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**FORGING BRAND ALLIANCES: OBJECTIVES,  
READINESS AND SELECTION OF PARTNERS  
IN ESTONIA**

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I have written the Master's thesis independently. All works and major viewpoints of the other authors, data from other sources of literature and elsewhere used for writing this thesis have been referenced.

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## INTRODUCTION

The taunting challenge of obtaining customer attention and approval in business environment saturated with information and competitors' value propositions is becoming ever so more complex. Consumers are constantly being bombarded with countless offerings from businesses and organizations. The overload of signals designed by marketers has made consumers to be more selective of the information they react to and be less susceptible to traditional marketing approaches (Muda, 2012: 374). While rapid development of technology is enriching marketers' arsenal of tools to monitor, analyze and interact with the consumers – it also offers people innovative ways of limiting marketers' access to them. Popularity of paid services, which for example remove commercial messages from online websites or provide ad-free television programs, would suggest an increase in consumers' willingness to make financial expenses to escape from marketing messages (Stone 2015). Therefore, practitioners are faced with a task of coming up with new marketing strategies and tactics in order to 1) overcome consumers' neglectful mindsets and formed defensive barriers; 2) ensure their companies' value propositions get across better than that of the competitors. Overall, this relentless struggle for consumers' attention has led to companies' marketing activities becoming more resource consuming, and therefore, smaller and medium sized enterprises are finding it hard to keep up (Hoffmann, Schlosser 2001: 358; van Gils, Zwart 2004: 685).

As a means of combating the issue, some companies have made a strategic decision to cooperate with other organizations and conduct joint marketing activities to alleviate the difficulty of the challenge (Day 1995: 297; Leuthesser 2003: 35-36). These practices have peaked scholars' interest and have highlighted the need to closer explore the possibilities and implications of such marketing partnerships. One of the first to address this topic, Bucklin and Sengupta (1993: 32) referred to collaborations between companies with the aim to achieve common goals as alliances. Over the past decade,

scholars have identified a number of benefits a company could potentially gain by allying itself with other business entities' brands, such as increasing own brand's equity (Abratt, Motlana 2002: 43), gaining access to new segments or markets (Varadarajan, Cunnigham 1995: 285), positively influencing own brand's image (Washburn et al. 2004: 487), reinforcing market position (Bengtsson, Servais 2005: 711). Furthermore, researchers have also established that the alliance's effect and consequences on company's brand significantly differ based on the perceived brand importance in relation to the other cooperating brand (Venkatesh et al. 2000: 6; Dickinson, Heath 2008: 24). In other words, benefits to brands involved are asymmetric. A smaller unfamiliar brand can gain a substantial boost by allying with a well-known brand, and by leveraging partner's name to build up their own brand (Simonin, Ruth 1998: 30; Yupin et al. 2009: 1095) and improve general performance (van Gils, Zwart 2004: 690). This is a compelling argument for lesser-known brand owners encouraging them to seriously pursue opportunities of forming brand alliances with businesses who have already established a strong brand.

However, finding a good partner and ensuring cooperation's profitability to all involved parties is easier said than done. Despite the aforementioned advantages, managers need to heed caution when tying their brand to another through joint marketing endeavors as it makes them more susceptible to external influences and possibly even lead to unfavorable outcome for the brand equity. Studies have shown that actions of the partner may for example have an indirect negative impact on company's brand associations and quality perception (Janiszewski, van Osselaer 2000: 336; Toledano, Riches 2014: 7), loss of brand reputation (Rao et al. 1999: 258), or grant the other party unwanted influence over company's decision making processes (Das, Teng 2001: 3; Lefroy, Tsarenko 2014: 1961). Therefore, scholars have acknowledged the critical importance of selecting the correct partner as it is one of the key decisions which can be the difference between success and failure of an alliance (Prince, Davies 2002: 52).

With that in mind, the current thesis attempts to further expand on the brand alliance applicability and ensuing expectations for the alliance from a business-to-business perspective. More specifically, the present work takes a closer look at successful brands' owners' views on the utilizations of brand alliances. The author has selected to

constrain the scope of research in this manner under the consideration that these brand owners possess experience in building strong brands and their prior success makes them ideal candidates to others to form alliances with. Contrary to previous globally focused studies, a more localized approach is used by examining brands operating within a particular national market – in this instance the market of Estonia. This viewpoint is advantageous for local businesses operating within the set market, because it accounts for specific characteristics relevant to the market in question (Samli et al.1993: 51). Brand selection for the empirical research is based on the results of an annual survey carried out by the international research company TNS Emor, which annually identifies the most well-known and liked brands among the Estonian consumers.

Thereby, the thesis aims to identify main objectives that companies with well-known brands hope to achieve through brand alliances, evaluate these businesses' overall readiness to enter into brand alliances, and identify the main criteria these companies use in the alliance partner selection process. Deriving from the set goals, the following research questions are raised: Which objectives Estonian companies with well-known brands hope to achieve through alliances? How willing and prepared are companies in Estonia with well-known brands to form brand alliances with other organizations? Which criteria are most relevant for company who already possesses a well-known brand when selecting a brand alliance partner?

Finding answers to these questions is necessary for several reasons. First, it provides an overview of how open major brands in Estonia are to the idea of joining forces with other organizations to achieve set goals, and highlights any shortcomings these companies may see in this practice. This in turn can help researchers to identify which areas of the brand alliances need further studies to increase company's knowledge base. Secondly, Estonian small and medium sized firms as well as foreign companies hoping to enter the Estonian market with the help of local partners can gain insights as what the well-established brands look for when searching for a marketing partner. This could provide valuable input, based on which smaller brands can assess if they possess the necessary capabilities to attract bigger brands. Furthermore, it could yield indicative guidelines for lesser-known brand owners on future development avenues.

The completion of following research tasks is needed in order to achieve the set goals:

- to provide a theoretical overview of the essence of brand alliance and different cooperation forms it may entail;
- based on prior scholars' works, to establish the primary elements associated with alliance objectives, alliance readiness, and partners selection; thereby providing a conceptual framework to fully comprehend these constructs;
- to construct measurement scales for evaluating companies' brand alliance objectives, alliance readiness, and selection of partners;
- to conduct an empirical study among the brand/marketing managers of companies who possess a well-known brand in the Estonian market to obtain the necessary data needed to answer the set research questions.

The thesis is divided into two main chapters. The first theoretical chapter begins by explaining the essence of brand alliance, highlights different types of cooperation forms it may pertain, and introduces the underlying conceptual framework of which considerations companies need to focus on in the brand alliance forging process. Thereafter, a more detailed overview of each of the framework components and elements related to them is offered in subsequent sections. The second chapter encompasses the design and results of the empirical research. It starts by providing an overview of the methodological approach used to conduct the empirical study. This includes the description of the research design, sampling method, and an introduction of the utilized measurements tools. Thereon, the results of the confirmatory factor analyses are presented, which establish the construct validity and reliability of the scales. The last subsection of the chapter contains the results of the empirical study. In the end, conclusions are drawn and research limitations and future research proposals presented.

The author would foremost like to thank his supervisor associate professor Andres Kuusik, whose guidance was invaluable during the thesis writing process. Secondly, the author would like to thank the companies' representatives, who generously took the time to participate in the study. Furthermore, the author would like to single out TNS Emor, whose prior research on establishing the most well-known brands in the Estonian market was essential in the selection of companies included in this thesis. Lastly, the author would like to thank his life-partner and family for the unwavering support.

# 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF BRAND ALLIANCES

## 1.1 The Essence of Brand Alliance and Considerations Framework

As the introductory chapter alludes to, the practice of marketing cooperation between firms has increasingly become seen as a viable development option in the eyes of company managers (van Gils, Zwart 2004: 685). However, Buttle (2009: 328) has observed that the initial academic works addressing interfirm marketing co-operation were somewhat vague and indecisive in clarifying the essence of the constructs associated with the topic. Terms like co-branding, strategic partnerships, and joint ventures were used interchangeably with little effort to attempt to systematically elucidate the difference between them (*Ibid.*: 328). This lack of consensus in terminology incontrovertibly resulted from the fact that there is a vast array of configurations companies' marketing relationships can take shape – from simple knowledge exchange to acquisitions or mergers of partner's marketing units (Kalafatis et al. 2014: 322). Focusing on the underlying common attribute, Bucklin and Sengupta (1993) made a substantial contribution to the increasing body of literature with the introduction of the term **alliance** to broadly encompass all the different marketing cooperation arrangements. Drawing from the common meaning of the word alliance – “a union or association formed for mutual benefit” (Oxford...2015), and transferring it into marketing context, the term alliance signals the existence of more than one entity and common pursuance of a certain set of marketing goals. Expanding on the idea, Parkhe (1993: 795) highlighted that marketing alliances consist of autonomous businesses and added that cooperation goals are linked to each participants' corporate missions. Varadarajan and Cunningham (1995: 282) supplemented the latter part by stating that the aspiration could be to accomplish both individual partners' specific

goals and common objectives. According to them, this is achieved by pooling the resources and skills of each involved party. Bucklin and Sengupta (1993: 32) also insinuated that marketing alliances are mostly lateral relationships in nature distinguishing them from the majority of other collaborative arrangements within the companies' value-chain. Moreover, the variety in structural differences of alliances is the main characteristic which differentiates disparate lateral collaboration forms (Das, Teng 2001: 2). Kotler and colleagues (2009: 107) have proposed that marketing alliances can be divided into four major categories.

- Product and service alliances, sometimes also referred to as sales alliances (Kuglin, Hook 2002: 9), in which companies leverage each others' products or services to jointly enter, secure or improve their own position. This is done for example through complementary offerings for consumers (Kotler et al. 2009: 107).
- Promotional alliances – partners grant each other access to their communication channels to promote other alliance members' products and services. Essentially, alliance participants assist each other by helping partners to gain access to their already established customer bases and distribute commercial signals (*Ibid.*).
- Distribution/logistics alliances – alliance members help to extend each others' distribution network or provide new channels by which to reach consumers (Johansson 1995: 302). For example, in retailing, companies offer partner's products and services in their retail spaces.
- Pricing collaborations – alliance members collaborate by bundling value propositions. For example, in the tourism sector, housing and rental car service providers coordinate efforts by bundling offerings together at a discounted price (Kotler et al. 2009: 107).

Overall, these scholars' influential work has laid the groundwork for a more systematic approach to differentiating various interfirm marketing co-operations in the marketing literature, and has led to the term alliance being used as an umbrella expression for all cooperation forms in more recent publications (Day 1995; Johansson 1995; Kotabe, Helsen 2011).

Study of marketing alliances has also raised a question about alliances' impact on brands involved in them. This has been seen as a particularly important subject given the fundamental importance a brand has for any organization. The majority of globally successful enterprises have established their position by skillfully utilizing their brand as a tool to identify themselves and distinguish from competitors while increasing customer loyalty (Kuusik et al. 2010: 190). Brands perform a number of valuable functions for organizations and, therefore, strategic management of brands within alliances is essential (Kotler et al. 2009: 428). As companies and their value propositions are widely known by their brand in the consumers' heads, scholars have introduced the term **brand alliance** in the literature dealing with marketing alliances. Rao and colleagues (1999: 259) have suggested it encompasses "all circumstances in which two or more brand names are presented jointly to the consumer". Their proposed definition of the concept has been widely adopted by fellow peers (e.g. Yupin et al. 2009; van der Lans et al. 2014). Essentially, it entails all joint-marketing activities, which involve more than one brand, regardless of whether the included brands are physically integrated in an offering or merely affiliated in a promotion or communication endeavor (Simonin, Ruth 1998: 31; van der Lans et al. 2014: 551). Gammoh and Voss (2013: 966) have interpreted it as the pooling of brands. The duration and intensity of a brand alliance may either be a long-term practice to manifest a strategic activity or short-term to carry out a tactical action for achieving a specific purpose (Elyas, Mohamed 2013: 3; Gummerrsson 2003: 157). However, its influence on the brand can persist beyond the length of the formal alliance between organizations (Prince, Davies 2002: 55).

A wide range of managerial approaches has led scholars to distinguish a number of different types of brand alliances (see Table 1).

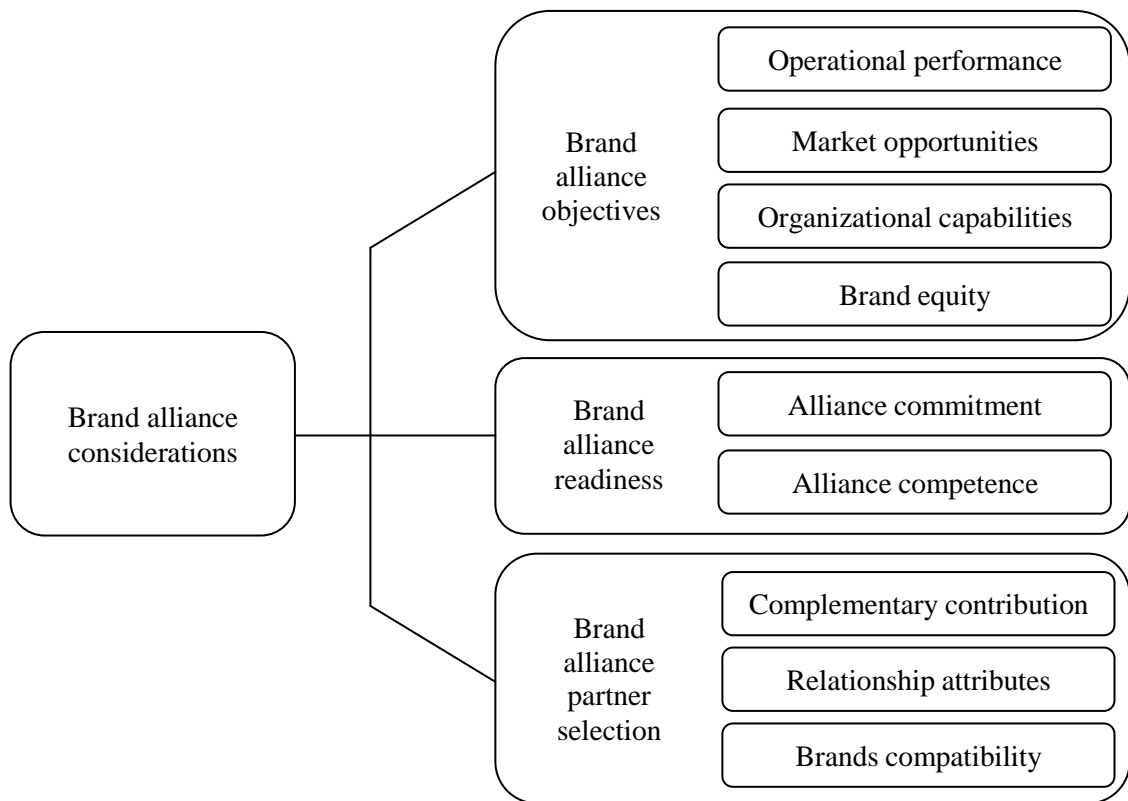
**Table 1.** Types of brand alliances

Alliance Type	Description	Source
Co-branding / dual branding alliance	Co-branding refers to the utilizations of two or more brands in a single distinctive new offering. The created offering is associated with all brands involved.	Ferrell et al. 2005: 477; Saunders, Guoqun 1997:45
Brand bundling alliance	Brand bundling alliance is a type of marketing cooperation where related, yet separate products or services of different brands are joined together for the purpose of selling them as a single offering.	Sheng, Pan 2009: 367; Stremersch et al. 2002: 55
Ingredient / component branding alliance	Materials, components or parts of one brand are contained within the other brand's products or offerings. This is primarily used to leverage ingredient brand value in signaling qualities of the final product. In some cases, the ingredient brand is not otherwise marketed as a separate product or service.	Kotler et al. 2009: 107; Vaidyanathan, Aggarwal 2000; Leuthesser et al. 2003: 36
Joint promotions alliance	Primarily co-communication marketing activities, which simultaneously involve or present two or more brands. This is done to build a perception of a symbolic tie between brands in which parties complement each other.	Elyas, Mohamed 2013: 3; Washburn et al. 2004: 490
Brand licensing alliance	Contractual agreement in which one brand owner permits another organization to use its brand in marketing activities. This is commonly done in exchange for a licensing fee.	Ferrell et al. 2005: 478

Source: compiled by the author.

However, these different alliance types have common denominators in that they all feature two or more brands which are owned by independent organizations, and that the involved parties in the alliance are joined together by convergence of their individual objectives – the premise of the alliance. Based on these grounds, the author of the present work perceives the term brand alliance to express any marketing activities companies take in co-operation with other organizations, which present the involved brands simultaneously to the consumers. This postulation provides the context for the conceptual framework of the thesis.

Based on scholars' prior works, the author extrapolates and proposes that there are three main areas of importance the company's decision makers need to take into account: 1) the objectives the company seeks to achieve through the brand alliance, 2) organizational readiness to effectively be part of any brand alliance, and 3) partners' input into the brand alliance. Subsequently, these considerations in the pre-alliance formation stage form the basis for the theoretical framework of this thesis. Similarly to Nielsen (2007: 340), the author refers to the pre-alliance stage as the time preceding the creation of the brand alliance. A visual representation of the framework is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework of the brand alliance considerations.  
Source: compiled by the author.

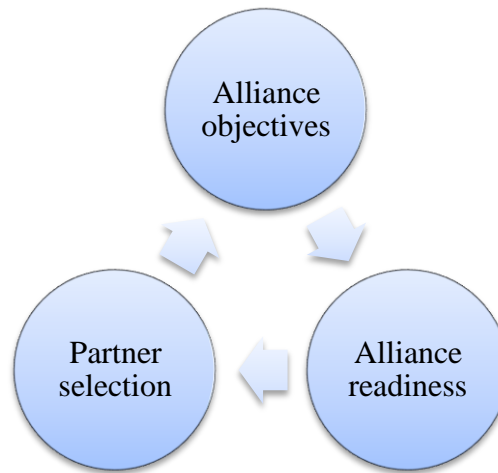
First, the company needs to establish the main objectives it wishes to achieve by forging a new or entering a pre-existing brand alliance. This determines the primary focus of the brand alliance. The author argues that these are fundamentally linked to the potential benefits any brand alliance with other organizations may be able to offer to the

company. Companies cannot hope to gain through a brand alliance something which the concept of alliance is not capable of providing. Therefore, the overall potential benefits of brand alliance provide the context for the identification process of objectives and motives. The author has analyzed the works of prior researchers to establish four broad categories of objectives which determine the focus of a brand alliance: operational performance, market opportunities, organizational capabilities, and brand equity. A more detailed overview of these objectives is given in Subsection 1.2.

Secondly, in the pre-alliance stage, the company should consider their own willingness and preparation to work within the alliance. In other words, whether the organization possesses the necessary commitment and competence required to meet the set objectives. This internal focus offers preliminary insights as to how the company might perform in a brand alliance. Subsection 1.3 provides a more thorough account of considerations related to the brand alliance readiness.

Thirdly, the company needs to contemplate on the selection criteria it holds towards the brand alliance partners. This entails explicit mapping what a potential partner is required to contribute, and use that as a roadmap in the process of seeking a partner. Furthermore, as the nature of an alliance suggests, the companies need to work in unison towards the set objectives. Therefore, the company's decision makers should project the relationship attributes as a means of predicting co-operation's efficiency. And finally, it is important to assess the partners' brands' compatibility through the eyes of the consumers. Subsection 1.3 gives a more detailed account of the considerations associated with the partner selection process.

It is important to note that these three considerations are interrelated; each one can provide further input to evolve and fine-tune the others (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Brand alliance considerations link.  
Source: compiled by the author.

For example, organization’s readiness may provide the basis for the partner selection process as the inwards reflections first expose any shortcomings a company has in pursuit of the objectives and reveal complementary resources the potential brand alliance partners need to offer. The alliance competence element of the readiness concept also influences company’s ability to seek out the most efficient partner for the co-operation. However, selecting a competent partner may open up additional new (previously unanticipated) avenues to explore and thereby extend the scope of achievable objectives. This in turn requires that the company re-evaluates its alliance readiness in light of the novel opportunities.

The present chapter continues by expanding on each element in more detail.

## 1.2 Brand Alliance Objectives

As previously stated in the framework section, brand alliance objectives are essentially related to the potential benefits of a brand alliance. Each company’s goals are subjective and dependent on their individual situation. However, every organization’s aims should be driven by what is obtainable. Therefore, in order to provide a baseline for the objective considerations, it is necessary to look at the underlying potentially beneficial outcomes. The objectives also determine the primary focus of the brand alliance. Based on the analysis of researchers’ prior findings on brand alliance benefits, the author

proposes that all the potential benefits can broadly be classified into four main groups, each driven by one of the four main brand alliance objectives: operational performance, market opportunities, organizational capabilities, and brand equity (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Potential positive outcomes resulting from brand alliance objectives. Source: compiled by the author, based on Varadarajan, Cunnigham 1995; Simonin, Ruth 1998; Koza, Lewin 2000; Beverland, Bretherton 2001; van Gils, Zwart 2004.

**Operational performance.** Firstly, companies may form strategic marketing alliances solely to advance their endeavor of meeting business objectives and capitalize on sales or/and profit growth (Varadarajan, Cunnigham 1995: 285). This somewhat pragmatic mindset suggests that companies are primarily interested in forging a brand alliance because of the potential functional and performance benefits it may provide; for example, more efficient transactions, additional sources of revenue, reduction in costs or advances in offerings' success in the marketplace. These incremental economic benefits are gained through partners pooling complementary resources, such as knowledge, facilities, and technology, which they individually would otherwise not possess nor wish to acquire themselves (Koza, Lewin 2000: 147; Johansson 1995: 302; Lambe et al. 2002: 144). The mutual support that allies offer to each other can also help to cope in turbulent and uncertain market environments (Day 1995: 297; Prince, Davies 2002: 53). Koza and Lewin (2000: 148) have suggested that these types of alliances can either be exploitative or exploratory in nature. Exploitative alliances can be characterized as being joint equity ventures and having very strict measurable operating objectives,

whereas exploratory alliances are more open-ended joint development endeavors (*Ibid.*: 148). Ultimately, the premise of both is that partners eliminate each other's shortcomings, thereby reducing the need for monetary expenditures (Lambe et al. 2002: 143). This practice is particularly evident in co-branding or ingredient branding alliances where creation of the new joint offering requires precise resource alignment. However, cooperation can reduce the independence of parties involved and make them more susceptible to the negative effects of partner's actions. Failure of one brand alliance member can directly or indirectly impact the performance or even the sustainability of associated partners.

**Market opportunities.** Beverland and Bretherton (2001: 88) have argued that alliances are primarily formed to leverage new market opportunities. By being in a brand alliance companies can gain access to partners' customer base and communicate with untapped potential customers who may not have been exposed to company's offerings in the past (Venkatesh et al. 2000: 5). Leuthesser and colleagues (2003: 43) referred to this as "reaching out" incentive, as companies aim to increase their sales through the newly found customers. Brand alliances are also used as an alternative strategic entry method into new international markets as companies leverage the partners' position in the local market to introduce their own brand. Furthermore, alliance partner's assistance with regard to communications, analysis of the local market, and assimilation into the domestic marketing network may help the company to circumvent some market barriers (Varadarajan, Cunningham 1995: 285). However, this implies that the company is contingent on partner's competence to provide adequate support and the most relevant information about the opportunities. Partners' shortcomings in this regard can lead to skewed decision making and failure to select the most useful partner can hamper the process of obtaining market related objectives.

Study of dynamic aspects of alliances has also shown that a brand alliance can result in shifts in consumers' preferences between two segments and ultimately in purchasing behavior (Venkatesh et al. 2000: 5). This effect can be both appealing and perilous when the partners in alliance are operating within the same economic sector. Additionally, a brand alliance can create word-of-mouth chatter within partner's customer base (*Ibid.*). Overall, a brand alliance can help the company acquire access to

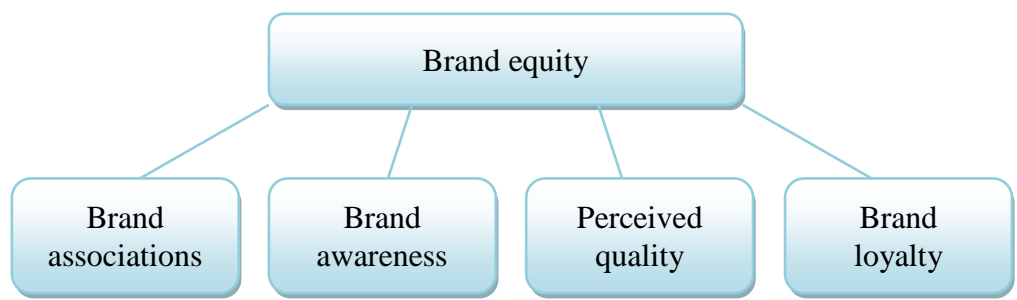
new markets, segments or reinforce its current market position without making substantial investments. In some situations the presence of a partnering brand can also speed up the consumers' adaptation rate of companies' products and services (Kotler et al. 2009: 432).

**Organizational capabilities.** Recent managerial literature characterizes organizations as portfolios of distinctive components and skills, while emphasizing the importance of possessing dynamic capabilities for adapting to the changes in business environment. Harnessing these capabilities enables to create, improve, extend, and maintain organization's unique assets (Teece 2007: 1319). One way to create or evolve these capabilities is through brand alliances as they can be a useful source of knowledge and know-how (Rich 2003: 447). Combining alliance members' insights and complementary skills has the potential to provide an environment for exclusive learning opportunities (van Gils, Zwart 2004: 687). New idiosyncratic tangible or intangible resources developed during the alliance may lay the foundation for future competitive advantages for individual companies (Lambe et al. 2002: 144). Koza and Lewin (2000: 148) have labeled alliances, which formation is primarily incentivized by strategic acquisition of new information or insights, as learning alliances. According to them, many alliances actually start off as learning alliances and later evolve into more intricate collaborations. Some of the most successful alliances have begun with a narrow coordination and broadened as the idiosyncratic knowledge base has grown (Kotabe, Helsen 2011: 317). Furthermore, Rindfleisch and Moorman (2001: 3) have shown that vertical alliances can be more effective in this respect, as the knowledge redundancy is lower compared to horizontal relationships. In other words, there is less overlap in knowledge allowing dissimilarities to potentially provide educational input.

However, the full value of capabilities evolved through cooperating within a brand alliance can sometimes be interlinked with the alliance relationship itself. This means that the developed capabilities' worth may diminish when the particular partnership is concluded (Lambe et al. 2002: 144). Therefore, companies need to evaluate to what extent absorbed tacit abilities are dependent on a specific partner to apprehend their durability (van Gils, Zwart 2004: 686). Building competitive advantages around capabilities contingent on set partners may lead to other organizations possessing

excessive influence on the company’s decision making processes and can endanger the company’s existence if there is a break down in the relationship. Additionally, sharing sensitive information and operational resources with partners during the learning process may diminish the value and uniqueness of the capabilities the company already possessed prior to the creation of the brand alliance (Rindfleisch, Moorman 2001: 2). In worst cases, the partner may use the skills and know-how shared during the cooperation to become a potential competitor in the future (Prince, Davies 2002: 55).

**Brand equity.** However, looking beyond functional benefit, Washburn and colleagues (2004: 487) postulate that brand alliances are to a large extent designed to transfer positive customer based brand equity to another partnering brand. This is done through multiple brand equity dimensions conceptualized by Aaker (1996) (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Customer based brand equity dimensions.  
Source: Aaker 1996.

Relying on the associative-learning framework, researchers argue that brand associations previously independently formed with an individual brand can extend from known brands to the unknown counterparts (Washburn et al. 2004: 487; Besharat 2010: 1242). *Brand associations* are defined as knowledge, emotions, perceptions and behavioral responses consumers have developed in relation to a particular brand (Aaker 1996; Brakus et al. 2009: 63). They can be (both) functional or emotional in nature and are formed based on the prior experiences with the brand and influenced by marketing communications (Kuusik et al. 2010: 196). Conveyance of one brand’s associations to a partnering brand occurs because consumers make connections between various elements taking place in the same environment (Shimp 1991, cited in Besharat 2010: 1242). One way marketers can further induce this phenomenon is by harmonizing esthetics of brands involved (Abratt, Motlana 2002: 44). The transfer of associations is

moderated by the perceived-fit effect (Simonin, Ruth 1998: 30; Levin, Levin 2000: 51; Ahn et al. 2009: 477). The literature on brand extensions has extensively studied this effect and has defined it as consumers' perceived degree of proximity of two elements (Buil et al. 2009: 1303). In the brand alliance literature, Simonin and Ruth (1998: 33) have distinguished between product-fit and brand-fit: product-fit indicates compatibility of product categories, and brand-fit indicates similarity of brand images in consumers mind. Lack of fit or misfit hampers the process of associations not carrying over from one brand to another. This is explained by the congruity theory which holds that people strive to preserve and re-establish consistency between cognitive elements (Lafferty et al. 2004: 518). In fact, Smarandescu and colleagues (2013: 133) have shown that consumers' need for cognition moderates the entire information processing procedure associated with alliances. When consumers do not see the relevant link between the brands allied together then they may dismiss it. In worse cases, it may even lead to image impairment and drive consumers away (van der Lans et al. 2014: 551).

Additionally, researchers have established that the higher-equity brand acts as inducing stimulus for the conveyance process (Washburn et al. 2004: 489). This results from the spillover effect and it is strongly linked to the *awareness* dimension of the equity. Awareness expresses consumers' ability to recall and recognize the brand in different conditions (Aaker 2001: 165). Aaker has also conceptualized that awareness always precedes creation of the associations. Recollection of at least one of the brands captures consumers' attention and provides preliminary context for the alliance which in turn influences evaluation of each brand separately (Simonin, Ruth 1998: 32; Abratt, Motlana 2002: 44). In other words, the familiar brand to the consumer acts as cue to build or improve partnering brand's awareness, attention, and later associations. Therefore, a spillover effect is moderated by pre-existent familiarity of brands and the effect is stronger from better-known brand onto the lesser-known brand (Bengtsson, Servais 2005: 707). It is prudent to highlight that the context provided by the higher-equity brand may become a defining setting for the lesser-known brand in the eyes of the consumers. This again emphasizes the importance of brand-fit to ensure that the created context is in line with the brand itself (Woisetschläger et al. 2008: 489). Discrepancies at this stage of the lesser-known brand's introduction can be costly to correct in the future. Furthermore, pairing a well-known brand with a new and relatively

unknown counterpart can also result in the former being overly dominant and eclipse the latter, thereby potentially obstructing the awareness transfer from occurring.

Research into consumers' interpretations of brand alliances has also shown that alliances have a profound impact on the *quality perceptions* of both the union and the individual brands involved (Bengtsson, Servais 2005: 707). This primarily results from consumers' assumption that in order to cooperate effectively, brands need to share the same values (Levin, Levin 2000: 44). They expect that quality brands only partner with others which have a similar level of excellence. Thereby, a membership in an alliance communicates unobservable quality about the brand itself (Rao et al. 1999: 258). Some may proclaim that this solely results from the quality association transferring onto the partner. However, in line with the signaling theory, Park and colleagues (1996: 454) argue that this effect actually occurs because other affiliating brands signal their willingness to tie their reputation with the brand. In effect, brand alliance members are vouching for each other's quality by being associated with one another (Woisetschläger et al. 2008: 488, Kotler et al. 2009: 433). Janiszewski and van Osselaer's (2000: 348) research further reinforces this explanation by showing that consumers expect more superior quality from a brand alliance than from a single-branded offering. However, this relation can potentially have the opposite effect if one of the partner's perception of quality is tarnished in the eyes of consumers. Therefore, a brand alliance makes company's brand reputation more dependent and susceptible to actions of other organizations.

Finally, a brand alliance can indirectly affect individual *brand loyalty*, which Aaker (1996) has defined as the sense of attachment consumers have towards the brand, through the changes in brand associations and quality perception. Bundling of offerings by partners within an alliance or mere perceived quality can modify behavioral loyalty by influencing consumers' purchasing intentions (Besharat 2010: 1243). Additionally, more exposure and increased awareness can alter cognitive loyalty. Cooperation arrangements between brands can also convey assurances to customers that products are compatible, and thereby alleviate such concerns (Bengtsson, Servais 2005: 709) and induce repeat purchases.

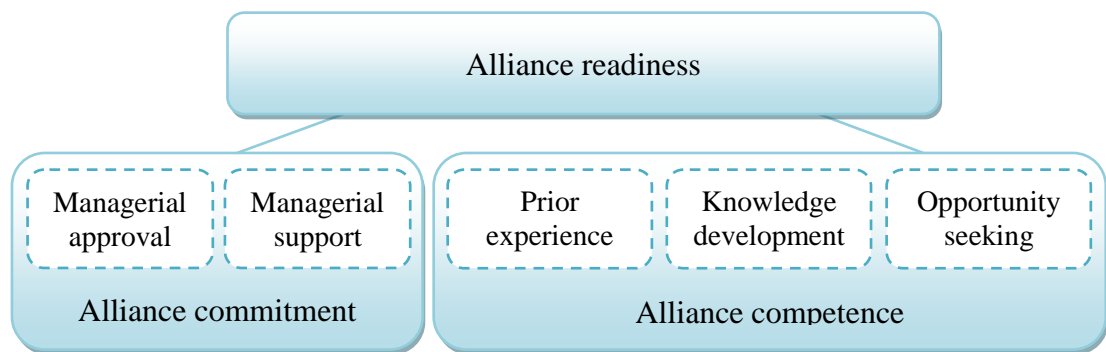
In summary, there is a wide range of economic, educational, and brand equity improving benefits a brand alliance can offer to companies. Therefore, it is almost self-explanatory why this practice is increasingly gaining popularity among organizations. The potential benefits a company hopes to gain through a brand alliance sets the focus of the alliance, and in turn, enables to broadly map which objectives are driving the alliance. However, as the review of the research suggests, achievement of these objectives hinders greatly by both 1) companies' own ability to utilize the potential of the alliance to the fullest (Lambe et al. 2002: 145-146), and 2) the partners' ability to provide the necessary input required to meet the aspirations (van der Lans et al. 2014: 551). A company can control the former by improving its organizational readiness and dictate the latter through the partner selection process.

### **1.3 Brand Alliance Readiness and Partner Selection**

The current section starts by looking at different elements signaling company's maturity to enter into any marketing partnerships with other organizations. Brands can be invaluable tools and combining them appropriately can lead to the creation of synergic alliances which overall benefit exceeds its individual components' benefits (van der Lans 2014: 551). Despite the number of appealing benefits a company could obtain, not all companies are prepared or willing to be part of a brand alliance. Marketing academics have postulated that the fundamental reason behind it is that organizations foremost seek autonomy, and collaboration does not come naturally to them (Prahalad, Ramaswamy 2004: 199). Entrepreneurs are disinclined to share accumulated know-how with partners and risk diminishing their competitive advantage (van Gils, Zwart 2004: 685). Furthermore, being involved in an alliance results in firms inevitably finding it necessary to alter how they do business to some extent (Viardot 2004: 60). The reluctance to be part of any cooperation is compounded by the researchers' observations that around 70% of alliances are unsuccessful (Day 1995: 298). Therefore, scholars have found it imperative to ameliorate our understanding on how to forge effective alliances.

With the goal of establishing the key antecedence for a brand alliance's success, Lambe and colleagues (2002: 152) found evidence that, internally, managerial commitment and

organizational competence have a significant impact on whether the alliance can potentially serve its purpose. They postulate that company-wide focus and dedication towards the alliance is necessary to combat any risks stemming from internal inadequacies and help to adapt to any changes resulting from the alliance. This, however, requires fidelity from upper-management. Nielsen (2007: 341) has referred to these as pre-alliance formation factors which affect alliance's performance. Expanding on this finding, the author of the thesis proposes that these internal elements converge under the construct of organizational **alliance readiness**, which in the current context can be used to signify brand owner's state of being fully prepared and willing to participate in the alliance and executing any responsibilities stemming from it. More specifically, willingness is expressed by the construct of commitment, and the preparation is indicated by the construct of competence. In addition to this direct effect, studies (e.g. Lambe et al. 2002; Gammoh, Voss 2013) have also shown that commitment has indirect effect on readiness through competence as senior managers' attitude towards brand alliance drives companies' propensity to improve its alliance competence. The interconnectedness of these two key elements is depicted in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** Organizational readiness to enter into brand alliances.  
Source: compiled by the author, based on Lambe et al. 2002.

The organizational behavior literature has referred to organizational **commitment** as the individual's attachment to the organization and relative strength of their identifications with it (Yuanqiong et al. 2011: 203). This conceptualization of the construct's meaning can be extended to elaborate on the essence of commitment in the context of brand alliances. In this instance, individual brand owners represent the entities subject to the effect, and the alliance resulting from the co-operation represents the entity the effect is

directed towards. Furthermore, scholars have argued that senior management, and particularly their approval and support, has a vital influence on overall organizational commitment (Susanto 2008: 54). *Managerial approval* refers to company's decision makers' agreement with the implementation of the practice. Given the nature of its importance, taking in strategic directions like creation or participation in a brand alliance is driven by senior management (Lambe et al. 2002: 147), and their attitude towards it is an essential antecedent for an organization's propensity to enter into an alliance (Gammoh, Voss 2013: 979). In making the decision, management needs to employ a long-term proactive strategic mindset, without being distracted by cursory short-term goals (Rich 2003: 450). In addition to agreeing to this path, senior management also needs to provide support for the brand alliance to enhance organizational readiness (Lambe et al. 2002: 147). *Managerial support* exhibits top managerial branch's willingness to undertake activities for the benefit of the strategic direction. This is primarily done through pledging tangible and intangible resources for the good of the alliance. Unambiguous signaling of support is also an important means by which alliance partners can demonstrate their dedication to the cooperation endeavors (Day 1995: 299). In general, the senior management has a direct effect on creating and maintaining the company's willingness to forge alliances and thereby elevate its overall readiness to be involved in a brand alliance.

Looking beyond managerial alliance commitment, the second facet of organizational readiness expressing preparedness is **alliance competence**. Lambe and colleagues (2002) have made a significant contribution towards furthering marketers' understanding of the competence concept by combining the resource-advantage view and the competence-based view developed in the managerial literature. They define alliance competence as company's ability to identify, develop, and govern co-operations, and proposed it is a higher order resource. This higher order resource comprises of three lower order resources: prior experience, opportunity seeking capability, and knowledge development capability. (*Ibid.* 2002: 145) So essentially, alliance competence is made up of specific skills utilized by the company in any alliance relationships (Gammoh, Voss 2013: 968).

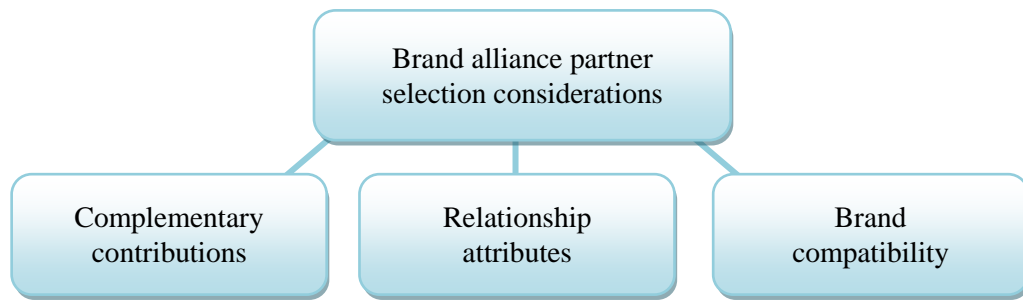
Studies have shown a positive correlation between alliance performance and its members' *prior alliance experiences* (e.g. Zollo et al. 2002: 701; Heimeriks, Duysters 2007: 25; Nielsen 2007: 341; Gammoh, Voss 2013: 964). An investigation of instances where organizations with higher alliance experience enjoying greater rate of success would suggest that prior endeavors have provided them with educational lessons. While the interaction and cooperation with different entities will most likely yield distinct experiences (as experiences are unique and subjective in nature), they may offer a broader context for the co-operation process itself and insights into general alliance governance (Heimeriks, Duysters 2007: 29). Gammoh and Voss (2013: 979) have also argued that the experience valence significantly alters their effect on enhancing alliance competence. Positive experiences reinforce the competence as it leads to repetition, whereas negative experiences develop it at a lower rate. Institutionalization of the gained knowledge enables the company to be more prepared for being involved in any future alliances (Rich 2003: 449). Experiences can be particularly valuable in cases of re-engagements. Repeat affiliations allow to facilitate a more extensive understanding of each partner's capabilities and resources (Nielsen 2007: 341). Overall, the accumulations of prior experiences contribute to a company's understanding of how alliances generally function and how to manage them (Zollo et al. 2002: 703), thereby elevating its alliance competence level.

Company's alliance competence is also influenced by its internal conscious cooperation *knowledge development* processes which entail targeted development of capable alliance managers and construction of supportive structures within the organizations (Lambe et al. 2002: 145). Essentially, it refers to company's investments into furthering their micro-foundations of dynamic capabilities which are seen internally necessary in relation to alliances (Teece 2007: 1319). This acquired knowledge differs from that obtained through prior experiences as they may be procured *ex ante*, whereas insights learned through experiences are attained during the course of former alliances (Gammoh, Voss 2013: 968). However, the accumulated knowledge developed by company and the knowledge learned through experiences may complement and advance one another when used correspondingly.

Lastly, Lambe and colleagues (2002: 145) have postulated that brand alliance competence depends on company's propensity to proactively and systematically *seek out alliance opportunities* and identify potentially suitable partners. In other words, this expresses the company's ability to evaluate external entities and environment, negotiate partnership conditions, and manage relationship structure (Gammoh, Voss 2013: 979). Some scholars have also referred to this as the partner relationship management skill (Kotler et al. 2009: 107). The external focus aspect distinguishes it from the knowledge development resource, which was discussed in the previous subsection. However, prior experiences and knowledge development can provide further inputs to refining future opportunity seeking capability. Superior capacity of opportunity seeking may provide the company with the first mover advantage in establishing and tying up the most promising alliance partners (Day 1995: 299).

To summarize, to get a sense of company's readiness to create or partake in a brand alliance, it is necessary to look at both managerial approval and support to evaluate their commitment, and company's prior experiences with brand alliances, knowledge development abilities, and opportunity seeking tendencies to assess their alliance competence.

As the section addressing brand alliance objectives alluded to, partners have a vital role in brand alliance achieving its goals and enabling to reap the potential rewards. Therefore, it is prudent to elaborate on what companies should focus on in the process of **partner selection**. It is also important to note that company's partner selection activities are influenced by its own alliance competence and particularly the lower order resource of opportunity seeking. From a marketer's perspective tasked with identifying a suitable partner, there are several aspects to take into account. The author has summarized these into three main broad considerations about a partner's input to be taken into account: potential complementary contributions the partner can offer, expected relationship attributes, and brand compatibility between their own and partner's brand (see Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** Brand alliance partner selection. Source: compiled by the author, based on Wilson 2000; Prince, Davies 2002; Rich 2003; Das, Teng 2003; Washburn et al. 2004; van der Lans et al. 2014.

**Complementary contributions.** One of the key aspects a company needs to assess about any alliance partner is to what extent they can contribute to the attainment of the set objectives. This entails estimating the alignment between the company’s subjective needs and the brand alliance partner’s capabilities (Hoffmann, Schlosser 2001: 361). However, prerequisite to any such meaningful evaluation is the company’s internal ability to competently identify its shortcomings and form an explicate understanding of its own requirements (Rich 2003: 451). Following the assessment of the needs and wants the company seeks to satisfy, it may proceed to analyzing and measuring the potential alliance partner based on their ability to provide the sought after tangible and intangible resources. In other words, companies consider who can provide more useful *complementary resources* for boosting operational performance, entitling to effectively enter new markets, enabling to reinforce market share or position, etc. The precise criterion to evaluate that on, derives from the goals the company hopes to accomplish through the brand alliance. However, Wilson (2000: 535) has proposed that partner evaluation needs to be done on two dimensions: value added to the partner and operational risk. One of the major risk indicators is goal congruence between partners – the extent to which parties see it possible to achieve mutual and individual entities’ goals simultaneously (Bicen 2009: 104). To make the alliance effort worthwhile, each member needs to be adequately rewarded in order to maintain the relationship (Leuthesser et al. 2003: 37). This implies that the company also needs to take into account partner’s expectations towards it and subsequent resource costs it may incur. Higher congruency may alleviate risk and cost associated with the pursuit of partners’ goals (Wilson 2000: 536). Comparing potential gains against projected expenses

provides the basis for the anticipated strategic value of the brand alliance (Bucklin, Sengupta 1993: 35).

**Relationship attributes.** Brand alliances are inherently complex arrangements involving several individual parties working in unison. Rich (2003) has likened alliances to marriage. Despite common aims, they still consist of distinct personalities who maintain separate identities (*Ibid.*: 448). In their pursuit of identifying the most important attributes relevant for successful alliance, Das and Teng (2003: 284) have highlighted the importance of the nature of the relationship between the two organizations. In particular, interfirm commitment, open communication, and trust towards one another are essential co-operational mechanisms which shape the relationship quality (Lee, Cavusgil 2006: 899). Similarities in organizational cultures and managerial styles may contribute to the facilitation of those. Company's own organizational commitment to the alliances was discussed in more detail above, but a two-way commitment is necessary to preserve the relationship in long-term. *Mutual commitment* is established on recognition of assets and resources each partner contributes for the good of the alliance (Day 1995: 299), and it represents the parties desire to continue the co-operation (Wilson 2000: 537). Furthermore, *trust* helps to develop more stable and co-operative behavior by reducing uncertainty and diminishing the likelihood of functional conflicts (Lee, Cavusgil 2006: 899). Thereby, trust is fundamental for companies to have confidence and willingness to rely on the partner (Kotler et al. 2009: 292). Ultimately, positive relationship attributes result in higher effectiveness which has been defined as a level of effort the company needs to devolve into maintaining the partnership in order to attain its purposes (Lewison 1996: 6). In the pre-alliance phase a company needs to rely on its capability to project relationship attributes with any potential brand alliance partners to identify the fitting partners. In doing this, decision makers also need to take into account any potential antecedents of conflicts affecting the attributes. Prince and Davies (2002: 54) have postulated that there are three main sources of conflict, which can negatively impact relationship attributes: the domain of control, dissolution of respect, and interference. These may undermine the level of trust and commitment between partners, and ultimately lead to the failure of the relationship and termination of the brand alliance itself.

**Brand compatibility.** As previously explained in the brand alliance objectives section (see section 1.2), the selection of an appropriate partner brand is crucial as consumers' attitude in relation to one partnering brand may carry over to the other through the alliance (Abratt, Motlana 2002: 45, Washburn et al. 2004: 487). This is the case with both positive and negative connotations consumers hold. Therefore, it is important to select a partner whose brand's image is compatible to the other brands' in the alliance (Prince, Davies 2002: 52) as brands' concepts co-exist within the alliance (Lanseng, Olsen 2012: 1111). According to Simonin and Ruth (1998: 32), consumers' perception of the compatibility is subject to *brand-fit* between the brands presented in an alliance. Van der Lans and colleagues (2014: 552) have further extended this term by postulating that favorable brand-fit results from a perceived correct mix of similarities and coherence in brand personalities. Strong brand-fit may contribute to the brand's ability to elevate the partnering brand's awareness, transfer positive associations onto the partnering brand, raise its perceived quality, and loyalty. In other words, to leverage brand alliance's potential benefits of improving company's brand equity marketers need to select a partner whose brand is the best fit for that purpose. However, evaluating compatibility can be tricky as marketers do not always possess an extensive understanding of the attitudes consumers may hold in relation to the other company's brand.

In summary, choosing companies with which to form brand alliances can be a challenging task. There are a number of different aspects to take into consideration in the selection process, which may be categorized into three main areas of contemplation: the potential complementary contributions of the partner, relationship attributes, and the compatibility between the partnering brands.

## **2. RESEARCH ON BRAND ALLIANCE OBJECTIVES, READINESS, AND SELECTION OF PARTNERS AMONG COMPANIES OPERATING IN ESTONIA**

### **2.1 Methodology and Measurement Scales**

An empirical study is carried out to ascertain the importance of the underlying objectives, readiness, and partnership expectations companies operating in Estonia may have in relation to brand alliances. This is necessary to further develop the proposed conceptual framework and achieve the set aim of investigating Estonian companies' views on brand alliances. As explained earlier, the author focuses on studying the topic from the companies' perspective, which have already established a strong and well-known brand among local consumers. This curtailment of research scope is done on the grounds that the literature review suggests companies' prior success makes them more appealing alliance partners for other business entities (Delgado-Ballester, Hernández-Espallardo 2008; Singh et al. 2014; Kalafatis et al. 2014). It could also be argued that brand owners, who have demonstrated their capability to build a strong brand, have a more comprehensive understanding of the multiple aspects affecting the process, and that access to their past experience enables to study a wider spectrum of brand alliance considerations.

As previously stated, the research investigates the case of a single pre-set market. The national market of Estonia is selected for the research for several reasons. Firstly, the author has extensive knowledge about the market and brands operating in it because Estonia is his native country. Secondly, there is a lack of prior research investigating the use of brand alliances in the Estonian market, and thus, shortage of evidence about the companies' preparedness to conduct joint marketing endeavors. Lastly, while Estonia has a good commercial infrastructure, its market size and growth rate are relatively

small compared to the majority of other countries (Market Potential...2014). Therefore, competition for individual consumers is high and the formation of a brand alliance could potentially be an appealing strategic option for many companies.

**Sample.** For the sample, the total population purposive sampling technique (Purposive...2015) is used in which the common characteristic of owning a well-liked brand among the Estonian consumers sets the parameters of the population. However, this raises the need to set a more definable base on which to distinguish between well-known and lesser-known brands. In that regard, the author is relying on the past work of the leading international research agency TNS Emor. The research agency annually conducts a nationwide survey using the computer assisted personal interview (CAPI) omnibus method to rank the TOP 150 most beloved brands according to the consumers living in Estonia. In the study, consumers are asked to identify their favorite brands in a multi-stage selection process, and the individual results are aggregated to determine the most liked brands on the Estonian market (Eesti elanike...2014). The research agency generously granted the thesis author access to their prior findings for the purpose of this study under the condition that the brand names and ranks would not be disclosed in the final results. Therefore, the results of the TNS Emor's study (991 participants), which were published in February 2014, are used as the basis for establishing the most suitable brands to be involved in the study, and companies who own these well-known brands are approached individually (Brändide Edetabel 2014). The examples include AS Kalev, AS Eesti Telekom, Apollo Holding OÜ, Tere AS, Swedbank AS, etc (*Ibid.* 2014). In particular, marketing directors, marketing managers, and brand managers are targeted as sources of information, as they are presumably the most informed employees to elaborate on companies' marketing activities. International brands (e.g. Google, Gmail, YouTube, etc), whose marketing activities are completely planned and executed from outside of the Estonian offices, are filtered out and excluded from the study because they are not relevant in the context of the present study. Therefore, the final sample size consists of 122 companies.

**The data.** The data was collected using an online questionnaire form administered through the survey platform Qualtrics. This method was preferred for several reasons. Firstly, it enables to approach a substantial number of participants in a limited time-

frame. Secondly, ensuring anonymity for the respondents enables them to be more open and provide truthful responses (Mooi, Sarstedt 2011: 55). Furthermore, this method allows companies' representatives flexibility to fill the survey when it best suits their busy schedule. Prior to full-scale distribution of the survey to the companies, the questionnaire was pre-tested on four marketing experts to assess the structure, clarity of the wording, and the instructions provided. Companies' representatives were approached via e-mail, which contained a hyperlink to the questionnaire, a brief description of the research topic, and the reasons why the company had been included in the study. A reminder e-mail to participate was sent days later. Contact details of the companies' marketing representatives were procured from the Internet and through data requests from the companies' customer service centers. Moreover, companies' representatives whose telephone numbers are publicly listed on online websites were additionally contacted via telephone to remind them to participate in the study. A total of 122 questionnaires were sent out between the time period 30.03.2015-10.04.2015, during which 67 responses were obtained from companies' representatives, resulting in a response rate of 55%. However, three observations were excluded from the analysis because the respondents did not fully complete the survey. The analysis was conducted in statistical software programs IBM SPSS Statistics 20 and SPSS Amos 21.

**The questionnaire.** The questionnaire itself mainly consisted of semantic differential questions. One multiple choice question was added to establish how frequently companies engage in brand alliances, and two open-ended questions were included to inquire about 1) companies' prior brand alliance experiences through examples, and 2) the brand which the companies would prefer the most to ally with. The complete questionnaire is presented in Appendix 1. The semantic differential questions derive from the used measurement scales previously developed by various scholars. However, the scale items were adapted to reflect the current research context and translated into Estonian to circumvent any possible language barriers of the participants in understanding them.

**Measurement scales.** The relative importance of alliance objectives' elements is evaluated using a measurement tool (see Table 2) which combines the work of several scholars.

**Table 2.** Brand alliance objectives measurement tool

Item/statement	Construct
You company is interested in being in a brand alliance in order to...	
...induce a growth in sales values	Operational performance
...improve Your company's market position	
...obtain an extra source of revenue	
...reduce Your company's production and marketing costs	
...acquire new skills and resources	Organizational capabilities
...gain access to new information sources	
...improve Your company's capabilities	
...enter into new markets	Market opportunities
...widen Your company's customer base	
...accelerate the adaptation of Your company's products and services	
...raise the perceived quality of Your company's brand	Brand equity
...increase customer loyalty towards Your company's brand	
...raise the awareness of Your company's brand	
...create positive associations related to Your company's brand	

Source: compiled by the author based on the works of Varadarajan, Cunningham 1995; Washburn et al. 2004; Norman 2004; Lee, Cavusgil 2006; Lefroy, Tsarenko 2014.

In particular, four items related to operational performance are grounded on the Lee and Cavusgil's (2006: 901) study of alliance performance, and the work of Lefroy and Tsarenko (2014: 1963) who have studied objective achievement in the context of nonprofit-corporate alliances. However, the particular wording of the items has been adjusted to more closely reflect the conceptual argumentation proposed by Varadarajan and Cunningham (1995: 285). Their contribution has also provided the foundation for the three items measuring market opportunities.

Furthermore, the measurement tool constructed by Norman (2004: 614-615) to *inter alia* assess knowledge acquisition within an alliance presents the basis for the three items in the scale pertaining to organizational capabilities. Washburn and colleagues' (2004: 499) research into the customer-based brand equity effect in a brand alliance has provided the four items used to assess the brand equity element of the alliance objectives. Overall, the 14 items for the assessment of objectives scale are measured on a seven-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). Item scores can be averaged within an element and compared against one another to evaluate their relative importance.

Organizational alliance readiness is assessed using the measurement tool composed by Lambe and colleagues (2002: 156) to quantitatively evaluate elements conferring to alliance success. These authors constructed and tested formative measures for both the constructs of alliance commitment (three-item scale) and alliance competence (nine-item scale). These have been conceptualized in the current study to combinedly exhibit overall alliance readiness. These measures do this by assessing individual lower order resources contributing to the higher order constructs which makes them pertinent to employ within the current framework. The scale items are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Brand alliance readiness measurement scale items

Item/statement	Construct	
Your company's management approves the use of brand alliances to achieve their strategic goals	Alliance commitment	
Brand alliances play an important role in future success of our company		
Management encourages co-operation with other organizations for marketing purposes		
Your company has extensive experience in marketing partnerships with other organizations	Prior experience	Alliance competence
Your company has participated in a number of joint marketing projects		
Your company has a substantial number of marketing allies		
Your company educates its employees on how to create marketing relationships with other organizations	Knowledge development	
Your company has learning programs on how to manage marketing co-operation relationships with other firms		
Your company knows how to train its employees to effectively work together with other organizations		
Your company actively searches for new promising partners for joint marketing	Opportunity seeking	
Your company is constantly seeking new potential partnering opportunities		
Marketing networks that can help your company better achieve goals are sought out		

Source: compiled by the author based on the work of Lambe et al. 2002.

All items are measured on a seven-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). Constructs themselves are measured through the mean score of related items.

The scale used for assessing the relative importance of elements associated with alliance partner selection is composed by the author based on prior researchers' works. The complementary contribution is measured using the corresponding section of the tool created by Jap (1999: 473) while studying the collaboration process. The adopted three items reflect the link between the attainment of business goals and resource pooling among partners. The four items pertaining to relationship attributes are derived from Bucklin and Sengupta (1993: 38) who have constructed a scale to quantitatively measure various aspects of the relationship in their study of alliance effectiveness and relational power balance. Furthermore, the widely utilized measurement tool (e.g. by Delgado-Ballester, Hernández-Espallardo 2008; Singh et al. 2013; Lafferty et al. 2004) developed by Simonin and Ruth (1998: 35) to assess brand-fit is used to establish the three items for evaluating the importance of brand compatibility. The resulting seven-point semantic scale consisting of 10 items is presented in Table 4 and enables to measure each of the three elements in the partner selection framework and to compare their importance in respect to one another.

**Table 4.** Brand alliance partner selection measurement scale items

Item/statement	Construct
A partner owns knowledge, which can be useful for the relationship	Complementary contribution
A partner possesses complementary skills and resources which Your company is lacking	
Combining partners' resources with your company's enables to achieve goals Your company would not be able to achieve alone	
There is an open communication between the parties	Relationship attributes
A partner always carries out its responsibilities and commitments	
A partner is trustworthy	
Co-operation with partners is effective and productive	Brand compatibility
Partner's brand has something in common with Your company's brand	
Partner's brand complements Your company's brand	
Partner's brand values are consistent with Your brand values	

Source: compiled by the author based on the works of Bucklin, Sengupta 1993; Simonin, Ruth 1998; and Jap 1999.

All items are measured on a seven-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 (completely not important) and 7 (extremely important). Each element's score is calculated by

aggregating scores of related items and comparing the result against the maximum possible outcome.

However, since the described scales are composed based on several different measurements scales, it is necessary to test the validity and reliability of each of the scales with confirmatory factor analyses.

## **2.2 Validity and Reliability of the Research**

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is used to test the construct validity of the three measurements scales used in the study. This is necessary to provide evidence that the measurement tools used for each construct are consistent with their nature, and establish the existence of fit between the data collected from the companies and the proposed conceptual model. Statistical software programs IBM SPSS Statistics and SPSS Amos are used to conduct the analyses. The results are presented in parallel due to constraint on the thesis volume.

Firstly, it is prudent to highlight that the preliminary analysis of the dataset indicates that it contains 64 observations and does not contain any missing values. According to Hair et al. (2010) it is recommended to have a minimal sample size of 50, and the observation per item ratio of five to perform a factor analysis. Observations to item ratio in the present measurement tools are 4.6 for the brand alliance objective scale, 5.3 for the alliance readiness scale, and 6.4 for the alliance partner selection scale. This suggests that more observations would be preferable for the analysis. However, the relatively low observation count results from the narrow scope of the research – there is a limited number of brands which could be categorized as being beloved and well-known among the consumers. Thus, a low sample size was expected. Secondly, since the variable composition derives from the conceptual framework, it can be presumed that the conceptual assumption, which stipulates the presence of an underlying structure, is met. Furthermore, the generic nature of the model structure implies the absence of influence resulting from any sample characteristics, and thereby suggests that the homogeneity of the sample is ensured.

The correlation matrixes (see Appendix 2) reveal that the majority of coefficients are higher than the recommended threshold of 0.30 and p-values are low ( $\leq 0.05$ ). This suggests that the items are sufficiently intercorrelated to form representative factors. The results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity for each three scales presented in Appendix 3 reinforce this conclusion. In each of the three cases the Bartlett's test is significant ( $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ), enabling to reject the null hypothesis that sufficient correlation needed for the analysis does not exist.

The confirmatory factor analyses conducted in SPSS Amos show that the items' standardized factor loadings onto corresponding latent variables are relatively high (see Appendixes 4-6). The constraint setting of the regression weight of 1 is set to loadings to provide grounds for a meaningful comparison. In each case it is above 0.6 offering initial bases to assume the presence of *convergent validity*. Furthermore, the standardized regression weights and correlation estimates obtained from the analyses' outputs enable to calculate composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) measures to statistically establish the existence of convergent validity. The results of the calculations for each of the three scales are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Convergent validity of measurement scales

Brand alliance objectives scale								
	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	OBJ_PER	OBJ_OPP	OBJ_CAP	OBJ_BRA
OBJ_PER	0.876	0.642	0.360	0.207	0.801			
OBJ_OPP	0.863	0.678	0.504	0.324	0.600	0.824		
OBJ_CAP	0.903	0.757	0.504	0.306	0.460	0.710	0.870	
OBJ_BRA	0.911	0.719	0.203	0.120	0.220	0.330	0.450	0.848
Brand alliance readiness scale								
	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	REA_COM	REA_XP	REA_DEV	REA_SEE
REA_COM	0.893	0.736	0.423	0.354	0.858			
REA_XP	0.901	0.752	0.423	0.261	0.650	0.867		
REA_DEV	0.848	0.652	0.303	0.164	0.550	0.410	0.808	
REA_SEE	0.902	0.755	0.336	0.184	0.580	0.440	0.150	0.869
Brand alliance partner selection scale								
	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	SEL_COM	SEL_REL	SEL_BRA	
SEL_COM	0.873	0.696	0.096	0.049	0.835			
SEL_REL	0.867	0.627	0.096	0.057	0.310	0.792		
SEL_BRA	0.899	0.750	0.017	0.009	0.040	0.130	0.866	

Source: compiled by the author.

The results show that in all cases average variance extracted (AVE) by the constructs are above the recommended threshold of 0.5 and composite reliability (CR) statistics are above AVE in all constructs across the scales. These observations also indicate convergence validity. Furthermore, AVE statistic is larger than subsequent maximum shared squared variance (MSV) and average shared square variance (ASV) in all constructs, which implies *discriminant validity*. Covariance between latent variables in the model ranges from 0.04 to 0.71 (see Appendixes 4-6).

Overall, the evaluation of results from the convergence and discriminant validity testing permit to conclude that construct validity of the three scales is established. Furthermore, all composite reliability indexes are above the recommended threshold of 0.7, indicating the reliability of the scales (Hair et al. 2010). Cronbach’s reliability coefficient  $\alpha$  reaffirms this conclusion (see Appendix 7).

In addition to testing the scales, it is also expedient to evaluate the collected data’s quality by assessing models fit with the dataset and establish whether the companies included in the study possess qualification to offer feedback about the usage of brand alliances in the Estonian market. To this end, the CFA results pertaining to model fit and descriptive statistics expressing companies’ profiles and cooperational activities are used. The results of the models’ fit with the present data are summarized in Table 6. In particular, discrepancy divided by the degree of freedom (CMIN/DF), Chi-Square test (p), comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) statistics are used in this instance.

**Table 6.** Measurement scales model fit statistics

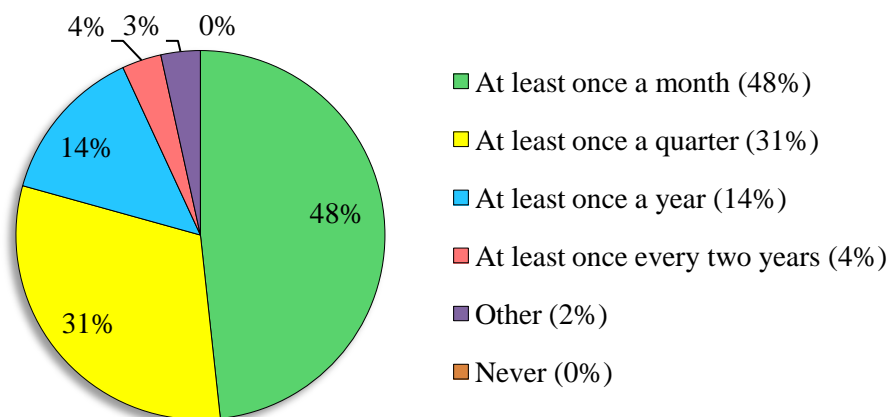
Measurement tool	CMIN/DF	p (CMIN/DF)	CFI	RMSEA
Brand alliance objectives scale	1.36	0.02	0.96	0.08
Brand alliance readiness scale	1.37	0.05	0.97	0.08
Brand alliance partner selection scale	0.89	0.65	1.00	0.00

Source: compiled by the author.

Discrepancy divided by the degree of freedom (CMIN/DF) is lower than the recommended threshold of 2.0 in all models, indicating a good fit (Hooper et al. 2008: 55). Moreover, the comparative fit indexes (CFI) are above the cut-off point of 0.9

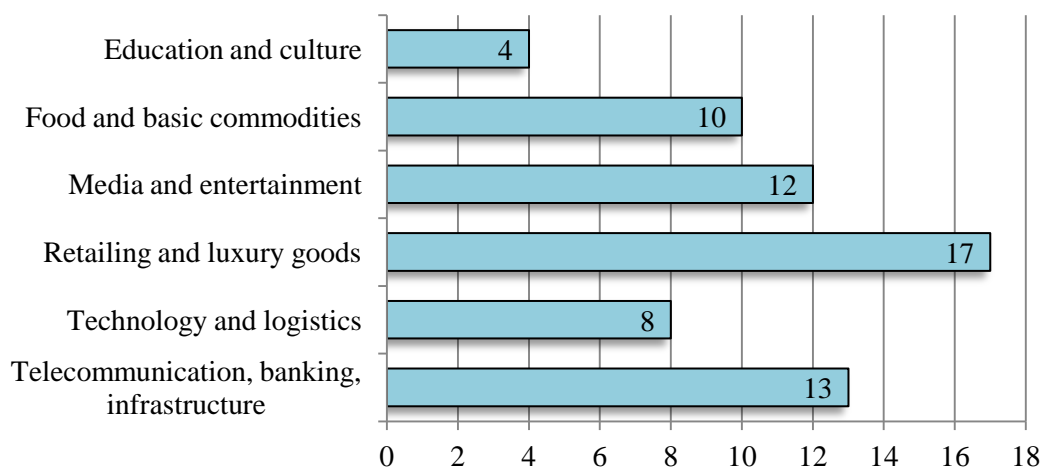
which also suggest a good fit (Brown 2011: 8). However, the results of root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) are above the recommended 0.05 for both the brand alliance objectives scale and alliance readiness scale. This indicates that the model and data fit is only marginal (*Ibid.*: 8). The Chi-Square significance value for the brand alliance objectives scale also reaffirms marginality of the model's fits. This may result from the sample size as the Chi-Square statistic lacks power when dealing with a small sample size (Hooper et al. 2008: 54). All four statistics indicate a good model fit for the alliance partner selection scale. Furthermore, the author performed a one-sample t-test to establish the significance of the scale items' means in comparison to the overall brand alliance objectives, readiness, and partner selection scores. The results are presented in Appendix 8.

Turning to particular well-known brand owning companies who participated in the study, the control question inquiring about their prior cooperational engagements with other organizations was used to establish whether they possess prior knowledge necessary to provide insights about the practice. The analysis revealed that all companies who were questioned for the purpose of this study have in the past been involved in brand alliances. In fact, almost half (48%) of the companies coordinate their activities with other organizations monthly and total of 94% engage in brand alliances annually (see Figure 7). This implies that the use of brand alliances in marketing activities is quite common in the Estonian market and that the all included brand owners are familiar with brand alliance practices.



**Figure 7.** Frequency of marketing co-operation, percentages.  
Source: compiled by the author.

A closer look at the participants' profiles shows that the sample contained companies from variety of different sectors (see Figure 8). However, each sector contains too few observations to conduct a statistically relevant comparisons between the groups. This directly derives from the selected sampling technique and narrow scope of the research to only include the views of companies which possess a well-known brand in the Estonian market. Thus, the distinction between industrial or service enterprises was used in the analysis to provide further insights about brand alliances across different business types.



**Figure 8:** Companies by sectors. Source: compiled by the author.

Moreover, the examples provided by the companies' representatives elaborating on which settings their company has allied themselves with other brands suggests that co-operations are not limited to impact a single economic sector. In other words, companies ally themselves with brands active in different economic sectors. The author analyzed the content of each of the described cooperating instances to establish whether they exhibit similarities to co-branding alliance, brand bundling alliance, ingredient branding alliance, joint promotional alliance, or brand licensing alliance. It is important to point out that some respondents provided multiple examples. The summarizing results are presented in Table 7. The responses have been translated into English and the exact brand names have been retracted from the examples to maintain the anonymity of the respondents.

The majority of examples (59) provided by the companies' marketing representatives can be classified as describing a joint promotional alliance. These are alliances in which the link between brands is created through co-communications. Interestingly, none of the companies offered examples of license alliances. This may derive from the characteristics of the sample, as the companies with well-known brands might be reluctant to entrust their brands into the hands of other organizations.

**Table 7.** Type of brand alliance utilized by the companies

Alliance type	Number of examples	Extracts from examples
Co-branding	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and development of new products with the leading chocolate factory in Estonia;</li> <li>• Organizing social public events together with other companies;</li> <li>• Launch of a new product in cooperation with X firm.</li> </ul>
Brand bundling alliance	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner's loyalty card holders get a discount in our service areas;</li> <li>• Offering customers discount if they have used our partner's products or services;</li> <li>• Connected loyalty program;</li> <li>• Joint discount campaign with our partners.</li> </ul>
Ingredient branding alliance	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting that our products are on partners vehicles;</li> <li>• Promoting our brand on products we manufacture for our partners.</li> </ul>
Joint promotions alliance	59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising awareness and supporting a social campaign;</li> <li>• Joint marketing campaign with partners in which we forward their best offers to our customer base;</li> <li>• Annual marketing campaigns with the main partners.</li> </ul>
Brand licensing alliance	0	-

Source: compiled by the author.

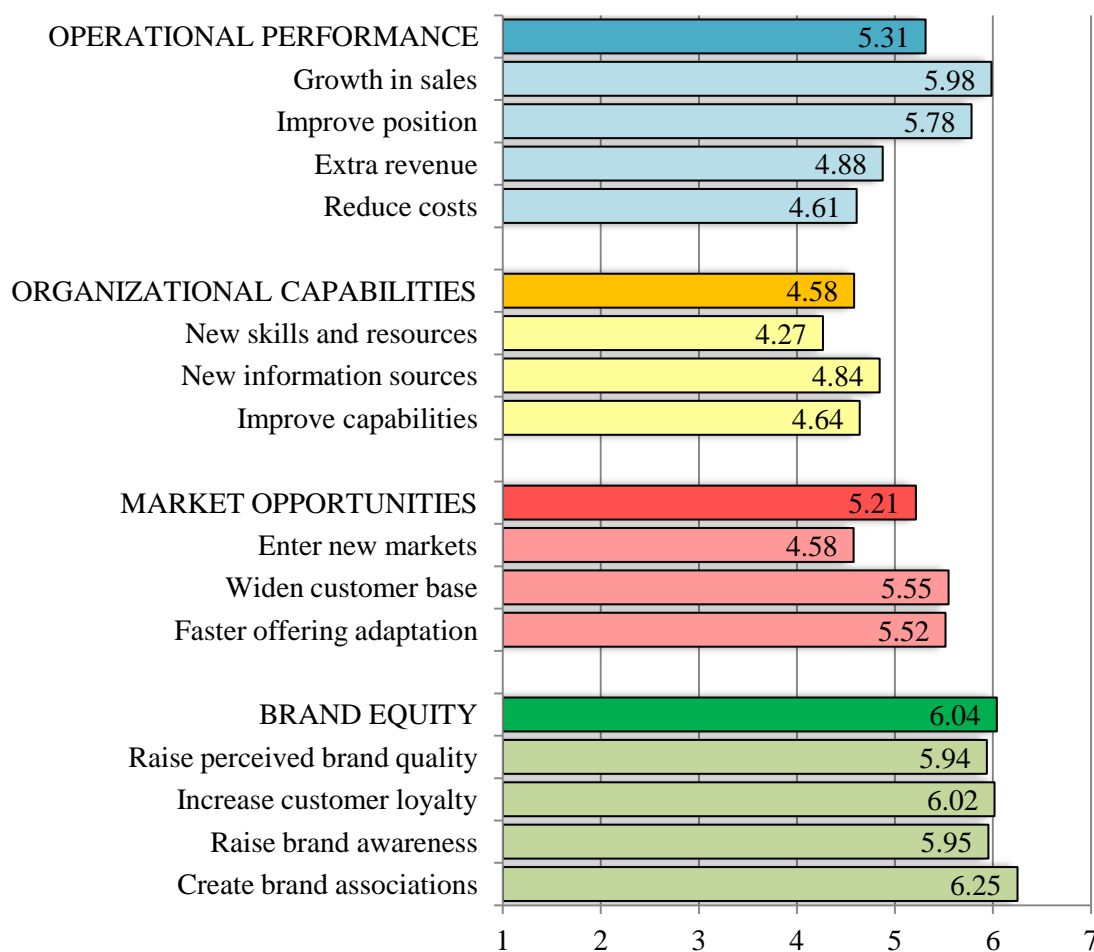
It is important to keep in mind that these results are indicative in nature and not an exhaustive representation of the true state. Many of the marketers made remarks that their company has been involved in so many brand alliances in the past making it difficult to list them all. However, the list does provide value by suggesting which joint marketing activities the respondents initially recalled, and thereby providing context for the interpretation of the study results.

To summarize, the confirmatory factor analyses conducted on the three measurement tools established the construct validity and reliability of the scales. There are some reservations about marginality of the data fit, which might derive from the small sample size. Furthermore, the descriptive statistics of the companies who took part in the study indicates that all companies have prior experiences in participating in brand alliances and thereby can be assumed to be knowledgeable to provide insights about the utilization of this marketing practice.

### **2.3 Companies Brand Alliance Objectives, Readiness, and Partner Selection**

**Brand alliance objectives.** The results of the study revealed that companies are most interested in marketing co-operations' ability to impact their brand equity (6.04 on a 7-point scale) (see Figure 9). This implies that brand alliances are seen by the practitioners as good strategic means to obtain brand equity related objectives. In particular, a closer look at the individual beneficial elements indices that companies who already pose a well-known brand in the Estonian market are most attentive of creating positive associations with their brand through allying with other brands. High emphasis on the brand equity objectives might also be explained by the fact that the study is carried out among the most known brand owners operating in the market. Thereby, they have already established a strong brand position in local consumers' minds and are primarily focused on maintaining their status.

Beyond brand equity (6.04), companies regard brand alliance as an effective tool to obtain objectives related to operational performance (5.31), and to a marginally lesser extent to gain access to new market opportunities (5.21). In particular, brand alliances are seen as good tools to induce growth in sales volumes (5.98) and to improve companies' market position (5.78). However, alliances which can provide companies with extra revenue or reduce manufacturing and/or marketing cost through joint activities are less appealing grounds on which to enter into co-operation with external entities.



**Figure 9.** Relative importance of brand alliance objectives for the companies, 7-point scale. Source: compiled by the author.

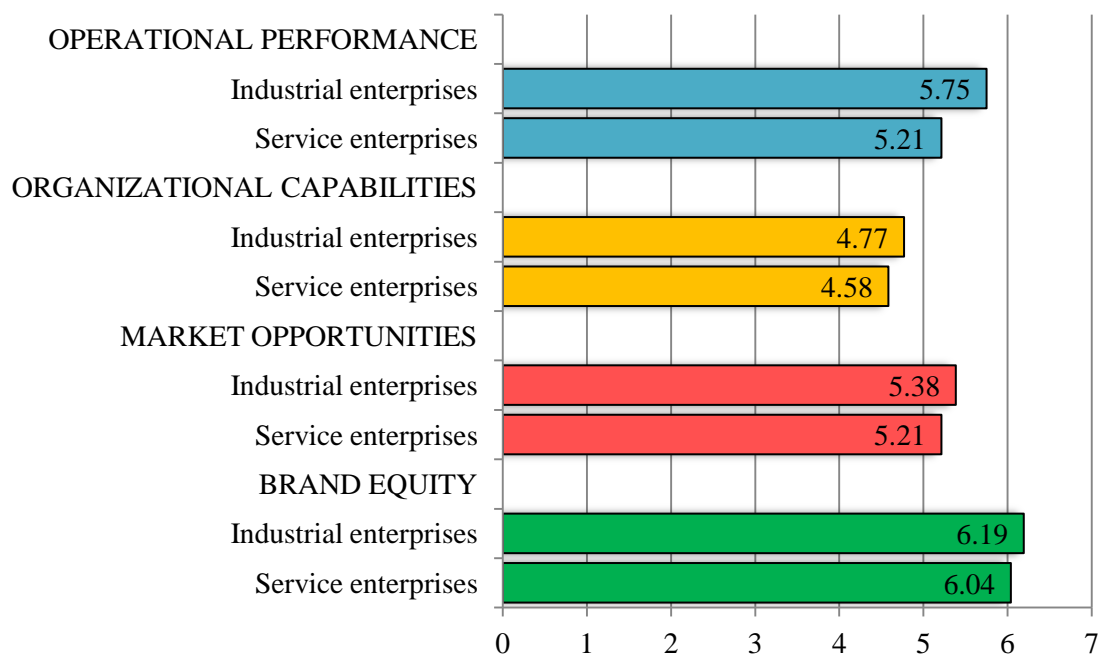
Interestingly, the market opportunities objective reflecting the possibility to enter into new markets via brand alliances is relatively low (4.58) among the companies in Estonia. However, according to prior scholars (Varandarajan, Cunningham 1995: 286), brand alliances are an effective means by which to do so. One explanation for this contradictory result might derive from the sample itself which contained well-known brand owners in Estonia, most of which are established companies with a rich history. Therefore, one might presume that they have already reached their primary market, and consequently, have access to the target audience, and as a result, are faced with limited opportunities to expand further. Furthermore, many of these companies are part of international consortiums or in possession of foreign investors which may influence their decision making related to expanding beyond the Estonian market.

As a reference point, the author used secondary data (obtained from these companies' websites) to establish which companies are owned by foreign entities and compared the respective scores concerning entry into new markets. Results of an independent sample t-test indicate that companies in possession of Estonian owners regard brand alliances as marginally more beneficial in obtaining new market entry objectives (4.63) compared to companies who have foreign owners (4.54). However, the difference is not statistically significant (see Appendix 9). Therefore, the comparison does not provide the necessary bases to draw any definitive conclusions. An alternative explanation might be that companies are content with their current market size and not interested in expanding into new (e.g. foreign) markets. Unfortunately, the present study is not able to offer further insights as to whether this low interest in new markets derives from companies' lack of motivation or from the perception that brand alliance is not the ideal means to achieve this objective.

Finally, the results reveal that the objective to impact the organizational capabilities (4.58) through brand alliances is the least important of the four to the companies. This is somewhat surprising considering that brand alliances can offer organizations a rich vein of new information, skills, and resources at a relatively low cost (Koza, Lewin 2000: 148). One explanation for this might be that companies who already own a well-known brand are confident in their current abilities and do not see the full value a potential partner can offer them through potential co-operation. Alternatively, as previously expanded on in the conceptual framework section (see section 1.1), companies are reluctant to share their core capabilities and know-how with other organizations to reduce the risk of losing its core competitive advantages. This mindset can also inadvertently drive their expectations towards partners. Thus, companies do not expect to improve their organizational capabilities through alliances as they do not expect to gain vital input from brand alliance partners. Either way, companies are least driven to achieve organizational capabilities objectives by forging brand alliances. Furthermore, the model results indicate a strong covariance between latent variables of capabilities and opportunities objectives among companies operating in Estonia (see Appendix 4).

Looking at the differences between industrial and service enterprises, it can be concluded that companies who manufacture products rate brand alliances' ability to

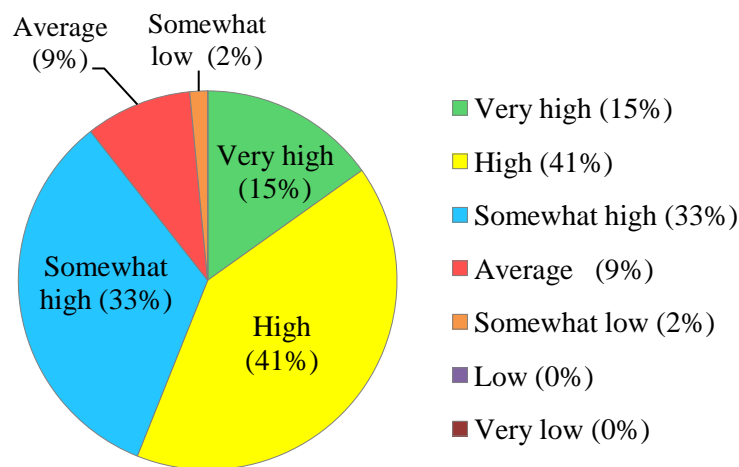
achieve objectives marginally higher than companies which primarily offer services (see Figure 10). Moreover, the underlying pattern of relative importance between the four objectives is similar. This somewhat responds to expectations as companies manufacturing products might be more reliant on their partners in distributing and marketing their offerings, and thus, achievement of their objectives is more dependent on brand alliances. In particular, there is a notable difference in the importance of operational performance objectives between the two types of companies. In addition to providing sales growth and improving market position, industrial enterprises also perceive brand alliances to be a viable means through which a company can gain extra revenue and reduce operational costs (see Appendix 10).



**Figure 10.** Relative importance of brand alliance objectives per business type, 7-point scale. Source: compiled by the author.

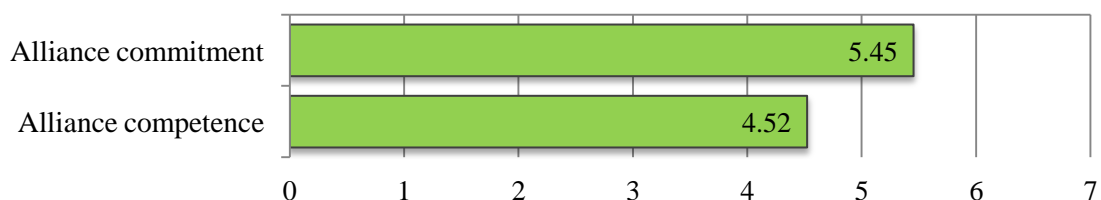
Overall, the results indicate that companies operating in Estonia regard brand alliances first and foremost to be means through which to increase their brand equity and achieve the objectives pertaining from that. Companies are least interested in using brand alliances in their pursuit of objectives related to enhancing organizational capabilities. Furthermore, industrial companies perceive alliances to be more useful tools to achieve those objectives than companies providing services.

**Brand alliance readiness.** In providing insights about companies’ organizational readiness to be part of a brand alliance, it is prudent to start by assessing companies’ self-reflective views on their readiness to co-operate with other organizations. The results presented in Figure 11 show that companies perceive themselves to be either highly (41%) or somewhat highly (33%) ready to conduct joint marketing activities with other companies. In fact, 89% judge their readiness to be at least above average. Furthermore, none of the companies who participated in the study regard their readiness level to be low or very low.



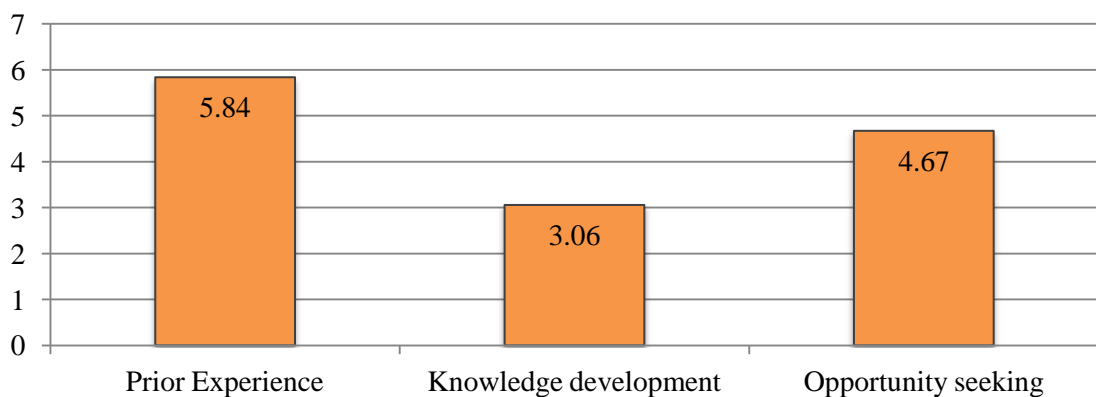
**Figure 11.** Companies’ perception of their brand alliance readiness, percentages.  
Source: compiled by the author.

These results imply that the majority of companies see themselves as very capable partners when it comes to brand alliances. However, quantitative measurement of their alliance commitment and alliance competence levels reveals a more telling story. In particular, companies’ alliance commitment is much higher (5.45) than their actual competence (4.52) (see Figure 12).



**Figure 12.** Companies’ alliance commitment and alliance competence, 7-point scale.  
Source: compiled by the author.

In other words, the upper level marketing decision makers in companies approve and support the creation of marketing ties with other companies' brands. However, there are shortcomings in companies' ability to identify, develop, and govern these ties. A closer look at the competence elements enables to gain further insights concerning these deficiencies. The analysis reveals that purposeful development of knowledge (3.06) pertaining to brand alliances is lacking within companies (see Figure 13). This may to some degree provide context to the previously established finding which suggested that brand alliances are least expected to help obtain objectives related to improving organizational capabilities. If companies have reservations about brand alliances' educational value then they might be reluctant to invest resources towards furthering their own knowledge relating to this matter. This in turn may lead to companies' having a lower ability to convert gained insights from alliances into resources which in the long run could help to improve their competitive advantage.

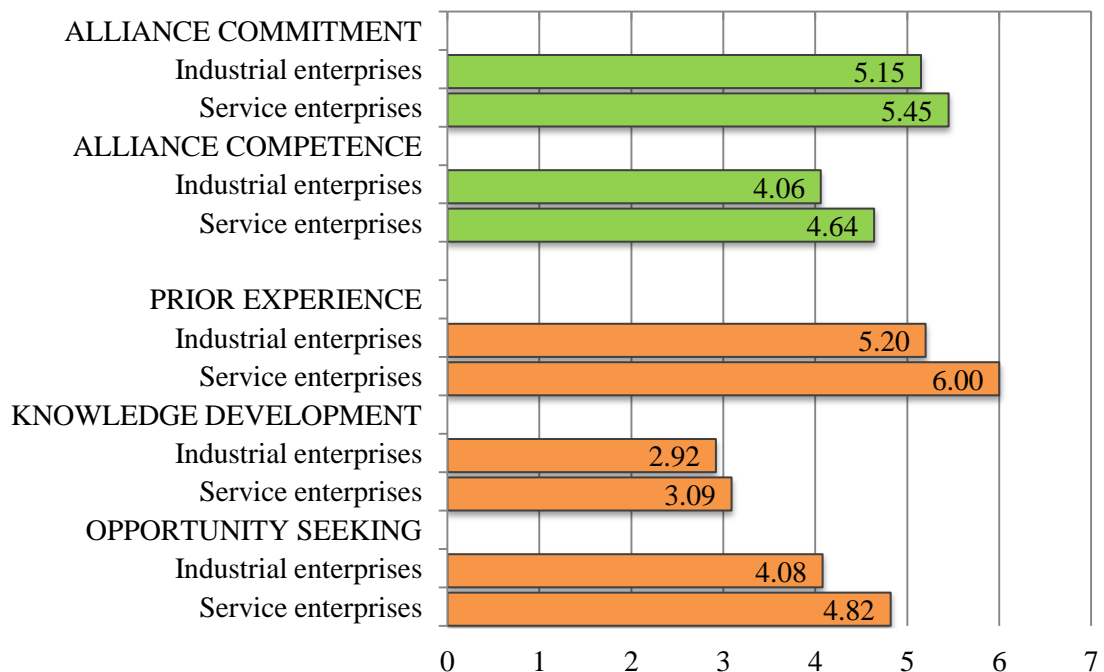


**Figure 13.** The results on brand alliance competence elements, 7-point scale.  
Source: compiled by the author.

Results of the opportunity seeking (4.67) may to some extent be shaped by the characteristics of the companies in the study sample. The companies which pose an established brand in the marketplace are appealing partners, and thus, may regularly be approached by lesser-known companies with co-operation proposals. Therefore, the well-known companies might not see the need to as actively search for new partners and opportunities themselves. However, companies need to be cautious in this respect as reactive behavioral tendencies constrain their options more than a proactive approach would do.

The figure also highlights that the companies operating in Estonia have a lot of prior experiences when it comes to operating within brand alliances. Previously presented findings related to companies' frequency of being involved in marketing activities with other organizations reaffirm this observation as it was established that all the participants in the study have been involved in brand alliances. Therefore, a high level of prior experiences (5.84) seems to be the dominant driver of alliance competence for the companies with a well-known brand in the Estonian market.

A brief overview of differences in alliance readiness among industrial and service enterprises show that the underlying patterns are similar (see Figure 14). However, the results reveal that companies who are in business of offering services have both higher level of alliance commitment and alliance competence, thereby exhibiting signs of being more ready to forge and operate within brand alliances. This finding is somewhat surprising in light of previous results as it was established that manufacturing companies see more value in alliances when achieving objectives.



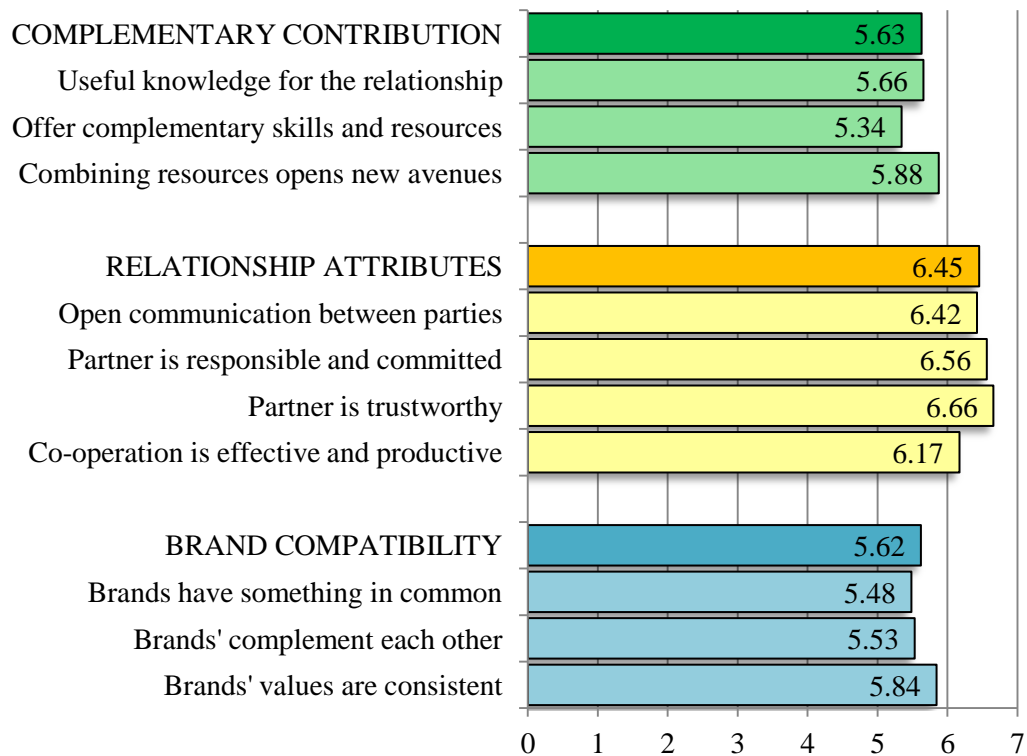
**Figure 14.** Alliance readiness elements per enterprise type, 7-point scale.  
Source: compiled by the author.

Prior experience may offer indicative explanations to this result. Service companies may be more flexible with alliance formations as the partners' endowments are not as high

compared to manufacturing companies. Thus, they can partake in more brand alliances and accumulate more experiences, whereas industrial enterprises are more constrained in their brand alliance activities by other organizations in their value-chain.

Overall, the results show that companies in Estonia who have an established brand perceive their brand alliance readiness to be relatively high. This may derive from the fact that these companies have substantial experience when it comes to operating in brand alliances and relatively high organizational alliance commitments. However, companies' alliance competence is lacking when it comes to internal knowledge development and, to a lesser extent, is undermined by their opportunity seeking behavior. As a result, there is still a lot of room for improvement to elevate companies' overall organizational brand alliance readiness.

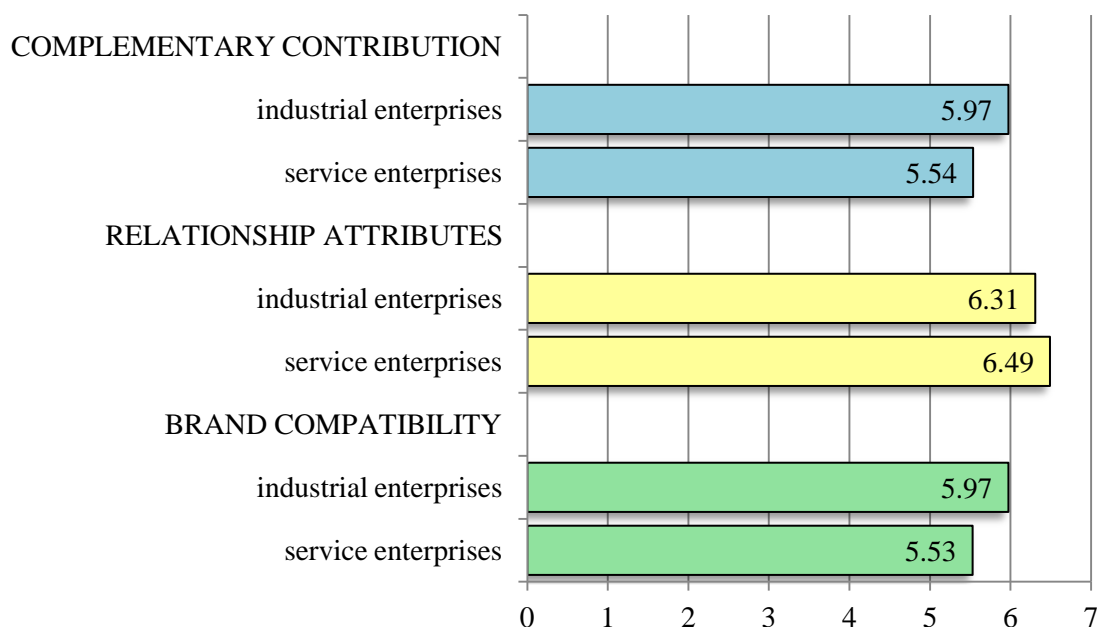
**Brand alliance partner selection.** Results pertaining to companies' expectations towards brand alliance partners show that the relationship attributes (6.45) take precedence over partners' complementary contributions (5.63) and brand compatibility (5.62) in the selection process (see Figure 15).



**Figure 15.** Relative importance of partner selection criteria, 7-point scale.  
Source: compiled by the author.

This implies that companies foremost seek partners which they perceive to be trustworthy, committed, and reliable. Furthermore, partnering brand's compatibility with company's own brand seems to be marginally less important than the counterparts' ability to contribute tangible and intangible complementary resources needed to obtain the set alliance goals. These results suggest that the Estonian marketers might be undervaluing the importance of brand-fit between the brands involved in the alliance. However, as previously discussed in the conceptual framework section of the thesis, researchers have established that the brand compatibility is one of the key antecedents to transfer brand associations, quality perception, brand awareness, and brand loyalty from one brand onto another. Therefore, companies' lack of emphasis on brand compatibility may hinder their efforts of achieving brand equity objectives through brand alliances. Interestingly though, study results presented earlier indicate that companies primarily see brand alliances as good means to fulfil brand equity objectives.

Furthermore, looking at the differences across industrial and service companies, it appears that manufacturing companies have higher complementary contribution and brand compatibility expectancies towards alliance partners than service companies (see Figure 16).



**Figure 16.** Partner selection considerations per enterprise type, 7-point scale.  
Source: compiled by the author.

This is in line with the finding pertaining to alliance objectives as it was shown that industrial companies see more value in brand alliances when striving to achieve operational performance objectives. Investments made by the partner into the alliance alleviate constraints on the company to provide all the necessary skills and input themselves. Partners who have abundance of complementary resources to offer to the manufacturing companies thereby make it easier to meet performance goals. However, this may lead to overdependence on the partners, which is why there still is a need for the quality relationship between partners to reduce the risk of exploitation.

Lastly, the analysis of the responses provided by the participants, concerning with which partner their company would ideally wish to enter into a brand alliance, offers somewhat contradictory results compared to the previously presented findings. Based on the key words in the reasons provided by the companies' representatives, the author has categorized the responses either to exhibit the characteristics of complementary contributions, relationship attributes or the brand compatibility criterion (see Table 8).

**Table 8.** Companies reasoning about ideal brand alliance partner selection

	Number of examples	Extracts from examples
Complementary contributions	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With company X to expand our customer base;</li> <li>• There are many but to name one then perhaps X, because it has a strong communication network;</li> <li>• Any IT company which can offer innovative solutions for our service stations;</li> <li>• Either X or Y, because they have high quality products.</li> </ul>
Relationship attributes	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With X, as they have been very good partners in the past;</li> <li>• We have already established a partnership with a firm we want to cooperate with and it is going smoothly;</li> <li>• Estonian companies which have a similar culture.</li> </ul>
Brand compatibility	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many major brands, which have a strong image;</li> <li>• Any food related brand, which shares the same brand values as us (natural, healthy, positive);</li> <li>• Cannot come up with any particular names right now, but brands with high awareness and quality perception;</li> <li>• Brand X because of their strong brand image.</li> </ul>

Source: compiled by the author based on the responses provided by the participants.

The results reveal that the relationship attributes are not the dominant driver when contemplating on which brand would be an ideal alliance partner. Evidently, most of the marketers' arguments referenced to partners' ability to either provide a strong brand as leverage (19) or offer complementary contributions (18). This implies that there is a discord between what companies look to gain from a brand alliance partner and what the companies base their partner selection process on. One explanation to this might be that in the ideal scenario companies take it as a given that the relationship is stable and effective, and thus look beyond relationship attributes. However, in real-life practical situations, the nature of the relation weighs more heavily against other benefits. Moreover, contemplations regarding hypothetical partnerships with ideal partners are void of any concrete reference points about what the relationship attributes might postulate.

Overall, this comparison provides insights about the partner selection process, and suggests that the relationship attributes might be seen more as a necessity rather than the ultimate benefit the partner needs to contribute to the alliance partnership. Therefore, organizations hoping to approach any of the Estonian companies with a well-known brand need to make sure they can at least offer complementary contributions and/or brand compatibility (or both) in addition to an effective relationship between the parties to gain approval. Furthermore, compatibility between partnering brands is marginally more important to companies than partner's complementary contributions.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The practice of forging brand alliances with other organizations in order to improve competitive advantage or overcome challenges has increasingly become a regular occurrence for companies over the past decades. This has sparked scholars' interest to more closely study this strategic cooperation form to further our understanding about its potential benefits and influences on consumer behavior. Despite a substantial body of literature elaborating on different aspects of brand alliances, there is still a knowledge gap as to which considerations drive companies in the brand alliance forging process. To this end, the present thesis looks to fill this gap by studying the main drivers from a business-to-business perspective.

The present thesis interprets the term brand alliance to pertain any marketing activities, which present the involved brands simultaneously to the consumers, taken by companies in co-operation with other organizations. Therefore, this thesis takes a generic view without focusing on any particular types of brand alliances, such as co-branding, bundling, ingredient, joint promotion or licensing alliances. Driven by this broad definition of the constructs, the author proposes a conceptual framework from a companies' perspective, which is applicable for all brand alliance types. The framework is constructed based on prior scholars' works and postulates that companies have three major areas of contemplation when setting out to forge a brand alliance: brand alliance objectives, organizational alliance readiness, and alliance partner selection. Within brand alliance objectives, it is possible to distinguish between operational performance, market opportunities, organizational capabilities, and brand equity objectives. With regard to alliance readiness, companies need to separately take into account both alliance commitment and alliance competence to ascertain its overall willingness and preparation levels. In the alliance partner selection process, it is necessary to individually assess partners' complementary contributions, projected relationship attributes, and brand compatibility. To employ the conceptualized framework and

ascertain each element's relative importance in relation to each other, it was necessary to conduct an empirical study.

Therefore, a quantitative study was carried out among the Estonian companies. In particular companies who already own a strong and well-known brand in the Estonian market were approached during the data collection process. This specific target group was chosen due to their presumable unique feature of possessing experience on how to build a strong brand in the set market. The total population purposive sampling technique was utilized in which the defining characteristic of the population was the ownership of a well-known brand. Research agency's TNS Emor prior work on this subject was used as a basis in establishing the most suitable companies to be included in this study. The data was collected using an online survey which was distributed electronically to the selected companies' representatives whose job entailed managing marketing activities. The questionnaire primarily consisted of semantic differential questions deriving from three measurement scales composed by the author based on various scholars' prior works. Two open-ended questions were added to allow participants to express their thoughts on this topic. A total of 64 usable responses were obtained between the time period 30.03-10.04.2015. Confirmatory factor analyses were used to establish the validity and reliability of the constructed scales for the purpose of this study.

The results of the study show that the majority of companies with a well-known brand are regularly involved in brand alliances and have extensive experiences in this regard. In fact, almost half of the companies engage in brand alliances on a monthly basis. Moreover, co-operation is most commonly joint promotional in nature, but brand bundling and co-branding alliances are also relatively widely used by the Estonian marketers. Furthermore, the Estonian companies are foremost interested in brand alliances to obtain brand equity related objectives (6.04 on a 7-point Likert scale). In other words, they look to create new positive brand associations, increase customer loyalty, raise brand awareness, and quality perception. Brand alliances are also seen as a useful means by which to achieve the operational performance objectives (5.31), in particular, to induce growth in sales values and improve companies' market position. Surprisingly, the marketers have reservations about brand alliances' ability to assist in

enhancing organizational capabilities (4.58). Additionally, the results showed that companies do not think that brand alliances can be an effective means through which to enter into new marketplaces. Furthermore, compared to service enterprises, industrial companies regard alliances to be more useful in achieving any type of objectives, especially when it comes to operational performance goals.

An evaluation of Estonian companies' alliance readiness reveals interesting results. Firstly, 41% of companies perceive themselves to be highly ready to operate within brand alliances and in total 89% perceive it be above average. However, individual assessment of alliance commitment and alliance competence shows that there are notable deficiencies with regard to the latter. In other words, companies with a well-known brand are not as competent in brand alliances as they perceive themselves to be. This mainly derives from the fact that companies are not concerned with developing their own knowledge pertaining to alliances (3.06), and to a lesser extent from the lack of capabilities to seek out alliance opportunities themselves (4.67). Therefore, companies' alliance competence is primarily acquired through lessons learned from prior experiences (5.84). The Estonian companies could greatly benefit from and expand their competence by taking a more proactive approach and not relying on the learning-by-doing attitude. This would open up more alliance possibilities which could be more profoundly in line with the companies' underlying business goals. Furthermore, the results show that alliance commitment, competence, and thereby organizational alliance readiness is higher among the service enterprises. This is an intriguing observation in light of the previously mentioned results which suggested that industrial enterprises see more value in brand alliances when it comes to achieving companies' objectives.

Finally, the results indicate that in the brand alliance partner selection process, companies in Estonia perceive relationship attributes (6.45) to be the most important aspect, followed by partners' ability to offer complementary contributions (5.63), and the compatibility between brands involved in the alliance (5.62). This implies that companies are foremost looking for partners who are trustworthy, reliable, and committed to the partnership; and are least concerned about the existence of brand-fit between the parties. However, this may hamper companies' achievement of brand

equity objectives as prior researchers have established that compatibility is the key to initiating the equity enhancing process between brands. Therefore, it is recommended that Estonian companies place a greater emphasis on brand compatibility considerations in the partner selection process. Furthermore, the results indicate that in an abstract setting where companies are able to choose any partner, the companies are less driven by relationship attributes and dominantly drawn to a partner who can offer either superior complementary resources or a strong brand to leverage in alliance activities.

The present study has several limitations that need to be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. Firstly, the sample size is relatively small, consisting of 64 observations. This results from the premeditated intent of only studying the views of companies who possess a well-known brand in the Estonian market. Therefore, the results are not generalizable to reflect the views of all the companies in Estonia. Secondly, while the study does compare differences across industrial and service enterprises, it does not take a closer look at each economic sector individually. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that companies' needs and thoughts in relation to brand alliances differ, e.g. within specific manufacturing subsectors. Furthermore, the present study does not include any control variable to draw parallels between companies' overall objectives and brand alliance objectives. As a result, there is a lack of grounds on which to evaluate whether, for example, the motivation to enter new markets derives from reservations about alliances' usefulness in this regard or companies' own general reluctance to strive towards such objectives.

The results of the thesis indicate several avenues for the future research to explore. First, the present work takes a narrow view when studying the Estonian marketers by only focusing on companies who have already established a well-known brand in the Estonian market. To a large extent, these are mainly sizable companies with a rich history. However, future research could expand on marketers' understanding of alliances in the Estonian market by concentrating on companies with a lesser-known brand, and comparing their views and convictions related to brand alliances with the present findings. This would allow a closer investigation of any discords pertaining from companies' brand position in the market. Secondly, the present study's generic approach of studying brand alliances universally without specifically focusing on a

single type of brand alliance could be used as a baseline by future research when examining different types of brand alliances separately. This would be a welcome addition to the brand alliance literature as it would elaborate in more detail upon aspects distinguishing the explained five different types of brand alliances. Thirdly, future research could take a more direct case based approach investigating the main success and failure stories in the Estonian market to extend marketers' knowledge on the alliance governance. Furthermore, there is still a lack of understanding whether companies' objectives and expectations for partners differ when they ally with international or domestic organizations. Therefore, future research could investigate this matter in more detail.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. Survey Questionnaire



Lugupeetud vastaja!

Minu nimi on Tanel Same ja pöördun Teie poole abipalvega. Kirjutan oma Tartu Ülikooli õpingute raames magistritööd, milles uurin Eesti ettevõtete valmidust ja motive teha teiste organisatsioonidega turundusalast koostööd. Turundusalane koostöö hõlmab antud kontekstis kõiki tegevusi, mis tutvustavad ja presenteerivad tarbijatele Teie ettevõtte brändi koos mõne teise ettevõtte/organisatsiooni brändiga (nt läbi toodete, teenuste, ühiskampaaniate, kommunikatsiooni jne).

Teie bränd on Eesti turul väga tuntud ja uuringu seisukohast on **hädavajalik saada tagasisidet just Teie ettevõttelt**. Olen Teile väga tänulik, kui leiate 10 minutit aega, et täita lühike küsimustik.

Ette tänades  
Tanel Same  
tanelsame@gmail.com

**Teie ettevõtte tegevusvaldkond ja brändi nimi**  
(Vastused on anonüümsed ning tulemused ei kajasta brändide nimesid)

**Kas Teie ettevõtte on teinud turundusalast koostööd teiste organisatsioonidega?**

Kui jah, siis tooge näiteid millistes (turundus)projektides on Teie bränd olnud seotud teiste brändidega.

**Kui tihti teete turundusalast koostööd teiste organisatsioonidega?**

- Mitte kunagi
- Vähemalt kord kuus
- Vähemalt kord kvartalis
- Vähemalt kord aastas
- Vähemalt kord 2 aasta jooksul
- Muu (palun täpsustage)

## Appendix 1 continues

**Palun hinnake 7-pallisel Likerti skaalal oma nõusolekut järgmiste väidetega.**  
Palun märgi üks ristike iga väite/rea kohta

Teie ettevõtte on huvitatud tegema teiste ettevõtetega turundusalaselt koostööd selleks, et ...	1 - pole üldse nõus	2	3	4	5	6	7 - nõustun täielikult
...suurendada müüki	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...parandada oma turupositsiooni	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...saada uus lisatuluallikas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...vähendada oma tootmis- ja/või kommunikatsioonikulusid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...omandada uusi oskusi ja teadmisi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...saada ligipääsu uutele infokanalitele	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...täiendada oma ettevõtte võimekusi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...siseneda uutele turgudele	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...laiendada oma kliendibaasi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...kiirendada oma toodete/teenuste levikut	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...tõsta oma brändi tajutavat kvaliteeti tarbijate silmis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...suurendada tarbijate lojaalsust oma brändi vastu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...tõsta oma brändi tuntust	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...luua positiivseid assotsiatsioone oma brändiga	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Kuidas hindate 7-punktilisel Likerti skaalal oma ettevõtte valmidust teha turundusalast koostööd teiste organisatsioonidega?**

1 - väga madal      2 - madal      3 - pigem madal      4 - keskpärane      5 - pigem kõrge      6 - kõrge      7 - väga kõrge

**Palun hinnake oma nõusolekut alljärgnevate väidetega 7-punktilisel Likerti skaalal.**  
Palun märgi üks ristike iga väite/rea kohta

	1 - Ei nõustu üldse	2	3	4	5	6	7 - nõustun täielikult
Teie ettevõtte juhtkond pooldab mõtet teha turundusalast koostööd teiste organisatsioonidega, et saavutada oma ettevõtte eesmäärke	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Turundusalased partnersuhted mängivad olulist rolli Teie ettevõtte tulevases edus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Juhtkond innustab looma turundusalaseid koostöösuhteid teiste organisatsioonidega	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teie ettevõttel on palju koostöökogemusi teiste organisatsioonidega	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teie ettevõtte on osalenud mitmes turundusprojektis koos teiste organisatsioonidega	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teie ettevõttel on mitmeid turundusalaseid koostööpartnereid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teie ettevõtte õpetab oma töötajatele, kuidas luua turundusalaseid koostöösuhteid teiste organisatsioonidega	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teie ettevõttel on koolitusprogramm, mis õpetab, kuidas hoida koostöösuhteid teiste organisatsioonidega	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teie ettevõtte teab, kuidas koolitada töötajaid teiste organisatsioonidega efektiivsemalt koostööd tegema	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teie ettevõtte otsib pidevalt uusi turundusalaseid koostöövõimalusi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teie ettevõtte otsib aktiivselt uusi potentsiaalseid turundusalaseid koostööpartnereid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teie ettevõtte otsib turundusvõrgustikke, mis soodustavad ettevõtte turundustegevust	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Appendix 1 continues

Nimetage bränd, millega Teie ettevõtte sooviks teha kõige rohkem turundusalast koostööd.  
Selgitage lühidalt miks?

**Palun hinnake 7-punktsel Likerti skaalal iga teguri olulisust Teie ettevõtte jaoks.**  
Kuigi ideaalis on kõikide faktorite olemasolu teretulnud, proovige siiski säilitada kriitilist meelt :)

Kui tähtis on Teie ettevõtte jaoks potentsiaalse koostööpartneri juures, et ...	1 - Pole üldse oluline	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Äärmiselt oluline
...partner omab teadmisi, mis võivad koostööle kasuks tulla	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...koostööpartner omab oskusi ja teadmisi, mis Teie ettevõttele puuduvad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...partneri ja Teie ettevõtte ressursside ühendamisel on võimalik saavutada eesmäärke, mida Teie üksi ei suudaks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...partnerite vahel toimuks avatud kommunikatsioon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...partner täidab alati kõik oma kohustused ja lubadused	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...partner on usaldusväärne	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...koostöö partneriga oleks alati efektiivne ja produktiivne	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...partneri brändil on midagi ühist Teie ettevõtte brändiga	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...partneri bränd täiendab Teie ettevõtte brändi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...partneri brändi väärtused sobivad kokku Teie ettevõtte brändi omadega	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Suur aitäh!**

**Kas soovite lõpetuseks midagi lisada?**

Source: compiled by the author.

## Appendix 2. Correlation Matrixes

		OBJ_ PER1	OBJ_ PER2	OBJ_ PER3	OBJ_ PER4	OBJ_ CAP1	OBJ_ CAP2	OBJ_ CAP3	OBJ_ OPP1	OBJ_ OPP2	OBJ_ OPP3	OBJ_ BRA1	OBJ_ BRA2	OBJ_ BRA3	OBJ_ BRA4
OBJ_PER1	Pearson Correlation	1	.762**	.720**	.510**	.188	.375**	.351**	.299	.459**	.490**	.302*	.071	.214	.106
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.136	.002	.004	.016	.000	.000	.015	.576	.089	.405
OBJ_PER2	Pearson Correlation	.762**	1	.693**	.463**	.285*	.427**	.402**	.379**	.445**	.430**	.385**	.159	.270*	.230
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.022	.000	.001	.002	.000	.000	.002	.211	.031	.067
OBJ_PER3	Pearson Correlation	.720**	.693**	1	.594**	.324**	.357**	.361**	.349**	.413**	.475**	.157	.001	.047	.020
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.009	.004	.003	.005	.001	.000	.216	.994	.712	.873
OBJ_PER4	Pearson Correlation	.510**	.463**	.594**	1	.284*	.452**	.369**	.326**	.287*	.386**	.151	-.005	.137	.091
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.023	.000	.003	.009	.021	.002	.234	.967	.282	.476
OBJ_CAP1	Pearson Correlation	.188	.285*	.324**	.284*	1	.740**	.797**	.524**	.366**	.506**	.410**	.338**	.354**	.357**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.136	.022	.009	.023		.000	.000	.000	.003	.000	.001	.006	.004	.004
OBJ_CAP2	Pearson Correlation	.375**	.427**	.357**	.452**	.740**	1	.717**	.566**	.544**	.617**	.339**	.190	.372**	.207
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.004	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.006	.133	.002	.101
OBJ_CAP3	Pearson Correlation	.351**	.402**	.361**	.369**	.797**	.717**	1	.576**	.389**	.512**	.414**	.286*	.385**	.308*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.001	.003	.003	.000	.000		.000	.001	.000	.001	.022	.002	.013
OBJ_OPP1	Pearson Correlation	.299	.379**	.349**	.326**	.524**	.566**	.576**	1	.688**	.676**	.332**	.237	.366**	.267*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.002	.005	.009	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.007	.059	.003	.033
OBJ_OPP2	Pearson Correlation	.459**	.445**	.413**	.287*	.366**	.544**	.389**	.688**	1	.682**	.233	.079	.183	.097
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.021	.003	.000	.001	.000		.000	.063	.536	.148	.447
OBJ_OPP3	Pearson Correlation	.490**	.430**	.475**	.386**	.506**	.617**	.512**	.676**	.682**	1	.393**	.177	.361**	.137
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.002	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.001	.162	.003	.280
OBJ_BRA1	Pearson Correlation	.302*	.385**	.157	.151	.410**	.339**	.414**	.332**	.233	.393**	1	.732**	.675**	.712**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.002	.216	.234	.001	.006	.001	.007	.063	.001		.000	.000	.000
OBJ_BRA2	Pearson Correlation	.071	.159	.001	-.005	.338**	.190	.286*	.237	.079	.177	.732**	1	.691**	.757**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.576	.211	.994	.967	.006	.133	.022	.059	.536	.162	.000		.000	.000
OBJ_BRA3	Pearson Correlation	.214	.270*	.047	.137	.354**	.372**	.385**	.366**	.183	.361**	.675**	.691**	1	.734**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.089	.031	.712	.282	.004	.002	.002	.003	.148	.003	.000	.000		.000
OBJ_BRA4	Pearson Correlation	.106	.230	.020	.091	.357**	.207	.308*	.267*	.097	.137	.712**	.757**	.734**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.405	.067	.873	.476	.004	.101	.013	.033	.447	.280	.000	.000	.000	

N=64; \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed);

Appendix 2 continues

		REA_ COM1	REA_ COM2	REA_ COM3	REA_ XP1	REA_ XP2	REA_ XP3	REA_ DEV1	REA_ DEV2	REA_ DEV3	REA_ SEE1	REA_ SEE2	REA_ SEE3
REA_COM1	Pearson Correlation	1	.680**	.738**	.445**	.448**	.470**	.389**	.236	.229	.504**	.442**	.474**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001	.061	.069	.000	.000	.000
REA_COM2	Pearson Correlation	.680**	1	.780**	.453**	.438**	.557**	.580**	.360**	.325**	.377**	.433**	.520**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.004	.009	.002	.000	.000
REA_COM3	Pearson Correlation	.738**	.780**	1	.511**	.548**	.554**	.463**	.215	.259*	.488**	.463**	.411**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.089	.038	.000	.000	.001
REA_XP1	Pearson Correlation	.445**	.453**	.511**	1	.798**	.691**	.327**	.128	.300*	.420**	.370**	.272*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.008	.314	.016	.001	.003	.030
REA_XP2	Pearson Correlation	.448**	.438**	.548**	.798**	1	.758**	.358**	.186	.233	.398**	.277*	.174
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.004	.142	.064	.001	.027	.170
REA_XP3	Pearson Correlation	.470**	.557**	.554**	.691**	.758**	1	.413**	.153	.292*	.475**	.434**	.327**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.001	.229	.019	.000	.000	.008
REA_DEV1	Pearson Correlation	.389**	.580**	.463**	.327**	.358**	.413**	1	.676**	.660**	.132	.120	.120
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.008	.004	.001		.000	.000	.298	.345	.344
REA_DEV2	Pearson Correlation	.236	.360**	.215	.128	.186	.153	.676**	1	.655**	.071	.069	.076
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.061	.004	.089	.314	.142	.229	.000		.000	.576	.587	.551
REA_DEV3	Pearson Correlation	.229	.325**	.259*	.300*	.233	.292*	.660**	.655**	1	.140	.124	.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.069	.009	.038	.016	.064	.019	.000	.000		.268	.331	.559
REA_SEE1	Pearson Correlation	.504**	.377**	.488**	.420**	.398**	.475**	.132	.071	.140	1	.829**	.659**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.002	.000	.001	.001	.000	.298	.576	.268		.000	.000
REA_SEE2	Pearson Correlation	.442**	.433**	.463**	.370**	.277*	.434**	.120	.069	.124	.829**	1	.747**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.003	.027	.000	.345	.587	.331	.000		.000
REA_SEE3	Pearson Correlation	.474**	.520**	.411**	.272*	.174	.327**	.120	.076	.074	.659**	.747**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.030	.170	.008	.344	.551	.559	.000	.000	

N=64; \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Appendix 2 continues

		SEL_ COM1	SEL_ COM2	SEL_ COM3	SEL_ REL1	SEL_ REL2	SEL_ REL3	SEL_ REL4	SEL_ BRA1	SEL_ BRA2	SEL_ BRA3
SEL_COM1	Pearson Correlation	1	.743**	.647**	.214	.273*	.183	.335**	-.028	.135	.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.089	.029	.149	.007	.826	.288	.608
SEL_COM2	Pearson Correlation	.743**	1	.697**	.259*	.266*	.131	.314*	-.065	-.020	.005
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.039	.034	.302	.011	.611	.873	.969
SEL_COM3	Pearson Correlation	.647**	.697**	1	.211	.207	.175	.256*	.092	.126	.169
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.095	.100	.166	.041	.471	.320	.182
SEL_REL1	Pearson Correlation	.214	.259*	.211	1	.605**	.530**	.532**	.176	.125	.214
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.089	.039	.095		.000	.000	.000	.163	.324	.090
SEL_REL2	Pearson Correlation	.273*	.266*	.207	.605**	1	.844**	.606**	.096	.126	.096
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029	.034	.100	.000		.000	.000	.448	.321	.450
SEL_REL3	Pearson Correlation	.183	.131	.175	.530**	.844**	1	.575**	.064	.087	.079
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.149	.302	.166	.000	.000		.000	.613	.493	.535
SEL_REL4	Pearson Correlation	.335**	.314*	.256*	.532**	.606**	.575**	1	.189	.144	.187
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.011	.041	.000	.000	.000		.135	.255	.139
SEL_BRA1	Pearson Correlation	-.028	-.065	.092	.176	.096	.064	.189	1	.689**	.827**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.826	.611	.471	.163	.448	.613	.135		.000	.000
SEL_BRA2	Pearson Correlation	.135	-.020	.126	.125	.126	.087	.144	.689**	1	.717**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.288	.873	.320	.324	.321	.493	.255	.000		.000
SEL_BRA3	Pearson Correlation	.065	.005	.169	.214	.096	.079	.187	.827**	.717**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.608	.969	.182	.090	.450	.535	.139	.000	.000	

N=64; \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: compiled by the author.

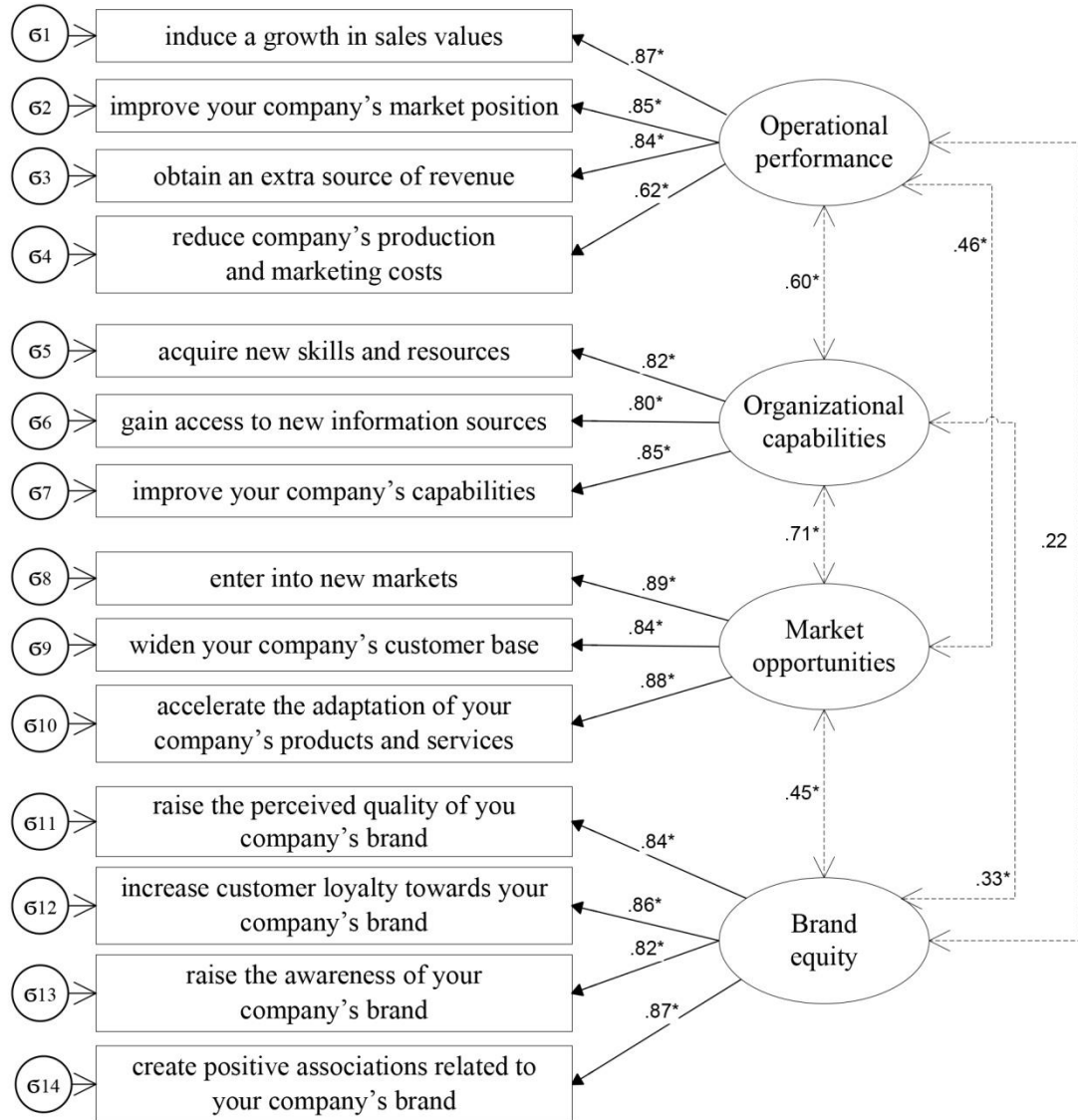
### Appendix 3. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test Results

		Brand Alliance Objective Scale	Brand Alliance Readiness Scale	Alliance Partner Selection Scale
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.822	0.810	0.743
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	611.709	528.687	366.101
	df	91	66	45
	Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000

Source: compiled by the author.

## Appendix 4. CFA Results for the Alliance Objectives Scale

### A) Measurement model and parameters



All coefficient values are standardized

\*  $p < 0.05$

Source: compiled by the author.

Appendix 4 continues

**B) Model Fit Summary**

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	34	96.79	71	.02	1.36
Saturated model	105	.00	0		
Independence model	14	670.22	91	.00	7.37

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.14	.83	.76	.56
Saturated model	.00	1.00		
Independence model	.78	.29	.18	.25

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.86	.81	.96	.94	.96
Saturated model	1.00		1.00		1.00
Independence model	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00

Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
Default model	.78	.67	.75
Saturated model	.00	.00	.00
Independence model	1.00	.00	.00

NCP

Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	25.79	3.99	55.65
Saturated model	.00	.00	.00
Independence model	579.22	500.70	665.22

FMIN

Model	FMIN	F0	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	1.54	.41	.06	.88
Saturated model	.00	.00	.00	.00
Independence model	10.64	9.19	7.95	10.56

Appendix 4 continues

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.08	.03	.11	.14
Independence model	.32	.30	.34	.00

AIC

Model	AIC	BCC	BIC	CAIC
Default model	164.79	186.04	238.20	272.20
Saturated model	210.00	275.63	436.68	541.68
Independence model	698.22	706.97	728.44	742.44

ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
Default model	2.62	2.27	3.09	2.95
Saturated model	3.33	3.33	3.33	4.38
Independence model	11.08	9.84	12.45	11.22

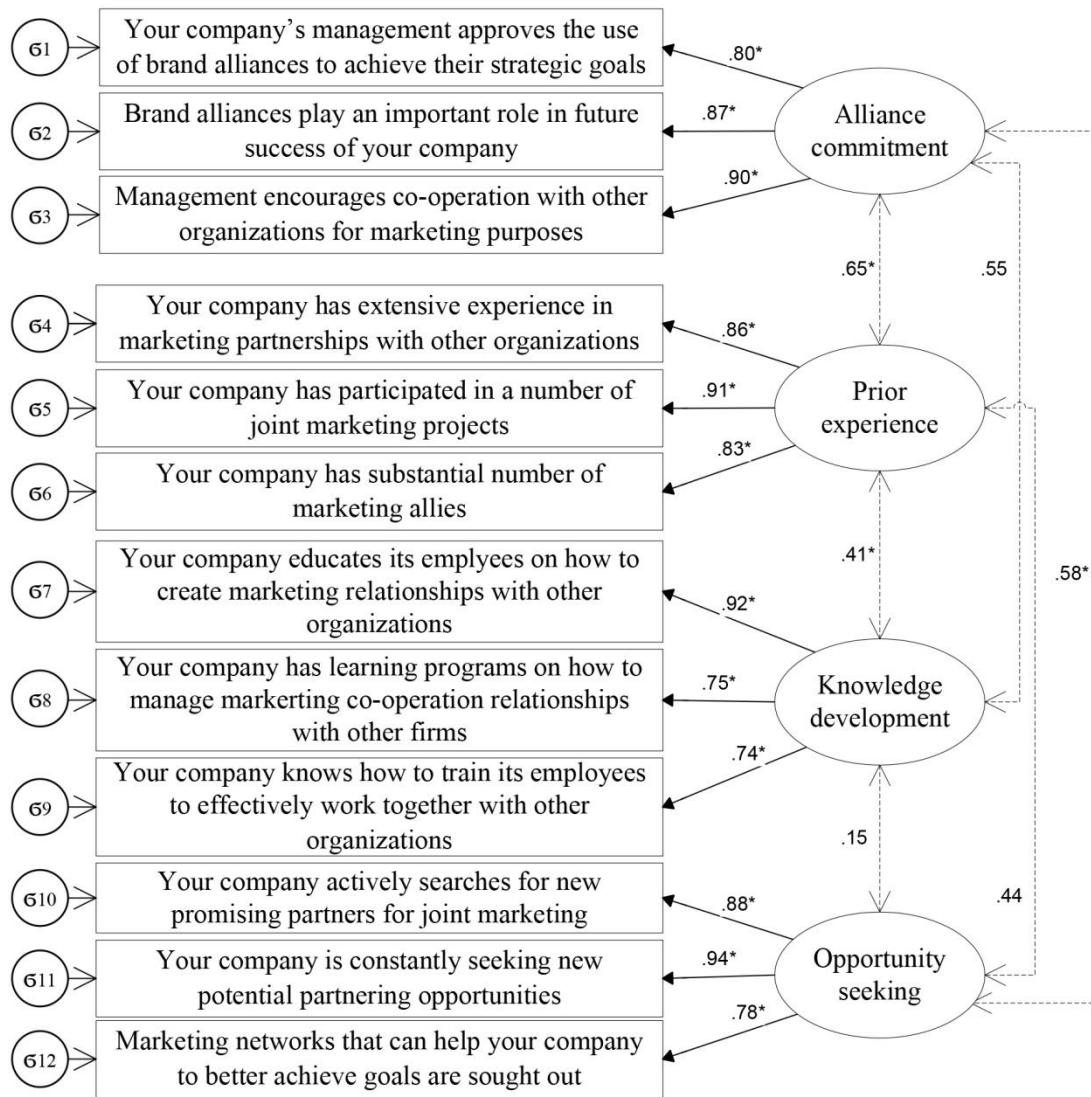
HOELTER

Model	HOELTER	HOELTER
	.05	.01
Default model	60	67
Independence model	11	12

Source: compiled by the author.

## Appendix 5. CFA Results for the Alliance Readiness Scale

### A) Measurement model and parameters



All coefficient values are standardized

\*  $p < 0.05$

Source: compiled by the author.

Appendix 5 continues

**B) Model Fit Summary**

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	30	65.72	48	.05	1.37
Saturated model	78	.00	0		
Independence model	12	572.62	66	.00	8.68

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.11	.86	.77	.53
Saturated model	.00	1.00		
Independence model	.75	.31	.18	.26

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.89	.84	.97	.95	.97
Saturated model	1.00		1.00		1.00
Independence model	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00

Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
Default model	.73	.64	.70
Saturated model	.00	.00	.00
Independence model	1.00	.00	.00

NCP

Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	17.72	.40	43.08
Saturated model	.00	.00	.00
Independence model	506.62	433.89	586.81

FMIN

Model	FMIN	F0	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	1.04	.28	.01	.68
Saturated model	.00	.00	.00	.00
Independence model	9.09	8.04	6.89	9.31

Appendix 5 continues

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.08	.01	.12	.18
Independence model	.35	.32	.38	.00

AIC

Model	AIC	BCC	BIC	CAIC
Default model	125.72	141.32	190.48	220.48
Saturated model	156.00	196.56	324.39	402.39
Independence model	596.62	602.86	622.52	634.52

ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
Default model	2.00	1.72	2.40	2.24
Saturated model	2.48	2.48	2.48	3.12
Independence model	9.47	8.32	10.74	9.57

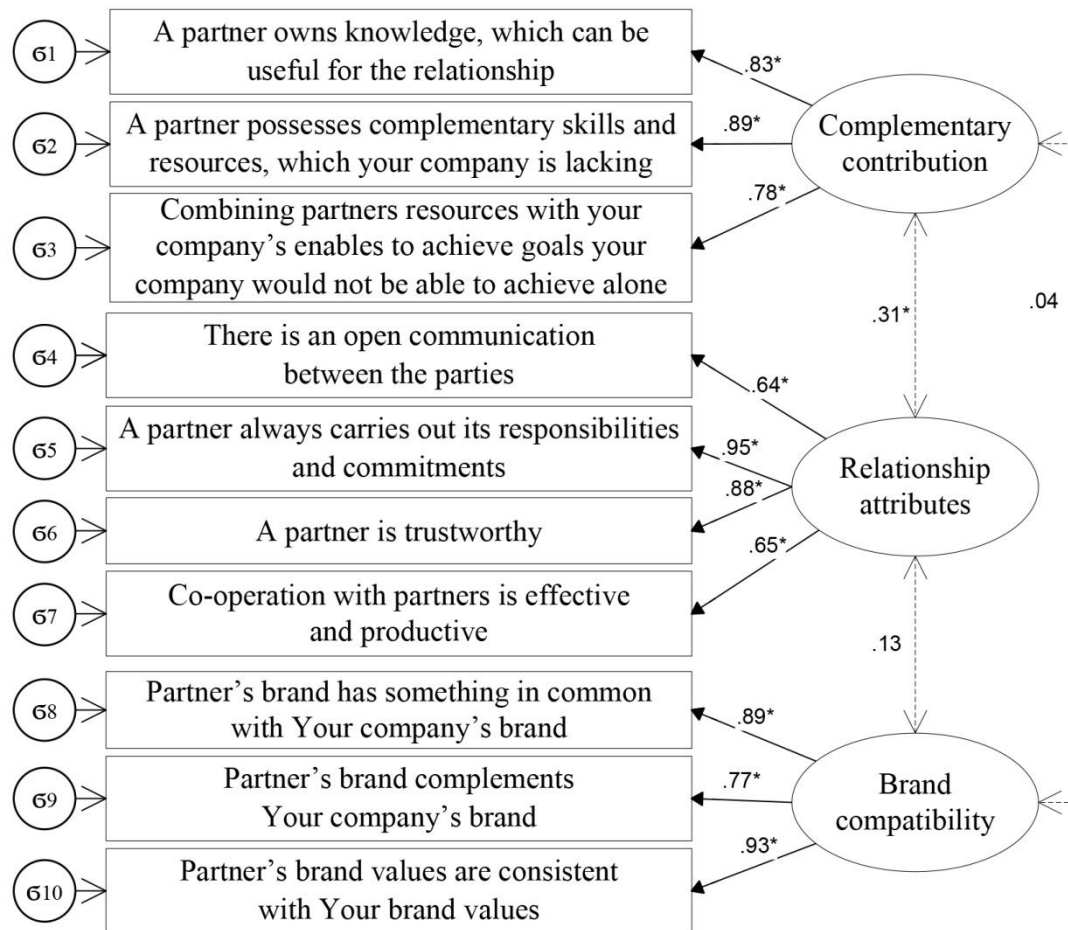
HOELTER

Model	HOELTER	HOELTER
	.05	.01
Default model	63	71
Independence model	10	11

Source: compiled by the author.

## Appendix 6. CFA Results for the Partner Selection Scale

### A) Measurement model and parameters



All coefficient values are standardized

\*  $p < 0.05$

Source: compiled by the author.

Appendix 6 continues

**B) Model Fit Summary**

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	23	28.33	32	.65	.89
Saturated model	55	.00	0		
Independence model	10	392.03	45	.00	8.71

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.07	.92	.86	.54
Saturated model	.00	1.00		
Independence model	.38	.44	.31	.36

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
	Delta1	rho1	Delta2	rho2	
Default model	.93	.90	1.01	1.01	1.00
Saturated model	1.00		1.00		1.00
Independence model	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00

Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
Default model	.71	.66	.71
Saturated model	.00	.00	.00
Independence model	1.00	.00	.00

NCP

Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	.00	.00	12.35
Saturated model	.00	.00	.00
Independence model	347.03	287.48	414.05

FMIN

Model	FMIN	F0	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	.45	.00	.00	.20
Saturated model	.00	.00	.00	.00
Independence model	6.22	5.51	4.56	6.57

Appendix 6 continues

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.00	.00	.08	.83
Independence model	.35	.32	.38	.00

AIC

Model	AIC	BCC	BIC	CAIC
Default model	74.33	84.06	123.98	146.98
Saturated model	110.00	133.27	228.74	283.74
Independence model	412.03	416.26	433.62	443.62

ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
Default model	1.18	1.24	1.43	1.33
Saturated model	1.75	1.75	1.75	2.12
Independence model	6.54	5.59	7.60	6.61

HOELTER

Model	HOELTER	HOELTER
	.05	.01
Default model	103	119
Independence model	10	12

Source: compiled by the author.

## Appendix 7. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients

	Responses	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Brand alliance objectives scale</b>			
Operational performance	64	4	0.863
Market opportunities	64	3	0.865
Organizational capabilities	64	3	0.897
Brand equity	64	4	0.903
<b>Brand alliance readiness scale</b>			
Alliance commitment	64	3	0.889
Prior experience	64	3	0.896
Knowledge development	64	3	0.852
Opportunity seeking	64	3	0.898
<b>Brand alliance partner selection scale</b>			
Complementary contribution	64	3	0.873
Relationship attributes	64	4	0.861
Brand compatibility	64	3	0.898

Source: compiled by the author.

## Appendix 8. Results of the One-Sample T-test

### A) Brand alliance objectives scale items

One-Sample Statistics					One-Sample Test					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Test Value = 5.34					
					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
OBJ_PER1	64	5.98	1.363	.170	3.783	63	.000	.644	.30	.98
OBJ_PER2	64	5.78	1.327	.166	2.660	63	.010	.441	.11	.77
OBJ_PER3	64	4.88	1.714	.214	-2.171	63	.034	-.465	-.89	-.04
OBJ_PER4	64	4.61	1.590	.199	-3.677	63	.000	-.731	-1.13	-.33
OBJ_CAP1	64	4.27	1.748	.218	-4.917	63	.000	-1.074	-1.51	-.64
OBJ_CAP2	64	4.84	1.394	.174	-2.848	63	.006	-.496	-.84	-.15
OBJ_CAP3	64	4.64	1.516	.189	-3.691	63	.000	-.699	-1.08	-.32
OBJ_OPP1	64	4.58	1.423	.178	-4.283	63	.000	-.762	-1.12	-.41
OBJ_OPP2	64	5.55	1.308	.164	1.265	63	.211	.207	-.12	.53
OBJ_OPP3	64	5.52	1.368	.171	1.027	63	.308	.176	-.17	.52
OBJ_BRA1	64	5.94	1.153	.144	4.146	63	.000	.598	.31	.89
OBJ_BRA2	64	6.02	1.148	.143	4.709	63	.000	.676	.39	.96
OBJ_BRA3	64	5.95	1.302	.163	3.766	63	.000	.613	.29	.94
OBJ_BRA4	64	6.25	.909	.114	8.013	63	.000	.910	.68	1.14

B) Brand alliance readiness scale items

One-Sample Statistics					One-Sample Test					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Test Value = 4.76					
					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
REA_COM1	64	6.03	1.054	.132	9.652	63	.000	1.271	1.01	1.53
REA_COM2	64	5.22	1.253	.157	2.929	63	.005	.459	.15	.77
REA_COM3	64	5.11	1.323	.165	2.113	63	.039	.349	.02	.68
REA_XP1	64	5.72	1.339	.167	5.729	63	.000	.959	.62	1.29
REA_XP2	64	5.95	1.147	.143	8.323	63	.000	1.193	.91	1.48
REA_XP3	64	5.84	1.324	.166	6.548	63	.000	1.084	.75	1.41
REA_DEV1	64	3.42	1.401	.175	-7.642	63	.000	-1.338	-1.69	-.99
REA_DEV2	64	2.45	1.221	.153	-15.120	63	.000	-2.307	-2.61	-2.00
REA_DEV3	64	3.30	1.477	.185	-7.927	63	.000	-1.463	-1.83	-1.09
REA_SEE1	64	4.91	1.591	.199	.735	63	.465	.146	-.25	.54
REA_SEE2	64	4.55	1.532	.191	-1.113	63	.270	-.213	-.60	.17
REA_SEE3	64	4.56	1.489	.186	-1.061	63	.293	-.198	-.57	.17

C) Brand alliance partner selection scale items

One-Sample Statistics					One-Sample Test					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Test Value = 5.95					
					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
SEL_COM1	64	5.66	1.211	.151	-1.940	63	.057	-.294	-.60	.01
SEL_COM2	64	5.34	1.263	.158	-3.841	63	.000	-.606	-.92	-.29
SEL_COM3	64	5.88	1.241	.155	-.484	63	.630	-.075	-.38	.23
SEL_REL1	64	6.42	.813	.102	4.645	63	.000	.472	.27	.67
SEL_REL2	64	6.56	.833	.104	5.880	63	.000	.613	.40	.82
SEL_REL3	64	6.66	.821	.103	6.884	63	.000	.706	.50	.91
SEL_REL4	64	6.17	.969	.121	1.832	63	.072	.222	-.02	.46
SEL_BRA1	64	5.48	1.098	.137	-3.392	63	.001	-.466	-.74	-.19
SEL_BRA2	64	5.53	1.038	.130	-3.226	63	.002	-.419	-.68	-.16
SEL_BRA3	64	5.84	1.116	.139	-.762	63	.449	-.106	-.38	.17

Source: compiled by the author.

**Appendix 9. Results of the Independent Sample T-test**

**Group Statistics**

	ownership	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
OBJ_OPP1	Estonia	27	4.63	1.445	.278
	Foreign	37	4.54	1.426	.234

**Independent Samples Test**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
OBJ_OPP1	Equal variances assumed	.207	.651	.245	62	.807	.089	.363	-.636	.815
	Equal variances not assumed			.245	55.745	.807	.089	.364	-.640	.818

Source: compiled by the author.

## Appendix 10. Brand Alliance Objectives per Business Type



Source: compiled by the author.

## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

### BRÄNDIDE KOOSTÖÖALASED EESMÄRGID, ETTEVÕTETE KOOSTÖÖVALMIDUS JA PARTNERITE VALIMINE EESTIS

Tanel Same

Tarbijate tähelepanu ja soosingu pälvimine tänapäeva teabeküllastunud ühiskonnas on ettevõtete jaoks üha keerulisem ülesanne. Inimeste kokkupuuted lugematu hulga organisatsioonide väärtuspakkumistega on õpetanud neid vältima traditsiooniliste turundustaktikate mõju ja valivamalt filtreerima nendeni jõudvat teavet. Seega peavad turunduspraktikud pidevalt otsima uusi strateegiaid ja taktikaid, kuidas murda tarbijate kaitsebarjääre ning muuta oma väärtuspakkumine konkurentide omast kõnetavamaks. Selle tulemusena on oma sõnumiga tarbijateni jõudmine üha ressursimahukam väljakutse, mida kõik ettevõtted endale lubada ei suuda.

Ühe lahendusena on ettevõtted hakanud sagedamini tegema koostööd teiste organisatsioonidega läbi ühiste turundustegevuste. Praktikast tulenevalt on viimastel aastakümnetel turundusalases kirjanduses palju tähelepanu pööranud ettevõtete vaheliste koostöösuhete uurimisele. Erinevate koostöövormide käsitluste põhjal on kasutusele võetud termin brändide koostöö, mis antud töö kontekstis hõlmab kõiki turundustegevusi, mille raames tutvustatakse ja presenteeritakse tarbijatele samaaegselt enam kui ühe erineva organisatsiooni brändi. Varasemad teadustööd on kinnitanud, et sellised partnerlussuhted võivad ettevõtetele pakkuda mitmeid eeliseid, nagu näiteks tõsta brändi tarbijaväärtust, aidata ettevõttel saada ligipääsu uutele turgudele või potentsiaalsetele klientidele, mõjutada brändi kuvandit ja kindlustada oma turupositsiooni. Samas võib turunduspraktikast leida näiteid olukordadest, kus turundusalane koostöö pole andnud ettevõtetele loodetud tulemusi või on koguni toonud kaasa ebaseeldivaid tagajärgi, näiteks negatiivseid assotsiatsioone brändiga,

kahjustanud brändi mainet või andnud teistele organisatsioonidele võimaluse sekkuda partnerettevõtte otsustusprotsessi. Seega võib koostöö ühest küljest olla tõhus efektiivne abivahend ettevõtete turundusvõimaluste rikastamiseks, ent samas tuua endaga kaasa brändidele soovimatuid tagajärgi.

Varasemad teadustööd on brändide koostöö kontseptsiooni käsitlenud peamiselt tarbijate vaatenurgast, keskendudes eelkõige sellele, kuidas avaldavad brändide vahelised koostööd mõju klientide suhtumisele ja hinnangutele. Vähem on tähelepanu pööratud koostöö loomise tagamaadele ettevõtete ja turundajate vaatenurgast. Käesolev magistritöö uurib lähemalt ettevõtete seisukohti seoses brändide koostööga. Töö eesmärk on välja selgitada peamised eesmärgid, mida ettevõtted soovivad läbi brändide koostöö saavutada, hinnata nende turundusalast koostöövalmidust ja tuvastada kriteeriumid, millel alusel ettevõtted valivad koostööpartnereid. Uuringus on vaatluse alla võetud Eestis tegutsevad ettevõtted, mille brändid on turul saavutanud tarbijate soosingu. Magistritöö fookuses on Eesti elanikkonna lemmikbrändide omanikud, mis tänu varasemale edule on potentsiaalselt atraktiivsed koostööpartnerid teistele organisatsioonidele. Tulenevalt eesmärkidest keskendub töö järgmistele uurimisküsimustele: 1) Milliste eesmärkide täitmiseks teevad tugevat brändi omavad Eestis tegutsevad ettevõtted brändide koostööd teiste organisatsioonidega? 2) Kuivõrd valmis on need ettevõtted looma brändide koostöösuhteid? 3) Millised kriteeriumid on olulised partnerite valimisel? Töö eesmärgi saavutamiseks ja uurimisküsimustele vastuste leidmiseks on püstitatud järgnevad uurimisülesanded:

- mõtestada lahti brändide koostöö olemus ja selle erinevad vormid;
- kaardistada peamised tegurid, mis on seotud koostöö eesmärkide, koostöövalmiduse ja partnerite valimisega;
- koostada mõõtmisvahend, mille põhjal hinnata ja reastada ettevõtete brändide koostööalased eesmärgid, koostöövalmidust ja tegureid, mis on seotud partnerite valikuga;
- viia läbi empiiriline uuring Eestis tegutsevate ettevõtete seas, kellel on Eesti elanike hinnangul meeldivad brändid.

Varasemate uuringute analüüsi põhjal koostab autor töö teoreetilises osas kontseptuaalse raamistiku, mis toob esile peamised eesmärkide koostöö kategooriad

ning koostöövalmiduse ja partnerite valiku tegurid, millega ettevõtted peaksid enne koostöö alustamist arvestama. Raamistiku struktuuri on põhjalikult selgitatud ja see on aluseks sobilike mõõtmisvahendite koostamisele ning empiirilise uuringu ülesehitusele.

Magistritöö praktiline osa tugineb empiirilisele uuringule, mille raames küsitleti 64 Eesti turul tuntud brändi omava ettevõtte turundusjuhti. Seega rakendati kogu populatsiooni sihipärase valimi tehnikat, kus populatsiooni defineeriv tunnusjoon on Eesti turul tuntud brändi omamine. Sobilike ettevõtete selekteerimisel toetus autor uuringufirma TNS Emori 2014. aasta „Brändide Edetabel” uuringule, mis selgitas välja 150 lemmikbrändi Eesti elanikkonna seas. Kvantitatiivse uuringu andmete kogumisel kasutati internetiküsitluse meetodit. Küsimustik koosnes peamiselt semantilistel erinevustel tuginevatest küsimustest, mis tulenesid kasutatavatest mõõtmiskaaladest. Mõõtmisvahendite valiidsust ja usaldusväarsust kontrolliti kinnitava faktoranalüüsiga.

Uuringu tulemuste analüüs näitas, et valdav enamus uuringus osalenud ettevõtetest osalevad regulaarselt brändide koostöös. Ligikaudu pooled ettevõtted teevad igakuiselt turundusalast koostööd teiste ettevõtetega. Ettevõtete poolt toodud näited varasematest projektidest viitavad, et enamasti väljendub koostöö ühises turunduskommunikatsioonis, kus ettevõtte brändi esitletakse tarbijatele koos partneri brändiga. Samuti toodi mitmeid näiteid kaasbrändingu (*co-branding*) ja brändipakettide (*brand bundle*) kasutamisest. Eestis tegutsevad ettevõtted, kes omavad elanikkonna seas tuntud brändi, on eelkõige huvitatud koostöös osalemisest, et tõsta oma brändi tarbijaväärtust (7-pallisel skaalal 6,04). Teisisõnu peetakse brändide koostööd heaks vahendiks, et luua tarbija teadvuses uusi positiivseid assotsiatsioone brändiga, suurendada brändi lojaalsust, tõsta brändi tuntust ja tajutavat kvaliteeti. Lisaks on turundusjuhtide hinnangul koostöö kasulik, et saavutada tegevusnäitajatega seonduvaid eesmärke, eelkõige kasvatamaks müügimahte ja kindlustamaks turupositsiooni. Üllatuslikult selgus, et turundajad ei pea brändide koostööd heaks mooduseks, et tõsta oma organisatsiooni koostöövõimekust ning omandada uusi teadmisi ja oskusi. Ühtlasi ei pea firmad seda heaks viisiks, kuidas siseneda uutele turgudele. Tööstusettevõtted hindavad võrreldes teenindustettevõtetega koostööd olulisemaks oma eesmärkide saavutamisel.

Ettevõtete koostöövalmiduse hindamine pakkus huvitavaid tulemusi. Esiteks peab 89% ettevõtetest oma valmisolekut osaleda brändide koostöös keskmisest kõrgemaks,

kusjuures 41% ettevõtetest hindab oma valmidust kõrgelt (7-pallisel skaalal 6). Mõõtes eraldi nende koostööalast pühendumist ja pädevust selgus, et viimases ilmnevad mitmed puudused. Täpsemalt selgus, et ettevõtete valmidus strateegiliselt arendada oma koostööskusi ja vastavaid teadmisi on küllaltki madal (3,06) ning vajaks suuremat tähelepanu. Samuti peaksid ettevõtted rohkem rõhku panema võimaluste ja partnerite aktiivsemale otsimisele. Sellest võib järeldada, et lemmikuimate brändidega ettevõtted Eestis pole nii tugevad turundusalases koostöös, kui nad ise arvavad. Tulemused viitavad, et selline kõrge enesehinnang võib olla tingitud sellest, et ettevõtetel on palju kogemusi varasematest koostööprojektidest. Pädevuse parandamiseks võiksid ettevõtted tegutseda ettenägelikumalt ning mitte toetuda ainult varasemate kogemuste kaudu omandatud oskustele. See võimaldaks ettevõtetel leida ja realiseerida uusi koostöövõimalusi, mis ühtiksid veel enam nende ärieesmärkidega. Uuringu tulemused näitavad, et teenindusettevõtete brändide vahelise koostööga seotud pühendumus ja pädevus on võrreldes tööstusettevõtetega paremad ja seetõttu on suurem ka nende üldine koostöövalmidus.

Partneri valikuga seotud teguritest on uuringus osalenud ettevõtete hinnangul kõige tähtsamad (7-palli skaalal 6,45) suhte omadused (*relationship attributes*). Lemmikuimate brändidega ettevõtted Eestis eelistavad luua koostöösuhteid eelkõige partneritega, keda nad peavad usaldusväärseteks ja pühendunuteks. Partneri võimekus pakkuda täiendavaid oskusi, informatsiooni ja teadmisi (*complementary contributions*) on ettevõtete hinnangul teisejärguline (5,63) ning veel vähem tähtis on brändide omavaheline sobivus (5,62). Samas on varasemad uuringud kindlaks teinud, et brändide sobivus on üks peamisi eeldusi koostöö abil brändide tarbijaväärtuse parandamiseks. Seetõttu peaksid turundajad partneri valikul suuremat tähelepanu pöörama partneri brändile, et hõlpsamini saavutada brändi tarbijaväärtusega seotud eesmärged. Samas viitavad käesoleva töö tulemused sellele, et ideaalses olukorras, kus ettevõttel on võimalik valida ihaldatuim liitlane, lähtutakse otsustamisel partneri brändist ja võimekusest pakkuda vahendeid, mis ettevõttel endal puuduvad. See tähendab, et ideaalse partneri valikul ei ole konkreetse suhte omadused kõige olulisemad.

Antud uuringu tulemuste põhjal järelduste tegemisel tuleb arvesse võtta mitut piirangut. Esiteks on valim suhteliselt väike, sisaldades vaid 64 ettevõtte seisukohti brändide

vahelise koostöö suhtes. See tuleneb teadustöö kitsendatud fookusest uurida üksnes TNS Emori brändide edetabelisse kuuluvate brändide turundusjuhtide arvamusi ja vaateid. Seega ei saa tulemuste põhjal teha üldistavaid järeldusi kõikide Eestis tegutsevate ettevõtete kohta. Teiseks on antud teadustöös põgusalt käsitletud ettevõtete seisukohtade erinevusi tööstus- ja teenindusettevõtete lõikes, kuid pole täpsemalt rõhku pööratud konkreetsetele tegevusharudele. Seetõttu puudub ülevaade, kas tegevusvaldkondade eripärad avaldavad mõju koostöösuhete loomisele. Kolmandaks ei sisalda antud uuring kontrollmuutujaid, mis võimaldaksid kõrvutada ettevõtete üldiseid eesmärke brändide koostöö omadega. Seetõttu pole näiteks võimalik välja selgitada, kas ettevõtete madal soov kasutada brändide koostööd uutele turgudele laienemiseks tuleneb liitide ebaefektiivsusest või üldisest soovist mitte siseneda uutele turgudele.

Magistritöö uuringu tulemuste põhjal saab teha ettepanekuid, mida võiksid tulevased brändide koostööd hõlmavad uuringud lähemalt uurida. Antud uuringu raames käsitletakse esiteks üksnes ettevõtteid, kes omavad turul juba tuntud ja tarbijate soosingu pälvinud brändi, millest enamik on suured ja mainekad ettevõtted. Seega võivad nende ettevõtete vaated nende suuruselt ja turupositsioonist tulenevalt erineda vähem tuntud brändidega ettevõtete omadest. Tulevaste uuringute raames võiks võrdluseks võtta väiksemate ja tuntumate ettevõtete vaated brändide koostöö suhtes, et kaardistada võimalikud erinevused ja laiendada turundajate arusaamu koostööprojektide kasutamisest Eesti turul. Teiseks ei käsitleta antud töös täpsemalt vaadete lahknevusi erinevate koostöötüüpide lõikes. Tulevikus võiksid uuringud turundusalasesse kirjandusse panustada, käsitledes ettevõtete koostöövalmidust, eesmärke ja partneri valiku protsessi lähtudes konkreetsetest koostöötüüpidest, ning seeläbi tuvastada, kas Eestis tegutsevad ettevõtted eelistavad mõnda koostöövormi teistele ja miks. Lisaks võiksid tulevased uuringud lähema vaatluse alla võtta konkreetsed turundusalase koostöö näited ja analüüsida õnnestumiste ning ebaõnnestumiste põhjuseid. Lõpetuseks võib välja tuua, et antud teadustöö tulemuste põhjal ei ole võimalik kindlaks teha, kas Eestis tegutsevate ettevõtete nägemused turundusalase koostöö osas erinevad, kui loodaks suhteid kohalike ettevõtete või rahvusvaheliste ettevõtetega. Tulevikus võiksid teadustööd täpsemalt uurida, kas turundusalaste ühenduste loomisel mõjutab ettevõtteid partneri päritolumaad, et täiendada meie teadmisi partneri valiku protsessi osas.

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