

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
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PERCEPTIONS OF CONTENT MARKETING:
Case study on Finnish companies

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The discipline of marketing has gone through some major changes over the past couple of decades. The power is moving away from companies to consumers, who are playing a more significant role than ever before. Furthermore, the increasing number of marketing channels and the digitalization of media create not only challenges but also opportunities for companies. These shifts in the environment have actually made content marketing to be one of the most popular concepts in marketing today. Content marketing is by no means a new concept, but the recent digital tools in marketing have changed the concept and made it more popular among marketers around the world.</p> <p>Content marketing is and has been a very hot topic in recent years, yet it has achieved relatively little academic attention. Therefore, this study attempts to find out, what does content marketing mean and how it is actually done. This research also aims to contribute some ideas and opinions on what the future of content marketing will hold. Due to the nature of the topic, the research is conducted as a qualitative case study. An abductive approach is taken, in order to refine the existing literature and intertwine this current knowledge with empirical data. Hence, three background interviews with marketing agency professionals were first conducted in order to find out what information is missing and needed in the field of content marketing. Moreover, eight Finnish companies were examined in the light of their content marketing practices to enlighten the literature of content marketing in terms of definitions, processes and future.</p> <p>The results of the study revealed that the definition of content marketing depends on the perspective of the person who defines it. However, based on the results of this research, content marketing is seen as marketing communications that provides valuable and helpful information to a clearly defined target audience with the aim to increase sales. In addition, the process of practicing content marketing appears to be more a continuous cycle than a clear linear line. The future of content marketing was seen differently in the case companies, yet all the interviewees agreed that the importance of content marketing will remain and might even increase in the future.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Marketing has changed dramatically over the years due to the various new technologies (Cordray, 2014). For example, traditional customer service has been replaced by social media management and good old sales calls have been replaced by blogging (Whittington, 2014). Furthermore, consumer behavior has considerably changed as it is now possible for them to for example get answers and ask for recommendations in the internet instead of the sales force (Handley, 2013). These new channels for marketing and the changing behavior of consumers naturally require marketing professionals to also develop new marketing practices. This is one of the reasons why content marketing seems to be one of most discussed issues in the discipline of marketing today.

Content marketing can be defined as “a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience - with the objective of driving profitable customer action” (Content Marketing Institute, 2014). In other words, content marketing is marketing communications where valuable content is the key in creating productive customer relationships. Steimle (2014) emphasizes that valuable content is the crucial factor that separates content marketing from any other form of advertising or marketing. Simply explained, content marketing is basically communicating with consumers without actually selling (Content Marketing Institute, 2014).

Companies often try to differentiate themselves with factors that their competitors use as well (e.g. we are good or we have excellent customer service), which is a shame because consumers do not get excited about that as they instead get excited when they hear how the product or service will help their daily lives (Keronen & Tanni, 2013, p. 87). Hence, content marketing has become more underlined; providing relevant and valuable information for consumers is more effective. In addition, according to Hiila (2014), consumers

are starting to recognize content marketing and actually find significant commercial content positive. Thus, although consumers would realize they are consuming content marketing, they do not mind because it is useful for them.

The benefits of content marketing are obvious. The basic point is that if the customers receive consistent, ongoing valuable information from the company, they finally reward the company with their purchases and loyalty (Content Marketing Institute, 2014). Consequently, content marketing can help to drive traffic to the company website, increase the amount of sales leads and therefore help to increase sales (Feldman, 2013). Moreover, Gregorio (2014) suggests that content marketing can build brand awareness, establish the company as a thought leader and is even cheaper than traditional marketing. Based on these numerous benefits, it's no wonder that content marketing has become so popular.

As Solomon (2013) emphasizes the discourses on the importance of content marketing have intensified recently. In fact, according to a research done with 200 marketing communications representatives from different firms in Finland in 2014 by Kubo Oy revealed that around 75% of the content marketers will increase their investments for content marketing during the next 12 months (MARK, 2015). Furthermore, the Kubo Oy research also indicates that over half of the respondents who did not use content marketing, were planning to start doing it within the next year (MARK, 2015). However, although content marketing is a fresh and hot concept it is actually as old as any other marketing initiative, but we are still in the beginning phase as not all companies are making the most of it (Pulizzi, 2012).

As mentioned, there are intensive discussions about content marketing due to the growing urge and need for companies to share valuable content. Despite the great attention content marketing is getting, especially in the U.S., academic information related to the topic is still fairly hard to find. Many of the journal articles focus on social media and digital marketing tools, and the changes these tools bring to marketing, but do not discuss the topic of content marketing itself. For example Henning-Thurau et al. (2010), Henning-Thurau et al. (2013), Malthouse et al. (2013), Wymbs (2011), Weinberg & Pehlivan (2011) and Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) all focus on social media and digital marketing, and most do not even mention content marketing. Furthermore, actual researches in the academic world are almost non-existent and the academic writings on the subject are mostly based on the related literature as for instance Rowley's article (2008). In fact, Rowley (2008) herself suggests that there is an evident need for further research in the area of digital content marketing. Thus, clearly more academic attention is required in the field of content marketing.

Although content marketing is becoming more popular, Keronen & Tanni (2013, p. 38) also mention, that especially in Finland discussions related to marketing are still more focused on different digital and social media channels instead of content marketing. Indeed, the impact of social media to the way companies try to communicate with customers is a widely discussed and researched issue. Social media and content marketing are closely related, as

many of the content marketing channels are included in social media. However, there is more to content marketing than merely the channels and impacts of social media. In addition, despite the strong focus on social media and digital marketing in general, Keronen & Tanni (2013, p. 38) mention that the topic of content and the importance of it is intensifying and the phenomenon is not something that will soon disappear.

The topicality of content marketing is the reason why it is selected as a focus for this research. The nature of the topic and the starting point of the research require an abductive approach. The abductive research process called systematic combining combines theoretical framework, empirical fieldwork and case analysis by evolving them together (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). According to Dubois & Gadde (2002) deductive approach is concerned in making propositions from current theory, inductive approach relies on grounded theory, whereas the systematic combining approach builds more on refining the existing theory. Thus, in this study the theoretical and empirical data are developed simultaneously in order to improve the existing theory.

In order to get a preliminary understanding of the topic, three background interviews were conducted. Three marketing agency professionals in Finland were interviewed to find out what the most important research angles related to content marketing are. In fact, all the professionals mention, that many companies, larger and smaller, in Finland seem to be struggling with content marketing and that there are still numerous companies who aren't even familiar with the concept even though they are probably involved in content marketing in one way or another. According to DeMers (2014) although content marketing has been a popular subject in the past couple of years, it is only now that the term is becoming familiar to marketers. Thus, although all the companies do not know about content marketing, marketers are getting familiar with the concept and the use of content marketing is in the rise in Finland.

Moreover, the more recent information on content marketing is generally published in the form of blog posts and websites. This information is usually given from a marketer point-of view, explaining marketing experts how to do it, instead of finding out how it is actually done in companies. On that account, there is a need to get a deeper understanding of the concept of content marketing, especially from a company perspective. Also the interviews with the specialists revealed that more information is needed from the companies who are involved in content marketing; how they see the concept and how they are actually doing it.

In addition, Rissanen (2014) implies that content marketing and content strategy is still a fairly young field in Finland and requires Finnish firms to benchmark foreign firms. As most of the information related to content marketing comes from the US, this is where Finnish companies usually look for advice. Instead of looking all the way to the other side of the Atlantic, Finnish firms should instead take notes from other Nordic countries, that share a similar culture (Rissanen, 2014). This is because the content is also culturally related in questions such as: how close to a consumer you can go, what is good

content and in which form it should be offered (Rissanen, 2014). Therefore, this research suggests taking notes of what is done even closer; in other Finnish companies.

As said, Finland is a bit behind when it comes to content marketing, but it is growing. Marketers in Finland are very interested in content marketing and even the companies that are not involved yet are planning to start practicing content marketing in the near future (MARK, 2015). Furthermore, there are companies in Finland who are engaged in content marketing and are already successful in their practices. Hence, this research aims to find out how these companies see the concept of content. The objective is to find out how the concept of content marketing is perceived in Finnish companies and how it is actually done. In addition to clearing out the meaning and process of content marketing, the aim is to figure out some future indications related to content marketing. By exploring the content marketing practices in these successful firms, this research will not only contribute to the marketing literature but also give practical implications to other firms in order for them to improve their content marketing practices.

1.2 Research problem and questions

As mentioned above, the approach of systematic combining is used in this research. On the basis of the approach, three marketing professionals were interviewed during the autumn of 2014 to find out their perspectives on content marketing. The companies these specialists represented were Aava & Bang, Brand United and Nettitehostin. The interviews were conducted in order to get a professional view on what perspectives of content marketing would be interesting for a research and what sort of academic information is missing in the practical field. Thereby, these interviews serve as background interviews for the actual research interviews. Moreover, the statements and opinions comprised from these interviews are referred to already in the literature review section to support the theoretical part of the thesis. The companies will be referred to as Company X, Y and Z in order to respect their privacy.

In fact, Company Z mentions that it would be interesting to get a company point-of view on the subject; how they see it, how they are actually practicing content marketing and why. As the concept of content marketing is fairly new in Finland, people might see it differently, which is why the perceptions of content marketing will be studied in this research. Furthermore, Company Y suggests that it is actually surprising how weak some Finnish companies are in marketing in general. According to Company Y many firms in Finland are stuck with ad hoc-activities, and no clear planning takes place in order to make smart moves. Thus, Company Y says that it would be interesting to know do companies see or understand the importance of storytelling in marketing. Hence, the research problem is that more practical information is needed in the

academic world in terms of content marketing especially from the companies' perspectives.

As mentioned earlier, there are also companies in Finland who are successful in their content marketing practices. Therefore, in order to generate useful outcomes, the companies that are already involved in content marketing will be interviewed as case companies. In addition, Companies X, Y and Z all agree that the importance of content marketing will increase in the future. Therefore, there is a need to study and learn more about content marketing. In addition, as content marketing will be emphasized even more in the future, it will be interesting to get the opinions and visions of the case companies on content marketing related to the future. Hence, perspectives on what will be the role of content marketing in the future and what will the important tools in the future will be discussed. Based on both the literature review and the arguments from the background interviews, the following research questions have been formulated.

Research questions:

RQ1: How is the concept of content marketing defined?

RQ2: How is the process of content marketing described in Finnish companies?

RQ3: How is the future of content marketing perceived in the eyes of Finnish companies?

By exploring the content marketing practices of successful Finnish companies, this research can provide valuable information and managerial implications for firms that are not yet engaged in or successfully practicing content marketing. An important note is that this research is not trying to get a general view on the content marketing practices in Finnish companies. Instead, the goal is to examine eight companies from different industries in which content marketing practices are active and effective.

The research constructs around a few important concepts. The most important concepts are integrated marketing communications, digital marketing and naturally the concept of content marketing itself. Moreover, the term content marketing will be elaborated more in detail and from different perspectives in order to fully understand the background of the topic and the purpose of this research.

1.3 Structure of the study

This study is divided into five different sections. It started with the introduction by explaining the background and motivation of the theme of content marketing. In addition, the research problem and gap were discussed and further formulated into research questions.

The second chapter defines the main concepts related to content marketing. In addition, it presents the most significant literature findings that are connected to the research topic. A general overlook is taken on the field of marketing communications, followed by a view on digital marketing, content marketing and the different subjects related to content marketing. To summarize the literature review, a research framework is also formulated with the help of the relevant literature.

The third section of the study presents the method of the research. The qualitative research method and the case study approach used in the study are explained and detailed descriptions of the steps of the research are given. Furthermore, this chapter presents the case companies and explains why these companies were selected. This is followed by the fourth section by representing the findings of the study and take-out from the interviews.

Finally, conclusions of the research are discussed in order to summarize the most relevant findings and link them to the literature used in this study. Each of the research questions are answered by intertwining the empirical and theoretical data used in this research. Moreover, the possible limitations of the study are evaluated. The last chapter attempts to also suggest some managerial implications and further research themes that emerge from the findings of this study.

2 CONTENT MARKETING IN THE MARKETING LITERATURE

This chapter as a whole provides a review of the literature, which this research is based on. Although content marketing is the main subject of this study, it is crucial to explain the broader field which content marketing is part of in order to fully understand the theme of this research. Thus, the chapter begins with an overview of integrated marketing communications, which is the base of the marketing literature where we can find content marketing. Thereafter, the concept of digital marketing is reviewed as most of the content marketing tools today are digital. After these two important concepts have been discussed in the light of marketing literature, the concept of content marketing is tackled from a few different perspectives; e.g. concept itself, content and channels. After all of the most essential terms have been explained, a research framework is formulated in order to summarize the literature and to create a comprehensive picture of the study.

2.1 Integrated marketing communications as a base for content marketing

Marketing communications refers to the direct and indirect means by which companies attempt to inform, persuade and remind consumers about the products and brands they provide (Keller, 2009). In other words, marketing communications can be considered as Promotion - one of the four Ps in the famous marketing mix concept (Karjaluoto, 2010, p. 11). Karjaluoto (2010, p. 11) explains that there are many different tools of marketing communications, but as a concept it refers to communication with the stakeholders of the company with the intent to increase the demand. Marketing communications can either

offer detailed product information or pass the product all together and communicate other issues (Keller, 2001).

According to Karjaluoto (2010, p. 10-11), we should in fact talk about integrated marketing communications (IMC). The concept of IMC emerged in marketing in the 21st century as the customer focus and intention to grow and retain customers became more than just advertising (Luck & Moffatt, 2009). IMC refers to the carefully planned use of all the marketing communications tools with a customer orientation, and in a way that they support each other in order to create benefits for the communication and sales (Karjaluoto, 2010, p. 10-11). In other words, the communication instruments that were traditionally used independently, are now combined so that the communication becomes synergetic and seamless (De-Pelsmacker et al., 2013, p. 6). To add an aspect, Reinold & Tropp (2012) define IMC as the process of managing all sources of information related to a product or service to which a customer or potential customer is exposed and which attempts to move the consumer towards a sale and customer loyalty. In addition, Mangold & Faulds (2009) go again further by explaining that IMC aims to coordinate and control numerous elements of the promotional mix in order to produce a unified customer-focused message and therefore achieve multiple organizational objectives. To congregate all these definitions, the aim of IMC is to convey a coherent story to the consumers in all communication channels in order to help the company reach its numerous goals.

There are a few reasons, why the concept of IMC emerged and is considered so important. De-Pelsmacker et al. (2013, p. 7) explain, that this integrated system makes communication more effective when a consistent set of messages is communicated to all target audiences. In addition, for instance loss of faith in mass media advertising and the need for enhanced cost-effectiveness are increasing the need for integrated marketing communications (De-Pelsmacker, 2013, p. 29). Moreover, Reinold & Tropp (2012) suggest that research has shown that marketing capabilities and company performance are highly linked to each other, and that efficient IMC has the potential to provide competitive advantage. Furthermore, companies have a stronger need to distinguish their brand as multiple products and services have arrived to the maturity stage of their product life-cycle (Keller, 2001). Considering the remarkable technological developments during the last decade, the importance of marketing communications has certainly grown since Keller wrote his paper.

Ewing (2009) mentions that IMC is indeed an appealing concept, but is still not universally well understood nor implemented. In fact, a report showed that although marketers understand that the mediascape has changed overtime, they don't believe their own industries have done an adequate job in addressing the effects of the change (Singh et al., 2008). The situation has probably, and at least hopefully, improved during the last seven years, but as Mulhern (2009) suggests when more channels for marketing communications become available, connecting across them becomes more challenging. The amount of channels seems to be increasing all the time, for instance due to large

amount of social media applications. Thus, we could assume that some companies are even today struggling with their IMC strategies. Company Y mentions it as well; many companies are confused and even afraid of the amount of different channels and have difficulty in sending a clear and solid message through all the channels they use.

Hence, the mediascape has changed and so has the behavior of consumers. The continuing fragmentation of media and the overload of information make consumers to become less and less interested in companies' brand messages delivered through traditional media. Moreover, consumers preferably respond to marketing when they have control over what they see, when they see it, whether it can be personalized to fit their own needs, and most importantly when they can be active participants in the marketing process. Today, marketing is no longer just about marketing a product or a brand, but it is more about marketing a feeling and letting the customer experience the product or brand. Whether it's in traditional media or technology-driven media, marketing communications roll around the emotional connection. (Singh et al., 2008).

As it can also be seen in Figure 1, the communication environment is very challenging for companies today. Mangold & Faulds (2009) suggest that consumers are turning away from the traditional sources of advertising: radio, television, magazines and newspapers and are turning towards the various types of social media to conduct their information searches. In addition, consumers are asking more control over their media consumption and consider the communication with other consumers very important (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). As Finne & Grönroos (2009) explain, integrated marketing communications is usually described to have a company perspective based on an inside-out view where the company drives integration and a consistent message is communicated to the consumer even though there is also an outside-in perspective, which allows the consumer to perform the integration.

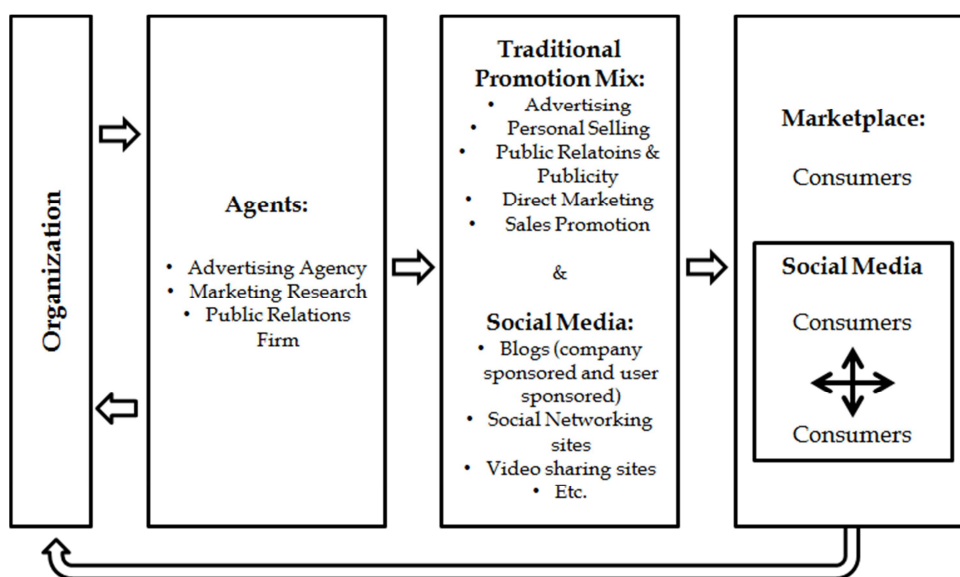


Figure 1 The new communications paradigm (Mangold & Faulds, 2009)

Finne & Grönroos (2009) in fact move one step further from integrated marketing communication by talking about relationship communication. Relationship communication is any type of marketing communication that influences the consumer's long-term commitment to the brand by facilitating the meaning creation through integration with the receiver's time and situational context. Thus, relationship marketing is based on on-going cooperation between the customer and the company, which is why the time and the situational context are important (Finne & Grönroos, 2009). Despite the interesting implications of relationship marketing, this study will refer to IMC, keeping in mind that today the communication between a company and a consumer resembles more of a dialogue than a monologue. In addition, we have to remember that consumers have been talking to each other long before the internet via traditional word-of-mouth; the voice has just become louder with the help of the social media and the internet in general.

2.2 Digital marketing tools providing the newness to content marketing

Marketing never changes in its core, because even though new trends come and go, it is still about creating awareness and desire among your potential customers (Hauer, 2012) and about keeping you current customers. However, the newness in marketing is actually the whole range of new digital marketing tools (Hauer, 2012). These tools derive partly from the changing consumer behavior. The ways consumers communicate with companies and with each other and the ways they seek and exchange information have changed dramatically over the past decade (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Hence, new notions have been created to refer to the new marketing concept such as online marketing, internet marketing and digital marketing. As Wymbs (2011) explains, internet is only one of the digital technologies that are included in the concept of digital marketing. Therefore, the limited terms of online and internet marketing won't be referred to in this research, but the concept of digital marketing is used and defined below.

Although, the concept of digital marketing is widely accepted, Karjaluoto (2010, p. 13) explains that in fact there is no single, generally accepted explanation for digital marketing communications. The course books for marketing communications usually explain the different forms of digital marketing without defining the concept itself (Karjaluoto, 2010, p. 13). However, multiple explanations can be found from different sources. For example, Merisavo (2008, p. 20) defines digital marketing communications as "communication and interaction between a company or a brand and its customers using digital channels (e.g. the Internet, email, mobile phones and digital TV)". To be more specific the term digital marketing can be defined as the use of digital technologies in order to create integrated, targeted and

measurable communication which helps to keep and acquire customers by building deeper relationships with them (Smith, 2007).

Both definitions, as many others that are available, naturally emphasize the digital means of the communication between the company and its customers and the fact that there are multiple channels for digital marketing. Wymbs (2011) suggests that the access platforms deliver content and allow interaction through numerous online communication tools such as organizational websites, search engines, blogs and e-mail. Not only is it possible for companies to communicate through numerous digital channels, but it has also become possible for consumers to get access and share content whenever and wherever. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2010) suggest there are for example high-tech mobile phones, portable computers and multiple real-time portals for information exchange.

According to Karjaluo (2010, p. 14) the most common and well-known forms of digital marketing are digital direct marketing (e-mail, mobile phones), internet-marketing; meaning mostly the company websites, campaign sites and web ads such as banners and search engine optimization. However, there are numerous other forms such as social media, viral marketing, interactive television and internet seminar and competitions (Karjaluo, 2010, p. 14). In fact, during the last couple of years social media is starting to become one of the most well-known digital marketing means. As there are multiple forms and channels of digital marketing, each company should evaluate which channels serve their own objectives in order to get the most out of digital marketing.

In addition, some as the definition by Smith (2007) imply that the aim of digital marketing is in fact not only to communicate the brand to customers but also engage them to the brand. This was one of the main purposes of marketing communications in general. One of the new angles in digital marketing communications is that the customer is now able to react and be a part of that communication, which can make the engagement easier and more powerful. In fact, the customers are now creators and contributors of marketing communication which makes digital marketing a more personalized and participatory media to interact with customers (Wertime & Fenwick 2008, p. 26-31). Furthermore, consumers are now empowered to share their own perceptions of brand stories easily and widely and are gaining a more important voice that companies can no longer afford to disregard (Gensler et al., 2013). Thus, the relationship between the company and the consumer has changed. The new connections formed through digital marketing illustrated by Wymbs (2011) can be seen in Figure 2.

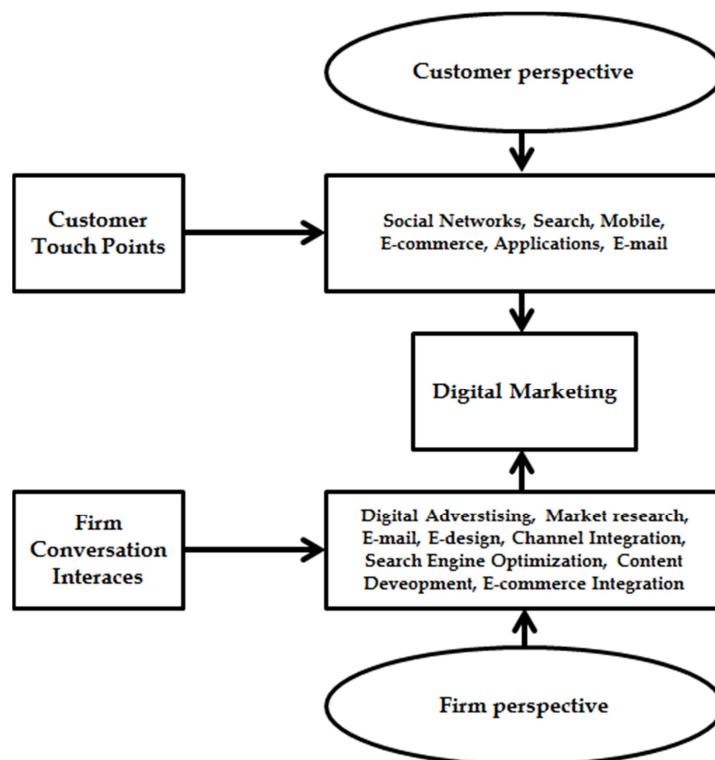


Figure 2 Digital marketing (Wymbs, 2011)

Digital marketing has numerous benefits. As mentioned earlier, digital marketing is often less expensive than traditional marketing. Furthermore, Hauer (2012) mentions that digital marketing means are not only less costly, but also allow to target more narrowly and adapt promotion more easily. More precisely, digital marketing uses digital technologies that are measurable, allow conversations to be targeted and facilitate the creation of relationships between the customers and the company whereas traditional marketing is more mass communication (Wymbs, 2011). This leads to another great advantage as digital channels allow companies to identify individual customers, and gather information from and about them (Merisavo, 2008). Hence, marketing has in fact become more and more personal and interactive compared to the traditional mass marketing (Karjaluoto, 2010, p. 127). In addition, as Wymbs (2011) also implied, the digital means provide improved analytical capabilities, which again can inform where to put more effort (Hauer, 2012). Thus, when the efforts and results are easier to measure, it is easier to know where to invest and what brings best results.

Digital marketing has indeed challenged the traditional marketing platforms and has forced companies to re-think their marketing strategies. There are actually multiple reasons why digital marketing is considered to be so special and different compared to the traditional marketing means. Lipiäinen et al. (2013) suggest that digital marketing brings more frequent communication, a reality that is created together with the customer, loss of control, requirement for transparency and truth, and a transfer from control to participation. In other words, we are communicating with each other more frequently in numerous

different ways and the power is moving from companies to consumers. This requires companies to be active in “social listening” meaning that the firms have to investigate and be more aware of what opinions are being shared about them and to react on those opinions if needed (Dempsey, 2014). Thus, it is clear that digital marketing provides great opportunities for companies, but it has also given the customer a bigger role in marketing.

Furthermore, Ryan & Jones (2009, p. 19) claim, that every company needs a digital marketing strategy simply because without one a company will miss opportunities and loose business. Consumers, despite the industry, are more and more relying on digital channels when searching for information, doing research, evaluating and even for purchasing products and services (Ryan & Jones 2009, p. 19). Therefore, it is safe to say that digital marketing in one form or another is something that every company should do. However, there is no single formula on creating a digital marketing strategy as each business has its own needs (Ryan & Jones 2009, p. 22).

Digital marketing is often separately discussed in the marketing literature, which is why there is a chapter dedicated to it in this research as well. Nevertheless, majority of all the pieces of marketing tactics that are done today are digital. As Filtness (2014) mentioned “Digital marketing is marketing”, and these two terms don’t need to be distinguished. Thus, the important issue to remember is that digital marketing communications is most advantageous when it is a part of company’s other marketing communications (Karjaluoto 2010, p. 214). Company Y and Company Z also emphasize that all channels, digital or non-digital have to be aligned and deliver the same message.

2.3 Dimensions of content marketing

2.3.1 The concept of content marketing

As mentioned before, companies have tried to create relationships with their customers with different content marketing tools for a long time, but only a few years ago it was turned into a popular marketing concept. Tucker (2014) actually says that content marketing is not a new concept, but instead it is a new term. Patel (2012) also mentions that content marketing is not a new marketing innovation, but what is new is that content marketing is increasingly becoming one of the only strategies to produce consistently good results in the face of widespread search engine algorithm changes. It seems that content marketing is one of the few strategies that provide both good business results and protection from future search engine changes (Patel, 2012). Thus, even though content marketing is not new, it has indeed become one of the most discussed issues in the subject area of marketing. In fact, one content marketing specialist, Joe Pulizzi, even started a Content Marketing Institute to share information on

content marketing and to help companies with their content marketing strategies (Content Marketing Institute, 2013).

In order to get a more academic definition on the subject of content marketing we can look at digital content as “bit-based objects that are distributed through electronic channels” (Koiso-Kanttila, 2004, p. 46). In addition, in terms of marketing, Rowley (2008) defines digital content marketing as the management process that is responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer requirements in a profitable way in the context of digital content, or bit-based objects distributed through electronic channels. What is important is that although today content is shared usually in digital channels, content can naturally be shared via other, non-digital channels as well. However, digital channels are the most discussed channels today, which is why digital marketing and social media have such a central role in this research.

In more simple words, content marketing can be defined as marketing done by creating and distributing valuable and relevant content to attract and acquire a distinctly defined audience – with the objective of driving profitable consumer action (Content Marketing Institute, 2014). The objective of integrated marketing communications was to increase demand (Karjaluoto, 2010, 11) and it seems to agree to that of content marketing; “driving profitable customer action” (Content Marketing Institute, 2014, Feldman, 2013). Thus, content marketing is one way for companies to communicate with consumers in order to increase sales.

Furthermore, Steimle (2014) explains that the consumer’s buying cycle includes four steps; awareness, research, consideration and buy. Content marketing is the tool to help in the first two steps of the buying process by raising awareness and educating consumers about a product or service they may have never even considered before (Steimle 2014). On the other hand, Harad (2013) explains that content marketing refers to companies regularly sharing valuable information with their target audiences that reinforce and align with their brand. This sharing of content is done with the aim to for instance attract prospects, generate interest and build trust (Harad 2013). In other words, instead of using traditional methods of outbound marketing, companies find that content marketing attracts customers and builds real trust between the brand and the consumer (DeMers, 2014). Thus, besides increasing awareness another main objective for content marketing is to engage the consumer to the brand of the company and spark the interest of future prospects.

According to Tucker (2014), content marketing also provides traffic to websites as by sharing useful information with the appropriate search terms, people will click to go the site. Hence, content marketing can provide further benefits because it supports other digital channels (Steimle, 2014). For instance, if the content the company distributes is share-worthy, readers will distribute the information to their social networks (Tucker, 2014). In addition, it offers additional content for social media marketing and contributes to SEO efforts as

it generates natural inbound links and builds up good content on the company's website that gets then found when using search engines (Steimle, 2014). Therefore, it can provide online word-of-mouth and be a powerful tool in other marketing efforts as well.

Another great benefit of content marketing is that it requires the content creator to stay ahead of industry trends and do research (Tucker, 2014). Not only will the consumer get the latest updates on the field, but also the content creator and thus the whole company can learn new valuable things. Furthermore, although content marketing can take a lot of time, it is often cheaper than traditional media. Steimle (2014) also mentions that the return on investment for content marketing can be extraordinary if it is done correctly and efficiently. Hence, there are multiple benefits for content marketing which is why it has become so important in today's dynamic business environment.

Content marketing can be done in multiple ways; corporate newspapers, blogs, videos, white papers, articles, press releases, direct mail pieces, infographics and many other content-driven techniques (Pulizzi, 2012, Tucker, 2014). However, an important issue to remember is that content strategy is not equal to renewing a website, opening a Twitter account or starting a blog, but instead it means to connect all these channels together in order to accomplish the company's goals and objectives in the long run (Keronen & Tanni, 2013, 61). In addition, what is shared and where depends on what the company sees appropriate and effective when considering its target audience and the industry it operates in. Moreover, Patel (2012) for example argues that content should always be free of charge in order for the viral nature of content marketing to function effectively. Thus, content marketing is often considered to be storytelling in the owned and earned media channels. The different channels for content marketing will be explained later chapter 2.4.

An important note to keep in mind is that the difference between content marketing and the regular information that companies send are the words valuable and relevant (Content Marketing Institute, 2014). In case people seek out or want to consume a piece of content a firm provides, it can be considered content marketing (Steimle, 2014). Steimle (2014) explains that it also depends on each individual who is exposed to the content and the way that person receives it; does he or she receive value from it or not. Therefore, it is very important to define a clear target audience when producing content and selecting the appropriate content in order to reach that target consumer. As an example of excellent piece of content marketing, Steimle (2014) uses the Lego Movie; it was a 100 minute toy commercial which people were ready to pay for. It is hard to argue against the power of efficient content marketing with that example. In other words, content is good when people genuinely want to read it, and it is excellent when people are willing to pay for it (Steimle, 2014).

In addition, content marketing differs from traditional media in many ways. Traditional media and advertising are bundled by editors and producers into relevant packages for large audiences, whereas digital, networked infrastructure allows the distribution of individual stories and pieces separately

from a packaged content (Mulhern, 2009). Furthermore, Handley (2013) explains that due to the technological developments, companies can create content that connects directly with the people they want to reach. Moreover, according to Mulhern (2009), the modular nature of content marketing actually makes it more efficient than bundled information because it provides people with what they want without extra content. This is one of the factors that make content marketing so appealing for both marketers and consumers.

The objective of this research is to find out what content marketing means to Finnish companies. Therefore, it is first important to take a look on the definitions provided currently in the literature on content marketing. As mentioned in the beginning, content marketing has not been a focus for academics, which is why the official academic definitions on content marketing are almost non-existent. However, 12 definitions are gathered in Table 1, of which a few are from academic articles and majority from blogs and websites of different content marketing specialists. Some definitions are from the same source even though the actual definitions are from different people, which is why with some definitions the source is separately indicated in brackets.

The definitions on content marketing vary, depending on the viewpoint and the background of the person who defines it (De Clerck, 2013). For instance, a brand marketer with the objective to cause a shift in brand perception and a B2B marketer with the goal to nurture leads are probably looking at it differently (De Clerck, 2013). This can also be seen in the definitions provided in Table 1, as some clearly emphasize the effect on brand whereas others the increase on sales. Furthermore, some definitions, like the one by De Clerk (2013), outline that content marketing is an umbrella terms for strategies and techniques to reach business and customer goals whereas others like the definition by Gunelius (2011) highlight the different forms content marketing can have.

Moreover, Koiso-Kanttila (2004) and Rowley (2008) focus on the digital aspects of content and go very into detail in describing digital content and digital content marketing. On the other hand, many of the provided definitions clearly emphasize that content marketing evolves around content that is essential for the customer. For example the definitions by Content Marketing Institute (2012), Graubart (2011) and Miller (2013) stress that content has to be relevant and valuable to the customer. Despite the similarities, there seems to be no single commonly acknowledged definition on content marketing. Therefore, we can assume that also companies see the concept differently depending on their perspective on the concept.

Table 1 Content marketing definitions

Writer & Source	Definition	Focus
Koiso-Kanttila, 2004	Digital content and digital products are conceptualized as bit-based objects distributed through electronic channels	Digital content
Rowley, 2008	Digital content marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer requirements profitably in the context of digital content, or bit-based objects distributed through electronic channels	Digital content marketing
Blank, 2011 (Cohen, 2011)	Content marketing is engaging with your community around an idea instead of a product. What it is to try to serve the community first, and sharing information, ideas and experiences that benefit others without directly asking for anything in return.	Sharing information not related to the product directly
Graubart 2011 (Cohen, 2011)	Content marketing is an approach by which companies seek to author and/or share contextually relevant content to create or reinforce their brand messaging. When done effectively, content marketing is not done in direct support of a sales process, but rather by positioning a company or individual within a space	Reinforcement of the brand
Gunelius 2011 (Cohen, 2011)	Content marketing is the process of indirectly and directly promoting a business or brand through value-added text, video, or audio content both online and offline. It can come in long-form (such as blogs, articles, ebooks, and so on), short-form (such as Twitter updates, Facebook updates, images, and so on), or conversational-form (for example, sharing great content via Twitter or participating in an active discussion via blog comments or through an online forum).	The different forms of content marketing
Decker, 2011 (Patel, 2012)	Content marketing is creating or curating non-product content – be it informational, educational, entertaining, etc. – and publishing it to contact points with customers to get their attention, to focus on the topic around your solution, and pull them closer to learning more about you.	To help getting customer into the funnel: awareness, interest, desire
Falls, 2011 (Patel, 2012)	Content marketing is using any type of content (newsletters, blog posts, white papers, videos, Tweets, podcasts, wall posts) to attract an audience you wish to market to. Capturing their attention through great content gives you the opportunity to present calls-to-action to them to purchase or try your product or service.	Way of selling by capturing attention
Garner, 2012	Real-time content marketing is all-encompassing and includes research, content production, community management and outreach, customer-relationship management, analytics and measurement, and real-time response and interaction through a variety of methods. Real-time content marketing is about embracing audiences in a human way, but also recognizing the technical drivers of content through networks.	Time and using search and social technologies to interact with customers
Content Marketing Institute, 2012 (Content Marketing Institute, 2014)	Content marketing is a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action.	Valuable and relevant content to target audience
De Clerck, 2013	Content marketing is an umbrella term covering a set of strategies, techniques and tactics to fulfill business and customer goals by using content across the customer life cycle and the business functions in a consistent, integrated and continuous way.	Umbrella term for certain marketing tactics
Miller, 2013	Content marketing for nonprofits is creating and sharing relevant and valuable content that attracts, motivates, engages, and inspires your participants, supporters, and influencers to help you achieve your mission.	Valuable and relevant content to reach goals

2.3.2 Importance of content

Content is actually the world's oldest form of communication: telling stories – the campfire has just been replaced by digital, broadcast and print channels (O'Neill, 2014). In addition, already in traditional advertising and promotion, creating innovative content has been a priority for marketers. However, in the era of digital marketing, the nature of content has come to the point that it has to change. Nowadays consumers have actually more choice than ever before, which makes the competition between firms even tougher (Tucker, 2014). According to Karjaluo (2010, p. 69), the receivers of information have become more selective, meaning that they expect to receive information that is just right for them. Therefore, defining your target audience, finding the right story and content and finally using the suitable channels is a challenging yet a mandatory task for companies.

The concept of content and the importance of the message arose from the interviews with the marketing specialists as well. In fact, all companies mention and emphasize that the content of the message is one of the most important thing in marketing today. Furthermore, Karjaluo (2010, p. 41) suggests, that what is said determines for the customer whether he or she needs it or not. Good content attracts, informs, persuades, serves and engages customers, prospects and other target audiences across the whole life cycle and relationship with the organization and the brand (De Clerck, 2013). Thus, the content is actually the thing that separates the leaders from the losers.

Hanna et al. (2011) also outline that companies should start their communications strategies with a clear story that they want to share with the consumers. In order to create stories that engage, companies need to strengthen their editorial brand and understand the motivations of the reader (O'Neill, 2014). These stories can be for example about a new product or service, a new relationship or even a general theme (Hanna et al., 2011). In addition, the content should attract the right target audience and take into consideration their needs and build around clear benefit arguments (Karjaluo, 2010, p. 41). Moreover, marketers can use either emotional or rational reasons or both to attract consumers (Karjaluo, 2010, p. 42).

Mulhern (2009) also explains that today companies should blend commercial and noncommercial content, meaning that in addition to branded entertainment they should include noncommercial information in their communication as well. On the other hand, Keronen & Tanni (2013, p. 99) suggest, that the purpose in content marketing is to direct the customers from different channels first to the knowhow based content and after guide the interested customers to learn more about the products or services themselves. Some examples of the knowhow based content can be content that educates the customer, interpretation of phenomenon and trends, innovations, best practices or process descriptions (Keronen & Tanni, 2013, p. 22). Thus, first the company communicates the noncommercial stories and useful information and when the

interest of the customer has been caught, commercial information on the products or services can be highlighted.

As an example, Ryan & Jones (2009, p. 79) emphasize the importance of content when it comes to websites as they mention that unique, relevant and informative content is what sets websites apart from their competition. Another interesting note is that companies with high-traffic websites have also visitors who have already purchased the product or service the company is offering (Malthouse et al., 2013). Therefore, Malthouse et al. (2013) suggest, that companies should not only try to sell their business on their website, but also provide news about the product or service and supporting information. For instance, many clothing companies provide news or reports from fashion events or give the customers inspiring tips on the latest trends. These and many other companies doing so are aiming to attract an audience by providing content the consumers value, while their ultimate objective is to sell more products or services in the future (Malthouse et al., 2013).

Hence, marketers have a more difficult role as they are now faced with the challenge of how to create engaging content. In fact, O'Neill (2014) implies that brands are now publishers, who use storytelling to engage their audience. Marketers have now more to consider from commissioning to technology, activation and measurement (O'Neill, 2014). On that account, we can talk about inbound marketing; companies have to create tempting content in order to get the customers' attention as the customer is able to decide him- or herself what to read and watch or who to listen (Keronen & Tanni, 2013, p. 33).

While customers have higher expectations when it comes to content, the nature of content has changed, which makes it easier for companies to respond to these expectations. Mulhern (2009) explains that the digital and networked infrastructure allows individual pieces to be freely distributed separately from the packaged content. The unbundled information is more efficient because it provides consumers the information they want without extraneous content (Mulhern, 2009). However, this modularity of content allows also more people to produce messages and distribute them, and therefore makes marketers to lose control (Mulhern, 2009). Thus, although content can be directed to the right people, the massive amount of information makes it now very difficult for companies to stand out.

To make things a bit more difficult, consumers are becoming more intelligent as well. Especially in Finland, people have a strong belief that media should be neutral and independent and sponsored contents actually work against that belief (Hiila, 2014). Thereby, if consumers realize that they are reading or watching paid content, they might become irritated (Hiila, 2014). At the same time, consumers actually want content from the companies itself, which implies that the problem is in the channel the content is shared in (Hiila, 2014). Hence, companies should carefully plan engaging content, but also evaluate what are the best channels to distribute that content and the partners to co-operate with.

2.3.3 Content marketing process

The establisher of Content Marketing Institute, Joe Pulizzi, together with another content marketing specialist Robert Rose, has created a seven-step framework, which can help companies to create their content marketing strategy (Pulizzi & Rose, 2013). As Pulizzi & Rose (2013) also emphasize, there is no general pattern how companies should do content marketing, but there are some core elements across successful content marketing processes. The following framework has been driven from practical experiences and is therefore an observation that includes seven steps in a “chain”, meaning that all steps are connected to each other (Pulizzi & Rose, 2013). Thus, this framework is not a generally identified theory, but it offers a sufficient general picture of the content marketing process.

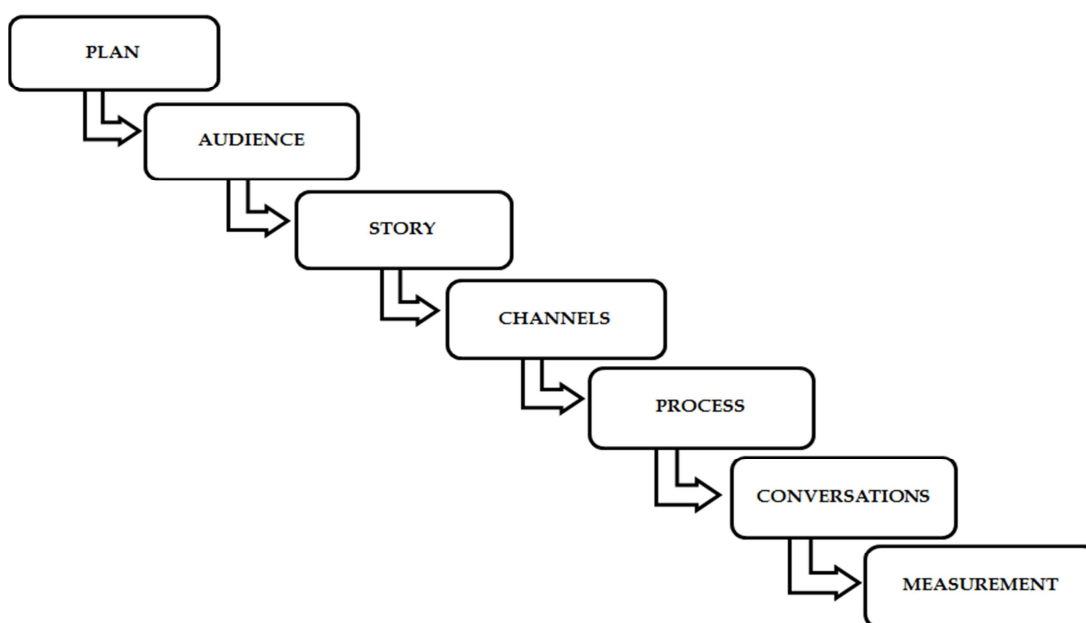


Figure 3 Content marketing process (Content Marketing Institute 2013)

As can be seen in Figure 3, content marketing, as many other marketing strategies, starts with planning. Pulizzi & Rose (2013) explain that the first step is to think what is the meaning of the firm, what are their needs and goals and also how is the firm different from its competitors. In fact, that is what Company Y emphasizes as well: it all starts from clearing out the company’s vision in order to get started with content marketing. Thus, after these fundamental questions have been answered, the company can start to think further; what sort of content marketing can help to achieve the organizational goals, how it affects to the existing marketing programs, who are the people that will be part of the process etc. (Pulizzi & Rose, 2013). Pulizzi & Rose (2013) also mention, that the planning step and getting the understanding of what is the meaning of the firm should in fact be a continuous process in order to optimize the marketing program.

After the company has defined itself and the reasons and goals to start a content marketing program, it needs to evaluate its audience. Pulizzi & Rose (2013) suggest, that there are two kinds of audiences; internal stakeholders and the people who the firm is actually trying to reach, both of which need to be engaged in the process. In addition, firms as well as their audiences evolve over time and so do their needs and preferences, which mean that the company should also continuously evaluate its audience in order to ensure efficient content marketing (Pulizzi & Rose, 2013).

Indeed it takes two fundamental steps before going into the actual content, which Pulizzi & Rose (2013) refer to as stories. Pulizzi & Rose (2013) suggest that telling stories is not actually selling but more of a way to build strong relationships with customers. In addition, Gensler et al. (2013) mention that stories can in fact help to build awareness, comprehension, empathy, recognition and provide meaning to a brand. The stories that the firm tells and the content that it shares should tell the tale of the company and share the values and ideas that it represents (Pulizzi & Rose, 2013). This is why clearing out the objectives and vision of the firm is a crucial step in the beginning. Pulizzi & Rose (2013) also explain that talking about telling a story, does not mean that there are narrative rules to content marketing. The intention is to share content with a passion and purpose in order to establish an emotional bond with your audience (Pulizzi & Rose, 2013). An important note also is that it is important to remember to produce content that is mobile-friendly, since smartphones are becoming the dominant way in which consumers watch and read content Steimle (2014).

When the ideas and stories that would be effective have been created, the company can start to evaluate which of the numerous channels are suitable to share this content. The key is to carefully choose the channels, as there are too many for any company to be present in all of them because you have to be active in order to be successful (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Pulizzi & Rose (2013) imply as well, that how and where the audience views the content is just as important as the message within. Therefore, the company should first identify all channels, explore which are the most effective, plan certain objectives for each channel and see how they could support each other (Pulizzi & Rose, 2013). Hence, it is crucial to make sure that all the activities in each platform are aligned with each other (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The main channels that can be used for content marketing will be explained in the next chapter. Pulizzi & Rose (2013) also emphasize that the content strategy of a firm should define the channel strategy and not the other way around.

After all those four steps have been gone through, the process can begin. Pulizzi & Rose (2013) explain that there are four stages to implement the content marketing strategy; create and manage; optimize, aggregate and curate; converse and listen; and measure and learn. An important note is that companies should also consider how often to share content, after all "...more is not always better, better is better" (Tucker, 2014). In addition to the stories, channels and the actual distribution, there should be clear division of roles and

responsibilities and establishment of guidelines and schedule (Pulizzi & Rose, 2013). Thus, this step is where everything that was planned is finally put into action.

As in all strategies and processes only implementing them is not enough. Pulizzi & Rose (2013) also emphasize that the conversation step is very important in order to optimize the results of content marketing, as this is where the customer takes the active role and responds. Thereby, the company should learn how to listen and how to answer those reactions of the audience (Pulizzi & Rose, 2013). As mentioned earlier Dempsey (2014) also emphasizes that this requires companies to be active in “social listening” meaning that the firms have to investigate and be more aware of what opinions are being shared about them and to react on those opinions if needed. On that account, the key is to follow up on the content that you share and be involved in the conversation that it possible raises.

After the plan has been executed and the conversations have been started, the final step in this framework is measurement. Although it is placed as the last step, it often is the beginning, the middle and the ending of the process (Pulizzi & Rose, 2013). However, companies should keep in mind that measuring is time-consuming, can be confusing and it takes time that content marketing creates visible results (Pulizzi & Rose, 2013). Thus, Pulizzi & Rose (2013) explain that finding out what is working and what not, and what can be done to fix it are the basics of this measurement step. Company Y and Z also emphasized how important measuring is, as that is how the actions for future can be justified.

Odden (2012) as well has created some steps to assist in creating a content marketing process. Odden (2012) in fact emphasizes 6 steps compared to the 7 provided by Pulizzi & Rose (2013). However, there are similarities between the two frameworks. According to Odden (2012) there are the following stages to a content marketing strategy: 1) identifying objectives, 2) defining the audience, 3) creating a content plan, 4) promotion of the content, 5) engaging the audience and finally 6) measuring the results. Odden (2012) explains that defining the audience means researching the customers segments and developing profiles that represent the consistent characteristics of the customers. Furthermore, creating the plan is bringing together the understanding of customer needs and the objectives of the business (Odden, 2012). This content plan identifies relevant content mix, topics and the desired outcomes (Odden, 2012). Moreover, Odden (2012) suggests that engagement means to grow your social networks and community through listening, participation, and content sharing. Finally, the results of the actions have to be measured (Odden, 2012).

The two frameworks indeed have many similarities; defining objectives and target audience, planning the content, engaging and listening and finally measurement. However, Odden (2012) does not mention the channels and also does not emphasize the conversation part as Pulizzi & Rose (2013). Furthermore, Pulizzi & Rose (2013) incorporate the broad “process” stage in their framework, which Odden (2012) does not include in his description. As

mentioned before, neither one of these are generally agreed theories or formulas that would be widely accepted in the academic world. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that this process tool might not be suitable for all the companies. Instead the purpose of these formulas is to provide an overview for this research and provide an idea how the content marketing process might be structured. Finally, these process descriptions will be later compared with the process descriptions of the case companies in order to see the connections between theory and practice.

2.4 Content marketing channels

2.4.1 Websites

It is fairly safe to say that a company website is the point where each organization's digital marketing starts from. For example Ryan & Jones (2009, p. 40) claim that for a digital marketer, a company website is the place for business. Even though, a company would do other things in the internet, a website is the place where it all channels back (Ryan & Jones, 2009, p. 40). Furthermore, according to Keronen & Tanni (2013, p. 62) with the rising importance of content marketing, websites are becoming one of the most valuable characteristic and factor of differentiation for companies. One of the specialists also mentioned, that today, a website that is up-to-date and dynamic is vital for each firm. This is because if you don't have one or if you have one that is not updated, you don't give a good impression about your company and the consumer might even think you are out of business.

Despite the importance, Lipiäinen & Karjaluo (2012) found in their research a couple of years ago that actually surprisingly many small and medium size firms in Finland do not even have a website. On the other hand, according to Tilastokeskus (2012), over 90% of the firms which have 10 or more employees actually have their own websites. Thus, it seems that, the bigger the firm, the more likely it is to have a website (Tilastokeskus, 2012). The activity in their own website seemed to be also strongly related to the size of the firm; the bigger the firm, the more they use their website (Lipiäinen & Karjaluo, 2012). The situation in Finland regarding websites has hopefully improved as both of these researches were done over two years ago.

Ryan & Jones (2009, p. 42) explain that it is crucial to think what is the website for and who is it for in order to make it effective. It's actually logic; when you have carefully defined your target customer and the reasons for the need to start a website, you have a clearer picture of what the website should include and what should it be like. Unlike many people think, it does make a difference how you write or show the content on your website as offline readers are patient, and online readers want the information they are looking for immediately (Ryan & Jones 2009, p. 55).

One of the reasons why websites are so important is that the different issues and the relationships between them are easier to present on a website than some social media channels for instance (Keronen & Tanni, 2013, p. 62). The specialists in the interviews also mentioned that same content (news, videos, posts) are often shared in many channels and they all come back to the company website. Therefore, it could be said that website is the heart and soul of digital marketing communications and is therefore such a vital part of the strategy.

The concept of search engine optimization (SEO) is closely linked to websites. SEO refers to a group of techniques and strategies used to increase the amount of visitors to a website by achieving a high-ranking placement in the results page of a search engine (Parikh & Deshmukh, 2013). Lipiäinen & Karjaluoto (2012) mention that in Finland, SEO seems to be the second most popular tool for digital marketing, even though almost half of the respondents in their research didn't use SEO at all. In addition, Parikh & Deshmukh (2013) suggest that when a website is rated to be included in the first ten results of a search engine, it develops the volume of quality traffic to the website, ensures a high return on investment and improves the global reach of the business. Thus, thinking of the amount of websites there are today, SEO is becoming more of a must than a plus.

2.4.2 Social media

The massive growth of social media is changing the way companies manage their marketing communications (Milewicz & Saxby, 2013). Social media can be described as the technological instruments that allow users to share and discuss information and content (Cortizo et al. 2011). In other words, Ryan & Jones (2009, p. 152) explain that social media is the umbrella term for web-based software and services that allow people to come together online and exchange, discuss, communicate and participate in many forms of social interaction, such as text audio, images, video and other media. According to Cortizo et al. (2011), social media includes blogs, microblogging, wikis, forums, social networks, photo and video applications and many more. Hence, social media can indeed be used as the broader term for many of the content marketing channels.

Although the lists above of the different platforms that can be considered to be part of the term social media give a picture of what it is, a more specific definition is needed. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) imply that there seems to be confusion between managers and academic researchers on what exactly should be included under the term of social media. People often refer to Web 2.0 and user generated content (sometimes referred to user created content), when talking about Social media, even though these are two separate concepts. Singh et al. (2008) explain that Web 2.0 differs from Web 1.0 in the sense that it is customer-centric, user-generated, interactive and dynamic, encourages community participation, and builds on collective community intelligence. Web 2.0 is a term that first described the then new platform where content and

applications were no longer published by individuals, but instead continuously modified by all users in a participatory way; basically personal websites were replaced by blogs and other collaborative projects (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). Moreover, Ryan & Jones (2009, p. 14) explain that Web 2.0 is about deploying the potential of the internet in order to connect and communicate with other people wherever they are; creating communities and sharing knowledge, opinions and ideas.

In addition, since the different social media platforms allow customers to talk to hundreds or even thousands of other consumers around the world, the companies are no longer the only source of brand communication (Bruhn et al., 2012). Thus, it is important to make a distinction between firm-created content, which is under the company's control and user-generated social media communication, which is independent from the company's control (Bruhn et al., 2012). Moreover, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) explain that Web 2.0 as a term represents the ideological and technological foundation; whereas user generated content (UGC) can be used as the sum of all in which people make use of social media. OECD (2007) proposes three characteristics that lay the ground to identify UGC; first of all the content has to be published; secondly, a certain amount of creative effort has to be put into creating the content and, finally, it has to be created outside of professional practices and routines. Certainly, as the means and habits are changing continuously, these three points are often hard to pursue.

Based on these two concepts, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010, p. 61) define social media as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content". This is indeed a more detailed definition when comparing to the one provided earlier by Cortizo et al. (2011). However, they both imply that social media refers to the various digital tools and means by which people connect and communicate with each other. Hence, social media allows companies to talk to customers and customers to talk to companies, and furthermore enables customers to talk to each other (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In fact, social media can be considered as an extension of the traditional word-of-mouth communication, as it allows word-of-mouth in the internet as well (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Today it is obvious, that social media has a great role in the daily lives of consumers, which is why companies are trying to make the most of it. Therefore, Weinberg & Pehlivan (2011) have identified three general approaches how companies use social media, which vary on the extent of being traditional or emergent in nature. At the traditional extreme is treating social media channels as long-established media channels to derive a predictable response. The second approach is experimental by involving testing and learning in order to discover important factors associated with social media and it is also traditional as it intends to associate decisions to ROI. The last emergent end approach is also more experimental as it attempts to discover what is

distinct about social media and change the organizational behavior according to those findings. (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011).

Furthermore, Weinberg & Pehlivan (2011) suggest that marketers can efficiently use social media by taking their message directly to consumers and focusing on traditional goals. However, they should take the distinctions in the elements of social media into consideration and act in accordance with their own marketing objectives (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Companies should also start social customer relationship management, which recognizes that instead of managing customers, the role of the business is to ease collaborative experiences and to have a dialogue that customers value (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011). In other words, companies should have clear objectives they try to reach with social media marketing but at the same use these channels to manage customer relations.

Where traditional marketing was all about reaching, social media marketing is about engaging and participating (Hanna et al., 2011). Furthermore, with the rise of social media, corporate communication has actually been democratized, meaning that the power has been taken away from the marketing departments by the individuals and communities that create, share and consumer blogs, tweets, videos, pictures etc. (Kietzmann et al., 2011). The fact that consumers now have a louder voice is not only a challenge, but can also be beneficial for companies. According to Hanna et al. (2011) consumers have more trust on their own opinions and the opinions of their peers as they build relationships and connections through social media.

The trend of consumers finding information about brands via social media platforms and becoming fans of brands in social media, leads to the assumption that social media in addition to traditional media exerts an important impact on the success of a brand (Bruhn et al., 2012). Thus, we have to remember that Internet-based media does not replace traditional media (Hanna et al., 2011). Weinberg & Pehlivan (2011) emphasize that social media is not a perfect substitute for traditional marketing and it is also not suitable for everyone in the same way. In fact, Hanna et al. (2011) mention that companies have to take both social and traditional media as efficient parts of an ecosystem, where all elements work together for a common goal. Many companies make the mistake of using the different social media platforms as separate media, when they should instead approach social media with an integrated strategy (Hanna et al. 2011). Despite the existing role of traditional media, social media is a very important issue for digital marketers today.

According to Bruhn et al. (2012), social media provides companies numerous opportunities to listen to their consumers, to engage with them, and to possibly influence their conversations. However, Trainor et al. (2013) also discovered that the use of social media technology alone may not be sufficient to gain competitive advantage. Therefore, companies have to use social media with the purpose of better serving their customers in order to reach the better relationship outcomes (Trainor et al., 2013). In addition, as social media holds potential for companies to engage with customers, it increases turnover (Heller

Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Furthermore, implementing social media platforms as tools for marketing is beneficial also due to the relatively low investment costs compared to many traditional marketing communication instruments such as TV (Bruhn et al., 2012). The numerous social media platforms have transformed the Internet from a platform for information into a platform for influence (Hanna et al., 2011).

Despite the obvious benefits, some companies are not using social media in their marketing and do not even find it relevant. Many managers of companies still consider social media platforms as “just another” marketing communication instrument, which is definitely a mistake (Milewicz & Saxby, 2013). Milewicz & Saxby (2013) found in their research that the manager’s satisfaction with a social media application is closely related to the intentions to continue using the platform. Thus, it is important to train and inform the leaders of the companies about the different social media tools and the benefits it can bring to the company (Milewicz & Saxby, 2013). This is also one of the reasons why measuring and informing about the results of the use of social media is so crucial.

The Figure 4 below presents a few of the most important groups of social media applications. Weinberg & Pehlivan (2011) identified two factors that explain the variation in social media; half-life of information and the depth of information. The half-life of information refers to the longevity of the information in terms of appearance and availability, meaning that in Twitter the information can move away quickly depending on for instance on the number of users the consumer is following (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Depth of information on the other hand, refers to the richness of the content, and the amount of diversity of perspectives, meaning that in social networking site Facebook can offer a large amount of rich information (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Therefore, the different types of social media applications can all have their own function. For example, Twitter creates awareness and allows short term conversation and blogs allow the company to build their brand and convey product knowledge (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011).

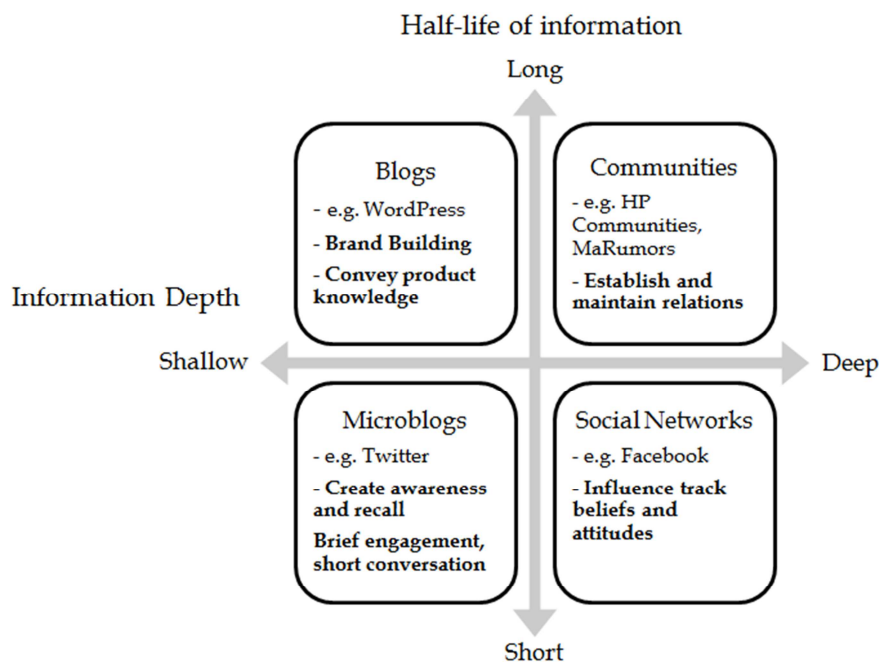


Figure 4 The nature of social media applications (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011)

The next paragraphs will provide more detailed information on the different types of social media applications. However, important is to keep in mind that even though many people agree on which platforms belong under the term social media, there is no systematic way in which all of these applications can be categorized (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Therefore, the categorization provided hereafter is made based on the literature used in this research and is not necessarily a general one by all marketers. Nevertheless, the categorization provides the reader the sufficient understanding of the different social media platforms in order to comprehend the results and findings of this study.

2.4.3 Social network sites

Social network sites are applications that allow people to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending messages between each other (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). Moreover, Gironda & Korgaonkar (2014) suggest that social networking sites offer users the ability to customize a unique personal profile, offer a unique platform for users to share and discuss ideas, and give the ability to "like", "tag" and "share" the comments and postings of other users. In fact, these elements provide an opportunity for consumers to remain in control of creating and managing their experience (Gironda & Korgaonkar, 2014). Social networking sites particularly attend to build and maintain social networks, where everyone is welcome after they have registered or created their own online profile (van Noort et al., 2012). The biggest and probably most well-

known example of a social network site is Facebook. Facebook was started in 2004 and has now over a billion users worldwide (Facebook, 2014).

Zhuang et al. (2013) mention that that social networking sites have become some of the most rapidly growing internet platforms during the past two decades. In addition, according to van Noort et al. (2012), social networking sites are increasingly used as channels for promoting products, services and brands. Thus, as consumers found these sites useful, it is natural that companies want make use of them as well. Moreover, Gironda & Korgaonkar (2014) explain that many companies are advertising on social networking sites not only because of the large audiences, but also because these sites allow very specific targeting of selected individuals that fall into a marketer's pre-specified characteristics. This is because these sites provide the geographic, demographic and psychographic information of all the users (Gironda & Korgaonkar, 2014).

In addition to advertising on social networking sites, according to Zhuang et al. (2013), researchers have recognized that these social networking sites can be very valuable in generating interactive communication between companies and consumers and between groups of consumers. Therefore, companies are setting up their own pages in order to better communicate and interact with the consumers (Gironda & Korgaonkar, 2014). Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) suggest that several companies are using social networking sites in order to support the creation of brand communities or for marketing research. Furthermore, an increasing number of brands are hosting online communities in order to build relationships with customers, get feedback, and strengthen the brand (Gummerus et al., 2012). Hence, these applications can be great tools to use in content marketing.

Moreover, social networking sites actually offer a presence on the internet that is engaging, relevant and behavior oriented and also transform online activities from an individual experience to a more community oriented one (Gironda & Korgaonkar, 2014). Furthermore, Gummerus et al. (2012) found in their research that consumers value entertainment and social benefits when it comes to brand communities, whereas economic benefits, such as competitions or lotteries were not perceived as important and thus might not be productive in the long run. Thereby, value entertainment and social benefits should be the focus for marketers when creating content to these sites in order to build an impressive community that engages the consumers.

In addition, the life of the information in social network sites is relatively short as they are maintained regularly (Weinberg & Pehlivan 2011). However, Weinberg & Pehlivan (2011) observed, that the depth of the information in these networks is significant, due to the 'communities' and the 'fans' in these sites. Furthermore, the speed, ease and sphere of influence of users' actions on these platforms provide greater viral potential for the dissemination of electronic word of mouth (Gironda & Korgaonkar, 2014). Some firms have even found that these social networking sites can work as distribution channels (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Thus, these sites can serve multiple purposes and can be utilized in numerous different ways.

In addition, Gummerus et al. (2012) suggest that companies should create content that keeps consumers visiting the Facebook site and encourages them to engage in transactional behaviors. Although, their research focused on Facebook, we can assume this applies to other social networking sites as well. Gummerus et al. (2012) mention that customer participation in brand communities affect positively on loyalty and strengthen the relationship between the brand and the consumer. Therefore, when talking about content marketing, social networking sites can be effective tools for companies to engage, communicate and entertain the consumers.

2.4.4 Blogs

Blogs are actually the earliest form of social media (OECD, 2007). According to Garner (2012, p. 170) blogs are real-time content management platforms for the internet. The word blog originates from the fusion of two separate words - web and log, due to the fact that it consists of online, web-based, chronologically organized entries on a number of subjects (Singh et al., 2008). Sinha et al. (2011) define a blog as publication of personal thoughts and links that occur frequently and in chronological order. Whereas, Singh et al. (2008) explain that a blog can be defined as a website on which a user or a group of users create an ongoing narrative. In addition, Garner (2012, p. 170) explains that they are made for content production, push-and-pull distribution of content and social interaction. Thus, blogs are not only intended to share ideas, but also to get connected and discuss with the stakeholders.

Furthermore, blogs can be used for multiple purposes, even from a company point-of-view. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) suggest that blogs can vary from personal diaries describing the author's life to summaries of relevant information in one specific content area. Moreover, the content of a blog can consist of text, images, video, audio or a combination of these depending on the service used (OECD 2007, Sinha et al., 2011). Therefore, individuals as well as companies can choose to initiate a blog with different types of content about a person, a theme, or even both. Singh et al. (2008) explain that blogs can also have a number of different objectives as for instance some try to gain marketing intelligence and others provide an on-going dialog between the marketer and the consumer. All in all, blogs are useful organizational tools to inform about the brand and interact with the consumers (Sinha et al., 2011).

Although there are differences in blogs, they have some common elements, such as comments that readers can add, categories which imply the subjects the entries discuss and permalinks that are permanent URLs to each individual post (Singh et al., 2008). In addition, the posts in blogs are tagged with keywords, which allow content categorization and also gains access to the content through tagging as a theme-based classification system (Sinha et al., 2011). Generally blogs are managed by one individual, but allow the opportunity to interact with others in the form of adding comments to the different blog posts (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). Furthermore, Kietzmann et al.

(2011) explain that blogs are normally used for facilitating rich and often lengthy conversations that can be traced back to the blog itself. Thus, the life of the information in blogs is relatively long (Weinberg & Pehlivan 2011). All of these features make blogs attractive for companies to use in their content marketing.

In fact, there are many reasons why blogs are important and can be a relevant tool in content marketing. Kietzmann et al. (2011) emphasize that millions of blogs and their interconnections have become an important source of public opinion. Moreover, Sinha et al. (2011) suggest that blogs are no longer one of the subcultures of the Internet as they have become a mainstream resource of information. For instance, many leading consultants, writers and academics share their expertise via blogs and thus provide readers with the latest information in their fields (Singh et al., 2008). On the other hand, blogs allow consumers to voice their opinions and make it possible for companies to see their organizations from the customers' viewpoint (Singh et al., 2008). In addition, Hanna et al. (2011) mention that writing a blog has been identified to be useful method of generating sales leads. Another great advantage is that blogs are global by nature; by publishing a blog a firm has a global platform that can reach the internet users around the world (Singh et al., 2008). Thereby, blogs can provide companies an international channel for communication and an effective tool for dialogue with a customer.

Despite the numerous benefits of a blog, there are some downsides as well. First, it takes time to not only continuously find something to write about but also respond to the feedback the blog entries create (Singh et al., 2008). In addition, Singh et al. (2008) mention that it is hard for companies to control the costumers' comments, as anyone can comment on blogs and even anonymously. Hence, blogs can be very time-consuming to maintain, especially if only one person is managing it. Thus, it is usually beneficial to share the work of writing a blog in a company. Furthermore, Hakola (2014) mentions that the forms of content marketing are changing all the time and blogs are facing challengers from video-blogs and Youtube-blogs. Therefore, it might be that these video-blogs will take even a larger share of the regular blogs in the future.

Some firms have chosen not to maintain their own blog but are marketing or advertising through other blogs. Especially earlier, companies were for example giving bloggers free products or paying for them to write about these products (Hakola, 2014). However, media and marketing agencies are also fighting for the attention of bloggers, which makes it more challenging for companies to get a popular blogger to post exactly about their product (Hakola, 2014). Moreover, the marketing environment has changed and is changing all the time. Thereby, Hakola (2014) suggests that it's time for companies to figure out new ways to use bloggers in their marketing.

2.4.5 Content communities

Many of the channels used for content marketing can be considered as content communities. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) explain that there are a wide range of content communities including photo sharing such as Flickr, video sharing like YouTube or PowerPoint Presentation sharing such as SlideShare. The main objective for these channels is to share media content between different users (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). What differentiates content communities from the social networking sites is that profile creation is not mandatory. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) mention that normally on these sites users are not required to build a personal profile page, and if they do the page usually contains only the very basic information, such as the number of videos they have shared.

According to OECD (2007), videos and films when talking about UGC refer to recording and/or editing video content and posting it online. There are in fact multiple platforms established for video sharing such as Youtube and Vimeo (Cortizo et al. 2011). These videos can include remixes of existing content, homemade content or even combination of these two (OECD 2007). The content can be shared on a user's website, traded on peer-to-peer networks, private websites or hosted by a video sharing site (OECD 2007). According to Steimle (2014), videos are often less used in content marketing, because people think they are expensive and hard to produce. However, the falling costs of professional equipment allow companies to make high quality videos easier and with smaller budgets (Steimle, 2014). In addition, during the background interviews, all the specialists emphasized the power and popularity of videos and some suggested that it would even grow in the future.

Picture sharing has also become a relevant and effective tool for companies. For instance the mobile application Instagram allows photo sharing with friends through a series of pictures (Instagram, 2014). The platform was originally planned for individuals (Instagram, 2014). Nevertheless, when browsing the users of Instagram, you can see that even companies like Coca Cola, Levi's and BMW have their own accounts in order to engage with consumers. The users can also share their pictures straight to e.g. Facebook and Twitter (Instagram, 2014). This allows also the companies to share the same content in different channels and make use of the pictures they took and edited via Instagram.

Furthermore, there are content communities for sharing many different types of content. For example, SlideShare allows users to upload e.g. presentations, infographics, videos, documents and webinars all in the same site (SlideShare, 2015). It has actually grown to be one of the largest communities and it consists of more than 15 million uploads from both companies and individuals (SlideShare, 2015). Thus, there are indeed multiple different content sharing communities and tools to be used in content marketing.

The popularity of these platforms is justified. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) suggest that the large amount of users makes them very attractive for companies to use in their communications. For example, Hanna et al. (2011) imply that many companies are now creating their own videos in YouTube in

order to drive sales, which is arguably clever as Youtube serves over 100 million videos per day (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, as a downside, content communities have the risk of being used as platforms for sharing materials that are copyright-protected, an even though there are rules, it is often hard to control the misuses (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Despite this disadvantage, these channels for content sharing enable companies to share vivid content cheaper and quicker than for instance publishing a television or a magazine advertisement.

2.4.6 E-mails and magazines

E-mail marketing is actually a powerful element in the digital marketing strategy as it allows easy communication with a customer on a personal level (Ryan & Jones 2009, p. 133). Therefore, it is very suitable for content marketing as well. The e-mails sent to customers usually contain a sales pitch or a “call to action” (Ryan & Jones 2009, p. 134). On the other hand, e-mails in marketing are often used as newsletters that are sent to consumers who voluntarily subscribed to them. According to Beard (2013), digital newsletters are scheduled, repetitive messages from companies to a number of subscribers and they usually have a website counterpart or archive which represents certain type of content.

Although e-mail is losing some of its share to the popular social media channels, it still remains an important tool digital marketing as it allows individual communications directly to people who want to hear from you (Ryan & Jones 2009, p. 147-148). Moreover, Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2012) mention that e-mail is advantageous as it is low-cost, easy to personalize, faster to create and implement and also encourages click-through to a website where the offer can be redeemed immediately. In addition, digital newsletters are timely and allow linking to other informative sites or articles that will enrich the reader’s experience (Beard, 2013). However, there are some disadvantages as well. Often the recipients have different communications preferences, the amount of newsletters sent is increasing, and it is also hard to keep them engaged as e-mail recipients are most responsive when they start subscribing the e-mails (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012).

On the other hand, Beard (2013) mentions that readers can become emotionally attached to digital newsletters and sometimes even look forward to receiving them. Naturally, if this happens, the content of the newsletter has to be interesting enough to get the customer engaged. A good newsletter would include for example relevant business or industry news, educational content, reviews useful sources that the audience could benefit from or presents a series of useful tips about the company’s product or service (Beard, 2013). In addition, as Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2012) suggest that a newsletter can be sent out weekly, monthly or quarterly. Thus, a company should closely consider which frequency is suitable for exactly their business and for their audience.

Magazines can also be considered as content marketing, even though they have been around longer than the term of content marketing. As McCrary

(2014) suggests, print magazines are actually a great tool for marketing. One reason is that companies can use magazines as a way to engage their customers in the offline world (Beard, 2014). Another great benefit is that now much of the information comes e.g. in short videos 140-character tweets, which makes print to stand out (McCrary, 2014). Magazines allow the company to provide information at greater lengths and dig deeper into the topics, which naturally give the reader something to hold onto for more than a couple of seconds (McCrary, 2014).

Moreover, Beard (2014) mentions that in some industries, like B2B manufacturing, around 60% of the companies actually use print magazines as a marketing tool. In Finland, for example Kesko, the large Finnish retail chain, sends a magazine every month to its customers, in order to provide recipes, holiday or celebration inspiration etc. In addition to the print magazine, Kesko offers the magazine also as a digital version, which gives it a wider spread. As the costs for producing and distributing print magazines are high (Beard, 2014), many firms might prefer to publish a magazine only digitally. However, these pieces of custom publication can definitely provide an alternative way for brands to connect with their customers in a meaningful way (Beard, 2014).

2.5 Research framework

The literature review serves as a profound background for this research. The most essential concepts are defined and discussed and a couple of different frameworks in the marketing communications environment are presented. As mentioned earlier, not many pieces of academic research specifically related to content marketing have been published. Therefore, theoretical frameworks or actual theories from the academic literature on content marketing were not found. In order to fully understand the link between the concepts and especially the position of content marketing in the marketing communications environment, a research framework is constructed by the author of this research. This framework is presented in Figure 5 and is constructed based on the Figures 1, 2 and 3 and Table 1 explained in the previous chapters. The framework serves as a summary for the literature review and provides the reader the links between the content marketing and the IMC literature.

The most essential concepts related to this research are integrated marketing communications, digital marketing and content marketing. As mentioned earlier, digital marketing is part of marketing communications and content marketing can be also non-digital marketing, which is why the concept of digital marketing is not separately presented in this framework. Therefore, as can be seen in the picture, integrated marketing communications is the larger base for the research in which the concept of content marketing lies.

The crucial components in this paradigm are the company, content creators, the stories, channels and the customers. As Mangold & Faulds (2009)

suggested in their framework, there is the company and the agents (marketing agencies etc.) that create communication from the company side. Hence, there are content creators inside and outside the company. The definition of content marketing used earlier was “a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action” (Content Marketing Institute, 2014). Thus, the company creates content and stories and shares them in different channels to a clearly defined audience, which is referred to as customers in this research framework. It is important to remember, that the audience is not only current customers but also potential customers. Moreover, in order to separate general communicational content and content marketing content, content is referred to as stories in this framework.

The customers search and absorb this information and see, hear and read these stories in the different channels. As mentioned earlier, the customers are in fact now creators and contributors of marketing communication which makes marketing a more personalized and participatory media to interact with customers (Wertime & Fenwick 2008, 26-31). Thereby, there is also an arrow with the word stories coming from the consumer side in order to indicate the consumer’s role in content creation. Some firms are making use of this and include their customers in their content marketing processes. For instance, food companies ask their customers to send their own recipes etc. (Jalotofu, 2015). In addition, consumers are asking more control over their media consumption and consider the communication with other consumers very important (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Therefore, in the framework the conversation between customers has also been taken into account as it has a huge effect on the content marketing practices of companies today.

As Harad (2013) explains, content marketing refers to companies regularly sharing valuable information with their target audiences that reinforce and aligns with their brand. This sharing of content is done with the aim to for instance attract prospects, generate interest and build trust (Harad 2013). Thus different companies might have different goals and objectives they try to reach with content marketing. For example, Kubo Oy’s research found out that while in some other countries that main objectives of content marketing are increasing brand awareness and customer engagement in Finland it is usually used for increasing sales and attracting new customers (MARK, 2015). Therefore, the research framework presents company with its vision in one, as it depends on the vision what the company does also in terms of content marketing.

While multiple companies are sharing their stories in numerous channels, the customers are taking part in the process. From the opinions and stories of the customers the company gets feedback. Moreover, as Pulizzi (2013) also mentions, the content marketing activities have to be measured during the beginning, the middle and the end of the process. By measuring the different content marketing channels the company naturally also receives feedback. This feedback (both from the company and consumers) actually guides the company

on what they are doing right and what they should improve. Hence, the companies have to actively seek for this feedback and measure the results of their storytelling.

As mentioned earlier content marketing is one marketing communications tactic. Therefore, this framework for content marketing lies in the larger base of IMC. However, content marketing should be part of a company's marketing regardless of what type of marketing tactics it uses (Content Marketing Institute, 2014). Thus, even though the company would not rely solely on content marketing, it is undoubtedly very effective to have it as a part of the marketing communications strategy.

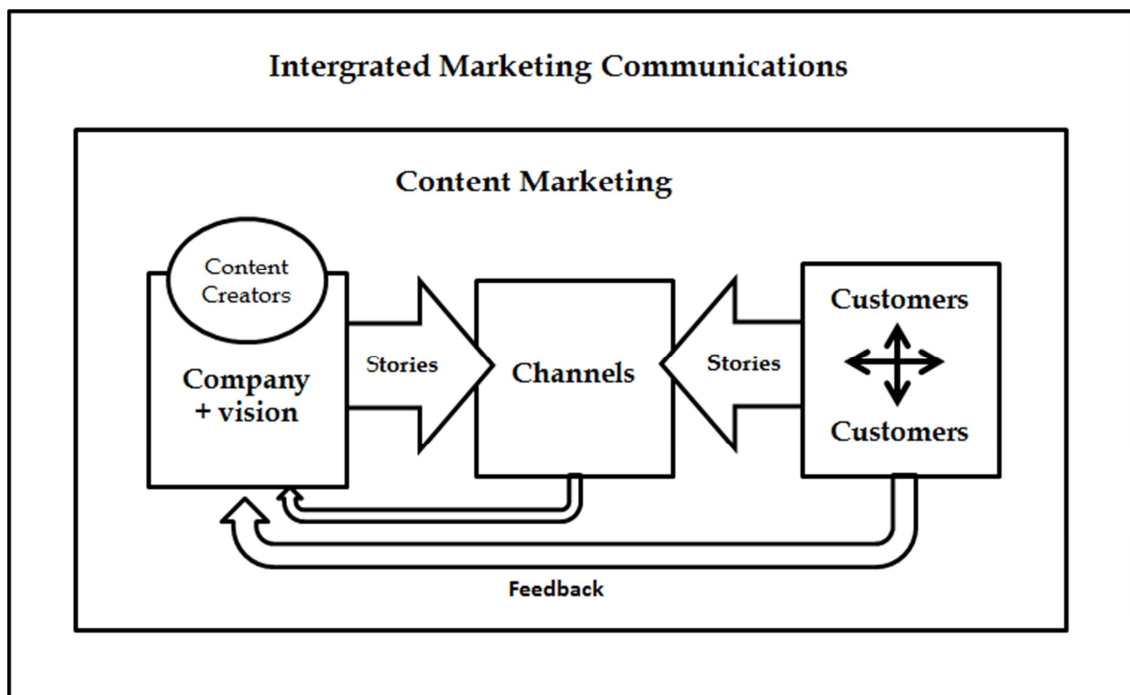


Figure 5 Research framework for content marketing

3 RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHOD

This chapter outlines the approach and method for this research. First of all, the concept of qualitative research and case study approach that are used in this research are presented. Thereafter, the methods for conducting the study and collecting the data will be viewed. Furthermore, the chapter will give insight on how the results will be analyzed. Finally, this chapter will introduce the case companies that will be interviewed related to their content marketing practices.

3.1 Qualitative research

The term qualitative research is actually used as an umbrella term for a series of research approaches in social sciences (Flick, 2009). Flick (2009) explains that qualitative research uses text as empirical material and is interested in the perspective of the participants. Furthermore, the methods used in the research should be appropriate to that issue and should be open enough to allow an understanding of the process or relation that is being examined (Flick, 2009). In other words, qualitative research finds the answer for the research problem in words instead of numbers.

In fact, in many researches in the field of marketing the qualitative method is selected. Carson et al. (2001) suggest that qualitative research methods are usually appropriate for marketing, due to the fundamental need to understand phenomena surrounding marketing. In addition, managerial performance and activities within an organization cannot be adequately studied within arranged compartments in an isolated and artificial settings (Carson et al., 2001). Thus, as this study is also about understanding the opinions, practices and performance of an organization and its people, it is clear that the qualitative research method should be chosen.

Moreover, Flick (2009) suggests that the intention in qualitative research is not only to create new knowledge to scientific purposes, but also to produce or

promote solutions to practical problems. That is what this research is aimed for; promoting solutions and efficient practices for content marketing. In other words, the purpose is to provide practical knowledge about content marketing for the companies who are still struggling in their own marketing practices. The approach for this qualitative research is case study, which will be elaborated further in the next chapter.

3.2 Case study and systematic combining approach

According to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008), case study should be more considered as an approach than a method. It is a way to get in-depth information on specific cases, which is why the case study approach was chosen to be used in this research. In fact, there are two types of case studies; intensive case study and extensive case study (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008) explain that when conducting an intensive case study, one or few unique cases are explored to get a deep understanding of that specific case, whereas in extensive case study multiple case studies are analyzed in order to find common patterns across the chosen cases. Therefore, by doing an extensive case study, in-depth information can be gathered on the common characteristics of content marketing in several firms.

When doing a case study research, it is important to choose a topic, where the beginning and endpoint of a case can be clearly defined (Yin 2009). In other words, it is important to specify what a single case is in that specific research. Flick (2009) explains that a case can be for example a person, an institution, an organization, a community or an event; it all depends on the topic and the research question. In this research, one case is a company that is studied in terms of its content marketing. In addition, as mentioned before, multiple cases are explored in order to identify some common and on the other hand some differing characteristics of content marketing from the perspective of firms. This approach gives the study a practical perspective and will hopefully highlight some managerial implications for other companies in the future.

Furthermore, as mentioned in the introduction, the approach of systematic combining is used in this research. According to Dubois & Gadde (2002), case studies utilize in-depth information on empirical phenomena and their context, which is why they offer unique means for developing theories. However, most textbooks describe case studies as linear processes even though by going “back and forth” from one type of research activity to another and between observations and theory, the researcher is able to expand the understanding of both theory and empirical phenomena (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Dubois & Gadde (2002) explain that with systematic combining the confrontation of theory and empirical world is continuous throughout the research process. Due to the nature of the research topic, the approach of systematic combining is

used in this study. With this approach, the theoretical and empirical data will be intertwined and more valuable outcomes will be made.

In order to combine the theory with the empirical framework, three background interviews were conducted. Today, many companies look for outside help when it comes to digital marketing and content creation. Therefore, three content creators from three different marketing companies were asked to give their point of view on the subject. These interviews serve more as background research in order to find out what is their professional view on the subject and what do they see as a research gap on the subject. Below in Table 2, the specialist companies, interview dates and durations can be found.

Table 2 Companies used for background interviews

Company	Interviewee	Interview date	Interview duration
Aava & Bang	Communications Consultant	30.9.2014	67 min
Brand United	Planner	2.10.2014	79 min
Nettitehostin Oy	Entrepreneur at Nettitehostin Oy	17.10.2014	e-mail interview

3.3 Data collection methods

According to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008), when doing case studies, the researcher usually starts with preliminary topics, questions or problems. In addition, during the study some new exciting questions often emerge, which might later change the interest of the researcher as well (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). Hence, it is useful in a case study to keep the design flexible and open for adaptations.

As mentioned above, a case study usually begins with general topics and problems. Therefore, to begin with, each case is examined from an outsider perspective, in order to see what the visible part of the content marketing is in the company practices. In other words, company websites, annual reports and other secondary data is used to get a general overview of each of the companies used as cases in this research.

After information is collected by using secondary data and observations, more qualitative data needs to be gathered on the topic. Thereby, qualitative interviews will be conducted with each of the case companies separately. These interviews are to be done with each of the firm representatives individually in order to find out what are the opinions of content marketing in that specific company and why. This way, each firm gives their own experiences and perspectives of the issue.

The qualitative interviews will be conducted as semi-structured interviews. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher has a general plan for

the research topic, but does not follow a fixed order of questions or word these questions in a specific way (Packer, 2011, p. 43). This way, the interviewees are encouraged to describe the issues related to the topic with their own words (Packer, 2011, p. 43). In addition, each interview will be audio-recorded, transcribed and analyzed.

In order to be sure to get an answer to at least the most essential issues, an interview structure was formulated, which can be seen in appendix 1. This interview structure has 6 themes, all of which include a few questions. As it is crucial to get the same basic information from all cases, a few background questions will be asked from the interviewees themselves and the company they represent. Moreover, to be able to understand the process of content marketing in the firm, a few basic questions will be asked related to marketing communications in the company. After the background questions, three themes will be discussed; content marketing, content itself and the channels used for content marketing. In the end of the interview the persons will be asked a few questions about their perspective of content marketing in the future in order to answer the third research question.

3.4 Data analysis

According to Boeije (2011, p. 11), qualitative research has three key elements; 1) it looks for a meaning, 2) it uses flexible research methods enabling contact, and 3) it provides qualitative findings. This study has a case study approach as elaborated earlier and it also contains the elements of a qualitative research. The research is trying to understand a social phenomenon with flexible methods in order to produce descriptive results (Boeije, 2011, p. 11). Therefore, the analysis will be done with the case study approach analysis methods provided by Eriksson & Kovalainen and further analyzed with the help of Boeije's (2011) qualitative research analysis instructions.

After all data; secondary and primary, have been collected the data will be analyzed. First, within-case analysis will be done, meaning that each case is studied individually (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). In order to be able to get some relevant findings, the cases have to be compared with each other. Thus, a cross-case analysis is made in order to find the common patterns and similarities between the cases (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). Not only the similarities will be collected, but also the most interesting differences and dissimilarities will be dissected.

According to Boeije (2011, p. 76), analysis refers to segmenting the data into separate parts, and then reassembling these parts again into a coherent whole. Hence, first each interview will be analyzed as separate sources of information and relevant findings will be highlighted. After the results of each interview have been outlined, the data of all interviews will be considered as a whole. First, the data will be segmented; the parts of the data will be organized

into categories or groups (Boeije, 2010, p. 77). The themes from the interviews will be categories in this phase together with other issues that clearly recurred in the interviews. The different interviews will be compared with each other and the categories will be named, and this naming process is called coding (Boeije, 2010, p. 79).

After the data has been categorized and coded, the reassembling phase can begin. Reassembling means looking for patterns and searching for relationships between the distinguished parts, in order to make sense of the data from a theoretical perspective (Boeije, 2011, p. 76). Thereby, the coherent whole and the end results of the research will be drawn from the similarities of different interviews as well as from the dissimilarities of the interviews. Finally, the categories defined in the segmenting phase are then further modified to new categories in order to present the most relevant findings in clear chapters. This will be done in chapter 4. The findings are introduced in nine different categories, that were found when designing the interview structure and during data analysis phase. Moreover, each category will give some examples and direct quotes from the interviews. These direct quotations are translated into English in in the main text, but the original Finnish quotes can be found in appendix 2. However, the companies will be referred to as Company A, Company B, Company C etc., in order to respect their privacy. The specialist companies will be referred to as Company X, Y and Z as was done in the literature review as well.

3.5 Case companies

According to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008), there is no single rule on the minimum number of cases that should be chosen when doing an extensive case study. This is because; the research problem has a great influence on how many cases are needed (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). In the case of content marketing multiple cases have to be examined in order to be able to get a more general view on the way companies do it and the challenges they face. Therefore, 8 companies will be included in this research in order to get sufficient amount of information to answer the research questions.

As mentioned before, although companies have been involved in content marketing for decades, content marketing as a concept is fairly new. However, Dempsey (2014) mentions that today many large companies have expert teams working solely on the companies' social media marketing in order to raise the profile of the brand. We can in fact assume that large companies in general have more experience on a specific field such as content marketing and at least have more structured strategies of doing it. Therefore, many of the case firms used in this study are medium or large companies, in order to get broader picture and more extensive knowledge on the topic.

On the other hand, smaller companies are known to be more flexible than large companies due to their size. Furthermore, as content marketing is cheaper than traditional marketing, smaller companies might be the ones that often make use of this particular marketing tactic. Therefore, it is important to take both larger and smaller companies as cases for this study. According to Yrittäjät (2015), companies with less than 50 employees are small, companies with 50-249 employees are medium sized and companies with over 250 are large companies. Looking at Table 3, one of the case companies is small, two are medium sized and 6 are large. Thus, these companies can surely provide valuable information on their content marketing practices.

In this extensive case study the cases will be selected from different industries. As the backgrounds of the companies taking part in the study vary, most probably the answers will vary as well, at least to some extent. This makes the cross-case analysis interesting as we can see what the largest differences are. In addition, a variance in the type of cases chosen can provide information on whether there are also similarities between these companies despite the difference of the industries. This allows us to possibly find also some general answers to the research questions. The case companies will include companies from numerous industries, such as food and confectionary, online services and travelling as can be seen in Table 3. In this study the names of the companies are revealed with the approval of the interviewees.

These companies were selected to be part of this research based on their content marketing practices. The method of snowball sampling was used in this study due to the nature of the theme. Snowball sampling is a technique for gathering subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide the names of other interviewees (Atkinson & Flint, 2004). The snowball sampling method takes advantage of the social networks of the identified respondents, which can provide the researcher with set of potential contacts (Atkinson & Flint, 2004). Thus, some connections came through the connections of the University of Jyväskylä. These connections then advised the researcher to interview a couple of other firms, which further advised to interview a couple of others. Most of these companies have advanced techniques to practice content marketing and can be said to be even pioneers in the field. However, as there is no scale nor official list on the best content marketers in Finland, these companies present one group of the companies in Finland that are efficiently working with their content marketing strategies.

Table 3 Case companies

Company	Industry	Employees	Turnover €	Interviewee	Interview date	Interview duration
Descom	Marketing and Technology	~240	~41 million	Content Manager	4.11.2014	69 min
Fazer Group	Food and Confectionary	~15 600	~1,7 billion	Online Marketing Manager	15.12.2014	92 min
Metso	Mining, Construction, Oil and Gas	~16 000	~3,9 billion	Marketing Communications Coordinator	15.12.2014	79 min
Paytrail	Online Services	~40	~4,5 million	Brand Manager	31.10.2014	63 min
Tjäreborg	Travelling	~140	~139 million	Director of Marketing and Sales	19.11.2014	90 min
Valio	Dairy products	~4600	~2 billion	Marketing Manager	29.12.2014	66 min
Valtra	Agricultural Machinery	~940	~109 million	Communications Manager	28.1.2015	73 min
Wärtsilä	Marine and Energy	~17 700	~4,8 billion	Marketing Manager	9.2.2015	82 min

4 FINDINGS

This chapter will present the ideas and thoughts that arose during the interviews with the case company representatives. The findings are introduced in nine different categories, that were found when designing the interview structure and during segmenting and resembling in the data analysis phase. In addition, the purpose of this chapter is to gather all the data together and present the overall results of the research interviews. Moreover, each category will give some examples and direct quotes from the interviews. However, the companies will be referred to as Company A, Company B, Company C etc., in order to protect their privacy and to avoid revealing the marketing practices of a certain company. The specialist companies will be referred to as Company X, Y and Z as was done earlier in the literature review. Below an introduction can be found to the findings with a quotation by Company Y that well sums up the changes the field of marketing is going through.

Before people just watched TV. You only had 30 seconds in the MTV3 commercial break to tell your story and that's it. And maybe some print advertisement somewhere. Now you have fifty channels and the media space is almost free, which is why the pressure is all in the content. There you compete with attention, because the media space is free for everyone, whether you are a small advertiser or a giant Oreo advertiser, it is still the same space in everyone's use. So the requirements for the quality of the content have sort of increased a lot. And it demands more to managing comprehensively and the eye of a professional as you can't do it on an impulse anymore. So it is like managing these large stories, so that's why we also talk about the curve of drama that has to go through all the media. So you have to almost make people to either cry or laugh in order to get the message through and it can't be this sort of clinical "satsumas 0,99€"-type of information, that just doesn't work anymore. (Company Y)

4.1 Marketing communications strategy

In each of the case companies the role of marketing communications is essential. Most of the interviewees mention that marketing communications is

valued and considered to be an important and essential part of the business. For instance, Company E says that marketing communications is a strategic, appreciated and significant part of the business, which is why it isn't the department where the company first makes cuts if necessary. Only two of the companies hesitate and say that it is valued, but the management could be more interested. Luckily however, for example Company D mentions that the role of marketing communications is actually increasing all the time and more focus and appreciation is put into it. This is clearly one of the reasons why these firms are doing well with their marketing practices; they get support. I believe this is also one of the reasons why content marketing is an essential part of their marketing communications. These firms value marketing communications and want to be forerunners in the field and in their own industries.

Company B emphasizes how it is important that the upper management has realized how important marketing communications is and that without it the company cannot succeed. In addition, Company C remarks that naturally you have to earn that appreciation by showing the results of the actions to the higher management. Company C also adds that the tools to show the results are there, but it is only a matter of using them right and showing that the investments were worth it. Moreover, Company H mentions that as the tools for measurement are getting better, showing the results has become easier and thus the management trusts and believes more in their marketing activities. Furthermore, Company C says that the role of marketing communications is considered very central in their organization and a lot of resources are invested into it. One of the reasons why it is so central also in the eyes of top management is that it is so closely linked to sales and sales generation.

As a whole, marketing communications in its different forms, whether it is paid, bought, owned, it is all sales generation, building a brand that sells and building business operations. So it is very obvious that it has a very important role. (Company C)

In addition, a crucial point that many of the interviewees emphasize is that the marketing communications strategy has to be linked to the overall business strategy. For example, Company C and E both highlight that this is a crucial part what every firm should do in order to have effective marketing practices and that if this would not be the case, marketing communications would actually be totally useless. Hence, all of the objectives and operations for marketing communications have to be derived from the overall business strategy. Surprisingly, half of the firms don't have a written marketing communications strategy. However, the important point for them also is that objectives and goals have to be set and there has to be a clear strategy even though it wouldn't be written in the form of an official strategy. Company G says that they make a strategy for a whole year, but they react to changes during the year and change their strategy if necessary. On the other hand, a couple of the firms mention that they are actually trying to move away from long-term planning in order to be more flexible due the active business environment.

...so we kind of tried to get away from this “year-clock-thinking” and maybe moved more to the direction of aiming to be as dynamic as possible, and not only reactive but being also sort of proactive. (Company A)

Another interesting point in these companies is that many agree that marketing is not a separate department but has to work closely together with different parts of the organization. In addition, Company Y mentions that this is the mistake that many Finnish companies make; marketing is kept or considered something separate and is not connected tightly enough to the other departments of the company. Company H says that product development and sales departments are intimately working together with their marketing. Moreover, Company F agrees and says that marketing is in the core of the business, and it is considered important already in the product development phase.

The same teams that also make, think about the product development projects and the production, like what we can do, the same teams are also involved in the making of marketing communications. So it is not like a separate or a different function...Because you can always think that you can make products, but do you have demand for them? So you have to start building the concept of marketing communications already from there. (Company F)

Furthermore, Company A proposes that marketing is connected to sales and customer service in order to make everything function properly.

We sort of think that, or I personally think this whole marketing as a sort of entity comprised from marketing, sales and customer service. So it is associated with, if you think of B2B-perspective, so that how do we catch the lead, how do we take care of it with the marketing means, and when it becomes a marketing qualified lead, so how the sales takes care of it and then again the when taking the service into use and how the after sales handles it. (Company A)

In addition, there is a noticeable difference between the B2C and B2B companies in terms of marketing communications budgets. All of the B2C companies emphasized that significant resources are invested into marketing as the target audience is a mass and traditional media has to be used in addition to content marketing. Many of the B2B firms on the other hand agree that more resources would come in hand in order to achieve more and get more results. Thus, it seems that B2B firms have to justify their need for additional resources more thoroughly as less money is used for paid media.

All in all, the take-out here is the link between the importance of marketing communications and the support from top management. The management's support and additional resources are gained by showing results. Furthermore, it is crucial to define the marketing communications objectives according to the general business strategy and connecting marketing with other

parts of the organization. All of these issues ensure that marketing is efficient and is working with the organization by trying to reach the same goal.

4.2 The concept of content marketing

As could be predicted based on the content marketing literature, the concept of content marketing is perceived differently in different organization. Each of the interviewees was asked to explain what content marketing means in their companies. In fact, there are almost as many answers as there are companies involved in this research. On the other hand, although the answers vary, when looking more closely, many of the answers have actually a lot in common. Few of the respondents simply explain the different channels they use for their content marketing practices in order to answer the question whereas some are more analytical. To start with, Company C says that content marketing is the current approach to marketing.

..so content marketing is today's approach to marketing. It is not equal to a firm's blog, it is not equal to social media, it is not equal to the company site, it is all of that. I see it that way, and for us it is like an approach. (Company C)

To go more into detail, Company A says that in their company content marketing is basically inbound marketing, meaning that they are trying to get customers to come to them instead of the company trying to get to the customer. This fits well to content marketing definitions mentioned in the literature review; it is pulling instead of pushing. Company D also explains that the point is not to primarily push their own product or service but communicate so that the product or service comes in between the lines. Moreover, Company H mentions that they don't use the term content marketing but instead they talk about strategic marketing. However, their strategic marketing refers to all of their marketing actions and also avoids this type of push communication.

I see that it is specifically the desire that, that we talk about some issue that concerns the customer or like a theme and not only push our own, or go forward with our product or service in the peak. So we have something else to say, that's how I see it. (Company H)

Furthermore, Company D and Company F have a very similar approach to the concept. Company D explains that content marketing is about providing useful information to the receiver, who most of the time is the customer but can also be stakeholder. For Company F it also means offering helpful information to the customer, because only telling about the product or service is not very useful or valuable for the customer. Thus, Company F mentions that the key is to provide service and valuable information besides the product or service in order to bring more value to it. However, the difference between these

companies was that Company F emphasizes that content marketing is more focused to their current customers whereas Company D says that it can be directed to both current and potential customers.

So it pursues to be this sort of objective information what it (the receiver) can make use of, even though it hasn't bought our product. But it still has to be closely connected to our business. (Company D)

In addition, Company D, Company E and Company F all mention, that they have been active in content marketing for a longer time even though the term is fairly new in their organizations. Company E said that they actually still don't use the term within the company, although they practice content marketing. Company F highlights that the tools for and the ways of doing content marketing have changed and developed recently, although the concept itself is not new. Moreover, Company C and Company H actually mentioned that they are already getting tired of the term content marketing. Company H is actually even irritated that this term has gathered such a palaver around it. However, Company C says that it is good that it has become such hype because it makes companies realize how important content in marketing is.

Marketing communications should construct from good content, when content marketing itself is actually nothing new. But thank god, this term is now on everyone's lips, because it means that advertisers are now starting to think more and more about what makes the advertisement interesting, and content is the one that makes it interesting. (Company C)

Furthermore, Company C and Company E say that the borders of content marketing are becoming fickle and it is not so clear anymore what is content marketing and what is not. For example, Company E explains that the new tools and ways of doing have made the lines of content marketing more blurry, which makes it actually hard to say what is pure advertising and what is more storytelling and so on. However, Company E mentions that generally when they talk about content marketing they refer to owned and earned channels, into which they have the possibility to produce content. In addition, they aim to produce content and share information effectively in order to ensure that their customers and people in general talk about them in the way the company wants them to talk and about the things they want them to talk. Company E emphasizes that even though it is hard to control what others discuss about you, it is possible to influence their opinions indirectly with good content.

On the other hand, Company C challenges the traditional way people define content marketing. Usually content marketing is indeed referred to as activities done through owned and earned channels as did Company E. What Company C suggests, is that stories and helpful information could be shared in paid channels as well. Company C explains that if you for example create a video that tells a story to your own channel and it becomes organically viral, this is considered content marketing. If you use money to boost that video to

make sure it becomes viral, it is not considered content marketing anymore. The question Company C asks is, if you have the money to do so, why wouldn't you? Especially if you are trying to reach a larger audience, organic distribution alone is often not enough. Thus, Company C explains that they do a lot of content marketing campaigns in the traditional sense, but they also use paid media to promote these pieces of content.

When you think that we are trying to reach 2 million people, then we have to make the most of the organic distribution and then we need to continue that distribution with money...Sure it can also be that if you have a small marketing budget, then of course with the tools of content marketing you get a lot done with small money. But if you have money, then you can make even more out of content marketing, which makes the people who make it with small budgets to criticize that it is not content marketing because a lot of money is used for that. So real content marketing is only a cool firm blog, which is something that I challenge. Then we get to the hypothesis that the bounds of content marketing are becoming blurry or have become more blurry and on the other hand all marketing can be content marketing, so that advertising is also done more with the conditions of content marketing. (Company C)

Moreover, three of the companies also mentioned that content marketing in their companies is also internal marketing within the company. Company B even mentions that this internal communication will be one of the big focuses in the marketing team for the year 2015. Company B says that this is because content marketing within the company can help the marketing personnel to sell marketing as a part of the basic business practices of the company. This naturally makes other departments trust and appreciate marketing practices more and encourages them to become more involved in the marketing activities. Linked to this, Company C explains, that although the marketing team is officially responsible for the content marketing practices, the employees of the whole companies have to be involved in the process and take part in content creation.

Thus, indeed even in only eight different companies, there are many different views and perspectives on content marketing. However, they agree on various issues. All in all, below in Figure 6, a summary on the phrases case companies use to describe content marketing is presented. Content marketing is not a new concept, but more of a new term; it is pulling instead of pushing; it is about providing information that is not directly telling about the company's offer, but instead offering valuable information for the customer; and it can also be about providing valuable content within the company. In addition, many agree that it is often hard to define content marketing or categorize what is content marketing and what is not.

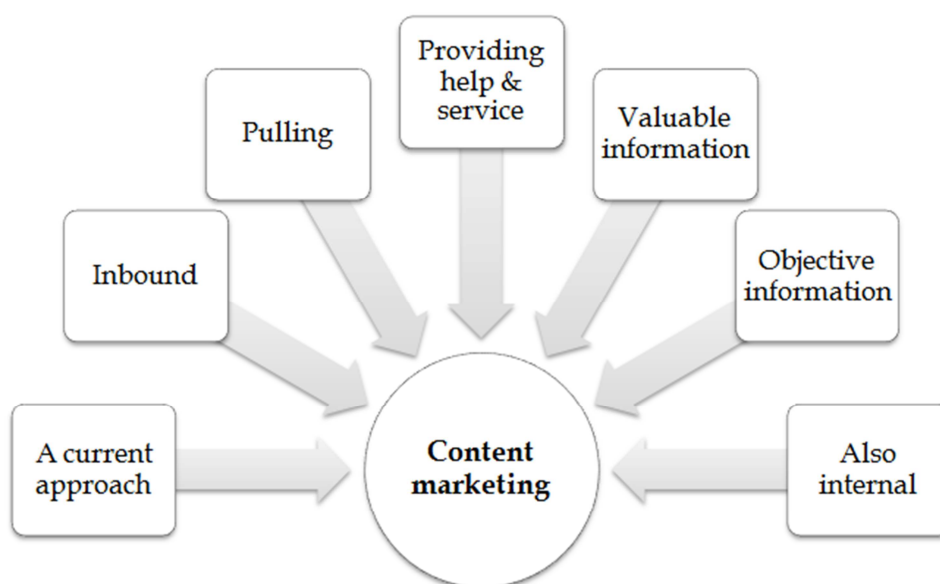


Figure 6 Phrases used by case companies to describe content marketing

4.3 The objectives and importance of content marketing

Company Y says that content marketing is a modern way to make business and reach the goals of the business. The objectives for marketing communications and content marketing were discussed not only in all eight case company interviews, but also in the background interviews with the specialists. In addition, all of the interviewees were asked to justify why they think content marketing is so important. These two are naturally linked together, as when asking why something is important, people also tell you why they do it. Company X mentions that although content marketing has many of the same objectives as marketing communications in general it has a special feature. These phrases by Company X actually not only well introduce the different objectives content marketing can have, but also explain why it is important.

Content marketing does not fit into any traditional marketing thinking directly. Of course content marketing is used to build the brand, market leadership, customers and so on, but the ideology contains to earn attention and to arouse the true interest of the customer. You can't no longer interrupt and push. People have learnt how to avoid commercials. The winner is the one who can make customers to voluntarily seek the company's marketing. (Company X)

Thus, the field of marketing has changed, which is why content marketing had raised its importance. Actually, many of the interviewees had been working in the field of marketing for a longer and emphasized how tremendously the field has changed within the last ten years. Company X says that the

technologies such as social internet and different digital tools have changed the field of communication and marketing entirely. For instance, Company Z mentions that 15 years ago if you had a website, that was enough, but now more is definitely required to even stay in the game. Furthermore, Company X further emphasizes that today, for example banner and print advertisements are not enough, which is why content and stories play a more significant role.

Content itself is indeed emphasized when talking about the importance of content marketing. First of all, content was seen to be important generally in making the company to be found in the digital world. Company E for example mentions that in order to make the people find the company in search engines and overall in the internet, content marketing is very helpful. Moreover, Company E highlights that the internet has become way more complex and different tools are needed to keep up with all the changes.

In addition, Company C explains that the importance of content marketing ensues from the content. Content is interesting and to make a commercial message interesting you need content, Company C further elaborates. Company F also says that because they operate around a few important themes that affect peoples' daily lives, telling stories and providing interesting content is the only way to operate in the industry. Thereby, merely advertising or communicating is not enough. Company B also explains that content is intriguing, because customers are not interested in the product/service itself. Company B continues that instead the company has to use content marketing and tell why it is important, what the key point is, and what can be reached with the help of the product or service they offer. Naturally, companies have to distribute these pieces of content in the channels the customers are.

*You have to be present there, where the consumer wants to be, wherever it is, and it's changing very rapidly. And the content is maybe the only way to be interesting enough for someone to get around the brand or those issues that we want to communicate.
(Company E)*

Furthermore, content marketing was not only seen to be an effective tool for making the customers interested but also for differentiation. For Company B, content is considered to be even the only efficient way for standing out from the competitors. Company B further explains that content marketing is actually the best way to get their message and story to the customer. Related to that, Company D mentions that content marketing is the way for them to create the image and brand of a thought-leader. Company D emphasizes that in their field futile and empty content doesn't carry very far. Thus, Company D says that they need to create an image and show that they are the hardcore specialist and expert in the field. Therefore, content marketing is seen important and effective in differentiation and building a leading brand.

Moreover, Company G says that content marketing is important in order to create a bond between the company and the customer or the potential customer. Company G also mentions that content marketing will strengthen the

already existing ties between the customer and the products and encourage them to also buy in the future. In addition, content marketing is seen to be a great way to engage the customers into conversations and that way create a bond between the brand and the customer. For example, Company E says that content marketing is very effective in helping to answer the consumers need for more personalized marketing and thus build appealing conversations with the consumer.

..and also that we are in the conversations, we are there to provide the type of content that it should be like in our perspective, and what would answer the people's needs and what would interest them. So you can't anymore think that if you we have a new product we make a commercial, and that it will handle it. Or that if a person wants to know something about us, it will come to our website and find and navigate itself, it just doesn't go like that anymore. (Company E)

On the other hand, Company H says that the importance of content marketing is obvious. Company H explains that the company should from the beginning know its customers thoroughly and every process should begin by considering the customers' process and activities. When you keep that in mind, then it's quite logical that the company's sales, product development and whatever should think about the customers, what their challenges are and what they need to hear, Company H elaborates. Hence, Company H explains that it is then logical that marketing follows the same strategy; the customer is not primarily interested in the offer of the company, but it is interested in the solution in general that solves the customer's problem. Company H and Company E thus mention, that content marketing is nothing new, yet it is very important. Company E highlights that what content marketing is called is not relevant, because the key is to create content that attracts and interests the target audience, keeping in mind that the content needs to have a meaning for the company as well.

Here again, there is a clear difference in B2B and B2C companies. Many of the B2B companies mention, that content marketing alone is enough and that it is the only way to succeed. B2C companies on the other hand highlight that, although content marketing is very important, traditional mass media is needed in order to reach the consumers. This is logical, as the customer base for these B2B companies is very different from consumers, thus you need to appeal to them in different methods. In addition, the target audience for the B2B companies is often notably smaller than for the large B2C companies that were involved in this research.

Although there are differences between B2C and B2B companies on why they feel content marketing important, each of the 8 case companies seemed to agree to a large extent on the objectives of content marketing. All case companies explain that the objectives and goals that they try to reach with content marketing come from the general business strategy. For example, Company E emphasizes that all of the objectives for marketing in general come from the business strategy. This is simply because, marketing cannot have its

own objectives, but it has to work for the common goal of the whole organization. Company G also highlights, that whether they are quantitative or qualitative objectives, they all derive from the business strategy. In addition, all of the case companies seem to agree, at least to a wide extent, in their objectives and goals they try to reach with content marketing.

One of the goals that each company highlights is sales generation. For example, Company C mentions that for each campaign and also for each fiscal period certain numerical sales targets are set. In addition, Company D says that content marketing is done in order to support sales department. Company H even highlights that their main objective is actually to support sales in various different ways. Moreover, Company F highlights that the crystal clear objective in content marketing is to generate sales. Company B actually suggests that sales should always be the main target, because in fact all the other objectives often also lead to sales generation.

Yes it (sales) always has to be, that's the number one. Because increasing brand or building brand awareness also eventually leads to sales. (Company B)

In relation to that, most of the companies suggest that content marketing was started in order to affect their brand. Company C mentions that increasing the top of mind and improving the brand in-mind are clear brand related objectives and often content marketing objectives. Furthermore, Company D emphasizes that the objective for them is to strengthen the brand and the story of the company. Company E also mentions that together with sales generations, increasing brand awareness is their largest objective in terms of content marketing. However, in their company depending on the product or product group different targets are emphasized.

So if some, let's say that there is a new product or even if we would go with an old product but to a new market, then of course the first objective is the awareness and experimentation that we want to bring with different tools. Then again if it is a product that already gained ground then of course the popularity and sales are the objectives that are pursued more in detail. (Company E)

Other companies as well had categorized and differentiated their objectives in various ways. For example, Company C mentioned that they group their objectives in three different categories; brand related objectives, sales related objectives and distribution related objectives. The distributional objectives can for example mean that if they would want to increase the sales in a certain channel, the company has to create marketing actions that support this goal. Hence, Company C also mentions that always case by case they define objectives and certain targets are set for each campaign. On the other hand, Company H says that all of their objectives are phased in the sense that they have different objectives to reach in supporting the sales. This categorization helps them to organize their marketing actions, when they know the goals of each action.

We have divided our objectives kind of according to the process. So how can we help in positioning and visibility in the market, how can we support sales so that they can build the brand reference about us to the customer and then last that how we can help in actually closing the sale. So our objectives are sort of staged and linked to these stages. (Company H)

Furthermore, Company D suggests that one of their key objectives in terms of content marketing is to inform their customers and potential customers that the company is an expert and a forerunner in what they do and thus also engage them to the brand. Although Company F mentions that their goal is also to engage, they still have a very different view than many of the other firms. Company F say that content marketing is not probably the best way to create awareness but works more for the people who are already their customers, thus providing information for the existing customers and making them more connected and loyal to the brand.

So if we think about the traditional funnel, that we are making awareness, like awareness about a product, then content marketing may not be the best tool. Instead it is more there on the steps of the use, so when they already use our product or have used or bought, then it is there as committing. So we are more there in the loyalty end. (Company F)

Traditionally content marketing is considered to be an effective tool for creating awareness, which is why this view is a bit surprising. Also in these interviews, many companies mentioned that content marketing is a great way for creating awareness, arousing interest and also maintaining that interest. For instance, Company B explains that content marketing can also help with the customers who are not yet in the end of the buying process or are not even considering buying yet.

With the help of content marketing you can kind of like keep the customer warm, if it is considering it (buying). Or then like those customers who don't even know that they need it yet. But then when they realize they need it and they have seen the content, they get it like "hey I've heard about that, I will take a closer look". (Company B)

To conclude, the objectives for content marketing are the same as in marketing communications in general; only the tools are different. Furthermore, the objectives derive from the company's general business strategy. It is also common to categorize these goals according to the processes in order to make sure the marketing actions support these goals. The most essential objectives in all companies are sales generation or brand related. A crucial point is that content marketing is seen to be an effective tool in creating awareness, but also in engaging the current customers. Thus, content marketing is effective and versatile, and depending on the content different objectives can be reached.

4.4. The content marketing process

Company E says that although content marketing has been a part of their marketing for a long time already, it is now becoming a more strategic and a more carefully planned part of their marketing communications. Therefore, content marketing is no longer occasional separate actions but actually more based on a strategic process. Here again, there were both a couple of differences and similarities in the way the case companies saw their processes related to content marketing. First of all, 7 out of 8 companies say that the process is continuous. Company C for example explains, that in fact there is no clear process that could be outlined in general content marketing activities. Moreover, Company D says that especially now the digital tools make the activities more continuous, which is why it is harder to say where the process begins and ends. Company E also emphasizes that all of the content marketing activities, are naturally always built on top of their previous activities, which is why there is neither a clear start nor an end. In fact, Company H suggests that the key in their actions is that nothing would be one-time thing, but instead the activities would be more continuous and systematic. Company C also highlights that content marketing should be always part of the bigger picture.

So it doesn't have this separate that now we start doing content marketing, but it is part of the bigger campaign. (Company C)

However, when talking about content marketing campaigns, the interviewees mention that some clear steps can be identified. For example, Company G says that they have continuous activities but also campaign-like activities, which have a beginning and an end. In addition, Company C further elaborates that a campaign is built around a specific theme and the process starts by first setting certain objectives for the campaign. Thereafter, a plan is made in terms of the messages and how these messages will be visible in different channels. Depending on the theme of the campaign and the product or service the campaign is promoting, the target audience might vary, which naturally has an effect on the characteristics of the messages and the channels that are used. After the implementation, the results are measured. Nevertheless, Company C mentions that also these content marketing campaigns are usually part of a bigger picture and they are often linked to other marketing activities. Therefore, even in the campaigns it is often hard to outline a clear or detached process as the overall picture is more complex.

Secondly, all of the companies agree that the process begins by defining the objectives. For example, Company Y mentions that the content marketing process should always start from the company's objectives and vision. This is because it is impossible to know what content marketing in their firm should be like if it is not clear what they want to achieve. Thus, Company Y emphasizes that the vision of the company should be the cornerstone in content marketing.

Furthermore, Company E highlights that the process starts from defining the objectives that have to derive from the overall business strategy. In other words, based on the overall business strategy and vision, the marketing team defines objectives for content marketing in general and for each campaign separately.

In addition, Company B emphasizes, that when talking about the content marketing process as a whole the key is to get the whole organization to take part in the process. Company B says that this is actually the hardest part of the process and many firms don't even realize how crucial this is. In fact, Company X agrees that indeed many firms haven't realized that marketing and marketing communications should be part of the other departments and work closely together. Company B explains that when the whole organization is included in the process, they can get relevant information related to the customers' needs from the people in the organization who actually work closely with the customers. Moreover, when other departments of the company realize the importance, they voluntarily take part in content creation, Company B suggests. Thereby, depending on the topic the team can get hardcore professionals to write about their topics.

Related to that, the next step in all of the companies was to clear out a content marketing plan. Company H emphasizes that it is important to clarify the audience in the planning phase. In addition, Company A emphasizes that they have cleared out very precisely certain potential customers, thus in other words the potential buying personas to which they plan the themes. Deciding on the themes that are relevant for the customers and the company is highlighted by all of the companies when talking about planning. Company E and Company F for example explain, that the second step is to plan the overall themes and the messages. In their companies, an overall plan is made for a year, but the themes and campaigns are usually planned for around 4 months at a time. The planning periods seem to vary between companies and between the different tools, as Company A says that for example if considering only a blog, the themes are planned only for a month at a time. Company F and Company H both highlight the importance of taking the customer into account in the planning phase. Company F actually mentions that their team focuses on the customer throughout their process. Thus, the company constructs this general overview from the customer perspective in order to pick out the issues that are important to them and to their customers.

And actually, everything begins from, that we have these overall objectives. After we actually think about either the period or the whole year, this sort of year-clock, that okay, where is the customer, what is it doing, what new could we bring for it, what kind of themes and thoughts are rising...So we make this, this kind of overall idea that what phenomenon and thoughts are now in. From there, we pick out the themes that are also important to us. (Company F)

On the other hand, as Company B mentioned, the answers on what the important themes are can be gathered from outside the marketing team as well.

For example, Company H says that they collect customer-related information from other departments in order to make their yearly plan.

We have gathered information from our sales, product development and other parts of the organization on what our customers are talking about at the moment and what should we talk about. And that way we have come up with four main themes that we focus on and then two smaller ones. (Company H)

Nevertheless, Company B and Company C emphasize that although the content and ideas might come from different departments of the organization, the marketing team is the one that keeps everything in control and makes sure that the published content is professional.

Each of the companies emphasize that planning is a crucial phase in the process. However, many of them also highlight how important it is to be adaptive. First of all, Company A mentions that the process resembles more a continuous cycle that has to be updated all the time. In addition, Company E mentions that although the objectives are always defined in the beginning of the planning process, the targets might have to be changed during the year if necessary. Nevertheless, Company G highlights that the larger overall objectives usually remain the same throughout the year, even though some smaller changes might be done. Furthermore, Company H outlines that normally the themes that are planned for the year are more general and later defined more in detail during the year in order to be able to react to the possible changes. Company F also mentions that some activities might need adaptations during the process, no matter how carefully you plan.

In fact, in content marketing you have to be awake all the time that what is happening. It might also be that some old content arises and even though you would make a precise publication calendar, you have to be flexible and be ready to change it if it seems like it. (Company F)

After a clear plan regarding the themes and messages has been outlined, the content creation and distribution step begins. Company E and Company H highlight that the target audience for that specific message determines the channel used to deliver the message. However, Company D explains that usually first the rich content is created in to the main channels. These main channels in the case companies are for example a company website, a blog or a magazine. Company A mentions that usually nothing is created only for social media, but instead the content that has been created for the main channels is then modified to fit the different social media channels. In addition, Company F emphasizes that the contents need to be promoted in different channels in order to make these contents visible for the customers. The promotion of the stories is important also to get more traffic to the main channels. For example, Company B says that after careful planning, editing and publishing the key contents are then promoted in different social media channels and in the newsletter. Company E also highlights that the contents are distributed in different

channels according to the needs and objectives of the channels, meaning that each channel has a clear role and function. Company A outlines the importance of promotion in order to get the content to reach the customers.

Any good content has to be marketed, and you can't think that good content markets itself....so, so content marketing without marketing is contentless marketing in my opinion. (Company A)

After the implementation, all of the companies emphasize the step of measurement. Company B was the only company who saw that the process has an end, and this end was measurement. However, the other case companies mention measurement as the last step, but emphasize how the process continues after. For example, Company F says that measurement is also continuous because website and other social media are continuously monitored and measured in addition to the campaigns that are separately measured. Furthermore, Company A explains that the key in the process is to have an effective measurement at the background throughout the process in order to analyze and plan well. Thus, measurement provides tools to improve the actions during the process and also provide information on future activities.

Moreover, although not mentioned when talking about the process, some companies emphasize the importance of conversation. Company E for example highlights that it is not enough to only publish content, but also follow customers opinions and discuss with them. In addition, although the companies first found it hard to explain the process of their content marketing activities, they eventually identified many clear steps in the process. Thus, in order to combine the similarities and identified steps, Figure 7 below presents the process as it was seen in these 8 companies as a whole. The companies agree that the process is continuous and starts from defining the objectives. Furthermore, the planning phase is important in order to define the audience, the themes and messages and the channels. After careful planning, the contents are created and then distributed and promoted in the selected channels. When the contents and stories have been published and promoted comes measurement, which is actually also considered to be partly continuous. Thus, although there are clear steps the companies identified, the content marketing process is more like a continuous cycle that is closely linked to the overall marketing communications activities.

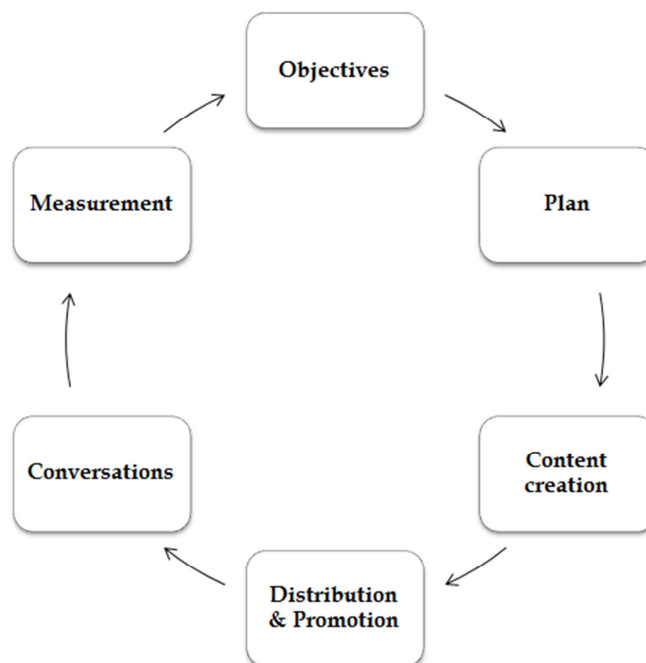


Figure 7 Content marketing process in case companies

4.5. Content; nature, sources and creation

The nature of content that is considered to be content marketing was shortly discussed already in the chapter 2.3. Most of the companies emphasize how the content should provide solutions and help for the customer. For example Company H suggests that the stories have to be related to the needs of the customers and the challenges the customers face. As Company B also mentions, the detailed product descriptions do not interest the customers in the beginning, because it is irrelevant for them. Thus, especially when providing content in the beginning of the customers buying process, it is more effective to communicate these sorts of issues.

...especially in the early beginning of the buying process, the less you talk about yourself and focus more on asking, listening and making conversations and more importantly emphasizing the phenomenon, the better the content is then. But the closer you get of the actual purchase here, then, then you just have to be proud of your own service. (Company A)

Furthermore, all case companies mention that they use the vision and story of the company itself in the content marketing. Moreover, Company B mentions that the content ideas always come from the objectives and goals of the company, thus starting from the higher level and passing downwards to actual practices. Company B also suggests that there is no use to create content just for the sake of content because it has to come from the vision of the

organization. Company D agrees and highlights that the strategy and story of the company is always behind everything they do in order to achieve what the company pursues. However, Company D adds that the key is to keep it at the background and not push the strategy and vision as they are, because often the content related to the company strategy or vision solely is not appealing.

So it (vision and story of the company) comes through the themes. So we don't, to me it would sound really "glued-on-top" if you start pushing those messages as they are, but it has to be on the background. It is sort of the filter that I use to choose the themes. (Company D)

Nevertheless, Company A mentions that the stories about their business and successes are often the ones that get most attention in the media. In addition, the companies that have a longer history also emphasize the effectiveness of business related stories and that they actually have more stories than they have time to tell them. In addition, Company E and Company F say, that they have separate channels to share content related to their business communication. Thereby, these companies have channels that are more directed to the customers, but also channels where they communicate the company's vision, strategy and figures of operations for the businesses and people who are interested. Furthermore, Company Z mentions that content can indeed tell stories about the company itself. For example, if they have a recreation day, they can make a video about it or post pictures in order to tell what a great workplace it is. This communicates a message about an open and transparent organization. According to Company E and F, the key when communicating business related issues is to be able to tell them in an intriguing way.

Moreover, Company E mentions that it is important to be open and talk about the tough issues as well. Especially now in the digital environment, customers discuss with each other more easily and quickly. Thus, Company E suggests that as people talk about the difficult topics anyway, it is better be there and discuss with them. The company can show they care about the customer's opinion and that they take their concerns into consideration by actually having conversations with them.

Sometimes life just is like that. Everything is not always nice. But you have to be able to talk about it. And that is also an alignment in content as well that we talk openly about everything, also the tough issues that are not so easy to explain. (Company E)

In addition, Company B and Company E emphasize that in content marketing it is essential to prioritize quality over quantity. Company E also says that they rather make less content in amount but focus more on the high quality of the content they release. Furthermore, they rather make larger packages of content with a clear theme instead of doing small little things that have no connection. Company B and Company D also highlight that they want to publish high quality content with a specialist perspective. This is what other companies mentioned as well; specialist view. The content has to be high-

quality and information from an expert in order to help the customer. On the other hand, Company A and Company C underline that in order to keep the customers and stakeholders interested in their content marketing activities, the frequency in publishing has to be quite high. The appropriate frequency naturally always depends on the company and the business it operates in. Thus, the challenge is to be able to publish high quality content but often enough to keep customers interested.

Besides the characteristics of the content in their content marketing, the case companies also mention various sources for the content ideas. First of all, according to Company C, the ideas for stories are born from the fact that the marketing people are open-minded and grasp any idea that comes across. Company D also mentions that if you have difficulty in getting new content ideas it is due to lack of innovativeness. Company D suggests that when working in the field of content marketing, you have to keep your ears and eyes open at all times, because even the smallest thing can turn into a great piece of content. Most companies indeed emphasized how majority of the ideas for content come from their own marketing department.

Nevertheless, many of the case companies suggest that marketing department is not the only source for content ideas. Company D for example mentions that the ideas for stories come also from other parts of the organization, for example sales department. Company H says that sales people can give great ideas and important information on what the customer is struggling with and what issues they would want the company to talk about. Company H also says that excellent ideas often come from product development as well, as they can provide information on what are the company's solutions to these problems and what can they offer in order to help the customer. Moreover, Company E says that sometimes the content ideas might arise from their own channels. According to Company E, for example if a theme, an issue or a question seems to come up in conversions with their customer or they see someone speculating something in the internet, they might take that issue and turn it into content or even a campaign in order to elaborate that issue more broadly.

At some point, when there was a lot of interest on that, then we held a seminar, where then, to where it was free access, so all the bloggers and people who had been talking about it in social media or called or something, they all received the info. Then we also tweeted openly that we have this seminar, welcome everyone who want to ask and have a conversation. So we actually brought it away from the web, so that it doesn't only revolve in the digital world. ..So if people ask, we have to make it possible for them to also ask from us and not only make them speculate the issue somewhere in social media. So we want to be active and be a part of the conversation and also bring the topics for the conversations, also the tough ones. (Company E)

Thus, the customer and the conversations with the customer might generate ideas for themes and stories as well. In addition, many of the B2B firms also use a lot of customer cases, reference cases or testimonials. They want

to tell the story and experiences of a customer to the other customers, which is in a sense nothing new. However, two companies mentioned that they are sometimes inviting their customers to talk or write content that is actually not related to the company. Company H for example mentions that they use webinars, where the speaker is sometimes customer who might talk about general issues going on in the industry. This is in fact content marketing where the customer has been taken to be part of the process.

Furthermore, Company E tells that when they renewed their website they took customers into the process in order to get their view on what should be done to the site. They themselves already had options and plans, but they still wanted to get contact with their costumers and ask them what they would prefer to see on their site. Moreover, Company E and Company F mention that their customers in general take actively part in content creation. In addition, Company C and Company G say that their customers actively create content for them by for example telling stories about their experiences, sending pictures of their experiences. Nevertheless, Company E emphasizes that if and when they use content that comes from a customer, they want to be open and also mention it. In other words it is important to be honest about the origin of the content and make a separation between the company-created content and the customer-created content.

Even though the stories come from other parts of the organization or even from the customer, the marketing department is ultimately responsible for content marketing. Company C highlights that in fact the whole organization has to take part in content creation. However, according to Company C it has to be coordinated through the marketing department, because they are the ones who have the knowhow and the control. In addition, Company F says that it depends on the topic that who is actually creating the content. For example if the theme is production or product development then their department takes part in the content creation because they are the experts in the theme.

Moreover, it was also considered to be important to find good partners for content creation. All of the companies used marketing and media agencies in their marketing activities. Company C says, that the best way in marketing is in fact to combine own resources with outside agencies and partners. Nonetheless, Company B emphasizes that the nature of content marketing makes it generally hard to produce outside the company. Company F on the other hand says that the planning, ideas and often the creation come from inside the company, but for video production or graphic design they often ask help from agencies outside the company. As content marketing is all about giving valuable information for the customer, it also requires the firm to get rid of communicating only the “we-thinking”. Company D even mentions that often the content that is written by someone outside the company appeals the best to customers. Thus, getting good specialist or researchers in the field from outside the company to write a blog text or white paper can be very effective.

Hence, as mentioned earlier, it is not content marketing to merely have a Facebook-page or Instagram-account; you have to make an effort. Many of the

case companies emphasize, that the content has to in fact provide useful and helpful knowledge for the consumer. The ideas for content come not only from the marketing department, but also from the other departments of the company and sometimes even from the customers. Content can also be created by people in the other departments of the company and again even by the customer. All in all, many people from outside the team are taking part in content idea generation and creation. This, can make the content richer and often more effective. However, the responsibility is in the marketing department and they are the ones controlling content marketing as a whole.

4.6 Successes and challenges in terms of content marketing

4.6.1 Successes

The eight case companies that were involved in this research have all been involved in content marketing for a longer time and have also been successful in their activities. Therefore, it was intriguing to hear their own views on what they consider as their most significant successes in terms of content marketing. In fact, the successes the interviewees mention are often different between the companies. In addition, even though increasing sales and building the brand were said to be the most important objectives, the successes that the case companies emphasize are something very different. Although Company B suggests that there are both numerical and qualitative successes, most of the successes the case companies highlight are qualitative.

A few companies say that a major success has been to actually even start content marketing practices. For example, Company C mentions that their primary success has been that they opened the path for content marketing and that they took a step into that direction. Furthermore, according to Company C the fact that content marketing has an important role in their marketing practices can be considered as a success. Company B agrees and emphasizes that for their company as well it has been a success that the company has overall taken such an intensive focus on content marketing. In addition, Company B says that they have even received positive feedback from their competitors, that they are doing a really good job with their content marketing. This naturally suggests that the company is ahead of its competitors, which can definitely be counted as a great success.

Moreover, a success is not only to start the content marketing activities but also to get the process function properly. For example Company F says that for them a great success has been to overall create processes and an ecosystem that actually enables them to make content marketing and be present in so many channels. Company H agrees and mentions that it has been a significant success that they have been able to get the process running clearly. According to Company H, the pieces of content are divided according to themes and

objectives. In addition, Company H says that when everything is organized, it is easier not only for the marketing department, but also for other departments in the organization to follow up and take part in the different content marketing activities. Company H adds that it has also been a success that their offer and content marketing are not separate but closely connected, which makes their communication more coherent and effective.

As mentioned earlier, Company C says that although marketing is the team that is responsible and controlling the content marketing practices, the whole organization has to be involved in the content creation. Related to this, Company B emphasizes that in their company the most significant success has been that they actually got the management team to understand the importance of content marketing. According to Company B, when the other departments (especially management) of the company realize the importance of content marketing, the whole process becomes easier. Moreover, Company B mentions that it is very important that the whole organization is part of the process and proud of working in the company also during their free time.

Furthermore, measurement was mentioned as a great success. For example, Company A suggests that a major success for their company has been to be able to measure the results of their content marketing and marketing in general. According to Company A, they earlier got customers without knowing where they came from, whereas now they always know through which channel the customer found the company. Company A adds that therefore, they now can actually have an effect on their actions in order to improve the things that are working, and stop doing the things that are useless. This naturally allows the marketing team to also show actual results to the higher management and justify the importance of marketing in the company.

So I think that it (measurement) is one of our biggest successes. That every year in budget negotiations we can show that the results of marketing are these and this is why we should be invested on. (Company A)

In addition, two companies say that the viral aspect they reach with their content marketing activities is a great success. Company D mentions that their successes are that through content and stories they publish, the company gets free publicity. According to Company D it might even be one piece of content, for example an article, but when that article earns attention in media it always feels like a success. Furthermore, Company G emphasizes that their recent action reached a lot of free publicity in different media, which has been one of their recent successes. Thus, the companies feel they have succeeded when the contents they publish reach people and spread through the people to media and channels that are out of the company's own reach.

Many companies mentioned different channels as their successes. For example Company C says that a major success for their company is that they in general took new effective tools in use in content marketing. Moreover, Company C continues that for example one very important issue is that content marketing is present in their website. Company E and Company F also mention

that renewing their website by changing the website platform to a more content oriented direction has been one of their recent successes. Company E outlines that so far the results on that renewed part of the site have been positive, people are spending more time on the site and the quality of the traffic has become better. In addition, Company D highlights that their social media actions have started off well and are already running successfully. Thus, some of the moments of success are experienced through the different channels used for content marketing.

4.6.2. Challenges

One of the greatest challenges was the content itself, although the problems came from a few different perspectives. For example, Company A mentions that it is a challenge to share new and fresh perspectives all the time as the themes that interest the customer circle around a few basic themes every year. Company H also says that sometimes it is difficult to find the right angle to tell the story, because it is important that the information is really something intriguing and not just some null story. Moreover, Company A says that content is challenging at times due to the fact that companies have to consider both the existing customer and the new customer, and provide valuable content for both. Often even the theme is the same, but if the angle is different it enables the company to stand from the crowd. Company B on the other hand, explains that the same marketing challenge remains; how to be different than everyone else, but now the challenge is in the content. Company B emphasizes that you have to be able to be different and innovative from the competitors yet appealing and understandable to the customers. Thus, being too far ahead can be harmful, if the customers don't understand what you are talking about.

You have to be able to make so high quality stuff that it really arouses it (interest), so you need to be able to stand out from the crowd...then there is the problem that you have to know when are you on the latest trend and when are you ahead. And if you are ahead that is also a problem, because you have to be ahead but not too much ahead. (Company B)

Furthermore, the content was seen as a challenge from the customer perspective. Company B says that it is sometimes hard to find the customers view and know precisely what topics are interesting for the customer.

So we have to get the information from the people who are with the customers; how do they (customers) speak, what kind of language do they use, what are most important things for them, what are they talking now. So we have to be able to answer to that. (Company B)

However, Company D and Company E say that it is not a challenge to generate the ideas for content in their companies. Company D says that if creating new content ideas is an issue, then the marketing team has to become more innovative and be more active in generating those ideas.

I would say that then it has to do with your own ingenuity and that you bother to focus on the industry. I'm also on my free-time, I try to be open to everything and watch documents and always when there's something that even distantly has something to do with our industry, I might think that that is a good one and so try to find also these smaller stories...in the end they are often small things and you just have to make them bigger and it might turn out to be a good story. (Company D)

Furthermore, Company E says that usually you have a reason to create a new idea and a target where you aim. According to Company E the reason and objective should imply what you should tell and what perspective you should take on the story. Moreover, Company E suggests that if the only guide to generate ideas is “we need something new”, the strategy and the goals of the business have to be reviewed again.

So if you are like ok, we need something new that is pretty bad. But then again you should go back to the strategy. Because there is always something that you try to reach with that change, when you just have to make is clear for yourself what is it that you are trying to reach. (Company E)

On the other hand, even if you publish innovative and different content it might not be enough. Company Y emphasizes that indeed today the pressure is all on the content. Company E also mentions that you have to compete over people's attention and to win the competition over that attention is now very different than it was before. Company B also says that as the amount of information is so huge at the moment, getting people's attention is getting harder and harder.

Furthermore, content was said to be the challenge from the creation perspective as well. For example, Company C mentions that filtering and curating the content is one of the biggest challenges. According to Company C, they have loads of content and they also receive numerous stories even from their customers, but the difficulty is to organize it, make it interesting and publishable. Company B and Company D agree and say that it often takes a lot of time to edit and make the content they receive from other departments and outside the company into high-quality and professional content that is connected with their other contents.

Besides content, resources were mentioned as one of the biggest challenges. Company G for example says that due to today's hectic business environment, it is impossible for them to do everything they would like to do with their current resources. Moreover, Company D highlights that resources are a challenge as time and money are needed in order to be a forerunner. Company D continues that also educating yourself to be the expert in doing content marketing is time-consuming. Company C and Company G on the other hand mention, that a great amount of content has to be published in order to keep the customers interested, which naturally requires significant resources.

Thus, Company E also mentions that resources are often a challenge exactly in producing the actual content, which is why the company has to turn

for partners and marketing agencies even though they would have the will and knowhow themselves. Company C suggests that as videos for example have a very central role now in content marketing, the challenge is to create good videos quickly and affordably. On the other hand, Company C mentioned that 5 years ago the challenge was to update and manage social media, whereas now that is not a problem anymore. Therefore, it might be that in five years video production is not a problem anymore because the processes and tools are developing in order to be able to do that.

Another challenge in many firms was to in fact get the process running smoothly. Especially the larger case companies say that a though challenge is actually to keep all content marketing organized and in control. Company E for example mentions that when you have many products or product categories it can all get easily out of hand. Hence, Company E suggests that one of their biggest challenges is to make sure that everything is under control, all the content production is coordinated and organized and connected between the different products. Naturally this requires a lot of general practices and efficient internal communication in order to avoid overlapping and conflicts between the content marketing of different products or services. Moreover, Company H says that in a larger organization is that so many people are involved and have to be involved and everyone has so many tasks to do. Thus, the challenge is to get everyone in the middle of all the rush to still pay attention to the marketing and internalize the new tools and messages that should be used.

In two companies, the challenge was the balance between traditional and content marketing. For example, Company F mentions that successfully combining and connecting the traditional marketing with content marketing is sometimes difficult. Company F says that the company is very good in the traditional marketing, but it does not help as that side in their marketing is becoming smaller and more emphasis is put on content marketing type of actions. Thereby, making the transformation and being ready and effective in the new tools is a challenge. Furthermore, Company G highlights that on a traditional industry the problem is sometimes the struggle between print and digital channels. Company G continues that some customers still need and want print material whereas others are ready to get the information in digital form. Hence, indeed in some companies it is challenging to find a balance between content versus traditional marketing and digital versus traditional channels.

4.7 Channels of content marketing

All of the companies mention that each channel has a clear role. Company B mentions that each channel is used for a different purpose as for example social media channels are usually used for sharing the content the company has created for the website, blogs or magazines. Furthermore, even the different

social media channels were said to have a clear role. For instance, Company B says that Instagram is solely for entertainment whereas LinkedIn is used more from a recruitment point-of-view. Company C on the other hand uses Facebook for customer service, Pinterest for inspiring customers and so on. Thus, the point is to give a clear reason for the customer for every channel.

Company E and Company H further elaborate that naturally the role of the channel derives from the audience that uses that specific channel. For example, Instagram is often used by a younger audience on average than Facebook. In addition, many of the interviewees suggest that each channel requires certain type of content, which also affects the role of the channel. For instance, in Instagram you can only share pictures or 15-second-clip and in Youtube only videos. Hence, Company G mentions that the content has to be modified to fit each channel. On the other hand, Company C says that the message has to be harmonious, which is why the same story should be distributed in all the channels, when making a campaign for example. In fact, Company F even highlights that it is very important to make sure that each channel has the same tone of voice even though the role is different. However, Company E emphasizes to keep in mind that when sharing the same message across all channels, you have to take the function of that channel into consideration and evaluate whether that content specifically fits that channel.

All companies say they use more digital channels for content marketing. When talking about marketing in general, most of the companies use more digital channels than traditional media. Nonetheless, in B2C companies, the traditional media plays a big role and a significant amount of their budget is used for paid media. This was mostly said to be helpful in reaching larger audiences, which is why it was considered necessary. Company C also mentioned that using traditional media is part of their omni channel-thinking. Company C explains that, they use traditional advertising together with digital tools in order to get a larger reach and effect.

We heavily believe in this omni channel-thinking, which means that at the same time when you see our TV-spot in the television, then at the same time in Facebook ads appear related to that advertisement or when you open Ampparit then there is a wide-space mobile ad related to the same advertisement. So digitalization together with traditional channels. (Company C)

Each of the companies emphasize that the selection of channels is done based on which channels are popular among the customers. This is logical as it is effective to be present in the channels that are most used by the target audience. Company D and Company E for instance outline that it is important to think about the audience when selecting the channels. Company F says that the channels they use were selected in order to be present there where their customers already are as then you don't have to try to lure them to come to a channel that they are not familiar with. Company F emphasizes that for example in social media you get to the customer in the moment they need you.

Actually also the social media channels we think that the role is that, because the people are already there. So that is the channel, where they already are and we in a way catch them in exactly that moment or that situation and can serve them there. (Company F)

In addition, Company D says that also the industry determines some of the channels. Naturally, for example in traditional industries, traditional means can be more effective whereas in innovative industries, innovative channels are more effective.

Many of the companies say that they are continuously active in seeking new channels. For example, Company D says that they also try out new channels in order to see whether there is something out there that could be beneficial for them. Moreover, Company E explains that they are not only awake for the new channels but also regularly evaluating their current channels. Company E elaborates that sometimes a channel can be taken into use for a campaign and then quit using after the campaign, however sometimes they might work so well that they stay as part of the continuous actions.

Furthermore, in Figure 8 below there is a summary of the channels the companies use in their content marketing activities. As can be seen, all of the companies have a website, a Facebook-page and a Youtube-channel. In fact, some companies have multiple as for example for a different products or services companies might have a separate website, Facebook-page or a Youtube-channel. The second most common channels are Twitter, LinkedIn and Newsletter, that 7 of the companies used. Instagram and blog were also fairly popular. 5 of the companies had a Google+ page, although some of them are currently not very active in the channel. In addition, one company uses some tools that were unique at least in this group of case companies. The company focuses on their current customers in their content marketing, so they for example provide webinars for their customers' top managers that discuss e.g. the trends in the industry. Sometimes, the speakers are from inside the company, but also they have speakers outside the company and also customers as speakers.

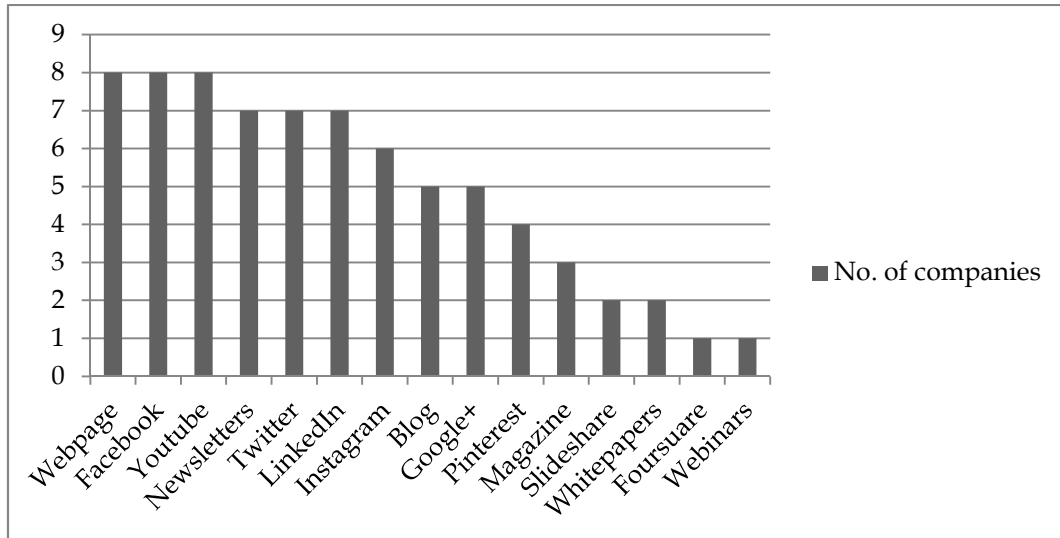


Figure 8 Content marketing channels used in case companies

Furthermore, in Figure 9 there is a summary on the channels that the case companies mentioned to be the most important. Half of the respondents mention that website is their most important channel. These companies say that their website is the core where all the other channels lead to, which is why it is the most important channel. Some companies explain that social media as a whole or different channels of social media are the most important. In B2B side Twitter and Linked are appreciated whereas in B2C side Facebook, Instagram and Youtube are appreciated. Only one company suggests that their most important channels is the customer magazine, as that is where they produce the high-quality content, which they then share in other channel. Moreover, one company mentioned that their most important channel is actually their own sales force. This question was considered to be a bit difficult to answer as the answers depend on the how the importance is defined. Thus, the answers might be very different if the question would be formulated and specified.

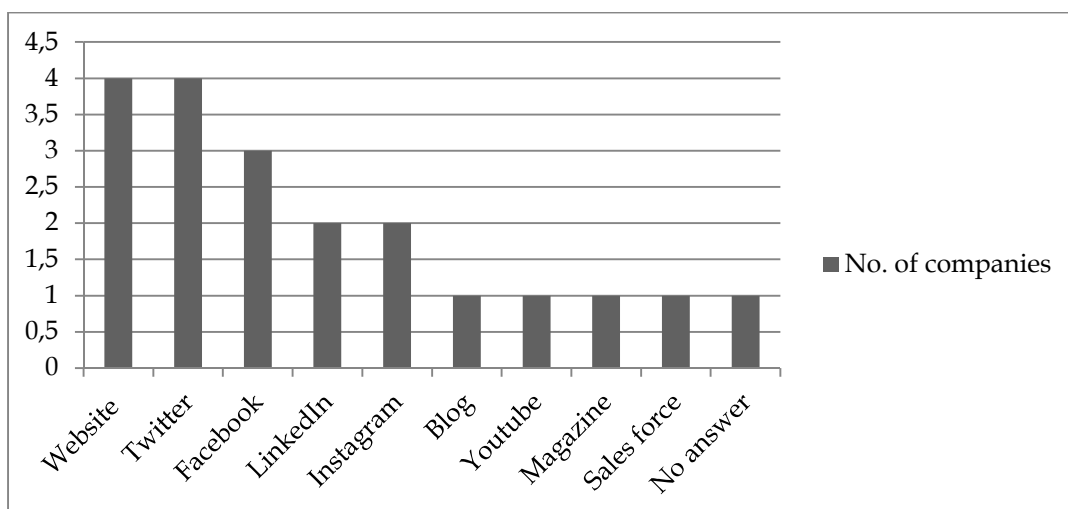


Figure 9 Most important channels for content marketing in case companies

Company Y mentions that it always depends on the company and the business it is in that what is the most important channel. According to Company Y, specifically between B2B and B2C the channels might differ a lot. In addition, there were two companies who considered their most important channel to be very different from the rest. First, Company D emphasizes the importance of a magazine, especially now that the amount of them is decreasing. Company D says that in the digital environment numerous pieces of information are competing over the attention of the people, which is why a magazine might be more powerful. Company H on the other hand says that each channel is meant to assist the sales department in different phases of the sales process; positioning, brand and closing the deal. Thus, not only Company H is the only company that mentions sales force as a channel but also highlights the sales force as the most important channel.

Well, in my opinion in the end it (most important channel) is our own sales staff. They have the close connections to the customers and the contact in a way. So no matter what the concept or channel finally was that influenced, the best access to the customer is still the person. (Company H)

In addition, Company G mentions that naturally the channels are selected in order to always be where the people are in each period of time. Thus, according to Company G, as now the social media and digital channels are important for customers, it is important for the company to be there. However, the company also found out from a customer research that the most important channels for their customers were in fact the different events where they actually saw the people of the company and the products. Therefore, they decided to organize a 9-month tour in Europe with a branded truck in order to visit the customers and entertain them wherever they are. Company G says that even though this is not a volume channel like the digital channels, it can be very convincing if done accordingly.

4.8 Measuring the results of content marketing

The interviews with the Company X, Y and Z revealed that in some firms in Finland marketing is still considered more as an expense than an investment. Based on this research, the lack of measurement might be the reason for this problem. All of the case companies say they measure the results of their content marketing practices and emphasize that this is very important. In addition, measurement and showing the actual results seems to be the key in getting the support from the higher management. Company C emphasizes that the key is to show the management that the investments also produced sales. Company C also suggests that this is where many companies go wrong with their marketing.

..in my opinion that (measurement) is maybe the stumbling block for the people working in marketing communications, that we forget that for example finance department thinks about things numerically. And we should in the same way be able to show the rates of return of the investments, the number of customers and conversion rates, so that it makes our actions credible. (Company C)

Furthermore, especially in the digital channels various tools are available for measurement and the problem is often in the actual use of these tools. For example, Company A mentions that the tools are there, whether it is measuring brand or sales, however it usually comes to knowing how to use them and actually using them.

Majority of the respondents mention they measure the results on a regular basis with different tools. A couple of the case companies even have an analyst to continuously follow the development of the different content marketing channels. However, most companies explain that it is the responsibility of the whole team or the owner of that specific channel to measure the results on different channels. Moreover, Company B suggests that the constant measuring helps in determining what are the channels that work and which are the most effective. On the other hand, Company C and Company E imply, that also the different campaigns have to be measured in addition to the regular measuring.

There were in fact many ways the case companies measured their results of the various content marketing activities. First of all, all of them measured the results in numbers. Many companies mention they follow the amount of visitors in a website, followers, likes and comments in social media, the amount of consumers sharing the different content the company shares, clicks on newsletters etc. In addition, Company G explain that besides the quantitative measurements, they measure the qualitative attributes with actual researches they make for their customers. For example, their customer magazine is from time to time measured with an actual questionnaire that is sent to the readers in order to find out their opinions on the magazine.

Furthermore, Company A suggests that only following the likes or the amount of people who have seen the content might be misleading. According to Company A, some pieces of content might get a lot of attention and they create an illusion of success if the content has actually no impact on the objectives the company is trying to reach. Therefore, it is crucial to follow and measure the quality of the traffic as well. For example Company B emphasizes that measuring the traffic, the visitors and the quality of the visitors on the website is important, as website is the channel where they try to lead the traffic. In addition, according to Company F the website is measured also in connection to campaigns in order to see whether those campaigns generated traffic to the website.

In addition, most of the companies say that they compare their continuous content marketing actions and their content marketing campaigns directly into sales figures. For example Company C explains that all tools and channels are measured and the results are compared to the amount of conversions and other KPIs. Nonetheless, most of the companies also admit that it is often hard to tell

the direct impact of their content marketing actions into sales. Company F explains that when multiple channels are used at the same time it is often hard to indicate the straight path that generated the sale. Moreover, Company E says that many of the content marketing they do is continuous in nature, which makes it also hard to show the actual connection between the concrete results and an individual content marketing action. Company E and Company F also say that content marketing, at least in their companies, is more long-term oriented and is built little by little, because creating high-quality content takes time. This is also one of the reasons why it is very hard to show the real connection. Company H agrees and says that in their company, one sales process can take up to a year, which makes it very hard to tell what impacted and what not.

When I think of some consumer based company connecting marketing to their webstore...Then it is so much easier to track the path. Whereas with us the lifecycle of one sale, if we are talking about a big one, might be up to a year. Then, naturally at some point the chain becomes blurry and in the end was it this one video the customer saw or what. So, the sales pattern is really a lot messier. (Company H)

Despite the fact that it is often hard to tell the direct connection between the actions and results, measurement is important. Company E emphasizes that measuring is not something that you can do for fun, but you have to do it properly and seriously. Company C and Company E also explain, that some of the results and certain indicators go to the management. This was definitely considered positive as then the management knows what was achieved and marketing receives the appreciation. Company H also hopes that they can in the future somehow create their processes in a way that would allow them to see the clear path the customer went through.

Furthermore, Company E and Company F both outline that measured results have to always be compared to the objectives. Company Y also mentions that when you have clearly defined the objectives in beginning of the process, then the measurement phase is also easier as you know what you need to measure and you have something to compare the actual results with. Company C suggests that the objectives are different and depend on the nature of the campaign.

Sometimes it is a sales-oriented campaign, which is when you set objectives that measure sales. Sometimes it is a brand-oriented campaign, which is when you set objectives that measure brand. (Company C)

All in all, according to Company C, although measuring each channel separately and measuring each campaign separately is important, the overall results are the ones that count. Thereby, the key is to measure the content marketing and other marketing activities as a whole.

When I look at the overall picture of marketing, so for me the content marketing meters are not so relevant, because it's a) continuous activities and b) it's always a part of a more

holistic campaign. This is why it's really hard to say that there would be one right way to measure content marketing, there is not. The meters have to be selected according to the objectives and the campaigns. (Company C)

4.9 Future in the field of content marketing

Even though some of the interviewees are already tired of the hype around content marketing, all case companies say the importance of content marketing will increase. All of the interviewees agreed that content marketing in general will grow and that it will also have an important role in their own companies in the future. Many, like Company D and Company G say that content marketing will have even a bigger role in their companies in the near future. Furthermore, Company B says that they will give up content marketing only if and when something better comes along. Thus, content marketing will remain essential in the future, at least until a more effective concept emerges.

The companies saw many different opportunities in terms of content marketing in the future. Company F and Company H mention, that one of the biggest opportunities is to get the customer to be more active in the conversation. Company H also says that another opportunity is that in the future it might be easier to actually direct and target the messages more closely to the people they are intended to. Hence, in the future, there might be new tools that enable easier targeting, which might also make the customers more actively to take part in the conversations. Company G says that competition can be an opportunity if you are able to figure out a way to be different and get to the customer in a different way it is an opportunity. Related to that, Company B and Company C for example says that to be and to get ahead of the competition is definitely a great opportunity in content marketing.

So in Finland many B2C and B2B firms are traditional and stiff to the extent that by being agile and bold in your actions can be a forerunner. And being a forerunner enables standing out from the crowd. This is why it is a possibility that we stand out, both in our industry and in general. (Company C)

On the other hand, when speculating possible threats, Company A sees the changes in their own industry as a possible threat or a possible opportunity. According to Company A, it all depends on how the marketing department and the company as a whole can and will react and respond to the changes. Furthermore, Company E suggests that the fact that content marketing is such a huge trend is actually a threat in the sense that there is so much interesting content available. According to Company E, people have to choose all the time more and more closely how to spend their time, what brands they follow and whose content they are willing to consume. Thus, to know what are the contents that really catch the attention and interest the consumer is very hard. Resources are also needed in order to stand out and to build a brand that

customers want to spend their time on. Therefore, Company C says that it is also a threat that their resources are not enough for the company to really stand out. Moreover, Company B mentions that after the hype around content marketing has disappeared, the activities can come indolent and the quality that is published is lower quality. Company H also says that a threat is that the content they provide is not relevant after all, which is why they might not stay ahead.

When asking about the most important tools in the future, more than half of the interviewees suggest that video as a format will increase in the next few years in the area of content marketing. For example, Company D mentions that the amount of videos they produce will increase in the future, and videos will in fact most probably grow to be one of the most important tools. Thereby, many companies say that Youtube as a channel will raise its importance. In addition, Company A for example says that in general the visualization of content will be even a bigger trend as for example the use of infographics is growing. Company X adds that in the future the audiovisuals format will take a larger role and the amount of mobile applications will increase as well.

In addition, Company A mentions, that the most important tools for content marketing will be the automation tools for marketing. Company A explains, that automation allows a small marketing team to make their marketing seem like it is done with a larger team. The automation minimalizes the manual work and allows the team to focus on the things that are impossible to do automatically. However, although Company B and Company E agree that these automation tools might raise their importance, they emphasize that other tools can and will also be important in the future. Company E says, that on the other hand it is important to make sure that you approach the customer in the right way and do not irritate them with too much content. Thus, Company E suggests that marketing automation works if it takes this into consideration.

Moreover, Company F and Company G emphasize that the new important tools in the future will focus on the customer. Company G says that the most important tools in the future will be the alternative tools to connect with the customers and where the customers can connect with the other customers. Their company is planning to have platform, where customers have accounts, in which they can see different kind of information related to the products they have purchased and also follow other customers and find out how they are using their products. On the other hand, Company F says that more emphasis is put on the content that is produced by the customers themselves, which is why there might be new tools developed that help companies to do that more effectively. Furthermore, Company F suggests that sponsoring, events and other that type of actions might also increase in the future.

So I somehow believe that this, this sort of sense of community. And although web is becoming stronger, I believe that these sort of meetings and events will also stay and connecting them will come more important. So it might be that this kind of future, that we find the future tool from there. (Company F)

The interviewees also presented their opinions on what aspects will be emphasized in content marketing in the future. Company G believes that the conversation with the customer will become even more important in the future. Company C agrees that customer will have a more central role, also in content creation. Company B on the other hand emphasizes that in general getting other people to tell your story will become more important in the future. Company D actually mentions that in their company they want to develop content marketing more to the direction of neutral information that has a clear link to the company but is more specialist and expert information related to R&D and technology. Creating content on these types of issues naturally would require people from outside the company as well. Thus, conversations with the customers and the contents produced by the customer and other people outside the company will be emphasized.

Moreover, Company E says that the factor that will become more highlighted in the future is content itself. Company E explains that companies want to even more provide a strong reaction to the receiver, the more powerful the better. On the other hand, Company F believes that the key is to make the people's lives easier by providing value instead of nice stories that are useless. Therefore, the story becomes connected to useful information. Company D also mentions that as the environment of the receiver is becoming more and more hectic all the time, the concentration becomes shorter. Hence, the nature of content has to change in the future. Company D suggests that especially the headings become important so that you get the reader to actually read the content and maybe shorter pieces of content are becoming more popular. On the other hand, Company D speculates that it might be that actually due to this hectic environment and scattered contents, longer expert type of contents become more interesting in the sea of short videos and tweets.

In addition, Company H says that in the future it is important to have "that something". Company H continues that especially in the consumer side, the companies that appeal and have that something will be the ones to succeed. On the other hand, Company H throw out the thought that it would be interesting if sort of being a fan of brand and real engagement to the brand would come to the B2B business as well. Furthermore, Company F mentions that expert promoting will become more important in the future. Thus, Company F explains that people of the organization talk about the issues and tell stories with their own names, which means that personal branding becomes more important. Company F says that for example the CEOs and other important people of the company will become the messengers for the content. In fact, Company B actually says that they find it great that their own CEO is in Twitter with his own name and has already more followers than the company itself.

In the sense, that the people of the firm work as the distributors of the content. But it is not an easy task, because the person has to want to do it. And then choosing the person, because they can only speak about their own expertise, so if you are the CEO you tell

about the issues from that perspective and take them forward... But I think this will increase and this sort of person branding and the company branding through that. (Company F)

Company Y also believes that content marketing will increase in the future, although the term might vanish. Company C, Company E and Company Y mention that the limits of content marketing are fading and it is becoming harder to say what marketing is content marketing and what is not. Moreover, Company H believes that in the near future content marketing remains important and will maybe even increase its importance. However, Company H says that the fuzz around it seems really strange and it doesn't really matter what you call content marketing.

Well at least what I follow in Twitter, especially digital marketing issues, it seems really confusingly high-sounding. Why do these things need to be invented all over again? Like okay, I understand that you have to keep your job interesting, but in the end it is all about to whom, what and how. In my opinion, you can call it whatever you want. (Company H)

Nonetheless, all companies agree that the role of content marketing is important also in the future. Company D for example emphasizes that content marketing will be more in the focus for the coming years. Moreover, Company E believes that content marketing is not a niche-thing that would soon be over, even though the forms and tools might change. Thus, new tools might come along, but the concept of storytelling remains important.

..storytelling is again then, like as a narrative form, is maybe one of the most important dimensions of content marketing...Content is more interesting when you tell them as a story. (Company A)

Furthermore, Company E says that although content marketing has been part of their marketing for a long time already, it is now becoming a more strategic and a more carefully planned part of their marketing communications activities. Moreover, Company C mentions that in the future all of their marketing will construct of good content, so that content marketing is not its own section, but more like all of their marketing activities can be considered content marketing. Company C also mentions that the role of content-oriented thinking in marketing will be highlighted which means that content marketing will be part of all marketing. Thereby, in the future content marketing term might disappear, but marketing in general becomes content marketing. On the other hand, Company F says that it is hard to say how the behavior of consumers will change, even though the company believes that content marketing will increase its importance. Thus, as their behavior is changing all the time, it might be that something new that comes along. For the time being however, all companies believe that content marketing will be important or even grow its importance in the years to come.

5 CONCLUSION

This research was conducted in order to examine the trendy and topical concept of content marketing more thoroughly. The objective was to unravel the company perspective on content marketing and especially to find out what are the perceptions of some successful Finnish companies. In addition, the aim of this research was to find out how the case companies actually work with content marketing and how the content marketing process can be described in these companies. As content marketing was seen to further increase its importance, the opinions on the future of content marketing were also discussed with these eight case companies.

The theoretical part of this study presented a literature review based on the topic of content marketing. The literature review constructed of 1) integrated marketing communications as a base for content marketing, 2) digital marketing tools providing newness for content marketing, 3) the concept of content marketing, 4) the channels of content marketing and 5) the research framework. All of these chapters provide the theoretical information related to content marketing and work as a basis for this study.

This chapter concludes the research and the previous chapters will be connected together. In other words, the findings of the study presented and the literature will be compared and integrated. Thus, the research questions will be answered and managerial implications will be given. Moreover, the study itself will be evaluated in terms of its limitations. Lastly, some interesting research subjects for future will be suggested.

5.1 Theoretical implications

First of all, fulfilling answers were found to all research questions. All of the case companies were able to contribute to this study and provided their perspectives on the research topic. As the aim of the study was to get the

perceptions of Finnish companies on the concept of content marketing, it can be said that the study reached its objective. Furthermore, due to the unique nature of this study, the findings have several contributions to the content marketing literature. First of all, supportive information is presented to the current literature by answering each research question based on the empirical finding and compared to the aforementioned literature. Moreover, these eight Finnish companies were able to also provide information to other companies on how to succeed in content marketing. These practical implications will be further elaborated in chapter 5.2.

Before tackling the research questions, the research framework presented in Figure 5 is discussed. This framework was drawn based on the literature review and the background interviews. The framework illustrated the concept of content marketing and presented the dynamics between the different factors related to the concept. In fact, a fairly similar framework could be drawn after collecting the empirical data, although couple of issues could be modified. In - Figure 10 an updated framework is presented to show the changes that could be made to the original figure. First of all, based on the findings of this research, the target audience is not only the customers or potential customers of the company, but it can also include other stakeholders. Some companies for instance created blog posts for investors as well. Thus, the word “customers” is replaced with the word “stakeholders” in Figure 10. In addition, some companies use content marketing as a tool for internal marketing as well. Hence, the term content marketing is added into the company to illustrate the internal content marketing process. All in all, the empirical data derived from the case companies resembled the literature. However, a few interesting perspectives were provided by the case companies and are concluded in the following paragraphs.

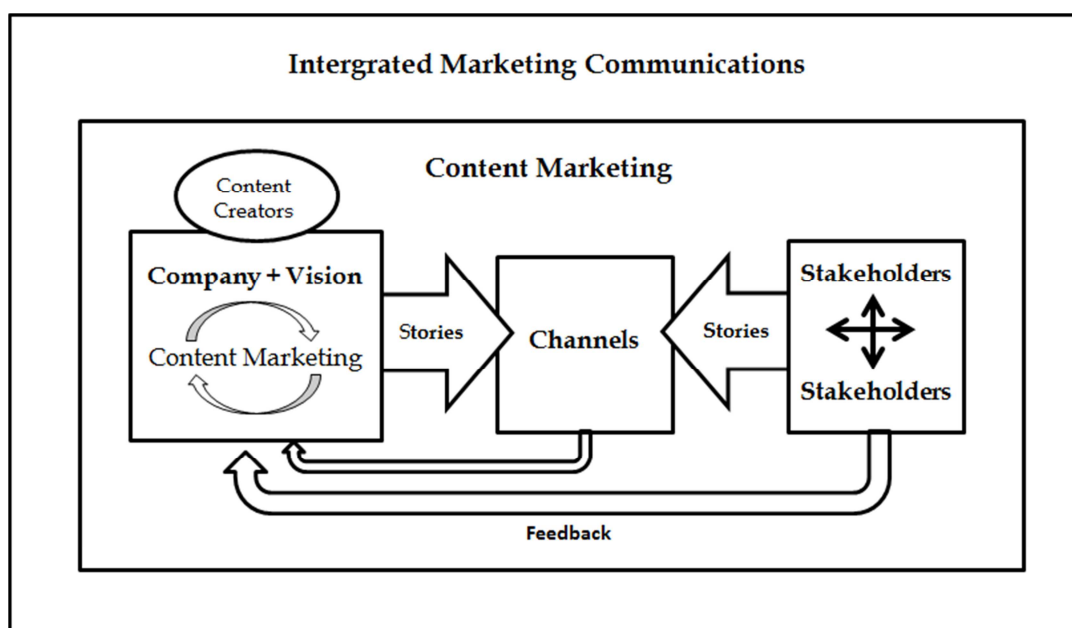


Figure 10 Content marketing framework

RQ1: How is the concept of content marketing defined?

As predicted in the beginning, the different case companies clearly looked at the concept of content marketing from a few diverse perspectives. Therefore, as in the literature, no single common meaning for content marketing could be found among the sample of this study. Nevertheless, many similarities and common features were identified not only among the eight case companies but also between the companies and the literature.

First of all, according to Steimle (2014) and many of the case companies, content marketing is the tool to create awareness and arouse interest. However, as mentioned earlier, content is shared with the aim to not only attract prospects and generate interest but to also build trust (Harad 2013). In other words, companies find that content marketing attracts customers and builds real trust and engagement between the brand and the consumer (DeMers, 2014). A couple of interviewees mentioned this as well; content marketing is a great tool to also make and strengthen the bond between the customer and the brand. Naturally, the engagement and stronger relationship are expected to contribute to future sales.

As Tucker (2014) says, content marketing is not a new concept, but instead it is a new term. Moreover, the new digital tools and applications have made content marketing easier and thus more popular. Many of the case companies said they have been involved in content marketing for a long time, yet it is only recently that their actions have become more strategic. Furthermore, the case companies suggested that today's business environment requires companies to use content marketing in order to connect with their customers. Thus, content marketing is not new, but instead increasing its importance as it partly provides answers to the challenges many companies face today. As Company C explained, content marketing is today's approach to marketing.

In addition, as Keller (2001) explains, marketing communications can either offer detailed product information or pass the product all together and communicate other issues. In fact, content marketing is indeed about the latter one; storytelling where the product itself is not the focus. This is what all of the case companies emphasized. The content provided through content marketing activities has to focus on other issues than the product or service of the company. Only after the attention and interest of the customer is raised with different stories and intriguing content, the company can start discussing the commercial information related to their own products and services.

Other characteristics that the case companies used to describe content marketing were inbound and pulling instead of pushing. In other words, content marketing is a marketing strategy where the pieces of content are so appealing that the receiver comes to the company instead of the company going to the customer. Moreover, as mentioned in the literature review, the difference between content marketing and the regular information that companies publish are the words valuable and relevant (Content Marketing Institute, 2014). In case

people seek out or want to consume a piece of content a firm provides, it can be considered content marketing (Steimle, 2014). This is indeed what the case companies highlighted as well. Content marketing has to provide valuable, relevant and helpful information that actually serves the customers' needs. The key was seen to be that the content that companies provide is useful for the customer and solves a problem that he or she might have.

Another interesting aspect of the findings was that the use and the audience of content marketing varied between the case companies. This actually resembles the variety of definitions in Table 1. Some definitions provided in the literature explain that content marketing is done to serve the community, others refer to target audience, some simply to customers whereas others do not even mention to whom the content is directed. Some of the case companies emphasized that the audience is their customer, whereas others define their audience as their stakeholders. Furthermore, a couple of companies say that content marketing activities are also performed inside the company for internal communication. The audience for content marketing depends on the perspective the organization has. Therefore, each company should define their own target audience, whether it is the customers, stakeholders or both in addition to the employees of the company.

Indeed, there are many different characteristics that the companies used to describe content marketing. However, as mentioned there are many similarities in the perceptions between the companies and the literature. For example, the definition by Content Marketing Institute is widely used and emphasizes many of the features the case companies mentioned as well. Thus, based on the used literature and the findings of this study the following definition on content marketing is formed:

Content marketing is an approach to marketing that provides valuable, relevant and helpful information to a clearly defined external and/or internal target audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action.

The definition provided above is again only one perspective, but aims to combine the findings of this research and the literature used in this study. The statement above outlines that the content that is provided has to be valuable, relevant and helpful to the target audience as was emphasized by the case companies and the literature. In addition, the definition highlights that there has to be a clear target audience for content marketing, in order to know what kind of content is helpful and valuable. The note here is that this target audience can be either inside or outside the company or even both. Furthermore, the important issue is that even though content marketing is done to influence brand perception or strengthen a certain distribution channel, the ultimate objective is always to generate sales. Thereby, the sales driven perspective is a crucial part of the content marketing definition.

Besides the different characteristics of content marketing, also other interesting opinions related to the concept of content marketing derived from

this study. One of the most compelling issues that resulted from the interviews is that the limits of content marketing and the concept itself are becoming more blurry. Traditionally, content marketing is storytelling in the owned and earned media channels. Patel (2012) for example argues that content should always be free of charge in order for the viral nature of content marketing to function effectively. However, Company C challenges this thinking by proposing that the same content marketing videos for instance are now used in paid media as well in order to get a more effective campaign out with the idea of content marketing. Thus, different people see the concept more broadly and openly than others.

Moreover, many of the case companies emphasize that it is very difficult to point out what is content marketing and what is not. The borders and limits are getting more and more fickle. The vagueness of the concept probably derives from the lack of commonly acknowledged theory of the concept. As said, the perspective of the person who defines the concept has a huge effect on the final meaning or definition. In addition, the activities of content marketing actually create a new grey area between marketing and journalism or entertainment (Malthouse et al., 2013). Content marketing is the combination of marketing, journalism and entertainment and it usually depends on your own viewpoint, which aspect you emphasize. Therefore, it might be even impossible to create a single commonly acknowledged definition as there would always be someone disagreeing or emphasizing other perspectives.

Furthermore, a few case companies mention that they are in fact getting tired of the term content marketing. They predict that a new term will be created to describe the phenomenon, even though the concept of providing valuable content to the target audience remains. In fact, this has already happened. Despite (or maybe due to) the hype around content marketing, a few marketing professionals have argued whether content marketing as a term is worth of all the fuzz. For example, Virtanen (2014) introduces the term help marketing when talking about content marketing. According to Virtanen (2014), the company that is more interested in helping the customer than making its own deal, will actually eventually get the deal. Hence, the sales and marketing direction and movement of pushing is turned into suction (Virtanen, 2014). Thus, marketing professionals should immediately stop the embrace and hype of the term content marketing, because it doesn't work if it is not done right (Virtanen, 2014). Nonetheless, Virtanen (2014) still believes that content (or help) marketing is in fact the only way to make deals in this digital time.

On the other hand, Puligadda et al. (2014), talk about meaningful marketing, which is non-interruptive, non-persuasive marketing communication that provides utility to the consumer and which is independent of the consumption of the company's product or service. As an example, Bank of America sends information to its customer on how they can avoid account fees due to overdrafts (Puligadda et al., 2014). Thereby, this is a growing trend; marketing that will add value to the lives of consumers instead of pushing products and services. The point of meaningful marketing is to build a

relationship with the consumer by nurturing perceptions of goodwill and trust towards the brand (Puligadda et al., 2014). The concept of meaningful marketing appears to be the very similar (if not even exactly the same) to content marketing with a new term as does the term help marketing by Virtanen (2014).

Even though content marketing is nothing new, the benefits are obvious. In addition, some companies can solely rely on content marketing and others use it together with other marketing tactics. Despite the strategy, content marketing should be part of a company's marketing regardless of what type of marketing tactics it uses (Content Marketing Institute, 2014). Naturally, the tools and the term for content marketing might and most probably will change in the future. However, even though the tools and delivery methods of content might shift and change, the importance of content marketing remains (DeMers, 2014). Thus, one of the key take-outs of this research is that content marketing and marketing in general is focusing more on providing information to help the customers' and stakeholders' daily lives instead of pushing the product or service. No matter what it will be called in the future, content marketing, help marketing or meaningful marketing, the content; relevant, valuable, helpful and interesting content is the key to success. Therefore, it can be said that content marketing is actually also tomorrow's approach to marketing.

RQ2: How is the process of content marketing described in Finnish companies?

In the literature review of this study an example of content marketing process by Pulizzi (2013) and Odden (2012) were introduced. These frameworks both have the shape of a chain, where each step is connected to the previous step and there is a clear beginning and an end. However, the companies that are already engaged in content marketing found it hard to describe a clear process in their content marketing actions. The case companies were unable to identify such a formula with a clear start and an end in their everyday actions. Thus, if we consider marketing communications and content marketing in a company in the practical world, the activities are more daily, ongoing and active with many simultaneous plans, projects and evaluations. Hence, when giving the process a more practical perspective, the process could be presented more as a continuous cycle where all steps are connected and there is neither a clear beginning nor an end. In fact, Figure 11 presents the process framework that can be formed on the basis of the findings of this study combined to the literature used in this research.

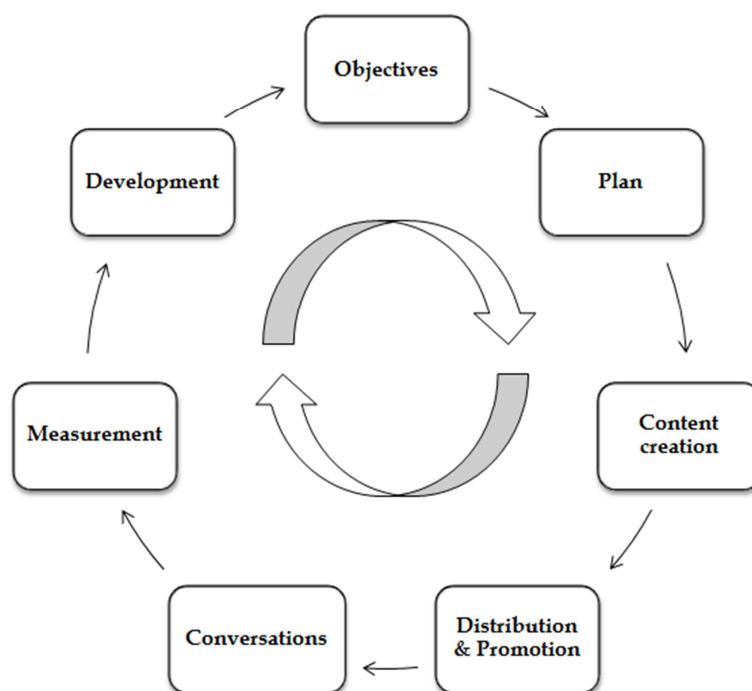


Figure 11 Content marketing process

The case companies said that content marketing activities are becoming more strategic instead of occasional activities. Thereby, although the process is continuous, due to the strategic nature the different activities regarding content marketing are now easier to identify. Eventually, the case companies were indeed able to indicate some clear stages in their content marketing activities and in fact many of these stages were similar to the steps described by Pulizzi & Rose (2013) and Odden (2012). All of the case companies emphasized how it is important to clear out the objectives of the company, the marketing team and also the specific campaign before doing anything else. This is what Pulizzi & Rose (2013) and Odden (2012) outline as well. Next, the case companies and the literature mentioned that a plan has to be done. However, the differences here are that Pulizzi & Rose (2013) use the word plan to describe the phase of defining the objectives whereas Odden (2012) uses it to refer to the part of figuring out the themes and contents. The case companies on the other hand talked about planning to describe the process of defining the target audience, determining the themes and contents and also deciding on the channels. Pulizzi and Rose (2013) and Odden (2012) have actually separated these stages. Thus, in Figure 11 the planning stage includes all of these; target audience, themes and contents and the channels that will be used. An important note by the case companies was that in today's dynamic environment, it is crucial to be adaptive and change the plan if necessary.

The next step according to the case companies was the content creation itself. Pulizzi & Rose (2013) describe this part as the stories and in his framework this step is done before choosing the channels. Odden (2012) on the other hand, does not even separate this step in his framework. The case

companies however said that first the target audience; the themes and the channels are defined in order to know what type of content has to be created. Some stories are written and produced by the marketing personnel themselves whereas for some marketing and media agencies are used. Furthermore, the interviewees emphasized that content creation is actually the responsibility of the whole organization, which is why stories should come from other departments than marketing as well. Moreover, customers were considered to be an important and an increasing source of stories in content marketing.

After the pieces of content have been created, these stories are then published and distributed in the selected channels. Pulizzi & Rose (2013) do not emphasize this phase whereas Odden (2012) refers to promotion. Case companies highlighted that it is important to not only publish the contents but also promote the contents in other channels. Thus, a blog post has to be advertised in social media and social media links have to be provided in the website. In addition to promotion of the content, the companies have to be active in listening how the customers and stakeholders comment and react on the contents and take part in the conversation. Pulizzi & Rose (2013) and Odden (2012) both emphasize the importance of the stage of listening and conversation as did the case companies as well.

After all these stages, comes the step of measurement according to both literature and the case companies. The case companies outlined that it is crucial to measure the success of the actions in order to know what worked and what not. In addition, marketing team has to show that their efforts generate results in order to make the management realize that marketing is worth the investments. In other words, management will give resources to the team if they see that they are worth the investment. However, there are some challenges when it comes to measuring, even though the results of digital channels are easier to evaluate than traditional channels. It is important to remember, that for example in social media not all customers engage the same way as they can have non-interactive behavior (reading other's comments) or interactive behavior (liking posts or commenting) (Gummerus et al., 2014). Hence, the person that likes and comments might never buy but the person that reads and listens might be a regular customer. Furthermore, especially in companies where closing one sale takes longer, it is often hard to point out which was the activity that eventually generated the sale. Despite the challenges of measurement, it was in fact considered to be one of the keys in marketing today.

Neither the case companies nor the literature separately mention the phase of development. Nonetheless, measurement is done in order to develop the activities, which is why the development phase is definitely an essential part of the process. Especially in today's hectic and dynamic environment, companies have to develop their actions continuously and be aware of the changes that might affect their process. In other words, measurement alone is not enough, but the results have to be used to develop the actions to improve the results in the future. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that although

the companies identified clear stages in their processes, they also emphasized how many processes and activities are going on at the same time. For example, although some companies made a plan for a whole year, smaller plans are made throughout the year for different campaigns, often also simultaneously. In addition, contents are created and published all the time and always built on top of the previous activities. Also measurement was said to be continuous as the different channels are measured continuously but in addition the campaign and different actions are measured separately. Therefore, a circle of arrows was added in the middle of this process cycle to emphasize that actually the process of content marketing is not a single cycle, but in fact many simultaneous cycles.

RQ3: How is the future of content marketing perceived in the eyes of Finnish companies?

As mentioned earlier, another intriguing issue arising from this study is that most of the interviewees agreed that the term content marketing will disappear eventually or is already losing its ground. However, they all at the same time mentioned that the importance of content and storytelling will in fact increase in the future. Mangold & Faulds (2009) also emphasize that stories are memorable and the more memorable they are the more likely they are to be repeated. In other words, it is actually easier to get your point across and influence people's minds when providing information in the form of a story. Although the key idea of the concept remains, new instruments and new perspectives on the subject surely arise as the concept of storytelling and content marketing is becoming more popular. The case companies also provided their views on the perspectives that will be emphasized and on the tools that will be used and created in the future.

First of all, there are various issues that the case companies saw to be highlighted in the future. Many interviewees suggested that the customer will be even more in the focus than before. The conversations with the customer will become more important and the content created by the customers will play even a more significant role in the future. The case companies outlined that new platforms and tools will be created in order to make the content creation easier for the customers. Moreover, it will be crucial to get other stakeholders and specialists outside the company to create the content for the company. In the future, it will be also important to not only get the people outside the company to create the content, but also to make them share and distribute the stories of the company.

In addition, the use of the employees of the company as messengers for the content is seen to grow in the future. One case company explained that one of their biggest successes is that their CEO is proudly sharing content in Twitter and is gaining a lot of attention with these activities. Many of the companies said that in fact the content is more interesting and thus more effective when it comes from a person, not the company itself. Thereby, the case companies suggested that this type of personal branding will increase in the future.

Companies will increasingly make content marketing activities with their own names in order to make the story more appealing to the receiver.

Moreover, the case companies emphasized that due to the hectic environment, increasing competition in content marketing and the overload of information, even more pressure is put on the content. To exaggerate a bit, the content has to make the receiver either laugh or cry or create some sort of strong emotion in order to leave a memory trace. Without a memorable reaction on the receiver, the content will not go through. People can and have to choose more carefully which pieces of content they consume, which is why creating good content is not enough. The companies have to know how to lure their target audience to actually read, watch or listen to the content. Thus, it might be that the headings will be more emphasized and that short, informative and effective clips and texts will continue to rule. On the other hand, it might be that in the world of scattered pieces of short stories, the long, deep and analytical pieces will be more appreciated. The rough competition might also make companies more innovative and force them to create distinguishable channels and applications to connect with their customers.

Moreover, many of the interviewees suggested that the visualization of content in general will become more important. Video as a format was expected to increase in the near future and platform such as Youtube and Vimeo will thus play a larger role. According to Subramanyan (2014) especially the publication of short behind-the-scenes type of content will increase in the future. Furthermore, the use of infographs, charts and other visual tools for expressing content will grow even more in the future. This partly supports the idea that shorter stories will be preferred by the receivers due to the explosive amount of information. After all, pictures and video can tell a lot more in a shorter time than a blog text or an article.

The findings also suggest that marketing automation tools will become more popular and important in the future. The automation of marketing eventually saves time by automatically doing the activities that are possible and provides marketers the time to focus on the activities that automation is not able to do. Subramanyan (2014) in fact emphasizes that the even though content marketing has been considered very important for a while now, some companies are still struggling with the distribution of the content, which is why the distribution part will be more emphasized in the future. Marketing automation can definitely provide an effective tool for the distribution of content for the companies that are having difficulties with that part of the process.

In addition, one company said that targeting and personalized messages will become more important, which is why new tools will be created to do those more efficiently. Subramanyan (2014) also outlines that personalization will be a focus for future. Moreover, DeMers (2014) suggests that in the future interactive content marketing will become more important. DeMers (2014) explains that unique and customized experience will be generated for the target audience with the help of customer data. This can mean for example that

different articles are displayed for different type of users or producing a “choose your own adventure” style video that explores different ideas depending on the input of the user (DeMers, 2014). Yet, this customization requires technologies to develop and for companies to be able to handle huge amounts of data. However, consider how fast technology develops nowadays, this can definitely be possible in the coming years.

Furthermore, creating communities and marketing through these communities was perceived to be more important in the future. Through social media people are “becoming fans” of brands and start “following” them in different applications. One company said that this sort of activity will probably increase in the future and hopefully reach the B2B businesses as well. In addition, another company emphasized that events, sponsoring, education etc. will also become more important in the future. Thus, it might be that companies are setting up their own training programs or organizing their own events even more in the future. For example the sports clothing and equipment store Stadium is organizing a summer camp for children in the summer of 2015 (Stadium, 2015) and by doing that they are not only making money but also increasing their awareness.

All in all, there are many ways the field of content marketing can and might change in the next couple of years. As the definition of content marketing, also the future depends and varies based on the perspective the person sees the subject. Thereby, there might be some common trends such as the customer focus and visualization of content. However, probably each company also creates certain features regarding their own future according to the objectives of the company and the needs and preferences of their target audience. The only certain issue is that the concept and the tools will change in the future.

5.2 Managerial implications

Importance of content marketing

This study has elaborated the importance of content marketing from many different perspectives. Pulizzi (2012) justifies the importance of content marketing in the following way “Your customers don’t care about you, your products, your services...they care about themselves, their wants and their needs. Content marketing is about creating interesting information your customers are passionate about so they actually pay attention to you.” The case companies also emphasized that sharing valuable and helpful information has to be part of the every company’s marketing communications. Some companies even said that content marketing is the only way to make marketing and that all marketing will be content marketing in the future. Moreover, content marketing

is usually done in owned and earned media, which is why content marketing is often cheaper than traditional advertising.

Content marketing is a great way to increase awareness and arouse interest. Thus, it can be a very effective tool in the acquisition of new customers. Furthermore, content marketing can be an efficient instrument in creating trust and engagement between the customer and the company. Naturally, the objective is to communicate the values and the ideology that the company has and believes in and also reinforce the company brand. The content marketing done with these objectives can create a stronger bond between the customer and the brand. All of these things: awareness, interest and engagement and brand reinforcement will eventually increase sales and generate future sales.

In addition, with content marketing the company creates informative and interesting stories that are valuable and helpful for the customers. These stories have to be related to the industry the company operates in order for them to work. Therefore, these pieces of content can also contribute to SEO and help in social media marketing. Besides making other marketing activities easier, content marketing forces the marketers to stay ahead of the competition. This is why content marketing professionals need to keep themselves updated on all the latest trends. Undoubtedly, content marketing is important and should be a part of the marketing communications of each company.

Important implications to succeed in content marketing

As mentioned the aim of this study was not to only contribute to the current marketing literature, but also provide some managerial implications on how to succeed in content marketing. Eight Finnish companies that are successful in content marketing were selected for this study in order to also provide information to other companies that are still beginning their content marketing practices. The instructions and precepts for doing content marketing have been elaborated throughout this study but will here be concluded.

First of all, the case companies outlined that probably the hardest but one of the most important issues is to get the whole organization to be part of the process. It is important to get the top managements' support by showing actual results. This is due to the fact that top management is reluctant to allocate resources to marketing in case they do not see these investments bringing actual results. Thus, measurement is an essential step in content marketing and in marketing in general. Furthermore, getting the rest of the organization to participate is crucial because by making the employees realize how important and effective content marketing is, they want to contribute. It is indeed important to encourage the employees from the other departments of the company to create content. Also getting the customers and the other stakeholders to create the content can make the content richer and thus more impressive.

Another very crucial point is that the marketing strategy of the company should always be closely linked to the organizational strategy. As Mangold &

Faulds (2009) explain, IMC aims to coordinate and control numerous elements of the promotional mix in order to produce a unified customer-focused message and therefore achieve multiple organizational objectives. Thus, the objectives of each marketing team in each company should get their objectives from the organizational objectives. This is also where the stories and content for their marketing should come from; the vision and mission of the company itself. The stories that the firm tells and the content that it shares should tell the tale of the company and share the values and ideas that it represents (Pulizzi 2013). This does not mean that the history of the company should be the content itself, but as one case company mentioned, the objectives and the vision are the filter that can be used to choose the themes and stories.

Furthermore, the case companies said that external help is needed in the content marketing activities. However, many of the companies emphasized that one of the key points for the success is that the contents have to come from the company itself. Marketing and media agencies can help with producing the content and in the implementation part, but the vision and objectives have to come from the company itself. Most importantly the vision and the objectives have to be clear in the company and for the marketing team in order to start efficient content marketing. The company is the expert in the business and should be the one who knows which key themes and contents are most appealing to their own target audience.

Another issue that came up is that the channels for content marketing should be determined by the stories that are shared. Thereby, when the company has a story it should carefully evaluate which channel is the best to communicate that specific story. In addition, it is not essential for every company to share content in Facebook, if it is not relevant for the company. This is what Pulizzi (2013) also emphasizes that the content strategy of a firm should define the channel strategy and not the other way around.

Moreover, as Steimle (2014) mentions that the secret in content marketing is to add value. Even though the very basic definitions of marketing outline, that they key is to add value to the customer, some companies still forget about that. Most of the firms found the actual content creation to be one of the biggest challenges. In addition, Keronen & Tanni (2013, p. 61) also mention that the problem in companies is not the lack of knowledge, but instead the difficulty to turn that knowledge into interesting and customer-oriented content. Thus, it is not enough to start doing content marketing, but it needs to be carefully planned, created and distributed. It cannot be overstated that the content and stories have to be relevant, valuable, helpful and high quality in order to contribute and benefit the organization. Therefore, the key is start thinking about the content and themes from the perspective of the target audience.

5.3 Evaluation of the research and future research suggestions

This study has a few limitations. First of all, case studies cannot rely on statistical inference but instead they need to rely on analytical inference (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Therefore, another researcher might have had different conclusions from the same data as no statistical conclusions can be made. Furthermore, the case companies were selected with a snowball effect. As there is no official listing of the best companies who do content marketing in Finland, the sample could have also been constructed of another set of case companies. However, the case companies are all involved in content marketing and were therefore able to contribute interesting results to this study.

Moreover, according to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008) reliability and validity are often used to evaluate a qualitative research. Reliability refers to the extent to which the measure or procedure generates the same results (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). As mentioned, in this research only eight cases were studied in terms of their content marketing practices. Supposing a similar research would be conducted with other eight companies, the results might produce different conclusions. Nevertheless, also many similarities were found both between the case companies and between the case companies and the literature. In addition, the nature of the topic is variable as mentioned earlier and in a few years the perceptions of content marketing might be different even within the same case companies. Thus, even though a repeated study might not draw exactly identical conclusions, similar findings would most probably be found in this period of time.

Validity on the other hand, refers to the extent to which the conclusions of the research give an accurate description of what happened (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The goal of this study was to get a company perspective on content marketing and eight actual companies were interviewed and examined. Therefore, the findings of this research clearly describe the issues that were meant to be studied. Furthermore, the conclusions of the research are justified and can even be well translated to the practical world.

In this study, the perspective of the company was selected and studied due to the research gap rising from the literature and empirical data. However, content marketing can and should be studied from the customer perspective as well. Hence, due to the fact that content marketing has so far gained fairly little academic attention, further research could be conducted in order to examine the concept of content marketing from a customer point-of-view. Based on the current literature and also on the findings of this study, customer has a very central role in content marketing. Thereby, more information is definitely needed from consumer and customer perspective.

Company X for example suggested that customer understanding is a difficult, yet one of the most important aspects of content marketing. Although content marketing is a great tool to engage with customer, the companies still have to use time on speculating which are the important themes and contents that should be discussed. Thus, research, insight and tools should be developed in order to make it easier for companies to actually figure out what are the contents and stories that the customer needs and wants.

Moreover, based on this research, the role of customers in content creation is expected to increase. According to Gensler et al. (2013) consumers make their own meanings of brands they use in their daily lives and that they are in fact co-creators of the brand stories (Gensler et al., 2013). In fact, for some brands it is valuable to reduce their own branding efforts and rely more on the consumer-generated brand stories, because if the story is told by a consumer instead of the company, it can be perceived as clearer and more reliable (Gensler et al., 2013). Therefore, the interrelations between the role of consumer in content marketing and the brand perception might create an interesting foundation for future research.

Furthermore, another intriguing future research theme could be to examine the actual effects on brand for example. The companies say their main objectives are to increase sales and build their brand. The impact on sales is, at least on a larger picture possible to witness, whereas the effects on brand are harder to notice. Hence, is it really working and how can the companies make it work are interesting questions. For example, a study could be conducted; maybe even with these same case companies, to see whether their content marketing efforts actually make a difference in brand perception in the eyes of their customers.

As was found in this study, there are differences in the ways content marketing is used. Some case companies found it to be a great tool to increase awareness and arouse interest whereas others emphasized it to be very effective in engaging the customers. Thus, further research could be developed to find out whether content marketing is more suitable for the beginning of the funnel or the latter part or is it indeed effective for both ends.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 Interview structure

Background

- Who are you? (Title, responsibilities, experience)
- Describe your company shortly? (Name, products, age, size, turnover)
- What business are you in? (Vision & mission?)
- Who are your customers? (Target group, age, interests)
- Who are your competitors?
- What is your position in the market as a company?

Marketing Communications

- What is the role of marketing communications in your company?
- What are the objectives of marketing communications in your company?
- Does your company have a written strategy for marketing communications? How is it linked to the overall company strategy?
- Who is responsible of the marketing communications in your company?
- How big is the marketing communications budget in your company?
- Do you use external parties to help you with marketing communications?

Content marketing

- What does content marketing mean for your company?
- Who is responsible for content marketing in your company?
- Why is content marketing important for your company?
- What are the objectives of content marketing in your company?
- What is the content marketing process like in your company? (Where does it start, what are the steps and where does it end?)
- Do you measure the results of your content marketing? How?
- What are the challenges related to content marketing in your company?
- What are the biggest successes in terms of content marketing in your company?

Content

- Who is responsible for creating the content of your marketing communications?
- Where do the content and stories come from?
- Do you use the story and/or vision of the company in marketing communications?
- Is the same story shared across all channels?

- Are your customers creating content related to your company?

Channels

- What are the channels that your company uses for content marketing?
- Why and how were these channels selected?
- What are the most important channels? Why?
- How do you use the different channels?
- Does your company use more traditional channels or more digital channels?
- Website (role, use)
- Social media (platforms, role, use)
- Blogs (role, use)
- E-mail (role, use)
- Other? (role, use)

Future

- Will there be a change in the content marketing strategy of your company in the future?
- What are the biggest opportunities and threats?
- What is the role of content marketing in your company in the future?
- What will be the most important tool in your content marketing?
- Do you see that the role of content and stories is going to change in the future?

APPENDIX 2. Original quotations in Finnish

Ennen katottiin vaan telkkaria, sulla oli vaan se 30 sekkaa sitä MTV3:n mainos.. aikaa kertoo se tarina eikä mitään muuta. Et ehkä joku printtiilmoitus jossain. Nyt onkin viiskyt kanavaa ja se mediatila on melkein ilmasta ja se paine siirtyy kokonaan siihen sisältöön. Koska siellä kilpaillaan paljon huomiolla, koska se mediatila on kaikille ilmasta, et oot sä sit peini mainostaja tai joku Oreojättimainostaja niin se sama mediatila on kaikilla käytössä. Ja se sisällön tavallaan laadun vaatimus on tavallaan noussu iha hirveesti. Ja se vaatii, se vaatii niinku enemmän semmosta kokonaisuuksien hallintaa tai ammattilaisen silmää ku se, sitä ei voi tehdä enää niinku hetken mielijohteesta. Et se on niinku isojen, isojen tarinoitten hallitsemistaja periaatteessa mekin puhutaan niinku koko ajan draaman kaaresta et niinku mikä pitää mennä kaikkien medioitten läpi. Et ihmiset pitää saada niinku suunnilleen itkemään tai nauramaan että niinku viesti menee perille et se ei olla niinku semmosta mitään kliinistä että "satumat 99"-tyyppistä et se ei niinku toimi. (Company Y)

Kokonaisuudessaan sillä, markkinointiviestintä eri muodoissaan, oli se maksettua, ostettua, omistettua, niin se on myynnin generointia, myyvän brändin rakentamista ja tota liiketoiminnan rakentamista. Et kyl se on tosi, itsestäänselvää et sillä on tosi tärkeä rooli. (Company C)

..että vähän me ollaan niinku sellasesta vuosikello-ajattelusta pyritty pois ja ehkä menty siihen suuntaan et me pyritään oleen niinku mahdollisimman dynaaminen ja paitsi reagoiva ni myöskin tämmönen niinku proaktiivinen. (Company A)

Samat tiimit jotka tekee myöskin, miettii tuotekehitys-projektia ja sitä tuotannon, et mitä voimme tehdä, niin samoissa tiimeissä on myöskin niinkun markkinointiviestinnän tekeminen. Et se ei oo niinkun eriytetty tai mikään erilainen toiminto. Koska tota aina voidaan ajatella (kun on isot tuotantolaitokset,) että tuotteita pystytään tekemään, mutta onko niille kysyntää. Niin se pitää jo sieltä lähtee rakentamaan sitä markkinointiviestinnällistäkin konseptia. (Company F)

Tavallaan ku me ajatellaan että, tai mä ite ajattelen että koko tän markkinoinnin tällasena markkinointi, myynti, asiakaspalvelu-kokonaisuutena. Et siihen liittyy, liittyy niinkun, jos ajatellaan B2B-näkökulmasta, niin se että että miten me saadaan se tietty liidi kiinni, miten me hoidetaan sitä markkinoinnin keinoin, ja kun siitä tulee niinkun marketing qualified lead, niin miten sitten niinku myynti hoitaa sen, ja miten sitten taas palvelunkäyttöönotto ja jälkimarkkinointi hoitaa sen. (Company A)

Eli sisältömarkkinointi on nykypäivän tapa suhtautua markkinointiin. Se ei ole yhtä kuin yrityksen blogi, se ei ole yhtä kuin sosiaalinen media, se ei ole yhtä

kuin oma site, vaan se on kaikkee sitä. Mä haastan niin päin. Ja meille se on sit niinku suhtautumistapa. (Company C)

Mut kyl mä näkisin et se on nimenomaan se halu että, et me puhutaan jostain asiakkaasta, tai jostain asiasta mikä koskettaa sitä asiakasta ja jostain niinku teemasta. Eikä vaan niinku tuupata niitä meidän omia, tai mennä tavallaan se meidän tuote tai palvelukärki edellä. Vaan se et meillä on niinku muutaki sanottavaa. Niin mä sen ite nään. (Company H)

Että se pyrkii oleen sellasta niinku puolueetonta tietoo mitä se pystyy hyödyntään vaikka se ei nyt just suoraan sitä meidän konetta ostais. Mut sen pitää kuitenkin niinku liittyä aika tiiviisti liittyä siihen meidän liiketoimintaan. (Company D)

Markkinointiviestinnän pitäisi rakentuu hyvien sisältöjen varaan, jollon sisältömarkkinoinnissa itsessään ei ole mitään uutta. Mut luojan kiitos tää kyseinen termi on nyt noussut kaikkien huulille ja pinnalle, koska se tarkoittaa sitä että mainonnan tekijät alkaa miettimään entistä enemmän sitä että mikä siitä mun mainoksesta tekee mielenkiintoisen, jollon siitä mielenkiintost tekee sisältö. (Company C)

Mut sit ku me ajatellaan et me tavotellaan 2 miljoonaa ostopäätöksen tekijää niin meidän on niinku otettava se kaikki orgaaninen levikki ja ilo siitä irti ja sit meidän on jatkettava sitä levikkii fyrkalla... Toki se voi olla myös, et jos sulla on pieni markkinointi budjetti, niin tottakai sillon sä saat sisältömarkkinoinnin keinoin öö paljon aikaan pienellä rahalla. Mut sit jos sulla on enemmän fyrkkaa niin sä saat otettuu siit sisältömarkkinoinnista paljon enemmän irti, jollon sit ne pienellä budjetilla tekevät kritisoi et ei toi oo sisältömarkkinointii, koska siihen käytetään paljon rahaa. Et ainoota oikeeta sisältömarkkinointii ois niinku joku firman oma nasta blogi ja sen ajatuksen mä niinku haastan, et ei se...jollon päästään taas niinku siihen ehkä hypoteesiin että sisältömarkkinoinnin rajat hälvenee ja on hälventyneet ja toisaalta kaikki markkinointi voi olla sisältömarkkinointia, eli sitä maksettua mainontaa suunnitellaan entistä enemmän sisältömarkkinoinnin ehdoilla. (Company C)

Sisältömarkkinointi ei oikein istu mihinkään perinteiseen markkinointiajatteluun suoraan. Toki sillä rakennetaan brändiä, markkinajohtajuutta, asiakkuuksia, yms., mutta sen ideologiaan kuuluu huomion ansaitseminen ja asiakkaiden aidon kiinnostuksen herättäminen. Enää ei voi keskeyttää ja tyrkyttää. Ihmiset ovat oppineet väistelemään mainoksia. Voittaja on se, joka onnistuu saamaan asiakkaan hakeutumaan vapaaehtoisesti yrityksen markkinoinnin piiriin. (Company X)

Se on oltava läsnä siellä missä se kuluttaja haluaa olla, oli se sitten mikä tahansa, ja se muuttuu tosi nopeesti. Ja ne sisällöt on ehkä ainoa tapa olla

riittävän kiinnostava, et joku hakeutuu niiden brändien tai niiden asioiden pariin joita halutaan viestiä. (Company E)

...ja se et me ollaan itse mukana niissä keskusteluissa, me ollaan itse tarjoamassa sinne sitä sisältöä, jollasta se meidän näkökulmasta pitäisi olla tai, tai mikä vastais ihmisten tarpeisiin tai mikä kiinnostais ihmisiä. Niin sitä ei voi enää ajatella et laitetaan joku mainos et meille tuli joku uutuuus, et se hoituu niinku sillä. Tai et jos ihminen haluaa tietää meistä jotain niin se tulee meidän sivuille ja etsii ja navigoi itse johonki, et ei se vaan mee enää niin. (Company E)

Joo se pitää aina olla. Se on niinku se ykkönen. Ja kyllähän niinku se, se brändin niinku mielikuvan luominen, kyllähän sekin on, se johtaa myymiseen. (Company B)

Et jos on vaikka joku, sanotaan et tulee uus brändi tai on joku mennään vaikka vanhallakin brändillä mut mennään vaikka uudelle markkinallekin, niin sillonhan tottakai se ensimmäinen on se tunnettuus ja kokeilu, mitä halutaan tottakai tuoda, tuoda sitten erilaisilla keinoilla. Ja sitten taas jos se on, on jo niinku jotenkin jalansijan saanut niin sithän se tottakai on se niinku suosittuus ja myynti ja tämmöset mitä sit lähetään niinku tarkemmin tavoitellaan. (Company E)

Et me ollaan tota jaoteltu ne meidän tavoitteet silleen tavallaan prosessin mukaan. Et miten tavallaan me voidaan niinku auttaa meidän positioitumisessa just näkymisessä markkinoilla, miten me voidaan tukee myyntii siinä että ne pystyy rakentaa sit sitä brändireferenssiä asiakkaille niinku meistä ja sit ihan viimeisenä sit se että miten me pystyttäs siinä ihan niitten myynnin klousaamisessa. Et ne meidän tavoitteet on niinku vaiheistettu, et ne on tavallaan näihin vaiheisiin linkitetty. (Company H)

et jos aatellaan perinteistä putkee, et tehdään niinkun awarenesssiä, niinkun tietoseks tuotteita, niin sisältömarkkinointi ehkä ei ole siihen se paras väline. Vaan se on enemmän siellä et sit kun on jo siellä käytön portailla, eli ne jo käyttää meidän tuotetta tai ovat käyttäneet tai ostaneet, niin, niin se on siellä sitouttavana. Et ollaan siellä enemmän ja siinä lojaliteettipäässä. (Company F)

Sillä sisältömarkkinoinnin avulla sä pystyt niinku pitämään se niinku ikään kun sen asiakkaan lämpimänä, et jos se niinku harkitsee sitä. Tai sitten niinku semmosia asiakkaita jotka ei oo vielä niinkun, ei vielä tiiä niinku tarvitsevansa sitten tätä tuotetta. Mut sitten, sitten ku se on altistunu sisällöille ja sille tulee se tarve, ni hetkinen mä oon muuten kuullu tosta, mäpä meen selvittää tarkemmin. (Company B)

Et sillä ei oo taaskaan sellasta niinku erillistä että nyt alamme tekemään sisältömarkkinointia vaan se on osa sitä suurempaa kampanjaa. (Company C)

Ja oikeestaan kaikki lähtee siitä, et joo on ne jotkut ylätasen tavoitteet, ja sen jälkeen oikeestaan mietitään sitä koko joko sen jakson tai koko vuoden semmosta niinku vuosikelloa, et okei missä se kuluttaja kulkee, mitä se tekee, mitä uutta sinne vois kehitellä, minkälaisia teemoja vois olla nousemassa, minkälaisia ajatuksia. Eli tehdään semmonen, vähän semmonen kokonaisajatus et mitä ilmiöitä ja ajatuksia nyt on. Jonka jälkeen sit valitaan et mitkä on meille tärkeet aihealueet. (Company F)

Me ollaan kerätty niinku infoo mejän myynniltä ja tuotehallinnolta ja eri puolilta organisaatioo et mistä mejän asiakkaat tällä hetkellä niinku puhuu ja mistä mejän pitäis niinku puhua. Ja me ollaan sitä kautta haarukoitu neljä tämmöstä niinku pääteemaa mihin me tullaan keskittymään ja sit kaks tommosta vähän pienempää. (Company H)

Oikeestaan sisältömarkkinoinnissa pitää olla aika hereillä koko ajan, et mitä tapahtuu. Saataa olla myöskin et joku vanha sisältö nousee ja et vaikka tekis tarkankin julkasu-kalenterin, niin pitää olla kyl joustava ja valmis muuttamaankin sitä jos siltä näyttää. (Company F)

Mitä tahansa hyvää sisältöä pitää markkinoida, eikä voida ajatella että hyvä sisältö markkinoi itse itseään. Että, et sisältömarkkinointi ilman markkinoitua on sisällötöntä markkinointia mun mielestä. (Company A)

Etenkin ku ollaan niinku täällä, sen ostopäätöksen erittäin niinku alkuvaiheessa, et mitä vähemmän höpöttää ittestään ja kysytään, kuunnellaan, keskustellaan ja ennen kaikkea niinku nostetaan ilmiöitä esiin, niin se on niinku parempaa sisältöä sillon. Mut mitä lähempänä ollaan sit sitä ostamista täällä, niin, niin sillon vaan tietysti sitten pitää olla ylpee omasta palvelusta. (Company A)

No se tulee niiden aiheiden kautta. Et me ei niinku, mun mielestä se kuulostaa kamalan päälleliimatulta, jos sinne alkaa tunkee niitä viestejä sellasenaan, mut sen pitää olla siellä taustalla, se on lähinnä se filtti, minkä kautta mä valitsen ne aiheet. (Company D)

Et välillä vaan elämä on sellasta. Ettei kaikki oo kivaa. Mut et sit täytyy niistä voida puhua. Ja se on ihan niinku linja myös tossa sisällössä et me puhutaan avoimesti ihan kaikesta, myös niistä hankalista jutuista tai jotka ei oo niin helppoja selittää. (Company E)

Jossain vaiheessa, ku siihen tosi paljon oli kiinnostusta niin sit me pidettiin erillinen seminaari, missä sitten, mihin oli siis ihan vapaapääsy, et kaikki bloggarit ja laitettiin niille jotka oli siitä keskusteltu sosiaalisessa mediassa ja soittanu ja muuta, niin laitettiin kaikille niille tieto. Ja twiitattiin sit ihan

avoimesti et nyt ois tämmönen seminaari, että tervetuloa kaikki ketkä halua niinku kysyä ja keskustella. Et tuotiin se sit pois sieltä verkosta myös, ettei se pyöri vaan siellä niinkun digimaailmassa. Et jos ihmiset kysyy, niin täytyyhän meidän niinku mahdollistaa se et he voi kysyä myös meiltä, eikä tarvii vaan spekuloida sit jossain sosiaalisessa mediassa. Et me halutaan olla myös aktiivinen ja osallistua keskusteluun ja tuoda itse niitä keskustelun aiheita myös niitä vaikeita. (Company E)

Et mä luulen et se on ehkä isoimpia onnistumisia, et pystytään joka vuosi sanoon budjettineuvotteluissa että markkinoinnin tulokset on nämä, tän vuoksi meihin kannattaa panostaa. (Company A)

Sun pitää pystyä tekeen niinku sen verran laadukasta tavaraa että se oikeesti niinku herättää sitä niinku, sun pitää pystyä kuitenkin erottautumaan massasta...tässä on niinku niitä ongelmia, että millon niinku mennään sitten siellä niinku harjanaallolla ja millon mennään edellä. Ja jos mennään edellä niin se on sitten kans ongelma, et pitää mennä edellä mut ei saa mennä liian edellä. (Company B)

Ni mejän pitää sitten saada sieltä jotka on niinku asiakkaitten kanssa tekemisissä, niin miten ne puhuu, minkälaista kieltä ne käyttää, mitkä on siellä sitten niinku ne ykkösjutut, mistä mejän asiakkaat nytten puhuu. Että mejän pitää pystyä sitten vastaamaan niinku siihen. (Company B)

Mä kyl sanosin et se on siitä omasta kekseliäisyydestä kiinni ja siit just et viitsii paneutuu siihen alaan. Että mä teen niinku vapaa-ajallaki, et mä oon koko ajan niinku yritän olla silleen hoksottimet auki et kattelen kaikkee tiededokumetteja ja just et aina ku tulee joku mikä liittyy etäisestiki vaan niin tostahan vois tota kautta ja yritän niinkun löytää sellasii niinku pikkujuttuja..et ne on niinku loppujen lopuks pikkuasioita ja sit sun pitää vaan paisuttaa niitä, et joskus ne pikkuasiatkin voi tai siis et niistä voi tulla hyvä juttu. (Company D)

Et sit jos ollaan silleen et no tarttis jotain uutta, niin se on aika huono, mut et sit toisaalta edelleen palaan siihen strategiaan. Et jotainhan sitä tavotellaan sillä muutoksella, jollonhan siinä pitää vaan itelle olla selvä se et mitä sillä tavotellaan. (Company E)

Me uskotaan vahvasti siihen omnichannel-ajatteluun eli samaan aikaan kun sä näät meidän TV-mainoksen telkkarissa, niin sinne tulee Facebookiin siihen samaan mainokseen liittyviä mainoksia tai sit ku sä avaatkin ampparit niin sit siellä on siihen samaan mainokseen liittyvä toi tota wide-spacen mobiilimainos. Eli tota digitaalisuus yhdistettynä perinteisiin kanaviin. (Company C)

Tavallaan sit myöskin ne sosiaalisen median kanavilla ajatellaan sitä et se rooli on se että kun ihmisett on jo siellä. Niin se on se kanava missä he jo on, niin

siellä me tavallaan saadaan ne kiinni juuri siinä hetkessä ja siinä tilanteessa, me pystytään niinku palvelemaan heitä siellä. (Company F)

No mun mielestä se on kyl loppupeleissä se meidän oma myyntihenkilöstö. Et kun heillä on niinkun tiiviit yhteydet asiakkaisiin ja tavallaan se kontakti. Et oli se sitte tavallaan se, lopullisesti se kanava tai konsepti mikä tahansa mikä vaikutti, niin kuitenkin se paras niinku access sinne asiakkaaseen on se henkilö edelleen. (Company H)

Se on ehkä niinku minun mielestä markkinointiviestinnän tekijöiden niinkun ajottin se kompastuskivi, et me unohdetaan se että vaikkapa talousosasto ajattelee asioita numeerisesti. Ja vaikkapa meidän pitäisi samalla lailla pystyä osottamaan niitä investoinnin tuottoasteita ja niitä asiakasmääriä ja niitä konversioita, jotta se tekee meidän tekemisestä uskottavaa. (Company C)

Ku mä mietin just jotain kuluttajapohjasta vaikka niinku markkinoinnin yhdistämistä niinku verkkokaupan toimintaan. Niin se on paljon helpompi niinku träkätä se polku ku meillä taas sitten se että yksittäisten niinku kauppojen tavallaan se elinkaari saattaa olla vaikka, jos puhutaan jostain isoista niin vuoden. Niin kyllähän se sit jossain vaiheessa se ketju sit hämärtyy et mistä se nyt sit loppujen lopuksi niinku et oliko se nyt sit se yks, yks tota video minkä se asiakas katto, vai tota. Ei, että se on paljon rähmäsempi se myynnin niinku kuvio. (Company H)

Joskus on kyse myyntilähtösestä kampanjasta, silloin asetetaan myyntiä mittaavat tavoitteet. Joskus on kyse brändilähtösestä kampanjasta, ja silloin asetetaan brändiä mittaavat tavoitteet ja mittarit. (Company C)

Ku mä katon taas markkinoinnin kokonaiskuvassa, niin ei mulla ole niin merkitystä sillä sisältömarkkinoinnin omilla mittareilla, vaan koska se on a) se on jatkuva tekemistä ja b) se on osa jotain aina niinku kokonaisvaltasempaa kampanjaa. Jollon mun on hirveen vaikee sanoo et on yksi ainoa tapa mitata sisältömarkkinointia, ei ole. Vaan mittarit pitää valita kampanjan ja tavoitteen mukaan. (Company C)

Eli tota Suomessa monet B2C ja B2B firmat on sen verran kankeita, sen verran perinteisiä ja jäykkiä, että ketterällä ja rohkealla toiminnalla voidaan olla edelläkävijä. Ja edelläkävijyys mahdollistaa erottumisen. Näin ollen se on mahdollisuus että me erotutaan, sekä meidän toimialalla että yleisesti. (Company C)

Et jotenki mä uskon et sellanen ja sellanen yhteisöllisyys ja semmonen. Ja toisaalta et vaikka verkko niinku vahvistuu niin mä uskon et semmoset niinku kohtaamiset, tapaamiset, tapahtumat tulee myöskin niinku pysymään ja jäämään ja niiden yhdistäminen ja mitä nyt on tehty. Niin siinä varmaan on

sellasta tulevaisuuden, et sieltä löytyy joku tulevaisuuden työkalu. (Company F)

Siinä mielessä että ne yrityksen ihmiset toimivat sen sisällön jakelijana. Mut se, se ei oo helppo tehtävä. Koska siinä täytyy tavallaan sillä henkilöllä olla halu ja tahtotila ylipäättään tehdä sitä. Ja sitten öö valita se, et hehän puhuu vaan omasta asiantuntijuudestaan. Eli et jos sä nyt oot jonku liiketoiminannjohtaja niin sä tavallaan kerrot niitä asioista siitä näkökulmasta. Mut et mä uskon et tää tulee kasvaan ja se semmonen niinkun henkilöbrändäys ja tavallaan yrityksen brändäys sitä kautta. (Company F)

Että tarinankerronta taas sitten niinkun kerrontamuotona on niinkun ehkä se sisältömarkkinoinnin yks niinku tärkeimpiä ulottuvuuksia. (Company A)

Joo ainaki mitä ite seuraa twitterissä, varsinkin niinku digimarkkinoinnin juttuja niin kyl se on jotenki hämmentävän korkeelentosta. Sit on silleen et miks nää asiat pitää niinku keksii uudestaan. Et okei, tottakai halutaan niinku pitää oma työ mielenkiintosenä, mutta sit kuitenkin loppujen lopuks se lähtee siitä että kenelle, mitä ja miten. Niin mun mielestä sitä nyt voi kutsuu sitten mikskä haluu. (Company H)