

## Developing a social media content strategy for Golla

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Master's Thesis  
Degree Programme in  
Communication Management  
2016



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<b>Report/thesis title</b> Developing a social media content strategy for Golla	<b>Number of pages and appendix pages</b> 62+1
<p>Social media environment has changed the way companies and brands communicate with their customers and audiences. Traditionally brands have been able to send marketing messages to the audiences through mass media channels. In social media environment brands can reach audiences globally, and target their messages to smaller niche groups.</p> <p>To gain awareness, brands have to provide the audiences something valuable. Brands have to know their audiences well, so listening and taking part in conversations is crucial. The content has to be entertaining or useful in order to engage the people. Content is the most important component of a brands online presence.</p> <p>This thesis examined the possibilities of communication, brand development and customer engagement in social media environment for a brand called Golla. The aim was to gain awareness among the desired target group, find tools to improve content production and sharing knowledge among the communication practitioners in Golla's team. In addition to this report, a guide booklet was constructed and handed in to the company.</p> <p>The data for this thesis was gathered through two semi-structured interviews, a workshop, by benchmarking other brands' activity, and email conversations with the team about campaign planning. Literature, professional presentations and other insight from the field of marketing and communication supported the suggestions for Golla's team.</p> <p>The research showed that the brand had very little resources and experience in social media communication, but the communication team was eager to learn and try new things. Based on the research, this thesis suggests some tools and practices to support the content creation and production as well as some principles and ideas for the content itself. The main finding of this study is customer oriented content marketing and communication that supports the relationship between the brand and the audience.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Social Media, communication, marketing, content, brand, strategy	

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# 1 Introduction

Social media environment has become an important part of every company's palette of communication. Social media channels and platforms provide ways to communicate, engage with customers, listen to them and follow competitors. They also provide a platform for companies to build their brand and create their status in the market.

Brand consists of identity and personality of a product or a company and the audience's perceptions about the brand. Companies can communicate their values to people and stand out from competitors. For example a bag is not just a convenient item to carry one's possession around. With a brand, the bag stands for something, and differentiates the item from other similar products.

A company can build its brand by communicating its values and acting accordingly, but it cannot serve ready-made meanings of the brand to the consumers. Brands are also developed in the consumer's minds, who use branded products to express their values and personality.

Communication about companies, products and brands has been traditionally about marketers sending messages to the audience. This is no longer possible. Digitalization and social media platforms as a communication environment have changed the way companies can communicate about themselves and their brands. The audience has power to tell their own stories about the brands and companies as well. Communicating in social media requires dialogue and participating in conversations. A brand has to become part of the communities in different platforms and provide its followers with newsworthy, useful or entertaining content to be accepted and liked. By telling a story about itself and linking the stories to its values, the brand creates deeper memory trace of itself in the audience's minds.

Due to its global nature social media platforms have been considered as an easy way to spread the stories to vast amounts of people with little cost as opposed to buying advertisements in more traditional media, such as television and magazines. Although large masses of audience is possibly at reach, easy is not the term to describe communication in social media. Competing over consumer's attention and gain their trust is hard work. The path can be especially rough for new and unknown brands.

Capturing the attention of the intended audience and standing out from competitors require a robust and compelling brand with a strong underlying theme and message that is tailored and relevant to the audience. Traditional advertising, marketing and PR are not enough to do the task. Communicating in social media requires shareable, scalable, immersive content built around a core brand or theme that encourages conversation and interaction with the brands intended audience. This requires storytelling skills, and continuity

across different platforms, and keeping the audience's interests in mind, so that they will begin to work to nurture the brand. (Norrington 2013, 26-28.)

Converting the followers and social media users into customers requires a long term strategy and consistent presence as an active participant of the communities. Passive and inconsistent practice does not benefit the brand, but may cause harm and confusion among the audience. Creating a profile in social media platform is easy, but creating the content and publishing it consistently is not. Starting the communication activities in social media channels without a strategy is a common mistake.

In this thesis the focus is on communication and a content strategy of a company and a brand named Golla. The company is based in Helsinki, Finland, and has started to voice its new brands in social media based on its new business strategy. The purpose of this thesis is to create a strategy to help the organization's social media communication team gain awareness to the brand, find and engage social media users from the target audience, and provide tools that will help the team to create and publish content as well as share information with one another. The long-term, underlying goal is of course to convert social media users into buying customers for Golla. The tools and suggested activities have been collected in the thesis product (see Attachment 1.) and explained in this report.

The thesis was conducted by qualitative research method and constructive approach in co-operation with the contractor. The data and information was gathered through interviews, workshop, benchmarking, discussions, literature and studying professional sources about the topic.

As a result of this thesis process a guide booklet for Golla's staff was constructed to help them plan their actions as well as categorize and produce content for different purposes in various channels in social media.

## **2 Towards a New Rise in the Global Markets**

Golla is a Finnish company that produces bags, cases and covers for electronic devices such as mobile phones, tablets and laptops, as well as for leisure time. The company was founded in 1995 by Kähkönen family, who had been in the business of handcrafted furniture. They decided to expand their production to small, functional design objects made of rubber and plastic with a company and brand name Golla. At the turn of the millennium Golla joined the rise of technological devices business and started to produce fashionable accessories for portable devices such as mobile phones. This strategy proved to be successful, as Golla grew and was introduced to the markets all over the world. (Golla 2015.) During its most successful years in early 2000 Golla was the market leader in a mobile phone case category, and the company sold over 7 million pieces of its products. The products were sold in the same places as electronic devices and they were found from the selections of big retailers, such as Walmart in United States. (Pietarila 2015, 16-17.) As Apple, the technology device producer, launched their smart phone, iPhone, the mobile phone market changed, and Golla faced challenges. Suddenly mobile phone case producers from China and other low production cost countries were multiplied and these producers sold their products at a much lower price. Golla could not compete with price or volume against these new competitors, and did not want to lower the quality or design standards either.

Also the economic development in Europe played its part in Golla's decreasing revenues. Earlier two thirds of Golla's annual turnover had come from Europe, but before the strategy change in 2013, only one third. As Golla's revenue started to decrease, the company owners and management realized it was time to change the business strategy.

Golla sees itself as a quality design company, and it didn't want to position itself as a low quality or a cheap brand. That road would have been short lived, and it wasn't the identity of the company. (Siitonen 2014b.)

### **2.1 New Direction**

Golla's organization decided to change its business strategy, and over its last quarter of 2014, after two years of developing a new business strategy, it launched three new collections that are aimed at global markets. Asia is the most important market, but Golla operates in Europe and USA as well.

The brand is seen internally as a modern lifestyle brand that designs and produces bags for people rather than the devices (Siitonen 2014). It wants to challenge well-known travel brands such as Tumi, but offer a more relaxed option of the same product category to the customers. Golla does not try to be a luxury brand.

Golla has a web-shop, but the company has opened and will continue to open, shop-in-shops and flagship stores in its target markets.

To spread the word about the new brand and products, Golla wants to use social media for communicating and marketing the brand.

## **2.2 Defining the problem**

In addition to brand, Golla has changed its distribution channels and pricing to a higher category. That can be a threat to customer and other stakeholder relationships, because change can cause confusion (Tamminen 2015, 43). The new brand has to be introduced to the new target groups and to those who already know the old brand as well as the distributors and retailers. The new business strategy required a new communication strategy for social media content.

While the new strategy had been developed, Golla had made a strategic decision not to actively communicate the brand. The company had waited for the new launch before any investments or plans had been made regarding the communications.

"Especially in our CEO's mind, the assumption, that something bigger and better is coming, has blocked all the effort of voicing our brand, in good and in bad. (...) Now the stuff is there, and we're kind of ready mentally, to start voicing that, and helping that (the web shop)." (Siitonen, 2014.)

This meant that the relationship with the existing customers hadn't been reinforced, but the new target groups were not familiar with the brand either. To fix this, Golla's staff wanted to know what to do, and how to do it. The team had created accounts in different social media platforms. The company had a valid business strategy, defined values and a story for the brand, but there was no plan, a strategy, how to communicate it in social media.

As a global brand, social media platforms and channels are an efficient way to reach consumers far and wide, but without a strategy that will not work, and in worst case inconsistent and irregular communication could even be counterproductive.

Golla needed to be able to tell its story, build a brand, identify and reach the right target groups as well as to engage them and activate them to spread the word about the brand and convert them from followers to customers. The brand's story had to remain familiar, but surprising in every channel.

Golla organization was short of resources for communication and it needed tools to organize an ongoing, long-lasting and sustained line of communication. Hence my research question for this thesis project is:



Q What tools and insight will help Golla to create a long-lasting strategy for content in order to communicate its brand in social media channels, tell its story in an interesting way, engage and activate target groups?

To be able to answer the question, it was important to get to know what Golla's team thought and how they practiced the content production and publishing. The communication principles and best practices had to be found from the literature and professional insight.

### **3 Literature review on brand and marketing communication**

This chapters explains the terminology and key concepts of this study. First term explained is a brand, because communication strategy is based on the company's business strategy but also what the brand stands for and it wants to convey. The text will then proceed to cover public relation, marketing communications and social media. After that this thesis moves on to chapter four which will explain the term strategy and strategic communication planning in more detail.

#### **3.1 What is a brand?**

The history of the term of brand starts from farmers marking their cattle with a hot iron to recognize their cattle from that of the neighbor's. The real starting point for the modern brand development is industrial revolution (years 1760-1850): transportation and communication ensured national distribution, and mass production of goods became possible, which brought consistency to the quality. This allowed the producers to persuade customers that they could rely on the products. Packaging improved and allowed for producers to make their products recognizable, making it possible for people to ask the product's name and repeat purchase. Newspapers provided mass communication and were supported by the establishment of advertising industry. Legalizing trademarks and copyrights of names, shapes and colors has added value to the branded goods. (Roper & Fill 2012, 108.)

The 1980's was a turning point in the conception of brands, when company managers came to realize that the principal asset of a company was in fact its brand names. Company's value had been measured in terms of buildings, land, machinery, but the managers realized that the most valuable asset is in the mind of the possible clients. (Kapferer 2008, 3.)

Today brands are considered to have valuable relationship with their customers that would exist even if the tangible assets of the company were destroyed. (Roper & Fill 2012, 108.) Intangible assets are non-physical, such as patents, trademarks, copyrights or brand recognition.

The simplest definition of a term brand is to say that it is a unique identity of a company or a product. It is what the public thinks about what the company does, produces, and how it serves and sells. It is a picture that consumers have in their minds. (Barlow & Stewart 2004, 1.) Brand differentiates the product or service from others and creates distinctiveness (ibid., 96).

A more complicated way to describe the term brand is: the sum of the values and attributes that are more than the subject's functional or accountable value (Juholin 2010, 20).

A brand is more than just the visual representation or reputation of the product, service or a company. Juholin (2013, 61-62) explains the differences between the terms profile, image, reputation and brand as follows: profiling is conscious and goal-directed actions to pursue a certain mental image. An image is created through these actions and communicating them. Reputation combines actions, communication, relationships and networks. Reputation includes the stories told about the organizations. Reality and actions are strongly attached to reputation. Juholin refers to brand when products and services are included. A whole company can grow into a brand that adds value to the companies and its stakeholders. Juholin (2013, 236) also states that brand stands out from other terms by having consumers as its target group.

Roper & Fill (2012, 5-6) argue that reputation and brand can be two separate things as it is possible to have a strong brand, but relatively poor corporate reputation. The authors also state that a brand is at the center of reputation management.

Both the marketer and the consumers play a role in brand building. A brand is a result of a marketer's activities, the input, but also as a result of consumer's reading of and reaction to activities, the take out. From the marketer's perspective, a brand is a promise. From the consumer's, it is the set of association, perceptions and expectations existing in his or her mind. Brand associations are created, sustained and enhanced by every experience and encounter with the brand. (Batey, 2008, 4.) In short: A brand is a cluster of meanings (ibid. 6). The stronger these associations are, the stronger is potentially the relationship between the brand and its consumer.

Batey (2008, 3) describes the difference between a product and a brand with four points:

- “\*You buy a product for what it does; you choose a brand for what it means.
- \* A product sits on retailers' shelves; a brand exists in consumers' minds.
- \* A product can quickly be outdated; a brand is timeless.
- \* A product can be copied by a competitor; a brand is unique“

Brand building cannot be overlooked by marketers. Customers will define the brand of the company in their minds whether the company formulates one or not for its products or services. This is in large part based upon their experiences, which is influenced by employees who might not have a clear idea about the brand they represent. (Barlow & Stewart 2004, 95.)

### **3.2 Brand identity gives direction**

Every brand should have an identity which is clear within the organization. The organization can then start building the communication strategy on the brand identity.

When a company creates and manages the brand, it has to take into account the brand perception of external stakeholders and the self-reflection of a brand by internal stakeholders (Arnhold 2010, 35). The managers have to evaluate how the brand is seen within the organization and by the audience and the consumers.

Batey (2010, 162) states that it should be possible to encapsulate the intended brand meaning in a strategic brand concept. This is the meaning the marketer would like the brand to have in the mind of the consumer.

A brand identity provides direction, purpose and meaning for the brand (Aaker 2002, 68). It should help establish a relationship between the brand and the customer, as brand identity consists of brand associations, which represent what the brand stands for, and the promise to customers.

As a difference from brand image, brand identity is on the sender's side. Image research focuses on the way in which certain groups perceive a product, a brand, a politician, a company or a country. Identity's purpose is to specify the brand's meaning, aim, and self-image. Before projecting an image to the public, it must be clear what the organization wants to project. (Kapferer 2008, 174.)

David Aaker (2002, 68) has organized brand identity into twelve dimension around four perspectives:

- Brand as a product (product scope, product attributes, quality/value, uses, users, country of origin)
- Brand as organization (organizational attributes, local versus global)
- Brand as person (brand personality, brand-customer relationship)
- Brand as symbol (visual imagery/metaphors and brand heritage)

Background on how the stakeholders see the brand provides information, but if a brand is thought of only as a perceptions of how the customers see the brand, this image becomes the brand rather than just one input (ibid, 69). A marketer should give an input to the brand as well.

Brand image is usually passive, and looks to the past, but brand identity should be active and look to the future. It should be strategic, rather than tactical. The brand identity should also reflect the brand's enduring qualities even though they are not salient in the brand image. (ibid, 70.)

The nature of the brand can be functional, experiential, or symbolic. Functional concept helps consumers resolve practical problems, and look for useful benefits. Experiential brand concept fulfills the needs for sensorial or cognitive stimulation. It offers an experi-

ence with the brand. Symbolic brand concept may take several forms such as group affiliation or social standing or may touch deeper emotional territory. Brands try to offer a mixture of different types of benefits. (ibid.)

Batey (2010, 162) states that a brand concept should find expression in, or at least be reflected in the brand communication, brand name, slogan and other elements of marketing activity.

Aaker (2002, 77) states that brand identity tends to be conceptualized too narrowly. To avoid that he suggests to consider the following:

- A-brand as a product perspective that includes user imagery and the country (or region) of origin.
- A brand identity based on the perspectives of the brand as an organization, a persona, a symbol in addition to product
- A value proposition that includes emotional and self-expressive benefits as well as functional benefits
- The ability of a brand to provide credibility as well as a value proposition
- The internal as well as the external role of the brand identity
- Brand characteristics broader than a brand position (active communication objectives) or a core identity.

In the context of corporate communication, Cornelissen (2011, 61) prefers to use the terms corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation. Cornelissen explains that corporate identity grew out of a preoccupation in the design and communication communities in ways that organizations present themselves to external audiences, and the term referred to visual elements, such as logos and color definitions. Gradually it came to encompass all forms communication such as corporate advertising, sponsorship, and all forms of outward-facing behavior in the marketplace. Through these three attributes organizations communicate and project an image of themselves to their stakeholders, and differentiate the position of the company in the eyes of the stakeholders.

### **3.3 Relationship between the brand and the customer**

The identity and image of the brand has to be worth its words, so to speak. Words and actions of the brand have to be in line with the values and the identity of the brand. One could state that same rules apply to relationships between friends in real life and customers and brands. Consumers support their identities by using their chosen brands, and a relationship with brands can be very committed and loyal one.

The key to success is in the hands of the consumers. They don't always buy the same brand within one category, but keep their minds open in regard to the brands they might buy. A brand must demonstrate that it is more relevant and appealing than its competitors, and create some advantage over them. A bond or a relationship between a brand and the

consumers is potentially created, and through that customers' loyalty is secured. (Batey 2008, 7).

Consumers' activity in interacting with the brand depends on what the brand means to them. Consumers turn to brands in search of help to affirm and construct identities. Batey (2008, 8) refers to Wicklund & Gollwitzer's (1982) summary: Actual self + brand = ideal self.

According to Barlow & Stewart (2004, 1) brands are the way to meet their needs in order to tell the world who they are.

"The consumer in effect believes, ' the only way I can be who I am is to have specific products or services'. A powerful brand therefore, creates a must-have quasi monopoly for itself." (Barlow & Stewart 2004, 1.)

Also Baron & al. (2010, 98) note that extensive literature on consumer behavior emphasizes the importance of social influence on human consumption behavior. Individuals will often frame their consumption choices in terms of the groups to which they belong, or aspire to belong.

Successful relationships are built on many factors, but five are most common:

- Commitment
- Trust
- Seller's customer orientation / empathy
- Experience/satisfaction
- Communication

(Baron & al. 2010, 31.)

If these factors are shortly looked at more closely, the authors state that commitment is a long-term concept, a continuous course of action or activity, and it is often indicated by an ongoing investment into activities which are expected to maintain the relationship (ibid, 32).

Trust is the precondition of commitment. Trust can be influenced by satisfaction and experience, and cannot be built without or with very little experience. Even risk is involved in building a relationship. Trust and commitment help in resisting attractive short-term alternatives, in favor of staying with the partner already committed to. (ibid.)

Batey (2008, 8) states that the trust deposited in a brand, and the superior performance attributed to it, derive from the brand's tangible and intangible qualities. These qualities are, and must be, experienced consistently over time by the consumer, both directly, through consumptions, and indirectly, for example through advertising and word of mouth recommendation. Trust and confidence have to be earned over time. It may be possible to buy awareness, but a consumer's heart cannot be bought so easily.

A relationship with a consumer is a delicate one. Commitment may suffer from bad experiences, but the situation can be overcome with empathetic attitude and behavior.

Empathy refers to ability to see a situation from another person's point of view. If there is a failure in service delivery or a product, the ability to empathize with a consumer can help build a relationship, and encourage trust and increase the chance of developing a long-term relationship and more sales. (Baron & Al 2010, 33.) Also negative feedback can actually boost awareness (Gillin 2009, 10) if attended to carefully.

Experience has an important influence on customer satisfaction. The measurement of successful relationship is how the relationship expectations meet with relationship performance, the experience. The most recent experience is usually remembered best, so if the last experience with a brand is positive, it may overcome previous negative experiences. (Baron& al. 2010, 33.)

To ensure the empathy and positive experiences, requirements for internal branding are increasing, so that the brand promise can be met. According to Arnhold (2010, 11) employees and interfaces at brand touchpoints, such as call center agents live the brand internally and externally.

In the digital age, social media provides these brand touchpoints and interfaces. It is important that the team responsible for social media communication has assimilated the brand and its identity. Consumers build their relationship with the brand based upon their experiences, which can be influenced by employees, who might not have a clear idea about the brand they represent (Barlow & Stewart 2004, 95).

A strong consumer – brand relationship has advantages for both the branded company and the consumer. The brand's benefit is that the customers create deeper relationship with a brand the longer the relationship lasts. For customers a customer – brand relationship creates benefits in terms of reduced risk of purchase decisions, social benefits with regard to affiliations to brand representatives and co-customers as well as special treatment benefits such as discounts, upgrades and time savings or loyalty programs. (Arnhold 2010, 43.)

Companies may have more than one brand to manage. According to Aaker (2002, 240), companies find themselves struggling to manage several different brand identities in several different situations for variety of audiences. Different roles of the brands must be coordinated to avoid confusion and one brand undermining another. Aaker's answer to managing brands in an environment of complexity is to consider them as not only individual

performers but members of a system that must work to support each other (ibid. 241).

There are goals to the system:

- Exploit commonalities to generate synergy in the form of enhanced brand impact or reduced execution.
- Reduce brand identity damage. Differences between brand identities in different contexts and roles have the potential to undercut a brand. The challenge is to manage the system so that this doesn't happen.
- Achieve clarity of product offerings and reduce confusion through experience and satisfaction.
- Facilitate change and adaptation. All brands need to adapt and change in response to external forces. A system can help manage the process.
- Allocate resources. Every brand role requires resources. Brand investment decision should not be based on an insular analysis of the brand-related business, and therefore neglect the impact a brand can have on the other brands in the system and fails to adequately consider future brands.

There are different roles for sub-brands, but in this thesis the sub-brand's role is to change the associations and modify the identity of the brand. The sub-brand can draw from the parent brand the reassurance of a familiar name plus other intangibles and personality dimensions. A sub-brand can help the brand to break out from a box and stretch into new product classes. With a sub-brand a company can engage in strategic opportunism, which allows the company to react quickly to opportunities that emerge in the market. Sub-brands also enable the brand to reach different target groups and meet their needs. (ibid., 253-254.)

Communication and marketing are ways to create, maintain and develop commitment and trust between the brand and the customer, and show empathy and customer orientation.

The term brand is strongly associated to marketing, rather than communication although brand is built through all messages and actions people encounter (Juholin 2013, 236).

### **3.4 Development of public relations**

The perception of how the companies and brands approach the stakeholders, has changed a lot over the years.

Until the 1970's the term public relations was used to describe communication with stakeholders. It consisted largely of communication with the press, and it was a tactical function. When other stakeholders started to demand more information from the company, communication practitioners started to look at communication as being more than just PR. Communication started to develop into a range of specialized disciplines including corporate design, corporate advertising, internal communication to employees, issues and crisis



management, media relations, investor relations, change communication and public affairs. The new communication functions concentrated on the organization as a whole. (Cornelissen 2011, 4.)

Globalization, corporate crises and financial crisis have strengthened the belief that how the company is viewed by its stakeholders, such as shareholders and investors, customers and consumers, employees, and members of the community in which the company operates, critically influences the future of the company. (ibid.)

In Finland, brand driven corporate culture is relatively new concept. Finnish trade was heavily dependent on Soviet Union until the year 1991, and the concept of brand is still fairly new to the corporate leaders (Juholin 2013, 264).

Until the 1980's marketing and PR were considered as separate functions in their objectives and activities. Marketing dealt with markets and public relations dealt with publics except for customers and consumers. Cornelissen (2011, 17) refers to Kotler & Mindak, whose study in 1978 stated that "marketing exists to sense, serve, and satisfy customer needs at a profit", while "public relations exists to produce goodwill with the company's various publics so that these publics do not interfere in the firm's profit-making ability".

This view started to change in the 1980's, when mass media advertising became more expensive and decreased in impact. Organizations had to find new ways to promote customer loyalty and brand awareness to increase sales. A new term marketing public relations (MPR) was born, which involved the use of public relations techniques for marketing purposes. The focus was on marketing company's product and services. It proved to be cost-effective tool for generating awareness and brand favorability and to communicate organization's brands with credibility (Cornelissen 2011, 17-18.)

As a distinction to corporate activities within public relations from marketing public relations, corporate public relations involve communications with investors, communities, employees, the media and government. (ibid.)

Whalen (Claywood 2012, 161) states that the purpose of MPR is to gain awareness, stimulate sales, facilitate communication and build relationships between consumers, companies, and brands. According to Whalen the actions used in MPR differ from traditional PR activities as the goal is to support sales and marketing efforts rather than corporate reputation goals. They also differ from traditional marketing goals, which typically pitch the product or service with a goal of achieving immediate sale instead of focusing on building trust and developing relationships with the marketing strategies. (Whalen in Claywood 2012, 162.)

Marketing and PR have their own areas for example in crisis situations, when marketing is not appropriate. In general all communication functions should aim at the same goal which is the success of the organization. (Juholin 2013, 262.)

### **3.5 Development of marketing communications**

Marketing public relations as a term is not used widely in professional language. Marketing communication is more commonly known. They can be seen as one and the same today, but have grown from different disciplines, MPR from PR perspective, and marketing communication from marketing perspective.

According to Fill (2009, 231) before there was marketing communication, there was promotion, and before that, a promotion tool, advertising. Advertising was focused on unique selling points, USP's, which were product features that differentiated one product from another. This uniqueness was of value to a consumer then the USP alone was considered sufficient to persuade consumers to purchase. This line of thought as well as purpose of advertising was challenged quickly, as distributors brought their own brands with same "unique" qualities to the market. (Fill 2009, 231.)

The role of advertising focused more on developing brand values that were based on emotion and imagery. Emotional selling propositions, ESP's, were emerged. This approach to communicating the products built brand awareness, desire and aspirational involvement.

More tools were required to get people to act, so sales promotions, event marketing, roadshows and, later, direct marketing evolved to fulfill this need. (ibid.)

Marketing communications should be able to create brands that are perceived to have value, but also encourage consumers to buy the product. It should be able to provide intellectual and emotional elements, so that audiences can engage with the brand on the basis of processing rational and functional information (i.e. intellectual), but also engage and align themselves with a brand's values on the basis of emotional and expressive information. (ibid. 233.)

As one can see, marketing communication has been seen as quite an operational function, but a corporate strategy that the organization pursues, should be supported by business, operational and functional level strategies. Successful marketing communications, as well as PR or any other communication strategy, should be used to complement marketing, business and corporate strategies. (ibid, 228.)

### 3.6 Integrating marketing and communication

Marketing and PR actions can complement one another. Company's image created through public relations programs, can positively reflect upon the product brands of a company, and increase the awareness of the product brand and enhance consumers' favorable impression of the brand. Public relations can also act as a corrective function for marketing by bringing other viewpoints and expectations of stakeholders to bear upon strategic decision-making besides the need to boost sales with customers. (Cornelissen 2011, 20-21.) Sometimes non-customer targets are very important to achieving a critical short-term goal or critical to the organization's survival than meeting a particular sales profit goal (Whalen in Claywood 2012, 164).

Integrating communication functions has been the buzzing theme of the conversation in the field of marketing and communication over the recent years, as there are plenty of strong drivers to integrate the functions. The environment for businesses and work change, and stakeholders have multiple roles. Consumers are more individual than before, and the media organizations and publishers are very diverse. Organizations have to be socially responsible and transparent, and they have to be consistent in how they communicate. They also have to be able to use more channels and different media to reach their audiences. In today's fragmented environment, it is difficult to stand out from competitors. Integrated communication strategies are more likely to break through the clutter and make the company name or product brand heard. (Cornelissen 2011, 23). Also, clients are shifting away from mass-media interaction with consumers, so marketing communication industry has less to offer them (Fill 2009, 257).

Integrating the communications disciplines seems like the reasonable thing to do, but there are several approaches to what it means and how it affects.

The role of IMC is to enable coherent and meaningful engagement with target audiences, as consumers can touch brands across range of channels. Each contact reinforces the previous message and facilitates the development of valued relationship. A wide range of elements needs to be integrated, such as communication tools, media and messages, the elements of marketing mix, brands, strategy, employees, agencies and technology, but not many organizations have been able to do this fully, although they might have coordinated the activities or partially integrated them. (Fill 2009, 281.)

Theoretically it can be difficult to define IMC as Fill (2009, 267) explains that scientists have not agreed on the theoretical base upon which to build integrated marketing strategy and operations. This leads to haphazard and inconsistent use of the term. Fill (2009, 264) refers to Cornelissen's two themes: process oriented concept and content oriented con-

cept. The content perspective assumes that message consistency is the major goal in order to achieve the "one voice, one look" position. In the process perspective the emphasis is on a structural realignment of the communication disciplines within organizations (ibid., 265).

In the communication framework the key driver is to provide a series of triggers by which customers or consumers can understand the values a brand stands for and a means by which they can use certain messages to influence their activities within the relationship they wish to develop. From the company's perspective IMC might provide opportunities to cut communication costs and reassessing budgets, synergies and effectiveness of communications. It can deliver clearer positioning and encourage coordinated brand development (ibid. 268-269.)

This thesis does not discuss IMC further. Although the aim is to create engagement and coherent brand experience in multiple channels, this thesis focuses on social media only as an environment, and does not involve other ways of communication or marketing.

### **3.7 Social media changing the communication field**

For decades communication, marketing and PR has been seen as a one way messaging. There is a sender and a receiver of the message. New media and web-based technologies have challenged this position. Today, organizations can no longer control what is said about them, or try to force the audience to talk about certain topic concerning the company. Instead they have to listen to what their audiences think of them and want from them, and then react to that.

The beginning of this change started in 1990's when the ordinary people started to use the internet, form communities and share content and have conversations with each other in an online environment. The internet opened up to allowing anyone to add their own content such as pictures, words, sounds and videos. (Brown 2009, 9.) Social networking is revolutionizing the way we communicate and share information (Malmelin & Villi 2015, 68), and that has an effect on the brands as well.

Brown (2009, 2) describes the transfer of control of the internet as the democratization of the internet, and the central platform for communication. Technical tools for creating different kinds of environments are available for ordinary internet users as well as for large companies, with which they could create new environments. Some of them became big companies and brands such as Facebook, Youtube and Wikipedia. (Brown 2009, 2.)

Social networks have evolved into online communities that can be based around many things, such as friendship or common interest. These communities have a very high level

of engagement with the sites, which is one reason why they have become such interest to marketers. (Malmelin & Villi 2015, 68.)

In addition to internet users talking and sharing content to each other, people have the ability to talk back to the companies, and share their view and opinions with other consumers. They do not just take in what they are told and this has major implications in the ways that brands communicate (Brown, 2009, 3).

In the traditional communication concept companies could have decided on their image and how they wanted to be seen, but in the new environment companies have lost control of their agenda. They now have to participate in conversations. (ibid.) To get the right information in the hands of key influencers, a dialogue is needed. Whalen (Claywood 2012, 165) states that to be truly authentic means that the communicator knows what is important to the target audiences, and this requires often two-way communication mechanisms that bypasses the traditional media gatekeepers and allows a direct interaction with key audience members.

Another profound change is as Brown (2009, 11) explains:

“The old-style definition of public relations talked about organizations communicating with their ‘publics’: a series of large groups of people identified by something that they all shared in common. (...) Now we can target groups on a much narrower basis.”

### **3.8 Engagement generates user related content**

According to B.L. Ochman (Gillin 2009, 32-33) marketing in social media is about engaging with enthusiasts and existing customers in interactive communities to drive more traffic and sales. The engagement facilitates highly involved audience that wants to interact with the brand. The more people with strong social networks the brand can interact with, the more likely the message is to spread. This requires that the brand is a trusted member of the community and consistent participation in social media, but it takes time to develop the position. (Gillin 2009, 32-33.)

The power of consumers have increased in recent years as they have access to both devices such as smartphones and distributions channels in digital media for their own content that is related to the brand. (Arnhold, 2010, 2.) At the same time, brands have lost their authenticity. Arnhold (ibid.) refers to a German consumer study, which states that two thirds of the German consumers don't see significant differences between brands anymore, and loyalty to the brands has decreased. The author gives couple of reasons to why this has happened: The number of brands has increased, and made it more difficult to stand out from the sea of offers. He has also observed a shift from product to communication competition, which has increased the number of brand messages in a fragmented

media landscape, and caused an information overload towards the consumers. This is why communicating well is important.

Kapferer (2008, 3) has no mercy for bad brand communication:

"It is the end for average brands. Only those who maximize satisfaction will survive. It is the end of hollow brands, without identity. The trader is also more powerful than many of the brands it distributes: all brands that do not master their channel are now in a B to B to C situation, and must never forget it." (Kapferer 2008, 3.)

Consumers have recognized their power toward brand and use their authority. Authority can be used to benefit the brands as well. For example in Finland professional video blog services and vloggers, youtubers, and bloggers have become professionals who employ themselves by creating branded content, and some of them are popular partners to the brands.

Malmelin and Villi (2015, 68) write about media brands, and state that a strong relationship with a media brand lowers the barrier to participate in co-creation of the content with the brand and participation can engage the user to a brand. This logic applies to other categories of consumer brands as well.

Arnhold (2010, 11) states that branded companies encourage consumers to create brand related user generated content aiming to strengthen brand loyalty and benefit from grass-roots ideas through positive word-of-mouth and to generate ideas for creative advertising. He defines user generated content as "the representation of the voluntary creation and public distribution of personal brand meaning undertaken by non-marketers outside the branding routines and enabled by multimedia technology" (ibid. 33).

#### 4 Strategic planning – how to accomplish objectives

To attract people's attention and interest, engage them and drive action, a brand needs a communication and marketing communication strategy that is based on the overall business strategies of the company.

Strategies are ideas of how to accomplish objectives, and tactics are specific actions to execute the strategy (Duncan 2008, 184). There are three levels of organizational strategy: corporate, competitive and functional. Corporate strategy is directional and sets out the broad, overarching parameters and means through which the organization operates in order to realize its objectives. Functional strategies, such as marketing and communication, should be integrated in such a way that they contribute to the satisfaction of the higher-level competitive level strategies, which in turn should satisfy the overall corporate goals. (Fill 2009, 288.)

This thesis will follow a Cornelissen's (2013, 108) process planning method, but reviewing Fill's marketing communications planning framework as well. These methods state the steps needed in order to proceed from strategy to execution.

Cornelissen (2011, 83) provides three points that define strategy:

1. *Planned and emergent*: In practice, strategy formation involves a combination of a logical rational process in which visions and objectives are articulated and systematically worked out into programs and actions, as well as more emergent processes in which behaviors and actions simply rise and fall within the strategic scope of the organization. Communication strategy typically consists of pre-structures and annually planned programs and campaigns as well as more reactive responses to issues and stakeholder concerns.
2. *General direction, not just plans or tactics*: Strategy means general, not specific set of actions to reach objectives. It concerns the organization's direction and positioning in relation to stakeholders in its environment for longer period of time.
3. *It is about the organization and its environments*: Emphasis is on the long-term, strategic choices that are feasible in the organization's environments. Missions and visions - what the brand/organization is, what it wants to be, and what it wants to do - are balanced with what the environment will allow or encourage it to do. Strategy has to be adaptive, and it needs to be responsive to external opportunities and threats that may confront an organization. (Cornelissen 2011, 83.)

Communication strategy involves the formulation of a desired position for the organizations in terms of how it wants to be seen by its different stakeholders. Based on the assessment of how the company is seen and how it wants to be seen, a communication strategy specifies a strategic intent. Communications strategies often involve a process of

bringing stakeholder reputations in line with the vision of the organization in order to obtain the necessary support for the organization's strategy, or reinforce the existing reputations of stakeholder if those are broadly in line with how the organization wants itself to be seen. (Cornelissen 2011, 82.)

This table below shows the steps of how to construct a strategy and proceed to planning a campaign.

Table 1. Steps for planning a communication strategy

Vision + Reputation
1. Strategic intent
2. Define Communications objectives
3. Identify and prioritize target audiences
4. Identify Themed message(s)
5. Develop message styles
6. Develop a media strategy
7. Prepare the budget.

(Cornelissen 2011, 108)

**First** step in Cornelissen's process is defining strategic intent based on corporation's vision and mission. It formulates a change or consolidation of stakeholder reputation of the organization. It is based on the gap between how the organization wants to be seen by important stakeholder groups and how it is currently seen by each of those groups.

Fill (2009, 294) states that this positioning is the key to brand-based communication. All brands and products have a position in the minds of audiences. Marketing communication should be concerned with achieving effective and viable positions so that the target audience understands what the brand does, what it means to them and can ascribe value to it. Positioning is about visibility and recognition of what a product, service or organization represents to a buyer. Identifying and understanding brand's values become increasingly critical, when rivalry is intense, competition is increasing and buyers have a greater choice.

**Second** step is to define communication objectives. Every campaign or program needs to have specific communication objectives in terms of whether they are seeking to change or consolidate a particular stakeholder's awareness, attitude, more general reputation, or behavior. Communication objectives should be defined as tightly as possible. SMART definition helps a practitioner do that: Specific - what does the communicator want to achieve, Measurable - clear indicators that show if the objectives are met or not, Achievable - in the light of current stakeholder reputation of the organization and the competitive landscape, Realistic - in the light of resources and budget and timely - time-frame for the objectives to be achieved.



**Third** step should identify and prioritize the target audiences. Every stakeholder group can't be targeted at once, so the most important ones need to be selected and segmented into more specific target groups for a certain campaign or program.

Fill (2009, 294) states that market orientation to strategy requires a consideration of the needs of the audience first and then a determination of the various messages, media and disciplines to accomplish the strategy, an outside-in-approach.

**Fourth** step defines the core messages towards a particular target audience. It often evolves directly from how the organization wants to be seen.

**Fifth** step develops messaging styles involving the creative concept that articulates the appeal of the message and brings it to life through slogans and visual content. Using particular messaging style depends on certain conditions and expectations of stakeholders.

**Sixth** step is to develop a media strategy, which means to choose the media that can best carry and execute the message, i.e. reach the target audience in the most effective way. Media-selection is ideally zero-based meaning that the most appropriate medium is chosen without pre-fixed and standard choice for a medium that may have worked in the past.

**Seventh** step is to prepare the budget. Traditionally most of the money has been spent on media buying and production of the content.

#### **4.1 Content strategy**

Content is the most critical component of a brand's online presence. This can include for example posts and updates in social media sites, blog posts, videos, pictures graphics, campaigns, promotes and customer service. The content drives traffic, informs users, builds awareness, improves the audience's opinion of the brand, increases brand exposure, drives conversations, converts customers and positions the company to meet the strategic goals. A good content strategy also drives business goals. (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, 23-24.)

Before the brand starts posting anything to their accounts, it should have a strategy according to which it presents itself in an online environment. Before starting to work on content strategy, the organization has to answer a lot of questions about itself and about the people it is providing the content to.

Content strategy is planning for the creation, delivery, and governance of useful digital content. Content strategy addresses the question: how can I best reach potential customers and provide value to them among billions of other content providers? The best way to address this question is to think about what the audience wants, what devices do they use and how can they be reached so that it best suits their needs at a time and a place when they want, what you can offer. (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, 23-34.)

Content strategy requires identifying specific groups of users, developing key messages and content based on their needs and interests, creating content optimized for the channels they use and distributing that content in such manner that maximizes its value to the user. (Frick & Eyer-Werve 2015, 3-4.) What should also be considered is, how they find the content, what life styles do they lead and how they use the products, but also how they perceive the communication they encounter in the digital environment. (Hakola & Hiila 2012, 131.)

According to web-based content marketing hub Smart Insights (2013) a simple starting point for content strategy is the following steps:

1. **Customer's goals:** Who are you aiming your content at? What are their needs, goals and objectives? How do they currently discover the content that is important to them? Where do they consume content? What content do they respond best to?
2. **Your objectives:** Why does your site/social media channel/mobile app/etc. exist? Who are the main stakeholders for these content channels in your business? What is the main purpose of each of these channels from your stakeholders' perspectives? What key messages do you want to convey? How do your key messages map to your business objectives?
3. **Main topics:** What are the main topic areas that you will publish on? What will you talk about? What subjects will you cover?
4. **Tone of voice:** How will you say what you're saying? What style will you adopt? How will you maintain a consistent style across all your marketing communications?

Frick & Eyler-Werve (2015, 8) provide a framework that can help the organization clarify and formulate specific and measurable objectives and goals.

Table 2. Framework for setting goals and objectives for content strategy

<b>Name of the organization</b>	
	1. Mission statement – what does the company do and what kind of business is it in?
2. Organizational objectives	What the organization does to execute its mission?
3. Website Goals	What specific strategies the organization can pursue on its website or campaign to meet the organization’s mission?
4. Target Audience Goals	What does the target audience comes to the site to learn or to do?
5. Content Hypothesis	What content supports both the website’s goals and target audience goals?
6. Promotion	How will people find this content?
7. Key performance indicators	Measures that help you understand if you are meeting your website goals.
8. Targets	Pre-determined indicators of success or failure.
9. Segments	A group of site visitors with a set of behavior, sources or outcomes in common.

Frick & Eyler-Werve (2015, 8)

In this table, and the four points before, show how both internal and external viewpoints have to be considered when the content is being created.

A good content strategy drives conversion (= turning users into customers), and increases customer engagement by making it easy to find the information, product and services. The brand has to meet the customers where they are instead of expecting people to find the brand. The content should also be published to the audience at times and at a frequency that customers are most receptive to. Then the brand has to engage the customers through all the channels, educate them, and provide entertaining content. The messages the brand sends have to be tailored to the target audiences, and the key messages have to increase positive sentiment and brand loyalty. Finally, getting measurable performance results enable the communication team to adjust the content to maximize the performance. (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, 24 -25.)

Traditionally brand communication has been based on AIDA-model, which consists of Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action (Duncan 2008, 182). Tanni & Kerosuo (2013, 117) argue that AIDA-model is based on reaching people, but in order to succeed in an

online-environment, the communication teams have to concentrate on attracting the strategically important target groups to follow brand's own content. The followers then bring new followers to the brand.

As a different approach and option, Tanni & Kerosuo (2013, 118) suggest a FIGA-model, which is an abbreviation of the words Find, Identify, enGagement and Action. In this model the followers bring new followers, and even though every follower may not be a prospect and a possible client, those will be found among the engaged followers.

Tanni & Kerosuo concentrate on business-to-business communication, and they have appointed different channels for different type of content. In this thesis the communication is business-to-consumer, B-to-C, and the content should activate consumer-to-consumer, C-to-C, communication, such as word-of-mouth recommendations and activation, as well. That is why there are slight differences in the way this thesis work approaches the content division related to channels. This thesis suggests, that these three different categories are usable in every channel, and thus they are placed in an example of editorial calendar accordingly.

According to Tanni & Keronen (2013, 39) three main categories for the content are:

1. Reaching – regular cycle of publishing.
2. Engaging – builds a relationship with a customer, enhances an engram in a customer's mind, gives ideas and inspires
3. Activating – engaging content leads to activate consumers to do something.

Finally, to differentiate content marketing from the term native marketing one has to remember, that native marketing gives the same experience than the media it is presented in. It can be part of content marketing or not. The native advertising content is planned according to the device or platform, and it is natural content that the customer doesn't feel as a one way advertising message. It is important that the ad is part of the identity of the media, but it is equally important that the consumer understands who the sender of the message is. Native ad is always bought or rented advertising. (Mäkinen 2015.) It is not owned or earned.

## **4.2 A brand needs a story**

Stories help people relate to the brand or community around it. If the company or a brand is not interesting to its customers or does not awake any feelings, people will not visit its page and generate or share content. Community is not born by people liking a page or joining a campaign. People must want to belong into a story and community. The community has to be meaningful and part of their identity. (Rauhala & Vikström 2014, 235-236.)

In social media stories are important, because people are exposed to all kinds of content from cat videos and celebrity pictures to daily news from different outlets. Brands compete

for attention among all of this content. Stories can be distributed through social media channels, but to stand out the content has to be interesting, useful and engaging (Rauhala & Vikström 2014, 206).

Before a brand can engage customers it has to have a story for itself based on its values (Rauhala and Vikström 2014, 195-196). A good company story is truthful and its values are alive in everyday life inside the company.

Phillips (2013, 22) refers to storytelling in various channels as Transmedia storytelling. At its core transmedia storytelling is about applying the same human principles such as good salesmanship and good storytelling that has been around for as long as we can remember. New tools let us apply those principles in a novel ways, but the old principles shouldn't be forgotten. It's easy to give an audience or a customer a cold and automated mass experience rather than a warm and personal one.

### **4.3 Key messages for the audience**

Having a clear idea, who and what kind of people are in the audience, helps decide on the channels, messages and even tactics. It is no longer enough to know that the target group is named "20-30-year-old male from the metropolitan area" (Hakola & Hiila 2012, 131). In social media it is possible to more specific niche target groups.

Audience research helps to identify the prospects and customers to target the communication to. Audience research can be done through user interviews to see, how the target group likes the products and what would make it easier for them to buy the products. One can also analyze the visitor metrics or conduct surveys, analyze users' actions, and use automated user polls. (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, 30-31.)

Creating the content to the channels starts with the story that underpins the brand. From that message the context for the content is created, that is discoverable, promotable and shareable, and that invites discussion and participation. (Norrington 2013, 27.) The brand managers should ask themselves how the brand wants to impact people's lives. What value does it provide that is different from others? What content can the brand share with the customers that would help them make a decision about doing business with the brand?

To help formulating key messages, imaginary user personas can be used. These personas represent the attributes, needs, wants and behaviors of a group of customers. The aim is to improve customer-centricity of a product or a service by developing an understanding of your users. User persona can help decide which content to keep, expand or throw away. (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, 32.)

When the content is created to the audience's specific needs, they are more likely to share it. Shareable content spreads the word far and wide, which is what the companies expect social media communication to do. People can be powerful advocates for brands, and word-of-mouth-marketing can be more powerful than advertising ever could.

Only small percentage of users create content themselves. In their article Matikainen & Villi (in Malmelin & Villi 2015, 82-83) state that it is much more common to share and distribute content for example by tweeting in Twitter or sharing in Facebook. It is more common to share the content created by professionals, such as news or entertaining media content, than content created by other users. This is why content has to be shareable - or it doesn't exist.

#### **4.4 Measuring results**

Measuring the results of the actions, and distributed content, is important to be sure that the content is efficient and doing what it is supposed to do. Many of the channels provide performance metrics, but there are also third party providers, who offer different kinds of metrics about how the content performs.

The key is to keep focus on what happens after the content is published in social network. The goal should be in tracking metrics that capture conversations, sharing and other forms of participation. (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, 103.)

The options for what to measure are endless, so it is important to choose the metrics that serve the objectives of the brand, and keep focus in the things that the organization wants to know and measure.

According to Frick & Eyler-Werve (2015, 104-105) there are four main types of metrics:

1. Volume: how many followers, posts, tweets etc. gives a starting point for measuring.
2. Engagement: quality of actions. These metrics include number of shares across platforms, number of people taking part in contest vs. number of people who liked and / shared it, number of people who used hashtags vs. those who talked about the event without using a hashtag, number of people taking action, like writing reviews, completing a challenge, or taking advocacy action. These metrics take sentiment into account: if 90 per cent of the reviews negative, the number of entries is not favorable.
3. Click-throughs. Count up a number of click-throughs and calculate how much money is saved by earning click-throughs instead of paying for them.
4. Conversions. Social media monitoring software can track conversions, like purchases. This is simple and most direct way to determine return on media invest.

Tanni & Keronen (2013, 43) state, that marketing managers often count clicks and number of visitors to the home page as a measurement of reaching audiences. Yet, building a customer relationship requires more than that. Engagement that leads to activating is im-

portant. Instead of clicks and likes more interesting information could be how many viewers got familiar with the content, and how did they end up finding it or what consumer did with the content while viewing it (Hurme 2015). The biggest number is not the most interesting information.

#### **4.5 Choosing the channels**

Joining a social media platform should be an informed decision, which is based on audience research. Creating accounts on multiple platforms is not wise if the target group is not using it or if the brand's organization doesn't have resources to keep all the accounts active. Neglecting an account says something about the brand as well, and it builds the brand. Scott (2013, 269) compares social media to a cocktail party. There are thousands of channels like social gatherings in real life. One can't attend them all, and join all the interesting conversations. That's why one has to choose the few parties to attend to, and have fun with those who are present.

If the brand has limited resources, it is better to take on just a few channels and manage them well. Knowing the audience, their interests, and what channels they use, and why they would be interested in receiving the brand's content, help save money and time. It is also more likely, that the brand is able to formulate the right kind of messages to the right channels. (Hakola & Hiila 2012, 115.)

Every digital channel has its own rules of engagement, its own tone and audience, and which operate at different velocities. For example Twitter and Facebook have their own rhythm. (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, 44.) Twitter is fast and on time, whereas Facebook can be slower paced.

Most community platforms, such as Facebook, are commercial companies, so activity in social media is also commercial activity, not only an arena for people to express themselves (Malmelin & Villi 2015, 68). Facebook and other companies hardly ever produce content themselves, but provide a platform for the interaction between users (ibid, 67). The channels should be chosen according to the features they have to offer to the brand and the consumers.

There are more publishing channels than one can keep track of, so this thesis will cover only those that are meaningful to Golla.

The channels and platforms that Golla uses, are listed in the following sections.

#### **4.6 Facebook**

Facebook started as a student network, but opened soon for non-students in 2006. It has become a big community with over 1.49 billion monthly users in the end of the second

quarter of the year 2015 (Statista 2015). It is the most popular social network in use as a marketing tool, because it is the most likely channel to reach majority of the target groups worldwide, and organizations can connect to communities and people directly.

Facebook provides four types of pages for communicating: personal profiles for friend-to-friend communication, company pages, groups, and applications. One can post a profile picture, cover picture, interesting information about the owner or the content of the page. One of the best features of Facebook are ability to Like and Tag (identify someone within a post) the things one does on the page. Pushing a picture of a thumb or tagging something is likely to appear on the user's profile for friend's to see. Facebook is a good way to deliver information and ideas to a network of people who are interested in the brand and its products. Shareable content is very important in Facebook. (Scott 2013, 248).

A profile is a first step, but there are other options. An organization can create a page or a group. Pages can contain information that anyone can see. Groups are often for more in-depth information around a specific subject. According to Scott 2013 (252) people join groups, because they want to stay informed, and they want to do it in their own time.

Facebook applications are a good way to build a brand. It costs nothing to launch and is easy to create. They provide a way for marketers to be creative, try new things and possibly go viral. (Scott 2013, 253.)

#### **4.7 Instagram**

Storytelling through images have become increasingly important marketing and public relations asset over the recent years (Scott 2013, 294). Images appeal to emotions across cultures. Instagram is all about visual marketing.

For a customer Instagram is a photo-sharing application that makes it easy and fun to manipulate a photo. Filters help to make an average photo more artistic. It provides an easy way to create content and publish it. Technology has improved so that anyone can create a picture or a video with their mobile phones, and upload it in the web with a speedy internet connection.

For marketer's Instagram is powerful channel to showcase the brand's offering, but if the photo stream is all about the products, it doesn't engage users in a long-term basis. A brand can start marketing in Instagram by sharing visually attractive and beautiful photos, but the key is to create content that the Instagram community wants to connect to.

Instagram is a good way to search for followers, and target groups, because people can use hashtags inside the application. Hashtags help people find the content and communities interested in the same topics. For example people interested in photographing often



use hashtags with lens descriptions, which help other photographers find their photos, and share information on how a captivating photo was taken. A brand can look for hashtags and use them in hope to find new people interested in the brand's values.

Another way to find followers is to like and comment their content as a brand. It is a step towards the users, and they might start to follow the brand in return. (Anttonen 2015 c.)

#### **4.8 Pinterest**

Pinterest is the third largest social network (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, 234) and also strongly based on visual attraction. It is a visual demonstration of bulletin board, or a scrapbook with social features. The users can create boards on which they can collect ideas, wish lists, inspiration and entertaining content for later use. They can follow any user or board they want without asking a permission or becoming friends. Users can also send each other pins that they might find interesting. Brands have noticed this, and to date, two thirds of the content is branded.

The marketing value is in following, sharing and liking when the content has to be interesting, shareable and visual. If a brand creates interesting visual content, people will start to follow the boards and pin it to their own boards which then shows in other people's feed. Pinterest also suggests pins for users according to their interests and behavior.

Pinterest is also frequently used to share things that you like that aren't your products or services but that get people interacting socially. For example a grocery market brand can share images of designer kitchens. (Scott 2013, 299.)

Pinterest makes it possible to showcase the organization as one can share inbound links to web content, such as web shop. It has attracted a lot of interest as an e-commerce platform. It has been said to drive over 50 per cent more conversion than other platforms, clearly better at introducing customers to retailers (Wiley 4<sup>th</sup> February 2014).

#### **4.9 Twitter**

Twitter is for sharing short messages. It is a social messaging service where users can share their thoughts in 140 character posts.

Twitter has become an important channel for businesses in building an image, building a brand, and listening to their customers.

Users can follow anyone they are interested in. It is used to spread information updates to the network, and pointing the interest of the followers to things the tweeter wants them to look at. The best way to get people to pay attention to oneself is to participate by following others and responding to them. (Scott 2013, 258.)

It should be emphasized that a brand should be linked to Twitter Search Engine to see what people are saying about you, organization, products and services, and perhaps the competitors and a category of products you sell. There are also third party services providing keyword and phrase monitoring. (Scott 2013, 258.)

A brand should be very careful when it talks about its products and services. Twitter is not a good tool to be used for direct advertising. A brand should act more like an interested member of a community. Some brands use Twitter to inform the customers about special deals, but spamming the community is not appreciated. A good rule to remember is that a brand should act as a member of the community, and have something to say. (Scott 2013, 258.)

#### **4.10 Other presence in social media**

Users can share content in other channels than the one it is originally uploaded in. For example a picture in Instagram can easily be shared in Facebook or Twitter. This section will cover channels and platforms that are considered as assisting of nature considering this thesis.

Youtube is a platform where people can upload videos, which are increasingly popular form of content. Users can visit Youtube content without registering or register and then be able to participate in commenting and customize the selection to better fit their needs.

Some users such as artists, entertainers and TV-shows have put up their own channels that users can subscribe to. Marketers such as Golla can use Youtube to upload its videos on a public display and share the content to other channels.

Videos are a good way to show people what the company does, and people enjoy watching visually enjoyable stories. They are also easy to share for example in Facebook or Twitter. Another platform for uploading and sharing videos is Vimeo.

Videos are also a good content for media and bloggers to share in their platforms.

Youtube and other video services have helped in emerging new professions such as vloggers, people who tell about their lives and thoughts through video blogs. Those who do it through Youtube channels, are called youtubers. These people make content and co-operate with brands spreading the word through reviews or creative content. Their companionship is based on ideally them being able to freely say or do whatever they want about the product or service. Their blogs and vlog channels are considered to be valuable, because they create positive word-of-mouth as they are trusted members of their communities.

To conclude this chapter, Frick & Eyler-Werve's (2015, 24) Content Marketing Cycle will show the different steps of a content strategy.

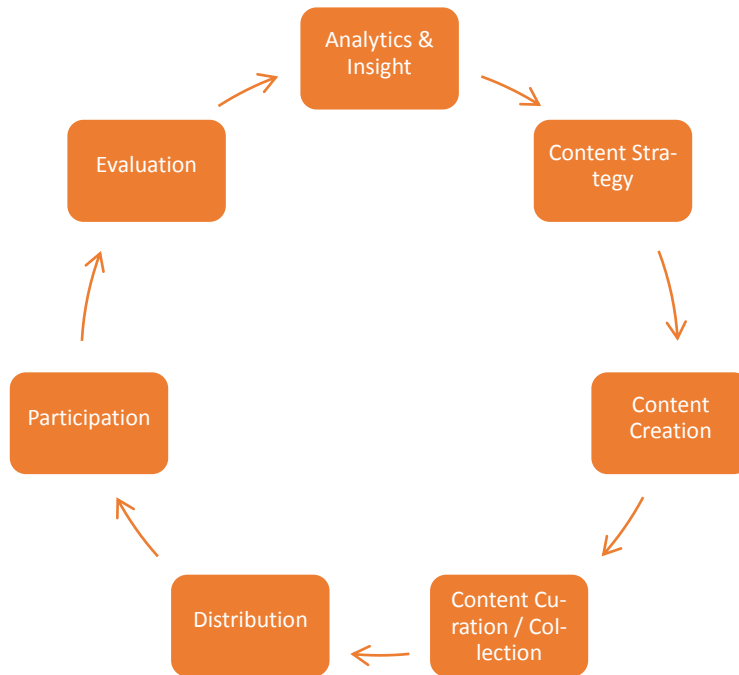


Figure 1. The Content Marketing Cycle. Frick & Eyler-Werve's (2015, 24)

As can be seen, the cycle starts with analytics and insight of what the current situation is and determines the task and objective for the content. After that a content strategy can be made. The content strategy will define the overall idea, a concept, for the content that will be created and produced.

The content strategy will also determine which channels are in use, and what their role is in the communication. After distributing the content in the chosen channels, the organization behind the brand has to take part in the conversation, monitor the reactions and listen to audience's wishes. By evaluating them, the content strategy can be altered and enhanced.

The cycle always ends in analytics and insight of what the results are, and if the goal was achieved.

## 5 Collaboration Brings out Ideas

This chapter will explain the method used in this research to gather the data and how it has been analyzed to come to the conclusions.

### 5.1 Constructive research approach

A constructive research method was chosen for this thesis project due to its nature and emphasis on collaborative work between the contractor and the researcher. It is a very practical type of a method. The constructive research approach has been developed in the field of business research, although it can be applied in many other fields as well. The method has been used for example to create a language, Morse code, and a mathematical frame. (Lukka 2011.)

The constructive research method is suitable for example when there is a need for a concrete product such as a plan, measuring system or a format. The goal for this research method is to find a solution to real world problems by creating a new structure or a construction. (ibid.)

The solutions should be theoretically argued, so that it brings new knowledge into business and science. To come to the solution or construction, theoretical and empirical knowledge is needed. It is evaluated by its usefulness in practice. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2009, 65). Constructive research approach can also improve an existing system or performance with the overall implication of adding to existing body of knowledge (Oyekoge 2011, p. 578). For a company or an organization, constructive research approach offers solutions to a problem at hand, but it can also narrow the gap between practice and theory, i.e. what theory could have to offer for the organization to handle their challenges in the future. For this to happen, it is important that both the researcher and the company representatives are committed to the task and work closely together. (Lukka, 2011.)

A constructivist approach focuses on the phenomena of the study. It sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data. The resulting theory is an interpretation, which depends on the researcher's view. (Charmaz 2006, 130.)

In terms of research question, the constructive research question can be phenomenon driven or theory driven or a combination of the two. The identified research problems are being used to propose research questions that address the problem. (Oyekoge, 2011, 576).

In the constructive approach, it is essential to tie the problem and its solution together with accumulated theoretical knowledge. The core element of the constructive approach is the innovation or design construct phase which is often heuristic by nature with stricter theoretical justification. The novelty and the actual working of the solution need to be demonstrated. (Oyekoge 2011, 579.)

Lukka's guide to constructive research approach is to find a research question that has a relevant problem, and a possibility to theoretical contribution (Lukka 2011).

## **5.2 Phases of the study**

This thesis project lasted a little over a year, and during that time the data and information has been gathered from interviews, a workshop, email correspondence as well as theoretic and professional literature, and presentations. This thesis' material is based on qualitative research methods. According to Flick (2009, 16) qualitative research is not based on a unified theoretical and methodological concept, but various theoretical approaches and their methods characterize the discussion and research practice.

Lukka (2011) divides the research process into three main phases that are:

1. Preliminary work, when the problem is being identified, possibility to a theoretical contribution is found and possibility for a long term working period is granted with the company.
2. Second phase is field work, when the solution model is being created and tested.
3. Third phase is to find a theory and a possibility for theoretical contribution.

This thesis project has followed these three phases, but the writer of this thesis can identify seven more narrowly focused phases. The phases are presented in the figure below.



Figure 2. Seven phases of this research process

These steps will be explained in the next chapter.

### 5.3 Interviews and current state analysis

This thesis process began with an introduction meeting in which the CEO and Head of Sales were present. The representatives of the company explained the situation of the company and expressed their preliminary thoughts, wishes and needs for the communication strategy in social media.

The researcher was part of a group of three student researchers although each student did their individual report. In the first meeting, it was possible to ask questions, but the emphasis was on getting to know the company's background and situation, and discuss the practicalities of the project. These included the approximated timetable, Golla's annual calendar and milestones of the launch for the new collections, why the change was necessary, and what the general business strategy was.

The writer of this thesis took notes in her notebook. It was agreed to organize a second meeting with the head of sales and the digital marketing coordinator, who would be able to answer the researchers' questions about the social media channels in use, what steps

had been taken in communication so far, and what was needed to do from this point on. The digital marketing coordinator's insight was valuable information to the task at hand. The interview was held in a semi-structured manner meaning that the researcher had listed questions and themes, but the interview was conducted in a relaxed manner and the participants were able to express their thoughts freely.

This interview was recorded, transcribed and highlighted with different colored markers according to the interviewees. The transcription was also marked with a pen to margins according to the theme discussed.

After the interviews, the researcher wrote a list of the themes and words that rose in the interviews. In the interviews the themes listed below were discussed:

- content
- concept
- communication plan and strategy
- storyline and storytelling
- brand, branding
- channels for content
- bloggers
- audience
- brand recognition and wider reach
- "old mobile phone case -image" vs. new Golla.
- relevance, relevant content
- no outsourcing

These words indicated what theoretic knowledge or practical insight could be useful for the team members in Golla, and what should be discussed in the guide booklet.

#### **5.4 Benchmarking and constructing the first draft**

With the background information about the company, its resources and needs, it was easier to evaluate the actions the staff had done in Golla's social media channels, and see what other consumer brands had done in different channels. This kind of researching helped finding ideas and logic in the competitors approach to communicate the brand in different channels. This research method is called benchmarking, which is mostly used in the field of business to evaluate and apply best practices that improve quality (Kyrö & Kulmala, 2004).

Golla had been following a competing global brand, Herschell. The researcher started to follow that brand and Golla in different social media channels. Other brands that were followed was Kuru, a footwear brand, which was a smaller brand for consumers with a specific foot condition called plantar fasciitis. This was interesting to the researcher because she was suffering from the foot condition and belonged to a niche target group herself in that regard. Kuru's approach was very active campaigning, contest and offers, which was

what Golla's team had in mind. Also Kuru's visual image palette happened to be similar to Golla's visual line.

Another benchmark target was Pepsi Max Finland, a global beverage brand, with a lot of activity in different channels and lots dedicated followers. Pepsi Max also has different approaches in different countries, which was interesting. Their content in the Finnish profiles was activating, and the content was shared, liked and commented a lot by its followers.

Occasionally, the writer of this thesis looked up other brands, from random consumer categories in different channels. These brands provided good ideas and inspiration to the work. It was interesting to follow the brand as a consumer, and observe the reactions and thoughts that Golla's as well as other brands' actions and content brought up in the observer.

One way of looking at benchmarks for content and campaigns was plain Google search and image search. One could search for "Pinterest campaign" and find a plethora of examples of campaigns and practices other brands had tried. It is also easy to find analysis done by journalists, professional practitioners and social media enthusiasts about different campaigns and tactical actions. Doing this and reading analysis of different campaigns helped brainstorming ideas for Golla.

The researcher took notes, saved screen shots and the best ideas to develop some ideas of them for Golla as a suggestion for their activities. The benchmark examples were used as frameworks that the researcher then filled with content suggestion for Golla, or took a part of the benchmark idea and developed a new idea from the original idea.

In reviewing the benchmark findings, and developing ideas for Golla, the researcher had criteria for what examples would fit Golla's agenda:

- The idea had to involve Golla's values somehow: travel, work on the move, Nordic roots, urban and active lifestyle, positive take on life.
- The idea had to serve the audience: entertain, challenge positively, activate, inspire
- Not too complicated / expensive / time consuming to perform or practice.

Talking about best practices with marketing and communications professionals, taking part in seminars and writing about the topic as part of researcher's day job as a journalist, helped the task forward as well.

Based on the interviews and benchmarking, the first draft of the guide booklet was constructed. The first draft was not meant to be a version that would be given to Golla's staff as a final guide. It was a Powerpoint –show (see Attachment 2) that had basic elements of content strategy and some examples of other brands' activities listed. It did help the constructing process in defining what the final work would have to include and what was still missing.



The Powerpoint-show introduced Golla, its target groups, its communicative objectives and channels it had currently accounts in. The nature of each channel was described, how it could be used, and what kinds of actions other brands had taken in these channels. It also pointed out some tones of voices or copywriting the researcher had observed as some way unclear or unpleasant from a consumer's point of view.

That first version was used as a basis for discussion in the workshop held in January.

## **5.5 Co-creation in workshops and via emails**

The objective for the workshop was to define with the staff members, what Golla is and how it would present itself in social media communication, define the roles for each channel and a tone of voice for the brand. The goal was also to gather ideas on how to act in different channels and plan a campaign.

The participants, in addition to the researcher, were six employees from Golla, who work closely or relatively closely with communication and content production for social media channels. The workshop enabled group discussion and different ideas to rise better than for example an interview.

The method chosen for this workshop was called MeWeUs. In this method every participant uses pen and paper to write or draw their ideas of a topic at hand. After that the participants share their thoughts and then the topics are discussed openly. (Kantojärvi 2012, 54-55.) Due to a small space and a small number of participants this development method seemed like the best way to share ideas in a group.

The first theme in the workshop was: What is Golla? This theme was chosen, because it is important to define how the brand is perceived by staff members internally to be able to communicate it externally. As Barlow and Stewart (2004, 95) stated, brands are based in experiences, and in this thesis context the practitioners are the ones creating those experiences for the audience. Discussing the brand's meaning to the team members also helps ascertain that everyone understands the brand similarly, and makes it easier to brief new or substitute employees.

The second theme was the target group. Golla had defined the overall target groups, but as social media makes it possible to focus the message to smaller niche groups (Hakola & Hiila 2012, 131), this was one chance to think through, who the brand wants to target with its messages. Defining clear target groups makes it easier to plan the key messages.

The third theme was Golla's communication. The questions were: what is the communication in social media like now, what it wants to be, and what it does not want to be in the future. The group defined Golla as a communicator, discussed tools and actions, as well as pointed out the attributes the brand does not want to be associated with. It was important

to acknowledge what the team members were happy with and what they felt still needed improving, to be able to set goals.

The writer of this thesis gathered the words that came up in the interviews in a framework below:

Table 3. Words from the interviews

<b>Communication is now</b>	<b>Want it to be</b>	<b>Is not</b>
Secure, could be more different Simple Videos Photos Product centered Good looking Vague Tame Too heavy Too serious	Real Quality Diverse Fresh Values and tradition Nordic, Finnish company with a face Tangible Planned Activating Relaxed Clever Interactive	Purposefully different, Fake Tacky Parochial Homemade Too weird Provocative Ordinary Cheap or cheap looking

The groups had also an open discussion about channels and the accounts Golla had in use as well as what kind of a story the brand wants to tell and how Golla would like to present itself. Facebook and Instagram were favored platforms among the team as the team members were most familiar with these channels and they are the easiest for the team members to use. The organization has defined the attributes of the brand story, but this conversation did not bring out very clear or concrete ways to take the storytelling forward. This was partly due to the fact that half of the participants were not familiar with the channels and were not comfortable taking part in the conversation.

The other part of the workshop was to plan campaigns and actions into different channels as a group. The method was a traditional brainstorming in which the researcher acted as a moderator. The group discussed hashtags and how to use them, platforms and their limitations, and possible times for campaigns. The researcher also shared some of her observations and thoughts with the participants in an informal conversation.

The researcher took notes and gathered some of the participants notes after the workshop as well. She then wrote the themes and outcomes discussed in the workshop to a document alongside with her observations, quotes and interpretations. These themes and

observations were then compared to the notes from the interview from the fall 2014 with the former employees. The themes were written with bold letters and after being printed, highlighted with colored markers.

## **5.6 Campaign planning**

In the workshop the group agreed on doing some activity for Valentine's day, which could have been used as a demonstration of novelty and actual working of the solution for this thesis, as Oyekoge (2011, 579) suggested. The schedule was tight and eventually the practitioners had no time to implement the activity. The team ended up posting a picture to some of the channels wishing happy Valentine's day.

Later in the spring, the team did a photo contest in Instagram, but it wasn't very successful, according to the staff members at Golla. The researcher observed the same. Only 15 photos were submitted of which some were sent by Golla's staff members. The campaign creators had not set any goals or metrics to define the success of the campaign, but they did expect more submitted photos and overall activity from the audience.

The collaboration between the researcher and the digital marketing assistant continued through emails about the possible campaigns or actions and how to promote them. Since the Valentine's day campaign was not conducted, the communication between the researcher and Golla's team members was less active than anticipated.

In the emails the digital marketing assistant wished for ideas for campaigns in the social media channels. There was a preliminary plan to do a measurable activity or campaign in March, but the photo contest in Instagram was a replacement for that. The theme of the contest was to send a picture related to one's work in some way. The writer of this thesis had no part in planning the campaign, but exchanged two emails about the contest theme and how it could be promoted and the participation activated after it was already launched. Other than the emails, the researcher followed the contest as a regular social media user and a consumer.

The point of the campaign from research point of view was to observe the success of the campaign according to defined goals and metrics in chosen channels, which could later be analyzed. The Instagram photo contest lasted until mid-June 2015.

The researcher received the results of the campaign in September 2015 due to staff changes in Golla before summer holidays. After the summer, it was not clear who the contact person for this thesis project would be. The writer of this thesis got a new contact person in the end of August, who had not been part of the team earlier, and did not know what had been discussed earlier regarding this thesis. Luckily there was one person who

had been involved with the campaign, and was able to provide some analysis about the contest.

The campaign was meant to be a test the team wanted to try out. The outcome wasn't satisfactory.

"We didn't assign any goals or spent time on planning. We thought that it would be fun to test something. We did expect a bit more participants."

(Kaksonen 24<sup>th</sup> September 2015.)

It is good to test, but to learn from the tests, there should be some metrics and goals to define, whether the test was successful or not, and how it could be improved. It is also easier to define Key Performance Indicators, KPI's, to know if the campaign is going to the right direction, and what could be done better if the campaign does not seem to be working.

The team had thought about what might have gone wrong. The reasons are listed below:

1. Promotion didn't find the right target group
2. More promotion was needed in the beginning to start the contest
3. The subject was too boring (send a picture that is related to your work). Maybe one's work is not too interesting as a photo motif
4. The prizes were not interesting enough. People buy Golla's products when they need them, so a voucher to a web shop is not so interesting.

(Kaksonen 24<sup>th</sup> September 2015.)

Based on the research and content strategy principles, the writer of this thesis found some additional reasons that explain the unsuccessful campaign. Acknowledging these and studying campaign planning in more detail will produce better outcomes from campaigns and activities in the future.

1. The promotion didn't find the target group because the contest was promoted in Golla's channels, which the individuals in the target group had not yet found. The promotion should have been conducted in the channels the target audiences use. Audience research would have helped in defining these channels.
2. The campaign was not thought through the audience's interest. Golla wants to reach active people who work on the move and lead urban lifestyles. That is why the theme work was picked for the contest. With more planning, the team could have come up with something that would interest this group of individuals beyond their work, but still benefit Golla's area of interests. For promotion of the campaign the writer of this thesis suggested the following:

"To activate followers to think of original motifs for photos, Golla could try to promote the contest with copy writing such as: 'Do you love the work you do? Tell / show it to us!' or 'Did you turn your hobby into work?' or 'What kind of adventures does your work include? Take a picture for us!'"

3. This target group might not be the type that takes part in photo contests in social media. Studying the target group's behavior would have helped define what alternative action would have worked better.
4. Golla had about 400 followers in Instagram when the contest took place. The contest might have worked better later, after Golla had attracted more followers in that channel, and then activated them with a contest.
5. Instagram might not be the right channel for the theme, as it is not profiled as a professional channel. Something to do with letting loose might have worked better in Instagram. Work can also be quite a difficult topic to visualize for most people.

## **5.7 Suggestions for Golla's team**

In September 2015, Golla's team was planning another campaign or contest, and asked if the researcher had any ideas or suggestions. The suggestion was to define the basic objectives:

- Who do you want to reach (working and traveling people for sure, but who else?) and what channel do they use (Insta or Facebook out of the ones Golla uses)
- What do you want to accomplish? Is the objective to engage the existing followers or find new ones? What reactions do you want?
- How do you measure the results? Likes? Shares? Increase in the number of followers by how many percent?
- What is the message you want to send?
- How do you promote the campaign or content? What are the indicators that the campaign is not going to the right direction, and what are your plans to correct the situation?

Instead of the campaign, the researcher suggested a longer term strategy to engage the followers, and accustom them into Golla's routine of publishing and repeating content. The basic concept was to activate Facebook followers into sharing stories of their adventures, and that way engage with the brand and co-create content. The point was also to find new followers by offering the followers entertainment and content that is "on brand", but does not feel like advertising. This creates trust and commitment between the brand and a consumer, and could help form a community around Golla's values and interests, as Batey (2010, 162) suggested.

The idea of adventures came from Golla's slogan: My day. My Adventure. The suggestion was, that Golla could pick a day, Friday for example, and post a question related to adventures every Friday. With a hashtag #storyforfriday people could take part and be part of the phenomenon and maintain interest in Golla's brand. Golla's staff could also share their stories and tips to make the company culture more familiar and the brand more approachable.

The framework for this concept was a result of benchmarking, as there is a hashtag #FF in Twitter which stands for Follow Friday. The trend was created in 2009, which has become a customary Friday activity. #FF is a way to recommend profiles for other users, and bring more followers to them. It is also a nice thing to do for other users, a sign of appreciation. (Orre, A. 2015)

The theme would be kept alive by asking questions every Friday. The researcher wrote a list of 12 questions with which Golla could start, and modify for their needs according to the objectives. Direct questions have proven to be quite an effective way to get followers to react (Anttonen 2015 c). The questions were as follows:

- What adventures would you like to experience?
- What would you like to learn this month?
- What was the last time you got lost?
- What has been your most unforgettable adventure?
- What is the best way to get to know a new city?
- Where would you like to visit next?
- Where's the best view in your home town?
- What is the best quality of a travel companion?
- When was the last time you overcame your fears?
- When was the last time you met a new person?
- What is your favorite airplane activity?
- What would you want to see in city X?

There were also four examples of how to react to the stories to make sure that the brand reacts and rewards the followers who take part in the #storyforfriday - activity. The examples were:

"Thanks for sharing your story! We're glad it ended well."

"Wow, what an adventure! Thanks for sharing!"

"That sounds like fun! Thanks for sharing!"

"Can't wait to visit city X! Thanks for the tips!"

It was also suggested that Golla could reward the best story once a month with a price or a discount.

Although it was suggested to start the activity in Facebook, where Golla has the biggest number of followers, it could spread to other channels like Twitter or Instagram, in which hashtags are used more widely. The researcher also suggested that Golla could start to follow some people in the desired target group, and maybe have them follow Golla in return. It is one proven way to increase the number of followers (Anttonen 2015 c).

In the feedback, Golla's Vice President in Sales and Marketing, Yuriko Shibayama (7<sup>th</sup> October 2015), stated that she would hope for the reactions to come from genuine social media users from various countries instead of from inside the organization. To the suggested idea and the activating questions her feedback was as follows:

"Questions should be simple, positive, inspiring. Not too complicated, negative, boring. And somehow related with Golla value – creative lifestyle and works, on the move, Scandinavia/ Finland.

From the list, I like

- Where would you like to visit next?
- Where is your next destination on business or on holiday?
- Where's the best view in your home town? Or what's great about your hometown?

Other ideas I come up with as getting inspiration from your questionnaires are;

- Where is your next holiday destination?
- Where is your favorite city?
- Which airport is your favorite?
- Which airline you like the best?
- Where you want to visit in Finland?
- What do you want to do in Finland?
- What's your favorite chocolate brand (image of work-mate, I eat sometimes chocolate when I need to do some complicated works)?
- What's your favorite drinks at the office?
- What's your favorite magazine on the plane?
- What's the favorite movie you watched in the plane recently?" (Shibayama 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015.)

Shibayama also commented on the campaign evaluation:

- “- How much Golla liked numbers are increased before / after the post
- How much comments we gain out of the post
- How much liked we gain out of the post, and its percentage of Golla entered liked. If Golla has 500 fans, and gain 20 liked, 4% people reacted.” (ibid.)

Whether Golla decides to implement the strategy remains to be seen, and the actual working of the solution cannot be demonstrated in this thesis. Yet, the feedback suggests that it is something that Golla's managers could consider.

## **5.8 Thematic approach**

During the process of this thesis project the researcher wrote down themes and took notes that came up in seminars, literature or discussions about social media communication and marketing.

In the theoretic literature, themes or individual words came up repeatedly. One theme repeated most often in literature and professional best practices guides, was 'content' based on the audience's needs and interests, the outside-in approach. The writer of this thesis wrote lists of these themes and compared them with the notes from the interviews and workshop to see, what the team members at Golla had talked about and what had not been addressed. As different people taking part in the interviews and the workshop, the researcher had to evaluate the difference between the know-how, practices and attitudes between the sources as well as what had been said.

The researcher combined similar words or themes into one topic, and then looked for expressions or sentences from the notes, that fit under that specific theme and then

searched for theoretical knowledge from the literature to provide justifiable knowledge to that theme in the booklet.

The theoretic material such as Cornelissen (2011, 108), Frick & Eyller-Werve (2015, 24-25) and Fill (2009, 288) as well as numerous sources on the internet provided principles of what steps there are to create a communication strategy and apply it in social media, what needs to be defined before starting to produce the content and publishing it. Hakola & Hiila (2012) and Tanni & Kerosuo (2013, 39) among others provided insight on the outside-in approach of the communication. Combining the themes from different sources helped define what parts were missing from the first draft of the booklet, Golla's practice and overall communication strategy.

After the research and analysis, the main theme for the booklet became content marketing and audience based approach to communication, content production and publishing. Literature supported the themes.

The unifying themes that are explained in the booklet are:

- Defining goals for communication in social media
- Defining the audience
- Defining the channels
- Defining concept for content
- Categorizing content according to goals
- Content marketing
- Outside-in-marketing
- Defining brand personality and tone of voice
- Golla's storyline and sustaining a unanimous brand in different channels
- Setting metrics and KPI's
- Knowing the channels and platforms.

## **5.9 Constructing the booklet**

The first draft of the booklet was written from a very tactical point of view, starting from the existing guidelines and channels given by Golla's staff. The first draft focused on loose ideas for action instead of continuous and long-term strategy. More in-depth study improved the second version and clarified the themes that were considered important.

The final version of booklet was written based on the themes mentioned in the previous section. The writing period was May 2015.

The writer of this thesis decided that the booklet should be practical, easy to read and to approach, so the tone in the text is not academic. Its purpose is to provide basic information based on theoretic and professional findings as well as the observations the writer



of this thesis has made. The aim is to be able to provide ideas and tools that the team members could implement in a near future or right away as opposed to wait for more resources to be able to proceed.

As Golla's head of sales had stated that the organization wants to produce the content inside the organization, the booklet does not advice the team how to do things exactly, but provide tools and challenge the reader with questions to find the best way for the team to approach the strategy, content production and publishing.

The booklet starts with a list of the goals agreed on with Golla's representatives in the preliminary phase during the interviews in fall 2014: increase brand awareness, engage old customers to the new collections of Golla and reach the new target groups. In the booklet a goal of converting the social media followers to the web shop and other distribution channels is mentioned, as it should be the outcome of successful content marketing in the long run.

The topics addressed in the booklet are chosen based on the list of themes that rose from literature, and by evaluating the notes from interviews and workshop. Based on the interview and workshop notes as well as observations following the brand in different channels, the researcher ruled out some topics and themes that were already taken care of to some level. These include search engine optimization, which was already done or were in process by the team members and covered by a fellow student researcher, or topics that seemed to be less important due to lack of resources, such as planning large campaigns. The content of the booklet tries to awake thoughts on how to approach the content creation from the audience's point of view, categorizing the content to pursue different goals, and building a time frame for publishing the content according to the organization's goals and audience's needs.

The booklet has been reviewed by a fellow student from the same research group, the supervisor of this thesis, and two representatives from Golla. The feedback from Golla's representatives is listed below according to page numbers of the booklet.

Table 3. Feedback

Page number	Topic	Feedback	Reviewer
2	mission statements	"These descriptions are very good and helpful."	1
3	content	"Shareable content is the key for Golla's marketing content. Sharing content makes sure the information reaches all Golla's followers."	1
3	content	"Liked about the idea of contents > campaigns. Also test. Then adapt. Reviewing results is something Golla can do better!"	2

4	editorial calendar	"An editorial calendar is really helpful to have, and easy to share within the teams. Such a calendar now exists and has detailed posts for different channels and dates."	1
4	editorial calendar	"Liked the idea of 1) Love it, 2) Do it/ Try it, 3) Share it. Mental approach to the consumers, not only product intro or city view etc. Emphasizing more working mentality type of contents (positive ones mainly) is one step to go!"	2
5	rules of thumb	"Rules of thumb for content publishing -> It will be helpful to have some example idea what this means for Golla concretely."	2
5	rules of thumb	"This is a good way to categorize social media content. We could maybe also consider highlighting positive customer reviews in Facebook? And the restaurant day idea is very inspiring!"	1
6	content marketing	"Check list -> Very good, concrete questions! Answers to these are important to write down – it will help creating better content." "Content marketing is the key -> Good points. Transparency and related but professional attitude in Facebook creates trust."	1
10	audience research	"How to get to know the customers? Any data available from Facebook or website who the visitors are?"	1
10	audience research	"Evaluation sounds good! And survey of current 'likes' (nationality, age group, gender) might be good to understand whom we communicate. Then having target where we want to reach more sounds good. Which markets, what kind of people etc."	2
11	audience research	"This is interesting, but requires a lot of time to analyze..."	1
13	story content	"Interesting points, Checklist for story content: - Values and hopes - Social communication - Feelings Would be nice to see a concrete example of this kind of story?"	1
16	visual representation	"Would be nice to see some concrete examples to go with this list. Good points! :)"	1
17	Pinterest	"Idea to combine Pinterest and Golla online store sounds good! More B to C business model which is pretty new for Golla who has done more channel business."	2
18	Twitter	"Twitter, how much relevant for Golla? What's smart way to use Twitter for Golla? Golla's strengthes is more with image (pictures) and story." Reviewer 2.	2
19	analysis	"If possible, nice to have some analysis of current Golla Facebook/ Instagram contents concretely, what has been working well and better to do more, and what is not performing as well. Nice to have Golla Facebook fans analysis, and further possibilities if possible."	2
20	collaboration	"Blog collaborations are very important and can make a brand very successful nowadays. It would be good to collaborate to spread the word of the Golla brand :)"	1

The feedback showed that Golla's staff had noticed some of the same development issues and made the same conclusions as the writer of this thesis. Some suggestions from the booklet had already been taken into use whereas some observations were new and initiated some thoughts on how to change or address the situation.

Some examples were overwhelming such as the analysis, which is presumably due to the lack of experience in the field of measuring and analyzing the content. This topic should have been explained more thoroughly and with more examples. Also more concrete or better visual representation or example was requested, which is a fair feedback.

## **6 Communication guidelines, tools and tactics**

In this chapter the key findings and guidelines for Golla's social media communication are listed. These findings are based on the analysis of the research. Also, the tools and suggestions for Golla are discussed.

### **6.1 Brand as an asset**

The starting point of this thesis is Golla's brand and the strategy how to communicate it in social media environment. As the contractor wished for ideas for content, the emphasis of this thesis is on the content strategy.

Brand is an intangible asset that creates value to products or a company. Brand is built by the company by providing the target groups messages and experiences that build desired associations to the brand. These messages support the values, the brand stands for.

Stakeholders such as customers, social media users and retailers have a role in building the brand as well, whether they want to or not. Brands exist in the minds of people, and they use brands to express themselves.

The perceptions associated with the brand are formed by experiences in encounters with the brand. These experiences can be divided into three groups by the purpose: functional brand helps solve problems, experiential brand provides positive associations through experiences, and symbolic brand touches emotions. All of the three can be mixed. Social media environment provides points of encounter between the customer and the brand and enables the brand to provide experiences to its audience, which is why communication has a big role in brand building in an online environment. These experiences and activities create the customer's trust, engagement, and loyalty.

### **6.2 Guidelines to social media communication**

Communication in social media should be based on values that the brand stands for. In Gollas's case these values are creative lifestyle, work on the move and Nordic roots.

When this thesis project started, Golla had done its background work well. The brand values were clear to the staff members and they had a good sense of the brand concept and story it wanted to tell as well as the business strategy. It had three sub-brands and product lines that were to reposition the brand and the company in the global market. Only the how to tell the story, the strategy, was missing. Golla had kept communication all together at a very low key level before the launch, but wanted to start voicing the new brand emphasizing the social media environment.

The organization had decided to use platforms in social media as channels to reach the right target groups globally. Social media environment is a good approach to reaching the audience far and wide, but it is also crucial to find the niche groups who to target the message to, and get them to spread the word on behalf of the brand. For this Golla needed a strategy for social media communication and producing content.

Communication strategy is the general idea on how to reach the goals that are set. To implement the strategy there has to be a plan how to execute the strategy, the tactics.

This thesis introduced Cornelissen's (2011, 108) matrix, which shows that company mission and vision form a strategic intent. To be able to communicate that, the strategic intent has to be translated into themed messages that are designed to change or reinforce perceptions in line with the vision of how the brand or organization wants to be known. They emphasize an aspect the organization wants to become associated with in the minds of important stakeholder groups. (ibid., 88-89.) When a product such as a bag, can be easily replaced with a similar product from a different brand, the values and image the brand has, are the differentiating factors that adds value to the product.

The new sub-brands Golla Air, Golla Road and Golla Original were there to change the associations and modify the identity of the brand, as Aaker (2002, 253) described.

Main guidelines for Golla to communicate its brand in social media are as follows:

In order to build a successful communication strategy for social media, an organization has to decide its **key messages** based on its strategy and values. What does the brand stand for? What does it want to talk about and be associated with?

**Audience research** is required to know what kind of people the brand wants to reach. What are their interests? What kind of content do they need, that the brand could provide? And what kind of content could this niche group share, and that way spread the word about Golla? What channels do they use?

Deciding on the **channels** is based on audience research as well to know what channels the audiences use and how. With limited resources, Golla should concentrate on just few channels and platforms and practice them well. Spreading the focus to too many channels can be difficult to manage, and that makes the brand look vague and inconsistent.

**Content creation** is based on the audience's needs and the values that the brand stands for, not feeding the audience the messages, the organization wants to say. Trying to attract opinion leaders, a niche group, instead of large masses, gives direction to content creation.

**Metrics and analyzing tools** help defining whether the plan is working or not, and what could be done to get the situation to change. It will also show, what has worked so far.

### 6.3 Content marketing

The most important finding of this thesis is content marketing. As a writer of this thesis, this is the overarching answer to the research question.

One of the goals of this thesis is to build brand awareness for Golla through communicating in social media channels. Brand as a term is heavily linked to marketing rather than communication, but as stated in the literature review, integrating communication and marketing benefits the brand, as communication can bring out other viewpoints about the company and brand to the target group other than boost sales. Communication can enhance the perception of a brand in ways marketing can't.

Content marketing in the social media environment benefits from both disciplines. Social media environment is very fragmented, and a brand has to stand out from other brands by providing useful, entertaining and inspiring content in the channels that the audience uses and in a way that the audience finds it valuable at a right time. Combining marketing and communication can help the brand to break through the clutter. Content is most important element of brand's online presence. It drives brand awareness, conversations, sales and positions the company.

One of the most important things for the organization behind the brand to remember is that communication in social media channels is based on two-way communication, not only providing content or messages that the organization wants to tell. The organization has to listen to the audience to be able to offer them the kind of content the audience considers useful, informational or entertaining and inspiring. The content can be posts, pictures, blogs, videos, games, applications or contests. Creativity is the limit. Content marketing and communication in social media is about building a community and becoming a respected part of one or many. The communities are there so that people can gather around mutual interests or friendships. People in these communities are very much engaged, which makes the communities attractive to the marketers. In order to become a respected part of the community, the organization has to take part in dialogue with the audience. The audience has the power to tell stories and spread the word to their communities. This is why the content should be shareable, at least for the most part. Social media users can be a powerful asset to a brand, in good and in bad.

This thesis product and report suggest the content to be an ongoing dialogue instead of one-off campaigns. Campaigns can also be used, but they have to be well planned. Goals and metrics should be set and analyzed to develop the activities forward. Otherwise the brand might seem inconsistent, which does not create trust and engagement.

The next sub-chapter will repeat the content categories and rules of thumbs for creating and producing the content.

## 6.4 Content categories and rules of thumb

Golla is very sales oriented company, and the content they post has been mostly from the company's point of view, as observed by the researcher. The interviews and discussions with Golla's staff support the conclusion. The results of social media communication activities would greatly benefit from slightly different approach to the content production. Golla's content consists mainly of high quality pictures with the emphasis on the product. Some of them are entertaining or inspiring, but not very useful or engaging, based on the likes, comments or other reactions the posts generate. Content in social media should not be advertising as it will irritate the community members. That is the reason why useful content to the audience is so important.

As a solution to creating content, this thesis suggests that Golla should divide its content into categories based on Tanni & Keronen's (2013, 39) three main categories:

1. Reaching – regular cycle of publishing.
2. Engaging – builds a relationship with a customer, enhances an engram in a customer's mind, gives ideas and inspires
3. Activating – engaging content leads to activating consumers to do something.

This thesis introduces a modified version of the categories. The categories are:

1. Love it – this content keeps the profile account active, but does not require a lot of effort from the production team or the customer.
2. Do it / try it –content inspires, engages and activates followers and builds a stronger bond between the user and the brand. Requires more effort from the content production, but is more rewarding.
3. Share it. This asks for a lot of preparations and effort from content production. This content consists of many pieces of content designed for distribution across all channels. This content is shareable, which creates more engagement, dialogue and word-of-mouth.

This kind of categorizing would help Golla's staff create guidelines and ideas to meet the communication objectives, as well as, to set measurable goals.

In the booklet, there are two rules of thumbs based on blogs and articles written by professional practitioners. First one of them is 80/20, which states that 80 percent of the content should be entertaining and useful for the audience generating likes, shares and comments, then 20 percent can be advertising and promoting direct sales.

Another rule, the rule of thirds, states that one third can promote the business, one third should share ideas and inspire and the last third should be brand developing and engaging.

These guidelines can be helpful tools when planning the content creation. They can give direction to the brainstorming and production of strategic ideas. There should be some concepts that guide the content production, so that the tone of voice and brand personality stays consistent throughout the channels and encounters with the audience even when there are changes in the staff members and other circumstances.

## **6.5 Editorial calendar and sharing knowledge**

Once the content is categorized, publishing it requires a strategy as well. Well planned publishing plan keeps the content flow steady in the chosen channels and reached the targeted audience at a right time.

For example an editorial calendar is a clear way to keep every team member on track what content is in production, what is being published and when and in which channels. When there is a basic rhythm for publishing, it can be varied, but without a rhythm and clear responsibilities, the outcome can be chaotic. An editorial calendar can include annual milestones and events around which some marketing efforts are targeted to. These can be for example national holidays, seasonal sales, and important events. The annual plan can then be broken down into as detailed calendar as possible, monthly, weekly, daily or even by the hour.

Channels and content categories should be marked down as well. Communicating in social media is also constant reacting, so editorial calendar shouldn't be a restricting or limiting tool, but a guideline for content publishing.

During the year of this thesis process, Golla went through a lot of changes in staff, which caused some inconsistencies in the content production and publishing. If an employee leaves his or her post, it shouldn't mean that it shows as a gap in communication, and content flow. From the very first meeting onwards the issue of resources, people practicing the social media communication function, was discussed. It is a factor, but one person can do a lot, if s/he know what to do and has the teams support.

Editorial calendars are a good way to keep the content standards in line with the storyline and communication goals.

Understanding different steps of publishing the content help organizing the daily practices. Frick & Eyler-Werve (2015, 24) provide the Content Marketing Cycle as an example of the phases that need to be considered in creating the strategy. The cycle starts and ends with analytics, as stated before in the thesis report. Without defined goals and metrics, there is no way of evaluating the outcome of the communication efforts.



## **6.6 Focus on few channels**

When this thesis project started, Golla already had accounts in few of the major channels, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest. These profiles had been chosen without evaluating their characteristic features or whether the audience the organization wanted to reach, used these channels. As stated before, channels should be chosen according to the audience research.

The channels that are chosen, should be committed to, because if a profile is inactive or not up to date, it still says something about the brand. If the accounts and profiles are not taken care of, they might decrease the brand's credibility and customer's loyalty.

In the workshop, it turned out that not all of the team members knew how to use Twitter for commercial purpose or how to use hashtags. If Twitter is strategically important, the team should learn to use it. If it is not, it might be relevant to consider whether the account in Twitter should exist. It is difficult to keep an account active, if the team doesn't see its benefits or know how to use it. In the booklet feedback one of the Golla's staff members doubted the importance of that account. It seems like a liability more than an asset in Golla's social media communication.

Understanding the different channels and their strengths will help choosing the right channel for each content, and develop content for these platforms. As Frick & Eyler-Werve remind us, there are different velocities in how the channels work. Twitter is a channel for quick reactive messaging, whereas Facebook-follower can wait for a while for a response. Instagram is not so time-bound, and in Pinterest the content can live for years. Channels shouldn't look identical, as it might irritate the users following the brand in multiple channels, but the same content can be varied in different channels.

The platforms have their own characters as well. Instagram can be a good platform to feed pictures, but Twitter is about being a member of the community, taking part in conversations, and using hashtags. Defining purpose and mission for each channel helps developing the strategy, and usage of them.

## **6.7 Finding the tone of voice and keeping it sustained**

When the writer of this thesis benchmarked and followed Golla's publishing in different channels, some inconsistencies were observed. While the pictures were of high quality, the captions and copy writing of posts varied. Sometimes there were long texts, sometimes only few words. Some posts were links to products in web page or promotion videos. The coherent line of thought seemed to be missing.

The brand should stay consistent when a social media user encounters the brand in different channels, and in real life. Looking back on the definitions of how Golla's staff members

saw the communication to be now (in January 2015), what it wanted to be and what it is not, shows that there was still room to grow to get to the point where the brand should be according to the staff members. Defining a unique tone of voice, which differentiates the brands from others in social media channels, helps the brand build a personality, and that way become a trusted member of a community.

Kortesuo (2010, 64-66) has drawn a matrix of attributes, words, feelings and amount of how much to use them. This matrix is included in the thesis product.

Writing down and categorizing the different situations in which Golla speaks as a brand, will help testing and adapting the way of communication.

### **6.8 Outsourcing is not a bad idea**

According to the interviews with Golla's staff, the team wants to do all the planning and content producing within the organization, as it is a design brand. They had tried to work with an advertising agency, but the outcome had not pleased the organization members, and they felt that they had better intuitive knowledge about the brand and how it should be presented.

While this might be very true, an outside opinion may see the brand's possibilities and situation from a different point of view and bring new ideas into what the brand could be associated with. An outsider can see things as the target group members might see them, and that way adjust the direction or social media communication plan. An outsider can also challenge the thoughts that are taken for granted inside the organization.

Using consultants may be costly, but there are other ways to use help from outside to spread the word about the brand. Bloggers, vloggers and other co-operations might provide new aspects to the brand and bring it to life in different situations. The brand can be introduced to new target groups that are unfamiliar with the brand. Bloggers and vloggers use their own media for publishing, and that media is heavily dependent on the persona and brand of the publisher.

### **6.9 Measuring helps targeting**

Golla's staff had established that it wanted to reach new customers who live a creative lifestyle and work on the move. The organization wanted the brand to be seen as an interesting, relaxed and original alternative to other brands on the market.

Communicating and marketing in social media enables the communicator to target the message to small niche groups, due to the analytic and metric tools that show how the audience reacts to the action. Targeting certain groups can increase for example street credibility or help stand out from the competitors.

To be able to measure the results, there has to be goals. Golla's team had been testing different content options, but the goals had not been set. Goals for communicating as well as the business goals should be made according to the SMART-principles, Specific, Measurable, Achievable or Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound. If the goals are not specified and defined, they remain more as wishes, not goals.

Measurable goals are those that leave no questions whether they've been met or not. For example getting more followers is a wish, increasing the number of followers by 5 percent is a measurable goal.

Achievable or attainable goals define if the actions needed to reach the goal are in fact doable. Realistic goals are those that can be reached with those doable actions, and within predetermined time limit. Time limit gives a frame for the goal to be reached.

Clear goals help determine, whether the execution of the strategy is working or if it should be altered.

## **6.10 Discussion**

This research addressed the question of how to communicate Golla's brand in social media environment, and provide insight and develop best practices for Golla's staff to improve their social media communication strategy. The focus was on content creation.

As opposed to traditional mass marketing and communicating, a brand can reach a vast global audience, but also very niche target groups in social media environment. This is partly due to the metric and analyzing tools available. A brand can observe the traffic and the reactions of the social media users to the content, and adjust the actions in the chosen channels. It can also study and observe the target audience, how they act, what they talk about, and what they are interested in. Analyzing this can help adjusting the strategy to reach them and creating content for them. To reach the best solutions in engaging and creating a relationship with the audience, the content should always be created from the audience's interests and point of view. The content should be interesting, inspiring and useful for those who consume it, and not only those who publish it. The social media users are usually happy to share the content in their own channels if the content is relevant to them.

Creating and publishing content is not enough, as voicing the brand in social media is about dialogue and becoming a trusted member of a community. The story and values of the company and the brand are important and they have to be true. Building trust, engagement and loyalty are important when telling the story of a brand.

Reacting to the audience's feedback and activity, and having dialogue with the followers provides experiences and encounters with the brand. This requires resources and clear

guidelines on how the brand represents itself. The content flow should be steady so that the channels stay alive. To do this efficiently, the brand needs a strategy.

Some organizations think that communicating the brand in social media channels can be done with little effort and cost. That is not the case. The competition for attention in social media channels is fierce, and without paying for visibility and coverage, the platforms restrict the distribution to the minimum.

As for Golla, the company had gone through a big change of rebranding itself and the new product lines, and was ready to start voicing the new brand. The business strategy was clear, but the strategy for communicating in social media was not.

Golla's team needed ideas how to tell the world about the new Golla, but without a strategy, producing content can become a tedious task with a poor outcome.

This thesis project was constructed in collaboration with the representatives of the contractor. First there were the interviews, the benchmarking and the workshop to clarify to the researcher what the situation was in Golla, what they needed and what other brands had done in their channels in terms of campaigning but also how they represented themselves in dialogue and reactions to followers activities.

After benchmarking the literature, blog posts and presentations by marketing and communication practitioners provided insight to the best practices and principles of communicating in social media and doing content marketing.

The contribution of this thesis to the contractor is the developing tools, frameworks and principles as well as questions that need to be answered when making a strategy for content marketing and communication in social media environment.

The findings and suggestions of this thesis study are gathered in the thesis product, the booklet (see Attachment 1.), but also in some email correspondence which has been referred in this thesis report.

The thesis product was constructed based on the wishes of Golla's staff and findings from the literature and professional insight. The guide booklet has been evaluated by fellow student, supervisor of the thesis and two of Golla's staff representatives.

The booklet provides basic information about topics the researcher found important to present to Golla's team. Added to the booklet, co-working with Golla's team to come up with ways to keeping the flow of content alive, has deepened the mutual understanding of the topic even further. The researcher contributed to the campaign planning content creation via emails. The cooperation is explained in this thesis. There is reasoning behind the suggested tools, and the material activates the reader to think about possible ways to approach content production and publishing.

Choosing which ones to include was a balancing act, as there are a lot of experts sharing their knowledge, but too much instructions can be confusing or considered overwhelming. The booklet was intended to be accessible and easy to read.

There are examples and questions for the reader so that s/he can evaluate, whether the suggestions are useful, or could become useful with alterations. The writer's intention is to provide something to start with, but not write imperatives.

According to feedback from Golla's team members, the booklet was useful and gave ideas, but it also raised some questions of how Golla could apply the knowledge. Some of the suggestions do require more resources and some studying.

The thesis product has been given and presented to Golla's representatives. It will not be part of this report document, as it is intended for Golla's internal use.

Golla had started to work on some of the suggestions, such as editorial calendar, already before they received the booklet. Based on the feedback, other suggestions are considered as well. While writing this report, there are no results or analysis of whether the suggestions have been applied and what outcomes they might have produced.

## 7 Conclusion

This chapter will explain the conclusions drawn from this research project.

The purpose was to identify the needs of Golla's social media team, and find solutions to their problems in communicating the brand in social media channels they had chosen.

The research question was:

What tools and insight will help Golla to create a long-lasting strategy for content in order to communicate its brand in social media channels, tell its story in an interesting way, engage and activate target groups?

### 7.1 Content compliments audience's needs

The interviews and workshop showed that the people in Golla's social media team had a good, unanimous view of the brand's core. They had a vision of what the outcome should be, but there was a lack of resources and skills to create a long lasting goal driven content strategy. Social media communication happened on the side of other tasks. There was also a need for some kind of system that would keep the people aware of what was going on, so that if and when changes in staff members do happen, the content flow would stay consistent.

The team had good single photo or campaign ideas, but the coherent idea and communication strategy was missing, so the content was not linked to the business goals. Without a strategy there is a risk that the single content ideas contradict with the brand values and image at some point, or one of the channels is neglected, which sends a message about the brand as well. This can be confusing to the audiences.

As Frick & Eyler-Werve (2015, 23-24) state, content is the most critical component of a brand's online presence. It drives traffic, informs users, builds awareness, improves the audience's opinion of the brand, increases the brand exposure, drives conversations and positions the company to meet the strategic goals.

To succeed in achieving all of the above, the content has to be based on the audience's needs, and provide valuable content to them. This insight is supported by many professionals and authors such as Frick & Eyler-Werve (2015, 23-25) and Hakola & Hiila (2012, 131). This is the most important message this thesis conveys to the social media team in Golla, because in the beginning, the team only thought about how to push the word out about the brand, and not what they could provide for the audience to build a relationship with the customers.

## 7.2 Suggestions

A brand in social media can take different strategic approaches to communicating. It can be:

- passive, and do nothing (which is not recommended)
- proactive, and produce content, promote it, and get noticed
- reactive, and respond to other user's content. A brand can ask user's to follow or like its content and that way get attention from other users. (Anttonen 2015 d.)

Golla is passive in some channels such as Twitter due to lack of time and knowledge of how to make use of it. There is a strong will to be proactive and produce content. Being reactive is the next step which will be easier, if and when there are more people to share the workload and updating the accounts.

The staff has taken steps to the right direction. They have defined their target groups more specifically than in the beginning, and they have studied the platforms they want to concentrate on, and which ones they might lose. They have also built an editorial calendar of some kind, which will help to organize the work, and create the ideas.

The thesis product introduces two different ways to divide the content between sales oriented and customer relationship oriented material. One of the rules suggests that the material published should be 20 percent sales oriented and 80 percent customer oriented. The rule is based on a thought that nobody likes to listen to a person who only talks about oneself, but providing valuable content will keep the level of interest high.

The other rule suggests that the content should be divided into three parts. One third of the content is about promoting the products, discounts and sales deals. One third is about showing the brands personality and values behind the product. The last third should come from other sources. In Golla's case the material could be travel or work related content from other curated sources. These rules can also help with the workload of creating the content.

One of the main suggestions for content producing in this thesis, is the idea of content categories with different purposes. The original categories are based on Tanni & Keronen's (2013, 39) division, but they are slightly modified for Golla's needs in this thesis.

The categories for Golla are: **Love it, Do it / Try it, and Share it**. The imperatives demonstrate the desired action from the audience. There is a different amount of work that the content requires in order to reach the goal, and get the audience to act according to the imperative. The objective is to keep a steady flow of content.

The organization has good capacity to produce high quality content after the strategy is clear and after they have a proper plan how to proceed. There should also be at least one

person who is fully responsible for taking care of social media channels. It has been an interesting and eye-opening study period that has shown the writer how much work and planning goes into making something look effortless: fun, light, inspiring and entertaining. It is done on a side of other duties.

The writer of this thesis collected models, tools, and examples in the guide booklet, which is the thesis product (see Attachment 1). Some of the suggestions are presented in this thesis report's chapter number five, 'Methodology'.

The feedback on the booklet shows that tools and ideas on how to approach the content production were welcomed, but maybe more ready-made solutions were expected. Some suggestions and tools in the booklet could have been explained more clearly or given more examples on how to approach the topic. Also audience research and measuring the results could have been given more attention in the booklet.

### **7.3 Research evaluation**

In qualitative research methods, the gathered material is often based on empirical research data. The aim is to discover why something happens and what conclusions can be drawn from the phenomenon, and why. (Willberg 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 2009.)

To evaluate validity of the study, the researcher must ask how well the research method and the angle of the study reflect the phenomenon that is being studied. The method should be chosen according to what kind of information and data is needed. (Hiltunen 18<sup>th</sup> Feb 2009.)

The aim of the researcher was to familiarize herself with Golla's situation, resources and challenges, and then find solutions and insight so that the staff could develop their method of working and communicating in social media environment. The most suitable method for this study was constructive research approach. It is a very hands on type of a method. The researcher and the contractor both contributed to developing the solution to the problem.

The material in this study has been gathered through semi-structured interviews, a workshop and e-mail correspondence to learn about the situation, the level of skills in the contractor's team, and the wishes the team members had. The interviewees and workshop group consisted of the people who practiced the communication or produced the content or were connected to those practices in some way. These people were the ones who the instructions and guidelines were written for, so it was sensible to work with them to learn about the problems and wishes. The researcher took notes, recorded the interviews and transcribed them, after which she marked the text with markers and pen according to



themes discussed. The main concern, after lack of resources, was content, so the researcher focused on that, and on improving the way knowledge is shared between the practitioners.

Flick (2009, 387) warns the researcher of three common errors: to see relation, where they are not correct; to reject them when they are indeed correct, and to ask the wrong questions.

The researcher asked questions specific to this team and their needs. The team members were able to speak freely, ask for ideas, and if they felt that the suggestions were not usable or did not compliment the brand, they were able to comment and argue with the researcher. This open communication ensured that their views were heard and the researcher got better insight about how the team produced the content. Without this communication the guidelines and tools could have been more general and in worst case unusable.

To develop the guidelines, benchmarking and professional insight helped the researcher to understand the concrete actions brands can do in social media environment. Literature gave a framework to the general phenomenon and how to proceed with the planning and constructing the guidelines for Golla.

Better and more accurate results could have been achieved if the researcher had been able to work more closely with the team in the creative process and producing the content. Also the changes in the staff members created some confusion regarding who was in charge of what, but in the end, this played very little role.

Some other researcher might have proposed a different solution to Golla's problems, which brings out the question of reliability. Reliability is at a good level, when the results are not coincidental. (Hiltunen 18th Feb 2009.) There is not one correct solution to Golla's challenges. The author of this thesis chose her approach to the situation by focusing on improving the content creation, production and publishing as well as sharing information within the organization.

According to the feedback from the practitioners, at least some of the suggestions were taken into account and in use within the organization, which suggested that the identified problems were correct and the suggestions were considered useful by the contractor.

The author of this thesis learned a lot about communicating and building a relationship with the audience while studying the theme of this thesis. There could have been much

more to take into consideration in this thesis, since there is a technological side to communication in the digital era. The line had to be drawn somewhere, and focus of the study remained in the content. It was surprising to the author, how much time finding the sources and composing the text took. Combining full time job and writing the thesis would have required more scheduling.

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## **9 Appedices**

Attachment 1. The research report (confidential)

Attachment 2. The PowerPoint – version of the guides (confidential)