Digital Brand Management: A Company and Consumer Perspective

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Abstract

The branding of a business is increasingly done through digital channels, mainly social media. In this paper, Digital Brand Management is explored from a company and consumer perspective and analyzed based on five case studies. The data was collected in November 2015 by Arcada´s International Business Management master students on a study trip in three Nordic countries. The identified learning points indicate that creating or rebuilding the brand story is critical for successful brand management. Managerially this story should be communicated on multiple digital platforms with different complementing content to create a buzz and engage loyal followers. As an ultimate goal the story can lead to fans that share their brand experiences with other fans or potential fans. This requires high managerial competence in social media. Finally, we learned that everything needs to be measured in real time and brand management decisions should be data driven as opposed to gut instinct decision making.

Keywords: Branding, digital branding, SOSTAC, digital marketing strategy, Nordic case study

1   INTRODUCTION

In today's global marketplace, the role of brand management has attained an elevated level of significance. In fact, the most distinctive skill of marketers is their ability to build and manage brands (Kotler & Armstrong 2010). This is because brands are the most powerful assets representing the core of the company, outlasting the company's tangible assets; thus they need to be carefully developed and managed, as brands represent consumer's cognizance and feelings about a product or service and its performance (Kotler & Keller 2006). Branding in a digital environment has its own distinctive dynamics that need to be understood to be able to select effective branding tactics and strategies. With the rise of digital media, brand building has become multi-directional and interconnected (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010). Digitalization becomes part of our daily routines and is shaping the traditional ways in which consumers and business interact with each other. Digitalization, specifically social media has claimed to have transformed consumer behavior (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010), with significant consequences for brands and products (Muntinga et al. 2011). Consumers increasingly spend more time on online services to browse, store, play, email, access Facebook, Twitter and other social apps through connected devices i.e., tablets, smartphones, laptops and in this way transforming the way internet is used (Ericsson Consumer Lab 2012). Mobile internet and social media have created new technology based channels or routes for organizations to communicate with their customers, labelled as "digital channels", leading to digital transformation (Edelman 2010).

The aim of this paper is to identify key learning points and managerial implications regarding digital brand management based on data collected from five different case companies in the Nordics.

2   METHODOLOGY

The Nordic Master Study trip was a project managed by a group of five students that had started their studies in the fall of 2014 in the Masters Degree Programme in International Business Management at Arcada. Planning, executing and documenting this trip was their project task. A critical part of the task was to choose a theme for the trip. The theme should be current and generate state-of-the-art learning points. The topic

should also be suitable to report as an Arcada working paper so that the learning points could be shared with coming master classes.

The group selected "Branding in the Digital Era" as the theme of the trip, and started to look for companies to visit as well as determine which Nordic cities would be visited. The companies were chosen based on criteria such as size (small and medium), location, industry and personal contacts. Each member of the group had one company that they were the contact person for.

Companies visited were; Virta Media (Helsinki), Monster Energy Drink (Copenhagen), e-Types (Copenhagen), Boozt (Malmö) and Truecaller (Stockholm). The choice of these five companies turned out to be very fruitful. They all represented modern approaches to branding and marketing communication. They are all companies providing products or services to the consumer market which offered a focused context suitable for exploring digital brand management.

Each student was responsible for their own case company. This responsibility included briefing the case company representative about the chosen theme and the expected input from the company's perspective. A special emphasis was set on getting substance for digital brand management and keeping company information to a minimum. In order to be able to secure that the theme was covered in the presentation, the student responsible was also required to prepare some questions according to the theme. A central task of the student was to collect the data by actively taking notes. However, the other students in the project group also took notes so that in the end five students' notes could be used and compared for the five case descriptions. This ensured that enough and diversified data was collected during the company visits.

After the trip, each student started to read and arrange all the collected data. Then work of finding a suitable theoretical framework for the analysis of the data commenced. By comparing the data from the different company cases, it seemed logical to analyze the data from two perspectives, i.e. the company and the consumer perspectives. We then saw a possibility to focus on certain theoretical issues from a company and certain from a consumer perspective. This then became the logic for the paper both in the theoretical and the empirical part.

3   DIGITAL BRAND MANAGEMENT

A brand is a set of marketing and communication methods that help to distinguish a company from competitors, and create a lasting impression in the minds of customers. A brand today, is much more than a brand was 20 years ago, but traditional "brand thinking" still occurs and includes several components that still exist and form the brand. From a customer point of view, and the ideal corporate brand building, a brand is in essence a promise to the customer of long term security, a competitive frame of reference and consistent delivery of functional and emotional benefits. (Haigh 2014) The concept of branding is the same as 20 years ago, but the opportunities and channels are on another level due to the digitalization in the 21st century. According to smart insights 2015, the definition to digital branding is: *"Digital channels, and assets are used to communicate a brand's positioning (or purpose) as part of* multichannel *brand communication or engagement programmes"*. Therefore digital branding could be renamed to Digital communication, and be part of a bigger context where branding is stronger related to the business strategy and brand planning. However, even if we talk about branding or digital branding or digital communication, the key elements are still the same, it is the way of how, when and where you brand that differs.

Modern brand building is much more of a consumer-centric approach. In many businesses it is about putting the customer or consumer in the center of the brand experience. The overall aim should consist of total brand experience that is aligned with the brand´s strategy, positioning and purpose (Smartinsights 2015*).*

The speed at which digital marketing has developed over the years, has changed the way brands and businesses are utilizing technology in building their marketing strategies. Digital marketing campaigns are becoming more prevalent, as digital platforms are increasingly incorporated into marketing plans and as more and more people use digital devices instead of going to physical shops.

In the digital world, spread of information and awareness can occur across numerous channels such as the blogosphere, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, and a variety of other platforms. Online communities and social networks allow individuals to not only become creators of their own content and publicly publish their opinions, experiences, thoughts and feelings about varying topics and products, but also

to comment on publications made by others and thus hyper-accelerating the diffusion of information (Nielsen 2016).

3.1 Digital branding – company perspective

Today, brands do not need intermediaries in order to have a direct interaction with customers, digital branding requires the brand to interact with the customers in the appropriate tone. Digital branding is about creating and establishing your brand's story and presence in the digital realm.

3.1.1 Strategic digital brand building

The marketing landscape is shifting further away from traditional advertising irrevocably towards digital options as online drives marketing. Digital strategies are fast developing to engage with online-savvy audiences through different social platforms. Today's digital campaigns are part of a multi-screen ecosystem, in order to amplify a brand's message to create a better involvement with on-the-go customers through highly targeted messages. The success of these campaigns depends on a thorough knowledge of the consumer mindset and location relevance (ScreenMedia 2016).

3.1.2 Digital campaign and content creation

One of the major challenges in content marketing is to create great content which is relevant and engaging. It can be achieved by focusing on the target audiences instead of the brand (Ryan & Jones 2009). By focusing more on audiences needs over that of what one would prefer to promote (Bosomworth 2014).

In the last decade due to rapid advancement in internet and online marketing coupled with the advent of social media and blogging, the business world has been completely democratized (Ryan & Jones 2009). Internet business are further impacted with the introduction of cloud computing, big data and responsive web designing, thus drastically altering the way we share information (Brown et al. 2012).

Recently the focus has shifted from outbound techniques to inbound techniques. In order to create the appropriate strategy to market and attract the desired attention

through a "two-way-conversation", the content, besides being shareable, should have the ingredients to trigger discussions and encourage followers to participate by commenting (Ryan & Jones 2009).

Content marketing strategies require a clear vision of one's business objectives, to be able to create viable web content strategies to engage both targeted customers and search engines. Strategies also help generate improved ROI through improved search engine rankings and thus sales.

A great strategy is needed not only to fuel social media activity, but also to create high converting landing pages and also to increase search engine rankings for target key words (Pirouz 2014).

- Constantly create high quality content (Pirouz 2014).

- Strategy should cover a wide range of different content types (Pirouz 2014).

- Content creation has to be well supported with content marketing (Pirouz 2014).

- Try to influence the influencers to create a greater impact; "nurture social evangelist" (Ryan & Jones 2009).

- Engage positively to nurture brand advocacy – focus on what interest's people (Ryan & Jones 2009).

- Harness the wisdom of the crowd – getting input from the online communities (Ryan & Jones 2009).

3.1.3 Digital consumer behavior analytics

Understanding your online consumer properly and doing necessary improvements and moves based on analytics gathered from the consumers' online behaviors, is in today's competitive world a must if you are looking at achieving a successful business and for being able to compete against your competitors. Analytics and especially advanced analytics give the companies the ability to get vital real-time insight about their

customers and more importantly the possibility to react upon this collected data, with offering for instance personalized options for its clients (Bose 2009).

With proper tools for advanced analytics, an online retail company can for instance easily map the whole purchase journey of their customer and with this insight optimize their operations and overall performance. This valuable insight should also be a crucial part of the company's decision making process. For gaining maximum benefit, it is also important to understand that the analytics should be incorporated into the company's daily operations and the data should be collected and analyzed in real time, without delays (Bose 2009).

Companies can use different kinds of tools and methods for gathering data about their customers and their online behavior. An effective and commonly used tool is Google Analytics, which easily gives the companies valuable insight about the online activities. The tool tracks all the website traffic and transforms this data into reports, that the company can follow, and based on that insight make smart decisions (Toncin, 2011). Many companies also combine Google Analytics with other tools for analyzing online consumer activities and some have even created their own tools, as for instance Boozt, which has created an internal dashboard for this (see paragraph 4.6)

In a study by Eriksson et al. (2016), based on the Data Driven Decision RACE model, empirical findings show that a majority of the investigated small eRetailers do analyze data, have analytical tools installed, use dedicated analytics experts and they, in fact, report to have a reasonably good understanding of their online customers and visitors. However, only a minority of the investigated eRetailers seem to make systematic, diverse and continuous data-driven decisions according to the three phases in the model. This implies that the small eRetailers primarily rely on experience and gut instinct rather than on data analytics when they make decisions and take actions concerning their online activities.

3.2 Digital branding- consumer perspective

The increasing number of personal devices used gives companies more ways of communicating with their customers. It also works the other way around and gives the customers a possibility to interact with the company in so many different ways than before. On top of this the customers can now also interact and share content with each other.

3.2.1 Digital brand image in social media

Social media is all about conversation; it is about reaching out to your desired target audiences and making it worth their while to interact with you on a social media platform. Organizations are increasingly using social media as a branding tool (Bruhn et al. 2012). Companies have created brand communities on social media thus adding social media to their marketing and brand building activities (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis 2014, Gallaugher & Ransbotham 2010).

Social media is a good way for companies to do market research and to encourage word of mouth. It makes it easier for marketing researchers to get closer to the consumers and collect the information they need (preferences, interests etc.). Social media is ideal for spreading information about a company through word of mouth, as the users are able to create and spread brand related content in their own network (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis 2014). Moreover, brands have inspired a deeper level of emotional support from the consumer (Morrison & Humlen 2015). A study by Zubernance from 2012 shows that brand ambassadors tend to make longer lasting effects among followers and are seen as more trustworthy. The level of commitment a brand ambassador has varies, but according to Jang et al. (2008) the level of commitment is higher when the community is consumer initiated, as opposed to being company initiated. Some brand ambassadors will go to great lengths in promoting the product as they have such a strong emotional connection with it.

One challenge that companies face in social media is how to react and respond to negative comments, as ineffective handling of such situations may lead to negative word of mouth among social media users (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis 2014). If a company

fails to develop a proper strategy to answer negative response it may have a negative impact on a brand's image (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010, Roehm & Tybout 2006, Corstjens & Umblijs 2012).

3.2.2 Controlling digital communication

As brand campaign wars arise; media agencies see the value of up-and-coming technologies to help them target specific audiences through concise and effective messaging on display and digital videos for a broader reach through YouTube and other applicable social channels. Today consumers engage with online content more than with online ads. As a result, more brands are creating content to meet consumer's expectations by cutting through the clutter and producing content that fosters better relationships with audiences. At present, every YouTube video watched, website visited and every search carried out on digital platforms are monitored by Tech giants like Google. Media agencies need to more actively harness the power of such intangible assets to create more effective online tools for stronger channel integration (Ovitz 2015).

3.3 The SOSTAC model

The SOSTAC model by PR Smith (*Figure 1*) is a logical, systematic and widely popular and used tool for strategic marketing planning. It is a planning system for developing and managing marketing strategies, creating marketing plans and campaigns. The SOSTAC framework is particularly applicable to the digital marketing context, as it helps to evaluate structure and manage the key strategies, tactics and actions of a company combined with digital marketing communication techniques (Chaffey & Smith 2013, SmartInsights 2016).
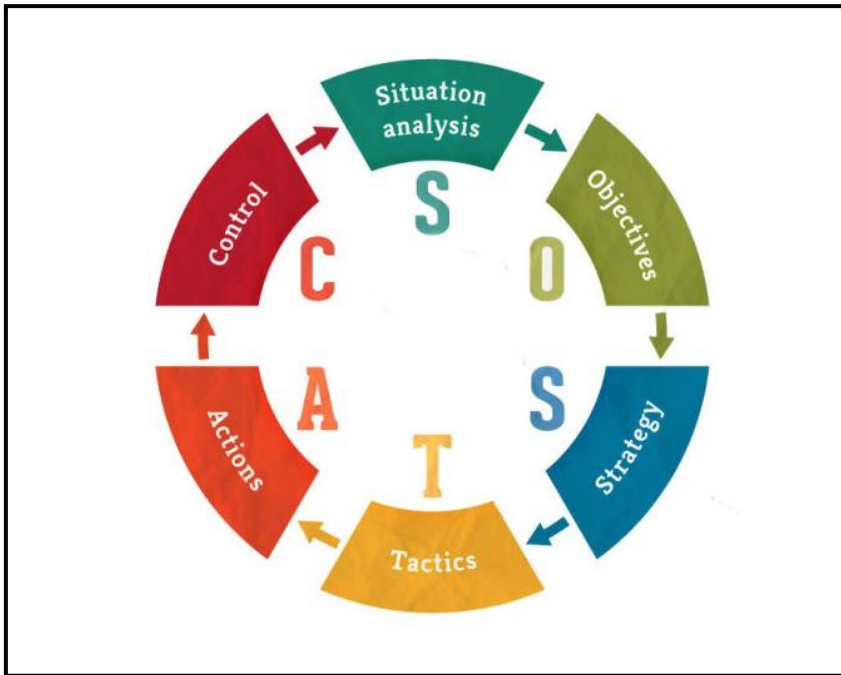
Figure 1. SOSTAC® Planning Framework

SOSTAC® acronym stands for Situation, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Action and Control (Chaffey & Smith 2013 pp. 3-5).

The main planning stages for a digital marketing strategy are the following:

S = Situational analysis – Where are we now (current state)?

O = Objectives – Where do we want to be (business goals)?

S = Strategy – How do we get there (plan to achieve the goals)?

T = Tactics – What tactical tools do we use to implement strategy (details)?

A = Actions – Which action plans are required to implement strategy (responsibility and deadlines)?

C = Control – How do we manage the strategy process (measure, monitor, modify = track the progress)?

(Chaffey & Smith 2013 pp. 3-5, BusinessBalls 2016).

4 THE DIGITAL BRAND MANAGEMENT MODEL

The digital brand management model is based on the SOSTAC model. The five empirical company cases are analyzed with the created model. The model has two perspectives; the company and the consumer perspective. The company perspective focuses on the strategic issues and decisions to be made when digital branding is developed and the consumer perspective focuses on how the consumers can be activated in a digital context, e.g. social media, to market the brand themselves. The digital brand management issues in the six different stages are derived from the theoretical discussion earlier in the paper. In table 1 we structure the model and in figure 2 we present the actual model.

Table 1. The structure of the model

Stage/arrow	SOSTAC planning focus	Digital Brand Management	Perspective	Case
1	Situation analysis	Strategic digital brand building	Company	e-Types
2	Objectives	Strategic digital brand building	Company	e-Types
3	Strategy	Strategic digital brand building	Company	e-Types
4	Tactics	Digital campaign and content creation	Company	Virta Media
4	Tactics	Digital brand image in social media	Consumer	Monster Energy

5	Actions	Digital campaign and content creation	Company	Virta Media
5	Actions	Digital brand image in social media	Consumer	Monster Energy
6	Control	Digital consumer behavior analytics	Company	Boozt
6	Control	Controlling digital communication	Consumer	Truecaller

Based on this structure we have for analytical purposes created the Digital Brand Management model (see figure 2).
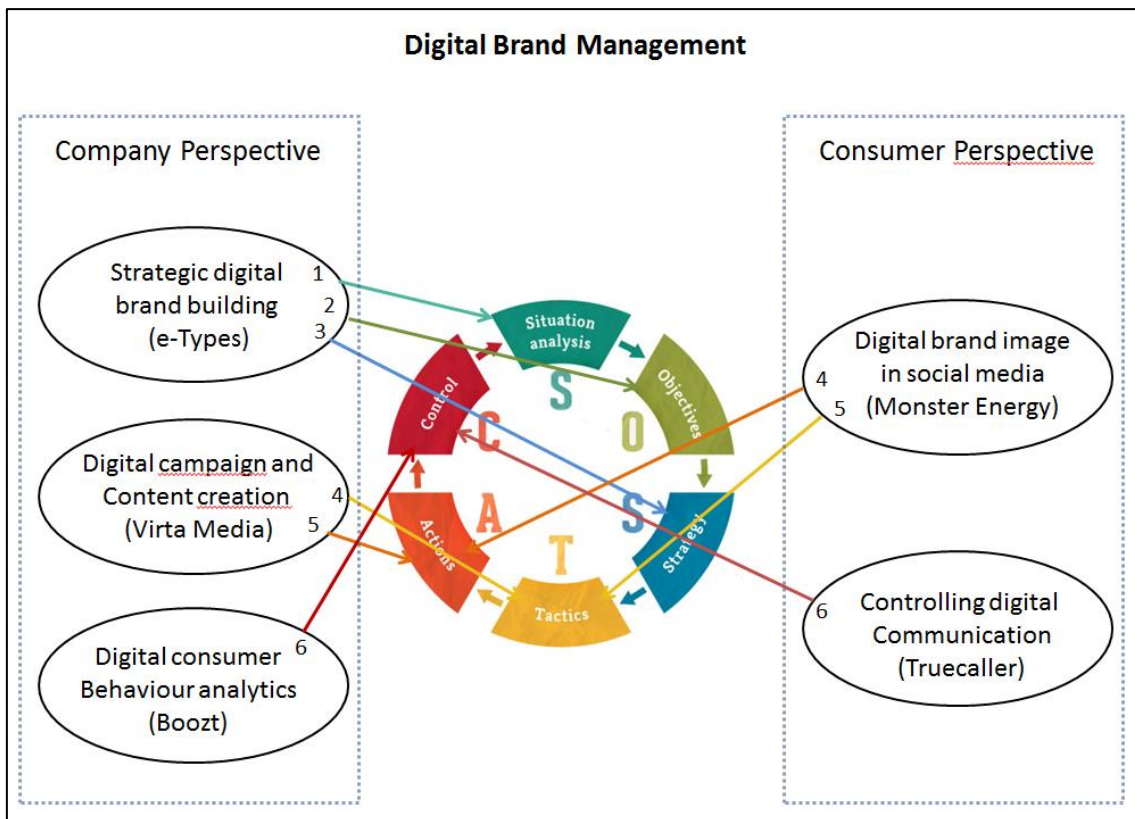
Figure 2. The Digital Brand Management model

We will below describe the critical issues and conduct empirical analysis of our five Nordic cases based on the digital brand management model.

4.1   Situation analysis

The steps of a Situation Analysis include Brand and Commercial Goals, Current Performance of the organization, Customer Insight, Marketplace Opportunities and Competitor Benchmarking (Smartinsights.com 2016).

The Situation Analysis is needed because it gives a clear insight into where the organization's current business is at and how the company interacts with internal and external factors. A company will find answers to questions such as "how are we performing, what are our distinctive competitive/marketing advantages, how effective is our marketing mix, are we focusing on the best segments with the correct type of customer, are we using the most appropriate channels for communication and distribution and what uncontrollable event(s) or trend(s) can impact our business.".

The most commonly used methods of organizations implementing the Situation Analysis include methods such as SWOT analysis, Competitor Analysis, Digital Customer Research and finding out the Digital Channels Landscape, to mention but a few (Smartinsights.com 2016).

Case: e-Types

E-types is a Danish strategic design agency focused on branding, brand building, digital branding, digital strategy, digital design and digital development. The company, already over 19 years active, has a clear idea of their current situation in the digital market and developed its leading market position with clear set of core competencies. Its major strengths and competencies compared to other market players are Brand Strategy, Brand Communication, Graphic (Brand) Design, in addition to Image Campaigns for fashion and/or luxury brands (e-Types 2016).

E-Types is a strong player in the Danish market when it comes to expressing a company's brand visually. The agency is performing better than ever and has been named one of the top 5 best and most influential design agencies in Denmark, awarded in 2014 accordingly for their design and outstanding work (e-Types 2016).

According to Rasmus Drucker Ibfelt, Creative director, Brand developer, Director and Partner of e-Types, the company segments its target group and their client portfolio into the public and commercial sectors and other players from the arts, culture and fashion industry, e.g. A.P. Moeller - Maersk, Lego, The Danish Government, Copenhagen PIX, Carlsberg, Woco, Grundfos, Madkulturen, Bang & Olufsen and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In other words, e-Types is a forerunner in the Danish market in creating digital branding campaigns for luxury but also known brands of any kind (Drucker Ibfelt 2015).

Knowing their market strengths and opportunities, Drucker Ibfelt pointed out that in the digital era we are living in now, creating a story and creating a concept is everything. Drucker Ibfelt stated that today's difficulties are to develop one strong big idea that can sell the company's product. The market is rapidly developing, and especially luxury brands among others often do not have a clear brand image and can also be financially

very challenging. They also face fierce competition from other luxury brands. Clearly, for the consumer the reason to buy the product is often unclear (Drucker Ibfelt 2015).

The company's business operations are separated as follows: e-Types Studio is focused on Brand Development, e-Types Daily looks after successful Brand Implementation, Design Management and Graphical Design/ Production, e-Types Digital concentrates on Digital Branding (Digital Strategy, Digital Design, Digital Development), whereby Playtype, the very own concept store of e-Types, shows strong competencies in Product development and wholesale, online sales and their own stores and other custom types. (Drucker Ibfelt 2015).

4.2 Objectives

Stage two of SOSTAC's model of digital marketing planning are the objectives, which should state where the company wants to go in the future. The company should conduct a SMART Test for objectives (see figure 3), which aims to define practical, measurable and realistic goals to achieve the strategy. It focuses on the concept of 5 S's (Sell, Serve, Speak, Save and Sizzle) which make each objective SMART (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, Time-related). (smartinsights.com 2016)

> **Specific** – Are you focusing enough on a specific issue or challenge within the organisation?
> **Measureable** – How do you plan to assess the performance? Will it be monitored through quantitative or qualitative analysis for example?
> **Actionable** – Will it assist in improving performance if achieved?
> **Relevant** – Is the issue to be addressed within the domain of the digital marketing team?
> **Time-related** – Have you set a specific time period?.

Figure 3. Definition of SMART objectives (smartinsights.com, 2016)

Case: e-Types

E-types main objective is to crystallize big ideas and to build strong brands with it (e-Types 2016).

Today and in the future, e-Types' aims with its skilled staff to ensure that they know how to create a customized brand and/or service for their customers and how to create a product which creates content and a story. The near future objectives also focus on strong brand re-building (webpages etc. i.e. done for Sanoma) and targets to have wider international co-operation and projects with other businesses. (e.g. in Finland co-operation with Finpro started Autumn 2015). Drucker Ibfelt himself is actively involved also in future projects with Universities and Higher Educational Institutions and believes that with worldwide co-operations both measurable and realistic brand strategies, a high company presence other than in Denmark, can be successfully built (Drucker Ibfelt 2015).

4.3 Strategy

Stage three of the SOSTAC model is strategy, the idea is how a company should execute a plan to get to the objectives which were set. Is it with the help of segmentation (how to divide up the markets), is it with the help of targeting (on which segments of the market one should focus) or is it with positioning (how to be perceived in each target segment)?

Case: e-Types

According to Drucker Ibfelt, "We always want to create something the client would never know to ask for. The idea behind e-Types business operation and their strategy is to increase brand visibility with taking on projects and user-centered products of any kind, to work on all possible platforms to fulfill the customer needs, from online, offline, interior, exterior, but also from people to products. With understanding and engaging their existing customer, e-Types can tell a story in very many ways, which is their key strategy. Everything the company does for its clients has a clear strategy and project planning and execution behind. The right staff with the right competencies is put to action. E-types' strategy is to focus on their ability of strategic thinking combined with creative development. Pushing boundaries, being versatile, operating within fashion, lifestyle, architecture as well as participating in design fairs, implementing new products steadily and being actively present in social media channels (Instagram over 16 000 followers in 2015) is a must for e-Types (Drucker Ibfelt 2015).

4.4 Tactics

The Tactics stage of SOSTAC can be explained as the details of the Strategy and the tactical tools to be used (Chaffey & Smith 2013). Choosing the right marketing mix is essential, but implementing them in a successful way is the tiebreaker. There are many tactical e-tools that can be used (websites, banner ads, opt-in emails) but what makes a company successful in its tactics is whether they understand what each e-tool can do (and cannot do). Not only must the company understand the characteristics of an e-tool but they must also understand when to use them. All of this requires careful planning and Chaffey & Smith (2013) recommend that at a PRACE framework and a Gantt chart should be used in order to keep the focus.

The PRACE framework has been developed by Smartinsights (2010) and is a practical tool to plan and manage activities in a more structured way. It consists of the key online marketing activities that need to be managed as a part of digital marketing and therefor PRACE stands for;

Plan - creating the overall digital strategy and objective setting so that it supports your goals

Reach – build awareness of your brand and products on other websites and build traffic to different parts of your website or social media sites.

Act – interacting and persuading site visitors to e.g. find out more about your company or a product and also to participate by e.g. sharing content.

Convert – conversion to sale by getting visitors to take the next step and generate commercial value by leads or sales.

Engage – build customer loyalty and customer lifetime value by repeat purchases and engaging the customer so that they will recommend you (also by using other systems)

Virta Media and Monster Energy both show that by carefully planning a digital marketing strategy, a company can reach its goals. Both companies have kept their

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focus on what is essential and have therefore been successful. But they have reached the goal in two completely different ways.

Case: Virta Helsinki

Virta was established in 2008 and ranked as No. 1 in 2015 by RECMA in Finland. It is the 2nd largest Finnish media company with digital savvy local and global clients like - OLVI, Elisa, Valio, Audi, Lidl etc. These companies know and realize the importance of digital platforms and want to capitalize on them to reach the masses. Virta focuses mainly on digital platforms supported by main stream advertising. Their short term visions are based on long term goals (Virtamedia 2016, Ovitz 2015).

According to Ovitz, Virta is in the forefront of digital campaigns by utilizing transmedia storytelling and creating a unique way for their client companies to connect with the masses to create brand loyalty. Virta won the Grand One in 2013, most prestigious consumer – Case Kristal (figure 4). In another case, the "Elisa Saunlahti missionaries", (figure 4), where Virta has gone a step further and created a one of its kind chapter based main stream advertisement on local TV channels followed by a digital version on YouTube. The chapters are updated at regular intervals to keep up the buzz – creating a loyal follower base for its client company (Ovitz 2015).
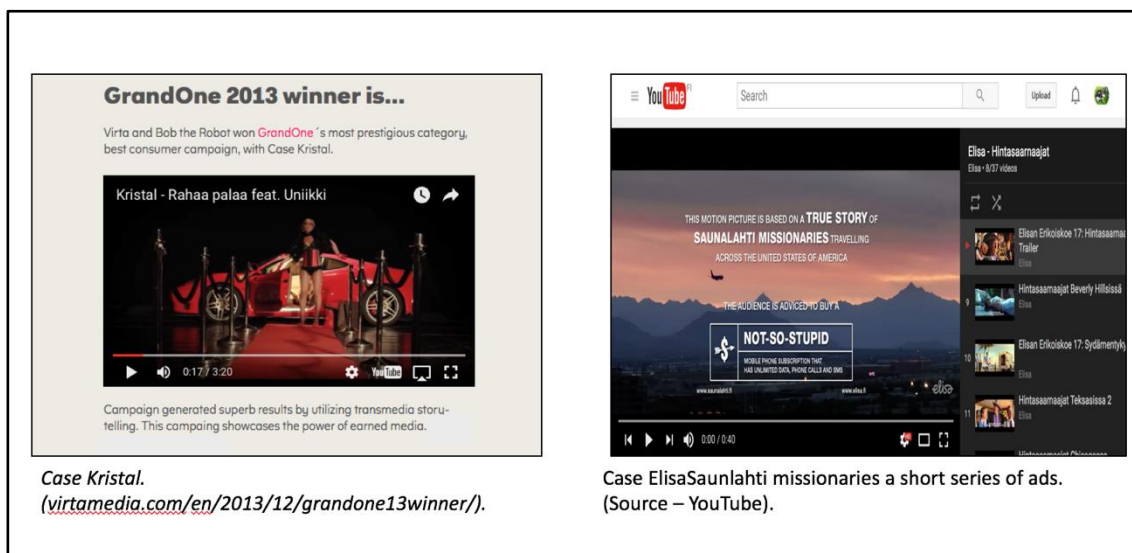

Figure 4. Grand One 2013 winner

Here Virta's main objective was to match the available resources in selling the organization to match the needs of the consumers, thus focusing heavily on people at the end of the value chain. In this internet/social media age, bombarding consumers with information about brands by breaking through the noise and clutter and creating a buzz to grab their attention. The final word of caution from Ovitz was, "you can't build brands with formats alone"; you need to be innovative and be able to take calculated risks (Ovitz 2015).

Case: Monster Energy

Monster Energy has taken a different approach than many companies on building brand awareness. They do not rely on TV ads, billboards or radio spots to spread brand awareness, they rely on their fans to spread the word. They organize different types of events like parties and concerts and support athletes in reaching their dreams. This way the fans can adopt their lifestyle and tell their friends about it on different social media platforms. Monster Energy is all about selling a lifestyle, not a product.

According to Österberg (2015) fans are the biggest asset for Monster Energy and they like to interact and have a dialog with them as much as possible. There is a logical reason for this as fans attract fans and they are the ones that make the brand. Monster Energy chases engagements not likes, and emphasizes that if the fans are willing to share it, then the content works.

This era of reaching the masses through digital media has been taken to the next level by companies like Monster, who have become an icon and have generated much traction and created a cult effect on their followers.

4.5   Action

The action stage of a digital marketing plan requires good project management skills and active attention to detail. This part is where the tactics are broken down into actions and each tactic or e-tool becomes its own mini project, requiring a series of actions and processes. For this stage a Gantt chart is again recommended but other types of aids are also encouraged (e.g. flow charts). Good implementation is a key factor in this stage

(Chaffey & Smith 2013). Risk management is another thing that is equally as important, together with choosing the right Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The action stage has been identified as the weakest part of the planning process for most companies (Bossidy & Charan 2004).

Case: Virta Helsinki Oy

Creating digital campaigns or media content is the first part of Virta's journey, the second part is to track the brand impact resulting from such campaigns. The question being, Is Virta bold and innovative enough in digital tracking of its campaigns? As usual, Virta leaves no stone unturned in this area either. Virta relies on Facebook and Google for data mining. Brand measurement is conducted with analytics through viewability, visibility and engagement statistics. Ad recall studies through search marketing and brand tracking, but at the same time keeping ad fraud and questionable metrics in control.

As technology advances, media agencies need to gear up to be prepared to find and implement new ways to measure their actions in future, a media agency is as good as the results it can get and those that can be measured. With the introduction of Real time banners (RTB) in digital advertising and Ad block tools being implemented in browsers it is time to innovate. With advancement in Bluetooth, NFC, RIFD, and Virtual reality, Virta is looking at a number of new avenues to track and measure ads directly on mobile devices through unique device ID and also apply cross device tracking thanks to technologies like 'Handoff' introduced by Apple.

Case: Monster Energy

Monster Energy has carefully planned their tactical e-tools and has chosen the platforms they want to stay true to. They have nearly 150 persons working with their Facebook page daily. The effort has clearly had an impact as Monster Energy is the 4th largest drink brand on Facebook. The company is also among the top 500 brands on YouTube and ranks as third in the Food and Beverage category. Even though Monster produces many different varieties of their drink (i.e. Original Monster Energy, Monster Lo-Carb,

Monster Rehab, Java Monster) they never mix brands (e.g. an athlete will always have the same can in his hand) and they maintain the same brand image at every touchpoint and platform.

4.6 Control

The last stage in the planning framework SOSTAC stands for "control". The main idea of control is that the company should monitor their overall performance with various activities and actions and most importantly be able to see if the efforts made are working or not, and when not, how the situation could and should be improved. The company can monitor their performance by for instance thorough web analytics, profiling of the website visitors and the customers and by doing customer satisfaction surveys. Continuous and regular reporting also plays an important role in the whole process. In other words, it is all about being able to stay in control of the situation. (Chaffey & Smith 2013)

Case: Boozt

The whole business idea of Boozt is very much based on insight and analytics about the customers and their behavior. The company follows the customers each step throughout the purchase journey and gathers all relevant data and utilizes these insights for making smart decisions. Reports of the online activities as well as completed orders are monitored and analyzed on a daily basis and the customers are put into different segments based on their purchasing behavior. For monitoring and analyzing the online behaviors of their customers, Boozt has developed their own digital real time monitoring system, which enables them to see all of their customers' order statistics and other online activities in one joint dashboard. This dashboard also includs data from Google Analytics and the data is analyzed every day in-house. This tool also enables Boozt to manage and control all of their customer data to the tiniest detail. Hence, the mindset of Boozt is to know the value of each customer and based on this insight know which customers they should focus on, which ones are worth buying back with various marketing activities, as e.g. affiliate e-marketing and which are the ones that they shouldn't waste time on (Neble 2015).

All these insights give Boozt the possibility to stay in control over the situation and through that try to achieve the company's most important objective, which is to improve the overall business performance. It also gives them a competitive advantage when trying to survive in these competitive times where there won't be space for too many players on the market.

Case: True Caller

True Caller differs as a company and business from the others presented in this paper. Their business is mainly measured in application download volumes and active users of the application. However, they measure performance using brand ambassadors around the world. It is a 6-month program for selected Truecaller users with the purpose of sharing their knowledge to others. Truecaller ambassadors teach, share and help customers get more out of Truecaller. Via the ambassadors Truecaller gets instant feedback from the field, but they also stay in control over what messages go out. In a way, they control the dialog between them and their consumers. Truecaller and the ambassadors communicate actively and in groups via skype and once a month the ambassadors' report their findings using a web tool. The process between Truecaller, the ambassadors and finally the end users is working and based on volumes, meaning they need to have a lot of active ambassadors. Brand ambassadors keep the company in good light and the company gets qualitative feedback on demand.

5 LEARNING POINTS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

According to the aim of the paper, we will here summarize the key learning points and the related managerial implications. In total, we have identified 4 main learning points based on the five case companies' data.

1. Creating a new or rebuilding an existing concept and story for the brand is of critical importance.

2. This story should be communicated on multiple digital platforms with different but complementing type of content to create a buzz and to engage loyal followers for the brand.

3. An ultimate goal can be to create such a good brand story and related content that fans of the brand can live that lifestyle and share their brand experiences with other fans or potential future fans.

4. The digital communication, even the whole business idea, should be based on analytics and insight.

The starting point for successful digital brand management is to create an excellent and solid brand story. The target group for the brand needs to be clearly defined. The potential consumer needs to be in the center and their needs and values clearly understood. Managerially the case usually is that the brand already exists. Often the brand has been developed over many years based on product features. In this case the brand needs to be rebuilt and a new story created, to engage the existing and new users through digital channels.

The challenge managerially is to understand the features and capabilities to communicate the created story and engage loyal followers of the different digital platforms. Different content is needed on different digital platforms to cater for the different needs of the follower, user and/or consumer. In some situations, the content can be just entertaining, creating a buzz when it goes viral, whereas in other situations the content needs to focus on the products and/or services to inform the consumer of the value that the brand can give them if and when they decide to purchase the brand.

An ultimate goal can be to create such an excellent story for the brand that it lives its own life among fans living the lifestyle of the brand. Managerially this requires superior competence and skills especially in social media, not only from a technical perspective but especially from a user oriented communication perspective. Possible negative experiences shared by followers need to be addressed instantly and in a positive manner. A superior digital communication of the brand story requires substantial investments and personnel resources to manage this communication in real time on multiple social media platforms.

Finally, the digital communication and decisions related to the brand need to be based on real time analytics and insight. The user driven brand engagement needs to be constantly monitored and measured so that data driven decisions can be made. The link between fans and sales need to be identified and monitored. The analytics need to be visually usable by management with practical dashboard type tools on both operative and more strategic levels. Brand management decisions need to be made based on facts rather than on gut instinct.

6 CONCLUSION

The Nordic Master Study trip was a success in many ways. The companies were very different from each other and that was a good starting point for the digital brand management study that is documented in this working paper. The companies represented both the company perspective and the consumer perspective. SOSTAC was a good model to use as a core as it provides basic information about what digital market strategy is about and what needs to be considered when planning and implementing a market plan.

The key learning points of this article is that customers can and will create valuable contents for companies in social media. This is something the companies need to value and invest in. But if the outcome is not analyzed properly (or at all) the result will not be satisfactory. A company also needs to be agile as social media is constantly changing and its users with it.

From our point of view, in order to be successful in digital brand management, a company needs to focus on two things. First, they need to engage the consumer, secondly they need to analyze the outcome. Based on the analysis the company needs to adjust and perhaps even start the digital brand management from the beginning. This way it is an ongoing process which adapts and changes constantly.

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