

TIIVISTELMÄ

Lappeenrannan-Lahden teknillinen yliopisto LUT
Kauppakorkeakoulu
International Marketing Management (MIMM) -ohjelma

Elina Niiranen

Brändin kansainvälistäminen Smart City -asiantuntijapalveluiden yritysmarkkinoinnissa

Pro gradu -tutkielma
2021

101 sivua, 12 kuvaa, 7 taulukkoa ja 1 liite

Tarkastajat: Professori Olli Kuivalainen ja Apulaisprofessori Anssi Tarkiainen

Hakusanat: brändi, kansainvälistyminen, brändin kansainvälistäminen, Smart City, asiantuntijapalvelut, yritysmarkkinointi, verkostot

Brändin kansainvälistämistä on tutkittu pääasiassa tuotteiden osalta kuluttajamarkkinoilla, ja palvelut sekä yritysmarkkinointi ovat jääneet vähemmälle tutkimukselle. Älykaupungit ovat teknologian kehittyessä ja maailman väkiluvun noustessa lisänneet kiinnostusta ja vaikka älykaupungeista on jo puhuttu pitkään ei niihin liitetyjä yhtiöitä ole tutkittu brändin kansainvälistymisen osalta. Niihin liittyvä tutkimus on keskittynyt lähinnä älykaupunkien omaan brändiin. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on ymmärtää yrityksen brändin merkitys asiantuntijapalveluita yrityksille tuottavien yritysten kansainvälistymisessä. Tutkimuksessa halutaan todentaa, miten aiemman teorian pohjalta luotu teoreettinen viitekehys toimii asiantuntijapalveluita tuottaville yhtiöille älykaupunki kontekstissa. Tutkimus toteutettiin kvalitatiivisena kuvailevana tutkimuksena, jossa hyödynnettiin deduktiivista ja induktiivista lähestymistapaa. Tutkimuksen empiirinen osuus tehtiin monitapaustutkimuksena, jossa haastateltiin neljää älykaupunkiympäristössä toimivaa yhtiötä, jotka tarjoavat yrityksille asiantuntijapalveluita. Yritykset valittiin tutkimukseen niin, että ne antaisivat mahdollisimman monipuolisen ja kattavan kuvan älykaupunkiympäristöstä toimivista asiantuntijapalveluita tarjoavista yhtiöistä.

Empiirinen tutkimus vahvisti monia asioita teoreettisesta viitekehuksesta, mutta toi esille myös selkeitä asiantuntijapalvelubrändille olennaisia asioita. Tutkimuksessa painottui asiantuntijatyössä olevan henkilökohtaisen tapaamisen merkitys sekä brändin rakentamisen osalta asiantuntijuuden esille tuonnin tärkeys. Verkostot ovat myös merkittävässä asemassa älykaupunkiympäristössä. Vahva asiantuntijuus ja ajatusjohtajuuden luonti, systemaattinen sisäinen ja ulkoinen viestintä sekä markkinointi eri kanavia hyödyntäen ja riittävät resurssit tukevat kansainvälistymistä. Alalle on tyypillistä vahva byrokratia ja päätöksentekoprosessit ovat hitaita. Alalla toimii myös monia EU-rahoitteisia hankkeita ja hankkeissa voi olla monia erilaisia osallistujia mm. start-upeista, isoihin yrityksiin ja hallinnollisiin tahoihin. Tutkimus toteutettiin koronapandemian aikana ja haastatteluisia huomioitiin myös vallitseva tilanne, sekä sen merkitykset yhtiöiden toimintaan.

ABSTRACT

Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology LUT
School of Business and Management
Master's Program in International Marketing Management (MIMM)

Elina Niiranen

The Brand Internationalisation in Smart City Business-to-Business Professional Services Context

Master's thesis

2021

101 pages, 12 figures, 7 tables, 1 appendix

Examiners: Professor Olli Kuivalainen, Associate Professor Anssi Tarkiainen

Keywords: brand, internationalisation, brand internationalisation, Smart City, professional services, business-to-business, networks

Brand internationalisation has been researched mainly with products in the B2C markets, and services and B2B markets have been less researched. Due to the technology changes and world population rise Smart Cities have been in the growing interest. Although Smart Cities have been already a longer time in the public talk, the companies related to Smart Cities have not been researched on the viewpoint of brand internationalisation. The brand related research has mainly been concentrating on Smart Cities' own brands. Aim of this study is to understand the brand's role in the internationalisation of the B2B professional services companies offering Smart City related B2B professional services. This study tests how the theoretical framework built according to the earlier studies functions with the companies offering B2B professional services in Smart City context. The study was conducted as qualitative descriptive study with deductive and inductive approach. The empirical part was made as multiple case study, in which four companies operating in Smart City environment and offering B2B professional services were interviewed. In the sample selection of the study the case study companies were chosen to present as diversified and comprehensive view as possible of the companies operating in Smart City environment and offering B2B professional services.

The empirical study valued many aspects of the theoretical framework but brought out also special characteristics for the B2B professional services. In the study the relevance of the personal meeting was highlighted as well as in the brand building the importance to disclose the expertise. The networks are also material in Smart City context. Strong expertise, generating thought leadership, systematic internal and external communication and marketing using multiple channels and sufficient resources support internationalisation. In Smart City environment strong bureaucracy and slow decision-making processes are typical and there are several projects financed by the EU. In the projects there are many stakeholders, i.a. from start-ups to large companies and administrative bodies. The study was made during the coronavirus pandemic and in the interviews the current situation and its consequences to the companies' operations were taken into the consideration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This has been a long way to go and finally I am happy to say that one part of my life is soon over, and I can start a new page. This has been an important time for me and during the studies I have met many amazing people, hopefully also lifelong friends, and learned new things about myself. Timing for the studies was perfect for me, but while trying to find the perfect time and moment for the thesis I noticed that that time never came, and I just had to take the time. And when I took the time I really enjoyed researching and writing the thesis.

I would not be here without my family and friends, who were always supporting and believing in me. I want to thank you all for your time and support. And I want to give a special thank you to my dear friends Petra and Amanda, who pushed me, when I needed the push, and my loved one and our boys, who believed in me and gave me the time to finish my 'marathon'. I want to also thank the professors as well as the interviewees from the case companies for giving me their valuable time and information for this study.

I hope that this study will help new businesses to grow and find their ways and resources to internationalisation and bring Finnish know-how to the international fields. Here like in many other stages in life guts, hard work and networks will help you to find your way.

After finishing this thesis, I have succeeded to fulfil one of my dreams and during the studies I was able to keep, nurse and build my others. Never stop believing in you and dreaming. And most importantly – remember to enjoy the life and the dreams you have succeeded, not only chase what you don't yet have. The life is here and now, not in the future or past.

Espoo, 21.06.2021

Elina Niiranen

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B2B – Business to Business

B2C – Business to Customer

COO – Country-of-Origin

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

PR – Public Relations

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION.....	9
1.1 Research background.....	9
1.2 Research context.....	10
1.3 Research gaps in studies.....	12
1.4 Research problem, objectives of the study and theoretical framework	13
1.5 Delimitations	15
1.6 Research strategy and organization of the study	16
2 BRANDING	18
2.1 Core concepts of branding.....	19
2.2 Brand building.....	21
2.3 Service branding and professional services.....	27
2.4 Business-to-Business branding.....	28
3 INTERNATIONALISATION	33
3.1 Internationalisation theories	33
3.2 Service internationalisation and market entry strategies.....	35
3.3 Brand internationalisation	36
3.4 Resources and networks	39
4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	41
5 METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION	44
5.1 Methodology	44
5.2 Sample selection.....	46
5.3 Data collection	49
5.4 Data analysis	50
5.5 Reliability and validity.....	51
6 EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND FINDINGS.....	55
6.1 Case analyses	55
6.2 Cross-case analysis.....	73
7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	90
7.1 Theoretical contributions and implications	90
7.2 Managerial implications	94

7.3 Limitations and directions for further research	96
8 REFERENCES.....	97
APPENDICES	101
Appendix 1: Questions for the focused interviews	101

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Research problem, questions, and objectives.....	13
Figure 2. The theoretical framework of the thesis	15
Figure 3. Brand identity hexagon	20
Figure 4. Customer-based brand equity (CBBE) pyramid	22
Figure 5. Dimension of branding strategies of born globals	25
Figure 6. Stages and activities in building ICEpower brand	26
Figure 7. The buying center's influential dimensions.....	32
Figure 8. Stages of Branding internationalisation.....	38
Figure 9. Theoretical framework for branding strategies of Born Globals	38
Figure 10. The theoretical framework of the thesis	43
Figure 11. The special characteristics of the brand internationalisation process of the professional services B2B brand.....	88
Figure 12. The adjusted professional services B2B framework according to the empirical study	89

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Brand-building tools.....	23
Table 2. Trajectory of B2B branding research.....	29
Table 3. Guidelines for B2B (industrial) branding.....	30
Table 4. Examples of the purchase decisions' criteria in the B2B markets	31
Table 5. Branding strategies to pursue an international level.....	36
Table 6. Case companies	48
Table 7. Case study summary.....	73

1 INTRODUCTION

“To Brand or Not to Brand”

(Kotler and Pfoertsch 2006, 15)

This is a good question. What is branding – something abstract, just a fancy, trendy word? What is the concreteness behind it and how is branding done and what is the difference in branding products and services or business-to-customers (later B2C) and business to business (later B2B) markets? What is brand's and branding's role in the internationalisation? This study answers these questions and introduce basics of brand and branding as well as different internationalisation theories and the linkage of these theories. The empirical part will evaluate the theoretical framework against the empirical study. The interviews were conducted during the coronavirus pandemic and the change of the market environment due to the pandemic was also analysed.

1.1 Research background

Brands and branding itself has a long history. The term brand can be already recognised in the Old Norse, in which the word “brandr” meant “to burn” and was the way how the animals were state to their owners. (Mohr, Sengupta and Slater 2010, 406) Since 1950s branding started to be researched and is now an essential part of marketing. The important aspects in branding nowadays are positioning, brand loyalty, personality, brand equity, communities and subcultures of consumption, relational branding, brand identity, Country of Origin (COO) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). (Hampf and Lindberg-Repo 2011, 11-12) In the past 20 years the importance of branding has been slowly recognized in the internationalisation studies (Gabrielsson 2005; Couto and Ferreira 2017) as well as the role of the branding services and the difference between branding B2C and B2B markets have also been recognised in the branding studies (Kotler et al. 2006, 110-122). According to John Murphy from Interbrands *“In the last 30 years, some of the greatest branding successes have come in the area of services”* (in Keller 2008, 15).

For the internationalisation there are many ways to a firm to expand its operations abroad. In the beginning of the internationalisation research the most common way to internationalize was follow certain steps in the process, while companies wanted enter markets, which were culturally and geographically near them. After getting familiar with the new markets the companies strengthened the commitments into the markets. Later, the relationships in the market started to be more valued during the internationalisation process and with internet some of the companies are already global straight from the beginning. (Johanson and Vahlne 1990; Johanson and Mattsson 1988; Cavusgil and Knight 2015)

In this study the main aspect is to research the special characteristic related to the brand internationalisation process for the B2B professional services in the Smart City concept.

1.2 Research context

The research context of this study is Smart City and companies offering professional services for Smart City environment. The demand of sustainable development in cities is growing, while the urban population is increasing. Smart cities are suggested to be one solution for this issue (He, Stojmenovic, Liu and Gu 2014, 1). In worldwide cities also generate 80% of CO₂ emissions and consume 75% of the energy production and this is an important reason to find a new sustainable model for the cities (Lazaroiu and Roscia 2012, 326).

A Smart City as a term is commonly used for the convergence of the city and technology (Yigitcanlar, Kamruzzaman, Buys, Ioppolo, Sabatini-Marques, Modeira da Costa and Yun 2018, 145) and more precisely the Smart City concept means “*a place where traditional networks and services are made more flexible, efficient, and sustainable with the use of information, digital, and telecommunication technologies to improve the city's operations for the benefit of its inhabitants*” (Mohanty, Choppali and Kougiianos 2016, 60). And the “*different components of a smart city include smart infrastructure, smart transportation, smart energy, smart health care, and*

smart technology. These components are what make the cities smart and efficient. Information and communication technology (ICT) are enabling keys for transforming traditional cities into smart cities.” (Mohanty et al. 2016, 60).

The author of the study has an interest in the brand and new technologies and sees circular economy and Smart Cities as an important way for the civilisation to create sustainable economies and combat the climate change. In 2020 the whole world had been using the yearly natural resources on the 22 August and in Finland already on 5 of April (Salmi 2020). Last year 2020 the world overconsumption day was postponed three weeks due to the coronavirus pandemic (STT 2020), but there needs to be other ways to combat the issues. The researcher noticed that the branding aspects of this field had not been searched much and wanted to combine her own interest in the Smart Cities and create new knowledge for the start-ups and more mature companies in the field to help them to be able to focus their limited resources in the relevant aspects in the marketing and branding activities.

In study made by Axelsson and Granath (2018, 696-699) is seen that in the smart city projects there are several stakeholders involved and the planning process for the smart city projects are long and consist many different activities. According the study the stakeholders, who are involved in the smart city projects, are different bodies of municipalities, public organisations, private firms, and citizen. Also, the EU Commission is sustaining the “smart city” model and funding different projects. (Lazaroiu et al. 2012, 326-327). The professional services related to Smart City context are provided to the B2B field, while the partners for these professional services are construction companies, cities, transportation companies etc. (Tekes 2017). In this study the case study interviewees, the companies offering professional services in the smart city field, have been chosen in a way that it would cover many different stakeholder groups offering the professional services.

1.3 Research gaps in studies

Internationalisation and branding have been both researched a lot, but the connections between these two theories and how they reflect to each other seems to be still quite unsearched (Couto et al. 2017; Gabrielsson 2005). Branding itself has been studied since 1950s as well as how it is related to products or companies selling well-known products (Hampf et al. 2011, 11-12). Before 1990s the studies related to internationalisation were also mostly made from manufacturing industries (Saarenketo 2004). Later, the internationalisation studies show that service firms have been studied more and they do not necessarily follow the traditional internationalisation models (Coviello and McAuley 1999; Grönroos 2016). Related to these existing studies some research gaps are seen.

First, most of the brand internationalisation case studies have also been made for product companies and product brands. Addition to the studies mentioned above there are also studies made for mostly fashion brands, such as Uniqlo. (Woo 2014). In the Gabrielsson's (2005) study part of the companies were also service companies. In the earlier literature internationalisation and branding relation for SMEs are mostly researched within different product categories, often fashion or goods (Woo 2014; Couto et al. 2017).

Secondly there are only few studies in the relation to the professional services branding. In the history the service brand and branding have not been studied separately, the studies have been focusing on product brands (Seyedghorban et al. 2016, 2675) and branding or the services have only been mentioned together with product branding (Kotler et al. 2009, 151-152; Keller 2008, 60). Also, some differences between product and service branding have been recognised and there is certain separation mentioned (Keller 2008, 15-17). According to the recent study of Guenther and Guenther (2019, 99) there is not that much marketing literature related to professional services branding and brands. In their study it is seen that branding is more beneficial for professional services than other B2B services.

The third research gap is brand and branding in the B2B markets. Most of the B2B branding information is adapted from the B2C markets and the general opinion has been that same presumption of branding will occur in both markets. Only later some differences in the B2C and B2B have been recognised and some research started. (Seyedghorban et al. 2016; Webster, Jr. et al. 2004)

The context of the study Smart City professional services is also narrow and relatively new subject. There were some studies of branding cities as Smart City but not as branding companies offering Smart City services. In this sense the research context Smart City professional services in the B2B market is a unique combination of relatively fractionally studied areas.

1.4 Research problem, objectives of the study and theoretical framework

In this study there are several theories and concepts related to each other. To be able to understand the relations in this study and how the research questions are related into the theories, following figure 1 was drawn.

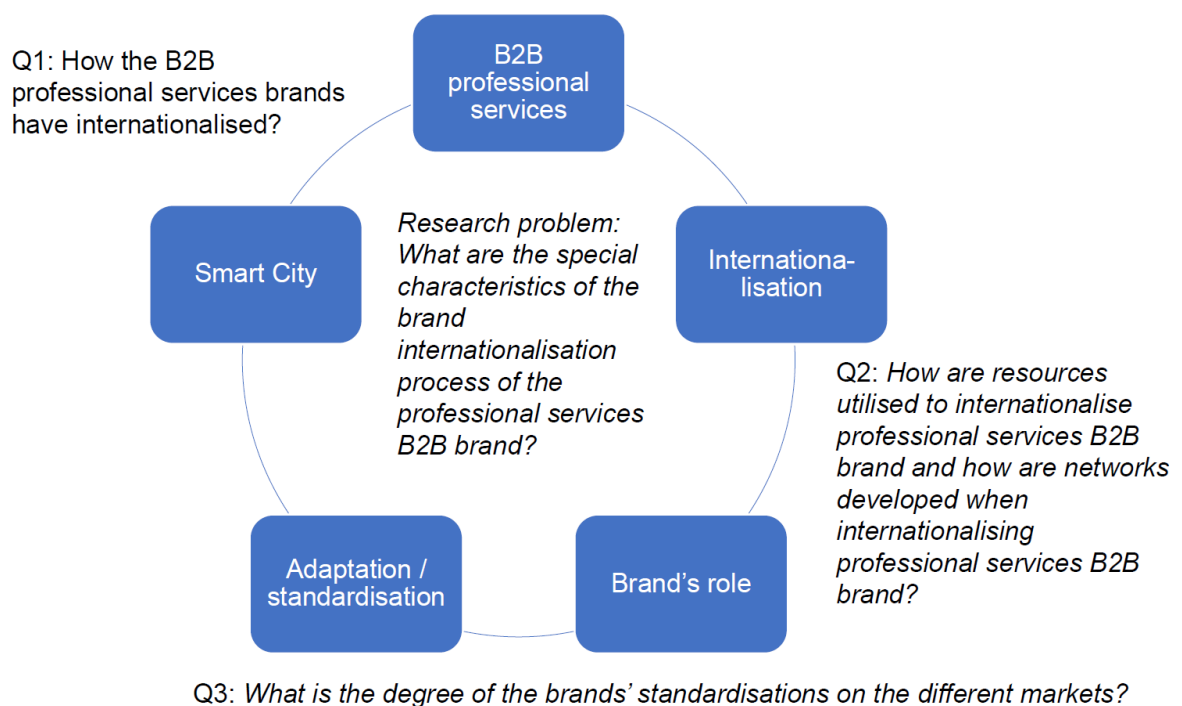


Figure 1. Research problem, questions, and objectives

The aim of the study is to evaluate alternative approaches of brand internalization considering special characteristics and demands of the professional services and the research problem is:

What are the special characteristics of the brand internationalisation process of the professional services B2B brand?

In this study the research problem has been broken into three different research questions. The first question is related to the ways of the internationalisation.

RQ1: How the B2B professional services brands have internationalised?

The second question analyses wider the brand internationalisation's processes – how the resources are utilised, and the networks developed.

RQ2: How are resources utilised to internationalise professional services B2B brand and how are networks developed when internationalising professional services B2B brand?

The last research question three is evaluating the adaptation level of the brand in the internationalisation process.

RQ3: What is the degree of the brands' standardisations on the different markets?

To be able to answer these questions the theoretical framework for brand internationalisation was build based on the literature review. The figure 2 presents the theoretical framework. The framework is based on two brand internationalisation studies for born globals and in this study's empirical part the framework will be tested for companies offering Smart City professional services for B2B customers.

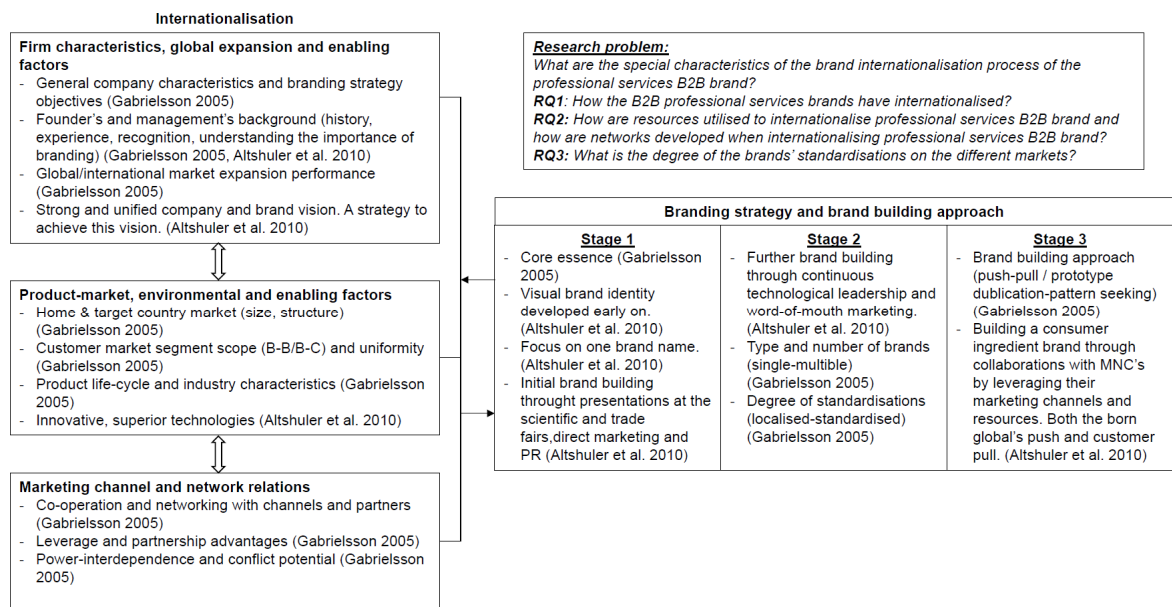


Figure 2. The theoretical framework of the thesis (adjusted from Gabrielsson 2005, 206; Altshuler et al. 2010, 218)

1.5 Delimitations

In this study the brand internationalisation process has been analysed. To be able to conduct the study there are several delimitations made. First in this study the research has been limited to test the theoretical framework built according to the literature review. During the literature review the researcher have been evaluating different basic theories of the brand and branding as well as the internationalisation. As the basis of the theoretical framework a brand internationalisation theory and a theoretical framework made have been combined. The theory and theoretical framework were chosen, while the researcher wanted to test, if the same processes used for born globals (partly providing product and partly services) could be used for professional services.

The secondly delimitation was that the Smart City professional services were chosen as the context of the study. Services and professional services are wider concepts, but to be able to research the special characteristics this narrower concept was chosen. Thirdly the Smart City field is technology and innovation orientated, which also reflects that the finding may have some differences. On the

other hand, two studies chosen as the model for the theoretical framework were from the born global companies, which are also often operating in the technology and innovation field.

The case study companies chosen were not presenting all the stakeholders in the Smart City sector but were a comprehensive sample of the professional services providers in the sector. All the case study companies are providing and offering Smart City professional services. Even though all the companies are offering Smart City services the companies are presenting different viewpoints of the companies offering the Smart City related professional services and are on that way given a wide sample for the study.

Lastly in this resources and networks have only been researched on the B2B professional service brand internationalisation and marketing point of view.

1.6 Research strategy and organisation of the study

The reason for this study is to understand the role of the brand in internationalisation process and how a B2B professional services brand can be internationalised in Smart City contexts. In this study qualitative methods are used as research methodology.

This study is conducted as descriptive case study with multiple case studies with deductive and inductive approach. The descriptive case study with deductive and inductive approach has been chosen, while this study's research strategy is to evaluate, if the existing theories for brand internationalising theories for born globals can be also adapted into B2B service brands and to explore the phenomenon wider and adjust the theories, if needed. The descriptive research is used when the exact phenomenon is known before the data collection (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016, 177). The deductive approach is in studies verifying existing theories and inductive approach to generate a new theory after exploring the data (Saunders et al. 2016, 145). In this study the existing brand internationalisation theories are evaluated with case study companies in the B2B professional service field to see if

the existing theories would also suit for the professional service brand internationalisation in smart city context. The multiple case study consists of four companies offering professional services for business customers. The main data for this study was collected via focused interviews. The representative of the companies were interviewed virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic. Also, some questions related to the coronavirus pandemic were included into the study.

The following chapters two and three overview the literature review of the relevant studies of the branding, internationalisation, and brand internationalisation. The fourth chapter presents the theoretical framework build according to the existing theory. The methodology of the study as well as the sample selection, data collections, data analysis and the reliability and validity of the data are overviewed in the chapter five. In the sixth chapter empirical results and findings are shown and the chapter seven the final conclusions will be discussed.

2 BRANDING

Branding has a long history. Already centuries ago, products were marked to state the owner. In today's world a brand is a name, design, sign, term etc., which differentiates company's products and services from the competitors. In a marketing point of view branding is the value of the brand for customers and company's reputation. (Mohr et al. 2010, 406) A brand is also a promise and the brand becomes real for the customers through everything the customers read, see, feel, know, expects, associates and has experienced with the brand. Brand also makes the decision-making process easier for the buyers, while the brand already differentiates the products or services. (Kotler et al. 2006, 5)

After 1950s the brands and branding started to be researched more and more, and companies began to see the advantages of the branding. In the beginning of the brand research in 1950s-1970s concepts like segmentation, loyalty, lifestyle, Marketing Mix, and personality were found. At that time branding was also questioned by some of the consumers, who only wanted to see product information in the labels. On the other hand, research showed that most of the consumers felt branded products important. (Hampf et al. 2011, 11-12).

During the 1970s and 1980s branding became essential part of marketing and new important concept such as positioning, social marketing, relationship marketing and brand equity were introduced. All these concepts were further researched and developed and as an example relational branding became from relationship marketing. New popular concepts after 1990s were also brand identity, Country-of-Origin (later COO), brand communities and subcultures and Corporate Social Responsibility (later CSR). (Hampf et al. 2011, 11-12).

The following chapters will highlight some of the core concepts of branding, how a brand is built, differences in service branding and professional services and B2B branding.

2.1 Core concepts of branding

Branding helps customers to understand the differences between different products or services. By enriching the products and services with a brand's power it creates value to the company. (Kotler et al. 2009, 151-152) According to the study of Hampf et al. (2011, 14-18) the most important branding concepts in 2010s are positioning, brand loyalty, personality, brand equity, communities and subcultures of consumption, relational branding, brand identity, COO and CSR. Also, Keller (2008, 3, 48, 54, 98) highlights concepts as brand elements, brand positioning, brand equity and brand awareness. The more recent quantitative bibliometric research by Seyedghorban et al. (2016, 2670, 2673) presents also concepts like industrial brand equity, brand awareness and associations, perceived quality, and brand image. In the following chapters some core concepts in branding have been overviewed.

Brand *positioning* is what brand does and provides for customers (Vaid 2003, 34) and it is also the way how customers see company's products compared to the competitors (Mohr et al. 2010, 253). It is important to the company to have a positioning strategy, when approaching a chosen segment. Positioning strategy will also change *brand identity*. Employees have a big role to the brand positioning, while they are representing the brand in customers' eyes. (Hampf et al. 2011, 15) The brand positioning can also vary in different times, while the meaning of the positioning is to explain to the customers in real-time company's place in the market and its unique offering (Vaid 2003, 34).

Brand loyalty is a controversial concept, while customer loyalty does not guarantee profitability, in matter of fact normally vice versa. Quite often a company needs to be profitable to be able to have loyal customers. Brand loyalty and *brand equity* are connected and one way of seeing brand equity is the number of loyal customers. *Brand equity* shows the value of the brand and it can be measured with financial aspects, customer-based or combining these two measures. (Hampf et al. 2011, 6, 15-16)

Relational Branding is an integration of relation marketing theories and brands' roles in the relationships. This integration shows the impact of a brand in the customer's and company's relationship. (Brodie et al. 2002 in Hampf et al. 2011, 8, 13) *Brand personality* is also connected in the relational branding, while personality is according to Aaker (1997, 347) "the set of human characteristics associated with brand". The *communities and subcultures of consumption* are small groups of people, who admire one or few brands. For branding they are important concepts, while the group members seem to have strong emotions towards brands, and they are loyal to their brands. (Hampf et al. 2011, 18)

The importance of the COO to the brand has been researched a lot. It seems that the COO does not matter with the everyday products, but with luxury product its essential part of the brand and can also establish the brand identity. On the other hand, the CSR has said to be united with branding in the beginning of 2000s, while the actions of the company create the image of the company to the consumers. (Hampf et al. 2011, 10-11)

According to the study of Hampf et al. (2011, 20) several of these key concepts together build *brand identity*. This approach can also be seen in the following Brand Identity Hexagon (figure 3).

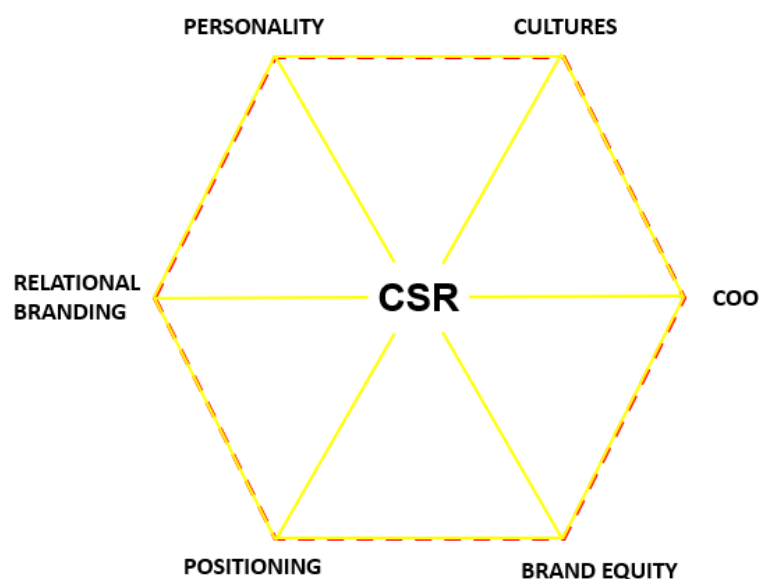


Figure 3. Brand identity hexagon (Hampf et al. 2011, 20)

The concept of *brand identity* itself was created early 1990s. (Hampf et al. 2011, 18 and Gelder 2003, 35) According to the van Gelder (2003, 35) the brand identity is what the brand stands for – a combination of all the elements of the brand. That is why its unique for all the brands. No brand has the same history, ambitions, values, purpose, and visual identity. (van Gelder 2003, 35) Keller (2008, 60) states that the brand identity answers the question “Who are you?” and is the first building block of the brand.

2.2 Brand building

In the branding process the products and services are getting the name and the elements of the brand, the marketers are “introducing” the products or services to the consumers (Kotler and Keller 2016, 146). With branding strategies companies make actions to build the brand. These actions include e.g. “*usage experience*”, “*choice of brand elements*” and “*associations with other entities*”. Successful branding activities create brand equity, which is company’s most important asset. (Mohr et al. 2010, 407) Loyalty and brand equity are connected (Hampf et al. 2011, 15) and to be able to build long term customer loyalty careful planning, creative marketing and long-term commitment is needed (Kotler et al. 2009, 150). Behind brand value is persistence strategic brand management work designing and implementing marketing programs and strategies. (Kotler et al. 2009, 150-152) On the other hand to have a successful strategies and to create a brand value, the consumers need to be able to see the equity of the brand (Kotler et al. 2016 146-147) According to Kevin Keller branding strategies are especially important for technology companies (n.d. in Mohr et al. 2010, 412).

The figure 4 illustrates Keller’s (2008, 60) Customer-Based Brand Equity (later CBBE) pyramid, in which is shown the four questions customers want to know about brands and six “brand building blocks” inside the pyramid. In the top of the pyramid (“Resonance”) brand has created significant brand equity. (Keller 2008, 60)

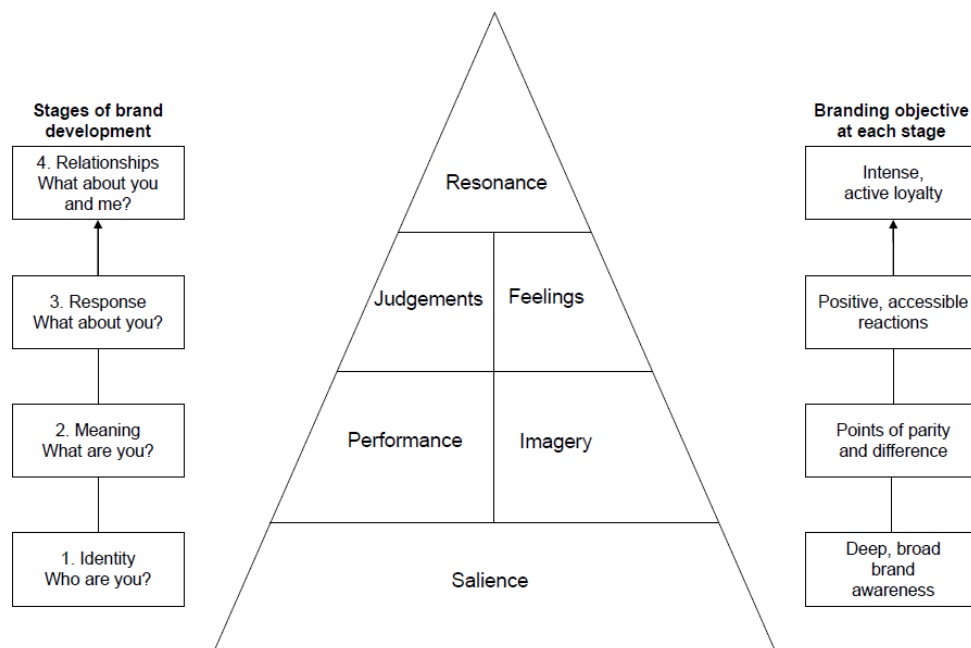


Figure 4. Customer-based brand equity (CBBE) pyramid (Keller 2008, 60)

The different stages and the branding objectives at the different stages illustrate the brand building. The stages in the left side are showing the more rational way of the brand building and the right-side stages show a more emotional way to build a brand. To build a strong brand both right and left side stages are needed. The six building blocks for the brand are brand salience, brand performance, brand imagery, brand judgement, brand feelings and brand resonance. (Keller 2008, 60-61)

The essence of the brand salience is the brand awareness, how often and how easily the customers remember the brand and recognise the brand. The brand performance tells how well the product or service fulfil the customers' functional needs and the brand imagery refers the brand associations related to the product and services. The associations may be e.g. purchase and usage situations or the images related to the brand in the marketing. In the B2B the imagery can relate to the type or size of the company. To create a brand equity the brand needs to have strong, beneficial, and unique brand associations. The brand judgement is based on customers' opinions on brand imagery and performance. The most important judgements for the brand are judgements on quality, credibility, consideration, and superiority. The brand feelings mean the feelings the customers have with the brand and how the customers feel themselves if they are related to the brand. There are

many possible types of the feelings, but what matters to the brand is how positive the feeling is. Only the positive brand feelings and judgements are beneficial for the brand. (Keller 2008, 60-71)

The brand resonance tells the relationships the customers have with the brand and it can be divided in activity and intensity. Activity is how often the customer buys or uses the brand and the intensity attachment to the brand. The CBBE model illustrates that the brand building has no shortcuts and to be able to build a strong brand and create significant brand equity, there are many aspects to consider. (Keller 2008, 60, 73-74)

Tools for brand building are the same that are used in the marketing communication and the idea is to inform, remind and persuade the customers about its brands and products. These tools do not differ between B2C or B2C brand building, but the priorities may vary. (Kotler et al. 2006, 110-111). The table 1 illustrates the examples of the brand-building tools and how they are used in the B2B markets.

Table 1. Brand-building tools (adjusted from Kotler et al. 2006, 110-122)

Brand-Building Tools	B2C	B2B	Examples in the B2B market
Personal selling	✓	✓	Face-to-face interaction is the focus area in the B2B markets. Communication and knowlegde of the sales people play an important role.
Direct Marketing	✓	✓	Direct communication such as. e-mail, newsletters, internet, mail. In brand building the brand performance must meet the customer expectations and it is important to listen the customer feedback.
Public Relations (PR)	✓	✓	Well designed programs generating coverage in the media. When successful, companu may have well-placed newspapers and magazines writing its stories, which create credibility and positive word of mouth. Effective and economical way to reach potential clients and build and sustain business.
Trade Shows and Exhibitions	✓	✓	Great opportunity for B2B companies to meet potential customers and build brand interest, knowledge and awareness. Has major importance for B2B companies.
Advertising	✓	✓	Often costly, in the B2B market a cost effective way is to set an add in the specialized press, eg. trade magazines, journals. On that way the add reached the selected audience.
Sales Promotion	✓		Is not that much in use in the B2B sector. Some promotion at the trade shows or discounts maybe used.

Personal selling is the mainly used brand building tool in the B2B market. In the business market it is more common to serve customers directly that in the B2C

markets. This also mean that the employees in the sales department are playing an important part in the brand building. Personal selling is one part of the direct marketing tool with which the company is able to focus its marketing effort to the acknowledged potential customers. Trade shows and exhibitions are also important for B2B companies to meet many potential customers at the same time and build brand knowledge, awareness, and interest. (Kotler et al. 2006, 110-122)

With the well designed and managed Public Relations (later PR) programs companies can have without pay attention (time or space) in the media, create credibility and attracts the potential customers cost effectively. Good option for the B2B market is to have paid advertisements in the specialised press. In that way the advertisement will find the selected audience and the PR information would be combined with the company's own message. Sales promotion is more used in the B2C markets, in the B2B markets sales promotion could be discounts or in the exhibitions business and sales-force promotion and the promotions would be targeted to the persons involved in the buying process. (Kotler et al. 2006, 110-122)

The following figures 5 and 6 demonstrate two different studies related to the brand building during the brand internationalisation. The brand internationalisation will be more discussed in the chapter 3.3 and these two studies will present the brand building dimensions and different stages of the process.

The study of "Branding Strategies of Born Globals" illustrates the brand strategy with three dimensions as shown in the figure 5 (Gabrielsson 2005, 205).

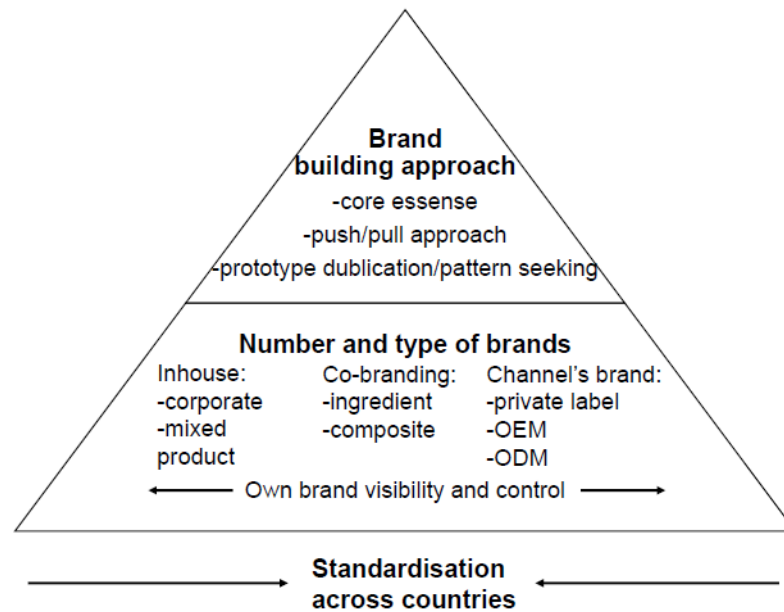


Figure 5. Dimension of branding strategies of born globals. (Gabrielsson 2005, 205)

Those three dimensions of the branding strategy are “brand-building approach”, “type and number of brands used” and “degree of standardisation”. The “brand-building approach” consist of those decisions made, when building a brand, which are the core essence of the brand, how the brand will be marketed (push/pull) and will the brand be first tested in one market before entering other markets (prototype) or has it been already designed for multiple markets (pattern). In the dimension “type and number of brands used” is evaluated the brands structure and architecture in the international market, which means that how many brands the firms are offering internationally and how the offered brands are situated in the organisation. The third dimension “degree of standardisation” refers to the standardisation level of the brand in different countries. (Gabrielsson 2005, 201-205)

The figure 6 shows an example of a branding strategy for a born global firm. It illustrates the stages and activities in building ICEpower brand (Altshuler and Tarnovskaya 2010, 218).

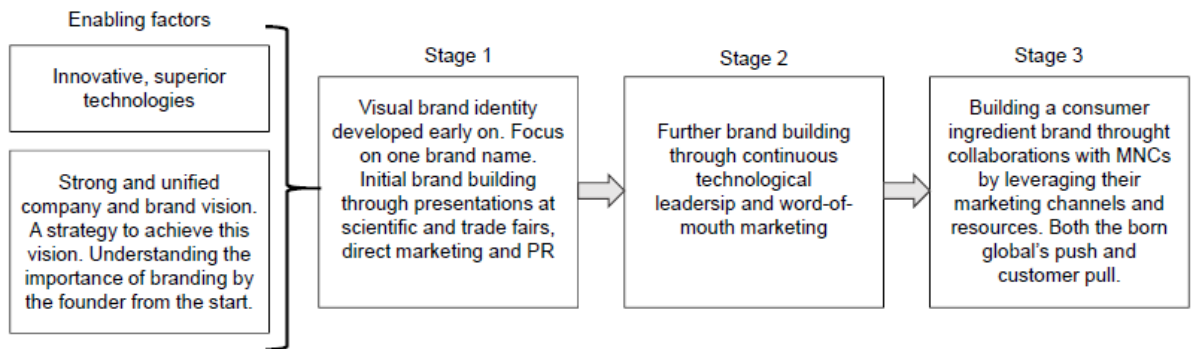


Figure 6. Stages and activities in building ICEpower brand. (Altshuler et al. 2010, 218)

The framework (figure 6) identifies that to be able to start to build a brand it is important to have good product and good vision. This framework also highlights visual brand image, one brand name and the importance of the marketing channels. The stage 1 includes giving a name to the company and the product, creating visual identity and to start promotional activities. The ICEpower brand noticed early on that they had to focus on one brand name and developed visual identity through website and series of branded marketing materials. The promotional brand building activities were direct sales, attending trade fairs, different PR activities and word-of-mouth marketing. The co-founder was already well-known in the scientific scene and the company was making presentations in the relevant conferences. The company first targeted the professional audio makers and later the manufacturers of the consumer audio in the consumer trade shows. At the same time the company was directly promoting their product in the customer meetings and was able to get coverage from leading publications. (Altshuler et al. 2010, 217-219)

The next step for the company was to building reputation in the B2B market with excellent technology and products as well as with marketing activities and successful work with the customers. The satisfied customers also enabled the word-of-mouth marketing in the market. The other marketing activities made were continues work in PR, trade fair presentations and direct sales. The third stage of the brand building was to build a consumer brand. With the premium technology and professional work, the company had already a good reputation in the industry,

the company was able to enter the consumer markets through their customers. (Altshuler et al. 2010, 219-221)

When speaking about technology companies the most beneficial is to build a strong corporate brand to be able to create stability in financial markets and long-term customer relationships. Branding is important for small companies when they want to have direct customer relationships. At that stage the quality of the product and customer experience are very critical. (Mohr et al. 2010, 412, 416)

2.3 Service branding and professional services

Branding is important for service companies, while the services and the quality of services are dependent on persons providing the services. When marketing services branding is a tool to make the service offering more concrete for the customers for example using brand symbols and giving own names for certain brand offerings. (Keller 2008, 15-17)

In the history there has been different strong service brands, but only in the beginning of 2000 the sophistication and pervasiveness of it became agitated (Keller 2008, 15). Difference in service branding in the sense of branding is that services are intangible in nature. For this reason, it is important to maximise the service quality and understand the numerous ways that affect the customers service experience. Use of many different brand elements make the brand more tangible and retrievable. To be able to build the brand image and brand awareness for the brand name have e.g. slogans, logos, and persons great importance. It is also essential that the brand name is easy to pronounce and remember. The marketing communication build the brand personality and the idea of the communication programs is to be fully integrated into the service experience and evolve over time. With the services it is also important to consider brand hierarchy as well as brand portfolio. In the vertical extensions the sub-branding is often made with modifier or individual brand name combined with the company brand. (Keller 2008, 652-655)

The service business means that the activities performed are charged (Keller 2008, 188). The professional services mean e.g. engineering services and consulting services and the companies operating in the B2B service industry are facing a fierce competition. Many of these companies try to get a competitive advantage through branding. (Guenther et al. 2019, 88) For the professional service companies the branding seems to be more relevant than the other B2B service companies. From the corporate brands in professional services the shareholders also expect more sales than from the brand specified in certain service. (Guenther et al. 2019, 99) In the Guenther et al.'s (2019, 99-100) study this was only seen for a professional services companies, not for other B2B services and they recommend that professional services should use the company's corporate brand.

When considering the standardisation and customisation across the international markets the services are included into the list of most likely candidates that can have the similar marketing strategies, when entering in different markets. Also, the B2B products using the corporate image and the brands positioned mostly related to the COO are in this list. (Keller 2008, 618-619) In the next chapter the special characteristics of the B2B branding are discussed.

2.4 Business-to-Business branding

B2B branding research is still at the beginning phase and the most researched areas have been brand power, industrial brand equity, managing brand equity and buyer attitudes. In the table 2 is presented the development of B2B branding research. During the years 2007–2016 the studies have been focusing on brand equity and brand's role as strategic asset for industrial companies. For the areas of future research is shown B2B service branding and especially the role of solution branding at B2B market. (Seyedghorban et al. 2016, 2675)

Table 2. Trajectory of B2B branding research (Seyedghorban et al. 2016, 2675)

Trajectory of B2B branding research.

	1972 – 1991 <i>Irrelevance of branding</i>	1992 – 2006 <i>Benefits of branding</i>	2007 – Present <i>Brand equity</i>	Future research <i>Branding spillover</i>
Intellectual structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product perception • Product non-differentiation • Brand name • Commodity product • Brand effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand equity • Loyalty • Performance • Competitive advantage • Quality assurance • Distribution efficiency • Intangible asset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity • Performance • Satisfaction • Buyer-supplier relationship • Brand importance • Brand image • Corporate reputation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market share • Financial performance • Economic performance • Extended buyer-supplier relationships • Buyer perception of brand • Commoditization and branding • B2B service branding • Solution branding
Theoretical foundations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive psychology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive psychology • Social exchange theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved cognitive psychology • Extended social exchange theory • Resource-based view • Information economic view

In the B2B branding buyer-employee relationships and the internal communication of the brand strategy are important. When the company have a clear and consist internal brand message, will the employees consistently deliver the same brand message to the buyers (Leek and Christodoulides 2012; Webster, Jr. et al. 2004) and the buyers will adhere to the brand's functional and emotional values (Leek et al. 2012). All the employees should understand their part in the brand strategy and especially the importance of the systematic brand message should be integrated into the trainings, compensation, and incentives of the sales department (Webster, Jr. et al. 2004). This enables the development of the strong relationships with the brand, employees and the company and creates exit barriers for the buyers (Leek et al. 2012). According to Webster, Jr et al. (2004, 398) there are certain guidelines for the B2B branding in the industrial markets. These guidelines are presented in the table 3.

Table 3. Guidelines for B2B (industrial) branding adjusted from Webster, Jr. et al. (2004, 398)

1. **The role and importance of branding should be tied directly into the industrial marketer's business/profit model and value-delivery strategy:**
basis of the brand is firm's distinctive competence and how the firm can deliver superior value to the chosen customers, in the brand management it is important to commit to sufficient resources, managerial attention and controls.
2. **Understanding the role of the brand in the organisational buying process:**
usage of market research to identify the decision makers (buyers) and criteria as well as the key differentiators versus competitors.
3. **Be sure the basic value proposition has relevance for all significant players in the decision-making unit and decision-making process:**
the brand promise should be consistent and answer the buyers needs and concerns.
4. **Emphasise a corporate branding approach:**
Importance of the buyer-seller relationship and buyer's corporate credibility and reliability, selective use of sub-brands to be able to focus and clarify brand image and position.
5. **Build the corporate brand around brand intangibles such as expertise, trustworthiness, easy of doing business and likeability:**
this enables firm to become a strategic partner for its customers, these concepts need to be made real within the firms way of working and customer experiences.
6. **Avoid confusing corporate communication strategy and brand strategy:**
the focus should be on the brand as a strategic entity and its meaning for the customers.
7. **Apply detailed segmentation analysis within and across industry-defined segments, based on differences in the composition and functioning of buying centres within those segments:**
The brand positioning should be combined in a way that it meets the unique needs in the subsegments without forgetting the overall corporate brand.
8. **Build brand communications around the interactive effects of multiple media:**
the specialised media such as industry trade shows, educational activities and professional journals are most effective, importance of the sales department (training, compensation, incentives) to maintain a strong corporate brand and enhancing brand equity.
9. **Adopt a top-down and bottom-up brand management approach:**
It is important to see the big picture (top-down) but not to forget the individual products in different business units and markets (bottom-up).
10. **Educate the entire organisation as to the value of branding and the organisation's role in delivering brand value:**
the whole organisation is responsible for implement the brand strategy and all of the employees should understand their role in it, while as the customers point of view all contacts points for the company and its products or services are creating the brand value.

Most of the B2B branding information is adapted from the B2C markets and the general opinion has been that same presumption of branding will occur in both markets. The differences between the B2C and B2B can be seen for example in the buying behaviour. (Seyedghorban et al. 2016; Webster, Jr. et al. 2004) In the B2B market purchases are more complex with higher volume and financial value. The buyers have a great responsibility and the decision-making process depends between businesses. (Seyedghorban et al. 2016) Also the functional values are

highlighted in the decision-making process and for the brand development the emotional qualities such as trust and providing reassurance were considered important in the sense of risk reduction in the decision-making process. (Leek et al. 2012) As an example, a strong brand can reassure buyers (Keller 2008, 12) or if a company offers a service infrastructure, will that reduce buyers' risks and reassure them in the industrial B2B markets (Leek et al. 2012). On the other hand, it seems that the environmental factors, such as recession, have a negative correlation for the brand's role. In the recession the buyers would in most cases prefer quality and lower price over premium brand. (Leek et al. 2012) It is also important to understand that industrial buyers are humans and their individual preferences and personality types are influencing the buying decisions (Kotler et. al 2006, 30). The table 4 shows examples of the issues influencing the purchase decisions in the B2B market and the figure 7 the buying center's influential dimensions.

Table 4. Examples of the purchase decisions' criteria in the B2B markets

Examples of the purchase decisions' criteria in the B2B markets	
Adjusted from Seyedghordan et al. 2016	Adjusted from Leek et al. 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social considerations • Environmental considerations • The intensity of competition in the market place • The trustworthy of suppliers' organization claim • Supplier reputation • Degree of customization of the product or service offering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The length of time a company has been in business • Company's degree of experience • Functionality of the product • Type of the product • Criticality of the purchase • Emotional qualities

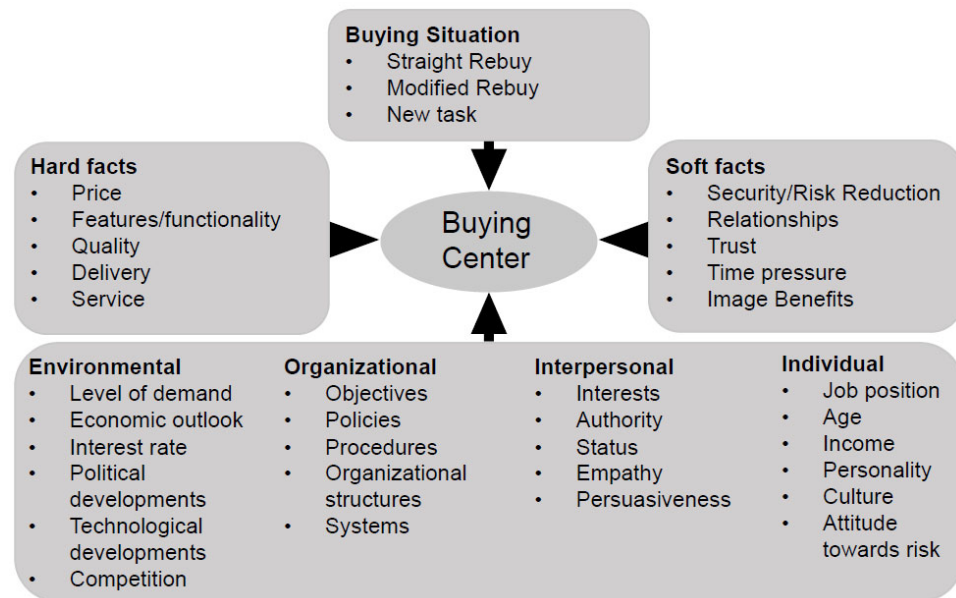


Figure 7. The buying center's influential dimensions (Kotler et al. 2006, 30)

The understanding of the special characteristics in the industrial market is important to be able to develop branding strategies. The successfully designed and managed branding strategies will create value for the firm and customers, stronger buyer-employee relationships, better-differentiated product offerings, customer loyalty and better responses to company innovation. (Webster, Jr. et al. 2004) A strong B2B brand may also give the company a competitive advantage. In B2B sector there are many segments and people involved, which makes B2B branding also complex and requires adaptation in marketing actions. (Keller 2008, 11-12) Guenther et al. (2019, 99) also agree that the brands may be hard to build or maintain but will create value for the B2B companies.

3 INTERNATIONALISATION

Internationalisation is a concept, which explains ways how companies can build their business abroad. During the 1980's the research of firm's internationalisation started to expand (Johanson et al. 1990). The most well-known theories are Uppsala model, Network approach and Born Globals (Johanson et al. 1990; Saarenketo 2004; Cavusgil et al. 2015). Internationalisation also includes the choice of the market entry strategy (Hollensen 2011, 9). In this chapter the basic internationalisation theories, market entry strategies and internationalisation of the services and brands will be overviewed.

3.1 Internationalisation theories

As mentioned above the most well-known theories are Uppsala model, Network approach and Born Globals (Johanson et al. 1990; Saarenketo 2004; Cavusgil et al. 2015). All those theories are overviewed in this chapter.

The Uppsala Internationalisation Model

The Uppsala Internationalisation Model was made in 1977 (Vahlne and Johanson 2017). The firm's internationalisation has been seen as a process in this model. During the internationalisation process the firm increases its involvements abroad step by step by getting more knowledge of the foreign market and operations as well as growing engagements abroad. In the model is assumed that the current market commitment and market knowledge impacts firm's decisions of the internationalisation steps. The knowledge and observations of the market opportunities and problems are assumed to be collected through business activities, which also create new business opportunities. Two patterns in the firm's internationalisation process is also explained by this model. The first pattern presents the establishment chain for the international operations in a new country (starting stepwise from direct export and ending even in manufacturing) and the second pattern shows that the selected target countries are countries, which are

familiar to the company, countries where the firm sees potential but the uncertainty of the market is low. (Johanson et al. 1990)

Network approach

Network approach is a network-based view of internationalisation based on Swedish research in the middle of 1980s. The approach has been developed by researchers, who had earlier knowledge of industrial firms and firms' internationalisation processes, distribution systems and interactions between firms in purchasing and marketing. The researchers saw that the industrial system consists of companies, which are dependent on other companies through use of the goods and services, distribution, and production. The Network approach relies on these relationships. The internationalisation of the firm happens by creating relationships with the participants of foreign networks. The relationships are made in three different ways; 1) contacting new firms in the national nets, 2) increasing commitments with already known nets abroad and 3) increment co-operation in national nets. (Johanson and Mattsson 1988)

Born Globals

The born globals phenomenon was recognised already in the 1980s. The born global term started to be used for the young, entrepreneurial firms, who had international business early on. (Cavusgil et al. 2015) One definition by Knight and Cavusgil (2004, 124) for born globals is "business organisations that, from or near their founding, seek superior international business performance from the application of knowledge-based resources to the sale of outputs in multiple countries". In his research Saarenketo (2004) states that there have been several other terms for this same phenomenon from different researchers, but nowadays quite many researchers have been adapting the term born globals. The born globals' entry mode is often exporting, and they see the whole world as their market. The size of the domestic market doesn't matter for the born globals. In Europe 20% of the new firms are seen as born globals. (Cavusgil et al. 2015) Born global are also quite generally service firms (Grönroos 2016).

3.2 Service internationalisation and market entry strategies

According to the studies of the internationalisation of the firm the small- and medium-sized firms (SMEs) in the industrial field are researched a lot. The internationalisation theories are mostly explaining how the internationalisation happened and why, not how the companies can have a long-term advantage of internationalisation or how the internationalisation processes relate to branding strategies (Autio 2017; Couto et al. 2017).

The internationalisation of services was not at first researched as the internationalisation was on the industrial field. During the last 20 years the research has been expanding, because of the growing market of services. In the service field there are characterised different export and entry strategies. (Grönroos 2016) According to Grönroos (2016) these strategies are direct export, systems export, direct entry, indirect entry, and electronic marketing. Direct export in services relate to that that the service provider goes to the foreign market for the service production, systems export that the service providers follow the clients to the foreign market, direct entry that the service provider moves abroad to operate, indirect entry on the other hand means that a foreign firm is providing the services without direct control of the service provider as e.g. with license agreement. The last strategy electronic marketing refers to internationalisation through internet. (Grönroos 2016)

If speaking about market entry strategies in general are the market entry strategies the way how companies expand their business abroad. There are different types of entry modes and those modes have different levels of risks and control opportunities for companies. Export modes include agents and distributors. These modes are highly flexible and has low risk and control. Intermediate modes are joint ventures and strategic alliances, which means that they have split ownership and shared control and risk. In the hierarchical mode the company has an own subsidiary. This consist low flexibility and high risk and control (Hollensen 2011, 9).

3.3 Brand internationalisation

When talking about international brands it has been seen that the trends and changes have been favourable for the business markets and the requirements for adaptation in market offerings are decreasing. International and global branding seems to be beneficial for the companies, while companies could use their market offering to pursue international/global branding. In a long run this would mean that with the same offering the B2B companies could receive greater economies of scale in the production, possible long-term growth and decrease marketing expenses. Greater growth potential has also greater risks and a well-designed branding strategy and proper implementation is needed. (Kotler et al. 2006, 88-90) The table 5 presents different brand strategies for international brands.

Table 5. Branding strategies to pursue an international level (Kotler et al. 2006, 88-90)

1. **International Brand Strategy:**
 - *same brands and marketing effort can be used in the international markets, market offering may vary a little, but not much customising is made*
 - *this strategy works for companies having unique brands and products and have no real competition*
2. **Global Brand Strategy:**
 - *no market adaptation, all branding is standardised*
 - *suitable for most of the B2B companies*
3. **Transnational Brand Strategy:**
 - *there is corporate concept for branding as an overall framework for the local adaptation*
 - *all of the foreign markets adapt own branding and marketing concepts and offerings within the scope of the overall framework*
 - *this strategy is meant for companies, who need to satisfy national needs*
4. **Multidomestic Brand Strategy:**
 - *the brand and marketing effort as well as market offerings are customised for all of the foreign markets*
 - *this strategy is for situation, when a company operates in the markets or sectors, in which local responsiveness is needed eg. certain market regulations or different circumstances*

In the real life it might not be possible to follow only one of these strategies and it is common that there are different variations of the strategies, while the international markets are developing, and adaptation is needed. In B2B market combination of corporate and product brands seems to create great results. The corporate brand also has dominance in the B2B branding strategies. (Kotler et al. 2006)

“The branding strategy with the highest potential for B2B companies is a strong corporate brand in relation with few product brands.” (Kotler et al. 2006, 90)

In the earlier literature internationalisation and branding relation for SMEs are mostly researched within different product categories, often fashion or goods (Woo 2014; Couto et al. 2017). The brand internationalisation or rather globalisation have been also researched through studies of born globals’ branding strategies and branding strategies of large, already multinational corporations (Gabrielsson 2005). As mentioned in the Internationalisation chapter 3.1 the born globals are small, entrepreneurial firms, who internationalise already from start. Within the born globals there are also many service firms.

In the earlier studies there were also a study from Finland made for 30 Finnish born global SMEs within technology field. In the study came out the importance of the global branding and standardisation. Important aspects for the branding were managerial implications, the selection of a single or multiple branding approaches and standardisation of the branding strategies. (Gabrielsson 2005)

In the earlier studies few frameworks were used to illustrate the branding process. The figure 8 illustrate the brand’s internationalisation process of goods and it made based on the idea that the brand management would be related to the stages of the internationalisation of the firm. (Fan 2008 in: Couto et al. 2017)



Figure 8. Stages of Branding internationalisation (Fan 2008 in: Couto et al. 2017, 196)

The figure 9 is taken from a research of born globals branding strategies. The Gabrielsson's (2005, 206) framework shows the branding strategy and its components as well as the variables affecting branding strategy according to the earlier theories.

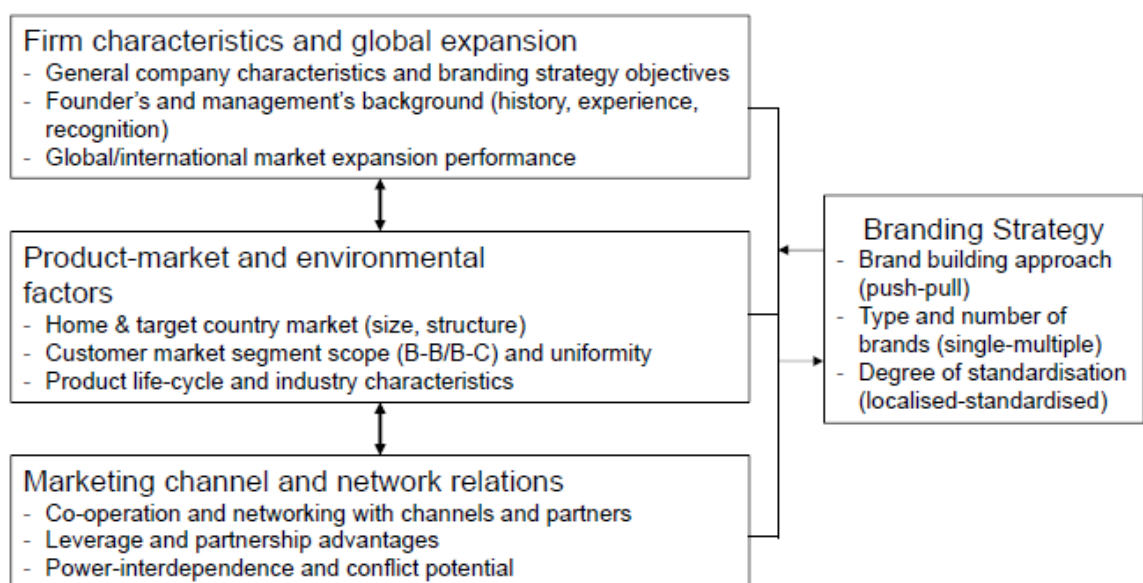


Figure 9. Theoretical framework for branding strategies of Born Globals. (Gabrielsson 2005, 206)

According to the several studies there seems to be some patterns having an influence on successful branding in internationalisation (Gabrielsson 2005; Altshuler et al. 2010). The patterns from the earlier literature have been gathered in this theoretical framework build by Gabrielsson (2005). Gabrielsson's (2005) study in which the framework was built, evaluates i.a. does the founders or key personnel knowledge and experience enable the global brand recognition or not, do the born global standardised global brands, do the born global have multiple branding strategies and do the B2B companies use push approach and B2C push and pull approach. After the evaluation it was seen that in many cases founders or key personnel knowledge and experience enabled the internationalisation. The findings from the study were also that standardisation and global branding became more important further in the internationalisation process and the branding strategies varied depending on the internationalisation path. For the B2B companies the branding strategies might have differed between different countries before the global presence, meaning that the B2B companies were developing their brand on the way and in the global presence the brand was mainly kept the same. (Gabrielsson 2005, 217-218) In the Gabrielsson's (2005) study there were also service companies included into the study and the B2B and B2C segments are both evaluated along the study.

3.4 Resources and networks

While this study is concentrating on professional services in the B2B market with the Smart City context, the born globals' studies seem to be more relevant for this study than the studies related to goods. For this reason, the resources and networks has been first studied according to the two studies related to born globals. According to the Gabrielsson (2005) the important issues for the born globals branding achievements are qualities, global orientation, and know-how of the leaders of the company. In the Altshuler et al.'s (2010, , 217-219) study the co-founder was also already well-known in the scientific scene and the personal selling, word-of-mouth marketing, relevant conferences and coverage in the leading publications were the case company's main brand building activities.

Secondly resources and networks have also been mentioned in many of the earlier chapter related to the brands and brand building. When speaking of the resources the personal selling is said to be the mainly used brand building tool in the B2B market. This means that the people in the sales department have an extremely important role in the brand building. For the B2B companies also trade shows and exhibitions are important places to meet potential customers and build brand awareness, interest, and knowledge. (Kotler et al. 2006, 110-122) Kotler et al. (2006, 110-122) also point out that specialised press is a good marketing channel in the B2B field. The personal selling is also linked to the networks and for example Mohr et al. (2010, 412, 416) highlight the importance of the long-term customer relationships. To be able to have long-term relationships the quality of the product and the customer experience is critical (Mohr et al. 2010, 412, 416) as well as when speaking of the professional services the professional services are dependent on persons providing the services (Keller 2008, 15-17).

On the networks point of view the different internationalisation theories depend often from the networks the company has. In the Uppsala internationalisation model the companies often target the countries, which are familiar for the companies (Johanson et al. 1990) or in the network model the internationalisation is build according to different networks (Johanson et al. 1988). For the born globals they normally see the whole world as their market already straight from the beginning (Cavusgil et al. 2015).

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to the literature review of this study brands are critical for the companies, especially for technology companies (Mohr et al. 2010, 412). Altshuler et al. (2010, 213) specifies that for the technology companies the branding gives the companies a possibility to differentiate themselves and according to the Guenther et al. (2019, 88) the professional services are also trying to get a competitive advantage through branding. To be able to answer the research problem and the research questions of this study the theories of the literature review were analysed related to the research problem;

What are the special characteristics of the brand internationalisation process of the professional services B2B brand?

and research questions:

RQ1: How the B2B professional services brands have internationalised?

RQ2: How are resources utilised to internationalise professional services B2B brand and how are networks developed when internationalising professional services B2B brand?

RQ3: What is the degree of the brands' standardisations on the different markets?

According to the literature review the born global studies are more relevant for this study than the studies related to goods. The Altshuler et al.'s (2010) study shows the framework from stages and activities in building an ICEpower brand for a born global company and the Gabrielsson's (2005) study presents the branding strategies for born global companies. Both frameworks have similarities with the research questions, but neither covers all the aspects. The Altshuler et al. (2010) framework was more for a product brand's internationalisation, the Gabrielsson's (2005) also had partly service companies and the combination of these frameworks showed many aspects related to the company branding and internationalisation.

Both of these frameworks were already a little older (2005 and 2010) but were consisting many of the basic branding literature and sources, many of the same sources of the basic theories as used in this study's literature review. The Altshuler et al. (2010) also refers to the Gabrielsson's (2005) study in their research. Based on the literature review the author decided to combine these two frameworks to bring together the branding strategy and brand building process. Even though the born globals can be offering both products and services the earlier study examples seem to be more concentrating on the products and for this reason a combination of these two studies were a good starting point for this study. The combination of these two frameworks can be seen in the figure 10. The empirical study will evaluate the theoretical framework.

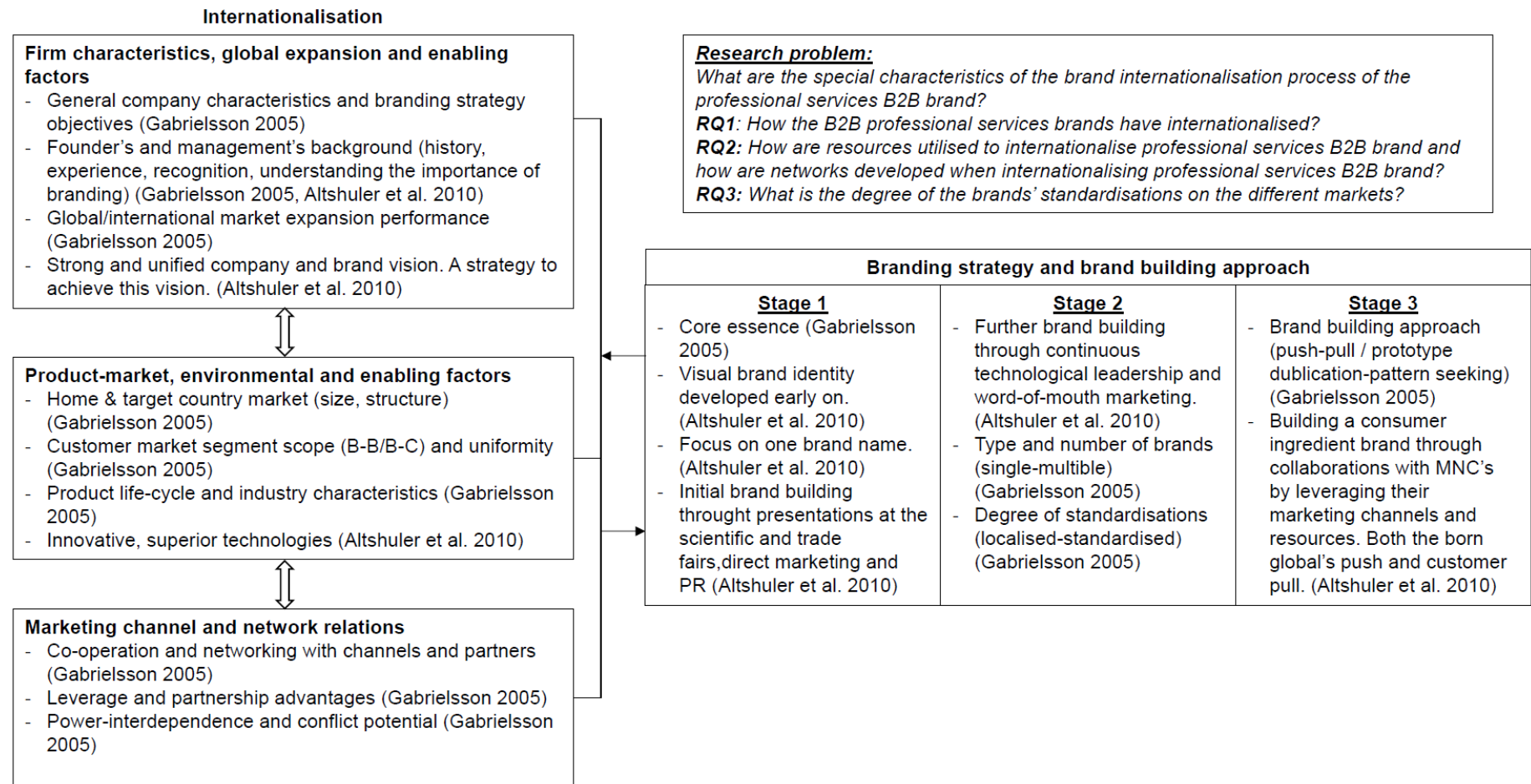


Figure 10. The theoretical framework of the thesis (adjusted from Gabrielsson 2005, 206; Altshuler et al. 2010, 218)

5 METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

In this study is researched the role of the brand in the internationalisation process and the context of this study are companies providing professional service in smart city field. This study was conducted as a qualitative descriptive multiple case study with deductive and inductive approach. This chapter will introduce the research methods used in this study, present the sample selection process, give the overview of the case companies, summarise the data collection and analysis processes and analyse the reliability and validity of the study.

5.1 Methodology

In the qualitative research method, the researcher gains a comprehensive view of the studied phenomenon through seeing the normal situations in the studied field (Miles and Huberman 1994, 6). Saunders et al. (2016, 177) state that the descriptive research is used when the exact phenomenon is known before the data collection and according to Yin (2003, 5) the descriptive case study describes the context's complete phenomena. The aim of this study is to evaluate, if the theoretical framework build from the existing theories in internationalising born global companies (including both product and service brands) can be also adapted into B2B professional service brands and for that reason the qualitative research method and the descriptive strategy was chosen. As a research strategy both deductive and inductive approach have been chosen. According to Saunders at al. (2016, 145) the deductive approach is used when testing a theory and inductive approach when exploring and building new theory. In this study both deductive and inductive approaches are used while in the literature review two basic theories were chosen to be tested and during the study also the other theories have been analysed with the empirical data and included in the new revised theory. To increase the validity of the study the multiple case study method was chosen instead of the single case study. In reference to Eisenhardt et al's study in 2007 the multiple case study enables to find more detailed information of the issue studied and to create a stronger theory, as Yin (2009, 58) also highlights that the number of replications make the result of the multiple-case more certain.

In the qualitative research the samples are normally smaller than in the quantitative research. The qualitative research is made as in-depth study with small samples and the samples are often rather purposive than random, while the universe is often more limited due to the initial definition and while random sampling may cause biased samples with small number of cases. (Miles et al. 1994, 27) In the multiple case study, the typical sample size thinking is not used. The idea in sampling is more to evaluate how many case replications the researcher wants for the study and how much would be needed. The number of replications make the result of the multiple-case more certain. In straightforward theories and issues, which does not need high certainty two to three literal replication could be an adequate amount and for high certainty for subtle theory would need five to six or more replication. (Yin 2009, 58)

The sampling in multiple case study need to be carefully thought through as well as in the qualitative research the random sampling is not recommended. The sampling frame, guided the conceptual framework and research questions, is required. (Miles et al. 1994, 27-28) In this study the sampling frame was evaluated to be companies offering B2B professional services in the Smart City context and the interviewees themselves would be either persons offering professional services in the Smart City field, working closely with the professionals or working in the marketing or communication department of the company. The sample size was first set from three to five companies, while the theoretical framework tested was rather straightforward, but high certainty wanted.

The data collection in the case studies, the case study evidence, may come in different sources. These sources are archival records, direct observations, documents, interviews, physical artifacts, and participant-observation. (Yin 2009, 98). According to Yin (2009, 106) the interviews are one of the most important sources of evident in the case studies. While the aim of this study was to evaluate the feasibility of the theoretical framework in the Smart City context the interviews were selected as the case study evidence.

For the interviews there are three different types of them – in-depth interview, focused interview, and survey. The in-depth interview is a wider interview, which maybe one-time event or an extended period. The interviewee is asked related to facts and opinions and the interviewee can be seen more as an “informant”. The focused interview is normally a shorter, one-time event and even though the interview is often made with conversational manner and remains open-ended, the interview mainly focuses in certain questions. The survey consists of more structured questions and can also be used as a source of quantitative data. (Yin 2009, 107-108) In this study the theoretical framework was tested in the Smart City context and the interview would have certain questions based on the framework. Also, the conversations manner was needed to get fresh commentary from the interviewees. For this reason, the focused interview was chosen as an interview type for this survey.

As for data analysis there are several relevant data analysis possibilities in the case study method such as explanation building, pattern matching, logic models, time-series analysis, and cross-case syntheses (Yin 2009, 162). In this study the analysis method used is pattern matching. Pattern matching can be used both explanatory and descriptive case studies as well as in single and multiple case studies. When using the pattern matching analysis method in the descriptive study the specific variables for the predicted patterns need to be defined before the data is collected. (Yin 2009, 136-137). The aim of this descriptive multiple case study is to evaluate, if the theoretical framework build according to the existing theory can be adapted into B2B professional service brands and the specific variables can be seen in the theoretical framework build before the data collection. The pattern matching is used to evaluate if the different theoretical predictions replicate across the cases. In this study the cases are first overviewed separately and after that the cross-case analysis is made.

5.2 Sample selection

As mentioned in the methodology chapter 5.1 the sampling in multiple case need to be carefully thought through an as well as in the qualitative research the random

sampling is not recommended. The sampling frame, guided the conceptual framework and research questions, is required. (Miles et al. 1994, 27-28) The idea of this study is to evaluate the brand internationalisation in the professional services B2B brand in the Smart City context. This evaluation will be made according to the theoretical framework presented in the chapter 4. The theoretical framework has been drawn based on the existing brand building and brand internationalisation theories for born global companies offering both products and services. This study researches, if the same theoretical framework could be used for companies operating in the professional service business and the context for the professional services was chosen companies offering other companies Smart City related professional services.

In this study the sampling frame was evaluated to be companies offering professional services in the Smart City context and the interviews themselves would be either persons offering professional services in the Smart City field, working closely with the professionals or working in the marketing or communication department of the company. The sample size was first set from three to five companies, while the theoretical framework tested was rather straightforward, but high certainty was wanted. After the first two and three interviews it was seen that the replication was already enough for the certainty wanted and the final amount of the cases ended up being four.

To be able to get the big picture of the brand internationalisation process related to the Smart City professional services, the purposive sample, typically used in the qualitative research (Miles et al. 1994, 27), was chosen to evaluate the Smart City services infrastructure in the wider sense. As mentioned in the introduction Smart City related services there are many different stakeholders in the Smart City projects (Lazaroiu et al. 2012, 326-327, Tekes 2017). Due to this the companies interviewed in this study were chosen to represent companies in different angles from the Smart City field. One of the companies is providing business advises for the foreign and local start-ups/companies, when they want to enter to the Finnish market and has seen widely how the start-ups/companies has grown and internationalised. One of the interviewed companies is working with different innovation projects combining

public and private sector and two of the companies are offering Smart City B2B professional services and are in different phases of their brand internationalisation process. The table 6 presents the overview of the sample companies.

Table 6. Case companies

Company	Interview date	Interviewee	Nature of service in the Smart City Context
A	17.06.2020	Business professional	Helping companies entering Finnish market, one operating sector related to Smart City Seen internationalisation paths from top to bottom with product and service companies
B	23.06.2020	Communication professional	Innovation company linking public and private sector together to create combined development projects and platforms for new Smart City innovations Working with different international projects
C	30.06.2020 and 01.07.2020	1. Smart City professional 2. Business professional 3. Communication professional	Providing many Smart City related professional services under their general infrastructure offering in several countries
D	01.07.2020	Smart City professional related also with the brand internationalisation process	Providing many Smart City related professional services addition to other services

The company A operates with companies entering Finnish market in three different sectors, one of the sectors being related to Smart City sector. In this study the interview was made related to the projects made in this Smart City sector. The interviewee has been involved with many different projects and had been working with several companies within the sector. During this work the interviewee had seen internationalisation journeys from top to bottom, e.g. companies who have made their internationalisation step by step within a long period of time, companies entering in ten new countries in a month and everything there between. (Company A 2020)

The company B is an innovation company linking public and private sector together in the Smart City related innovation projects. The role of the company B in these projects is facilitating, being the professional, who helps the companies to develop, test and piloting their products and services in the real city environment and with citizens. One project lasts normally round three years and many of these projects are international. The company B is strongly operation in the B2B sector, but part of the co-development is involving the citizens in the development. The interviewee

works in the communication department in the company and has a good overlook in the Smart City sector on the communication and marketing perspective. (Company B 2020)

The company C is a company offering large variety of services and they have their Smart City offering included in their infrastructure division. The company has a long history and know-how. With the company C the interview was divided into two 30 minutes parts. In the first interview the interviewee was a person providing professional services for the Smart City sector and in the second interview there were two interviewees, one from the management and one from the communication department. All the interviewees had a long and solid experience from the Smart City sector. (Company C 2020)

The company D is a research and development company, which is also providing B2B professional services. In the Smart City field, they have several services and one service package combining the services. The interviewee is Smart City professional, who has been involved with the internationalisation process of the Smart City professional service offering. The interviewee and the company D have also a long and solid experience from the Smart City sector. (Company D 2020)

5.3 Data collection

As mentioned in the chapter 5.1 the primary data for this study was collected as focused interviews. The questions were organised based on the different main themes of the study and followed the theoretical framework presented in the earlier chapter 4. In the beginning of the interview there were some background information of the company and then questions themed with internationalisation and brand/branding. The questions can be found in the Appendix 1. All these questions were sent beforehand to the interviewees. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, while all the interviewees were Finns and the questions were also sent in Finnish. Interview questions presented in the appendix 1 are translated from the Finnish questions. As the interviews were conducted as focused interviews, the place of the questions between the interviews had some changes depending from the

discussion. All the questions presented in the appendix 1 were asked with all of the case companies. As the coronavirus pandemic was on during the interviews, the pandemic's reflection to the daily work was also discussed during the interviews addition to the interview questions seen in the Appendix 1.

All the interviews were conducted via Teams due to the coronavirus pandemic. In the Teams meetings all the interviewees were asked a permission for recording and the interviews were conducted as anonym. All the interviews were conducted within one hour and they were conducted between 17.06. - 01.07.2020. With one company the interview was separated into two parts both lasting approximately half an hour. The separation was made according to the interviewees wish, while the first interviewed professional was not involved in the brand building and brand internationalisation. The second part of that interview was conducted with the management and communication and marketing department.

The interviews were transcribed by the interviewer and the analyses of the interviews have been made according to the transcripts not the recall of the interviewer. As the interviews were conducted in Finnish, the transcripts were also made in Finnish and the translation from Finnish into English was made during the individual case reports.

5.4 Data analysis

As mentioned in the earlier chapter the interviews were conducted in Finnish as well as the transcripts and the translation from Finnish into English was made during the individual case reports. All the separate case reports were written in short period of time to ensure that the translations would not change any of the data gathered. The cross-case analysis was made directly in English according to the separate case reports.

In the data analysis each individual case is analysed separately, and the individual case analysis were made as detailed as possible, while the original transcript was in Finnish and the researcher wanted to ensure the reliability of the study. In the

individual case analyses were seen patterns with the theoretical framework based on the existing theory. The case study questions were designed to evaluate the validity of the existing theory in the Smart City context and the answers for the questions showed similarities or differences between the theoretical framework and the individual cases. Addition to the patterns found in the individual cases, there were replication between the individual cases already from the two first interviews on. After the individual cases were analysed the findings were gathered in a table and the cross-case analysis was made between the individual cases. After the cross-case analysis the theoretical framework was readjusted for the B2B professional services Smart City context and the study questions were answered according to the cross-case analysis.

5.5 Reliability and validity

Yin (2009, 40) states that to be able to judge the reliability and validity of the research, there are common tests used in the all social science methods. These tests are also relevant for the case study as it is one form of empirical social research. In his study Yin (2009, 41-43) has combined these commonly used tests with case study tactics and in which research phase these tactics are used. These tests are construct validity (used in data collection and composition), internal validity (used in data analysis), external validity (used in research design) and reliability (used in data collection). As the internal validity test is stated not to be applicable for descriptive studies, it is not a valid test for this study.

The case study tactics for the construct validity in the data collection phase are using different data sources in the data collection and to maintain the chain of evidence and in the composition phase to let the interviewees to see the draft of the case study report. (Yin 2009, 41-42) While the aim of this study is to evaluate the existing theoretical framework in the Smart City context, only the interviews were chosen to be used as the source of evidence. According to Yin (2009, 106) the interviews are one of the most important sources of evident in the case studies, but when evaluating the validity of the study this only one source of evidence is good to keep in mind as well as that the interviewees have not been asked to comment the draft

of the case study report. In the following chapters the validity of the interviews conducted and maintenance of the chain of evidence have been analysed.

When evaluating the strengths and the weaknesses of the interviews the strengths are that they focus directly to this study's topics and provide explanations and causal inferences. On the other hand, the weaknesses of the interviews are that there might be inaccurate information, because of the poor recall, misunderstandings due to bias in the responses or poor articulation in the questioning. There also might be reflexivity in the interview situation, which means that the interviewee may answer the way the interviewer wants. (Yin 2009, 102; 106)

In this study the interviews were conducted as focused interviews and the interview questions were sent to the interviewees few days beforehand. Due to the focused interviews, also some supplemental questions were asked in addition to the questions given before the interview. During the interview the interviewer changed the order of the questions according to the discussion. All the interviews were recorded with the permission given by the interviewees and the interviewer transcribed all the interviews after the interview and the analyses of the interviews have been made according to the transcripts not the recall of the interviewer. The transcript also minimises the misunderstanding of the responses and shows if the interviewee had misunderstood the question. Also, the misunderstanding of the questions was minimised by the written questions sent beforehand. While transcribing the interviews, the interviewer kept also in mind the possibility of reflexivity. While the interviews were focused interviews, lasting generally one hour the nature of the interview and the number of questions, were also not potential for the reflexivity. It is still always good to keep in mind that the focused interviews always have some differences.

The establishing the chain of evidence means that an external observer is able to follow any piece of an evidence throughout the whole research (Yin 2009, 122-123). In this study the study questions, the theory gathered, and the theoretical framework build according to the theory were the basis of the cross-case study questions. All the interviews were conducted as focused interviews by the same researcher

following the same questions. In the interviews the order of the questions and some additional questions were different, but all the case study companies were asked the same interview questions shown in the Appendix 1. All the interviews were also recorded and transcribed according to the recording. The interviews were conducted in Finnish as well as the transcripts and the translation from Finnish into English was made during the individual case analyses. All the individual case analyses were written in short period of time to ensure that the translations would not change any of the data gathered. The cross-case analysis was made after the individual case analyses and the study questions answered according to the cross-case analysis.

In the external validity the case study tactic for multiple-case studies is to use replication logic in the research design phase and the reliability's test case study tactic to create a case study database and to use case study protocol. The reliability test means that the case study has been documented in a way that another researcher would be able to make the same research and with the same documentation end up by the same findings and conclusions. (Yin 2009, 41-45)

Referring to the replication logic of this study first it was clearly seen in the separate case studies that the replication was found and the answers for the interview questions started to repeat themselves already from the second interview on. The replication was seen in all the four case studies. According to Yin (2009, 58) in straightforward theories and issues, which does not need high certainty two to three literal replication could be an adequate amount and for high certainty in subtle theory would need five to six or more replication. In this study the theory was more straightforward, which means that the four replications would be certain to say that the findings of the study can be generalisable in the Smart City context.

Also, in the study the four different cases are all from the different angles of the Smart City context. In the sample selection the purposive sample was used and to be able to evaluate the theoretical framework build, the sample cases were intentionally chosen from different point of views of the Smart City context. According to the Miles et al. (1994, 33) the comparison of the cross cases would be impossible, if there are no sampling frame, if there are different processes or there

are radically different settings. In this multiple case study, the interviewees title in the case study organisation can be different, but their viewpoint of the Smart City field only completes the other cases. All the case companies were also chosen through the same sampling frame and all the interviews have been made by the same researcher with the same settings. The purposive sample also strengthen the generalisable.

As of speaking the reliability of this study, all the references can be found in the theory and methodology and the reference list is in the end of study. The individual case analyses have been written in a way that the findings of the cross-case analysis can be found from the individual case analyses and the case references are included in the text. The methods used in this study have also been explained in detail in this methodology chapter 5 and the interview questions can be found in the Appendix 1. The Finnish transcriptions of the interviews are not found in the appendix due to the language and the anonymity of the interviewees. Also due to the anonymity some too detailed answers have not been written in the separate case studies, but these details have not been essential for the analysis and on the opinion of the researcher has not harmed the reliability of the analysis. The individual case analyses have been made as detailed as possible to increase the reliability of the study and to enable the replication of the study.

6 EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Aim of this study is to evaluate the brand internationalisation in the B2B professional services in the Smart City context. For this four companies presenting the different angles of the Smart City professional services in the B2B field were interviewed. All of these companies had different viewpoints and this following chapter present the results and findings of the empirical study. The chapter 6.1 overviews the results and findings of the different case companies and in the chapter 6.2, cross-case analysis, the research questions will be answered, and the theoretical framework reanalysed based on the empirical results.

6.1 Case analyses

In this case analysis chapter, all the four case answers will be summarised and analysed. All the case companies' summaries may have some differences in the structure even though the same questions, available in the appendix 1, have been asked from the all case study companies. The differences depend on the focused interviews in the study as well as the interviewees' answers. It is also important to notice that the companies' position in the Smart City field vary. In the end of this chapter there is a summary table of the different case studies and the chapter 6.2 presents the updated framework according to the case study findings. As mentioned in the chapter 5 all the interviews were conducted in Finnish. The citations in the case analyses are direct translations from the Finnish interviews.

Case company A

The company A (2020) says that it has seen and has been following many companies' internationalisation paths. The company A has business customers from start-ups to more mature companies. The company helps mostly foreign companies to enter the Finnish market working as an advisor to enable companies to grow and develop their business. It is working in three different sectors, Smart and Clean sector being one of them. This case study concentrates only on company's Smart City related sector, Smart and Clean, and the answers for the

interview questions were directly linked only to this sector. Addition to the company's own work it has a strong partner network, which also provides services for the customer companies. (Company A 2020)

The company A is well connected with the Smart City sector and has had already for a longer period of time a good observation post over Finnish and foreign companies' internationalisation path in the Smart City sector. The interviewee has seen that there are many different internationalisation ways:

“Some company may do internationalisation work for 10 years and enter slowly into different foreign markets, some companies may end up starting their internationalisation project at the right time with an interesting innovation, or an innovation having a global need, and they will get financing and are able to extend.” (Company A 2020)

The company A (2020) has also seen that in the Smart City field some start-ups are not investing into the national market but enter the global market right from the start, being born globals. On the other hand, the company A (2020) says that the size of the company often goes hand in hand with the internationalisation stage the company has.

As the enabling factors for the internationalisation the company A (2020) sees innovations, financing, resources and right channels and networks for the internationalisation work. While in the Smart City fields the companies are also operating in close relations with the cities and the other similar actors, the liability and trust that the company still exists in the future is important for the potential customers and in this the brand and brand building has an important role. (Company A 2020)

Both product and service innovations are typical for the sector. (Company A 2020) Following example given by the company A is an extreme internationalisation story in the Smart City sector and it shows, what can happen, if the innovation comes to the market at the right time and the certain need is seen:

“Some companies have started to expand into the Nordics and after getting a good financing round, they have been able to launch in ten different countries in one month, that has been amazing.” (Company A 2020)

As seen in the example the company A mentioned above the financing is an important issue and enables also use of more resources. Depending on the company size the company A says that the person in charge of the internationalisation actions is the CEO or some person, who has been designated for the internationalisation.

“Internationalisation of a company is a tuff work, while you have to sell yourself again and again to new people and you need to be active in the channels you have chosen.” (Company A 2020)

The company A sees that in the start-up companies, where the CEO is normally the person behind the internationalisation, the positive side is that he/she can make the decisions right away, but on the other hand she/he might also be kind of the “bottleneck” for the internationalisation. The internationalisation needs resources and it’s not something what you can easily do beside your normal work. (Company A 2020) The company A says that ideal situation for many companies have been that the CEO has a dedicated person by her/his side to coordinate the internationalisation. This way the CEO can be throwing the balls and the dedicated person catches them. The company A encapsulates the situation as follows:

*“Combination of liability and dignity aspects with the real Start-up spirit helps.”
(Company A 2020)*

In the Smart City sector, the right channels and different networks are important. (Company A 2020) The company A has its own partner networks and it is aware of many different networks in the Smart City field in the Helsinki area and has also been part of some of the networks. The company A says that for the start-ups and more mature companies, it is important to be actively part of the relevant channels

and networks, while in these networks and channels are the relevant persons to get to know with. The company A is one of these channels for its customers and it can show the customer the other relevant channels and networks in the Smart City field. For example, the networks are often quite small, niche networks. One examples of a network for New Mobility and Smart Mobility is the ITS (Intelligent Transport Systems) Finland network and for building the PropTech Finland. (Company A 2020)

“These channels are extremely useful, while in these channels our customers get acquainted with the network, not only the competitors, but also potential partners, understands how Finland works in this sector, get to know with the potential customers and gets contacts with the governmental side, while normally these parties are fixedly participating these networks.” (Company A 2020)

Quite often these networks are national, but different countries have their own similar networks, e.g. ITS Finland, ITS Norway, ITS etc. and the national networks work together with the other countries' national networks and may organise different co-operations together. For example, every year the different ITS networks will organise Europe wide conference. (Company A 2020)

When speaking about brand and branding the networks and channels has also an important role. (Company A 2020) The company A says that using money for large marketing campaigns is often useless, while quite often in the Smart City field it is possible to name the few potential customers and those customers can most probably be found through the relevant networks. For the brand building these contacts would be the most important way of creating the credibility for the brand:

“The brand is important, of course, and LinkedIn visibility, good visuality, that kind of convincing, needs to be in place. But I would value more, to be able to connect with these parties and get trustworthiness through that for the brand.” (Company A 2020)

“The brand needs to be reliable.” (Company A 2020)

“When speaking about Smart Cities, there are quite often cities or some other similar actors, to whom the trustworthiness of the company has surprisingly big importance and normally, if there are any purchases on behalf of the city, the governmental officer needs to have a feeling that this particular company will exist also after an year. When this is mirrored into the big picture, the brand rises to an unpredictable value. So, to say even though the branding is not done like ‘calling out in the marketplace’, such as in the consumer markets, the company needs to be able to invest in brand building adequately.” (Company A 2020)

For the Smart City actors there are many different kind of ways to make the brand building, addition to the above mentioned channels and networks there are certain own arenas in the social media such as closed LinkedIn communities, certain discussion forums for core groups, some special platforms for collaboration forums, which normally consists the whole value chain. One extremely important way is to ask to be committed as a speaker in the conferences and different events and attending different conferences and events and taken part of the conversation in these happenings. It is also important to show other people’s views in the own channels. Additionally, in the Smart City field there are often collaboration forums organised by cities or other entities, these are also good channels to be part of. (Company A 2020)

When talking related to the social media and webpages, the company A’s opinion was that LinkedIn would be the most important channel and Twitter in some extend. Instagram would be interesting as it shows the soft side but was not the top priority. Own website is also important, while a company without a website, seems fishy. (Company A 2020)

The company A also says that it is important to think that the brand name works in the different markets. If the name is something that the customers cannot even pronounce, it might ruin a good product or service. In its work company A has seen

that some companies in Finland have changed their brand and marketing before entering the international markets. The number of brands - only company brand or also some product or service sub brands, depends often from the company's offering. (Company A 2020) The company A said that some service companies have for example productised their services into different offerings to enable the customers to better understand the service offering.

Case Company B

The company B is innovation company, which is involved with several Smart City related innovation projects. The role of the company B in these projects is facilitating, being the professional, who helps the companies to develop, test and pilot their products and services in the real city environment and with the citizens. One project lasts normally round three years and many of these projects are international. The company B is strongly operating in the B2B sector, and the co-development is also involving cities, universities, research institutes and the citizens in the development. Funding from the EU has an important part in most of the projects. (Company B 2020)

The company B's brand internationalisation had started already straight in the beginning by its first CEO. The CEO was well networked visionary, who was directing towards internationalisation. He had excellent presentation skills and he was very actively traveling around the world attending different events as a speaker. Later the CEO left the company but continued working in the Smart City field and his legacy can still be seen in the organisation. (Company B 2020)

Today the company B has several professionals, who had been actively attending different events as speakers and participants, until the coronavirus pandemic changed their way of working. After the pandemic the company's professionals have been hosting and attending different kind of webinars and workshops. All the professionals are also actively joining the Smart City related conversation in the events and different other channels and providing blogs and articles for the

company's communication team to publish. The blogs and articles are normally related to the projects the professionals are involved with. (Company B 2020)

Before the pandemic the company B preferred presentations, speaker positions and personal networking over stands in the conferences. They didn't see that the benefits having a stand are as high as the costs of a stand is. Addition to the stand cost always comes the personnel costs as well as the time and money needed to book and build the stand. The company B is carefully thinking, the places and times having a stand. After conferences the company B had a systematic process to keep in contact with the people met in the conferences. (Company B 2020)

The company B has also been developing systematic communication strategy, which the communication teams executes and measures. All the professionals get communication training when they start in the company. The new communication strategy was built few years ago and it seems to be working well. The basis of the strategy was clear targets, actions chosen to reach the targets and systematic measuring. The company B does not have a brand strategy but is planning to have it in the future. At the moment the brand work is part of their communication and marketing strategy. (Company B 2020)

When speaking of the brand the company B says:

The brand is the image "what people are talking about you, when you are not in the room" (Company B 2020)

"The brand is built through the concrete actions and implementations." (Company B 2020)

The interviewee sees that:

"We want to be a good, interesting project partner to new project partners and to the financier a reliable project passer that delivers impressive results and actively communicates and communicates about them. As well as to the media, provide the media interesting content and then gain good reputation and visibility. These are the pieces that it is made up. The meaning of the brand

*is that it enables us to get project partners, financing, and good reputation.”
(Company B 2020)*

The main channels and networks for the company are different Smart City related networks, such as Eurocities, European Network of Living Labs, Nordic Network of Smart Cities, different seminars and conferences, and the company’s own communication channels. The professionals are providing a lot of content related to the different projects they are involved with and the communication team publishes this content in the company channels. The main own channels for the company are direct email newsletters and in the social media they use Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. For the social media the company has an own strategy. (Company B 2020)

“In the social media we have some desired target groups, in desired language. In the LinkedIn we are building the employer image. Twitter is probably the main channel for the international social media side, Finnish and English are our languages. For all the social media channels we are using, we have defined content missions, coming from the strategy, and we know exactly what each post is aiming for, what kind of audience it is for and what it wants to communicate to the public.” (Company B 2020)

The professionals are also encouraged to be active in the social media, especially in Twitter, which is company B’s main channel. The professionals have been advised, that always, when they want the company’s communication team to forward their tweet in the company’s own channels, they will tag the company’s name into the tweet. The company B says that at the moment they have many skilled social media users, who are followed by their project partners. This enables that the messages in the social media also spread out to the European collaboration levels. (Company B 2020)

The message is often to bring out the project, what the project has established and who have been involved within the project. (Company B 2020) The company B says that it is important to tell concrete establishments and the core of their

communication is always the content provided by the professionals. The one mission for the message is to state why the company is a good and reliable Smart City project partner and how the co-operation can be made with them, and the second to provide good reputation. In the project business the reputation is extremely important. (Company B 2020)

This year due to the coronavirus pandemic the company B has been hosting a lot of webinars and facilitating different workshops in the web format. The company said that after the pandemic began, they reacted quickly and started to learn new remote technologies to facilitate different workshops. From all the webinars and workshops the company is collecting feedbacks and analyses them carefully. (Company B 2020)

Even though the company had to quickly adapt into the new situation, it seems that the work has continued quite business as usual, while the company employees are used to using different technologies and agile working culture. The interviewee sees that some of the remote technical solution will stay and people will continue to work more remotely also after the pandemic. All traveling and personal contact cannot be stopped, while the personal contact has an essential role in the project work and finding the new project partners. (Company B 2020)

The company B has only a company brand, but some of the larger projects may have their own brand image and own channels such as social media accounts and websites. The projects are co-operation projects and the company B has given the projects quite free hands to operate. Depending on the project there are different project partners involved with in the marketing and communication and in some projects the partners are also mostly responsible for the marketing and communication decisions. These projects are often lasting few years and for this reason the company B wants to centralise most of the communication also related to these brands under its own brand "umbrella". The company B's brand is kept the same among different markets and the only variation is that they use both Finnish and English in their communication. (Company B 2020)

The company B is systematically measuring its communication and marketing work and selected KPIs are followed. The results are twice a year collected into an impact report and presented to the board. Among other regular measures such as the regular analysis of the feedbacks coming from the hosted events, the company is conducting yearly a stakeholder survey. From the survey the company B is e.g. following the net promoter's score (NPS). (Company B 2020)

Case Company C

The case company C is a design and consultation company. The company is international, and the Smart City is related with most of the company operations, while it can be said as an umbrella theme. The one interviewee describes the Smart City with the following words:

“Smart City is very cross-cutting, an umbrella theme. Almost all our activities are very strongly driven by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which are more than a dozen of these different themes. Smart City aims to respond to the urbanisation development in the world and in different countries and cities, which continues to be strong, and bring solutions there. Smart City, in my opinion, is everything that the future will bring to urban areas, activities, construction and planning. It can be then mobility or digitalisation and the opportunities it offers to provide and receive services. For measuring different sensors, what happens in the environment: air quality, water, temperatures, light, noise. There's a lot of potential from a Smart City perspective.” (Company C 2020)

The company C operates in the B2B market and has a long history of different services and is also offering variety of Smart City services. The Smart City professional services are part of company's offerings in the different business units and in the business unit related services. The company has an international brand and all the service related to Smart City are under the company brand. The company does not have a separate Smart City brand or offering. The company may have market specific offering in general, but that depends on the market characteristics

and demand. Mostly the Smart City related services are national, while the cities are national, but there are also some international elements. The company has offices in several different countries and the country specific marketing materials can be localised depending on the market. The brand in all the countries remains the same and they have only few sub brands depending on the market. For Smart City they don't have any sub brands. (Company C 2020)

The company C has been doing a lot of brand work. In their work they see that in the professional services field the traditional marketing such a newspaper marketing is not the ideal way for them, and they believe in "thought leadership". (Company C 2020)

The company says about their brand strategy that:

"Our brand and brand strategy are based on who we are, what we are, and which are our organisation's strategy and values." (Company C 2020)

In their brand work they have seen that the one important component in their brand is that they are professionals and that they want to show also in their marketing. The "thought leadership" is built through e.g. articles, presentations and research studies and the company encourages its personal for this. (Company C 2020)

The company has chosen few main themes on which they want to provide more information. Smart City is under one of those main themes and is has also been an important component for the brand building, while it is an interesting topic in the media and the company is a professional in that field. Important issues in the "thought leadership" is the ability to take part of the social conversation and to be able to show the own knowledge. (Company C 2020)

The professionals are showing the "thought leadership" in their work and the marketing and communication department is helping the professionals to publish the content the professional has made in the company's different channels. The company's different channels are company's webpages, and different social media channels and then the company is also organising different events and webinars.

The professional may also write in the channels outside the organisation. Addition to the company's own events and webinars the professionals are attending different events, seminars, and conferences as a participates or presenters. The company is also normally attending fairs and conferences and depending on the event they have there a stand or only a presentation. The company is also attending and organising student events to be able to find the future talents for the organisation. (Company C 2020)

The company has good resources in their work, while they have often local marketing and communication departments in the different countries and professionals providing the content for the company communication and for the different publications. The professional interviewee said that they see the resources from the marketing and communication department important in their job, while when they have created the content, the marketing and communication team will make the content fit in the different channels. The company professionals also attend actively in the different events as a participates and presenters. (Company C 2020)

As a part of the professional work the networks are often mentioned. When asked about the importance of the different networks for the company, the interviewee answered:

“Yes, it is really important. A) It is a very good way to monitor what is happening elsewhere, to be informed about what other companies are doing, which regulatory requirements are coming and in which direction legislation is developing. B) It often starts cooperation opportunities; two competing companies may cooperate and then develop things together. C) Then this networking is also a good way to get the company visible, in that way, meet a lot of customers, authorities at the industry seminars and get to publish blog posts and give speeches at various events.” (Company C 2020)

As for the brand, also for the professionals' work, the blog posts and speeches in the different event are important and it requires that the professional is constantly

awake related to new topics. The professionals also want to create conversation and they invite customers and other stakeholders in the events and webinars. Due to the coronavirus pandemic all the events are hosted as webinars and the interviewee sees that it is important to the company to host the webinars that the customers and other stakeholders can hear current topics and projects. In the professional service work the personal contacts are important and after the coronavirus pandemic it is important in the networking point of view that the events can be also hosted face to face. There is a difference if you meet the person face to face or via the internet. In the face to face contact the discussion are much deeper than in the internet. (Company C 2020)

Other channels used in the professional service field are mostly company's own communication channels and company's and professionals' own Twitter and LinkedIn accounts. (Company C 2020) The interviewee sees that those channels are good places to communicate shortly and give stimulus for the reader. The best way would be:

“A short, vigorous message from the current topic combined with the link, where more details can be *found*.” (Company C 2020)

Addition to the Twitter and LinkedIn, some larger development projects may also have some own private channels as well as the different networks. Quite often these networks are for Finnish cities, authorities and companies operating in Finland, while cities are national, but there are also some larger international projects. The drivers for the internationalisation in the Smart City field are related to the knowledge management and to share experience and competence. (Company C 2020)

The brand building is a long-lasting process and even if the company brand is built through the “thought leadership” it is important to remember that the professionals build the company brand. The professionals may change job, but the company needs to be able to build the brand systematically to be able to keep the good professional in the company and find the future talents. The company C is making

a systematic work also with the students and different schools to inspire pupils and students to study relevant studies and to find future talents. (Company C 2020)

The coronavirus pandemic has also changed company C's work and they as all the events were cancelled, they needed to think new, different ways to keep contact with the customers. The company was able to adapt the new situation rapidly and has made a large leap during the spring with the digital communication. They had already earlier organised some webinars but are quite certain that also after the pandemic they will keep organising more webinars than before the pandemic. The webinars are easier and more economical to organise than regular events and even though they cannot replace all regular face to face events and contacts, are they here to stay. (Company C 2020)

Case Company D

Case Company D is a research and development company, which is also providing B2B professional services. In the Smart City field, they have several services and one service package combining the services. The service package does not limit that the Smart City related services would not be able to buy also separately. In this case study the focus of the brand internationalisation is made for the brand internationalisation of this Smart City service package. The company itself has started its internationalisation steps already early on, but the internationalisation of this service package has started more recently. (Company D 2020)

As mentioned also this company had noticed that the Smart City field is wide and there are Smart City related services included in several business units' work. To be able to combine the Smart City related services and create a structured Smart City offering the company D decided to create a Smart City service package, which was united with one specific professional service offered in the Smart City related professional services related to all Smart Cities services the company offered. This specific professional service could be used in relation with all the different Smart City related services. (Company D 2020)

“The Smart City know-how has been scattered in the different teams and we have not been able to tell the customers and potential customers, that “so you know we have to know-how to do this and that as well.” As in response to this problem, such an approach was tried, that it would be compiled under one brand name, from there the core know-how that is communicated consistently and that message is always more or less the same, whether it is some conference appearances or customer meetings, our websites or social media or videos online. It seems to have helped and for me it is now easier to present in the company meetings compactly and consistently what we are actually proposing and offering.” (Company D 2020)

With this service package the company wanted to make the Smart City professional services offering more concrete to the customers and the whole organisation. This service package was given an own brand name, which was used internally, but in the communication and marketing outside the service package brand name would always be used together with the company’s brand. After the service package brand was built it was launched internally and externally. The idea of the brand was to crystalize the large variety of the service related to the Smart City field and to make it easy for the potential customers, customers, and co-workers to understand the offering and how it is linked together with the special professional service offered. The brand material was built that way that with the marketing materials the variety of the services could be seen. (Company D 2020)

“The brand, its purpose is to support the customer’s communication that we can effectively tell that we have this service and know-how that could help the customer. And it means, this marketing communication, which is precisely webinars, articles and blog posts and social media communication and conference presentations.” (Company D 2020)

“That we have a ready-made understanding of how this thing goes and the materials to support it, how we present it to the customers. And in that frame of reference, we will quickly get to the heart of the matter. Somehow like this it can be described.” (Company D 2020)

As the company itself was already internationalised, they had already international contacts. For this service package the internationalisation was started with few international conferences, co-operation with the local Finnish embassies and with a co-operation with the Business Finland. Also, the marketing material were made, and the different communication channels used. The internationalisation was started with few countries and the service offering was quite the same among the different countries. Some localisation may only be made with the example cases used in the materials. All in all, the marketing materials included several different case projects from different areas, that all the contacts could find something similar for them. More localisation and/or adaptation in the offering would then be made, if the discussion would continue, but that is also normal with the Smart City professional services in the national level as well. (Company D 2020)

“The marketing communications is tried to make universally competent, while the headaches of the city decision-makers around the world are similar, that the background is the complexity of things that are characteristic of all cities, and that it is a network of interactive things where everything affects everything and when the basic problem is the same, it speaks with such over-concepts and generally, so that message can be similar. Of course, we have taken into account in marketing that when presenting cases, case examples, so there are wide variety of different environments and milieus.” (Company D 2020)

As speaking of the international conferences, the company D decided that they would rather participate in few conferences having a larger presence than several with a smaller presence. In that way, they could save their own resources and focus on those seminars they are attending. Already earlier the company D had noticed that in conferences, they had an own stand they had gotten many contacts, but most of those contacts were not relevant for creating new projects for the company. With this new Smart City service package, they had decided to seek position as a Keynote Speaker in the conferences and invest in an interesting, well prepared presentation in the conference. The company D wants to try this new way to see if this would create more relevant contacts in the conferences. The co-operation with

the local embassies and Business Finland was seen functional for the company D. The embassies and Business Finland have wide networks in the world and with their help the company D has been able to get local support, local business contacts and meetings. The company D has also seen that the embassies and the Business Finland has been happy to be able to help them. (Company D 2020)

The company has already some international projects with the service package and they also have their own contacts in the different countries. Earlier the company D itself have had some subsidiaries or presentative but now with the Smart City professional service package the company D has noticed that to keep the international contacts or to execute international projects do not necessary need local offices. In today's networked world the contacts are normally kept with the phone or video calls and emails, which does not require an office in the same country and the business trips have been quite economical way also to meet the contacts and execute the projects. The coronavirus pandemic has also improved the use of different medias. (Company D 2020)

Other communication channels used in the internationalisation process are webinars, blogs, articles, company websites and different social media channels. Addition to the company's own social media channels the interviewee sees that the Twitter and LinkedIn are the most important channels for the professionals' own work. The company's marketing team has been actively taken part of this brand building and different other units have made tight co-operation and market research before the new brand / service package was launched. All in all, the company D has been using quite much resources inside and outside their organisation for the project addition to the marketing professionals, e.g. service designers. (Company D 2020)

During the coronavirus pandemic there has also been some virtual conferences related in the Smart City field and the company D has been participating these conferences. The pandemic has also created some opportunities for the Smart City side and the company has been able to adapt their marketing and their operations related to this. (Company D 2020)

Generally, in the Smart City field the company D sees that the most important contacts are the personal contact and those personal contacts are the key for the new projects. The most important ways to create the personal contacts are 1) own networks, 2) if you are introduced to someone, by a person the someone knows and 3) if you have a very interesting presentation and a person comes to talk to you related to this presentation. These three kinds of contacts are the ones, which normally can lead to a project. Even though the coronavirus pandemic has changed the world now, the company D sees that the personal contacts and conferences will return when the pandemic is over. And due to the pandemic, the personal contacts have also learned to use different medias and part of the new ways may stay after the pandemic is over. (Company D 2020)

The company D sees that the general marketing work, such as webinars, company websites, videos, social media, has an importance to create the general knowledge of the service package brand in a long run. The company D has also noticed the earlier mentioned difficulties in the city field, that the discussions are long and there are many different steps before decisions are made. This new service package brand has already help that the company has been able to get more interest in their offering and the discussions have started earlier and they have been able to focus on the main topic faster. It has also enabled the company's internal communication and understanding and the company personal to present their offering to the potential customers and customers. (Company D 2020)

Summary of the case studies

In the following table 7 presents the summary of the special characteristic of the case study companies related the theoretical framework presented in the chapter 4. In the summary table there are also gathered the patterns matching in the case study interviews and a separate appendix from the case analysis have not been included into the study.

Table 7. Case study summary

Company	Firm characteristics, global expansion and enabling factors	Product-market, environmental and enabling factors	Marketing channel and network relations	Branding strategy
A	-Resources are important for the internationalisation, recommends atleast one dedicated person -Innovations, financing, resources and right channels and networks for the internationalisation work	Home & target market B2B, innovative technologies	Co-operating and networking	Stage 1: Sees brand an important tool, speak for many companies Stage 2: - Stage 3: -
B	-CEO, his history and connections, was the starter of the internationalisation -clear and unified marketing and communication strategy	B2B, innovative technologies	Co-operating and networking	Stage 1: Core essence, presentations in the scientific and trade fairs, face to face contacts Stage 2: brand building, thought leadership, main company brand, also project brands, standardised Stage 3:push and pull, pattern seeking
C	-History of the company -Global international market expansion performance -Strong and unified company and brand vision, strategy to achieve this vision	B2B, innovative technologies	Co-operating and networking	Stage 1: Visual brand identity, core essence, presentations in the scientific and trade fairs, face to face contacts Stage 2:brand building, thought leadership, main company brand, standardised Stage 3: Smaller companies contacting the company for co-operation, push and pull, pattern seeking
D	-History of the company -Global international market expansion performance -Strong and unified company and brand vision, strategy to achieve this vision	B2B, innovative technologies	Co-operating and networking	Stage 1:Visual brand identity, core essence, presentations in the scientific and trade fairs, face to face contacts Stage 2:brand building, thought leadership, main company brand and a service brand, standardised Stage 3:push and pull, pattern seeking

The findings of these case studies will be analysed, and the research problem and questions answered in the following chapter 6.2 cross-case analysis.

6.2 Cross-case analysis

In the cross-case analysis the differences and similarities between the four different case studies will be analysed and the research problem and questions answered. Based on the findings of the cross-case analysis the theoretical framework will be tested if the framework could be used for professional services in the B2B professional services field or not.

The research problem of the study is;

What are the special characteristics of the brand internationalisation process of the professional services B2B brand?

In the four case studies presented in the chapter 6.1 the case companies disclosed their company's brands' internationalisation processes. All the case companies

were providing B2B professional services in the Smart City field. The following research questions will guide the cross-case analysis to understand the brand internationalisation process and to test the similarities and differences related to the theoretical framework. In the end of this chapter the research problem will be answered with the guidance of the research questions.

RQ1: How the B2B professional services brands have internationalised?

Three of the case companies B, C and D have an international brand and even though the company A is working in Finland its brand is well known among its international customers. The company A (2020) has also seen many professional services companies' internationalisation paths in the Smart City field and says that the brand building has an essential part in the internationalisation. In the Smart City sector, the companies are working with the cities and other different networks. With the liable and professional presence in these networks it is possible to start to build the company's brand (Company A 2020). A small company has many different options for the internationalisation path and as the company A (2020) says some companies may work several years and enter slowly into different markets and some companies may have at the right time the right innovation and the internationalisation goes rapidly or the companies may straight from the start be born globals. The company A (2020) sees that the enabling factors for the internationalisation are innovations, financing, resources and right networks and channels. In many cases the CEO is behind the internationalisation and if the CEO can get help with the internationalisation process, often some more resources are the key issue and the internationalisation will go more rapidly.

The company B (2020) has started its internationalisation straight from the start due to the firm's financial structure and the first CEO's own connections and character. The company has also been actively building their brand during the internationalisation path. The main brand message they want to give to different stakeholders are reliability, professionalism and efficiency and the main brand ambassadors are the professionals themselves. (Company B 2020) These same characteristics in the main brand message and the same main brand ambassador

were also found in the other three interviews, even though all the companies A-D were presenting different viewpoints of the B2B professional services providers in the Smart City sector. The company B (2020) has also a systematic marketing and communication plan and the company educates all the new employees for the communication.

The company C (2020) is already a global company and the company's internationalisation have been built during a longer period. The company had recently made a large new brand launch and in this research the brand building during the new brand launch will be discussed as well as how the company's Smart City professional sees the brand building in the daily work. In these four different case studies, addition to the companies having different viewpoints in the Smart City sector, also the interviewees had different viewpoints of the industry. This enabled the interviewer to see the Smart City sector with a wider perspective and showed that all the different viewpoints strengthened the view of the same aspects seen important to the Smart City professional services brand building and internationalisation.

For company C (2020) the Smart City products are part of their national offerings, but they share thoughts and best practices within the company between the different countries they operate related to the Smart City sector to be able to provide the best professional services for their customers. The company C (2020) has made a brand building plan and has several aspects how the professional services brand is built. In the centre of this brand building are the professionals and their know-how and the main idea behind the brand building is thought leadership. The company C (2020) is also encouraging the professional into research and writing white papers, while the company feels that the research has an important role in their company. The company C (2020) is also actively working with the schools and universities to be able to make the next generation interested in the professional services they are offering and to get the future talents to their professionals' team.

The company D (2020) was also already earlier internationalised, but the internationalisation of the specific Smart City professional services offering started

only few years ago. This study and the case study interview concentrated on the specific Smart City offering. For the new Smart City offering, was also made as a new product launch. Before the launch the new service brand was carefully planned with several stakeholders. The company D (2020) has been using much resources inside and outside their organisation for the brand building, addition to the marketing professionals, e.g. service designers and personnel from the other company units. Also marketing research was made. The newly branded service package was also first presented to the employees and one of the main ideas of the new service package was to unify the service offering related to Smart City related professional services.

For the service package the internationalisation was started with few international conferences, co-operation with the local Finnish embassies and co-operation with the Business Finland. In the conferences the company D (2020) decided to seek position as a Keynote Speaker and invest in an interesting, well prepared presentations. Already earlier the company D (2020) had noticed that in conferences, they had an own stand, they had gotten many contacts, but most of those contacts were not relevant for creating new projects for the company. The co-operation with the local embassies and Business Finland was seen functional for the company D (2020). The embassies and Business Finland have wide networks in the world and with their help the company D (2020) has been able to get local support, local business contacts and meetings. The company has already some international projects with the service package and they also have their own contacts in the different countries. Earlier the company D (2020) has had some subsidiaries or presentative but now with the Smart City professional service package the company D (2020) has noticed that to keep the international contacts or to execute international projects do not necessary need local offices.

Other communication channels used in the brand internationalisation process are webinars, blogs, articles, company websites and different social media channels. Of course, the coronavirus pandemic has changed the way of working and now all the meetings are online meetings and events and conferences webinars. (companies B, C and D 2020) The company D (2020) was waiting, as the other companies as

well, that the situation will change and there could be return to the personal meetings and conferences. The company D as well as the companies A, B and C forecasted that after the pandemic some of the meetings will continue to stay virtual, but the importance of the personal meeting will not change in the Smart City field. Also, the social media is important part of the brand building. Addition to the company's own social media channels the interviewee sees that the Twitter and LinkedIn are the most important channels for the professionals' own work.

To summarise there have been similarities and differences in the case study companies' internationalisation paths. The main differences between the companies are seen in the size of the company and the resources the company has or is able to use. The main idea of the brand internationalisation path has been the same for all the companies – the core essence of the brand is the expertise and liability. The knowhow of the professionals and in the smaller companies the CEOs have an important role in the internationalisation path. The channels used in the brand internationalisation have been presentations and participating in the professional conferences and networks and during the coronavirus pandemic the companies have rapidly been building new ways to connect through webinars and digital conferences. The personal meetings with the potential customers and customers and the professionals have been seen extremely important as well as the confidence building through white papers, articles, newsletters, and blog post. During the coronavirus pandemic this has also been rapidly changed into digital meetings. The professionals are also active in the social media and the main channels used there are LinkedIn and Twitter. All in all, the brand internationalisation consists of several pieces, which are together building the company's professional brand and creating the interest and trust for the company expertise, which is needed to be able to convince the different stakeholders in the Smart City field to start business with the company providing professional services.

RQ2: How are resources utilised to internationalise professional services B2B brand and how are networks developed when internationalising professional services B2B brand?

In the case studies the resources have been utilised for brand internationalisation in several ways. When working with the different companies the company A (2020) had noticed that, if the smaller companies were able to have another employee to help the CEO the internationalisation could be started easier. The company A (2020) saw that in the start-up companies, where the CEO is normally the person behind the internationalisation, the positive side is that he/she is able to make the decisions right away, but on the other hand she/he might also be kind of the “bottleneck” for the internationalisation. The company A (2020) stated that the internationalisation needs resources and it’s not something what you can easily do beside your normal work. The ideal situation for many companies has been that the CEO has a dedicated person by her/his side to coordinate the internationalisation. This way the CEO can be throwing the balls and the dedicated person catches them.

Also, in the company B (2020) the CEO was much involved in the brand internationalisation and the CEO was traveling a lot and attending different conferences and given professional presentations. The professionals are in the core of the Smart City B2B professional services brand internationalisation. In the literature review Mohr et al. (2010, 412, 416) highlighted the importance of the long-term relationships and customer experience. The professional services are also dependent on persons providing the services (Keller 2008, 15-17). In the company B (2020) the resources are also utilised in the marketing and communication department and the company has a clear communication and marketing strategy, which is also systematically discussed with the professionals providing the content for the communication and marketing. Addition to the content the professionals are the part of the different Smart City projects and networks and are attending and making presentations in the conferences and webinars. The professionals are also the customer contacts and are addition to providing content to the company’s channels active in their own social media accounts. The company B (2020) have a clear internal communication.

The company C (2020) has been using resources to design the new brand for already internationalised company. The brand has been carefully built and in the centre of the brand is also the expertise of the company's professionals. Addition to the communication and marketing department the professionals have their own role. The professionals are also encouraged and supported to write articles and do research. Also, the company C was first launching the brand internally and unifying the brand message. (Company C 2020)

When building the separate Smart City service offering the company D (2020) utilised many different resources. First the separate service package was built to be able to crystallise the Smart City related service offering. The second stage was to create a brand for the package. In this work the marketing department, personnel from the other company units and e.g. service designers were all involved in the process. Before the new brand was launched it was also internally presented. The company had also made strategies for the brand internationalisation and e.g. in the professional conferences the company had decided to rather concentrate to have a keynote speaks that use the resources to build a stand in the conference. Also, for the company D (2020) the professionals are in the centre of the brand internationalisation strategy.

The networks have an important role in the Smart City context. The professionals have been participating different conferences and networks to meet potential customers and customers and to get new contacts. There are certain main conferences, where most of the stakeholders are participating and then smaller conferences, events, and webinars for smaller public. The company A (2020) says that for the start-ups and more mature companies, it is important to be actively part of the relevant channels and networks, while in these networks and channels are the relevant persons to get to know with. The company A (2020) is one of these channels for its customers and it can show the customer the other relevant channels and networks in the Smart City field. For example, the networks are often quite small, niche networks. One examples of a network for New Mobility and Smart

Mobility is the ITS (Intelligent Transport Systems) Finland network and for building the PropTech Finland. (Company A 2020)

“These channels are extremely useful, while in these channels our customers get acquainted with the network, not only the competitors, but also potential partners, understands how Finland works in this sector, get to know with the potential customers and get contacts with the governmental side, while normally these parties are fixedly participating these networks.” (Company A 2020)

Quite often these networks are national, but different countries have their own similar networks, e.g. ITS Finland, ITS Norway, ITS etc. and the national networks work together with the other countries' national networks and may organise different co-operations together. For example, every year the different ITS networks will organise Europe wide conference. (Company A 2020)

EU is also funding the Smart City related projects and the networks are also often developed through these projects (Company B 2020). The company B (2020) has been carefully building their marketing and communication strategy and sees that clear professional message would reach all the networks. The company B is strongly operating in the B2B sector, and the co-development is also involving cities, universities, research institutes and the citizens. Company B's (2020) first CEO was well networked visionary, who was directing towards internationalisation. He had excellent presentation skills and he was very actively traveling around the world attending different events as a speaker. Today the company's professionals continue this work attending different events/webinars as speakers and participants. In the conferences and other events networking has been one of the most important issues for the professionals and almost straight after the coronavirus pandemic started the company started hosting workshops addition to the webinars. The company B (2020) sees that in the future all traveling and personal contact cannot be stopped, while the personal contact has an essential role in the project work and finding the new project partners. (Company B 2020)

The main channels and networks for the company B are different Smart City related networks, such as Eurocities, European Network of Living Labs, Nordic Network of Smart Cities, different seminars and conferences, and the company's own communication channels. The main own channels for the company B are direct email newsletters and in the social media they use Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. For the social media the company has an own strategy. The professionals are also encouraged to be active in the social media, especially in Twitter, which is company B's main channel and the professionals have had separate training related to the different channels and how to use them. (Company B 2020)

The company C (2020) sees that the issues related to the brand building are also essential part of the professionals' work - speeches in the different events and blog posts are important and it requires that the professional is constantly awake related to new topics. The company C (2020) highlights that the professionals also want to create conversation and generate thought leadership. Part of the professionals' work is to invite customers and other stakeholders to the different events and webinars. Due to the coronavirus pandemic all the events have now be hosted as webinars and the company C (2020) sees that it is important to the company to host the webinars that the customers and other stakeholders can hear current topics and projects. In the professional service work the personal contacts are important to build networks and after the coronavirus pandemic, it is important in the networking point of view that the events can be also hosted face to face. There is a difference to meet the person face to face or via internet. In the face to face contact the discussion is often much deeper. (Company C 2020)

The company C (2020) also states that addition to the above-mentioned channels to create networks, other channels used in the professional service field are mostly company's own communication channels and company's and professionals' own Twitter and LinkedIn accounts. Addition to the Twitter and LinkedIn, some larger development projects may also have some own private channels as well as the different networks. Quite often these networks are for Finnish cities, authorities and companies operating in Finland, while cities are national, but there are also some larger international projects. The drivers for the internationalisation in the Smart City

field are related to the knowledge management and to share experience and competence. (Company C 2020)

Generally, the company D (2020) also highlights the conferences and face to face meetings. In the conferences they had also defined that they see that for relevant networking it is more important to have keynote speaks in the conferences than build a stand. The company D (2020) also sees that the most important contacts are the personal contact and those personal contacts are the key for the new projects. According to the company D (2020) the most important ways to create the personal contacts are firstly own networks, secondly if you are introduced to someone, by a person the someone knows and thirdly if you have a very interesting presentation and a person comes to talk to you related to this presentation. These three kinds of contacts are the ones, which normally can lead to a project. Even though the coronavirus pandemic has changed the world now, the company D (2020) sees that the personal contacts and conferences will return when the pandemic is over. And due to the pandemic, the personal contacts have also learned to use different medias and part of the new ways may stay after the pandemic is over. (Company D 2020)

The company D (2020) sees that the general marketing work, such as webinars, company websites, videos, social media, has an importance to create the general knowledge of the service package brand in a long run. As for the professionals' own use the company D (2020) agrees with the other case study companies that the Twitter and LinkedIn are the most important channels for the professionals' own work. The company D (2020) has also noticed that in the city field, the discussions are long and there are many different steps before the decisions are made. They have also noticed that the new Smart City service package brand has already help that the company has been able to get more interest in their offering and the discussions have started earlier and they have been able to focus on the main topic faster. It has also enabled the company's internal communication and understanding and the company personal to present their offering to the potential customers and customers. (Company D 2020)

Outlining the case studies and how the resources have been utilised and networks developed in them. The resources are enabling more detailed planning and brand internationalisation strategies. The professionals creating thought leadership are in the centre of the brand internationalisation and the unified internal communication guidelines and trainings as well as different marketing and communication channels are supporting the unified brand message and the brand internationalisation.

When considering the networks development, it is important to remember that the Smart City field consists many stakeholders such as cities, authorities and companies operating in that country. To develop networks, it needs consistent work and general knowledge of the company generated with marketing communication. The networks are often built in conferences and specific networks. The most important way to develop networks were personal contact. The liability and trust are important factors for the cities and authorities and that the potential customers can be sure that the company still exists in the future. In this the brand and brand building have an important role as well as the marketing communication and the personal meeting in different networks.

The case study shows that in the conferences it is wiser and better use of resources to try to have a presentation in the conference than build a stand. The companies have noticed that after the presentation there have been more valuable new contacts than with the stand. The stand also requires more time, is more expensive and is employee intensive. The case studies also show that clear internal communication and structured company message is time saving and enables the unified brand message.

During the coronavirus pandemic in spring 2020 the case study companies were able rapidly to change their way of working and create new virtual concept replacing the personal meetings, conferences, and different network events. Even though the digital communication is an important part of the network developing the case study companies believe that all traveling and personal contact will not stop, while the personal contact has an essential role in the project work and finding the new project partners.

RQ3: What is the degree of the brands' standardisations on the different markets?

In the literature review the Gabrielsson (2005) pointed the degree of standardisations as part of the branding strategy. In the case studies the brands were mainly kept the same across different regions and countries. The main adaptation between the different markets seemed to be changes in the marketing languages. One company had made some adaptation in the case examples in the marketing material and was in the service concept launch operating with some co-operation partners (Finnish embassies, Business Finland) in the new markets and these co-operating partners had the knowledge and some networks already from the market. For one of the companies the Smart City related offering was part of the other offerings and the selections of the services provided in different market differed from the market specific reasons.

The company A (2020) pointed out that what they have seen with the different companies during the internationalisation is that a new company it is important that the brand name is easy to pronounce and use in the different countries. The name itself does not need to be understandable in the different countries, its only that the brand name is easy to remember and pronounce. The company A (2020) also said that most of the companies they have seen have only had one brand name they had used in the different countries and not much localisation was made addition to turning the websites into English, if they were in some other language.

The company B (2020) has the same communication and marketing strategy in the different markets, but in the different project brands there might be different co-operation partners managing the communication and marketing. The projects last approximately up to three years and for this reason the company B (2020) wants to keep the main communication under its own brand and the projects are also linked into the main brand. This way the company B (2020) can build its own brand even though there are many different projects and many different operators within one project. The company B's (2020) communication and marketing department operates in Finland and from Finland and the professionals have been traveling

when they have been attending professional conferences or meeting foreign business partners. The potential localisations for the different project brands have been done within the different project partners. For the company B (2020) the brand has been standardised and the only changes between markets have been language.

As a global company the company C (2020) has separate communication and marketing teams in different countries. With the new brand launch the company C (2020) decided that it wants to keep the brand the same across the different countries, but the product offerings may differ between the countries depending on the local demand. The local marketing and communication offices will make the same new brand changes in their own countries and in the country's own language. Some of the local sub brands will keep in their own name and in some cases with the sub brand name the group's name and new brand is only added below the sub brand. (Company C 2020)

As speaking of the Smart City offering, which is part of the country specific offering for the company C (2020), the offering itself is local, while many of the professional services depend on the local regulations and standards. Depending on the professional services offered there might be coming changes between the countries, while the company C (2020) makes co-operation within the different countries to share the best practices and at least in Finland small companies are offering the company C (2020) their Smart City related innovations. All in all, the cities will remain local and when offering services for the cities the decision-making processes vary between different areas and countries.

During the time the company D (2020) launched their new service package the company brand was already internationalised. The company had a respected company brand and already international contacts. The company D (2020) created a new service package brand to enable to show easily their service offering under one brand name. As the company brand was strong the company decided to use the company brand with the new service package brand. Both the company brand and the service package brand were decided to keep the same between the different

markets, only some localisation would be made with the example cases used in the materials. Due to the nature of the Smart City sector more localisation and/or adaptation in the offering would then be made, if the discussion would continue, but that is also normal with the Smart City professional services in the national level as well. (Company D 2020) This means that in the Smart City field the cities and other stakeholders need to follow the local legislation and governance structure, which may set some precondition for the services provided.

When mirroring the case study answers to the literature review there are many similarities with the case study answers. In the literature review the study of Guenther et al. (2019, 99-100) stated that the shareholders recommend that the companies offering professional services should use the company's corporate brand. This was the case mainly in the companies A, B and C interviews. Only the company D had created an own service concept brand under the company's brand. On the other hand, Kotler et al. (2006, 90) argue that for B2B companies the potentially highest branding strategy would be a strong company brand with few product brands. This goes exactly in line with the company D's branding structure for their new service concept. Another well-known researcher Keller (2008, 618-619) states that services, B2B products using the corporate image, and the brands positioned mostly related to the COO, are in general often having similar marketing strategies in different markets. On the other hand, Keller (2008, 11-12) also highlights that when speaking of B2B branding there are many people and segments involved, which requires adaptation in marketing actions.

In the Gabrielsson's (2005) study the results of the study disclosed that for the B2B born global companies the branding strategies might have differed between different countries before the global presence, meaning that the B2B companies were developing their brand on the way and in the global presence the brand was mainly kept the same. (Gabrielsson 2005, 217-218) As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter in this study the case studied showed that the degree of the brands' standardisations was high for the B2B professional services. The companies trusted mainly the company brand and the brand image and brand message was kept the same between the markets. The main idea behind the brand was for all the

companies the expertise and as the brand ambassadors the professionals. The market entry was often made with the professionals and their knowhow with and the expertise was shared through conferences, participating different networks and by publishing reports, white papers, and blogs. In the Smart City field, the brand building with the technical know-how and personal contact with the potential/customers seemed to be extremely important.

When coming back to the research problem of the study:

What are the special characteristics of the brand internationalisation process of the professional services B2B brand?

As seen in the research questions 1, 2 and 3 the core essence of the brand internationalisation are expertise and liability and the special characteristics of the internationalisation process of the professional services B2B brand are creating the expertise and liability. The professionals are the main brand ambassadors and their expertise and communication skills have a great importance in the brand internationalisation. In the case studies the professionals were providing research, articles, blog post and attending the conferences and networks. The professional own and the company's social media and communication channels are part of the brand internationalisation. Unified and clearly communicated internal company wide guidelines will enable systematic and less resources requiring communication processes. Structured external communication and marketing also support the professionals work and the professional may concentrate on their work and provide more content for the communication and marketing.

The personal contact has been an important part of the brand internationalisation well as the long-term customer relationships. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the companies needed to rethink their way of working. All the case study companies were able to adapt the situations and start working virtually. All the case companies believe that the face to face contact will return but some of the new practices may remain. The figure 11 summarises the special characteristics.

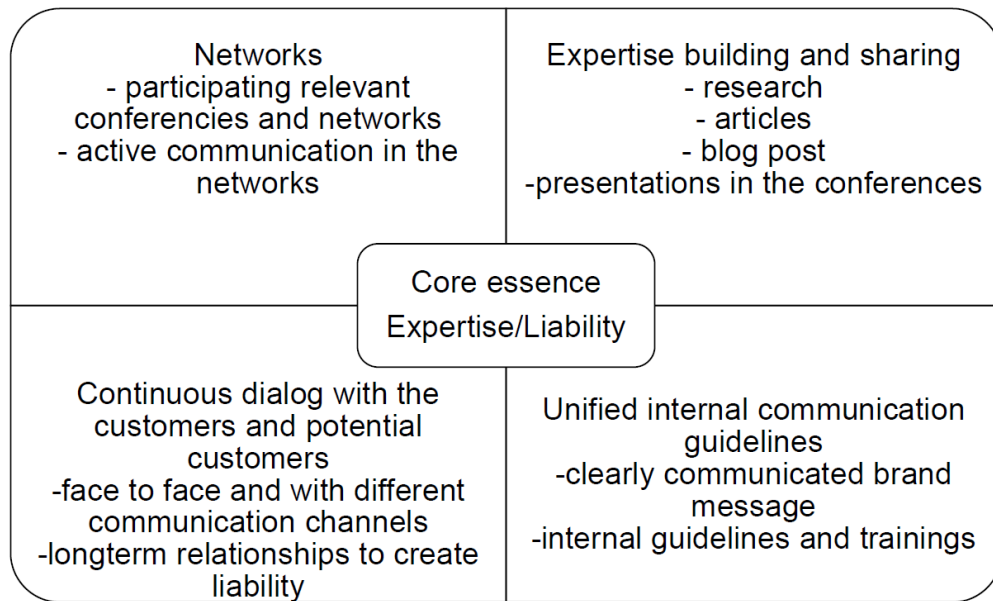


Figure 11. The special characteristics of the brand internationalisation process of the professional services B2B brand

Revising the theoretical framework

The results of the study will be adjusted in the theoretical framework. The aim of this study was to see if the theoretical framework of the brand internationalisation built according to the earlier theories would also work for the professional services in the Smart City field. This study shows many similarities between the case studies and the theoretical framework. This confirms the that the theoretical framework done according to the two brand internationalisation theories made for born globals (Altshuler et al. 2010 and Gabrielsson 2005) has similarities in the professional services field in the Smart City context. The figure 12 presents the adjusted theoretical framework.

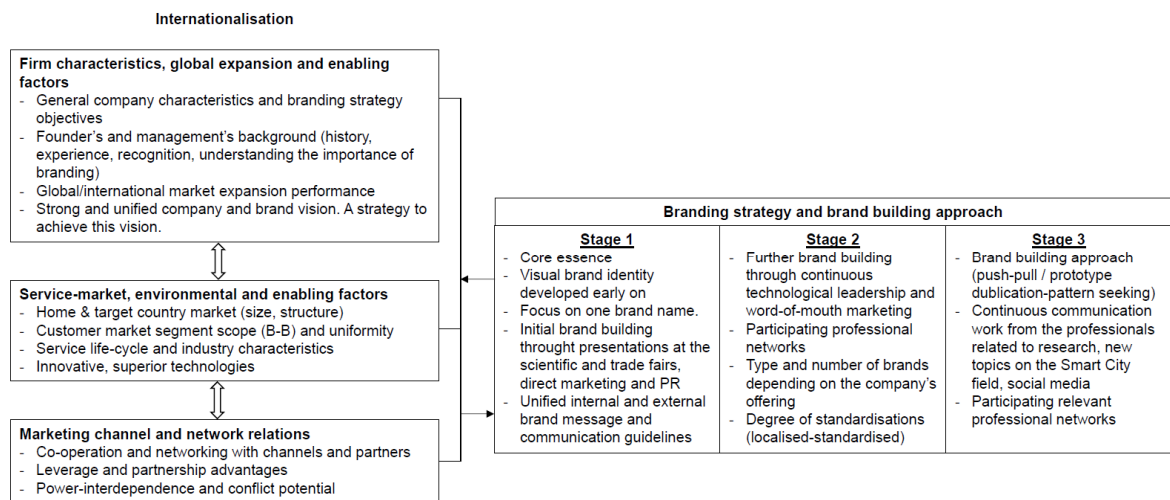


Figure 12. The adjusted professional services B2B framework according to the empirical study

The study shows that the theoretical framework could also be used in the B2B professional services field. The main changes in the revised framework were that some detailed information of the branding strategy and brand building approach were added into the framework.

The added parts were at the first stage of the branding strategy and brand building approach “*unified internal and external brand message and communication guidelines*”, at the second stage “*participating in professional networks*” and adding “*depending on the company's offering*”, when considering the type and number of brands. From the third stage the “*building a consumer ingredient brand*” (Altshuler et al. 2010) was deleted, while this framework was made for B2B professional services. In the stage 3 were added “*continuous communication work from the professionals related to research, new topics on the Smart City field, social media*” and again “*participating relevant professional networks*”. Addition to those changes from the Internationalisation part the product-market was replaced with service market and product life-cycle with service life-cycle.

This adjusted framework summarises the aspects, which would be important to consider, when starting a brand internationalisation process in the professional services B2B field.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to understand the concreteness behind the brand and branding and how is branding done and what is the difference in branding products and services or B2C and B2B markets as well as what is brand's and branding's role in the internationalisation process. The literature review conducted showed certain research gaps and it seemed obvious that the brand internationalisation with the services have been less researched. The study was made as qualitative descriptive multiple case study using both deductive and inductive approaches to test the existing theories to build understanding of the phenomenon and build a new theory. The interviews were conducted during the coronavirus pandemic and the change of the market environment due to the pandemic was also analysed.

7.1 Theoretical contributions and implications

In this study the main theories of branding and internationalisation have been analysed and two separate brand international studies Gabrielsson (2005) and Altshuler et al. (2010) were chosen. These brand internationalisation theories combined many basic theories, supplemented each other and were concentrating on born global companies. Even though the born globals can be offering both products and services the earlier study examples seem to be more concentrating on the products and for this reason a combination of these two studies was a good starting point for this study. The Gabrielsson's (2005) study evaluates more the branding strategy as the Altshuler et al.'s (2010) study explores more the brand building process.

According to the study's deductive approach the study has been evaluating if the theoretical framework built according to the two earlier studies for the born globals could be also used in the B2B professional services brand internationalisation. The study was made as multiple case study to increase the validity of the study. The multiple case study showed that the theoretical framework could be also used in the brand internationalisation for B2B professional services. In the theoretical framework built by Gabrielsson (2005) and the study of Altshuler et al. (2010) were

gathered several aspects related to brand internationalisation from the earlier literature. The empirical study confirmed that the existing framework could be used for the B2B professional services companies with small adjustments. The internationalisation part and the branding strategy and brand building approach were mainly following the framework.

As part of the study's inductive approach the framework was adjusted, and new theory built. The main adjustments into this study's theoretical framework were "*unified internal and external brand message and communication guidelines*", "*participating in professional networks*" and "*continuous communication work from the professionals related to research, new topics on the Smart City field, social media*". These special characteristics were found essential for B2B professional services brand internationalisation in the empirical study. From the characteristics the unified guidelines are disclosed also by Leek and Christodoulides (2012) and Webster, Jr. et al. (2004) in the B2B branding studies and the importance of the networks can be found in several studies such as Johanson et al. (1988) and also in Gabrielsson's study (2005). Due to the importance of the special networks in the professional services brand internationalisation, the researcher wanted to add and highlight the "*participating in professional networks*" also under the "*Branding strategy and brand building approach*" of the adjusted framework. Earlier the networks were only mentioned in the more internationalisation focus part of the framework.

The "*continuous communication work from the professionals related to research, new topics on the Smart City field, social media*" were added into the stage three in the "*Branding strategy and brand building approach*", while as seen in the empirical study the brand building is an ongoing process. The communication is also part of basic the brand building tools (Kotler et al. 2006, 110-122) and is part of the service experience when fully integrated (Keller 2008, 652-655). Regarding to the social media it is also good to remember that the studies from Gabrielsson (2005) and Altshuler (2010) have been conducted during the time, when social media was not yet in use as it is today and for the adjusted framework it is important to add social media, while it was clearly seen in the empirical study that it is one of the key medias

in today's world, also for networking. Also, in the new framework built the product-market and product life-cycle were changed into Service-market and service life-cycle due to service orientation of the framework.

As speaking of the special characteristics of the brand internationalisation for the B2B professional services in the Smart City context the study highlighted that the core essence for the brand internationalisation of the B2B professional service company in the Smart City sector are liability and expertise. The core essence was also mentioned for one of the brand building approaches in the Gabrielsson study (2005) and one of the guidelines for B2B branding is according to Webster, Jr. et al. (2004, 398) to "build the corporate brand around brand intangibles such as expertise, trustworthiness, easy of doing business and likeability".

In the empirical study the brand building and brand internationalisation is made through thought leadership consisting the professional expertise and communication and marketing in the different channels related to the content provided by the professionals. As seen in the Keller's (2008, 60) CBBE pyramid the brand judgement is based on the customers' opinions and the feeling the customer has with the brand, and as Keller (2008, 15-17) also states the professional services are dependent on the professionals. In the communication and marketing the content provided by the professionals are also used in the company's different channels and modified into the right form. The unified internal and external brand message and communication guidelines was seen important in the study. Kotler at al. (2016, 146-147) also say that persistent designing and implementation of marketing programs and strategies are needed to create brand value. Also, Webster, Jr. et al. (2004, 398) advises to use multiple medias in the brand communication and educating the organisation.

In this empirical study is seen that for the thought leadership building important parts are international conferences and personal contacts. Also, the professional experience of the founder, CEO, and/or the professionals have a great significance in the brand internationalisation. They are the best brand ambassadors in the international scenes and are the ones making the presentations in the conferences,

creating the customer contacts, and being involved with providing the content for the other marketing activities. The importance of conferences and direct marketing was also seen in the Altchuler et al.'s (2010, 218) study related to born global companies as well as in the Gabrielsson's (2005) study the importance of the founders' and managements' background. This empirical study shows that these could be generalised also for the B2B professional services.

This study also highlights the importance of the personal meeting with the Smart City environment. The interviewees saw that the personal contacts and meetings were the best way to continue the discussion related to projects and while in the Smart City environment the decision-making process is long the trust and liability have a great importance. In the earlier theories this is also seen (Hampf et al. 2021, 15), when building brand equity and loyalty. Also, Mohr et al. (2010, 412, 416) have seen the importance of the long-term relationships and customer experience. In the study was also seen that the coronavirus pandemic have changed the working environment and even though the professionals see that the importance of the personal meeting still exists and will become back in the future, they also believe that the virtual meetings will also remain and will be also used in the future as part of the personal physical meetings.

In the study was also analysed the degree of the brands' standardisations on the different markets. In the earlier studies Guenther et al. (2019, 99-100) says that the shareholders recommend professional services companies to use company's corporate brand. This was seen in the empirical part in the company interviews with companies A, B and C. The company D had a sub brand for the service concept under the company's brand. According to Kotler et al. (2006, 90) the potentially highest branding strategy for the B2B companies would be a strong company brand with few product brands. This is in line with the company D's branding structure. Keller (2008, 618-619) points out that B2B products using the corporate image, services, and the brands positioned mostly related to the COO, are in general often having similar marketing strategies in different markets and continues (Keller 2008, 11-12) that when speaking of B2B branding there are many segments people and involved, which requires adaptation in marketing actions. The Gabrielsson's (2005,

217-218) study disclosed that for the B2B born global companies the branding strategies might have had some differences between different countries before the global presence. The empirical study showed a high brand standardisation for the B2B professional services. The companies were mainly trusting the company brand and the brand message and brand image was kept the same between the markets. For all the companies the main idea behind the brand was the expertise and the professionals the brand ambassadors. The market entry was mostly made with the professionals and the expertise was shown in the through conferences, participating different networks and by publishing reports, white papers, and blogs – through the thought leadership as highlighted also earlier in this chapter.

The brand's role in the brand internationalisation is to give the company a competitive advantage. The Guenther et al. (2019, 88) stated in their study that the branding seems to be more important for the professional services companies than for the other B2B companies. This is also seen in this study. Guenther et al. (2019, 88) also highlight that it is recommendable for the B2B professional services companies to use the company's corporate brand. In this study is also seen that the use of the company's corporate brand is has been a recommended way for the B2B professional services, but due to the complexity of the Smart City related professional services the separate sub brands has also been working and creating value for the companies.

7.2 Managerial implications

One reason for this study was the researcher's own interest in the Smart Cities and circular economy in general. The researcher wishes that this research would help companies to understand the special characteristics of the brand internationalisation process. In this study the brand internationalisation has been looked on the point of view of the B2B profession services in the Smart City field.

The first and most important managerial implication from this study are the special characteristics of the B2B professional services' brand internationalisation. For the professional services the expertise and liability are in the core of the brand

internationalisation and the brand internationalisation strategy should be structured in a way to support the continuous expertise and trust building. According to the study, the main aspect in the brand internationalisation strategy would be active participating and communication in the relevant networks, continuous dialog with the customers and potential customer, expertise building and sharing and unified internal communication guidelines. Many of these same issues can be found from the earlier theories e.g. from the Webster, Jr. et al.'s (2004, 398) guidelines are highlighted the corporate brand building through expertise and trustworthiness, multiple media used in the brand communication and educating the employees.

In the Smart City field, the relevant networks are often small and by being part of the networks it is easier to find different co-operation partners and customers. For many of the stakeholders the trustworthiness and professionalism are the key issues for service providers. Addition to the relevant conferences and fairs are often places to build brand awareness and brand image with presentations. Interesting presentations were also seen as a good way to build the professional brand and meet relevant potential customers.

When talking about the resources it was clearly visible in the study that in the smaller companies, in which the CEO is in charge of the brand internationalisation, it would be more efficient to hire a separate person to co-operate with the CEO. On that way the CEO's know-how and drive could be combined with a person, who would have time to put into practise the CEO's plans and visions. On the other hand, the study showed that it is important to evaluate and measure the impact of the actions and be able to change the practises, when needed.

Related to the resources another valuable lesson from the resources was the systematic marketing efforts and communication. In the case studies it was easy to see that a systematic processes and clear guidelines enabled the marketing and communication to systematically deliver the same brand message not depending on the brand ambassador. Both Leek et al. (2012) and Webster, Jr. et al. (2004) also note that employees will deliver the same brand message if the company has clear internal brand message. The empirical study also showed that with clear

instructions the professionals would also save time and be able to use that time more efficiently. The professionals could only provide the content in many cases and the marketing and communication team could proceed with the content via different media.

7.3 Limitations and directions for further research

In this study there are certain limitations and at the same time several directions for further research. As a first limitation of this study can be recognised that the study was made for a narrow context Smart City sector. Even though the narrow sector, the study was able to concentrate the different viewpoints of this sector, it also viewed only a sector where innovations and continuous development has a large role. When considering professional services there are many different sectors offering professional services.

On the other hand as a second limitation can be seen in the Smart City sector that even though the interviewee companies presented different angles of the professional services providers the other stakeholders of the Smart City sector such as cities, authorities or other companies operating in the Smart City sector were not interviewed.

As a third limitation of this study can be seen the interviews. The interviews are always subjective even though the researcher placed a special attention to the interviewing process and the interview answers were already from the second interview on repeating mostly the same message.

This study also gives many ideas for further studies. At first the other professional service companies, could be tested to see the differences between the professional services. Secondly how the COO's of the company reflects to the brand internationalisation for the Smart City companies. Thirdly the interesting topic would be to see how the coronavirus pandemic have now (after an year) changed the situation and if the pandemic have permanently change some ways of working or is the situation going back to the "normal" or what is the "new normal".

8 REFERENCES

- Aaker, J. (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, vol. 34(3), pp. 347-356.
- Altshuler, L. and Tarnovskaya, V. (2010) Branding capability of technology born globals. *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 18(3), p. 212-227.
- Autio, E. (2017). Strategic Entrepreneurial Internationalisation: A Normative Framework. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, vol. 11(3), pp. 211-227.
- Axelsson, K. and Granath, M. (2018) Stakeholders' stake and relation to smartness in smart city development: Insights from a Swedish city planning project. *Government Information Quarterly*, vol. 35(4), pp. 693-702.
- Cavusgil, S. and Knight, G. (2015). The born global firm: An entrepreneurial and capabilities perspective on early and rapid internationalisation. *Journal of International Business Studies*, vol. 46(1), pp. 3-16.
- Couto, M. and Ferreira (2017). Brand Management as an Internationalisation Strategy for SME: A Multiple Case Study. *Journal of Global Marketing*, vol. 30(3), pp. 192-206.
- Coviello, N. E., and McAuley, A. (1999). Internationalisation and the smaller firm: A review of contemporary empirical research. *Management International Review*, vol. 39(3), pp. 223-256.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. and Graebner, M. E. (2007) Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 50(1), pp. 25-32
- Gabrielsson, M. (2005) Branding Strategies of Born Globals. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, vol. 3, pp. 199–222.
- Grönroos, C. (2016) Internationalisation strategies for services: a retrospective. *The Journal of Services Marketing*, vol. 30(2), pp. 129-132.
- Guenther, M. and Guenther, P. (2019) The value of branding for B2B service firms – The shareholders' perspective. *Industrial Marketing Management*, vol. 78, pp. 88-101.
- Hampf, A. and Lindberg-Repo, K. (2011) Branding: The Past, Present, and Future: A Study of the Evolution and Future of Branding. Helsinki, Hanken School of Economics. [www document]. [accessed 11.3.2018]. Available https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/26578/556_978-952-232-134-3.pdf

- He, Y., Stojmenovic, I., Liu, Y., and Gu, Y. (2014). Editorial: Smart city. *International Journal of Distributed Sensor Networks*, vol. 2014 (Article ID 867593), pp. 1-2.
- Hollensen, S. (2011) *Global Marketing: A Decision-oriented Approach*. 5th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Hsieh, M. H. 2002. Identifying Brand Image Dimensionality and Measuring the Degree of Brand Globalization: A Cross-National Study. *Journal of International Marketing*, vol. 10(2), pp. 46-67.
- Johanson, J. and Mattsson, L-G. (1988) *Internationalisation in Industrial Systems - A Network Approach*. In: *Strategies in Global Competition*. New York: Croom-Helm.
- Johanson, J. and Vahlne, J. (1990) *The Mechanism of Internationalisation*. *International Marketing Review*, vol. 7(4) pp. 11-24.
- Keller, K. L. (2008) *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*. 3rd Ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Keller, K. L., Apéria, T. and Georgson, M. (2008) *Strategic Brand Management: A European Perspective*. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Limited.
- Kotler, P. and Keller, K. L. (2009) *A Framework for Marketing Management*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Kotler, P. and Keller, K. L. (2016) *A Framework for Marketing Management*. 6th Ed. Global Ed. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Kotler, P. and Pfoertsch, W. (2006) *B2B Brand Management*. Heidelberg: Springer Berlin.
- Knight, G. and Cavusgil, S. (2004) Innovation, organizational capabilities, and the born-global firm. *Journal of International Business Studies*, vol. 35(2), pp. 124-141.
- Lazaroiu, G. C. and Roscia, M. (2012) Definition methodology for the smart cities model. *Energy*, vol. 47, pp. 326-332.
- Leek, S. and Christodoulides, G. (2012) A framework of brand value in B2B markets: The contributing role of functional and emotional components. *Industrial Marketing Management*, vol. 41(1), pp. 106-114.
- Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994) *Qualitative data analysis : an expanded sourcebook*. 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks, California 91320: SAGE Publications, Inc.

- Mohanty, S. P., Choppali, U. and Kougiannos, E. (2016) Everything you wanted to know about smart cities: The Internet of things is the backbone. *IEEE Consumer Electronics Magazine*, vol. 5(3), pp. 60-70.
- Mohr, J., Sengupta, S., Slater, S. (2010) *Marketing of High-Technology Products and Innovations*. 3rd Ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson.
- Saarenketo, S. (2004) *Born Global Approach to Internationalisation of High Technology Small Firms - Antecedents and Management Challenges*. *New Technology-Based Firms in the New Millennium, Volume III*. Elsevier.
- Salmi, R. (2020) Maapallon uusiutuvat luonnonvarat kulutettiin loppuun tänään – korona siirsi ylikulutuspäivää kolmella viikolla eteenpäin. [www document]. [accessed 22.11.2020]. Available <https://www.ts.fi/uutiset/maailma/5042571/Maapallon+uusiutuvat+luonnonvarat+kulutettiin+loppuun+tanaan++korona+siirsi+ylikulutuspaivaa+kolmella+viikolla+eteenpain>
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2016) *Research methods for business students*. 7th ed. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education.
- Seyedghorban, Z., Matanda, M. J. and Laplaca, P. (2016) Advancing theory and knowledge in the business-to-business branding literature. *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 69(8), pp. 2664-2677.
- STT. (2020) Uusiutuvat luonnonvarat on käytetty loppuun tältä vuodelta – koronakriisi lykkäsi maailman ylikulutuspäivää. [www document]. [accessed 22.11.2020]. Available <https://www.sss.fi/2020/08/uusiutuvat-luonnonvarat-on-kaytetty-loppuun-talta-vuodelta-koronakriisi-lykkasi-maailman-ylikulutuspaivaa/>
- Taylor, K. (2019) Breaking into the Smart Cities Market. *Security Business*, vol. 12, pp. 30-32.
- Tekes. (2017) *Smart City Solutions from Finland*. [www document]. [accessed 8.4.2018]. Available https://www.businessfinland.fi/globalassets/julkaisut/Smart-City-Solutions-from-Finland.pdf?t_id=1B2M2Y8AsgTpgAmY7PhCfg%3d%3d&t_q=smart+city&t_tags=language%3aen%2csiteid%3a53b34a16-7ce7-4ab0-8c7e-f06c83547e28&t_ip=93.106.231.58&t_hit.id=Finpro_Web_Features_MediaData_GenericMediaData/_f21889ed-ecf8-4857-86b9-9e82de19910f&t_hit.pos=1
- Thorbjørnsen, H. and Supphellen, M. (2011) Determinants of core value behaviour in service brands. *Journal of Services Marketing*, vol. 25(1), pp. 68-76.
- Vahlne, J-E and Johanson, J. (2017) From internationalisation to evolution: The Uppsala model at 40 years. *Journal of International Business Studies*, vol. 48(9), pp. 1087-1102.

- Vaid, H. (2003) *Branding: brand strategy, design and implementation of corporate and product identity*. London: Cassell Illustrated.
- van Gelder, S. (2003) *Global brand strategy: unlocking brand potential across countries, cultures and markets*. London: Kogan Page.
- Webster, Jr, F. E. and Keller, K. L. (2004) A roadmap for branding in industrial markets. *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 11(5), pp. 388-402.
- Woo, H. (2014). Asian apparel brands' Internationalisation: The application of theories to the cases of Giordano and Uniqlo. *Fashion and Textiles*, vol. 1(1), pp. 1-14.
- Yigitcanlar, T., Kamruzzaman, Md., Buys, L., Ioppolo, G., Sabatini-Marques, J., Modeira da Costa, E. and Yun, Jh. J. (2018) Understanding 'smart cities': Intertwining development drivers with desired outcomes in a multidimensional framework. *Cities*, vol. 81, pp. 145-160.
- Yin, R. K. (2003) *Applications of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Yin, R. K. (2009) *Case study research : design and methods*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, California 91320: SAGE Inc.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questions for the focused interviews¹

Theme	Question	Reference
Background	1. Branch of business 2. Title/job of the interviewee 3. Company's internationalisation stage 4. Which services does the company offer, B2B/B2C?	
Internationalisation	5. Which were the reasons to begin with the internationalisation? Who or what was the trigger? 6. When did the company start internationalisation? 7. Which channels and networks were utilised in the internationalisation and how the networks were developed? 8. Which internationalisation actions the company has taken and how has the company internationalised? 9. What is company's / project's internationalisation strategy and what is brand's role in that strategy? 10. Which factors have had the most important role in the internationalisation?	Gabrielsson (2005), Altshuler et al (2010) Gabrielsson (2005) Gabrielsson (2005) Gabrielsson (2005) Gabrielsson (2005)
Brand/Branding	11. What was the brand building approach for international markets? What has been the brand strategy? 12. Has there been market specific changes in the brand? 13. Type and number of brands? 14. What was the objective of the brand strategy? 15. What has been the role/importance of the brand and brand building in the internationalisation? 16. What are the resources and channels used in brand building?	Altshuler et al (2010), Gabrielsson (2005) Gabrielsson (2005) Altshuler et al (2010), Gabrielsson (2005) Altshuler et al (2010), Gabrielsson (2005) Gabrielsson (2005) Altshuler et al (2010), Gabrielsson (2005)

¹ In the interviews these questions were in Finnish, as all the interviewees were Finns. Interview questions presented above are translated from the Finnish questions. As the interviews were conducted as focused interviews the questions between the interviews may have had some changes depending from the discussion.