested.

2 CHOOSING AN INDUSTRIAL BRANDING STRATEGY IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

The goal of this chapter is to provide a theoretical understanding of how companies can utilize branding in the digital age. This chapter refers to a fundamental understanding of the brand as a concept and environmental factors (in this research the industrial and digital environment) which have an influence on the desired branding strategy. The strategic decisions include the decision on brand architecture as well as the overall branding philosophy. First, the special characteristics of the B2B sector will be discussed. Also the overall decision to brand in the B2B sector will be discussed by presenting the benefits of branding. Then the concept of brand will be presented and also the adjacent concepts, company identity, brand, reputation and image, will be explained in order to understand the relatedness of these concepts. Next the digital environment and its special characteristics will be described. At the end of the chapter propositions concerning the strategic decision to use branding in the digital age are suggested.

2.1 Business-to-business and industrial -marketing

In the B2B environment, the company markets its products or services to other businesses (AMA 2012; Căescu & Dumitru 2011, 274; Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 20). Hence, B2B marketing is about meeting the requirements of other organizations working in the business sector. A business organization can be profit seeking but may also be a budget-constrained entity (e.g. government, university, organization) (Căescu & Dumitru 2011, 274; Webster & Keller 2004, 391).

Another similar concept, industrial marketing, is sometimes mixed with the concept of business marketing (Căescu & Dumitru 2011, 274). Although the concepts are very similar, there are also differences. In fact, it can be seen that industrial marketing is part of business-to-business marketing. AMA

(2012) defines industrial marketing as marketing of goods and services to industrial markets. The fundamental difference between these two very close concepts is that industrial marketing is more related to marketing between industrial manufacturers and wholesalers whereas business-to-business marketing is marketing between manufacturer and wholesaler and between wholesaler and retailer (see Căescu & Dumitru 2011, 275) as well as marketing between a B2B company and the final B2C customer. In this research the term business-to-business marketing (B2B marketing) is used and also viewed as covering industrial marketing. The term industrial marketing is used if the difference has to be highlighted.

2.1.1 Special characteristics

B2B markets are global and industrial products and services are quite similar. Thus, the focus is mostly on functionality and performance. Therefore, the national differences are not as relevant as in a business to consumer context (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 23). Business-to-business companies often can be described as “born global” and thus the brand should also be designed in a way that it is applicable in global markets. The key differences between consumer and business markets are:

1. The nature and complexity of industrial products and services.
2. The nature and diversity of industrial demand.
3. The fewer number of customers in business markets.
4. Larger volume per customers in business markets.
5. Closer and longer-lasting supplier and customer-relationships in business markets. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 21.)

Owing to the complexity of products and services and the special needs of buyers, the buying process is significantly different in the B2B sector (Webster & Keller 2004, 393). A buying center (the group of people responsible for finalizing major decisions, usually involving a purchase) is usually needed to facilitate transactions between organizations. The buying center involves people with different roles. Webster and Wind (1972) identified six different roles in a buying situation: initiators, users, buyers, deciders, influencers and gatekeepers (Webster & Keller 2004, 394) who all need to be considered when making brand decisions. A successful B2B brand should take the different aspects and needs of all buying center members into account (Lynch & de Chernatony 2007, 125).

Although business buying is derived from the strategic need for having an organization behind the actual buyer, it is individuals making the decisions (Webster & Keller 2004, 391 & 395). Hence, it is important to recognize the fact that when dealing with the business sector, the relationships are usually established on two levels: between a company’s customer-facing personnel and the customer but also between the company itself and the customer, and that both reflect the brand. In the B2B

environment the importance of personal selling and personal relationships is widely recognized (Andersen & Kumar 2008, 522). Customers' impressions of a brand image depend on multiple contacts that the customer has with the company (Nandan 2005, 276). The importance of brand consistency makes it vital that the company's employees project the brand in a way that is consistent with the company's intentions (Leek & Christodoulides 2011, 833), as such company staff have an important role as brand ambassadors.

The buying center is a group of people that address the different factors that affect their decisions. Traditionally, B2B marketing was based on hard facts because the common understanding was that the B2B buying process was above all a rational process. Although we are dealing with the B2B environment where the industrial products or services are usually more complex, the amount of money transferred between the companies is relatively high and the risk is great, it is important to remember that decisions are not purely rational. Recently a wider understanding has developed that other factors (e.g. emotional) also have a great impact on B2B decision making. (Roper & Davis 2010; Lynch & de Chernatony 2007, 131.)

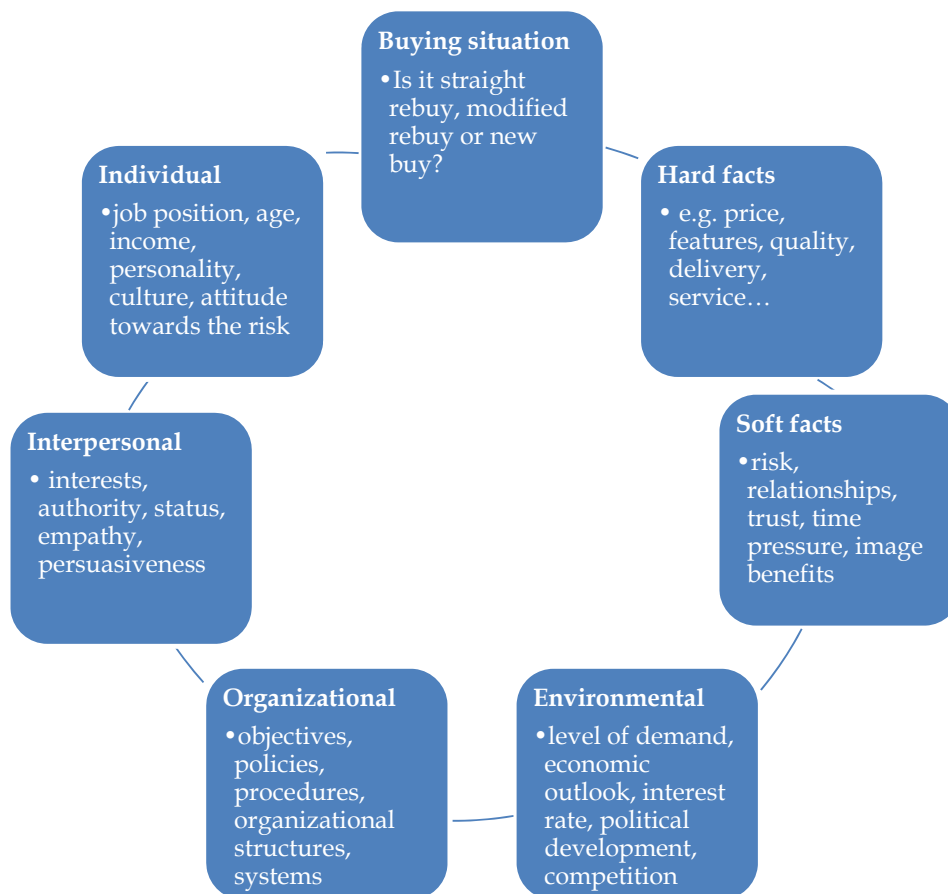


Figure 2 Factors impacting the B2B decision making process (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 30)

Factors impacting the B2B decision making process can be seen in figure 2 (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 30). The factors include both rational and emotional factors and also environmental factors, like the macroeconomic ones that are beyond an organization's control, but which have an influence over the process since companies do not exist in a vacuum. Although the B2B decision making process is organizationally driven, interpersonal and individual factors have an influence on decision making. Hence, the organizational buying process occurs not just between organizations but also between individuals with their own needs and desires. The brand has an influence on all these factors around the buying center (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 33).

2.1.2 Benefits of a brand and branding

Branding in B2B markets has been empirically confirmed to provide several benefits for companies. One major reason to adopt branding in the B2B context is the need for differentiation. Nowadays the availability of information has increased and one reason for this is the internet. Customers in different industries are presented with an overwhelming number of potential suppliers from around the world (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 358). Increasing homogeneity of product quality, the greater complexity of products and services as well as the pressure of rising costs, has forced B2B marketers to find new ways to distinguish their firms from the competition and hence B2B companies have started to consider branding a good option (Baumgarth 2010, 654). Brand gives the company a tool to distinguish itself from the competition (de Chernatony 2009, 101) and hence can be a great source of competitive advantage in industrial markets (Lync & de Chernatony 2007, 131). In future B2B branding and brand management will become critical to success in the market necessitated by tightening competition owing to globalization, market liberalization (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 361) and new technologies (Helm & Jones 2010, 545).

In the B2B market, brand orientation has a positive influence on company market performance directly and so indirectly on economic performance (Baumgarth 2010; Wong & Merrilees 2008). A strong brand can increase the value of the company in the B2B environment, and can also support premium pricing. The company with a strong brand may justify a higher market price when sold than similar companies without a strong brand. (Low & Blois 2002, 386.) Brand orientation has been established to be a positive factor for brand performance, and so for small business growth (Juntunen et al. 2010; Merrilees, Rundle-Thiele, & Lye 2011). The brand has also been stated to be useful in the early stages of the decision making process where the parties involved have no previous experience of dealing with each other (Leek & Christodoulides 2011). In the B2B arena, decision making usually involves high risk. A strong brand reduces risk for stakeholders and hence is an attractive choice for customers (Ohnemus 2009, 160).

In the B2B context brands do not just reach the customers but also other stakeholders such as investors, employees, partners, suppliers, competitors, regulators, or members of the local community (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 358). Reaching multiple stakeholders also enhances a company's ability to access critical information. A strong brand has also been seen to increase information efficiency (Ohnemus 2009, 160). The benefits are summarized in the table 1.

Table 1 Benefits of a B2B Brand

Benefits of B2B Brand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinction factor (de Chernatony 2009) • Competitive advantage (Lync & de Chernatony 2007) • Higher market performance directly and so higher economic performance indirectly (Baumgarth 2010; Wong & Merriles 2008) • Prize premiums (Low & Blois, 2002) • Attracts customer (Ohnemus 2009) • Positive force for small business growth (Juntunen et.al. 2010; Merrilees, Rundle-Thiele, & Lye, 2011) • Reduce risk (Leek & Christodoulides, 2011; Ohnemus 2009) • Reach all stakeholders (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007) • Increases information efficiency (Ohnemus 2009)

All these previously mentioned benefits also speak for branding in the B2B environment. The abovementioned points counter the arguments that branding is not beneficial in the B2B context. Although it is important to consider that any decision to build the brand should not be made for the brand's sake, but for the requirements of the environment in which the company is operating. However the need for a B2B brand seems to be more and more acute in this shrinking world.

2.2 Concept of brand

The definition and meaning of the term brand varies across the literature and also among managers (de Chernatony 2009, 101). The brand may be considered a nearly tangible concept or from the "brand as a trademark" point of view to the more abstract brand as "co-created value" view. Hankinson (2001, 128) argues that there is no single accepted definition of a brand. Instead, there are numerous overlapping definitions (in de Chernatony & Riley 1998, 418).

When talking about a brand, usually the first thing that comes to mind is that a brand is a sign, name or symbol which makes the product or service

distinct from other sellers. The previous thought restates the company oriented definition of a brand, defined by the American Marketing Association (AMA) in the 1960s and still its official definition (AMA 2012). This definition captures the main functional purpose of the brand as a distinctive factor in the market. The definitions can be criticized as being focused only on visual features as a distinctive factor of the brand and capturing the brand just as a trademark. Although the definition gives only a narrow point of view about the concept of brand it remains in an official definition of a brand.

Whereas AMA's definition focuses on the tangible essence and functional value of a brand, Kotler & Pfoertsch (2007, 358) defines a brand as an intangible concept, which consists of a promise, totality of perceptions as a distinctive factor and a short cut of attributes of the product, service or the company. This definition also sees differentiation as a main purpose of the brand. The key change of the previous definition is the brand as an "intangible concept", which states that other than tangible features can be distinctive factors. Two previous definitions see the brand from a company-centric perspective.

The brand, besides functional value, can also have symbolic value (Burmamann & Stolle 2007 in Burmann, Hegner & Riley 2009, 116). From this perspective, the brand is seen not just as a differentiation factor but also as a feature which adds special value to a customer's lifestyle (de Chernatony 2009). The benefits for the customer are seen as a central component of brand. The multiple roles of brand are also adopted in Wood's (2000, 666) definition of a brand as a tool to achieve competitive advantage for a company through differentiation features which provide satisfaction and benefits for the customer. These previously presented consumer-oriented approaches to defining a brand indicate that a company can provide both functional and emotional value for its customers even if the values are seen subjectively.

Continuing the previous thought process, a brand can also be seen as a psychological phenomenon occurring in the interaction between the brand and the customer. It is through the interaction between the brand and customer that the brand gets its meaning. The power of brand resides in the minds of the customer as a result of all kinds of interaction with the brand. (Webster & Keller 2004, 389.) Also de Chernatony (2009, 104) adopts the idea of a brand as a co-created feature and suggests the definition of brand as "a cluster of rational (functional) and emotional values that enable a promise to be made about a unique and welcomed experience". Figure 3 shows the development of emphasis from rational to emotional values and ultimately to the promised experience in which each level adds customer value (de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004, 240). This research follows the logic of brand as a psychological phenomenon between the brand and the stakeholders² with a purpose to differentiate the company or product from

² In this research stakeholder is a person, a group or an organization which has direct or indirect stake towards in the organization.

the competition and create value for the stakeholders through functional and emotional value which leads to the promised experience. Hence, the concept of brand actually combines the three different but overlapping concepts of brand: brand identity, brand image and brand equity.

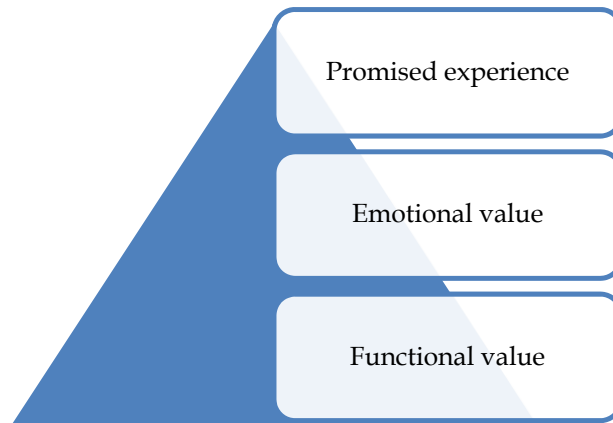


Figure 3 Understanding the nature of brand (de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004, 240)

2.2.1 Brand identity in the B2B context

Brand identity is a company-focused view of the brand and at its core is brand promise (Burmam, Hegner & Riley 2009, 116). From a communicative perspective, it is the sender's view of the brand (Nandan 2005). In recent marketing literature this managerial point of view on a brand is seen as "inside-out perspective" (see Burmann, Hegner & Riley 2009, 114).

Brand identity represents rather stable features of the brand. The identity-based brand promise and behavior are the part of the brand, which interface with the brand expectations and create the brand experience for the external stakeholders. The brand promise is stated by the company and brand behavior is presented by the internal stakeholders. (Burmam, Hegner & Riley 2009, 116.)

Brand identity has not been strongly researched in a B2B context and but a few studies have been identified (Beverland, Napoli & Yakimova, 2007; Beverland, Napoli, & Lindgreen, 2007). Beverland, Napoli and Yakimova (2007) have identified six basic attributes required to build a strong brand identity; product, services, logistics, adaptation and advice. Product, services and logistics are seen as a tangible part of the brand identity whereas adaptation and advice are intangible. This identification mixes brand identity building and brand positioning (Coleman, de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2011), which can be seen as one part of building brand identity. The other study concerning the B2B brand identity focused on identifying capabilities as a basis of brand identity. The identified capabilities were relational

support, coordinating network players, leveraging brand architecture, adding value and quantifying the intangible (Beverland, Napoli & Lindgreen 2006). This last point of view does not offer specific tools to understand brand identity but attests to the need for emotional and functional attributes of B2B brand. The same need is also supported in other studies (see e.g. Leek & Christodoulides 2012; Lynch & de Chernatony 2007). In Leek & Christodoulides' (2012) research, functional values (quality, technology, after sales service, innovation) were seen as primary factors considered by buyers in the decision making process. In addition, the emotional qualities of risk reduction, providing reassurance and trust, were highlighted.

De Chernatony and Harris (2001) also offer a single model for brand identity. Although it is developed from the company brand perspective and not primarily for the B2B environment, it offers an understanding of brand identity. According to the model, brand identity can be seen as comprising six components: vision, culture, positioning, personality, relationships, and presentation. Vision and culture are central components of brand. Vision reflects the core purpose of brand and unique values, which are relevant for the target audiences. Culture reflects values that the employees share. Positioning states what the brand is, who the target is and what value it offers. Personality reveals the emotional characteristics of the brand which reflect the core values. Relationships capture the idea of relationships between the brand and its stakeholders. The final component of brand identity, presentation, involves the identification of presentation styles to reflect the brand's identity (Harris & de Chernatony 2001, 442–445.)

2.2.2 Brand image and brand equity

Brand image refers to the idea that a brand is something that is perceived by a stakeholder. In marketing terms this is called an "outside-in" perspective (see Burmann, Hegner & Riley 2009, 114). Brand identity captures the idea of the brand itself whereas brand image is a reflection of brand identity. Brand identity is sent but brand image is perceived. Following this, the brand is a concept which can be contemplated from two different perspectives; "inside-out" and "outside-in". This creates the identity based understanding of the brand. When dealing with identity based branding, it is important to understand that brand development should be understood as an iterative process, not a static concept of these two dimensions. (Burmann, Hegner & Riley 2009, 114 & 116).

The ongoing interaction of these two concepts, brand identity and brand image, forms the basis for brand equity (Burmann, Jost-Benz & Riley 2009, 391). Brand equity is the additional value which a stakeholder perceives (Zaichkowsky, Parlee & Hill 2010, 776). It is an intangible market-based relational asset, which reflects multiple bonds between firms and customers (Christodoulides & de Chernatony 2010, 61). Every interaction with the brand identity (Burmann, Jost-Benz & Riley 2009, 391) as well as

those of customer and other stakeholders alike, has an influence on it (Abimbola & Vallaster 2007, 343).

It is important to realize, that brand identity might not be perceived in the same way by the external and internal stakeholders or even among external stakeholders. The identity-image linkage should be strengthened if the firm wants to create value for the customer. (Nandan 2005, 276.) Because the brand image is something perceived by the stakeholder, it can be impacted by influencing the identity of the brand. Hence, internal stakeholders, who are a touch point with external stakeholders, are in a key position to build the company's brand from inside the company. It is important to ensure, that the brand promise and behavior meet brand expectations and brand experience (Burmah, Hegner & Riley 2009, 116) in order to achieve external stakeholder satisfaction. Hence, the brand identity should be based on the company's identity since what one promises, one also needs to be able to deliver (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 358). The brand should be built by including both internal and external components in the process to be able to tighten the gap between reputation and brand identity (Harris & de Chernatony 2001, 445).

2.3 Company identity, brand, reputation and image

The brand is only one element in a much wider framework. To get a better understanding of how the a company can be presented, understood and managed, the concepts of company brand, product brand, company identity, company reputation and company image should be defined carefully since the concepts are easily mixed. Linking these concepts develops consistency in branding actions; the greater the integration between these concepts, the more consistent and successful the branding efforts will be (Abimbola & Vallaster 2007, 342). When understanding how these elements are related and work together, it is possible to a get powerful tool to understand brand management in the new environment (Balmer & Gray 2003, 993). This holistic view of branding is also represented in the idea of "corporate level marketing" (Balmer & Gray 2003, 993), which should be seen more like philosophy where all the functions are genuinely working together (Balmer & Greysheer 2006, 731).

2.3.1 Company identity

The company identity defines "what we are" and "who we are" and is a character that every entity has (Balmer & Gray 2003, 979). It is something that wells inside the organization (Wartick 2002, 376). The corporate identity mix suggests, that identity consists of three components: communication, modus operandi (products and services included) and visual appeal (van Riel & Fombrun 2007, 68). The organization's operations, operational environment

and people all have an influence on the company identity (Vos & Schoemaker 2006, 48).

2.3.2 Company brand and product brand

Companies can choose to brand on different levels by using product brands, a company brand or a mixture of the two. Briefly, the product brand is created to communicate the benefits of one product while the company brand concentrates on promoting the company itself. If the company chooses the product brand strategy, the company behind the product will not be visible to the customer. If the company follows the company brand strategy, the brand of the company is dominant over the product brand. The company can also choose an endorsed strategy where both, the company and the products, are branded and equally visible to the audience. (Cretu & Brodie 2007, 231.) Depending on strategy and goals, the company must decide which strategy to use.

A company brand states what the company stands for (Aaker 2004, 6; Balmer 2011, 1351). The key question could be; “what added value can we promise and deliver for the audience that the audience appreciates?” The company brand is something which distinguishes company identity from the mass and conveys its individuality (Nandan 2005, 265). It represents the organization behind its products (Aaker 2004, 6 & 8). The company brand is strategically created feature, which not every entity has, plans to have or even needs or wants to have (Balmer & Gray 2003, 979).

The company brand differs from the product brand in discipline, scope and management. It has deeper roots than a product brand. Company brands are long-term oriented and the main responsibility for brand management is in the hands of senior management (e.g. the chief executive). The general responsibility for the brand is down to all personnel, not just marketing staff. Thus, the whole staff can be seen as brand ambassadors. (Balmer & Gray 2003, 976, 978.) This requires a holistic approach to brand management since the objective is to get all the members of organization to act together in support of a desired brand identity (Harris & de Chernatony 2001, 442). As stated, internal stakeholders are in a key position to deliver the brand. The importance of employees in brand management and brand building, especially in a B2B context, has also been noticed in various studies (see e.g. Baumgarth & Schmidt 2010; Burmann, Zeplin and Riley 2009; Lynch & de Chernatony 2004; Roper & Davis 2010). Employees are the tentacles of the organizations delivering the brand.

A company brand is not just customer oriented but also takes other stakeholders into account. Hence, the idea of company brand comprises the concept of a multi-stakeholder approach. (Balmer & Gray 2003, 976, 978.) Also Roper & Davis (2010, 569) supports the idea of a multi-stakeholder approach to industrial branding. They state that a strong industrial brand takes multiple stakeholders into account and is able to create intellectual and emotional ties with them (Roper & Davis 2010, 569). The company brand can

also be a great distinctive factor; while products and services are becoming similar, the companies are very different (Aaker 2004, 10).

In industrial branding, the company name as a brand symbol is in a determining position. Therefore, the brand loyalty is actually the same as company loyalty. (Roper & Davis 2010, 569.) Consequently, the company brand can be assumed to be dominant over the product brand in industrial branding. Furthermore, Aspara and Tikkanen (2008) have stated that in B2B, company brands are more important than product brands.

2.3.3 Company reputation and image

The concepts of image and reputation need to be discussed since they are often confused and used synonymously both in the literature and in practice. In practice, the concepts cannot easily be distinguished but in academic use and especially in the case of measurement, it is essential to be aware of the differences between the relationship of these concepts. The definitions of these two concepts were very similar initially, but the measurement was made differently, which made others look for differences between the concepts.

The relationship between these concepts is controversial and splits the science field into two different schools; the analogical versus the distinctive school. The distinctive school has also been divided into three sub-schools. (Gotsi & Wilson 2001.) The analogical school is the oldest approach and sees image and reputation as synonyms. It has been criticized for its laziness in drawing distinctions between the concepts and thus is accused of creating confusion over the concepts. The distinctive school sees the concepts as discrete. The first group of the distinctive school defines reputation as a true picture of an organization and sees image as artificial, like a constructed picture of the organization. The first group has been criticized since it relates negative concepts like manipulation and persuasion to the image. The second and third groups are nowadays broadly supported. The second group defines reputation as a part of image whereas the third group sees reputation as consisting of images formed by individuals. (Gotsi & Wilson 2001.) The main difference between the second and third groups' perception is related to the interdependence of the concepts.

Following the third group of the distinctive school, company reputation is a judgment made by observers. It is a collective judgment of a company and based on assessments of the financial, social, and environmental impact on the company over time (Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty 2006, 34). Image in contrast is a reflection of the company identity perceived by its stakeholders (Vos & Schoemaker, 2006, 57). Image is an impression of the firm (Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty 2006, 33). It can also be seen as one component of reputation. Wartick (2002, 376) defines reputation to consist of different images and company identity.

In this research, the relationship between image and reputation is viewed from the perspective of third group of the distinctive school,

whereby the company is seen to have various images which together with identity form the reputation.

2.3.4 The logic of the concepts

Based on the previous, the main difference between company identity and company brand is that the company identity is something that an organization has naturally (Wartick 2002, 376), whereas the company brand is something that is strategically created (Balmer & Gray 2003, 979). Reputation instead is something which the company has earned, including the images as impression of the firm perceived by stakeholders (Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty 2006, 33).

Balmer and Greysher (2006) provides a new option to clarify the mixed concepts by presenting the concepts under the umbrella term "Concept of Corporate Level Marketing". The corporate level marketing mix consists of six attributes ("the 6 C's") presented in figure 4, which is drawn based on the theory.

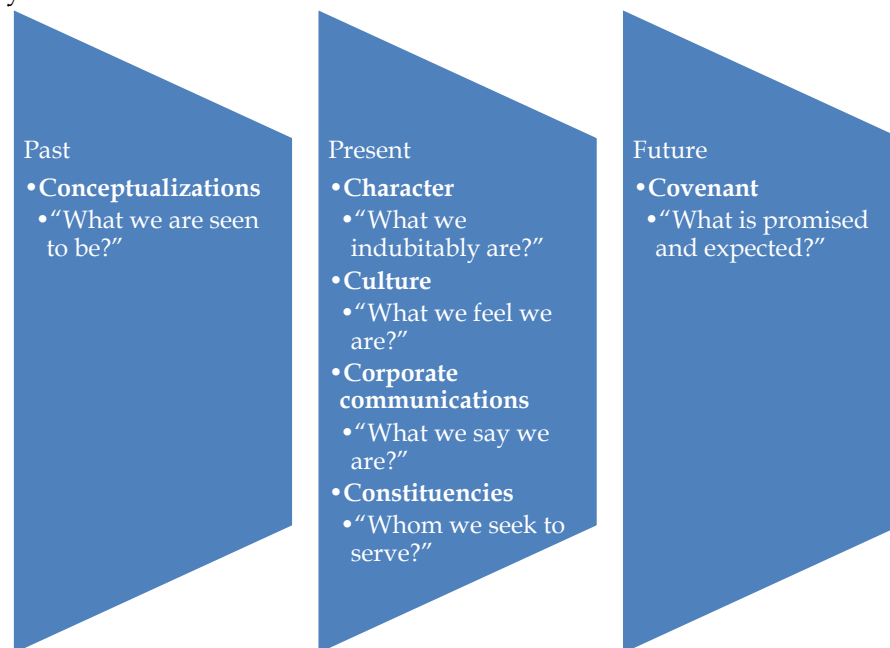


Figure 4 Corporate level marketing mix

Also in Balmer and Greysher's (2006) model, conceptualization (the reputation) refers to the experience and something that has happened in the past; reputation requires history. The covenant (brand management) instead is more future oriented and captures the idea of what is promised to happen in the future. Brand is a promise, reputation is a fulfilled promise. The other C's; character, culture, corporate communications and constituencies, are more oriented to the present moment and can be seen as components of company identity. (Balmer & Greysher 2006.) Brand is like a spearhead of the organization with the main purpose to create brand equity and distinguish

the company/product from the competitors in stakeholders' minds. The difference between brand and reputation could be described with the marketing terms push and pull. The company brand is a push factor which can be seen as a more aggressive way to meet the receiver by pushing the message of the benefits through. The company reputation is considered more a pull-style concept which is focusing on building and maintaining a propitious environment towards a company to attract the stakeholders. As Fombrun and van Riel (2004, 3) summarize; a good reputation is a valuable competitive advantage and attracts environment like a magnet.

This also might explain why the B2B companies are not used to branding themselves. Traditionally they have not faced as much competition as companies in consumer markets (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 357). The building and maintaining of a propitious environment has been enough. Now the process of distinguishing themselves from the competition has become more relevant because of the reasons stated before (e.g. globalization and market liberalization, increasing homogeneity of products) and hence B2B branding has become topical.

2.4 Digital media

In 21st century, internet and other digital technologies have forced marketing practitioners to consider marketing from a new perspective. Empowered consumers, increasing competition, globalization, advances in technologies and the interdependencies of these forces have challenged marketing activities in last decade (Wymbs 2011, 94). The concept of marketing has expanded from the narrow managerial focus to be a much broader concept which perceives the context and society in general. Marketing is about the value creation process, where customer relationship management is one part. Marketing also benefits, not just customer, but the organization and its stakeholders. (Ringold & Weitz 2007, 253.) Now marketing should be understood as an activity rather than a function (Wymbs 2011, 94), which captures the idea of the broader understanding of marketing which is needed especially in the context of digital media.

2.4.1 Adoption of digital technologies in B2B

Generally, B2B companies have been relatively slow to adopt new technologies. The major barriers have been lack of money, time and training, a negative impression of usefulness and unfamiliarity with the new technology (Buerer, Senecal & Pullins 2005, 395). Also adopting social networking sites has not been an exception. In B2B the adoption of social media has been slow compared to B2C companies (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides 2011, 1), mainly with the same reasons as for adopting new technologies in general. In addition, impressions that social networking sites

are unimportant in the company's field of operation or industry and competitors decisions not to use the sites either, have also been barriers to adopting social networking sites in B2B companies on a daily basis (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides 2011).

Major reasons to adopt new technologies have been to achieve a more efficient working style, time saving, better customer communication and management requirements (Buehrer, Senecal & Pullins 2005, 395). Given the previous points, the major reasons for B2B companies using social networking sites have also been the social aspects of sites (the ability to attract new customers, nurture relationships and increase awareness). Furthermore, the benefits of communicating the brand online, the possibility of receiving feedback and interacting with suppliers have been major reasons to adopt social networking sites. (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides 2011.)

It seems that B2B companies are waiting for their competitors to take the first steps on using social networking sites and digital marketing tools in general. Also the lack of best practice seems to be a factor explaining why B2B companies are behind B2C companies. However, if the new platform of interaction has been identified at an early stage, the company has a better chance to become a key player (Luoma-aho & Vos 2009, 121). Therefore, companies brave enough to surf the wave of digital development might gain great competitive advantage in the future

2.4.2 Taxonomy of digital media

Digital marketing is not a stable concept; it is constantly changing (Wymbs 2011, 94). It is not just marketing on the internet, although sometimes digital marketing is defined as if it comprises only internet marketing, which could be more accurately seen as one significant part of digital marketing. Digital marketing can be defined as a management activity with the goal of identifying, preparing and satisfying the needs of customers (or other stakeholders') profitably in the digital environment or with bit-based objectives, distributed through electronic channels. (Rowey 2008, 522.) In the literature, the term digital media is also used synonymously with new media (e.g. Hennig-Thurau, Malthouse, Friege, Gensler, Lobschat, Rangaswamy & Skiera 2010, 312). Three key benefits, which distinguish digital marketing from traditional marketing are that digital environment is measurable, it enables better targeted communication and contributes to relationship building between firms and customers (and other stakeholders) (Wymbs 2011, 95). Digital tools also make it possible to browse purchase-related behaviors and reduce marginal costs when producing extra copies. In general, the digital environment is an extremely easy distribution channel, even for global audiences and the information does not have to pass traditional "gate keepers" such as publishers. (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010, 312.) In this research, digital media is seen as an environment, not just a

channel, with its own special characteristics that need to be taken into account, when dealing successfully in digital media.

As mentioned before, internet marketing can be seen as one part of digital marketing. Internet marketing, also referred to as online marketing (Simmons, Thomas & Truong 2010) can be defined as a marketing strategy where companies are using various different web-based tools for marketing purposes. Web pages and e-mails can be seen as examples of online tools for marketing communication (Simmons 2007, 550–551). A company's web page can be described as a home of the brand in the online environment. E-mail can be used for various marketing purposes e.g. sharing information, promotion, building and maintaining relationships, guiding customers to web pages etc. (Simmons 2007, 550). A common point of these tools is that a company has considerable control over them and communication is mainly one-way broadcasting.

The internet makes it possible not just to passively consume brands, but also to co-create brand value (de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004, 238). One crucial part of the internet is social media, which cannot be ignored (Aula 2010, 43). In the literature, the term social media is usually used synonymously with the term "Web2.0." (e.g. Kaplan & Haenlein 2010), which precisely implies the technical part of social media, and "new media", which also can be used to refer to digital media in general. Social media can be defined as "a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user generated content" (Kaplain & Haenlein 2010). Social media is not just one digital channel; it is an arena for participation. (Aula 2010, 43–45.) Kaplan & Haenlein (2010, 62–64) have identified six different types of social media: collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia, OhMyNews), blogs (blogs, podcast, and Twitter), content communities (e.g. YouTube and Flickr), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook and LinkedIn), virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft) and virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life and Habbo). Common to all these applications is the idea of dialogical communication and interaction. Interactivity within the internet is seen to have a positive impact on a company's online performance by increasing customer's attention, developing stronger relationships and thereby increasing overall satisfaction (Simmons 2007, 553). Aula (2010, 43–45) argues that from the company and management point of view, the most interesting applications in the social media are the biggest networking service Facebook, the music and entertainment focused MySpace and career-oriented LinkedIn. Aula does not provide empirical support for this notion while the digital media have also been changing rapidly. Therefore, it is doubtful whether this is still the case, in particular in the business-to-business environment.

2.4.3 Requirements of the digital age

Since digital marketing is a new approach to marketing, not just traditional marketing boosted by digital elements (Rowey 2008, 531), it has its own characteristics and dynamics, which need to be understood in order to be able to select effective branding tactics and strategies. Next, the special features of the digital environment will be discussed in the branding context. The different age components, presented in figure 5, were identified by scanning the literature. They are seen to define this digital age and thus also add requirements for the brand strategy.

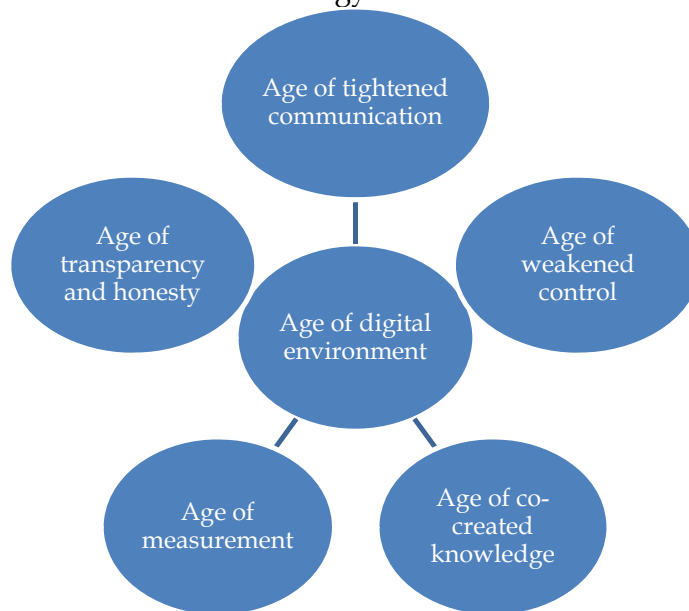


Figure 5 An age of digital environment

An age of tightened communication

Today the digital environment provides an extraordinary platform from which to reach stakeholders with new speed, reach and interactivity of social communication (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010, 312; Jones, Temperley & Lima 2009, 928). The amount of touch points with stakeholders has increased enormously, due to the internet (Helm & Jones 2010, 546). On the internet, relationships and value building are at the center of marketing communication (Rowey 2008, 530). Social networking sites especially (e.g. LinkedIn & Facebook) have provided tremendous opportunities to build relationships with and between stakeholders easily, by creating personal profiles and communicating with others' profiles (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, 63). Communication in social media occurs on the interpersonal level rather than the company level, which makes social media harder to control. Social media can be described as never-ending exhibitions in the B2B world, where the main focus is to network with other people in the field. While the digital environment offers excellent opportunities to network and hence facilitate

the business, it has also tightened the competition within markets because of easier accessibility of information and new contacts.

An age of weakened control

Although the digital environment enables companies to reach important stakeholders better, it also gives the chance to possible stakeholders to meet each other more easily beyond the control of the company. In other words, the consumers are empowered to spread the information about the company without the company's control or permission. (Aula 2010, 44; Helm & Jones 2010, 546-547; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, 60.)

The shift from a controlled environment to an uncontrolled one has significantly influenced branding. Before, companies were able to control the information available from them, but not anymore, at least not with the same strength (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010, 312; Jones, Temperley & Lima 2009, 931; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, 60). Shared information cannot be controlled by the outsider, hence post-internet branding is about managing customer relationships (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010, 313) and facilitating conversations around the brand (Christoboulides 2009, 142). This requires companies to work with different stakeholder groups in partnership (Jones, Temperley & Lima 2009, 928). One important stakeholder group is the employees of the company, who unavoidably are ambassadors of the brand (Balmer & Gray 2003, 976, 978). Hennig-Thurau et. al (2010, 313) describes incisively that managing the relationships in new media is like playing pinball; it is hard to predict where the ball goes. Today's marketing is more about fitting in than domination and control (Deighton & Kornfeld 2009, 4). The role of the brand manager has shifted from one of guardian to that of a brand host. Those who have been agile enough to build and manage their brand in new ways have achieved an enormous amount of brand equity. (Christodoulides 2009.)

An age of co-created knowledge

One important aspect of digital marketing, especially when talking about social media, is information sharing. The basic idea behind social media is that social media is about participation, sharing and collaboration (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, 65). On the internet, users develop their own perspectives on companies and brands through the available information. Real time information sharing has become a permanent part of behavior anywhere and anytime (Deighton & Kornfeld 2009, 4; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010, 311). One influencer in this process is the information created by co-users. Nowadays, branding can be described as an open source activity, where everyone has a say on the brand (Fournier & Avery 2011, 194). Since people want to share their opinions and experiences, it would be beneficial for the company to let them share on the business's web site and around its products since the brand equity created can be significant (Simmons, Thomas & Truong 2010, 1275). The reputation in internet is constructed through a complex narrative web or within ambient publicity (Aula 2010, 47). As Weber (2007, cited in

Jones, Temperley & Lima 2009, 931) indicates, in the social web, reputation is built mostly by participation, collaboration and tailor made content (e.g. search engines). Management of ambient publicity might play a central role in a company's intention to build relationships with stakeholders and create value for the company by building and maintaining a good reputation (Aula 2010, 48).

An age of measurement

As stated above, digital marketing tools provide useful applications for measuring communication (Wymbbs 2011, 95). Basically every action on the internet can be tracked by other consumers and also by companies (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010, 312). These new dimensions of monitoring, offer companies a tremendous opportunity to get information and so accelerate their actions in the digital environment. Online reputation management requires continuous monitoring, participating and measuring the impact in digital media (Jones, Temperley & Lima 2009, 929). The various web-analytics and clickstream data programs available provide a broad databank of the actions of people on the internet. Through this information, companies are able to see what is working and what is not on the internet and so can develop their actions and even an entire marketing strategy to be more efficient (Wilson 2010, 184, 185). Despite the increased opportunity to measure actions, the questions of how to measure and what is relevant to measure seem unresolved.

An age of transparency and honesty

In the era of Google, Wikipedia, WikiLeaks and social media, almost all information is available for anyone who has access to the internet. As stated above, the information which creates the overall impression of the company comes from a variety sources. In social media, the truth is based on a collective understanding (Aula 2010, 45). Basically this is not a new phenomenon, but what makes it significant, is that now this varied information is easy to find from one platform—the internet. The availability of information from a variety of sources might give an incoherent picture of the company, especially when the information is not favorable to the company (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, 60).

Social media gives rise to new expectations and beliefs about organizations to which organizations should react. One of those expectations is of transparency in business practices (Aula 2010, 45). Today, companies are living in a fishbowl where misdemeanors are not easy to hide. The internet has forced companies to be more transparent and honest if they want to communicate successfully with their various audiences (Jones, Temperley & Lima 2009, 931). Gaps between image and identity have become a bigger risk (Nandan 2005, 276). In the ideal case, falsehood would not be possible. If the company manipulates information concerning the company, and hence creates a “distorted reality” about itself, it might cause an enormous

reputation risk resulting from the organization's own communications (Aula 2010, 45).

The requirement of the moment is to adopt values that enable a human focus, authenticity, transparency and integrity (Ind 2005, xvi). Companies need to be able to build a consistent image of themselves in the digital media. Since the public requires transparency, the companies' identity needs to be such that it can bear the requirement of transparency.

2.4.4 I-branding

As stated before, current knowledge about i-branding is fragmented and a comprehensive understanding of how the different tools come together to assist the successful development of the internet as a branding medium, is missing (Simmons 2007, 544; Simmons, Thomas & Truong 2010, 1261).

De Chernatony and Christodoulides (2004) have listed attributes to be considered when taking the brand online, and these are presented in figure 6. The considerations are mostly related to the company's web site, and hence give one point of view on how the brand should be reflected by the company's web pages.

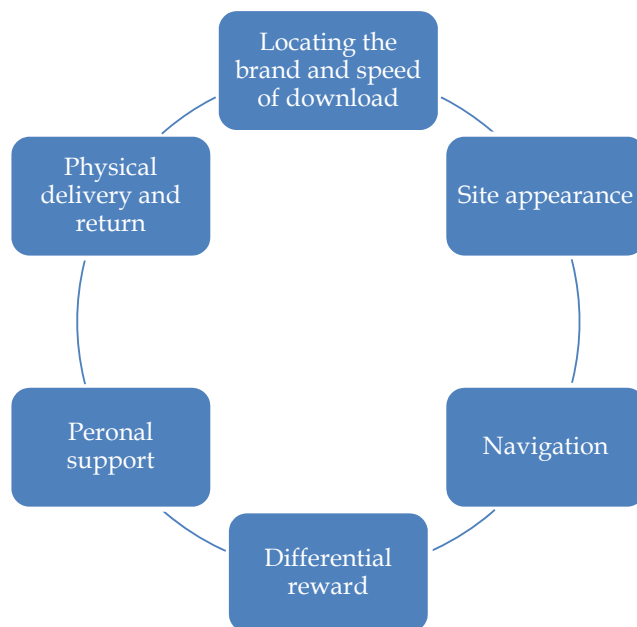


Figure 6 Aspects to be considered when taking a brand online (de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004)

"Locating the brand and speed of download" refers to how easy it is to find and use the web pages and to the notion that pages should be designed based on knowledge of how customers use technologies etc. "Site appearance" guides a company to pay attention to tone of voice (style of writing and visual emphasis) and also consistency within its website and in different media locations. "Navigation" highlights the importance of easy navigation

and signposting that speaks the customer's language. "Differential reward" advises companies to ask why anyone would use the webpage and urges the building of something extraordinary in the pages in order to distinguish it from other webpages. "Personal support" is also seen as important; the web page should show alternative means to contact the company. Finally, "physical delivery and returns" highlights, that the brand in the online environment is consistent with brand performance in the offline environment. The authors see building genuine relationships, enabling greater interactivity and developing better tailored offerings as critical success factors on I-branding. (de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004).

Simmons (2007) provides a conceptual framework for branding in the internet environment by presenting "the four pillars of i-branding", shown in figure 7. Interactions between the pillars were empirically confirmed in further research (see Simmons, Thomas, Truong 2010). The Simmons model gives wider tools to consider branding online than the earlier model of de Chernatony and Christodoulides (2004) by capturing the internet environment in general.

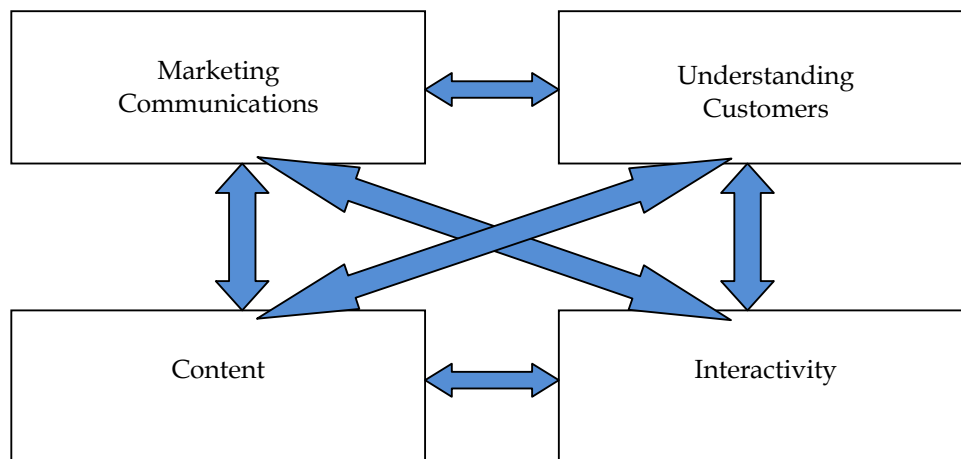


Figure 7 The four pillars of I-branding (Simmons 2007, 545)

The first pillar, "understanding customers", refers to the importance of understanding the wants and needs of the customer and how the customer uses internet tools (i.e. data collection and use of personalized messages). This is important since the brand is crucially dependent on customer perceptions about it. The second pillar, "marketing communication", recognize the fundamental shift from mass marketing to more personalized marketing and two-way dialogue, which requires new thinking about marketing. Relationship building and attracting the customer are key. Tools available include company web sites, e-mail marketing and viral marketing (e.g. social media marketing). The third pillar, "interactivity" captures the idea of the rapidly and constantly changing internet environment and the

importance of social networking sites. Online tools for contributing to interactivity can be blogs, RSS-feeds and online communities. The fourth pillar, “content”, refers to the importance of high quality content influencing brand equity online and the usability of tools provided. Each of the four pillars will only contribute to internet branding through interaction with the other pillars. (Simmons 2007). Thus, the branding on the internet should be receiver oriented, personalized, symmetric, continuous, and genuine and also consist of high quality content.

Both of the models highlight the importance of understanding the customer both when creating the content and when designing the technological applications. On the internet, building relationships, interactivity, genuineness and tailoring were also seen important in both models. Consistency was perceived to be important in all actions on the internet but also within offline reality and online reality. Even though these models offer guidelines for branding in an internet environment, they do not provide suggestions for selecting a brand strategy in that environment or guidelines for the decisions that need to be made in order to be successful in this challenging new environment.

2.5 A brand and branding strategy in the digital age

Although the digital environment and its new challenges have become clearer, the solutions certainly have not (Fournier & Avery 2011, 203). This section considers some of the conclusions and propositions concerning the strategic decisions about the brand and branding in the digital environment.

It seems that branding in the digital environment requires a branding strategy that distinguishes the company clearly from the competition, a strategy that focuses on building the brand which is strong and consistent to endure the power of public scrutiny of the requirements of transparency and honesty. The importance of consistent branding actions within the I-environment but also within offline and online reality was also stressed in existing models of I-branding (see de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004; Simmons 2007; Simmons, Thomas & Truong 2010). Hence, branding should be based on the company’s identity in order to keep the gap between image and identity to a minimum. The brand identity should be communicated clearly to the internal stakeholders to be able to create a consistent picture of the company in various media. The company should clearly know who it is and what it stands for and genuinely act accordingly. Genuineness was also highlighted in i-branding models (see de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004; Simmons 2007; Simmons, Thomas & Truong 2010). Aula (2010, 46) captures the requirement of the new age well: “in social media, an organization cannot just look good, it has to be good”.

Digital media, especially social media, requires authentic stories to be told, not marketing messages sent (Fournier & Avery 2011, 203). As stated

before, post-internet branding is about managing customer relationships (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010, 313) and facilitating conversations around the brand (Christoboulides 2009, 142), not pushing marketing messages through. The relationship point of view and symmetry of communication were also supported in i-branding models (see de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004; Simmons 2007; Simmons, Thomas & Truong 2010).

Proposition 1: In the digital age the brand should be distinctive, sincere and genuinely interested in others and current issues.

In addition to the above, the most important fact should not be missed. Branding in the internet environment should be strongly customer oriented (see de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004; Simmons 2007; Simmons, Thomas & Truong 2010). The customer should be seen as the focal point of all branding actions. It is important to ensure, that the brand promise and behavior interfaces with brand expectations and brand experience (Burmam, Hegner & Riley 2009, 116) in order to deliver satisfaction to external stakeholders. This requires an understanding of the customer's expectations and market situation, but also strong internal branding and an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the company. Hence, branding in the digital age should combine both branding inside-out (identity based branding) and outside-in (strong customer orientation).

Proposition 2: Successful branding in the digital age should combine both branding inside-out (identity based branding) and outside-in (strong customer orientation).

Although the fundamentals of brand management are not understood, the discipline of public relations offers some insight and clues. In the era of Web 2.0, public relations principles are providing more suitable tools than traditional marketing ideas. (Fournier & Avery 2011, 203.) Is there need for marketing in the digital age? This notion requires companies to think how to organize different management functions to be able to respond to the requirements of the digital age. Since there is a requirement for coherence, the functions should be integrated as well as possible to be able to give a clear and consistent image of the company. Combining marketing and communication functions could be beneficial to serve the branding goals in digital environment (Fournier & Avery 2011, 203-204).

Proposition 3: Successful branding in the digital age requires consistent communication and hence requires strong integration of marketing and communication (both internal and external) functions.

In addition adopting a holistic view of branding could be beneficial. As stated before, the brand should be discussed as a strategic asset controlled by the top management (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 359). The previously presented corporate level marketing –philosophy (Balmer & Greyser 2006), where the concepts of corporate reputation and image, total corporate

communication, corporate brand, corporate and organizational identity should be seen as integral concepts, might provide a working foundation for the brand in the digital age.

Proposition 4: Successful branding in the digital age should be led by top management and rooted as a genuine part of the company's strategy.

Now the concept of brand and its functions as well as understanding of digital environment and B2B environment and their special characteristics has been discussed, and a theoretical understanding of how the company is going to brand itself has been created. Some propositions based on the theory have also been suggested to guide the strategic decision when branding in digital age. The following sections address the issue of how to create brand equity.

3 CREATING BRAND VALUE

Branding is all about building value for the stakeholders in a way that stakeholders perceive it and hence it has an impact on overall market performance. As stated before, brand equity is the additional value that a stakeholder perceives (Zaichkowsky, Parlee & Hill 2010, 776). Brand value (brand equity), is tangible (monetary) and/or intangible (non-monetary) value which the company delivers to its stakeholders. Therefore, it is important to understand, how the total brand value is formed in order to be able to build the brand, that is, to have an impact on brand value. Most of the studies concerning brand equity have focused on consumer markets and little research has focused on industrial brand equity (Jensen & Klastrup 2008, 122; Leek & Christodoulides 2012) or industrial branding in general.

In this chapter, the second question from the guiding principles, how to create brand equity, will be exposed by creating the understanding of the evolving logic of branding considering the requirements of the digital age. At the end of the chapter the suggested theoretical model of this study and its propositions are presented.

3.1 The evolving logic of B2B branding

Mertz, He & Vargo (2009) have inspected the evolution of the branding literature and created a timeline for different eras of branding logic starting from the Individual Goods-Focus Brand Era (1900-1930s), then the Value-Focus Brand Era (1930s-1990s), the Relationship-Focus Brand Era (1990s-2000) and finally the Stakeholder-Focus Brand Era (2000 onward). Most of the articles are used to create the evolving logic focus on B2C branding, actually the first article related to B2B branding in Mertz, He & Vargo's (2009) evolution is Jones's (2005) article from the Stakeholder-Focus Brand Era (year 2000 onward).

Table 2 Evolving logic on branding in B2B context

Evolving logic on B2B branding	In a centre...	Brand equity through...	Evolving branding logic	Contribution
<p><u>Relationship Focus Brand Era in B2B</u> Kuhn, Alpert & Pope (2008) Beidenbach & Marrell (2010) Jensen & Klastrup (2008) Zaichkowsky, Parlee & Hill (2010)</p>	Customer relationships	Dyadic relationships	External and internal actors (customers and brands) as operant resources	Dyadic relationships with internal and external customers.
<p><u>Stakeholder Focus Brand Era in B2B</u> Jones (2005)</p>	Stakeholder approach	Dynamic and social processes	All stakeholder as operant resources	Network relationships with all stakeholders as well as social relationships among customers (and other stakeholders).
<p><u>Network actors Focus Brand Era in B2B</u> Mäläskä, Saraniemi & Tähtinen (2011)</p>	Network approach			
<p><u>Era of digitalization- Issue arenas?</u></p>	More dynamic stakeholder model; issue arenas (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010)	Dynamic and social processes (also without company's control)	Relevant conversations for organizations field are operant resources	Issue arenas as places of social interaction. Influence of the non-living actors and positioning on different issue arenas on total brand value.

Although the evolving logic has been created by using articles focused mainly on B2C branding, similar eras can also be identified in B2B branding, although B2B branding seems to be a step behind, at least temporally. The evolving logic of branding in the B2B context is presented in table 2 using the framework of Mertz, He & Vargo (2009) but considering the studies of B2B branding. Next, the different eras will be discussed from a B2B branding point of view and further development is suggested that considers the digital environment and its new requirements on how to create brand equity.

3.1.1 The relationship focus brand era

The relationship-focus brand era refers to the time from the 1990s to 2000 when the relationship between the company and customer became the central issue (Mertz, He & Vargo 2009, 337). The same era can also be seen in a research field focusing on B2B branding, but almost ten years later (see table 2). Most of the studies related to B2B branding seemed to be focused on the relationships between the company and customer. As an example, the research related to the impact on customer experience on brand equity in B2B settings (Beidenbach & Marrell 2010), the customer oriented point of view to create brand equity (Jensen & Klastrup 2008) and the confirmation that the Brand Asset Valuator® is applicable also to the B2B context (Zaichkowsky, Parlee & Hill 2010).

One well known model, Keller's (1993) customer based brand equity pyramid (CBBE), represents this era well. The model has been modified to fit the B2B environment, although research findings provided only partial support for it in the B2B context (Kuhn, Alpert & Pope 2008). The revised customer based brand equity pyramid for B2B consists of a sequence of steps, which each need to be achieved successfully (brand identity, brand meaning, brand response and brand relationships). These steps include six brand building blocks: the salience of the manufacturer's brand, performance, reputation, judgments, sales force relationships and partnership solutions (Kuhn, Alpert & Pope 2008).

Each of the above mentioned studies represents the relationship-focus brand era, where the target of the brand is the customer and the focus is on the relationship between marketing inputs and customer reactions. The described models are linear and do not take into account the complex relationships of different stakeholder groups, which are especially important in the B2B environment.

3.1.2 The stakeholder focus brand era

From the perspective of the stakeholder focus brand era, all the stakeholders from the networks are seen as having an influence on the brand value (Mertz, He & Vargo 2009, 339). Mertz, He & Vargo (2009) classify the Stakeholder model for brand equity created by Jones (2005) (see figure 8) as

representative of this era although the model also resembles the network philosophy.

The Stakeholder Model for Brand Equity acknowledges the complex nature of B2B relationships better than the previously presented models. It suggests that multiple relationships are important sources of total brand equity and that there are relationships between these stakeholders. The model is based on three assumptions: (1) value creation occurs in the interaction between brand and its stakeholder; (2) value is created by addressing stakeholders' expectations in the form of functional, symbolic or hedonic outcomes (3) value is created in two ways, both influencing the total brand value; first, value is created through interaction between the brand and the stakeholders and second, it is created through a form of interaction between different individual stakeholder groups. It also perceives the overall brand value to depend on environmental factors which are the most obvious macroeconomic factors. (Jones 2005, 17-18.)

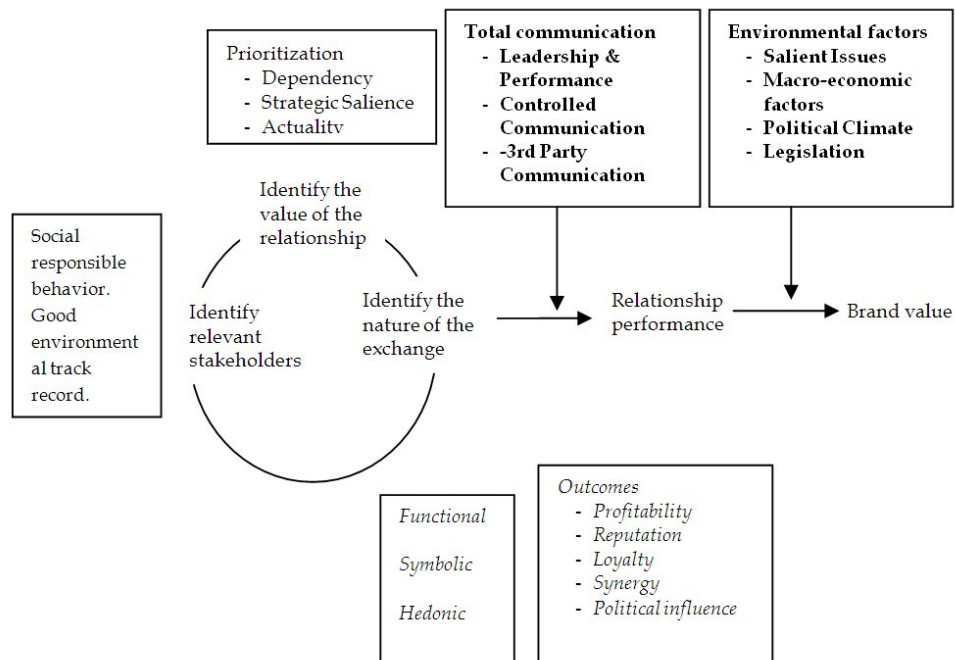


Figure 8 Stakeholder model for brand equity (Jones 2005)

In the model, communication is highlighted as a key factor for goodwill, trust and reputation and an influencer of other stakeholder's perception of the brand. It represents a continual process to identify stakeholders, prioritize them and determine the value that they deliver to brand value. It also perceives the overall brand value to depend on environmental factors too, mostly macroeconomic factors. (Jones 2005.) Although, it captures the complex nature of B2B relationships and the impact of environmental factors, it still sees branding as an identification and management of stakeholder relationships. The model also does not pay attention to internal stakeholders.

3.1.3 Network focus brand era

Another point of view of brand value creation is the network approach to branding. The Network Actor Participation model (Mäläskä, Saraniemi & Tähtinen 2011), presented in figure 9, extends branding theory by defining and describing the activities performed by network actors which are relevant for branding and by conceptualizing the prominent actors. It also perceives the dyadic relationship between the network actors and brand, and hence shows that network actors have a direct or indirect influence on brand image and also the brand identity formation of the company.

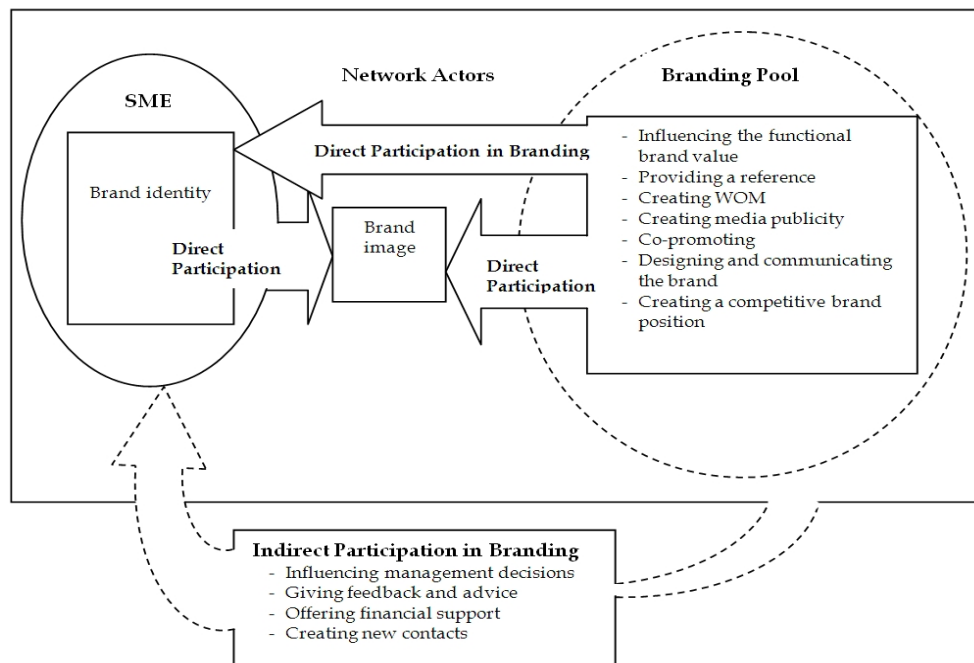


Figure 9 Network actor participation -model in B2B SME branding (Mäläskä et al. 2011)

All the stakeholders creates brand value whether they are directly connected with the company or not (Mertz, He, Vargo 2009, 338). Although the model is developed in the context of small and medium-sized companies, it provides a useful framework to understand the complex network-relations in the B2B environment. Network approach represents the latest direction of brand thinking, where the value is seen to be formed in networks rather than in a dyadic relationship between stakeholder and brand (Mertz, He & Vargo 2009, 338). The model suggests a new concept of the branding pool, which refers to key actors in the network who are directly affecting the brand image and brand identity by influencing the functional brand value, providing a reference, creating WOM or media publicity, co-promoting, designing and communicating the brand or creating a competitive brand position. Brand identity has also been seen to have a direct impact on the brand image. Other network actors can also have an indirect influence on the brand image by

influencing management decisions, providing feedback or advice, offering financial support or creating new contacts for the company itself which directly influence the company and the brand identity (Mäläskä, Saraniemi & Tähtinen 2011).

The influence of actors can be both positive and negative. It is also important to note that the branding pool is not intentionally organized around the brand. (Mäläskä et al. 2011, 1148, 1151.) Consequently, branding is all about managing stakeholder relationships. In the model, internal and external stakeholders are seen as holding equal positions in the branding pool. Although the model captures the complex nature of different actors in network well, it does not take into account macro environments other than the social-cultural environment (e.g. political, legal, technological, spatiotemporal and ecological environments (Luoma-aho & Paloviita 2010, 55)) that may have an impact on actors in a network as the Stakeholder Model For Brand Equity indicates (see Jones 2005). Non-human actors should be considered as stakeholders of organizations too (Luoma-aho & Paloviita 2010).

3.1.4 The era of digitalization - Time for issue arenas

As argued above, since the development of new technologies, companies are crucially losing control over the communication of their brands. The digital environment requires brand hosts instead of managers (Christodoulides 2009). In the Network Actor Participation model and in the Stakeholder Model for Brand Equity, the company is seen as a focal point in the stakeholder web. Both models encourage companies to identify key players within the network, which is seen to offer the company the possibility to consciously and systematically influence the actors and so increase the brand value by managing and nurturing the relationships with the most influential actors in their core markets. Both models also recognize the influence of elements which are not under the company's control such as media publicity and WOM (Mäläskä et al. 2011) and environmental factors like salient issues, macroeconomic factors, political climate and legislation (Jones 2005) that impact on total brand image and value. Although uncontrolled elements were identified, the only manner suggested to influence them was through stakeholder relationships. Hence, both models rely on the control of the organization, which is in opposition to the new rules that the digital environment requires.

Since this development of new communication technologies and lack of organizational control, traditional ways of thinking about stakeholders are becoming outdated (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010, 315). New ways of thinking are needed to respond better to the environment where the companies cannot see themselves as a controlling focal point of the networks. In fact, in the new environment, search engine reputation and social media reputation (Luoma-aho & Vos 2009) are more important than before (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010).

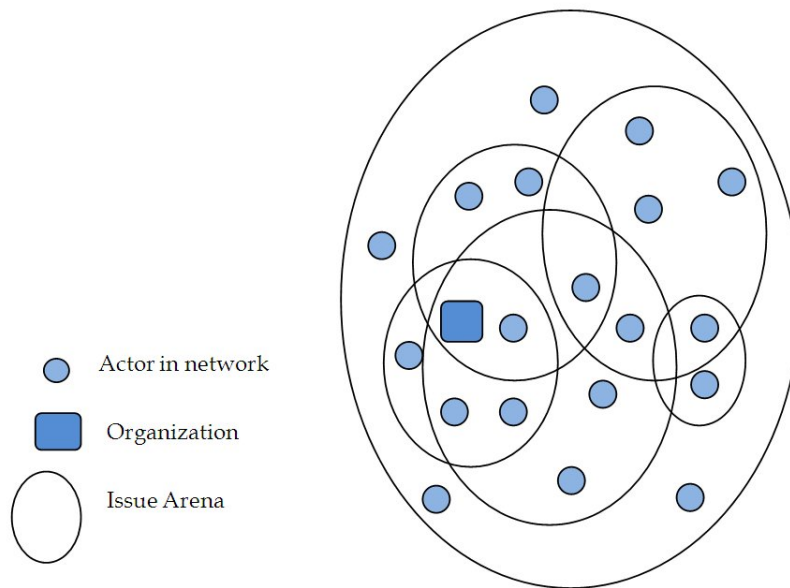


Figure 10 Issue arena –approach

The new more dynamic stakeholder model called issue arenas might offer suitable tools to understand and operate in the new environment. The issue arena approach is presented in figure 10, which is based on the theory of Vos and Luoma-aho (2010). Issue arenas present a change from the organization-centered thinking toward monitoring and dialogue on issue arenas, which are not under organizational control (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010, 322). The issue arena approach combines the traditional organization-centric stakeholder thinking with issue management theories, which emphasize understanding weak signals and early warnings. Today, at the center of communication are issues and topics, not organizations. In the issue arena approach the organization is seen as one player among others in different issue arenas, which can be seen as places of interaction – compare the term market (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010.) An issue arena can be seen as a platform for public exchange and creation of meanings (Heath 2006), or negotiation and enactment (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010). Survival does not only depend on finding the key stakeholders, as previously presented models suggest, but also on finding the relevant issue arenas in which to participate. Important questions are “which issue arenas are relevant for the future of the organization?” and “which issue arenas provide opportunities for interaction with specific groups?” (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010, 316; Luoma-aho & Vos 2009, 121.) Issue arena approach considers not just the human actors in the network, but also the non-living actors influencing total brand value.

3.2 Three components affecting brand value in the digital age

As stated above, successful branding requires understanding how the value is formed. To summarize, total brand value is formed through the interaction between different actors influenced by the company brand itself but also by other actors, internal and external as well as living and non-living actors (e.g. public opinion concerning a certain topic and macroeconomic factors). As presented above, successful branding in the era of web 2.0 requires communication with various stakeholders, but also participation in multiple issue arenas in order to be able to monitor the environment and react if needed. The brand is something which is built, but at the same time, something which is formed in stakeholders' minds. Owing to the complex and fragmented external environment, organizations need to manage perceptions about themselves by reflecting a coherent image, which requires nurturing the consistency of their internal environment (Baumgarth & Schmidt 2010, 1250). Hence, branding should include three main areas; branding inside the organization, branding outside the organization, and branding in issue arenas by participating in current conversations in relevant networks.

3.2.1 Branding inside

As stated before, internal stakeholders, who are a touch point with external stakeholders, are in a key position to build the company's brand from inside the company. Empirical evidence for the key role of internal brand equity in external brand performance has been provided in Burman, Zeplin and Riley's (2009) investigation, which reinforced the causal relationship between the hypothesized determinants of brand commitment, brand citizenship behavior and resulted in positive effects on the brand customer relationship. Lync & de Chernatony (2004) have stressed the importance of effective personal brand communication both within the organization and as well as externally through the industrial sales force. Roper and Davis (2010) strengthened the link between the employee views of the organization and the views of customers. They also emphasized the importance of training to influencing internal views of corporation and hence customer satisfaction (Roper & Davis 2010).

Webster and Keller (2004, 401) counsel educating the entire organization to see the brand value and deliver it. Also Baumgarth and Schmidt (2010) stated that the brand oriented company culture is the foundation of the brand equity perceived by the customer. At a company level, this means choosing a brand oriented strategy, where the impact is on the internal individual level of brand perceptions (internal brand commitment, internal brand knowledge and internal brand involvement) which all impact internal brand equity and so customer based brand equity.

The internal communication of the brand to employees within the supplier company is essential as it determines how the brand is conveyed by externals.

To summarize, the brand should be rooted in the organization in a way that it shines beyond the organization like a beacon. This requires strong internal communication about the brand; at its best the brand should be rooted in the company culture. Everyone working in the organization should know and feel the brand and act and behave accordingly.

3.2.2 Branding outside

Branding outside captures the marketing perspective of branding. It focuses on marketing the brand identity to the external stakeholders in a consistent manner. As stated before, the core of the brand is the brand identity, which is the part of brand that the company can manage (Burmam, Jost-Benz & Riley 2009, 391).

Brand identity is the “package” that the company communicates to the external stakeholders. It should be communicated to the external environment in a consistent manner. This requires that the brand is led by the top management and communicated in an integrated way. All functions of the organization should be according to the brand (Balmer & Greysher 2006).

Branding outside is all about managing stakeholder relationships. As discussed previously, this requires identifying the key stakeholders from the network, identifying the value of the relationships in order to prioritize the relationship and identifying the nature of the exchange (Jones 2005). Each stakeholder relationship with the brand should be identified, measured and understood (Roper & Davis 2007).

3.2.3 Branding in issue arenas

Branding in issue arenas captures the public relationship perspective on branding. The goal of PR is to maintain mutually beneficial relationships (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010, 321), which requires listening to different stakeholders and acting in a comprehensive way. Although the company cannot control its environment, it can take part in the conversation and be an active player in its network and hence have an influence on its image. If the company tries to control an arena in the traditional manner, it can easily lead to conflict (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010).

Organizations usually need to be part of several different issue arenas. They might be active in one arena, but passive or followers in another (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010). Early identification of relevant issues may give company advantage in becoming the dominant voice on the issue, if it is able to establish sufficient credibility (Luoma-aho & Vos 2009, 120). Hence, it is important that the companies are present in different virtual and physical arenas. The number of potential issue arenas especially in social media is increasing (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010, 322).

If the conversation relates directly to the company, a reaction is required. The dynamics of issue arenas require that they be monitored continuously. Through monitoring different conversations, the organization also acquires valuable information from the field that it is operating in. How the organization is perceived depends on how stakeholders' expectations are formed in different issue arenas (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010).

Issue arena approach helps to understand the requirements of the new age too, that is, to tell stories not to send marketing messages (Fournier & Avery 2011, 203) and gives tools to address the requirement for facilitating conversation (Christodoulides 2009, 142). It guides organizations to focus on issues and conversations about topics related to the organization. Hence, branding in different arenas means actually monitoring the public sphere and being an active player in it by taking part and creating conversation, not managing the brand or the conversation. This point of view encourages a focus on the company through relevant issues and topics, not organization-centric marketing messages. As Luoma-aho and Vos (2010) explicate, for example an energy company may communicate with various stakeholders on an environmental issue and hence, position itself in a certain light in the market. The company can strengthen its market position by creating a position strategy in different arenas and clarifying its position with key message strategies in each arena.

3.3 Branding in the digital age

A theoretical model of how to create brand equity and a brand proposition has been formed on the basis of the reviewed literature and notions related to B2B branding in the digital age. The model builds the theoretical foundation to manage a brand and create brand value in the digital age (figure 11). As the figure shows, value is formed directly between the brand and its stakeholders. The overall brand perception is also influenced indirectly by the relationship between internal and external stakeholders and the interaction among the various network actors as well as the position of the brand in different issue arenas. Reputation also influences the overall perception.

As already stated, branding should include three main areas: branding inside the organization, branding outside the organization, and branding in issue arenas by participating in the topical conversation in networks. All three areas concurrently affect the brand value and all these areas need to be taken into consideration, in order to build a strong and consistent brand, especially in the era of digitalization. The blue arrows in figure 11 highlight the brand output.

Proposition 5: In the digital age a company should build its brand inside the organization, communicate it to external stakeholders in a consistent manner and build its brand in different issue arenas through conversations.

It is also important to note that branding is a constantly evolving process, which requires continuous monitoring of environment and tuning of brand (Mäläskä, et. al 2011; Jones 2005). As stated before, branding in digital age should combine both branding inside-out (brand building) and outside-in (interaction between stakeholders). Purple arrows in the picture 11 present outside-in and inside-out idea of create brand identity.

Proposition 6: Successful creation of brand value in the digital age requires ongoing monitoring of the environment and reacting to weak signals.

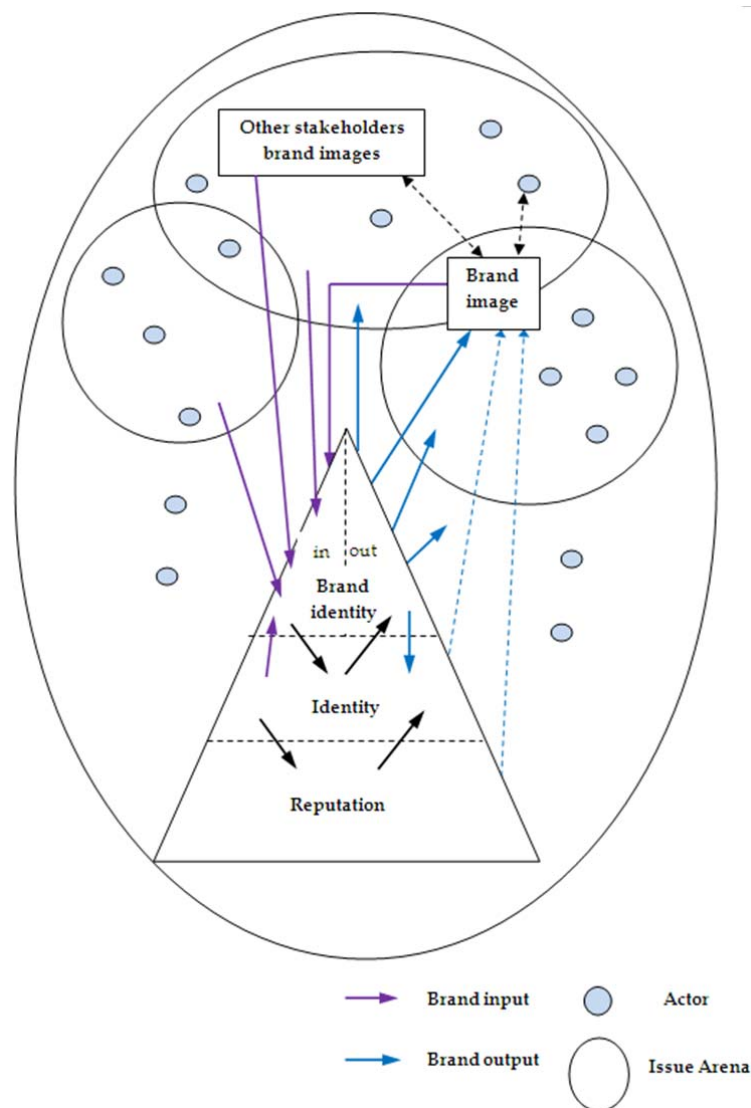


Figure 11 Branding in the digital age

Now the evolving logic of branding considering the requirements of digital age has been discussed and a theoretical understanding of how the company can create brand equity has been formed. Also a number of propositions and a theoretical model have been suggested to aid understanding of the requirements that need to be considered when creating brand value in the digital age. Next it is time to contemplate the empirical point of view and so the research methodology of this study will be presented.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Ontology defines the nature of reality and what we can know from it (Metsämuuronen 2005, 199). The aim of this study is to create understanding about the phenomena and explore the limits and direction of current theory and practices, not to create general rules. Taking into account the nature of the study, the ontological approach will be constructivism. Constructivism assumes that reality is proportional and based on a researcher's subjective interpretations. Epistemology describes the relationship between researcher and subject. It is theory about knowledge and its mien. Following the idea of constructivism, the epistemological basis in this study is subjectivism which sees that findings are created not discovered. These choices determine that, the methodology should be based on hermeneutics. (Metsämuuronen 2005, 201-202.)

4.1 Case study as a research strategy

This research uses the case study as a research strategy following the methods of hermeneutics. The chosen strategy is consistent with the purpose of the whole study. The case research permits contemplation of a certain situation in-depth. The main focus is not to find generalized information but to increase knowledge of certain phenomena (Johnston, Leach & Liu 1999, 204; Laine, Bamberg & Jokinen 2007, 10). The epistemological question in the case study is what we can learn from one case (Metsämuuronen 2005, 206). A case study is a useful way of testing theories and models in the real world (Shuttleworth, 2008). The method conjoins induction and deduction by accentuating the building of new theories and also combines prior theory (Laine, Bamberg & Jokinen 2007, 19; Perry 1998, 799) and hence can be considered as an abductive strategy. A case study can be useful when inspecting industrial marketing phenomena. From the managerial point of view, the results from the case study (e.g. examples of success and failure)

may even be more useful for managers than survey based results (Johnston, Leach & Liu 1999, 203). According to Yin (2003, 5–8), a case study is relevant when (a) the aim of the study is to answer “how” and “why” –questions; (b) the investigator has little or no control over the behavior or event; (c) the focus is on contemporary events.

In case studies, a specific setting of research design has not yet been developed (Yin 2003, 19). Yin (2003, 20) describes case study research design as a multiple step journey from “here” to “there”. The research design is like the backbone of the whole study. According to Philliber, Schwab and Samloss (1980) the research design should cover four problems: (1) what question to study, (2) what data is relevant, (3) what data to collect and (4) how to analyze results (in Yin 2003, 21). Yin (2003, 22) has also listed five important components of a case research design.

1. Research question
2. Propositions, if any
3. Unit(s) of analysis
4. The logic linking the data to the propositional
5. The criteria for interpreting for findings

Considering the fact that there will not be any specific setting of case research design, this research uses steps from “here” to “there” by restating Yin’s components, the problems that should be included in case design and the existing advice on how to implement case research. In this research, the steps are presented in figure 12.

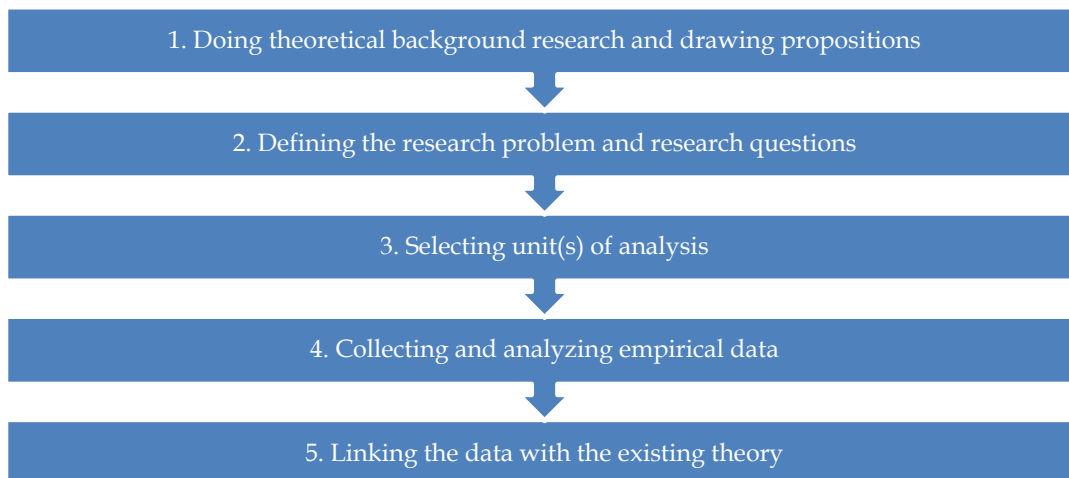


Figure 12 Research design

Theoretical background research and drawing propositions

According to Johnston, Leach and Liu (1999, 205) every case study has to be based on a theoretical background. Reflecting important theoretical issues helps to identify where to look for relevant evidence. The idea of

propositions is to direct attention toward the affairs which should be examined considering the scope of study (Yin 2003, 22–23). Yin (2003, 30–31) counsels the researcher to implement a literature review related to the research topic and be aware of the different theories which might be relevant for the study. Hence, under previous consideration, the case study should be based on the theoretical understanding of the studied phenomena. The theory basis is also the factor that differentiates the case study from the ethnography and grounded theory, which do not require theoretical background. Whether the purpose of the study is to develop or test theory, the theory development as part of the design phase is necessary. The theoretical understanding also guides which data to collect and what methods should be used to analyze data (Yin 2003, 28-29).

Theoretical understanding is also crucial when doing research interviews: the researcher needs to be able to form questions based on the answers of the interviewee (Yin 2003, 54). It is also important to keep in mind, that the theoretical framework should not be too strict in the sense of influencing too much of the content of the empirical findings.

These issues were taken into consideration by doing a literature review and drawing propositions from the theory before collecting empirical data. Also the loose model for branding was chosen to guide the data collection. The loose model was chosen since it was important that theory did not rule the data collection, but the framework was still needed to target attention in the right direction. In addition, the created propositions were kept in mind but it was not desirable that they affect the data gathering too much. After collecting the empirical data, the theoretical part was refined.

Defining the research problem and research questions

The research problem and research questions were defined in the introduction and are by nature of the “how” type and hence enable the use of case study research (Yin 2003, 22).

Selecting unit(s) of analysis

It is important to define clearly what the case is or cases are. The purpose of the research determines what kind of case needs to be studied. In this research single case research was chosen as the best alternative. Selecting the deviant case is reasonable because it helps to understand the limits of existing theories and develop them further (Flyvbjerg 2011, 307). Single cases are useful as they give beneficial descriptions of events especially when describing new ideas, relationships and ways of doing things, which do not yet exist in present theories. Although a single case study has its advantages, it has been criticized on the grounds that many single case studies would have achieved more by adding more cases into the research (Cunningham 1997, 407). A certain situation, when single case studies have been extremely successful, is when they have been represented early stages in the field (Eisenhardt, 1991, 621). As stated before, the topic of this research (industrial branding using digital media) is quite new and not greatly researched yet.

Timing supports the justification of the single case research. The purpose of this research is also consistent with the advantages of the single case study.

The case company was selected through a discretionary sample which provided an option to select the most suitable company in light of the study's goals. The selected case company, The Switch, provided a great opportunity to understand this phenomenon. The company has been a brave adopter of digital tools by integrating digital elements on a daily basis and in the company's strategy and hence been able to build its brand and conduct a successful market entry. The Switch is also a great example for other young Finnish companies that need to be encouraged to think big and invest in marketing.

The Switch is a Finnish company which is a component supplier of megawatt-class permanent magnet generators (PMG) and full-power converter packages for wind power and other new energy applications. The company was founded in 2006 when Rotatek Finland (FIN), Verteco (FIN) and Youtility (USA) merged. From the beginning, the operations have been directed to international markets. Nowadays, the company has its model factories in Lappeenranta (FIN) and Vaasa (FIN), and is headquartered in Vantaa (FIN). Two subsidiary companies are located in the main markets of the wind industry; the USA and in China. The international network is also leveraged into Germany, Denmark, Spain, India and Korea. The Switch employs over 270 people.

The Switch has two fields to operate in; wind and solar. Both sub-areas are operating under the main brand. Mainly, the company does not sell standard products but tailors them based on customer desires. The operations of the company are firmly based on strong networking which facilitates its rapid and flexible working style.

The Switch is a relatively new actor in the renewable energy industry where most of the companies have long traditions and strong reputations. Despite the general recession, The Switch has been able to grow rapidly through all its years, as can be seen in figure 13.

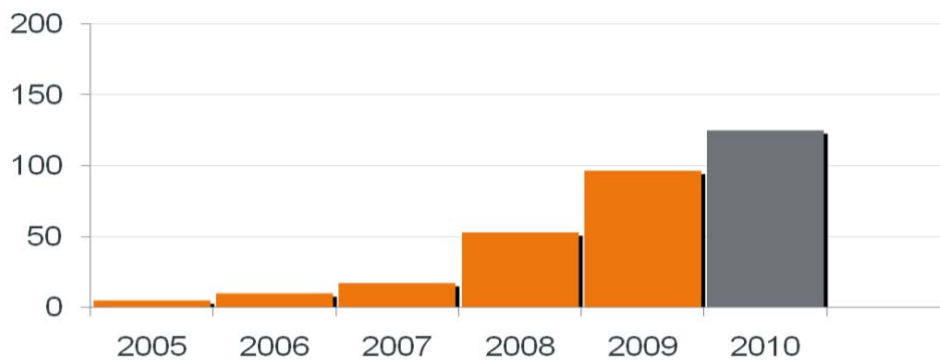


Figure 13 Growth in turnover MEUE (Annual Report 2010)

The growth has been furthered by the technology revolution in the renewable energy industry. The Switch has been an early adopter in the area of permanent magnet generator technology, which has nowadays become the major technology in wind turbines. Before The Switch, there was not any significant actor in the market using the same technology (Yritys Suomi 2011). Owing to its forward-looking technology, the efficiency of power plants has improved.

In 2010 The Switch was awarded the Internationalization Award of the President of the Republic of Finland. The purpose of the respected award is to highlight business models and concepts as an example to the other Finnish companies in the internationalization process. (Yritys Suomi 2011).

4.2 Collecting and analyzing empirical data

To get a deeper understanding and comprehensive picture of the phenomena, data and method triangulation, which is natural for a case study (Dubois & Gibbert 2010, 130), was applied. In data and method triangulation the empirical data is collected from different sources in different ways (Laine, Bamberg & Jokinen 2007, 24). In this study the main empirical data were collected through semi-structured theme interviews among key players in the case company and its advertising agency which has been involved in building the case company's brand. Complementary data was collected by doing content analysis from the company blogs, talking points, newsletters, Facebook and Twitter. The web page was also analyzed systematically. Although this study was undertaken from the company management point of view, a stakeholder questionnaire was conducted to support the findings from the main data. The brand association and channels used by different stakeholder groups were inspected by implementing a short survey, which included both qualitative and quantitative questions. Other available material about the company (official documents, annual reports, news articles, company presentations, video clips, 360° conferences videos), were used to get a better view of brand building and support the findings of the main and complementary data. The materials were also used to support the findings. (See figure 14.)

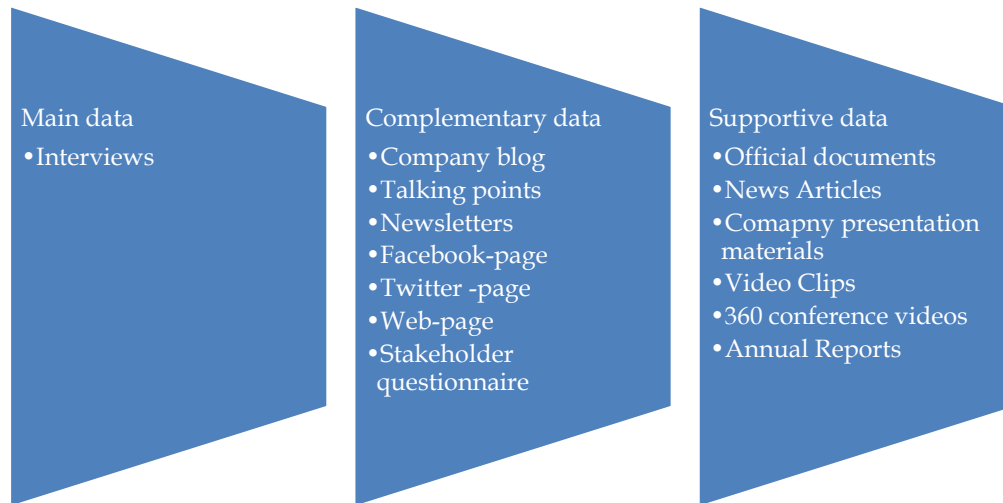


Figure 14 Data collection

4.2.1 Semi-structured theme interviews

The semi-structured theme interview was the most appropriate strategy to implement interviews, since it made it possible to freely discuss the themes framed by the researcher but also provided strict questions (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 89). A semi-structured theme interview leaves space to ask more detailed questions, and also offers the researcher the freedom to raise issues in the course of the interview. The selected themes were based on the guiding principles of branding of Kotler and Pfoertsch (2007) (presented in the introduction) and the research purpose was to focus on the digital environment in particular. The five themes discussed in this study were:

- Decision to brand (over all decision to build a brand)
- Brand and branding (what, to whom, why and how)
- Digital environment and tools (what, why and how)
- Maintenance (brand management and development)
- Evaluation of success (strengths and weaknesses)

The sample technique used was a discretionary sample since the purpose was to find the persons with the best knowledge. The data collection was continued until nothing new appeared. This was also accordingly the nature of the qualitative research when what was needed was specific information on a certain topic (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2003, 87–89). Hence there were five interviews conducted, four face-to-face and one via phone. The language of the interviews was in four cases Finnish and in one case English. All interviewees were in such a position that they had both affected and implemented the company's brand and branding decisions. The data was collected from the company representative as well as its communications agency, Radikal, which had worked with the company as a strategic partner and implementer of the materials from the end of the 2007 to autumn 2011.

The longest interview was conducted with the Sales and Marketing Director of The Switch who has been developing the brand since the beginning, has the main responsibility for the brand and also works in close cooperation with the CEO of The Switch. The main responsibilities of the communication manager of The Switch are both external and internal communication globally, whereas the marketing manager is mainly responsible for purely marketing activities of the company, although they work as a team. The CEO-A of the Radikal had worked more on The Switch's strategic decisions and CEO-B of the Radikal was more focused on contributing special knowledge of digital tools. The interview data is presented in table 3. The same themes were discussed with different interviewees but detailed questions varied since different positions and expertise among interviewees (interview questions are provided as appendix 1).

Table 3 Collected data from the semi-structured theme interviews

Date	Interviewee	Representative of	Length
16.11.2011	CEO-A (Radikal-A)	Radikal	50min
19.12.2011	Sales and Marketing Director	The Switch	1h28min
19.12.2011	Communication Manager	The Switch	37min
27.1.2012	CEO-B (Radikal-B)	Radikal	46min
14.2.2012	Marketing Manager	The Switch	44min

Each of the interviews was recorded and transcribed verbatim. After that the analyzing itself started. The transcript materials were read through several times by making notes to help to parse the data. Since, the same themes were discussed in each interview, all the material was organized under the themes and the whole transcript material was analyzed as a single unit. Organizing the data under the themes helps to see the relevant information for the research (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 180). After organizing the data, the thick description was written by providing a quotation from the interviewees to support the findings.

4.2.2 Content analysis

Company blogs, talking points, newsletters, Facebook and Twitter entries were analyzed by using abductive content analysis which was seen as the most appropriate method to complete and verify the data collected through semi-structured theme interviews. Content analysis makes it possible to analyze and quantify documents and texts in a systematic manner (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2003, 106; Bryman & Bell 2007, 304). The method gives objective and systematic tools to analyze mass media items as well as documents and texts that are either produced by an organization (e.g. annual reports, newsletters)

or written about it (e.g. articles in business press) (Bryman & Bell 2007, 302–303). Abductive content analysis has theoretical connections, but theory does not rule the analysis. An abductive approach makes it possible to analyze the data from an inductive starting point (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2003, 99).

The purpose was to untangle the themes and topics which were discussed in each medium and also to inspect the discussion style and the role of writer. The unit of analysis varied in each medium owing to their different natures (see table 4).

Table 4 The units of analysis

Medium	Unit of analysis	Sub units	Amount of collected units	Sample technique	Timeline
Company's blog	Blog text	Writer, purpose of the story, content, comments	14	Census	9.12.2009-15.9.2011
Talking point	Article	Purpose of the story, content, expert	21	Census	20.2.2008-7.12.2011
Newsletters	One newsletter story	Content, special features, pictures	150	Census	1/2008-4/2011
Facebook page	Wall posting	Writer, content, comments, reactions	141	Census	11.9.2009-16.12.2011
Twitter	Tweet	Content	952	Convenience sample	3.1.2011-15.12.2011

The data was analyzed using the Mills and Huberman (1984) three-phase process to analyze inductive data, comprising: 1. Reducing, 2. Grouping and 3. Abstraction (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2003, 110–111). Units of analysis in each medium were collected in their own files and each medium was analyzed individually. At first the collected units were reduced and the relevant sub-units were collected for further analysis. The similarly reduced sub-units were grouped into main groups. The amount of sub-units in each group were quantified in order to get a better understanding of the most important contents. The analysis was finished at the grouping level since the abstraction did not provide more relevant information considering the purpose of the analysis.

4.2.3 Web page analysis

The web pages were analyzed by using qualitative content analysis from a deductive starting point. Deductive content analysis requires using an analysis framework based on theory (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2003, 116). The purpose of the web page analysis was to find out how the brand is delivered through the company web pages. At first, the web pages were analyzed by its content and a thick description was provided. Then the guiding principles of Harris and de Cheratony (2001), “taking the brand promise online”,

(presented before in figure 6) was used as a framework to analyze the brand presence. The web pages were analyzed systematically from the six points of view that the model suggests.

4.2.4 Stakeholder questionnaire

The purpose of the stakeholder questionnaire was to examine the associations that different stakeholder groups made about The Switch in order to see how coherent a picture The Switch has been able to create. Also the channels respondents used and how important they perceived those different channels to be for searching for information on The Switch or the industry in general was investigated in order to clarify the role of digital channels. Considering the goals of the questionnaire, the structure of The Corporate Image Measurement Model, presented in table 5 was chosen since the purpose was to inspect the brand image.

Table 5 The Corporate Image Measurement Model (Vos & Schoemaker 2006, 84)

Primary impression	The primary impression that people have of the organization
Familiarity	The familiarity with the organization and its activities
Perception	The characteristics which are spontaneously attributed to the organization and the extent to which the respondents feel that various reveal characteristics applicable
Preference	The preference people have for each characteristic and the relative weights of the characteristics for the respondent
Position	The position the is attributed to the organization in relation to other organization

At first the primary impression concerning the company was asked with the open question, which is an important element of the measurement model. The question clarifies which associations are the most prominent in the minds of the respondents (Vos & Schoemaker 2006, 86). Familiarity was measured since it is important to know the basis on which people form their images (Vos & Schoemaker 2006, 86). Hence, the length of the relationship with The Switch was requested and also the frequency of use of different communication channels that The Switch is actively using was asked about.

Perception was measured using a semantic differential since it was suggested by Vos and Schoemaker (2006, 86) and because it is a widely used scale to measure attitudes and images (Clevenger, Lazier & Clark 1965, 80; see also Vos 2000, 116). In the semantic differential, respondents position the answer between two adjectives in a way that best expresses their perception. The adjective pairs were created based on characterization, collected from the interviews that The Switch wanted to reflect through the channels it used.

The preference was measured by asking the respondent to evaluate the importance of the channels in receiving information about The Switch and also receiving the information concerning the industry in general using a five-point Likert scale. It was important to differentiate the importance of receiving information concerning The Switch itself and on the industry in different channels, hence the purpose was also to investigate whether the company was able to deliver information concerning the industry in general and if so, through which channels. Considering the scope of this study, the position was not included in the questionnaire because it was not considered to add information relevant for this study.

The role of the questionnaire in this research was to offer complementary data and hence provide support for the main data; hence the small number of answers was seen as sufficient to fulfill its goal. The questionnaire was implemented in electronic form with the Webropol program and sent to 41 respondents via e-mail. The questionnaire was sent to 10 internal stakeholders and 31 to external stakeholders (including 12 customers (13 respondents), 2 partners (3 respondents), 1 service company (1 respondent), 4 Engineering Houses (9 respondents), 5 suppliers (5 respondents) of the company.

The respondents were selected by The Switch from their database by using a cluster sample where different stakeholder groups were in their own cluster. From each cluster, a certain number of respondents were selected at random. All the e-mails included a motivational letter, which was tailored with the name of prospective respondent. One week was allowed for the response. A reminder message was sent five days after the first message. Finally, 23 respondents answered the questionnaire and hence the response rate was 54.1%. The tailored motivational letters and brevity of the questionnaire probably motivated respondents to submit answers.

The data was analyzed using qualitative methods for the open question and statistical methods for the other questions. The open question, which measured the primary impression of The Switch, was answered 18 times. This question was analyzed using content analysis. The selected unit of analysis was an expression which characterized the company, hence 31 different expressions were identified. These expressions were grouped based on whether they were positive, neutral or negative. Inside the positive and neutral group two sub-groups were identified, one group of expressions related to the company and other group of expressions related to the technology.

The quantitative answers were analyzed by taking statistical values (average and standard deviation) and comparing them. The target variable was formed from the answers which measured perceptions to get an overall picture. The Kruskal-Wallis test, which is a one-way variance analysis, was used to reveal the differences between respondent groups. It was the most suitable test to measure differences on several groups, since the normal distribution of the answers was questioned, because of the relatively small

number of respondents. The respondents were also split into two groups, internal and external stakeholders, to get more reliable results, since some of the sub-groups were relatively small. A Mann-Whitney test was performed to reveal the differences between the groups. Mann-Whitney was selected, since it is the most suitable to measure differences in median and emphasis of variables, when the amount of respondents is small. Using a t-test would have required a larger amount of respondents and standard deviation of the results.

4.2.5 Linking the data with the existing theory

The logic of linking the data to the theory and propositions can be established in numerous ways (Yin 2003, 26). In this research the explanation building was used as an analysis strategy. Explanation building is one special type of pattern matching analyzing strategy, which aims to find out how the case description is following the existing theories, or which theories seem to be relevant (see Yin 2003, 116.) The goal is not to conclude the research, but to build an explanation about the case and develop thoughts for further study (Yin 2009, 141). This is very appropriate strategy to see which theories seem to be relevant when building the industrial brand in the digital environment and to provide some guidelines for further research. Using explanation-building instead of pattern-matching is also more suitable considering the purpose of this research, which was to create understanding and learn from the single case, not to provide generalized information. The structure of the analysis in this research follows the logic of the iterative nature of explanation building (Yin 2009, 143):

- Making initial propositions
- Comparing findings of an initial case
- Revising the propositions
- Comparing other details of the case against the revision
- Comparing the revision to the facts of second, third, or more case
- Repeating this process as many times as is needed

In this research the analysis is finished in the revising the propositions phase considering the scope of this study is to offer one point of view for this topic. Hence, after analyzing the empirical data, the thick description of the case will be written and the research questions will be answered. Then the propositions, which have arisen from the theory, will be discussed and evaluated in the light of the empirical findings. Finally, the propositions will be revised.

5 EMPIRICAL STUDY

In this chapter, the empirical findings of this study are discussed and explained. The analysis is structured based on the research themes from the research questions by starting with the overall decision to brand. Then the strategic decisions on how the company has built its brand and created brand equity will be discussed. The special focus is on the usage of digital tools and their use in branding. Some quotations and stories told by the interviewees are used to support and illustrate the empirical findings. Quotations are translated into English, focusing on the substance of the original stories been told. Also the content analysis from the company's blog, talking point, newsletter, Facebook and Twitter entries and also the results from the stakeholder questionnaire will be presented as complementary data for the interviews. In addition, other material and sources are provided to support the findings.

5.1 Decision to brand

5.1.1 Branding as a self-evident decision

According to the interviews, for the founders of the company the need to build a strong brand was self-evident. As a matter of fact, the founder team saw a strong brand as a requirement for surviving in the industry where the company needed to be able to compete with actors who had been operating in the industry for a long time with strong reputations. The strong brand was seen as an efficient way to distinguish company from the competition and to gain the required attention, since the budding company did not have a known name or reputation. The strong brand was needed to establish plausibility in the market. Branding and the brand were seen as a key to successful market entry.

“For The Switch, it has been so obvious that a strong brand is needed and hence the thought has not even been challenged...When we entered the market as a latecomer, we thought that with creating a good brand, we are able to separate our self from the market and gain the needed attention.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

According to the interviews, in 2006 the wind production industry was at a turning point with two competing technologies; the more traditional double-fed technology and the newer permanent magnet generator technology (PMG). In the renewable energy market, The Switch was a latecomer and it had invested in the new PMG technology. The newer PMG technology was more secure, energy efficient and service-free than the older technology but buyers were reluctant to buy it owing to a fear of novelty or other reasons for not adopting newer technology. To get in to the market, The Switch needed to convince buyers not just about the company but also about the technology itself. The market situation in 2006 was rather different than it is today. The wind power industry was growing rapidly and hence market entry was rather easy. Now, the market has matured and competition is tougher.

The term growth venture describes the company well. From the beginning it has had clear and unashamed goal of growing rapidly to become an industry leader in the international market. It has had a rather un-Finnish courage to think big.

“In the Finnish B2B market, nine of every ten innovations are excellent, like world-beaters, but when we enter to the international markets to play, it is not enough to have a working product but also everything around it is needed, then we are talking about the brand value which needs to be on a right track.” (Radikal-B)

One driver of the rapid growth intentions has been the investors’ interest in building a successful startup company and selling it at an early stage. In March 2011, the American company American Superconductor Corporation agreed a 190 million (€) price to buy The Switch, but the acquisition was cancelled the same autumn due to the financial problems of the buyer company.

“We planned to build a startup company which would be sold, but that didn’t happen.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

The company and its brand were targeted directly at international markets. Still it does not see itself as a global brand, since global implies that the company is operating all around the world. It is truly and naturally international as the main markets are the growing market in Asia (China, Korea and India), the traditional market in Europe (Germany and Spain) and the large market in the USA.

“We have been a truly international company from the beginning. We are an international company but not global since it means that we should be everywhere. We are where the wind business is.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

The origin of the brand has not been highlighted, although the Finnish ways can be seen in the company's manner of operating. Finnish people are usually characterized as egalitarian, environmentally-aware and honest.

"Our operations are not based on tricks but solving customer problems, and we genuinely want to solve the problem and I think we are good at it." (Webcast 2011 - Intro speaker 1)

The brand was built to attract the wind power industry in general, not in any specific geographical area. Even if the geographical markets are crucially different, no brand differentiation was made.

"The brand is the same in every place, all the colors and so on." (Sales and Marketing Director)

The company itself was in an initial stage when the branding started. It had the new technology, strong knowledge about the industry, a clear focus for the business and basic elements of the company, but no name or reputation. The strong vision was to be the industry leader of new energy by being a desired partner for multi-megawatt power generators. A brand was needed to push the company through. The core idea of the whole brand was to distinguish the company from the competition and make it recognizable in the industry.

"The goal was to create a clear brand that differentiates us from the others and makes people want to work with us." (Marketing Manager)

5.1.2 Market insight as a foundation of the brand

The brand and the whole business strategy were based on strong market insight, which can also be seen in the steps that The Switch took to become an international player (see table 6). The company recognized what kind of player would be needed in the market, and the whole business strategy was built accordingly. The brand was created to communicate the strategy and strengths of the company in order to be able to compete in the selected niche. The decision to brand in the early stage made it possible to build the brand rather freely and form the organizational identity based on the brand. The company described its operational course as based on the idea of integrated marketing communication, where the entire company is communicating the same core strategy and the same brand.

"At first I was thinking of answering that yes, we started strongly to brand what we are, but actually it went in the other way round. We saw that in our market, this kind of player was needed, and we devised our business strategy accordingly so that we were able to compete in that niche." (Sales and Marketing Director)

Table 6 The Switch's steps to becoming an international player (CEO of The Switch presentation materials 2011)

- Look for the growing market
- Monitor the geographical trends
- Analyze the technological trends
- Create strategy and communicate it to personnel
- Investors should have enough money to turn the company profitable
- Decide to become a world class player with competent people
- Create innovative and significant offering
- Dare to fulfill the customer requirements
- Create production concept that scales according to customer requirements
- Create processes that you can deliver what you have promised
- Communicate externally and internally your success
- Be alert and be ready to react to changing market conditions

Although the brand is built focusing on external factors (outside-in), the internal factors have also been kept in mind by building the brand in a way, that it fits the style of The Switch and the people in it. It was seen as crucial that the company was able to deliver what had been promised.

“We thought that the people who make buying decisions prefer going to listen to rock and roll in the pub than going to an art exhibition, this is a caricature. And another important thing was that the people who are delivering the message, they find it easier to deliver it if the message feels natural for them. Then the whole thing goes through better...it has been important to consider what the people in The Switch feel is good, and then emphasize that.” (Radikal-B)

The company brand strategy was adopted. The product brands, solar and wind were underplayed. The basic idea was to brand a company that had great products. This was chosen since the technology itself was seen as at the heart of the company and it was not portrayed in just one product. In addition, the biggest difference compared to the other companies in the field was The Switch's fast and agile working style, which was also related to the entire company. The purpose of the company brand was to get The Switch to look as big as possible and be taken seriously in the field.

“The biggest differentiator comes our way to operate and hence we chose to brand the company.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

“The purpose of The Switch's company advertising has really been that in certain buying circles, the company has been perceived as credible and big enough. Although they were small, we have made them look bigger than they really are.” (Radikal-A)

5.2 The brand

5.2.1 Brand dimensions

The interview data identifies the technology, customer orientation, networked style of operation and the people of The Switch as the cornerstones of the brand (see figure 15).

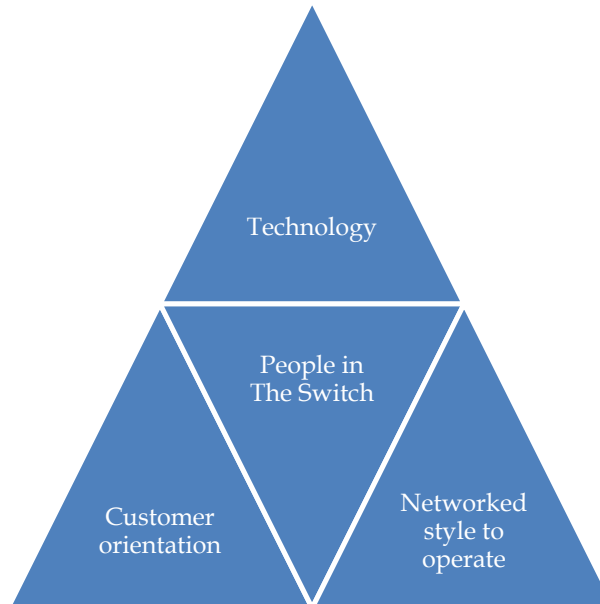


Figure 15 Cornerstones of The Switch brand

New technology refers to the technology revolution in the industry and the strategic decision to focus on newer PMG -technology. It also refers to company's ambition to be recognized as the first adopter of the new technology in the industry and hence to take ownership of the technology. The company name, The Switch, also refers to the technology change in the industry but also the new way of thinking, which The Switch has been pursuing. Customer orientation refers to the importance of working closely with the customers and achieving high customer satisfaction, since the amount of customers that the company focuses on at any one time is relatively small. The networked working style again refers to the company's divergent style of operating; instead of building its own factories in every country, the company has focused on building a subcontractor network, which enables a flexible working style and the ability to deliver orders of all sizes. Also people in The Switch were often mentioned as an important part of the brand and the company in the interviews and hence can be seen as one element of the brand.

“The attributes of the brand, although it is sort of boring thing, but the brand rest strongly on the technology that we have....one cornerstone of our brand has been that we have enunciated that the new technology in the industry is brought by us, we have been trying to claim the ownership of the technology.... An other strong characteristic has been our working style, which is a kind of network style... the third important thing is customer centricity and that explains why we are the “good guys”, despite the fact that the technology is there, we are still customer centric.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

“The brand consists, I don’t know if I can put it this way, but I think it starts from the people inside the organization and people who are driving the thing, I think it starts pretty much from them. ” (Radikal-B)

The image goal was to be recognized as an aggressive but positive and agile player in the field. The Switch wanted to be a breath of fresh air in the relatively conservative industry – a serious player but one with a twinkle in its eye. It wanted to resonate with the industry and be a topical actor with opinions and something to say. The company wanted to shake the old pattern of thoughts. The orange logo references a whirlwind that also reflects to the dynamic nature of the company. The Switch wanted to be a kind of opinion leader in the industry, which was supported by the image goal. The neutral tone of voice was eschewed.

“The Switch is kind of a brilliant blotch, orange, kind of electrical and fresh.” (Radikal-B)

“Usually in our field, B2B companies brand themselves in a neutral way which we have tried to avoid. The most important thing for us has been to be for or against in a way that arouses some feeling or creates a stimulus. ” (Sales and Marketing Director)

The Switch’s brand cornerstones and fundamental business style can also be seen in its values (see table 7); leading minds, dynamically different, exploring challenges, care for the environment, seriously relaxed. Leading minds refers to its aim to be a forerunner in the industry. Dynamically different represents The Switch aspiration to be an active and courageous player. Exploring challenges in contrast refers to its courage to do things in a new way. Care for the environment captures the company’s corporate citizenship point of view and its higher purpose of existence. Last but not least, seriously relaxed refers to the company’s high level of professionalism complemented with a humane perspective. (Webpages). The values are all relevant, innovative and their own way replicate the requirements and trends of today.

“I think our brand should definitely exactly replicate those values.” (Marketing Manager)

Table 7 Values of the company and the brand (adopted from the Company's web pages)

Leading minds	Dynamically different	Exploring challenges	Care for environment	Seriously relaxed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-of-the-art technology • Professional growth • Highly specialized • Reputable experience and know-how 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast • Innovative • Wiki/networked • Actively changing • High level of energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brave • Proud • Passion to make a difference • Actively doing something for a good cause 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving back • Giving to others • Green, renewable energy • Keen sense of higher purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior • Spirit of fun and respect • Attitude

The core of the brand has not changed over the years, but the main messages have. Certainly, the brand has formed as the company has grown and evolved over time. A brand is never ready. History has helped the company to understand better the promises that the brand needs to make and has already made. The promises have slowly turned to the results and thus strengthened the belief that the decisions that have been made have been the right ones.

“Now we have a history and people see that it has been true what we have said and our exceptional networking style has been beneficial...We have been right and now everyone sees that we have been right.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

For The Switch brand, much of the inspiration has been adopted from B2C branding. The company wanted to challenge the directions in the industry; it does not understand why company communication should always be neutral, heavily presented and concentrating on information about the company. The Switch believes that the information can be presented effectively and interestingly.

“When creating the brand, lot of influence was taken from consumer marketing which is rare in B2B.” (Radikal-A)

“Normally company communication should be very neutral which is something that we have avoided with our tone of voice and committing ourselves, which has been in line with our image goal.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

The Switch has had a story that it has communicated to the audiences. Telling a story is seen as an important part of creating brand image. As in every great story, in The Switch story, there is a beginning, a development stage and an end. The story begins from the notion that there is a new player in the field with the new technology. After that the company starts its trip to

conquer the world. It has managed to get into the world, travel around it and is finally able to conquer the world and be in harmony with it.

The story and The Switch's brave and distinguishable style can be clearly seen in the annual reports of the company. Examples pictures from the story are presented in figure 16.

"In the annual reports, usually no story is created." (Radikal-A)

In its 2007 Annual Report, The Switch welcomes the reader to the era of New Energy referring to the new technology and the new energetic company. The company management team members are presented as members of a rock band fooling around with brand tools, referring for example to "CEO and lead vocalist". Also the language is accordingly similarly of on an extraordinary theme; "Singing along with the customer" and "Join The Switch on their world tour" just as an example. The report is presented with The Switch's eye catching seriously relaxed style. (see Annual Report 2007.)

By 2008 the company is heading to conquest the world filled with attitude and a bit of arrogance. On the cover, the management team is presented with a slightly arrogant rock style and as full of attitude. "This grew crew is ready to rock'n'roll the world!" (see Annual Report 2008.)

2009 is the year of the "Fantastic Voyage", the company has got its foot in the world market and is now conquering it. On the cover there is a wanderer's hat on the world map. The CEO looks at the results and smiles contentedly. The Switch's employees are working on the top of the world together and cheering and supporting each other like musketeers. (see Annual Report 2009.)

By 2010 the world has been conquered and the company is in harmony with it. The report states; "Our chosen path has taken us to many extreme places around the world", and compares its journey and the company to Phileas Fogg who travelled around the world in 80 days in Jules Verne's story. In this annual report the management team representatives are presented in different extreme places like an extremely cold place with the northern lights and wind turbines, in front of a Chinese building that is conquered, on top of the world in a Zen-position etc. Although the company is in harmony with the world its sights are set on the future. (see Annual Report 2010.)

2007

Jukka-Pekka Mäkelä, CEO and lead vocalist
The customer rocks!

Singing along to the customer's melodies has always been the Swatch's strength. Superior technical know-how, agility and coverage are the driving forces for the industrial rock band.

"A If employees are committed to our customer-oriented organization, without capital expenditure, the facts, when and production. Together they become a strong force for our customer." - Jukka-Pekka Mäkelä, CEO of Swatch

In 2008 we are creating the basis for our growth by manufacturing as part of the Production Facility. At the same time, we have been strengthening our ties with our customers, focusing on the highest quality and consistency and productivity. Technical and production. The challenge is to make our products both functional and suitable for our customers' operations. Mäkelä reports.

"We have been able to position ourselves as a good partner in the business."

2008

2009

2010

Wind power business report: Dawn to new horizons

India, which exhibits great growth potential, is one of the new markets we entered in 2010.

When business technology will continue to develop rapidly in the coming years, the demand for the services of the Swatch Group will increase. The Swatch Group is committed to the development of the Swatch Group's business in the new markets. The Swatch Group is committed to the development of the Swatch Group's business in the new markets. The Swatch Group is committed to the development of the Swatch Group's business in the new markets.

The Swatch Group's business in the new markets is growing rapidly. The Swatch Group is committed to the development of the Swatch Group's business in the new markets. The Swatch Group is committed to the development of the Swatch Group's business in the new markets.

Wind power highlights

- Development in wind power technology continues to advance rapidly in the coming years.
- The Swatch Group is committed to the development of the Swatch Group's business in the new markets.
- The Swatch Group is committed to the development of the Swatch Group's business in the new markets.

Figure 16 Examples from the annual reports

5.2.2 Target of the brand

In the wind power industry, the value chain, presented in figure 17, consists of component suppliers (e.g. The Switch), who sell their components to the turbine manufacturers who build the complete wind turbines. Turbine manufacturers are invited to tender by wind farm developers, who are in charge of building the wind farm. Building a wind farm requires primarily obtaining permissions from different organizations, landowners and political bodies. Finally, the energy company buys the electricity produced in the wind farm or buys the entire wind farm. At every level of the value chain, the different engineering offices are consulting with the companies.

A primary target group for The Switch brand was the clients and wind turbine manufacturers. Also the engineering offices were seen as an important target group, since they are involved at all levels of the value chain. The importance of other target groups is more or less in the same order as the value chain; the further off the actor is in the value chain, the less important it is. Also the media was seen as an important target of the brand. Good relationships with the press were seen as a foundation for informing. The staff of the company were seen as an important target of the brand, but also a key element of the brand, since the brand is strictly and strongly related to the overall modus operandi. The role of the staff in branding will be discussed later.

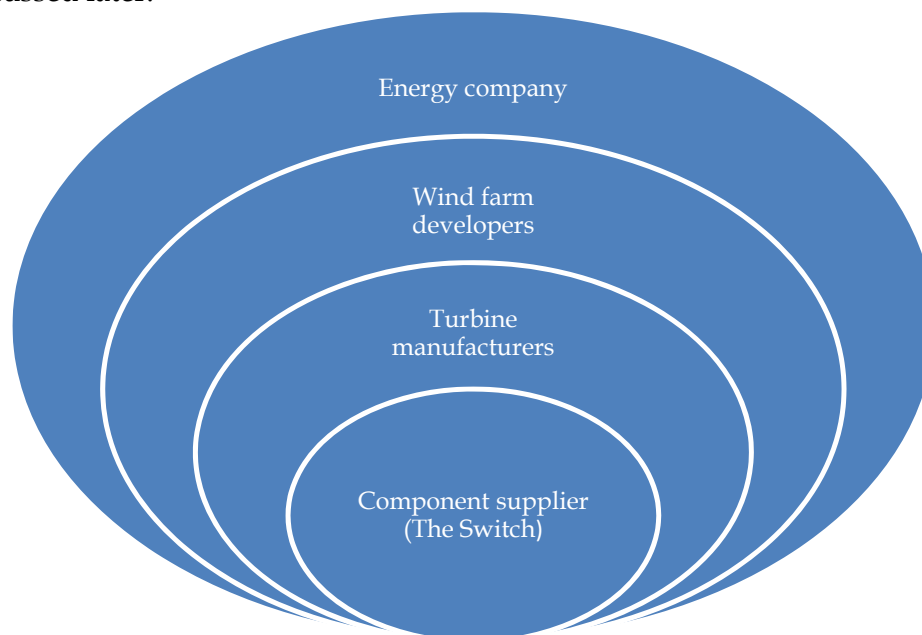


Figure 17 Value chain of the wind industry

Recently The Switch has been widened its branding scope to cover the entire wind industry, move forward in the value chain (engineer agencies, energy companies, energy park builders and planners, politics etc.) and by posing subjects of interest to parties other than just clients. For now, the company

sees that it has been able to reach the technical people in the client organizations via technical publications. Currently, the focus is moving from technical publications towards the more general information about the whole industry. Now the aim is to also reach management level (CTO, CFO etc.) of the target organizations, which is seen as a challenge. The Switch is planning to do it by focusing communication more on wider subjects related to the industry instead of emphasizing its technology and explaining it.

“The main target groups to whom we have been targeting the brand directly have been our clients. Lately, we have been widening the target of the brand to concern the wind power industry in general, by going a little further in the value chain and trying to exert influence there by bringing up the issues that are of interest to others than technical people in the value chain.”(Sales and Marketing Director)

“Next, we are trying to create the messages that better catch the attention also of those at higher levels in the organizations, like management, CTO’s and people responsible for finances. We want to talk to them and adjust our message to emphasize what is happening in the market more and communicate the kind of bigger trends instead of speaking about why this generator and this bearing is good.” (Communication Manager)

For the investors and possible buyers, The Switch has focused more on trying to explain the brand actions and justify the brand choices and to indicate the strong brand picture in the industry. The main messages have been rather similar to all the audiences, with the expertise of the audience still been stressed in the messages. The same themes have been communicated to all the stakeholders but flavored with the receiver’s special interest.

“We have the certain themes that we are trying to push through, so the variation is been done related to the details. For example we cannot explain the same details for investors and engineers.” (Communication Manager)

5.2.3 Branding channels

Influential channels in the renewable energy industry are rather different than many other businesses, since the decision to build a wind farm involves different groups of people. These people are at the same time B2B decision makers and consumers. The Switch channel strategy can be described as a “familiar in every place” (Radikal-A). All in all the company has tried to be an active player in the entire field and create conversation.

The external communication channels can be divided into two groups; the core communication channels and supportive channels. The core communication channels consist of face-to-face channels, of which the most important is the customer visits where The Switch presents itself, has its conversation with the client and asks what The Switch can do for them. Of second important are factory events, where The Switch invites clients to Finland to get to know their working processes. Third are the renewable

energy exhibitions, which are a well functioning channel in the wind industry.

“The most important communication form in our operation is customer visits, as boring as it may sound. We go face-to-face and tell, explain, discuss and finally ask what can we do for the client.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

The supportive channels are other than face-to-face channels, which support the face-to-face meetings with clients. In the wind industry, the professional magazines are seen as important platforms for creating awareness. Web pages were also seen as an extremely important channel to deliver the brand. The brand has been a big part of all the material that The Switch has produced and used.

“Basically I would say that the main channel or one of the main channels is the website. I mean, we have a very strong appearance on the web I think.” (Marketing Manager)

“We brought the branding with it (technical brochures etc.), like this (numbers) is for the technical people but when he/she need to justify the product for the upper management, which necessarily do not understand the technology, so this (text box and pictures) explains the product in nutshell in a way that the management level understands. This can also be accordingly the brand.” (Radikal-A)

Also both digital and non-digital direct marketing messages are used. The Switch has also organized its UpDate 360° meetings every other year (so far in 2007, 2009 and 2011), where it has invited people from around the world to participate. The events are also shown online for the people who are not able participate in person.

Two latest webcasts from The Switch UpDate 360° events can be found on the company web pages. For those meetings, The Switch has invited experts in the organization as well as partners and experts in the industry to speak up about the current issues in the field. The themes are related to The Switch, but the company is not always in the center of the communication. The UpDate 360° events are also rallying events for the people inside and outside the organization. A good example of this is found in the 2011 intro, where beautiful music is playing in the background and company managers share their thoughts on the success of The Switch in Finnish. The company members are presenting themselves as humble and smart. An example of the online UpDate 360° is presented in figure 18.

The company has also been contributing to blogs related to the wind industry (e.g. the CleanTech Finland blog) and sending speakers to different seminars. To deliver its brand, The Switch has also produced The Switch song created by Paleface and its band Conscious Youths. The style of the song is rap/hip-hop and hence also stresses the image of The Switch as a young, fresh company and one with attitude.

“Both The Switch and Conscious Youths share the same core values, including care for the environment. The Switch expresses these values in its offering for wind power; while Paleface and his rap group release the sounds of these values in their lyrics and rhythm.”(The Switch webpages)

The Switch UpDate 360° in Vaasa

Welcome to the webcast of our The Switch UpDate 360° in Vaasa taking place on February 16, 2011.

We have the pleasure to have you join us for a day filled with different viewpoints on the wind business.

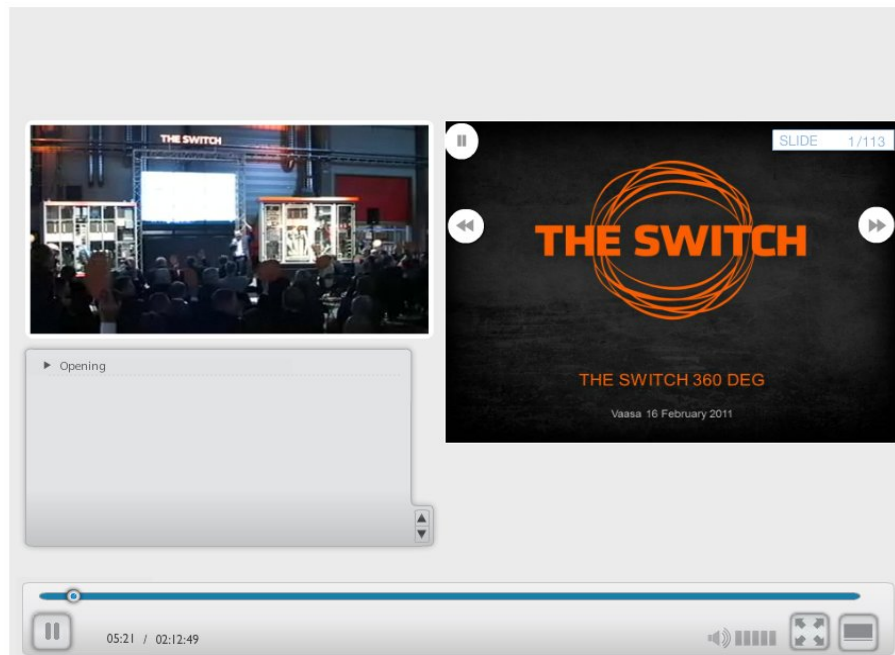


Figure 18 The UpDate 360° 2011

5.2.4 Brand and internal communication

As stated before, the staff of the company was seen as a target of the brand but also as a key element of the brand since the brand is strictly and strongly related to the overall modus operandi. Everything in the company is communicating its brand. The brand is seen as a natural part of the whole organization and a foundation of all its actions.

“Our brand is strongly incorporated in our style of acting.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

“They (the personnel) all know the brand, it is in their backbone. And then they have kind of spirit, that we will beat the world and although we are a small house, we are able to beat the big international houses.” (Radikal-B)

The strong integration of brand and company's identity also supports the fact that brand values are actually the same as company values. In fact, the values are originally created with the staff. Through them, the staff has regularly been reminded about the core points of The Switch. The values have also guided the personnel selection. Fitting in with the company's atmosphere is seen as important. Marketing and communication functions work closely with human resources. The company also designs its staff events to reflect the "The Switch spirit". The Switch has aimed to make its staff proud to work for the company. The personnel were also seen as a crucial factor in revising the brand.

"The brand is certainly integrated in to the organization." (Radikal-A)

"They really have a good mood so certainly it has been really important that the personnel have been taken into account. I think it is rather rare that the company really understands that every person, starting from the car driver is basically delivering the messages forward and hence does their own sales job even though he/she does not know it." (Radikal-B)

The importance of the personnel can also be seen from the publications of the company. Every person on the webpage, annual reports and other brochures are real people from The Switch. The company has also brought out people to tell the stories in their publication and seemingly is proud to tell how great people are working in the company.

"When you are looking at the annual reports, they all are the real people of The Switch, just as an example." (Radikal-A)

The values have also been a guiding line for internal communication, which plays a big part in The Switch. The main channel for internal communication is intranet. Recently the company has begun to publish an internal newsletter. The tone of the internal communication is intended to be light. The same themes that are communicated outside the organization have also been communicated inside. Also the personnel are highlighted in intranet by promoting the teams and actors through transmitting success stories. Communication has been kept as open as possible.

"Internal communication, which has a big role in our company, make sure the employees know what is going on." (Marketing manager)

"I would say that in intranet we are trying use lightness in our communication style. We are communicating the same themes internally that we communicate externally and also trying to highlight the employees. I have goal of relating success stories through teams and telling who the people behind the success are." (Communication Manager)

5.3 Brand and branding in the digital environment

5.3.1 Digital tools as a strategic decision

In the beginning, The Switch made a strategic decision to use electronic tools and channels in its communication as much as possible. The amount of printed material was intended to be kept to the minimum. In the beginning, the main reason to invest in digital tools was the fact that it was in line with the brand. As stated before, the company intended to create an image of a new and modern company and using modern tools in communication supported this vision.

“Using an electronic communication material creates vibes that the company is a modern in their communication and then the products are associated as modern as well.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

The more practical reasons to adopt digital tools were the speed, low cost and effectiveness of the tools. It was also seen as important to choose the best channels and platforms to meet the target groups for the communication, whether they were digital or not.

“The digital tools were chosen since the message was seen to spread through them much easier and we experienced that the renewable energy is so sexy and hence the messages should be in the channels where the people who are exploring renewable energy are...The digital emphasis is not just there for its own sake but because we thought that it this it was very good way to go.” (Radikal-A)

The Switch strongly believes that internet channels have been the most effective to get their message through and have helped build a certain image. The main difference was seen when comparing an internet promotion with an advertisement; the advertisement is read rapidly just once, but in the digital environment, the reader spends more time with the brand studying it through the web pages etc. The company does not believe it gets any new clients through social media tools, but it does trust the webpage to deliver new business. In addition, the global reach, speed and ability to interact with stakeholders were seen as advantages. For example, mailing lists were used to support marketing. Digital tools also made it possible to create powerful new kinds of presentation materials like 3D pictures and hence made things look even better, although PowerPoint presentations still play a big part as a presentation tool. The ability of digital tools to link certain things together was seen as a benefit.

“I certainly believe that in digital way, we get our message through better than any other way.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

“Digital channels are much faster. I mean for example, if I sent the brochure to India it takes ten days, if I send electronic campaign to India it takes two minutes...for example in the products you can show a 3D craft or animation which looks great! We have found big advantages in digital tools.” (Marketing Manager)

Digital tools have also facilitated the integration and cooperation of marketing and selling functions. One good example is the “touchscreen-selling tool”, which has been used in exhibitions. The screen guides the user through the choice of the correct generator for the wind turbine and then offers the option of buying a converter module. It also solicits contact information, which is sent straight to the company’s database in Finland for the sales department. Based on the information from the exhibition, the sales team can easily approach the prospective client.

“It was kind of touchscreen tool for sales people for exhibition use. The idea was that the sales people were able show and present the products in a more convenient way. Instead of putting the crosses in the box, the sales people were able to search for the right product just for a particular prospect.” (Radikal-B)

The Switch has also developed a massive database with information on not only clients, but everything related to the industry.

“We salvage and categorize everything... From the beginning, the idea has been to create a strong database that can be used as an engine for our communication.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

The detailed database provides an opportunity to automate marketing and communication functions and also to tailor messages, which improves the efficiency of marketing and communication. One example is the occasion when the company was working with one prospect that was also incorporated into the database.

“The prospect had some unqualified facts and lack of certain information which The Switch were able to recognize. The Switch reacted by writing a few stories concerning those specific topics and added them with reference story and more technical article to the next newsletter. After one week sending the letter, the sales went to see the prospect who was thrilled with the stories in the newsletter which were amazingly something that they were looking for.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

The company CRM tool, Sales Force, provides an opportunity to create individual user profiles and customer pages where people can discuss subjects related to the specific case. Providing this opportunity for discussion on the web is seen as effective.

“The sales person who uses the tool has their own profile there (SalesForce), it is surprisingly similar to Facebook, like it is built on top of this normal CRM tool. And there, every company and customer are presented in a similar way to

Facebook's fan pages where you can follow the page and have conversations there... It has been a good thing, it works." (Sales and Marketing Director)

As discussed before, the company is currently using intranet as its main internal communication channel. In intranet, staff can comment on posted news, although commenting has been low.

It seemed difficult for all the respondents to estimate the digital account for overall marketing and communication costs, since it was difficult to distinguish between the digital and non-digital expenditure. Digital marketing and communication can be seen as a platform that is involved in all marketing, communication and sales activities. The overall selling and marketing has been mainly based on face-to-face meetings like customer visits and exhibitions where the digital materials have been included in the form of presentations and digital selling tools. The digital materials are integrated tightly with all other material and hence, it is difficult to assess its share. Most of the digital materials like brochures, presentations and annual reports are also provided in printed form, since it has been seen that clients want to have something tangible to take away after a presentation or a meeting, even if they will never read it. In marketing communications, the digital and traditional are used equally. The advertising agency representative estimated the use of digital tools in The Switch case to be as high as 70-75%, or at least higher than is usual in B2B companies.

"Digital and non-digital tools are mixed and thus it is extremely difficult to measure how much we use for digital marketing." (Sales and Marketing Director)

"I can't really say it but if you compare costs of digital and print, the costs of digital tools has been much lower. I think that our digital part is more important than the print part in our marketing, but the costs of digital marketing are lower than the print costs, but I cannot give you an exact number." (Marketing Manager)

"I would say 70-75 %, or at least a more notable share than usually seen in B2B." (Radikal-A)

When choosing the marketing channels, it was seen as important to consider to whom the company is talking, and which channels the target of the communication is using. In the renewable energy industry, the internet was seen as the main channel which the customers and people in the industry use to search for information. There, the challenge is to stand out from the competition. The internet was not chosen just because of its charm or novelty but it was seen as an effective tool to create awareness about the company.

"I think it is the internet which is the main tool which the customers are using when searching for information." (Sales and Marketing Director)

"Our focus on the web site is that it is available everywhere and it is the easiest way to communicate with our stakeholders." (Marketing Manager)

It was also seen as important to perceive which tools the target group is using, what kind of technical instruments they use (communicators, tablets, laptops etc.) and what kind of connections are available to the target audience. When planning the content, it was seen as important to understand the different nature of internet, especially the different style of how people surf web pages. In the digital environment the headlining and dividing of content was seen as key. The visitor needs to get hooked to search for more and more information.

“In the digital environment, the content is ploughed through differently than in print. You need to choose the headlines much better and divide the content and at the same time, it has to be something that hooks the reader and makes the reader want more information.” (Radikal-A)

“We are always simplifying things (on the internet page). Somehow you always create too complicated structures and usually the simplest things are the ones that work best. We have noticed that the more subpages, the less they are read, for example on the webpage, the main things need to be on the main level.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

5.3.2 Branding on the internet

As stated before, web pages have been one of the main tools used to deliver the brand on the internet. The company’s webpage can be described as a home of the brand and the part that the company has the control over, at least to some degree. The Switch’s web pages are a comprehensive mixture of company information, product information and current news of the brand. The web pages will be explained in more detail and analyzed in the next section.

The heart of the webpage is The News, a section that asks, “Are you switched on?” and provides current news on the company as well as on the general trends in the industry. The news section will be analyzed more comprehensively later as it is the core element of the website. In fact the leading idea when building the company’s web pages was to make them like a blog rather than a web page, and it remains an aim. This blog inspiration was chosen since the blog was seen to represent a more relaxed communication style, which provides an opportunity to take a different perspective on various subjects rather than just to inform people about the company’s situation.

“We tried to make our webpage to be more like a blog than a normal company web page. Although we haven’t got as far like I would have liked...a blog is social media and hence enables more relaxed communication style and taking different standpoints.”(Sales and Marketing Director)

The Switch has also adopted social media tools to deliver its brand. The main social media tools, Twitter and Facebook and LinkedIn will be discussed more comprehensively later.

The Switch has also used other internet based content delivery tools although they do not play a big role and were just mentioned during the interviews. The tools concerned are an RSS-feed which delivers basically the same content found in the news section of the web pages.

The company has also used Flickr, which is a photo management and sharing application, although it is not active there (the last picture added was in 2010). There, The Switch have mainly the same pictures which they have on its Facebook page; pictures of exhibitions, company events and company members working and having fun.

YouTube has also been used to deliver The Switch brand. YouTube videos can be found on the company's web page media center, as well as through links on the Facebook page. At first, The Switch videos were delivered through the marketing managers own account, over all 15 videos including the four blog videos, one video wishing viewers a merry Christmas in different languages (watched 74 times), seven videos from The Switch 'UpDate 360' event from 2009, one video concerning the The Switch and the manufacturing agreement made with Scanfil in 2009 (watched 524 times) and one on a similar agreement between The Switch and Mecanova (watched 694 times). The channel also features a three-minute long The Switch movie (watched 498 times), where the company and people are presented while The Switch song plays in the background.

The Switch energy-channel on YouTube (theswitchenergy 2012) has four videos of about six minutes in length; one telling the story of the company (watched 89 times), one illustrating the model factory concept (watched 370 times), one concerning the 'Full-power converter' (watched 803 times) and one video explaining The Switch 'Permanent magnet generator' (watched 11 575 times). The same videos are also used in exhibition material to promote the company and its technology.

5.4 The company web page

5.4.1 Brand and the company's webpage

The company's web site is divided into seven categories; company, products, services, news, media center, career and contact. The main page is presented in figure 19.

"The Company" section offers basic information on the company itself and welcomes readers "...to join The Switch side of life!" The site seems to be targeted at non-technical people with a basic knowledge of the industry who want to know what The Switch is and what it stands for. The company values as a working philosophy are explained carefully with the quotations

from world famous thinkers and examples of how certain values are met through the company's daily routines.

“People do not decide to become extraordinary. They decide to accomplish extraordinary things.” (Sir Edmund Hillary)



Figure 19 The Switch's main web page

Also the management team is pictured along with basic facts about their work and personal life and their motivation to work for The Switch. As Dag Sandås (CFO) highlights the job opportunity in The Switch was “too good to pass up”. The company's desire to be socially responsible is also brought up by presenting the examples of the company's environmental and social responsibility sections. The company explains how it sees its responsibilities

and gives examples how it has considered them. The annual reports are also available to read there.

“The Product” section provides the visitor with plenty of technical information about the products (wind and solar) and the technology. This part of site seems to be targeted at the technical people. The product part is built in a way that the visitor needs to click forward to get more detailed information on a certain topic. Also tables and technical drawings are used to visualize data. There are also references from the projects in which The Switch technology is used.

“The Services” section sheds light on the operating logic of The Switch and its support system in all phases of the delivery (design - production - proactive (meaning after service)). In this section the company aims to convince its readers that it is a reliable partner to work with in all phases during the process and also offers its nationwide 24-hour service phone number.

“The Media Center” offers a variety of information and materials concerning the company. Here, the visitor can find annual reports, various brochures and also data sheets, official images and logos, screensaver, wallpaper, publications, video and audio materials, not forgetting The Switch Song.

“The Careers” section offers the visitor information about the open positions in the company as well as career stories by company employees. The company values are highlighted too. “The Contact” section provides an address and phone number for the various corporate offices, the appropriate weather forecast for each region, and a form to contact the company with feedback or to request further information.

5.4.2 Taking brand promise online

Next, the webpages are analyzed by using the guiding principles of “taking the brand promise online” (de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004, presented in figure 6).

Locating the brand and speed of download

The pages of The Switch website are easy to find and convenient to use. Also the customer has been taken into account in usability as well as in content. Information about the company and its products is available in abundance. Although the site looks good, it does not stumble by using overly difficult applications that would slow use. The extraordinary effect is created with great pictures and layout.

Site appearance

The tone of voice represents the brand well; it is piquant but professional. The overall appearance of the page is stylish, expensive, well made and reliable. Despite the strong colors and pictures that are used, the impression stays professional and consistent. The customers and the main market areas

are also taken into account by providing the web pages in English, which is the language of the industry, but also in Chinese, which is one of the main markets and where providing information in the native language is a great advantage. One server is even located in Hong Kong to ensure that the web pages are working properly. The information on the staff of The Switch is included on the site with pictures of the individuals so as to create an impression of reliability.

Navigation

The clear structure makes it easy for the user to grasp information about different topics. The information is provided for technical people but also for people with no technical knowledge but a basic knowledge of the industry. The language and the content of the site are designed to attract the people working in the industry, not the average Joe. The content is written using the jargon of the industry.

Differential reward

What make the company pages extraordinary compared to those of its competitors are the strong and brave colors that are used but also the fact that the staff are presented in pictures and sometimes with their names. The news section is also quite different from competitor sites. The Switch genuinely wants to be present and a part of the conversation, not hide itself or its personnel behind the brand.

Personal support

The visitor is offered a phone number to access support if needed. The contact section urges customers to contact the company in the way most convenient for them.

Physical delivery and return

The web pages provide links to the company's Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn pages to offer the visitor more information from these media. These medias are analyzed further in more detail. Briefly, The Switch continues to deliver its brave but professional line through these media. The results of the stakeholder questionnaire indicate that the overall perception of The Switch was positive and coherent between the respondent groups. Hence, it can be stated, that The Switch has been able to deliver its brand successfully also beyond its webpage.

5.5 The main tools adopted on the internet to create content

As stated before, the heart of the webpage is "The News", a section that provides current news on the company as well as the general trends in the industry. It includes the latest news, talking points, newsletters, press

releases and an event calendar. This is the most interactive part of the web page and represents the blog ideology. "The News" provides a platform for the company to express its opinions.

"We have tried to deliver the image of ourselves as an opinion leader in the industry and for that, the blog has been the main tool." (Sales and Marketing Director)



Next the main tools used to express the opinions are analyzed and discussed in order to find out what has been written, how the content is written and who is writing. First, the newsletters are analyzed which is the most non-interactive platform but still an important tool with which to share the company's thoughts. The other two analyzed tools, the blog and talking points, represent the more interactive side, encouraging visitor comment. The company also sees the blog as a social media tool, due to the possibility to interact and share thoughts by commenting.


5.5.1 Newsletters

For this research all 17 newsletters published before 2012 (from 1/2008 to 4/2011) with their 150 news stories were analyzed apart from the promotions of forthcoming exhibitions or the connected featured news (21). The newsletters were written for all the external stakeholders of the company and sent to subscribers across the industry. The letters included sections of company news (including personnel news and expansions), success stories concerning customer cases and reference stories. There was also a talking point section, which will be discussed later. Later the highlights concerning the top news and featured news sections were added. The last 14 newsletters also included a column by the CEO called "Dear friends", which could be described as an editorial. In that section the CEO usually discusses the current market trends and comments on how The Switch is going to address them. The CEO also thanks partners for their cooperation, praises company employees and offers reassurances that the company is on the right track. An example of the newsletter is presented in figure 20.

For the further analysis all the news stories were reduced and categorized based on the content (see figure 21). The most often recurring subject was the technology of the company (21%). Most of the technology related stories were explaining and justifying the chosen technology. Reference stories and cooperation news formed the second most common theme (15%).


FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

THE SWITCH  FACEBOOK  TWITTER


01/2011
SWITCHING ON
Frequently 

Dear Friends

Building future-proof design
As the wind power industry is rallying for new and larger turbine designs, The Switch responds to this trend by introducing eight new turbine design models in 2011.
[Read more »](#)




Talking point



Success stories


The Switch wins Finnish President award
President of Finland Tarja Halonen granted The Switch with an Internationalization Award.
[Read more »](#)



The Switch enters India's booming wind and solar market
The Switch will be contributing with technology and components to the export of 166 1.5MW wind turbines to India.
[Read more »](#)

Measuring the perception of performance
How is The Switch doing?
[Read more »](#)

Company news



Third The Switch Update 360°
[Read more »](#)

100% service: The Proactive Switch supports customers through the entire product lifetime
[Read more »](#)

Joining the team
New faces at The Switch.
[Read more »](#)

Find out more about The Switch
[Read more »](#)


Meet us!

Greetings from Delhi Sustainable Development Summit 2011
[Read more »](#)

EWEA 2011
March 14 – 17
Brussels Exhibition Centre, Belgium

Wind Power India 2011
April 7 – 9
Chennai

AWEA Wind Power 2011
May 22 – 25
Anaheim, CA, United States



2012 © www.theswitch.com

Figure 20 Example of the newsletter front page

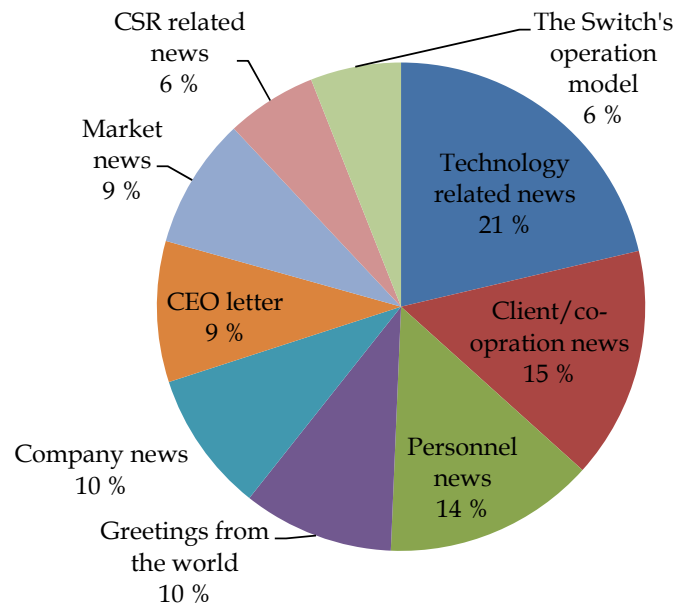


Figure 21 Subjects in newsletters

These stories are intended to garner respect from other industry actors by presenting the cases and new customers that rely on The Switch technology. Also through success stories and cooperation news, The Switch is able to present itself alongside more established players in the market. Personnel news (14%) also plays a big part in that. The company manager and directors are pictured and short descriptions provided. People working in key positions such as in a new market area, were usually presented with a more detailed story and more personal details (like family and hobbies being mentioned). The Switch intends to show the reader the type of experienced people working for the company and so gain credibility in the industry in general.

Other themes discussed in newsletters were greetings from all over the world (10%), mostly from the exhibitions where the company had participated. In the exhibition news, the company usually thanked the visitors and described the (always high) interest shown toward the company and its technology. The orange color and interactive exhibition stand seemed to attract the visitors well. The company also relayed news (10%), mostly of its expansion, like opening a new factory or leveraging operations in new market areas. Through these stories the company was able to verify its enormous growth. Also the general analysis of the company's key markets was presented (9%).

The Switch also employs its newsletters to communicate its actions related to corporate social responsibility (6%) and hence strengthens its responsible image. The CSR news concerned such things as employee recreational days, sponsoring a boys football team and issues related to clean

technology. Newsletters also give an opportunity to explain The Switch operations model (6%) and justify it.

The target group for the various technical stories in the newsletter seems to consist of technical people in the industry, possible technical people in the buying center and engineering consultants. The reference stories and personnel news seem to be targeted more at the decision makers of the client company to reduce the buying risk. Exhibition reports could be targeted at the people who visited the exhibition and the news offered a great opportunity to continue the relationship and remind them about the meeting. Company news, the CEO column and the market news seem to be targeted at all actors in the industry to inform them that The Switch is a growing power and a player to be taken seriously. The news concerning The Switch operations model addresses the skeptics and the CSR news the politicians and other decision makers.

The company newsletters are visually well constructed, easy to read and navigate. Lots of pictures are used. The pictures are mainly of real people from the company, while technical pictures accompany the technical stories. Some pictures represent company staff in less-formal situations too. The high quality photographs represented The Switch's seriously relaxed style of operation.

5.5.2 The Blog

The blog has been the medium used to express opinions and share thoughts related to the company's actions and the industry in general. An example of a blog posting is presented in figure 22. The overall goal has been to stimulate conversation and create an impression of The Switch as an opinion leader in the industry.

"On our webpage, the blog has been the main thing." (Sales and Marketing Director)

For this research, all 14 blog postings published before 2012 (from 9.12.2009 to 15.9.2011) were analyzed. Information on the writer, the purpose of the story, its content and possible comments were collected from all the blog texts for further analysis. The first four blog stories were published as one-minute long video clips where the CEO shared his thoughts. The rest of the stories were in written form. The blog texts were short, concise features in which a company representative or external writer shares their thoughts about some current issue. Writers use their own names and pictures. The most active writers were the CEO (29%), product managers (22%) and business development directors from different countries (21%) (see figure 23).

Peter Nyegaard Jensen: Danish Vikings fight to keep global market leadership

Tue, March 8, 2011

Competition in the global wind market has never been greater. Therefore, the Danish wind industry is aware that new technology development is more important than ever. Also at the governmental level, there is a common interest to secure Danish workplaces and Danish exports.

After last year's shocking staff reductions at Vestas, the Danish government presented a proposal for a future new energy policy that represents a long trail towards 2050 and comes with a number of concrete initiatives for 2020. The proposals have been received with praise in the wind industry.

The proposal increases Denmark's renewable energy targets for 2020 to 33% from 30%. This is an important signal that Denmark will continue to be at the forefront of rapidly transforming its energy system towards one based on renewable energy. It gives Danish technology development, growth and jobs.

The Danish wind power giants and the 240 sub-suppliers to the Danish Wind Industry Association will focus on the development of new technology.

Permanent magnet generators are increasingly being introduced in multi-megawatt size turbines. 3 MW wind turbines with direct drive are already on the rise, and wind turbines of more than 5 MW will be ready for grid connection in 2012.

We at The Switch are following the development with interest. Not only are we among the few companies in the world mastering permanent magnet technology, but we are also among the very few able to supply **direct-drive generators** above 5 MW based on proven technology.

Denmark has first-mover advantage and as Vikings intends to fight to maintain its global market leadership, focusing on large offshore turbines.

As we move towards 2020, the European waters will add another 3.7 GW of offshore wind power per year. This represents an annual market potential of approximately EUR 10 billion, of which EUR 7.6 billion is to be invested in the Northern European offshore market.

Peter is responsible for The Switch business development in Denmark and Scandinavia

SHARE   

One response to "Peter Nyegaard Jensen: Danish Vikings fight to keep global market leadership"

1. T Lee says:
March 23rd, 2011 at 23:36:09

I'm a 4th generation american norwegian who owns shares of American Superconductor Tech – which just bought the "Switch". Keep up the good work!

Leave a reply

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website

Comment



Figure 22 Example of a blog posting

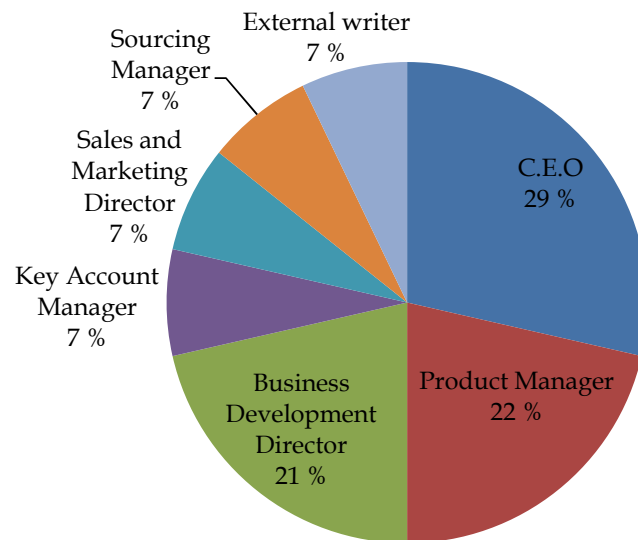


Figure 23 Writers on The Switch's blog

Blog texts seemed to follow a logic; addressing some general topic or concern related to the industry and how The Switch is going to reckon with it. The most of the texts concerned The Switch technology; the overall demand for The Switch technology in general (36%) and justifying its technology (22%). Also the concern in the industry about the sufficiency of rare earth materials (21%) was discussed often in the blog. (see figure 24). Through the blog, The Switch demonstrated that the company is up-to-date and aware of industry trends and able to respond to the current challenges. The amount of commenting seemed to be quite low, with only two positively commented blog postings.

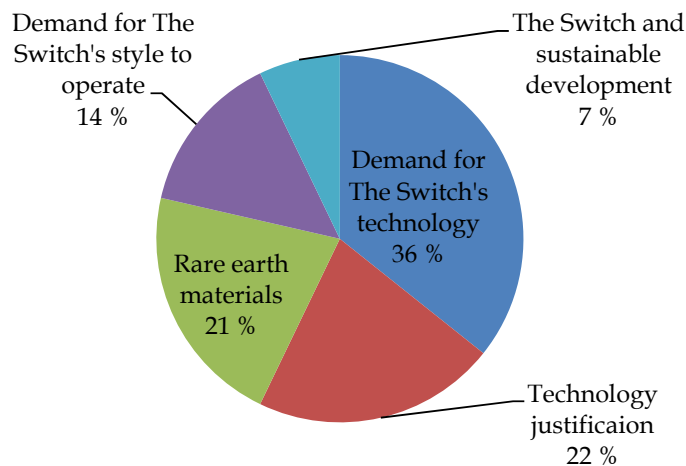


Figure 24 Subjects of The Switch's blog

5.5.3 Talking points

Talking points were first published as part of the newsletters, but recently were given a dedicated section of the website linked to the news section. An example of content from the talking point section is presented in figure 25. For this research all 21 talking points published before 2012 (from 20.2.2006 to 7.12.2011) were analyzed. From each talking point section, the purpose of the story, its content and the experts referenced were collected for further analysis.

ARE YOU SWITCHED ON?

LATEST NEWS
BLOGS
TALKING POINTS
NEWSLETTERS
PRESS RELEASES
EVENT CALENDAR

Don't save your way out of the crisis
 Mon, February 13, 2012

With the exceptional volatility of the global economy still wreaking havoc on new energy companies in every corner of the world, Dag Sandås, CFO at The Switch, gives his viewpoint on reasonable steps to take to build for the future.

He bases his guidelines on his own first-hand experience with The Switch, which has been able to grow remarkably despite the ups and downs that any start-up venture faces when working towards hard-earned international credibility.

Read more »
 Posted in categories [Latest news](#), [Talking points](#)

Creating a future in New Energy means innovating it together today
 Wed, December 7, 2011

The Switch came to the market five years ago on a mission to bring better drive train technology to wind power generation that allows more energy per turbine. Our idea was to push the permanent magnet generator (PMG) as the technology of choice because it maximizes energy yields, especially at partial loads. The full-power converter (FPC) too offers the highest-level performance by assuring utility-grade power.

What has happened during these first five years in the market? Practically all of the top 10 turbine manufacturers have selected PMG for their turbines. And the drivers have remained the same: better quality power, more energy and more robust, compact design for PMGs.

Read more »
 Posted in categories [Latest news](#), [Talking points](#)

SIGN UP FOR NEWS FROM THE SWITCH

First name: *

Last name: *

E-mail: *

Company:

*These fields are required.

Figure 25 Talking Points –section on the web page

In talking points, the issues relating to the company and its markets were discussed more deeply than in the blogs. The purpose seemed to be to explain the different themes in detail with various technical drawings and tables. The most often discussed topics explained and justified the technology of The Switch (62%). Also the future foresights (14%) of the market and the company were analyzed carefully. There were also greetings from Santa Claus forwarded at Christmas (see figure 26).

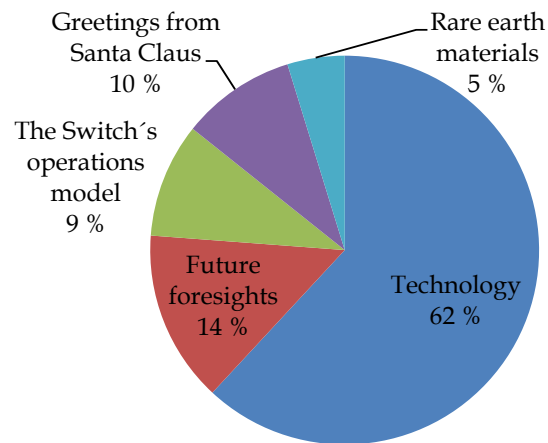


Figure 26 Subject of Talking points

The writer remained anonymous except for the first talking point. However, for most of the issues, there was some expert interviewed from R&D (33%), the management team (29%) or from among the product specialists/managers (24%). Each interviewee was presented with their name and picture. (see figure 27.) Commenting also seemed to be quite a rare occurrence in the talking points section (only two positively commented issues).

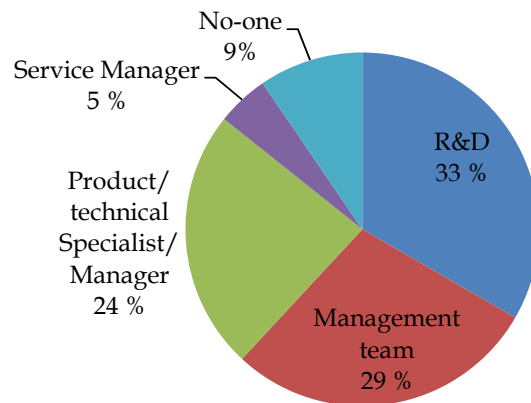


Figure 27 Experts in Talking points

5.6 Branding in social media

5.6.1 Usage of social media tools

The main purpose behind the company adoption of social media tools was the image goal and the aim to be identified as a forerunner. The second reason was the fact that the social media tools brought more life to the web pages. Besides the company's blog, the main social media channels that The Switch actively utilizes are Twitter and Facebook. The company also uses LinkedIn but not as actively as the previously mentioned options. The company uses social media to post messages about everything systematically in different channels. Of the internet tools, the blog and webpage content is seen the main avenue, with Twitter and Facebook as supporting channels.

"We have tried to deliver the image of us as an opinion leader in the industry...In fact, one reason to adopt social media tools was just to get the web page to be more alive...The blog in our webpage has been the main thing and all the others, like Twitter and Facebook, are just supporting. Initially, I opened them (Twitter and Facebook) just because of the image goal. When we started to build the brand, it was kind of statement that if you are tweeting, you have something different in your attitude, you think in a more modern way, that was kind of the thought then." (Sales and Marketing Director)

Through social media, the company seeks to receive important information. It is seen as an easy way to follow current events and get a rather comprehensive compilation of what is going on in the field. The Marketing and Sales Manager actively follows the whole industry rather than just what is written about the company, since writings concerning the company itself are still relatively rare. If there is something interesting, he reacts to the news in his own name as a representative of the company.

"I believe that it is the best to be yourself but at the same time the representative of the company." (Sales and Marketing Director)

The company has also approached professional bloggers when publishing the annual report in order to get the message delivered more effectively in social media channels in the renewable energy industry. Hence, they organized two publication events; one old school event in a more conservative place and one in a fashionable place to attract the bloggers. In both events the CEO presented the company and was available to discuss it.

"We thought that it would be very cost effective and distinctive way to deliver the message...broadcasting almost immediate news posts through different social media channels." (Radikal-B)

Next the main social media channels are discussed more comprehensively in order to find out, how the company is really using these tools to convey the brand.

5.6.2 Twitter

Twitter has been the main social media channel and was seen as the most effective channel in social media. The key idea behind adopting Twitter was to exploit its newness; it was thought that someone using Twitter would have a different angle and a modernity in their attitude. Twitter posts were targeted more at the wind power industry in general, and to the whole value chain. An example from the Twitter page is presented in figure 28. The company policy is to primarily tweet links concerning their own press releases, highlight subjects from their newsletters and post positive stories written about them. If there is not anything directly related to the company available, The Switch tweets interesting, positive themes and happenings related to the industry.

“For example when we have our own announcements, we post them and highlight newsletter stories and of course we tweet if the are positive things written about us, and if there is none, we tweet interesting industry news and occurrences. For example if there is something related to our technology and also if there is something positive related to wind and solar power industry in general.”
(Communication Manager)

The Switch uses Twitter under the name @theswitchenergy. Although the company tweets the company name, the main user of Twitter is the Communication Manager whose image fronts the Twitter account. As at 3.1.2012 The Switch had 390 followers and 3771 sent tweets. The company uses #P2E, #wind and #solar hashtags in their tweets. In Twitter, hashtags are used to mark keywords or topics in tweets to categorize messages. Hashtags help users to find news related to certain topics, like news related to the wind industry, since the news is marked with a wind-related hashtag. For this research, all the tweets, published during the year 2011 (from 3.1.2011 to 15.12.2011) (n=952) were selected for further analysis. Of those 83.30% (n=793) were tweeted by using the #wind hashtag and 15.65% (n=149) were tweeted to be shown for The Switch followers and Twitter page visitors. The tweets tweeted without the #wind hashtag were mainly about The Switch as a company (70.44% of all tweets without #wind) and tweets with the #wind hashtag to the industry in general (99.62% of all tweets with #wind).

The Switch
@theswitchenergy
Switching power to energy, #P2E #wind #solar
<http://www.theswitch.com>

Following

3,798 TWEETS

557 FOLLOWING

704 FOLLOWERS

Tweet to The Switch

Tweets

- WindpowerEngineering** @Windpower_Eng 10 Apr
Permanent-magnet-generator manufacturer has five worthy ideas for lowering energy costs. bit.ly/HgjSaN #wind #windpower
Retweeted by The Switch
- The Switch** @theswitchenergy 2 Apr
Lowering the cost of energy made simple: As wind and solar compete as serious contenders in generating more ener... bit.ly/HAVX5u
- The Switch** @theswitchenergy 30 Mar
sending a message for action on climate change this Saturday, March 31st earthhour.org fb.me/Jet1K65g
- The Switch** @theswitchenergy 29 Mar
[@GIAGroup](http://GIAGroup) lists top 3 concerns of American Competitive Intelligence Managers in China goo.gl/qwg8a
- The Switch** @theswitchenergy 28 Mar
we are recruiting! goo.gl/Rh9y0
- The Switch** @theswitchenergy 26 Mar
Five Rights to Freedom of The Switch give the ability to excel even during hard times: The wind power business h... bit.ly/H4n03X
- The Switch** @theswitchenergy 26 Mar
Join us at the EWEA Annual Event 2012 to lower the cost of energy: The Switch has taken a closer look at how to ... bit.ly/Hamnl2
- The Switch** @theswitchenergy 22 Mar
[@helink1](http://helink1) Hi! Thanks for your interest in The Switch! You can get in touch with our HR department at theswitch.com/career/applica...
In reply to Kristo Helin
- The Switch** @theswitchenergy 22 Mar
Business Line: Finnish company The Switch introduces MW-scale inverter thehindubusinessline.com/companies/arti...

Similar to The Switch

- Wind Energy Update** @W_E_Update Follow
- Kristan Grote** @kristangrote Follow
- Canadian Wind Energy** @canadawind Follow

twitter

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Status Apps Resources Jobs Advertisers
Businesses Media Developers

Figure 28 The Switch's Twitter page

Mainly The Switch tweeted links to the news stories concerning the industry (87% of all tweets in 2011). The stories were mainly related to the technology or the market situation in the industry or future insights. The second most popular tweeting topic was linking stories from the company's web page or social media channels (9% from all tweets in 2011). All of these news were tweeted without the #wind hashtag and hence targeted to The Switch's Twitter followers. The tweets were mainly links to the company blog or talking points but also links to added Facebook photos and YouTube videos. The Switch also tweeted news where The Switch was mentioned (3% of all tweets in 2011). These were mainly news where The Switch technology was

discussed or news where the company member was as an expert in the news story. Re-tweeting seemed to have a minor part (1% of all tweets in 2011). Twitter seemed to be the channel adopted by The Switch to transmit news stories, mainly related to the industry and hence to create an image of an active player in the industry (see figure 29).

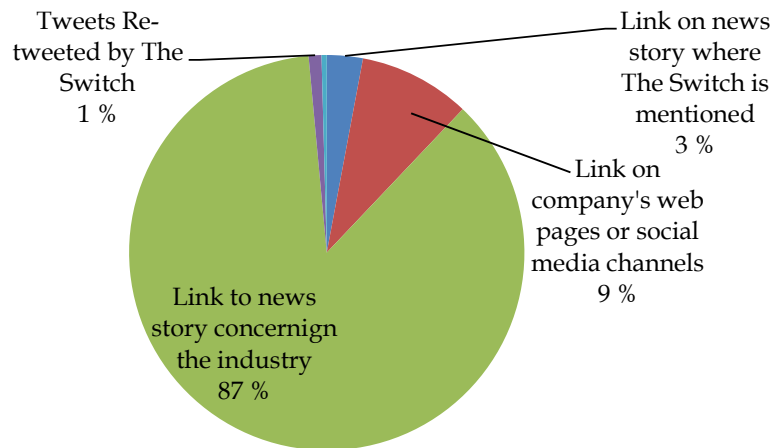


Figure 29 The Switch's tweets in 2011

5.6.3 Facebook

The other strongly adopted social media application was Facebook, which was targeted more at the company's inner circle, mainly the staff. The interviews reveal that there are now employees, their families, computer suppliers on Facebook and everyone can join. Although it is mainly targeted for internal groups, it is not considered a problem if there are clients or other external groups of the company present. The main idea of Facebook is to boost "The Switch spirit". An example of The Switch's Facebook page is presented in figure 30.

"Facebook is more a tool for our friends and we use it more for unofficial communication. For friends of The Switch, we want to share how we work and something that cannot be read in our brochures. It gives a company the face and place to show the values as well as who our employees are, share how we work and tell that we have fun on the way." (Marketing Manager)

"The company has used Facebook for systematic non-stop news feeding about everything beginning from the annual report photo shoots to normal news feeding." (Radikal-A)

"If there is something positive related to the industry in general, The Switch will 'like' it." (Communication Manager)

facebook

The Switch
is broadcasting LIVE



Making of annual report
LIVE broadcast from The Switch's phone
via Bambuser.com: Sign up
phone model: iPhone 3GS
position: 60.293368, 24.9695

Tykkää · Kommentoi · Share · 14. joulukuuta 2010 kello 12:56 via Bambuser

Nilla Sandås tykkää tästä.

Kirjoita kommentti...

The Switch
Good to read



The True Cost of Renewable Energy | Renewable Energy News Article
www.renewableenergyworld.com
What does renewable energy cost? Isn't it still more expensive than fossil fuel electricity? Way more? In a word: no.

Tykkää · Kommentoi · Jaa · 9. joulukuuta 2010 kello 19:06

Adel Samara tykkää tästä.

Kirjoita kommentti...

The Switch

Figure 30 Postings from Facebook

For the content analysis all the 141 wall posts posted from 11.9.2009 to 16.12.2011 were collected. The Facebook page is built as a company fan page where the writer is the company. As at 28.12.2011 the company had 478 Likes. The Switch is the most active poster on the page, with 88% of all primary posts, which is quite natural. The most posted issues were passing on company related news (25%) through links to stories on the company's web page (i.e. newsletters, talking point texts, blog stories). Posting the news

related to the industry in general (where The Switch was not mentioned), was also quite common (20%). Other frequent subjects were posts related to exhibitions and other events (17%) involving the company. The posts were mostly informative posts to invite people to come and meet the company at certain exhibitions and photos of company employees working at the exhibitions; building a stand or chatting with clients etc. Facebook was also a channel to post other issues, not related to the business (13%), like practical jokes, amusing coincidences such as the discovery of a restaurant called Switch and clips related to the making of the annual report video, where staff were featured in makeup or posing (see figure 31).

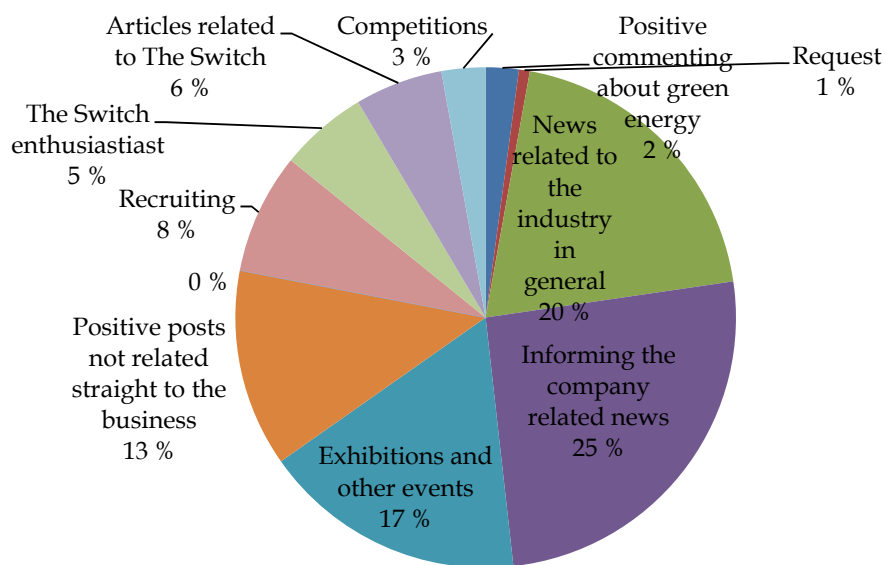


Figure 31 Subjects in The Switch's Facebook page

All in all, the tone of voice on the web page was quite relaxed. The company brand choices seemed to have made it possible to be humorous in a natural manner on the Facebook page. The Switch answered comments posted by other group members within 24 hours if an answer was needed. The language that The Switch used when answering the messages was friendly and informal e.g. "cheers", "...nice to hear :-)", not informative or distant.

The photos and videos used were not professionally made, which made them look even more realistic in telling the story of the brand and not marketing it. The Switch does not just have the Facebook page, but has understood the nature of it and is an active user of it.

Of the 124 posts posted by The Switch, 90 were 'liked' or commented on (73%). Hence, it can be stated that the communication on the Facebook page has not been just broadcasting and the page has also been a platform for interaction. The most liked comments were related to the winning of the

internationalization award (17 and 15 likes). Also the congratulations for the Finnish hockey team (12 likes) and The Switch truck on the road (10 likes) were highly rated. A new video from the converter, the pictures about building an exhibition stand, the news about the acquisition and news of how Japan had used wind power to compensate for nuclear energy were all liked nine times. The most liked comments seemed to be related to big company news and emotionally loaded news. The more informative the message was, the less it was liked or aroused reaction.

5.6.4 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the third channel used by The Switch. Although the interviewees stated that it has not has been used as well as the company could have. LinkedIn is seen as a slightly boring channel. The Switch has tried to use it for recruiting people but not much for anything else. It can be argued that LinkedIn is not as important to the company's brand as Facebook and Twitter.

“Maybe we haven't really been able to utilize LinkedIn well. It is a kind of boring channel.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

Another reason for not using LinkedIn actively is that the company does not see it as a place for conversation in their industry. It was seen more as a channel where people post messages which others read without reacting to them.

“I think we have a group for our company where nobody is really active...but I know that we have used it also for recruiting” (Marketing Manager)

5.7 Brand Management and development

5.7.1 Brand management

Company strategy strongly guides the other strategies. The brand was seen as a fundamental part of the strategy and corporation itself, like a foundation of the overall strategy. The CEO has the main responsibility for the primary business strategy but the Sales and Marketing Director also has an influence over it. The Sales and Marketing Director reports directly to the CEO and discusses the direction of the company by bringing his own special point of view to the strategy meetings.

Based on the main strategy, the Sales and Marketing Director creates the marketing strategy and puts it into effect. The Sales and Marketing Director is also responsible for marketing, communications and new customer sales. Differentiating between brand-, sales-, communication- and

marketing strategies or extracting marketing from the communication functions seemed to be difficult to do for all the interviewees. This also reflects the strongly integrated nature of these functions. The sales strategy is not distinguished and the selling is based on common knowledge; a 'just go and sell' philosophy. Certainly the clients are segmented and prioritized. The marketing strategy includes the communication strategy. Excluding the internal communication, the company produces communications mainly targeted to the market and less company communication. The company does not have any specific document called a branding strategy, but the brand is seen as guiding all the company's functions.

"I bring my input to the business strategy, especially the market input, and the strategy work is done in a team that the CEO runs. When the business strategy is set, I formulated marketing strategy based on it and then I start to implement it." (Sales and Marketing Director)

"We have a branding strategy but it is very rough. It is acknowledged in the company strategy, but there is not official document. We don't have these kinds of documents like big companies have, so how it usually works for us, is that based on the company strategy, The Sales and Marketing Director is developing like a short strategy presentation of the brand and based on that, we help with the development. But we don't have any official document for that." (Marketing Manager)

Marketing and communication are partly overlapping functions and there is one team implementing both. The responsibilities are divided between the marketing manager, mainly responsible for purely marketing projects and events, and the communication manager, who is in charge of internal communication and external communication to the market. The two work closely together at the headquarters. The marketing and communication tasks have not been strictly divided. Also their main marketing agency does not differentiate between marketing, communication and sales functions but sees it as crucial that they all work together seamlessly, hence has been able to offer its services to support the integrated course of operations.

"We have one team for marketing and communication." (Sales and Marketing Director)

"We are actually working in the same room.....We share ideas spontaneously and thoughts what we have heard here and there... I would say that we collaborate closely." (Communication Manager)

"We are targeting the same groups. Marketing and communication works hand in hand in our company." (Marketing Manager)

There are also two other communication/marketing people, one in China and one in the USA, which are the biggest market areas. The main responsibility for the local marketing/communication managers is to report

the occurrences in the market and localize the communications. All the marketing and communication actions are strictly led from the head quarters.

“She kind of localizes all what we send in China and also helps to understand China as a market, what is happening there and which are the current main trends etc.”(Communication Manager)

5.7.2 Brand development

In its brand management and development, the company has relied on measuring, inspecting and reacting to feedback, although it has not been strictly coordinated. The brand has been refined constantly on the basis of the feedback from the environment.

“In the beginning many things went right instinctively...We are just tuning the brand in a way that the brand promise answers the relevant questions, not of course all the time, but in a way that the brand is always relevant.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

“They maybe do not have had kind of big plan for the brand, but things happen and then things are moving forward and on the way, the brand has taken onboard small hints and direction changes” (Radikal-B)

“This has been kind of proactive and reactive, of course it has been systematic, but we have done lots of things ad hoc. We have had to react extremely fast since the renewable energy market is evolving so fast and the new things come along all the time and we have tried to react as fast as possible.” (Radikal-A)

As stated before, strong market orientation has been one of the key elements when building the company and brand. “Be alert and be ready to react to changing market conditions” was also stated in The Switch steps to becoming an international player (see table 6). The Sales and Marketing Director works also at the customer interface and hence gets important knowledge and stays abreast of the current trends, signals and the customer thoughts. The company measures the company actions and also carefully analyses the industry and follows market analyses. The information available from the internet have also been analyzed, in terms of identifying the most-opened topic in the newsletter, for example, which also provides clues on the most current topics in the industry. Each year, the marketing and communication team brainstorms new themes for the next year. The topicality of the brand is continually under discussion between the CEO and marketing branding functions.

“Then of course I read through the research with the CEO, and draw my own conclusions as to what we should do. We discuss that actually all the time.” (Sales and Marketing Director)

“In communication we measure for example how our announcements are published and how people are reading our publications.” (Communication Manager)

The company does not investigate the brand itself as it is seen as a part of everything related to the company, which is also evident when looking at the main strategy and marketing strategy, which are interwoven. The brand is measured as a part of three researches related to customer buying criteria, communication coherence and customer satisfaction. Customer buying criteria research is done every 18 months and includes some image-related questions. The company uses the results to benchmark best practice. Since the company also relies on the idea of integrated marketing communication, it investigates how integrated its communication really is. In practice the whole communication chain is investigated; so how the management team/personnel/sales persons are communicating the strategy and how the customers have received the message. The research offers good information about the coherence of the communication and provides tools to improve the communication to make it more consistent. The third indicator of how the brand is perceived is customer satisfaction measurement. In addition to the above, the company also investigates its market position.

5.7.3 Managing the brand in the digital environment

The digital environment provides plenty of tools to monitor actions on the internet. The Switch tracks its web pages about once a month. It monitors the number of visitors to the web pages and relates the figure to certain news released about the company or in the industry. It counts how many people have opened the newsletter, which topic has been most popular and how much time the visitor has spent in a certain place. The main purpose of tracking web sites is to get information about what viewers see as interesting. Tracking tells the company which topics are hot and which not, and the information is used to improve its communication and to keep the management team informed about the current hot topics in the industry.

“We publish for example “talking points” which in certain time period somebody goes through and find out what has been read and how much in which topic has been clicked” (Communication Manager)

“We react to the “clicks” in a way that we communicate forward in the business which topics were interesting and also take them account in the future. For example when I write the newsletter for the customers I take the interest topics on a pool and keep them in my mind that these were interested and this were not.” (Communication Manager)

Tracking has also helped The Switch to learn that the best working sites should be as simple as possible. The more subpages there are, the less they are read. The main news and subjects should be placed on the main level.

Managing the brand in social media means admitting that not everything can be controlled. The company needs to be able to react to whatever comes up. Active participation is seen as important. The usage of the company's profile in social media channels has been restricted to just a few people. The company does not offer any instructions for employees on how to use social media tools. Social media tools are allowed to be used during work time, and barring them is seen as strange. The company sees it as part of its employee's make-up if they want to communicate with the outside world and it cannot be influenced by any restrictions or guidelines.

"Nowadays the company is active in social media, in the way that it guides the visibility there and is not just at the mercy of conversation although it cannot be controlled completely." (Webcast 2011 - Intro speaker 1)

"We have for example played with the idea of setting up a Twitter account for all our sales personnel around the world, so they can share how they work and what they are doing, where they are and so on, but it is not easy to make that happen. We have for example, two employees who are actively re-tweeting and sharing things about the industry, but we haven't really encouraged our employees to do so." (Marketing Manager)

5.7.4 Challenges in the digital environment

The biggest challenges of using digital tools have mainly been technical. The company's management has been brave and willing to adopt use of different digital tools, and especially the Sales and Marketing Director has been active. The newness of digital tools used in marketing has challenged the users. The speed of the digital environment especially makes getting the timing working well between different digital functions a challenge and has required new forms of planning and coordination. The different national regulations governing internet use, raises concerns over international use that the company must keep abreast of.

"We are operating also in China which is actually a quite big challenge for us because, we have limited resources in marketing in our company, but then in China you find lots of restriction concerning the main tools that we have, and what we want to use we cannot use them in China...Digital tools enables worldwide reach but we need to be aware of all kinds of restrictions and laws from different countries." (Marketing Manager)

"With this customer, I would see that there hasn't been any challenge to adopting digital tools since the Sales and Marketing Director has been really aware and willing to do so, and also sees the opportunity offered by using digital tools. Usually, in our job, the main challenges are not the technical, but related to the company culture or the fact that the management team does not support to usage of digital tools. But in The Switch case, the Sales and Marketing Director has taken a main role, and also internally it has been understood from the beginning, that this is the way how the world goes." (Radikal-B)

Although the main difficulties have been technical, the rapid growth and the change to use of an electronic internal communication platform (intranet) from a less organized internal communication style have caused some difficulties in internal communication. Some employees have been reluctant to adopt the intranet as a main internal communication channel of the company, which has sometimes led to communication failures.

“It has been an interesting challenge to combine two different working styles and get everyone to understand that intranet is the place for internal communication. Sometimes people complain that the message does not run, but then we ask ‘Have you checked from the intranet?’” (Communication Manager)

5.8 Stakeholder questionnaire

Although this study was conducted from the company management point of view, the stakeholder questionnaire was conducted to support the findings from the main data. As stated before, the role of the questionnaire in this research was to provide complementary data for the interviews. Although the answers provide some insight on the perceptions and channels usage, it is important to recognize the limited number of respondents. Hence, the results cannot be generalized, although they do offer some insight.

Background information

The questionnaire was completed by 23 respondents (see table 8) of which the biggest group were customers (34.8%), the next biggest employees (30.4%) then engineering house representatives (21.7%), suppliers (8.7%) and potential customers (4.4%). Most of the respondents were had been involved with The Switch for more than two years (52.2%), from six months to two years (26.1%) and less than six months (8.7%). Three (13.0%) of the respondents were not doing business with The Switch.

Table 8 Demographic characteristics

Demographical characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Role		
Employee of The Switch	7	30.40 %
Customer of The Switch	8	34.80 %
Potential customer	1	4.40 %
Supplier of The Switch	2	8.70 %
Engineering house	5	21.70 %
Total	23	100.00 %
Operation time with The Switch		
We are not co-operating	3	13.00 %
Less than six months	2	8.70 %
From six months to two years	6	26.10 %
More than two years	12	52.20 %
Total	23	100.00 %

5.8.1 Perception of the brand

Primary impression

Based on the results, the overall primary impression of The Switch is positive (65% of all expressions) (see figure 32). The Switch was described for example as a reliable, competent, innovative and flexible company.

“Excellent web presence, innovative products, creative solutions, competent team.”
(Respondent 1)

“Technical leader, fast growing.” (Respondent 2)

The technology was described for example as innovative, creative, high quality and needed. There were some neutral statements, like referring to the brand color, orange, and to the core company products and technologies. There was just one negative description, which stated that the company lags behind in converter technology.

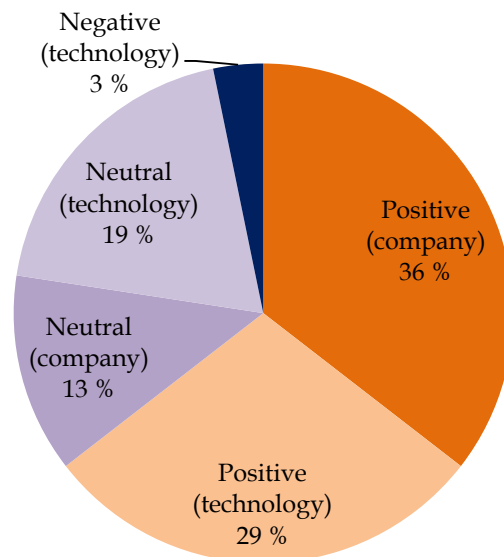


Figure 32 Primary impression of The Switch

Perception

The perception was measured with ten adjective pairs, which were selected from the interview data. The most desirable adjective was rated 5 and the opposite as 1. The adjective pairs and key figures are presented in table 9. The positive adjective is presented first.

Table 9 Stakeholders perceptions of The Switch

Positive adjective (5) - Negative (1)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fresh - Outdated	4.13	0.69
Company with opinions - Company without opinions	4.04	0.77
Active actor in the industry- Passive actor in the industry	4.00	0.67
Distinguishable actor in the industry - Vanish in the ground	3.96	0.71
Forerunner in technology - Retarded in technology	3.91	0.90
Customer oriented - Not paying attention to the customer	3.87	0.92
Attractive - Boring	3.87	0.82
Desirable partner - Not a desirable partner	3.78	0.80
Agile - Rigid	3.52	0.79
Twinkles its eye - Serious	3.09	1.04
Overall perception	3.82	0.56

The Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to test whether background variables had an effect on the perceptions concerning The Switch brand. No statistically significant differences were found ($p < .05$). The background variables were also grouped into external stakeholders and internal stakeholders and the Mann-Whitney test was performed. No differences were found ($p < .05$). Therefore, it seems that respondent's background does not have an effect on the brand perceptions. From the results it can be seen that the overall perception related to The Switch is quite positive (total mean=3.82 and total deviation 0.56). The most positively The Switch was characterized as fresh (mean=4.13), company with opinions (mean=4.04), as an active actor in the industry (mean=4.00), a distinguishable actor in the industry (mean=3.96) and a forerunner in technology (mean=3.91). The company was also rated as customer oriented (mean=3.87), attractive (mean=3.87), a desirable partner (mean=3.78) and agile (mean=3.52). The lowest score was given for 'twinkle in its eye' (mean=3.82), which might be influenced by the poorly selected adjective pairing with 'serious'. Based on the results it can be stated that The Switch has succeeded well in communicating its brand personality to its stakeholders. There were not any big differences between the respondent's ratings expressions and hence it can be stated that the company has also been able to create a consistent brand image.

5.8.2 Channels and received information

Channels

The Mann-Whitney test was performed to test whether there is a difference between internal and external stakeholders in terms of the frequency of using different channels. Statistically significant differences were found ($p < .05$) in usage of five channels (see figure 33 and appendix 2).

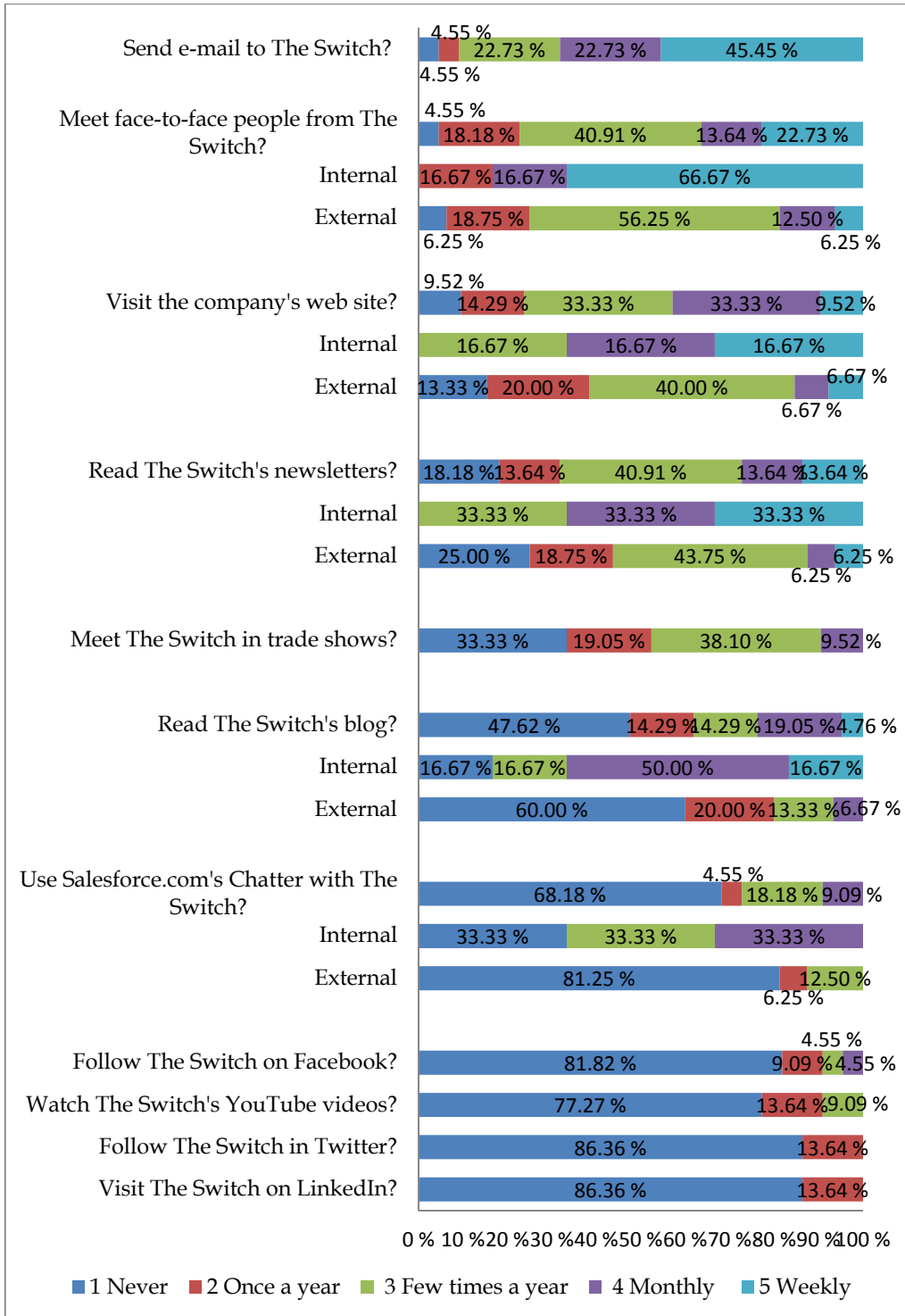


Figure 33 The frequency of use of tools to communicate with The Switch

As can be seen from figure 34, all in all, the most frequently used channels to communicate with The Switch were e-mail and face-to-face meetings. Naturally, the internal stakeholders met people face-to-face from The Switch

more often than external stakeholders. Other significant differences between these two respondent groups were the frequency of visiting the company website, reading the newsletter and reading the blog, where the internal stakeholders seemed to be significantly more active. Internal stakeholders were also more active users of Salesforce, which is to be expected as it is used for managing customer relationships. For both respondent groups, the new social media channels were almost never used. It might be that in this respondent group, people did not use these tools on a daily basis and hence did not follow The Switch there either.

The importance of different channels in receiving information about The Switch

The Mann-Whitney test was performed to test whether there is a difference between internal and external stakeholders on the importance of different channels in receiving information about The Switch. Statistically significant differences were found ($p < .05$) in the usage of four channels. The key figures and results from the Mann-Whitney test are presented in appendix 3.

As can be seen in figure 34, by far the most important channels in receiving information about The Switch were the traditional B2B communication channels; face-to-face meetings (mean=4.52) and telephone conversations (mean=4.43), which were all evaluated higher than somewhat important. The company's web site (mean=3.74) which has been the main internet channel to deliver the brand was also rated as a relatively important channel. Internal stakeholders also evaluated tradeshow (mean=4.43), asking of my colleagues (mean=4.43) and using Google (mean=4.43) higher than somewhat important, whereas external stakeholders perceived these channels generally as neither important nor unimportant. There was also a significant difference between internal and external groups on how important they perceived the company's blog to be. Internal stakeholders (mean=3.71) ranked it as significantly more important than did external stakeholders (mean=1.91), who perceived it generally to be somewhat unimportant.

The most unimportant tools were clearly the different kinds of social media tools; Facebook (mean=1.65), Twitter (mean=1.57), Salesforce (mean=1.78), LinkedIn (mean=1.87) and YouTube (mean=1.91). They were all ranked as not important at all or somewhat unimportant. The low evaluations of social media tools might arise from the fact that the respondents do not use social media tools at all. If the questionnaire had been offered to potential employees or media representatives, the situation might have been different. However, there is a clear difference in importance between the traditional communication channels and new channels. Also the low rating of Salesforce might result from the fact that it is closed system and not available to all the respondents. However, two respondents rated it as a somewhat important tool to receive information about The Switch.

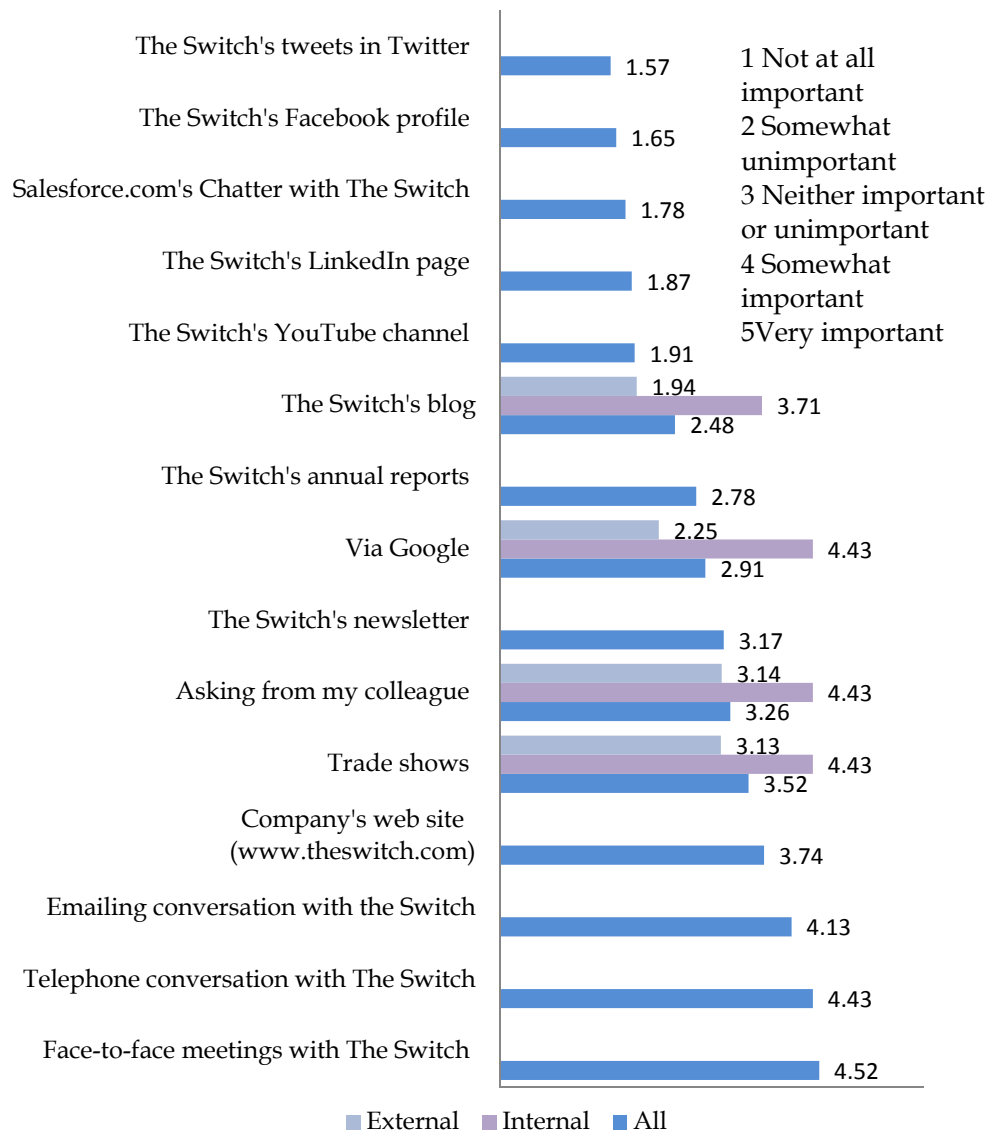


Figure 34 Importance of different channels in receiving information about The Switch

The importance of different channels in receiving information about the renewable energy industry

The Mann-Whitney test was also performed to test whether there is difference between internal and external stakeholders on the importance of different channels in receiving information about The Switch. Statistically significant differences were found ($p < .05$) in the usage of five channels. In appendix 4, the key figures and results from the Mann-Whitney test are presented.

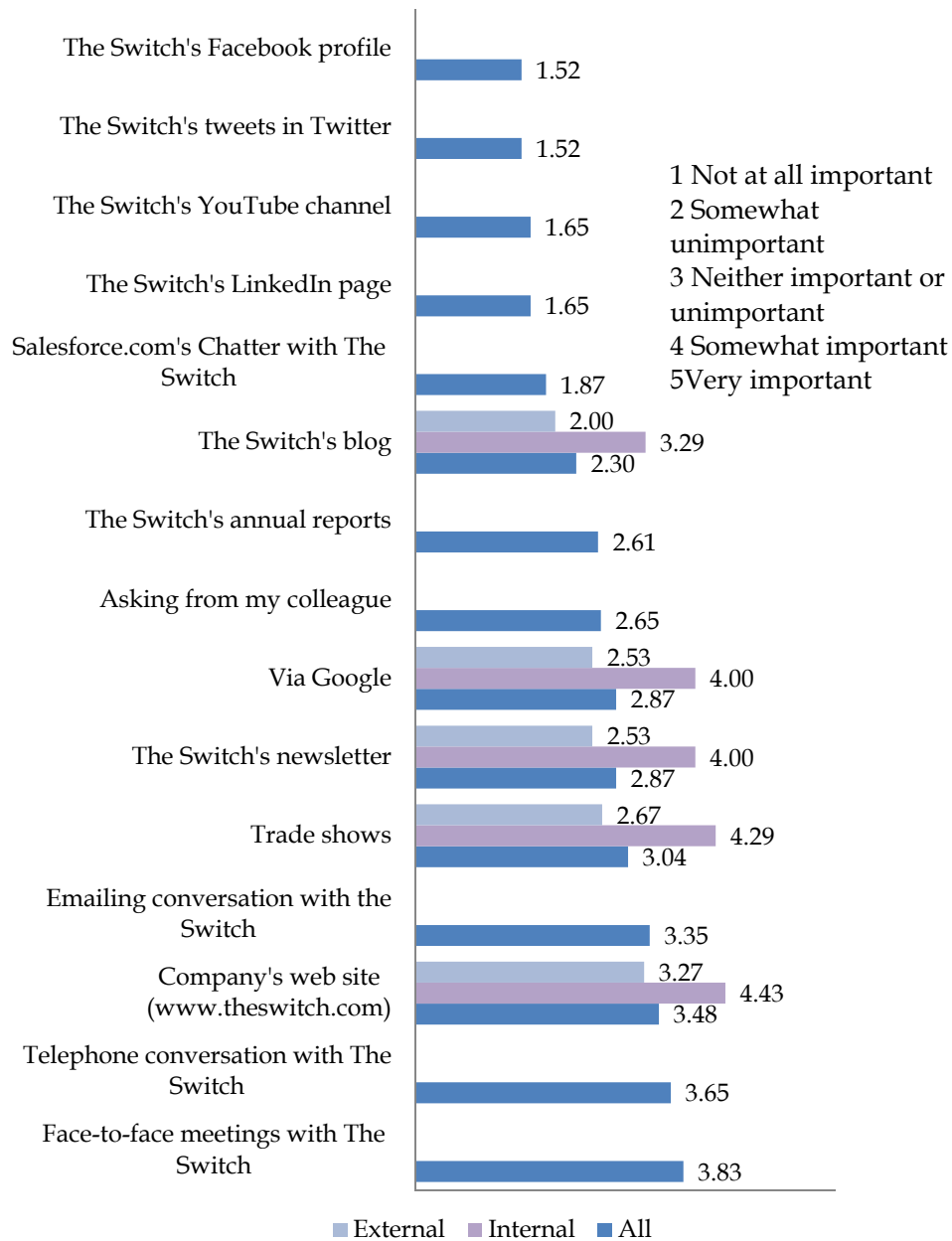


Figure 35 Importance of different channels in receiving information about the renewable energy industry

As can be seen from figure 35, The Switch has managed to share information not only about itself, but also about the renewable energy industry. Nevertheless, all the averages are a little lower than in the importance of different channels in receiving information about The Switch. Face-to-face meetings with The Switch (mean=3.83) and telephone conversations (mean=3.65) were ranked as somewhat important channels through which to receive information about the renewable energy industry. Also the importance of the company's web pages (mean=3.48) was ranked a little

above average in both groups although there was significant difference between internal and external stakeholders; internal stakeholders perceived the company's web site (mean=4.43) as the most important channel for receiving information about the renewable energy industry. In contrast, external stakeholders rated the company's web pages (mean=3.27) close to neither important nor unimportant.

Internal stakeholders also rated trade shows (mean=4.29), The Switch newsletter (mean=4.00) and Google (mean=4.00) as somewhat important channels. Whereas external stakeholders perceived these channels closer to being somewhat unimportant. Also the importance of The Switch's blog divided the respondent groups. Whereas internal stakeholders perceived it as rather or somewhat important (mean=3.29), external stakeholders rated it more or less somewhat unimportant (mean=1.87). Also the importance of receiving information about the renewable energy industry through social media channels was perceived as sitting between not important at all and somewhat important.

One interesting notion from the results is that face-to-face meetings with The Switch, telephone conversations with The Switch, company's web site and emailing with The Switch were rated higher than trade shows, Google and asking from my colleague. Hence it can be stated that The Switch seemed to justify its position as a reliable opinion leader, or at least an actor to whom stakeholders listen even on issues around the renewable energy industry in general.

Summary of the stakeholder questionnaire

As can be seen from the results, the most often used communication channels, as well as the most important channels for receiving information about The Switch and receiving information concerning the renewable energy industry, were personal channels (face-to-face, telephone and e-mails). Since there were no significant differences between the perceptions related to The Switch, this also indicates that The Switch has been able to deliver its brand in a consistent manner through their employees, and that clearly has required that the employees understand the brand.

5.9 Evaluation of success

5.9.1 Strength of the brand

All the respondents were asked to evaluate the brand. They all considered The Switch as a strong brand in the industry. The Switch was seen to claim its position in the market as a worthy, aggressive but positive and agile player. The consistent brand image was also confirmed in the results of the stakeholder questionnaire.

“Marketing and communication has been implemented in a way which creates an image of a topical, forerunner company, with know-how and products that carry forward long into the future.” (Radikal-A)

At the same time the company was seen to be able to deliver what the marketing and communication had promised. Little by little the brand and its promises have contributed to the reputation of the company. Furthermore, the fact that the brand has been anchored strongly in the organization and its people makes it strong.

“I go back to the personnel and the drive that they have had. I think it has been the strongest thing there. They have been able to create a kind of mood and action to their operation and I believe that it has been the strength in the background.” (Radikal-B)

As the Marketing Manager of The Switch confirms;

“I think it doesn’t help if you have a great idea for the brand, I mean, of course you can make wonderful guidelines, but if everybody in the company behaves in a different way than the brand presents, then there is no value in it. We were able to deliver the brand, on the one hand in our actions meaning our employees but also in our products.” (Marketing Manager)

Also the strong tone of voice and avoidance of neutrality were seen as one of the success factors of the brand. The fact that the brand stirs feelings and conversation is important. The Switch can be judged to have achieved its position as a breath of fresh air in the industry.

Reinforcement of the view that the company’s brand was working well came through the subsequently stalled company acquisition process. During the process people outside the organization were talking about The Switch’s brand, which was seen as impressive, great looking and startling. Other B2B companies envy the courageous style of marketing and wish that their companies could be as brave as The Switch has been.

It should be noted that it is not just the brand that has brought success. The company has been in the right place at the right time with the right messages and at the same time has had an excellent sales team, and a fully involved management team that has been ready listen to the clients and adapt to their requirements.

“It is the whole combination, the company should see as a whole, everything from how personnel talk about the company to how the management presents it have an impact on the brand.” (Radikal-B)

5.9.2 Weaknesses of the brand

Having a strong brand was also seen as a weakness, as a strong brand creates high expectations, which the company always needs to be able to deliver. Sometimes the expected value has been so high that disappointments have

occurred when someone starts to cooperate with The Switch and realizes that it is just a company that manufactures very good generators. The situation can be clarified by comparing it with buying fewer:

“You buy fantastic shoes about which you are thrilled, but after couple of days you notice that they are just shoes and rubbing you since they are new. (Sales and Marketing Director)

In addition, sometimes the heavy investment in marketing actions could have been seen as over-promoting from the stakeholder point of view. The most conservative people in the market might feel that the brand of The Switch is too frivolous and therefore think of the company as a non-worthy actor.

“But when people see the products they understand how great the company really is.” (Radikal-A)

The issue of seemingly not taking matters seriously was also tackled by making all the materials using the highest quality and making sure that everything is finished and done properly.

“We can show any kind of funny things and situations and do whatever, but they have to look like that they are considered carefully and then it also communicates that our product is OK.” (Radikal-B)

Doubters can also be found inside the organization. Its own staff sometimes challenge the brand by asking whether the company should be doing things as it does given the kind of industry it operates in. The fact that the company has been growing rapidly has also brought some challenges to managing the brand. The fact that the brand is based strongly on the company culture and is basically in the hands of just a few people also makes it vulnerable. The lack of proper brand guidelines can be seen as a problem, especially if some key people who manage the brand leave the company.

“I might be wrong, but this is my own threat scenario that making these kinds of brand bibles is necessary, although sometimes it might feel unnecessary and strange, but there I would see the vulnerability of the company.” (Radikal-B)

I might be wrong, but this is my own threat scenario that making these kinds of brand bibles is necessary, although sometimes it might feel unnecessary and strange, but there I would see the vulnerability of the company.

“We have to move on a to the next level since now we are at a turning point although I don’t believe that the young and fresh attitude will disappear.” (Communication Manager)

6 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to build an understanding of how to build an international industrial brand using digital media. The research was conducted from the company management perspective. The five sub-research questions will first be answered then the findings and theory will be interrelated and the propositions will be discussed and revised and finally the main research question answered. Then the theoretical contribution and managerial implication of this research will be provided and the evaluation of the study will be discussed. Finally suggestions will be made for future research.

6.1 Answers to research questions

This section addresses the five research questions. The first research question was: *How has The Switch rationalized its decision to build its brand?* Building a strong brand was a self-evident need for the case company. A strong brand was needed to distinguish the company from the competition, advance its market entry, and was a necessary tool to help compete with the reputable actors in the market.

The second research question was composed to understand: *How has The Switch built its brand?* The brand was based on strong market insights. Hence it can be stated that the brand was built outside-in. Because the company was at an initial stage when the branding started, actually the whole company was built according to the brand. Although the brand was built focusing on external factors (outside-in), the internal factors were also borne in mind by building the brand in a way that it fits The Switch and to its people. The company brand strategy was chosen since through the company the main differentiation points could be better highlighted. A further factor influencing the choice was the cost efficiency.

The brand was built in a holistic manner, which can also be seen in the integration of the marketing, communication and selling functions. The brand has demonstrated consistency in channel choices, messages, chosen colors, selection of people through to the overall strategy and products. It has been a single tight package. The brand has been seen as a strategic asset and as natural part of the overall company strategy. It has been rooted in the organizational culture as well as its values. The distinction between the company identity and brand was difficult to make. Consistency was also confirmed in the stakeholder questionnaire.

The third research question focused on the digital environment and sought answers to the question of: *How has The Switch rationalized its decision to use digital media in branding?* The main reason for adopting a strong emphasis on using digital tools was the image goal of being seen as a modern forerunner company. The speed, cheapness and effectiveness of the tools but also the ability to deliver the message effectively worldwide, were reasons for adopting this digital emphasis. Digital tools were also seen as the best tools to get the message through. The possibility to facilitate the communication and integration as well as cooperation between marketing and sales functions by using digital tools was also mentioned.

The fourth research question was also related to gaining understanding of the digital environment and in particular: *How has The Switch used digital media in branding?* Different digital tools were integrated in natural way for all the company actions. Therefore, it was also difficult to estimate the extent of the effect of using digital media amongst the other activities. All in all, face-to-face channels were seen as the most important in marketing, communication and sales. The other channels, including digital media tools, were seen as supporting functions. The importance of traditional communication tools over digital ones was also verified in the stakeholder questionnaire. The most often used and important digital tool by far was e-mail.

The company's web page was stated to be an important tool to deliver the brand on the internet. The role of the web page can be described as providing a home for the brand in the digital environment. The company's web page was also rated as an important channel for receiving information about the company and the industry in general, especially among internal stakeholders.

The web page was the source of the content, which was delivered through other digital channels like e-mail in the form of the newsletter, or in social media in the form of the blog, talking points and newsletter feeds. The blog and talking point section on the web pages also made it possible to share thoughts on the current news in the industry and to take sides and hence create an image of an active and topical company which has something to say. The blog and talking points were mainly written in a way that they firstly discussed some general hot topic in the industry and then

considered how The Switch would approach the issue. Hence, the company was not at the center of the communication, but the issues were.

As stated before, social media channels were used to support the company blog and other content on the web pages. The Twitter account was targeted to the industry in general. The Switch has mainly relayed news related to the industry in general through Twitter by using the #wind hashtag and hence tried to strengthen the image of being the opinion leader in the industry. The company has also tweeted the company related news and content created by the company but just for the followers of The Switch. By using Facebook, the company wanted to communicate with its close circle, and the account was mainly targeted at company employees, and adopts an intentionally light tone. The company has used Facebook to post news relating to both the company specifically and to the industry in general. The Switch has used social media channels to make its brand more like a person or entity, which can be loved or hated. Despite the active use of social media tools, they were rated as not important and as almost never used channels among the stakeholder questionnaire group. The receiver of the message has been taken into account in technical applications and their functionality, and also the content and in the language what was used.

In summary, the role of digital tools was to support the personal communication, selling and the image goal. The web page of The Switch was the place for content delivered through social media channels. The brand was seen as a guiding line for all the actions. The content was not just company-centric information but also current issues related to the industry in general. How different functions are working together on the internet is illustrated in the figure 36.

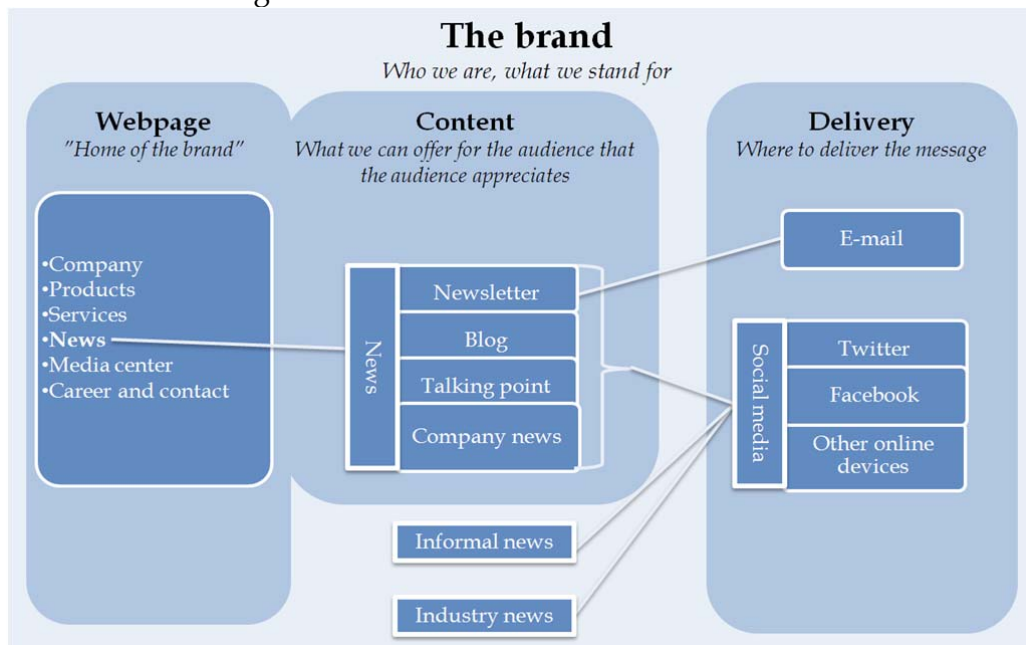


Figure 36 Managing the content on the internet

Finally the fifth research question was: *How has The Switch created brand equity?* The Switch has created value with its brand by linking the brand strongly with the company, communicating it inside-out in a consistent and customer-oriented manner and being an active participant in the conversation concerning the industry. Although the brand was mainly targeted at the customers, targeting the messages to the industry in general was also seen as important.

Internal stakeholders were seen not just as the target of the brand, but also as a key component of it. The strong brand knowledge inside the company was seen as a crucial factor, since the brand is strongly connected with the modus operandi. The brand was seen to be in the backbone of the people of The Switch. The brand knowledge of internal stakeholders was also verified in the questionnaire. The management intended The Switch spirit to be conveyed through open, warm and encouraging communication. The Switch has clearly internalized the importance of personnel as brand ambassadors.

For its external brand communication, The Switch has chosen a very integrated way to communicate. The strong integration can be seen from the consistency of all the analyzed communication channels. The consistency was also verified in the correspondence of perceptions of The Switch among internal and external stakeholders in the questionnaire. Also the way that the sales, communication and marketing functions were organized has most likely furthered the strong integration of the communication. External communication was also implemented in a very customer oriented manner. The channels and content were selected by thinking of the receiver of the message but also the brand style. Digital tools, like the CRM system, also make it possible to tailor messages for certain customers.

One of the leading ideas of the brand was to make the company an industry opinion leader. It was planned to achieve this goal by becoming an active player in the conversation concerning the industry. To support this goal on the web page the company created a news section with a blog, talking points and newsletters, which provided a platform on which to share opinions on current events in the industry. The company has also been active outside the web becoming expert on different news stories and demonstrating its expertise at conferences. It has also been active in social media channels sharing information and news of the company but also general news on the industry. The company has also understood the different natures of social media channels; on Facebook, the company used a more personal and less-formal communication style in line with Facebook's more personal and intimate nature. Twitter was targeted more at the industry and used news feeds related to the industry, in accordance with the nature of Twitter as a more professional news feed channel. Being an active player, the company has unintentionally influenced its brand image, and the company's role as an active player was recognized in the stakeholder responses to the questionnaire.

To summarize the above, The Switch has built its brand by integrating it strongly in the organization's actions and its people; it has communicated it outside the organization in a consistent and customer-oriented manner, but it has also been an active player in various conversational arenas in the industry.

6.2 Discussion of the propositions

This section aims to show the interrelation between the empirical findings and theory and to discuss the propositions arising from the theory and revise them as appropriate. Propositions one to four relate to how to brand and proposition five and six cover how to create brand equity. Finally the main research problem, how to build an industrial brand within the digital environment will be answered.

Proposition 1

The first proposition was: *In the digital age the brand should be distinctive, sincere and genuinely interested in others and current issues.* As can be seen from the results, the content and the delivery in digital channels is created in a way that speaks to the people in the industry. As stated many times before, The Switch had a goal of becoming an opinion leader in the industry and committed itself to various topics related to the industry in general. Given that, The Switch has almost accidentally acted according to the requirements of the digital environment. Instead of doing marketing, its actions have facilitated conversation around the brand. This supports the previous research suggesting post-internet branding is about managing customer relationships (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010, 313) and facilitating conversations around the brand (Christoboulides 2009, 142), not pushing marketing messages through, as well as the notion that digital media, especially social media, requires authentic stories to be told, not marketing messages sent (Fournier & Avery 2011, 203). Creating interesting and relevant content seemed to be key.

The Switch style of taking sides and talking about current issues is closer to communication than traditional marketing activities. The Switch's communication style supports the earlier research and the suggestion that in the era of Web 2.0. public relations principles provide more suitable tools than traditional marketing ideas (Fournier & Avery 2011, 203). Hence, it might be relevant to consider adopting a communication and public relationship perspective when operating on the internet. The digital environment seems to require a strong understanding of communication, not marketing. The previously asked question of whether there is a need for marketing in the digital age, seems to be relevant.

In addition, the decision of the management of The Switch to adopt a less serious style of communication in social media channels, is in accordance with prior research on being genuine in I-branding (see de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004; Simmons 2007; Simmons, Thomas & Truong 2010). As can be seen from the results, The Switch brand entails allowing humor to emerge through various channels and the use of unofficial videos and pictures.

Transparency was also seen as a requirement of the digital age (Aula 2010, 45; Jones, Temperley & Lima 2009, 931). The Switch had made its actions transparent by putting out information on the company and its actions through a variety of media. The transparency was also seen its decision to expose the people behind the company to the public; this can be seen from the use of anecdotal content with names and faces in the bylines. The strong human focus has been present in all the company's marketing and communication actions although the delivery channel have mostly been digital. The brand has given the company a soul and the people have contributed the content.

In giving a face to the company and having a strong, brave appearance and its own style, The Switch wanted to resonate with the environment it operates in. The brand clearly reflects both emotional and functional values and hence is congruent with the previous research on the need for both emotional and functional attributes in a B2B brand (see e.g. Lynch & de Chernatony 2007; Leek & Christodoulides 2012). Based on the results, it can be suggested that the emotional part of the brand is the one that has caught the attention and the functional part the one that convinces.

Through its empirical findings, this study adds a novel notion to the original proposition, namely that in the age of digitalization, the company should not just be interested in current issues, but take part in conversations and also create content itself. Based on the theoretical reasoning and empirical findings, this study suggests a revised proposition: *brand in the digital age should be genuine, real and genuinely interested in others and current issues by taking part in conversation and creating content.*

Proposition 2

The second proposition was: *Successful branding in the digital age should combine both branding inside-out (identity based branding) and outside-in (strong customer orientation).* The Switch has built its brand based on market insight (inside-out), which probably has contributed to its growth, since it has been able to find the niche and build the brand accordingly. Hence, it can be argued, that the branding has had a positive influence on business growth, which also supports the earlier research (see Merrilees, Rundle-Thiele, & Lye, 2011; Juntunen et.al. 2010). This notion also strengthens the previous research, which argues that in the i-environment, the brand should be strongly customer oriented (see de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004; Simmons 2007; Simmons, Thomas & Truong 2010).

As discussed above, reputation requires history (Balmer & Greysher 2006), which the company did not have. The Switch's brand was seen as replacing reputation. This finding sheds light on the relationship between the concepts of brand, reputation and identity. Hence the brand is something created and planned, identity is what the company really is and reputation something that the company has earned. Therefore the reputation cannot be built, but the brand identity can. The brand identity can be seen as a tool to guide the reputation in a certain direction. Its brand is a concept that guides the company forward. Now, the company has gained some reputation and it will be interesting to see how that will influence its branding. Will the company continue pushing forward with the brand or will it start to nurture its reputation?

Despite the market oriented approach to branding, The Switch also perceived the internal factors in the branding choices. Hence, the branding process has not been purely outside-in, but also flavored with an inside-out perspective. In fact, the whole identity of the organization has been built from outside-in since the beginning and then communicated inside-out. As discussed, the digital age requires strong customer attention, but also consistency with the marketing actions and realization of the promises. In the case of The Switch, the company balances these two perspectives.

Building a brand identity in the initial stage of a company's life cycle might give the functional perspective that enables building the company to be market oriented, to serve a certain niche, and also provide a clear understanding of what the company stands for. Branding in the initial stages also makes it possible to build a truly market-driven identity, as happened in this case. This also confirms the suggestion about the benefits of commencing branding in the pre-established stage (Juntunen et al. 2010). The Switch had built its company according to the brand. The distinction between the brand and identity in The Switch case is nearly impossible to make. This finding about strong integration of brand and identity also supports the earlier research on the importance of integrating these concepts, and hence being able to deliver a coherent picture of the organization (Balmer & Gray 2003; Abimbola & Vallastes 2007), which were argued to be especially important in this era of digitalization. Also Aula's (2010, 46) notion that "in social media, an organization cannot just look good, it has to be good", has been realized in The Switch, although there has been some disappointments, since the expectations of the customers have been so high. However, the possible disappointments are not related to the company products or services, more to the fact that The Switch is a fundamentally industrial company. For The Switch, its brand has been a foundation of all its actions and it can be described as a function which takes the company forward.

Based on the empirical findings, this study adds to the original proposition a notion that, a brand should not be built from the outside-in or the inside-out but as a combination of the two. A brand should be built in a

way that the outside-in is the leading direction although the internal capabilities of the organization cannot be overlooked. Based on the theoretical reasoning and empirical findings, this study suggests as a revised proposition two that: *Successful branding in the digital age requires branding outside-in but in a way which is consistent with the internal elements.*

Proposition 3

The third proposition was: *Successful branding in the digital age requires consistent communication and hence requires strong integration of marketing and communication (both internal and external) functions.* As can be seen from the results, The Switch has organized its functions in a way that marketing, communication and sales are working closely together. This also supports the suggestion from the previous research of the benefits of integrating communication and marketing functions in the digital environment (Fournier & Avery 2011, 203-204). At The Switch, the marketing and communication functions also work closely with human resources which makes it possible to integrate internal and external communication activities and hence create the same picture inside and outside the organization. The marketing and communication function also works closely with the sales department.

The empirical findings of this study allow us to add to the original proposition the notion that the integration of, or at least close cooperation between, communication and marketing with HR and sales departments would be beneficial too. Based on the theoretical reasoning and empirical findings, this study suggests the revised proposition three that: *Successful branding in the digital age requires consistent communication and hence strong integration of marketing, communication (both internal and external), sales and human resources functions.*

Proposition 4

The fourth and last proposition related to a brand was: *Successful branding in the digital age should be led by top management and rooted as a genuine part of the company's strategy.* To The Switch the brand is a strategic asset led by the top management. This supports the suggestion from the previous research that view brands in a holistic manner (see Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007; Abimbola & Vallastes 2007; Balmer & Gray 2003; Balmer & Greysheer 2006). Baumgarth and Schmidt's (2010) notion that the brand oriented company culture is a foundation of brand equity perceived by customer was also supported in this research.

The empirical findings of this study allow us to add the notion that the brand should not be rooted in the company's strategy but also in that company's culture to the original proposition. Based on the theoretical reasoning and empirical findings, this study suggests a revised proposition four that: *Successful branding in the digital age should be led by top management and rooted as a genuine part of the company's strategy and culture.*

Proposition 5

The fifth proposition was related to how to create brand equity and was: *In the digital age a company should build its brand inside the organization, communicate it to external stakeholders in a consistent manner and build its brand in different issue arenas through conversations.* As discussed above, internal stakeholders influence the brand value (see Burman, Zeplin and Riley 2009; Lync & de Chernatony 2004; Roper & Davis 2010; Baumgarth & Schmidt 2010) and hence they are in a key position to deliver the brand value. The case company here realized the importance of its personnel in delivering brand value, which is in line with the previous research. As stated above, the brand was rooted in the corporate culture and communicated carefully to the personnel. This finding supports the earlier research on the need to educate the entire organization to see the brand value and deliver it (Webster & Keller 2004, 401). Also the whole company strategy was brand oriented, which also supports the previous studies on the benefits of choosing a brand-oriented strategy (Baumgarth & Schmidt 2010).

It is suggested, that the brand should be communicated to the external environment in a consistent manner. All functions in the organization should be according to the brand (Balmer & Greysher 2006). This was also supported in this research.

The empirical findings also supported the relevance of issue arena thinking (see Luoma-aho & Vos 2010) to branding in the digital age. As can be seen from the results, the company has mainly communicated itself through issues. The Switch has been actively participating in the conversations in the industry and has been able to position itself in the market as an active, topical and strong player. This is also in line with the issue arena approach.

Empirical findings strengthened this proposition and hence only a minor amplification was made. Based on the theoretical reasoning and empirical findings, this study suggests a revised position five that: *In the digital age, a company should build its brand inside the organization, communicate it to external stakeholders in a consistent manner and build the brand in the industry by participating in general discussion in multiple issue arenas.*

Proposition 6

The final proposition, proposition six, was: *Successful creation of brand value in the digital age requires ongoing monitoring of the environment and reacting to weak signals.* The dynamics of issue arenas require ongoing monitoring, and through monitoring different conversations, the organization receives valuable information from the field that it operates in (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010). This notion was also consistent with the case company actions.

The case company has also continuously monitored its environment. This is also in line with the notion, that online reputation management

requires continuous monitoring, participating in and measuring the impact of digital media (Jones, Temperley & Lima 2009, 929). Although monitoring and managing the brand has not been very systematic, the company has been able to listen to the weak signals from the industry and been agile enough to refine the brand based on those signals. Monitoring and continuous refinement has helped company to keep the brand relevant to the audience. This finding also supports the notion from previous research of branding as a constantly evolving process, which requires continuous monitoring of the environment and refinement of the brand (Mäläskä et al. 2011; Jones 2005).

The empirical findings of this study enable us to add to the original proposition the notion that a brand should be adjusted based on even weak signals. Hence, based on the theoretical reasoning and empirical findings, this study suggests as its revised proposition six that: *The successful creation of brand value in the digital age requires ongoing monitoring of the environment and reacting to relevant weak signals by continuously adjusting the brand.*

Summary

The main research problem: How to build an industrial brand using digital media has already been answered indirectly. To summarize, the study results using the existing theory suggest that building an industrial brand in a digital environment should be undertaken in a consistent manner, as a strategic asset by integrating genuinely different operational functions. Branding should be market driven but take account of the company's internal capabilities and affairs. The brand should accord with the company identity. In figure 37, the arrow which goes from the brand identity, thought company identity, and back to the brand identity presents this process. The company perceives and receives signals from the environment and considers how it should respond to them and transform the signals as a part of the brand identity in light of the company identity.

Branding in the digital age also requires strong internal communication as well as consistent external communication, and we must not overlook brand delivery in different issue arenas by participating in current conversations. To keep the brand relevant and active, branding should be seen as an ongoing process requiring continuous adjustment of the brand through monitoring the environment and reacting to weak signals.

The need for specific digital tools to monitor the environment and deliver the brand was another thing identified from the case study. A company can monitor the environment and gain important brand input by monitoring stakeholders actions, for example, by analyzing click-stream data or inspecting the postings in Facebook or Twitter (arrow A). Further information on the brand input can also be gained by monitoring general conversation and trends, for example in Facebook or in Twitter (arrow B). Listening to internal stakeholders (arrow C) is also important, since they usually have tacit knowledge of the customers and current trends. Listening to stakeholders can be done through digital channels like intranet or SalesForce.

In the digital environment, the brand can be delivered through digital tools inside the organization using an intranet, internal newsletter or other social media application like Facebook that the internal stakeholders use (arrow E). In the age of digitalization, the brand can be delivered beyond the organization for example through the company web page (arrow F). The brand can also be delivered through issue arenas by participating in general conversation for example on Twitter or in Facebook (arrow G). A company can also brand itself by sharing thoughts and creating content concerning the industry in the form of a blog, through publishing talking points or a newsletter (arrow G).

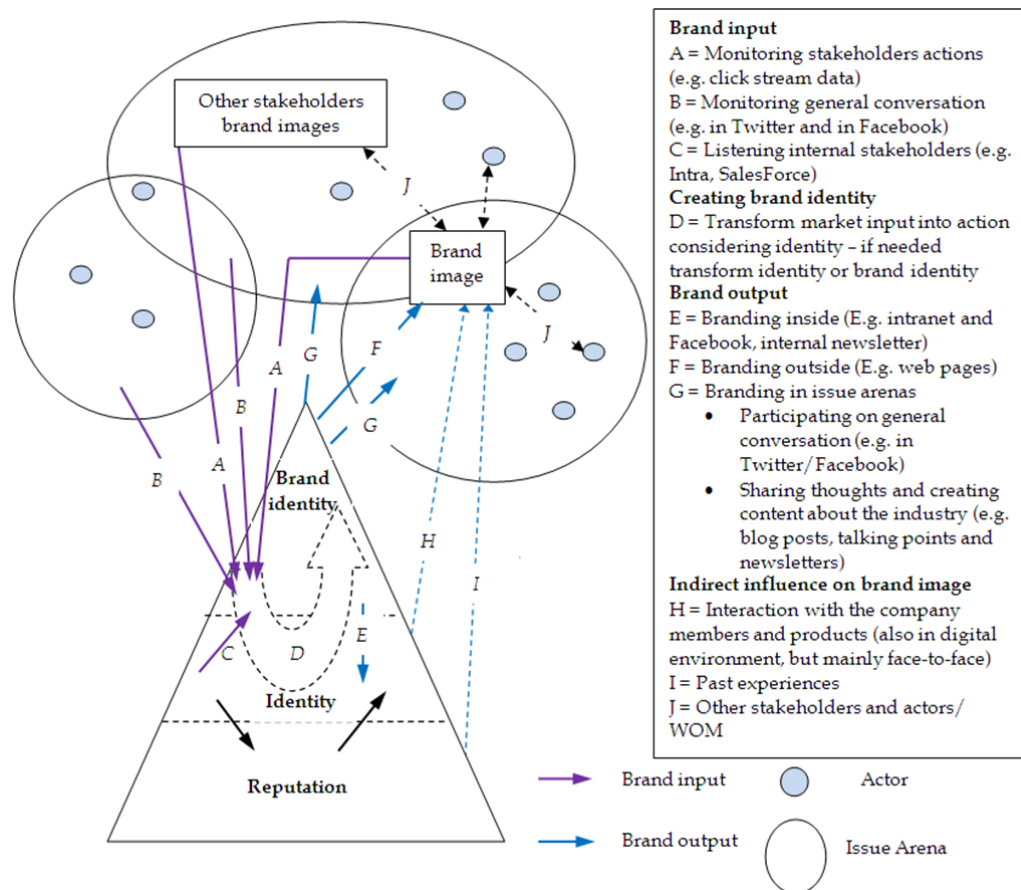


Figure 37 Revised model for Branding in the digital age

6.3 Theoretical contributions

As discussed above, this study mainly follows the prior theoretical knowledge, although some specifications and further suggestions were made. This section draws together the main theoretical contributions of this study. The Switch's idea to build its brand to promote the company through and

distinguish it from the competition supports the role of brand characterization as a push factor. This finding supports the earlier research on the role of the brand in the B2B environment as a distinctive factor (de Chernatony 2009).

The empirical evidence suggests the strong integration of operations is important. This indicates that branding models relying on integration and treating the brand in a holistic manner might be topical and relevant in the era of digitalization (see e.g. Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007; Abimbola & Vallastes 2007; Balmer & Gray 2003; Balmer & Greysher 2006). The digital environment also requires rectitude of the companies owing to increased transparency and surrender of a degree of control. As Aula (2010, 46) notes "in social media, an organization cannot just look good, it has to be good". Hence the branding in the digital age should strongly take internal elements into account.

Another notion clearly supported by the empirical findings was that branding on the internet requires stories be told not marketing messages sent (Fournier & Avery 2011). As stated previously, it might be relevant to consider adopting a communication and public relations perspective when operating via the internet. The creation of relevant content on the web also seems to be key. This is in line with the previous research on creating content in existing models of I-branding (see de Chernatony & Christodoulides 2004; Simmons 2007; Simmons, Thomas & Truong 2010).

The idea of issue arenas and issue arena management in the digital age (see Luoma-aho & Vos 2010) was supported by the empirical findings. This notion expands the branding theories towards those surrounding corporate communication, which is also consistent with the previous notion of a communication focus being a desirable direction to head in. Issue arena thinking would offer a new perspective from which to view branding and also communication and marketing in general in this new environment. A new environment with new rules requires tools and concepts to understand how companies can act there beneficially.

As discussed, the major reasons for adopting new technologies have been the pursuit of a more efficient working style, time saving, better customer communication and owing to management requirements (Buehrer, Senecal & Pullins 2005, 395). The findings of this research support the previous results but add the image purpose to the list. The opportunity to create an image of a forerunner and an up-to-date company was The Switch's main reason for adopting new technologies. The major reasons for using social networking sites were: the ability to attract new customers; to nurture relationships; increase awareness; to exploit the benefits of communicating the brand online; and the opportunity to receive feedback and interact with suppliers (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides 2011) was also supported. However, in this research, the social media channels served mainly image purposes and supported the other communication channels through which to feed news. Social media channels were also used to receive information and to follow current trends in the industry. In

conclusion, we can observe that social media platforms might offer very good tools to perceive the weak signals. The previously presented notion by Aula (2010, 43-45), that from the company and management point of view, the most interesting applications in social media are the biggest networking service Facebook, the music and entertainment focused MySpace and career-oriented LinkedIn was not fully supported. In this research the most used channels were Facebook and Twitter, which may be considered surprising, since the case company operates in an industrial environment. However, it is not essential to make generalizations of the most interesting channels from the company point of view, since it is the target who decides on channel selection.

Although B2B companies have been criticized for their slow adoption of social media tools compared to B2C companies (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides 2011, 1), the empirical findings of this study suggest that the adoption has been slow for the simple reason that in B2B, the customers and important stakeholders cannot necessarily be reached through social media channels. As this study shows, despite the benefits of new digital tools the most relevant channels in B2B still seemed to be face-to-face meetings, phone conversations and e-mail. In B2C, the customers have already adopted social media tools to a greater extent.

The results confirm that the brand plays an important role on the company's web pages. It seems that de Cheratony's and Christodoulides's. (2004) guiding principles on "taking the brand promise online" have been followed. In addition, the four pillars of I-branding; marketing communication, understanding the customer, content and interactivity (Simmons 2007), can be identified in this case.

In the digital environment, the distinction between B2C and B2B branding practices seem to be fading. In this research, The Switch has been able to build a convincing brand by taking inspiration from the B2C sector. That brand is distinguishable, a key requirement in the era marked by increased competition due to globalization and market liberalization (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 361). The company communication is colorful but at the same time the brand is taken seriously due to its high quality, and the similar quality of the company's products and the company itself is appreciated.

The powerful and extraordinary branding seems to have inspired the whole organization to be proud of the company, which also shows outside the organization. The importance of internal stakeholders, especially employees, as brand ambassadors has also been emphasized in previous studies (see e.g. Burman, Zeplin & Riley 2009; Lync & de Chernatony 2004; Roper & Davis 2010; Webster & Keller 2004; Baumgarth & Schmidt 2010).

As stated at the beginning, as a process, branding includes planning, coordination and controlling and also focusing on all relevant stakeholder groups (Fiedler & Kirchgeorg 2007, 177). This point will not hold true in the digital era. Branding requires planning and coordination, but as argued many times, one of the crucial points in the digital era is the diminishing of

company control. Hence, branding in the digital age necessitates participating not controlling. The company needs to participate in different issue arenas and hence to position itself as an active player (Luoma-aho & Vos 2010, 323). In the age of transparency and honesty, companies cannot satisfy all the stakeholders equally at the same time. In the digital era, companies need to state clearly who they are and what they stand for and through that, justify their position and act consistently.

6.4 Managerial implications

Several practical implications can be drawn from this study. This section draws together the main managerial implications, first as applicable generally and then for The Switch in particular.

For other companies

As stated many times before, this study suggests the strong integration of different functions in organizations. If the company has a brand, it should be genuinely rooted in the organization and also be based on the company's identity. The smaller the gap between the brand and company identity, the better it will be. The most important thing is to try to integrate the functions in a way that a coherent image will result without necessitating excessive company control. Hence, branding inside and nurturing the internal environment is crucial. Delivering a coherent image requires building the brand inside the organization, communicating it to external stakeholders in a consistent manner while building the brand in the industry by participating in general discussions in different issue arenas. A clear understanding of who the company is and what it stands for also becomes more and more important in the digital environment. The brand should be seen as a foundation of all the company's actions in the digital era.

The case of The Switch illustrates some best practice to manage the digital environment in branding. As stated before, a lack of best practice has delayed the adoption of digital tools in B2B environment. Before going to the web, the company should consider what it has to say, in other words, what it can give to its audience. Companies should also think through the implications of participating in certain conversations and if it is consistent with other communications. For example, a company producing environmentally harmful products is not convincing when promoting a cleaner environment. However, for the company it might be beneficial to follow such kinds of conversations to be able to react if needed and be aware of current issues. Hence, even if the company chooses to take a passive role it might be beneficial to monitor the weak signals.

Also the old rule, the customer is the most important, should not be forgotten despite this digital hype. If the key stakeholders do not follow the digital channels even indirectly, digital channels are not relevant for the

company. The receiver should be the decisive factor on whether or not to adopt digital tools. If the usage of social media tools and the like is seen as beneficial, it is also necessary to consider the different natures of these channels and evaluate the brand and to what extent the brand and the company are able to adapt to the requirements of the chosen channel. For example, Facebook requires a more unofficial and personal communication style than LinkedIn or Twitter, which requires active tweeting.

One big issue for companies seems to be the question of how to manage the brand on the internet. This study indicates that companies cannot really manage this but can only influence the process. The first part of influencing is to be present in different channels and follow what is happening there, and the second part is to be active there. The company can itself announce who it is and what it stands for through communication but most importantly by positioning itself in different issue arenas. It is better to make an announcement yourself than let the audiences draw conclusions based on fragmented information.

As stated before, the case of The Switch is also an example for other Finnish companies of the benefits of B2B branding. If Finnish companies cannot compete on volume, size or prices – something else is needed. This case illustrates that for a company trying to get noticed in the international environment it is not enough to have a winning product, it will also need a distinguishing feature. The case of The Switch presented in this study may encourage Finnish companies to think big and aim high. The ambition and drive that The Switch demonstrates, has advanced its journey. The Switch also chose to create a distinguishable B2B brand using unconventional means, and in doing so, the company acquired much positive attention. If companies want to succeed in international markets in this age of digitalization, strong marketing and communication is really needed.

For The Switch

The Switch has been able to create a coherent picture, partly because of the strong integration of different functions. For now, the strong and effective integration has mostly been based on the firm control of the Sales and Marketing Director and close operation with the Marketing and Communication Managers that has been a requirement for building a strong brand. The challenge in the future will be on how to maintain this strategy when the company expands. One solution would be to invest in internal communication, and create an online platform for the communication and marketing functions, where everyone may see in real time what is going on in different functions. The platform should be implemented in cooperation with its users.

Also the lack of a “brand bible” or systematic brand instructions can form a threat for the company in the future. Developing written guidelines about the brand could be useful to make sure that the brand stays in good shape even if key persons in the organization move on. However, The Switch

brand seems to be genuinely integrated into the corporate culture, values and actions and hence the need for written guidelines is not as obvious as it might be otherwise. Nevertheless, the writing of guidelines might also help understand the brand better and hence lead to tools to manage and develop it in a more systematic manner.

This study was conducted from the company management perspective. For The Switch, it could be beneficial to inspect the internal brand perception more comprehensively to safeguard the consistency of the brand. This could focus on the perception of the people who are working with the customers and suppliers. The Switch spirit is an important thing to nurture. Although the results of this research indicated the small role of newsletters, blog posts and talking point columns, it can be argued that they might have a bigger role among internal stakeholders, who are in a key position to deliver the value for the customer.

As mentioned previously, the company is now at a kind of turning point, since the brand has hitherto been based on the newness of the company but it has now gained a reputation. The Switch should not abandon its strong branding activity, as branding is a continuous process. The brand has been the driving force in the company's actions. Could the next step be to strengthen the image of an opinion leader by taking the blog and talking points out into bigger arenas? The bright kid playing with Lego could become a top student at school but also an organizer of the best parties and an opinion leader among his or her friends.

Also the more systematic measurement of the brand and brand output on the internet would be beneficial to help accelerate actions through that medium. This is not an easy task, since examples of good measurement practices in the digital environment seem to be rare. The company could also benefit by analyzing the users of the Facebook page and the Twitter followers to gain a clearer perception of who is following the company and why. This would help the company to amplify the messages in these media and produce even more effective communication there. Investigating the use of different channels by key stakeholders and their content preferences would assist acceleration of communication and hence prevent the sending of information irrelevant to the stakeholders. The difference between over communication and relevant communication is important to understand especially in our world, where we encounter enormous information flows every day.

6.5 Evaluation of the study

At first it has to be stated that this research was based on one case study and hence the results are not generalizable. The goal of this study was to give guidelines for further research and hence the results should be seen as suggestions not absolute truths. The research was also conducted from the

company management point of view. The case company operates in the renewable energy industry, which is considerably different to other more traditional industries. In the energy industries the influencing channels are rather different and in the buying process, there are multiple influencers who have a direct or indirect influence on the final decision.

The case study as a research method has been criticized for lacking rigor, especially concerning the validity and reliability of the study (Dubois & Gibbert 2010, 130). Thus, issues concerning construct, internal and external validity and also reliability need to be approached carefully when implementing case study research.

In this research, construct validity was taken into account by using data triangulation and adopting different perspectives on the case. The main data (interviews) were acquired and confirmed with complementary data. Also the clear chain of evidence and the progression of the study were described carefully. The analyzed empirical data were also sent to The Switch for comment in case of misunderstandings or factual errors.

Internal validity is related more to data analysis, something which was taken into consideration by using a clear research framework, explanation building and triangulation (Dubois & Gibbert 2010, 132). In this research the propositions created from the theoretical base matched the empirical findings rather well. This also strengthens the internal validity of the research.

External validity refers to generalizing the results; single case studies are especially vulnerable to criticism of their external validity (Yin 2009, 42). To strengthen the external validity of this single case research, a clear justification for the case selection was provided (Dubois & Gibbert 2010, 132) and the theoretical basis was used to guide the research (Yin 2009, 42). However it is important to remember that the results are not transferable beyond the context of this study since only one case firm was examined. Nevertheless, this study provides a solid starting point for further research and for the production of guidelines on how industrial companies can use and benefit from digital solutions. Using replication logic and hence running a second and third similar study would also be beneficial in future to help to create results that could be generalized in other contexts.

Taking the reliability of the study into account, the empirical data (notes, documents, interviews) were collected in a case study database, which enables later investigation of the same case and hence facilitates the replication of this case study. Also the transparency of the study was enhanced by producing, clearly describing and following a case study protocol. However, although the qualitative data was strengthened with quantitative methods, qualitative research is always subjective. This means that the findings are at least to some degree always subjective, despite objectivity and critical thinking being borne in mind. Using interviews as a main data source also has some weaknesses. The interview data is always the subjective experience of the teller, not a purely objective description of the

case. The objectivity of the stories told was improved by interviewing more than just one person, also outside the organization.

Although quantitative methods are thought more objective, they also have some weaknesses. In this research, the group of respondents to the questionnaire was relatively small, although it was high quality since the respondents were all in a position that to have influenced organizational decision-making. The low number of respondents does however mean that the results should be treated with caution. The content analysis conducted also has some weaknesses that should be considered. Despite the clear guidelines and organization of data, the categorization in the end is based on the interpretation of the researcher. The reliability of the content analysis was improved by entering and saving all the phases when conducting the analysis and hence making the process as transparent as possible. In summary, the study addresses the trustworthiness of the results relatively well. The research has achieved the goals that were set; to create an understanding of how to create an industrial brand through digital media.

6.6 Suggestions for further research

In this research, the aim was to gain understanding of how to create an industrial brand in the digital environment. The study was conducted as a single case study. As a suggestion for future research, more case studies of companies that have successfully utilized digital tools would be beneficial. It would also be beneficial to know about companies that have tried to utilize digital tools but have failed to do so successfully, so we might learn about the barriers to using these tools. Another way of strengthening the results of this study would be to implement a questionnaire based on the results and test the results in a wider context. This would extend the understanding of the phenomena and create better generalizable results. Also it would be interesting to extend the explanation building process further so as to compare the revisited propositions to the facts of a second, third, or more cases, repeating the process as many times as necessary.

The case firm operates in the renewable energy industry and is a relatively young company. As a suggestion for future research, more case studies from companies of different ages might be interesting and useful to conduct. Companies which have not operated with digital tools from the beginning probably illustrate different challenges than the “digital native” companies.

Another interesting aspect to study would be the role of digital tools in different types of companies. The barriers to and facilitators of adoption of a digital emphasis in different industries and also in companies of different sizes and ages would be useful to inspect. The results would help other companies to identify their own barriers and hence to be prepared for

possible problems. This would also provide useful knowledge for companies when planning the change communication when adopting digital tools.

One interesting aspect would be to continue the research with the case company. As this study inspected the phenomena from the company management point of view, it would be interesting to do research also from the employee perspective and examine internal brand communication more comprehensively. As stated before, the company is at a kind of turning point since it has now gained some sort of reputation. It would be interesting to investigate, how the brand is transformed into reputation and what will the role of the brand be at different points of the company's lifecycle. Does the reputation displace the brand when the time passes by? Such a study would create a better understanding of the role of reputation and brand in industrial organizations and also help young companies to decide whether to build a brand or not.

It would also be interesting to see how the case company manages to maintain the integration of the different functions (which has been one of the success factors to date) as it expands. Understanding more about the role of different social media channels after a few years would be beneficial too, it is unclear as yet whether the use of social media tools is only beneficial when creating a name in the industry or whether it is also beneficial in the long run. It would also be interesting to analyze the followers in Twitter to see, who really follows the case company, how often they follow it and why, and hence to gain an understanding of how effective Twitter really is.

Although it is stated that digital tools provide useful tools to measure communication (Wymbs 2011, 95) and every action on the internet can be tracked by other consumers and companies (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010, 312), it seemed that in this case the company did not really have appropriate tools to systematically measure its actions in the digital environment. Tracking and other measurement tools were used, but not very systematically. Hence, more research is needed on how companies can measure their actions in the digital environment more systematically. Other best practice in different organizations' use of digital tools could offer useful avenues of study too.

This research also cautiously suggested that in the digital era, there would not be too many differences in the branding of B2B companies compared to B2C companies. Of course the channels and messages are different, but aggressive branding would be beneficial for both at least in the beginning. The differences between B2B and B2C branding practices would be interesting to pursue further.

This study also suggested thinking about the digital environment through the concept of issue arenas. This new concept and its benefits and usage in the digital environment should also be an interesting topic for further research. Understanding the dynamics of issue arenas and also how to gain a dominant voice would help to better understand the digital environment.

As stated early in the current research, digitalization has definitely changed the world, and it needs to be investigated and understood better since there is a lack of best practice and new requirements. It is also important to keep in mind that the digital environment does not exist in a vacuum, but merits an integral approach. Hence the question of what is the meaning and role of the digital environment for companies in the future would be extremely important to investigate.

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APPENDICIES

APPENDIX 1 General interview structure

Background information

- Who are you?
- What are your responsibilities?
- What is your role in The Switch's story?
- When did you start to work for the Switch?

THEME 1 Decision to brand

- Why was the decision to brand made?
- Which one was first – the company or the brand?

THEME 2 Brand and branding

The brand

- What was starting point for the brand?
- What is the basis of the brand?
- How would you describe the Switch's brand?
- What are the core elements of the brand?
- How would you describe the structure of the brand?
- How has the internationality of the company been influenced by branding?

Organizing the brand

- Does the Switch have a branding strategy?
- How is the branding strategy related to the marketing/communication/overall business strategy?
- What have been the roles of communication/marketing and sales concerning the brand?
- Who is responsible for the brand?

Goals

- What have been the goal of the brand?

- Have the goals varied over time?

Target

- At whom is the brand targeted?
- At whom is the marketing/communication targeted?

Main messages and channels

- What have been the main messages?
- How have they varied overtime?
- Which have been the main channels used to deliver the brand?
- How has the brand been distributed in these channels?

THEME 3 Digital environment and tools

Role of digital tools

- What has been the amount of usage of digital tools in relation to all marketing and communication tools?
- What has been relationship between digital tools and other marketing and communication tools?
- What has been the digital marketing proportion of the whole marketing/communication budget?
- Why has The Switch invested in digital tools?
- What has been the goal of using digital tools?
- What has been the benefit of using digital tools?
- How has the use of digital tools influenced marketing or communication activities?

Usage of digital tools

- What digital tools are used by The Switch?
- How are they used?
- Which have been the most important/most successful?

Branding on the internet

- Why has The Switch chosen to deliver the brand via the internet?
- Where has the brand been delivered on the internet?
- How has brand been delivered on the internet?
- Who is responsible for delivering the brand on the internet?
- How have the company members been guided to use of social media tools?

THEME 4 Maintenance

Brand management generally

- How has the brand been controlled?
- How has the brand been measured?
- How has the brand been developed?
- What have been the roles of marketing, communication, sales and human resources?

Brand management in digital environment?

- How has the brand been measured in the digital environment?
- How has the brand been managed on the internet?

THEME 5 Evaluation of success

Position

- What is the role of the brand in The Switch?
- How would you describe the Switch compared to its competitors?

Success of the brand

- Is the Switch a strong brand?
 - o What are its strengths?
 - o What are its weaknesses?

Success in digital environment

- Does The Switch succeed in the digital environment?
- How has The Switch succeeded in the digital environment?
- Has The Switch faced challenges in using digital tools?

Branding process

- Has The Switch faced any challenges in the branding process?
- What you think have been the key factors of success in the branding?

Role of advertising agency

- What has been the role of the advertising agency?

APPENDIX 2 The usage of different tools

<u>How often do you...</u>	1 Never		2 Once a year		3 Few times a year		4 Monthly		5 Weekly		Total	Mann-Whitney
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
Send e-mail to The Switch?	1	4.55%	1	4.55%	5	22.73%	5	22.73%	10	45.45%	22	0.083
Meet face-to-face people from The Switch?*	1	4.55%	4	18.18%	9	40.91%	3	13.64%	5	22.73%	22	0.021*
Internal	0	0.00%	1	16.67%	0	0.00%	1	16.67%	4	66.67%	6	
External	1	6.25%	3	18.75%	9	56.25%	2	12.50%	1	6.25%	16	
Visit the company's web site (www.theswitch.com)?*	2	9.52%	3	14.29%	7	33.33%	7	33.33%	2	9.52%	21	0.029*
Internal	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	16.67%	4	16.67%	1	16.67%	6	
Read The Switch's newsletters?*	4	18.18%	3	13.64%	9	40.91%	3	13.64%	3	13.64%	22	0.013*
Internal	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	2	33.33%	2	33.33%	2	33.33%	6	
External	4	25.00%	3	18.75%	7	43.75%	1	6.25%	1	6.25%	16	
Read The Switch's blog?*	10	17.62%	3	14.29%	3	14.29%	4	19.05%	1	4.76%	21	0.014*
Internal	1	16.67%	0	0.00%	1	16.67%	3	50.00%	1	16.67%	6	
External	9	60.00%	3	20.00%	2	13.33%	1	6.67%	0	0.00%	15	
Use Salesforce.com's Chatter with The Switch?*	15	68.18%	1	4.55%	4	18.18%	2	9.09%	0	0.00%	22	0.409*
Internal	2	33.33%	0	0.00%	2	33.33%	2	33.33%	0	0.00%	6	
External	13	81.25%	1	6.25%	2	12.5%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	16	
Follow The Switch on Facebook?	18	21.82%	2	9.09%	1	4.55%	1	4.55%	0	0.00%	22	0.407
Watch The Switch's YouTube videos?	17	77.27%	3	13.64%	2	9.09%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	22	0.203
Follow The Switch in Twitter?	19	86.36%	3	13.64%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	22	0.541
Visit The Switch on LinkedIn?	19	86.36%	3	13.64%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	22	0.541

*Statistically significant difference p<.05

APPENDIX 3 The importance of different channels in receiving information about The Switch

	Mean All	Std. Deviation	Mean Internal	Std. Deviation	Mean External	Std. Deviation	Mann- Whitney
Face-to-face meetings with The Switch	4.52	1.123	4.83	0.408	4.69	0.602	0.747
Telephone conversation with The Switch	4.43	1.199	4.67	0.816	4.63	0.719	0.858
Emailing conversation with the Switch	4.13	1.456	4.33	0.816	4.31	1.302	0.693
Company's web site (www.theswitch.com)	3.74	1.251	4.43	0.535	3.44	1.365	0.760
Trade shows	3.52	1.238	4.43	0.535	3.13	1.258	0.018*
Asking from my colleague	3.26	1.421	4.43	0.787	3.14	0.864	0.007*
The Switch's newsletter	3.17	1.267	3.86	0.690	2.88	1.36	0.135
Via Google	2.19	1.443	4.43	0.535	2.25	1.183	0.00*
The Switch's annual reports	2.78	1.278	3.14	0.378	2.63	1.5	0.492
The Switch's blog	2.48	1.275	3.75	0.756	1.94	1.063	0.002*
The Switch's YouTube channel	1.91	0.949	2.00	0.816	1.88	1.025	0.671
The Switch's LinkedIn page	1.87	0.869	2.00	0.816	1.81	0.911	0.624
Salesforce.com's Chatter with The Switch	1.78	1.204	1.83	1.472	1.88	1.088	0.941
The Switch's Facebook profile	1.64	0.832	1.57	0.787	1.69	0.973	0.871
The Switch's tweets in Twitter	1.57	0.788	1.43	0.787	1.63	0.806	0.624

*Statistically significant difference $p < .05$

APPENDIX 4 The importance of different channels in receiving information about the renewable industry

	Mean All	Std. Deviation	Mean Internal	Std. Deviation	Mean External	Std. Deviation	Mann- Whitney
Face-to-face meetings with The Switch	3.83	1.302	4.29	0.756	3.87	1.125	0.490
Telephone conversation with The Switch	3.65	1.301	4.00	0.816	3.73	1.163	0.783
Company's web site (www.theswitch.com)	3.48	1.473	4.43	0.787	3.27	1.335	0.047*
Emailing conversation with the Switch	3.35	1.369	3.57	0.976	3.47	1.302	1.000
Trade shows	3.04	1.522	4.29	0.756	2.67	1.345	0.009*
The Switch's newsletter	2.87	1.325	4.00	0.000	2.53	1.187	0.002*
Via Google	2.87	1.576	4.00	0.816	2.53	1.506	0.039*
Asking from my colleague	2.65	1.496	3.83	0.753	2.71	1.139	0.062
The Switch's annual reports	2.61	1.27	3.43	0.535	2.40	1.242	0.091
The Switch's blog	2.30	1.259	3.29	0.756	2.00	1.134	0.021*
Salesforce.com's Chatter with The Switch	1.89	1.180	2.17	0.983	2.00	1.134	0.791
The Switch's LinkedIn page	1.65	1.027	2.00	0.894	1.73	0.961	0.569
The Switch's YouTube channel	1.65	1.071	2.17	0.753	1.79	0.975	0.397
The Switch's tweets in Twitter	1.52	0.9994	1.83	0.983	1.60	0.91	0.622
The Switch's Facebook profile	1.52	0.994	1.83	0.983	1.60	0.91	0.622

*Statistically significant difference $p < .05$