

# **ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CONTENT MARKETING IN CORPORATE BLOGS**

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<b>Abstract</b> <p>Online behaviour is shifting from static to interactive. Because of this, organizations need to be even more alert to keep their customers satisfied. Companies need to be there for their customers and feel like friends, or atleast more humane. Many organizations today are using content marketing on their blogs, trying to attract and engage customers. This thesis aims at finding out how exactly companies are trying to engage their customers on their blogs and what aspects of parasocial interaction can be recognized in these blogs.</p> <p>An attempt to answer these questions is made by linking the concepts of content marketing, engagement and parasocial interaction. A content analysis was made on the corporate blogs of five different mobile operators. Sports related content was examined in order to find out how the companies were trying to engage their customers.</p> <p>The thesis presents four different ways the companies are trying to engage their customers, and argues that many of the aspects of engagement and parasocial interaction were indeed intertwined. The findings suggest that different kinds of call to actions in both text and on the platform were used for engagement as well as fading the brand from the text, personifying the writer and addressing the reader directly.</p> <p>The thesis does not take any stance on whether these ways of engaging are succesful or not, but merely presents what and how companies are trying to do it. A deeper study on the effects of content marketing in corporate blogs is required to better understand the effects of engaging behaviour.</p> <p>This thesis serves as a good starting point for studies in the field, since parasocial interaction has not yet been much studied from the viewpoint of corporate blogs. It will also be of value for companies when planning their social media interaction processess.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> content marketing, corporate blog, engagement, parasocial interaction, storytelling	
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# JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTON KAUPPAKORKEAKOULU

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<b>Tiivistelmä</b> <p>Ihmisten ja organisaatioiden käyttäytyminen verkossa muuttuu yhä enemmän staattisesta vuorovaikutteiseen. Yritysten on oltava tarkkana, sillä pitääkseen asiakkaansa tyytyväisenä, niiden on oltava saavutettavissa ja tunnettava enenevässä määrin ystäviltä, tai vähintäänkin inhimillisiltä. Monet yritykset hyödyntävät sisältömarkkinointia blogeissaan ja pyrkivät näin houkuttelemaan ja sitouttamaan asiakkaita. Tämä tutkielma pyrkii selvittämään millä tavoin yritykset koittavat blogeissaan sitouttaa asiakkaitaan ja millaisia parasosiaalisen vuorovaikutuksen keinoja yritysblogeista on tunnistettavissa.</p> <p>Näihin kysymyksiin pyritään vastaamaan linkittämällä yhteen sisältömarkkinoinnin, sitouttamisen ja parasosiaalisen vuorovaikutuksen käsitteet. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan viiden operaattorin yritysblogien urheilusisältöjä sisällönanalyysin avulla.</p> <p>Tutkielma esittelee neljä erilaista keinoa, jolla yritykset pyrkivät sitouttamaan asiakkaitaan. Tutkimuksessa myös väitetään, että sitouttaminen ja parasosiaalinen vuorovaikutus ovat hyvinkin usein lomittuneita. Yritysblogeista havaittiin neljä erilaista keinoa, jolla yritykset pyrkivät sitouttamaan asiakkaita. Nämä olivat erilaisia kehoituksia toimintaan sekä tekstissä että itse sivustoilla, brändin häivyttäminen tekstistä, kirjoittajan henkilöiminen sekä lukijan puhuttelemine suoraan.</p> <p>Tutkielma ei ota kantaa siihen, olivatko nämä sitouttamisen ja parasosiaalisen vuorovaikutuksen keinot onnistuneita, vaan esittelee lähinnä näitä keinoja. Syvempi jatkotutkimus yritysblogeissa tapahtuvaan sisältömarkkinoinnin on tarpeen, jotta ymmärrettäisiin kuinka se sitouttaa lukijoita.</p> <p>Tutkielma toimii hyvänä lähtökohtana myöhemmille alan tutkimuksille, sillä parasosiaalisia suhteita ei juuri ole tutkittu yritysblogien näkökulmasta. Siitä on myös hyötyä silloin, kun yritykset suunnittelevat vuorovaikutteista toimintaansa sosiaalisessa mediassa.</p>	
<b>Asiasanat</b> parasosiaaliset suhteet, sisältömarkkinointi, sitouttaminen, tarinankerronta, yritysblogi	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Everyone seems to be doing it - but what exactly is it? And can it be used to form meaningful - and profitable - relationships? This thesis aims to find out how companies are using content marketing for engaging their customers and potential customers. The research will look into nearly a hundred blog posts in the corporate blogs of five companies, trying to find clues of how the companies are trying to engage the readers through their texts and whether and how they are trying to form relationships through them.

The shift from a static web environment to a more interactive environment has changed the relationship between consumers and brands (Labrecque 2014). Brands today have more possibilities to build relationships with and influence their target groups, but at the same time consumers have the possibility to choose from a much larger mass of brands with whom to build relationships. For brands to be able to form real relationships online, they should focus on creating compelling content and to appear approachable (Men & Tsai 2015). When the brand feels more like a friend, the customer will listen more closely to it (Rubin & Step 2000).

When customers form imaginary relationships or even friendships with media personas, it is called parasocial interaction (Horton & Wohl 1965). Parasocial interaction has been studied in the contexts of both tv, radio and social media. This thesis will try to find out how companies are trying to profit from parasocial interaction in their own blogs. This is a rather fresh viewpoint to the studies of parasocial interaction, since earlier studies of parasocial interaction on blogs has mostly concentrated on the imaginary relationship building between a blogger and her reader (see e.g. Tsiotsou 2015) - not a company as a blogger.

The framework for studying engagement and parasocial interaction is content marketing in corporate blogs. Content marketing is a rather new form of marketing, but it is closely related to publicity, advertising and advertorials as well as

sponsoring and product placement. These concepts and their relation to content marketing will be further explained later on in this research.

In recent years, many studies have concentrated on content marketing, but it has perhaps not been understood clearly enough. According to Pulizzi (2012), content marketing refers to "the creation of valuable, relevant and compelling content by the brand itself on a consistent basis, used to generate a positive behavior from a customer or prospect of the brand". The basis of content marketing is always strategic; to sell by telling stories (Hallahan 2014). In their widely-cited handbook, Handley and Chapman (2011) stress that the goal of content marketing should never be just to generate buzz, but rather something quantifiable.

The scope of the thesis is in sports related content marketing in corporate blogs of five mobile operators. Sports related content was chosen since it is a field that in itself raises emotions and is thus fruitful soil for engagement (see e.g. Kunz, Elässer & Santomier 2016).

The results of this thesis will be of value for both organizations who do content marketing and for professional content creators as well as for academics. It will help broaden the understanding of content marketing and the different engagement and parasocial interaction can be used for engaging customers and forming relationships.

The research questions are the following:

1. In which ways are companies trying to engage their customers and potential customers through their blogs?
2. Which aspects of parasocial interaction can be recognized in corporate blogs?

The paper is structured as follows: first, earlier literature about new forms of marketing communication will be presented, including an introduction to the concept of content marketing. In the following chapter, engagement will be defined, followed closely by the presentation of parasocial interaction. The fourth chapter starts with a presentation of content analysis, which is the method used in this study. Then the research data and the conduction of the research will be explained. The following chapter presents the analysis and results of the study and aims at answering to the research questions posed here in the introduction. Finally, the thesis will be concluded with a discussion and an evaluation of the study and with some suggestions for future research.

## 2 CONTENT MARKETING

This chapter starts with providing some definitions for content marketing and goes on with comparing it to other forms of marketing communication, which are indeed very closely related to it. These concepts include advertising and advertorial, sponsoring and product placement and branded entertainment. The emphasis is on sports marketing, since it is the scope of this research. The chapter will be concluded with an introduction to narratives and storytelling in marketing.

### 2.1 Defining content marketing

Content marketing is a rising trend today, but it has in fact existed for hundreds of years: according to Pulizzi (2012), John Deere's magazine *The Furrow* can be counted as the first content marketing ever made. *The Furrow* provided its' readers with education about tool, technologies and business possibilities instead of just selling the company's products. This made the magazine popular, and the company a leader in its field. (Pulizzi 2012.)

There is no one universally accepted definition of content marketing, and most of the definitions used are given by others than academics. According to the widely-cited definition of the Content Marketing Institute (2011), the purpose of content marketing is to "attract and retain customers by creating and curating relevant content which is meant to change or enhance customer behavior". Good content can provide uninterrupted engagement for the consumer and increase the time spent with the brand (Ashley & Tuten 2014, 19). The biggest difference between content marketing and earlier forms of online marketing is that the goal is not simply to drive traffic and sell, but also to educate and engage the customers on the way (Hallahan 2014).



Content marketing is the creation and curation of relevant, compelling and timely relevant content with the goal to engage customers and encourage them to buy the products of a brand (Pulizzi 2012; Holliman & Rowley 2014; Hallahan 2014). The concept of content marketing is defined further in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Defining content marketing

Definition	New contribution	Is storytelling mentioned?	Year	Author
Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience – and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.	Instead of pitching products and services, the brands should provide relevant content for its potential customers	No	2011	The Content Marketing Institute
Content marketing is the creation of valuable, relevant and compelling content by the brand itself on a consistent basis, used to generate a positive behavior from a customer or prospect of the brand.	Stories are shared at a higher rate when the brand is removed from the story, a removal of sales pitches entirely from the content engenders trust and credibility.	Storytelling is at the center of new marketing; no marketing communication will be effective without compelling storytelling.	2012	Pulizzi
Content marketing involves creating, distributing and sharing relevant, compelling and timely content to engage customers at the appropriate point in their buying consideration processes, such that it encourages them to convert to a business building outcome.	The definition includes content sharing, is specific about the key characteristics of content, refers to the buying process and is open to the potential business outcome.	Content marketing represents a change of role for B2B marketers, and associate it with inbound marketing, publishing and storytelling.	2014	Holliman & Rowley
Creating or curating useful information or entertainment fare to engage users, promote online click-throughs and return visits.	Content marketing is much like classic PR: providing feature material, information and entertainment fare using the same tools and techniques as in classic product publicity	Brand journalism, a specific form of content marketing, generally calls for using journalistic storytelling skills, producing for brands the same kind of materials as journalists.	2014	Hallahan

## 2.2 Content marketing and the concepts related to it

To better understand content marketing, it is important to examine how it is positioned to other forms of marketing communications. The current marketing environment is characterised by fragmentation of audiences, media overflow and information overload (Kunz et. al. 2016). In this environment, smart marketing communications are needed. Marketing communication include all the means by which organizations inform, persuade and remind publics about their products or services (Keller 2009). Hybrid messages in turn are paid attempts to influence publics for commercial benefit using communication that seems non-commercial (Balasubramanian 1994). Hybrid marketing communication messages are a rising trend, and content marketing can be understood as a form of hybrid messages. Content marketing is closely related to inbound marketing (Hallahan 2014), word of mouth marketing (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki & Wilner 2010) and social media marketing (Ashley & Tuten 2015).

According to Hallahan (2014), content marketing differs from earlier forms of internet marketing in that it goes beyond providing click bait and emphasizes quality messages that are intended to engage the readers. Content marketing might be the closest one to what has earlier been conceived as PR; the brand provides feature materials, background information and entertainment fare (Hallahan 2014) with the intention not to disturb, but rather to educate the customer (Pulizzi 2012). The difference is in that content marketing can be understood as paid publicity, and it is slowly starting to replace earned publicity (Lahav & Shimand-Zeiner 2016).

According to Stephen and Galak (2012) a company's media activity can be divided into three categories: owned, earned and paid media. Owned media include activities in the company's own channels, paid media is advertising and earned media is for example mentions in media or online communities (Stephen & Galak 2012). Content marketing can be seen as being somewhere in between paid media and own media: it usually exists in a company's own channels but it is often paid for too, for example when someone outside of the organization creates the content or when it is distributed.

Taiminen (2015) divides paid media content into five categories:

1. Branded journalism: content that follows the principles of journalistic content creation and answers to the needs of the target audience

2. Content marketing: content usually created by the brand itself to its own channels, tempting the target group, the purpose is to indent existing customers and to get new customers
3. Sponsored content: content produced for the brand in exchange of a fee, presented in an external media environment, the purpose is to associate the brand with the content
4. Native marketing: paid advertising that suits the media environment and is similar with the original content, which appearance is convergent and doesn't disturb the reader's reading experience
5. Advertorial: advertising space that is grounded on brand promotion, it is made as similar as possible as the journalistic content by its appearance and style, the brand is intentionally made a part of the story.

It is worth noting, that even though content marketing is here counted as part of new paid media content, it is described as being content created to the brand'.

Next, some main concepts related to content marketing are further examined.

### **2.2.1 Advertising and advertorials**

Advertising has turned more towards editorials and editorials more towards advertising (Kim, Pasadeos & Barban 2001). In this new media environment consumers might get confused by what content is persuading to sell and which is not. Consumers process different kinds of communication in different ways, and when the communication doesn't seem commercial, it is processed more positively than advertising (Balasubramanian 1994). Studies (see e.g. Kim et. al. 2001) that advertorials generate a greater recall on messages than traditional advertising. From a marketer's perspective this is great news, but it might also be ethically somewhat problematic. Earlier the defense of advertising has been that the consumers are intelligent and able to filter commercial information, but when it is unclear whether there is a commercial pitch the consumer is not that able to filter the information (Drumwright & Murphy 2009).

According to Kim, Pasadeos and Barban (2001), language has a significant effect on whether readers recognize advertisements. Advertisements are more likely to be recognized when wording such as advertising and sponsored content are being used, in comparison to presented by or brand-voice. Advertising recognition effects on how readers perceive the credibility of the news, the quality of the story, their attitudes toward the company providing the company and their intentions to share the story (Woydjinski & Evans 2016).

### 2.2.2 Sponsoring

Sports sponsorship is an important tool in the branded world of today (Kunz et. al. 2016). According to Breuer and Rumpf (2011), many marketing communication tools suffered from the financial crisis, but sponsorship just kept on growing more popular. Sponsorship is defined as a "business agreement between two companies in order for both parties to mutually benefit and accomplish their profit and non-profit objectives" (Tsiotsou 2011). Sponsorship is most widely used in sports, including associations, events, teams, athletes and facilities (Tsiotsou 2011). In fact, about two thirds of all sponsorship spending is on sports (Delia & Armstrong 2015). Sponsoring is most effectful for known brands and especially when the objective is to reinforce existing buying behaviour (Breuer & Rumpf 2011).

### 2.2.3 Product placement and branded entertainment

During the last years, product placement has become an important marketing strategy for firms and it is widely used in for example movies and tv series. Comparing to advertising, product placement has been found to be a more effective way to attract customers and much cheaper, too (Redondo & Bernal). Branded entertainment is closely related to product placement, differing in that the brand is not placed into content but the content is rather co-created by the brand (Kunz et. al. 2016). They define sports-related branded entertainment as "sport content that is co-created by sponsors, sport and media entities, while embedding brands subtly" (Kunz et. al. 2016).

## 2.3 Storytelling to sell

We form our understanding of ourselves and the world around us through narratives (Shankar, Elliot, Goulding 2001). We index, store and retrieve information in the form of stories (Woolside 2010) and short and simple stories with compelling characters and clear plots, myths, help in making consumption decisions (Woolside, Sool & Miller 2007). Today, a narrative perspective is increasingly used in marketing (Shankar et. al. 2001) and storytelling has become central for all new marketing (Pulizzi 2012). According to Pulizzi (2012), marketing communication cannot longer be effective without compelling storytelling.

Shankar et al. (2001) see brands as the main characters of their stories and the brand managers as the authors. From this perspective, marketing plans are stories: they have a beginning, a middle and an end, a valued end point, events relevant to the goal state and a previously decided order for the event. In marketing language, these can be translated into being the marketing objectives, the marketing mix

and the marketing programme. (Shankar et. al. 2001). Stories are useful in marketing communication, because they come with touchpoint to the lives of the receivers, which in turn cause awareness and emotional connection (Woolside 2010).

Eventhough narratives vary, writers usually offer particular perspectives for the stories, consumer character types. A blogger may identify as for example a critic or a friend, and tells her stories almost without exceptions from this point of view (Kozinets et al. 2010). According to Woolside (2010), narrative processing creates self-brand connections when people interpret the meaning of their own experiences by fitting them to their interpretations of experiences into a story. Marketing narratives most likely appeal to consumers who seek to similarities to their own ideal stories (Shankar et. al. 2001).

According to Woolside (2010), a good story expressess how and why life changes and displays the struggle between expectations and reality. The structure of the message indicates whether it is a story or not. A message need to be chronological and causal in order to be counted as a story (Woolside et. al. 2007). Storytelling is at the core of new marketing and especially content marketing (Pulizzi 2012). Next, the goals of storytelling and content marketing will be presented: engagement and parasocial interaction.

### **3 ENGAGEMENT AND PARASOCIAL INTERACTION**

In this chapter engagement and the role of it on social media communications will be explained. Then the conversational human voice will be presented, followed by an introduction to parasocial interaction. The viewpoint through the whole chapter is on social media and corporate blogs, them being the scope of the thesis.

#### **3.1 Engaging publics on social media**

Despite engagement being a widely used term, its' definition is somewhat ambiguous (Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek 2013). They define consumer engagement as "an interactive, experiential process, based on individuals' engagement with specific objects (e.g. brands, organizations), and/or other brand community members". Mollen and Wilson (2010) define online engagement as a "cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value". In this thesis, engagement is understood as a commitment to an active relationship with the brand, as adapted from the definition by Mollen and Wilson (2010). According to Taylor and Kent (2014), engagement is a part of dialogue and both the orientation influencing interactions and the approach guiding the interaction processes. It is engagement that causes publics to want to visit a website over and over again and this engagement comes from how the site is experienced. Calder, Malthouse and Schaedel (2009) point out that it is crucial to understand how consumers experience a website in order to understand the engagement.

Engagement is not a new phenomenon in communications. The engagement of different publics has been at the center of PR throughout its' history (Luoma-aho 2015). According to Taylor and Kent (2014), the term engagement has been used in five different contexts in earlier PR literature: social media engagement, employee en-

agement, CSR and engagement, civic engagement and social capital, and dialogic engagement. In this study, the focus will be on social media engagement, on how organizations are trying to engage publics through their social media channels or, even more precisely, their corporate blogs.

Lately, social media has become an important tool for engaging customers (Men & Tsai 2015). Social media plays an important role in our economic and social environment and gives people the possibility to connect with other members of the community and satisfy their needs for a sense of belonging (Tsiotsou 2015). Companies too have awakened to the potential of social media and are active on all imaginable platforms, corporate blogs being one among many. Corporate blogs have evolved from online and offline systems and they are a mixture of both personal and professional communication (Kelleher & Miller 2006). According to Kelleher and Miller (2006), corporate blogs can offer a unique channel for developing and maintaining relationships between organizations and their publics.

Emotionally engaging with customers is found to be the most important element when building online communities (Pressrove & Pardun 2016). The ones participating and sharing in social media are the engaged consumers. When sharing branded content, the customers are not only forming their own online identity, but also creating maybe the most valuable form of media for the brands; earned media. (Ashley & Tuten 2015.) The engagement of customers affects the relationship between the organization and the customer positively (Gummerus, Liljander, Weman & Pihlström 2012). Dialogic and open communication online can deepen the feeling of belonging to a brand community and help organizations when facing problems or crises (Men & Tsai 2015). Consequences of consumer engagement include loyalty and satisfaction, empowerment, connection and emotional bonding and trust and commitment (Brodie et al. 2013). According to Taylor and Kent (2014), engagement not only benefits the organization or their publics, but the society where it exists too.

The engagement process is initiated by a consumers' need for information (Brodie et al. 2013). The following step is to seek information, and if the information provider pleases the customer, they will at best start following the information provider. The following might of course also be caused by the information provider being a brand the customer follows of other reasons. The consumer's choice to follow a brand on social media is voluntary, but it signals a pre-existing positive attitude towards the brand. This attitude and behaviour could be transferred into more permanent relationships through engagement processes on the brand's pages (Wondwesen 2016). The consumer engagement process can be described as interactive and experiential and it is based on several sub-processes, such as learning, sharing and socializing (Brodie et al. 2013).

When marketing and engagement gets more automated, it will become even more important for brands to preserve their human relationship qualities for them to be able to meet their consumers' expectations (Labrecque 2014). As social media usage increases, so do consumer expectations of brands (Labrecque 2014). Consumption expectations help consumers in anticipating the consequences of buying and using a product (Seabra, Abrantes & Lages 2007). Expectations influence how customers perceive a company's performance (Hsieh, Kuno, Yang & Lin 2010) and they alone can form customer satisfaction (Oliver 2014). Expectations are beliefs of what should happen (Golob, Jančič & Lah 2009) or desired or potential performances (Grunwald & Hempelman 2010). Media - and social media - is a central source when forming and fulfilling expectations about a brand (Seabra et al. 2007).

According to the expectation disconfirmation theory, high expectations are more likely to be negatively disconfirmed and low expectations positively disconfirmed (Oliver 1977; 1980). In other words, if a company outperforms the expectations, the disconfirmation is positive and when it underperforms the expectations, the disconfirmation is negative. The more confident a customer is in her belief, the more likely it will influence her attitude and future behavior (Spreng, Page & Thomas 2011). Since expectancy disconfirmation plays a big role in customer satisfaction (Oliver 1980) it is important that customers have a realistic image of the company. Companies should try to manage their customers' expectations to be able to match them (Olkkonen & Luoma-aho 2014).

### **3.2 Parasocial interaction**

The concept of parasocial interaction (PSI) was first introduced in 1956 by Horton and Wohl explaining the imaginary relationship massmedia users formed towards tv personas. Lately, the research on parasocial interaction has been extended also to the field of social media (see, e.g. Jin 2010; Tsiotsou 2015). Parasocial interaction has been defined as "the illusion of face-to-face relationship with the performer (Horton & Wohl 1965), as a "quasi-relationship with media personalities" (Rubin & Step 2000). Giles (2002) defines parasocial interaction as a user's responding to a media figure as if it were her personal acquaintance. In this research, parasocial interaction is understood as an imaginary relationship towards media personas (Horton & Wohl 1965; Rubin & Step 2000).

Parasocial interaction is an illusionary experience, meaning that the consumer interacts with the brand as if they were engaged in a direct two-way conversation (Labrecque 2014). The individual feels related with a media character, be it real or fictitious, and they may perceive the relationship as a two-way one, instead of a



one-sided media process (Xu & Yan 2011). It is cultivated by attractiveness and perceived similarity (Xu & Yan 2011) and open communication, such as sharing information that seems personal and establishing feelings of a one-to-one relationship (Labrecque 2014). Parasocial interaction increases the desire to provide information (Labrecque 2014) and to interact more through listening more carefully and regarding the media persona as an credible source of information (Rubin & Step 2000).

In order to form intimate and personal relationships with their customers, organizations should strive to humanize themselves and appear as friendly and agreeable (Men & Tsai 2015). A way of humanizing the brand is to talk in a conversational human voice. A conversational human voice is engaging and natural and it can correlate positively with factors such as trust, satisfaction, commitment and mutuality (Kelleher 2009; Kim 2001). In addition to the human voice, using a brand persona to humanize the brand is found to be successful in influencing customers and forming intimate relationships with them (Horton & Wohl 1965).

According to Kelleher and Miller (2006), corporate blogs are perceived as more conversational than the websites of respective organizations. Corporate blogs may thus be especially well suited for using a conversational human voice (Kim 2001; Kelleher & Miller 2006). Blogs can bring forth human attributes of the organization and the people behind the organization and thus help the organizational messages to reach the target groups. Friendly narratives and human interest stories can help shape an emotional connection between the customer and the organization (Pressrove & Pardun 2016). A final touch to the human voice can seem radical: to extract the brand mentioning from the content. According to Pulizzi (2012), stories from which the brand is removed are shared more than stories where the brand is mentioned.

According to Tsioutsou (2015), the effect of publicity is higher in blogs than in online magazines. This is a result of a trend where consumers follow bloggers as if they were their friends and, as long as the bloggers genuinely recommend particular brands, the customers form friendship-like relationships with the brands too (Tsioutsou 2015). Feeling close to an organization increases the likelihood of connecting with it online and sharing its content with friends (Pressrove & Pardun, 2016). The feeling of connectedness might result in other benefits than sharing content as well. The more exposed someone is to the content of an organization, the more they start to rely on the source (Rubin & Step 2000). The customer might be more willing to provide information to the brand that feels like a friend (Labrecque, 2014) and a parasocial relationship can result in a real-life return on investment too; offline engagement (Pressrove & Pardun, 2016).

Parasocial interaction is not just a media phenomenon and imaginary relationships have existed in all societies. One kind of parasocial interaction exists in real-life performing situations where there is a big gap in status between the listener and the performer. (Giles 2002.) Parasocial interaction is quite similar to how real social relationships are established (Horton & Wohl 1956; Rubin & Step 2000) and often normal social interaction might include a degree of parasocial interaction (Giles 2002).

## 4 METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH

In this chapter, the methodology of this thesis, content analysis, will be presented. The choice of method will be justified and the use of it in this study will be explained. Then, the research data will be presented, followed by an explanation of how the research was conducted.

### 4.1 Content analysis as a method

In this study, content analysis was used to analyze data from the organizational blogs of the operators. Krippendorff (2013) defines content analysis as *"a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use."* Content analysis was chosen as a method because it suits well the inspection of existing web page content. Content analysis starts with data that is not originally meant to answer to research questions, as opposing to interviews or answers on questionnaires (Krippendorff 2013). First, research questions were set for guide the study. It is important to set research question before starting to go through data, since that makes the researcher read the text for purpose and sets an empirical ground to the analysis (Krippendorff 2013).

In this study, similar phenomena from different texts, as in different blogs, were compared and analyzed according to the research questions set and the operationalization made in the light of earlier research. The texts were chosen by relevance sampling, which means that all textual units that answers to the research questions were chosen (Krippendorff 2013). In this technique, the researcher examines the text which are to be analyzed and reduces the number of texts to a sample containing a manageable amount of texts (Krippendorff 2013). The studied texts are thus not representatives of a whole population of texts but rather a population of relevant texts (Krippendorff 2013). In content analysis, the coding can be data- or

theory-driven. In data-driven coding, the data is preliminary examined before deciding on the categories and in theory-driven coding, the categories are established within a chosen theory framework before starting the analysis (Stemler 2001).

## 4.2 Research data and conduction of the research

The target of this study was five mobile operators from five different countries. They were chosen to represent different cultural context but all analyzed texts had to be in English or Finnish, in order for the researcher to understand the texts. From all the studied organizations, twenty latest blog posts were chosen, or as many as possible if they had produced less. The data was collected 31.1.2017. Virtually, 18 posts by DNA, 12 by AT&T and 20 posts by Telstra, Vodafone and BT was analyzed, making the sum of data analyzed 90 blog posts.

DNA is a Finnish mobile operator with cirka 3.8 million mobile communication and fixed network subscriptions in Finland (DNA.fi, 15.1.2017). The blog analyzed by DNA is called DNA Appinen. DNA's main profile on Facebook is liked by 197 392 persons and on Twitter they have 5210 followers (27.4.2017). The latest blogpost analyzed was from 9.1.2017 and the oldest from 5.1.2016. 18 blogposts from DNA Appinen were counted in the data.

AT&T is an American mobile operator and the world's largest operator their internet covering 400 million people (about.att.com, 15.1.2017). The blog analyzed is called Inside Connections. AT&T's main profile on Facebook is liked by 6 213 139 people and their Twitter profile is followed by 812 124 people (27.4.2017). The latest blogpost analyzed was from 9.1.2017 and the oldest from 17.3.2016. 12 blogposts from AT&T Inside Connections were counted in the data.

Telstra is an Australian operator, with 17.2 million mobile services, 7.0 million fixed voice services and 3.4 million retail fixed broadband services in Australia. Their blog is called Exchange (telstra.com, 15.1.2017). On Facebook, the main page of Telstra has 809 858 likers and their main Twitter profile has 109 219 followers (27.4.2017). The latest blogpost analyzed was from 25.1.2017 and the oldest from 16.11.2015. 20 blogposts from Exchange were counted in the data.

Vodafone is British and it is one of the worlds largest operators with 470 million mobile customers, 14 million fixed broadband customers and 9.8 million TV customers (vodafone.com, 15.1.2017). The official blog of Vodafone UK is called Vodafone Social. On Facebook, Vodafone UK has 934 639 followers and on Twitter,

the follower amount is 192 722 followers (27.4.2017), and their link to their blog in their Twitter profile. The latest blogpost analyzed was from 4.1.2017 and the oldest from 10.6.2016. 20 blogposts from Vodafone Social were counted in the data.

BT too, is a British operator operating worldwide (btplc.com). On Twitter, the main profile of BT has 64 627 followers, on Facebook, BT Business and Public Sector is liked by 5 585 people and the tv-channel BT Sport is liked by 739 959 people (27.4.2017). BT's blog is called Let's Talk and the latest blogpost analyzed was from 5.8.2016 and the oldest from 17.8.2012. 20 blogposts from Let's Talk were counted in the data. BT also has a site purely dedicated to sports content which is very regularly updated, but in order to keep the data from all the five organizations similar, the corporate blog was chosen for the analysis.

The scope in the corporate blogs of these organizations were sports related blog posts. A clear line had to be drawn to keep the data consistent. Sports related content was chosen because sports content is powerful in branded engagement, since sports fans are highly committed online (Kunz et. al. 2016) and is thus a fruitful soil for engagement. Some of the organizations had separate sports sites but for this study, the data was chosen from their corporate blogs to keep the data from the different organizations similar. This might have reduced the amount of possible data but the choice was made so that all texts would be of similar breed.

First, the corporate blogs were searched for both on the corporate websites and on search engines. The blogs were not possible to be found on the starting page of the organizations, but the researcher had to search for "particular organization" + "blog" in order to find them. In the blogs themselves, a first evaluation on the content was made to decide which posts would be a part of the data studied. All sports related content was picked and e-sports were counted as sports content too. Some posts were merely sports content, some included texts that assimilated sports with technology and were thus mostly tech-related, some were recommendations on sports applications and some were people profiles of professional athletes. The chosen data was then copied to one word-document per organization and then the analyzing of them started.

In this research, the coding was data-driven, or emergent, meaning that a first examination was done before deciding on the categories. The focus of the analysis was then decided to be on whether the organization was mentioned in the text, whether the writer was personified, whether the reader was directly addressed and on how much and what kind of call to actions the text and platform included. In addition, other interesting and discernible issues were registered. Some posts included other elements than text as well, such as images, Twitter or other feeds

and videos. There were registered as a part of the text, but not analyzed separately. The sheet used in the analysis can be found as Appendix 1.

The categories were chosen by drawing on the literature presented earlier with a couple of working hypotheses in mind:

1. The more story-like the text, the more engaging the content
2. The more calls to action, the better the engagement results
3. The lesser the brand is emphasized, the more interested the readers are in the content
4. The more parasocial interaction principles applied, the deeper the commitment to the brand.

As mentioned earlier, the results of the engagement efforts could not be studied with the data of this research, but rather the ways the organizations tried to reach engagement and parasocial interaction.

After all of the 90 blogposts were analyzed according to the earlier set categories, the results were analyzed more precisely. In this phase, the repetitive aspects from different data were looked at together and were tried to be understood in the light of earlier research. The categories that seemed most important and frequent were researched even more precisely and categorized into their own subcategories. These findings will be presented in the following chapters.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this chapter, the analysis and results of this thesis will be presented. The aim is to answer to the research questions posed earlier in the report:

1. In which ways are companies trying to engage their customers and potential customers through their blogs?
2. Which aspects of parasocial interaction can be recognized in corporate blogs?

The answers to the two research questions seem somewhat interlocked. Some of the ways of engagement are also aspects of parasocial interaction and naturally parasocial interaction can be seen as engaging behavior.

The examples picked for presenting the analysis and results are from the corporate blogs of AT&T, BT, Telstra and Vodafone. Posts by DNA were counted as much as the others in the analysis, but they were left out from the examples in order to not to lose any of the meaning in translation, since the texts were in Finnish and the others in English.

### 5.1 Stories as text style

Following the earlier mentioned indicators for stories (Woolside et. al. 2007), the chronologicity and causality of the messages were used as indicators for deciding whether particular texts could be counted as stories. This was not though the only indicator: for example posts that were merely aimed at recommending applications or explaining how the company provides products and services were not counted as stories. Stories had to have a beginning, a storyline and an end. As Appendix 2, there is a model example of a story and as Appendix 3, an example of a text that

could not be counted as a story. The text that is not a story is merely a collection of apps that the writer is recommending, and even though the text has a somewhat personal touch, it is not a story but rather a list of services.

There were found to be great differences between the studied organizations on whether the blogs consisted of stories or other texts. This is numerically presented in Table 2. Both BT and AT&T had almost only text that could be counted as stories in their corporate blogs. The other companies had lesser, but enough so that the rest of the research could be seen as a research on content marketing, which largely is storytelling.

TABLE 2 Stories

	DNA	Telstra	AT&T	Vodafone	BT	All
Story	6/18	5/20	10/12	8/20	18/20	47/90

As presented in Table 2, about half of the studied data could be counted as stories. Storytelling was earlier mentioned as being a core determiner for successful content marketing. It can thus be concluded, that many of the organizations could use more story-like content to be able to even more engage their followers.

## 5.2 Different kinds of call to actions

One major way the organizations seemed to try to engage their readers were different kinds of call to actions in both the blogpost and the platform. A series of different call to actions were recognized in the data. These included call to actions in text, links, social media icons and commenting sections.

All platforms included the social media icons of Facebook and Twitter and all but DNA had also the icon of LinkedIn. The icons were not just pictures, but links with the possibility to share the content to one's own friends and followers on these social media channels. All organizations but AT&T had a commenting section in their blogs and many encouraged their readers to comment and share their opinions about the matter discussed. A curious detail was that in the blog of Vodafone, there seemed always to be already one comment in the commenting section, but with a closer look it came apparent that nobody had actually commented on the post.

In table 3 the number of call to actions in all of the blogs are presented. Even though the research was a qualitative one, the quantities were registered in order to better see the differences between the different organizations. It is worth noting,



that from some of the organizations there were less blog posts counted in the analysis, and some of the numbers might be much lower than the others. No separate emphasizes has been counted, since the quantities are not the main results but rather supports for the qualitative results.

TABLE 3 Call to actions

CTA	DNA	Telstra	AT&T	Vodafone	BT	All
Overall number of CTA	114	234	131	293	173	945
CTA in text	16	68	38	69	48	239
Links	66	46	45	164	48	369
Commenting section	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	4/5
Facebook icon	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	5/5
Twitter icon	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	5/5
LinkedIn icon	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	4/5

In text, call to actions in the form of both texts and links were identified. The texts and links were often intertwined, inviting the reader to learn more about the subject at hands or get introduced to a product or service the brand offered. In an example from the blog of Telstra, the text was about how people like to watch their sports together from small screens on the go, including an example were the writer had seen a group of people watch 'footy' on the train from a mobile phone and how he had joined them. One paragraph in the text invited to learn about an app Telstra provides:

*"It was a reminder how our footy (or any sport really) connects us here in Australia, especially with technology today, including Wi-Fi and apps like I did with the Official AFL Live App <link to the Telstra website where the app is presented> that you can hold in the palm of your hand. It's what transports you to the action and lets you share the magic of a game 'live' with others around you, and even an excited (okay, make that screaming) mate on the other side of the country."*

These kinds of invites to read more and learn more makes the reader dig deeper into the different contents of the company and might inspire them to for example download the app, when it is served to them in an easily accessible manner.

### 5.3 Fading the brand

As table 4 below shows, the brand was mention in most of the blog posts – in the case of AT&T, the brand name was mentioned in all of the blog posts.

TABLE 4 Brand mention

	DNA	Telstra	AT&T	Vodafone	BT	All
Brand mention	5/18	8/20	12/12	10/20	17/20	52/90

Not surprisingly, the brand was often mentioned, but mostly just in the very beginning or the very end of the text. This left the content itself to be free from branding, which made it seem more legitimate. Especially in the cases of personal stories, the brand was faded. On the other hand, it was quite often mentioned in texts that were aimed at recommending apps or television program. In these cases, the brand was mentioned as a provider of the possibility to achieve these contents. When the text was written from the personal point of view of a employee, the brand was often mentioned just in the short personal presentation of the writer.

### 5.4 Personification of the brand

What seemed like one the most important findings of the study, the brand was personified in a mere part of the blog posts analyzed, in one way or another. As table 5 below shows, for all firms but DNA, the writer was personified.

TABLE 5 Writer personated

	DNA	Telstra	AT&T	Vodafone	BT	All
Writer personated	4/18	20/20	10/12	14/20	16/20	64/90

Four different levels of personification were distinguished from the data. In the first group, the text was most of the times written in passive voice from the view-point of the organization, and there were no level of personification. In the second one, the organization was personified as a group of people, who asked questions from the interviewee or who was addressed as “us” or “we”. In the third group, the personification was more deep: here, a representative of the brand was speaking, but from a personal perspective. In the fourth group, the personification was rather similar as in the previous, with the difference that the speaker was not someone from the organization, but a stakeholder as a guestblogger. These categories are compared in Table 2.

TABLE 6 Types of personification

Type of personification	Who is speaking	Determining factors
None	Organization	Passive voice
The organization as a group of people	Organization	Questions asked from an interviewee; “we”, “our”
The person as a part of the organization	Brand representative	Personal perspective from inside of the organization
The person as a friend of the organization	Stakeholder	Personal perspective from outside of the organization

The first is one where the organization is the speaker and there isn't any effort in personifying the brand, the posts are in passive voice and the tone can be official or merely aimed at selling or telling about the organization's products and services or a news style story.

The second group is where the brand is speaking, but it is humanized by talking about “us” or “we”, indicating that there indeed is a human behind the text and that the reader can be a part of this “us”. In the cases where this style was used it was also rather common that the writer addressed the reader directly and welcomed her to be a part of this “us”, as in this example from the blog of BT:

*“Has it really been four years since London 2012? Just like we've lost track of time, it's easy to forget how important technology is in the world of sport. So let's take a moment to recognise the effort that goes into achieving sporting success – both on and off the track.”*

In the third group, there is a brand representative speaking, but they speak from own experience and even if they talk about the brand providing something, it is always from the personal viewpoint. An example of this is an AT&T blogpost where the writer tells his story from a young swimmer to an Olympic athlete and further to how AT&T today provides a possibility for sports fan to connect with the athletes:

*“When I qualified for the 2004 Olympics in Athens, a lot of the local kids brought me cards wishing me good luck. I took those with me for inspiration.*

*Today, AT&T makes it easier than ever for people to communicate with their favorite Olympians. Fans can sign up to become an #ATTFanmate, cheer on Team USA athletes and even receive special messages in return. As an*

*Olympian, I know messages like that make you want to train harder and be better.*

*I'll never forget those kids from the local pool. I still keep in touch with many of them. It's experiences I had as an Olympian that help me in my job today with AT&T. I've learned that you should always seek to be great at something. Whether it's at work or in your personal life, find something to be passionate about and be great at it."*

In the fourth group, the speaker is a stakeholder representative such as a sports fan or a professional athlete who guest blogs in the corporate blog. In these cases, the blogpost might seem more like a regular collaboration post in the blog of the writer: they write from their own perspective, always still mentioning the brand. From the five organizations researched, only AT&T did this kind of blog posts – but they did it often. In these cases, the writer was either a professional athlete or a sports fan, to whom AT&T had provided the possibility to go and watch a match. A footballer writes in one of AT&T's guest bloggings:

*"I'll never forget the 2012 Olympic Games in London. It was my first Olympics, and I scored the game-winning goal. That game got us into the final match to compete for a gold medal. After winning that game against Japan, they placed the gold medal around my neck as the national anthem played. It's a moment I'll always remember.*

*Now we're getting ready for Rio. AT&T is helping me connect with the awesome fans who are always cheering us on. Starting with the 100 Day Countdown Event today in New York City's Times Square, AT&T is heading out on the Road to Rio Tour. At stops along the way, AT&T is mobilizing fans and transforming them into our teammates, or in this case, fanmates."*

Many blogs also personated the writer not only through the text, but with a presentation of the reader at the beginning or end of the text, telling about their role in the organization or as a stakeholder.

## **5.5 Addressing the reader directly**

Another attempt to engagement is quite similar to the previously presented: the writer speaking directly to the reader. Interestingly, it was the exact same amount of blog posts that personated the reader as those who personated the writer, but it

was not the same blogs or not even the same companies who addressed the reader and writer. If DNA was the only one who did not address the writer, they were much better at addressing the reader. Vodafone addressed the reader directly in all of their blog posts while BT did it in only a couple of texts. This can be seen more clearly in table 7.

TABLE 7 Reader personated

	DNA	Telstra	AT&T	Vodafone	BT	All
Reader personated	11/18	19/20	10/12	20/20	4/20	52/90

There were found to be three different ways this was executed in the blogs. It is difficult to say which way of addressing the reader makes the company seem most approachable and if this are directly proportional. An educated guess would be that the more informal the style, the more real the personal approach feels and the real the interaction feels, the more the possibility for parasocial interaction.

TABLE 8 Ways of addressing the reader

Focus on reader	Personification of reader	Style
Reader in focus throughout the text	Personal	Formal
Reader in focus in only the introduction or conclusion	Partly personal	Mixture of formal and informal
Reader in focus throughout the text	Personal	Informal

The first style of addressing the reader is in quite a formal style but still keeping the reader in focus. The reader is addressed, but not in an intimate, friendly, manner more as a public. An example of this formal addressing, is from the blog of Telstra:

*"A lot has changed about the broadcast over the years and what's great is that it has opened up the game to a whole new audience. Many will choose to camp in the lounge room and watch the game with friends and family, others will choose to watch on their mobile or tablet. No matter how you tune in, Game One of the 2016 Origin will get you craving for more."*

The second style of speaking directly to the reader is where the tone in the blog is otherwise quite formal, but the introduction or conclusion of the text is written directly to the reader. Where the writer addresses the reader, the style is much more personal and inviting to read more. One example is a blogpost by Vodafone,

which otherwise is written in a common article style, but the lead paragraph reads:

*"Sick and tired of having your face forced into strangers' armpits on the tube? Bored of being stuck in miles of static traffic? Maybe it's time to hop onto that roadie you bought all those years ago and finally give cycling to work a go?"*

The third way of speaking directly to the reader is one where the reader is in focus throughout the whole text and the writer speaks to her as to a friend. Here, the writer speaks to the reader at all times, and might kind of chitchat to her in between the paragraphs. In one example, the blogpost was about what new rules and players are in on the new season of football. The writer tells about the changes in a casual manner, and fills the text with personal comments to the reader. This example too, is from the blog of Vodafone:

*"Yep... Pants and undershirts now need to match the main colour of shorts and shirts. Don't ask why."*

*"Ok, so now you know all about this season's movers and shakers, there's only one final thing to talk about: the fixtures."*

Concluding, most of the texts seem to be written with a reader in mind. The reader is mostly in focus, atleast in parts of the texts, only the level of formality and personality is shifting.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this final chapter, the results of this study will be examined in the light of earlier literature presented in the beginning of this report. After the conclusion, the study will be critically evaluated and some suggestions for future research will be proposed.

### 6.1 Conclusions

The aim of this research was to understand how companies are trying to engage their followers through content marketing in their blogs. The research discussed different aspects of engagement and the possibility to form parasocial interaction in corporate blogs. Before starting the data analysis, earlier research in the fields of content marketing, engagement and parasocial interaction were presented. Through this, a credible basis for the research to come was established and a research gap big enough for this thesis came to light. Then, sports related content in the corporate blogs of five mobile operators were analyzed in order to find out how they tried to engage their followers and form parasocial interaction with them.

Stories and a humane touch seems common by looking at the blogs studies. Storytelling could be even more used, since it has been found to be more effective than traditional selling tactics. A couple of aspects of engagement and parasocial interaction were identified. These included call to actions in both the text and on the platform, the fading on the brand in the text, the personification of the brand and the direct addressing of the reader. The attempts of engagement and parasocial interaction seemed often to be intertwined, and only the different kinds of call to actions were counted as purely attempts to engage, not to form parasocial interaction. The brands might have tried to engage their readers in also other manners,

that could not be identified in this analysis. These might be for example the ways in which they themselves shared their posts on other social media.

A surprising notion was how little the organizations tried to fade the brand from the texts. Even when the writers were someone from outside of the organization, the brand name was mentioned. According to Pulizzi (2012), the content might be more appealing, when the brand is not mentioned. In the future, organizations might benefit from fading the brand even more in their texts, but this too needs to be studied more in order to draw some conclusions on the actual effect on engagement.

The most interesting finding might have been the different attempts of parasocial interaction – how the companies tried to speak from one human to another. The success of blogs lies mostly in how the writer feels like a friend, and if this effect is possible to be gained in corporate blogs too, organizations are facing a gold mine. This effect could be boosted by even more lifting up the persons behind the façade by promoting the staff. Tsotsou (2015) argued that promoting the staff as the “faces of a media” might very well invite the readers to form intimate relationships with them. The effect of parasocial interaction in the relationship between blogger and reader is already widely noted, but could it possibly be an effective tool also for corporate blogs?

Looking at this data, it is not possible to evaluate whether the different ways the companies tried to engage the readers or form parasocial relations with them were successful. This study only focused on the ways in which the companies tried to engage and tried to form relationships. The number of shares and comments were noticed in those pieces of data where it was possible, but it seems as if those are not reliable measures on whether engagement actually took place. A deeper study on the relationship would be needed in order to evaluate whether relationships were formed and whether readers felt as if the corporate bloggers felt like friends or even real people instead of big organizations. To draw any conclusions in this matter, the readers should be studied, while this study focused only on the texts produced by the companies.

## **6.2 Contributions**

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the studies on content marketing are still in their early stages. This thesis has shedded light on the understanding of content marketing and how it might be used for engaging different publics by drawing together earlier research with fresh data. The viewpoint of corporate



blogs is new for the studies of content marketing, engagement and parasocial interaction.

This thesis gives an excellent starting point for future research of corporate blogs as platforms for parasocial interaction. It seems that if though blogs have a great potential for engagement and parasocial interaction, and companies are just starting to understand that they themselves too, can be those to whom the publics form relationships; not only professional bloggers. This thesis presents corporate blogs as a platform for engaging content marketing that can, when made with a personal twist, help in forming imaginary relationships between the publics and the brand. Relationships between brands and loyal, engaged customers can turn into long-term profit offline. This thesis gives insight into how this can be done.

### **6.3 Evaluation of the study and suggestions for future research**

Almost all background literature was from peer-reviewed academic articles and it was current; from the latest couple of years. This was especially relevant in this thesis, since the topics discussed are going through a rapid change and literature in the field can age fast. Naturally, all research is built upon the choices made by the researcher. In this thesis, the aim has been to report the choices made as thoroughly as possible, but it unfortunately possible that some of the choices have not been argued as well as they could have been, which in turn might reduce the credibility of the thesis.

The concepts studied in this thesis are rather fuzzy and operationalizing them was indeed hard. When studying earlier literature, several different definitions for all of the main concepts were found. The researcher made decisions on which definitions to use, based on which ones seemed to be most commonly used. Some choices cannot though be easily justified, since they were most probably done by the researcher herself, not drawing from earlier theory. Also, part of the concepts were not perhaps clearly enough operationalized, and in some cases it might have remained unclear which definition was the one used in this particular study. Even concerning all of this, the choices were mostly legitimized and the operationalization was all in all successful.

Something that came up during the analysis was that it was unclear whether all of the data could be defined as content marketing. A possibility could have been to even more deeply analyze what content marketing really is and choose the data accordingly. This is one of the main problems the researcher found when evaluating the study. Also, it is in a way a shame that it was not possible to study how the

engaging behavior of the companies really worked. This would have added some legitimacy to the research and the results would have been of even more use for both academics and marketing communications professionals. Also the context of the study is rather narrow: sports related content in corporate blogs. This was a conscious choice made to keep the data consistent and analyzable, but naturally this might also hinder the exploitation of the result in other fields.

This research inspired some other thoughts too, on what kind of direction future research could take. Deeper research into how parasocial interaction can be exploited in corporate communication is also needed. In the light of this research, it seems like corporate blogs can offer a platform for personal communication that can engage and help in building meaningful and profitable relationships. More research into how this really affects the readers is needed in order to draw any conclusions about the possibility of PSI in corporate blogs. In order to understand how well the content engages customers or potential customers, it would be beneficial to research the target groups. This could be done by following a sample of social media followers of organizations and try to find out what kind of content really engages and how this is manifested in the consumption habits of the customers.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Sheet used in data analysis

Link to post	Brand mention	Overall CT A	CT A in text	Links	Possibility to comment	Comments	Facebook	Twitter icon	LinkedIn	Shares	Writer personated	Reader personated	Story	Multimedia	Open
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## Appendix 2. Example of story

I'm an Olympian...and an AT&T Employee

This time of year is always special for me. Every 4 years, I get a friendly reminder of my past. I'm an Olympian, and that's something no one can take away from me.

It's not an easy road to get to the Olympics. My road started when my father moved our family to the Virgin Islands when I was just 1. He was looking for a change, and I'm glad he found it.

Like most kids, I started swimming at an early age just to be with my friends and soon after joined an organized team. I got my first up-close look at what it's like to train for an Olympics when I was 8 years old. Our head coach was from West Germany, and he had some older swimmers from their national team come train in the Islands. I just remember being in awe of how good those guys were, and telling my dad that I wanted to be like them. He said something to me about my swimming that I'll never forget. "If you're really going to do this," he said, "you have to commit to it and do it." So I did.

I spent thousands of hours in the pool. My hard work eventually paid off and I was given the opportunity to compete for Yale. That's where I continued to perfect my form and improve my strength, eventually reaching All-American status. In 2000, I was honored to represent my country in Sydney to compete in my first Olympics as the only swimmer from the U.S. Virgin Islands. Even though I didn't advance to any races that made it to the TV broadcast, the experience was unforgettable. It made me want to train again to get back for the next Olympics.

After graduating from Yale, I went to help my parents with the family business in New York, where they had relocated. There, I began training with a local coach outside of Albany. It was just like when I was a kid back in the Islands, only I was now the Olympian swimming in the same pool as kids on the local swim teams. When I qualified for the 2004 Olympics in Athens, a lot of the local kids brought me cards wishing me good luck. I took those with me for inspiration.

Today, AT&T makes it easier than ever for people to communicate with their favorite Olympians. Fans can sign up to become an #ATTfanmate, cheer on Team USA athletes and even receive special messages in return. As an Olympian, I know messages like that make you want to train harder and be better.

I'll never forget those kids from the local pool. I still keep in touch with many of them. It's experiences I had as an Olympian that help me in my job today with



AT&T. I've learned that you should always seek to be great at something. Whether it's at work or in your personal life, find something to be passionate about and be great at it.

This is AT&T's 32nd year as a sponsor of Team USA. And I'm proud to work for a company that helps so many young athletes' dreams come true. My swimming career is long over, but you can bet I'll be competing vicariously through the swimmers in Rio. Good luck to all the athletes!

\*George Gleason swam for the U.S. Virgin Islands in the 2000 and 2004 Olympics Games. He swam the 200m freestyle, 100m freestyle and 200m individual medley in 2000. He swam the 100m backstroke and 100m freestyle in 2004. He is currently a chief of staff, celebrating 8 years with AT&T this year.

### Appendix 3. Example of other text than story

#### What's on my Phone: Damian Martin

The AFL and NRL seasons have closed for another year and now our heads are turning to one of Australia's fastest growing sports: the National Basketball League.

The NBL has grown from a fledgling competition with games played in front of just a few hundred people to a league that attracts more than 750,000 spectators each season.

Basketball also has one of the highest participation rates of any team sport in Australia, with numbers continuing to grow each year.

To celebrate that Telstra mobile customers can enjoy a FREE (RRP \$30) NBL Live Pass to watch every NBL game live this season, we caught up with Perth Wildcats star player Damian Martin to find out what's on his phone.

#### 1) Layout

It allows me to put several photos together in one picture. Now that I am a dad I find myself putting together photos of silly positions my newborn gets in and comparing them to celebrity's poses. My dad jokes aren't funny but they have begun with the pics.

#### 2) Uber

Gets a smashing. Give me a bottle of water and some gum and I'll give you 5 stars.

#### 3) Groupon

Love a discount on food, travel or random items. I'm hoping one of my favourite Mexican places doesn't put a limit on how many \$7.50 burrito and drink meals I buy. Love a good deal, although I may have gotten a little carried away when I bought the 12 head massages or the robot vacuum cleaner

#### 4) Twitter

Bit of fun for catching up on, or sharing news. Also need it to follow Andrew Bogut's funny comments. @damianmartin53

#### 5) Backgammon

Use it to play against some team mates and friends. Jarrod Kenny has more chance of winning Australian of the Year than beating Jesse Wagstaff in a comp but it kills time on long flights and comes in handy during film sessions.