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Master's Degree Programme in International Marketing Management (MIMM)

Master's thesis

**CREATING BRAND AWARENESS THROUGH AUTOMATED EMAIL NURTURING
CAMPAIGNS IN B2B CONTEXT**

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this qualitative study is to find out how marketing automation systems can be used in improving a company's brand recognition in a B2B customer environment. This study will particularly focus on whether or not automated email marketing can improve brand recognition. The frame of reference for this study is based around the research questions and split into theoretical and empirical parts.

The theoretical part introduces brand recognition as well as implementation of marketing automation tools. The empirical part tests and shows actual experiences of the use of marketing automation systems in improving brand recognition.

The results of the study indicate that marketing automation systems only improve brand recognition after customers are already somewhat familiar with the brand. Using marketing automation systems seems to be best suited for boosting sales and improving customer engagement in circumstances where the customer knows the brand and accepts their email marketing.

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Tämän kvalitatiivisen tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, miten markkinoinnin automaatiojärjestelmiä voidaan hyödyntää yrityksen bränditunnettuuden kasvattamisessa B2B asiakasympäristössä. Tutkimuksessa keskitytään erityisesti siihen, voiko automatisoitu sähköpostimarkkinointi tehostaa bränditunnettuuden lisäämistä. Tutkimuksen viitekehys on luotu tutkimuskysymysten pohjalta ja tutkimus jaettu teoreettiseen sekä empiiriseen osaan.

Työn teoreettinen osuus käsittelee bränditunnettuutta sekä markkinoinnin automaatioon käytettävien työkalujen käyttöönottoa. Tutkimuksen empiirinen osuus testaa ja tuo ilmi käytännön kokemuksia markkinoinnin automaatiojärjestelmän hyödyntämisestä bränditunnettuuden lisäämisessä.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että markkinoinnin automaatiojärjestelmät voivat tehostaa bränditunnettavuutta vasta, kun asiakas tuntee brändin jo kevyesti entuudestaan. Markkinoinnin automaatiojärjestelmien hyödyntäminen sopii mahdollisesti parhaiten tehostamaan myyntiä ja asiakaskokemusta tilanteessa, jossa asiakas tuntee brändin ja hyväksyy heidän sähköpostimarkkinointinsa.

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Great things in business are never done by one person.

*They're done by **a team** of great people.*

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Still, I would not be here without my **family**. Your support was invaluable.

17.10.2016 in Helsinki,

Laura Similä

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1 INTRODUCTION

This master's thesis aims to understand and learn if marketing automation tools could be utilized for creating brand awareness in business to business environments. More specifically, this thesis focuses on the automated email nurturing process and automated email marketing processes that could make brand awareness building more efficient. This thesis includes theory about brand awareness as well as academic research on the use of marketing automation tools. It is clear that a marketing automation tool itself could not create brand awareness for the company but could it, as a tool, intensify the results? This thesis includes an empirical part that consists of interviews, observations and a small case study. This study is conducted as a case study research based on a Finnish SME. This chapter will provide an introduction to the topic, background of the study, literature review, research problems, theoretical framework and the definitions of the key concepts. Also, the delimitations, research methodology and the structure of the thesis are presented at the end of this chapter.

1.1 Background of the research

Ongoing online conversation shows that plenty of marketers are infatuated about marketing automation, but only few actually know how it should be done. According to Sweezy (2014), many people in the marketing field actually tried to work with marketing automation, but do not have full understanding of how to do it correctly. The growth of digital marketing and increase of customer-centric marketing drives demand for personalized marketing automation solutions (DeBevois 2007) that could bring sales and marketing systems together effectively. The rapid growth of digital development allows increasingly better automation solutions (Klie 2014), and increased demand for process efficiency improvement calls for more efficient marketing (Ernst et al. 2010; Callah 2010; DeBevois 2007).

Marketing automation software systems are now more desirable than ever (Klie 2015; 2014). According to Klie (2015), latest reports released by Frost and Sullivan expect marketing automation sales to reach over 14 billion dollars by 2020. Marketers operate under the pressure of optimizing the returns of marketing investments, and the importance of marketing automation increases specifically (Klie 2014) represent huge growth rates year-over-year (Klie 2015).

Adamson et al. (2012) proved that customers use online information sources during the purchasing process and before even contacting a seller. The fact that B2B buyers also search information online to support their decision making process creates need for a new marketing paradigm; 'digital content marketing' (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015). Digital content marketing refers to creating, distributing and sharing relevant, compelling and timely content to engage customers at a significant stage of their purchasing process in order to encourage the decision to buy (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015; Holliman and Rowley 2014). According to Holliman and Rowley (2014), Pulizzi and Handley (2014) and Järvinen and Taiminen (2015), the key business objectives of B2B content marketing are creating brand awareness and engagement, increasing sales and lead generation, upselling and cross-selling. According to Sweezy (2014) content marketing could be described as a hot topic especially in the B2B marketing sector. Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) believe that the digital environment has popularized the term of content marketing. Unfortunately, academic research on digital content marketing as well as about marketing automation is still very insufficient. This study demonstrates how automated email marketing could be utilized when creating brand awareness among B2B customers. Since a shift to digital content marketing (e.g. behavioral targeting and content personalization) is one of the basic requirements when building marketing automation (Ernst et al. 2010; Callah 2010), this study will demonstrate how digital content marketing relates to marketing automation. Automated email marketing also gives great possibility to test both marketing automation and content marketing since email marketing could be used for multiple marketing purposes. Email marketing could be used, for example, as a part of inbound marketing, promoting and advertising, event-marketing and overall brand awareness creation.

Automated email marketing requires an IT tool that has an automation feature. Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) refer to marketing automation as an IT tool that brings together sales and marketing systems and enables companies to utilize customer data from their CRM systems. At the moment, all forms of marketing automation are attracting increasing attention (Ernst et al. 2010; Callah 2010), also in the B2B sector (Hubsot 2015; Järvinen and Taiminen 2015; Advertising Age 2014). However, Hubspot (2015) still states that many marketing automation investments fail. Previous literature explains the basic idea and requirements of marketing automation, but very little is known about how marketing automation processes should be applied in order to create brand awareness.

Since marketing automation is quickly becoming a significant part of a company's marketing strategy, it is strange that it still remains academically un-researched. Putkinen (2014)

claims that marketing automation as a technology and a tool does not clearly fall under any traditional research areas due to its cross-departmental nature. As a tool, marketing automation is part of both the selling process and the marketing process. According to him, the subject falls into an academic “no-man’s land” between marketing, management and information systems. Putkinen (2015) also admits that marketing automation technologies and tools are still quite new in many business areas, especially in Finland.

1.2 Research problem and the objectives of the research

The aim of this study is to find out how automated email marketing could be used when creating brand awareness among the B2B customers. The scientific goal of the study is to add knowledge about marketing automation, especially from a marketing perspective and more specifically from an automated email marketing perspective. Since previous research on marketing automation focuses more on sales funnels and sales, this study will focus on describing how to create brand awareness through marketing automation tools like automated email marketing. The managerial goal of the research is to help the case company build an automated email marketing process that creates brand awareness as well as overall customer engagement for them. More specifically this study will focus on the first steps of the customer funnel, e.g. creating brand awareness among the company’s B2B customers. The main research question of the study could be defined as:

How can automated email marketing be utilized to create brand awareness among B2B customers?

In order to reach these goals, the author will answer three sub-questions. These three sub-questions are formulated as follows:

- 1. How do marketing automation tools help create brand awareness?*
- 2. How to create brand awareness among B2B customers?*
- 3. How to create automated email marketing process that supports brand awareness building?*

1.3 Literature review

The literature of this thesis is divided into two parts: previous literature about marketing automation tools and brand awareness. According to Heimbach et al. (2015) the first

definition of marketing automation was made in 2001 by John D.C. Little and it referred to the automated marketing decision support on the Internet. Already at that time automated marketing promised higher returns on marketing investments and increased customer engagement through personalization of marketing activities (Bucklin et al. 1998). Today, marketing automation could be seen as a tool for understanding and utilizing customers' digital body language and purchasing behavior (Klie 2014). Previous literature also shows that personalization is still one of the key elements of successful marketing automation (Heimbach et al. 2015). Marketing automation platforms enable marketers to easily segment and deliver targeted content to a diverse customer base. It also seems that marketing automation is traditionally used mostly in B2B organizations (Klie 2014).

Existing knowledge about marketing automation is quite lacking and mostly based on informal online articles or research reports produced by commercial research institutions (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015). The academic research of the subject has attracted limited attention, probably due to the recent nature of the subject. Even though marketing automation could be listed as one of the hottest terms in B2B marketing, only a few B2B companies are using it (Advertising Age 2014).

Lately Heimbach et al. (2015) explained the previous history of marketing automation and also provided a general framework for marketing automation. In their study, Heimbach et al. (2015) also highlighted the importance of personalized marketing and utilizing CRM systems when using marketing automation. However, this study uses a definition by Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) that sees marketing automation as an IT tool that brings together sales and marketing systems and enables companies to utilize customer data from their CRM systems. It is important to note that automated email marketing is usually one part of these integrated marketing automation tools. Since this study examines how automated email marketing could be utilized to create brand awareness, the theory of marketing automation will focus more on the automated email marketing feature of marketing automation technology.

Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) examined how marketing automation could achieve business benefits when integrating content marketing with the B2B selling processes. The study proved that demand for the digital content that leads potential buyers to interact with the companies is growing. They also stated that digital content marketing is strongly connected with building an effective marketing automation process. The lack of academic research challenged previous studies of marketing automation, and Järvinen and Taiminen (2015)

also stated that even the overall relationship between digital marketing and B2B sales has attracted very limited attention in existing literature.

Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) proved that the previous academic research on the subject is very limited but necessary. According to their study it could be beneficial to examine how marketing automation mechanisms can be used to create and share content for the key objectives of content marketing. Those key objectives could be for example promoting brand awareness or engagement. Moreover, Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) focused tightly on sales oriented views of marketing automation, but this study will be more from a marketing perspective.

When talking about branding or brand equity, it should be understood that a brand is different from a product. Products are more likely to perform functions whereas brands offer emotions. Products could be very similar to each other but brands and branding is what differentiates different products. (Joseph 2015) According to Keller (2008) a brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design that is meant to identify and differentiate the brand's products or services from their competitors. However, a brand can be built to customers' preferences and that is how customers are able to remember and recognize information regarding a certain brand. (Keller 2008) Keller (1998, 70) describes a positive brand image as a strong, favorable and unique link that is created by marketers to associate the brand in memory. However, previous literature proves that research about brand awareness usually goes hand in hand with brand image research.

Customers gather information about brands and their products or services all the time from the outside world. (Keller 2008) That leads us to brand awareness. How to build a brand that is recognizable? How to create brand awareness and make sure that customers will recall your brand? According to existing literature like Keller (1998) and Aaker (1991), brand awareness is one source of brand equity. Keller (1998) and Aaker (1991) wrote about awareness as one key part of managing brand equity. Among other things, previous literature like Keller (1998, 67) investigated what causes brand equity to exist or how brand equity like brand awareness could be created. Aaker (1991, 13) states that brand equity means a "set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand". Those could be for example its name, brand image or symbol like a logo. In 1991 Aaker (17) stated that brand equity consists of brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and "other proprietary brand assets". However, those definitions have changed over time and already in 1998 Keller (46) wrote about brand awareness, not name awareness.

Other than the concept of marketing automation, branding as well as brand awareness theory has attracted a lot of academic interest. However, the ways of creating and understanding brand awareness have changed during academic history (Landa 2005). According to Keller (1993), brand awareness is also an element of brand knowledge. Gustafson and Chabot (2007) state that brand awareness is mostly connected to the consumer's memory. Established research like Keller (1998) and Aaker (1991) sees that brand awareness is one part of brand equity and includes two features; brand recognition and brand recall. In 2008 Keller stated "top of mind" as a third part of brand awareness. Nowadays academic literature broadly includes all three aspects to brand awareness; brand recognition, brand recall and top of mind.

This study examines how branding, and more specifically brand awareness, could be related to B2B digital marketing through marketing automation. Kotler & Pfoertsch (2006) investigated how B2B branding should be done and why it is important. According to them, brand management is always more important for companies in almost every industry. However, they also stated that the importance of branding and brand equity is oftentimes misunderstood in B2B marketing field.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework describes the theoretical perspectives of the study. This framework presents topic key concepts and the theoretical starting points of the research. The topic key concepts of this study are brand awareness and marketing automation technology. Since this study is implemented in B2B environment, it will be noticed in theoretical framework. More specifically theoretical framework show how brand awareness could be created in different stages of automated email marketing process. The ultimate outcome will show how marketing automation tools, more specifically automated email marketing, could be utilized when creating brand awareness for the case company. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framework of the study.

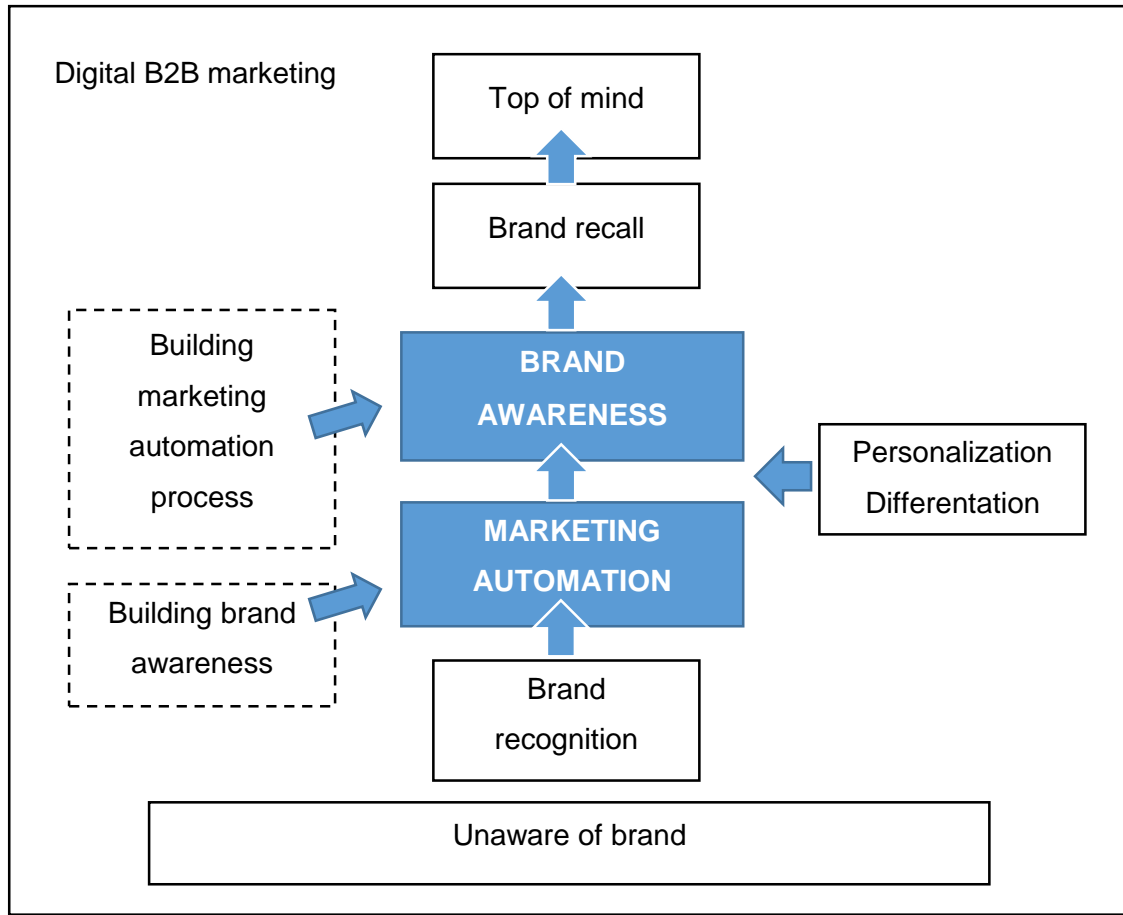


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of the Research

1.5 Delimitations

This study only covers medium to small sized Finnish companies that are using marketing automation tools for their B2B marketing. This study does not editorialize consumer customers. When talking about B2B marketing, we need to pay attention that sometimes B2B customers are in buyer's role but not the actual final user of the product of service.

Haig (2001) states that sometimes B2B marketers forget that the purpose of the marketing is not only to raise brand awareness or get short-term success. But even though the author admits that building long-term loyalty and engagement is one of the ultimate goals for B2B marketing, this study does not focus on long term brand engagement. This study focuses on the first steps of the customer sales funnel like creating brand awareness for the company.

One of the managerial needs for this research was to build a marketing automation process that creates overall customer engagement for the case company. In order to create

engagement, customers first need to recognize, be interested and maybe even decide to buy that certain product or service. For that reason, this study will focus on the first steps of the customers' path, e.g. creating brand awareness about the company among the company's B2B customers. This study covers the marketing automation process from the beginning of the process, when the company contacts a potential buyer. This study does not cover customer engagement that happens or does not happen after the customer actually uses the service many times. This study focuses on the digital marketing process that leads B2B buyers to buying decisions through the marketing automation tools.

Since the empirical part of this study focuses on automated digital email marketing through marketing automation, social media usage will not be covered completely. The main reason for this is that measuring for example Facebook's efficiency or power for B2B marketing could be difficult and multidimensional. The aim of this study is to learn how brand awareness could be created through marketing automation mechanisms. In order to reach this goal, brand awareness should be measured. This study also focuses on the automated email marketing feature of the marketing automation tools. As such, other features of the marketing automation tools will not be elaborated on completely.

However, social media channels like LinkedIn could be suitable for B2B marketers as well. Swezey (2014, 186) states that social media channels should be used for distributing content even though those channels do not create any content. Marketing automation could be utilized with social media, but this study only focuses on specific ways that combine social media channels and automated digital email marketing.

1.6 Definitions of the key concepts

This section defines the key concepts of the study. Most of the concept definitions are based on the existing academic literature that was introduced in the theoretical part of the study.

Brand awareness

Brand awareness includes three parts; brand recognition, brand recall and top of mind. Basically brand awareness means the familiarity of the brand through repeated impressions. The idea is that the more customers experience the brand in every way possible, the more likely the customers will remember and recognize the brand in the future. (Keller 2008) According to Keller (1993, 12) the third and most advanced part of brand

awareness, “top of mind” is when a customer strongly associates the brand with the product category in their memory.

Marketing automation

Previous literature proved that there are various definitions for marketing automation. This study uses the definition provided by Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) and it sees marketing automation as an IT tool that brings together sales and marketing systems and enables companies to utilize customer data from their CRM systems. Marketing automation is implemented through marketing automation software (MAS) that includes different kind of software platforms that are created and designed to automate marketing tasks. Examples of the most popular Marketing automation software worldwide could be listed as Hubspot, Marketo and Pardot (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015). The empirical part of this study will be executed with Microsoft Dynamics Marketing (MDM) software and more specifically it will focus on the email marketing automation tool. The bottom line is, marketing automation creates cross-channelled and fully tracked digital marketing that could be created from one single platform instead of different tools and channels (Sweezy 2014).

Automated email marketing

According to Haig (2001) email marketing is one way to create brand awareness among potential B2B customers. Email marketing enables companies to share and offer informative content about their products and services digitally via email. Email marketing is executed with email software that can send out electronic commercials (Jenkins 2009). Automated email marketing tools are usually part of the marketing automation software. It enables brands to create and deliver multiple email marketing messages at the same time. It saves time and resources, but the biggest benefit of the automation systems in email marketing is that marketers are able to measure and react to the results during the marketing process. For example, the automated email marketing process reacts automatically to the receiver's behavior and changes the content based on the receiver's digital behavior. This enables marketers to send more personal marketing messages to customers, since the messages are based on the customer's own behavior and needs. (Sweezy 2014 and Putkinen 2014)

Digital content marketing

Content marketing in a digital environment refers to creating, distributing and sharing relevant, compelling and timely content to engage customers at a significant stage of their purchasing process in order to encourage their to decision to buy (Holliman and Rowley 2014). Effective use of marketing automation requires use of digital content marketing (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015).

B2B buying behavior

Business-to-Business refers to business that is conducted between companies, not between company and consumers. Because of the digitalism, B2B buying is no longer dependant on the traditional ways of selling and marketing. Online marketplaces allow a wider spectrum of buyers, lower prices and make purchases quicker and more convenient to B2B buyers. (Haig 2001)

Personalization

According to Keller (2003, 230) companies could use personalized marketing to increase customer's desire to buy a certain brand. He states that marketers could use personalization through experiential marketing, one-to-one marketing and permission marketing.

1.7 Research methodology

This research will include both a theoretical and an empirical part. The theoretical part of the thesis is based on a review of the existing literature on brand awareness and use of marketing automation tools. However, as a tool, marketing automation is more likely the context of the thesis and not the actual part of the theory. Brand awareness theory is extensively studied from numerous decades and it is generally accepted to consist of brand recognition, brand recall and top of mind awareness. Academic research about the use of marketing automation systems is still quite minor and most of the literature is acquired from the last few years. This is why the author will also use secondary sources like articles as references.

Because of the nature of the research questions and theoretical framework, a qualitative research method is used. Qualitative research aims to understand and analyze words rather

than numbers (Patton, Cochran 2002). In a qualitative research, various research methods could be used, for example interviews, observation and the usage of the literature (Metsämuuronen 2005, 198; 222). As a bottom line, Gibbs (2007, 94) sees that qualitative research attempts to understand, describe and explain. However, since this study also aims to answer questions “how” and “what”, the case study approach is chosen. According to Robson (1993, 44) the case study approach has a considerable ability to provide answers to the questions “how” and “what”. This study also examines research questions by searching existing use of the marketing automation tools from the case company. Since this study also examines the case company’s practices for marketing automation use, this study utilizes a single-case research method. Single-case research methods focus on one single case and data acquisition methods could be for example surveys, interviews, observation and use of existing archive materials. (Järvinen & Järvinen 2004, 75) The aim of the case study part is to find out how marketing automation tools could help create brand awareness in practice.

The empirical part of the thesis is based on qualitative research. In this part, the author has interviewed several marketing automation specialists as well as case company representatives to understand the topic and answer the research questions. Altogether five interviewees from different Finnish SMEs were interviewed, four individuals from the case company Majoituspalvelu Forenom Oy and one marketing specialist from Zeeland Family Oy. The author also cited speeches and lessons about marketing automation usage implemented by marketing specialist. Interviews of this research were implemented in person using semi-structured interviews. All the qualitative data was collected with interviews and sightings that were executed during February and April in 2016. All the companies and individuals were selected because each of them were working with marketing automation software decisions, either inside of the company or as a consultant for the existing Finnish companies.

1.8 Structure of the research

This section presents the structure of the thesis. This thesis includes seven chapters and it is divided into theoretical and empirical parts.

The first chapter introduces the topic and gives introduction to the thesis. The first chapter includes background of the subject and the chosen topics. The author also clarifies why the topic is chosen and why it is important to research this particular topic. After that, the

research questions were presented and explained. The author also presents and defines the key concepts of the study and shows which limitations should be made conducting this thesis. Naturally the first chapter also includes the theoretical framework, research methodology and finally the structure of the research.

The second and third chapters of the study formulate the theoretical part of the study. The second chapter introduces brand awareness theory and it includes knowledge and theory to create and achieve brand awareness. The awareness pyramid as well as the value of brand awareness is opened. The second chapter of the thesis also includes aspects from the B2B and digital context of the study. Those chapters present how brand awareness building could be related to digital buying or B2B buying.

The third chapter of the thesis includes knowledge about marketing automation and its use. Most of the used articles are academic quality, but the chapter also includes articles and blogs about the topic. However, even though the research may be academic it could not be described as a theory. The third chapter introduces marketing automation and automated email marketing usage in a very detailed and concrete manner. It explains and opens the overall marketing automation process and then focuses on its automated email marketing feature. Finally, the chapter also opens the relation between marketing automation and digital content marketing in B2B context.

The fourth and fifth chapter contain the empirical part of this thesis. The fourth chapter introduces research and data collection methods. That section opens up how the needed data was gathered and why. The fourth chapter also introduces the case company Majoituspalvelu Forenom Oy and explains why the company and all the representatives were chosen for this thesis. In the end of the fourth chapter, the reliability and validity of the research will be discussed and analyzed.

The fifth chapter includes empirical analysis and the results of the research. The fifth chapter opens up results from the interviews, as well as observations from the small and practical case study. This chapter also introduces aspects from the marketing specialists and insights from the case company representatives.

The sixth chapter is the last actual chapter of this thesis and it includes conclusions and discussion. In this chapter, all the research questions are answered and the results of the study presented. The author compares and combines together the theoretical and empirical

part of the study. The final chapter of the thesis includes a summary of the findings and an analysis of the theoretical contribution of the study. In this final chapter the author also provides managerial notifications and recommendations for future research. Thus, the limitations of the research will be analyzed.

At the end of this thesis, chapter seven will present references of this thesis.

2 CREATING AND ACHIEVING BRAND AWARENESS

Previous literature shows that if a potential buyer knows a brand, the possibility to decide to buy is higher. Customers are more willing to buy a product or service that they know (Oliver 1980). Gustafson and Chabot (2007) state that a significant brand image means that the customers recognize the brand easily. According to them, brand image could be created for example by offering information, like showing the features of the product to the customers. There is actually a certain process to create brand awareness. According to Nathan (2011) the first phase is when a customer perceives that he or she needs the product or service. After understanding the need, the customer seeks the information and compares different kinds of solutions and brands. The customer evaluates the product or service both financially and personally, and if he or she decides to buy it, the customer reviews the product or service after a purchase.

According to Merisavo et al. (2006, 36) customer relationships could strengthen if the customer feels that he or she can get help with finding information, can ask questions about a service or product and is able to debate and give feedback. That is to say, the customer needs to feel that he or she is noticed and important. However, customers will not be satisfied with just information. According to Merisavo et al. (2006, 36) customers appreciate information that helps them with decision-making like personalized recommendations or differentiated search systems.

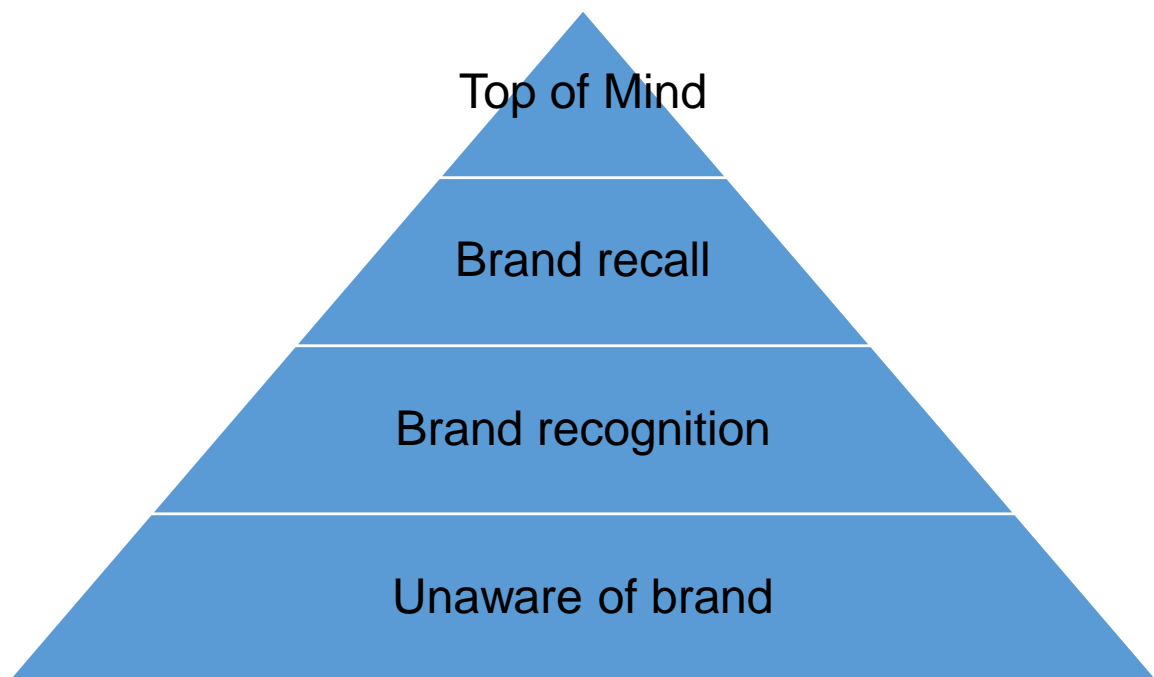
2.1 Brand awareness

According to Aaker (1996, 61) brand awareness reflects the possibility that customers recognize and recall a brand in multiple situations. The idea is that customers know where and how to get access to the brand's product or service (Malik et al. 2013, 168). As said earlier, established literature like Tuominen (1999) and Keller (2008) states that brand awareness consists of brand recognition, brand recall and top of mind. According to them, brand recognition reflects the ability of a customer to confirm prior exposure to the brand. Brand recall instead reflects to "customer's ability to retrieve the brand when the product category is already given and the needs fulfilled by the category" (Keller 1993, 3) or "customers' ability to correctly generate the brand from a memory" (Keller 1993, 12). Top of mind is when a customer strongly associates the brand with the product category in memory (Aaker 1991, 62).

More in-detail brand recognition refers to customers' "ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue" (Keller 1998, 67). It basically means that a customer is able to recognize if she or he has heard or seen the brand before. If a customer walks into shop, can she or he correctly distinguish the familiar brand? Since brand recognition is based on seeing or hearing something that is related to brand, it is more important than brand recall when shopping inside of the store. While products could be physically present, potential customers might recognize the familiar product easier than recall it from memory. (Keller 1998, 68)

According to Keller (1998, 67) the second part of brand awareness, brand recall, refers to customers' "ability to retrieve the brand from memory when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by category, or purchase or usage situation as a cue". And more simply "brand recall request customer to correctly generate the brand from memory when given a relevant cue" (Keller 1998, 68). The difference between recognizing and recalling the brand is that usually it is easier to recognize a brand but not necessarily recall it. The idea of the recall is not just recognizing the brand, but remember it when thinking about the context or for example the product category. Brand recall is significant especially for the services, since potential customers cannot see the service, but they need to recall it. (Keller 1998, 68)

Picture 1 perform Aaker's (1991, 62) brand awareness pyramid that consists of three different levels. The first and lowest level is brand recognition, which is the minimal level of brand awareness. It is generally said that brand recognition is significant when a potential customer chooses the brand in the purchasing moment, not before. The second level of brand awareness is brand recall that has a stronger brand position than brand recognition. The last one "Top of Mind" is a special position and also the highest level of brand awareness. It means that a specific brand is above and ahead of other brand options in the customer's mind. "Top of mind -awareness" means that the brand is "the first named brand" in an unaided recall test. (Aaker 1991, 62)



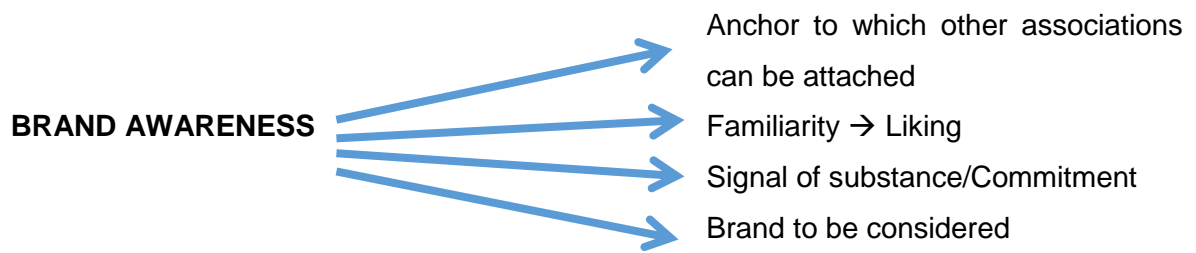
Picture 1. The Awareness Pyramid (Aaker 1991, 63).

2.1.1 Significance of brand awareness

Brand awareness could be divided into three levels and the ultimate goal is to be the first-named brand with top of mind awareness in your customer's mind. But how does brand awareness actually work to help the brand's success? Aaker (1991, 63) states that a dominant brand image creates a strong competitive advantage. According to him, a strong brand helps the brand to be chosen while no other brand will even be considered.

Keller (1998, 68) states that brand awareness is important for three specific reasons; learning advantages, consideration advantages and choice advantages. Aaker (1991, 63) instead sees that brand awareness increases value in at least four ways. Picture 2 shows, that the value of brand awareness creates value in four different ways;

1. Anchor to which other associations can be attached
2. Familiarity and liking
3. Signal of substance or commitment
4. Brand to be considered



Picture 2. The value of brand awareness (Aaker 1991, 63)

“Anchor to which other associations can be attached” refers to using an anchor as a metaphor. The idea is that the associations (like feelings or adjectives) are linked to the brand’s name via chains that link associations in memory. Those links between associations and the brand could be thick, sturdy or even weak. However, those chains could be strengthened with creating stronger brand awareness. (Aaker 1991, 64)

When it comes to a brand being familiar, people usually like familiar things. According to Aaker (1991, 64) brand recognition gives the brand a feeling of familiarity that could guide customers to buy. Keller (1998, 67) as well as Aaker (1991, 64) stated that especially with “low-involvement products” like paper towels or soap, familiarity could help customer’s buying decisions a lot. If a customer is not interested in comparing products with each other, the familiarity of the product’s name or layout could be enough. Aaker (1991, 65) proved that the recognition value contributes to a brand’s success and there is a positive relationship between liking and amount of exposure. He stated that previous recognition studies (Zajonc 1980) proved that “exposure repetition can affect liking even when the recognition level apparently is unaffected”.

The next value of brand awareness could be a signal of substance or commitment. According to Aaker (1991, 65) name awareness is a possibility to gain presence, commitment and substance. According to him, those features could help even B2B buyers’ decision making. Aaker (1991, 65) sees four logical reasons why name awareness or recognition could help buyer’s decision making;

1. If the name is recognized, the firm has advertised extensively.
2. If the name is recognized, the firm has been in the business for a long time.
3. If the name is recognized, the firm is widely distributed.
4. If the name is recognized, the brand is successful and other people use it as well.

Even though those reasons are not necessarily even true or based on facts, brand awareness could lead potential buyers to feel familiar and trusting about a brand. In contrast to this, if the brand is totally unknown, customers could feel suspicions about it. (Aaker 1991, 65) Aaker (1991, 67) also mentioned that brand awareness creates value in ways that makes a brand be considered. According to him, a brand could not be included in the "consideration set" if the buyer could not recall the brand. Generally, brand awareness is request for being considered as an option. However, it must be noted that buyers will also recall brands that they dislike. Another point of view is highly sales-oriented business, which could quickly increase brand awareness with sales meetings.

Aaker (1991, 69) reminds, that brand awareness also has its limitations. Even though brand awareness is an important brand asset, it does not create sales by itself. According to him, this challenge is present especially with new products, because customers are not familiar with the new products even though the brand would be well-known.

2.1.2 Building brand awareness

Aaker (1991, 72) thinks that creating brand awareness requires gaining a brand name identity and linking it to the product class. Especially new brands need to start achieving both recognition and recall from the bottom. Even when the brand is well-known, brand awareness needs to be maintained and improved. Natural building of brand awareness depends a lot on context, industry, company etc. but some guidelines could be set. Building brand awareness is mostly based on psychology and advertising studies.

In 1991 Aaker (72-76) suggested companies to focus on the following ideas;

1. Be different and memorable
2. Involve a slogan or jingle
3. Create symbol exposure
4. Create publicity
5. Do event sponsorships
6. Consider brand extensions
7. Use cues
8. Build recall with repetition
9. Use recall bonus

When creating brand awareness, marketing messages should be memorable and include a reason to be noticed. Many times this happens when the message is unusual and different from others. Too many times different brands in the same product or service category have very similar marketing communication approaches and that makes it harder to "break out of the clutter". (Aaker 1991, 72) However, a noticeable message is not enough. Marketing messages should link the brand and the product/service class together. One possibility to differentiate a brand is to create a slogan or jingle that makes people remember the brand more easily. According to Aaker (1991, 73) the link to the slogan should be built stronger than the link to the brand itself. A slogan or jingle could include characteristics that could be visualized and also easily recalled. However, slogans and jingles should be built with strong link to the brand and product class, for example the slogan could have the brands name in it. (Aaker 1991, 72-73)

According to Aaker (1991, 73) since visual images are much easier to recall and learn, they can play a significant role when creating brand awareness. He suggests companies to create symbol that is strongly linked to a brand and its product or service. He also states that publicity could be less expensive and still more effective than advertising. As everybody knows, people are usually more willing to read news than advertising. One effective but also very difficult way to create brand awareness is to create content that leads your company to the news. Aaker (1991, 75) also mentioned that event sponsorship could be one way to create or maintain brand awareness.

Aside from this, Aaker (1991, 75-76) suggests companies to consider brand extensions. In his opinion companies could strengthen brand recall and make their brand more salient by putting brand name on other products. The idea is to add the brand name to other additional products than advertising. Aaker also stated that companies could add "cues" to their awareness campaigns to remind customers about their product or service. Brand cues are usually used in packaging solutions and help customers remember or guess what is inside of the box. However, cues and symbols are not enough alone. Aaker also suggested companies to build recall with repetition and use of recall bonus. The idea is that because recall is more difficult than recognition, it requires continuous repetition. (Aaker 1991, 75-76)

2.2 Brand awareness in B2B buying

Kotler & Pfoertsch (2006) highlighted that B2B marketing is very different from B2C marketing. They said that the business world has generally seen branding more relevant for consumer markets and products. That is usually based on the fallacy that brand loyalty is a non-rational behavior and does not work with B2B buyers. When buying in the B2B world, the decision-making process should maybe be objective and trust only so-called hard facts like a products' price, functionality, benefits, features, service or quality. However, Kotler & Pfoertsch (2006) do not believe that even B2B buyers could turn themselves into unemotional or rational machines when buying at work. Kotler & Pfoertsch (2006) also proved that some of the world's strongest brands do exist in B2B markets and show examples of highly branded B2B companies like Microsoft, IBM, Intel, HP, Oracle and Siemens. They stated that branding is as important and relevant for B2B as it is for B2C.

Also Apunen & Parantainen (2011) states that buyer's decision making is not based only on rationality but also feelings. They actually argue that the limit of the human's conscious mind is only 45 bits per second in contrast to the subconscious that is able to handle 11 200 000 bits per second. Aaker (1991, 65) also stated that feelings like familiarity could affect a lot even in large purchasing decisions. According to him, especially situations where brand's products do not differ, brand awareness could have a strong role in decision making. According to Haig (2001) differentiation in B2B marketing is just as important as it is for B2C customers. Haig states that branding should be taken just as seriously in B2B business.

B2B buyers make buying decisions for living and many people would think that those decisions should be based only on facts and information. Despite this, Haig (2001) states that honesty is an important part of B2B marketing since buyers' trust is based on honesty. He states that digital marketing enables companies to give an unrealistic picture but that it is not profitable in the long run. Kotler & Pfoertsch (2006) emphasize that branding is not about "stirring people into irrational buying decisions". They stated that often in the B2B world branding is misunderstood as a way to create an unreal illusion of a product or service.

Kotler & Pfoertsch (2006) told that based on German marketing research, the most important brand functions in B2B are;

1. Increased information efficiency

2. Risk reduction
3. Value added / Image benefit creation

Kotler & Pfoertsch (2006) sees that industrial or B2B buyer make decisions rationally only up to certain point. According to them, B2B buyers try to make the most rational decisions based on price, features and service. However, they also admit that every B2B buying decision process is very complex and needs to be considered. They see that it is very hard to find out how, why or when a B2B buyer actually makes the decision. Many times different departments inside of the organization have their own opinions that should be taken into account.

The buying process usually starts with selecting a group of brands to consider. That group of for example four different brands could be referred to as a consideration set. How does the buyer decide which brands to choose from the consideration set? The buyer might start thinking of the companies that offer the needed product or service. Naturally the companies that come to mind first have a better opportunity to get inside of the consideration set. Similarly, companies that are unknown, do not even get the opportunity. It is clear that companies with top of mind awareness have a competitive advantage in situations like this. (Aaker 1991, 66)

Kotler & Pfoertsch (2006) divides buyers into three types based on their buying situation. They stated that for almost four decades marketing literature has seen three buying situations as the straight re-buy, modified re-buy and new task. Re-buying is basically buying the same product again from an "approved list" that specifies preferred suppliers. The modified re-buying is a buying situation where "a company aims to satisfy an existing need in a modified way" (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 25). In a new task buying situation, a company needs a totally new product or service. Naturally, "new task" -situations hold the greatest risk for the company since the service or product is previously unknown. When making a buying decision on a totally new product or service, decision making usually takes more time. That is because more people inside of the buying company are involved in the decision. However, Kotler & Pfoertsch (2006, 25) sees that successful branding could expedite the buying process.

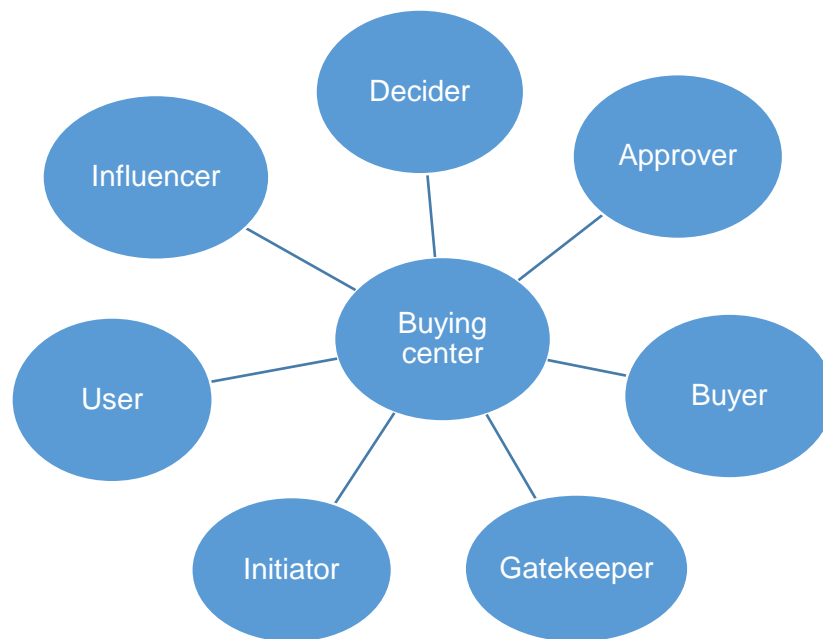


Figure 2. Roles of the buying center roles (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 25).

When planning marketing, it is also important to understand who actually makes the buying decision and why. Figure 2 shows that marketing literature generally sees that buying decisions are usually made by initiators, users, influencers, deciders, approvers, buyers and gatekeepers. Figure 3 below shows how brand influences on buying decision.

BRAND

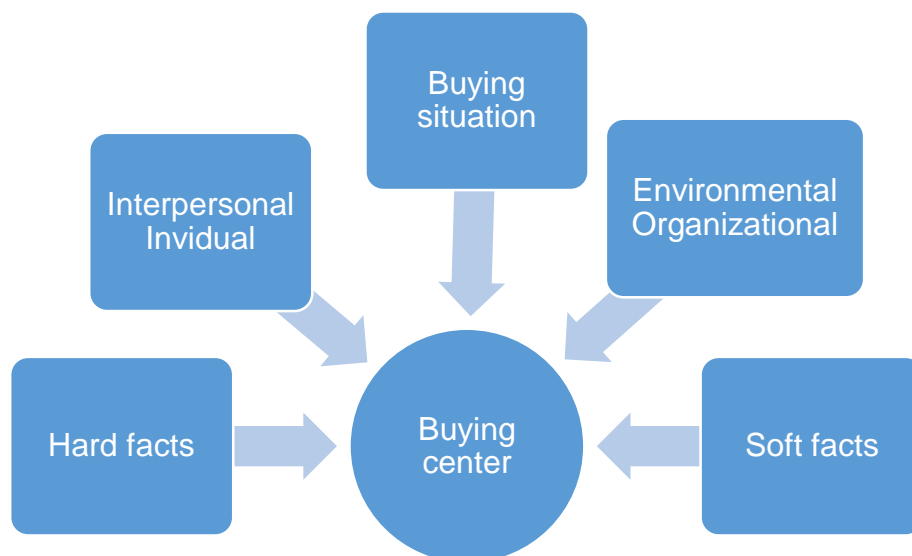


Figure 3. Brand influence on buying decision (Modified from Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 25).

2.3 Brand awareness in digital buying

Digital channels and environments have grown rapidly, especially from 1996 to 2006, and are here to stay as channels for customer service, overall communication, sales and marketing. Digitalization is not only a phenomenon anymore but a cornerstone of marketing and business nowadays. (Merisavo et al. 2006, 15) Edelman (2010) sees that the internet has dramatically changed how customers engage with different brands. He also stated that the old way of doing marketing and business is unsustainable. He sees that customers nowadays are very promiscuous in their relationships with brands. Customers could search information and connect with multiple brands in digital channels at the same time. (Edelman 2010) Those digital marketing channels could be for example websites, online marketing, email marketing and mobile marketing (Merisavo et al. 2006, 15).

However, the problem is that customers can shop online in ways that are not under the control of companies, manufacturers and retailers. Edelman (2010) also sees that companies do not know how to reach the customers' digital "touch points", where the customer is open to influence when shopping online. The point is that when creating brand awareness in a digital environment, companies should understand customers' digital buying behavior in order to reach customers in the right "touch points". Edelman (2010) states that traditionally marketers have seen customer buying behavior as follows; first customers start with many brands in mind and then "narrow them down to a final choice". However, he thinks that nowadays customers are not that reductive in their decision-making process. Instead, customers add and drop brands from a consideration set during the actual evaluation process.

Also according to Sweezey (2014, 13) a modern buyer starts their buying journey online and "goes back to google" more than two times during the decision making process. According to him, modern buyers do not want to discuss with or meet the seller before the buyer feels ready for it. This basically means that buyers need to have time to surf and search online before they feel comfortable or ready to communicate with the seller.

According to Merisavo et al. (2006, 19) utilization of information technology, CRM -systems as well as digital marketing channels has been tangled during their history. They also believe that the ultimate breakthrough is still coming when marketers really learn to use digital channels to understand and engage customers to the brand or the company.

According to Haig (2001), email marketing is one way to create brand awareness among potential B2B customers. Email marketing enables companies to share and offer informative content about their products and services. Merisavo et al. (2006, 55) sees that B2B marketing should also be used for personalized marketing. They stated that personalized marketing (like personalized content and layout) could significantly improve the results of marketing. In order to personalize the content, marketers should search and collect customer information and customers' buying behavior (Merisavo et al. 2006, 55).

3 MARKETING AUTOMATION

The world of marketing has changed rapidly since digitalization has ultra-connected the world in ways that allow people to operate and communicate worldwide like never seen before. Utilizing marketing automation enables companies to reach people both in a personal and measurable way. (Sweezey 2014) It could be said that marketing automation technology fills a void that existing technologies like CRM systems leave, and marketing automation technology is usually integrated for example with a CRM system.

One of the world's most popular marketing automation providers Marketo (2015) sees that marketing automation could help B2B marketers solve the challenge of managing a large amount of often complicated relationships with potential customers. They see that marketing automation technology could help manage, measure and steer the multichanneled and personalized communications with potential customers.

Sweezey (2014) simplifies that as a term, marketing automation refers to the process of using one platform for multiple marketing activities. Those activities could be tracking leads, automating personal marketing messages or downloading comprehensive reports and statistics about marketing activities. Ginty et. al (2010) sees that the most important aspects of marketing automation are segmentation, lead scoring and lead nurturing. Another article by Dickie (2012) defines lead scoring, lead nurturing and analytics as driving forces of marketing automation. Even though the definitions could differ, the possibilities and the purpose of marketing automation tools is mostly understood similarly in existing conversation.

However, the aim of traditional marketing automation is to increase marketing effectiveness and marketing revenue. Several contexts that people usually associate with marketing automation are demand generation, customer relationship management or automated lead management. Usually the motivation behind using marketing automation is generating more leads with the same budget, proving the value of marketing efforts, empowering marketing users to build online campaigns, managing the lead funnel more effectively, aligning sales and marketing or consolidating multiple tools like CRM, social media or email marketing. (Sweezey 2014)

When utilizing marketing automation and personalization in marketing operations, both the contact details and personal data of the customers must be collected and analyzed for

example from customer relationship management (CRM) systems. According to Wiersema (2013), marketing teams are also able to get deeper insight from the customer data from CRM systems if marketing and sales systems are integrated. According to Järvinen and Taiminen (2015), tracking individual behaviors or actions over time requires that customers actually leave contact information like an email address when visiting a company's website. Basically because new customers could not be found using CRM systems, companies also need processes that identify visitors on their websites or social media. According to Järvinen and Taiminen (2015), complete use of marketing automation requires that individual new customers first identify themselves by, for example, sharing their contact information.

Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) divide marketing automation to the active and passive approaches. The active approach refers to asking direct questions whereas the passive approach uses previously gathered information, such as past transactions or clickstream data. When building marketing automation processes, the active approach could involve content that directly asks customers "would you like to learn about this topic?" and leads customers straight to the company's website via a link.

3.1 Overall marketing automation process

According to Sweezey (2014), marketing automation is both a technology and a way of marketing. Putkinen (2014) explains in his Master Thesis that marketing automation actually combines technology and methodology to first understand buyer behavior and use that information for marketing and selling purposes. Putkinen (2014) uses a definition by Ginty et. al (2012): "Marketing automation combines technology and methodology to understand buyer intent, engage leads with personalized messaging and content, trigger the release of messages based on buyer behavior, and pass on the hottest leads to the sales team". That definition does not include all the possibilities of marketing automation, but more likely reflects how the automated email marketing process actually goes.

Naturally, marketing automation also has a strong symbiotic relationship with online marketing and digitalization. Marketing automation needs digital marketing to work but at the same time, digital marketing could be more effective with using marketing automation. With marketing automation for example, the following digital marketing actions could be planned more efficiently: search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), email marketing, content marketing, trade shows, social media and websites.

(Sweezy 2014) According to Järvinen and Taiminen (2015), marketing automation is a software platform that delivers content based on particular rules set by users.

According to Sweezy (2014), marketing automation includes three different parts. The first part is lead tracking, which basically means tracking a lead across all marketing channels. The second part is automated execution, which consist of automated processes for automated marketing campaigns for example. The third is just downloading comprehensive reports and statistics about marketing activities. These reports help marketers value and analyze their marketing efforts and revenue. (Sweezy 2014) Marketing automation includes techniques similar to Web analytics. According to Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) marketing automation enables marketers to track and utilize website visitors' online behaviors such as navigation paths and page views. That information comes from cookies and IP addresses. Since the overall goal of marketing automation is to attract, build and maintain trust with customers, personalization is one of the key elements of building effective marketing automation. Regardless if the customer is current or totally new, automated content should meet that customers specific needs. As such, Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) noticed that according to Petty and Cacioppo (1986), more personal messages will be more effective and more likely noticed. Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) sums up that the ultimate goal is to design content to meet customers' individual needs and expectations. When talking about B2B customers and marketing automation, personalization refers to the use of digital content marketing.

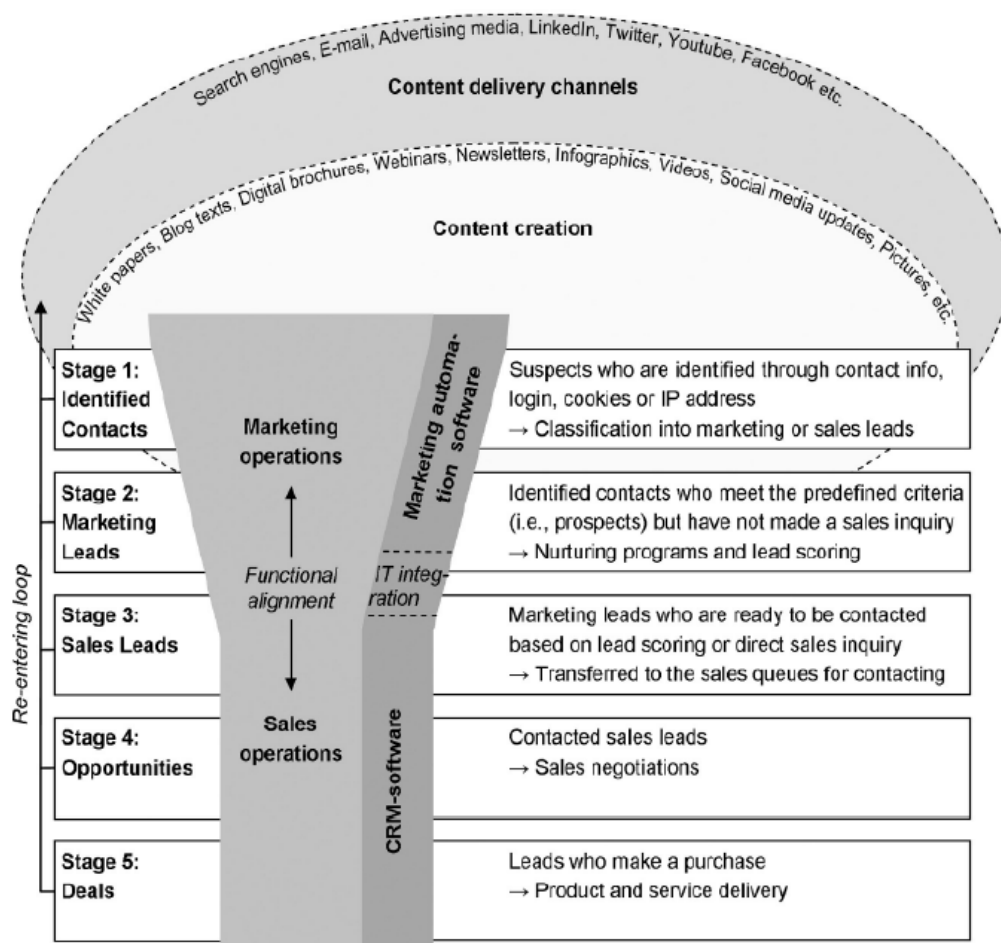
Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) sees that marketing automation is realized inside of the sales funnel that, in the case of marketing automation, is divided to suspects, prospects, leads and deals. Suspects are potential customers that the company is already aware of. Prospects could be defined as suspects "who meet the predefined criteria". Prospect selection is based on the sales representatives identification of which prospect could be a potential and profitable buyer. Leads are prospects that were identified as potential and high quality prospects and who are qualified to be contacted. The sales funnel ends with deals. Deals are leads that actually ended up in deals. (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015)

Callah (2010) and Ernst et al. (2010) highlights the sales teams' role in the marketing process. Marketing and sales operations need to work together in order to take full advantage of marketing automation. They state that the sales team needs to change the way they think and operate for ideal utilization of marketing automation. According to Sweezy (2014) the marketing, CRM, website and sales teams should all work together to

create a successful marketing automation process. Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) also highlighted that the integration of the marketing and sales systems is essential. They stated that companies should consider using “a joint marketing and sales funnel” instead of the regular sales funnel.

3.1.1 Marketing and sales funnel

The “Marketing and sales funnel” by Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) includes five stages. These marketing and selling stages strongly utilize marketing automation software as well as CRM systems. As picture 3 below shows, use of marketing automation software is most significant during stages one and two. As said earlier, this study focuses on early phases of the customer path E.g. creating brand awareness about the company among the company’s B2B customers.



Picture 3. Marketing and sales funnel (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015)

The first stage of the marketing and sales funnel is identifying and classifying contacts. These contacts could be potential buyers or visitors to a website who left their contact information during their online visit. If the visitor is a current customer, the marketing automation system should identify the customer through an IP address, cookies, an e-mail address or a website login. However, the first stage requires that the suspect is identified. After that, identified contacts can be divided into marketing or sales leads. (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015) An interview in the study of Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) defines marketing leads as identified contacts on which the system has "some sort of behavioral data but no clear signals of purchase intention". Contrary to this, sales leads are contacts whose "behavior shows clear indications of a purchase intention" (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015).

The aim of the second stage of the marketing and sales funnel is to nurture and score marketing leads. Nurturing means that marketing leads are transformed into sales leads through attracting, educating and engaging marketing leads. (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015) Lead nurturing refers to the process of "taking a person from one step to the next automatically" (Sweezy 2014). The aim is to offer timely and meaningful content to marketing leads through marketing automation software and lead potential customers into making a buying decision. More specifically, nurturing is an interactive process where "marketing leads are targeted with personalized nurturing campaigns" (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015). During nurturing campaigns, marketers get information and learn about the prospects behavior and needs. (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015)

During the second stage, identified contacts who fit the potential customer criteria are nurtured into "warm" sales leads. Stage two includes the lead scoring part, which actually defines when a marketing lead is ready to be transferred to the sales team. According to Järvinen and Taiminen (2015), sales and marketing teams together decide the score weights that determine when a marketing lead is transferred to sales ready. Sweezy (2014, 97) stated that marketing and sales teams should together define the following concepts: sales-ready, score, service-level agreement and sales-ready lead. According to him, it is very important that both teams understand these concepts similarly.

The first two stages of the marketing and sales funnel deal mostly with marketing automation as well as creating brand awareness. After sales leads are transferred to the sales team for contacting, the focus will be on engaging customers to stay as a customer or buy more. According to Järvinen's and Taiminen (2015), the marketing and sales funnel

framework and CRM software together with marketing automation play a more significant role when engaging the customer in stages 3 through 5.

According to the framework presented in picture 3, marketing operations change to sales operations between stages two and three. In stage three, marketing leads that are nurtured to sales leads are ready to be contacted. During the third stage, “warm” sales leads are “transferred to the sales queues for contacting”. (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015)

Stages four and five are clear selling stages where potential customers are contacted and sales negotiations are made. Stage five includes deals that are leads who actually made a purchase. Product and service delivery follow after a buying decision. The key feature of the marketing and sales funnel is that potential customers can and hopefully will re-enter the funnel again. That is why it is very important to keep engaging customers after the actual first purchase. However, this study focuses on brand awareness and the two first stages of the marketing and sales funnel.

The two first stages of the marketing and sales funnel are basically about finding and nurturing potential customers. According to Järvinen and Taiminen (2015), behavioral personalization is the key to successful nurturing. Their study proved that the company could satisfy customer’s need for relevant content easier if the delivered content is based on the contact’s individual behavior on the company’s website.

3.1.2 Identifying sales ready leads

Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) states that B2B sellers are more focused on the quality of the suspect than the actual amount of suspects. This same thought goes with marketing automation since the idea is to take only warm and sales ready leads out of the marketing automation system. Wiersema (2013) believes that effective use of digital content marketing improves suspect quality. According to Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) objective evaluation of high quality prospects is challenging for B2B sellers. They stated that lead qualification is usually based on the sellers own intuition or discernment. Building an automation process requires determining when prospects are “warm enough” and ready to contact. This also enables setting coherent features for high quality leads (also called warm leads). Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) proved that many companies use “a scoring system” in their marketing automation software that determines which of their prospects (marketing leads) are “warm” enough (sales leads).

Lead scoring enables marketers to measure a lead's interest and sales readiness. Scoring could be used for example in lead qualification, segmentation and cold lead identification. Scoring could also be used as a trigger that activates new automations. In order to create a lead scoring model, marketers need to follow and analyze leads' behavior and actions. The following behaviors should be analyzed; lack of activity, length of activity and amount of activity. For example, if a lead is inactive, it could be reasonable to lower a prospect's sales-ready score. Length of activity could tell about a prospects engagement. For example, if a person watches only ten percent of the video, engagement could be lower than if person watches the full video. Amount of activity could also tell about person's engagement. The more pages a person clicked and visited, the more engaged he or she might be. (Sweezey 2014, 195)

The aim of the lead scoring model is to measure leads' interactions and behaviors. These interactions and behaviors are usually tracked from the marketing campaigns. Usually scoring is based on page views, email clicks, downloads, search terms, campaign touch points or form completions. When scoring leads, it needs to be made clear that scoring and grading leads are different things. Lead grading refers to measuring the demographic qualities of the leads like job titles, company size, company location, company's revenue, and software used by the company or industry. These criteria could tell how leads fit the potential customer behavior. (Sweezey 2014, 199) However, grading of the leads does not tell anything about the leads' actual behavior in the sales funnel.

When identifying sales-ready or "warm" leads, marketers should pay attention to both grading and scoring. The danger is that marketers send highly sales-active leads with a bad demographical fit to the sales team (Sweezey 2014, 200). Even if the lead is highly interested in the topic or your service, it does not help if the person is not in the right position to buy. However, building a scoring model is a learning process and should not be started with too much complexity. Sweezey (2014, 202) states that building scoring models should begin simple and then develop over time. As said earlier, marketing and sales teams should work together to identify how different actions and behaviors affect leads sales readiness. Teams could use terms like percentage of sales readiness or sales-ready score to identify how sales ready a lead is. For example, when a lead is 50 percent sales ready, that person has reached the half way point in the buying process, and when a lead scores 100 percent, that person is ready to be contacted (Sweezey 2014, 202).

In order to identify how sales ready a lead is, multiple actions like web interactions, downloads, email engagement, term searching or social media interactions could be scored. (Sweezey 2014, 210) One possibility to find warm leads is comparing bigger groups of leads in the same nurturing campaign. This basically enables marketers to find “the most ready” leads when compared to other leads.

According to Sweezey (2014, 199) lead scoring models should be updated frequently. Scoring models lose their efficiency if marketers set it up once and then leave it. According to him, scores are a constant work in process and they can go up and down. Marketers should also remember that scores are relative to time. For example, if a lead scored sales ready last year, it might not be sales ready anymore in this year.

3.2 Email marketing

Since the empirical part of this study will focus on automated email marketing, the concept will be discussed more carefully in this chapter. Even though email marketing could be defined as a very effective online marketing tool, it is also very controversial. Email marketing could cause annoyance if the customer’s needs and email marketing do not meet. (Haig 2001) In order to create successful email marketing, Merisavo et al. (2006) suggest marketers to think of email marketing as a customer service instead of selling. They stated that email marketing should be easily accessed, convenient to read and create value to the customer. Merisavo et al. (2006) also highlights that offers or contact prices should not always be the goal for email marketing. According to them, email marketing is chance to activate customers and make them desire information instead of pushing information toward customers. According to Haig (2001), email marketing that has informative content is more powerful than advertising messages.

Apart from this, laws and limitations narrow down the use of unsolicited commercial emails. According to Morimoto and Chang (2009), unsolicited commercial email (UCE) is commercial email messages that are sent without the consumer’s permission to correspond. In other words, nowadays marketers try to ask permission for their email messages from consumers. However, challenges in gaining permissions are obvious. In order to get permission, customers need to already be interacting with the company through their website and order email messages there. Tezinde, Smith and Murphy (2002) stated that gaining permission could challenge especially small companies, startups and non-familiar brands. They also highlighted that people already get so many emails that they

could be suspicious about giving permission to “yet another email list”. And even though marketers might get permission, email addresses demand updating since addresses change for various reasons.

Permission based email marketing is similarly sending marketing messages through email software, but requires pre-approved permission from the recipients (Jones 2008). Cases et al. (2010) stated that when recipients agreed to provide their contact information to get email marketing, marketers are able to send more personalized marketing. It is clear that marketers value permission based email marketing lists much higher than unsolicited commercial emails. Previous introduced literature explains the idea of digital content marketing. The idea is to offer relevant and essential information to the customer so that they are willing to receive email marketing. Future of brand awareness building is also in line with more beneficial content; literature suggests companies to consider email marketing as a customer service, not direct selling.

As well as other marketing, all email marketing should be tailored and personalized to the audience (Haig 2001). It is very hard to send relevant information to everyone with through mass emails (Sweezey 2014). Merisavo et al. (2006) proved that customers react to personalized email marketing up to 1,5 to 3 times more often than to non-personalized. Still, many companies do not personalize marketing content competitively. Merisavo et al. (2006) listed barriers and bottlenecks for personalization as follows; collecting customer contact information, integration and control of databases, updates of information and outdated contact information, successful segmentation and profiling, targeting, timing, differentiation and interactive marketing.

Benefits of email marketing could be defined as follows;

1. Direct communication with potential and current customers
2. Interactivity
3. Cultivate brand loyalty
4. Lower set-up and distribution costs
5. Affordability by SME companies
6. Targeting qualified leads on a one-to-one basis.

In other words, email marketing has the potential to nurture potential and current customers and it is also easy and cost-effective to deliver. (Tezinde, Smith and Murphy 2002; Merisavo

and Raulas 2004; Frick 2010, pp. 171-184; Ellis-Chadwick and Doherty, 2012). Wu (2008) added similar and helpful email marketing aspects to the aforementioned, such as low set-up costs, irrelevance of distance and time, ease of entry and targeting.

3.2.1 Automated email marketing

Automated email marketing that is implemented through marketing automation is often called email nurturing. Even though both of them are based on email marketing, there are many differences between traditional email marketing and email nurturing. Sweezey (2014, 37) states that marketers should educate themselves before making lead-nurturing campaigns with automated email marketing tools. According to him, automated email marketing differs significantly from mass email marketing.

According to Sweezey (2014) traditional email marketing is “from one to many” while nurturing (automated email marketing) is “from one to one”. As said, nurturing is based on automated execution while in traditional email marketing the sender needs to create a list and then send certain emails to that list. With marketing automation, senders are able to create multiple emails and send them out automatically based on automated the program and process they created. Since automated email marketing enables differentiating content, marketers create personalization with nurturing. (Sweezey 2014) As said earlier, automation also enables marketers to add triggers that automatically release messages based on buyer’s behavior. In other words, marketing automation technology automatically responds to the customers based on their actions like opening the message, clicking the links etc. However, this study uses the term “automated email marketing” instead of nurturing.

3.2.2 Automated email marketing process

According to Sweezey (2014), typical objectives for automated email marketing campaigns could be generating more leads, reviving cold leads and sales support. Ginty et. al (2012) claims that “marketing automation combines technology and methodology to understand buyer intent, engage leads with personalized messaging and content, trigger the release of messages based on buyer behavior, and pass on the hottest leads to the sales team”. That definition does not include every possibility of marketing automation, but more likely reflects how the automated email marketing process actually goes. That is because many times

automated email marketing campaigns are understood as marketing automation, even though automated email marketing is just one part of marketing automation software.

However, MacPherson (2001) compiled a general list of the customer contact cycle's phases;

1. Acquisitions
2. Testing
3. Retention: use of personalization, loyalty programs etc.

The first phase includes acquisitions, like targeting potential customers, gathering contact lists and creating content. Haig (2001) states that B2B email marketing contact lists should be divided into different business categories in order to target the message. As said earlier, gathering of contact information and permissions could be challenging, but it is not always about availability of the contact lists. Ngai et al. (2009, p. 2593) claims that companies often gather significant amounts of "stakeholder data" but fail to find and use valuable information from the data.

Beside segmentation and targeting, marketers should decide on a marketing tactic. How to make content that is interesting and necessary for a specific target group? Ellis-Chadwick and Doherty (2012) studied email marketing tactics in 20 UK retail operations and proved that email marketing tactics are relatively scant. According to them, tactical marketing could include considerations of for example timing, degree of personalization, length, relevancy of sender and subject, relevancy of heading, usage of pictures and body text, color scheme, number of hyperlinks and usage of branding attributes. However, their study proved that marketing tactics really affect sender-recipient communication and also further decisions or behavior. Few academic studies researched which features (pleasure features or trust features) have higher importance on customers' purchase decisions. According to those studies, so called pleasure features, such as design and uniqueness, had even stronger importance than trust factors (Cases et. al. 2010) In other words it is proved that pleasure features as well as tactical marketing effects have results on email marketing. That is why design, layout, timing and personalization of the content plays a significant role in automated email marketing. MacPherson (2001) sees that testing the automated email marketing solution is very important. According to him, the testing phase includes marketing campaign testing and analyzing functionality.

Furthermore, recently many companies like the case company of this study, considered getting their own mobile application for marketing and content sharing purposes. Actually Sweezey (2014) sees that it is much easier to use email marketing that still drifts directly to customer's smartphone. When using an app strategy, companies need to keep customers engaged with their application, if they even get customer to download the application in the first place. However, all email marketing should support both laptops and smartphones. According to Sweezey (2014) it could be more justifiable to use a mobile strategy that supports automated marketing and content sharing than use resources to keep an application strategy powerful. One must keep in mind that automated email marketing technology providers naturally sell their own product, and maybe that is why they do not want to highlight the use of an application strategy.

3.3 Marketing automation and digital content marketing in B2B context

According to Sweezey (2014), content marketing as well as marketing automation have become buzzwords in the marketers' world. Also Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) states that use of content marketing spread continuously in the B2B sector. Digital content marketing is introduced in this study, because existing literature proves that use of marketing automation demands high capability to create effective digital content. Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) stated that the combination of content marketing and marketing automation promises significant possibilities to B2B companies. However, they highlighted that very little is known about how these tools guide and engage potential buyers in different parts of the B2B sales process.

The basic idea of content marketing is that buyers nowadays are searching for help from the internet to support their buying decisions. Companies need to 'help' customers by providing enough helpful content and information. (Sweezey 2014) As said earlier, Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) stated that since B2B buyers search for information online to support their decision making process, it creates a need for a new marketing paradigm; 'digital content marketing'. According to Holliman and Rowley (2014), digital content marketing includes creating, distributing and sharing relevant, compelling and timely content to engage customers at a significant stage of their purchasing process in order to encourage them to decide to buy.

According to Järvinen and Taiminen's article (2015), content marketing is strongly connected with social media marketing. As well as marketing in social media, content

marketing trusts in the power of storytelling rather than promotional communications. According to Sweezey (2014, 116) short-form content is best for outbound marketing like lead-nurturing and email marketing. According to him, short-term content should be understood in 5 minutes and also to be easy to engage with. One option to create short-form content is to compact long-term content and focus on key things.

Created contents can be very diverse, but basic digital contents created by marketers for digital content marketing are, for example, webinars, videos, surveys, how-to guides, buyers' guides, Ebooks, blogs or newsletters (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015; Sweezey 2014; Chaffey and Smith 2013). Content creation includes different steps like innovating new content ideas, creating the actual content, distributing the content and finally tracking the impact of the content marketing. Marketing automation and content marketing could have an effective relationship since marketing automation enables marketers to test the impact of different kinds of content and even see certain customer's or segment's engagement to certain content. Statistics from marketing automation tools help marketers focus on effective content and save time from content creation. (Sweezey 2014) Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) also stated that B2B companies could be able to improve their content marketing strategies more effectively by utilizing marketing automation.

The relation between marketing automation and content marketing is strong since successful use of marketing automation software requires a shift to content marketing. Content marketing could lead marketing departments to bottlenecks since the need for new and innovative content increases significantly and quickly. However, the shift to content marketing is necessary in order to reach the customer with the right content in the right stages of the buying process. (Callah 2010; Ernst et al. 2010)

4 RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA

The empirical part of this study is based on qualitative research. The empirical part of the study aims to understand how the use of marketing automation tools could help with brand awareness building. Based on the previous theoretical part of the study as well as the research questions of the study, the author has interviewed several Finnish company representatives to get insights on the subject. However, the author believes that the theoretical part together with the empirical interviews, observation and case study testing enables the author to answer the research questions.

This section presents the research approach of the study. This section includes the research design, data collection methods and data analysis methods. Also the reliability and validity will be explained and case company introduced.

4.1 Data collection

This study consists of both a theoretical and empirical part. The theoretical part of the study covers theory about brand awareness as well as current knowledge about marketing automation tools. Used data is gathered mostly from articles, journals and books. As mentioned above, the empirical part of the study consists of interviews, observations and a small case study practice.

The interviewees of the study were limited by few criteria. All of the interviewees should have worked with sales and marketing and more specifically had requirements to decide and plan marketing automation usage. Some of the interviewees had more specific knowledge about marketing automation tools and brand awareness and some of them were responsible for sales numbers and results that have been affected by marketing automation usage.

Altogether three companies participated in the empirical data collection. The case company, Forenom Majoituspalvelut, was selected since they are a Finnish SME that just started utilizing marketing automation tools to help build brand awareness. Company representatives were willing to learn and openly give insights of their marketing automation process' planning and testing. As a part of the empirical part of the study, the observation and results from the practical use of marketing automation process will be presented and analyzed. A further two companies, Zeeland Family and Aaltonen & Yrjölä Sales

Communication were selected due to their special knowledge and experience from digital marketing and sales and more specifically their use of marketing automation tools. Both of the selected companies sell marketing automation software systems to their customers.

However, all the interviews could be divided into two different groups. The first group includes case company's internal interviews, where company representatives told their vision and experience about the use of marketing automation and brand awareness building.

Table 1. Internal interviewees of the case company Majoituspalvelu Forenom Oy.

Company	Interviewees	Position
Forenom Oy	Kalle Eerola	Area Manager, Tampere
Forenom Oy	Sarianna Jolkkonen	CMO
Forenom Oy	Aarno Annola	Sales Manager, Oulu
Barona Group	Kirsti Lahtinen	Area director
Forenom Oy	Esa Saksinen	Area Manager, Lahti
Forenom Oy	Iiro Eskelinen	Area Manager, Espoo

The second group consists of marketing specialists from two other companies as you can see in table 1. All the interviews of the study were made by semi-structured approach. The interviews were conducted in person in a face-to-face interview or with a phone/skype connection.

As Saunders et al. (2009, 320) suggest, all the semi-structures interviews fulfilled the following steps;

1. The interviewer is able to prepare for the interview by knowing the theme and the quality of the questions before interview.
2. The content and the flow could differ in different interviews for example based on the interviewer's knowledge or the flow of the interview.
3. In order to get all the needed data, interviews could include additional questions.
(saunders et al. 2009, 320)

The interview questions were based on the research questions, the theoretical part of the study and the authors own combinations between subjects. The aim was to ask questions

that will help answer research questions and gather a deeper understanding of the subjects. The questions were carefully planned beforehand but questions varied from different interviews based on the interviewees. For example, interviewed sales people had slightly different questions than marketing people in order to get a deeper insight on a specific area. All the interviews were conducted in Finnish and then translated into English.

Even though empirical data collection included seven interviews and one observation from the speech, the data analysis methods were same with all of them.

Table 2. Data collection from the marketing specialists.

Company	Data collection method	Person and Position
Zeeland Family	In person semi-structured interview	Samuel Tenhunen Digital Director
Aaltonen & Yrjölä Sales Communications Oy	Observations from the speech	Jani Aaltonen Chairman of the board

The interviews and observations were not recoded due hectic schedules and environment of the interviews. All the interviews and the observations from the speech were transcribed and translated into English. When the data from the interviews and observations were gathered, translated and transcribed, the author wrapped up all the findings to the final form to the study. The author felt that transcription of the data could help the author adapt the content to the thesis without misunderstandings or errors.

The interviews lasted around 30 minutes to one hour depending on the need, subject and interviewees schedule. Some of the interviewees were interviewed two times. For example, part of the case company representatives was interviewed before and after practical testing of the marketing automation process.

4.2 Data collection with small practical case study

The case company of this study, Majoituspalvelu Forenom Oy, started to use marketing automation technology and wanted to see if automated email marketing tools could help create brand awareness for the company. The next empirical chapter introduces why and how the case company used marketing automation tools and more specifically its automated email marketing tool for creating brand awareness. This automated email marketing process building, testing and results from it will be used when analyzing if marketing automation tools could be used for helping brand awareness building among the B2B customers.

5 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section presents discussion and findings from the empirical part of the research. The empirical part of the study consists of five interviews, observation from the presentations and observations from the case company's marketing automation tool testing. All of the individuals as well as companies are presented openly with their own names. All of the empirical findings based on the topics of brand awareness, marketing automation tools and automated email marketing.

More specifically this chapter first introduces the case company's internal motivation for brand awareness building as well as for the use of the marketing automation tool. After that, previous literature points out how brand awareness could be built and then how marketing specialists see marketing automation and brand awareness. After that, the chapter introduces the case company's test process for automated email marketing. Results from the automated email marketing testing will be presented at the end of this chapter.

5.1 Case company Majoituspalvelu Forenom Oy

This section compiles the theoretical and empirical aspects of why and how to create brand awareness for the case company Majoituspalvelu Forenom Oy. This section will define the case company's goals and challenges regarding creating brand awareness through marketing automation mechanisms. First the empirical part searches and analyzes the case company's internal opinions about why brand awareness is important to the company and why it should be developed.

This section demonstrates how internal representatives inside of the case company see brand awareness and its importance. This section also considers representatives' motivations and goals for creating brand awareness for the case company. All the interviews were implemented through semi-structured interviews in February 2016. Overall, during the internal interviews it was clear that the main goal of marketing in the case company is to support sales and create brand value.

Kirsi Lahtinen, Area director of the case company's holding company Barona Group Oy, sees that customer's brand awareness helps the selling process, even though it is not necessary. She mentions that it is important that customers know something about the

company before sales meetings. In her opinion, it is helpful if customers already have their own ideas of how companies could do business together.

Lahtinen (2015) sees that all types of brand awareness are helpful to the selling process:

"Even if a customer's experience was negative, it is still a starting point for a conversation. Our sales people could expand or fix the customer's image of the company."

Kalle Eerola, Area Manager of the case company, Majoituspalvelu Forenom Oy Tampere, sees brand awareness as even more significant as Lahtinen did. According to him, brand awareness should be created not only to create an image for the company, but also to change wrong associations about the company.

"The ultimate goal is to create brand awareness for the company and create an image as positive as possible."

Sarianna Jolkkonen, Chief Marketing officer of the case company Majoituspalvelu Forenom Oy believes that brand awareness could make the selling process easier, even in the B2B sector. The main target group for the case company is business travelers. She states that resources inside of the company (like time and money) should be used to create brand awareness. According to her, the case company is willing to invest in creating brand awareness.

"Our brand is not recognizable enough. We need to create brand awareness with more systematic and regular marketing activities."

Jolkkonen (2015) sees that a brand can be made recognizable with differentiated marketing. According to her, a brand should be built distinctively and companies should dare to be different from other brands.

"Brand image should be build clear and fresh - it could even be provocative."

Jolkkonen (2015) says that if potential customers do not have any earlier experience of the company, he or she usually does not even have any mental image about it. If and since company suffers lack of brand awareness, the brand does not evoke any feelings.

Jolkkonen believes that content marketing will be in a more significant role since the company started using marketing automation tools.

"I believe that, along with the use of marketing automation tools, we must focus more on B2B marketing as well as pure content marketing."

Also Esa Saksinen, Area Manager of Majoituspalvelu Forenom Oy Lahti sees that lack of brand awareness is one of the main problems of his selling area.

"The most important goal for the campaigns (automated email marketing campaigns) is that people would be aware of our existing and new services. Many people do not know who we are and what we offer."

Saksinen (2016) says that the biggest individual challenge for Forenom Lahti is that people are not aware of Forenom's new apart-hotels in Lahti city. Saksinen (2016) feels that brand recognition would help selling process notably;

"It is much easier to call a customer and ask for a meeting if she or he already knows about our service and is, for example, already receiving our email marketing."

As a conclusion of the internal opinions of the case company, it can be seen that the case company representatives feel that the company suffers from a lack of brand awareness. As the representatives (like Jolkkonen 2016) said, customers do not recognize or recall their brand enough. However, company representatives see the importance of brand awareness and they are willing to invest in creating more brand awareness.

Based on interviews (Eerola 2016; Jolkkonen 2016; Lahtinen 2016; Saksinen 2016), the case company's goals are as follows;

1. Create and increase brand recognition and recall
2. Create image of the brand as positive as possible
3. Increase knowledge of new products and services

Company representatives believe that the use of marketing automation tools could help make brand awareness building more efficient. Company representatives see that they could help the selling process with more systematic and regular marketing activities. They

also believe that if they focus more on B2B and content marketing, it will help them create brand awareness for the company.

When going through internal aspects of the case company regarding marketing automation technology, it should be noted that there are both long- and short-term goals. Short term goals could be defined as goals to create brand awareness among the potential customers. However, marketing automation software as a big investment also has long term goals. Those long term goals will deal with overall customer engagement and possibilities to measure marketing results.

The Chief marketing officer of the case company Majoituspalvelu Forenom Oy, Sarianna Jolkkonen (2016), mentions that their goal is to connect and communicate with the customer more regularly and engage customer with the company. According to her, one purpose for the use of marketing automation tools is to support sales and to generate more leads for the sales. From a marketing point of view, the most important goal for the company in the long term is to get a 360° view of all of their businesses. It means that the entire organization is able to get the same information and view of every operation and customer. According to her, currently it is not clear that everyone in the company sees things similarly in different departments.

"In long term, marketing automation is mostly for engaging current customers and new customer acquisition."

The case company sees that marketing automation in the long term is strongly connected with overall customer experience. According to Jolkkonen (2016) the entire customer path matters and should be focused on. She states that one of the goals for marketing automation is to measure and utilize information about customer satisfaction.

"It is about the customer path as a whole. We need to know exactly how customers find us online, how customers feel about our service and what customers do after they have used our service."

Jolkkonen (2016) sees that one goal of marketing automation is to make the company's internal activities transparent. The idea is that everyone in the organization is able to see and follow what is going on in the marketing area. Other goals are to measure marketing activities and the efficiency of marketing. Jolkkonen (2016) also mentions that one goal is

to have all marketing operations and activities under one platform. When using marketing automation correctly, the company does not need to use multiple different tools at the same time.

Jolkkonen (2016) mentions that it could be helpful to see which tasks or campaigns use the most resources. She also plans to create better reporting with marketing automation.

“With marketing automation I am able to show to the management exactly where and how my team uses resources (like time or money) and what the results are.”

According to Swezey (2014, 29) Jolkkonen’s goal is achievable since integrated marketing automation and CRM enables companies to see which side of the organization is driving more revenue. He also stated that integration helps other functions to see marketing as a revenue center, not just as an expense.

Interviews proved that the concepts of content marketing were understood and defined very congruently in interviews and according to the theory. Content marketing was defined as creating and delivering content that adds value and engages customer with the company (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015; Jolkkonen 2016). More specifically, B2B marketing contents were described as webinars, newsletters, blog texts, pictures, messages and videos (Jolkkonen 2016).

Also, the importance of digital content marketing as a part of marketing automation process was well noticed in the case company. However, Jolkkonen (2016) sees that the company does not use content marketing as systematically as they should.

“The motivation to start using marketing automation is that we really want to compete with our competitors, and right now we are kind of forced to find new solutions. Maybe other companies do engage their current customer better than we do. They offer relevant information about their services and products much more than we do”

As a short term goal, the company wants to utilize marketing automation tools to make brand awareness building quicker and more efficient. For this purpose, the company wants to use for example the automated email marketing feature of their marketing automation tool.

Company representative Jolkkonen (2016) sees that the automated email marketing process includes the following steps:

1. *Gathering contact information*
2. *Defining a target group and creating content*
3. *Set the marketing automation process triggers and also define when a lead is ready to be contacted by the sales team*
4. *Building a marketing automation process*
5. *Measuring the results*

Even though the company has a pretty clear picture of the automated email marketing process, there is still a couple of bottlenecks. Jolkkonen (2016) sees that the most significant challenges during the marketing automation building could be defined as follows:

1. *How to make the sales team understand that marketing automation needs their efforts, especially with gathering customer's contact information?*
2. *How to make content good enough to increase conversions?*
3. *How to make sure that the sales team will correctly contact and follow up leads from the marketing automation systems?*

According to previous marketing automation textbooks, Jolkkonen's concerns seems valid. According to Sweezey (2014, 95) the marketing team should invite sales to every step (investigation, implementation and refinement) of building marketing automation. According to him, failing in this process might cause misunderstandings that could affect the automation process negatively. Another request is to share and define responsibilities for every team and person. That is how people will know what they should do and why.

Existing literature of marketing automation tools proves that marketing and sales teams should together define lead scoring models for the automated email campaigns. However, both of the company's sales representatives, Lahtinen (2016) and Eerola (2016), are not sure when marketing leads should be transferred to sales team. Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) stated about this that the definition of a high quality lead is very subjective and depends on the company. Eerola (2016) said that overall clear interest might be enough.

"If potential customers actually open our newsletters and links more than once, that could tell us something about their needs."

A sales representative of the case company, Lahtinen (2016), says that one of the most significant challenges is the timing of the marketing. How to contact customer at a time when she or he is willing to connect and has an active demand? Lahtinen (2016) speaks about right timing and the need for the service or product.

“The ideal timing is when we are able to contact a potential customer right when she or he has a demand for our service.”

However, according to Järvinen and Taiminen (2016), one option is to ask prospects during nurturing if she or he would like to meet the sales person. Merisavo et al. (2006) proved in their study that right timing in email marketing could make a huge difference. One possibility is to send an email at the same exact time and day of the week when the customer contacted the company and accepted the email marketing. The expectation is that at that time the customer has time to read through emails.

Company representatives understand both the challenges and possibilities of marketing automation usage well. Their understanding of the concepts of marketing automation is mostly up to date which is, according to previous literature, important for the process. Still it seems like company representatives need support in creating lead scoring models together with the marketing team. As a conclusion of the previous internal opinions from the case company, the goals for marketing automation in the case company are to;

1. Connect and communicate with the customer more regularly and engage customers with the company.
2. Generate more leads for the sales.
3. Get a 360° view of the business.
4. Make the company's internal activities transparent.
5. Measure marketing activities and the efficiency of marketing.
6. Offer relevant and effective content for the customers.

However, as previous research about marketing automation shows, all of those goals could not be fulfilled short-term. For that reason, the goals are divided into long-term and short-term goals. Long-term goals are to get a 360° view of the business, make the company's internal activities transparent and engage customers with the company in the long-term. It should be understood that achieving these goals should start right away, but measuring the

results takes time. It should also be understood that when aiming to get customers engaged they first need to remember, recall and prefer the brand. That is why the process should start with creating brand awareness first.

However, this study focuses on starting the automated email marketing process and certain results that can be measured in the short-term. Since the aim of this study is to find out if brand awareness can be created through marketing automation process, this study focuses only on the goals that are connected to starting the automation process and creating brand awareness. These short-term goals are to connect and communicate with the customer more regularly, generate more leads for the sales, measure marketing activities and the efficiency of marketing as well as offering relevant and effective content for the customers.

5.2 Creating brand awareness among the B2B customers

The previous section introduced the case company's goals and purposes for brand awareness as well as for the use of marketing automation. This section brings up the most important parts of brand awareness theory which will be modified and used when creating brand awareness for the case company. This section aims to answer how the company's internal goals for the brand awareness would be reached.

In order to increase brand recognition and recall, Jolkkonen (2015) sees that marketing should be differentiated and as a company they should dare to be different. Aaker (1991, 72-76) thinks similarly and suggest companies to focus on being different and memorable. Marketing messages that create brand awareness should be memorable, different from others and include a reason to be noticed. Marketing content should also link the brand and the product/service class together. When content is truly useful, helpful and joyful for the customer, the company's image will more likely become as positive as possible. Since the case company already has their own visual layout and brand, they should be used actively. Literature strongly recommends companies to use symbols that are strongly linked to the brand and its product or service.

Since the company wants to focus more on B2B marketing, they should remember that honesty is an important part of B2B marketing since buyers' trust is based on honesty (Haig 2001). Successful use of digital content marketing requires better segmentation and better identifying of the customers. Literature suggests companies to use personalized marketing and digital content marketing when creating brand awareness. Companies could, for

example, divide customers into different groups based on buying situations such as straight re-buy, modified re-buy and new task. Since marketing content should be personalized, companies need to understand who actually makes the decision. Previous research shows that the following groups will typically make the buying decisions; initiators, users, influencers, deciders, approvers, buyers and gatekeepers. Previous literature shows that one way to increase knowledge of new products and services is to create content that leads the company to the news. Moreover, more systematic and regular marketing activities will create brand awareness since building recall requires repetition.

When creating brand awareness online, companies should understand that the online buying process is very different from the traditional way of buying. Companies need to focus on finding and reaching the customers' digital "touch points", where customers are open to influence. Thus when creating content, it must be understood that B2B buyers usually do not have time to read through lengthy emails (Haig 2001).

Based on previous literature the most important thing is to find B2B buyers' digital "touch points", give differentiated, useful and helpful marketing messages continuously and with repetition. Most importantly, as Merisavo et al. (2006) said, marketing should be changed from selling and telling to listening, learning and helping.

5.3 Utilizing automated email marketing

This section will include theoretical aspects about the actual automated email marketing process and how it should be built in order to help brand awareness building in the case company.

Findings from the Järvinen's and Taiminen (2015) study showed the irony that to become more personal with your marketing, B2B marketing should be automated. According to their study findings, one of the main motivators behind the process is to "target customers with the right content at the right time". In order to manage effective marketing automation and switch to content marketing, companies may have to change their marketing philosophy. According to Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) strategic transformation simultaneously with starting marketing automation actually helped marketers to focus on right and effective tasks. Marketing should be built proactively because it leaves time to focus on innovating and creating content, measuring the performance as well as optimizing marketing tactics over and over again.

Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) stated that high quality content for automated email nurturing should include the following key features;

1. The content design has to be based on real customer's needs, not a broad audience.
2. The content should add and create value for customers rather than just promote the company's products or services. The content should not focus on the company or its products and services.
3. The content should help customers solve their problems, offer advice and make buying easier and more reliable.

Companies should dare to create and deliver enough specific content. According to interviews from the Järvinen's and Taiminen (2015) study, the general content topics resulted in lower interest among the customers than very specific topics. But how to find out what kind of content customers need? Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) stated that companies need to be aware of informational needs through active listening of the customers. To find out what kind of content the customers appreciate, companies could for example collect customer feedback and do active social media monitoring.

Sweezy (2014, 112) sees that customers engage with two different kind of content: problem-solving content and content for professional development or entertainment. According to him, early-stage leads could be interested in, for example, blog posts that help customers identify a problem, how-to articles or short videos. Mid-stage leads could be interested about blog posts that solve some certain problem, webinars featuring other customer's success stories, references or case studies. He stated that late-stage leads who are almost ready to buy would appreciate blog posts that compare the company's service to other alternatives as well as buyers' guides.

Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) suggest companies to utilize expertise from multiple functions inside of the organization. It could be a challenge for marketers to innovate and create specific and professional content to the customer. Organizations should think of content creation as a joint process that combines expertise from different specialists in different functions. During this joint process, marketers will still coordinate the process but the ideas, topics and the actual content could be innovated with top professionals of the subject. More specifically, marketers could interview specialist and create content based on that. The best option is to create content in collaboration with specialist and marketers.

However, the joint process requires that marketers have the ability to transform interview information into actual content that can be delivered with marketing automation. Marketers also should be able to separate the same information into different content for different channels. For example, if marketing automation utilizes social media, content needs to be more entertaining than in other channels. (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015)

5.4 Aspects from marketing specialists

This section compounds different insights from marketing specialist. The idea of these interviews with marketing specialist was to get insights and expert's opinions of automated email marketing and use of marketing automation as a tool. These insights were meant to analyze and confirm the solutions that the case company made.

Samuel Tenhunen is the digital director of Zeeland Corporation and has years of experience from digital marketing communication for example from Microsoft. The author interviewed Tenhunen in April 2016 in a semi-structured face-to-face interview.

Tenhunen admits that marketing automation as well as automated email marketing are currently huge buzzwords in the marketing world. However, Tehnunen assures that marketing challenges have stayed mostly the same over the years. Even though he sees that marketing automation is just a new wave or trend, he still believes it could make a difference and help companies achieve more efficient marketing results. Tehnunen sees that old ways of marketing like TV or magazine advertising do not work anymore. He claims that, for example, traditional marketing like radio advertisement could still be effective if it is sensibly combined with the use of inbound marketing or use of marketing automation tools.

Tenhunen (2016) sees that comprehensive use of marketing automation could help companies create a positive brand image and brand awareness but he also highlights that it rarely happens if the company only uses automated email marketing for creating brand awareness. Tehnunen states that the use of marketing automation definitely helps marketers to personalize contents more effectively and thereby create brand awareness and a positive brand image for the company.

Tenhunen sees that email marketing is here to stay since the business world does not have substitutive tools yet. Use of email is still, and will be in the future, an essential tool especially in the B2B business.

"Email marketing is still the best way to send personalized marketing messages to the customers. Even though marketing in social media or websites could be personalized, it is not as personalized as a private email."

Tenhunen states that automated email marketing enables marketers to follow and track customer's behavior and respond straight to the customer based on his or her behavior. Even though Tenhunen sees that email marketing, and more specifically automated email marketing, is still very useful and efficient, it does have its risks. He highlights that automated email marketing should only be used for those customers who are provably interested about the messages. This basically demands that the customer approves or orders email marketing.

"Companies should not send direct email marketing to their customers in case they do not know if the customers really want to get it. If customer is annoyed and block the content, there is no way to get customer back to the contact lists in the future."

Tenhunen sees that automated email marketing alone should not be used for creating brand awareness for the company;

"If the only goal is to create brand awareness with repetition, you should not use automated email marketing for it. That is how you end up spamming content to customers who might not want it."

Tenhunen states that best ways to create brand awareness for the company are:

1. Use relevant and helpful content
2. Use interesting and differentiated content
3. Respect your customers - do not spam
4. Be invigorating

Tenhunen sees that automated email marketing works effectively when used together with other automated marketing tools and as a part of inbound marketing. He sees that if automated email marketing is used separately from other marketing activities, it could easily turn into spamming customers. The best way to use automated email marketing is with

those customers who are already interested about the company and actually interested in receiving more information or help.

Jani Aaltonen is chairman of the board at Aaltonen & Yrjölä Sales Communications Oy and held a speech about automated marketing in February 2016.

Marketing specialist Aaltonen (2016) sees that the automated marketing and selling process consist of four stages. The ultimate goal of the process is to generate engagement and make unknown potential customers refer to the company. The first stage "enticement" requires brand awareness and interest in the company. In this stage the company's website, blog, keywords and social media play a key role.

The second stage is working towards conversion, which basically means gaining trust among the customers. In this stage, website visitors for example should be turned into sales leads. According to Aaltonen's (2016) speech, landing pages have an important role in this stage. When trust is gained, the deal needs to be closed. The third stage "closing" means that sales leads turns into customers. In this stage CRM systems, email marketing and workflow are important.

When a sales lead is turned into a customer, engagement begins. According to Aaltonen, the fourth stage is called "care -stage" where customer service begins. The aim is to create customer satisfaction with personalization, social media tracking and surveys. If the company succeeds in engaging the customer, she or he might become an advocate for the company.

Aaltonen (2016) also thinks that the sales funnel could be divided into Top of funnel (ToFu), Middle of funnel (MoFu) and Bottom of funnel (BoFu). The aim of ToFu is to bring new customers to websites and create brand awareness. The aim of the MoFu is to convert leads to sales and the aim of the BoFu is to help the customer to decide to buy.

As said earlier, customers need different content in different parts of the buying process. In order to create an effective marketing automation process, marketers should know what kind of content to send, and more importantly when to send it. Aaltonen (2016) sees that beginning of the buying process (ToFu) customers think "what is my problem?" and marketing messages should answer that question with blogs, social media, google, videos etc. After that (at the MoFu stage) customers think: "how to solve this problem?" and again

marketers should give content that helps to solve the problem. According to Aaltonen (2016) that kind of content could be webinars, guides, tips and events. The last stage, BoFu, refers to the question; “why is your solution the best for me”? Aaltonen (2016) feels that the best way to answer that question is to give content that includes for example; prices, references, cases, service descriptions, feature lists, technical sheets or videos.

5.5 Automated email marketing practice in the case company

Development of the automated email marketing process for the case company started with defining the company’s goals and purpose for the automated email marketing process and brand awareness building. After that the research and study about ideal marketing automation process was made based on previous literature and existing knowledge of brand awareness and marketing automation technology.

However, development of the automated email marketing process started with testing features and possibilities of marketing automation software, Microsoft Dynamics Marketing. The first test was implemented in February 2016 when the case company sent invitations to their events. As told earlier, the case company faced brand awareness challenges for example in some areas where the overall brand awareness stage was weak and even current customers did not know about the company’s new services. According to previous research (Aaker 1991, 69) about brand awareness, customers might easily be unaware or even suspicious about a brands’ new products or services even though the brand would be known or recognized. Overall the case company’s representatives felt that the company’s brand recognition was not sufficient.

The company decided to increase brand awareness about their brand and its new services in four Finnish cities by organizing “Open doors” events for the customers. As Aaker (1991, 72-76) and Aaltonen (2016) stated, organizing events could help increase brand awareness among potential customers. Aaltonen (2016) also said that events could help customers understand how to solve their problems with the company’s services. The case company decided to organize “Open doors” events in several cities in Finland; Lahti, Espoo, Vantaa and Oulu. The idea was to create brand awareness with the events but also with automated email marketing that invited customers to attend the “Open doors” events. Since the company felt that they suffer from a lack of brand awareness, their major problem was to make customers aware of and attend their “Open doors” event. The company decided to invite customers to the event with marketing automation software, which allows sending

multiple differentiated and automated email messages to customers during the invitation process. For example, Haig (2001) states that email marketing is one way to create brand awareness among the potential B2B customers. The aim was to measure customers' reactions to the invitation and automatically respond with effective content with the right timing. The idea was to lead customers to attending the event and be aware of the company's services in multiple cities in Finland.

Another goal for the automated email invitations was to practice, learn and understand how marketing automation software and more specifically its automated email marketing tool actually works to increase customer knowledge of brand and its services. As Swezey (2014, 37) also suggest, marketers should educate themselves before making automated lead-nurturing campaigns with email tools. The reason is that, according to him, automated marketing differs significantly from mass email marketing. For the case company, this was also the first time they used and planned automated email marketing.

Since Merisavo et al. (2006) listed barriers and bottlenecks for personalization in email marketing, the aim of this first automated email marketing process was to avoid those barriers. Merisavo et al. (2006) stated that collecting customer contact information, integration and control of databases, updates of information and outdated contact information could set barriers for successful email marketing. Those challenges were tackled with gathering information from many different sources. All the contacts were tested to be up to date and for example only those customers that used the company's services during this or last year were selected. With those actions the company believed their contact lists to be up to date and customers still active. Also only actively operating B2B companies were selected to the invitation list.

Merisavo et al. (2006) also mentioned that challenges during the marketing process could be caused by unsuccessful segmentation, profiling, targeting, timing or differentiation and lack of interactive marketing. For this automated email marketing sending, the recipients were selected based on following features;

1. The target company is located near the case company's new or existing services.
2. The target company's previous buying behavior or interest is related to "Open doors" events or offered products.
3. A person who has other interests for new accommodation services, like bloggers and journalists.

As said, Merisavo et al. (2006) proved that right timing in email marketing could make a huge difference. Also company representative Lahtinen (2016) sees that one of the most significant challenges is the timing of marketing. In this automated email marketing process, the company decided to send the first emails a couple of weeks before the actual event. The decision was based on the company's previous experience of B2B buyers' schedules. The invitation could not be sent too early, since the invited person would forget or not have idea what he or she is doing at that moment in the future. On the other hand, B2B buyers' work could be very hectic and their calendars could be full at least for one or two weeks in advance. Previous experience also demonstrated that the beginning of the week is the best sending time. However, that first sending was followed up by several different emails based on recipients' reactions and behavior. The right timing for the follow-up messages was also planned and automated carefully. These follow-up messages included for example welcoming messages for those who already attended and reminders for those who opened the letter but did not sign for to the event yet. Those actions are meant to increase interactivity with the customer during the process. Also the content of the messages (like questions) were planned to be interactive and encourage customer to take part in discussion.

Differentiating and personalizing of the content was at the center of the planning. All the brand awareness researchers as well as marketing automation literature highlighted the importance of differentiated and personalized content. Also representative of the case company Jolkkonen (2016) stated that they should dare to create more differentiated marketing messages that draw attention. Sweezy (2015) sees that differentiated marketing messages actually create personalization. Too many times marketers are guilty of benchmarking other companies marketing too much. As previous literature proves, it is very important to create different messages than competitors. In this automated email invitation round, the company tried to create content that is different from those emails that the company itself or its competitors have sent earlier. The company decided to be daring or even risky with their content. The reason for this was part of the purpose of this test round. The company wanted to see if new kinds of content would make a difference when measuring the results.

As Haig (2001) reminds, email marketing could cause annoyance if the customer's need and the email marketing does not meet. The company tried to tackle this risk by profiling recipients so well that they could be sure that chosen customers are actually interested in

the event. However, the company also decided to leave customers out of the process if they did not react to the emails. All of the emails also had instructions at the bottom to quit receiving any emails in the future.

One of the new thoughts from literature and previous research of both brand awareness and marketing automation is that email marketing should be seen as customer service instead of selling. Related to this, for example Merisavo et al. (2006) sees that email marketing is a chance to activate customers and make them desire information instead of pushing information toward customers. The idea of the event itself was to offer relevant information and a positive experience for the customers. The event itself included servings, relevant and new information and as well as networking opportunities. Those aspects were naturally mentioned in the marketing messages. Haig (2001) sees that email marketing that has informative content is more powerful than advertising messages. The aim of sending the invites was to give informative content, but the main idea was to actually introduce customers to an informative experience. The company thought that an actually informative experience could be even more powerful than just informative content. Thus, the event itself could be seen as part of the marketing contents.

It needs to be noted that even though the aim of sending the automated emails was to get customers to attend to the event, the main goal was still creating brand awareness for the company. That is why sending those emails is important even in cases where the customer is not willing or capable to attend the event. As company representative Saksinen (2016) mentioned, sales people feel it is much easier to contact a customer if she or he already knows about the company's service or has received email marketing before.

As said earlier, a B2B buyer's work life can be hectic, and based on previous results of email marketing inside of the company, many customers read emails on their smartphone. That is why all the email marketing should support both laptops and smartphones. With this automated email marketing the company also made sure that all of the contents supported both laptops and smartphones. Luckily their new marketing automation software supports that.

All the invitation campaigns were implemented through three different phases. The first phase was to send event invitations which was followed by two reminders of the event. The contents of the emails differed by recipient. The automated email marketing systems automatically followed up on recipients' reactions and behavior and sent additional

messages based on the recipients' reaction. For example, if the recipient clicked the sign up link but did not sign up yet, the system followed up by asking if the customer had any problems with registering.

However, overall input from the automated email marketing messages and from the event itself was pretty good. Company representatives felt that customers enjoyed the event and also got much useful information about the company and its services. Overall the Area manager of Espoo city, Eskelinen (2016), was quite satisfied with the "Open doors" event;

"Even though the event did not create direct sales right away, it was a much more relaxed way to meet customers and present our services and products."

Eskelinen feels that emails and events could be an easier way to communicate with customers as opposed to traditional sales meeting. He stated that if the email is very personal, it might work better.

Measuring the actual sales numbers is very hard right after the event. Some of the results could be realized as late as a full year after the event. Measuring the actual growth of brand awareness is challenging. Overall company representatives felt that the automated email marketing campaign and the event boosted positive buzz around the brand. Area manager of Lahti City, Saksinen (2016b), was satisfied with the "Open doors" -event in Lahti city. More than 30 customers attended the event, which is a great turnout for the small Finnish city.

Overall, Saksinen (2016) was satisfied with the automated email marketing process and the event itself;

The "Open doors" -event as well as its automated email marketing was worth the effort. It is hard to estimate actual numbers, but the event and its marketing will surely result in direct sales."

Saksinen (2016) says that the event or its marketing does not change the image of the company but it might have created positive buzz and brand awareness in the city.

“Even if the customer does not have a need for our service at the moment, she or he might remember us when the need arises. This is why it makes sense to create brand awareness and make sure that potential customers know us and our service.”

However, those are just feelings and not actual numbers. The actual numbers and results from the automated email marketing campaigns showed that automated email marketing could really narrow down the recipients and find the interested and potential ones from the mass audience.

Table 3. Opening percentages of the automated email marketing messages (first, second and third letters).

	Opening % of the 1st letter	Opening % of the 2nd letter	Opening % of the 3rd letter
Oulu	26,59 %	50,00 %	57,14 %
Espoo	22,59 %	83,33 %	52, 38 %
Lahti	27,33 %	21,15 %	47,62 %

Previous experience from the case company sees that a percentage of 20 is normally a good opening percentage for traditional email marketing messages. However, due to differentiated and more personalized content, the opening percentages in the first automated email marketing message (Letter 1) were higher than 20 % in all cities.

However, numbers show that the opening rates were continuously growing during the automated email marketing campaign. Only in Lahti city, opening rates dropped around 6 % between the first and second letter. Also in Espoo, opening rates dropped from over 83 % to 52 % between the second and third letter. Aside from this, it needs to be mentioned that the timing of the letter has a lot to do with the opening rates. For example, holidays or different weekdays could affect opening rates. People generally open more messages during the first days of the week than for example on Friday.

Table 4. Relation between opening percentage and amount of sent letters.

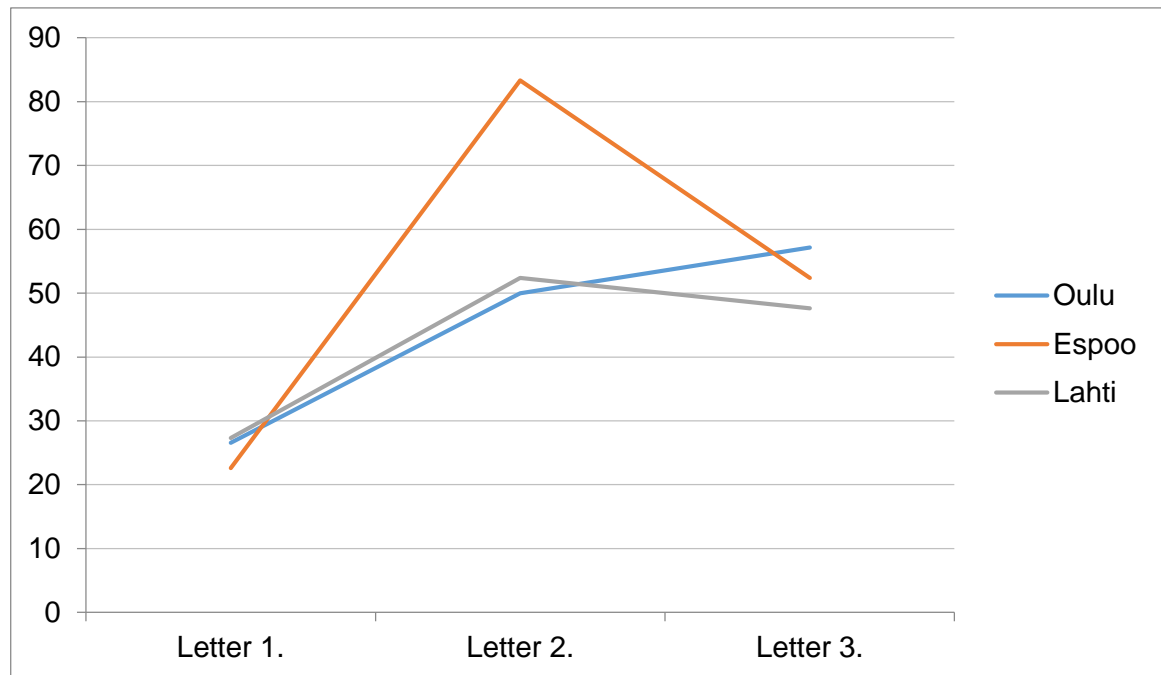


Table 4 shows the opening rates' growth during the automated email marketing campaign. It should be mentioned that whenever the automated email marketing system "found" an interested customer, it also left many people out of the campaign and narrowed down the recipient list. The system was planned to drop out those customers that were not interested in the message. The rest of the recipients, who stayed on the list, slowly became more "warm" and willing to learn more about the company. That is also why they opened the letter each time most likely.

As table 5 shows, the audience got narrowed down and the opening rates increased, the amount of blocking decreased. That also proved that the system automatically dropped out those who were not interested and stopped sending messages to them. As the automated email marketing process moved forward, people on the marketing list were not willing to block the content or leave the marketing list.

Table 5. Percentage of recipients that blocked the content during the automated email marketing campaign.

City	Blocked % of the 1 st letter	Blocked % of the 2 nd letter	Blocked % of the 3 rd letter
Oulu	1,1 %	0,00 %	0,00 %
Espoo	1,46 %	0,00 %	0,00 %
Lahti	1,32 %	0,10 %	0,00 %

There were some differences between the cities in the results. The area Manager of Espoo, Eskelinen (2016), was worried about customers' no-showing the event. He felt that the invitation messages and profile of entrants were the right kind but they all did not appear on the scene. However, Eskelinen (2016) doubts that the timing of the event was unsuccessful since it was just before a holiday. In the other two cities, no-show of the event was nonexistent.

Sales Manager of Oulu city, Aarno Annola sees that the "Open doors" -event and the marketing around it was successful. Annola (2016) sees that the event increased their brand image and all the participants really liked and were thankful for the event. The overall feeling was positive, but Annola is still not sure how the event and the automated email marketing around it really effected sales numbers.

"We always hear comments that our customers do not know our services. All the people who really read our emails or attended our event, now know our services! Actually, they were a bit surprised how great our services really are."

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Most modern marketers already have a website, an email tool and several social media accounts for the company. Many marketers have already learned how to use SEO and how to optimize content to deliver results. Even still, engaging the modern online buyer is a challenge for marketers. (Sweezey 2014, 10) At the moment, previous literature believes that marketing automation could be the next step to upgrade marketing and sales (Järvinen and Taiminen 2015). More specifically, the future of marketing deals with engaging the customer. We are going from selling and telling to listening, learning and helping. However, everything cannot and should not be automated. Sometimes automation needs a hand (Sweezey 2014, 56) and it is kind of comforting for us as marketers.

Based on previous research and the results of this study, marketing automation is a huge trend that is continuously growing all over the business world. The biggest marketing automation software sellers like Marketo and Hubspot surely know their business and how to make it sell. Thus, the need for marketing automation is undoubtedly there. Both marketers and sales directors are willing to find ways that could effectively bring both sales and marketing together and increase sales.

When starting to write this thesis, the author wondered what kinds of companies could benefit from marketing automation systems. The previous thought was that marketing automation might not be that effective for small companies because of smaller contact groups and high costs of marketing automation software. At this point it is clear that small companies also need to create brand awareness among the mass audience if they are willing to grow and increase sales. Also, marketing automation software is not that expensive since the growth of marketing automation gives rise to competition in this industry. However, the author still feels that marketing automation does not fit every company. It is more about how the company's internal aspirations support the use of marketing automation and how they are able to create content. The bottom line is, marketing automation is just a tool and results depend on how marketers are able to use it.

This study proved that marketing automation tools enables marketers to communicate more effectively with a mass audience. The empirical part of the study proved that the use of marketing automation tools could create positive buzz among the potential and current customers more effectively than traditional marketing like email marketing. However, it is also clear that marketing automation should not be the first tool to be used to communicate

with the customer. Because of this, marketing automation tools could be better suited for engaging the customer with the brand than actual brand awareness creation.

6.1 Summary of the findings

This section presents the findings of the study and answers the main research question as well as the three sub-questions.

Automated email marketing was studied through previous literature, online conversations, case company's internal opinions and insight from marketing specialists. This study aims to understand and show how automated email marketing (as a tool) could help the case company to create brand awareness through their B2B customers. Findings of this study are based on previous research, interviews and results from testing marketing automation technology with the case company. The automated email marketing test process was made on the basis of instructions from previous research, online material, marketing specialists and case company representatives. The results from the test process show, if the use of automated email nurturing really helped the company with creating brand awareness.

When the author first started to study confluences of marketing automation (MA) tool usage and brand awareness (BA) building, it was not clear how they affect each other. The author believed that the use of marketing automation software could make brand awareness building more efficient and easy due to saving time, better focus and ability to build reputation. Both brand awareness building and usage of marketing automation demand high use of personalization and good marketing content.

Moving forward the study found several similarities and confluences behind both marketing automation (MA) practice and brand awareness (BA) theory. The following section introduces those confluences and also justifies if and how the use of marketing automation technology could actually make brand building easier or efficient

How do marketing automation tools help create brand awareness?

Brand awareness literature clearly proved that differentiation is one of the key elements of successful brand awareness building. The use of marketing automation technology enables marketers to focus on creating new, differentiated marketing messages instead of copying old or used content.

Brand awareness literature clearly proves that personalization is one of the key elements of successful brand awareness building. Marketing automation researchers and marketers claim that the use of marketing automation enables marketers to personalize content for a mass audience. Since email nurturing enables differentiating contents, marketers create personalization with nurturing (Sweezy 2014).

Since successful personalization demands segmentation and targeting, marketing automation technology's integration with CRM systems helps segmentation and customer targeting. For example, CRM and ERP -integration allows marketers to divide customers into for example the following groups; straight re-buy, modified re-buy and new task, and target personalized message to the right group.

Brand awareness (especially recall) is built with repetition (Aaker 1991, 72-76). Use of marketing automation tools and especially automated email marketing enables repeatedly sending marketing messages to customers without provoking them. The use of automated tools also enables marketers to automatically send multiple messages at the same time without using too much time.

Aaker (1991, 73) highlights that since visual images are much easier to recall and learn, it can play a significant role when creating brand awareness. As such, automated email nurturing should be designed carefully around presenting visuals.

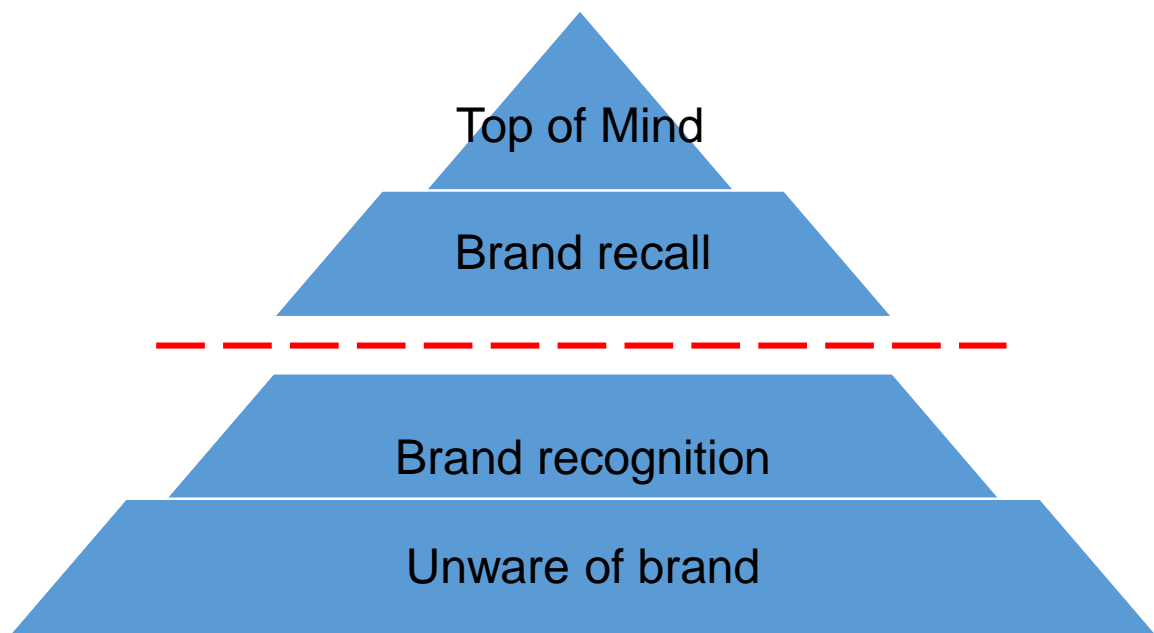
The business world has generally seen branding (brand awareness building) as more relevant for consumer businesses (B2C). Marketing automation tools are generally seen and used more in B2B marketing and MA usage could increase branding importance also in the B2B sector.

The marketing analysts who were interviewed, who might have the most recent information of MA usage in Finland see that automated email marketing could be used as a tool for

creating brand awareness with several limitations. Of course, automated email nurturing itself as a tool does not create brand awareness, but it enables marketers to focus on the most critical things that actually create brand awareness for the company. For example, Tehnunen (2016) sees that use of marketing automation and automated email marketing enables marketers to personalize marketing messages, which could help the company to create brand awareness among the B2B customers. However, Tehnunen (2016) states that automated email marketing itself is not a good tool for creating brand awareness. That is because effective use of automated email marketing demands that customers approve or order email marketing. For example, if customers do not know anything about the brand, the company should not start sending direct emails.

That is why Tehnunen (2016) sees that automated email marketing could help companies create brand awareness, if customers do know the company and order email marketing. In other words, automated email marketing should not be used to create brand awareness among those customers who do not recall the brand at all.

Based on the use of marketing automation tools they could help brand awareness building in the later stages of the awareness pyramid by Aaker (1991, 63). The first two stages are unaware of the brand and brand recognition. This study and picture 4 below demonstrates that the use of marketing automation does not work with brand awareness building when customers are totally unaware of the brand. Seems like the customer needs to be at least at the stage of brand recognition when starting to use automated email marketing. However, the study also found out that marketing automation tools like automated email marketing could make brand awareness building more efficient in later stages of the pyramid, for example when transforming the customer from brand recognition to brand recall and top of mind awareness.



Picture 4. The Awareness Pyramid for use of marketing automation tools.

Marketing specialist Aaltonen (2016) highlights that effective use of marketing automation demands brand awareness. Aaltonen sees that a company's website, blog, keywords, social media and landing pages play a key role when creating brand awareness for the company. According to him, email marketing is a very important tool when closing the deal with a customer. As a conclusion, automated email marketing could help a company to create positive brand awareness, but not in the first steps in the customer path. First, the customers need to know something about the company, for example through social media, the company website, blog, keywords etc. and after that the company could start effectively using automated email marketing.

That is why the entire marketing automation process should happen in unison. It seems like automated email marketing does not work on its own for creating brand awareness, but it could be a very effective tool when combined with other marketing automation activities.

To actually find the answer for the main research questions, the three sub-questions should be handled first. The main research question of this study is; *how automated email marketing could be utilized to create brand awareness among B2B customers?* In order to answer the main research question perfectly, how brand awareness could be created, especially among B2B customers, should be presented first.

How to create brand awareness among B2B customers?

Edelman (2010) sees that companies do not know how to reach the customers' digital "touchpoints", where customers are open to influence when shopping online. Marketing automation technology helps marketers to find those touchpoints, measure them and also know when customers are open to influence.

Also according to Sweezey (2014, 13) a modern buyer starts their buying journey online and "goes back to google" more than 2 times during the decision making process. Buyers need time to surf and search online before they feel comfortable or ready to talk with the seller. How can the seller know when a B2B customer is ready to contact? Use of marketing automation technology enables marketers to follow, understand and measure customer's "online behavior". Marketing automation technology allows tracking certain customers and their behavior during the search process. Marketers are able to see if customers clicked, read or were interested in specific content. Automated email marketing campaigns could follow customers and nurture them automatically with more personalized content, and when customer click links and read messages enough, the automated email marketing campaign could automatically ask if the customer is ready to meet.

How to create an automated email marketing process that supports brand awareness building?

When potential customers do not already recognize or recall a brand, they need answers for the questions "'what is my problem?" and after that "how to solve this problem?". According to Aaltonen (2016), companies could help potential customers and answer these questions with webinars, guides, tips, events, blogs and videos. The case company tried to create content that answered those questions and use it in the automated email marketing test run. Also, all of the content like video, event- and webinar invitations, tips and blogs could be distributed more effectively with marketing automation and automated email marketing. For example, brand awareness literature clearly proves that differentiation and personalization are key elements of successful brand awareness building. Automated email marketing itself does not differentiate and personalize content but it enables marketers to focus on the most important parts of marketing content that will actually create brand awareness. For example, since marketers could automatically execute marketing communication, reputations and interactivity, they have more time to create content that is different from others. Previous literature also claims that marketing automation enables

marketers to personalize marketing for the mass audience. Without automated technology, personalization for the mass audience is particularly challenging and takes time.

Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) stated that high quality content for automated email nurturing should include the following key features;

1. The content design has to be based on real customer's needs, not a broad audience.
2. The content should add and create value for customers rather than just promote the company's products or services. The content should not focus on solely on the company or its products and services.
3. The content should help customers solve their problems, offer advice and make buying easier and more reliable.

6.2 Theoretical contributions

The scientific goal of this study was to add knowledge about marketing automation, especially from the marketing perspective. This study proved that marketing automation tools should not be used **alone** for creating brand awareness for the company. More likely marketing automation technologies should be used as a part of selling and marketing mechanisms. As a conclusion, marketing automation systems could be used when engaging current customers or customers who are willing to learn more about the company.

However, this study proved that marketing automation tools like automated email marketing is still a very powerful and useful tool when used alongside other marketing activities like digital marketing, inbound marketing or blogging.

6.3 Managerial notifications

However, marketing automation users need to understand that marketing automation is still just a tool and it does not miraculously solve your problems. Sometimes it feels like marketing automation software is marketed as a tool that will right away increase brand awareness, sales, customer engagement and make marketing more effective. What is true is that marketing automation is an effective tool that helps marketers easily personalize and differentiate content for mass groups, and that could be very helpful in, for example, B2B marketing. Marketers can use the same platform for all marketing activities, and more importantly, automate the process to run itself. However, while marketers could leave

certain platforms behind, they also need to learn to use new platforms for marketing automation. For example, in the case of automated email marketing, marketers are able to use the same platform for managing contacts, planning automation, creating content, delivering the marketing messages and measuring the results and follow-ups. Marketers do not need to use many different platforms for email marketing, but they need to learn to use a new platform instead. Also, marketers do not need to take care about scheduling of email messages since all the content is automated.

In the long run, use of marketing automation could be very effective but it must be noted that with marketing automation you still need to pay “learning costs”. Even though learning the use of marketing automation software is easy for digital-minded people, it still takes time. As the literature of this study proves, use of marketing automation requires a switch to a content marketing frame of mind and changing the aim of the marketing process from selling and telling to learning, listening and helping. It could also be seen that the use of marketing automation enables marketers to focus on the most important activities like creating, analyzing and measuring content that is effective.

This study proves how important it is to get marketing and sales teams to work together effectively. Before starting the implementation of marketing automation tools, all the questions and concerns about the process should be answered and taken into account. It is very important that both marketing and sales teams understand the concepts similarly.

6.4 Limitations and direction for the future research

The results of this study proved that marketing automation tools could be used to strengthen brand awareness but not for creating brand awareness from the start. Utilization of marketing automation tools like automated email nurturing requires that customers are somehow interested in the company and willing to learn more. If the customer does not know anything about the company, brand awareness building should not start with using only marketing automation tools.

Apart from brand awareness, the previous researchers were interested, how marketing automation could be used for creating brand engagement for the company. Since this study focused on the early steps of the marketing and sales funnel, future research could investigate how marketing automation tools could be used in the long run, for example in creating brand engagement. What happens after customers recognize, recall and buy a

certain brand? How to make customers buy more and more often? How to make customers feel loyalty to the brand instead of just feeling familiarity? How to engage customers with the brand long-term? Since this study examined how the use of marketing automation fits for creating brand awareness, future researchers could examine how marketing automation could be used for creating brand engagement for the company long-term.

Järvinen and Taiminen (2015) proved that previous academic research of the subject is very limited but necessary and needed. According to their study it could be beneficial to examine how marketing automation mechanisms can be utilized to create and share content for the key objectives of content marketing. Those key objectives include brand awareness as well as engagement.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview Questions

Appendix 1. Interview Questions

Marketing automation

How would you define marketing automation?

What is your motivation to start marketing automation?

What kinds of goals you have for marketing automation process?

What steps does marketing automation process planning include?

What objectives could cause bottlenecks during the marketing automation process?

Brand awareness, interest and engagement

How important is it to have a strong brand?

What is your target segment?

How do you make your brand recognizable?

Can the customers recall your brand?

In the sales process, does brand awareness, interest or engagement help you?

Digital content marketing

What kind of content is the most effective?

How significant is the role of content marketing in the company's B2B marketing?

B2B buying behavior

What kind of information that customers already have on the company, is significant?

What elements should be fulfilled before a customer is ready for a meeting?

When are leads selling ready or warm?

What kind of follow up is most efficient?