

Strategic Brand Management in Global Technique Trading. A plan to identify and build sources to brand value in a B2B context

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<p>This thesis is a product-based thesis. The aim of this thesis focuses in creating a strategic brand management plan in the B2B sector for commissioner company - company X. Competition is a fact in business life. The high competitiveness in the field requires companies to differentiate themselves in order to stand out and make their name in the market. A good brand management strategy will help the company grow strong in the B2B market.</p> <p>In the theoretical part of this thesis, the essential theories of brand management terms are defined and explained. Four different tools and frameworks introduced in this chapter are Customer Based Brand Equity, CAGE framework, SWOT and Brand positioning map. The theories were collected from academic books, journals and qualified published articles. The empirical part is the process of creating the strategic brand management plan. First session is the analysis of the competitors and the markets geographical character then comes to the suggestions of the plan. The final product of this thesis is a concrete strategic brand management plan for the commissioner company.</p> <p>As the result of this thesis, a strategic brand management was created and ready as a suggestion for the commissioner company in developing and expanding their brand.</p>	
Keywords Brand, Branding, Brand management plan, B2B	

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1 Introduction

The thesis is co-written by Linh Tran and Nghi Nguyen to complete the International Sales and Marketing degree. During the time, Nghi Nguyen works in the Company X, which has the plan to expand their markets and develops the marketing system in order to strengthen brand value. Therefore, Nghi decided to focus on the B2B context of the brand management plan to identify and enhance brand value for the company. This topic is also caught Linh's attention, so a corporation was formed. The authors could deliver a better quality of work and overlook by combining strengths and perspectives. The workload would be shared equally between the authors. Thus, more efficient results could be easily gained. The brand management strategy for Company X is the target for this thesis.

It is noticeable that numerous companies tend to use branding as the new tool to differentiate themselves from others in the B2B markets these days. The high competitiveness in the field requests organizations to discover better approaches in order to stand out and grow as a strong brand.

The essence of brand management is to build a bridge connecting relationships between the brand and the target audience. A good brand management strategy could help optimize the effectiveness of not only communication, marketing, PR, but also all activities outside and on social networking platforms. Thereby, a company can completely refine and transform its core products and services to give customers the best user experience.

The main purpose of the strategy is to increase both local customer engagement and relationship management between the business and customers. Moreover, changing customers' perceptions and expectations to the company's products and strengthen the brand image in the specific regions to the environment sector are also important factors.

1.1 Commissioner Introduction

Company X is a Finnish trading company that operates in three areas: Bioproducts, Energy Efficiency and Environment technologies. The company has a total of 6 offices globally which are located in Finland, Russia, Poland, Kazakhstan, China, and Vietnam.

The company's specialties are in international trade as well as sales and project management. At the same time, Company X provides customers with suitable services and products for their needs and based on a single case by bringing them and principles together. With the aim of raising the awareness of customers in the target global market, the company is now focusing on developing the new brand management strategy.

Having been developing business model in three areas for decades, however, Company X is mainly recognized in Environmental and Bio-products only. Thus, the company recently is focusing to get more customers in the Energy Efficiency industry. First step of this process is making an applicable strategy to apply for its target marketplace.

1.2 Aim of the thesis

The aim of the thesis is to create a brand management strategy concentrated on the energy and environment sector for the commissioner. Company X is currently operating in three regions: former Soviet Union countries, Asia, and Europe. So far, the company has been mostly following the traditional method of getting customers through the sales network. With the purpose of gaining more awareness from local businesses in the company's marketplaces, the authors will create a plan for the company as a result of this thesis. After studying current issues and the position of the brand, the brand management plan will be created with detailed actions to develop the company brand in the next run. In order to make the plan, competitors' analysis and geographic analysis will be conducted by the authors.

At the time of writing the thesis, the students could learn and understand more about brand management, trading in B2B environment, and how to create an efficient plan in order to enhance the brand value in B2B trading context. Working on this thesis project is also a chance to apply theories and knowledge authors have learned from classes and books to practical use. Writing the thesis in a pair can help both authors to improve their team-building skills and cooperate while working together. At the end of the thesis writing process, the authors aim to improve their writing skills, fully understand the topic, gain experiences in group works, handling research skills during the process, and learn from both successful and failed results. Authors are hopefully aiming for the best result they could get, grade 4 or higher.

1.3 Assessment Criteria

In order to evaluate the thesis work, the authors will create a self-assessment form to reflect the work process and assess the outcome result on the scale from 1-5. At the end of the thesis process, the authors can base on these criteria to grade their own performance. The criteria are evaluated as follow:

Table 1. Evaluation criteria made by authors.

Criteria	Grade (1-5)	Comments
Achieve aim of the thesis		
Work process (Group work, deadline, communication)		
Self-learning / development		
Quality of the delivered work (Empirical part/ Final work for the commissioner)		
Overall thesis		

Besides that, a form for the commissioner will be created so that the company can evaluate how helpful and practical of the plan is to the company. In this form, the commissioner can give their feedback about the work, what is the right part and what could be improved and grade the product on a scale from one to five.

Table 2. Evaluation criteria for commissioner made by authors.

	Grade (1-5)	Feedbacks
Final product		

1.4 Thesis structure

This is a product-base thesis and the framework of the thesis is following the traditional report framework.

Before going to the practical section, the theoretical chapter will explain all the methods, templates, and tools which are applied in the empirical part. For the theoretical framework part, the secondary data collection method will be applied by gathering information from published books, business magazines, reports, and universities' research which could be found easily in libraries and on the internet.

In the Empirical part, the competitor analysis and market research will be accomplished by applying tools and framework that should be mentioned and explained in the theoretical part. A comparison of the brand image between different markets would be made. A brand management strategy will be created for internal and external use.

In the conclusion, the final outcome will be evaluated together with the discussion of the result achievement and issue improvements. Self-reflects and final words will be considered as the thesis closure part.

1.5 Limitations

It is essential to develop efficiently a comprehensive brand management plan. Since Company X presents partners and principals with variety of technologies on different industries, this thesis will focus on the energy industry aspects and take into accounts the competitors who are internationally developed in the energy sector. By viewing the commissioners' perspective, the thesis will mainly discuss how companies create values in the energy industry and build their brand strong in the marketplace. Another approach in branding is to identify and analyze competitors together with locate the brand among them. The result could form a strategy for brand management.

2 Strategic Brand Management

In this chapter the authors will give an overall look to readers about the theory and explanation about branding, brand identity, brand position as well as providing critical knowledge about brand equity. These are all essential theories that help form a strategic brand management. Additionally, all tools and frameworks that will be used and applied later on empirical part will be also mentioned and explained in this chapter.

Brand building is a set of actions and thus it requires a strong plan ahead of time. This is the place strategic brand management applied. Strategic brand management takes a role of enhancing brand equity of the organization to higher level through 4 stages which increase the value of the brand and on top of that position the brand firmly in the mind of the clients. (Keller, K. L. 2013, 59.)

The Strategic Brand Management process increases the value of the organization's products and services by creating a unique brand identity in the market. It permits the organization to separate itself from its rivals and convey its message and market position in a predictable and comprehensive way.



Figure 1. 4 steps of Brand Management (adapted from Keller, K. L. 2013, 59).

2.1 Definition of Brand

Brand is a physical, emotional, intuitive and exclusive image that customers associate when referring to a product, business or organization. The word "brand" is commonly used today, but many people do not understand the true meaning of the word. Brand

is not only the logo or the name of a business but there are deeper values behind as well. A brand is a collection of intangible assets of a company, service or product, it is an emotional bridge between customers and businesses (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 5). A brand is much more than a product, a brand name, a logo, a symbol, a slogan, an ad, a jingle, a spokesperson; these are just tangible components of a brand – not the brand itself! (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 12).

Brand is the perception of customers about a company. Every day there are hundreds of new products and new companies being born such as a new product in a supermarket or an unknown startup company. This creates competition among companies and helps customers to have more choices of products and services. At this point, companies need to connect the company's brand customers' feelings if they don't want to be eliminated from the market. An example for the connection between consumers and a brand is Apple. Apple successfully built their image in the market and gained many loyal customers and followers for the brand. These fans are ready to line up for days waiting for Apple's new products or even willing to have arguments online to protect the brand. Therefore, a strong brand needs to stand out in a highly competitive market. If a company wants to achieve that, it has to make people love the brand, trust it and value your product as you do. Do the same way Apple instills faith in their products (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2008, 3). As competition creates infinite choices, companies look for ways to connect emotionally with customers, become irreplaceable, and create lifelong relationships (Wheeler 2012, 2).

How a brand is trusted by people and becomes successful. By a definition, a brand is a promise, that the business will be the one to fulfill. The basic principles of branding, listening and understanding requirements from customers, to meet their needs in the most complete way. Providing a promise that they will be happy using the product and fulfilling that promise is the most sustainable way to build a brand. Customers choose a product because of its quality and good service. A brand is the way customers perceive it.

2.2 Branding

Branding is about taking something common and improving upon it in ways that make it more valuable and meaningful. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 12.)

Branding is a process. It is a long and serious process that helps create a unique name and image for a product, company or service in the minds of consumers. Branding can be referring to a long and exhausting discipline game. And the branding

process primarily through consistent and well-planned marketing campaigns. Using a consistent brand identity and proper advertising strategy will help brand building become more favorable and effective. Branding is also about taking advantage of all the media and the opportunity to show customers what your brand is different from your competitors. Companies promote branding with the desire to lead the field in their operations, overcome the competition of their competitors and help employees get the best tools to reach customers. (Wheeler 2012, 6.)

Therefore, a brand is a combination of tangible and intangible factors such as brand name, packaging, historical value, reputation and advertising. The branding process is an exchange of basic characteristics, values and attributes that help clarify brand image in the eyes of customers. And depending on how a company conveys those characteristics, it will create the brand image in people's eyes. So, it is important to make sure what the brand communicates to the business wishes. Whether it's a company, a product, or an individual brand. To be successful, companies need a strategic vision and head to help businesses stay on track. Branding is the process of putting images of products and services into the minds of customers, so it takes a lot of time. (Onaindia & Resnick 2013, 2.)

Branding is about seizing every opportunity to express why people should choose one brand over another. A desire to lead, outpace the competition, and give employees the best tools to reach customers are the reasons why companies leverage branding. (Wheeler 2012, 6.)

2.3 Branding in B2B context

Branding is just as relevant in B2B as it is in B2C. Brands like Microsoft, IBM, Intel, Dell, SAP, Siemens, FedEx, Boeing are vivid examples of the fact that some of the world's strongest brands do exist in B2B. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 12.)

Even though the branding for B2B businesses is somehow similar from other branding activities, but it still has important differences from marketing for consumers in general. For B2B businesses, corporate brands are often more focused than brand goods. This can affect the distribution of marketing spend.

The main difference between B2B and B2C markets can be found in the nature and complexity of industrial products and services, the nature and diversity of industrial demand, fewer customers, larger volumes per customer, and last but not least, closer and longer-lasting supplier-customer-relationship. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 59.)

In general, with a more limited target audience, B2B businesses need a more focused communication method. This affects the choice of media. At the same time, businesses also tend to sign longer-term contracts, resulting in price fixing and detailed terms. Decisions are often based on more rational benefits, such as when a consumer buys a box of baked beans. So, in terms of spending, positioning and communication, the B2B market is completely different. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 20.)

2.4 Brand Identity

Brand identity is common sense: a codified collection of shared elements (things in common) that are activated through a range of visual, verbal, and aural qualities (elements of sense). And common sense is what's needed to distinguish today's B2B brands. (Onaindia & Resnick 2013, 6.)

Brand identity is a tangible thing, so it attracts all senses. In other words, brand identity is what you can see, feel, hear. It promotes the recognition and remembrance of customers about the brand. It helps customers to tell the differentiation from a company's brand to other competitors. Brand identity is something people can see, touch, hold, listen to or watch it. To put it simply, everything a company shows to its customers is its brand identity. It can be typography, colors, logos, store systems, transportation, website and much more. All of them contribute to the identity of the company's brand. (Crowdspring 2020.)

All the images that brands bring to consumers, can be called as brand identity. How many elements of a brand identity system will depend on the size and field of the company? For example, a company operating software and applications through an internet network would not need to identify a vehicle, but a delivery company would most likely need it.

The goal of designing a brand identity is to find familiar objects, redesign them, making them able to deliver brand messages to customers. Identity design when appearing in front of customers should ensure the uniformity of form, color, size and font ...Some of the typical components in brand recognition such as company name, logo, melody, slogan, typeface and shape create the attractiveness and attract customers. Brand identity is an important factor to help customers remember the company's brand. (Onaindia & Resnick 2013, 6.)

According to Onaindia and Resnick (2013, 7), brand identity includes the following factors:

- Standard logo with user manual (size, color, zoom ratio)
- The main color of the brand (with complementary colors)
- Brand font
- Warehouse graphic library (logo, catalog, brochure, packaging, website ...)

A company can create its own Brand Guidelines to keep its brand components in sync. This guidelines will contains full business information such as history, vision and mission of the company, logo, standards used in communications, standard color palettes and fonts when printing .This brand guideline will helps all the branches and the employees of the company to follow and keeping up the company image in order to help the brand achieve consistency when appearing. Consistency allows customers to remember who the company is and what value the company provides to them. The main purpose of a brand guideline is to guide the use of brand image assets (logo standards, fonts, colors...). The unity of the brand identity project helps the company form a cultural identity for its business. (Slade-Brooking 2016, 156.)

In general, brand identity is made up of many factors, and they need to be synchronized into one system. So, the logo is not a brand identity, but it is an important part of the brand identity. The way the logo is displayed on the web page, the typeface and the color your company uses - all of those aspects form an intuitive identification system. After all, identity design plays an important role in branding. It helps form a brand concept in the minds of customers.

2.5 Brand Positioning

In the B2B industry, brand positioning can be succinctly defined as a “collective comparative” view of an organization, product, or service. It must effectively and authentically represent the whole while demonstrating how that aggregate stands apart from the competition. (Onaindia & Resnick 2013, 26.)

Brand positioning in the target market plays an important role in branding, which can determine the success of a brand. Specific marketing programs such as branding, advertising and distribution all depend on the position of the brand identified in the target market. Brand positioning is one of the important steps to build a brand, however, the concept, position and influencing factors of brand positioning can be affected by the change and development of the society and business environment. The role and position of brand positioning also changes and evolves over time. There

are many definitions of brand positioning, but all have the same perception: Brand positioning is to identify the distinctiveness, the uniqueness or specialty of a brand, compared to other competing brands, in the mind of the target customers. (Onaindia & Resnick 2013, 27.)

Brand positioning is the heart of marketing strategy. It is the "act of designing the company's offer and image so that it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target customer's minds." As name implies, positioning means finding the proper "location" in the minds of a group of consumers or market segments, so that they think about a product or service in the "right" or desired way to maximize potential benefit to the firm. Good brand positioning helps guide marketing strategy by clarifying what a brand is all about, how it is unique and how it is similar to competitive brands, and why consumers should purchase and use it. (Keller 2013, 79.)

According to Keller (2013, 79), in order to determine the position of the brand it is important for the company to know who the target consumer is? Who the main competitors are? and how the brand is similar to or different from its competitors?

To be able to define the right target customers for the business is very important. The target customer (or target market) is understood as the collection of individuals or groups of people that the product targets. In other words, they will be the ones who can afford to buy the product. So, identifying the right customer segment will help make the positioning more accurate.

Analyzing the competitors is the second key step to follow in order to determine the position of the brand. Target customers of this business may also be the target customers of another business. So, understanding the competitors such as their strengths and weaknesses or their strategy can help the company gain advantages in the market.

And lastly, to be able to define the similarity and difference of a company compared to the competitors. A company should understand well it owns the strength and weakness, from that to overcome the weakness use the strength as its advantage. Only when the company knows the similarity of it and its competitor, by then the company can see what to define the differences and unique of the company Using the strength to make the brand outstanding on the market.

2.6 Brand Equity

Brand equity is a marketing term used to indicate the value of a brand. These values are determined by the customer's perceptions and their experiences related to that brand. Positive brand equity will make the business different from its competitors. High quality products, great services, and effective marketing campaigns thanks to brand equity will make the brand more recognizable, thereby promoting cooperation from customers (IGI Global 2019, 3). Brand equity is formed and developed as a result of the customer's brand awareness process. The process usually involves the relationship between the customer and the brand. Brand equity is naturally formed through the following dimensions: brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand attribution, and perceived quality (David Aaker 1996, 7).

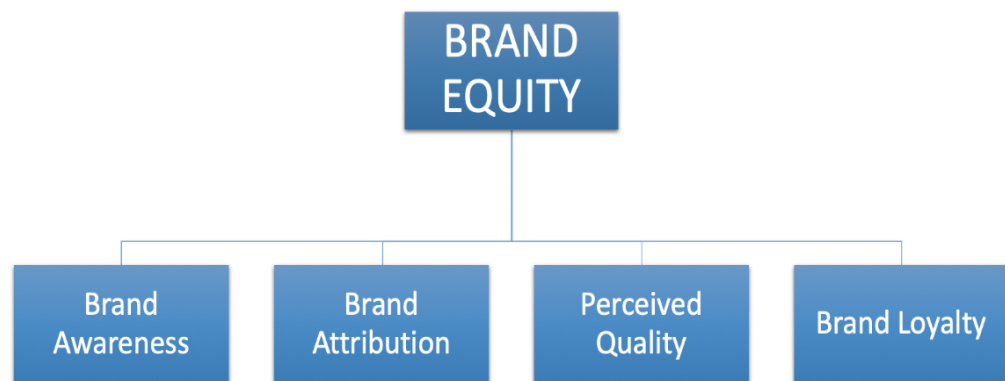


Figure 2. Brand Equity Model (adapted from David Aaker 1996, 8)

This model defined the brand equity based on customer perspective. On the other hand, there is another brand equity model developed by Young & Rubicam, a marketing and communications company. According to this model, a strong brand will consist of two main components: Brand Vitality and Brand Stature. Brand Vitality consists of 2 elements: Relevance and Differentiation. Brand Stature includes Esteem and Knowledge (. (Franze 2015, 427) This is a very interesting approach when a brand, no matter how much it makes a difference, must be familiar with customers. Franze 2015, 427).

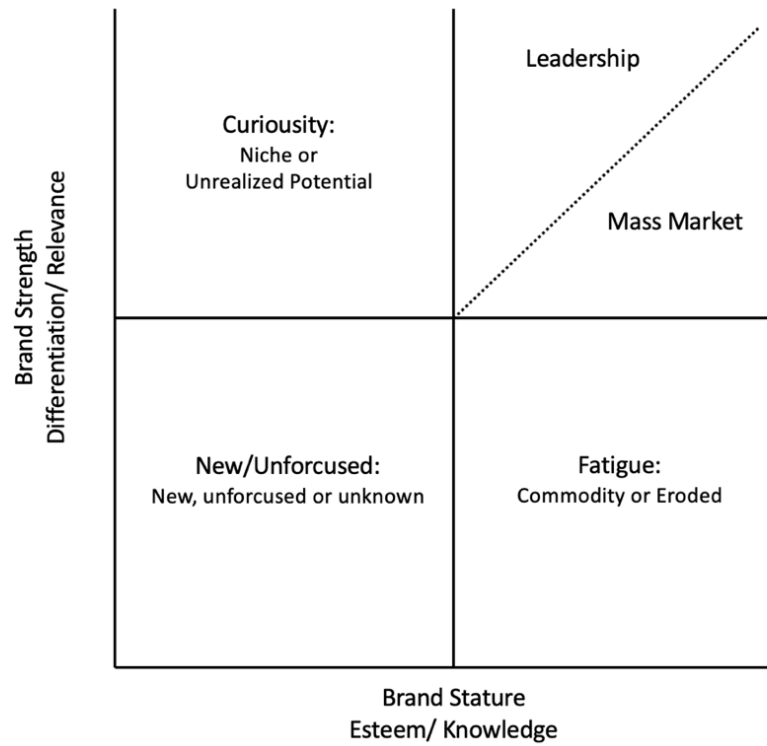


Figure 3. Brand Asset Valuator (BAV) (adapted from Franze, 2015, 427)

In spite of the difference of these two models, there is a common point that it is to create a brand with high awareness, good quality, differentiation and ultimately towards the loyalty of the customers.

3 Tools and methods for creating a strategic brand management plan

This chapter introduces four different tools and methods that will be use in creating the strategic brand management brand later on empirical part. By reading this chapter, the reader can understand the use of each framework and model, how they work and the benefit they bring to this thesis. Brand positioning map is introduced first in this chapter. After that, theories on Customer based brand equity (CBBE), SWOT analysis will be explained. The last but not least, the CAGE distance framework is presented.

3.1 Brand Positioning Map

The brand positioning map demonstrates brand's strengths and weaknesses concerning certain aspects critical to customers. It is a helpful tool to identify competitive advantages, market opportunities and how these opportunities change in a dynamic market circumstance. (Jones. J, 1998, 136-138.)

Brand positioning maps can assist business with classifying categorized existing brands in the market into four criteria. The map identifies the closest competitive brands of the company as well as their strengths and weaknesses. It additionally provides visual view about competitors for data analysis or identifying market segments for requirements of new products.

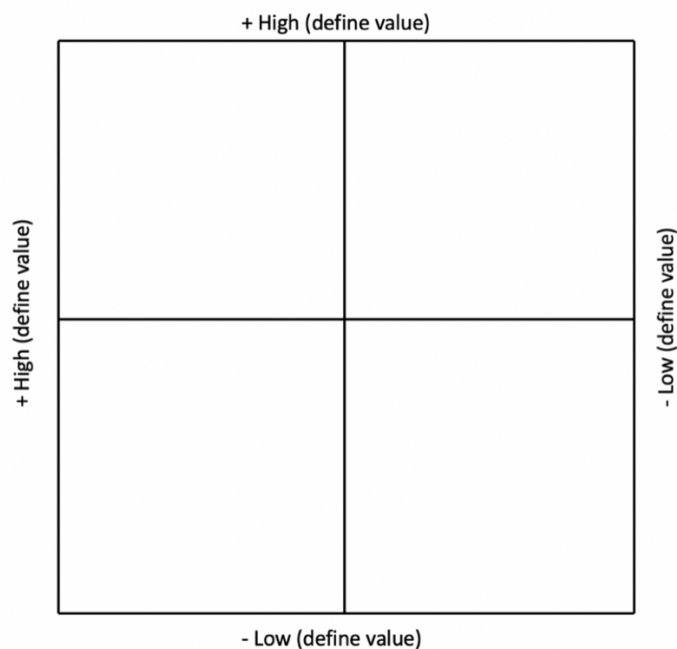


Figure 4. Brand Positioning Map (Jones. Brand Positioning Map (adapted from Jones. J 1998,136-138)

After creating the positioning map, these sample following questions should be answered in order to interpret it. (Angela, 2010)

- Do the customer attitudes match with the image that company would like to deliver?
- What do customers think about competitors?
- Does it match with the company's opinion?
- According to customers, who are the competitors that are most similar to the company's brand?
- Is there any change for the new brands coming into the market?

By taking into account these questions, if consumers' view towards the brand does not meet the expectation, the company needs to make changes in marketing strategy. On the other hand, the company can focus on making the brand more outstanding. (Angela, 2010)

3.2 Customer based brand equity (CEEB)

Defining Customer-Based Brand Equity the CBBE concept approaches brand equity from the perspective of the consumer - whether the consumer is an individual or an organization or an existing or prospective customer. (Keller 2013, 69)

The concept behind the Customer based brand equity model is: To build a strong brand, a company has to shape the way customers think and feel about its product. A company has to build the right kind of experience around its brand, so that the customers have specific thoughts, feelings, beliefs, opinions and perceptions. Understanding and brand knowledge of customers - all the different things that are associated with that brand in the minds of customers are very important because it is the foundation of brand value.

When a company has strong brand equity, customers will buy more from it, they will refer the company to others, they are more loyal, and the company is less likely to lose customers to competitors. The basic premise of the CBBE concept is that the power of a brand lies in what customers have learned, felt, seen, and heard about the brand as a result of their experiences over time. In other words, the power of a brand lies in what resides in the minds and hearts of customers. (Keller 2013, 69.)

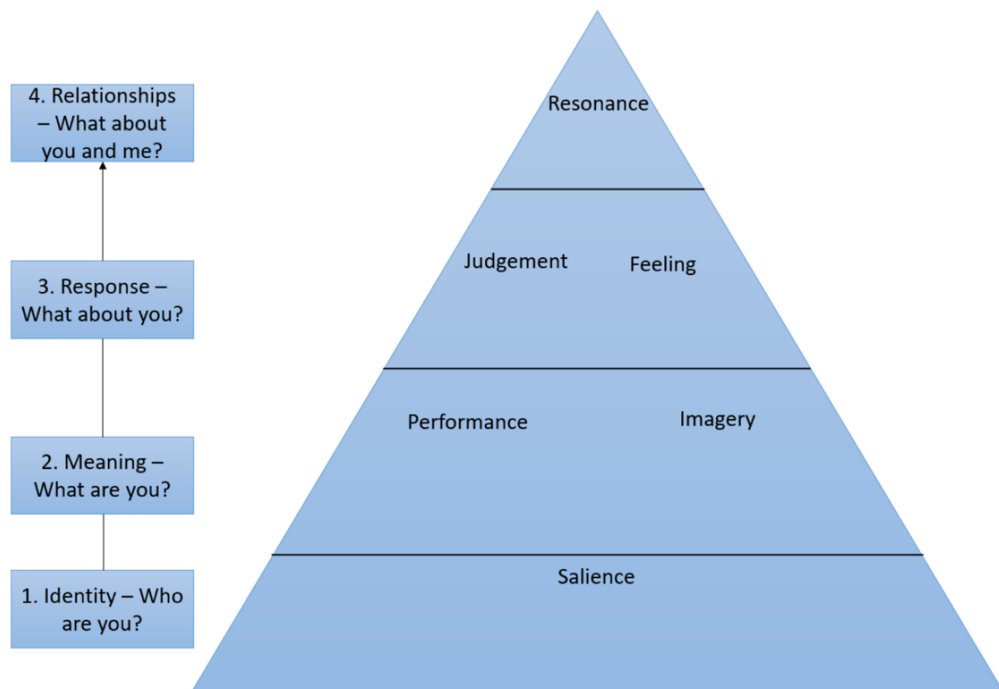


Figure 5: Keller's Brand Equity Model - CBBE Model (adapted from Keller 2013, 69)

The four steps of a pyramid are the four basic questions that customers will ask, often unconsciously, about a company's brand. These four steps are divided into 6 blocks, from which proceed to the top of the pyramid and build a successful brand. (Keller 2013, 69.)

Step 1: Identify brand - Who are you?

In this first step, the goal is to create brand prominence or a unique customer perception of the company - in other words, a company needs to make sure its brand stands out, customers recognize it. and be aware of it.

Step 2: Meaning of the brand - What are you?

The goal in the second step is to identify and convey the meaning of the brand and what it represents. The two blocks in this step are "Performance" and "Image".

"Performance" determines how well a product meets customer needs

"Image" refers to the level of branding that meets the needs of customers at the social and psychological levels.

Step 3: Brand response - What do I think, or how do I feel about you?

Customer response with brands falls into two categories: "judgment" and "feeling".

"Judgments" focus on customer's opinions based on performance and imagery

"Feeling" are the customer's emotional responses and reactions to the brand. For example: Can the brand evoke direct emotions to customers (happiness, comfort ...), or brands that make them feel special about themselves (stylish, confident, class,...).

Step 4: Brand resonance - How many connections do I want to have with you?

Resonance brand is at the top of the pyramid because it is the most difficult level - the highest level of desire. The company achieves resonant branding when customers feel attached to the brand.

CBBE could evaluate several sources of brand equity that have good diagnostic ability and can be used as an input to predict a brand's potential. Despite to the benefits of the CBBE model brings, there is still the limit side of it. According to Ćorić & Jelić (2015, 1006), Keller's CBBE model is able to apply in B2B business it but will need some adjustments. And even though CBBE has been mentioned and discussed widely in marketing theory but there are not many available connections from the theory to the application of the model. CBBE model has not yet been applied and commonly used. (Zhao & An 2008, 553.)

3.3 SWOT analysis

There are many effective methods that can be used to collect the necessary information, and one of them is SWOT analysis. Appeared in the mid-1960s, SWOT has always been among the most powerful tools to analyze, not only businesses, but also organizations, individuals or teams.

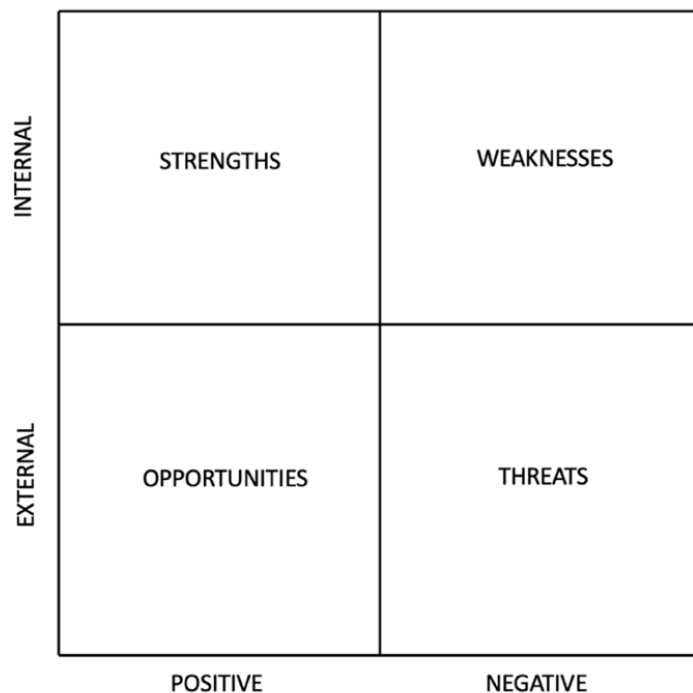


Figure 6. SWOT (adapted from Alan Sarsby 2016, 7)

According to Cordell and Thompson (Cordell & Thompson, 67), SWOT analysis is "a mnemonic (for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) representing the factors to consider when assessing a business or a proposition." By definition, it can be seen that Strength and Weakness are internal factors, while Opportunity and Threat are external factors, over which we have no control. Each of the four factors has its own characteristics and role. To begin with, Strength stands for what the organization excels at. This can be considered what give organizations the ability to develop and accomplish set goals. Strengths can be referred to both tangible and intangible qualities, which give the company distinct features from other competitors. Strength includes, for example, strong financial resources, good customer service, strong brand, highly skilled staff, etc. Knowing the strengths of the business is a huge benefit as it can become a basis of success. Weakness is what could prevent business from giving out the best performance. Some of the weaknesses might be outdated technology, location, and so on. This part should be directly looked at in order to bring out the best result for the analysis. The third factor is Opportunity. As one of the external aspects, Opportunity helps organization to realize its environment's advantages and make use of it to implement plans and strategies. Last but not least is Threat. This negative factor appears at the same time with the appearance of any potential that can harm the organization.

As mentioned before, SWOT is used to analyze individuals, teams, organizations, business, and also SWOT is useful to evaluate the competitor's business. SWOT analysis can be considered as the foundation of everything. Fine (2009) described SWOT as the basis of an effective strategy, business proposition, company positioning, company's direction and also helps companies choose and implement valuable ideas. However, Fine has pointed out that even though the function and method of SWOT seems simple, companies can still meet challenges in the process of completing it. This is primarily because it is hard for businesses to face the reality of their current position. In order to complete and give out the best result, it is compulsory for organizations to deal with their problem directly and to conclude what is working and what is not, what is worth pursuing and what needs to be given up. On the other hand, later on, when businesses have successfully applied SWOT in their analyses, the advantages can then be clearly seen. What SWOT does is to put the available information and data in a logical order, which makes it easy for people to access. People then will base on the results of SWOT to make decisions. Many people make decisions according to the previous ways and methods, others make decisions based on their instincts. Without a doubt, each of these decision-making methods is beneficial in its own way, however, it is not always the best steady path to choose. It would be better to combine these with some solid analyses so that the decision can

be realistic and practical at the same time. Businesses can consider using SWOT in situations such as before starting a business, in the beginning of implementing an idea or when evaluating competitors.

Even though the advantages of SWOT are undeniable, there are still many limitations lie in this analysis method. It is argued that SWOT is "purely a 'snapshot' in time of the status quo." (Cordell & Thompson, 2018). The primary reason for this is that although SWOT can point out many important information, it cannot provide a solution, direction or next steps. Another opinion also stated that SWOT analysis studies the internal and external factors of the subject, however, in reality, the surrounding environment and other aspects evolve and change rapidly without foreseeing (Teoli & An, 2019). This also participated in the limitation of SWOT method. Last but not least, people think that with only a few individuals studying the case, the inputs may not be reliable, which leads to the ability of misunderstood, misused outputs.

SWOT is, without a doubt, an effective and popular analyzing method. With the ability of evaluating different aspects of a business, SWOT is a very powerful tool for organizations and surely is beneficial. However, there are still many issues of concern regarding this system and it is up to each business to evaluate and apply it in a suitable way.

3.4 CAGE Distance Framework

In the CAGE Distance Framework, CAGE stands for the first initials of the four key words of the framework are Culture, Administration, Geography, and Economy. These four components help to evaluate the impacts of distance to trading, imports and exports. From that, company can have advantages in creating plans and strategy on a fairground as the local companies while they enter a new market. Additionally, the framework also provides the company with a better look into trading, capital, information, and human behavior. (Ghemawat 2007, 2.)

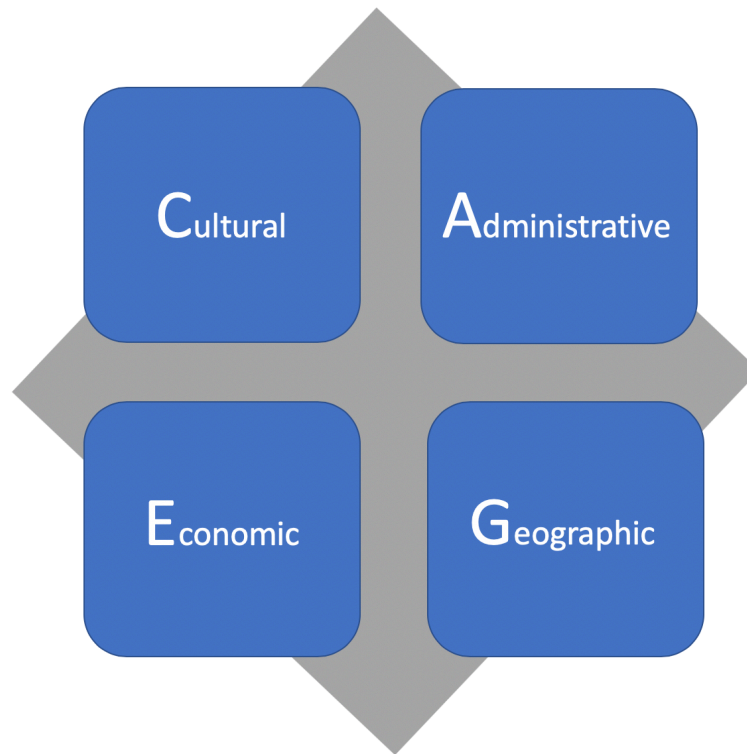


Figure 7. CAGE Distance framework (adapted from Ghemawat 2001, 5)

3.4.1 Cultural

Culture refers to the main social properties maintained by interactions between people. Differences in race, religion, color, social standards and language, trust, belief, and variations of egalitarianism are elements that can create a gap between countries and have a strong impact on the activities of a business. Culture can directly affect marketing strategies of businesses or in another way, changing companies' behavior on the market. For example, when a company enters a new region, they will have to adjust their way of approach, communication, negotiation with customers to be suitable with the etiquette, rules, and manners of a culture in order to be able to step in the market. (Ghemawat 2007, 10.)

Not only direct but indirect business could also be affected by culture through behaviors of the locals according to their beliefs, religious, standard of the society because these factors can influence their consumption behavior. Therefore, companies also have to consider their marketing methods through these aspects.

Considering culture as a factor that will affect a business marketing strategy when entering a new country or area, there are disadvantages and advantages side of it. When entering to a new country with differences in culture, the company may face

many disadvantages, for example, the language barrier, the company will need to translate the slogan of their company to the destination's language with the same message to be kept. Or the definition of the norm, in each country, norms are different, so a promotion campaign may work out in a country but considered as inappropriate in another. But there are also advantages for the company when entering a new market as they can use their difference to stand out. Harnessing the fundamental differences is a cross border strategy. (Ghemawat 2007, 18.) For example, the beneficial effects from cultural differences can be used in context when a company wants to highlight the origins of their products, handmade leather goods come from Italy or exclusive champagne comes from France.

Therefore, it is important for a business to know well about the culture of the area they are about to enter since when the company can understand the culture of the new market, it can create a suitable approach strategy and minimize the risks.

3.4.2 Administrative

The impact of administrative and political factors strongly influenced the transaction between nations. Administrative attributes include laws, policies, and derived institutions from a political process and ordered or obligated by the government. The administrative distance reflects current and historical political and legal associations among business partners. This aspect of CAGE will help companies to check whether there are historical or current political factors that can support or hinder business relationships between the company and a new national market. Laws and regulations that promulgate at the national or international level can hugely be affected to cross borders trading activities. Due to these, the position of the company in the market can also be influenced. For example, the forming of the European Union is clear evidence for barrier removal obstructing political administration. (Miloloža 2015, 54.)

Under the CAGE model, the administrative distance leads to huge challenges in terms of implement global marketing, in which CAGE identifies the attributes that create challenges as well as some industries affected by the administrative distance factor. When countries are together forming unions also makes it difficult for businesses to be outside of these communities. Because they are aimed at creating competitiveness pictures of national enterprises in the union. This factor makes it difficult for the process of collecting market information as well as updating new market policy objectives, which leads to inappropriate market analysis and strategy development. Or politic relation between countries sometimes interferes with marketing activities if

the countries are having conflict, or a political issue can make a country boycott a brand, products of other countries

These challenges will cause international companies to consider these politically sensitive factors in choosing distribution channels, performing activities to promote their products. In international politics with many opposing sides, taking advantage of a politician, an event, a landmark must consider the factors that can bear to side effects such as politicians may be ostracized in one place, part of the population certain, or a place name is in dispute between the parties ... But on another hand, businesses can also use those points to create their own advantages. (Ghemawat 2007, 11.)

3.4.3 Geographic

Geographical attributes are considered geographical location, common borders, time zone, climate, the sea bordering on the terrain or the distance within the country to the border. In addition, the intervention of humans, such as transportation and communications infrastructure, also needs to be considered as well.

Geographic factors can affect transportation prices, such as products with large volumes, huge sizes or heavy products which will increase transport costs. Similarly, the transport prices of tangible products also become higher when the transportation distance is further. Not only physical products or tangible product costs are affected but intangible products and services are also influenced by geographical distance. Capital flows across borders can be altered as well when the distance between the two countries increases. This phenomenon cannot be explained by transportation costs - which are not physical products matter. The telecommunications factor and the number of multinational bank branches can be one of the reasons that determine the influence of these geographical distances to capital flows across borders. (Miloloža 2015, 54.)

The longer the distance is, the more difficult communicating and understanding for businesses are operating between one country to other countries. When a company opens its market and operates in different locations, there will be challenges as the geographic distance increases. Transmission the information between locations will take longer which can lead to slower the business process, especially in a location where there is a lack of facility for communication. The research phase can be time-consuming since external impact factors in each country are different. The products of the company will also need to adjust to be suitable with the topographic

characteristic of the destination. For example, a machinery product of a company from a temperate country will need to adjust to run smoothly when entering a tropical country. A marketing strategy also needs to be drafted to match the geographical factors. (Ghemawat 2007, 21.)

Not only looking at the negative side, preparing to enter a new market is a step for a business to grow bigger. By this, it is a chance for the company to develop its product and services, wider its product range and market. With a variety of product options and the capacity to operate in different geographical locations, it will help the company to attract more potential customers.

3.4.4 Economic

Economic distance refers to differences that affect cross-border economic activity through economic mechanisms distinct from the cultural, administrative, or geographic ones already considered. In this regard, the gravity model flags not only economic size (which increases the absolute amount of trade but decreases trade as a percentage of GDP), but also per capita incomes. (Ghemawat 2007, 13).

Economic distance shows some core elements differences such as income, distribution of wealth and purchasing ability of segments in a geographical area. Customer wealth or assets are also one of the important economic attributes to create distance between nations. It has an impact on the level of transactions and trading partners of the country. Besides that, there are also different factors that have an impact on economic differences: price, quality, financial resources, people and other sources.

The wealth gap in a country usually could be related to economic activities, interaction of the high-income class with lower income class is the difference in prices. Due to the disparity between the economic sectors, a company could not apply the same marketing strategy to all the markets. The company has to pay attention to the GDP and people's income in order to create a flexible marketing strategy that will be suitable in each market. Therefore, it is important to note that although the distance often has a hindering effect on cross border trading activities, it still has certain positive effects in specific cases. (Ghemawat 2007, 22.)

4 Geographical and competitors research

This part of the thesis will apply the CAGE distance frameworks SWOT mentioned in previous chapter to do the research and analyze. Firstly, it will be the geographical research part of nine chosen countries then come to the competitors' analysis of three competitor companies in the same field with the commissioner company. The geographic and competitor analysis was conducted mostly focusing on the energy industry.

The criteria for selecting countries to analyze are the typical countries that the company has been operating in each region, Asia, CIS countries and Europe. Choosing to analyze two countries that the company already operating in Asia are China and Vietnam, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan from CIS area and Poland from Europe, to see the what are the same features and what are the differences between the markets. Analyzing Indonesia, Azerbaijan, Czech Republic and German as potential markets that company can enter. The data below is adapted from Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (MOFA).

4.1 Geographical analysis

The data for geographical analysis can be found in the Appendix 1. The CAGE analysis is conducted based on two sources. The first source is data from Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs websites. Another is from the survey's answers. The aim of geographical analysis is to find the similarities and differences between the countries in the same areas. Eventually, the data would show the possibility to develop the same marketing strategy and brand management for each area.

From the CAGE analysis, it can be seen that countries from Europe region are Czech Republic, Germany and Poland has more similarities in cultural and administrative to company X compared to countries from other region. The time zone and travel distance from the headquarter company to these three countries also smaller since they all belong to same region. These can be considered as advantages for the company when entering these countries for example, saving traveling costs, easier to set meeting schedule between head office versus the local branches. Since there is a big difference in culture to countries in Asia and CIS region, the company has to more consider and well-prepared for the strategy plan here. Even though big difference in time zone and distance could be a difficult when enter these markets,

the pros cannot be unseen since these are developing countries with a lot of potential for the business.

For the Asian region, the three countries almost share the same culture and have high level of power distance which means the hierarchy has influence in every aspect including business. Among these countries, Indonesia is a new potential market that has the highest population in South- East Asia. This is an island nation and very rich in natural resources. Indonesia develops mostly in services and industry especially in natural gas and oil. Therefore, it creates chances for company X to enter the market.

In the CIS regions, company X has been operating in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. But it is still challenging for the company to deeply understand the differences of culture and engage with customers. It is important to develop a particular strategy focused on these areas in order to raise awareness and gain potential customers.

About marketing channels, based on the statistic, Vietnam, Indonesia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Poland, Germany and Czech Republic are all having the most population using Facebook as a main social media channel. It is significant chance for company X to keep on approaching customers through these channels. Moreover, it is considerable to start marketing on Instagram in these countries because it is the second highest channel people are using.

On the other hand, China and Kazakhstan are the two countries that use different social media channels such as Weibo or VKontakte in daily life. It is noticeable that these platforms require users to know the local language. Luckily, company X has ability and human resources to advertise and communicate in these 2 countries.

In a nutshell, it is an advantage for company X as it has experiences in doing business in these regions. Since every country in the same region has the similarities in for example the cultural and administrative, company X can apply the same brand management system that has already used for the existing daughter companies in the region.

4.2 Competitor data collection:

Nowadays, it is obvious that there are different organizations out there offering a comparative item or services to yours. In any marketplace, company need as much insight and information as possible to increase an edge over the rivals. Just realizing what they offer is still not sufficient. With the development of technologies and innovations, it is easier for business to find out about their competitors than before. It is critical to consistently direct thorough analysis about competitors so as to be one step ahead. This session identifies 3 competitors which operates business in global energy sector. In the branding perspective, SWOT model is used to analyze the companies.

Besides company X, four Finnish companies are chosen for analyzing. The first company called Eneron Oy, which specialty is providing products, services and solutions using in the energy efficiency projects. The company focused field is a marketplace for providers on renewable energy for buildings and estates. The second company is VassaETT. VassaETT plays a role as an advisory and research consultant in global energy markets. The next company is Motiva Ltd. The company is experts in providing services and solutions and projects for businesses, public sectors and municipalities. Last company to analyze is Elomatic, a consultant and engineering company. This company has the most similar business model compare to company X.

Four companies chosen for analysis are Finnish based companies who operate internationally in energy industry. With the same foundation and background, they are considered as company X's rivals. By studying competitors' websites and all social media platforms, the analysis would particularly concentrate on the marketing perspective to see how these four companies advertise themselves.

Table 3. SWOT analysis of Company X

COMPANY X	
<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong network and local support. • Websites in 6 languages. • Interacting in different social platforms. 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not yet promoting for the brand. • Hardly reach new possible customers. • Not making use of the ability to advertise in different languages.
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing demand for renewable energy. • The renewable power capacity is going to grow approximately by 50% between 2019 and 2024. • The CO2 emission reducing goal are trending globally. (Payal, 2020) 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competition will merge in renewables energy sector.

Table 4. SWOT analysis of Eneron Oy (Eneron 2020.)

ENERON OY (Eneron 2020.)	
<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise on products and services • Having smart management service providing data on energy consumption and costs. • Informative websites with plenty of interesting pictures about solutions. 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Twitter (165 followers) and LinkedIn (37 followers) for communication but less followers.
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing demand for renewable energy. • The renewable power capacity is going to grow approximately by 50% between 2019 and 2024. • The CO2 emission reducing goal are trending globally. (Payal, 2020) 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competition will merge in renewables energy sector.

Table 5. SWOT analysis of VasaaETT (VasaaETT 2020)

VaasaETT (vassaETT 2020.)	
<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing research and consultant for partners to enter the global target market. • Several feedbacks from customers are shown as references on the websites. • International experts. • Average 3 posts per month in Twitter. • The content is basically about on-going projects, events, what happens in the energy sector recently or retweet from partners. • Informative websites including events, project reports, etc. 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only use Twitter for marketing online with about 950 followers
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing demand for renewable energy. • The renewable power capacity is going to grow approximately by 50% between 2019 and 2024. • The CO2 emission reducing goal are trending globally. (Payal, 2020) 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competition will merge in renewables energy sector.

Table 6. SWOT analysis of Motiva (Motiva 2020)

Motiva (Motiva 2020.)	
<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having 3280 followers in LinkedIn and about 4600 followers in Twitter. • Daily update the information. Besides the post about their services, there are many contacting news and messages. 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p>

<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing demand for renewable energy. • The renewable power capacity is going to grow approximately by 50% between 2019 and 2024. • The CO2 emission reducing goal are trending globally. (Payal, 2020) 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competition will merge in renewables energy sector.
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Table 7. SWOT analysis of Elomatic (Elomatic 2020.)

Elomatic Oy (Elomatic 2020.)	
<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having company publication every beginning of the year. • Several brochures are sharing online. It mainly about the services, product catalogue, company technologies. • Providing expert articles. • Plenty of blog posts per month. • Showing donation and fund to fight climate change. 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing demand for renewable energy. • The renewable power capacity is going to grow approximately by 50% between 2019 and 2024. • The CO2 emission reducing goal are trending globally. (Payal, 2020) 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The competition will merge in renewables energy sector.

4.3 Competitor analysis

Since company X is operating in 3 different sectors and playing the role as service provider, there are plenty of major competitors that have presented in the industry for years and have already built good brands for people to know and recognize. In other words, the competitors have proven their reliability and validity for customers. The competitors that mentioned in the competitor's analysis all seem to have the same services, however, unlike them company X still need to learn and develop the brand image to strengthen their position in the market.

Among these competitors, Elomatic has the most similar way of operating and services. This company maintains good customer relationship by utilizing several channels. Elomatic's strengths is showing their expertise with references through publication and marketing materials. Although Elomatic and company X share many common in the services and solutions, it is undeniable that Elomatic has deeply focused on its marketing strategy and gained certain recognition in the market. To better compete with these companies, company X has to further concentrate on marketing and advertising activities.

5 Brand Management Plan

This chapter is describing the final product of this thesis, a brand management plan. The plan includes the brand position of the company X, customer analysis, brand management plan and plan executive. The tools and methods introduced previously in chapter 4 are Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) and Brand Positioning map which will be used and applied for the building plan process.

5.1 Brand positioning

To define the position of the brand (company X) the authors conducted a survey within Company X to get the insights from employees along with customers' feedback they had received about the company. The survey included questions ask about the employees' opinion and feedback from the customers. The survey sent to employees in each daughter companies via company's internal e-mail. As a result, seven responses were received which includes four respondents from Finland, two from Russia and one from Vietnam.

- Which three words used to describe the company?
- In your opinion, what are the company competitive advantages and disadvantages?
- What feedback received from customers?
- How did customers hear about the company?

From the survey, most of the employees' opinions they have towards company X as an innovative, well-built system, and strong expertise company. However, from the customers' feedbacks the image of company X is still unclear for them.

5.1.1 Customer Based Brand Equity _ Keller Model

The Keller's CBBE model demonstrates 4 steps for brand building and brand management. This model is pyramid showing the increase of awareness as well as the connection between customers and the brand. The 4 steps of the pyramid also present for 4 basic questions which customers would consider unconsciously about the brand, including: Identify brand, Meaning of the brand, Brand response and Brand resonance. To assemble a solid brand, process to the top of the pyramid where an agreeable relationship exists with customers (Keller 2013, 69).

Accomplishing the brand identity includes making brand remarkable quality which identifies with parts of client attention to the brand. How effectively and frequently is the brand evoked under different circumstances or conditions? Whatever degree is

the brand top-of-mind and handily reviewed or perceived? What sorts of prompts or updates are fundamental?

Normally, brand awareness refers to clients' ability to recall and perceive a brand. This is something other than customers know about the company name or they have recently seen this brand, maybe even many times. Brand awareness additionally includes connecting the brand - name, logo, image, symbol, etc. to specific relationship in memory.

Specifically, building brand awareness is the job of ensuring that customers comprehend the product or service in which the brand is competing. At a more extensive, building brand awareness additionally implies guaranteeing that clients know which of their needs the brand is intended to fulfil - through these services and what basic capacities does the brand offer to customers?

Based on the survey's result and existing data about company X, CBBE model is applied as below:

Salience

- Who are you? Company X is a global partner specialty in trading and project management. The company has experience of almost 70 years in international trade as well as presents over 100 companies worldwide. Company X is known as a Finnish based company who has a certain position in the services such as bioproducts and environmental technologies.
- The primary objective is to bring customers and principles together by offering the customer a wide range of products from different manufacturers along with services or projects best suit for every single case. The principles and partners are technology and solutions provider, who reach company X to get help expand their business to target market.
- Characteristics of the service are strong expertise with Ability to operate in local languages.
- Distinctive signs: The slogan is "Passion in global trade" which is also presents the spirit and culture of the company.

Performance

- Primary characteristic: offering variety of innovations and modern technologies.

- Secondary characteristic: adding values by service network and local sales, being a reliable partner.
- Efficiency: Always try to improve efficiency with new technology and use renewable energy.
- Price: price is adjusted for each case based on negotiation with principals and customers. However, company also has pricing issues as sometimes the price is quite high.

Imagery:

- User profile: Company tries to reach customers especially in developing countries with up to date and know how solutions. The brand makes efforts specially to communicate with national companies which present the countries.
- Personality and values: The brand is customer-focused.
- Experiences: Once established, company tries to keep in touch with customers by continuously updating the blog and contact in social media. It is believed that enhancing customer experience in every sales and project is the key objective for the business.

Judgement:

- Quality: In term of quality, Company X has wide range of finance project and programs.
- Credibility: Company X has a good credibility regarding the qualified services that build a healthy environment and reduce CO2 emission.

Feelings:

- Warmth, fun: reliable, innovative and friendly
- Security: People used to feel secure regarding the provenance of products and the quality. The services and solutions meet customers' expectations.
- Social approval, self-respect: Company X is approved and suggested by its consumers.

Resonance:

- Loyalty: Strong loyalty of principles in long-term cooperation. Company massively advertises to keep its best consumers and attract people.
- Community: Company has an increasing community but does not have enough two-way communication with its consumers. Consequently, the main

advertising is Facebook page but there is a lack of interaction. For B2B business, it is undeniable that company need more concentration on LinkedIn as it is professional platform for business.

- Engagement: Not clear engagement system for loyalty customers.

It is undeniable that company X has competitive advantages such as the ability to combine different technology providers to form new turn-key solutions and good geographical coverage. However, in order to compete with competitors and prove its presence, it is significantly important for company X to deliver outstanding objective and engagement to customers as well as build a strong community.

5.1.2 Brand positioning map

This map defines the position of company X among its competitors compare in customer relationship and number of communities that the company active in. According to Wheeler (2012, 2) companies look for ways to connect emotionally with customers, become irreplaceable, and create lifelong relationships. Choosing these criteria will help the authors be able to compare the activeness with customers of the commissioner company to its competitors and come up with suggestion for the plan. The horizontal axis measuring the interaction and relationship between companies and its customers. Based on the number of followers and feedbacks or reviews of customers to the company to decide where the company will place. To the right is the higher in number of followers and interactions with the companies and decrease to the left. The vertical axis is calculating the number of platforms, communities as Facebook, LinkedIn, website that each company take part in. The more platforms that one companies has, the upper the company go towards and in reverse, the fewer communities that a company take part in, the lower the company moving downward.

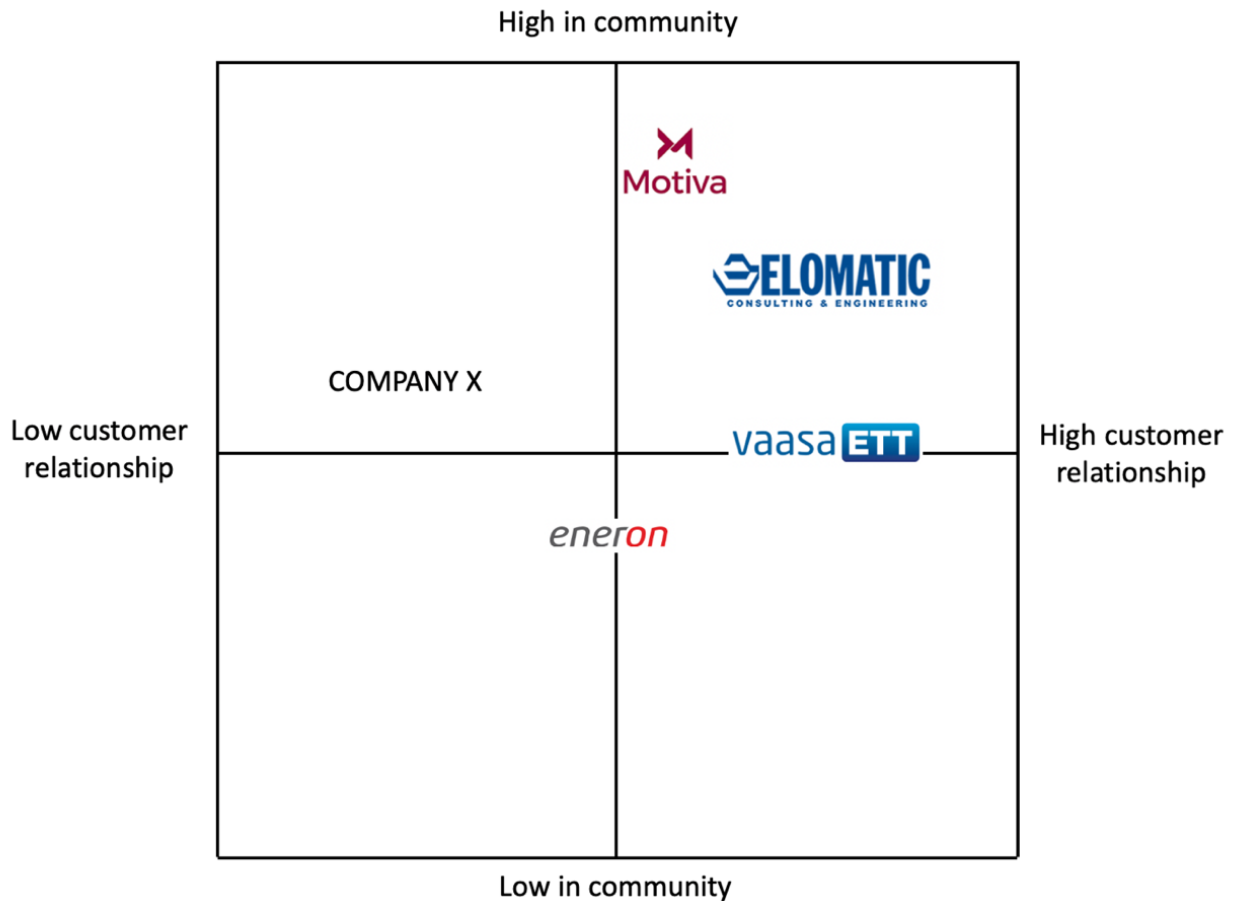


Figure 8. Brand Positioning Map made by the authors

- Company X has around 170 followers in total of three platforms are LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook, most of the followers are from LinkedIn. There also feedbacks from customers available on the company webpage.
- Eneron has around 200 followers total from Twitter and LinkedIn. On the website, Eneron also published their number of viewers and interaction button on each of their post. But the number of interactions on these platforms is low since the company not so active.
- VaasaETT catching up right under Motiva by active in Twitter with about 900 followers and 400 followers on LinkedIn. Even though the followers of VaasaETT in total only 1300 compare to Motiva but the two side interactions between the company and its followers are as much as Motiva. Besides that, VaasaETT also has open feedbacks from customers on their webpage.
- Motiva Oy places in the highest place in the map due to it great followers in both LinkedIn and Twitter platforms, which is totally around 8000 people. The

company update their information daily on their platforms and like interaction from their followers.

- Elomatic Oy has 239 followers in Twitter, 589 followers in Facebook, 284 followers in Instagram and especially 6033 followers in LinkedIn. Good interaction in all platforms.

5.2 Customer analysis

Based on the result of the survey, customers who chose to use company X services find it satisfied with the service provided and would prefer to continue cooperating as well as maintain good customer relationship. However, the issue is that the company has difficulty in attracting new customers who have not use the services and it also takes time for new customers to trust in the service offered. On top of that, the answer also indicates that company X has problem in transferring message since customers are unclear about what company is actually doing. These problems are caused by lack of branding and advertising and thus, bring such challenge to enhance brand image. Besides, according to the feedbacks, customers got to know about the company through friend, their partners who already used the service or cold call. No mean of advertising was mentioned. That is the reason why specific actions need to be done in branding and marketing in order to raise awareness among potential customers as well as make brand image perceived.

In B2B market, customer segmentation consists variety of customers from massive to medium and small companies or even the public sector. Although all these segments are in the B2B market, a marketing message for single segment should be created as part of long-term strategy. Besides, the message should be built based on the products and services that the segment primarily uses.

5.3 Brand Execution

Whether the brand is B2C or B2B, the most essential part of execution is the communications. The ideas on how company X overcome the difficult task is presented as the following.

Marketing actions: The issue mentioned previously was lack of marketing activities. Therefore, the ideas and suggestions on implementing marketing plan are presented below:

Creating marketing clear content based on brand identity and positions.

- Taking advantages of the company unique working methods and the use of technologies to get visible insights for customers. For example, presenting the team of experts for the project or showing more about the current stages of working as well as technology in means of pictures or videos for customers.
- Making advertising investment on the relevant channels.
- Refining the target audience and customer segmentations to maximize the efficient of transferring message.
- Writing marketing content for each group of target audience and segment.
- Considering advertising in Instagram. It is possible to link existing Facebook page together with Instagram. Therefore, it would be grateful to take advantage of this features.

Enhancing the content and interaction of existing digital marketing channels.

- Continuously reviewing and generating meaningful and interesting content for homepage and social media page.
- Utilizing Google AdWords search engine optimization to attract visitors to the company website along with using tracking method.
- Launching marketing campaign to focusing on target audience to gain visibility for the company.
- Test the YouTube channel to optimize the power of video messages and show the services and projects in a more understandable way to customers.

Developing control and report system for local office marketing activities.

- Making plan to update on local homepages as well as social media channels.
- Continuously updating contents and keeping tracks on the work.
- Having monthly meeting with marketers in daughter companies to sync the content and possibly solve current issues.

Making brochures, references publication and journals. This help customers and principles have visual and better knowledge about company's products, services and solutions.

- Creating pictures and videos storages for example on newest technologies and solutions.

Brand guide needs to be disseminated for the daughter companies to follow.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

Throughout the thesis process, the authors have understood more about branding and the process of creating a strategic brand management plan. The thesis topic was interesting to work on, but it was also very challenging since it focused on the B2B energy segment, which the authors have not had so much experience on it. Working on this project the authors had chance to widen their knowledge and thicken their experience.

During the time working together on the thesis, two authors were constantly keeping in touch and updating the work process to each other. As in the original plan, besides sharing the work process through online channels, the authors will also have face to face meeting at least once a week. But due to the epidemic situation happening during the project time occurred, only a few meetings were able to be held at the beginning phase, but the rest unfortunately got to canceled. Instead of a face to face meeting, the team replaced it with Skype meetings. Working on a team, the two authors can together discuss the topic, cultivate more knowledge for each other, improve work efficiency as well as motivate the other member. Even though there were miscommunication or conflicts in schedule sometimes, but two authors tried their best to solve them. After the process of writing this thesis, the authors have improved their own individual skills as well as a team player. It is very important to be a supportive team member and be able to keep up with the deadlines of the created plan.

The commissioner of this thesis is Company X. The first step of the thesis process is the authors submit to the company and the school their topic proposal. After the thesis proposal got approved, the two authors began creating the thesis plan, after this phase, the two authors had a Skype meeting with the thesis advertiser to get feedback and advice and then the two authors had a face to face meeting with the commissioner at the company headquarters. In this meeting, the authors presented the thesis plan to the company, explained the direction of the thesis and its process schedule. After this meeting, the authors have the chance to understand more about the company, their expectation from the thesis and their comments on the plan. During the writing of the thesis, the author and the commissioner were kept in touch and exchanged via email. The commissioner was supportive and involved in the thesis work.

The commissioner gave positive feedbacks that useful information was well collected and analyzed. Hence, a clearer insight of the commissioner was relied

upon their employees. There is no doubt that the thesis work would be a nice support for the brand management plan in the future.

The plan is developed based on the insights from internal surveys as well as the analysis data. From the authors' point of view, this thesis has not fulfilled all the expectations from the beginning. Since this was a challenging topic, the authors fortunately have fully support from the commissioner and supervisors. It is believed that even though there are still some points which could have been more developed, but this thesis can also be a good contribution for commissioner to manage their brand in the future. Writing this thesis was a difficult process but also an opportunity for authors to grow and develop themselves. As the final result, a strategic brand management was created and ready as a suggestion for the commissioner company in developing and expanding their brand.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Geographical data collection

People's Republic of China

- **Cultural:**

- Population (estimated): 1,393 billion (World Bank 2020.)
- Language: Chinese
- Religion: Non-religious 73,56%, Buddhism 15,87% and other
- Ethnicity: Han Chinese 91.9% and others
- Most used Social media channels:
 - Wechat (largest social network in China): over 1 Billion (Statista 2020)
 - Sina Weibo (similar to Twitter): 480 Million (Statista 2020.)

- **Administrative:**

- Legal system: Following to the institution of the People's Democratic Republic, the one-house regime
- Currency: Renminbi (yuan, CNY)

- **Geographic:**

- Located in Asia, bordering on 14 countries. China ranks third in the world in area after Russia and Canada, and first in population. Half of China's territory is mountainous and mainly distributed in the west.
- Area: 9,596,961 km²
- Capital: Beijing
- Time zone: UTC +8
- Climate: China belongs to the monsoon region; the climate varies from warm to dry.

- **Economic:**

Over 50% of the population lives in agriculture. Crops include rice, wheat, sweet potatoes, sugarcane, soybeans and vegetables. Animal husbandry and fishing also play an important role. Significant reserves of resources and fuels, such as oil, gas, iron ore, bauxite, tin, and other important economic sectors are iron, steel, cement, vehicles, fertilizer production, food processing, garment and textile. (MOFA 2020.)

The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

- **Cultural:**

- Population (estimated): 95.54 million (World Bank 2020.)
- Language: Vietnamese
- Religion: 73,2% No religious, 12,2 % Buddhism and others
- Ethnicity: 54 groups, among which the Kinh (Viet) accounts for 86.2% of the population
- Most used Social media channels:
 - Facebook: 45,3 million users (Statista 2020.)
 - Zalo: 35 million users (Dome 2020.)

- **Administrative:**

- Vietnam is a politically stable country.
- Legal system: The Communist Party of Viet Nam is the ruling and only legal political party in Viet Nam of which the Political Bureau and the Central Committee are the most important. The Communist Party of Viet Nam operates within the framework of the Constitution and the law.
- Currency: Viet Nam Dong (VND)

- **Geographic:**

- Vietnam is a country located on the Indochina Peninsula, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific coast. People's Republic of China to the North; Laos and Cambodia to the West; and Eastern Sea to the East.
- Area: 331 000 km².
- Climate: Tropical monsoon.
- Capital: Hanoi.
- Administrative units: 63 provinces and cities.
- Time zone: UTC +7

- **Economic:**

Industry 41%, Services 38%, Agriculture 21%. Vietnam was a country focused mainly in agriculture, one of the top countries in produce and export rice and coffee. In recent years, the country has gradually shifted to industrialization and modernization (MOFA 2020.)

Republic of Indonesia

- **Cultural:**

- Population (estimated): 267.7 million (World Bank 2020.)

- Language: Indonesian
- Ethnicity: Indonesia has about 300 ethnic groups, each with a different culture. The largest group is the Javanese, which accounts for 42% of the population, and has cultural and political advantages. The Sunda, Malay, and Madur are the largest non-Java groups
- Religion: Diverse religions, most of the population are Islam (about 87.2%)
- Most used Social media channels:
 - Facebook: 130 Million users (Statista 2020.)
 - Instagram: 64 Million users (Statista 2020.)

- **Administrative:**

- Legal system: Indonesia is a republic with a presidential system.
- Currency: Indonesian rupiah (RP)

- **Geographic:**

Indonesia is an archipelago lying between the Pacific and Indian Oceans in Southeast Asia. Terrain: Mostly coastal lowlands, large islands with mountains inside. Variety of natural resources as petroleum, tin, natural gas, nickel, wood, bauxite, copper, fertile land, coal, gold and silver. Natural disasters: Floods, severe droughts, tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanoes, forest fires

- Area: 1,904,569 km²
- Time zone: UTC+7 - UTC+9
- Climate: The climate is hot and humid with two seasons: dry season from May to October, dry season from November to April. The climate is more moderate in the highlands.
- Capital: Jakarta

- **Economic:**

Industry accounts for 35%, agriculture: 21% and services: 44% of GDP.

Indonesia is a resource-rich country, including oil, natural gas, tin, nickel and bauxite. Over 55% of the labor force is engaged in agriculture. Rice is the staple food crop, but Indonesia also exports a significant amount of rubber, tea, coffee and spices. Industry is heavily involved in processing minerals and agricultural products.

Republic of Kazakhstan

- **Cultural:**
 - Population (estimated): 18, 28 million (World Bank 2020.)
 - Language: Kazakh. Russian is also a language used in commerce and is considered the language of communication of ethnic groups.
 - Religion: Most of the population are Muslims 70.2%,, 26.3% are Christian and 3.5% others
 - Ethnicity: Kazakhs (Qazaq), Russians, Ukrainians, Uzbek, Germans, Tatars, Uygurs, other ethnicities
 - Most used Social media channels:
 - VKontakte – 43% to the proportions of social media users (Kazakhstan act global 2020.)
 - Odnoklassniki – 34% to the proportions of social media users (Kazakhstan act global 2020.)

- **Administrative:**
 - Legal system: Kazakhstan is a democratic, secular, constitutional republic
 - The President is the Head of State, with a 5-year term.
 - Legislative body: Parliament consists of two houses: Senat (Senate) and Mazhilis (House of Representatives).
 - Executive body: The Prime Minister is appointed by the President, with the consent of Mazhilis (House of Representatives). The Prime Minister submits to the President for approval of the cabinet list.
 - Currency: Tenge (KZT)

- **Geographic:**
 - Located in Central Asia, northwest of China, the eastern part of the Ural River in Eastern Europe.
 - Area: 2,724,900 km²
 - Capital: Nur-Sultan
 - Time zone: UTC +5 til +6
 - Climate: continental, hot summers, and cold, dry winters

Kazakhstan is a large lowland region in Central Asia. In the west, next to the Caribbean Sea, the delta lies below sea level. The highlands of Kazakhstan include the northern hills and mountain ranges. Kazakhstan also has a number of saltwater records, including the Iranian Sea, which is becoming increasingly narrower, taking

too much water for irrigation work from these rivers. Deserts include the Kyzyl Kum desert in the south, the Caribbean in the central region, and the Baltic desert in the north.

- **Economic:**

Industry accounts; 30%, agriculture: 10% and services: 60% of GDP.

Kazakhstan is the main supplier of food and raw materials to the republics of the former Soviet Union, especially Russia. The transition to a market economy is almost just beginning. Half of the labor is in agriculture. Large farms in the northern plains provided one-third of the grain of the former Soviet Union. Other agriculture sectors include sheep breeding, food processing, vegetables and rice cultivation. Kazakhstan is rich in resources including coal, tin, copper, zinc, gold, chromium, oil and nickel. Industries include iron and steel. (MOFA 2020.)

Republic of Uzbekistan

- **Cultural:**

- Population (estimated): 32.96 million (World Bank 2020.)
- Language: Uzbek
- Russian is also a language used in commerce and is considered the language of communication of ethnic groups.
- Religion: 88.6% of the population are Muslims, 9.4% Christians and others
- Ethnicity: 83.8% are Uzbeks, 4,8 Tajiks and others
- Most used Social media channels:
 - Instagram: 21,3% to the proportions of social media users (Statcounter 2020.)
 - Facebook: 16,24% to the proportions of social media users (Statcounter 2020.)

- **Administrative:**

- Legal system: Uzbekistan is a secular, unitary constitutional republic.
- The President is: Head of State and Government.
- The highest Legislature is the Supreme Council (Oliy Majlis) consisting of two Houses: The Legislative Institute (House of Representatives) with 150 seats, the Senate with 100 seats,
- Judicial Agency: Supreme Court, Judges introduced by the President, passed by the National Assembly.

- Currency: Uzbek som (UZS)

- **Geographic:**
 - Uzbekistan is a Central Asia country, bordered by Kazakhstan vs Turkmenistan. Western Uzbekistan is dominated by flat deserts. To the east are the mountain ridges and the valley.
 - Area: 448,978 km²
 - Capital: Tashkent
 - Time zone: UTC +5
 - Climate: Continental climate. Summer season, small rainfall.

- **Economic:**

Industry accounts for 27%, agriculture: 26% and services: 47% of GDP.

Uzbekistan is one of the world leaders in cotton production. In addition, it also produces wheat, barley, raises a lot of cows and sheep. In addition, it also has significant reserves of oil and gold. Mechanical industry and large machinery manufacturing developed. The economy is mainly state-owned and centralized. At present, the economy of Uzbekistan is gradually shifting to a market mechanism. (MOFA 2020.)

Republic of Azerbaijan

- **Cultural:**
 - Population (estimated): 9.981 million (World Bank 2020.)
 - Language: Azerbaijani
 - Religion: 96.9% of the population are Islam, 3% Christians and 0.1% Other
 - Ethnicity: Azerbaijanis accounted for 91% and others
 - Most used Social media channels:
 - Facebook: 29,05% to the proportions of social media users (Statcounter 2020.)
 - Instagram: 23,04% to the proportions of social media users (Statcounter 2020.)

- **Administrative:**
 - Legal system: Azerbaijan is a unitary semi-presidential republic

- The President is elected by universal suffrage, with a 5-year term, with no limit on the number of terms in office; have the right to appoint Government members.
- The Prime Minister and members of the Government are nominated by the President, approved by the National Assembly.
- Legislative body: National Assembly (Milli Mejlis) 1 house with 125 seats, elected by universal suffrage, 5-year term.
- Currency: Manat (AZN)

- **Geographic:**

Located in southwest Asia, bordering the Caspian Sea, between Iran and Russia, with a small part of the North in the Caucasus region.

- Area: 86,600 km²
- Capital: Baku
- Time zone: UTC +4
- Climate: subtropical

- **Economic:**

Industry accounts for 18%, agriculture 22% and services: 60% of GDP.

Azerbaijan has important reserves of oil and natural gas that underpin the economy and the base of heavy industry. Although industry accounts for a large share in the economy, agriculture still plays an important role. The main export products are cotton and tobacco. Sturgeon fish caught in the Caspian is the raw material for the important fish production industry. Azerbaijan is turning to a market economy. (MOFA 2020.)

Republic of Poland

- **Cultural:**

- Population (estimated): 37.97 million (World Bank 2020.)
- Language: Polish
- Religion: 92,9% of the population are Roman catholic and others
- Ethnicity: 98% Polish and others
- Most used Social media channels:
 - Facebook: 20 million users (Statista 2020.)
 - Instagram: 7,2 million users (Statista 2020.)

- **Administrative:**

- Legal system: Republic, democracy, parliament and multi-party.
- Currency: Polish zloty (PLN)

- **Geographic:**

Located in Central Europe, the east borders Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania; Russia; the west borders Germany; the North is the Baltic Sea; South by Czech and Slovakia.

- Area: 312,696 km²
- Capital: Warsaw
- Time zone: UTC +1- UTC +2
- Climate: temperate

- **Economic:**

Industry accounts for 35%, agriculture: 5% and services: 60% of GDP.

Polish agriculture is predominantly small and privately owned. More than 20% of the workforce is engaged in agriculture. The main products are potatoes, wheat, barley, beets and grass for animal feed. Industry develops according to a large-scale centralized plan. Poland has large natural, copper and silver coal mines. The mechanical engineering industry of food processing, chemicals, metallurgy and paper industry occupies an important position and is also the main export item. (MOFA 2020.)

Federal Republic of Germany

- **Cultural:**

- Population (estimated): 83.02 million (World Bank, 2019.)
- Language: German
- Ethnicity: 91,5% German
- Most used Social media channels:
 - Facebook: 22 million users (Statista 2020.)
 - Instagram: 38,35 million users (Statista 2020.)

- **Administrative:**

- Legal system: Germany is a federal, parliamentary, representative democratic republic.
- Currency: Euro

- **Geographic:**

Central Europe, Germany is located in the heart of Europe and is surrounded by 9 neighboring countries: France, Austria, Switzerland, Czech, Poland, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg.

- Area: 357,022 km²
- Capital: Berlin
- Time zone: UTC +1, UTC +2
- Climate: Temperate

- **Economic:**

Industry accounts for 30.4%, agriculture: 1.2% and services: 68.45% of GDP. Key industries are electronics, chemicals, textiles, food processing and cars. The main agricultural products of Germany are hops, grapes, beets, wheat, barley and dairy products. (MOFA 2020.)

Czech Republic

- **Cultural:**

- Population (estimate): 10. 62 million (World Bank 2018.)
- Language: Czech
- Ethnicity: 64,3% Czechs and others
- Most used Social media channels:
 - Facebook: 40,09% (Statcounter 2020.)
 - Instagram: 11,24% (Statcounter 2020.)

- **Administrative:**

- Legal system: Democracy, multi-party and parliament.
- Currency: Czech koruna (CZK)

- **Geographic:**

- Area: 78,866 km²
- Capital: Prague
- Time zone: UTC +1, UTC +2
- Climate: Temperate oceanic climate.

- **Economic:**

Income level: High income (World Bank, 2018.)

Industry accounts for 42%, agriculture: 5% and services: 53% of GDP.

The country's main industries are metallurgy, manufacturing of machinery, electronic equipment, transportation, textiles, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, food and food processing. Besides, The Czech Republic is very engaged in the production of ceramic and crystal wares. The main crops of the country are wheat, potatoes, beets, etc. Tourism is the strength of the Czech Republic. (MOFA, 2020.)

Appendix 2. Survey questions

1. Which office are you from?
2. Which three words used to describe the company?
3. In your opinion, what are the company competitive advantages and disadvantages?
4. What feedback received from customers?
5. How did customers hear about the company?