Master's Thesis in Informatics

DSB – The enabler or disabler

A qualitative study of the transforming of the relationship between Volvo CE and their dealers
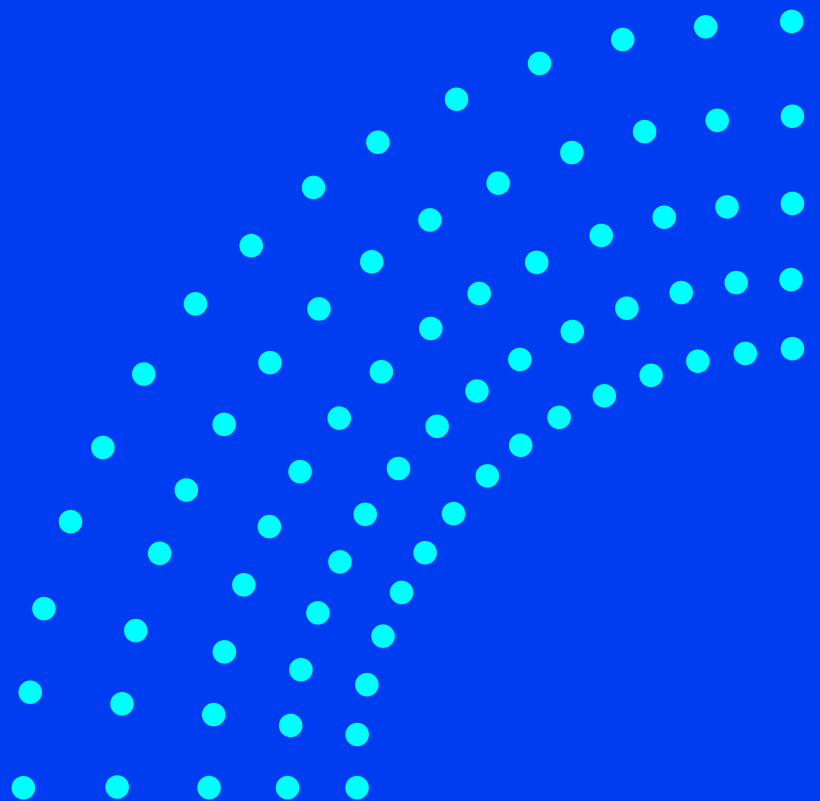
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Göteborg, Sweden 2004

IT University
of Göteborg

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Business Technology

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SUMMARY

It is relatively easy to control how a company's brand is being used within the company, but it becomes more complicated with external business partners that are promoting and selling products that are connected to the brand. Companies use different course of actions regarding how they approach this dilemma. The purpose with this master thesis is to analyze how the implementation of a new information channel (the Dealer Site Builder application) have effect on the relationship between Volvo Construction Equipment (VCE) and their local dealers, and how the Dealer Site Builder (DSB) application can be used to develop the relationship in the future. To examine the dealers' perception of the DSB there is a focus on web design aspects. To study the transformation of the relationship the focus lies on two different aspects of the relationship, branding and trust, and how these aspects are affected. In addition to this, interviews with employees at VCE and Volvo Information Technology (VIT) have been performed in order to gather background information regarding the purpose of the DSB application and how the DSB can develop the relationship in the future. The result showed that all of the interviewed dealers were of the opinion that the DSB offered a clean design that gave a professional impression. This study has shown that all dealers were very satisfied with the product information that concerns VCE's products. When discussing negative aspects, all of the interviewed dealers expressed a disappointment regarding the possibility to promote non-competitive products. A majority of the dealers requested a more distinct local connection on the DSB. The trust that a majority of the interviewed dealers have in VIT and VCE is high. The high level of trust offers a foundation that VCE can proceed from when informing about the possibilities with the DSB. The implementation of the DSB is still at an early stage, and the level of trust is high, but it is important that VCE acts in a way that maintains and creates future trust. When discussing branding, all of the interviewed dealers stated that they thought that the Volvo brand was strong and that they could derive advantages from being associated with it. Finally, it is important to underline that we think that the DSB will be successful if it continues to develop in a direction that fulfills both the dealers' and VCE's needs. It is important to make the dealers understand the possibilities with the Volvo-provided dealer site; otherwise they may not see the actual value of it. The awareness will be decisive for the success of the DSB since there is a large possibility that the whole project will fail if the dealers do not use the DSB. The DSB needs to be improved continuously in order to develop according to the dealers´ needs and thereby becoming a tool that is being used in the dealers' everyday work.

The report is written in English.

Keywords: Relationship, web design, trust, branding

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SUMMERING

Det är relativt enkelt att kontrollera hur ett företags varumärke används inom företaget, det blir dock mer komplicerat när externa affärspartners marknadsför och säljer produkter som är förknippade med varumärket. Företag använder sig av olika metoder för att komma tillrätta med dilemmat. Syftet med denna magisteruppsats är att analysera hur implementeringen av en ny informationskanal (the Dealer Site Builder application) påverkar relationen mellan Volvo Construction Equipment (VCE) och deras lokala återförsäljare, samt hur the Dealer Site Builder (DSB) kan användas för att utveckla relationen framöver. För att undersöka hur återförsäljarna uppfattar DSB:n har ett fokus legat på webbdesignaspekter. För att undersöka hur relationen har förändrats har fokus legat på två aspekter av relationen, varumärkesbyggande och förtroende, och hur dessa har påverkats. Utöver detta har det genomförts intervjuer med anställda på VCE och Volvo Information Technology (VIT) för att insamla bakgrundsinformation rörande syftet med DSB-applikationen samt hur DSB:n kan utveckla relationen i framtiden. Resultatet visade att alla intervjuade återförsäljare var av den åsikt att DSB:n erbjöd en stilren design som gav ett professionellt intryck. Denna studie har visat att alla återförsäljare var väldigt nöjda med den produktinformation som rör VCE:s produkter. Vad gäller de negativa aspekterna så var alla intervjuade återförsäljare missnöjda med de befintliga möjligheterna att marknadsföra icke-konkurrerande produkter. En majoritet av de intervjuade återförsäljarna efterfrågade en högre grad av lokal förankring på DSB:n. En majoritet av återförsäljarna uppvisade en hög grad av förtroende gentemot VIT och VCE. Denna höga grad av förtroende erbjuder en grund som VCE kan utgå från när de informerar om möjligheterna med DSB:n. Implementeringen av DSB:n befinner sig fortfarande i ett tidigt skede, och graden av förtroende är högt, men trots det är det viktigt att VCE hela tiden agerar på ett sätt som underhåller samt skapar framtida förtroende. Beträffande framtida varumärkesbyggande så ansåg alla intervjuade återförsäljare att Volvos varumärke var starkt samt att de kunde erhålla fördelar genom att associeras med det. Slutligen skulle vi vilja understryka att vi anser att DSB:n kommer bli framgångsrik om den fortsätter att utvecklas på ett sätt som uppfyller både VCE:s och återförsäljarnas behov. Det är viktigt att få återförsäljarna att bli medvetna om möjligheterna med DSB:n, annars finns det en risk att de inte ser något värde med att använda den. DSB:s framgång är beroende av att återförsäljarna görs medvetna om möjligheterna med den. Om återförsäljarna inte använder sig av DSB:n föreligger det en stor risk att hela projektet misslyckas. DSB:n bör förbättras kontinuerligt så att den utvecklas i enlighet med återförsäljarnas behov och därigenom blir ett verktyg som används i återförsäljarnas dagliga arbete.

Rapporten är skriven på engelska.

Nyckelord: Relationer, web design, förtroende, varumärkesbyggande

Acknowledgements

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Carl Löjdquist   Martin Palmqvist   Rickard Strömberg

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Appendix 1 - Interviews
Appendix 2 - Question templates

1   Introduction

In 1999, The Volvo Group initiated a new project. Volvo Information Technology in Göteborg received a mission to build a new volvo.com website. Nine months later, the project failed and was called off due to a number of reasons. Volvo Information Technology in Greensboro, USA now got the project. With the motto "think big, start small and scale fast" they succeeded with the mission about six months later. One part of the volvo.com site was about building web sites within the volvo.com environment for dealers. The Dealer Site Builder was a tool for dealers to get strong web presence and Volvo Construction Equipment was the first subsidiary within the Volvo Group to implement it. This thesis will discuss how the Dealer Site Builder influences Volvo Construction Equipment and their dealers from three different standpoints, web design, trust and branding.

In this chapter a short background of the topic as well as the problem field of this master thesis is given. The chapter will also describe the purpose of the thesis, the main question and the questions linked to illustrate the main question, together with definitions, delimitations as well as a description of how the thesis is disposed.

1.1 Background

In today's business, companies compete with more than just the actual product that they are selling. Feelings that are associated with the company name are becoming almost as important as the product itself. (Aaker 1996) In order to influence these associations companies strive to develop their brand. At present time the brand can be a competitive advantage in the pursuit of customers. A strong brand can contribute with increased credibility and positive associations. Negative associations with brands can be devastating for business. (Apéria 2001) It becomes important for companies to take control of the brand and its associations. Companies strive to convey the customers' perception of their brand to assure that the public recognizes the intended values. An expanding type of mission is the creation of visual identities for corporations, organizations and larger events. These identities are created by the use of symbols, logotypes and homogenous typography. Since a company's brand is important nowadays, the companies are very careful regarding how their brand is being used in different contexts. It has become even more important for the companies to assure that their brand is used adequately and in approved situations. (Aaker 2003)

The increased use of the Internet has led to a larger exposure of brands. Hence an improper use and spread of a company's brand on the Internet can have big impact. The Internet can be used to bring about a view of the company that can be exposed to the general public. The use of the Internet offers a complementary channel of communication which can be of use when conveying a representation of a company, but also lead to more situations where the brand can be misused or used in an unintended way. (Aaker 2003)

1.1.1 Brand management through external business partners

A substantial part of today's companies collaborate with external business partners in order to reach out to potential customers with their products. The relationship between the companies involved in this cooperation is important for a traditional manufacturing company that needs to use intermediaries to sell their products to the end customer. (Sanner 1997) This type of cooperation requires the organizing and managing of particular processes in a company. If there is a lack of trust amongst the companies involved, difficulties arise when alterations of business are made. (Keen 2000) Major companies are often positioned so that they can dictate the given terms, hence smaller business partners have no choice but to accept these terms. The issue is delicate and the outcome can have an effect on the existing relationship, thereby influencing the trust.

1.2 Problem area

To use the Internet to convey a homogeneous and adequate image of a company's brand is an extensive and complicated project. The fact that a brand can have such a strong influence has led to the fact that companies are trying to control their brand, and the ways that it is exposed, as extensively as possible. Companies use different courses of actions regarding how they approach this dilemma. It is relatively easy to control how the brand is being used within the company, but it becomes more complicated with external business partners that are promoting and selling products that are connected to the brand. Companies have developed strategies for making their business partner's way of conducting business in line with their own. Kjell-Arne Rövik (2000) points out that it is complicated to conduct organizational changes. Organizations are, generally speaking, resistant toward attempts to sudden and extensive changes. Decisions taken and implemented by management without consideration or involvement from other parties can be met by skepticism and distrust. When the controlling of a company's brand includes external business partners the project is considered to be complicated and this can be explained by a number of factors which will be furnished below.

A company brand is a delicate issue
A company brand is an asset that develops through time and it takes less time to destroy a brand than it takes to build one. The brand, and everything that surrounds it, is often handled in a delicate way in order to minimize the risk of jeopardizing it. Companies therefore take extra precautions in issues that involve their brand. (Kotler 1999)

Trust
It is important that companies have trust in their business partners in order to enable an elaboration of the collaboration. Trust is a prerequisite that is necessary in order to establish a well-functioning collaboration. If there is a lack of trust, the involved companies might experience difficulties during the collaboration. The problem is that trust needs to be established as well as maintained. If the trust is not maintained, it gets undermined and this can lead to difficulties for the involved companies. (Keen 2000)

Unwillingness to an almost exclusive cooperation
External dealers do not always regard it as a strategic advantage to be almost exclusively connected towards one manufacturer for a number of reasons. For example some might fear that the manufacturer is overlooking and controlling them as a 'big brother'.

Unfamiliarity towards new channels of communication can create uncertainty
When the Internet is implemented in a company's everyday business there is a possibility that the actual users might feel uncomfortable when using it. Hence, it is of importance that the actual users perceive that the application shows a high level of usability. (Hix & Hartson 1993) If this fails to be accomplished, there is a possibility that it will become difficult to integrate the application with the everyday work. It is important that the users are aware of the possibilities that the application brings forward. The use must have a purpose, and this purpose might be to replace a previously unfulfilled need. (Benyon & Preece 1993) The application must be outlined in a way that attracts the users, otherwise they might find it hard to accept it. The application needs to be developed with focus on the environment that the user is active in. (Siegel 1998)

This thesis studies a specific company, Volvo Construction Equipment (VCE henceforth), and the relationship with their dealers. This will be developed further in the following section of this chapter where the purpose with this thesis will be outlined along with the main question.

1.3 Purpose and main question

On account of the background information furnished above, the following purpose has been outlined:

> *The purpose with this master thesis is to analyze how the implementation of a new information channel (the DSB application) can have effect on the relationship between VCE and local dealers, and how the DSB application can be used to develop the relationship in the future.*

Based on the purpose above, the following main question has been outlined:

> *How does the DSB application transform the relationship between VCE and their dealers?*

In this thesis, the focus will be on how the dealers perceive the DSB application and how the DSB application has transformed the relationship between VCE and their dealers. To examine the dealers' perception of the DSB there is a focus on web design aspects. To study the transformation of the relationship we focus on two different aspects of the relationship; Branding and Trust. The chosen main question will be illustrated through part questions directly linked to each aspect. The main question can therefore be divided into three categories of sub-questions relating to web design, trust and branding.

Web design

- *How do the dealers perceive the DSB application?*

- *Which transformations of the DSB application do the dealers want to have implemented?*

Branding

- *How does the use of the DSB application influence a dealer's brand/web presence and how does it influence Volvo's brand?*

- *How do the dealers perceive the fact that they become a part of the Volvo brand on the Internet?*

Trust

- *How does trust have effect on the implementation of the DSB application?*

To clarify this, there have been performed interviews both with dealers that have implemented the DSB application, dealers that are going to implement the DSB application as well as dealers that have chosen not to implement the application at present time. In addition to this, there have been performed interviews with employees at VCE, VIT and AB Volvo to gather background information regarding the purpose with the DSB application and how the DSB can develop the relationship in the future.

1.4 Delimitation

This thesis has been delimited by specifically focusing on three different actors: Volvo Construction Equipment, Volvo Information Technology and the dealers of Volvo Construction Equipment. These three actors are found in different contexts when it comes to the Dealer Site Builder application. Volvo Information Technology is the developer, Volvo Construction Equipment is the owner and the dealers and their customers are the users. There has not been performed any interviews with end customers; instead the reflections made regarding end customers are taken from the three actors' standpoints.

None of the other business areas or business units within the Volvo Group has been studied, nor have we studied Volvo Car Corporation which is a subsidiary to Ford Motor Company. There has not been made any benchmarking tests of the Dealer Site Builder, therefore a comparison with other similar applications has not been made.

This thesis is going to examine the business-related relationship that exists between two parties. In this specific case the focus lies on the relation between a particular manufacturer and their dealers. The relationship that we have chosen is to focus and highlight aspects of web design, trust and branding connected to this specific relationship. Other aspects of a relationship do exist, among interesting aspects economical, net work-based and technological aspects of a relationship can be mentioned. However, this master thesis will focus on the aspects of a relationship mentioned above since we are of the opinion that these are the most interesting and essential in this context. These are the most interesting aspects since the design of a web site influences how it is perceived from a user or visitor point of view and therefore can influence the outcome. Trust is of importance since it constitutes as a foundation in relationships. This foundation, built upon trust, can enable long-term cooperation. The branding issue is of importance since it is a delicate task for companies to handle and this becomes even harder regarding co-branding on the Internet.

Regarding the theoretical framework in this thesis, there are a number of similar theories that could have been used equally good. This can be seen as a limitation since there are a large number of theories in this field which is only partly covered by the specific choice of literature. These specific theories have been chosen with departure in the three aspects of a relationship that are discussed above. Other interesting fields, such as economical and strategic management, do exist but due to the limited amount of time delimitations needed to be done.

1.5 Definitions

This section will define conceptions that are important in the thesis. Above that conceptions that are commonly used throughout the thesis will be defined in order to bring clarity.

'The DSB' and 'the DSB application' - This is a shortening for Dealer Site Builder. The DSB is a tool that is used to create dealer sites for VCE´s dealers. When referring to the DSB we do not mean the actual tool but the Volvo-provided dealer site.

VCE - This is a shortening of Volvo Construction Equipment.

VIT - This is a shortening of Volvo IT.

BA – Business Area within the Volvo Group

BU – Business unit within the Volvo Group

Volvo - When talking about Volvo it means either a given BA or the Volvo Group. This is usually specified in the context, but sometimes it only says Volvo and most of the times that means the Volvo Group, for instance regarding the Volvo brand.

1.6 Disposition

Chapter 1, Introduction
The chapter gives a short background of the topic as well as the problem field of this master thesis. The chapter will also describe the purpose of the thesis, the main question and the questions linked to illustrate the main question, together with a description of how the thesis is disposed.

Chapter 2, Theoretical framework
The theoretical framework consists of theories regarding web design, trust and branding. These theories will be discussed thoroughly in this chapter. An account of how the theories have been discussed in the fields of research, what it stands for and why it is interesting in this context will be discussed.

Chapter 3, Methodology
This chapter will describe the scientific approach and choices of practical tools to obtain the knowledge needed to illuminate the main topic. The chapter also discusses the validity and reliability of the thesis. This chapter intends to illustrate the course of actions, to provide the reader with all interesting information on how the data necessary for this thesis was gathered and point at general patterns and differences between the performed interviews.

Chapter 4, Empirical study
The development and creation of the DSB application is narrated in chronological order. Initially a statement regarding VCE's and VIT's vision with the DSB will be given. The following section consists of facts regarding the actual development, creation and roll-out of the dealer sites. The next section treats a concrete description of the dealer sites and their construction. This chapter's final section consists of a depiction regarding the users, i.e. the dealers, perception of the dealer sites.

Chapter 5, Discussion

In this chapter, the collected data will be analyzed by using theory regarding web design, trust and branding. The chapter consists of four sections and each section will be concluded with our comments and advice on what was found out in both the empirical study and the theoretical framework.

Chapter 6, Conclusion

This chapter consists of a summary where the most important aspects that have been brought forward in this thesis are highlighted.

2 Theoretical framework

The participating companies in the thesis are a manufacturer (VCE), an IT provider (VIT) and dealers (of VCE). A specified application that is supposed to be used by third parties has been developed. The third parties are VCE's dealers and the application is the DSB which is intended for the dealers' customers, in other words the end customer. The end customer can be seen as the ultimate objective but at present time the distance between VCE and the end customer is substantial, instead it is generally the dealers that possess a strong relationship with end customers.

The project involves a number of actors and each actor has different agendas. On the one hand a **web design perspective** can be distinguished and the purpose is to discuss this aspect in order to describe the structure of a web site and theories regarding usability and design. On the other hand, a **trust perspective** is considered since the ambition is to describe the importance of trust in situations where alterations of business are made. Theories regarding **branding** will also be brought forward, thereby illuminating strengths and impacts that a brand can be in possession of.

These theoretical conceptions will be discussed thoroughly in this chapter. An account of how the conception has been discussed in the fields of research, what each conception stands for and why it is interesting in this context will also be discussed.

2.1 Web design

This section includes four sub sections. The first section consists of an account of the web design concept. The second section consists of theory that highlights the importance of having the actual user in mind when designing a computer system. The third section accounts for the elements that form a web site, furthermore it gives details on design aspects which are valuable when designing an organization's web presence. It is of importance to bear these aspects in mind since they outline the basic knowledge regarding usability on the web. The fourth section treats different methods of usability testing, it also pinpoints why it is important to conduct usability tests.

There are three main reasons why these aspects are interesting to bring forward. First of all one can say that these aspects have an effect on how a dealer perceive the dealer site that has been created by the DSB. If the dealer site is perceived as unmanageable, difficult to maneuver and confusing it is not likely that the dealer site will become a part of the dealer's daily business. This line of argument leads to the second reason which focuses on the dealer's existing customers. In order to make the dealers inform their customers about the existence of their dealer site it is required that they are satisfied with the dealer site themselves. If the dealers are dissatisfied with the design it is reasonable to assume that they will not promote the dealer site since that would be bad marketing for their dealership. The third reason for focusing on web design is that the design is an important competitive advantage when it comes to obtaining new customers. In the long run, the idea is to pass on new potential buyers to the nearest

VCE dealer with the help of the 'branch locator' on volvo.com[1]. In order to keep these prospective customers it is important that the dealer site is user-friendly and interesting so that the visitors stay long enough to take part of the content. One of the requirements for enabling the DSB to obtain acceptance amongst the dealers is that they are satisfied with the content on the site and the design of the site.

2.1.1 An account of the concept web design

Web design is a relatively new occurrence and the meaning of the concept is the creative design of a web site. The concept web design consists of typography, layout, imagery, document capacity, structure, navigation, linguistic and visual quality. The evolution of web sites can be divided into three different generations. The first generation of web sites had focus on functionality and they are described as linear. These web sites suffered from a lack of layout and information was presented on a grey background. The text often consisted of long lines which were divided with horizontal lines. At this time it was more important to be present on the Internet than to actually have a web site with quality content and a well thought-out layout. The second generation of web sites appeared in 1995 when Netscape invented the blink-tag. The second generation is similar to the first with the difference that icons have come to replace words and a menu was being used to present a hierarchy of information. The third generation of web sites, which exist at present time, focuses on the design of the site and strives to attract visitors by using metaphors and visual themes. Typography and layout are combined with creative design solutions to create a positive general impression. The idea is to provide the web site with a sense of uniqueness combined with simplicity and quality content that is presented in an attractive way. (Siegel 1998)

2.1.2 Design that centers on the user

The interaction between humans and computers has given rise to a great deal of research. The field includes the communication and interaction between humans and computers as well as how the user perceives her surroundings, both physical and psychological. (Benyon & Preece 1993) The users can be divided into three groups; novice or first time, knowledgeable intermittent user, and expert frequent users. The users of these three groups all demand different user interfaces. The novice user does not have an understanding of computers and therefore perceives difficulties in identifying the actions that have to be carried out to fulfill a specific task. Therefore an interface that is integrated with the system and feels natural to the user is demanded. When designing software it is not possible to design solely with consideration to functionality. Aspects such as usability and learn ability have to be taken into account. This is called user interface design and the corresponding research area Human-Computer Interaction, hereafter HCI. (Shneiderman 1992) HCI means the design of computer systems that are simple, effective, functional and easy to use. The idea is to figure out how people are using computer systems, and then use this knowledge to create improved systems that will satisfy the actual needs. (Benyon & Preece 1993) One of the main purposes of HCI is to create systems that utilize on the strengths that

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[1] This will be described more thoroughly in section 4.3

both people and computers possess, thereby enabling the creation of new mechanisms and languages for human computer interaction. (Norman 1988)

User-centered-design, UCD, is a way of thinking that lies within the research area of HCI. The focus in UCD lies on people, their working environment and how technology can be developed and designed in order to be supportive. All designs focus on making the actual user the center of attention and therefore the development of a system should focus on finding out user needs and problems. The outcome of the product is dependent on the understanding that the designer shows. (Preece 1994) Hix and Hartson is of the opinion that UCD must focus on what is best for the user instead of focusing on the fastest and most convenient implementation way for the developers. According to Hix and Hartson it is also of importance that the developers get acquainted with the future users in order to enable the construction of a suitable system. If the user has been involved in the making of a new system the perceived reluctance will appear to a lesser extent. (Hix & Hartson 1993)

The usability of a system determines to what extent the users make use of the functionality. Jakob Nielsen, who refers to UCD as usability engineering, discusses five characteristics that should distinguish a system. Firstly, a system should be simple in order to enable the user to quickly learn the possibilities that the system has to offer. Secondly, effectiveness should characterize the system so that the user reaches a high efficiency level when he has learned to use it. Thirdly, the system ought to be designed so that the user remembers how it works, even though there are long periods of time when the user is not using the system. The fourth characteristic is the issue regarding the management of errors that occur. The use of a system should result in a low frequency of occurring errors and errors that yet tend to occur should be easy to attend. The final characteristic treats the gratification that a user should perceive when using the system. (Nielsen 1993)

A computer system's ambition is to make it easier for people when conducting their everyday work. In contrast to this ambition, recent studies show that the actual users often perceive the computer systems as difficult to understand and grasp. In order to create a system that is easy to use, it is necessary that focus shifts from a technical perspective to a user perspective. (Fossum 1996) A procedure that can be used to capture the users' opinion is the iterative process. In figure 1 the iterative process of user interface design is visualized and the main idea with this procedure is to involve the actual user in the design process. Not even the most experienced usability experts are able to design perfect user interfaces in a single attempt, hence interface designers should build a usability engineering life cycle around the concept of iteration. (Nielsen 1993)
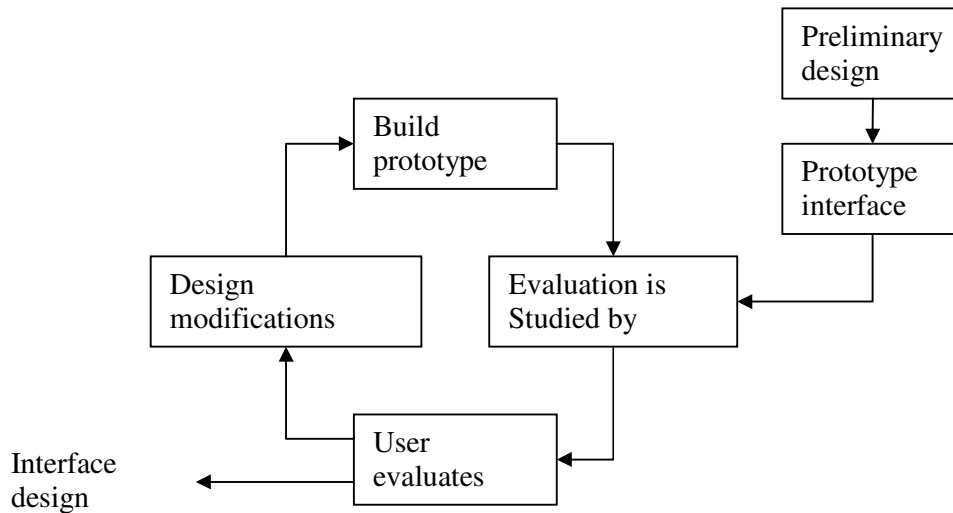
Figure 1: Interface design (Pressman 2001: 473)

Since the interface design can be seen as a part of the larger software design some kind of requirements specification is often available. This specification outlines the functionality that the system should present. In an initial phase the designer tries to describe the end user and thereafter some sort of task analysis is conducted. Task analysis and user profiles form the basis for the type of user interface style that will be used. Interface design can be seen as a highly iterative process, hence it is of importance to possess the methods and tools that are needed to evaluate and test user interfaces at the various stages in the design process. (Nielsen 1993) Different methods of usability testing will be discussed in section 2.1.3.

2.1.3 Web design aspects

The first part of this section focuses on the design of the page and includes a description of how the screen space should be used to obtain interest. Part number two explains the content design and how design is being used to allow people access to the content. The third part consists of a description regarding the importance of creating a useful site design.

The web users exhibit impatience and insistence on instant gratification, and as a result it has become important to develop web sites that obtain a high level of usability (Nielsen 2000). Hix and Hartson emphasize that the relationship between an organization and its customers can be affected by a system's capability to perform certain tasks. It is therefore important to bear in mind that what is perceived as good design in one organization is not necessarily appreciated everywhere. Hence it is of importance to develop an understanding of the organization and the tasks that are demanded in order to create a useful system. When designing a user interface, one focuses on the user's perception of the reality. It is important that the interface is designed in a way which makes it easier for the users to perform their tasks in the

specific system. The function of a system is to facilitate work tasks, hence it is of importance that the interface is designed to support the system. (Hix & Hartson 1993)

Page design
Simplicity is the fundamental rule when it comes to designing a page. Users are rarely visiting a page because of its design. Their center of interest is more often focusing on the content. Users often have specific reasons when they go to a web site. In most cases they are searching for information and it is important that the specific information is adequate. To ensure that the information wanted can be easily found, the web site must be carefully architectured from the page level through the entire site. When it comes to design, the first page differs from the linked ones. The main purpose of the first page is to provide the visitor with an overview regarding the specific content of the entire site, information regarding the originator of the site and an explanation of what is being offered on the site. The linked pages' main purpose is to focus on the content. It is of importance that a logotype is presented clearly on the first page and usually it is placed in the upper left-hand corner. The company's name should also have a clear placing that is easily seen. There should be a logotype and a heading on every page since the visitors not always enters the web site from the first page. The heading helps to explain where the visitor currently is and the logotype states which web site it is. (Nielsen 2000)

There should be a link menu on the first page that displays the main categories. This menu also makes the web site more informative and easy to navigate. News and special offerings can also be placed on the first page. A web site can also derive advantages from using a search field since many visitors prefer to use this navigation tool. (Nielsen 2000).

Content design
Quality content is one of the two most important aspects when it comes to web usability (the second aspect concerns site design and will be discussed in the next section). Content on the web needs to be much more oriented towards providing relevant information and fast answers than traditional media. It is important that a web site not only provides a series of financial statements, product catalogues and advertisements. In order to attract interest from the visitors the web site should provide information that motivates the time and effort that the downloading requires. The information needs to be original in order to satisfy the visitor's needs. (Nielsen 2000). A web site should always consist of updated and adequate information. It can be seen as a service to the visitors to show which information on the web site that is the latest. By showing when the information was updated, the visitor can decide whether it is relevant and up-to-date or not. To earn the visitor's trust, the information must offer more than an overview. There must be some depth to the content and depth is earned by making sure that the information not becomes static. (Sampson et al 2002)

All business web sites need to provide a clear way to find information about the company, no matter how big or small the company is, or how simple or complex the range of products are. The visitor likes to know with whom they are doing business, and details about the company give credibility to the site. The site must be able to communicate in one short glance where visitors are, what the company does and what

visitors can do at the site. An 'About us'-section should exist since it enables the visitor to contact the company that provides the web site. This section also informs where the company is located, phone numbers, fax numbers, addresses, contact lists and more information similar to this. It is easier for the visitor to contact the company if the information in the 'About us'-section is detailed. (Sampson et al 2002).

Most visitors scan online content and therefore it is important to optimize content for scannability and craft it to convey maximum information in few words (Nielsen 2000).

> *"Usability studies indicate a fierce content focus on the part of users. When they get to a new page, they look immediately in the main content area of the page and scan it for headlines and other indications of what the page is about. Only later, if they decide that the content is not of interest to them, will they scan the navigation area of the page for ideas of where else to go." (Nielsen 2000: 100)*

Jakob Nielsen (2000) states that it can be positive to use pictures if they are meaningful and serve a purpose. This means that pictures should not be used without consideration. If a picture is used properly, it can provide more information than a written section.

Text on a web site

It is important to bear in mind that a text needs to be created with consideration to its purpose, thus making it necessary to rewrite texts that have been used in other medias than the web. A text should either be written directly for the web, and thereby take into consideration all rules regarding the creation of text on the web, or one can use an existing text and revise it. Texts on the web need a well thought-out structure, disposition and an eloquent language. It takes more of an effort to read text on screen compared to traditional reading, hence it is of importance to adjust the text to the media in use. Reading a text on screen is a strain on one's eyes since the human eye needs to concentrate to a higher extent as a result of a screen's reduced resolution. (Englund & Guldbrand 2001) According to Jakob Nielsen (2000) the text is the most important component on a web site and therefore it requires reflection in the creation of the text. It takes approximately 25 percent longer to read a text that is published on the web (Nielsen 2000). One of the reasons for this is that most of the on-screen reading takes place when the reader sits upright. This position leads to the drying up of one's eye since the eyes do not moisten like they normally do when the gaze is faced downwards (Englund & Guldbrand 2001).

Site design

A site consists of both an aesthetical and a technical part. The site ought to be quick to download, the pictures must be compressed correctly and it is of importance that the colors function together. The design can be seen as the site's and the company's public appearance. A web site's structure differs from a book's since the chapters in a book are placed in the order that they should be read. Web sites are lacking of this linear structure since it is impossible to know how the visitor will navigate through the site. It is important that a visitor can move freely between the different pages on the web site. It is critical that visitors are able to find the appropriate navigation area effortlessly and that this area gives a good sense of what lies beneath the links. The navigation area should reveal the most important content of the site. (Ullman et al 2000)

When designing the site it is important to focus on usability since the users will not find the correct pages unless the site is structured according to user needs. It is essential for the site to contain a navigation scheme that allows the users to find what they are looking for. (Nielsen 2000) If a similar design is used on every page of the web site, it becomes easier for the visitor to use the web site efficiently. A navigation tool that is outlined in a particular way must never differ when it comes to functionality. (Ullman et al 2000)

When a visitor can locate the information wanted without experiencing any problems, there is an increasing possibility that the visitor will return to the web site. The design of suitable navigation tools on the web site can help to facilitate the visitor's navigation process. The hierarchy on the web site should be structured so that no information is placed too deep within the site. (Sampson et al 2002)

There are different models to handle the disposition of a web site and the selected disposition guides the visitor's actions and behavior on the web site. Englund & Guldbrand (2001) divide the different disposition models into four main categories. These categories can be used separately or combined.
- Chronological disposition
- Hierarchical disposition
- Thematic disposition
- Associative disposition

There is only one way to move around on a web site that is structured according to the *Chronological disposition* (see figure 2). This type of structure can be used in order to partly control the visitor's movement on the web site. Since this disposition fails to give any freedom when it comes to navigation, the structure is seldom suitable for an entire web site. (Englund & Guldbrand 2001)
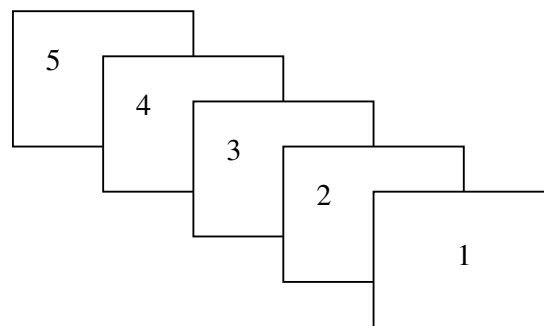
Figure 2: Chronological disposition (Englund & Guldbrand 2001)

The *hierarchical disposition* (see figure 3) is the most frequently used structure amongst web sites. The upper page in the structure is the starting page on the web site. The information continues to get more specific as the visitor gets further down the structure. The structure should contain a maximum of three to four levels in order to

keep the web site easy to navigate. If the structure exceeds these limits, there should be a map of the web site in order to make it easier for the visitor. (Englund & Guldbrand 2001)
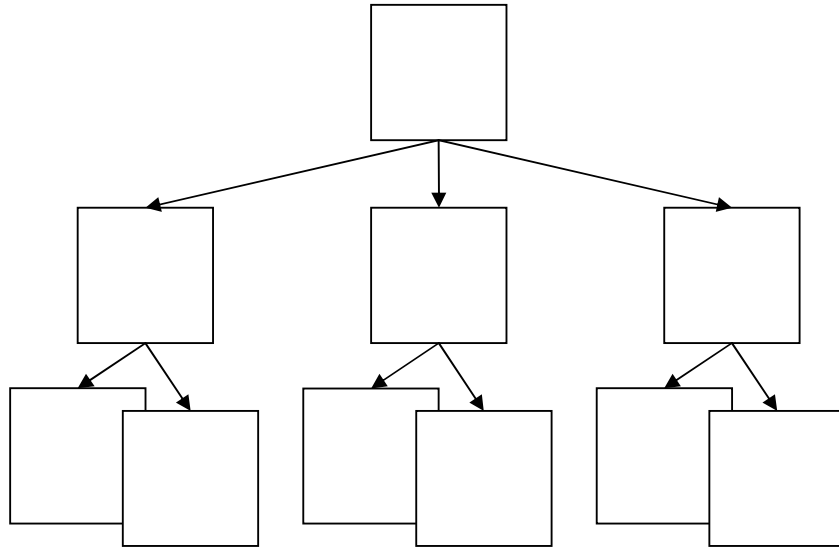
Figure 3: Hierarchical disposition (Englund & Guldbrand 2001)

A *thematic disposition* (see figure 4) treats every part separately, hence the different parts are independent of each other. The parts are only connected through a mutual starting page which offers an overview of the content. (Englund & Guldbrand 2001)
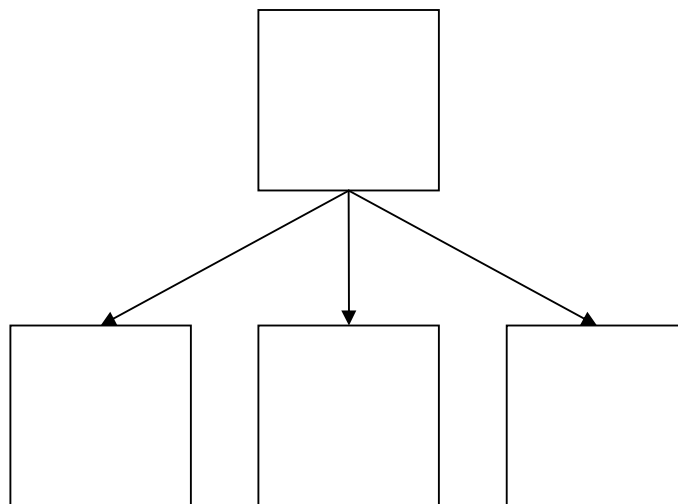
Figure 4: Thematic disposition (Englund & Guldbrand 2001)

The *associative disposition* (see figure 5) offers freedom when it comes to navigation since the visitor can move freely without taking chronology or hierarchy into consideration. The disadvantages of this structure, is that it is difficult to navigate on it. (Englund & Guldbrand 2001)
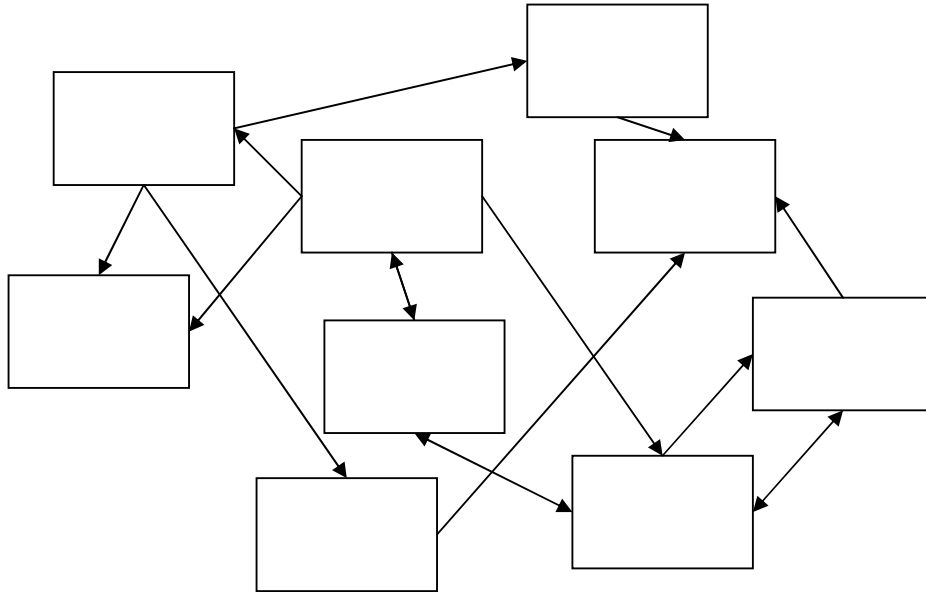
Figure 5: Associative disposition (Englund & Guldbrand 2001)

2.1.4 Evaluation

By using methods to evaluate the development of systems, it is possible to identify and take care of many of the usability problems that the user experiences with the system. In order to enable the creation of a usable system, it is necessary to test the system on the future users at an early stage. (Fossum 1996)

There are five reasons that explain the purpose of testing a system (Rubin 1994);
- Minimize costs that can be derived from service and support.
- Create a history regarding usability which can be used in order to prevent that old mistakes are repeated.
- It is possible to create a competitive advantage.
- It can increase sales.
- Minimize the risk of creating a product with extensive usability problems.

A quick and simple method for evaluation should be used at the beginning of the developing process. Methods that are more extensive should be used in a later phase of the development. The choice of method is dependent on who the future users are, how long the project has proceeded, what type of system is being built and what the allocated resources are. This procedure can also be applied when evaluating an existing system. The quick and simple method can be used to establish whether it is necessary

to continue or not. A more extensive method can be used to establish what it is that needs to be tested. (Preece 1994)

Jakob Nielsen (1993) divides the evaluation methods into three categories; Inspection, Usability test and Empirical examination.
- The inspection method involves the inspection of usability aspects in the user-interface. This method is mainly performed without including the actual user, instead specialists within HCI carry out the tests.
- Usability testing is designed so that the end-user performs certain tasks in the system. The result that can be derived from a usability test shows to what extent that the user-interface is helping the user to understand how certain tasks in the system should be performed.
- The Empirical examination focuses on letting the users answer questions regarding the system. The questions are answered in writing or orally and treat the user's opinions on enhancements and their view on the existing system. The evaluator can also obtain information regarding the user by observing them when they use the system in their everyday work.

This ends the first section of the theory chapter regarding web design and in the following section theories regarding trust will be brought up.

2.2 Trust

This section consists of six sub sections. The first section consists of an account of the trust concept. The second section consists of theory regarding trust in the world of business. The third section treats with how trust can be built, requirements to achieve trust and actions that companies can accomplish in order to create trust. It also contains synergy effects that can be brought forward by the commitment, which is dependent upon trust. In the fourth section the importance of maintaining trust is outlined. This can be dealt with through mutual benefits, support and competence within the companies. The fifth section is about relationships that are long-term based. This is connected to trust and commitment and its importance in these kinds of relationships. This section highlights the importance of retaining existing customers and cooperating parties since it is less resource consuming. How relationships can be of different character in different contexts is also considered in this section as well as drawbacks connected to long-term cooperation. The sixth and final section regarding trust consists of how trust can diminish. It deals with difficulties to regain trust after mistakes are committed and problems connected to the implementation of new technologies and information channels.

The focus of this thesis is a particular kind of trust, more specifically the current trust between a particular manufacturer and its dealers. Trust is a necessity for this relationship to work efficiently, and a crucial factor that can affect whether the cooperation will be successful or not. Trust is crucial to accomplishing alterations regarding the way business is conducted; trust can also encourage the participation of both parties involved. Changes like these are hard to establish if the relationship lacks trust. It is easier to accomplish changes if the degree of trust is high. The trust issue does not end when the changes are carried out since the importance to manage existing

trust is just as important, possibly even to a greater extent. If the maintenance of trust is unsuccessful, the likelihood that the cooperating party will be disappointed increases.

2.2.1 An account of the concept trust

There are a number of different definitions of what we refer to as trust. Keen et al (2000) means that trust or confidence is an expression that is intensively studied in several disciplines differing greatly from each other such as politics, sociology, psychology, medicine and economy. It is therefore hard to reach consensus regarding a homogenous and valid definition of trust. Even if there are a number of different definitions on the matter of trust in each discipline, there are some common characteristic. Terms that are used synonymously in the different disciplines are e.g. interpersonal skills, self-confidence, reliability, rationality, belief, competence and expectations. (Keen et al 2000) In the field of trust, Luhmann (1979) is a common point of reference. His view on trust is that the other party will act in an expected and desired way. Furthermore;

> *"To show trust is to anticipate the future. It is to behave as though the future were certain." (Luhmann 1979:10)*

This means that one can make use of the present in an attempt to reduce complexity and uncertainty in the future. This behavior can make the existing trust a foundation for the future. (Luhmann 1979)

In many industries it is of importance to build trust within the organization or with suppliers connected to the company. From this point of view underlying trust is fundamental to enable the building of trust towards a company's actual consumers. Trust can be seen from different angles in different contexts and it is hard to actually measure. The degree of trust affects a company's ability of performing business to a great extent. A high degree of trust amongst suppliers and customers facilitates the business opportunities while the contrary, i.e. distrust or lack of trust, tends to prevent business activities. Trust can be used as a means of control in business. If the confidence and thereby commitment towards cooperating parties is strong, a mutual base for the parties involved can be constituted. This can facilitate the management in different issues that emerge in the daily contact between involved parties. (Keen 2000)

Trust in terms discussed above plays an important role in almost every interaction from effective communication to learning and problem-solving. Seen from a corporate perspective, trust has been identified as crucial to both relationship-based cooperation, as well as the continuity of corporate ventures. Moreover, trust may lead to committed relationships, decreased transaction costs, and function as a significant determinant for managerial problem-solving efficiency. Finance and activities depend on and influence each other reciprocally, furthermore in a corporate perspective. (Sanner 1997)

2.2.2 The trust issue in the world of business

"*Value in the relationship comes from personalization, collaboration, community, and above all the design of trust*". (Keen 2000:163)

A new social tradition is needed in today's electronic environment in order to increase the ability of cooperative behavior and to enable business relationships. Since this way to communicate lacks face-to-face contact and it is difficult to determine the intonation of the contrary party's voice, it is important to create new social forms of relationships between companies and customers. (Shneiderman 2000) However, the lack of direct interaction in electronic business can be addressed by providing complete information in terms of history about the company, its legal status and presentations of the people behind it. This can breed familiarity which moreover can generate trust. (Egger 2002) The willingness to get to know the opposite party is the first step in the meeting between people. The foundation of a relationship does not start until this stage has been passed and in this procedure confidence can be able to grow forward. This confidence can work as a fundament for trust, which will be of importance for the relationship's ability to move forward. Within businesslike relations, especially on the Internet, trust is a requirement in order to enable the conducting of business. (Preece 2000) One of the most important elements regarding the uptake and use of electronic forms of business is the necessity of trust. (Egger 2002)

Engaging in business-to-business relationships, many companies have switched from private networks to the Internet as the mediator between business partners. The advantages that can be derived from using their relationship business on the Internet as base are for instance the low initial cost of IT infrastructure and the reach of the Internet which increases the number of potential business partners. The cost of acquiring new customers is significantly higher than retaining existing customers which can explain that relationships based on trust can constitute a strong competitive advantage. (Egger 2002)

2.2.3 The building of trust

Before a statement regarding the factors that can affect the development of trust is given, it is necessary to explain why this is of importance. Both the customer and the company receive strength through trusting each other and this is a matter that concerns both involved parties. (Gummesson 1998) According to Sanner (1997) trust is built on the expectation that someone or something will act in the way needed or desired. When individuals put trust in this, they believe that their expectations will be met and that they thereby will avoid dealing with the disappointment of unfulfilled expectations. When expectations are met, trust is built while if they are unfulfilled, the result will be distrust. Furthermore trustworthiness depends on an individual's norms and social structures within his society and culture, which is based on the social and economic governance mechanisms. Individuals form their opinions, whether to trust or not, based upon the values, principles, or standards from their culture, class membership, family and their individual characteristics. (Sanner 1997) Trust can be built through the development of personal relationships, which in turn is built by letting people socialize. (Davenport & Prusak 1998)

Three actions that companies can take in order to create trust are, according to Shaw (1997), *Achieving Results*, *Acting with Integrity*, and *Demonstrating Concern* (see figure 6). Each of these factors influence one another, however the importance and relevance of each of these actions in building trust differs based on the specific situation. Furthermore, each of these factors must be understood and practiced consistently in order for companies to achieve a high level of trust with their consumers. (Shaw 1997)

| Achieving results | + | Acting with integrity | + | Demonstrating concern | = | Level of trust |
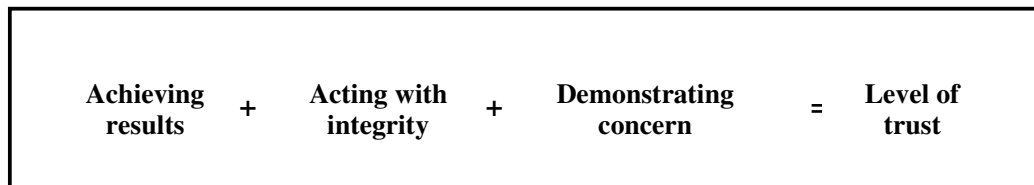
Figure 6: Achieving and sustaining trust (Shaw 1997)

Commitment to promises made by companies is their responsibility as well as fulfillment of them. Commitment is also of importance if the companies want to earn as well as sustain the trust from their customers. Customer expectations are based partly on what the company will perform or achieve for them, consumers will loose trust if their expectations are not met. Furthermore, everyone within the company needs to work cooperatively by fulfilling their obligations in order to make sure that consumers develop a trustful relationship with the company. (Shaw 1997)

Inconsistency in words and actions is the key factor that draws customers to believe that a company is untrustworthy. Most individuals are inclined to trust those who they perceive to behave consistently in their words as well as actions. If companies want to achieve the trust of consumers, it is essential that they act with integrity, e.g. consistency in all their actions. A company's ability to demonstrate concern is crucial if they want to develop trust with their consumers and moreover want their consumers to feel that they can rely on them at all times. The company can do this by showing consumers that they understand and are responsive to their interests, needs and satisfaction. (Shaw 1997)

To achieve trust the trustee should follow these four specific aspects (Herriot et al 1998):
- Act competently in his role
- Be open and honest, not seeking to deceive
- Not take advantage of the company but rather be concerned about their welfare
- Act reliably, behaving consistently and keeping promises

The techniques and sources for gaining information from suppliers are similar to dealing with the organizations' own customers, but with one important difference.

Suppliers more often than customers have interests in relationships with the organization. At the same time, they have more information to hide and therefore the supplier in general wants to build relationships, without giving away all their power. This information is important to bear in mind while establishing business connections and build trust between parties involved. (Davenport & Prusak 1998)

Synergy effects by strong commitment
A close cooperation between companies can help to solve the problem of getting access to competence while at the same time reducing the coordination problems that naturally exists in a market. (Hamel and Prahalad 1994a; Jarillo 1998; Grant and Baden- Fuller 2000) Alliances like these tend to be cautious initially which can lead to cooperation problems that will arise at various levels of the organization. However, these problems will be resolved over time. As they work together, mutual trust will grow and as the parties adapt to each other the cooperation problems will also diminish. This can be seen in forms of a common language, routines and technology. If this development does not take place, the alliance will be unsuccessful since it would fail to give any advantages on the market. (Grant and Baden-Fuller 2000)

Apart from having actual competences, an organization can also facilitate the development and analysis of competences. Through the mutual trust that can exist in a group each member has the possibility of testing new ideas with their equals which then will go through social validation by the group, where it can be encouraged or discouraged by the members. This mechanism can give access to a larger competence base since the group evaluates ideas and provide more creativity for each member's competence. This mechanism is most important for members that are not considered to be experts in their field. In an environment of trust they are more willing to share their thoughts and ideas. Since the experts affects the authority through their expertise and do not need additional support from others, they are also less dependent of such mechanisms. (Stasser, Taylor and Hanna 1989; Hinsz 1990)

2.2.4 Maintaining trust

When confidence has grown to commitment between two parties, either company to consumer or between companies, it is essential to maintain this trust and develop it into a depending relationship. Trust can be ruined easily but is hard to rebuild and seen from this perspective the maintenance of trust is of great importance.

Basic ingredients of relationships are trust and commitment. Trust is crucial to relationships as it enables a long-term cooperation. It can help companies to resist short-term offers and focus on the long-term. When companies engage in a relationship, they become dependent of each other's resources, knowledge, and the business that the relationship provides. This causes uncertainty for the firms which somehow have to be managed. Trust has the power to overcome the uncertainty and provides a base for deepening of relationships. The perception of trust is often shaped by peoples' experience. It can be experience from other similar relationships, but it may as well be a matter of general experience. (Johansson, Kushch & Silver 2000)

Through competence trust can be developed, which refers to a company's ability to perform a job well. To achieve trust from consumers it is of importance that they believe they can trust the judgment and decision-making of a company even when there are changes. Important attributes for a company to be permeated by are openness, honesty and truthfulness to their consumers in order to obtain their trust. In other words, companies need to be as transparent as possible in all their business actions. This includes for example financial performance and the fact that responsibility is taken when mistakes towards consumers are made. Moreover, consumers need to be convinced that the company is reliable and consistent in all their actions. In order to feel trust towards the company consumers need to know that they can depend on them. Furthermore, the relationship between the consumer and the company is affected in terms of equity. This means that the company has to be sensitive when finding out what consumers really want and then provide this. Trust will not be achieved if the consumers feel that the company is unreasonable to deal with. (Reynolds 1997)

To have a relationship with a customer implies that the customer comes to the company for reasons beyond just buying products and searching for information. At this point the bonds are strengthened between the customer and the company and each party bring more and more to the relationship. This can be expressed in terms of the company bringing more and more partners to the relation, at the same time as the customer brings more and more of a community focus. Companies are learning how to use the relationship to create, for example, mutual development and estimation (Keen 2000)

A 'win-win-situation' can be a result when both parties benefit from a mutual relationship. This means that the customer can expect to receive a product or service that fulfill his or her expectations and that the company offers some kind of warranty if any defects or insufficiency derive from the product. In contrary, the company can benefit from the relationship by expecting the customer to return if he or she is pleased with the product and the company's overall performance. The importance of building customer confidence signifies that the company at the same time can create the foundations of long-term cooperation. Furthermore, this means that the company can cut costs that are often connected to the searching for new customers or other kinds of cooperating parties. Recruiting new customers is often a lot more expensive than the process of deepening relationships with existing customers. (Gummesson 1998)

2.2.5 Long-term relationships

Relationships are valuable assets that companies can establish. By moving into a market early, a company can establish relationships with customers, distributors and suppliers and by doing so keep competitors out of the market (Ford et al 1998). Generally speaking relationships in business contexts can be of different nature. Some of them are more long-term based while others are short-lived. A number of relationships are more sufficient while others are insufficient. A relationship has to go through different stages to develop. However, all relationships do not move according to predetermined patters. Some fail initially and thereby become short-lived while others are long-termed and move into the different stages. Relationships are not developed according to a linear scheme but are instead often dynamic and require

flexibility from the involved parties. Trust and commitment are amongst the most important ingredients in a relationship. However, other variables such as mutual goal orientation and information sharing are also important in order to create long-term relationships in which value sharing is included. (Ford et al 1998) Commitment is the ability to maintain a relationship and it consists of three different components (Johansson, Kushch & Silver 2000);

- Sacrifice of some value
- Willingness to act in certain ways
- Efforts to secure consistency and continuity in the relationship

Commitment is important as it saves the company the time and effort that it takes to search for new partners. In addition to trust, commitment is the second most valuable component in a relationship. (Johansson, Kushch & Silver 2000)

In the long-term stage, both companies are highly dependent of each other. In this stage, the experience of both companies leads to the establishment of common operating practices, such as trust and norms of conduct. The routines that occur in long-term cooperation, might not relate well to neither companies' business practice. Ford (1997) refers to this phenomenon as institutionalization. Both companies will become less responsive to market conditions and this might turn into lack commitment. Companies may become dependent on their counterparts and the social distance is also minimized in the long-term stage since relations develop over time. (Ford 1997)

In the business world of today it is both hard and expensive to gain new customers and this has led to a shift of focus, from frequently searching for new customers, to maintaining of existing customers. New channels and forums have opened up new possibilities to create and manage relationships. However, the maintenance, and creation, of relationships is still a tough balance of how these relationships should be created and maintained. (Zigurs & Qureshi 2001)

Relationships in different contexts

Products sold in industrial markets can be considered as complex products and for those the marketing mix is not a sufficient description of what the supplier offers to its customers. Variables can be added in order to increase the value of the product and such a variable is technology. The focus shifts from being price oriented to value oriented and this can be explained by the fact that the parties involved gets more interested in the value provided. (Ford et al 1998)

Companies' active in industrial markets are often dealing with its customers on an individual basis and each relationship with their customers has some distinct characteristics. The personal interaction enables both the supplier and customer to reduce uncertainty, and the degree of flexibility is high since adaptations in products and services can be made. The interacting between the parties can enable the building of trust and confidential information can be exchanged since it is easier to build social relations. This interaction can lead to deep relationships with strong bonds between the salesman and the customer. However, such a strong bond could also potentially harm the company since customers may identify more with the salesperson than with the

company itself. A result of this might be that the customer follows the salesman if he decides to work for another company. (Ford et al 1998)

There are some factors that determine how important the relationship towards the company is for the customer. The impact of these aspects is depending on the specific context where the relationship takes place. Depending on the value of the products that a company provides to its customers, the relationship is more or less important for the customer. The relationship is more important the higher the value of the product is. The quantity also affects the importance of the relationship as when it increases, so does the importance of the relationship. Moreover, the content of the offering is also important in determining how valuable the relationship is for the customer. (Ford et al 1998)

Drawbacks of long-term relationships
Building close relationships can provide the company with many benefits. Although, there can also be noticeable drawbacks when creating relationships, such as limitations of the company's flexibility since the other party has to be considered in the decision-making process. Moreover, the relationship ties up resources which will make it more difficult for a company to establish relationships with new partners. However, the establishment of more facilitative and integrative relationships also demands that resources and capabilities can be shared between the parties so that each party can focus on his core processes. This can lead to the fact that one party is being dependent on the other party's resources and capabilities in order to function. If this party pulls out of the relationship the other party will get problems which can affect their competitiveness. (Ford et al 1998)

2.2.6 Actions that make trust diminish

If trust is neither improved nor maintained in a sufficient way it can diminish. Some actions may as well lead to distrust or lack of trust in a relationship that was fortunate up until just recently. Moreover, trust is 'self perpetuating', i.e. the individual will continue to search for reasons that support their opinion not to trust. This makes it difficult to gain back the trust and confidence, after mistakes have been committed. For example, if a consumer has had a bad experience with a company in the past, this will have a direct impact regarding their trust towards the specific company. Furthermore, once the individual's trust has been violated it would involve a higher level of risk to trust again. Many customers are not willing to take that risk, but it depends on the individual. (Shaw 1997)

2.2.7 Trust and the Internet

The possibilities to create and manage relationships have been enabled by new web technologies and collaborative systems. The possible reach of these relationships has also increased. Networks of people, groups and organizations are able to work together regularly despite the fact that they are based on different locations. These relationships can be created and sustained through teamwork enabled by collaborative work technologies. Technology also enables forums in which employees, professionals and policy makers can inform, communicate and interact with each others. Virtual

workspaces are making an impact in supporting interorganizational relationships, as to be seen in the travel industry where airlines, hotels and different types of agencies are working together. Through cooperation and collaboration, organizations can create synergies that are adding value for the customer. (Zigurs & Qureshi 2001) The sharing of resources and capabilities enables enhancements in overall effectiveness, such as production and distribution, and the parties involved in the relationship can get access to resources and capabilities that they do not possess on their own. (Ford et al 1998)

The Internet-based business has created many new services and business models. The problem is that lack of experience often is connected to unfamiliarity which implies that it is more likely to generate mistrust than trust. This phenomenon can partly be explained by the lack of previous experience and understanding of these new business models. A person's level of IT experience has a direct effect on how confident he or she feels when using this technology. Web sites are intended to be the most dynamic medium at present time since information can be updated and published instantly. However, this is not always the case in reality where problems regarding price, description or availability of information can be perceived. (Egger 2002)

There are some areas where the online interaction does not attract customers as quickly nor as much as expected. Some businesses manage its relationships best outside the online world. This argument is common in fragmented industries and one reason that can explain this industry's failure on the Internet might be the industry workers themselves. This industry's doubts in the Internet might be that salespeople in general, all the way from house sellers to car or insurances sellers, prefer face-to-face selling, since that is their traditional way of performing business. (Keen 2000)

2.3 The Brand

This Section consists of four sub sections. The first sub section is an account of the concept branding and this section discusses and defines branding from a theoretical standpoint. The second sub section is about brand equity and how the brand consists of values which can divided into four different categories, awareness, loyalty, perceived quality and associations. The third sub section is about local brands, the pros and cons with having a local brand and how it differs from a global brand. The fourth and final sub section will describe branding on the Internet and how it differs from conventional branding.

From the time where sales mainly were about just selling a product to a consumer it has now come to the point where a company's sales figures are about much more. The consumers of today rarely buy any products or services without having heard of it before. This is however dependent on the type of commodity. Today consumers not only buy a product or service, they buy a lifestyle and an image. A company's brand has become their window to the surrounding world. A brand can consist of many values for the consumer which sometimes can be crucial for the consumer's decision process. This depends on the type of product or service along with other factors. The brand is of importance to a company's success but also a good foundation to the company's profiling. In today's situation, with the Internet being an evident example, profiling is also possible through different channels. This chapter looks at the pertinent

theory regarding branding on the Internet. The focus lies on branding for the dealers, that are business partners, rather than branding for the end customers.

2.3.1 An account of the concept branding

An orange… is an orange… is an orange. Unless, of course, that orange happens to be a Sunkist, a name eighty percent of consumers know and trust.
> - Russell L. Hanlin, CEO, Sunkist Growers

Kapferer (1997) claims that the brand is not the product but it gives the product meaning and defines its identity in both time and space. Arnerup-Copper and Edvardsson (1998) states that the brand is a mixture of attributes, tangible and intangible, symbolized in a trademark which, if managed properly, creates values and influence. This is something that Clifton and Maughan (2000) agrees on and adds that a brand equals a relationship, reputation, a set of expectations and a promise.

Branding is building a brand in the mind of the prospect. It is similar to positioning and marketing. If a powerful brand is built, a powerful marketing program can be established. If this task fails all the advertising, fancy packaging, sales promotion, and public relations in the world will not help to achieve the given objective. A branding program should be designed to distinguish a specific product from all the competing products on the market, even if all products that are available on the market look similar. A successful branding program is based on the concept of singularity. It creates in the mind of the prospect the perception that there is no product on the market quite like this specific one. (Ries & Trout 2001)

2.3.2 Brand equity

According to Aaker (1996) and Kotler (1999) the brand's values are summoned into what they call 'Brand equity'. Brand equity is a set of assets linked to a brand's name and symbol which adds value to a provided product or service. Brand equity can be divided into four main categories (Aaker 1996):

- Brand awareness
- Brand loyalty
- Perceived quality
- Brand associations

Several aspects of the brand equity definition deserve elaboration. First, brand equity is a set of assets, which means that the management of brand equity involves investment to create and improve these assets. Second, each brand equity asset creates value in a variety of different ways. In order to manage brand equity effectively and to make informed decisions about brand-building activities, it is important to be observant of how strong brands create value. Third, brand equity creates value for the customer as well as the firm. In this case, the word customer means both end users and those at the infrastructure level. Thus, the Hilton hotels for example, need to be concerned with its image among not only consumers who travel but also travel agents. Fourth and finally, for assets or liabilities to underlie brand equity, they must be linked to the name and symbol of the brand. If the brand's name or symbol should change, some or all of the

assets or accountabilities could be affected and even lost, although some might be shifted to the new name and symbol. (Aaker 1996) According to Kotler (1999), brand equity is based on the extent to which it has brand loyalty, name, awareness, perceived quality, strong brand associations, and other assets.

Brand awareness
Awareness refers to the strength of a brand's presence in the consumer's mind. Consumers often buy a product or service that is linked to a well-known brand because they feel confidence in the well-known. An unknown brand usually has a small chance of being chosen. When consumers see a brand and remember that they have seen it before they realize that the company is spending money to support the brand. Since it is generally believed that companies will not spend money on bad products or services, consumers take their recognition as a signal indicating that the brand is good. Brand awareness is often divided into different levels (Aaker 1996):

- *Top of mind*, or brand name dominance, is the ultimate awareness level. In a recall task the customers mention that particular brand first of all.
- *Brand recall* is when the brand comes to consumers' minds when its product class (for example, life insurance companies) is mentioned.
- *Brand recognition* reflects familiarity gained from past exposure. Recognition does not necessarily involve remembering where the brand was encountered before, why it differs from other brands, or even what the brand's product class is. It is simply remembering that there was a past exposure to the brand.
- *Unaware of brand*. The respondent is not aware of the brand.

Because consumers are bombarded every day with a growing amount of marketing messages, the challenge of establishing recall and recognition, and doing so economically, is considerable. Two factors are likely to be increasingly important as firms struggle with this challenge. First, given the resources required to create healthy awareness levels, a broad sales base is usually a large asset. It is expensive and often almost impossible to support brands with relatively small unit sales and a life measured in years instead of decades. For this reason, corporate brands such as General Electric, Honda or Siemens have an advantage when it comes to building presence and awareness, because multiple businesses support their brand name. Second, in the coming decades, the firms that become skilled at operating outside the normal media channels will be the most successful in building brand awareness. Getting consumers to recognize and recall the particular brand can considerably enhance brand equity. However, simple recall or recognition is only part of the awareness challenge. The strongest brands are managed not for general awareness, but for strategic awareness. It is one thing to be remembered, it is quite another thing to be remembered for the right reasons. (Aaker 1996)

A firm must actively try to establish the brand in customer's minds as well as shaping what the brand represents. Brand Associations refer to what a customer links a brand to in his or her mind. These are the perceptions that the customers have in their minds about the brand. Brand associations can also be referred to as the brand image. The brand image or associations are created and influenced by specific attributes in the brand identity. Associations can be both emotional and functional and they can make

up a picture of the brand that is positive and strong in comparison to competitors. (Melin 1999)

Brand awareness is an asset which increases in value over time. The more the brand is exposed and used by the consumers the stronger the asset. A result of strong brand awareness is that the company builds barriers towards other brands. (Apéria 2001)

Brand loyalty

To have loyal customers is important in order to enable a specific company to establish its market position. This is of importance since the competitors do not want to spend unnecessary amounts of resources on consumers that are hard to obtain. Brand loyalty is therefore an important barrier towards competitors. Brand loyalty is the core of brand equity and an indicator on a company's future profits. Brand loyalty is also affected by the other three dimensions of brand equity. (Apéria 2001)

In some consumer-behavior research it is seen that purchases are preceded by a decision process. However, there is a significant portion of purchases that are not preceded by this decision process. In many situations this process never occurs, not even on the first purchase. The debate between those who believe in rational brand choice and brand loyalty and those who believe in non-rational brand choice and weak non-existent brand loyalty has to a large extent ignored a substantial body of evidence about how consumers choose among brands. As it happens, this evidence comes down decisively on the side of those who believe that most consumers do not forge decisive loyalties to brands, most of the time. (Weilbacher 1993)

Perceived quality

The expression 'perceived quality' handles some of the associations that the customer has to the given brand. It treats the matter of how the customer perceives the quality of the brand, which affects the public perception of the brand and therefore the company's added value as well. (Aaker 1992)

In the long run, the most important factor that affects a business unit's performance is the quality of its products and services, relative to those of competitors. The perceived quality can differ from the actual quality for many reasons. One reason is that consumers are affected by a prior image of bad quality; therefore it is critical to protect a brand from gaining a reputation of poor quality from which recovery is difficult and sometimes impossible. (Aaker 1996)

Brand associations

Brand associations involve all the factors that link the customers to a specific brand in any way. Everything that tries to unite the company and their customers can be classified as brand association. The main focus is on the specific image that the customers intend to improve by their choice of brand, product attribute, symbols and other personal or organizational associations. The effort to determine what associations the customers want to be related to is therefore of importance. (Aaker 1996)

2.3.3 Local brands

Being a local brand means that the specific company probably has a relatively small geographical area covered but instead probably has a higher level of trust. Local brands are filled with a high level of trust and personal connections, which is based on the way that consumers relate the brand to their personal life. Furthermore, it is explained that local brands are more than just brands. They can be seen as institutions, which encourage a definite level of trust. This trust is dependent on four factors: (Kapferer 2002)

- Structural factors
- Brand equity factors
- Competitive factors
- Environmental factors

Structural factors

Local brands provide consumers with trust and loyalty. A local brand can be known for generations, and if the purchase is not frequent, people are more likely to go with what they know or have experienced. Additionally, consumers rely heavily on the trust and confidence they have developed in well-known brands, or on a 'mouth-to-mouth' basis that they may have received from friends or professionals. (Kapferer 2002)

The sales force plays a key role in customer bonding and have a strong ability to impact the buying behavior of consumers towards a local brand. Local brands have the ability of being close to the distributors, and have a better starting-point to follow up on consumers. Furthermore, local brands are cheaper than foreign brands, due to the added on tax that is transferred to the final price which the consumer pays. Moreover, this factor may promote a consumer to stick to their local brands, which may be less expensive, more familiar, and reliable. (Kapferer 2002)

Brand equity factors

Consumers develop strong emotional connections to local brands in which they normally develop a positive perception of the brand image. Emotional connections to the brand can be further explained by the fact that the consumer has been around the brand for a long period of time. When a new foreign brand enters the market, consumers are not inclined to see the need to even try a foreign brand, especially when there is nothing wrong with the brand that they are using. Often, they have also developed an emotional connection to the brand. In many situations one can see that local brand names incorporate nationalistic meanings in order to further enhance emotional added value. In France two famous detergent brands are La Croix (Henkel) and Saint Marc (Benckiser), both have a credible reputation in terms of product performance. Moreover, they both use the country's symbols (La Croix means the cross), which creates latent sources of consumer bonding. (Kapferer 2002)

Competitive factors

According to Kapferer (2002) local brands have a high level of awareness and are usually able to deliver faster services to customers, unlike foreign brands that can experience complications in getting the final product to the end consumer.

Environmental factors

Lastly, a distinctive aspect that the local brand obtains is the pride in which a consumer feels towards a brand that is linked to their country. Brands are perceived as local participants who make each country or even region unique. Furthermore, consumers want to support their own countries domestic market. (Kapferer 2002)

2.3.4 Branding on the Internet

The Internet is often conceived as simply another media vehicle. That view can demote the Internet into an intriguing but minor player. The real transforming power of the Internet, however, comes from using it as a vehicle to emphasize and support other communication programs and in playing a centerpiece role providing the glue that holds them together and making them a solid force. Repositioning the Internet as a vehicle that emphasizes, integrates and differentiates other brand building programs has the potential to change its perception and result. According to Aaker (2003) it is easy to dismiss the Internet as being an insignificant brand-building tool. However, this perception is incorrect:

> *"We know that much of the banner advertising on the Internet is either ineffective or of modest impact in the context of communication efforts behind brands. We also know that many Internet commerce and content concepts have seen a meltdown dramatically showing that some well-accepted assumptions about the Internet were simply wrong. It is tempting to conclude that the Internet is overrated and oversold and that therefore should be is a marginal consideration in brand building. That conclusion would be wrong!" (Aaker 2003[2])*

This misconception is further discussed by Aaker (2003):

> *"The Internet in fact has the potential to fundamentally change brand building and brand relationships. Just the numbers and rapid growth give pause. The number of active users each month now exceeds 75 million in the US. Worldwide, the active users are over 400 million and still growing rapidly. Yahoo gets over 200 million unique visitors each month worldwide, 80 million of which log on to their personalized MyYahoo! site." (Aaker 2003[3])*

It is not only the numbers that matters in this case. The impact on people's interests and activities, created by opportunities to experience enhanced involvement through the Internet, also plays a big role. The Internet experience represents participation. The average US user spends over 10 hours per week and this number has increased distinctly year by year. The interactivity afforded by the Internet adds a potential dimension to the communication that is comparable to that added by radio over newspapers or television over radio in earlier times. (Aaker 2003)

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[2] E-mail correspondence with David A. Aaker 2003-12-04

[3] E-mail correspondence with David A. Aaker 2003-12-04

The Internet provides virgin territory for product and service augmentation. For many firms, most augmentation avenues have already been pursued and have become mature themselves, and are less likely to result in meaningful differentiation. In contrast, Internet-based product augmentation options have generally been untried. As a result it will be more feasible and economical to create differentiated services and features and to exploit first mover advantages. The key is to avoid thinking of the Internet as a stand-alone media vehicle, but, rather, as a way to leverage the products and services of the business. (Aaker 2003)

Key success factors
According to David Aaker (2003) there are key success factors to be addressed when the Internet acts in an effective role to leverage, differentiate or integrate the brand. They revolve around some brand building fundamentals and some practical approaches toward integrated communication with the Internet acting as a catalyst as well as a partner. (Aaker 2003)

One of the key factors is the fact that the brand presented on the Internet should be homogenous with the rest of the brand exposure. Thus, Internet components including the web site needs to support the brand with the right look, feel and personality that is on-brand and consistent with the brand presence elsewhere. When the brand is represented by on-brand visuals and content it becomes easier to detect programs that have not achieved on-brand focus, which is surprisingly difficult. The fact is that few web sites reflect the correct brand associations, because of the functional need to be comprehensive, easy to navigate and uncluttered. Aaker believes that a good example of online branding is the 'Ask Jeeves[4]-symbol'. A strong integrating visual symbol reflecting a brand personality and character can help. (Aaker 2003)

Another key factor according to Aaker (2003) is that customers need to be motivated to come to the site and return regularly. The motivation, which usually involves information, entertainment or interactive communication, can come from any brand building program with an Internet component. It can also come from an Internet-based program. The 'if we build it, they will come' philosophy relying on printed material is long obsolete. Instead there needs to be real motivation. Some of the examples given by David Aaker (2003) include:

- *News*. ESPN, with over 5 million visitors per day, attract people regularly with its news from current sporting events and by its content such as that around college athletic sites.
- *Information about events*. The Mobil 1 information supporting auto racing attracts the key target segment, those who are that interested in cars that they change their own oil.
- *Humorous or interesting content*. People are drawn to the Honda Civic site to access their series of 30 second humorous silent clips designed to interject fun into the sensible Civic brand. The clips show ordinary people doing bizarre things. In one, an annoying child was calmly placed in the overhead luggage compartment while onlookers appeared to regard this as a

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[4] www.askjeeves.com

normal occurrence. In the first 3 months of the program 5 million clips were forwarded.

- *Joining a community*. People come to the Pampers site to compare notes on the progress their babies have made and the challenges at each stage.

The third and final key factor that is brought up is to drive traffic to the web site. According to Aaker (2003) a web site can provide value when accessed by employees, but the payoff is usually in reaching customers. Thus, there must be mechanisms to drive people to the site in the first place. The easy way to get Internet traffic is to become part of a site that already has traffic, otherwise much of the brand benefit will be temporary. One key to success is to find a parent site that fits, attracts the right target audience and has on-brand associations because these associations will affect the brand.

This finalizes the three theoretical fields regarding web design, trust and branding. The last section of this chapter will summarize the essence of what has been brought up in this chapter.

2.4 A summary of the theoretical framework

This section consists of a summary of each section previously brought forward in this chapter. The most apparent theory regarding web design, trust and branding will be highlighted.

2.4.1 Web design

Hix & Hartson (1993) points at the importance of focusing on the actual user when designing a system. Benyon and Preece (1993) is of the opinion that when developing a computer system the actual user-need must be satisfied and in order to capture knowledge regarding user-needs one must figure out how people are using the system. Nielsen (1993) argues that the designer must try to describe the end user in an initial phase of the system design. In literature the importance of usability is emphasized by Fossum (1996), Nielsen (1993), Preece (1994) and Shneiderman (1992).

Jakob Nielsen (2000) points at the importance of designing simple web pages since the users seldom visit a page because of its design. Jakob Nielsen (1993) call attention to the fact that simplicity should distinguish the design of a system. This characteristic is of importance in order to enable the user to learn the possibilities that the system offers. Hix and Hartson (1993) emphasize that a system's capability to perform certain tasks can affect the relationship between an organization and its customers. According to Jakob Nielsen (2000), quality content is one of the two most important aspects when it comes to web usability and therefore content on the web needs to be much more oriented toward providing relevant information and fast answers than traditional media. A site should offer the visitor information that is of use to the visitor. The visitor should always sense that it is worth to spend the time that it takes to download the information. (Nielsen 2000) By designing the web site with the suitable set of navigation-tools and links, the visitor's navigation process can be facilitated. (Sampson

et al 2003) A homogenous design makes it easier for the visitor to use the web site efficiently (Ullman et al 2000).

The procedure of continuously listening to user opinions is a line of action that is discussed in theory. Jakob Nielsen (1993) refers to it as iterative processes were the actual user is involved throughout the design process. Theory states that an evaluation of a system's interface can be made after an implementation has taken place. This evaluation can be used in order to establish the level of usability that an interface shows. (Preece et al 1994) By using usability testing, it is able to identify and take care of existing problems (Fossum 1996).

2.4.2 Trust

In many industries it is of importance to build trust within the organization or with suppliers connected to the company. From this point of view underlying trust is fundamental to enable the building of trust towards a company's actual consumers. The degree of trust affects a company's ability of performing business to a great extent. A high degree of trust amongst suppliers and customers facilitates the business opportunities while the contrary, i.e. distrust or lack of trust, tend to prevent business activities. (Keen 2000)

The advantages that can be derived from basing their relationship business on the Internet are for instance the low initial cost of IT infrastructure and the reach of the Internet which increases the number of potential business partners. The cost of acquiring new customers is significantly higher than retaining existing customers which can explain that relationships based on trust can constitute as a strong competitive advantage. (Egger 2002)

The relationship between the consumer and the company is affected in terms of equity. This means that the company has to be sensitive when finding out what consumers really want and then provide this. Trust will not be achieved if the consumers feel that the company is unreasonable to deal with. (Reynolds 1997) A 'win-win-situation' can be a result when both parties benefit from a mutual relationship. This means that the customer can expect to receive a product or service that fulfill his or her expectations. The importance of building customer confidence signifies that the company at the same time can create the foundations of long-term cooperation. Furthermore, this means that the company can cut costs that are often connected to the searching for new customers or other kinds of cooperating parties. Recruiting new customers is often a lot more expensive than the process of deepening relationships with existing customers. (Gummesson 1998)

If trust is neither improved nor maintained in a sufficient way it can diminish. Some actions may as well lead to distrust or lack of trust in a relationship that was fortunate up until just recently. (Shaw 1997)

2.4.4 Branding

According to Ries and Trout (2001) it is important to differentiate the specific brand from all the other brands on the market. It makes the customers think that there are no other products or services on the market quite like these. Kapferer (1997) claims that a brand is not the product but it gives meaning to the product. Brand equity is a set of assets linked to a brand's name and can roughly be divided into four different categories; brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations (Aaker 1996 & Kotler 1999).

- Brand awareness has to do with whether or not customers are aware of the brand. (Aaker 1996)
- Loyal customers are important for the company to establish its market position since the competitors do not want to spend unnecessary amounts of resources on consumers that are hard to obtain. (Apéria 2001)
- The expression 'perceived quality' handles the matter of how the customer perceives quality on the brand. (Aaker 1992)
- Everything that tries to unite the company and their customers can be classified as brand association. (Aaker 1996)

According to Kapferer (2002), being a local brand means that the specific company probably has a relatively small geographical area covered but instead probably has a higher level of trust. Furthermore it is more common that the customer buys something that he recognizes than something he has not heard of before, especially when it has to do with things that are rarely bought. Consumers develop strong emotional relations to local brands in which they normally develop a positive perception of the brand image. Emotional connections to the brand can be further explained by the fact that the consumer has been around the brand for a long period of time.

One of the key success factors with branding on the Internet, according to Aaker (2003), is the fact that the brand exposed on the Internet should be homogenous with the rest of the brand exposure. Two other key factors are motivation and traffic, the customers need to be motivated to come to the site and return regularly.

3   Methodology

This chapter will describe the scientific approach and choices of practical tools to obtain the knowledge needed to illuminate the main topic. The chapter also discusses the validity and reliability of the thesis. Furthermore, the intention is to illustrate the course of actions in order to provide the reader with information on how the data necessary for this thesis was gathered. The general patterns and differences between the performed interviews will also be highlighted. We will have a critical standpoint to the chosen course of actions and how the data collecting was performed and to the collected material.

3.1 Choice of research method

Research methods can be divided into terms of qualitative and quantitative aspects. These aspects can each be divided more specifically, which will be discussed later on in this chapter. Both qualitative and quantitative methods focus on providing an understanding of the society that we live in and how the inhabitants act and influence one another (Holme & Solvang 1997). Apart from this similarity these two methods differ a great deal. Whereas the qualitative method is characterized by proximity between the researcher and the subjects studied the quantitative method is used when variables are easy to measure and convert into structured and formalized data. (Davidsson & Patel 1994)

The research method applied in this thesis can be described as a qualitative method. The main purpose of using a qualitative method is to achieve a better understanding of the studied circumstances. (Holme & Solvang 1997) When using a qualitative method the information cannot be converted into quantities and numbers, hence it is up to the researcher to understand and interpret the information (Davidsson & Patel 1994). The aim is to gain a higher level of understanding of how the relationship between two business partners can be affected due to an implementation of a business application and the qualitative turn offers the highest level of in-depth understanding. If a quantitative method would have been used, in-depth understanding would not be accomplished and the possibility to gain the respondents inner thoughts and reflections would have gone astray. Another factor that had an effect on this decision was the fact the number of companies that had gotten into contact with the examined business application was limited. Hence, it would have been impossible to use a quantitative research method.

Within the qualitative research method it is possible to perform individual in-depth interviews, focus group interviews or a combination of the two. Another qualitative research method is participating observations which is often used as a complement to previously mentioned methods in the qualitative field. The main purpose of focus group interviews is to help facilitate discussions within the group thus contributing to illuminate topics and questions that were not included in the additional question template. (Wibeck 2000) When respondents show *"…dissimilarities regarding the way*

they live or think…"[5] one can derive advantage from using focus group interviews (Wibeck 2000: 40). One of the most significant drawbacks, when using focus group interviews, is the fact that there is a possibility that one of the participants take on a dominant role in the group. This type of behavior inhibit the dynamics of the process, hence all other participants are suppressed and unavailable to express their thoughts and opinions (Hansen et al 1998). Individual in-depth interviews focus on capturing the respondents' personal interception, interpretation and opinion (Holme & Solvang 1997).

The interview method we chose to conduct was in-depth interviews. There were two primary reasons why this method was chosen. First of all, after going through the theoretical field we felt in-depth interviews was necessary since it was important to grasp the respondents' attitudes to a brand, their perception of a technical application and their confidence in their business partner. The second reason for making this choice is that the chosen respondents show considerable similarities regarding their work tasks that they perform and field of business that they are active in. Technical competence amongst the respondents and the size of the business where they work is quite different but since we were aware of this we instead chose to focus on the differences in their answers. Another reason is that it would have been difficult to organize a focus group interview with these respondents since they work at different locations and are too occupied with work to attend an interview at a location different from their workplace. To get their cooperation, each dealer had to be interviewed separately and in-depth interviews therefore were the natural choice.

To answer this thesis main question, primary and secondary data has been collected. The gathering and use of these data is to be seen as an iterative process, hence information is used crosswise. During the creation of this thesis, primary and secondary data has been collected alternately. Initially interviews were made, with personnel at Volvo IT and Volvo CE, and documentation from Volvo CE and Volvo IT were received and studied. The input from these two sources, together with several discussions with our academic supervisor Magnus Bergquist and our industrial supervisor Martin Jerresand (whose position will be described in section 4.1), led to the creation of the main question. To facilitate the answer of the main question literature studies were made. We refer to this theory later in this thesis, in the chapter named discussion, where the theory is used to analyze the interviews. This procedure will be described more thoroughly below in the section regarding the collection of primary and secondary data.

3.2 Collecting primary data

The conception primary data means that the researcher gathers information that has not been available earlier, hence the information is considered new (Lekvall & Wahlbin 1993).

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[5] Our translation

Selection of respondents

The primary data can be divided into two categories whereas the first category focus on gathering information, through interviews, regarding background information on volvo.com and the DSB application and the second category consists of interviews with dealers. The first seven interviews with personnel at VIT and VCE focus on gathering background information, and after those three additional interviews were performed with personnel at VCE, VIT and AB Volvo. Eight[6] interviews with dealers of VCE were conducted as well.

Respondents in the first category were chosen on basis of their involvement in the volvo.com project on the development of the DSB application and the formulation of its design and content. It was also important to choose respondents from, on the one hand, Volvo CE and on the other hand Volvo IT, to gather information from both participants in the creation and formulation of the DSB application. Respondents in the second category were selected to get as much dispersion among the participants as possible. Therefore our selection criteria were to interview both dealers that have chosen to implement the DSB, dealers that are going to implement the DSB and dealers that have chosen not to implement the DSB. Furthermore, both dealers that are owned by Volvo and dealers independent from Volvo were chosen in order to gather different opinions. Primarily US dealers were interviewed since there are more dealer sites rolled out in the US than in Europe and Volvo has generally reached further with the rollout of the DSB in North America as well. In addition to the American dealers, a Swedish dealer has been interviewed to fulfill the category of dealers that chose not to implement the DSB. The second intended dealer interview in this category could not be used in this thesis. Afterwards it was made clear from management of this dealer that they did not want to have their opinions published. This miscalculation and its influence on the thesis will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Semi-structured interviews

The general purpose of an interview is to obtain first hand information from the respondent. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way to facilitate the opportunity to follow up ideas, substantiate answers and seek knowledge beyond the original question in a way that is impossible when using a questionnaire. There would only be one opportunity to conduct face-to-face or telephone interviews with the dealers and according to Bernard (2002) semi-structured interviews is the most appropriate method when facing these conditions. (Bernard 2002)

One of the advantages with the use of a semi-structured interview is that one can ask complex questions and if something is unclear it is possible to immediately clarify the question for the respondent. If the vagueness is opposite one can ask the respondent to clarify his or her answer. When an interview is semi-structured the respondent can talk more freely and develop his or her thoughts about the issue. It is of importance that the interviewer avoids leading questions and strives to focus on open-ended questions, i.e. where the respondent can talk without restraint. (Bell 1995)

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[6] 8 dealer interviews were performed, but only 7 can be presented, which will be explained below

An MP3-recorder[7] was used during the interviews to record the respondents' opinions. The respondents were informed in advance that their answers would be recorded. We are aware that when recording an interview, the respondent can get inhibited and feel hesitant. It is however our opinion, and experience, that most respondents gradually get comfortable with the fact that they are being recorded. The most important benefit that derives from recording an interview is that nothing of the respondents' reasoning and opinions are missed. After each interview the respondents were asked if they wanted to be anonymous or if we their name and position could be used when referring to the interviews. This question was asked after the interview was finalized since we did not want to influence their answers. If this question was asked before the interview, there might be a possibility that the answers would differ and be less truthful or be limited.

After an interview was completed the material was transcribed. The recorded material was transcribed literally in order to make sure that the respondents were adequately quoted.

The interview situations will be described below. The interviews are divided in five categories and the specific circumstances of each interview are described in appendix 1. General descriptions of the interviews will be outlined below as well as occurrences from the interviews that differ from the general.

General circumstances for the interviews
The course of actions was that one of us served as a moderator leading the discussion and asking the questions while one acted as backup for the moderator and the third served as a secretary. We rotated between these three roles to assure that everyone performed the different tasks. A question template was worked out for each interview, adjusted to serve each of the three categories of dealers (dealers that have implemented the DSB, dealers that are going to implement the DSB and dealers that have chosen not to implement the DSB) and two categories of Volvo personnel (VCE and VIT). All question templates are gathered in appendix 2.

The empirical chapter is based on facts that progressed during interviews with people involved in the process, Dealers that have implemented the DSB, Dealers that are going to implement the DSB and Dealers that have chosen not to implement the DSB. Some of the interviews have been translated from Swedish to English. When this situation has occurred, a literal translation has been performed. Quantities of the collected data have been used word by word while other elements of the data have been shortened and revised. The main reason for making this procedure is that some of the interviewed respondents outlined long discussions and by revising the data the essence of these discussions was more apparent.

Data obtained from the respondents employed at VIT, VCE and AB Volvo will be referred to by using the names of the respondents. The reason why we chose to conduct this course of action was that we thought this was a more distinct way of presenting the material and therefore easier for readers to separate the respondents from each other. Furthermore, the respondents in this category accepted their names to be used in the

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[7] A digital Dictaphone which was used to record and store digitally in mp-3 format

thesis. In the empirical study, the dealers will be referred to by using the name of their specific dealership. In the discussion chapter, the dealers will be referred to by using the three different categories of dealers. This procedure will, hopefully, facilitate the readers' understanding.

3.2.1 Interviews with employees at VCE

A total of four interviews with three persons employed at VCE has been performed. Most of these interviews were accomplished over the telephone and performed as conferences. One of these interviews was performed in a hotel bar, one in our temporary office in Asheville and the rest were performed as telephone conferences. Generally these interviews were performed in Swedish since the participants were of Swedish nationality, but one was performed in English.

3.2.2 Interviews with employees at VIT and AB Volvo

A total of five interviews with four persons employed at VIT has been performed and most of these interviews were accomplished at the interviewed person's office. All these interviews were performed in Swedish since all participants were of Swedish nationality. Furthermore, an interview with the brand director of AB Volvo has been performed. This interview was conducted by telephone as a conference and it was performed in Swedish since the respondent was of Swedish nationality.

3.2.3 Interviews with dealers that have implemented the DSB

Three dealers that have implemented the DSB were interviewed during our stay in Asheville, USA. The first interview took place at the respondent's office. This interview was performed first in order to obtain a feeling regarding the circumstances of the respondent's everyday work. This was the only dealer interview that was performed at the dealer location and also the only one where we actually met the respondents face-to-face. Two of the interviews were performed over a telephone as conferences from our temporary office in Asheville. Another difference between the interviews was the number of respondents that participated. In the interview that took place at the dealership two respondents participated, and three and one respectively participated in the telephone conferences.

3.2.4 Interviews with dealers that are going to implement the DSB

Three dealers that are going to implement the DSB were interviewed, all by telephone from the temporary office in Asheville and one person (the IT manager of each dealer) was interviewed at each occasion. The procedure was more or less similar at all dealer interviews in this category.

3.2.5 Interviews with dealers that have chosen not to implement the DSB

Two dealers that have chosen not to implement the DSB were interviewed, both by telephone. One difference was that one of these interviews was performed in Swedish

and the other one in English, as with the rest of the dealers. Both were performed over the telephone as conferences and took place at the IT University in Göteborg. But as mentioned earlier, one of these interviews could not be used since that dealer's management decided not to participate in this examination.

3.3 Collecting secondary data

The secondary data consists of Volvo CE and Volvo IT documents. The company document has provided background information regarding the starting point and shaping of the volvo.com project in general and the DSB application in particular. This information was needed when creating the main question of this master thesis.

3.3.1 Volvo CE and Volvo IT documents

Documents regarding volvo.com, the DSB application, requirements specifications from VCE to VIT and interviews performed by VCE with their dealers were also brought to our attention. This material has constituted as a foundation from where the continued work with this thesis has proceeded.

3.4 Evaluation

In this section, the validity and reliability of the thesis will be evaluated. This is important in order to assure that the course of actions has been valid as well as reliable from an independent person's point of view. It is of importance to point out that we, through the work with this thesis, must have a critical attitude towards the procedure and seek beyond what is obvious in the interpretation. This includes the gathering of both the theoretical compilations and empirical data and the analyzing of this data.

3.4.1 Validity

To assure the validity of this thesis, departure in a number of principles that are outlined by Staffan Larsson (1994) will be taken. The first principle will be identified as the '*discourse criterion*'. This criterion deals with the 'legitimacy' of the thesis regarding statements and opinions that have been brought forward in the analysis. To assure that a thesis is of good quality requires that others will not find consistent insufficiency in the result presented. The main purpose of the essay is to consistently convince the science society. (Larsson 1994) We consider that we have been using relevant theories and methods in this essay. The likelihood that there exist other theoretic compilations which would have been equally good is extensive, but we have not found a better theoretic framework to proceed from. The questions in the interview guide have given a variety of spontaneous and relevant answers regarding the topic. The questions were tested in a pilot study, which took place a couple of days before the interviews, to make sure that the questions were pedagogical and adequately formulated.

A second criterion in terms of validity is the *heuristic value*. This means that the qualitative study should contribute with knowledge resulting in a new way of considering the reality. By reading the thesis one should obtain a new angle of a former

illuminated or previously unknown domain. (Larsson 1994) We expect that this thesis has summarized and concluded interesting theories that are available in the given field. We also think that the thesis has given some new knowledge through the mixture of theories to match the given field. This particular mixture of theories was not to be found elsewhere and this is why we have contributed with a field in theory that is uninvestigated. Similar mixtures of theoretical fields might have been performed earlier although.

The third criterion considers the *empirical anchoring* needed for a study to obtain some type of validity. If this anchoring is lacking, one cannot call the study empirical since the interpretations must be anchored in reality. There must also be evidence for these. A number of references are needed to enlighten what one has intention to illustrate. Alignment between empirical results and existing theory indicates validity. (Larsson 1994) We have found theories that we sense support the empirical material that has been gathered. We have furthermore tried to find a number of references to support each field of theory connected to the empirical material to make the evidence even more confirmed and underlined. This is also something we sense have been performed in a valid way.

Consistency is the fourth criterion brought up by Staffan Larsson (1994). To give a short and concise explanation of this criterion we refer to Staffan Larsson (1994:183)[8]:

> *"This is an interpreting built-up between the part and totality. The comprehensive view is based on the components at the same time as the meaning of each component is depending on the comprehensive view."*

Hence, consistency treats the overall impression that the reader will obtain from reading the thesis. The aim has been to make the interplay between the different parts of the thesis to represent, and thereby appear as, a natural whole. In an initial phase there were a number of alternative paths to place the components and put the compilation together. After several modifications in the disposal, we finally chose to use the most adequate combination. Aspects that seem obvious and natural from our point of view as authors can in reality appear less clear to the uninitiated reader.

The *pragmatic criterion* focuses on the possible use of the thesis. The question is likewise what consequences the result can have and if this is of importance. (Larsson 1994) Hopefully students in our field of study can be inspired and find ideas through this thesis and we also hope that this study will be valuable for our business assigner. We think that we have pointed out a number of important factors for VCE and VIT to consider while continuing the process of the DSB. This includes the rollout of the DSB as well as enhancements of the application and will be thoroughly described in chapter 5 and 6. The suggestions mostly include dealer opinions that are important for VCE in order to make their relationship successful. This thesis might work for VIT as a foundation with indications of important factors to bear in mind while designing DSB applications for other business areas than VCE. VIT also has interests in the suggestions for this specific DSB for VCE's dealers in order to perform a successful application for them.

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[8] Our translation

Aspects that we thought were missing in Larsson's validity criterion deals with the trustworthiness of the people we have interviewed. This is something Victoria Wibeck (2000) focuses on and it deals with the trustworthiness of the respondents. This aspect is important to bear in mind while working with interviews. On the one hand, as a moderator you would like to deny possible untruth in the answers of the respondent but on the other hand it is important to be aware of external factors that can affect the answers. The respondents can have been influenced by the fact that all three of us participated in the interviews. The likeliness that they were influenced by the fact that an employee at VCE participated in most of the dealer interviews is also considered as significant. The answers of the respondents can have been influenced by the circumstances and that is important to bear in mind while analyzing the material. The fact that most interviews were performed over the telephone can also have a negative effect. Another risk is that the respondents can withhold important information since some opinions can be delicate to reveal. This can also be about information that is withheld due to politeness. (Wibeck 2000)

3.4.2 Reliability

The concept Reliability is thoroughly discussed in theory. The opinions regarding the meaning of the concept differ to some extent. We have therefore chosen to give an account of some of the now prevailing interpretations.

The reliability increases if the same moderator deals with all interviews performed (Holme & Solvang 1997). For learning reasons, we instead chose to rotate between the roles during the interviews. Despite this fact, the interviews were performed without complications since the interview situations reminded of each other. The same question template was used for all interviews in the same category and before the interviews were performed these templates were tested in a pilot study which can contribute to a better reliability. According to Davidson and Patel (1994) reliability increases if the interviewer or moderator is experienced or if structured interview templates are used. When Wiedersheim and Eriksson (1991) discuss reliability they see it as the ability of a measurement to resist the influence of chance. We have been using question templates that are semi-structured and that have been tested in a pilot study, the question templates have also been evaluated by our academic supervisor. Two of us have previous experience of performing semi-structured interviews and that has helped us during these interviews. Since we have tested the question templates in a pilot study, and had them evaluated by our academic coach, and also have previous experience of performing semi-structured interviews, it is our opinion that we have been able to resist the influence of chance to a high extent in the study. The level of reliability in this study can, viewed in this perspective, therefore be considered as high. Merriam (1994) states that reliability refers to the extent by which the results of a study can be repeated if the study is performed once again. Since we have performed qualitative interviews, there are small possibilities that the outcome will be exactly the same even if the same question template is used. We do not aim to present a result that establishes general circumstances that are current, but instead the center of attention is to describe the specific opinions and relations that we have noticed.

4 Empirical study

The development and creation of the DSB application will now be narrated in chronological order. The aspiration is to contribute with a description that illuminates how the DSB has evolved from just being a vision to becoming an actual product. Alongside this description the ambition is to explain how the actual users, i.e. the dealers, perceive the dealer site created from the DSB.

Initially a statement regarding VCE's and VIT's vision with the DSB will be given, the section includes a report on VCE's and VIT's extensive goals with the DSB and a statement of what they hope that the application will be able to achieve in a long-term perspective. The following section consists of facts regarding the actual development, creation and rollout of the dealer sites. The installment contains a description of the context where the application was created and a statement regarding the involvement of the parties concerned. It will also be a condensation concerning the strategy on how the dealer sites should be spread to the dealers. The next section treats a concrete description of the dealer sites and its construction. This chapter's final section consists of a depiction regarding the users, i.e. the dealers, perception of the dealer sites. The dealers are divided into three groups:

- Dealers that have implemented the DSB
- Dealers that are going to implement the DSB
- Dealer that has chosen not to implement the DSB

By highlighting the users' opinions regarding the DSB it is possible to compare their views with VCE's and VIT's intention with the DSB, thereby making it possible to illuminate possible dissimilarities. The material presented in this chapter will be analyzed in chapter 5.

The parties involved
Below follows a statement regarding the parties that are involved, directly and indirectly, in the creation and development of the DSB.

- **Volvo Information Technology (VIT).** VIT is a wholly-owned subsidiary and a business unit within the Volvo Group. Volvo IT provides solutions for all areas of the industrial process. Clients include the Volvo Group, Ford-owned Volvo Cars, and other large industrial companies. The Volvo Group includes several business units that provide additional manufacturing, development or logistical support. The largest business units are: Volvo Powertrain, Volvo 3P, Volvo IT, Volvo Logistics and Volvo Parts (www.volvo.com)

- **Volvo Construction Equipment (VCE).** VCE develops, manufactures and market equipment for the construction and related industries. VCE is a Business Area within the Volvo Group which offers a total product line of more than 150 different models of excavators, wheel loaders, motor graders and articulated haulers. They are distributed mainly through independent dealers and in parallel with VCE's rental program to customers in more than 200 countries. The Volvo Group includes six business areas which are; Volvo

Trucks, Volvo Construction Equipment, Volvo Penta, Volvo Aero, Volvo Buses and Volvo Financial Services. (www.volvo.com)

- **Volvo Construction Equipment's dealers.** VCE has an estimate of 500 dealers worldwide. Some of the dealers are independent from Volvo while others are Volvo owned companies, such as LB Smith. The dealers may not sell competing products to Volvo on the Internet, but non-competing products are part of their offerings.

VCE contacted VIT in Greensboro (US) with a request that they should build the DSB application. VCE had, at that point of time, outlined a specification that VIT was going to proceed from. VCE had talked to some of their dealers during the making of the specification in order to capture the dealers' opinions. The mission was to create a dealer site that fulfilled the needs of VCE's dealers. The web presence of VCE's dealers has varied a lot which was one of the main reasons for VCE to provide their dealers with equivalent dealer sites. The idea was also that they should have access to the dealer site free of charge. (Bredborg)

4.1 The vision

The empirical material in section 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 has been derived from interviews with employees at VIT, VCE and AB Volvo. Their name and position will be stated below.

VIT
- Martin Jerresand, Director of Application Development Techniques & e-Business Solutions at VIT, located in Greensboro, USA
- Mathias Södersten, project manager at VIT's e-Business solution center, located in Göteborg, Sweden
- Karin Garberg, rollout manager at VCE in Europe. Consultant for VIT, located in Göteborg, Sweden
- Peter Hedborg, program manager at VIT, located in Greensboro, USA

VCE
- Mats Bredborg, director of e-Business at VCE and also head of the business side in the volvo.com project, located in Duxford, England
- Robert Williams, independent consultant working at VCE in the North American e-Business group, located in Asheville, USA
- Richard Andersson, e-Business project manager at VCE, located in Duxford, England

AB Volvo
- Mats Nilsson, director of brand management, located in Göteborg, Sweden

Some of VCE's dealers have created advanced web sites where updated and correct product information is presented. The problem that VCE stand before is that the greater part of its dealers either do not have a web site at their disposal or that they have

developed a deficient web site. The latter case includes problems such as incorrect use of Volvo's logotype, for example wrong color and incorrect information that is being presented. This can in most cases be explained by insufficient updating on the web site. To manage these problems VCE decided to develop an application that enabled all dealers the possibility to have a dealer site at their disposal. This site was created by VIT and the idea was that it should be updated automatically and frequently and not demand any resources from a dealer point of view. The information was to be decided and controlled by Volvo, thereby minimizing the risk that incorrect and disadvantageous information was presented in public. The main reason why dealers chose to join the DSB initiative was, according to Mats Bredborg, that it should be free of charge and that the dealers would not need to spend time or money to keep their dealer site updated and fresh. As argued by Bredborg, the only reason for a dealer not to join the DSB was if the dealer provided lots of competing products or that the dealer was of the opinion that their own brand would get neglected. Richard Andersson continued the reasoning;

> *"It didn't start with a request from the dealers' point of view, instead it was us telling them, that while you have been focusing on selling machines, we have noticed a new type of marketing channel, the Internet. It is a very conservative industry although a few dealers in Europe have a decent web presence".*
>
> *– Andersson*

Below, a more detailed description of VCE's and VIT's visions with the DSB application will follow. In many aspects they present a similar picture regarding their vision with the DSB. Since VCE and VIT have been working closely together during the greater part of this creation process, the DSB vision has been a natural topic of discussion and this can be detected in their answers. In some aspects their opinions differ to some extent which can be noticed in the interviews. In the following text a compilation of the material regarding VCE's and VIT's visions with the DSB is brought up. The various visions are divided in categories since this procedure highlighted the most comprehensive reflection regarding the visions with the DSB. Another way to present this was to make a more clear distinction between opinions about the vision that originated from VCE respective VIT. This procedure would have helped to point out the occurring differences between these two parties more explicitly. Since the primary focus of this thesis not is to compare the attitudes from these two parties regarding the application, this procedure was not chosen but instead the first one mentioned. The primary focus in this part of the chapter is to illustrate the visions that have been anticipated.

4.1.1 Simplify communication between dealers and their customers

The DSB is thought to handle the communication between the dealer and its customers. The DSB will not help VCE with dealer communication more than indirectly by influencing what the dealer communicates to its customers. There are no present plans on launching a communication channel from VCE to the dealer through the DSB, since an extranet already exists for that. There are no plans today on integrating those two. (Bredborg)

"First and foremost it's a new channel for the dealer to communicate with its customers, for example the customers can find the person they want to contact."
– Bredborg

VCE first initiated the idea of having a dealer site builder as part of their strategy to make the dealer and their customers approach each other without the involvement of Volvo (Jerresand). Karin Garberg explains how she thinks that the DSB can affect the relationship between VCE's dealers and their customers;

" My opinion is that the Dealer Site Builder is Volvo CE's initiative or idea, as a part of the VCE strategy to bring the dealers and their customers closer to each other. The idea is that Volvo should stand between them as little as possible. The offer of the Dealer Site Builder can be seen as a part of this strategy." - Garberg

Richard Andersson continues the line of thought by explaining that VCE should not bypass their dealers since they are too valuable for them. The dealers have been somewhat skeptical in the beginning thinking that this is Volvo's way to create a channel and work directly against customers and e.g. sell parts online direct to the customer. What Volvo is trying to do is to support the dealers with a good system because most of them do not have the facilities, capacity or knowledge to build their own web sites. Volvo creates platforms for dealers where all the interaction between the dealer and the customer is supposed to take place. (Andersson)

4.1.2 Create homogeneity and a strong web presence

One of the basic ideas of the application is to get the dealer to be part of the volvo.com web site and to have a homogenous brand approach. At present time, some dealers already have their own web site and these sites often show layout problems. (Jerresand) Mats Bredborg is of the opinion that the DSB can help VCE in their aim for a more homogeneous brand:

"The DSB offers a way to control the brand more. Since we're a global company we want to market our products using the same branding to create homogeneity worldwide, this also goes for things such as printed material." - Bredborg

The Volvo brand is well established, and can in itself function as an incentive that motivates VCE's dealers to be a part of Volvo's Internet initiative. The VCE brand is not as familiar as the Volvo brand and therefore advantages can be derived from using the Volvo brand. Volvo is a globally renowned brand, which is mostly referred to as the Volvo image and not necessarily VCE. Volvo as a brand is considered strong on the web, which is an advantage for the dealers of VCE. (Andersson) Some of the dealers handle the exposure of the Volvo brand in an adequate way while others are very unprofessional. Hence VCE aims to help them by providing dealer sites. The dealer will be associated with everything that the Volvo brand stands for and this is something that dealers have to take advantage of. One of the purposes with this application is to mediate the Volvo brand to the dealers' customers. (Hedborg) DSB should be consistent when it comes to branding and offer high brand recognition regardless of where the visitor is on Volvo.com (Södersten). Peter Hedborg's view on the brand connection between Volvo and dealers is the following:

"The brands of the dealers will probably be affected in a good way by using the DSB. Again they will be connected to the Volvo brand more obviously than before. Previously there has almost been just the dealer's brand and the visitor could only find Volvo's and other manufacturers' brands under the product section. With the DSB you can see both the dealers and Volvo's brand on the very first site. The dealer's logotype on top of the site and the Volvo brand at the bottom of the site. The sites look professional, clean, clear and I think it will make many dealers look better." - Hedborg

Branding on the Internet is a complex issue and the aim is to create a high level of recognition that permeates Volvo's entire Internet investment (Bredborg).

"We have a global design policy for all the Volvo companies. This is good since the sites become more homogeneous, on the other hand it's bad because all the sites may be too similar looking and you won't be able to really distinguish one dealer site from another. There's a fine balance between those two issues and we are struggling to make them work better together." – Bredborg

4.1.3 Provide dealer sites that are up-to-date

One idea with the DSB is to provide fresh and updated information through a centralized and updating service. This means that the dealer sites will be up-to-date independent of how active or inactive the dealer is. (Södersten, Williams) Mats Bredborg continues;

"The DSB will make the dealer sites up-to-date with the latest information since the updating of the sites will be centralized and managed by Volvo. This was a problem with previous dealer sites and we could not possibly blame the dealers for that, it's an almost impossible task for them since we have a lot of different products and new products are launched each year. The dealers had neither money nor resources to handle that. We wanted to cut down on costs that the dealers had for making their own websites, partly because there were no coordination of the different dealer sites, thus no homogeneity." - Bredborg

Generally speaking it is important for the dealers to be exposed and available on the Internet, because that's where the customers compare quality, prices and offers that competitors provide. VCE has seen strong Internet presence as an important competitive advantage. The Internet is working as a substitute to the Yellow Pages. To assure that the dealer sites consist of adequate information, VCE has decided to offer their dealers a solution where information automatically is being updated centrally. (Hedborg)

"Volvo offers their dealers a brand new updated site, in my opinion it's a great benefit that the manufacturer builds the whole site, the whole structure. In this way Volvo support their dealers in a way that I think is unique in the industry and no competitor is offering this type of support. Eventually everything is about making more business, selling more products, that's what it's all about. To offer the conditions that make dealers survive and also make them able to expand." (Hedborg)

4.1.4 Continuous improvement

The vision is to continuously develop the DSB and this work must be constant since further enhancements are needed to assure that the DSB stays competitive. The work with the project has been carried out iteratively, hence a number of improvements due to customer demands have been executed. The procedure denotes that updates take place in an iterative form that implies a frequent updating of the application. Further enhancements are discussed on a regular basis and when a number of requests are gathered, a new project is initiated with the mission to update the system. (Hedborg)

Volvo will try to get information from the dealers continuously in order to find out what they would like to have added on their site (Williams). Maximum support will be given and the idea is to put more applications on the dealer when they are prepared for them and ready to use them (Hedborg).

4.1.5 Strengthen bonds with dealers

For the dealers' customers, the relationship with their specific dealer is more important than the brand of the product that the dealer offers. At the same time the power of the Volvo brand cannot be underestimated. Since this is a common phenomenon in the industry, the importance of building and maintaining good relations with dealers arose, seeing that this is what facilitates sales to end customers. Since the dealers have established such a strong relation to their customers they are therefore not that dependent of emphasizing themselves as a seller of Volvo products in specific. If a dealer that is selling VCE products decides to instead sell Caterpillar[9] products, there is a significant risk that the customers remains loyal to their dealer and instead changes manufacturer. (Bredborg)

The idea is that Volvo will help to market the dealer through the dealer site rather than having the dealers do it by themselves. By doing this VCE can help the dealers to communicate to a larger public and it also makes it less expensive to market their business. (Bredborg)

"The dealers' brand grows stronger and if you are driving by a Volvo dealer today you can clearly see that he is a dealer for Volvo products. The Volvo logotype has an enormous value, the dealers' brand is not recognized to the same extent but instead their brand has a strong value when it comes to the relation between dealer and customer. This value is also strengthened due to the brand collaboration between the dealer and Volvo which shows that the dealer is selling world class equipment. The co-branding is an important part, both for us and the dealer. We are able to show our brand together with our dealers' brand at the same time as the dealers' brand is strengthened by ours." - Bredborg

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[9] Caterpillar is the market leader in the industry of construction equipment and thereby a strong competitor to VCE

Rob Williams thinks it is positive for both dealers and Volvo to appear together in different contexts. Both parties want to make the dealer grow in sales, marketing and brand and just showing the Volvo brand will strengthen each dealer's appearance.

"I think by using the DSB application, there's a stronger alliance between the brands of both Volvo and dealers. They now see Volvo products on the webpage and also the co-branded logo at the bottom of the page. It's a stronger bond between Volvo and the dealers." – Williams

4.2 Course of events

Volvo.com is a fundamental prerequisite that has enabled the making of Volvo-provided dealer sites. The volvo.com site consists of a master site for every business area in the Volvo Group and in this particular case the focus lies on VCE. The VCE site has different sub-pages for each of their markets and this grouping is region-based. These region-based sub-pages are called market sites and each market site is produced in that specific market's language. It is necessary to create a market site before creating a dealer site since the dealer site is built on templates from the market site. When a market site is established, it is possible for VCE to establish dealer sites for dealers in that market with the use of the DSB. (Garberg) This is illustrated in figure 7 below:
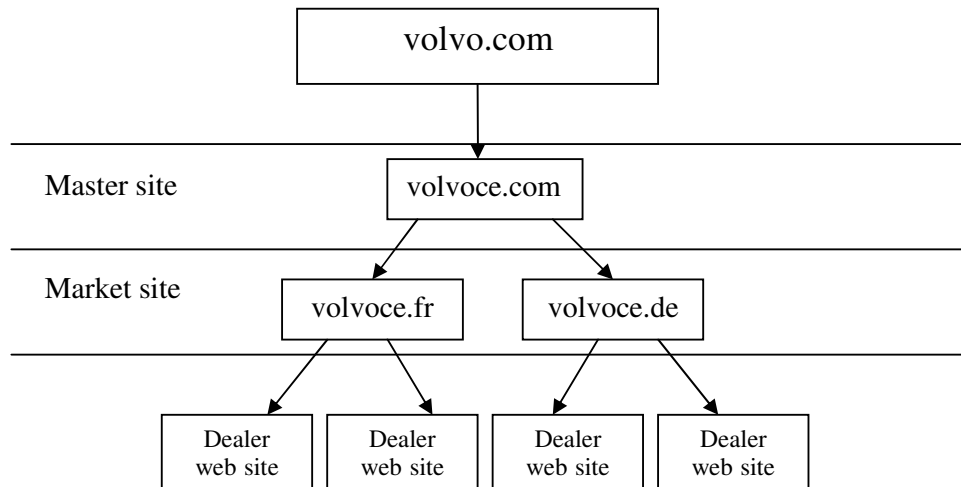

Figure 7: The relationship between the volvo.com site and the dealer sites

4.2.1 Specifications from VCE

The DSB application has been created through collaboration between VCE and VIT. At first surveys were made by VCE on where the industry generally was heading regarding dealer sites. After that VCE chose eight dealers to participate in a dealer survey. The dealers were chosen with the aim to cover the variety of different types of dealers. For instance, VCE chose to interview one dealer that is fully owned by them,

one independent dealer, one dealer that is positioned in a country with more than one language, one dealer that initially was negative to use the DSB, and one dealer that was positive. The surveys showed an overwhelming positive response and from the results VCE came up with a prototype that was brought to all the interviewed dealers in order to get their approval and opinions. After the presentation a decision was made to invest in the DSB. Management visited all dealers and told them about the investment and that the DSB was going to be rolled out (Bredborg).

> *"The dealers were very pleased with the presentation but at the same time they didn't really think that Volvo could accomplish the things that they had promised". – Bredborg*

With this information as a starting point, VCE outlined specifications that VIT proceeded from. A first version was made in which the first requests and the most basic functions were built-in. It was a pretty simple version. (Hedborg)

Simplicity

In the previous, cancelled version of volvo.com people worked with the philosophy that everything could be modified and that led to the development of a product that seemed brilliant on blueprint but impossible to create in reality. According to Mats Bredborg it is better to work in line with the principle: 'Think big, start small, scale fast'. The work process regarding the DSB has followed these principles. VIT created a version that was relatively basic and since it was basic it could be released quickly. An evaluation was performed after this introduction and the responses from this led to the fact that changes were made before the next version was launched. (Bredborg)

> *"We did a profile on our dealers where we asked them what they wanted on their dealer site and they asked for up-to-date information that is easy and simple to get. So we created a dealer site that was simple and easy to use and I believe that we have accomplished that. When we compared our dealer sites to Mack Trucks[10] web site we found that our version is a bit too stiff, but on the other hand I think that the simplicity and ease of use will pay off in the end." - Bredborg*

Recycling is important and one of the initial main purposes of the project was to recycle as much as possible and the templates should be recyclable regardless of the purpose of use (Hedborg). The DSB is supposed to be fast and easy to build since it is based on the volvo.com platform. (Södersten)

4.2.2 The Rollout

The presentation of the DSB has been taken care of by VCE and VIT employees currently working for VCE. The rollout plans are different in Europe than the US where the rollout has been easier due to similar language, culture and attitudes. Generally speaking the reception from the dealers has been mostly optimistic. (Hedborg) The DSB was primarily presented for the North American dealers through

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[10] www.macktrucks.com

the IT council[11] of North America. The council met in May 2003 and the dealers involved got a presentation. The meeting consisted of eight dealers and among what was shown to them was the LB Smith site in progress. The dealers got some general information on the DSB, regarding branding, and possibilities of exposing non-competitive products. They were given a form to fill in which content they wanted to have implemented and the feedback was mainly positive. (Williams) Mats Bredborg describes the dealers' views on the DSB;

> *"It has been very positive from the beginning, the dealers liked the idea but they never thought that we could make it with the technology we used for it. They were also skeptical whether or not we would be able to handle their brand. Several of the dealers have worked with Volvo for years and they thought that the dealer site would be just a Volvo site. So I believe that they are surprised in a positive way, the technology works fine and the mix of their brand and the Volvo brand is good." - Bredborg*

One of the issues was to convince the dealers that both parties, i.e. Volvo and their dealers, could achieve advantages by using the DSB. It was of importance to underline that this application could cut costs for Volvo as well as the dealers. (Bredborg)

> *"The DSB is just a fragment of the cost we spend on brochures every year. So to charge the dealers for the DSB is not a strategy that we have worked out." - Bredborg*

Procedure

The demand of the DSB has varied and those who do not have a dealer site of their own or a reasonable web presence, which is about 90 percent, have been very optimistic. This has been obvious, especially from the point of view that they do not have to contribute with their own time and other types of resources since Volvo helps them. The general impression is that they have been very pleased. There have also been some dealers that would like the Volvo information, but still be responsible for their own sites since they want their banner, their frame in the navigation etcetera. But this is only about two or three dealers of in total 40-50 big dealers in Europe. One of the larger dealers, that earlier was negative to the DSB, has chosen to use Volvo's concept and think that it is really good. (Andersson)

Instead of going to all dealers, VCE will rollout the application to a few strong dealers to make the more negative dealers interested and to make them aware that the application is successful (Bredborg). Karin Garberg explains the difficulties that arise when trying to convince dealers that already have a web solution:

> *"The next dealer to implement the DSB will probably be the Irish dealer Pat O'Donnell who is a dealer that is independent from Volvo. He has his own dealer site, but is interested in the DSB. Nevertheless it is tough to convince this dealer since they already have a solution that works. It is easier to convince those dealers who don't have a solution to begin with, because they are pleased with almost anything." (Garberg)*

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[11] A discussion group of dealers that are interested in IT. In these meetings they receive information about news and future events in the IT section

When it comes to the dealers who are owned by the Volvo Group, it is almost just a matter of pushing out the DSB application. It takes more effort regarding marketing and arguments when it comes to convincing the detached dealers. The selling-in-phase takes around 80 percent of the time while the actual implementation takes 20 percent. (Södersten)

At present time the North American market is expected to expand most. One of the main reasons for this is that the US market is large and that there is one official language for all the dealers in this region. Since a master site in English exists, this can be used to build dealer sites for all dealers in North America. The DSB is being rolled out at a much faster pace than first expected. The plan was to roll out five dealer sites by the end of 2003 but more likely there will be 10-15 dealer sites. (Bredborg) The rollout in North America has, according to Robert Williams, been carried out more easily than expected:

> *"We haven't really encountered a dealer in North America that doesn't want it. But a lot of dealers do not believe that a dealer website will enhance their sales and that's a mindset we have to change by showing the value through existing Volvo made dealer sites." – Williams*

Support of the DSB
The support of the DSB is a part of the package that is being offered. VIT is supposed to take care of the support for the dealer sites since the support is more of an operational service and they have more experience than VCE in that field. This is also why VCE now have VIT consultants to roll out the DSB application, so that the dealers and VIT can develop a more personal relation. In this particular case it is important since they are the ones handling the future contact in terms of support. (Bredborg)

4.2.3 Problems

The majority of VCE's larger dealers have seen the potential with using DSB since they have seen it as an opportunity to get possession of something better. Some of the dealers however have said that this is not Volvo's core competence and therefore they have decided to let their own site remain. VCE have used the first rolled out dealer site as an example to illustrate the concept and thereby making it easier for dealers to understand what the application can accomplish for their business. It is more efficient to allow them to have a closer look by themselves on a site that is up and running. The problem or limitation with the success of this procedure is that the first dealer is a Volvo owned dealer. VCE are excited to roll out a dealer site for Pat O'Donnell so that they can demonstrate that an independent European dealer is using the DSB. (Andersson)

The problem with the dealers is, according to VCE, that they are not fully aware of how important the DSB is for them. Generally they are too technically ignorant to realize that this will be the most important channel for them in a nearby future. One of their main concerns is that they are of the impression that future purchases will be carried out directly from the customer to VCE, omitting the dealers from the value chain. VCE's strategy is not to build any system that enables VCE to do business directly with the customer; VCE do not have the organization or the mentality to carry

out such a process or system. The dealer on the other hand has the organization and mentality to do this. The purpose of the DSB is more of an enabler for the dealers to open up a new channel towards the customers and it is VCE's task to help them realize that. (Bredborg) Peter Hedborg explains that VCE has made a decision that means that all their business is supposed to go via their dealers, some other Volvo-based companies are considering selling directly to their end customers, and discussions have taken place regarding how much dealers should be involved. But VCE has already made this decision and will go via their dealers and support them as much as possible and without reservation. A part of the strategy is to help the dealers to sell more products. In a near future the end customers might be able to order parts online from their dealer. This is part of the strategy where the customer can contact their local dealer directly and have personal connections, a local anchorage and they will be able to get everything through the local dealer. (Hedborg)

Hedborg continues about the cons and implies that everyone is not ready for the Internet use at present time, even though it has been available for quite a period of time. Some people are uncomfortable using the Internet, and a part reason for this might be difference in industries, ages, and old convenience patterns that are hard to change. This is even more valid for this type of industry where personal contacts are common. Hedborg is of the opinion that traditional ways of working and personal contacts are positive but time consuming and should at least be combined with the Internet. (Hedborg)

The question of co-branding on the dealer sites was sensitive since it was impossible to persuade the dealers not to sell other kinds of products on the site. Besides selling their main products, construction equipment, the products' complementary products such as stereo, air condition, and cellular phones also brings revenue to the dealers. VCE do not offer all these products at present time, but it is important for the dealer to be able to sell complementary products. The solution to this problem was to make the Volvo logo disappear whenever a customer visited a part of the dealer site that displayed products of any other brand. (Bredborg) Some content cannot be exposed on the dealer site and that can be perceived as a problem by some dealers since they are eager to promote all of their products (Hedborg). Robert Williams' view on the same issue;

"Dealers can't present their whole product line unless they're selling 100 percent Volvo products. They might not be able to market the site as freely as they probably would want to. At the same time I think it represents the dealer in a very positive way. I think the dealer gets a clean and easy to navigate website." - Williams

Different dealer demands have been discussed, according to Robert Williams:
"We need to meet all their demands, so to win over all the dealers completely we need to provide the same functionality that they have had on their web site on the DSB as well. We will not be able to completely meet all of their demands though. For example, including competitive brands on the DSB is a very complicated branding and legal issue so it's not just to implement what the dealer wants all the time." – Williams

Swecon, the largest independent dealer in Sweden, has chosen not to implement the DSB, but instead continues to use their own dealer site solution. (Andersson)

> *"Swecon, the Swedish dealer, is the best independent dealer site at the moment and they have developed the site themselves and are satisfied with their own solution right now. As long as they are pleased and have a good site we are not trying to change their mind and convince them to choose our solution, because it is all about customer satisfaction." (Andersson)*

Swecon is of the opinion that DSB is a good idea but despite that VCE have not managed to convince them that the DSB is better and cheaper than their solution. They do not have the best site when it comes to layout, but it is well integrated in their system and it contains the most important functions. (Bredborg)

4.3 The DSB application

The Volvo-provided dealer site consists of two parts; one part that is Volvo-driven and one part that is dealer-driven. The content of these two parts will be described more thoroughly below.

In terms of the design, the Volvo-provided dealer site is aligned with the new volvo.com design, hence the same look and feel can be recognized and that is beneficial. This procedure has led to a developing process directed by the templates that the system consists of. The business areas within the Volvo Group have not had full liberty of action when it comes to designing the dealer sites; instead they have become united by common structure requirements. (Hedborg)

> *"Some people have seen this as a limitation of each business area while others would say that this is the main reason that we have been able to finalize this project. I think it is a cost effective solution for all parts involved seen in a total perspective, with one single platform." - Hedborg*

The issue regarding co-branding has been solved so that the first page of the dealer site shows both Volvo's and the specific dealer's name and logotype. The dealer's name and logotype are placed in the upper left-hand corner and Volvo's is placed in the lower section of the page. This procedure enables the marketing of both Volvo's and the dealer's brand at the same site. (Bredborg)

First page of LB Smith (www.lbsmith.com)

From the first page of the dealer site, visitors can access both Volvo-driven content as well as dealer-driven content. This will be expounded below in the following two sections.

As a comparison to the LB Smith site, a screenshot from an independent dealer is illustrated.
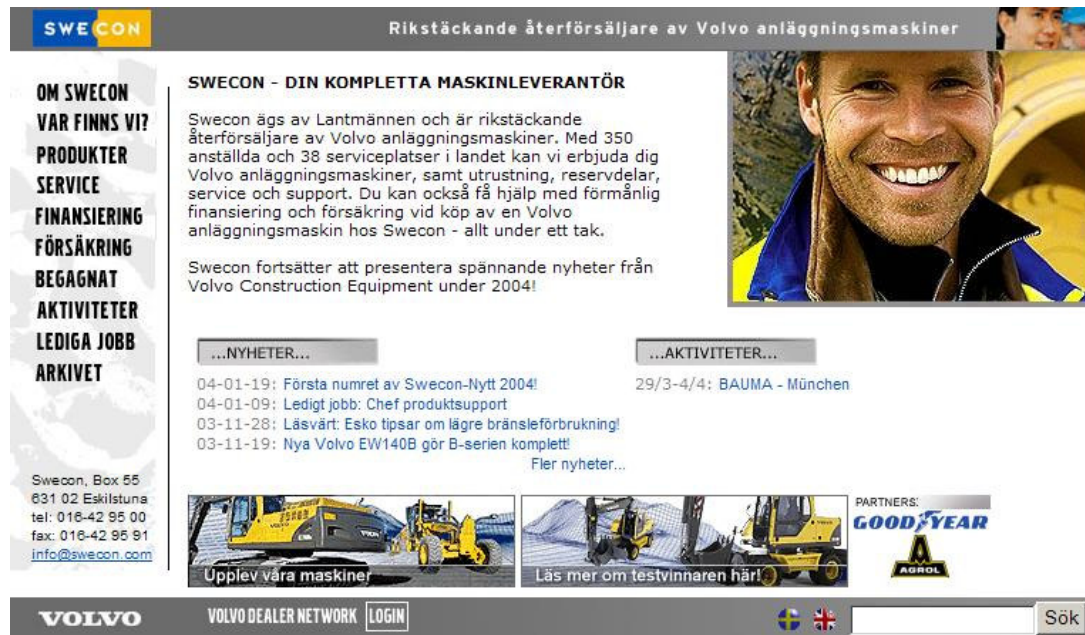
Screenshot from the first page of Swecon's dealer site (www.swecon.se)

Swecon is also one of the respondents that participated in the dealer interviews, and the only respondent that has chosen not to implement the DSB. In the first dealer site project, Swecon wanted VCE to provide a dealer site for them. However, this project was never finalized and therefore Swecon made the decision to build their own dealer site instead. (Swecon)

4.3.1 Dealer-driven content

The dealer-driven content consists of three sections; dealer information, dealer products and used equipment. This includes the 'Home page', 'Other products', 'Parts & service' and 'Other parts & service' and finally the 'About us' section (Williams).

Dealer information

The 'Home page' is the first page of the dealer site and it consists of the dealer's logo and color scheme in an integrated Volvo-provided web site. Furthermore, this page is designed to feature the Volvo products that the specific dealer carries and want to promote individually. On this page the customer can learn about the offerings of this specific dealership and access the 'contact us' as well as detailed branch information. This section is named 'About us' on the dealer site and consists of information

regarding the specific dealer. In this section contact information, company history, listings of the dealer's locations, employment possibilities and more of that kind of information can be found.

The 'About us' page of LB Smith (www.lbsmith.com)

According to Mats Bredborg, dealers' influence of the content on the DSB, first of all in terms of the information presented, is relatively low. They can in principal not influence the information related to the products, and they are not supposed to do it either. It is impossible for a dealer to influence the Volvo offerings or the message Volvo is sending out through the DSB, but still the dealer has lots of influence regarding the personal information and those parts of the site specifically provided for the dealer. The dealer can make those parts of the site that he has access to like a library and add much more information to the site. For example the dealer can add manuals for all their used equipment so the end customer can get access to those. (Bredborg)

Dealer products and services
In addition to the Volvo-driven section of 'Parts & service' there is a section named 'Other parts & service' on the dealer site that is dealer-driven. In this section the dealer is allowed to add completing parts and services that they provide. The product section that is dealer-driven is named 'Other products' on the dealer site and it consists of the other brands that the dealer is providing. The dealers can present the other manufacturers of construction equipment that they market. Although, it is only possible

to promote complementary products that are non-competitive to Volvo's products. Products that are non-competing with Volvo's are defined as produced in a market segment where Volvo does not compete in at present time (Williams). Under this page one can find the 'product line' page where the dealer is allowed to list their complete offerings of their complete line of non-competing products. At this page they can also present their completing parts and services offerings from the 'Other parts & service' page.

The 'Other products' page of LB Smith (www.lbsmith.com)

The only negative part with a strong connection to the Volvo brand is concerning the marketing of competing products that some dealers are selling. From the dealer point of view the connection to the Volvo brand is so strong that products from other brands seem kind of hidden. Volvo provides the dealer with updated information and a site but the trade-off is that Volvo is in control of the content. (Hedborg)

"Products directly competing with specific Volvo products are not allowed but dealers are allowed to market brands that aren't competing with a specific

Volvo product. This limits the dealer and if I was in their position I would like to present everything, the whole product line of course, in a professional way which they are not allowed to right now. This is a decision made by VCE and I'm a little interested in how this is going to be followed up, since I guess the dealer does whatever he wants. All he wants is to make money which is not strange at all, and it's going to be interesting how this will be taken care of." – Hedborg

Used equipment

This section is named 'Used equipment' on the dealer site and it consists of the used equipment that the specific dealer is selling. The sale of used equipment is at present time handled by a third party and it is the dealer himself who decides whether he wants to sell used equipment on the dealer site or not. A company called 'Machinery Trader' is maintaining the site that provides the used equipment. When a visitor clicks on the 'Used equipment'-button, a new window opens and Machinery Trader is the host of that window external from Volvo.
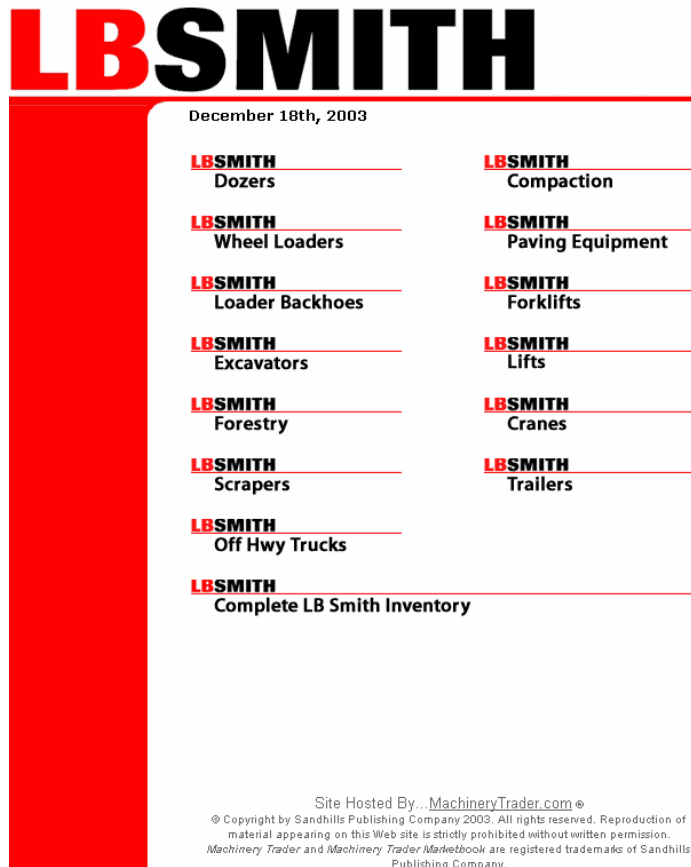
Screenshot from LB Smith's external 'used equipment' section (www.lbsmith.com)

Dealers that are providing used equipment have links from their dealer sites to an independent web site that is not controlled by Volvo (Jerresand).

"Machinery Trader is a third party that at present time provides the used equipment and we'll see what is going to be done about this in the future. This is a problem, that the information cannot be taken care of and controlled in the same way here as at the dealer sites. There are definitely possibilities for a Volvo solution on the used equipment sale." - Hedborg

4.3.2 Volvo-driven content

The Volvo-driven content consist of three sections; Volvo products, Volvo parts and branch locator.

Volvo products

All of the Volvo construction equipment that the specific dealer is providing is presented on the dealer site. The equipment is presented in writing and with pictures. The dealer gets this information automatically, hence updating is performed without allocating resources from the dealer.

The 'products' part of the LB Smith site (www.lbsmith.com)

"The material, for example templates, is recyclable and can be used on several sites. When a product specification is changed, the system automatically updates all concerned markets and dealers. This example pinpoints that DSB can be seen as a whole concept connected all the way to dealers and end customers as well". - Hedborg

Volvo parts

Volvo provides the dealer with information regarding the specific Volvo parts that the dealer is selling.

'Parts & service' provided by LB Smith (www.lbsmith.com)

Branch locator

Visitors can use the branch locator to find the dealer that is located closest to them geographically. The visitors just have to fill in their postal code or city of residence, and the branch locator will find the nearest dealer. The branch locator also gives information regarding product range, contact information, maps and driving directions.

Screenshot of the 'branch locator' section of LB Smith (www.lbsmith.com)

Business solutions

On the business solutions page the visitor can look at the LB Smith-provided solutions for areas such as mining, agriculture and public authorities.

Screenshot from the 'business solutions' section of LB Smith (www.lbsmith.com)

Finance

On the financing and insurance section the visitor can get information about the available investment models for LB Smith's products. Loan, lease, credit application and insurance are the four sub-pages for this section.

Screenshot from the 'finance' section of the LB Smith site (www.lbsmith.com)

Member services

The 'member services' section consist of customer exclusive material. Some of the sub-pages are restricted to members only and the visitor will need to register before entering these pages.

Screenshot from the 'member service' section of LB Smith (www.lbsmith.com)

News & media

In 'news & media' section the visitor have access to press releases, articles and events regarding LB Smith. It is also possible to download screen savers and wallpaper, links to buy merchandise and diecast toys as well as subscribing to newsletters regarding Volvo Construction Equipment.

Screenshot from the 'news & media' section of the LB Smith site (www.lbsmith.com)

4.3.4 Volvo's reflections on enhancements on the DSB

Peter Hedborg thinks that the usability on the DSB is good and refers to three investigations performed by Volvo during the time of the volvo.com project, hence design and usability have been modified during the project. The response has been positive from the beginning but improvements can always be made. (Hedborg) Robert Williams about the functionality;

"I think we have a good base of functionality but there still has to be even more functionality on the site. The next step will be within the parts area where there will be a parts locator so that the customers can buy parts online." – Williams

The platform that the DSB is built on will be strong enough to handle all the applications needed for the dealers. The dealers need a dealer management system to support their business. The system will handle all their customers and parts and if the customers could access these applications through the DSB they could order the parts and services directly on the Internet. If the customer would do this, the dealer could save money and be more efficient when placing orders. Thanks to this, the dealer could provide better service to the customer. These expanded possibilities such as ordering online could in the end also facilitate for the dealer to sell even more products. (Bredborg)

"The procedure would make it possible for the customers to see what's in stock which could also enable online parts ordering. I also think that there should be a customer management system so the customer could see what parts he has ordered and get an overview on his service contracts. The idea would be to simplify the handling of the customers' Volvo machines." - Bredborg

Enhancements such as new applications are the highest priority for VCE at the moment. Firstly, it is important to make the dealer understand the importance with the DSB and what it can accomplish for the specific dealer. The problem is that some of the North American dealers are not fully satisfied with what the DSB offers, thus it is important to find a balance with developing the DSB and at the same time inform the dealer on how the DSB can facilitate their work. (Bredborg)

"I think that there should be a possibility for the dealers that can put some resources aside to maintain their DSB. It should be possible to influence the outcome to a larger extent so that dealers that are committed in their dealer site will have room to maneuver it more freely. There should be a difference between a dealer site that obtains maintenance and allocated resources and a dealer site that gets a minimum of resources. This isn't really possible today and maybe that is why for example Swecon has chosen not to implement the DSB." - Bredborg

Robert Williams would like to see the Volvo products appear above other competitive products within the search engines so that information about the Volvo products is shown first (Williams).

4.4 Dealers that have implemented the DSB

Clyde/West
Independent from Volvo
Volvo DSB: www.clydewest.com
Locations: 3 branches in Washington and Oregon
Interviewed: Rick Semke – VP Sales
                Jim Fillback – Marketing/Sales
                Ciara Williams – Sales Administrator

CMI (Construction Machinery Industrial), LLC
Independent from Volvo
Volvo DSB: www.cmiak.com
Locations: 4 branches in Alaska
Interviewed: Erik Frazier – IT manager

LB Smith
Owned by Volvo
Volvo DSB: www.lbsmith.com
Locations: 13 branches throughout South East US
Interviewed: Bryan Smith – VP Operations
                John Johnston – Marketing Manager

All of the interviewed dealers had a presentation of the DSB before they decided whether to implement the application or not. According to CMI the presentation was adequate in the sense that it offered enough information for them to make the decision to implement the DSB.

"I thought it was a very professional looking site, it made our and any dealership look good. Nothing negative from what I saw." – CMI

The situation with LB Smith is special due to two reasons. LB Smith is a dealership that is owned by Volvo and Bryan Smith used to work for VCE and was involved in the initial creation of the DSB. These facts led to an easy decision regarding the implementation of the DSB (LB Smith).

Dealers' general view on the DSB
The dealers had different opinions regarding the main purpose of the DSB and how they perceive it. One belief, that was common among all of the dealers, was that the DSB can help them to establish high-quality web presence. Clyde West sees the DSB as a tool that connects them to VCE North America and helps to deliver more information to the field. According to LB Smith, the main purpose of the DSB is to provide a world class Internet presence for VCE dealers with access to up-to-date information. CMI had the following view on the DSB and the potential benefits that the implementation of it can bring forward:

"It's definitely a marketing tool, I really liked it because we needed a web site and I was the one who was going to have to make it and I was really busy with like fourteen different things going on. And these guys could get a professional web site out there at no time and maintain it and still allow us some flexibility."
– CMI

The dealers were asked to motivate their main argument for choosing to implement the DSB. The answers varied and for CMI the main reason was the fact that Volvo could launch the site fairly quickly and create a professional web site for them. LB Smith motivated their decision to implement the DSB:

"The best part is that it is dead simple, easy to navigate, it doesn't demand too much work and it is free of charge." - LB Smith

Clyde West was of the opinion that the most important benefits that can be derived from using the DSB is the fact that it will help them to sell more new and used products, they also think it gives them new opportunities to sell parts and services. LB Smith and CMI agreed that the best part with the DSB is that it provides updated information that is easy to access.

The dealers also had opinions regarding the downsides with the DSB and LB Smith and CMI seemed to share the same view on difficulties that arise when dealers want to present other brands on their dealer sites.

"The worst part is the lack of ability to show other brands and to manage and promote non competing brands." – LB Smith

"The only complaint I have is that we sell multiple lines, different vendors, different brands and the question is how I can get more stuff out there, but it's definitely Volvo flavored right now. That's the only downside as I see it. I want it to look more universal I guess. It's definitely a Volvo web site." – CMI

LB Smith summarized three aspects of downsides that dealers perceive when deciding whether to implement the DSB or not.

"There's a big fear with implementing the DSB. Number one is the lack of control. Number two, the fear that the manufacturer is serving as a big brother, looking down over the shoulder of the distributor and getting one step closer to controlling what the distributor has and does. And Number three, the lack of ability to represent other products." - LB Smith

The dealers were asked if they believed that the use of the DSB could increase sales and their answer were unisonely positive. Clyde West had a site prior to the implementation of the DSB. The site was insufficient and had few responses. CMI and LB Smith are of the opinion that the DSB could help their dealership to sell more products.

"I don't know if sales will explode or anything. The inflow of new customers will definitely increase while sales to existing customers probably won't be affected that much." - CMI

"We see effect in sales already and that's another way to sell the DSB! We get sales from the site already, why aren't the other dealers implementing it?" – LB Smith

Dealers' view on the Internet
All the dealers agreed that it is important to be exposed and available on the Internet. LB Smith believes that an exposure on the Internet affects their market shares since they cover more with the Internet.

"The smaller dealers recognize that their customers are starting to use the Internet, they will never buy the construction equipment online but they certainly recognize the need for being online anyway. They understand that some, especially young people, use the Internet but they haven't totally grasped how this is going to affect them. It's only another way of communication for them. You can't have a salesman that could possibly cover all the area that you're covering with your dealership so that's why the Internet is such a great thing for us." – LB Smith

CMI and Clyde West see the Internet as a channel which enables their companies to provide presumptive customers with adequate production information.

"From a business person's point of view it's like a desk, it makes our sales-men's job easier since it provides more information to our customers that they can look up before they come to us." - CMI

The respondents also saw downsides when using the Internet as a communication channel and the biggest cons, as Clyde West sees it, is that everyone is of the opinion

that it is an excellent way of doing business. According to Clyde West people seem to forget that one never can be sure of whom you are talking to or if the information is correct and this is an ongoing problem with the Internet.

> *"It's like we tell our kids not to speak to people they don't know. It's a downside in matters of trust." – Clyde West*

CMI discussed problems that occurred when using the Internet as a communication channel. They were of the opinion that it might take some time to get used to this new way of providing information, hence the market needs time to adjust to fully accept this form of communication.

> *"It lacks of face-to-face communication and personal meetings. The meeting with our customers is of great importance in this business. Face-to-face communication is everything when you're in sales business and the Internet can work more as a complement to our business in this matter." - CMI*

All dealers agreed that the Internet use amongst their customers has been fairly low in the past, but recently there has been a transformation regarding the spread of Internet use amongst their customers. The Internet is becoming a tool that overtakes functions that up until this point has been performed by other products.

> *"Internet has taken over for the yellow pages which have more like gone away thanks to the Internet. Internet is like the new thing and the yellow pages don't exist in the same way anymore. One problem with this business is that a lot of our customers don't use Internet that much, they're not aware of the Internet pros even though they're getting better." - Clyde West*

Dealers and their customers

According to Clyde West the reason why customers come to them when they want to buy construction equipment, is that they offer what the customers need. The personal meeting is important since that is where the relationship is beginning. CMI develops the reasoning regarding customer contact:

> *"We have good contact with our customers, high degree of returning customers, almost like based on a friendly relationship." - CMI*

All dealers think that it is important to strengthen the relationship to their customers, although their opinions differ regarding how to handle this issue.

> *"I'm not a salesman, but as I see it is important with personal contact, get to know them over a dinner or so. It's important to get to know them so they don't just see us as a faceless company and we don't see them just as money coming through the door." - CMI*

LB Smith brings forward the importance of using modern techniques in their strive to achieve close connections to their customers:

> *"We're just beginning that, our salesmen all have relationships with the customers but to be honest with you a lot of it are dependent on the branch and that particular salesman. We don't have anything institutionalized to facilitate better communication, cooperation, always hitting a guy with information via e-mail. We didn't even have a good database of all our customers until just recently. We didn't have it! That's amazing, I mean 2003 nearly 2004, we had it*

but it was all strung out. Most dealers see these technicalities as a necessary evil. But now they're starting to get it." – LB Smith

LB Smith and Clyde West believe that the DSB can create added value to their customers in terms of providing them with the latest information about the products. LB Smith says that by using the DSB, customers can get the latest up-to-date information directly from their manufacturer. Thereby, the DSB can help to create added value to their customers. Clyde West continues the reasoning:

"I don't think they will actually buy things online, but the buying can be a result of checking the Net out. I like to think that there's a need for this type of service now and that this need will grow in the future." – Clyde West

Dealers' vision with the DSB

When it comes to long-term expectations on the DSB the dealers' opinions differ to some extent. As LB Smith sees it, the DSB is adequate for the next couple of years. But the long-term aims are to improve the interaction between the dealer and their customers. Their vision is also to use the DSB as a 'cyber storefront', i.e. use it to sell parts directly to the customer. They look forward to when everybody realizes the potential with the DSB. In Clyde West's opinion the DSB will hopefully provide them with all pertinent information that can help them and Volvo to sell more products. They also believe that the DSB will obtain more enhancements continuously and that the interaction between them and their customers will improve by using the DSB.

4.4.2 Web design

Dealers' perception of the DSB application

All dealers in this category think that the DSB is built-up in a good way and that the navigation is easy. LB Smith thinks that the navigation is better than on their previous site although they have not done any surveys on that matter. It has arty layout, is easy, clean and direct. Clyde West believes that the DSB contains a great deal of content, it is easy to navigate and it does not consist of unnecessary information or Flash[12] content. The overall impression regarding design, functionality and usability is positive.

Even if most of the feedback from these dealers was positive, some negative views were brought up.

"In terms of more negative stuff I would say that it's such a strong Volvo flavor, you don't know that we sell other products, the other products are kind of hidden. Although I think it's an understandable trade-off when Volvo are creating and hosting the site, and we are not charged for that service. In some way we have to find a solution for this issue, but I think we will work that out too." - CMI

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12 Flash is a software platform that can be used to integrate video, text, audio, and graphics that can be used for interactive marketing and presentations, e-learning, and application user interfaces. For further information see; www.macromedia.com

Transformations of the DSB that the dealers want to have implemented
In order to attract dealers to use the DSB it is of importance that the DSB application includes the functions that are asked for. The dealers listed the most important functions they could point out, thereby expressing their wishes regarding the built-up of the DSB and transformations that the dealers would want to have implemented. The dealers had opinions regarding the DSB application and came up with suggestions on enhancements. LB Smith would like to have a competitive comparison on the DSB where customers can compare Volvo products with competing brands. They would also like more financial information. Otherwise they believe that the DSB includes most of the information and applications that are needed for now. According to LB Smith it would be positive to offer the distributor an easier way to change the information on the site. CMI expressed similar wishes regarding dealers' possibility to affect the content.

> *"I think it would be cool to put up some pictures of salesmen whenever you want. Maybe also some content that we can put in by ourselves, like we're throwing a party on this date and so on. But I mean Volvo is pretty flexible right now, so that's not a problem, I guess we will work it out." - CMI*

The interviewed dealers were asked to come up with suggestions regarding functionality that they would like to have implemented in a three-year perspective, thereby presenting their view regarding demands on the DSB. CMI thinks:

> *"It would be really neat in the future if Volvo could create a template and put most of the content out there and then we have like a software we can go on with and kind of customize ourselves, add customer interface that Volvo have control over. That would be pretty neat. Something where we can't change the template, only what's on it, that'd be pretty cool. If our customers could check parts availability on the parts online would be great as well. To get a look of our warehouse to see what's in stock here would be a good service for our customers." - CMI*

CMI thinks that the DSB carries out almost all information a customer could ask for. The only thing the information lacks is opinions from users and professionals. They would like to publish reviews on different products, parts or services on the site so it becomes even easier for the customers to form their own opinion before the decision of an actual purchase of something. To get the opinions from professionals today, the customers need to either call the company or visit them, but with this solution customers will save some time. According to Clyde West there are a few things that could be improved to get the DSB more interesting for their customers. They want to be able to inform their customers about new events as soon as it emerges. When they were free to think in a future perspective about what could make the DSB more interesting for their customer, the following was said:

> *"We want something on the web that can attract customers back. People in our business are not readers it's more like discussions and opinions that would attract them. It could be more like a magazine and also more local, something that affects you personally. I would also like it more based on the region than it might be right now. You should keep it fresh and keep it interesting. You got to have the customers coming back and the site needs to be more inviting for the*

customers in some way. We would also like to present more old stuff, like used equipment, old manuals and that stuff." - Clyde West

Furthermore, Clyde West is of the opinion that:

"The key is to change content often and provide our customers with pertinent information to attract them back to the site. If we keep it dynamic like that it should work well." –Clyde West

Customers of CMI had requested access to download equipment specifications which could save printed material for CMI and time for both CMI and their customers. The procedure would facilitate product comparison for the customers as well and all together be beneficial for both parties. (CMI)

LB Smith would like to see real time help in the future, a platform which enables interaction with their existing customers. But, LB Smith continues, the real future is in parts and service. LB Smith had a clear opinion on what needs to be done to make the DSB even more interesting for dealers.

"The best way, although Volvo or VCE management disagrees, is to allow dealers to host information about non competing products. Yes, Volvo pays for the site, but what if the dealers won't participate. Then it's like congratulations, you really didn't win. If we can do this it will suck the customers in and it will make them use the dealer site. What the dealers really want is to sell products and make money. Dealers are in the money making business not in the business of representing Volvo. Yes, they have a good relationship with Volvo but they're really in the money making business." – LB Smith

4.4.3 Trust

Existing obstacles for an implementation and further developed collaboration

The confidence in and commitment to VCE and VIT is "110 percent" from Clyde West's point of view. They want to be tightly linked to Volvo and the choice to go on with the DSB is partly due to the good confidence in Volvo. The confidence includes both products and services like the DSB. Since they are a rather small dealer they are of the opinion that it is positive for them to be strongly linked with their manufacturer. CMI expressed a high level of full confidence in Volvo:

"It seems rock solid, I have full confidence with everything, especially the web site. Any innovation that is out there, Volvo probably will be the first out there to get it and implement it for us." – CMI

According to LB Smith the DSB presents one third Volvo and two thirds LB Smith and that is not seen as a problem from their point of view. They also believe that the extension on how they can influence the information presented on their personal pages like 'about us' is enough.

CMI is of the opinion that the DSB presents Volvo more than the dealer. They think the Volvo flavor is a bit too strong, although their view is that this is not an actual problem at present time. Clyde West figures that if the DSB fails to present their

dealership to the extent that they would like, it would be their own fault since Volvo is very flexible and sharp eared to Clyde West's requests and expectations.

LB Smith points out that there is a conflict in dealers' minds; on the one hand they recognize it as positive to be tightly linked to their manufacturer, and on the other hand they do not fully trust that manufacturers will stick with their present standpoint.

> *"Dealers know that the day will come when Volvo will charge the dealers for the DSB. And they also know that a manufacturer someday may change their mind, when a new guy comes he might say: we are reorganizing and this is the new way this and that will be done. They want to align themselves with the manufacturer but in the reality dealers don't really trust manufacturers. But this is not only in Volvo, this goes for practically all manufacturers. So with the alignment of a manufacturer and a distributor there is a risk and the dealers are aware of that. As a distributor you don't only want to sell excavators, you want to sell everything so that you can tell your customer; whatever you want, come to me, I have it. The downside for Volvo is that they don't have the same product range as Caterpillar which forces the dealer to sell other brands." – LB Smith*

4.4.1 Branding

How the use of the DSB application affect a dealers' trademark and web presence
The Clyde West brand stands for stability since they have been doing business since 1911. This has given the company a good reputation in their line of business. In the matter of developing the brand their opinion is:

> *"We are trying to link us tighter to Volvo so they can be more stable in the marketplace. The most important thing is to tie the CW brand to the Volvo brand. It's different here than in other parts of the country. Volvo needs stability in the marketplace here, they have had a lot of different dealers in this region. We have worked together for eighteen months and Caterpillar for instance has been using the same dealers for quite a long time. So stability is important, both for Volvo and us." – Clyde West*

LB Smith states that they are distributors of Volvo construction equipment that attempt to give world class levels of service on the machines they sell, and competing machines if possible. Distributors generally do not think about their brand in the same way that manufacturers do, instead they focus on giving good service to people. LB Smith claims that their brand has improved from being terrible to much better since they implemented the DSB. But the Internet effect is still relatively small and it will not single-handedly help their brand to develop from terrible to best in the world.

Dealers' perception of becoming a part of the Volvo brand on the Internet
CMI and Clyde West are optimistic about the fact of becoming a part of the Volvo brand. The more exposure they get the better, and they also think that it is even better if they are tightly linked to Volvo in order to get common exposure.

> *"We want to be tight with Volvo. Clyde West is Volvo and Volvo is Clyde West. We're a local company with local management and local ownership with worldwide ties with the Volvo organization. We want to be a Volvo dealer just*

like there are Cat dealers. To be 'The Volvo dealer' is the main thing. We could be a local company that has international ties." - Clyde West

CMI sense that it is positive from a customer point of view, to obtain as much access to CMI as possible and this is what they get from a strong web presence that provides all the information a customer could ask for. According to LB Smith, one of the benefits that can be derived from being a part of the Volvo profile on the Internet is that it is a 'win-win situation'. Both the manufacturer and the distributor will benefit from it.

"An excavator in these days is an excavator. One machine to another is almost dead on track so it's the relationship between distributors and customers and the service that the distributor offers that really matter. Those are the two key fundamentals the distributor has to overcome in the competition for customers. Our biggest issue is awareness. For people, Volvo is cars not construction equipment. However, the Volvo brand is our single biggest asset. Product advantages are not sustainable. Every brand has they're own engineers and they are as good at reversed engineering as any other." – LB Smith

CMI and Clyde West agreed on that the most negative part of establishing a closer connection to the Volvo brand is the difficulty to market products from other manufacturers on their dealer sites, hence there is a possibility that other manufacturers feel concealed.

4.5 Dealers that are going to implement the DSB

Golden Equipment
Independent from Volvo
Volvo DSB: www.volvo.com/dealers/en-us/goldenequipment/
Own Web Site: www.goldenequipment.com
New Web Site: www.golden2.sks.com
Locations: 2 branches in New Mexico
Interviewed: Terry Malone – IS/IT Manager

Marcel's Equipment
Independent from Volvo
Volvo DSB: Not started
Old Web Site: www.marcelsequipment.com
Locations: 3 branches in Canada
Interviewed: Rob Brown – IT Manager

McClung-Logan Equipment Company
Independent from Volvo
Volvo DSB: Not started
Old Web Site: www.mcclunglogan.com
Locations: 2 branches in Maryland and Virginia
Interviewed: Mark Coppola – IT Manager

All of the dealers that are going to implement the DSB have had a presentation regarding the application.

Dealers' general view on the DSB
The dealers were of the opinion that the DSB offered an opportunity to establish a site on the Internet easy and quick without having to put so much effort in it since Volvo will take care of most of the content. Golden Equipment's number one reason to implement the DSB was the fact that it is basically free of charge for the dealers. One thing that distinguishes Golden Equipment from the rest of the interviewed dealers in this category is that they already have a site at their disposal which they will keep after the implementation of the DSB. The idea is that customers will be linked back and forth between these two sites. Volvo represents only 50 percent of their business so they have other manufacturers that they need to have represented on their web site. They have content management software that makes it quite simple to create web pages for their own dealer site. It is the pertinent employees of each department that are responsible for the content on that dealer site. The main reason for McClung-Logan to implement the DSB was:
"Volvo does it for free and we shouldn't be able to do it like that ourselves. I like what they have to offer and if it comes out anywhere near like I expect it to I will be very happy." - McClung-Logan

Marcel's Equipment's overall view on the DSB at this point is:
> *"We're going to go ahead with it for marketing and administration reasons so it takes some workload of our people as well. The DSB is another tool that we need to use, that we haven't pursued in lack of time and knowledge of our own to do this. Volvo is professional as well." - Marcel's Equipment*

Dealers' view on the Internet
According to Golden Equipment the Internet use amongst their customers is high especially regarding searching for used equipment and looking for the best prices. Golden Equipment believes that exposure on the Internet is another source of revenue since they will be able to sell parts and merchandise. Another level of offering is created to customers and it will help them to get more involved with what Golden Equipment offers. McClung-Logan thinks that their larger customers are very computer literate while some of the smaller ones are not. Further on they state that it is the way of the future, and Marcel's Equipment agrees on this growing use amongst their customers.

Internet exposure and availability is an important issue for McClung-Logan because that's where business is going. They also think that few dealers will try to fight against the fact that the Internet is an important issue for business and that those who do not follow will get left behind. Marcel's Equipment underlines the importance of being available on the Internet and states that it will also help them integrate tighter with Volvo.
> *"We live with it, without it we would not be able to survive. Our business would not work without it; we use it as a daily tool." – Marcel's Equipment*

Internet as a communication channel does not only bring forward positive effects. Marcel's Equipment considers the Internet as a bit slow, aggravating and that knowledge is needed in order to use it properly. McClung-Logan's view on the Internet is that the demography of the industry is a drawback in terms of Internet use.

"The cons are that some of the older people like to do business in a more traditional way. Our outstanding sales force has been in the business for 20 years and most of them are not computer literate. The people in that generation tend to fight it a little bit and older customers seem to fight it as well. The sons and daughters that are coming up in the companies are the ones who are driving the use of computers when doing business." - McClung-Logan

Dealers and their customers

All interviewed dealers consider themselves to have a good relationship with their customers and this relationship has been established due to a long tradition of providing good service and treating them professionally. According to Golden Equipment customers come to them when they want to buy construction equipment. First and foremost this is due to the relationship they have with their customers, but also because of the service standpoint of Golden Equipment's, hence customers know that they will be taken care of.

"We develop long-term relations with our customers. They keep coming back and we are trying to be their top of mind. Once a month we do customers forms with some of our biggest customers. We sit down and discuss what we need to do better and what they expect from us and vice versa to develop our relationship."
- Golden equipment

The main reason why customers come to McClung-Logan when they want to buy construction equipment is because they have earned reputation in this type of trade for professionalism, service, and that their salespeople have developed strong relationships with the customers. To strengthen this relationship even more they are working every day with demonstrating products, arranging trips for important customers and other types of arrangements. Marcel's Equipment implies that it is an old type of business, mostly taken care of by personal meetings and that is one of the reasons why they have been pushing for the DSB to complement the salesman's job.

The dealers are unanimous regarding the value that the DSB can create for their customers and bring forward advantages that can be derived from using the application.
McClung-Logan continues with the opinion that they think the DSB can create added value to their customers. They state that their customers easier can find out whom to contact, customers can check out equipment inventory and they can search for information directly instead of going through a salesman. Marcel's Equipment are looking for an even higher degree of returning customers with assistance from the DSB, and also that this could help them strengthen the bonds between them and their customers in the future. Marcel's Equipment thinks the DSB can create surplus value to their customers, especially if they will be able to add more personalized information on the site and if there will be more applications implemented. Golden Equipment is of the opinion that whenever the customer has a problem they know where to go and on the dealer site they can search for information no matter what time or day it is.

Marcel's Equipment, Golden Equipment and McClung-Logan all agreed that there is a need for this type of service both now and in the future.

> "The Internet purchasing and the Internet is becoming a bigger part of the business whether you like it or not. And if you try to fight it you're going to be left behind." – McClung-Logan

Dealers' vision with the DSB

McClung-Logan's ambition is to obtain greater public exposure and thereby strengthen the connection between their dealership and the Volvo name. It is important for them to be recognized as a Volvo dealer. (McClung-Logan) Golden Equipment agrees on the importance of exposure and to be recognized on the Internet.

> "Our long-term expectations on the dealer site are to get to the point where we're top of mind in the customers' eyes. So if they have any questions in the construction equipment area, our site will be the first one that comes to mind." - Golden equipment

4.5.2 Web design

Dealers' perception of the DSB application

Regarding design and usability, the dealers perceive the DSB as mainly positive. McClung-Logan is of the opinion that the Volvo-provided dealer site has a clear design and a well thought-out disposition. McClung-Logan points at two features that can be found on the DSB; 'the interactive walkaround', where the visitor virtually can sit inside a machine and try different features, and 'the sitemap' which offers the visitor an overview of the site. Golden Equipment believes that the DSB is very easy to get around even though they think that some of the buttons are a bit too small. Furthermore, they consider the design and usability to be overall good. When it comes to functionality they do not see any problems and they have not gotten any negative feedback. Marcel's Equipment compares DSB with their previous site and has the following opinion:

> "The dealer site made by Volvo is looking a lot more professional, they've got somebody that has some talent down there obviously, the one that I've seen is easy to navigate through and that was one reason that we went through with this." - Marcel's Equipment

Marcel's Equipment has been studying the LB Smith site quite a lot and thinks that there is no comparison to their site. Marcel's Equipment does not have enough resources of either time or people on their own to offer their customers an updated and professional site and they think that the DSB can solve this problem. The functionality on the DSB includes everything McClung-Logan needs at present time. They like the contact opportunities in the 'About us'-section, the maps to find the dealership and the 'Dealer locator' to name a number of examples. McClung-Logan's opinion on how the DSB is built-up:

> "It incorporates the color scheme of Volvo and the corporate identity along with the dealerships individual colors and logo. It gives you an easy access to all the things that you want to get in touch with, for example contacts, products and

other product lines - they allow you to link to other product lines through their web site and I think that's tremendous. The site is among the best around. They offer maps so that you can find different dealers and you also have a contact list that you can use. At the same time it is not a really fancy or spectacular web site but it is simple, basic and it gives you all the information that you can possibly need. It doesn't have lot of frills but I don't think that people need a lot of distractions." - McClung-Logan

Transformations of the DSB application that the dealers want to have implemented

The dealers were asked to point out the most important functions in an application like the DSB, thereby expressing their wishes. The DSB application needs to include functions that dealers ask for in order to attract them to use the DSB. McClung-Logan thinks that the DSB is basic and contains all the needed information and applications at present time, although they expressed a wish of providing Flash pictures of the machines. Competing dealers have had a small box with Flashes on their first page where they show their used equipment, hence the visitor do not have to connect to their used equipment list in order to see these pictures.

Golden Equipment thinks that the DSB might be missing a feature which makes it possible to look up parts availability. Marcel's Equipment agrees and emphasize that they would like more interaction and something with customer access that could link the customers closer to the company and they could make use of on a daily basis.

"What I would like personally is all the information, the pricing and if I want I can go through and order parts online. I see that in some point of time, you can order all parts on the machine, the more you can make the customers do by themselves the better, and very beneficial I would say. We look at a free source of income" - Marcel's Equipment

When it comes to functionality Golden Equipment would like to see something where customers can compare different models. They would like the dealer site to contain more pictures, since that would make it more attractive for their customers. Golden Equipment also wants to have more competitive information on the site in the future. This is an important issue, if they are to replace their own site and only use the DSB.

*"The big reason is that we represent many products apart from Volvo. So we need to represent them also on a website. But if VCE could agree on exposing other manufacturers that would maybe be a reason for us to only have the DSB."
– Golden Equipment*

McClung-Logan and Marcel's Equipment would also like more competitive information on the DSB and thereby be able to promote all their products on the Internet.

"The only comment that we've had at the office is, and everybody understands Volvo's point of view, that every dealer has different machines other than Volvo and they would like to have that ability to put that on there and to maintain your own site as a personal site. You are going to have to market the other equipment that you have, and not everybody lives a 100 percent on Volvo's equipment.

From a service aspect it is important with one stop shopping." - Marcel's Equipment

Beyond this Marcel's Equipment would like to add more interaction on the site that will attract their customers to visit the site more frequently, something that customers actually can make use of. It is important that the dealer site contains more than just information about Volvo. There has got to be a reason for customers to return to the dealer site, for instance manuals that can be downloaded. McClung-Logan would like Volvo to keep in mind the development of the site over time. Speaking free of mind, they want the DSB to be a simple site that is easy to navigate and informative for their customers. The most important issue is, from the McClung-Logan point of view, to be identified with their main product line. They want to have a strong connection to the Volvo identity which has not been the case with their previous site. They are of the opinion that it is important to have a strong dealership that is distinct to the customers. McClung-Logan thinks that this is especially important if you are a Volvo dealer since they have a lot of different dealerships who sells products through many independent dealers.

4.5.3 Trust

Existing obstacles for an implementation and further developed collaboration
Golden Equipment has a high level of confidence in both VCE and VIT. They are also optimistic about the DSB and thinks that when they launch their dealer site the confidence in Volvo will grow even more.

All dealers agree on that it is mostly Volvo that is presented through the dealer site. Marcel's Equipment thinks that the information provided by the dealer seems somewhat thin on the LB Smith site, which they have examined closely. The information about the particular company is insufficient, although they do not think it is of importance. Hence, the fact that the DSB represents VCE more than the dealer is not seen as a problem at the moment from Marcel's Equipment's point of view. McClung-Logan is of the opinion that the dealers have responsibilities when it comes to the shaping of personal content.

"It is up to the dealer to incorporate their own personal identity in the application and this can be done in the 'about us' section, the contact application and maybe in the locator. Everything else is basically a mere image of the Volvo web site from product offerings to news and media." - McClung-Logan

Marcel's Equipment wants to be able to present their whole product line and would also like to make their site more flavored of themselves.

"The main line is to make the Internet project ours, we have customers that are brand dependent and in respect to them we have to keep pursuing other products. We have customers that are never going to change and you can push and try as hard as you want but they are going to be stuck with other products than Volvo." – Marcel's Equipment

Marcel's Equipment's confidence in Volvo as a whole, VCE and VIT mostly, is high. The decision to go through at 100 percent with Volvo was made three years ago, and the confidence has reached a point where it is almost like taken for granted:

> *"The conjunction of this is that confidence now is on a 'mood point'. The changes that we are making into the business right now are based on what Volvo has done for us and what Volvo is going to do for us. We're changing our entire operating system because of them, so I think confidence in what they have to offer is at 'mood point', which means that we've gone so far pass the point as a confidence issue, we've had jumped on board at 100 percent and we're making changes to the entire business, based on what they have told us." – Marcel's Equipment*

McClung-Logan only has positive things to say about Volvo. Their view on Volvo is that they are professional and that they have assigned competent staff to this task. If they did not feel comfortable with Volvo they would not have gone through with the implementation. Their opinion is that this confidence only will improve with the implementation of the dealer site.

4.5.1 Branding

How the use of the DSB application influences a dealer's trademark and web presence

All interviewed dealers considered their brands as well-established in the line of business that they conduct. According to Golden Equipment their brand is more local and people within the state know who they are and where they are located. They send out flyers, sponsor the state fair and other marketing projects. To develop their brand they are trying to spread the word and the Internet can make it easier. The Internet is becoming more common and they are assuming that it also will help them developing their brand. Marcel's Equipment is of the opinion that their brand stands for confidence, reliability and ease of use.

About the effect that the DSB can have on the dealer's brand McClung-Logan thinks that a closer linking to Volvo will help them. It will also be beneficial for Volvo since people that are familiar with the McClung-Logan brand will notice the Volvo brand. Marcel's Equipment's view on the brand issue is:

> *"I think it's going to simply make a statement that we are pushing harder and in a more forward direction with Volvo than we are with the other companies." – Marcel's Equipment*

Dealers' perception of the fact to become a part of the Volvo brand on the Internet

According to Golden Equipment the Volvo brand possesses a high level of recognition. It is very positive for Golden Equipment to be a part of Volvo in different contexts. The association takes them to the level where they are recognized for representing one of the larger actors in the industry. Even though Golden Equipment stated it was positive to be associated with the Volvo brand, they have come to notice a weakness regarding the recognition of VCE's brand. The problem is that the first thing that

comes to the customers' mind when they hear or see Volvo is cars and some may never even have heard of VCE.

Marcel's Equipment is optimistic about becoming a part of the Volvo brand on the Internet. They are looking forward to becoming a part of the Volvo profile on the Internet and want to be tightly linked to Volvo, even more in the future. They are excited about appearing with Volvo in different contexts and do not see any disadvantages with VCE's appearance on the Internet:

> *"Personally I think it's probably the best one out there, when we made the decision to go with Volvo it wasn't easy but now we're behind it all the way" - Marcel's Equipment*

McClung-Logan thinks that it is positive to become a part of the Volvo profile on the Internet since the Volvo brand is strong.

> *"I think that it's an excellent product and I think that they have excellent people who provide service and after-service. It is a really strong brand." - McClung-Logan*

4.6 Dealer that has chosen not to implement the DSB

Swecon
Independent from Volvo
Volvo DSB: Decided not to implement the DSB
Own Web Site: www.swecon.se
Locations: 38 branches throughout Sweden
Interviewed: Fredrik Rigö - Information Manager

Swecon got a run-through in 1999 of an early version of a dealer site that Volvo was developing and they were of the impression that this solution was sufficient for their dealership. At the same time Swecon worked with developing a dealer site of their own. The first version of Volvo's dealer site was a lot different from the one VCE are offering today but the version was cancelled only six months later due to a reorganization of VCE. The staff that had been involved with the development of Volvo's dealer site was replaced with personnel that not were updated on the previous project. When this project was put to an end, Swecon chose to continue the development of their own dealer site in order to be available on the Internet.

The dealer and their customers
Swecon's strategy is to build long-term relationships with their customers and the most important component is the personal meeting and the contact between Swecon's salespeople and the machinery buyers.

Swecon is of the opinion that their customers use the Internet to a modest extent.
According to Swecon the Internet use amongst their customers is low and this has been established through surveys made on their dealer site. In an attempt to improve these statistics Swecon often refers to their dealer site during customer contacts, especially regarding used equipment.

"Our customers usually call their salesman and ask for a specific machine and then the seller refers to the dealer site. They tell the customer to visit the web site for information regarding specifications and pictures of the object." - Swecon

The dealer's view on the Internet
Swecon saw the Internet as an expanding communication channel and another way of reaching customers, which needs to be included in a company's strategic planning.
According to Swecon it is of importance to establish Internet presence since the Internet facilitates constant accessibility to product information for their customers. The biggest con that arises from the use of the Internet as a communication channel is the difficulty to assure that updated and adequate information is presented.

The dealer's perception of their dealer site
Swecon has strived to create easy navigation on their web site since the greater part of their visitors has a high middle age. Simplicity was important in order to induce the customers to visit the web site. Swecon has not requested user comments but instead proceeded from assumptions and test results from a small group of people. The navigation is not as pedagogical as it could be and this can partly be explained by technical obstacles. At this point of time Swecon is of the opinion that their dealer site is deficient when it comes to offering their customers surplus value, hence the provided content can be seen as commonplace information. Surplus value can be achieved when customers get access to information that is exclusively provided to them.

Swecon's web site was created to reflect Volvo's core values in order to convey a message so that their customers get the feeling that Swecon is strongly connected to Volvo. The idea is to assure that the customer always associates Volvo with Swecon but at the same time it is important that Swecon is seen as one company and Volvo as another. Swecon has an aged target group and therefore their main purpose of their dealer site was to show that they existed and present what they had to offer. They perceive the web site as a complement to their existing channels of communication.

Factors that made the dealer choose not to implement the DSB
Swecon conceived the possibilities to influence the content on the dealer site provided by Volvo as limited. Furthermore, they lacked control over the system and had doubts regarding the project.

"Wise from experience we know that some projects are not completed and if we were to enter this project without reservation, there was a possibility that we would stand without a solution. That is why we chose to go ahead with our own dealer site and wait and see the outcome of the Volvo solution." - Swecon

Swecon's trust in VCE was insufficient and that affected their decision to create a web site on their own. They did not believe that VCE would manage to provide a solution that would satisfy their needs.

"The DSB was presented more like 'this is what we had in mind and this is basically how it's supposed to be' and then we realized that this was in contrast to our opinions about how you're going to reach the customers and provide the best possible service on the Internet." - Swecon

Swecon mentions other aspects that need to be taken into consideration, such as the fact that Swecon nowadays owns dealerships in both Germany and the Baltic States. Swecon lacks a web presence in these regions and at present time they are not able to provide a web site for neither the German nor the Baltic market. They have managed to provide a web presence sufficient enough for the Swedish market, but these new markets put, according to Swecon, the DSB issue in a new perspective.

Main differences between the DSB and the existing dealer site
Swecon's dealers have a close local connection and this relationship is reflected on their own dealer site. Swecon is of the opinion that the local connection is lacking on the Volvo-provided dealer site.

> *"We thought that there weren't enough possibilities to present our own organization and that the content was too focused on presenting Volvo products. We would like to have the opportunity to launch campaigns and present non-competitive products more prominently. - Swecon*

Swecon is of the opinion that the Volvo-provided dealer site has been created with substantial resources.

> *"Volvo possesses the information, the possibilities and the material needed to present updated and extensive information on the Internet. We don't have the resources to manage that amount of information. We would need to carry out an extensive restructuring of our web site to get even close to the Volvo supported web site." - Swecon*

Transformations that would make the DSB more interesting
Since Swecon declined to implement the DSB in an initial phase, they had opinions regarding enhancements that would make the DSB more interesting to them. Swecon made this decision, even though they perceived the basics of the application as positive.

If Swecon should consider implementing the DSB in the future there are a few things that they would like to have added to the application. Swecon senses that the dealer locator on the Volvo web site is insufficient. On Swecon's dealer site the internal address book is connected directly in order to enable that updates are performed automatically. This procedure also renders the possibility to contact all employees through their dealer site. Swecon would like to present their product specialists, mechanics and salespeople on the web site.

> *"This procedure is impossible in the dealer locator. We can't connect our internal systems to the dealer site provided by Volvo. We want to establish a closer contact with our customers and right now we are trying to publish pictures of all employees so that customers know who they are talking to." - Swecon*

Swecon points at the importance of conveying a complete service package on the dealer site, thereby making the dealer site reflect the service that Volvo offers.

> *"All together it's a whole package that is offered to our customers and I think the web page should reflect that to a larger extent than it does today. There's a*

lot of focus on products on the dealer site offered by Volvo, even though parts and services are included, I think it's important to offer a comprehensive solution that includes financing, insurances, service agreements and machinery help. The focus should be on providing the whole package, thereby satisfying all customer needs. This procedure would also generate trust among the customers." – Swecon

Swecon would also like to promote activities, customer meetings, fairs and events where customers are invited to test the equipment. A dealer site must never stay static since the appearance will be completely different in a five-year perspective. It is important that the dealer site follows customer demands in order to meet the changing needs, therefore companies should strive to anticipate what the customer might ask for in the future.

In a longer perspective, Swecon is of the opinion that it is almost impossible to stand outside the Volvo-provided web site. The benefits are obvious but there still needs to be some agreements made between Swecon and Volvo about the solution. Swecon is of the opinion that their own brand most likely will be strengthened if they chose to implement the DSB.

"Basically I think Swecon belongs in a solution like this, but there still are a few things that need to be taken care of in order for us to accept the DSB as a part of our business." – Swecon

4.8 Summary

VCE and VIT have worked closely together during the development and implementation of the DSB application. Their vision with the DSB was that it should; *Simplify communication between dealers and their customers, Create homogeneity and a strong web presence, Provide dealer sites that are up-to-date, Continuous improvement* and that it should *Strengthen bonds with dealers*. The DSB has been rolled out in both Europe and North-America but the implementation pace has been much faster in North-America.

The Volvo-provided dealer site consists of two parts; one part that is Volvo-driven and one part that is dealer-driven. In terms of the design, The Volvo-provided dealer site is aligned with the new volvo.com design, hence the same look and feel can be recognized. The issue regarding co-branding has been solved so that the first page of the dealer site shows both Volvo's and the specific dealer's name and logotype. The dealer's name and logotype are placed in the upper left corner and Volvo's is placed at the lower section of the page. This procedure enables the marketing of both Volvo's and the dealer's brand at the same site. Enhancements such as new applications are the highest priority for VCE at the moment. Firstly, it is important to make the dealer understand the importance with the DSB and what it can accomplish for the specific dealer.

The dealers are divided into three different categories; *Dealers that have implemented the DSB, Dealers that are going to implement the DSB* and *Dealer that has chosen not to implement the DSB*. All of the dealers had a presentation of the DSB before they

decided whether to implement the application or not. One belief, that was common among all of the dealers, was that the DSB can help them to establish high-quality web presence. All the dealers agreed that it is important to be exposed and available on the Internet. The dealers agreed that the Internet use amongst their customers has been fairly low in the past, but recently there has been a transformation regarding the spread of Internet use amongst their customers. All dealers think that it is important to strengthen the relationship to their customers, although their opinions differ regarding how to handle this issue. All dealers are of the opinion that the DSB is built-up in a good way and that the navigation is easy. All of the interviewed dealers expressed a disappointment regarding the possibility to promote non-competitive products. The dealers promote and sell these products at their dealerships, thus it should be possible to market these products sufficiently on the dealer site. A majority of the dealers were of the opinion that there needed to be a closer local connection on the Volvo-provided dealer site. In order to attract customers, it is necessary to offer a high level of local content on the DSB. The confidence in and commitment to VCE and VIT is high, according to a majority of the dealers. Some of the interviewed dealers are of the opinion that the DSB presents Volvo more than the dealer. They think the Volvo flavor is a bit too strong, although their view is that this is not an actual problem at present time. The dealers are optimistic about the fact of becoming a part of the Volvo brand. According to some of the dealers the Volvo brand possesses a high level of recognition. The dealers state that it is positive for them to be a part of Volvo in different contexts.

5   Discussion

In this chapter, the collected data will be analyzed by using theory regarding web design, trust and branding. The chapter consists of four sections. In addition to previously mentioned sections there is also a final section which highlights the most apparent results.   The first three sections will be concluded with comments and reflections connected to what we has been found in both the empirical study and the theoretical framework.

In the empirical chapter, the dealers were divided into three different categories; Dealers that have implemented the DSB, Dealers that are going to implement the DSB and a Dealer that has chosen not to implement the DSB. This chapter will refer to these groupings, instead of naming the specific dealer, when analyzing their views. When referring to employees at VIT and VCE we have chosen to write out their names. It would be misleading to group them into categories since their positions are diverse.

5.1 Web design

In this section, the procedure when creating the DSB and also the dealers' perception of the DSB will be put in relation to theories regarding web design that was brought up in the theoretic framework. This course of action can contribute to explain the outcome of the project and furthermore the dealers' perception of the DSB.

5.1.1 The creation of the DSB

Designing the DSB
Before outlining the design of the dealer site, VCE conducted interviews with dealers in order to capture their opinions regarding the build-up of a dealer site. In the literature Hix & Hartson (1993) stresses the importance of focusing on the actual user when designing a system. Nielsen (1993) argues that the designer must try to describe the end user in an initial phase of the system design. Benyon and Preece (1993) are of the opinion that when developing a computer system the actual user-need must be satisfied and in order to capture knowledge regarding user-needs one must figure out how people are using the system. When VCE decided to include the actual user in an initial phase, necessary conditions for the creation of a user-friendly dealer site were used. However, this procedure does not guarantee a successful outcome.

A majority of the dealers also states that they consider their customers to have a low experience of Internet knowledge. However, there has been a transformation regarding the spread of Internet amongst the customers. According to Richard Andersson, the VCE dealers are active in a conservative industry and therefore one can say that the computer use amongst them is not that widely spread. Shneiderman (1992) emphasizes that three types of users can be found and that each type demands different user interfaces. The novice user does not have an understanding of computers and therefore an interface that is integrated with the system and feels natural to the user is demanded. Preece (1994) develops the reasoning further when stating that the outcome of a specific product is dependent on the level of understanding that the designer shows

regarding user-needs. To enable this level of understanding it is important that the actual user is the center of attention during the design process. Hix & Hartson (1993) propound the necessity of including the user in the design process since their involvement often leads to making the perceived reluctance appear in a lesser extent. It is important that VCE always keep the Internet knowledge amongst their customers in mind, when developing the DSB. Mats Bredborg is of the opinion that the DSB should be easy to use, and that it is important that the dealers understand the existing functionality in order to use the system, which has permeated the whole process of the DSB creation. In literature the importance of usability is emphasized by Fossum (1996), Nielsen (1993), Preece (1994) and Shneiderman (1992). Since VCE and VIT were aware of the fact that the Internet use in the construction equipment industry is relatively low, they have designed a site which is built up with usability in consideration.

It have been noticed that the theories regarding the involvement of the actual user can be distinguished in the making of the DSB. VCE tried to establish user-needs before developing the application and the first version was built with these opinions in consideration.

How the dealers were informed
All of the involved dealers have had a presentation of the DSB before making a decision whether they want to implement it or not. This presentation focused on presenting an overview regarding the DSB and the existing functionality. That the presentation focused on existing functionality is similar to Hix & Hartson's (1993) opinion regarding the importance of focusing on what is best for the user. Fossum (1996), points at the necessity of demonstrating how a system can support the everyday work. It has become obvious during the interviews with dealers, that some of them are lacking in basic knowledge regarding the possibilities of the DSB. Some of them have requested an implementation of already existing features. These facts imply that changes regarding the information need to be done.

Comments
Even though it is possible that the employees who were involved in the creation of the DSB never have heard of the web design theories used in this thesis, their line of action show evident similarities. Some design aspects have, as stated above, been taken into consideration during the creation of the DSB. One of the advantages that can be derived from involving the dealers at an early stage of the design process is the fact that changes can be made before the application is released. By collecting the users' opinions a company can establish a useful knowledge regarding the dealers' different agendas. This knowledge can be used in order to create an application that the company is satisfied with and that, at the same time, is in line with user-needs. By requesting this thesis, VCE is collecting even more views from the persons that are actually using their application. It is of importance that this procedure continues in order to enable the capture of the users' shifting needs and opinions. This capturing is an important first step and it is important that the process does not stop there. The collected feedback needs to be taken into consideration when further developments take place. Companies must not assume that they are in possession of all of the adequate information just because they have the technical knowledge. The dealers

show a greater knowledge regarding the customers, hence it is of importance that Volvo bears this in mind.

Our opinion is that Volvo should allocate extensive resources to inform and educate all dealers that are interested in the DSB application. The dealers should be made aware of all possibilities that the DSB provides. This can be decisive in terms of the future impact that the DSB will have on the dealers' daily work.

5.1.2 How the dealers perceive the DSB

When the interviewed dealers motivated their decision to implement the DSB, one could notice two reasons that became more significant than the others. Firstly, all dealers emphasized that the dealer site was free of charge and secondly, all dealers appreciated the fact that the dealer sites could be implemented within a short period of time.

The dealers that have chosen not to implement the DSB also stressed these two factors when discussing the advantages with the DSB.

Page design
All of the interviewed dealers were of the opinion that the layout on the DSB was clean and easy. According to them, the Volvo-provided dealer site gave a professional impression. Jakob Nielsen (2000) points at the importance of designing simple web pages since the users seldom visit a page because of its design. VCE and VIT intended, according to Martin Jerresand and Mats Bredborg, to create a dealer site that was basic and easy to use. One of the reasons for this decision was the fact that a substantial part of VCE's dealers are not that experienced when it comes to using computers in their everyday work. Hence it was important to design the page in a simple manner. Jakob Nielsen (1993) calls attention to the fact that simplicity should distinguish the design of a system. This characteristic is of importance in order to enable the user to learn the possibilities that the system offers. The successful outcome of the DSB's page design can partly be explained by the fact that it was created with the dealers' opinions as a starting point. The procedure exhibits advantages that can be derived from listening to user opinions.

Even though all of the dealers appreciated the clean design on the Volvo-provided dealer site, one of them wanted to add Flash illustrations on the first page. The dealer had noticed that some of their competing dealers had a small box with Flashes on their first page where they show their used equipment. The interviewed dealer was of the opinion that this procedure added value to the first page since the visitor did not have to connect to the list of used equipment in order to see these pictures. This opinion does not correspond with the theories that stress the importance of designing simple web pages (Nielsen 2000). This particular dealer's opinion emphasizes the importance of finding out the actual customer needs. Even though existing theory supports one view, one cannot take for granted that this standpoint is convenient for everyone.

The first page should always provide an overview regarding the content of the site, hence information about the originator of the site and the offerings that are provided on

the site should be presented. (Nielsen 2000) On the Volvo-provided dealer site the dealer's name and logotype appear in the upper left part of the page while the Volvo name and logotype appear in the bottom of the page. According to Robert Williams, this procedure helps to strengthen the bonds between VCE and their dealers. This way of handling the issue has also been perceived as positive amongst all of the interviewed dealers. The dealers are of the opinion that the dealer site incorporates the color scheme of Volvo and the corporate identity along with the dealership's individual colors and logo. According to Jakob Nielsen (2000) it is seen as standard procedure to place the company's name and logotype in the upper left-hand corner.

Content design
All of the interviewed dealers were satisfied with the information regarding Volvo products on the dealer site. The most negative aspect, regarding the content on the site, was the fact that the greater majority of the dealers were of the opinion that there were too few options when it comes to the promotion of other products. The greater part also asked for the ability to personalize the content to a larger extent.

Quality content is one of the two most important aspects regarding web usability and therefore content on the web needs to be much more oriented toward providing relevant information and fast answers than traditional media (Nielsen 2000). As stated above, all of the interviewed dealers were of the opinion that Volvo's product information added value to the dealer site to a large extent. It is important to point out that the greater majority of dealer's perceived information and promotion of other products as quality content. Since quality content is one of the two most important aspects regarding web usability (Nielsen 2000), the dealers' view on quality should be taken into consideration.

The dealers all agreed that they do not possess the needed resources or manpower to enable the updating of all product specifications. One of VCE's (Bredborg) and VIT's (Jerresand) original goals with the DSB was to enable automatic updating on all dealer sites hosted by Volvo. Theory states that the information on a web site must offer the user more than an overview. Hence, there must be some depth to the content. Depth is created by making sure that the information is updated frequently, thereby guaranteeing that the web site does not become static. It is also of importance that the site advertises the responsible company's way of acting. (Sampson et al 2002). The dealers stated that they were convinced that benefits could be derived by using the system. According to Jakob Nielsen (1993) it is important that a user perceives gratification when using a system. Some of the dealers pointed out that the dealer site offered good contact opportunities in the 'About us' section and a well designed 'Dealer locator' that was of use when trying to find a specific dealership. In theory, it is established that the 'About us' section is necessary in order to enable the visitor to contact the company that is the provider of the web site. If the 'About us' section is comprehensive, it becomes easier for the visitor to contact the company. (Sampson et al 2002) The 'Interactive walkaround', which is a feature on the Volvo-provided dealer site where the visitor virtually can sit inside a machine and try it out, has received positive comments among the dealers. This view can be connected to Jakob Nielsen's (2000) ideas were he claims that a web site must offer a sense of uniqueness in order to persuade visitors to spend time and effort to download the information.

The majority of the dealers stated that the most important benefits that can be derived from using the DSB, is the fact that it will help them to sell more new and used products. Hix and Hartson (1993) emphasize that a system's capability to perform certain tasks can affect the relationship between an organization and its customers. The dealers were of the opinion that the DSB could enable sales by providing their customers with updated and adequate information, they also think it would give them new opportunities to sell parts and services. Jakob Nielsen (1993) discusses this phenomenon when he points at the importance that a user should perceive gratification when using a system.

The most negative aspect, regarding the content on the DSB, was the difficulty to promote other brands. A majority of the dealers was of the opinion that the Volvo-provided dealer site does not market their complete product line. Most of the dealers accepted that it was impossible to market the competing brands that they represented, but it was harder for them to understand why the non-competing brands could not be marketed to a larger extent. According to Peter Hedborg, products from other brands seem almost hidden and from a dealer point of view that can be perceived as negative since they make a lot of money on selling complementary products. Hix & Hartson (1993) and Benyon & Preece (1993) accentuate the fact that it is of importance that the developers of a system always bear in mind who the actual users are. In the dealers' everyday business, they are marketing and selling products that are complementary to Volvo's construction equipment. Therefore, it is of importance that the dealer site reflects this way of conducting business. Although a couple of the dealers were of the opinion that this is a reasonable tradeoff since Volvo provides the dealer with updated information and this service is free of charge. A question that arises is if these dealers actually are satisfied with the DSB or if they think that it is acceptable just because it is free of charge.

Many of the dealers have complained over the fact that there are too few photographs of construction equipment on the dealer site. A common opinion was that it is better to present the construction equipment with pictures in order to attract the visitors. One of the dealers explained that people in their industry are not readers. According to Jakob Nielsen (2000) pictures can provide meaningful information when being used in a proper context. Since many of the dealers' state that pictures are appreciated, this needs to be taken into consideration from a Volvo point of view.

Along with these negative comments, a majority of the dealers thought that there were too few possibilities to personalize the information on the dealer site. The provided information was perceived as too general and there were not enough options to personalize it. The information regarding product specification was, as stated before, perceived as positive, but the information regarding the specific dealership and their offerings were seen as insufficient. The dealers felt as if the information was too general and not directed towards their customers. Jakob Nielsen (2000) states that the content needs to be optimized in order to attract the visitors. Since visitors often scan the content it is important to offer something that captures their attention.

Site design

All of the interviewed dealers were of the opinion that the Volvo-provided dealer site offered a well thought-out navigation. A system should be simple so that the user is able to discover the possibilities that the system offers (Nielsen 1993). If a visitor is able to locate the wanted information without any problems, there is an increasing possibility that the visitor will come back. By designing the web site with the suitable set of navigation-tools and links, the visitor's navigation process can be facilitated. (Sampson et al 2002) One of the dealers pointed at 'the sitemap' as being particularly useful, when navigating on the dealer site. This navigation tool offers the visitor an overview of the site which can be of use when visiting the dealer site. Englund & Guldbrand (2001) describes that a map of the web site can be practical if the structure consists of more than four levels. If the web site consists of many levels but lacks a map of the site, the visitor might experience difficulties when navigating on the site.

The interviewed dealers thought that there was a homogeneity throughout the entire dealer site. When they visited different parts of the dealer site, they perceived a high level of recognition. This was seen as something positive, and that perception goes in accordance with theories that allege that a homogenous design makes it easier for the visitor to use the web site efficiently (Ullman et al 2000). Mats Bredborg states that there are global design policies for all Volvo companies' and this affects the outcome of the dealer sites. On the one hand, he thinks that the sites become more homogeneous, but on the other hand, it is insufficient because all the sites may be too similar looking and the visitor will not be able to really distinguish one dealer site from another. He implies that there is a fine balance between those two issues and that VCE are struggling to make them work better together. Mathias Södersten and Peter Hedborg emphasize that the DSB is supposed to be easy to build and the templates should be recyclable, in consequence homogeneity will come to characterize the DSB. In terms of the DSB design, it is aligned with the new volvo.com design. Hence, the same look and feel can be recognized. This procedure has led to a developing process that is directed by the templates that the system consists of. It can be seen as a cost-effective solution to proceed from one platform.

Comments

The dealers are, generally speaking, for the most part satisfied with the build-up and the content on the Volvo-provided dealer site. In addition to the fact that the service is free of charge and that the implementation has been carried out quickly, the dealers have emphasized their appreciation of the fact that the product specification is updated automatically and frequently. The dealers' views are mainly positive, but nevertheless there have been brought forward a list of suggestions regarding future enhancements of the DSB.

Even though the dealers like the homogeneity on the DSB, it is important to remember that this procedure can lead to future problems. If new dealer sites are launched in the pace that Volvo expects, there will be a large number of Volvo-provided dealer sites in a near future. It is possible that the dealers then will come to perceive their specific dealer site as similar to all the other dealer sites provided by Volvo. This development of events can be prevented, to some extent, by offering the dealers more responsibility

and thereby possibilities to influence the content on their site. Furthermore, this can lead to more local and personalized material on each dealer site, which will make them more unique but still using the Volvo-provided templates.

Since the dealers chose to implement the DSB for reasons other than the actual shaping of the dealer site, it is important to develop it according to dealer demands. If this is succeeded, it becomes easier for VCE to convince their dealers that they have made a correct decision and that they should continue to use it. In order to improve the possibility that the DSB becomes a part of the dealer's everyday work, it is of importance that VCE and VIT are receptive to their views regarding the DSB and its shaping. This is of great importance since if dealers do not make use of the DSB, their customers probably will not use it either. This reasoning leads to the next section, which treats enhancements that can be made on the DSB.

5.2 Trust

This section of the discussion chapter focuses on the importance of trust as a fundamental part in business relationships. Trust and commitment are significant factors to build long-term relationships as well as maintaining them. To underline this importance and the trust issue as a whole we are going to present three major sections that each consists of empirical material gained from the interviews put in layers with references from the theoretical framework.

5.2.1 The dealers' trust in Volvo

The willingness to get to know the contrary part is the first step in the meeting between people. The foundation of a relationship does not start until this stage has been passed and in this procedure confidence can grow forward. This confidence can work as a fundament for trust, which will be of importance for the relationships' ability to move forward. Within businesslike relations, especially on the Internet, trust is a requirement in order to enable the conducting of business. (Preece 2000) Volvo performed interviews with a number of dealers before the DSB was initiated and has been performing follow-ups during the construction of the DSB and after the rollout of it too (Hedborg, Williams). This is an indication that they might be aware of the reasoning furnished above and that there exists a willingness to get to know the contrary part by listening to dealers' opinions. Trust is a prerequisite that can facilitate the implementation of the DSB amongst dealers and it can also enable the DSB solution to succeed.

Generally, companies need to be permeated of competence within the company which can develop trust in the minds of surrounding parties. Furthermore, companies need to show that they are reliable and consistent in order to create feelings of trust towards the company. Customers and cooperating parties need to know that they can depend on the company. (Stasser, Taylor and Hanna 1989; Hinsz 1990; Reynolds 1997) This is obviously something that Volvo is working on and keeping in consideration, by for example initiating this thesis they exhibit that dealers' opinions are important to Volvo and by doing so trust from dealers can be one of their profits by utilizing this approach. Among the respondents, all dealers except one has got high confidence in Volvo's

competence as their manufacturer, regarding both overall competence, more specific, technological competence, as well as the fact that they are providing high quality products. In the literature, this high level of confidence indicates that there is a stable basis of trust that can constitute a foundation to develop from. Trust has been established through consistency, competence and responsibility which can be built on by working together. (Sanner 1997; Shaw 1997; Johansson, Kushch & Silver 2000)

Since the confidence in VCE and VIT is high from the majority of the interviewed dealers' point of view, they are also strongly committed to Volvo. Most of the dealers have passed beyond the confidence point since they are already changing their businesses to be even more connected to Volvo. If the confidence and thereby commitment towards cooperating parties is strong a mutual base for the parties involved can be constituted (Keen 2000). The fact that the dealers have high confidence in Volvo seems to be one of the biggest reasons why they agreed to pursue the DSB initiative.

Theory states that a close cooperation between companies can help to solve the problem of getting access to competence while at the same time reducing the coordination problems that naturally exists in a market. (Hamel and Prahalad 1994a; Jarillo 1998; Grant and Baden- Fuller 2000) One of the dealers that have chosen not to implement the DSB points at the importance of conveying a complete service package on to the dealer site, thereby making the dealer site reflect all the service that Volvo offers. By doing so, the web venture can reflect values in a further extension than at present time. Hence, they would like to offer the customers a comprehensive solution which includes the whole package of supplementary products and services as well. Furthermore, they think this procedure would generate trust amongst end customers. This particular dealer did not have enough trust in VCE and was doubtful that VCE could manage to provide an application that would fulfill their demands.

The greater part of the interviewed dealers is considering the DSB as a component in a long-term relationship with Volvo. A number of dealers pointed out that the web cooperation enabled by the DSB was an opportunity that would encourage both Volvo and themselves. One of the dealer's means that being a part of the Volvo brand on the Internet is something both parties will benefit from. This phenomenon is also described in the theoretical framework. A '*win-win-situation*' can be a result when both parties benefit from a mutual relationship. This means that the customer for example, can expect to receive a product or service that fulfill his or her expectations. The importance of building customer confidence signifies that the company at the same time can create the foundations of long-term cooperation. (Gummesson 1998) Furthermore regarding the confidence between dealers, VCE and VIT, the confidence has reached a point where it is almost like taken for granted. One dealer stated that they have passed beyond the confidence issue since they have changed their entire business to be in line with VCE's requests. The trust topic is also discussed in the literature regarding business alterations. To achieve trust it is important that people believe that they can trust the company's decisions and judgment even when there are changes (Reynolds 1997). The implementation of the Volvo-provided dealer sites can influence these dealers' way of performing business to some extent, since alterations of business need to be performed. In the dealer interviews it was revealed that a number of dealers

have far-reaching visions with their Volvo-provided dealer sites and with this cognizance trust gets even more important.

Through cooperation and collaboration, organizations can create synergies that are adding value for the customer (Zigurs & Qureshi 2001). When values are added to the customer it also enables trust towards the company to grow. Most dealers believe that the DSB can create added value to their customers in terms of providing them with the latest information about the products. It is easier for their customers to find out whom to contact and they can search for information directly on their own instead of going through a salesman. One dealer that is going to implement the DSB is expecting an even higher degree of returning customers with assistance from the DSB, and expects that this also could help them strengthen the bonds between them and their customers in the future. If surplus value is created in the minds of customers, it is again of importance to emphasize that this facilitates the building of trust. At this point the bonds can be even more strengthened between the two parties and each brings more to the relationship. (Keen 2000)

Distrust or low degree of trust
Suppliers, more often than customers, have interests in building relationships with an organization. At the same time, they have more information to hide and therefore the supplier in general wants to build relationships without giving away all their power. This information is important to bear in mind while establishing business connections and build trust between parties involved. (Davenport & Prusak 1998) This opposition in suppliers' minds was made even clearer in the dealer interviews. One dealer that has implemented the DSB points out that there is a conflict in their minds; on the one hand they recognize it as positive to be tightly linked to their manufacturer, and on the other hand they do not fully trust that manufacturers will stand firm with their present standpoint. In other words, they fear that reorganizing of business will be made and furthermore this dealer points out that dealers know that the day will come when VCE will charge them for the DSB.

One dealer that has implemented the DSB summarized three aspects of downsides that dealers perceive when deciding whether to implement the DSB or not. First one is lack of control, secondly the fear that the manufacturer is serving as a big brother controlling the dealer's actions and thirdly, lack of ability to represent other products than Volvo's. In theory it is stated that one requirement for trust is sensing that the other party would not take advantage on the company but rather be concerned about their welfare (Herriot et al 1998). One of dealers' main concerns is that future purchases will be carried out directly from VCE to the customer, thus neglecting the dealers from the value chain. According to VCE, their strategy is not to build any system that enables VCE to do business directly with the customer. VCE does not have the organization or the mentality to carry out such a process or system. (Bredborg) Peter Hedborg explains that VCE has made a decision that all their business is supposed to go by their dealers. Some other Volvo-based companies are considering selling directly to their end customers, but VCE has already made this decision and will go by their dealers and support them as much as possible. VCE first initiated the idea of having a dealer site builder as part of their strategy to make the dealer and their

customers approach each other without having VCE disrupting the communication. (Jerresand, Garberg, Hedborg, Andersson)

One of the most important elements when using electronic ways of doing business is the necessity of trust (Egger 2002). The problem with lack of trust gets even more obvious in the interview with one dealer that has chosen not to implement the DSB. VCE offered some dealers a solution similar to the DSB already in the year 1999. Due to management issues among other things, VCE did not accomplish to get the provided solution up and running, which made trust become somewhat tarnished in their view. This insufficiency of trust in Volvo affected them in their decision to continue using their own web site instead of the DSB. This problem is discussed in the literature, by for instance Sanner (1997) and Shaw (1997). When expectations are met trust is built, while if they are unfulfilled expectations, the result will be lost trust (Sanner 1997). If trust is neither improved nor maintained in a sufficient way it can diminish. Some actions may as well lead to distrust or lack of trust in a relationship that was fortunate up until just recently. Moreover, trust is 'self perpetuating', i.e. the individual will continue to search for reasons that support their opinion not to trust. This makes it difficult to gain back the trust and confidence, after mistakes have been committed. (Shaw 1997)

The respondents do not always trust the Internet as a communication channel and pointed out that people seem to forget that one never can be sure of whom you are talking to or if the information is correct on the Internet. The lack of direct interaction in electronic business can be addressed by providing complete information in terms of history about the company, its legal status and presentations of the people behind it. This can breed familiarity which moreover can generate trust. (Egger 2002) One dealer that has implemented the DSB discussed the problem that the market most likely needs time to adjust to fully accept this form of communication. They continued pointing out that it lacks face-to-face communication which for a long period of time has been the most important meeting in sales business. These dealer opinions indicate that the online relationship is not always to prefer and this goes in line with theories that Keen (2000) brings forward. There are some areas where the online interaction does not attract customers as quickly or as much as expected. Some businesses manage its relationships best outside the online world. This industry's doubts regarding the Internet might be that salespeople in general prefer face-to-face selling, since that is their profession. (Keen 2000) This is a conservative industry where the computer experience is relatively low amongst dealers as well as end customers according to Mats Bredborg and Richard Andersson. The problem in Internet-based business is, according to Egger (2002) that lack of practice often is connected to unfamiliarity which implies that it is more likely to generate mistrust than trust. Explanations for this are for instance lack of previous experience and understanding of these new business models. A person's amount of experience with IT has a direct effect on how confident he or she feels in using this technology. (Egger 2002)

Comments
The foundation of trust that already exists between VCE and most of their dealers can be crucial when alterations of business are supposed to be made, like in this case. Distrust or a low degree of trust can bring negative consequences as in the case

furnished above where one dealer has chosen not to implement the DSB due to lack of trust in VCE. Since trust was tarnished in their view it will be even harder for VCE to cooperate closely with them since trust is a fundament for cooperative relationships. This also brings forward the importance of keeping previous incidents in mind, and considers which degree of trust that existed before alterations of business was discussed. It is important to frequently perform follow-ups of how trust is developed with different cooperative parties regarding how each party will be convinced to participate in this collaboration. Another important factor is that the user feels comfortable with the system or as in this particular case, the application, which can make a contribution to increased confidence and thereby a higher degree of trust.

From our point of view it is obvious that Volvo, CE first and foremost, has a liability towards their dealers in this matter from the moment when the DSB was initiated. VCE are responsible for making sure that the dealers are satisfied with the provided application and that it also can be beneficial for dealers' customers. VCE has obtained trust from their dealers and it is therefore of importance that they support the dealers and maintain this trust.

At the same time it is important to point out that most interviewed dealers have a high degree of trust in Volvo and that the commitment, as well, is strong between manufacturer and dealer. This is a great resource that needs to be supported and maintained through continuous follow-ups and enhancements. Beyond that it can constitute a good basis for the long-term relationship and through consistency be beneficial for both Volvo and their dealers. With most of the interviewed dealers the fundament of trust is already built and the important issue now is to maintain and improve the trust between involved parties even more in order to enable long-term relationships with the dealers.

In those cases where dealers have a low degree of trust in Volvo and the DSB application, we would suggest that Volvo discusses the purpose of the DSB with these dealers and also listen carefully to what each of these dealers really expect the application to provide. Volvo has to be sensitive to what dealers really want to be able to rebuild this trust. Otherwise it will be hard for this cooperation to turn out well in the long run. Beyond that it is of importance that promises are kept and that Volvo not gives these dealers the slightest opportunity to distrust Volvo again.

5.2.2 Building long-term relationships

In perspectives of management and trust it has been an increasing focus on building long-term relationships, both with customers and suppliers. Maintenance of existing relationships and focus on them is often cheaper and less time-consuming than the search for new customers, suppliers or other cooperative parties. (Gummesson 1998; Zigurs & Qureshi 2001; Egger 2002) All dealers appreciate that VCE offers this application for free and that they put all the resources needed for support, maintenance and updating of the dealer sites. In theory it is stated that commitment is the ability to maintain a relationship and it is important since it saves the company time and effort in looking for new partners. In addition to trust, commitment is the second most valuable component in a relationship. Trust is crucial to relationships as create opportunities for

a long-term perspective and it helps firms to resist short-term offers and instead focus on the long-term. When companies engage in a relationship, they become dependent upon each other's resources, knowledge, and the business that the relationship provides. (Johansson, Kushch & Silver 2000) A number of dealers points out that since they have already passed the confidence stage they are now committed to VCE and wants to get even more committed. Moreover, dealers want to work long-term with Volvo.

Relationships are very dynamic and require flexibility from the involved parties. Two of the most important ingredients in relationships are trust and commitment. However, other variables such as information sharing and mutual goal orientation are also needed in order to create long-term relationships in which value sharing is included. (Ford et al 1998) According to Mats Bredborg at VCE, the relationship situation in this industry is a bit complicated. In most cases the relationship is more established between dealers and their customers than between the manufacturer and their dealers. Despite the fact that the Volvo brand is strong, the end customers have a more established relation to the local dealer than the manufacturer. Thereby, the consumers' remains stronger related to their local dealer than to the specific product that they are looking for. A theoretic parallel to Bredborg's reasoning can be found in Ford's et al (1998) discussion regarding this problem in sales business. The personal interaction enables both the supplier and the customer to reduce uncertainty. Moreover, personal interaction enables the interacting parties to build trust and exchange for instance confidential information and it is easier to build social relations. This interaction can lead to a deep relationship between the salesman and the customer. (Ford et al 1998) Through the Volvo-provided dealer site, VCE can enable an information channel directly towards their end customers. This information channel can provide the customers with, for instance, product specifications that salespeople at each dealer previously assisted them with. (Bredborg) This can make the end customers less dependent on their dealers and reduce the face-to-face interaction between dealers and their customers which previously was necessary. At the same time Ford et al (1998) points at the fact that strong bonds between salespeople and customers could also potentially harm the company as customers may identify more with the salesperson than with the company itself. As a result the customer may follow the salesperson if he decides to work for another company. (Ford et al 1998) This phenomenon was also encountered in one of the interviews with a dealer that has implemented the DSB. They pointed out this problem when speaking about each salesman's relationships with their customers. This relationship is more or less depending on the industry and that particular salesman.

From the dealer interviews another perspective than the one Bredborg referred to can be noted. Dealers agreed on the fact that the commitment between them and their customers are strong and important, which at the same time do not exclude the fact that most dealers additionally wants to be tightly linked to their manufacturer and that both these are important relationships for dealers. In theory it is stated, that engaging in business-to-business relationships have led to that many companies have switched from private networks to using the Internet. The advantages that can be derived from basing their relationship business on the Internet are for instance the low initial cost of IT infrastructure and the reach of the Internet which increases the number of potential

business partners. (Egger 2002) Moreover, the general dealer point of view in this matter is that they want to be tightly linked with Volvo. They are thereby looking forward to building long-term cooperation with Volvo, which they furthermore discuss as beneficial for both the dealer and the manufacturer. Gummesson (1998) states that when two parties achieve mutual benefits from a relationship it can constitute a foundation for long-term cooperation. According to Mats Bredborg, both VCE and the dealers can achieve advantages by using the DSB since this application can cut costs for VCE as well as for the dealers.

Since VCE's previous dealer site project in 1999 failed to be completed, Mats Bredborg is of the opinion that it is of importance to finalize the project this time and to provide a solution for the dealers that is satisfying in a long-term perspective. He implies that VCE wants to provide their dealers with a service that they cannot manage on their own. This service will also cut costs for them and permeate homogeneity on the web for Volvo. (Bredborg) Products sold in industrial markets, can be considered as complex products and for those the marketing mix is not a sufficient description of what the supplier offers to its customers. Variables can be added in order to increase the value of the product and such a variable is technology. Pricing becomes more flexible the higher the value of the relationship is. The focus shifts from being price-oriented to value-oriented and this can be explained by the fact that the parties involved gets more interested in the value provided. (Ford et al 1998) By providing dealers with this technology, personal contacts and time-consuming activities connected to this can be reduced. Personal contacts are seen as positive but time consuming, but if dealers combine this business with their dealer site on the Internet it could save them some time. (Hedborg)

One of the dealers that have implemented the DSB means that it is of importance for Volvo to obtain stability in their region. Volvo has had a variety of dealers in this specific region and needs to work more long-term based. They refer to Caterpillar, the market leader in construction equipment, which has been using the same dealers for quite a long time and outline the importance for both Volvo and themselves to work long-term. In the literature, this can be connected to the long-term stage where both cooperating companies are highly dependent of each other. Both companies' experience leads to the establishment of common operating practices, such as trust and norms of conduct. The routines which have grown out of this, might not relate well to either companies' business practice. Companies may become dependent of their counterparts and the social distance is also minimized in the long-term stage. (Ford 1997) Another dealer, that also has implemented the DSB, discusses the similarity between the actual machines in the industry and thereby implies that the relationship, especially that between dealers and customers, is the most important.

Comments
It is of importance for VCE to work on the trust issue and provide solutions that enable mutual benefits. The DSB is a service that can produce benefits for both parties in the relationship and thereby the DSB can have an effect on the trust amongst dealers. Trust and mutual benefits are prerequisites that enable the relationships to become long-term, which also is something both parties are looking forward to. There are a number of changes that dealers would like to have made on the DSB. It is of importance that VCE

and VIT listen to dealers' wishes regarding their views on what the DSB should be able to accomplish for them. Moreover, this can facilitate the maintenance of long-term relations. Concrete examples of dealers' wishes, and VCE's and VIT's attitude towards these, can be found in the section regarding web design, chapter 5.1.

Simplicity is requested by the dealers, in order to assure that they actually can make use of the application. Simplicity can also help to produce trust between manufacturer and dealers in the long-term perspective. It is also important that it is simple for the end customer which means that he will use it. Thus trust is also created with the end customer.

5.2.3 Maintaining trust

If companies want to obtain, as well as sustain, the trust of their consumers it is their responsibility to fulfill and be committed to the promises they make (Shaw 1997). The dealer, that chose not to implement the DSB, implies that in the long run it is of importance that the customers are contented with the dealer site in order to make them use it as a reference. This can also enable maintenance of trust amongst customers. However, most of the interviewed dealers have full confidence in Volvo keeping their promises.

The cost of acquiring new customers is significantly higher than retaining existing customers, which can explain that relationships based on trust can constitute a strong competitive advantage (Egger 2002; Zigurs & Qureshi 2001). According to Mats Bredborg, the idea is that Volvo will help the dealers by providing them with dealer sites, which at the same time can strengthen the bonds between Volvo and their dealers. Theory states that new channels and forums have opened up new possibilities to create and manage relationships. However, the maintenance of relationships is still a tough balance of how these relationships should be created and maintained. (Zigurs & Qureshi 2001) Regarding maintenance of existing customers it is of importance to gain trust by providing a web site that attracts the customers. One of the dealers that have implemented the DSB emphasizes that it is of importance to change content often in order to attract the end customers back to the dealer site. They are reasoning that as long as the dealer site is kept dynamic trust will be maintained.

Establishing more facilitative and integrative relationships also means that resources and capabilities can be shared between the partners. Hence each party can focus on their core processes. This can result in partners being dependent on each others' resources and capabilities in order to function. (Ford et al 1998) All dealers agreed on the fact that Volvo possesses the resources to maintain the web site in a way dealers could not manage on their own. In this sense, trust can be maintained from both dealers and dealers' customers if Volvo makes use of their resources and knowledge to continuously improve the application. Both VCE and VIT employees agree on the importance of continuous improvement of the dealer site. In theory it is stated that web sites are intended to be the most dynamic medium to date, as information can be updated and published instantly. However, this is not always the case in reality since there can be problems with price, description or availability of information. (Egger

2002) By this reasoning the importance for Volvo to use their resources to provide what they intend to, gets even more obvious.

Inconsistency, in words and actions, is a key factor that draws one to believe that another is untrustworthy (Shaw 1997). One of the dealers for example has a negative experience from a former cooperation with VCE. This has led to the fact that they do not fully trust VCE at present time since VCE did not manage to keep their promises. Mats Bredborg states that even though the dealers like the DSB application they did not think that VCE could not manage to create the promised solution.

Shaw (1997) points at the fact that most individuals usually trust those who they perceive to behave consistently in words and actions. This implies that if companies want to gain or maintain the trust of consumers, it is imperative that they act with integrity in terms of for example consistency in all their actions. (Shaw 1997) The perception that Volvo is keeping their promises is something that the majority of interviewed dealers agree on. This fact makes it even more important for Volvo to uphold their promises and in reality live up to dealers' and their customers' expectations. Otherwise it will be tough to maintain the existing trust of today.

Comments
In this section, the importance of maintaining trust through whole-hearted commitment from both parties is highlighted. Especially from the Volvo point of view, since dealers have come to change their business completely in order to match the DSB application in a way that is requested by VCE. With consideration to this fact, Volvo will have to engage fully in the relationship to maintain and improve trust.

The building of a relationship is only the beginning of long-term thinking and acting. If trust is used in an advantageous way, it can constitute a chain putting the relationship together and maintaining it. Since the DSB is considered to be a part of this long-term relationship it can, if used correctly, enable enhanced trust and commitment to the relationship between VCE and their dealers. In this coherence it is significant to frequently reflect the purposes of the DSB application with respect to all involved parties' interests. These reflections can constitute a fundament for a learning process which can be used and updated by follow-ups before every enhancement of the application is made. Thereby, it also can constitute an important component in the process of maintaining existing trust between the parties involved.

5.3 Branding

This chapter will discuss branding as a resource, consequences of the need for local branding and branding on the Internet.

5.3.1 Brand as a resource

According to Ries and Trout (2001) it is important to differentiate a specific brand from all the other brands on the market. It makes the customers think that there are no other products or services on the market quite like those connected to the specific brand. Mats Nilsson's view regarding co-branding on the dealer sites is, in a way, an

example of that statement. He states that it is in line with their policy when it comes to co-branding, which is that brands are not supposed to be mixed but kept separated. According to Mats Bredborg and Robert Williams this has been a complex issue throughout the DSB project, both from a legal standpoint as well as a branding policy issue. In an effort to solve this problem the Volvo logotype disappears when a visitor comes to a page on the dealer site that present other brands than Volvo's. Kapferer (1997), claims that a brand is not the product, but it gives meaning to the product. Most of the dealers like the fact that they are tightly connected to the Volvo brand since the Volvo brand has a good reputation. One of the dealers that are going to implement the DSB says that Volvo has excellent products and excellent people that work there and they also have a really strong brand. The dealers that have implemented the DSB all agree that one of the most important things with the DSB is that they get closer connected to Volvo and the Volvo brand by using it. One of the dealers that have already implemented the DSB states that the Volvo brand is their single biggest asset since product advantages are not sustainable.

Brand equity

Brand equity is a set of assets linked to a brand's name and can roughly be divided into four different categories; *brand awareness*, *brand loyalty*, *perceived quality* and *brand associations* (Aaker 1996; Kotler 1999). If the name or symbol of the brand should change, Aaker (1996) suggests that some or all of the assets or accountabilities could be affected or even lost, although some might be shifted to the new name and symbol.

Brand awareness

According to Aaker (1996) brand awareness has to do with whether or not customers are aware of the brand. Customers often buy a well-known brand because they feel safe with the well-known. A general opinion is that if the customers recognize the brand they feel that the company behind the brand is spending money on their brand and therefore also delivers quality products. Brand awareness is often divided into different levels and the most desired level from a company point of view is known as 'top of mind'. This means that the brand has cognitive dominance in the customers' mind, suggesting that the given brand is the first one that comes to mind for the customer when they think of a specific product or branch. According to one dealer, the long-term expectation on the dealer site is to get to the point where they are top of mind amongst customers. It should be their site that comes to mind if a customer has any questions regarding construction equipment. One dealer's ambition is to obtain greater public exposure and thereby strengthen the connection between their dealership and the Volvo name. It is important for the dealer to be recognized as a Volvo dealer. Most of the dealers think that by linking their brand more closely to the Volvo brand they will get increased brand awareness. This awareness can also be a step in the direction of becoming 'the Volvo dealer', which means that they automatically will be known as a dealer that delivers quality products. According to Richard Andersson, Volvo as a trademark and brand is a strong motivator for VCE's dealers to be a part of the volvo.com site. The VCE brand is not being used to a large extent, instead one only talks about Volvo.

Brand loyalty
According to Weilbacher (1993), the debate between those who believe in rational brand choice and brand loyalty and those who believe in non-rational brand choice and weak non-existent brand loyalty has to a large extent ignored a substantial body of evidence about how consumers choose among brands. This evidence comes down decisively on the side of those who believe that most consumers, most of the time, do not forge decisive loyalties to brands. Most of the dealers pointed out that they have good contact with their customers and that they have a high degree of returning customers. One of the dealers stated that they are expecting an even higher degree of returning customers with assistance from the DSB, and also thought that this could help them strengthen the bonds between them and their customers in the future. Most of the dealers agree that the face-to-face contact with the customer is very important and that the Internet can only be seen as a complement to this contact.

According to Apéria (2001), loyal customers are important for the company in order to establish its market position. This is of importance since the competitors are unwilling to spend unnecessary amounts of resources on consumers that are hard to obtain. Brand loyalty is therefore an important barrier towards competitors. Brand loyalty is the core of brand equity and an indicator on the company's future profits. Most of the dealers perceive the DSB as a way to improve the interaction between themselves and their customers. With this improvement they can establish stronger connections with the customers and thereby also get more loyal customers. However, the question is whether the customers are loyal to the Volvo brand or the dealer brand. According to Mats Bredborg the dealers have established a strong relationship with their customers, and this relationship is often stronger than the customers' relationship towards the brand of the machines they buy. If a dealer would change from being a Volvo dealer to a Caterpillar dealer, the chances are high that their customers will continue their relationship with the given dealer instead of the relationship with the brand on their machines.

Perceived quality
In the long run, the most important factor of a business unit's performance is the quality of its products and services, relative to those of competitors. The experienced quality can differ from the actual quality for many reasons. (Aaker 1996) Most of the dealers believe that the reason why customers come to them when they want to buy construction equipment is because they have earned a reputation in this type of trade for professionalism and good service. The reputation has also been created by the fact that their salespeople have developed strong relationships with their customers. The fact that they are selling Volvo products is also a success factor since it is generally believed that Volvo delivers high-quality products. All of the dealers believe that it is positive for them to appear with the Volvo brand since it is so recognized regardless of the context. The expression 'perceived quality' treats some of the associations that the customer has to the given brand. It handles the matter of how the customer perceives the quality of the brand, and this has an effect on the public perception of the brand and therefore also the company's added value. (Aaker 1992)

Brand associations
Everything that tries to unite the company and their customers can be classified as brand association. The main focus is on the image that the customers intend to improve by their choice of brand, product attribute, symbols and other personal or organizational associations. The effort to determine what associations the customers want to be related to is therefore of importance. (Aaker 1996) Mats Bredborg points at the importance of possessing a well-known brand by pointing at the fact that dealers' brand grows stronger when they are associated with the globally renowned Volvo brand. The dealers' brand has a strong value regarding the relationship between dealer and customers. The co-branding on the DSB is an important part for both VCE and the dealer since VCE is able to show their brand together with the dealers' brand. According to one dealer, the Volvo brand has a high level of recognition. The problem is that the first thing that customers think about when they hear or see Volvo is cars. Some may never have heard of Volvo Construction Equipment, this is also something that Mats Nilsson and Richard Andersson agreed on. But the association takes them to the level where they are recognized for representing one of the larger actors in the industry.

According to one dealer, a positive aspect of being part of the Volvo profile on the Internet when using the DSB is that it is a 'win-win situation'. Both the manufacturer and the distributor will benefit from it. Volvo will have more control of their brand which will enable them to have a homogenous brand exposure worldwide (Bredborg, Jerresand) and the dealer will appear together with Volvo which results in added associations to the Volvo brand. A majority of the dealers states that they will have access to a clean and easy to navigate dealer site which will open up a new communication channel for them that is in line with what their customers want both now and in the future. One dealer is of the opinion that linking tighter with Volvo will help them, and it will be beneficial for Volvo as well since people that are familiar with the dealers' brand will draw attention to the Volvo brand. Robert Williams and Mats Bredborg summarize this when they say that by using the DSB application, there is a stronger alliance between the brand of both Volvo and dealers. The customers can now see Volvo products on the webpage and also the co-branded logo at the bottom of the page. It strengthens the bond between Volvo and the dealers.

Comments
Today a brand can be very important to a company's success on the market since it consists of so many values and attributes. Hence, branding is a powerful tool when a company wants to differentiate their products from its competitor's products. Brand equity is a set of assets linked to the given brand. All of the dealers see their brand as an asset and even more so in the Volvo brand. The close connection between the two brands is important in the dealers' eyes since it can contribute with stronger recognition and awareness for the customers. Having cognitive dominance, or top of mind, means that the brand have a very strong awareness level in the customers' mind. This gives the dealers an advantage compared to their competitors, and a mix of the two brands is mostly positive in this context. Customers tend to be more loyal to the actual dealer rather than the brand itself, which underlines the obvious; one cannot solely depend on the brand. A close connection and communication with the customers is also of importance to be successful. The customer-perceived quality is high both

when it comes to the Volvo products as well as the brand. The fact that the dealer sells products that the customers think highly of is something that can further strengthen the dealers' brand on the market. We believe that by having a strong brand a customer might lower the bar for the perceived quality on the company's products which means that the given company might have better prerequisites than its competitors. The associations with the Volvo brand can sometimes be misleading. Many customers see Volvo as manufacturer of cars rather than construction equipment. So even though the Volvo brand has a high level of recognition, it may in VCE's case sometimes be the wrong associations.

5.3.2 Local brands

Local brands
Being a local brand means that a company probably has a relatively small geographical area covered but instead the company probably is in possession of a higher level of trust. Kapferer (2002) states that local brands are filled with a high level of trust and personal connections based on the way consumers relate the brand to their personal life. It is also explained that local brands are more than just brands. They can be seen as institutions that encourage a definite level of trust. This trust is dependent on four factors and we will develop two of these since the other two factors seemed too far-fetched for this thesis. The two more pertinent factors, structural and brand equity factors, will be described as follows.

Structural factors
If a purchase is not frequent, the consumers tend to choose a product that is familiar to them. This is the strength of the local brands; they provide consumers with trust and loyalty. Furthermore, consumers rely heavily on the confidence and trust that they have developed in well-known brands, or on a 'mouth-to-mouth' basis that they may have received from friends or professionals. (Kapferer 2002) According to one dealer the Internet lacks face-to-face communication and personal meetings. Meeting a customer is of great importance in their business and face-to-face communication is important. This implies that the Internet merely can work as a complement to their business in that matter.

According to Kapferer (2002) it is more common that customers buy something that they recognize than something they not have heard of before, especially regarding products that are bought rarely. Robert Williams expounds his view on this when he explains that it is positive for both dealers and Volvo to appear together in different contexts. Both parties want to make the dealer grow in sales, marketing and brand just showing the Volvo brand will strengthen the dealer appearance. The collaboration between a locally known, brand such as the dealer, and a globally renowned brand, such as Volvo, is positive and strong when exposed together in different contexts. Most of the dealers agree on this part too and they believe that customers think of their brand as a brand that gives good service to people. The Volvo brand stands for top of the line products. Hence a mixture of those two is a good combination. Some of the dealers believe that the DSB will make their salesmen's job easier since it will give the customers more information prior to contacting the dealer. This is something that Kapferer (2002) somewhat describes by stating that the sales force plays a key role in

customer bonding and have a strong ability to impact the buying behavior of consumers towards a local brand.

Brand equity factors

According to Kapferer (2002), consumers develop strong emotional relations to local brands in which they normally develop a positive perception of the brand image. Emotional connections to the brand can be further explained by the fact that the consumer has been acquainted with the brand for a long period of time. When a new foreign brand comes onto the market, consumers are not inclined to see the need to even try a foreign brand, especially when there is nothing wrong with the brand that they are using. This can also be explained by the fact that they have developed an emotional connection with the brand. This is something that Mats Bredborg underlined in an interview; a customer is emotionally attached to the local dealer. It is believed that it does not really matter which brand a dealer sells, since the customers are more attached to the local dealer than the actual brand that the dealer offers. According to most of the dealers, the customers are looking for a dealer that can provide them with products and services that fulfill their needs. It is helpful if the brand is known and is in possession of good reputation, but first and foremost the customers approach the dealer and thereafter looks for a product that fits their requirements.

Comments

Being a local brand has its pros and cons. The pros in this case are that the dealers are well known in their regions and have close and personal contacts with their customers. Since the customers in this case are more likely to go to the dealer they want to buy from instead of buying a specific brand, the close and personal contact can be a good complement to the value of the Volvo brand. The strength of the Volvo brand combined with the strength of a dealers brand is a good mixture to achieve even better relations with the customers.

5.3.3 Branding on the Internet

The DSB application can be seen as a step in the right direction when it comes to Volvo's branding strategy. It can also be seen as creating a new communication channel with the purpose to mediate a company's image. From a branding point of view, it would be unfortunate to have badly designed dealer sites that present Volvo and the Volvo brand poorly. Most of the interviews with personnel at VCE and VIT confirm this standpoint and the respondents believe that the DSB is an initiative to improve this situation. Most of the dealers that had a dealer site prior to the DSB also agree that the DSB makes both their brand and the Volvo brand appear in a more positive way since most of them did not have the resources to maintain their own site prior to the DSB. One dealer states that the topic 'branding on the Internet' is something that evolves more clearly around the Volvo brand than the dealer brand. Mostly because a distributor generally does not look at his brand the same way as a manufacturer does. Aaker (2003) points out two key factors when it comes to successfully building a brand on the Internet. One of those key factors is the fact that the brand presented on the Internet should be homogenous with the rest of the brand exposure. This is something that all of the respondents agree on.

The dealers all agree that having a dealer site is something that their customers want, both now and in the future. Some of the dealers believe that customers might not buy products online but the need for a dealer site with information regarding the products is something that their customers would like to see. Being a Volvo dealer on the Internet is something that they all are enthusiastic about. And as mentioned earlier, the tighter the connection is between Volvo and dealer, the better. Richard Andersson says that Volvo as a brand is considered strong on the web, which is an advantage for the dealers. Mats Bredborg is of the opinion that branding on the Internet is a complex issue and the aim is to create a high level of recognition that pervades Volvo's entire Internet investment. According to Peter Hedborg, some of the dealers handle the exposure of the Volvo brand in an adequate way on their own site while others are unprofessional, thus VCE aims to help them by providing dealer sites. The dealers will be associated with everything that the Volvo brand stands for, and this is something that dealers have to take advantage of. One of the purposes with this application is to mediate the Volvo brand to the dealers' customers. One of the key factors with branding on the Internet, according to Aaker (2003), is the fact that the brand that is being exposed on the Internet should be homogenous with the rest of the brand exposure. Therefore, the Internet components including the web site need to support the brand with the right look, feel and personality that is on-brand, and consistency with the brand presence elsewhere. This is something that Mathias Södersten brings up when he states that the DSB should be consistent when it comes to branding and offer high brand recognition regardless of where on the volvo.com the visitor is. Mats Nilsson believes that one of the keywords in branding is consistency.

Two other key factors are motivation and traffic and this implies that the customers need to be motivated to visit the site and return regularly. The motivation can come from any brand-building program with an Internet component or it comes from an Internet based program. The 'if we build it, they will come' philosophy relying on printed material is long obsolete. Instead there needs to be real motivation. (Aaker 2003) Some of the dealers bring up this point and says that one of the most important things with the DSB is not just to launch it but to drive people to it. They believe that plain product information is not enough. To make the customers coming back to the dealer site it has to be more interactive and tailor made information such as local information.

Comments
Branding on the Internet is an up and coming, if not established, piece in the marketing puzzle. One of the branding problems on the DSB is the fact that the connection to the Volvo brand is so strong that products from other brands seem kind of hidden (Hedborg, Bredborg). According to most of the dealers the DSB presents more of Volvo rather than the dealer, therefore the dealers are not able to expose everything that they offer. This is a dilemma since the dealers want to present their entire product line in order to sell more products at the same time as the Volvo branding policy does not permit showing other brands together with the Volvo brand, apart from the specific dealer brand.

5.4 Analytical inferences

This thesis was initiated by VIT but the company that has been examined is VCE. It is important to bear in mind that these two actors have different agendas and purposes with the DSB application. VIT have a design and usability focus and their center of attention is to create well functioning application. VCE's primary focus is to manage their dealers by affecting their web presence.

The confidence that the interviewed dealers' have in Volvo, is a lot better than one of the interviewed employees in VCE thought. Actually, the interviewed dealers generally trust Volvo and have a high level of commitment towards Volvo. Only one of the dealer's lacks of trust in Volvo and this dealer has therefore chosen not to implement the DSB at present time. However, this dealer states that they actually belong in a solution like this and due to the fact that they recently have entered new markets, they are considering an implementation of the DSB in the future. Furthermore, this high level of trust has made it relatively easy for VCE to implement the DSB in the North American market. Moreover, trust is a solid foundation for co operations between companies but still it is of importance to bear in mind that the trust needs to be maintained. Trust can be maintained through fulfillment of VCE's obligations towards the dealers that have implemented the DSB, in other words provide support whenever it is necessary.

Another interesting result is that the interview categories among the dealers did not differ as much as expected. The dealers that already have implemented the DSB and the dealers that are going to implement the DSB show similarities in their answers. Although the last dealer category; the dealer that has chosen not to implement the DSB, distinguishes to some extent from the others. Especially in terms of trust since their lack of trust was one important reason to decline the implementation of the DSB. However it is important to bear in mind that only one dealer interview in this category was performed and that we cannot jump to conclusions from this one interview. Still, the fact that one dealer expressed these opinions is enough for VCE to consider.

5.4.1 Continuous improvements

It is important to make the dealers understand the possibilities with the Volvo-provided dealer site. There needs to be a focus regarding how the dealers are informed. This is a prerequisite that needs to be fulfilled in order to increase the possibility that the dealers actually will use the DSB in their everyday work. During the interviews, it was made clear that some of the enhancements that the dealers had requested already existed on the DSB. The dealers are given a description regarding the possibilities with the DSB when they make a decision to have it implemented, but despite this they are not aware about existing functionality. This implies that the information is either insufficient or that the written manual needs to be complemented with other forms of information. We have pointed out some aspects that are important to bear in mind during the process of informing the dealers, and these aspects are also important when developing the DSB. We have created a model that treats these aspects. This model is called 'Continuous Improvement' and it consists of three steps:

- Increased Awareness

- Add value
- Iterative thinking

The model proceeds from the DSB application and below follows a description of each step.

Increase awareness

If the dealers are unable to see that possibilities that the DSB offers it is possible that they will become less interested in using it. In order for the dealers to comprehend the value of the DSB they must know what it can provide for them. In many cases during this thesis we have noticed that the dealers are not aware of either the capabilities or the values of the DSB. One of the key success factors with the DSB is that the dealers are made aware of the features and that they know what the DSB can do for them. We believe that this could be communicated more thoroughly to the customers and this is important for following reasons:

1. The dealers will know more about the possibilities of the DSB which can lead to several positive effects such as an increased level of trust in Volvo and also the ability for the dealers to use the DSB to its full potential.
2. The DSB will be more interactive and frequently used since the purpose of it will be communicated and the dealers see reasons for using it. This may also enable the DSB to be more alive.

The awareness will be decisive for the success of the DSB since there is a large possibility that the whole project will fail if the dealers do not use the DSB. Furthermore, if the dealers will not make use of the DSB, the dealers' customers probably will not either.

In order to attract different types of dealers and provide the dealers with the right type of information regarding the DSB, it can be helpful to divide them into different categories instead of looking at them as a homogenous mass. This procedure could lead to different strategies being used when approaching different types of dealers. For instance, categories can be created depending on IT-knowledge, degree of personalization and the time and money that the dealer is willing to spend on it.

According to the dealers, the two most positive aspects with the DSB were that it is free of charge and it can be launched quickly. It is positive that the dealers perceive these aspects as positive but it is important that VCE puts time and effort into convincing them about the advantages that can be derived from using the DSB. If the DSB is to become a success, the dealers need to be convinced that the most positive aspects with the DSB is the actual possibilities that it offers and not the short period of time that it takes to implement it or the fact that it is free of charge.

Add value

To add value, such as content, interaction and applications, is crucial for the DSB to survive. But one of the most important things one should bear in mind when adding value is who it is meant for. In this case it is first and foremost content for the customers who buy construction equipment and also the dealers. Therefore it is of importance to look over the actual demand of the certain content. If the target group

does not have a demand for the given content there is a risk that the content remains as plain content and never becomes a value to either the dealers or the customers.

Before new features are added it is important that the dealers are made aware of the existing ones. If new features are added, and the dealers are unaware of the existing ones, there is a risk that the dealers think of the DSB as too technically advanced. This can lead to unwillingness to use it and it may fail to become part of their everyday work.

The content needs to be updated frequently since the dealers', and their customers, needs changes constantly. The dealer site should reflect the physical store of the dealers' as much as possible. In other words, it should allow exposing of other brands than Volvo's in order to be managed by Volvo. If this was possible, Volvo would have the power of controlling the way competing brands are exposed. This is something we see as a great opportunity for Volvo to be top of mind in the customers' eyes. Instead of seeing it as a threat that other brands than Volvo are exposed and promoted, this could be used as a competitive advantage. We are of the opinion that if the dealerships are allowed to sell competing products there should also be possible to show these brands on the dealer site. We believe that excluding competing brands from the dealer sites is the wrong way to proceed. If VCE want their dealers only to sell VCE products they should forbid them to offer competing products at the dealerships before forbidding it on the dealer sites.

An iterative process
The updating of the DSB application should be performed as an iterative process. We see the development, and the spreading, of the DSB as an ongoing process that never ends. The DSB needs to be improved continuously in order to develop according to the dealers´ needs. The dealers are in possession of valuable information regarding the end-user and this information is something that Volvo needs to take under consideration when performing updates. This knowledge can be used to enable the capturing of what the end-user are requesting from a dealer site.
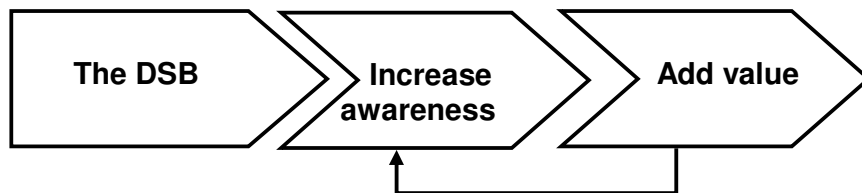

Figure 8: 'Continuous improvements'

In section 4.1 a presentation regarding VIT's and VCE's vision with the DSB was given. Their vision was divided into five different categories:
- Simplify communication between dealers and their customers
- Create homogeneity and a strong web presence
- Provide dealer sites that are up-to-date
- Continuous improvement

- Strengthen bonds with dealers

During the interviews with the dealers, we have obtained information regarding their perception of the DSB and the advantages that can be derived from using it. The dealers' opinions of the DSB are, in many respects, similar to the vision that VIT and VCE have expressed. The conclusion that can be drawn from this implies that VIT's and VCE's vision with the DSB is on the point of being fulfilled. The dealers seem to have similar visions and expectations on the DSB. Still, it is of importance to bear in mind that the DSB initiative is in an early stage and the actual outcome of the project is hard to establish at present time. The development of the DSB can take different directions depending on the future decisions that VIT and VCE make. In order to describe, and to emphasize the complexity of the future development of the DSB, we have performed scenarios which will be described in the following section.

5.4.2 Suggestions on enhancements of the DSB

The procedure of continuously listening to user opinions is a line of action that is discussed in theory. Jakob Nielsen (1993) refers to it as iterative processes where the actual user is involved throughout the design process. Not even the most experienced usability experts are able to design perfect user interfaces in a single attempt, hence interface designers should build a usability engineering life cycle around the concept of iteration. According to Peter Hedborg and Robert Williams, VCE and VIT had a vision where the Volvo-provided dealer sites are distinguished by continuous improvement. As a part of this vision the initiative to write this thesis was taken. The idea was to capture the views of the dealers who had got in contact with the dealer site. Theory states that an evaluation of a system's interface can be made after an implementation has taken place. This evaluation can be used in order to establish the level of usability that an interface shows. (Preece 1994) By using usability testing, it is possible to identify and take care of existing problems (Fossum 1996).

The most important issue was, according to all of the interviewed dealers, to attract the customer to visit the dealer site frequently. The dealers were of the opinion that the DSB could help them increase both sales and customer interaction, but in order to enable that it is necessary that their customers are acquainted with the dealer site. The majority of the suggested enhancements were therefore concentrating on how the Volvo-provided dealer site could be developed in order to attract the dealers' customers. According to them, it was of importance that the dealer site consisted of more than just Volvo information. In theory, (Preece 1994; Hix & Hartson 1993) the importance of focusing on the actual user is stressed. The interviewed dealers are expressing a desire regarding the shaping of the Volvo-provided dealer site. They are hoping that the site will be outlined in a way that will be appreciated by their customers. Jakob Nielsen (2000) talks about the uniqueness of a site. By this he means that a site should offer the visitor information that is of use to the visitor. The visitor should always sense that it is worth spending the time that it takes to download the information.

The suggestions regarding enhancements that will make the DSB more attractive for the dealers' customers are summarized:

- **Enable promotion of non-competitive products to a higher extent.** All of the interviewed dealers expressed a disappointment regarding the lack of possibility to promote non-competitive products. The dealers were of the opinion that it was beneficial for both parties, Volvo and the dealers, to increase the marketing possibilities for this type of products. The dealers promote and sell these product at their dealerships, thus it should be possible to market these products sufficiently on the dealer site.

- **A higher level of local content.** A majority of the dealers were of the opinion that there needed to be a closer local connection on the Volvo-provided dealer site. All of the interviewed dealers have established a close local connection. Many of the dealerships have existed for generations and much of the business is conducted face-to-face. In order to attract customers it is necessary to offer a higher level of local content on the site. The dealers would like to promote activities, customer meetings, fairs and events. This procedure is needed in order to use the dealer site to invite customers to test the equipment. The customer must feel that the news and information that is being presented on the dealer site is directed directly towards them and not the entire North American market.

- **Add more pictures of construction equipment.** Many of the dealers have stated that their customers are interested in seeing more pictures on the dealer site. Accordingly to the dealers, their customers are not readers and therefore a higher level of pictures would be appreciated. By using more pictures, customers would get attracted to a higher extent.

- **Allow dealers to change information on the site.** Many of the dealers were of the opinion that they should be able to change some of the content on the dealer site, without having to contact Volvo. Accordingly, the best solution would be if the templates were static and some of the content was changeable. Adding pictures of employees and information regarding future events was the content that was requested mostly.

- **Convey a complete service package.** Some dealers would like the dealer site to reflect their dealership to a larger extent. At present time, the dealer site mainly offers product specifications and contact information. The dealers would like to see that the dealer site offers a comprehensive solution that includes financing, insurances, service agreements and machinery help.

- **Add pictures of employees.** In order to make the dealer site more personal, some of the dealers have inquired about the possibility to publish photographs of their employees. This procedure would make it possible for them to expose their product specialists, mechanics and salespeople on the web site.

- **Enable downloading of manuals.** Some of the dealers have asked for the possibility to download manuals on the dealer site and dealers' claims that even their customers have made inquires about this. The idea was to offer new, as well as old, manuals as a service that would offer real value to the dealers' customers. It is hard to locate old manuals at present time, hence this procedure would favor both dealers and their customers and beyond that cut costs in printed material which would be beneficial for both Volvo and their dealers.

- **Order parts online.** At a first stage, some of the dealers would like to use the dealer site to look up the availability of specific parts. In a longer perspective, some of the dealers expressed a wish to enable the ordering of parts online through the dealer site. One of the dealers was of the opinion that customers should have access to this service since that would reduce their workload.
- **Compare different models.** Some of the dealers pointed out that their customers have requested the possibility to compare different models. This can be seen as a service that facilitates the buying process.
- **Publish opinions from professionals and users.** One of the dealers expressed a will to publish opinions from professionals and users regarding different products, parts and services. These opinions should be published on the dealer site as a service and guideline to the visitors. At present time, customers need to call or visit a dealership in order to get a professional opinion. This procedure could function as a complementary service to the customers.

Through interviews with employees at VCE and VIT, reflections regarding enhancements of the DSB have been made. According to Mats Bredborg and Robert Williams, a parts locator will be added so that customers can buy parts online. The personnel at VCE and VIT are aware of the fact that the dealers perceive the ability to market products from other brands as insufficient. The general view is that the Volvo-provided dealer site offers a good basis, but enhancements need to be carried out. Mats Bredborg states that it should be possible to influence the outcome to a larger extent, thus enabling that dealers that are committed in their dealer site will have room to maneuver it more freely. Mats Bredborg also points out that the dealers need a dealer management system and that the customers should have a customer management system. The dealer management system should be able to handle the dealers' customers and parts. Furthermore, the customer management system should enable customers to see their invoices, which parts they have ordered and offer an overview regarding their service contracts.

Comments
Since VCE's dealers operate in a mature market, it is necessary to proceed at a modest pace. The dealers, and their customers, are often inexperienced when it comes to knowledge about computers and doing business on the Internet. These facts bring up the importance of proceeding slowly, so that the dealers are used to the present dealer site before any changes are made. If the dealers are unaware of the possibilities with the present version of the dealer site and new features are implemented, there is a chance that the procedure has an opposite effect. If the dealers perceive the dealer site as complicated there are less possibilities that the site becomes a part of their everyday work.

It is important that VCE puts a lot of effort into explaining the advantages that can be derived when using the Volvo-provided dealer site. During the rollout of the dealer site, VCE should focus on explaining the possibilities of the dealer site. Some of the suggested enhancements are available at present time. This indicates that the information regarding the possibilities with the dealer site have been insufficient. Since not all of the participating dealers are aware of the existing functionality, one needs to evaluate how the dealers have been informed. It is therefore important that the

information is performed more thoroughly. An extended use of two-way communication, between VCE and its dealers, could help to minimize the risks of insufficient information taking place. The dealers can show a larger knowledge regarding customer needs, therefore their opinions need to be taken into consideration in order to enable the development of a sufficient dealer site.

5.4.3 Scenarios regarding the future dispersal of the DSB

Scenario planning is a tool to point at possible outcomes of the future which departures from a couple of uncertainties together with some predetermined factors. There are a number of other steps included in this method. However, we have not followed each step when making these scenarios and therefore it is not adequate to call this method scenario planning but instead just scenarios. The uncertainties have a high level of influence on the outcome of the future and are at the same time hard to predict. The predetermined factors also have a high level of influence on the outcome of the future but they are in contrast to the uncertainties most likely to happen. With departure from these factors, scenarios can be elaborated. There are a number of different theories in the field of scenarios. However, this is not a focus in the theoretic framework and therefore we have chosen not to treat this field of theory. We have been influenced by the scenario planning method when creating future scenarios. Furthermore, the method of working, these specific scenarios and the background to these as well has been discussed with a researcher (Martin Börjesson, industrial doctorial candidate) in this field. We chose to add this to the discussion because we are of the opinion that this discussion can add another interesting dimension to this thesis.

The uncertainties that we have emanated from is first of all; dealers perceived usefulness of the DSB. The degree of perceived usefulness amongst dealers is conclusive for the success of the DSB. In this case we focus on the future dispersal of the DSB. The perceived usefulness of the DSB amongst dealers is divided into three categories of statements necessary for the DSB to succeed:
- A high degree of acceptance of the Internet as a communication channel is required
- Perceived usefulness is required in order to obtain a high level of dispersal
- Perceived usefulness influence the acceptance among the actual users

The second uncertainty that we feel is of importance for the future dispersal of the DSB is; level of integration. By this we mean integration in the way dealers are conducting business on a daily basis and if the DSB application will reach how well the DSB will be integrated in their everyday-work. Furthermore, this will have an impact on the future dispersal of the DSB amongst dealers. The level of integration is divided into two categories of statements that need to be fulfilled in order for the DSB to succeed:
- In order to make use of the application in the everyday-work, integration is required
- Integration is conclusive in order to emphasize the pros with the application

These two uncertainties constitute as the *x* and *y* axis on a scenario cross with four fields representing four different outcomes of the future. We have chosen to illustrate two of the scenarios from the scenario cross and the reason for this will be further developed below. The focus of this scenario cross is on the future dispersal of the DSB.
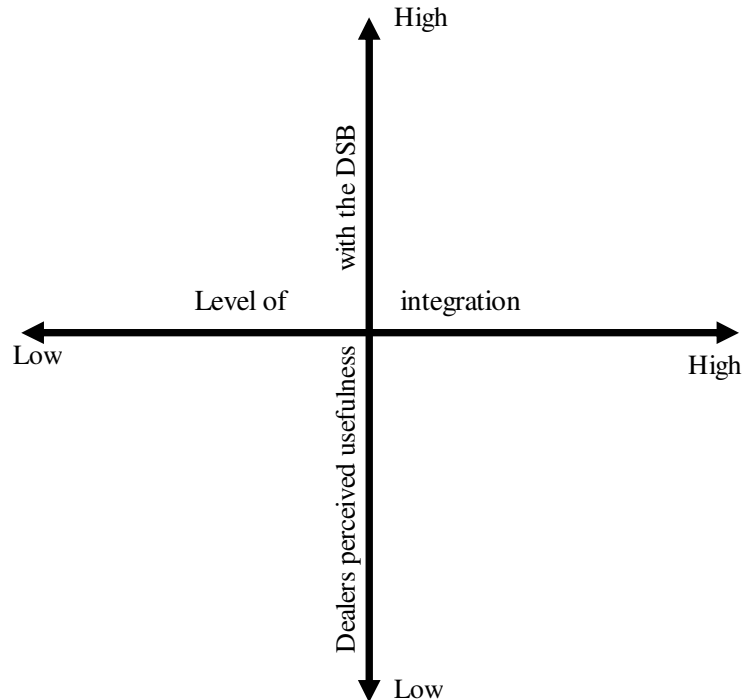
Figure 9: Scenario cross

The predetermined factors that we have been proceeding from when forming the scenarios, is that demographical changes in the industry will take place. This will be noticed through a shift in generations, both among dealers and their customers. The other fact is that the Internet use will increase, both among companies and home-users.

The 'best case' scenario of the DSB in a few years time is outlined as follows:
A majority of the dealers have implemented the DSB since they are of the opinion that this application can add value to their way of conducting business. The DSB has become a part of the dealer's everyday-work since they think that this application is both cost and time saving for them. Furthermore, the DSB function as a great sales support for the dealers because the customers can get information on their own, which facilitates their buying process. This leads to the fact that the customers are more well-informed and thereby lightens the workload of the dealers' employees. The VCE brand is now stronger in the industry of construction equipment thanks to the successful dispersal of the DSB. This has also lead to increased market shares for VCE and increased sales for their dealers generally. VCE have been listening to their dealers' requests and currently the DSB has succeeded to reflect the physical store of the dealers' to a large extent on the Internet. The enhancements of the DSB have derived from discussions between VCE and their dealers which are seen as beneficial from both parties' point of view. The success of the DSB has led to a stronger relationship

between VCE and their dealers, and together they are very competitive. Trust between VCE and their dealers are both maintained and growing over time.

The 'worst case' scenario has the following outcome in a few years time:
Few of the dealers use the DSB since VCE has not been able to convince their dealers about the value of the DSB. Dealers cannot see the benefits of using either the applications or the functionality included in the DSB. Since the dealers do not make use of the dealer sites derived from the DSB, they do not refer to it or promote it in their contact with their customers. Dealers' customers therefore see no surplus value by visiting the dealer sites. Enhancements of the DSB are not in line with the dealers' demands, since their requests have not been considered in a reasonable way by VCE. Therefore, dealers' trust in VCE diminishes since their opinions seem to be neglected. Dealers also think that the content on the dealer sites is too Volvo flavored, together with the fact that VCE is controlling their way of doing business to a much higher extent than they prefer. Furthermore, dealers create their own dealer sites in order to make them more unique, since the dealer sites provided by VCE are too universal from a dealer point of view. They add local content on their dealer sites and also make them more personalized. The DSB has failed to strengthen the relationship between VCE and their dealers. Instead, the opposite effect can be noticed. Dealers' sense that they are less dependent upon VCE, instead they are putting more resources aside to attract new customers as well as keeping their existing. Since VCE notice that the DSB is only a waste of resources they decide to put an end to the DSB. Instead they are working on new ways of supporting their dealers for a closer cooperation.

Above, we have just pointed out a 'best case' and a 'worst case' scenario regarding the future dispersal of the DSB. None of these scenarios are likely outcomes in reality. We chose to illustrate these two opposites since the actual outcome is almost unpredictable at present time. Reality will probably appear somewhere in between the 'best case' and the 'worst case' scenario, in either of the empty fields of this scenario cross illustrated below.
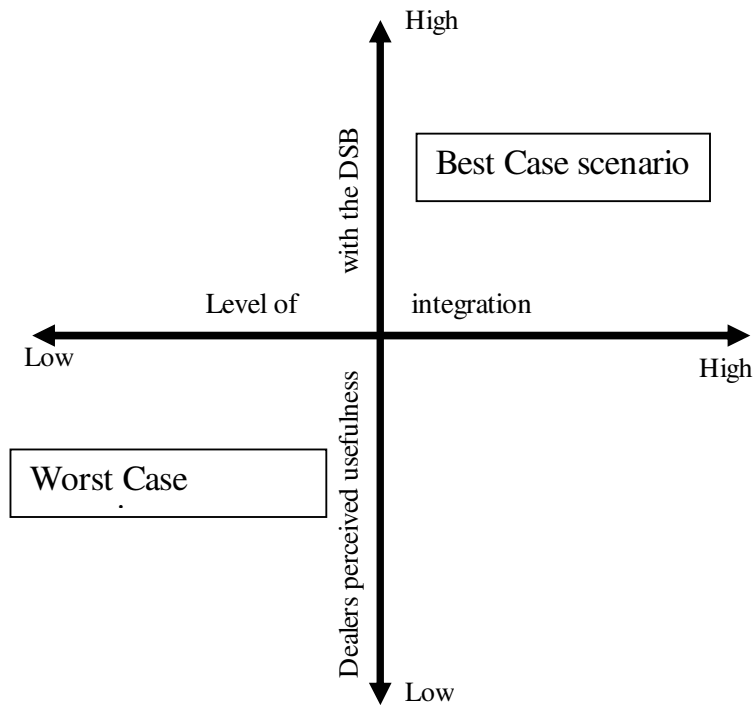
Figure 10: Scenario cross 2

6   Conclusion

This chapter focuses on pointing at the most important results that has been brought forward during the work with the thesis. This summary proceeds from the questions and the results from the Discussion chapter.

Regarding the *web design* aspect, all of the interviewed dealers were of the opinion that the DSB offered a clean design that gave a professional impression. They also stated that the Volvo-provided dealer site was easy to navigate and that it offered a well-structured layout. This study has shown that all dealers were very satisfied with the product information that concerns VCE's products. This content is updated automatically and this is something that the dealers appreciate. When discussing negative aspects, all of the interviewed dealers expressed a disappointment regarding the possibility to promote non-competitive products. The dealers promote and sell this type of products at their dealership, hence it should be possible to market these products sufficiently on the dealer site. A majority of the dealers requested a more distinct local connection on the DSB. All of the interviewed dealers have established a close local connection and in order to attract customers to the Internet it is necessary to offer a higher level of local content on the site. The customer must feel that the news and information that is being presented on the dealer site is directed directly towards them and not to the entire North-American market.

The level of *trust* that a majority of the interviewed dealers have in VIT and VCE is high. The high level of trust offers a foundation that VCE can proceed from when informing about the possibilities with the DSB. The dealers are of the opinion that Volvo provides a high level of competence regarding both IT and support. The DSB is considered to be a component in a long-term relationship with VCE. The trust is more likely to develop in a positive direction if the trust is maintained. Trust is built on the expectation that someone, or something, will act in the way needed or desired and therefore VCE needs to act consistently towards their dealers, otherwise lack of trust might be developed. The implementation of the DSB is still at an early stage, and the level of trust is high, but it is important that VCE acts in a way that maintains and creates future trust. Hence it is necessary that the commitment towards the dealers is fulfilled.

When discussing *branding*, all of the interviewed dealers stated that they thought that the Volvo brand was strong and that they could derive advantages from being associated with it. The dealers inquire a closer connection to the Volvo brand and see the co-branding as a positive aspect. The dealer's brand and Volvo's brand functions well together and, if used properly, they can develop together and become even stronger. We think that a positive development of the involved brands can lead to a successful cooperation. VCE's brand can obtain advantages since VCE get a closer connection to the local markets where the dealers are located. Furthermore, the dealers' locally known brand will get stronger since it becomes more tightly linked to the Volvo brand, which is globally known.

We would also like to underline that we think that the DSB will be successful if it continues to develop in a direction that fulfills both the dealers' and VCE's needs. It is important to make the dealers understand the possibilities with the Volvo-provided dealer site. This is a prerequisite that needs to be fulfilled in order to increase the possibility that the dealers actually will use the DSB in their everyday work. We are of the opinion that a development like this will lead to a cooperation that is beneficial for VCE and their dealers. During the interviews, it was made clear that some of the enhancements that the dealers had requested already existed on the DSB. The dealers are given a description regarding the possibilities with the DSB when they make a decision to have it implemented, but despite this they are not aware about all existing functionality. This implies that the information is either insufficient or that the written manual needs to be complemented with other forms of information. If the dealers are unable to see the possibilities that the DSB offers it is possible that they will become less interested in using the application. The awareness will be decisive for the success of the DSB since there is a large possibility that the whole project will fail if the dealers do not use the DSB. Before new features are added it is important that the dealers are made aware of the existing ones. If new features are added, even though the dealers are unaware of the existing ones, there is a risk that the dealers think that the DSB is too technically advanced. We see the development, and the spreading, of the DSB as an ongoing process that never ends. The DSB needs to improve continuously in order to develop according to the dealers´ needs and thereby becoming a tool that is used in the dealers' everyday work.

On the basis of the results and the discussion presented earlier, we will now summarize the answer to the main question as concisely as possible. This will be performed with a focus on the three main aspects of the thesis; web design, trust and branding.

How does the DSB application transform the relationship between VCE and their dealers?

Web design functions more as a prerequisite for the Internet-based relationship. Since all the interviewed dealers perceives the layout on the Volvo-provided dealer sites as positive and easy to use, this can constitute a good foundation for the future use of the DSB. However, this cannot alone lead to a high level of use of the DSB application. A well-functioning two-way communication between the involved parties must be combined with the actual perception that the dealers have regarding the design in order to enable a high level of use. The continuous development of the DSB application can have an effect, either in a positive or negative way, on the relationship. This effect on the relationship will be indirect since the direct way of influence will be about the actual level of use of the DSB application. A positive effect on the level of use can be facilitated if the DSB will be developed in a way that dealers' sense as beneficial for both parties thanks to two-way communication. On the contrary, the level of use can be affected in a negative way if VCE make all their decisions without communicating with the dealers. If the DSB application is carried out and developed according to, VCE's and VIT's, and the dealers' interests, it can become a tool that helps to strengthen the relationship.

About trust, all of the interviewed dealers, except one, have a high level of confidence towards VCE and VIT. This is a good prerequisite for the relationship to maintain strong and solid but also to grow in a long-term perspective. Communication is a fundamental part when it comes to building trust since it can facilitate the collaboration. Trust can also grow stronger if Volvo makes use of the competence within the organization in a way that the dealers can benefit from. If the dealers feel that the DSB is being developed in their desired direction and that it supports their everyday work, trust can grow stronger and the DSB application can be seen as an enabler of this. Furthermore, we believe that the relationship can be seen as a bridge between dealers and VCE and trust is the foundation for this bridge. If there is no trust between the two parties, the bridge will collapse and the future of the DSB becomes more unstable and uncertain.

If the DSB is able to obtain a large spread within this type of business, there are possibilities that the dealers' brand will be more widely spread than it would have been otherwise. If this is the outcome, it could lead to the fact that the dealers notice that their brand has become stronger from using the DSB and also that the bonds between the dealers' brand and the Volvo brand have improved. These aspects can result in a strengthening of the relationship between VCE and their dealers. However, it is of importance to bear in mind that the relationship can become impaired if the dealers think that their brand fails to be exposed to the same extent as the Volvo brand. In other words, a successful co-branding is conclusive.

6.1 Continued research

This thesis has focused on a specific area but during the process other interesting questions have arised. Below follows a description regarding possible research areas.

- **Benchmarking.** It would be interesting to compare Volvo's solution with competing companies. This procedure could help to highlight the strengths and weaknesses that the DSB is in possession of. This type of comparison could also help to establish in which direction the development is heading. By examining competitors' dealer sites it is possible to determine how the Volvo provided dealer site is able to compete.
- **Other markets.** This study's main focus has been on the North-American market and to develop an understanding of the circumstances that exist there. This procedure can be developed further by examining other markets. There are substantial differences in for instance Asia and the Middle East and it would be interesting to point at these differences. Cultural aspects can have an effect on how the actual users perceive the application. There might be differences in, for example, which features that are requested by the users and also differences in how they perceive the layout of the DSB.
- **Other Business Areas.** This thesis has focused on the relation between VCE and their dealers, but it would also be interesting to examine the relationship between other Business Areas and their dealers. The DSB is constructed in a way that makes it possible to use the solution in other Business Areas. AB

Volvo's other Business Areas are active in many different markets and the constellation of the different dealerships can vary to a large extent. It would be of interest to examine how the DSB can have effect on the relationship between the dealer and their customers.

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Appendix 1

Interviews with employees at VIT
Interview with Martin Jerresand 20030912
The respondents position
Director of Application Development Techniques & e-Business Solutions at VIT, located in Greensboro, USA
Place for interview
Meeting at Kastrup International Airport in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Question template 1 was used for this interview

Interview with Mathias Södersten 20030918
The respondents position
Project manager at VIT's e-Business solution center, located in Göteborg, Sweden
Place for interview
Meeting at Volvo IT office in Gothenburg, Sweden

Question template 2 was used for this interview

Interview with Karin Garberg 20030922
The respondents position
Rollout manager at VCE in Europe. Consultant for VIT, located in Göteborg, Sweden
Place for interview
Meeting at Volvo IT office in Gothenburg, Sweden

Question template 3 was used for this interview

Interview with Peter Hedborg 20030926 and 20031103
The respondents position
Program manager at VIT, located in Greensboro, USA
Place for interview
Telephone conference at the IT University in Gothenburg, Sweden.
Meeting at Volvo IT office in Greensboro, NC, USA.

Question template 6 was used for this interview

Interviews with employees at VCE
Interview with Mats Bredborg 20030929 and 20031104
The respondents position
Director of e-Business at VCE and also head of the business side in the volvo.com project, located in Duxford, England
Place for interview
Meeting at Gothia Towers in Gothenburg, Sweden.
Meeting at Volvo IT office in Greensboro, NC, USA.

Question templates 4 and 11 were used for these interviews

Interview with Robert Williams 20030929
The respondents position
Independent consultant working at VCE in the North American e-Business group, located in Asheville, USA
Place for interview
Meeting at Volvo CE headquarters in Asheville, NC, USA.

Question template 5 was used for this interview

Interview with Richard Andersson 20030925
The respondents position
E-Business project manager at VCE, located in Duxford, England
Place for interview
Telephone conference at the IT University in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Question template 7 was used for this interview

Interviews with employees at AB Volvo
Interview with Mats Nilsson 20031209
The respondents position
Director of brand management, located in Göteborg, Sweden
Place for interview
Telephone conference at the IT University in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Question template 12 was used for this interview

Interviews with dealers that have implemented the DSB
Interview with LB Smith 20031105
The respondents position
Bryan Smith, VP operations.
John Johnston, marketing manager.
Place for interview
Meeting at LB Smith office in Asheville, NC.

Question template 8 was used for this interview

Interview with CMI 20031104
The respondents position
Eric Frasier, IT manager.
Place for interview
Telephone conference at VCE headquarters in Asheville, NC, USA.

Question template 8 was used for this interview

Interview with Clyde/West 20031105
The respondents position
Rick Semke, VP sales.
Jim Fillback, marketing/sales
Ciara Williams, sales administrator
Place for interview
Telephone conference at VCE headquarters in Asheville, NC, USA.

Question template 8 was used for this interview

Interviews with dealers that are going to implement the DSB
Interview with Golden Equipment 20031105
The respondents position
Terry Malone, IS/IT manager.
Place for interview
Telephone conference at VCE headquarters in Asheville, NC, USA.

Question template 9 was used for this interview

Interview with McClung-Logan 20031106
The respondents position
Mark Coppola, IT manager
Place for interview
Telephone conference at VCE headquarters in Asheville, NC, USA.

Question template 9 was used for this interview

Interview with Marcel's Equipment 20031106
The respondents position
Rob Brown, IT manager.
Place for interview
Telephone conference at VCE headquarters in Asheville, NC, USA.

Question template 9 was used for this interview

Interview with dealer that has chosen not to implement the DSB
Interview with SWECON 20031024
The respondents position
(Exempelvis var och vad denne arbetar med)
Place for interview
Telephone conference at the IT University in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Question template 10 was used for this interview

Appendix 2

Question-templates

Question template 1

Questions to Martin Jerresand 20030912

Questions regarding the dealers and their connection to volvo.com
- In what way have the dealers been informed about the possibilities with volvo.com?

- Have the dealers participated with opinions during the development of volvo.com?

- Have the dealers requested for an application like the DSB, or have the development been initiated by VIT?

General opinions regarding the DSB
- What is Volvo's main purpose with volvo.com? (underlying causes)

- What is/was Volvo's strategy with volvo.com? (is there any documentation that treats this)

- Some of the dealers are not interested in implementing the DSB, why is that?

- To what degree are the dealers aware of the possibilities with volvo.com?

- In what way can the marketing be improved (in order to increase the dealers interest in the DSB)?

Question template 2

Questions to Mathias Södersten 20030918

- What is your connection to volvo.com?

- What part of volvo.com do you mainly work with?

- Is there any Business Area that work more closely against?

- What are your opinions regarding the volvo.com-project so far?

- How would you describe the main purpose with the volvo.com-project (subjectively)?

- How involved are you in the DSB application?

- What do you think about the DSB application (positive/negative)?

- Can you describe the procedure that takes place when a dealer wants to create a dealer site by using the DSB application (which stages are included in the procedure)?

- Have Volvo CE's dealers in Sweden been informed about the possibilities that can be derived from using the DSB (how)?

- Which company should the dealers contact when they have questions regarding the DSB?

- In what way is Volvo IT in Göteborg involved in the DSB initiative?

- When is volvo.com (and thereby also the DSB) supposed to be implemented in full extension in Europe (and in Scandinavia)?

Question template 3

Questions to Karin Garberg 20030922

- Have Volvo CE's dealers requested for an application like the DSB, or have the development been initiated by VIT (if not, how do you know that they inquire an application like this)?

- Have you performed any surveys with the dealers that can help you to outline the shaping of the DSB?

- Have the dealers been involved during the development of the DSB (if yes, how. If no, why not)?

- In what way have the dealers been informed about the possibilities with volvo.com?

- Have Volvo CE's dealers in Sweden been informed about the possibilities that can be derived from using the DSB (how and if no, why not)?

- Which dealers are using the DSB at present time (have you gotten any reactions yet)?

- Which is the next dealer that is supposed to implement and use the DSB?
- Who is responsible for the launching and creation of new dealer sites for the dealers?

Question template 4

Questions to Mats Bredborg 20030929

- What are your hopes and expectations with our thesis?

- What is Volvo CE's vision with the DSB?

- Can you describe your role in the volvo.com-project?

- Can you describe your role at Volvo CE?

- Could you send us information regarding Volvo CE's specification on the DSB (regarding the main purpose, strategies and further on)?

- Have Volvo CE's dealers requested for an application like the DSB, or have the development been initiated by others (if not, how do you know that they inquire an application like this)?

- We have taken part of some surveys that were done on account of the DSB, how were the respondents selected?

- Have the outcome of these surveys influenced the development of the DSB?

- Have Volvo's purchase of Bilia effected your course of action regarding the continued implementation of the DSB?

- At present time, are there any Bilia dealers that only sell construction equipment?

- Regarding Bilia, who has previously been responsible for the updating of their dealer sites (who is going to do it from now on)?

- Are the dealers offered any kind of technical support when they make the decision to implement the DSB (get hold of new computers, the installment, getting a proper Internet-connection)?

- What kind of response have you gotten on the DSB so far (what is the demand like)?

- To what extension have you looked on which services your competitors offers (have this influenced your work)?

- How does your "dealer council" work and is this some type of forum that you have used to market the DSB towards your dealers?

- Do you intend to make it possible for the customers to order parts directly from Volvo CE through the dealer sites?

- How does the legal aspects effect you (what type of problem are they causing)?

- How does the communication between Volvo CE and their dealers take place (fax, phone, email)?

- Is there any section on the DSB that is protected by a dealer login where they easily can contact Volvo CE (if no, why not)?

- If the dealers don't have a high technical competence, do you actually think that their dealers have it (in other words, does the end-customer have interest in an application like this)?

- Is it ok if we perform interviews with Swecon and other dealers that has decided not to implement the DSB?

Question template 5

Questions to Rob Williams 200309

- Have Volvo CE's dealers requested for an application like the DSB, or have the development been initiated by others (if not, how do you know that they inquire an application like this)?

- Have the dealers been involved during the development of the DSB (if yes, how. If no, why not)?

- In what way have the dealers been informed about the possibilities with volvo.com?

- Which dealers are using the DSB at present time (have you gotten any reactions yet)?

- Are these dealer site fully completed or is there anything missing on them?

- Which is the next dealer that is supposed to implement and use the DSB?

- Who is responsible for the launching and creation of new dealer sites for the dealers?

Question template 6

Questions to Peter Hedborg 20030926

- Can you describe your role in the volvo.com-project?

- Could you send us information regarding Volvo CE's specification on the DSB (regarding the main purpose, strategies and further on)?

- Who should the dealers contact if have specific request regarding the DSB?

- When a dealer site is up and running, which parts of the updating is Volvo IT responsible of?

- To what extension is Volvo IT involved when a new dealer site is to be created?

- Are the dealers offered any kind of technical support when they make the decision to implement the DSB (get hold of new computers, the installment, getting a proper Internet-connection)?

- Do you intend to make it possible for the customers to order parts directly from Volvo CE through the dealer sites?

Question template 7

Questions to Richard Andersson 20030925

- Can you describe your role in the volvo.com-project?

- What kind of response have you gotten on the DSB so far (what is the demand like)?

- Have you noticed any differences between dealers that are interested in technique and those who aren't regarding their interest in the DSB?

- We have taken part of some surveys that were done on account of the DSB, how were the respondents selected?

- Have the outcome of these surveys influenced the development of the DSB?

- To what extension have you looked on which services your competitors offers (have this influenced your work)?

- How does your "dealer council" work and is this some type of forum that you have used to market the DSB towards your dealers?

- Have Volvo's purchase of Bilia effected your course of action regarding the continued implementation of the DSB?

- Which markets have completed market-sites (which are next in line, why they)?

- Are the dealers offered any kind of technical support when they make the decision to implement the DSB (get hold of new computers, the installment, getting a proper Internet-connection)?

Question template 8

Questions to dealers that has implemented the DSB

- We are three students from the IT-university in Gothenburg, Sweden. We are now in the making of our master thesis. The thesis is about the relationship between the dealers and VCE and how that relationship can be affected by the DSB.
- We will record this interview and we are the only ones that will have access to the recording.

Background questions:
- Did you get a presentation of the DSB?
- If yes - How was the DSB presented to you?
- If yes - What was positive/negative with the presentation?
- What is your view on the DSB? (its main purpose, is it a tool, a marketing channel, plain information etc.)
- What was your main reason to implement the DSB?
- What is best/worst with the DSB so far?
- Did you have a dealer site before you got the DSB? (Or did you have plans on building one?)
- If yes – Have you kept it after the implementation of the DSB?
- If yes – what resources have you put aside for maintenance and updates?

- Is it important for your company to be exposed and available on the Internet? (In that case: why?)
- What are your long-term expectations for your dealer site? (vision)
- Do you believe that by using the DSB you could increase sales?

- In your opinion, what are the biggest pros/cons with Internet as a communication channel? (regarding customers and value chain)
- How widely spread is the Internet use amongst your customers? (If the use is low, is that because it is generally low amongst your customers or is it because they are not aware of your site?)

- What is the main reason why customers come to you when they want to buy construction equipment?
- What is your relation like with your customers? (For example good contact with customers, high degree of returning customers)
- What is your strategy on how to strengthen the relationship between you and your customers?
- What is your relationship with your customers based on? (do you believe that a future implementation of the DSB could affect this relationship?)

- Do you believe that the DSB can create added value to your customers?
- Is there a need for this type of service for your customers today/in the future?

Web design:
In what way do the dealers perceive the DSB application?
- What is your opinion on how the DSB is built-up? (Is it easy to navigate?)
- What is positive/negative with the DSB in terms of design and usability?
- What do you think about the existing functionality on the DSB?

Which transformations of the DSB application do the dealers want to have implemented?
- In your opinion, does the DSB have all the information needed?
- In your opinion, does the DSB have all the applications needed?
- Is there anything about the DSB application that you would have carried out in another way? (What? Design, functions etcetera)
- If you are free to kick a few ideas around, how would you like the DSB to be built-up? (When it comes to functionality, usability, navigation, appearance and communication)
- Which enhancements could make the DSB more interesting for your customers?
- What functionality would you like to have implemented in a three year perspective? (regarding the DSB, future demands on the service/application)
- Make a list of the five most important functions that you think should be included in an application like this? (motivate)
- What do you think the DSB could accomplish for you in a long-term perspective?
- Have your customers commented on the site?

Trust:
Which obstacles for an implementation/collaboration exist?
- What is your perception on how the DSB presents the dealer? (Is it more that the DSB presents VCE?)
- In what extension do you believe that you can affect the information presented on the DSB? (Is it enough?)
- What is your confidence in VCE/VIT and has your confidence affected your decision regarding the implementation of the DSB?
- Do you believe that this confidence could change with an implementation of the DSB? (In that case how?)

How can the use of the DSB application affect the information flow and the communication between VCE and the dealers?
- What do you think of the information presented on the DSB?
- Is there any information that you believe should be available on the DSB that isn't there today?
- How would you like to maintain the content?
- How often do you feel that updates are necessary?

Branding:
How does the use of the DSB application affect a dealers trademark/web presence?
- What does your brand stand for? (What's your view on it?)
- Are you working on developing your brand? (How?)
- Do you have a future strategy connected to your brand?
- Do you think that your brand is affected by using the DSB application (How)?
- Have your customers noticed that you have a dealer site?
- Do you inform your customers about the dealer site (How)?

How do the dealers perceive the fact to become a part of the Volvo brand on the internet?
- What is your opinion on the Volvo brand (strengths/weaknesses)?
- What is your view on becoming a part of the Volvo profile on the Internet when using the DSB? Good or bad?
- Is it positive for you to appear together with Volvo in different contexts? (In which context is it positive?)
- Could it be negative for you to appear together with Volvo in different contexts? (In which context is it negative?)
- Do you think that the DSB application can help you linking the customers closer to you?

Question template 9

Questions to dealers that is going to implement the DSB

- We are three students from the IT-university in Gothenburg, Sweden. We are now in the making of our master thesis. The thesis is about the relationship between the dealers and VCE and how that relationship can be affected by the DSB.
- We will record this interview and we are the only ones that will have access to the recording.

Background questions:
- Did you get a presentation of the DSB?
- If yes - How was the DSB presented to you?
- If yes - What was positive/negative with the presentation?
- What is your view on the DSB? (its main purpose, is it a tool, a marketing channel, plain information etc.)
- What is your main reason to implement the DSB?
- Did you have a dealer site before you got the DSB? (Or did you have plans on building one?)
- If yes – Are you going to keep it after the implementation of the DSB?
- If yes – what resources have you put aside for maintenance and updates?

- Is it important for your company to be exposed and available on the Internet? (In that case: why?)

- What are your long-term expectations for your dealer site? (vision)
- Do you believe that by using the DSB you could increase sales?

- In your opinion, what are the biggest pros/cons with Internet as a communication channel? (regarding customers and value chain)
- How widely spread is the Internet use amongst your customers? (If the use is low, is that because it is generally low amongst your customers or is it because they are not aware of your site?)

- What is the main reason why customers come to you when they want to buy construction equipment?
- What is your relation like with your customers? (For example good contact with customers, high degree of returning customers)
- What is your strategy on how to strengthen the relationship between you and your customers?
- What is your relationship with your customers based on? (do you believe that a future implementation of the DSB could affect this relationship?)
- Do you believe that the DSB can create added value to your customers?
- Is there a need for this type of service for your customers today/in the future?

Web design:
In what way do the dealers perceive the DSB application?
- What is your opinion on how the DSB is built-up? (Is it easy to navigate?)
- What is positive/negative with the DSB in terms of design and usability?
- What do you think about the existing functionality on the DSB?

Which transformations of the DSB application do the dealers want to have implemented?
- In your opinion, does the DSB have all the information needed?
- In your opinion, does the DSB have all the applications needed?
- Is there anything about the DSB application that you would have carried out in another way? (What? Design, functions etcetera)
- If you are free to kick a few ideas around, how would you like the DSB to be built-up? (When it comes to functionality, usability, navigation, appearance and communication)
- Which enhancements could make the DSB more interesting for your customers?
- What functionality would you like to have implemented in a three year perspective? (regarding the DSB, future demands on the service/application)
- Make a list of the five most important functions that you think should be included in an application like this? (motivate)
- What do you think the DSB could accomplish for you in a long-term perspective?

Trust:
Which obstacles for an implementation/collaboration exist?
- What is your perception on how the DSB presents the dealer? (Is it more that the DSB presents VCE?)

- In what extension do you believe that you can affect the information presented on the DSB? (Is it enough?)
- What is your confidence in VCE/VIT and has your confidence affected your decision regarding the implementation of the DSB?
- Do you believe that this confidence could change with an implementation of the DSB? (In that case how?)

How can the use of the DSB application affect the information flow and the communication between VCE and the dealers?
- What do you think of the information presented on the DSB?
- Is there any information that you believe should be available on the DSB that isn't there today?
- How would you like to maintain the content?
- How often do you feel that updates are necessary?

Branding:
How does the use of the DSB application affect a dealers trademark/web presence?
- What does your brand stand for? (What's your view on it?)
- Are you working on developing your brand? (How?)
- Do you have a future strategy connected to your brand?
- Do you think that your brand will be affected by using the DSB application (How)?
- If you already have a dealer site – have customers noticed it?
- If yes – have you told your customers about it?

How do the dealers perceive the fact to become a part of the Volvo brand on the internet?
- What is your opinion on the Volvo brand (strengths/weaknesses)?
- What is your view on becoming a part of the Volvo profile on the Internet when using the DSB? Good or bad?
- Is it positive for you to appear together with Volvo in different contexts? (In which context is it positive?)
- Could it be negative for you to appear together with Volvo in different contexts? (In which context is it negative?)
- Do you think that the DSB application can help you linking the customers closer to you?

Question template 10

Questions to dealers that has chosen not to implement the DSB

- We are three students from the IT-university in Gothenburg, Sweden. We are now in the making of our master thesis. The thesis is about the relationship between the dealers and VCE and how that relationship can be affected by the DSB.

- We will record this interview and we are the only ones that will have access to the recording.

Background questions:
- How was the DSB presented to you?
- What was positive/negative with the presentation?
- What is your view on the DSB? (its main purpose, is it a tool, a marketing channel, plain information etc.)
- What made you decide not to implement the DSB?
- Do you have a dealer site? (What is best/worst with it so far?)
- If yes – Will you keep it after an eventual implementation of the DSB?
- If yes – what resources have you put aside for maintenance and updates?

- Is it important for your company to be exposed and available on the Internet? (In that case: why?)
- What are your long-term expectations for your dealer site? (vision)
- Do you believe that by using the DSB you could increase sales?

- In your opinion, what are the biggest pros/cons with Internet as a communication channel? (regarding customers and value chain)
- How widely spread is the Internet use amongst your customers?

- What is the main reason why customers come to you when they want to buy construction equipment?
- What is your relation like with your customers? (For example good contact with customers, high degree of returning customers)
- What is your strategy on how to strengthen the relationship between you and your customers?
- What is your relationship with your customers based on? (do you believe that a future implementation of the DSB could affect this relationship?)
- Do you believe that the DSB can create added value to your customers?
- Is there a need for this type of service for your customers today/in the future?

Web design:
In what way do the dealers perceive the DSB application?
- What is your opinion on how the DSB is built-up? (Is it easy to navigate?)
- What is positive/negative with the DSB in terms of design and usability?
- What do you think about the existing functionality on the DSB?

Which transformations of the DSB application do the dealers want to have implemented?
- In your opinion, does the DSB have all the information needed?
- In your opinion, does the DSB have all the applications needed?
- Is there anything about the DSB application that you would have carried out in another way? (What? Design, functions etcetera)
- If you are free to kick a few ideas around, how would you like the DSB to be built-up? (When it comes to functionality, usability, navigation, appearance and communication)

- Which enhancements could make the DSB more interesting for your customers?
- What functionality would you like to have implemented in a three year perspective? (regarding the DSB, future demands on the service/application)
- Make a list of the five most important functions that you think should be included in an application like this? (motivate)
- If you choose to implement DSB, what do you think it could accomplish for you in a long-term perspective?

Trust:
- How do you communicate with VCE? (How often do you communicate with each other?)
- Who do you usually contact on VCE? (What is their position in the company?)
- How can the DSB be an active part in the communication/relation with VCE?

Which obstacles for an implementation/collaboration exist?
- What is your perception on how the DSB presents the dealer? (Is it more that the DSB presents VCE?)
- In what extension do you believe that you can affect the information presented on the DSB? (Is it enough?)
- What is your confidence in VCE/VIT and has your confidence affected your decision regarding the implementation of the DSB?
- Do you believe that this confidence could change with an implementation of the DSB? (In that case how?)

How can the use of the DSB application affect the information flow and the communication between VCE and the dealers?
- What do you think of the information presented on the DSB?
- Is there any information that you believe should be available on the DSB that isn't there today?

Branding:
How does the use of the DSB application affect a dealers trademark/web presence?
- What does your brand stand for? (What's your view on it?)
- Are you working on developing your brand? (How?)
- Do you have a future strategy connected to your brand?
- Do you think that your brand would have been affected if you were using the DSB application (How)?
- If you have a dealer site - Have your customers noticed that you have a dealer site?

How do the dealers perceive the fact to become a part of the Volvo brand on the internet?
- What is your opinion on the Volvo brand (strengths/weaknesses)?
- What is your view on becoming a part of the Volvo profile on the Internet when using the DSB? Good or bad?
- Is it positive for you to appear together with Volvo in different contexts? (In which context is it positive?)

- Could it be negative for you to appear together with Volvo in different contexts? (In which context is it negative?)
- Do you think that a future use of the DSB application would help you to link your customers closer to you?

Final question:
- What could make you change from your dealer site to the DSB?

Question template 11

Questions to employees VCE/VIT

- We will record this interview and we are the only ones that will have access to the recording.

Background questions:
- How was the DSB presented to the dealers?
- How did the dealers respond to the presentation?
- What is your view on the DSB? (Its main purpose, is it a tool, a marketing channel, plain information etc.)

- Why is it important for dealers to be exposed and available on the Internet?
- What are the long-term expectations for the DSB? (Strategies, vision, increase revenues and/or cut costs for VCE/dealers?)

- In your opinion, what are the biggest pros/cons with Internet as a communication channel? (Regarding customers and value chain)
- How widely spread is the Internet use amongst end customers? If it is low, why would you want to implement the DSB?

- What is your strategy on how to strengthen the relationship between you and your dealers? Is the DSB a part of this strategy?
- What is your relationship with your dealers based on?
- How can the DSB create added value for the dealers?

Web design:
In what way do the dealers perceive the DSB application?
- What is positive/negative with the DSB in terms of design and usability?
- What do you think about the existing functionality on the DSB?
- Do you have a design policy for the Volvo.com site that includes the DSB? If so – How has that affected the creation of the DSB?

Which transformations of the DSB application do the dealers want to have implemented?
- In your opinion, does the DSB have all the information needed?
    - If yes, what information is especially good?
    - If no, what information do you want to add in particular?

- In your opinion, does the DSB have all the applications needed?
  - If yes, what applications are especially good?
  - If no, what applications do you want to add in particular?
- Which changes could make the DSB more interesting for the dealers and their customers?
- What functionality would you like to have implemented in a three year perspective? (regarding the DSB, future demands on the service/application)
- Make a list of the five most important functions that you think should be included in an application like this? (motivate)

Trust:
- How do you communicate with the dealers? (How often do you communicate with each other? Which channels are used: mail, phone, letters etc)
- How can the DSB be an active part in the communication/relation with the dealers?

Which obstacles for an implementation/collaboration exist?
- What is your perception on how the DSB presents the dealer?
- In what extension do you believe that the dealers can affect the information presented on the DSB?

How can the use of the DSB application affect the information flow and the communication between VCE and the dealers?
- How can DSB affect the information flow between VCE and dealers?

Branding:
How does the use of the DSB 'application affect a dealers trademark/web presence?
- Do you think that the dealers brand will be affected by using the DSB application?

How do the dealers perceive the fact to become a part of the Volvo brand on the Internet?
- What is your opinion on the Volvo brand (strengths/weaknesses)?
- What are the pros and cons with the dealer becoming a part of the Volvo profile on the Internet by using the DSB?
- Is it positive for you to appear together with the dealers brand in different contexts? (In which context is it positive?)
- Could it be negative for you to appear together with the dealers brand in different contexts? (In which context is it negative?)

Final question:
- In your opinion, what are the reasons why dealers choose or choose not to join the DSB initiative?
- What could make the dealers change from their dealer site to the DSB?

Question template 12

Questions to Mats Nilsson 20031209

Branding

- What are your expectations on the DSB?

- What is the problem with presenting non-competitive brands on the DSB?

- How can this problem be solved?

- In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses with the Volvo brand?

- In what ways can a dealer derive advantages from using the Volvo brand?

- Could it be negative for a dealer to appear together with Volvo's brand in different contexts (in which contexts)?

- In what ways is branding on the Internet different from traditional branding?

- Which are the most important key success factors regarding branding on the Internet?

- What can a homogenous Internet-profile contribute with?