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LAUNCHING NUOC PHAN LAN BRAND IN VIETNAM  
Bachelor's Thesis 2015

## ABSTRACT

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Environmental issues are emerging as another side of economic development in Vietnam. From Finland, through its strong network in South East Asia, Finnish Water Forum recognised the opportunity and the need of having a Finnish brand promoting Finnish water expertise in the environmental sector, especially water treatment in Vietnam.

The research objective is to launch the brand successfully in Vietnam within 2014. In order to achieve that, this paper describes carefully the process of building the brand concept and visual identity. Those are the important criteria that are required in the beginning stage of the brand development.

Qualitative research and quantitative research were carried out in this study. The data was collected through the author's observation and discussion with the commissioner during the working period in the company. Moreover, a survey took place on the launching day of the brand in Vietnam. This brought to the research more concrete reflection of the brand recognition and the professionals' interests.

The final result of this research was to create and launch a Finnish brand in Vietnam. In essence, the pros and cons of this process are revealed carefully in this paper. Furthermore, at the end of this study, suggestions to the brand long-term strategic management is proposed, thus this leads to further researches in the future.

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#### Appendix 1: Questionnaire

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

Environmental issues, particularly water resources are emerging to become one of the biggest problems in Vietnam that come along with the industrial development. The Vietnamese government are aware of the situation and seeking for the reliable partnership worldwide.

Finland is among one of the highest-level countries in technology of water supply and water treatment. Companies in the industry are seeking for business partnership in foreign countries where Finnish expertise can be applied. Vietnam is on top of the list of potential destinations that Finnish companies have a big chance to success.

Relationship between the two countries has established for 40 years. Furthermore, Finnish water technology is respected in Vietnam by local people with projects invested by Finland. There is a road in Vietnam named as “Finnish water road”, which represents the strong reputation of Finnish water technology. However, the relationship in the last 40 years was Official Development Assistance of Finland to Vietnam. The commercial partnership is still very small.

Therefore, in order to accelerate the commercial linkage between Finland and Vietnam in the water treatment, water supply industry, it is vital to have a Finnish representative, or a trademark for Finnish water knowledge in Vietnamese market. Once the Official Development Assistance comes to an end, Finnish companies still can have some advantages in the country to compete with other foreign firms in Vietnam.

### 1.2 Research Objective

During the summer 2014, I had a chance to work in Finnish Water Forum as a project coordinator. My task was to take care of the whole branding project including working along with our designer for the design of the brand and other relating parties. In addition, due to the shortage of fund at the initial phase I was responsible for building the brand website, creating newsletters and controlling our social media appearance.

In the first meeting of our project members, the main idea of my work and the thesis pursued the following objectives:

- Create a unique identity to Nuoc Phan Lan brand, which reflect the aim and vision of the brand.
- Prepare for launching event in November 2014.

Besides, the other important subject of this thesis is also to give suggestions to Finnish Water Forum in order to raise funds through different channels. Those financial incomes will be reinvested to Nuoc Phan Lan's future promotion campaign.

### 1.3 Research questions

The main research questions are how to launch the brand successfully in Vietnam. In order to give proper answers to this major question, there are sub-questions that are needed to answer in order to solve the great problem. In this paper, those sub-questions are:

- What is the core concept of the brand?
- How to build unique brand identity that reflects the brand's personality and enhance brand awareness?
- What are the main activities of the brand?

### 1.4 Research method

There are two methods of collecting data for a research. One is quantitative research method that is counting on statistics generating from a questionnaire to give a solution or answer for a problem. The other one is qualitative research method, which is based on interviews, observations or previous experience while working with key people in that process or experts in the field of study in order to solve the problem. Both methods require systematic data collection so as to deliver the most accurate answer for the research question. (Ghauri&Grønhaug 2005, pp. 108-11)

The research objective is to define the brand identity and to launch Nuoc Phan Lan brand in Vietnam. Therefore, the practical aspects are the most important request of this work. Every step in the strategic planning was carefully considered in order to minimise errors and cost-efficiency. As a result, the author has carefully taken notes in every project meeting as well as discussion with colleagues. Hence, qualitative research method is the main research method of this paper.

Moreover, during the launching event, another research was carried out to discover the visitors' interests and their fields of business. This database will be used after the launching day in the brand strategic plan for future activities.

## 2 THE FINNISH WATER FORUM

### 2.1 About the Finnish Water Forum

Finnish Water Forum is a joint network of Finnish Water Sector established in 2009. It represents members including commercial enterprises, government and non-government organisations, scientific educations as well as other associations operating in the field of water treatment and water supply. The number of members in Finnish Water Forum is 98 companies and organisations that cover every water knowhow from industry, technology to science or management. The figure 1 bellow illustrates the connecting network of Finnish Water Forum with its members and other associations. (Finnish Water Forum, 2014)

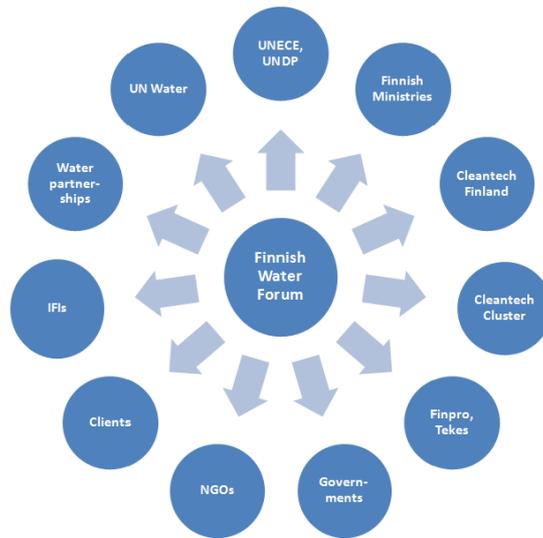


Figure 1. Finnish Water Forum Network (Finnish Water Forum, 2014)

One of the main functions of Finnish Water Forum is processing any enquiries regarding water issues. After that, the enquiries are delivered to the right experts in order to provide the best sustainable solutions for that particular problem. In addition, as being a representative of its members, Finnish Water Forum's task is promoting the Finnish water expertise worldwide. Thus, the managers and staff of Finnish Water Forum have to travel and participate in events, exhibitions as well as business seminars to present the best of Finnish water technology and management. (Finnish Water Forum, 2014)

Finnish Water Forum and its members have strong knowledge in various water management areas. For instance, the most noticeable ones are smart water, integrated water resources management, wastewater treatment, sludge management and water efficiency. Furthermore, Finnish weather varies from -30 Celsius degree to +30 Celsius degree. Thus, the Finnish technology and knowhow can be applied in most parts of the world. (Finnish Water Forum, 2014)

## 2.2 Nuoc Phan Lan from idea to practice

Finnish Water Forum considers Vietnam as one of the main target markets to advertise its members' products and services. Therefore, creating a brand in Vietnam is necessary to strengthen the awareness of Finnish water expertise within the society and to compete with others bodies in the market from the United Kingdom, Germany

or Singapore. As a result, Finnish Water Forum has registered Nuoc Phan Lan as a brand in Vietnam so that they are able to implement their strategy and activities. (Tuukkanen, 2014)

However, launching Nuoc Phan Lan to the market is still yet to take off because of various reasons. Two of those are limited time and financial resources. I was lucky to approach and receive the opportunity working along with Mr Markus Tuukkanen – the Finnish Water Forum Deputy Manager and other colleagues to prepare introduction of Nuoc Phan Lan brand at Vietwater2014 exhibition – the largest event in Vietnam about water in 2014.

In the plan, besides being the representative of Finnish Water Forum in Vietnam, Nuoc Phan Lan also contributes to improving awareness in Vietnamese society and companies operating in Vietnam of the necessity to protect the water resources. Through our communication channels, we will raise funds for charity projects to build water utility in regions that are suffering from contaminated water or lack of clean water. In addition, Nuoc Phan Lan also focuses on sponsorship for student associations and youth associations, which are doing water projects in Vietnam.

Furthermore, involving Vietnamese students studying in Finnish universities, particularly Kymenlaakso University of Applied Science to the continuing project is another vital goal of Nuoc Phan Lan. Vietnamese students will play an important role in connecting Vietnam and Finland because of their understanding of both cultures.

### 3 BRANDING AND LAUNCHING A BRAND

#### 3.1 What is a brand?

Brand has become an essential aspect of human life, country, enterprise and many other bodies, which are striving to succeed in its own market. Entrepreneurs want to brand their products in order to boost their sales and to increase the profit. People are using branded products to save time in shopping, demonstrate their status and satisfy

their need. In the job market, more and more people are also branding themselves so that they want to differentiate from other competitors for job vacancies. From the larger perspective, a country is investing increasingly more financial and time effort to position itself in the world map. Based on that, the country may benefit by receiving more foreign tourists or foreign investment that are the force to drive its economy.

Hence, it would seem that a brand is a “must” component for the success, the stability and the future of companies, people and countries. Therefore, during its history, there are many economists and researchers who once claim the definition of a brand. In Kapferer’s research (2008), he mentions the customer-based definition of a brand:” a brand is a set of mental associations, held by the consumer, which add to the perceived value of a product or service”. From this definition, it can be seen that to create a brand, the company’s task is to deliver emotional feelings to the consumer when they own the product. Those feelings can be unique, proud, satisfied, and successful.

The top management will concentrate on building those perceptions to the consumer via marketing activities and communication to create awareness about the product within the society. However, along with the development of technology, the consumer has more tools to check and compare different products and services from different companies. The quality of the product and service is a crucial part of a brand building plan. Hence, Kapferer (2008) claims that the product and service is the core of a brand and the communication is the tools to add tangible and intangible perception to the brand.

Moreover, one of the vital notes, which is worth to remember, is the distinction between a product and a brand. A product often represents the functional factor that is the original reason a customer buys it. A brand is a product with added factors. It increases the financial value of the product as well as differentiates the same product from different companies. Therefore, a brand also displays the style of a firm in the competition. As mentioned in the work of Chunawalla 2009 (cited in American Marketing Association), a brand is a set of factors such as name, sound, sign or the combination of those which help the consumers classify products or services from different sellers. The one performing the attractive style to convince the customers will be the winner, since become the market leader. (Kaptan and Pandey, 2010)

### 3.2 Brand identity

The idea of brand identity came in the beginning of the nineteenth century, became a trend in the 1950s and since then has developed to a must component of every firm (Mallik Sadhna, 2009, 187). Aaker (2002, 68) defined brand identity as: "Brand identity is a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization member."

A strong brand often brings to the consumers strong experience in various aspects, for instance experience of using products, experience of sales and after sales services and so on. The company, of course want to be memorized for their effort and investment. By building a unique and solid brand identity, the firm is building signature for their products and services that distinguishes themselves from the rest in the market (Vincent, Laurence 2012, 168). Hence, along with company development, there is nothing assured, except the brand identity. It is what the firm stands for and where the consumers put their trust on. Thus, building a stably distinct brand identity also means assurance for the future of the brand. (Rankin 2009)

Building brand identity requires deep research about what the company wants the brand to be. There are no such things like common guidelines for every brand. The firm should plan themselves in advance who the brand's target customers are, how much the budget is, and how much time is granted for the building period before contacting design agency, or design department. Therefore, the identity in some circumstances is just a logo, and perhaps a website. However, for the big company with worldwide customer-based, the identity can vary. For instance, the design of the package, the theme song in advertisements series of unique images, mascot, and so on can be part of a solid world-class brand identity. (Mallik Sadhna 2009, 189)

Moreover, there are situations when the company receives criticism about their brand identity. The confusion starts within the company about whether or not they should change the company identity to avoid complaints. However, it is essential to take into account that brand identity is as similar as person's name and signature. A person with a name and a signature represents that person with his/her behaviors, characters and appearance, how he/she looks like. This cannot be changed in any situation. Therefore, the brand identity, once it is created, represents the vision, the true characters of

what the company wanted it to be. Hence, only when the board of managers consider that after a certain period of time, those vision and characters are not suitable anymore, then they should consider changing the brand identity. (Vincent, Laurence, 2012, 169)

Brand image and brand identity are usually raising confusion. In fact, those are related subjects which are elements of a strong brand but obtain different meanings (Srivastava, 2011). In general, it can be said that brand identity is the message from the firm to the consumer while brand image is the perception of the consumer about that message (Kapferer, 2008, 98). Both brand image and brand identity are the results of the communication process between the firms and its targeted publics (Nandan, 2005).

### 3.2.1 Brand name

The initial step of building a strong brand is selecting a brand name. However, many firms are quite underestimate the essence of a good brand name by giving no meaningful name or strangely pronounced name to their newly born brand (Tai, 2013, 87). However, brand name is the very first important decision that managers can make in order to create a well-known brand (Whiteling, 2010). According to Kapferer (2010), to achieve success in this beginning stage, the company saves a lot of time for the future, perhaps several years.

One of the basic criteria of creating a good brand name is its length. A short one is easier for customer to memorize and recall (Keller, 2008). It facilitates the process of transforming the short brand name to a genetic word for a category (Tai, 2013, 91). For instance, Ipad has been successfully a genetic term for tablets category instead of Asus Transformer or Samsung Galaxy Tab.

Moreover, the brand name should be easily pronounced. This encourages the viral marketing within the community, thus reduces cost of advertising. Otherwise, the brand with a long name needs to invest a significant money and effort to gain consumer's attention. (Keller, 2008) The manager should also aim to the brand future penetration in the future in naming process. As English is internationally accepted as business language, the name is not necessary an English word, but has no difficulty in translating or pronouncing in English. (Tai, 2013, 93)

Furthermore, the unique brand name is playing a deciding role in the popularity and the recognition of the brand (Keller, 2008). When selecting a brand name, the manager should avoid choosing a descriptive name, which describes the product. On the one hand, those brands with the descriptive name often fails to deliver the message to the consumer about their quality as well as their vision. On the other hand, the name which shows the spirit of the brand can help the brand eliminate its competitors who are trying to imitate its image. (Kapferer, 2010)

Last but not least, the company should be aware of other names in the market when selecting the brand name, thus avoid unintended infringement of registered trademarks. Finally, for the manager and the marketers, choosing a name can affect their work performance because they are going to present the brand, especially mentioning the brand name every day, everywhere. Thus, a bad name can reduce their belief in the success of the brand, thus fails to deliver the brand spirit. (Whiteling, 2010)

### 3.2.2 Logo and Symbol

To certain part of consumers, brand and logo are confusing and often used interchangeably (Resnick et al., 2013). However, to marketers, a brand is far more than just a logo. As Antonelli (2014) claims in his work that:” Like a bicycle wheel with many spokes, your branding spokes need to be connected to one central hub. Think of your logo as the hub for your brand and all other iterations of that logo as your spokes.” Those spokes are brand image, website, symbols, packaging and so on. Hence, they build the solid brand running in the market.

Keller (2008) has described the benefits of a logo in branding strategies. First of all, a logo helps the firm to distinct its product and services from its competitors in the faster way. Based on the symbols, typography, and colors of the logo, the consumer can differentiate brands of the same category. Besides, the message sent out from the logo can be perceived by consumers from various cultures easier than other brand elements such as brand name, sounds, and taglines and so on. Finally, the logo can be changed within the period of time to achieve the goals of renewing the appearance of the brand. (Keller, 2008)

Building a logo must be carefully determined. If the logo of a well-established company is needed to reinvent, it would cost the company a lot of money and effort to re-

build its recognition (Irani et. al, 2011). A good logo is the one which delivers the expertise and the message of the firm to its consumer. Furthermore, raising the expectation toward the quality of the purchased product are a bonus point for the company to consider. In addition, different firms have different paths to create a suitable logo which endorses their business strategy. (Antonelli, 2014)

A company which holds a well-known name can get advantage by setting the name as a central part of the logo like Coca-Cola; while the others can use abstract logos to facilitate the consumer's brand recall such as Toyota and Nike (Antonelli, 2014). Thus, regarding to the process of creating a logo, Irani and co. (2011) declared that it embraces both research effort and sense of design in the development team. This combination helps the firm to avoid deploying the brand which results in confusing the message. In a nutshell, the team which are in charge of building the logo must have open-minded attitude and look to the wide picture of the progress and the aimed goals. (Antonelli, 2014)

### 3.2.3 Website

Website stands in the top position of every business owner's to-do list to build their brand (Fallon, 2013). In fact, an increasing number of companies nowadays are switching from traditional advertising channels like TV, newspaper and off-line banner to online-advertising via websites and social media.

Wheeler (info) quoted a famous sentence of Gavin Cooper – Design educator and founder that:” A website is a living, breathing brand tool that needs to be cared for over time”. The quote showed the importance of creating and maintaining the websites. According to Harden and his colleague (2009), website is not only influential on online businesses but also has great impact on offline sales performance. This research also published that there can be a 200 percent increase in sales if a company manages its URLs effectively and efficiently. Furthermore, launching a website means a lot to the firms; it is the start of building strong brand loyalty as well as the platform of attracting new customers. (Harden et al., 2009)

Last but not least, the website can be considered as the official face of the firm. All of the brand identity element is usually shown in the website which makes it totally vital to be looked after. Therefore, it is crucial for the marketers to involve the designers to

the process of building the website in order to create the balance of influential content and attractive user interface. Furthermore, the firm should also take into account the variety of devices that consumers are using at this blooming technology world. The website must work perfectly on smartphones and tablets along with desktop version. (Wheeler, 2009, 152)

### 3.3 Brand equity

There have been many researchers and managers trying to answer what actually brand equity is . Does it link with the corporate or the customer? How do business authorities measure it? From the work of Aaker (2002, 8), he defines brand equity so that it includes assets which bring values to a firm and/or its customers; the assets must be demonstrated in a set of brand identities which are name, symbol, and colour and so on. These assets include brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations. (Aaker, 2002, 8)



Figure 2: How brand equity generates values (Aaker, 2002, 9)

From figure 2, it can be seen that to the consumer, brand equity delivers commitment of products and services quality, satisfaction of ownership, and personal status in the community. Besides, creating a strong brand equity profits the company more than tangible facilities and machinery (Riezebos and co. 2003, 266). However, the manager should acknowledge very well that every single asset is not easily built. It needs a continuing investment of both time and money with a clear vision and solid strategy. In return, those assets will pay back to the firm effort through consumer's trust, sales increase and high company's reputation and value. Therefore, monitoring closely and being sensitive to the movement of assets are the focal point to build strong and stable brand equity. (Aaker, 2002, 8)

While Aaker stressed that brand equity may deliver values to both the firm and the customer, Kapferer sees brand equity from a different angle. Brand equity is defined by him as the financial value of a brand that a firm can benefit, as well as strategic and managerial advantages. Values and advantages that the firm benefits through the brand are created from assets in the customer mind. At this point, there is the similarity between Kapferer and Aaker in terms of categories of brand assets. (Kapferer, 2004, 14)

In addition, Keller develops a brand equity model called customer-based brand equity (CBBE). This theory emphasizes the customers' perception of a brand. What are the impressions of the customers when they hear, see, and use the brand? It makes a brand distinct from other players in the market. Therefore, delivering the right type of experience that the firm wants its customer to have is crucial in building brand equity. All of the experience and the impression that the consumers perceive is called brand knowledge. (Keller, 2008, 48)

### 3.3.1 Brand awareness

When a brand enters a new market, unless it has been popular worldwide or region wide, there is a very little chance for the consumers to recognize it. In this situation, the marketers are responsible to make a master plan to spread the brand awareness to the society by using variety of marketing tools (Jing, Z., Pitsaphol, C. & Shabbir, and R. 2014). How well the customers recognize the brand as well as where the brand stands in the recall list are the main criteria to access whether the plan is successful or not. (Aaker, 2002, 10)

To some people, brand awareness is about the ability of the consumer to name the brand through the first sight of logo, color or tagline. Nevertheless, according to Aaker (2002, 10), it is not mandatory to declare clearly how the consumer recognises the brand. The importance is that one remembers there was an encounter with the name, or the sound, or the color of the brand somewhere, sometime. This little awareness can make a crucial impact the purchasing decision. Nowadays, there are usually so many

options in the market for a product; thus, a familiar one is usually purchased while an unknown brand has a very small chance (Panchal and co., 2012).

Besides brand recognition, brand recall is another component of brand awareness. Brand recall is defined as the option that appears in the consumers' mind when they think of some kind of product (Aaker, 2002, 11). For instance, if one would like to buy a luxury car, definitely Mercedes, Audi, and BMW are the first names coming in his or her mind.

### 3.3.2 Perceived quality

Keller (2008, 195) described perceived quality as the evaluation of customer about products and services' quality of a firm, which differentiates itself from other competitors in the product class. In addition, Aaker (2002, 17) also mentioned perceived quality as the powerful force to push the financial performance. From his research (figure 1.2), it can be seen that Return on Investment of a company is heavily affected by the perception of the consumer toward its product.

Moreover, major numbers of firms nowadays consider that Total quality management (TQM) plays a substantial role in their business development as well as brand building. For the managers, perceived quality can be seen as the final outcome of TQM effort that they need to achieve. It reflects how well they deliver the message of high quality product and services to their customers. However, sometimes the message is not clear or not in the category that receives the attention from the consumers. Thus, conducting research about consumer's demand is a priority to succeed in generating perceived quality. (Aaker, 2002, 20)

### 3.3.3 Brand loyalty

The other asset in Aaker's element of brand equity is brand loyalty. It is the fact that when the customers are satisfied with the product and service offered by the firm, they are willing to promote and repurchase it. Therefore in the research of Jing Zhang and his colleagues, they claim that brand loyalty plays a central role to growth the market share as well as profitability of the company. (Jing, Z., Pitsaphol, C. & Shabbir, R.

2014) Moreover, Aaker (2002, 21) revealed in his book that once the consumers are loyal to the firm's brand, there is definitely a huge reduction in marketing cost.

The important point to the top managers is classifying the loyalty segmentation. Thus, they can make a decent decision to suit the best to the market. In general, there are five main groups as described below:

- Noncustomers: The ones who are buying the other brands' product or not using the company's product class.
- Price switcher: The ones who make the purchasing decision based on the price tag.
- The passively loyal: The ones who buy the brand's product because of a habit rather than preferring it to the others.
- Fence sitters: Those who see no difference among two or three brands
- The committed: The ones who are already the firm's loyal customers.

(Aaker, 2002, 23)

### 3.3.4 Brand associations

Brand association is a vital factor of how brand equity generates values to the brand. It creates the feeling for the person purchasing a product. Thus, the consumer can distinguish between a company and another. These associations are built by the brand identity. For instance, the brand's celebrity representative, and theme song of the brand advertisement, logo, symbols and colour are strong tools to increase desire of purchasing products. (Aaker, 2002, 25)

## 3.4 Launching a new brand

### 3.4.1 New product development process

To both the consumers and the producers, each new product released brings a lot of benefits to them. It offers the solutions for the consumer in daily problems or satisfies their desire of owning the latest produce. By giving new product to market, the firm

refreshes themselves from the consumers' perception. Thus, this is the source for generating the growth of the company and surpassing its competitors. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 284)

Hence, unless the company has the financial ability to make a quality acquisition, using internal resource to implement new product development process would require the company to invest tremendous money and effort. Therefore, in order to minimise mistakes and save resources, the firm should understand precisely the product development process. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2014, 285), there are several phases in this process that the producer should step by step go through so as to deliver the best possible result.

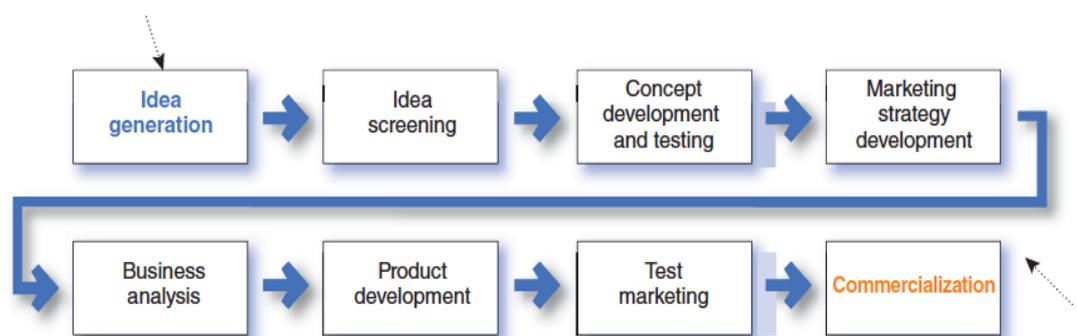


Figure 3. Major stages in New Product Development (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 285)

Figure 3 illustrates important stages in the process of New Product Development. This diagram can be used widely for every person in the company to track the product development process. Hence, marketers and managers have a concrete idea of what have been done and what is going to be the next steps so that misunderstanding and confusion are reduced to minimal level.

#### 2.4.2 Launching the new brand

As mentioned earlier in this paper, a brand which can stay and make impact on a market always goes along with a product that shows the physical characteristic of the brand. Therefore, usually at the same time, the new brand and the new product go hand in hand in the launching process. After the period of defining and developing the

new product, one of the most important considerations that a marketer has to decide on is introduction timing. When is the best time to release the product to markets? In order to answer this question, the marketer must have sufficient knowledge about the market and the information of the firm business. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 293)

The introduction timing depends on various factors. If the company is having another product in the same product line that is at the growing or maturing stage of its life cycle, the firm has to consider postponing the launching process. Otherwise, this new product can eat the other's market. In addition, during the preparation for the introduction, there are some faults detected on the product, the introducing time must be delayed. In the contrast picture, if the marketers sense that competitors are going to release a similar kind of product to the market, definitely the firm has to invest significantly more time and effort to become the pioneer of that product in the market. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 293)

The place where the company is going to launch the new product is another essential decision that awaits the marketer to decide. Companies which have a strong distribution channel worldwide or nationwide often have the power to launch their product at all the distributors at the same time. However, depending on the strategy of the firm, some others decide to make a priority list on which market to introduce the brand first. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 293)

#### 3.4.2 Expectations during the launching stage

When the producer has a chance and ability to release a new brand and a new product, there might be huge expectation of business performance growth and an increase of revenue and profit. However, as Kotler and Armstrong (2014, 297) have pointed out in their research, during the introduction phase, the firm often experiences slow sales and a negative profit.

The reasons are very comprehensive. At the introduction period, the product is new to the market and not well perceived by the consumers. Hence, the consumer needs time to digest the product characteristics and features in order to make the purchase decision. Most of the main buyers at this stage are usually waiting for this product to release for a period of time. Besides, because this is a new product, the company has to

invest a lot of money to advertise it by various channels so as to inform the consumer about the product and encourage them to try it. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 297)

This fact should be well understood and managed by the firm so as to guarantee the introduction phase process smoothly. Moreover, the board of managers may have a longer plan for the necessary financial resources to nurture the successful launching campaign.

#### 4 METHODOLOGY

Commercial research concentrates on practical issues which are solved to bring benefit for companies or organizations. In this type of research, academic theory is widely applied in order to provide the standard for the research design so that the credibility of the research is justified. Hence, board of business managers use the research results to make final decisions about marketing strategy and marketing mix. (Craig and Douglas, 2000, 23)

As a result, commercial research is applied in this paper because the research objective is to provide critical suggestions to the Finnish Water Forum so as to make final decision on launching program of Nuoc Phan Lan brand. Research actions in this thesis are designed based on theory of New Product Development and branding theory such as brand identity and brand equity.

##### Qualitative research method

In addition, this research's main method is qualitative research method. Regarding to the research objective and other aspects of the research, qualitative techniques bring certain advantages to the research. Craig and Douglas (2000, 169) emphasize that this research method can be used in various circumstances to achieve the research objective. For example, qualitative method can be used to build ideas for pre-testing marketing activities, brand concepts, product designs, etc. Furthermore, the researcher is able to have deeper insights to the problem by discussing with interviewees and having mutual understanding about the issue.

Among the popular techniques of qualitative research method, in-depth interviews are chosen to conduct the research. This fits the project conditions because it gives the researcher good chances to explore verbal and non-verbal responses through discussion. Furthermore, the researcher's experiences in the period of working with interviewees may ensure the consistency of the result which is essential. (Craig and Douglas, 2000, 189)

Interviews conducted in this research were based on the internship period of the researcher in Finnish Water Forum. Through both individual discussion with the branding teams that include Markus Tuukkanen – the Deputy Managing Director of Finnish Water Forum, Karti Mehtonen – the Managing Director of Finnish Water Forum, Anh Nguyen – a Designer, Finnish Water Forum. Besides, Hien Le – a User Interface Designer, Tuxera Inc. and Anh Thu Tran Minh – an Independeny Consultant, Anthurium Ltd. are the ones which bring different perspectives of the Vietnamese market to the research.

All of the interviewees are specialists in their field. Besides, they have strong knowledge of both countries, Vietnam and Finland, particularly Anh Thu Tran Minh and Markus Tuukkanen. Both of them have strong and solid experiences in building relationship in water treatment and water supply sectors between the two countries over the last decade. Therefore, individual discussions and meetings are noted carefully by the researcher to provide credibility to the research.

#### Quantitative research method

While qualitative research used in designing brand concept, and brand visual identity, a quantitative research was chosen to conduct in the launching event. This survey research can provide deeper insights of customer behaviour through its large database. The instrument of quantitative research method has a greater effect to final outcome than in the qualitative research because of its large sample sizes. Therefore, the research instrument adaptation to the market condition should be designed properly based on the research objective. (Craig and Douglas, 2000, 189)

In the research, a survey that is used to inquire visitors' interest in the launching event from 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2014 to 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2014 was carried out. The questionnaire was aimed at professionals and companies visiting the event. The length of the questionnaire was short to increase the rate of survey completion because of the tight schedule of the visitors. However, it still included the main information that the brand requests for its future analysis. Over 600 answers from companies working in different fields within water treatment industry were collected during 3 days in the event. This is a positive sign of the visitors' interest in Finnish technology, and particularly Nuoc Phan Lan brand.

## 5 LAUNCHING NUOC PHAN LAN BRAND IN VIETNAM

### 5.1 PEST analysis of Vietnam in water treatment solutions

Over the past two decades, the world has seen the impressive performance of Vietnam's economic and social development. However, along with the fast development, the issues of environmental pollution are now at the red alert to government and society to pay more attention. Only 60 per cent of wastewater is gone through the public treatment system but the proportion handling wastewater is just as low as 10 per cent. Most of the Vietnamese households, approximately 90 per cent use septic tanks for store the wastewater but only 4 per cent of those are treated properly. (The World Bank, 2014)

The indicators above is just few facts showing that there are appealing chances to companies both foreign and domestic that want to stand up and invest in the sector. Nevertheless, besides the foreseen the opportunities, the hidden challenges of discovering effectiveness and profitability in the complex political and social environment are vital to determine before conducting any action.

#### 5.1.1 Political and legal environment

Vietnam is a single political party state. Communist Party is the power force which leads the country socially and economically. Since the political extraordinary transition called "Doi Moi" in 1986 that allowed Vietnam to open the gate to the world, the

country has experienced the significant development. GDP per capita increased from under 100\$ in 1986 to 1960\$ in 2013 (The World Bank, 2014). As a result, the poverty rate in the country has dropped dramatically over the period from 60 percent to 10 percent.

Vietnam water sector is managed by the cooperation of 5 ministries. The Ministry of Construction monitors the urban water supply and sanitation. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is responsible for the rural area. Besides, the ground and surface water resources management is taken care of by the Ministry of Ministry of Nature Resources and Environment. Furthermore, this ministry also monitor the quality of water resources as well as the process of discharging the wastewater to lakes, rivers and sea. In addition, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Investment will work together for attracting investments and business and economics activities of the water sector. Last but not least, the Ministry of Health controls the hygiene of drink water. (Embassy of Israel in Hanoi, 2009)

The complexity of handling water issues between government organisations has been a major problem for foreign investors. This is an important point that firms who are planning to invest in water solutions in Vietnam need to pay extra attention. Thus, seeking for reliable consulting services or cooperating with local business partners will lower the unnecessary risks in managing paper work.

#### Intellectual property fact

Moreover, one of the main constraints for foreign firms in business partnership conducted in Vietnam is intellectual property (IP) protection. Following an article in Nikkei Asian Review, the Vietnamese firms pay little awareness to defend their names or their ideas. The figure shows that less than 1 per cent of companies registered their trademark in the national intellectual property office in 2013. Similarly to the enterprises, Vietnamese civilians do not consider IP infringement as sort of crime with over 81 per cent of software piracy rate. (Nikkei Asian Review, 2014)

The government have not had any previous decisions to protect the foreign intellectual rights when they are operating in the country. Since the participation of Vietnam in the World Trade Organisation, the outsiders expected a remarkable changes in the Vietnamese legislation in terms of IP protection. Nevertheless, the situation is still re-

mained as it has been because of hurdles to implement the laws into practice. (Nikkei Asian Review, 2014)

### 5.1.2 Economic environment

After a period of high inflation and vulnerable growth, Vietnam economy has gained the necessary stabilization. According to the World Bank, the GDP annual growth rate of Vietnam in 2013 was 5.4 per cent. This figure is forecasted to grow gradually in 2014 and 2015. Moreover, the inflation rate is also managed effectively by the government to keep the stability of the economy with 4.7 per cent in the first 8 months of 2014, which was the lowest rate since 2003. Therefore, in the period of next two years, the forecast is more optimistic about the performance of strong industries, the rise in household consumption. (Asian Development Bank, 2014)

Along with the crucial return on track of the economy, there are a lot of positive signs of actors in the water sectors. Huge foreign investment has been directly targeted to the water supply and wastewater treatment in many cities in the whole country. For instance, on 8 October 2013, Ayala Group based in Philippine bought 31.5 per cent of SII (the Sai Gon water infrastructure company) to become the biggest foreign investor in the industry. Only 63 per cent of Vietnamese industrial zones has the wastewater treatment system. In addition, there are 21.5 per cent of Hanoi population that cannot access to the clean water while this figure may be much higher in other cities. Therefore, Vietnam water sector still offers a huge room for foreign companies to invest. (Vietnamnet, 2014)

### 5.1.3 Social environment

Vietnam is a country of large labour force. Over 50 per cent of the population is between 15 and 54 years of age. This is one of the major factors that attract foreign investors. Vietnamese population is over 93 million people, which ranked 15th in the

world and 7th in Asia. Thus, there are about 50 million people in the country that are available for the work force. (The World Fact Book, 2014)

Overall, the population density in Vietnam is 271 people per km<sup>2</sup>. However, there are three most populated regions that are Red River Delta, South East and Mekong River Delta with 971, 655 and 431 people per km<sup>2</sup> respectively. Thus, combined with the inadequate infrastructure, the water supply and wastewater treatment is the emerging concern of the authorities in these areas. (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2013)

Besides, thanks to the rapid development of the Internet, the Vietnamese youth are able to approach with the global information sources. Thus, they are having a more and more concerns over the environmental issues of the country, especially toward water sector. As a result, a growing number of youth volunteer associations assisting the authorities to protect nature resources have been established. This is a positive sign showing big potential to the foreign investors that the future of this country is going to spend their time and effort to resolve environmental problems.

#### 5.1.4 Technological environment

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the infrastructure of water system in Vietnam still requires a major investment to be able to satisfy all the citizens' need. Around the world, the big groups and companies working in the sectors have been paying more and more attention to the Vietnamese market, such as companies from Singapore, Malaysia, the UK, and the Netherlands and so on. Hence, the latest model of machines and systems are introduced at business trade fair and exhibitions. Along with the foreign brands, the new entries to this market will face fierce competition from domestic companies, which are state-owned, or having strong relationship with the authorities.

Since the penetration of the Internet in 1991, over two decades, Vietnam has achieved remarkable success in connecting local people with the world. There are 35.6 per cent of Vietnamese population having the Internet access. Users spend time on the Internet for various tasks including reading new (85%), checking email (77%), surfing (71%), studying (66%) and entertaining (61%). In addition, social media, particularly Facebook is playing a rising role in the user's activities with 85 per cent increase of number of user between 2011 and 2012. (TECHINASIA, 2013)

Besides the Internet, mobile phone is also changing the Vietnamese people daily life. There are only over 93 million people in the country, but the number of mobile phones is over 120 million units. Furthermore, 30 per cent of those are smart phones which enable users to accessing to the Internet. This has illustrated that the Vietnamese are following the global trend of spending more time on their phone for the Internet, instead of using computers. Thus, the chances for digital marketing and e-commerce are blossoming for firms to switch or strengthen their strategy. (TECHINASIA, 2013)

## 5.2 The brand Nuoc Phan Lan

### 5.2.1 Mission and Vision of Nuoc Phan Lan

One of the most challenging tasks in building Nuoc Phan Lan brand is how to give it a character and personality that makes the brand stand out on the market. It is not only different by the name or the visual identity, but also the mission and vision itself. There are organizations from Germany, the Netherlands and Japan working extremely hard to improve Vietnam water system's condition. However, they are operating in quite similar manners. Therefore, in order to differentiate itself from the rest, Nuoc Phan Lan has to work hard to bring fresh and innovative attributes to the market.

#### Mission

Nuoc Phan Lan represents the Finnish Water Sector in Vietnam. It is the bridge to link between the Finnish know-how and the need of Vietnam in challenging water issues. Therefore, Nuoc Phan Lan embraces the responsibility of introducing the latest technology and expertise to the Vietnamese market. In addition, through Nuoc Phan Lan network, the Vietnamese enterprises can find the reliable business partners from the Scandinavian country. This creates the necessarily competitive market so as to provide the variety of products to consumers in Vietnam. (Tran, 2014)

One of the most important reasons why Nuoc Phan Lan exists in Vietnam is to create a link between enterprises and community to protect the water resources. The brand strives to deliver message to the society of the essence of sustaining water resource. Besides, Nuoc Phan Lan aims to raise awareness of the firm about how safety water resource can benefit the community as well as the development of the company.

Hence, the hope of mutual understanding between the companies and the local citizens can build the way forward.

### Vision

Our aim is to make Nuoc Phan Lan a brand standing for innovation, enthusiasm and reliability. Through our campaigns, we want to play a part in the improvement of Vietnam water system. We wish after a decade of operation in the country, the Vietnamese citizens could enjoy accessing to safe water in any place, at any time. Furthermore, by bringing the standard of Finnish water infrastructure to Vietnam, we want the Vietnamese people to have the same convenience and comfort as Finnish people do. (Tuukkanen, 2014)

Moreover, by engaging the two countries' businesses, Finnish Water Forum really looks for strengthening the relationship between Vietnam and Finland. Via Vietnam, Finland can access more to the Southeast Asian economics region to a greater extent, while Vietnam can also increase its appearance in Europe.

## 5.2.2 Nuoc Phan Lan brand core activities

### Obtaining right to use the trademark

Nuoc Phan Lan understands that there are companies in the market striving to deliver their commitment toward environmental issues, particularly water problems. Hence, we have created a package of service that helps the firms to do that. Any manufacturers who meet Nuoc Phan Lan's standard of water treatment will be able to subscribe the trademark and use it for their advertising and promotion activities. (Tran, 2014)

Indeed, from the Nuoc Phan Lan website, there is a form of subscription for companies to fill in and submit. After that, the project coordinator will contact again with the firms and set a date that Finnish experts are going to visit the territory and to check the facility and the water usage and water treatment process. Hence, if there are some criteria which are yet to match the set of standards, the experts will kindly offer advice and proposals. (Tran, 2014)

The subscription fee is 100 euro per year which is small for any size of enterprise. The duration of each subscription is one year so after every year, the process is repeated. However, from the second year, as customers are saved in Nuoc Phan Lan database, the staff from the brand will contact the company in advance. (Tuukkanen, 2014)

From this point, the subscribed company have the right to use the Nuoc Phan Lan trademark with the logo alongside every marketing activities. Furthermore, the brand and Finnish Water Forum are willing to assist the firm in finding business partners in Finland, as well as giving technical advises for problems of the company. (Tuukkanen, 2014)

#### Being a giving partners

Moreover, Nuoc Phan Lan is willing to be a giving partner with any individual as well as organisation who want to donate to improve water infrastructure of regions in Vietnam. The donators can contact Nuoc Phan Lan to present their ideas and which location they are aiming to. Based on that, the board of managers will search for the right companies who are believed to deliver the sustainable solution for the donators' willingness.

By cooperating with Nuoc Phan Lan, the board of managers promises that there is no corruption or bureaucracy. The project is processed in the most effective and efficient way that conforms Finnish water standard. Hence, we assure the donators of their high reputation in the regions. Thus, the company will receive substantive support from the local residents for their business projects.

#### Assisting youth organisation

As mentioned above in the SWOT analysis, there is an increasing number of the youth volunteer associations in the country that are spending time and effort to attract the society attention toward water problems. For instance, Water-Revol, Water Wise and other associations from universities and high schools throughout the country have actively participated and organised water events recently. (Tran, 2014)

Nuoc Phan Lan is a non-profit company, therefore, it is assured that all the revenue raised from its activities will be reinvested to the society. Finnish Water Forum finan-

cial support is accounted as one of the main parts of Nuoc Phan Lan's budget. Moreover, through Finnish Water Forum network, Nuoc Phan Lan will seek sponsorship from organisation from both government and non-government organisation. (Mehtonen, 2014)

Last but not least, the young Vietnamese will not only receive financial support but also consulting services on their ideas, the technology that they want to use by the knowledge and the expertise of Finnish Water Forum members. Hence, Nuoc Phan Lan is striving to bring more credibility and creativity to their activities so that the organisations can further inspire local people to participate in environmental protection activities.

### Digital Marketing Activities

In the initial stage of establishing the brand, Nuoc Phan Lan does not have any physical office in Vietnam. Therefore, digital marketing is chosen to be the main channel to involve people to the brand activities. For instance, the brand has created its own website (nuocphanlan.com), its newsletters system sending out 4 times a year, social media accounts are in process of releasing. The website is the main force to provide information regarding the brand profile, news and outstanding Finnish water technology. (Tuukkanen, 2014)

There are various reasons that Nuoc Phan Lan decided to use digital marketing, especially online marketing as the core of the brand central marketing strategy. As the figure of using Internet in Vietnam increasing remarkably every year, online marketing is a powerful channel to attract people attention. Edelman (2010) mentioned that because of the changes in consumer habits of using digital technology, firms are carefully switching their interests from traditional marketing toward interactive digital marketing. Furthermore, optimizing online marketing can reduce a significant amount of cost of rent and other administrative costs.

However, controlling digital marketing content is vital for Nuoc Phan Lan to create its credibility and image. Any mistakes of publishing improper content can leads to a catastrophic damage to the brand reputation and brand awareness. Thus, Nuoc Phan Lan starts with website and newsletters as the frontier in its marketing strategy. The reason

is that website and newsletter is less interactive environment than social media. Therefore, publishing content is managed carefully before posting. (Tran, 2014)

### 5.2.3 SWOT analysis of Nuoc Phan Lan brand in Vietnam

#### Strength

Entering the Vietnamese market with Nuoc Phan Lan brand, the broad of managers and the branding team have strong confidence and belief of success because of our solid strengths and advantages comparing to competitors. First of all, in terms of knowledge about the water sector, Nuoc Phan Lan is supported by substantial know-how and high technology of Finnish water institutions, companies and associations. Finnish experts are capable of suggesting solutions for various weather conditions ranging from -30 Celsius to +30 Celsius. Further, Finnish companies have operated in many countries and regions around the world like Nepal, Russia, and China. As a result, Nuoc Phan Lan can become a reliable consultant for its customers and partners. (Markus Tuukkanen, 2014)

Despite Nuoc Phan Lan is a new brand in Vietnam; the term "Nuoc Phan Lan" (Finnish Water) is already well known for decades in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. This was a result of successful cooperation between Finnish government and Vietnamese government in assisting Hanoi and Haiphong, the two biggest cities in the North of Vietnam to build water supply utilities. Over and above that, local residents in Hanoi named a road in Tayho district as "Nuoc Phan Lan Road". Even though it is an unofficial name, its popularity is used within the community. (Anh Thu, 2014)

The relationship with NGOs and SEAWUN (South East Asia Water Utility Network) is a valuable asset, which allows Nuoc Phan Lan to join their activities in certain levels. Therefore, Nuoc Phan Lan can approach business-to-business network in all over South East Asia countries. The company sees it as a huge opportunity not only for Nuoc Phan Lan to increase the brand awareness but also for Finnish Water Sector to introduce and create potential partnership.

#### Weaknesses

One of the pitfalls in this project is the financial limitation. The financial resources of Finnish Water Forum depend a lot on the support of the Finnish government and funds from the European Union. At the moment, they are experiencing tight fiscal policy from both authorities. Hence, Nuoc Phan Lan has to take limited budget into account in human resource plan and marketing strategy. This has a huge effect in the process of the project because the branding team has had to find the lowest cost path to build the brand which is a clearly a disadvantage to the brand compared with the competitors. (Mehtonen, 2014)

Furthermore, because of the limited financial resource, it is unlikely that Nuoc Phan Lan will have an office with representatives in Vietnam at the initial stages. The operation of Nuoc Phan Lan will be aligned with some other Finnish firms working in the field, such as Econet Group or Vaisala. This may emerge an issue of controlling and marketing plan. (Tuukkanen, 2014)

Vietnamese economy is considered highly as the relationship economy. In order to succeed, the relationship with businesses within the field and the authorities plays an important part. Although Finnish Water Forum has strong partnership with many organizations in Vietnam which benefits Nuoc Phan Lan at the beginning stages, Nuoc Phan Lan is still lack of connection with governmental departments. This may cause delays in the process of applying for trademark recognition, or other paper work process.

### Opportunities

One of the biggest opportunities for Nuoc Phan Lan in Vietnam is that there are no direct competitors. There are other companies working in the water sector but their focuses are more on product and technology than raising people awareness of water issues. Nuoc Phan Lan emphasizes on educating, connecting people, and organization to protect the environment, especially water.

Being the first brand in the market to concentrate on raising awareness toward protecting water resource gives Nuoc Phan Lan clear advantages. First, Nuoc Phan Lan may quickly gain attention from the society and firms from marketing activities, hence create the initial brand awareness. This may make the brand stand out from other associations doing the same tasks but not as intense as Nuoc Phan Lan does. By spreading the

brand image, Finnish Water Forum, especially Finnish water companies will have an upper hand to their competitors. Once people know about Nuoc Phan Lan (Finnish water), they will welcome investment and products made in Finland to their purchasing lists. (Tran, 2014)

Along with the popularity of the Internet in the whole country, Vietnamese youth have more chances to approach the global information sources. They are nowadays well aware of the reality of water problems existing in Vietnam. Thus, involving young organizations into Nuoc Phan Lan's promotion campaign may generate a substantial effect to the society. Besides, the young enthusiastic people will become the country driving force in the near future. Hence, assisting them to express and transform their desire into real action is the right move for Nuoc Phan Lan as well as Finnish Water Sector in the future to build long lasting relationship between the two countries' water business.

Last but not least, Vietnamese government is paying more and more attention toward the environmental issues, especially the water resource. Recently, authorities have introduced the new regulation toward standard of drainage, sewerage and wastewater treatment, Decree No. 80/2014/ND-CP (Wastewater Management Program, 2014). Following this new law, the higher standard of wastewater is formulated in order to minimize hazard of industrial and urban area to the nature. Thus, there will be the need of water system improvement which requires consulting and purchasing. This is a good opportunity for Nuoc Phan Lan to introduce Finnish water expertise in the market.

### Threats

In the promoting Finnish Water Expertise task, Nuoc Phan Lan faces fierce competition from other countries with a strong water know-how and maybe more geographic knowledge such as Singapore, Japan, China and Malaysia. These countries have quite similar culture to Vietnam, which creates certain advantages for them to conduct business. Furthermore, the flow of Official Development Assistant from Western countries like Germany, Austria and the Netherlands may build barriers to Finland to establish commercial relationship with Vietnam in water sector. (Tran, 2014)

The SWOT analysis is summarised in table 1.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of Nuoc Phan Lan brand in Vietnam

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>The first registered brand in Vietnam focusing on raising awareness of people toward water resources protection.</p> <p>Strong knowledge of the field through the support of Finnish water companies and institutions both in Vietnam and in Finland.</p> <p>The term of Nuoc Phan Lan has already well-known in Hanoi, and several provinces in Vietnam.</p> <p>Strong connection to the Finnish water sector and NGOs</p>	<p>Limited financial ability</p> <p>No physical office in Vietnam. The brand operation depends heavily on the Finnish companies and Finland embassy in Vietnam.</p> <p>NPL has yet to establish tight connection to Vietnamese environmental associations and authorities. Thus, compare to domestic companies and associations, NPL has little less connection in Vietnam.</p>

Opportunities	Threats
<p>There are no direct competitors in the field of raising people awareness toward water issues.</p> <p>Water quality issues are becoming more important in general.</p> <p>Government are posing more regulations towards companies about the quality of discharging wastewater. Thus, firms need to improve their wastewater treatment systems in the short future.</p>	<p>Singapore, Malaysia, the Netherlands, the UK, Australia are among the countries receiving attentions of local business and citizens about their technology.</p>

### 5.3 Building Nuoc Phan Lan visual identity

Initial visual brand identity of Nuoc Phan Lan has a substantive effect on the future success. The reason is that on Vietnamese market, the number of brands' focus on their appearance is increasing. Hence, to catch people's attentions, Nuoc Phan Lan has to bring unique characters and new look to the market. (Nguyen, 2014)

Moreover, in Nuoc Phan Lan identity designing process, the Finnish design style is an important aspect that the branding team has to take into account. On the one hand, the brand represents Finnish water so the look of the brand should reflect it. On the other hand, the Finnish designs or in general, the Nordic designs are regarded as premium quality in Vietnam. Hence, using Finnish design in building Nuoc Phan Lan appearance is considered to give the brand certain advantages. (Nguyen, 2014)

#### 5.3.1 Nuoc Phan Lan's logo

Nuoc Phan Lan's logo is entirely created by the Finnish Water Forum designer, Anh Nguyen following the guidance of the branding team. As similar as the website, the logo has to reveal the brand characters while reflecting the Finnish original. Furthermore, it has to be simple, eyes-catching and unique. (Tran, 2014)



Figure 6. Nuoc Phan Lan's logo

The Idea of the blue background and white text is taken from the Finnish flag. The palette also suggests credibility and sustainability. The name of the brand, Nuoc Phan Lan is centred in a blue square shape. This increases its visibility while still maintain the sim-plicity and professionalism. In addition, a droplet is positioned aside the brand name in the logo to reveal field of business Nuoc Phan Lan operating. (Nguyen, 2014)

### 5.3.2 nuocphanlan.com

#### Website content

From the first meeting, Tukkannen (2014) mentioned the essence of a website in the initial brand building process: “Nuoc Phan Lan website will play the core role in raising the brand awareness because it is the channel that we can definitely manage the content and how it interacts to viewers.” The time and effort spent in building the website was significantly greater than the others such as logo, business materials, and newsletters.

The website designing process went through several steps. At first, the skeleton of the website was brainstormed and built by the whole team members based on how many groups of users Nuoc Phan Lan wants to attract. Then, the content was created according to the skeleton in text files. Tran (2014) emphasized that the text appears in the website has to be correct technically and politically. Besides, it needs to have an interesting content written in a promoting manner.

Due to the high demand of the text quality, contents in the website went through different stages of checking and altering by Vietnamese professionals working in Finnish companies, Vietnamese Embassy in Finland, and Vietnamese companies. There were a lot of comments from different angles with different ideas. However, to maintain the characters of the brand, the team chose only the supportive comments to edit the content. (Tuukkanen, 2014)

### Website User Interface

The website user interface is produced similarly as the content. Anh Nguyen, a Finnish Water Forum's designer, proposed a few versions with different designing styles. For instance, the following figures illustrate two noteworthy ones.



Figure 4: First website layout

The first design focused on blocks which were created based on Finnish Water Forum website. The background is made by diamond pattern with blue color which represents water. The pictures in the front pages create the professional impression while

still generate curiosity for the users with the Nuoc Phan Lan street (Finnish water street) sign. (Tuukkanen, 2014)

From the external comments, Le (2014), User Interface Designer of Tuxera Inc., commented:” Although the website layout offers a professional look, the style is out of date because it is not automatically resizable for desktop and mobile devices. The structure of the blocks can easily cause problems while coding.”

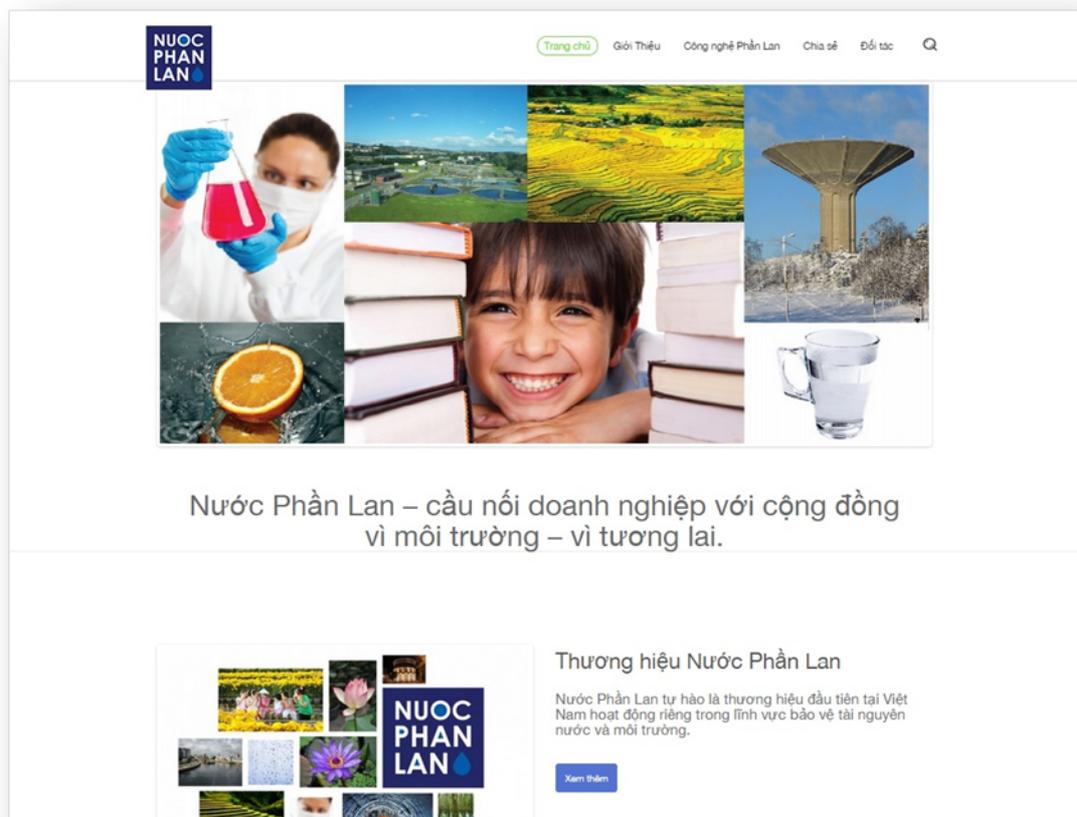


Figure 5: Second website layout

The second version was suggested by Le and received more positive comments. The front page picture not only creates professional outlook, but also brings the feeling of trust and happiness to the reader at the first glance (Tran, 2014). This layout is resizable according to the viewers' devices. Furthermore, the users find it easy to read the text because of the white background. Nuoc Phan Lan's logo is set in one corner of the front page picture and it is like a stamp of the brand's promises, professionalism,

quality, happiness and so on. Thus, based on the comparison between the two models, the latter one was chosen to be further developed. (Le, 2014)

### 5.3.3 Business materials

Logo is an important assets of Nuoc Phan Lan. However, to create the logo without any further implementation on business activities is waste of time and financial resources. Therefore, Nuoc Phan Lan has to have a unique style in business material. This shows the prestige and professionalism of the brand. (Markus Tuukkanen, 2014)

All of the materials that used business transactions or meetings of Nuoc Phan Lan were designed in one style. Similar to the logo, blue and white are the main colors of the design. In most of them, the logo is always put in the most visible place. This helps business partners recognize the brand at the first glance. Moreover, by preparing care-fully these materials, Nuoc Phan Lan wants to deliver a message of cooperative willingness and credibility.



Figure 7: Nuoc Phan Lan business materials

#### 5.4 Launching Nuoc Phan Lan brand to Vietnam in 2014

Vietwater is the biggest event of water industry in Vietnam. The event is held annually in either Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City, two biggest cities of Vietnam. Every year, there are thousands of visitors coming to the event; especially the latest event 2014 saw the record breaking of 10560 attendees participating. There were also 3000 exhibitors from 32 countries coming to the event to show their technology and looking for business partnership. (Vietwater, 2015)

Finnish Water Forum has taken part in the event for 3 years with Finnish companies, such as Keypro, Niras Finland, and so on. Vietwater2014 was the occasion that Finnish Water Forum wanted to introduce Nuoc Phan Lan to visitors. On one hand, Nuoc Phan Lan can be presented to many companies, government departments as well as professionals in the field. Therefore, this increased the effectiveness of the launching events while the cost was reduced significantly. On the other hand, by introducing Nuoc Phan Lan to the event, Finnish Water Forum could deliver strong commitments on the Vietnamese market. (Markus Tuukkanen, 2014)

In addition, in October 2014, the Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam, Mr Hoang Trung Hai visited Finland and had a talk with Finnish Water Forum. Nuoc Phan Lan brand was mentioned during the discussion and received encouragements from the Vietnamese side. Therefore, Vietwater2014 hold in November was ideal timing for launching the brand because within a month, the story of a new Finnish brand in Vietnam would be able to reach to certain groups within the Vietnamese government. This would help Nuoc Phan Lan gain more attention in the launching event.

#### 5.4.1 Preparing for Vietwater

The launching event was actually prepared in a short time because of the late confirmation from Finnish companies participating in Vietwater 2014. However, with a remarkable effort from the branding team, Nuoc Phan Lan still made necessary construction for the successful event.

First of all, a brand's newsletter was sent to the Finnish Water Forum network including firms from Vietnam, Finland, Malaysia, the US and so on to introduce about the launching event and invite them to visit the brand website. In addition, three stories about successful water projects of Vietnam and Finland were included in the newsletters. The stories also give readers interesting points of view, for instance a foreigner's impression about water conditions in Finland or the contrast pictures of water infrastructure between rural and urban area in Vietnam. Besides, there was one section in the newsletter presenting noteworthy Finnish companies who are doing well in the market.

A short survey designed with Nuoc Phan Lan theme was also listed in the preparation plan. The survey aimed to enlarge the contact database of Nuoc Phan Lan newsletter system. Besides, questions about the interests of visitors in the event were also included so as to figure out their interests.

Moreover, Nuoc Phan Lan prepared 400 hundreds of high quality white t-shirt with the logo of Nuoc Phan Lan. These T-shirt would be distributed to VIPs and Finnish Water Forum partners in the event to spread the appearance of the brand in Vietwater 2014. The team also ordered thousands of business materials to give away for visitors. All of these materials were designed products made to earn the first impression from the visitors. From the very first look, Nuoc Phan Lan wanted to show the professionalism and commitment in the brand operation. (Anh Thu, 2014)

#### 5.4.2 Launching Nuoc Phan Lan in Vietwater 2014

The launching event was considered as a success because of the vast attention received from the audiences. There were many positive signs of Nuoc Phan Lan's bright

future to fulfil its mission. Not only were the visitors impressed by the brand but also the other exhibitors as well as government officers. The Vice minister of construction of Vietnam, Mr Cao Lai Quang visited the stand and gave encouragement speech to the board of managers about Nuoc Phan Lan brand. Besides, Nuoc Phan Lan was honoured to receive strong support from the Finnish embassy in Hanoi during the event.



Figure 8: the Finnish Water Forum Deputy Manager presenting Nuoc Phan Lan idea to Mr Cao Lai Quang, Vietnamese vice Minister of Construction (Tuukkanen, 2014)

Nuoc Phan Lan logo was one of the most popular signs in the event because it appeared in thousands of document folders and t-shirts that were distributed by Nuoc Phan Lan. In addition, there were 600 visitors filling in the survey of Nuoc Phan Lan that showed remarkable interests from the crowd in the brand. This database would play essential roles in the brand's marketing activities in the future. Furthermore, in the launching event, there were many commercial deals signed by useful assistances of Nuoc Phan Lan to find the mutual benefits between local companies and Finnish firms.



Figure 9: First deal done on the launching day (Tuukkanen, 2014)

Last but not least, besides positive responses at the events, Nuoc Phan Lan received many feedbacks from local businesses, professionals in the field by email. Among the feedbacks, invitation of cooperation and assisting requests were the most popular ones. In addition, there were greetings from other emails of potential participation in the next Vietwater event.

#### 5.4.3 The launching event survey

During three days at Vietwater2014 event, the survey received great attention from the visitors. There were over 600 people completing the questionnaire.

Nuoc Phan Lan popularity

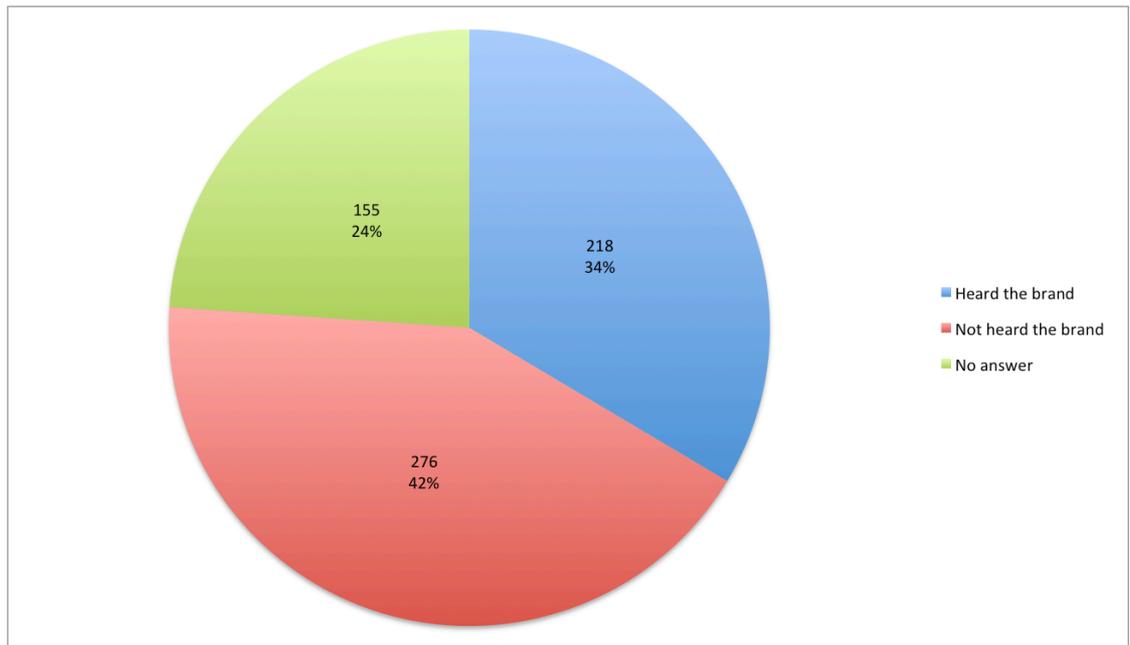


Figure 9: The brand popularity in Vietnam

As can be seen from figure 9, the number of the visitors who have heard about the brand is 218 people, which accounts for 34 per cent. 276 people had never heard of the brand and 155 interviewees did not answer the question. This figure shows positive result because the brand Nuoc Phan Lan sent only a newsletter to inform firms and professionals about its establishment one month prior to the launching event.

The values that the brand name Nuoc Phan Lan delivers

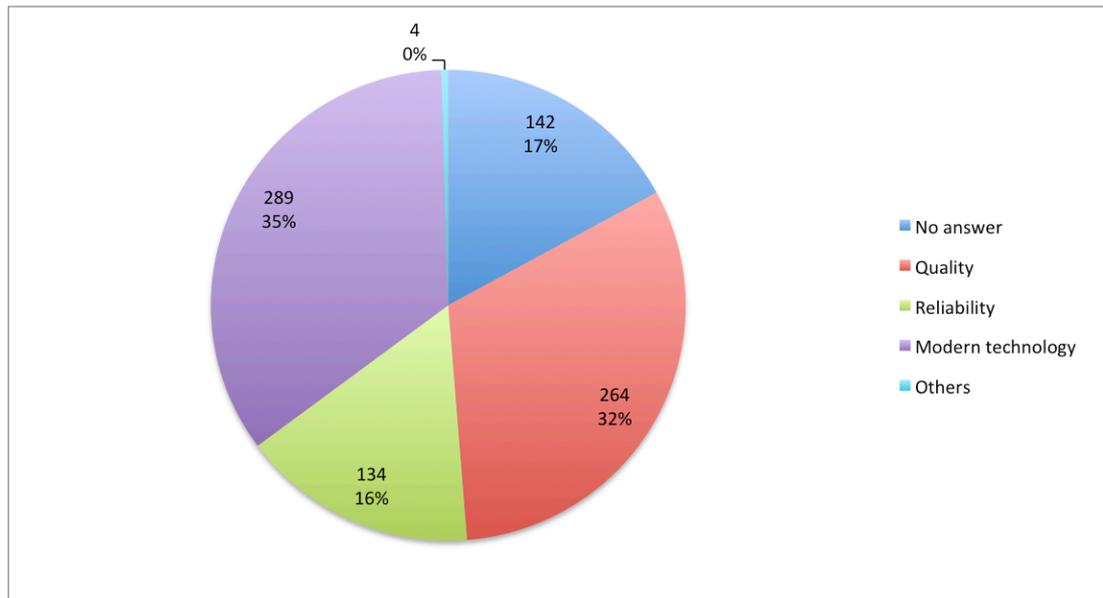


Figure 10: The values of Nuoc Phan Lan in visitors' opinions

Among all the choices given, the brand name “Nuoc Phan Lan” was most connected to innovative technology and quality with 35 per cents and 32 per cents representatively. 16 per cents of participants associated the brand name with reliability whereas 17 per cents did not provide answer to the question. No suggestion aside from the given options was recorded.

The visitors' interests in Vietwater2014 event

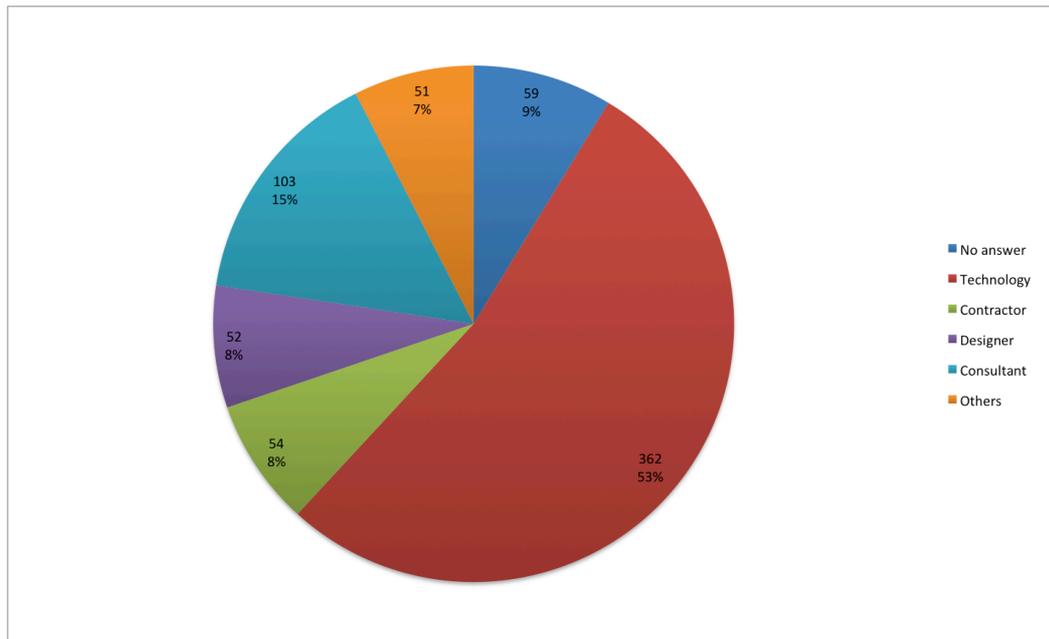


Figure 11: Visitor's interests in Vietwater2014 event

The figure 11 reveals that looking for technology is the main interest of visitors in the Vietwater2014 event with 53 per cent. Besides, consultancy received the second biggest amount of interests with 15 per cent. The four other areas like contractor, designer, no answer and others are quite at the equal level ranging from 7 to 9 per cent.

All in all, it can be seen that Nuoc Phan Lan is on the right track to become a popular brand in Vietnam. Marketing strategies using newsletters and website seemed to work considerably well at the initial stage. In addition, through the marketing channels, the brand should provide useful technology information on Finnish expertise to the Vietnamese market, as it is the biggest interest of people attending the event.

### 5.5 Recommendations for the commissioner

Based on the research, financial resource is one of the major problems that Nuoc Phan Lan is encountering. Every marketing activity requires certain amount of money to be effectively conducted. Therefore, Finnish Water Forum should find a solution for this issue as soon as possible in order to continue developing the brand in Vietnam market. Seeking for funding from the Finnish government, Asia Development Bank, the World Bank should be considered in the near future.

For every big brand operating in international environment, having a representative team in the local market brings many advantages to its competitiveness. The brand representatives should be able to expand the brand awareness in the market, as well as to give technical answers for Finnish water expertise questions. First and foremost, this team can raise the credibility of the brand to local firms and professionals. Besides, this team is also responsible for promoting activities and increasing Nuoc Phan Lan's network.

Moreover, a strong marketing oriented team, who is responsible for social media, is another vital piece of puzzle in raising Nuoc Phan Lan's awareness in Vietnam. Being able to post interesting information and handle conversations on the social media page are the key skills that the brand team should take into account.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The main research questions of this research were to create Nuoc Phan Lan visual identity and to launch it successfully in the Vietnamese market. The research shows the importance of building visual identity in brand building process. It can make remarkable effects in most of the company marketing activities. In addition, the research also illustrates that Nuoc Phan Lan's logo, website, newsletters and business materials can express the character of the brands as enthusiasm, creativity, professionalism, and reliability.

Furthermore, the thesis also describes concisely research actions for the brand launching process. The author and the board of Finnish Water Forum managers took into account many factors of the business environment as well as brand launching theory in order to make final decisions. For instance, timing and place of launching are essential factors that lead to the success of the brand early stage. Besides, additional activities such as introducing the brand to Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Mr Hoang Trung Hai, and the newsletter sent before the event also contribute significantly.

Last but not least, because of the shortage of financial resources and human resources, Nuoc Phan Lan are focusing only on the website and newsletters. These two channels are official sources that visitors can receive information about the brand's activities and information. Facebook and other social media channels will come after because of its side effects if not well managed.

#### Further research and development ideas

As a young established brand, Nuoc Phan Lan are open for further development. One of them is to raise the brand awareness of the brand through digital marketing and social media. This research could include two qualitative researches and website and social media enhancement.

The first qualitative research is conducting a basement survey asking companies and professional within the Vietnamese water industry about their awareness of Nuoc Phan Lan brand. After that, it will be a period of website modification and social media channel establishment. Then, the final survey will show how changes in digital marketing and social media have increased the brand awareness of targeted groups.

In addition, the Nuoc Phan Lan project also brings opportunities for Vietnamese students studying in Finland to participate in linking water industry between Finland and Vietnam. This not only offers them practical knowledge of international business operation but also a chance of raising self-awareness about environmental problems.

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## BẢNG HỎI QUESTIONNAIRES

- Họ và tên  
*Full name* \_\_\_\_\_
- Cơ quan, tổ chức  
*Organization* \_\_\_\_\_
- Chức vụ  
*Title* \_\_\_\_\_
- Email \_\_\_\_\_
- Số điện thoại  
*Phone number* \_\_\_\_\_
- Bạn đã bao giờ nghe đến thương hiệu “Nước Phần Lan”?  
*Have you heard about “Nuocphanlan” (meaning Finnishwater) brand?*  Rồi  Chưa  
*Yes No*
- Tên thương hiệu “Nước Phần Lan” gợi cho bạn những giá trị gì?  
*Which values does “Nuocphanlan” brand name stand for?*
- Chất lượng  Uy tín  Công nghệ hiện đại  
*Quality Reliability Modern Technologies*
- Khác, đề nghị ghi rõ \_\_\_\_\_  
*Other, please specify*
- Thành phố nào có con đường mang tên “đường nước Phần lan”?  
*In which city is “Finnish water street” located?*
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Bạn tìm kiếm gì ở Triển lãm ngành nước 2014?  
*What are you looking for at VietWater 2014?*
- Công nghệ  Nhà thầu  Thiết kế  Tư vấn  
*Technology Contractor Designer Consultant*
- Khác, đề nghị ghi rõ \_\_\_\_\_  
*Other, please specify*
- Bạn có muốn đăng kí nhận Bản tin qua e-mail từ chúng tôi?  
*Would you like to receive Newsletters from us?*  Có  Không  
*Yes No*

Để biết thêm thông tin về thương hiệu Nước Phần Lan, hãy vào trang web của chúng tôi tại  
*For more information about Nuocphanlan brand, please visit our website at*  
**nuocphanlan.com**