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# ATTRACTING CUSTOMERS UTILIZING CONTENT MARKETING

– Case Study Kirami Oy

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The objective of the thesis is to study how content marketing practices can be utilized in attracting new customers. The aim was to understand French customers through cultural matters, their social media behaviour and ultimately, find the social media channels, which reach the French audience. Answers were searched for determining the best content marketing practices in introducing a new product and attracting potential buyers. For companies to reach potential customers, they need to be online, since buying starts with Internet information search. Through successful content marketing, customers are provided with relevant information throughout their buying process. When the content reaches the customers on their terms and brings added value, purchases are made. The thesis was done in collaboration with the commissioner Kirami Oy.

The thesis composes around literature review and research interviews. Firstly, the theoretical aspects of digitalization of marketing was covered. The digital marketing chapter addressed inbound marketing and content marketing as a lead converting tool. The concept of social media was explained and French social media behaviour studied. The literature review concluded with discoursing French cultural elements through Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The thesis culminated into a qualitative research. The research was done holding semi-structured interviews with the case company's stakeholders in global marketing and communications.

The thesis objective was reached. Through extensive research, the challenges for doing content marketing in a foreign culture were defined. Primary cultural element that influences digital marketing is language. Target audience needs to be approached in their language and tone of voice. Finding the functional social media networks is substantial in communicating with the audience. Both French B2C and B2B customers can be reached through Facebook, whereas the main professional network amongst B2B is LinkedIn.

The research findings can be exploited in choosing the effective social media networks to reach the foreign target audience. The thesis works as a guideline for successful content creation. Kirami Oy's global marketing practices can be developed to meet the needs of foreign customers. Furthermore, the discoveries can be utilized in creating a successful content marketing strategy for the case company's target audience in France. Importantly, the findings define what content marketing elements engage the audience.

## KEYWORDS:

Content marketing, Inbound marketing, Social media, Digitalization, Lead conversion

Anni Suoniemi

# ASIAKKAIDEN TAVOITTAMINEN SISÄLTÖMARKKINOINTIA HYÖDYNTÄEN

- Tapaustutkimus Kirami Oy

Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on tutkia uusien asiakkaiden tavoittamista sisältömarkkinoinnin keinoin. Päämääränä oli tutustua ranskalaisiin asiakkaisiin kulttuurielementtien avulla, tutkia heidän sosiaalisen median käyttöä ja löytää parhaat sosiaalisen median kanavat ranskalaisen yleisön tavoittamiseksi. Tavoitteena oli määritellä sisältömarkkinoinnin keinoja tehostamaan uuden tuotteen tuomista markkinoille sekä tavoittamaan mahdolliset ostajat. Tavoittaakseen potentiaalisesti ostajat, yritysten on oltava aktiivisia verkossa, sillä tiedonhaku alkaa Internetissä. Onnistuneen sisältömarkkinoinnin avulla asiakkaille tuotetaan hyödyllistä tietoa ostoprosessin eri vaiheissa. Ostoa edistää sisällön tuottama lisäarvo asiakkaille. Opinnäytetyö tehtiin toimeksiantajalle Kirami Oy.

Opinnäytetyö muodostui teoriaosuudesta ja tutkimushaastattelusta. Ensimmäisessä teoriaosuudessa käsiteltiin markkinoinnin digitalisoitumista. Digitaalisen markkinoinnin kappale käsittelee syvemmin inbound-markkinointia ja sisältömarkkinointia liidien jalostamisen työkaluna. Sosiaalinen media esiteltiin ja sitä tutkittiin ranskalaisten käyttäytymisen näkökulmasta. Teoriaosuus vietiin päätökseen käsittelemällä Ranskan kulttuurielementtejä Hofsteden kulttuurien ulottuvuuksien avulla. Työ kulminoitui laadulliseen tutkimukseen. Kvalitatiivinen tutkimus toteutettiin teemahaastatteluina toimeksiantajan markkinoinnin ja viestinnän yhteistyökumppaneille.

Opinnäytetyön tavoite saavutettiin ja kattavan tutkimuksen tuloksena onnistuttiin tunnistamaan haasteita ulkomaiselle yleisölle kohdennetussa sisältömarkkinoinnissa. Ensisijaisessa roolissa toimii kieli, jolla on merkittävä kulttuurillinen vaikutus digitaaliseen markkinointiin. Kohdeyleisöä tulee lähestyä yleisön kielellä ja äänensävyllä. Toimivien sosiaalisen median kanavien löytäminen on oleellista kommunikoidessa kohdeyleisön kanssa. Ranskalaiset kuluttaja- ja yritysasiakkaat tavoitetaan parhaiten Facebookin avulla. Ammatillisista verkoista LinkedIn on tehokkain yritysasiakkaiden tavoittamiseksi.

Tutkimustuloksia voidaan hyödyntää toimivien sosiaalisen median kanavien valinnassa ulkomaisen kohdeyleisön tavoittamiseksi. Opinnäytetyö toimii onnistuneen sisällön tuottamisen perustana. Kirami Oy:n kansainvälisen markkinoinnin käytäntöjä voidaan kehittää vastaamaan ulkomaisten asiakkaiden tarpeita. Ennen kaikkea, tutkimustuloksia voidaan hyödyntää onnistuneen sisältömarkkinointistrategian luonnissa. Tutkimustulosten avulla onnistuttiin määrittämään toimivia sisältömarkkinoinnin elementtejä.

ASIASANAT:

Sisältömarkkinointi, inbound-markkinointi, sosiaalinen media, digitalisaatio, liidien jalostaminen

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS**

B2B	Business to Business
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
B2C	Business to Consumer
PPC	Pay-per-click
Q4	Fourth quarter
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research Motivation

The utilization of content marketing in today's marketing practices is significant. The author realized this while studying digital marketing in Lyon, France. Kamel Touzaline, a digital marketing specialist, explained in his lectures in Jean Moulin III University that mastering content marketing is the key to successful digital marketing. At the university, the author also came across the fact that the French demand personalized marketing. Personalized marketing refers to providing the audience individualized content that speaks to the customer as an individual (Manthei, 2018). The author is aiming to work in digital marketing after graduation, and therefore, is passionate about the topic. One of the main personal motives for the author is to build knowledge amongst content marketing and use the knowledge in her working life in the future.

## 1.2 Background

Foreign trade is necessary for small economies such as Finland. Being a small market economy where economic decisions are made by citizens and companies, Finland is dependent on doing business abroad (Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto, 2018). The author believes economic reasons have led many Finnish companies to operate internationally. The author claims that foreign trade requires understanding the foreign culture. Therefore, when discussing about international business, cultural elements need to be considered.

Three out of four marketers pursue to create more content than they did the previous year. Content marketing not only generates more business, but it can also be used for educating and nurturing existing customers. (Patel, 2016) Therefore, content marketing is crucial for businesses to maintain their competitiveness and respond to the customer demand.

The thesis researches inbound marketing, more closely content marketing, from the perspective of a company expanding business from Finland to France. Focus is on understanding the French consumers and culture, as well as their social media

behaviour. Being Finland's top 15 trading partners stated by Workman (2018), France has a lot of potential as a market place for Finnish SMEs.

The thesis aims to provide useful material to the case company Kirami Oy's marketing operations. In addition, it can be accessed by students and marketers, after being released in Theseus. The author believes that by combining cultural perspectives to content marketing, the thesis will serve as a relevant article.

### 1.3 Presentation of Kirami Oy

Kirami Oy, a family-owned Finnish company that produces wood-fired heaters and hot tubs, is the commissioner for the thesis. Kirami Oy was founded in 2001, when the CEO Mika Rantanen decided to put up a business in Finland. The business started with importing wood-fired hot tubs from Sweden to Finland. Rantanen decided to develop a leisure time product, and having lived in Sweden, wood-fired hot tubs suited his idea. Own manufacturing began shortly, when the company realised the product needed a lot of development. Sales set out slowly, since the product was completely new to the Finnish market. Ever since the beginning, Kirami has focused on manufacturing and marketing the hot tubs and spinoffs. (Kirami, 2017)

Kirami is a SME, which currently employs around 30 people and has a wide network of subcontractors. Kirami is currently Europe's largest manufacturer in its field. It operates in Sastamala Finland and has a turnover of 8,2 million Euros (in 2017). 25 percent of Kirami's revenue comes from export. Kirami has retailers all over Finland and business is steadily expanding to Europe. The company's success is based on ongoing product development, user friendliness and wide range of products. (Kirami, 2018).

### 1.4 Objectives and Research Questions

The primary objective of the thesis is to present, how to exploit content marketing in attracting new customers. The thesis studies French culture to define what cultural elements to consider in globalized marketing in France. The aim is to understand the social media behaviour and networks used by French customers. Finally, the thesis provides elements, which help Kirami Oy improve its online presence in France.



To reach the objective, the thesis will provide answers to the following research questions:

- How can the case company attract the French audience?
- What are the key elements of successful content marketing in France?
- What are the main social media networks used in France?
- What are the main challenges for the case company's global marketing and how can they be managed?

### 1.5 Structure

Firstly, literature is reviewed on digital marketing, more closely the advantages and challenges caused by digitalization. Chapter two reviews an elaborated aspect of marketing, which is inbound marketing. Primarily, the second chapter will study content marketing as a technique in attracting customers and converting leads. The latter part of second chapter will address social media marketing, networks and the French social media behaviour.

Furthermore, the case company needs to understand the French cultural elements in order to provide potential customers with relevant content through the right channels. Chapter three treats the six cultural dimensions presented by Geert Hofstede with France's scores in each category. Studying the cultural dimensions helps to understand the target audience and analyse the interview findings.

Chapter four explains research methodology and justifies why the qualitative method chosen is studied. The chapter introduces the semi-structured interviews used to collect primary data and other forms of data collection. Thereafter, the research data is analysed in chapter five and finally, the main findings and suggestions for the commissioner are presented in the conclusion.

## 2 DIGITAL MARKETING

Digital marketing is a term, which is used to describe businesses' all sorts of marketing efforts online, such as social media, Google search and emails, for instance (Alexander, 2016). It is done to market products and services utilizing electronic devices. The time people spend using electronic devices is increasing. In order to be present where the customers are, businesses need to practice digital marketing. (Patel, 2018) Ultimately, digital marketing is a form of advertisement (Marketo, 2018).

Businesses use digital channels to connect with their existing and potential customers. Digital marketing consists of various assets and tactics, which all support the company's marketing goal. The assets include the company website, blog, social media channels used and interactive tools, for example. In addition to reaching the common goal, tactics such as content marketing, inbound marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing and pay-per-click (PPC) can be used. (Alexander, 2016)

Growth of digital marketing has created advantages for businesses to market and interact with the audience cost-effectively. Clay (2017, 16) states digital marketing to enhance the quality of communication. Digital marketing is used to boost business relations because a broad audience can be reached through it. Success of the marketing, the outcomes and feedback of it can be evaluated in real-time by using digital marketing (Clay, 2017, 16).

### 2.1 Challenges of Digitalization

In today's business environment, companies have numerous ways of marketing. Communication has moved online and there are various instant communication platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. To reach potential customers, companies' marketing needs to be online and they need to adapt to new digital technologies. (Clay, 2017, 15) The expansion of digitalization demands companies to build up their marketing competence and resources. Companies need an increasing number of marketers who are up to date in the consumers' trends and social media behaviour, for instance.

## 2.2 Brand Awareness

Clay (2017) states that when planning to increase the amount of digital marketing, brand awareness is an important element to keep in mind. When wanting to gain loyal customers, a strong and well-known brand is one of the most important goals to have. The objective of creating brand awareness is to attract potential customers to test and evaluate the product or a service. Ultimately, it is used to influence them to make the purchase. A brand needs to be easily identified and this can be done by telling a story. Having a well-developed and personalised website which brings value to the audience, can increase brand awareness. Social media has multiple dimensions to build the brand. Social media is an effective tool to communicate with the potential buyers, it can advertise the brand and it promotes interaction with the audience and the product. (Clay, 2017, 20)

## 2.3 Inbound Marketing

Yuan (2015) states that outbound marketing refers to the “traditional advertising methods”, for example cold calling and direct mail. Hubspot (2018) determines inbound marketing as a method to use valuable and useful content in attracting customers and serving them throughout the buying process. When using outbound marketing, the company aims to grab the attention of customers through advertisement, for instance. Tervo (2018) explains that the objective of inbound marketing, on the other hand, is to lead the customers to the company’s content when customers are searching for information. Therefore, the objective of inbound marketing is to firstly turn strangers into visitors, visitors into leads, leads into customer and finally customers into promoters of the business (Hubspot, 2017). Tervo (2018) states that both types of marketing are needed but inbound marketing may be more cost-efficient than the traditional outbound marketing.

In today’s world, both B2B and B2C buying processes begin usually with information search on the Internet. Through effective online marketing, customers can be reached in the beginning of a buying process. They can then be convinced into making a purchase decision by creating content, which is valuable and useful for the consumers. (Tervo, 2018)

Successful inbound marketing requires knowing the target customers. Companies need to know their values, buying behaviour and online habits, for instance. Understanding the purchasing process, the channels used and the obstacles in the path are essential in executing effective inbound marketing. With the help of content marketing strategy, customers can be served with relevant content depending on the stage of the process they are at. In addition, the content needs to be marketed where the audience is. Analytics is needed to measure and learn from the results to optimize the operations. (Tervo, 2018)

Inbound marketing is briefly linked to the customer buying process. Inbound methodology consists of four phases: 1. attracting, 2. converting, 3. closing and 4. delighting, which are presented below in figure 1. The primary objective of the thesis is to study attracting new customers. Therefore, the literature review directs to the first phase of inbound marketing presented by Shannon (2017) in figure 1. Target is on examining the marketing elements in transforming strangers into visitors.



Figure 1. The Four Phases of Inbound Marketing (Shannon, 2017).

Hubspot (2018) states that in the first phase, strangers are converted into visitors with applicable content available when the customer wants it. The Internet is full of content and when marketing, companies need to be visible in the same channels with the target audience (Korpi, 2010, 28). According to Agrawal (2016), social media is used as a tool in attracting customers.

According to Hubspot (2018), the first phase in inbound marketing is attracting people to the company's site. Primarily, content is the main matter in inbound marketing. Content needs to be where the customer is looking for it and when they are looking for it. Defining a content strategy is needed to ensure that the customers find the company

when they begin their online purchasing process. Social media can be used to interact with the target customers. It enables the company to share the helpful and relevant information as well as show the people behind the brand. Additionally, prospective customers can also be attracted to the company's website by blog posts. (Hubspot, 2018) The following sections will study attracting target customers with useful information and therefore, content marketing and social media are covered.

## 2.4 Content Marketing

Content has been a part of companies' marketing operations since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Customer newsletters used to be the most common forms of content marketing. For example, the first known customer newsletter was first released by John Deere in 1895. (Filtness, 2014) Creating and sharing content for target audience is not a new concept but it has changed through time. For example, the Internet has changed the way of doing content marketing and increased the exploitation of it.

Clark (2013) defines content marketing as a technique for businesses to attract potential customers, convert them into buying customers and interact with the target audience through useful, free content. Le (2013) states that content marketing has three elements; marketing, information and entertainment. Therefore, when planning content to be published, Kirami should evaluate whether the content fulfils the aforementioned elements. When the content provides valuable information and educates the consumer, businesses can gain brand loyal customers who make purchases again. Le (2013) continues that the content should not only be relevant to the customer but it should also be related to the type of business.

Content marketing consists of valuable information that people search for actively, and it has intrinsic value (Wilson, 2016, 19). The objective should be having the target audience save the company's content, for example by bookmarking it. Continuously creating and sharing interesting, useful and engaging information makes effective content marketing. (Wilson, 2016, 24) Interaction with the audience is essential in content marketing because it helps the company to modify the content to reach the ultimate objective, which is a made purchase (Filtness, 2014).

### 2.4.1 Target Audience

In content marketing, companies need to be familiar with the target audience; who they are, what they want and how they want the content (Filtness, 2014). Wilson (2016) states that the prospective customers, who are searching for useful and interesting information, need the most content. They should be the main target audience for content creation. Companies should create content, which provides answers to their questions. Observing what the customers ask can be done by active listening and that will help to attract more target audience. Although the prospective customers are a large group of audience, targeting the content towards them will increase the propensity to reach the ultimate objective of making sales. (Wilson, 2016, 45-48)

### 2.4.2 Global Content Marketing

When marketing to a different culture, it is important to adapt to the culture of the targeted audience. With effective marketing, a product can be shaped to the culture's nature (Startup overseas, 2017). In global content marketing, the content should be localized to the target audience in order to reach the objectives (Wilson, 2016, 59).

Content marketing only works if the customers find business's content, read it and take action (Wilson, 2016, 59). Global businesses, which operate in multiple countries, face challenges of creating local content for their foreign audience (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018). Almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of consumers browse websites with content in their own language. Also, roughly 75 percent would be more likely to purchase product, which has been provided with product details in the consumer's native language. Less than 50 percent of consumers value the price over the accessibility of product information in their own language. (Bedor, 2015)

For the French, language is the core of their national identity. France fears English language taking over their prestige language. Therefore, the French feel offended when their own language is not being used. (Gallix, 2013) Seifert (2016) questions the concept "universal marketing". Seifert (2016) explains that content should be created in the local language. Therefore, content marketing in France should be done in French. French language also guarantees that the message is understood correctly. Studies have shown that France is listed lowest in terms of English skills amongst the

population. In addition, when content is created in French, it is 10 times more effective in its performance compared to content in English. (Seifert, 2016)

#### 2.4.3 Global Content Marketing Strategy

Having a recorded strategy in both B2B and B2C content marketing endorses success. A well-defined strategy should indicate how your brand's content marketing would operate. It should also explain why each element of the strategy matters. The key is to understand through a content marketing strategy, how the audience will interact with the content throughout the buying process. The strategy should be changed and developed as the brand changes. (Izea, 2018) Creating a strategy should start with discovering the current stage, the effectiveness and success of it (Bedor, 2015).

Primarily, before creating content, the strategy should have a goal. In the goal setting process, different members and departments of the company should be consulted to figure out what the ultimate objective of the strategy should be. The company's large-scale goals should be discussed and then fractioned them into smaller objectives. The smaller objectives should be reached by content marketing. (Izea, 2018)

Secondly, the content marketing strategy should have a defined audience (Izea, 2018). Marketers need to understand their audience: who they are and where they are (Bedor, 2015). Defined audience is mandatory to understand whom the content speaks to. The defining process should go deep into the personas and characteristics of the audience. Not only the audience's needs should be determined, but also what they are fond of and passionate about. When the audience is well understood, the content created will speak to them. (Izea, 2018) Cultural elements, such as restrictions, need to be considered (Bedor, 2015).

Companies, that are not entirely new to digital marketing, often have existing content. The existing data should be identified and analysed. Focus on analysis should be on the performance and usability of the existing content. Good content maintains its value in long-term and is memorable for the audience. Secondly, future content should be identified. Based on the knowledge of the audience personas and analysis of previous content, plans on the type of content to be created should be made. At the stage, topics, timetable and content types could be sketched. (Izea, 2018) While planning future content, companies should determine where their content would be located.

Companies may create own sites and URLs for different audience or choose an international site for all. (Bedor, 2015)

Language issues occur when doing global content marketing (Bedor, 2015).

Companies may have existing marketing material to be translated for the foreign audience. Bedor (2015) suggests not investing in the translation of low impact content, such as posts on social media. The translation of such should be automatized as much as possible. Investing in high impact content, for instance brochures, is recommended. The content could be recreated by local experts to suit the targeted audience despite the cost of it. According to Bedor (2015), translating material can be financially inefficient. (Bedor, 2015)

Someone, such as a project manager, needs to oversee the strategy (Bedor, 2015). The roles for the members of the content marketing team need to be defined. Evaluation on who produces, publishes, audits and monitors the content should be made. Company can determine whether the step is done in-house or whether certain roles are outsourced for freelancers, for instance. In B2C marketing, content marketing is to some extent outsourced. (Izea, 2018) Outsourcing may be beneficial for the company, since it can provide the audience with familiar terminology and content that fits the local style (Bedor, 2015).

Finally, the success of the strategy should be evaluated. Well-defined plans for measuring the content is essential in being able to evaluate the performance of the content marketing strategy. (Bedor, 2015) When the previous stages of the strategy have been identified, it is easier to evaluate its success. Hanki (2015) presents that calculation and interpretation of the amount of content screenings is important for measuring content marketing. The measurements show the consumption of the content and the preferences of the audience. The commitment of the audience can be measured by the amount of responds to social media posts, shares and likes. The collected contacts indicate the success of targeting audience. Examples of collected contacts are blog readers or Facebook followers. Since the ultimate objective of content marketing is to make sales, the impact of content marketing on revenue and sales should be analysed. (Hanki, 2015)



#### 2.4.4 Lead Conversion

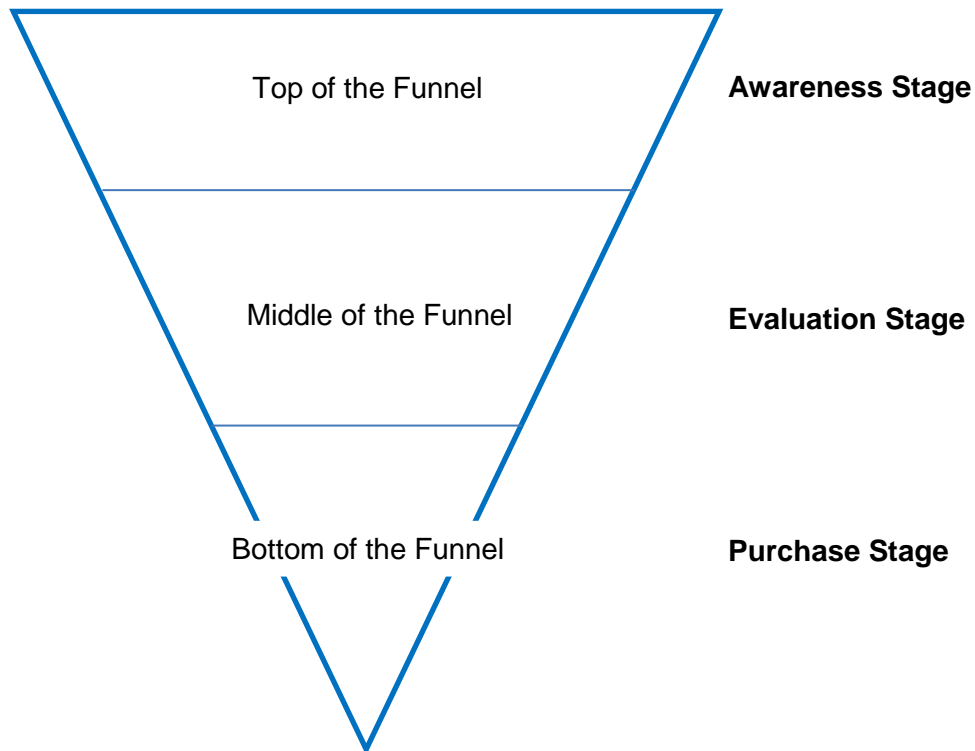


Figure 2. Content Marketing Funnel (Lucidchart Content Team, 2017).

The most important factor in content marketing is convincing people that they are making the right choice by purchasing the product. To succeed in content marketing, businesses need to create content that converts customers in the buying process. (Izea, 2017) The content created should support the customers in their journey of buying a product (Lucidchart Content Team, 2017). Customer endorsing content, which supports the buying process, can be explained with content marketing funnel.

Content that is created to generate leads is destined for the audience in the beginning of the buying process. The lead generating content is called top of the funnel content and it functions by helping the audience to decrease the amount of choices in the market. (Izea, 2017) The assumption should be that the potential customers are unaware of the company's products. Therefore, top of the funnel content should create awareness of the company's products and introduce the customers, as seen in figure 2. Examples of such content are posts on social media and blogs, photographs and videos. (Lucidchart Content Team, 2017)

After becoming acquainted with the products, customers evaluate whether they need the products. At this point, they are at the evaluation stage, the middle of the funnel. At the evaluation stage, trust should be built and a personal relationship should be developed between the customers and the company. Content created at this point would be emails, downloads and white papers, for instance. (Lucidchart Content Team, 2017)

Ultimately, the customers should be converted into making the purchase by providing them with reasons why to buy (Lucidchart Content Team, 2017). Bottom of the funnel content intends to convert the leads. The objective of the purchase stage, as presented in figure 2, is to encourage customers to make the purchase from your company. (Izea, 2017) Examples for content in final stage are customer stories and product comparisons (Lucidchart Content Team, 2017).

#### 2.4.5 Common Types of Content Marketing

There are different types of content that companies can create to market their products and connect with potential customers. *Bloggning* is the most common type of content marketing because its low cost and it can easily be accessed from Google. Blog posts can be rapidly written and people commonly enjoy reading them. Bloggning is used at a stage where companies aim to build relationships with the customers. (Gotter, 2017)

Type of content that can be used in encouraging the customer to make a purchase are reviews that show the product functions. According to Izea (2017), *reviews* help to assure the potential customer to purchase the product. Through reviews, the potential customer should understand why the product is better than others are and how it performs. Izea (2017) states that *infographics*, detailed explanations of the product, can persuade a person in making a purchase decision. Infographics succeed in content marketing when they are visually appealing, have details of the product and importantly, can easily be found in text. For effective lead conversion, well-designed *landing pages* can be utilized as well. Landing pages are the pages where people come after clicking a search result or a social media post, for instance. Information on the landing pages should be narrowed down to only the most relevant. (Izea, 2017)

*Videos* are an effective type of content marketing because they are engaging. People prefer watching a video of a product instead of reading about it. In addition, there are

more people watching videos than reading blog posts, for instance. In content marketing, videos can be published separately on YouTube or they can be added on blog posts. (Gotter, 2017)

#### 2.4.6 Storytelling

Storytelling refers to brands' material in medias when they are presented in a form of a story (Hunt, 2017). Potential customers need to get to know the company before they are ready to do business with them (Wilson, 2016, 45). Stories have been narrated for thousands of years. They appeal to people and a message receives more attention when it is told in a story. Companies can utilize storytelling in presenting their brand and operations. Becoming acquainted with the company through a story is easier for the customers. (Salonen, 2013) Stories or personal experiences are good ways to catch the reader's full attention. Professional marketers master storytelling and can create relatable stories. (Korpi, 2010, 95)

#### 2.4.7 Content Publishing Practices

Producing content should be done regularly. Companies should publish content at least once a week. There should be many dimensions to the published content, for example videos and blog posts. In the beginning, company websites need to have a lot of content. When the company has mastered its own site, it can focus on distributing content to other channels. (Korpi, 2010, 92) Marketers need to know where their targeted audience is, for instance which social media platforms they use (Bedor, 2015). The content should be published where the customers are. Therefore, marketers should know their target audience and where they are the most active (Korpi, 2010, 92). Cultural elements need to be considered as well. In France, it is recommended to spread content regularly and cautiously through different channels, instead of all at once (Startup overseas, 2017).

Companies should take advantage of ongoing conversation and produce content related to what people already discuss about (Korpi, 2010, 93). A simple way of doing such is answering to customers questions by using search word analysis. Companies could also publish content related to the season or ongoing events.

Useful, solution-offering content tends to go viral in the social media. Humour is also a way to stand out and catch your audience's attention. However, cultural elements need to be considered with humorous content. Another way to help the content reach large audience is to bring a personal aspect to it. (Korpi, 2010, 95)

## 2.5 Social Media

Social media can be defined as being the content that is created together by companies and consumers. Social media is a public site, which can easily be accessed by the audience and they can participate in creating its content. (Korpi, 2010, 6) In spoken language, we often refer to social media when talking about Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, for instance.

### 2.5.1 Interactive Social Media

Social media consists of communities that create valuable content to its members. In social media communities, all members can create content and therefore, influence other members of the community. Today's social media is interactive. Visitors of social media sites have the opportunity to comment the existing content or even modify it. (Korpi, 2010, 6-7) Companies can influence the activity level of their social media sites. There are multiple ways of activating the audience. Activation methods should be developed and used based on the company's way of acting and their customers. Examples of activation methods are voting, evaluations, commenting and answering as well as questionnaires and Gallup. (Korpi, 2010, 19)

Creating added value is a substantial objective of social media. Companies can create added value by creating and commenting content that serves their philosophy. In social media, the value of a comment can be measured by the amount of discussion it creates. In an ideal scenario, a comment that has created discussion, can lead to the creation of new content that grabs the attention of the members of the community. (Korpi, 2010, 11)

### 2.5.2 Social Media Marketing

The objective of social media marketing is to lead customers forward in their decision-making process and encourage them to make a purchase decision. Depending on the product or the service, companies need to evaluate the length of the purchasing process and modify their marketing to it. With expensive products, the process is longer. Whereas, with less expensive goods, marketing can lead to the sales more rapidly. (Korpi, 2010, 69)

Companies use social media for being present in all stages of the customers' purchasing process and information search. Social media is used to create awareness and build the first contact between the company and consumers. When customers search for different suppliers, companies need to be found on the social media for them to be competitive in the market. Having made a purchase, customers want to get reinforcement for the financial commitment they have made. Reviews serve the purpose and are used to rationalize the purchase. (Korpi, 2010, 69)

### 2.5.3 Social Media for Acquiring New Customers

Companies invest in social media because it can support the customers' endorsement of the company's products or services. Customers interact with each other in the social media, discussing the products they have purchased and tried. The interaction can create positive brand awareness for companies, while customers make recommendations, for instance. On the other hand, negative experiences are shared as well. (Chaffey and Smith, 2017, 227)

Companies can utilize social media in acquiring new customers (Chaffey and Smith, 2017, 239). However, Chaffey and Smith (2017) state that social media works best for interacting with existing customers. When acquiring new customers, companies need to have a plan for the process. Social media can be used to reach the prospective customers. This can be done by advertisements and sharing posts, for example. Companies should encourage customers to be active with the company's content to create interaction. The more active people are, the more likely the company will receive leads. The ultimate objective of marketing can be reached through social media when companies convert interactive audience into purchasing customers. Meanwhile

attracting new customer, the company should not forget the existing customers. They should be engaged and encouraged to promote the business. (Chaffey and Smith, 2017, 223)

#### 2.5.4 Social Media Networks in France

The most frequently used sites on the Internet are social media sites (Chaffey and Smith, 2017, 225). The best way of marketing is being visible in the channels where the target audience is (Korpi, 2010, 28). In choosing the right social media channels, marketers should find out where their targets communicate and interact. Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are social media platforms for networking (Chaffey and Smith, 2017, 226). The platforms serve as a place for making contacts, which leads to people making a network. Social media networks can be utilized in both B2C and B2B marketing. (Korpi, 2010, 21)

French people have adopted new digital habits and are the third most active digital device users. French people are constantly online on the Internet, for instance when commuting, at work and even while watching TV. (Boussouis, 2015) From France's 64,9 million people, 55,4 million people were using Internet in 2015. From the population 29,4 million people use mobile Internet actively. Therefore, 45 percent of the population use Internet with their mobile as well as other equipment. (Solio, 2015) Access to social media requires Internet. The numbers show how largely social media can be accessed by the French. Heavy use of Internet brings many possibilities for marketers who want to reach the French customers through social media.

Statista (2018) presents the usage of different social media networks in France in the fourth quarter 2017. There were 38 million active social media users on a monthly basis in France in 2017. (Statista, 2018)

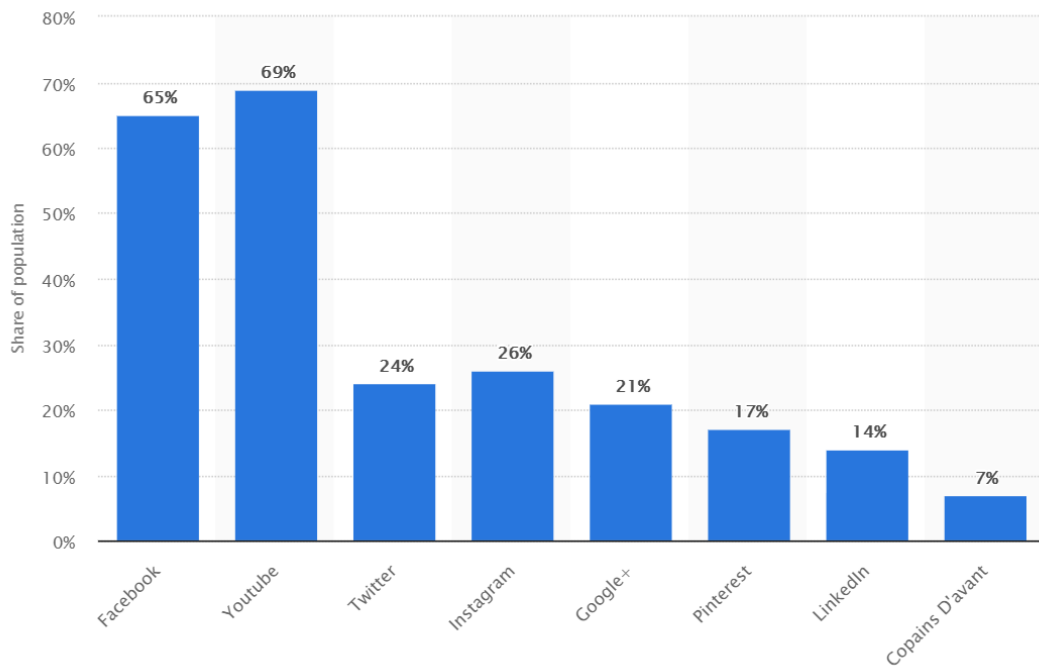


Figure 3. The Share of Population in France Using Social Media Networks in Q4 2017 (Statista, 2018).

In the end of 2017, YouTube was the heaviest social media network in terms of Internet users with 69 percent rate as seen in figure 3. YouTube is also the second popular website in France. Having no major competition in France, video content will reach the French through YouTube (Translatemedia, 2018). YouTube is the second largest social media network based on the number of active users as seen in figure 4 (Tauzin, 2018). The statistics of figure 3 present that the two social medias, which stand out when it comes to social media activeness of the French, are YouTube and Facebook. Figure 4 reinforces the statistics by Statista's (2018) on the fact that Facebook and YouTube are the social media networks that have highest traffic amongst the French.

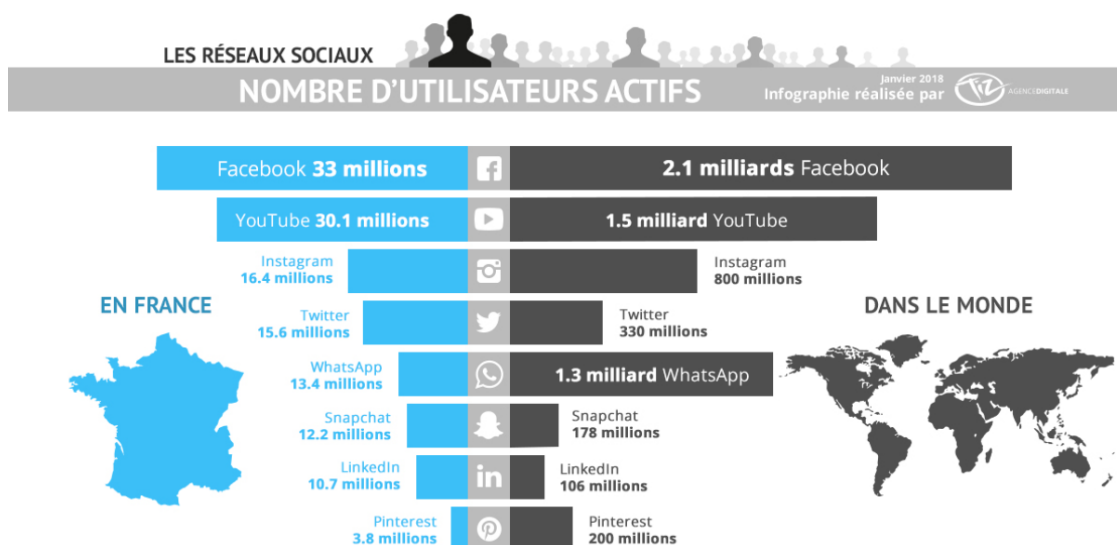


Figure 4. Active Social Media Users: France on the left compared to the rest of the world on the right (Tauzin, 2018).

### 2.5.5 Facebook

Facebook is unequivocally the most common social network with 33 million French users. Being the fourth commonly used website amongst the French, Facebook is the ideal network in reaching consumer customers. (Translatemedia, 2018) Executives in France are slowly growing into social network users, 49 percent of them used Facebook weekly in 2015 (eMarketer, 2015). The percentage has likely grown since that and therefore, Facebook can be utilized in B2B as well.

In 2015, 35 percent of active Facebook users were between ages 25 to 34. The second largest age group of active Facebook users were the 18 to 24-year olds. (Solio, 2015) In 2016, most active Facebook users were between the age 15 and 24 (Translatemedia, 2018). The most active Facebook users are not the ideal target audience for the case company. However, Translatemedia (2018) states that older generations in France are increasingly becoming active in Facebook as well.

There have been rumours that the use of Facebook is decreasing and that the social media network is slowly about to die. Juslén (2016) claims the current situation to be the opposite, other social media networks are facing difficult times but Facebook is maintaining its leader position as the platform, which businesses use to attract customers and make sales. Marketing in Facebook becomes beneficial for the



company when the target audience is reached by the company's content. Therefore, Juslén (2016) states that financial investment in Facebook's advertisement increases the reach of target audience tremendously. Facebook has reformed its advertisement possibilities in the past two years. It has for example introduced a new pixel, which allows companies to create target groups from the visitors of its Facebook page. Target groups can also be created by detailed indicators, such as time spent on the page. (Juslén, 2016)

According to Niiranen (2018), utilizing Facebook messenger in inbound marketing is a trend for B2B marketing. Ultimately, providing personalized content to Facebook user's inbox can lead to a purchase. Facebook is essential for Kirami Oy in its social media marketing. By financially investing in Facebook marketing, the case company can build their target audience and allocate the content straight to them. The social media behaviour of the target audience can be analysed in more detail as well.

#### 2.5.6 LinkedIn

LinkedIn has potential in B2B marketing. When the content is well formed and the message is relevant and innovative, the posts will reach great audience through it (Niiranen, 2018). There have been significant improvements to LinkedIn after being bought by Microsoft in 2017 both in recruitment and social media marketing. For example, marketing campaigns can now be addressed to a targeted audience. LinkedIn also has a possibility for Lead Generation Forms, meaning that companies can create landing pages inside LinkedIn to collect potential customers' contact information. An improvement is also a Sponsored in Mail advertisement with which LinkedIn users can be led to an inside LinkedIn landing page of a company. (Perkkiö, 2017) For the case company's marketing, LinkedIn offers great potential. Since LinkedIn is the most common professional social media network in France, potential customers can be contacted and awareness can be built by targeted marketing campaigns.

However, it is stated that French businesses are difficult to reach through social media. In 2016, 95 percent of French companies did not use social media. It has been a few years, and the percentage has likely lowered to some extent. LinkedIn is the most popular professional networking site for B2B in France. It has approximately 11 million French users and the site has overtaken a professional network Viadeo originated from

France. (Translatemedia, 2018) In 2015, 48 percent of executives in France used LinkedIn weekly (eMarketer, 2015) and therefore, it was nearly used as much as the most common social media network. However, in reaching B2B customers, social media is not ideal based on the numbers.

## 3 CULTURAL ELEMENTS

Cultural elements impact on doing business in today's globalized business communications. Goman (2011) defines culture as the set of values shared by a group of people. All cultures have values, rules and beliefs that subconsciously affect people. Such matters effect on thinking and actions. Despite cultural elements influence people, there is no arguing that all are individuals. However, it is common to rely on generalizations when understanding foreign cultures. (Goman, 2011)

### 3.1 Categorizing Cultures

Cultures have been studied throughout times by sectioning them into categories. In the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, many authors explored the problems of societies through separated cultural dimensions. Generally, societies were been categorized based on their development in economics or modernity. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, societies were categorized by a one-dimensional aspect of culture, which meant that societies were considered either traditional or modern. (Hofstede, 2011, 3).

Hofstede analyses national cultures through six dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, long-/short-term orientation and indulgence/restraint. Hofstede defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others". The term culture is often used to describe nations, organizations and ethnic groups. Occupational culture is a field that has not been researched as extensively as the other types of cultures. People acquire organisational cultures at work, whereas societal, national and gender cultures are acquired by children from early age at school. Societal cultures affect people's values and influence subconsciously. Organizational cultures, on the other hand, influence people's cognizant and apparent practices and how people experience their surroundings. (Hofstede, 2011, 3)

For the case company Kirami Oy, understanding the French customers is essential in providing them with appealing content. As explained by Hofstede (2011, 3), peoples' subconscious minds are affected by societal cultures. The cultures also influence peoples' behaviour, for example, how they adapt to new matters. The French people

and their market is new for Kirami Oy. To attract the French audience and provide them with relevant content, the company needs to understand the cultural elements that influence the French. Hofstede's cultural dimensions are utilized in the chapter 5 when analysing data.

### 3.1.1 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

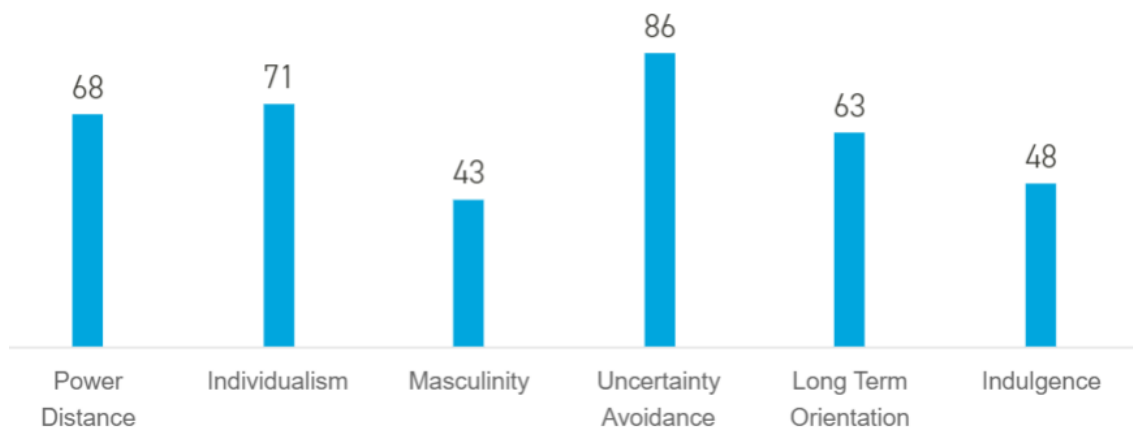


Figure 5. France's scores in Hofstede's six cultural dimensions. (Hofstede Insights, 2018)

#### **Power Distance**

The first cultural dimension is power distance. Power distance presents the scope to which organisations' less powerful members approve and assume unequal distribution of power. Less powerful members of organizations can be for example the children of a family. The first dimension addresses that both the followers and the leaders endorse society's level on inequality to the same extent. Hofstede (2011) states that power and inequality are present in all societies. However, in some societies equality overcomes inequality. (Hofstede, 2011, 9)

In countries scoring low in power distance, hierarchy can be seen as inequality of roles whereas in large power distance, hierarchy refers to inequality of existence (Hofstede, 2011, 9). France has a relatively high score of 68 in power distance as seen in figure 5. Commonly, French organizations tend to have additional hierarchical levels compared

to other Western European countries (Hofstede Insights, 2018). When doing content marketing in France, hierarchical matters need to be considered. In Finland, elderly bathing in hot tubs is common and that can be seen in marketing material. However, in France such material might be seen as mockery. Countries which have a high score, dread and honour the elderly, whilst in low scoring countries, they are equivalent to others (Hofstede, 2011, 9).

### **Uncertainty Avoidance**

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the rate of interpretation tolerated by the members of the society. The dimension measures the level of discomfort or comfort in unorganized situations. Unorganized situations refer to spontaneous and unidentified incidents, for instance. Cultures which are uncertainty avoiding, have strict behavioural regulations because they try to minimize abnormal situations. (Hofstede, 2011, 10)

Uncertainty accepting cultures accept different views better (Hofstede, 2011, 10). Scoring a high 86 in uncertainty avoidance, French people are not accepting of uncertainty. In general, the French want to feel emotionally safe and they do not like surprises (Hofstede Insights, 2018). Kirami may encounter challenges in its content marketing to France, since French customers' reactions to surprising marketing may differ significantly from the Finnish customers' perceptions, for instance. Being an uncertainty avoiding culture, Kirami should adapt the marketing to the French culture instead of doing marketing similarly how it is done for the Finnish audience.

People from strong uncertainty avoidance societies experience more stress and angst, whereas weak uncertainty avoidance societies have less of such emotions. Societies that have a high score in the dimension are measured lower in terms of welfare. (Hofstede, 2011, 10) Due to the high score in uncertainty avoidance, it can be claimed that stress is largely present in the French environment. Kirami's hot tubs can be marketed as being stress relieving goods. The stress relieving factor might appeal to the French customers, since it brings value by de-stressing the hectic mind. With positive health benefits, Kirami's products can also be marketed as raising welfare.

## **Individualism**

The third dimension is the alternative pair of individualism and collectivism. In individualistic cultures, people take care of themselves and their immediate family. On the opposite, collectivistic cultures look after extended families and build strong collaborative groups. (Hofstede, 2011, 11) French society is individualistic due to a high score of 71. Individualism should be considered when producing marketing material. In French marketing material, instead of presenting a large group bathing in a Kirami hot tub, there should be only a few people bathing, since that is more suitable for an individualistic culture.

Privacy and personal view are valued in individualistic cultures (Hofstede, 2011, 11). The French prefer to separate work and private life from each other (Hofstede Insights, 2018). In Finland, Kirami's products could be marketed for workplaces' leisure activities, whereas in France such is unlikely to be successful.

## **Masculinity**

Being the fourth dimension, masculinity versus femininity indicates the extent that values are distributed between genders. Men's values have a tendency of differing more among each other than women's values. In masculine societies, strength is admired and there is a large differentiation between gender roles. In feminine societies, people have sympathy for the weak and nurturing is done by all genders. (Hofstede, 2011, 12) Based on a low score of 43 on masculinity, the French culture is stated to be feminine. To increase successful content marketing, femininity could be emphasized. That could be done by showing children bathing in the hot tubs, for instance. In France, separation of feminine upper class and masculine working class exists (Hofstede Insights, 2018). The separations support that the marketing should be rather feminine, since Kirami's products are rather targeted to the upper class, for instance due to the cost of the products.

## **Long Term Orientation**

The fifth dimension is the opposite pair of long-term versus short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2011, 13). The dimension of long-term orientation explains how a society combines its past with the present and the future. Countries scoring high in the dimension emphasize on modernity, whereas the ones scoring low prefer norms and traditions while adopting to change slowly. (Hofstede Insights, 2018) Scoring 63 in long-term orientation means that the French culture reacts positively to modern and innovative ideas. This is an advantage for the case company. The French tend to make investments and save, since sparing is a common trait for long-term orientated cultures (Hofstede Insights, 2018). Therefore, Kirami should emphasize that the hot tubs are a long-term investment in health and leisure time.

## **Indulgence**

The sixth dimension indulgence refers to the level of controlling impulses and desires (Hofstede Insights, 2018). Hofstede (2011, 15) explains that indulgence implies the satisfaction received from human desires. In indulgent cultures, leisure time is valued and people are physically active, whereas restraint cultures are quite the opposite (Hofstede, 2011, 16). France scores 48 in the dimension of indulgence. Being more of a restraint culture, it might be challenging to market a leisure time good for the French. However, it is stated that the French value work and leisure time equally and have mediocre activity in sports (Hofstede, 2011, 16).

## 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The chapter covers the empirical aspects of the research, the research method used, its implementation in practice and processing the collected results. The objective of the thesis is to study content marketing in attracting new French customers. The objective is achieved through professional interviews and reflecting the results to the theoretical background. Through the combination of theoretical and empirical perspectives, the author and the commissioner are able to perceive the elements of successful inbound marketing. The interviews were held face to face with five marketing and communications professionals.

### 4.1 Research Methodology

Research can be defined as information that is methodically collected and interpreted. Research has to have a distinct purpose to figure matters out. (Saunders et. al., 2016, 726) The nature of the author's research is descriptive. Descriptive research attempts "to determine, describe or identify what is" and it often covers a current issue (Research Methodology, 2017). Purpose of the research is to collect data related to the primary research objective: how to utilize content marketing in attracting new customers in the French market. The objective of the research is to describe and explain the cultural elements that influence the target audience. In addition, the descriptive research portrays the social media usage of the French and what elements influence the content that should be created to the audience. Through the research, challenges for content marketing can be identified. Descriptive research was chosen for its effectiveness in analysing issues, since the research objective was to identify how marketing matters should be done. It lacks verifying the problem statistically, which is a disadvantage of the chosen research design (Research Methodology, 2017).

#### 4.1.1 Qualitative Research Method

First, the method for research design must be chosen. The research can imply quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods design. Quantitative design creates and utilizes numerical data. On the contrary, qualitative design utilizes non-numerical data.



If choosing between the two methodological choices is problematic, components from quantitative and qualitative designs can be combined through mixed methods. Deductive manner of approach is incorporated with quantitative data, whereas abductive or inductive approach is typical for qualitative design. Qualitative design may have elements of deductive approach, since theory is commonly tested in the research. (Saunders et. al., 2016, 165, 166, 168)

The request for holding interviews for the research came from the commissioner Kirami Oy. The research objectives were discussed with Kirami's Marketing Specialist Heidi Olá in the beginning of the writing process. The author conducted the interview questions based on the defined research objectives. The objective of the interviews was to adduce, interpret, and conclude the interviewees' knowledge amongst globalization of marketing, inbound marketing and the French culture. Therefore, qualitative method was chosen to understand the characteristics and interpretation of the themes. Abductive approach was applied to formulate common matters and challenges in doing content marketing for the French audience.

#### 4.2 Data Collection

Primary data was collected by conducting four semi-structured interviews with five professionals. Using the research design enabled the author to study and interpret the interviewees' personal knowledge and experiences. The objective of the interviews was to discover new perspectives amongst four main themes: 1. French culture, 2. social media, 3. globalization of marketing and 4. content marketing in France. Although the themes of the interview were same for all the interviewees, the focus point in each interview differed. The interviews were held in quiet premises and recorded for rehearing.

Data was collected through both primary and secondary data. Primary data refers to the data gathered precisely for the distinct research. Contrary to primary data, secondary data implies to data which has been gathered for other causes. The objective of using secondary data in research is to analyse the existing data and create interpretations and finding from it. (Saunders et. al., 2016, 724, 727)

Theoretical secondary data was collected from books, both hardcopy and online, articles and blog posts. The Internet was used to access recent data, which was valid

and current. Since content marketing is a constantly changing and developing field of marketing, the author was critical on material available and used material from reliable sources.

In the interview with Julien Chaigneau from Kirami, focus of the interview was on French culture, as well as French social media behaviour. Chaigneau was chosen to the interview for his French background and experience in working with French leisure time activities. Chaigneau also communicates with Kirami's French customers and operates Kirami's French Facebook page. Interview with Päivi Luoti and Ulla-Mari Uusitalo from Telegraafi focused on marketing in France and the communication aspects of it. Luoti is a professional in communications and has experience in global communications, marketing and working with foreign partners. Uusitalo is experienced in export and has for instance lived in France. The two were chosen for their knowledge on communicational aspects. Mikko Samuli is a digital marketing expert and has done export in consumer goods and B2B to France. Samuli was interviewed from marketing agency Doop because of his 20 years of marketing experience and interest on the latest marketing trends. The interview with him focused on inbound marketing and globalization of marketing. The focus of the interview with Arja Saarikoski from Kirami was on doing business abroad and interpreting Kirami's experience in expanding business abroad. Saarikoski oversees the communications with Kirami's foreign retailers and participates in planning and executing marketing operations.

#### 4.2.1 Interview Design

Research interview is a proactive discussion between two or more participants. It requires the interviewer and the interviewee to actively listen to one another, while the interviewer asks clear questions, which the interviewee voluntarily provides answers to. Interviews can be themed to address different subject matters. Such interviews are referred to as semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews proceed through open conversation, which is structured by support questions that may be used to lead the conversation. Therefore, the questions may be asked in a different order depending on the interview and additional questions may be presented to meet the objective. Semi-structured interviews are often audited by recording or taking relevant notes (Saunders et. al., 2016, 388, 391) Semi-structured interview was chosen because it abled to author to prepare questions beforehand. Questions were prepared in advance

to ensure that the interviewer would not lead the interviewees into answering a certain way. The author wanted to create conversation and encourage the interviewees to express their views to get reliable data. The disadvantage of the chosen design was challenge of analysing the data in an organised manner.

The interviewees were contacted by email in the end of 2017. Two interviews were held shortly after in November and December 2017. The latter two were held in February 2018. Interview requests were sent to Kirami's stakeholders and the author's networks in Lyon. Kirami's stakeholders agreed to the interviews and the dates were agreed well in advance for time management purposes. All interviews, despite the interview with Luoti and Uusitalo, were held individually. Three interviews were held in person and the fourth interview with Saarikoski was held via Skype due to distance factors. The interviewees received the interview questions beforehand. Some of them had looked at them before the actual interview. The interviews took between 45 and 60 minutes. The interviewees were asked for permission to record the interview. The interview results were themed to clarify the analysis as seen in appendix 1. The findings were analysed by content analysis. Therefore, verbal data from the interviews was categorized and summarized under different themes (Research Methodology, 2017).

#### 4.3 Validity

The validity of the research was ensured by having the research objective in mind throughout the process. The research met the objectives it intended to reach and provided answers to the research questions. The thesis was able to generalize findings on the French social media networks, the target audience and the elements and challenges of successful content marketing. It helps the commissioner to proceed with inbound marketing and adapt it to a foreign market and audience.

#### 4.4 Research Limitations

The results of the interview were limited to Kirami's stakeholders. Therefore, none of the interviewees were fully objective or external towards the commissioner. Since the interviewees were familiar with the case company, the discussion on each theme was associated with Kirami and there was lack of general overview of the topic. Interviewing

more French originated experts would have created more value to the research. The author made efforts to reach French digital marketing professionals living in France but contacts did not lead to interviews. However, consulting Kirami's stakeholders enabled to get an in-depth research on the factors affecting the marketing of the case company.

Having set specific themes and numerous support questions for the interviews, might have limited the discussion. Although they were used to guide the interview, they might have lead the discussion to certain topics. For instance, plenty of discussion was on globalization and doing business abroad, whilst the discussion should have focused on inbound marketing in more detail.

## 5 DATA ANALYSIS

The chapter covers the results of the semi-structured interviews. The professionals interviewed have extensive experience in different aspects of marketing and communications. They have some work experience with the French customers in foreign trade, B2B marketing and tourism. The material has been interpreted and analysed to give the reader a comprehensive view of the collected qualitative data. Expanding business to France, Kirami needs to understand the French culture and how it affects marketing, for instance. The primary objective of the analysis is to conclude the important factors Kirami needs to consider in their inbound marketing targeted to the French. The analysis covers the interview findings and the challenges that might encounter the case company regarding the interview topics.

### 5.1 French Culture and Behaviour

#### **How do French perceive foreign companies?**

The interviewees explained that apart from food, the French react positively to foreign products and services. French people being constantly online, exposes them into foreign content and information (Boussouis, 2015). Being exposed to international information eases the attitude towards new matters. Therefore, presumably the French will react positively towards Kirami's products. France's high score of 63 in long-term orientation presented by Hofstede Insights (2018) supports the favourable attitude.

A common dilemma presented by the professionals was that the French people do not know Finland. Selling a product that is foreign to the potential customers can cause difficulties. When the potential customers are unaware of the product, they are at the awareness stage, the top of the funnel as presented previously in chapter 2.4.4. To introduce the products and the company, Kirami should create awareness on social media, since it is used for such purposes as stated by Korpi (2010, 69). Awareness can be created through content such as posts on social media and blogs, photographs and videos (Lucidchart Content Team, 2017).

In France, there is a niche market for the hot tubs. Niche market refers to a concise section of potential customers for whom the product is targeted at (Ward, 2018). The challenge is to create the need for the niche and direct the marketing to the specific group. On the other hand, a niche market has opportunities for small businesses, since large companies do not focus on them (Ward, 2018). When potential customers evaluate whether they need the product, they are in the middle of the funnel at the evaluation stage as presented in chapter 2.4.4. At the stage, the case company can reinforce the customers' needs by providing them content through emails and downloads (Lucidchart Content Team, 2017).

### **What cultural elements should be considered when doing business in France?**

The main challenge stated amongst the interviewees was the language. The message sent by Kirami needs to be understood correctly by the customer. Understanding the correct tone of voice not only requires language skills, but also comprehension of the customer's needs, habits and culture. Based on the interviews, English campaigns would be underrated and the sole language to be used in marketing is French. The interview findings reinforce the statement by Gallix (2013) that the French might feel offended if their own language is not being used in marketing as presented in chapter 2.4.2. Seifert (2016) also emphasizes on the importance of local language in effective content marketing. To overcome the challenges, the interviewees presented that Kirami should have a local expert in charge of the communication with the French.

The interviewees stated that the Finnish and French business cultures differ in the pace of actions and manners as well as manners of approach. Hierarchy was stated to be present in the French culture and distinct class borders exist. Addressing formally is substantial in business environment according to the interviewees. Hofstede Insights' (2018) theory supports the interview results, since France scores high in power distance, meaning that power is distributed unequally as presented in chapter 3.1.1. Cultural elements should be emphasized when communicating with French retailers, for instance. B2B and B2C content need to differ from each other on the formality. B2B content is likely to reach people higher in the hierarchical ladder, such as executives, and the author believes it should therefore be more formal.

### **What kind of consumers are the French?**

The professionals stated French culture to be hedonistic and that value on leisure time is emphasized. According to Hofstede Insights (2018), the French score relatively low in indulgence and therefore, the finding differs from theory. However, the score of 48 on indulgence is mediocre and conclusion cannot be drawn solely based on the score.

All interviewees expressed that the French decision-making is done on emotional basis rather than rational reasons. The interview finding verifies Hofstede Insights' (2018) theory on uncertainty avoidance studied in chapter 3.1.1, in which is stated that emotional links drive the French culture. Since Kirami's hot tubs are a leisure time good, the common interview finding was that the health benefits should be promoted by content marketing. Examples of such content could be visually appealing infographics, since according to Izea (2017), they are effective for presenting product details. When being stressed, French consumers might perceive wellness increasing products appealing. Hofstede (2011, 10) states people from high uncertainty avoiding cultures to experience more stress and therefore, the feeling of stress can be utilized in marketing.

Kirami's possible target audience in France were also discussed in the interviews. Parisian members of the upper class with high standard of living were presented as the ideal customers according to some of the interviewees. In the interviews, internationality was a convergent feature needed for the potential target customers. Some of the interviewees stated Parisians as internationally minded. The geographical location of the outer suburbs of Paris, being in the Northern France, would be ideal for Kirami's products due to the climate. Examining the target customer is relevant in content marketing, since according to Filtness (2014), companies need to be familiar with their target audience. Content should be created to their preferences in order to reach the potential customers. The right channels need to be chosen based on where the target audience is active (Korpi, 2010, 92).

Scoring high in long-term orientation, the French appreciate traditions and prefer the well-known (Hofstede Insights, 2018). Being remarkably uncertainty avoidant, the French value familiarity. In the interviews, it was discussed that the content created should be made familiar and relevant for the French. Relevance of the content is the basis for effective inbound marketing as presented by Tervo (2018) in chapter 2.3. The

theory and the interview findings reinforce that the marketing should be shaped to the French people's nature as claimed also by Startup overseas (2017).

## 5.2 Social Media in France

### **What social media channels would you use when marketing in France? Why?**

Facebook stood out in the interviews when discussing about the social media channels to be used with French customers. The professionals reinforce the statistics by Statista (2018) presented in chapter 2.5.4 on popular social media networks in France. The statistics state that YouTube and Facebook are the common social media platform amongst Internet users (Statista, 2018). Tauzin (2018), on the other hand, claims Facebook to have the most active users. Juslén (2016) also states that Facebook remains as a trendy and effective social media network to be used in both B2B and B2C marketing. Therefore, the author believes Kirami should primarily focus on Facebook as the social media network for marketing communications.

YouTube was also mentioned by all the interviewees. However, based on the interviews, its value was not highlighted. Statista (2018) claims YouTube to have the most traffic over any social media network in France. Videos are a powerful way of creating awareness (Lucidchart Content Team, 2017). Kirami should introduce the product in the form of videos, since people prefer learning about a product by videos according to Gotter (2017). Gotter's (2017) theory on videos as a content type is presented in 2.4.5. Since YouTube has nearly no competition in France according to Translatemedia (2018), Kirami's video content is recommended to be published there.

Based on the interviews, LinkedIn is the most powerful professional social network to be used in B2B marketing. Perkkiö (2017) reinforces LinkedIn's potential in reaching business customers. Having around 11 million French users and being the most popular professional network as stated by Translatemedia (2018), Kirami should publish in LinkedIn to reach business audience. However, the author believes strategy for LinkedIn marketing should come later after Facebook and YouTube.

Other social media networks discussed with the professionals were Instagram, Google+ and Pinterest. Statista's (2018) figure classifies the networks into the six most frequently used networks. However, the author believes focusing on few main channels



in the beginning of expanding business abroad is sufficient. Juslén (2016) claims that the only social network businesses need to use in their social media marketing is Facebook. Therefore, the author believes it is better to create relevant and valuable content in one place, instead of mediocre content to multiple places.

The ultimate challenge in social media marketing described by the interviewees is activating the French in Kirami's social media. Interactive social media is studied in 2.5.1. As stated by Korpi (2010, 19) the audience can be activated by voting, commenting and questionnaires, for instance. Kirami should encourage potential or existing customers to be interactive by such methods. Activating the target audience requires lots of contribution from the case company in terms of labour input.

### **How do French businesses communicate with their customers in social media? What channels are used?**

Based on the interviews, there should be a separate Facebook page for the French audience. In the French Facebook page, French language should be the only language used. Professionals claimed that it is crucial to use the same language as the consumers use, when approaching the brand. The interview finding supports Bedor's (2015) claims that local experts should always recreate the content to the local language.

It is worthy to mention, that some interviewees suggested to use Kirami's French retailers' social medias to market the product. They claimed this to build trust amongst the French. Another confidence-creating element brought out in the interviews was utilizing blogs, for instance professional interior bloggers who the locals trust, in publishing content. Lucidchart Content Team (2017) states blogs being effective in the top of the content marketing funnel when creating awareness of the product.

### 5.3 Globalization of Marketing and Content Marketing in France

#### **What marketing factors should businesses consider when expanding to a new market/French market?**

Building trust, reliability and showing quality of the products are important objectives brought out in the interviews. According to the interviewees, these objectives need to be reached in global marketing. Bly (2016) claims that confidence between the brand and the reader can be done by talking from experience. Without credibility, the reader cannot be engaged (Bly, 2016). Kirami can meet the above-mentioned objectives, by sharing reviews of customers. Izea (2017) reinforces reviews to be an efficient type of content marketing. Showing in practice how the hot tubs function, will encourage the customer to make a purchase.

#### **What marketing message should be targeted to the French audience?**

The interviewees claimed that marketing, which tells a story, appeals to the French. Salonen (2013) explains storytelling as an appealing way of delivering the marketing message. Storytelling is covered in chapter 2.4.6. Therefore, the case company should utilize storytelling when introducing the product to the French audience. Storytelling will help the customers become acquainted with the product as presented by Salonen (2013).

The professionals stated the language and the tone of voice to impact on delivering the marketing message. Bly (2016) states that companies should "write like people talk". Doing so, will enable the message to be understood correctly by the audience and identify themselves with the message. The professionals claimed effective marketing message for the French to create feelings and emphasize local values and manners. Therefore, the interview finding supports France's feminine culture as presented by Hofstede (2011, 12) and that the impact of emotions can be exploited in delivering the marketing message.

### **What is successful content marketing?**

An interview finding was that there should be a separate content marketing strategy for France in order to succeed. The importance of strategy was not emphasized in all the interviews but in literature review its importance was highlighted. Global content marketing strategy is covered in chapter 2.4.3. Based on the findings, Kirami should set goals, define the audience who the content is created for and analyse the existing content. It should then make plans for future content, have someone in charge of the process, ultimately evaluate, and measure the success. Izea (2018) claims that both B2B a B2C content marketing require an adaptable strategy. Building and monitoring a strategy requires time and input from a marketer. The author recommends Kirami to evaluate, whether they have the resources to have an employee solely in charge of the French content marketing strategy.

The professionals pointed out that the ultimate objective, making sales, should not be forgotten. Hubspot (2017) reinforces the finding that the ultimate objective of inbound marketing should be making sales. The interviewees explained that through content marketing, the case company should sell the Kirami experience. Hubspot (2018) explains that in inbound marketing, the company needs to be present in the entire purchasing process. In order to sell the experience, Kirami's content should provide value throughout the buying journey.

### **What do you see as the challenges of content marketing in France?**

Some challenges have been presented under the previous interview questions analysed in chapter 5. The interviewees agreed that one of the primary challenge in global marketing to France, is finding a local partner who knows the local audience and circumstances. The professionals explained that having a local professional will be cost efficient, since it minimizes the errors and is a safe way to represent the company and its brand. However, the selection of a trustful partner is not effortless. An important factor presented during an interview was that contracts need to be made to avoid the partner taking over the business in the foreign target market.

The amount of information on the Internet is a challenge on its own. Professionals express that standing out in social media may be challenging. Korpi (2010, 28)

stresses that the Internet is full of content and the channels which are visible for the target audience need to be defined. Therefore, Kirami needs to be active where the customers are. Based on Tauzin's (2018) data presented in figure 4 in chapter 2.5.4, the most active social media users in France are on Facebook and YouTube. Using the same social networks as the target audience is a relevant matter for the company's visibility.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The goal of the thesis was to examine how French customers can be attracted by effective content marketing practices. The objective was to understand the common social media networks amongst the French and how the foreign target audience can be reached. Noteworthy was on the interviews with the marketing and communication professionals. Chosen interview themes were to examine the literature review topics diversely in depth. Based on the theoretical data and research finding, the thesis pursued to provide the commissioner guidelines for functional content creation that reaches the target audience.

The research interviews and theoretical literature review encapsulate that understanding and knowing the target audience, is key to creating successful content. Successful content marketing promotes the ultimate objective of doing marketing, which is making sales. Making sales requires creating content that the audience values, understands and which moves the customers further in the purchasing process. Content should not only support marketing but be informative and entertaining for the audience.

The primary answer to the research question on *how can the case company attract the French audience* is correct language. Local tone of voice should be used and for the French audience, content needs to be created in French. A separate Facebook page in French language is supposed to enhance reaching the audience. Building trust and awareness of the brand is essential in attracting new customers. Trust can be built by sharing experiences on the products in the form of reviews, for instance. Awareness requires numerous top of the funnel content, such as social media and blog posts.

For the case company Kirami Oy to have functional online presence, it needs to be present where the customers are. Therefore, *the main social media networks used in France* were identified. For both French B2C and B2B customers, the preferred social media network is Facebook. Although Facebook has the most active users of all social media networks in France, the most active users are between ages 15 and 24 and do not fit the ideal age group of Kirami's buyers. Currently, YouTube has the highest percentage of users compared to other social media networks in France and it can be utilized for publishing video content. The primary professional network amongst the French is LinkedIn.

The ultimate *challenge in marketing to the French audience* is being interactive with the audience. A strategy needs to be implemented in order to ensuring that there is enough communication and customers see the value Kirami brings. Someone needs to oversee the strategy, its constant development and adaption to the customers' needs and desires. Content should always answer the audience's questions. Finding a trustful local partner, who knows the local audience and circumstances, was also an essential matter stated in the interviews. The challenge can be managed by using the company's networks in finding the right partners.

The data used for the thesis was current. Inbound marketing is a constantly developing aspect of digital marketing and to have reliable data, only recent literature was reviewed. The results of the interviews were reliable, since all the interviewees were professionals with years of experience in marketing, communications or foreign trade. Despite the numerous primary data received from the interviews, the research lacked in depth analysis of key content marketing elements. The thesis could have focused more specifically on certain issues. However, the thesis managed to answer the research questions and describe the content marketing elements broadly. Aspects of targeting marketing practices to a foreign culture were examined precisely regarding France as the case country.

The author suggests the commissioner to create a content marketing strategy and have an employee in charge of the implementation and evaluation of it. If the commissioner would like to further study the French social media behaviour further, the author recommends French digital marketers to be interviewed. There was limited free data available online, and therefore analyzing the French social media habits were cursory. As a conclusion, content marketing, as a technique in attracting customers, can and should be utilized in expanding business abroad. However, extensive market research needs to be conducted beforehand and that is recommended for the commissioner as well.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Interview Themes and Support Questions

Interview 1: On November 28, 2017 with Mikko Samuli held at the Doop office, Turku.

Interview 2: On December 13, 2017 with Päivi Luoti and Ulla-Mari Uusitalo held at the Telegraafi office, Turku.

Interview 3: On February 2, 2018 with Julien Chaigneau held at Lemminkäinen Campus, Turku.

Interview 4: On February 8, 2018 with Arja Saarikoski held via Skype.

### **Own Experience and Background**

- Minkälainen uratausta sinulla on? What is your career background?
- Millaista kauppaa olet tehnyt Ranskan kanssa? What type of business have you done with France?
- Mitkä ovat suurimmat kulttuurierot Ranskan ja Suomen välillä? What are the biggest cultural difference between France and Finland?

### **French Culture and Behaviour**

- Miten ranskalaiset kokevat ulkomaiset yritykset? How do French perceive foreign companies?
- Minkälaisia kokemuksia sinulla on Ranskasta kulttuurin saralla? What are your experiences on the French culture?
- Millaisia kulttuurielementtejä tulee huomioida käydessä kauppaa Ranskassa? What cultural elements should be considered when doing business in France?
- Millaisia ranskalaiset ovat kuluttajina? What kind of consumers are the French?

## **Social Media in France**

- Mitä sosiaalisen media kanavia käyttäisit markkinoidessa Ranskassa? Miksi? What social media channels would you use when marketing in France? Why?
- Miten ranskalaiset yrityksen kommunikoivat asiakkaiden kanssa sosiaalisessa mediassa? Mitä kanavia käytetään? How do French businesses communicate with their customers in social media? What channels are used?

## **Globalization of Marketing**

- Minkälaisia kokemuksia sinulla on kansainvälistymisestä? What experiences do you have on globalization?
- Mitä tulisi ottaa huomioon markkinoinnin näkökulmasta mennessä uudelle markkina-alueelle/Ranskan markkinoille? What marketing factors should businesses consider when expanding to a new market/French market?
- Minkälainen markkinointiviesti Ranskaan kannattaa suunnata? What marketing message should be targeted to the French audience?
- Miten ranskalainen asiakas yllätetään markkinoinnin keinoin positiivisesti? Entä negatiivisesti? What sort of marketing would surprise a French customer positivity? What about negatively?

## **Content Marketing in France**

- Millaista on onnistunut sisältömarkkinointi? What is succesful content marketing?
- Millä kielellä tuottaisit sisältöä Ranskassa? What language would you create content in France?
- Mitä haasteita sisältömarkkinoinnissa Ranskassa esiintyy? What do you see as the challenges of content marketing in France?

## Appendix 2. Summary of the Interviews.

Experience and Background	French Culture and Behaviour	Social Media in France	Globalization of Marketing	Content Marketing in France
<p>Professional backgrounds of interviewees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-different aspects of marketing and communication (digital marketing, content marketing, translation)</li> <li>-foreign trade (export)</li> <li>-tourism</li> </ul>	<p>Important factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Importance of the local language (English campaigns will be underrated)</li> <li>-values</li> <li>-hedonism</li> <li>-pace of life (leisure time valued)</li> </ul> <p>Cultural differences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- straightforwardness (FIN) versus small talk (FR)</li> <li>-addressing formally (FR)</li> <li>-distinct class borders (FR)</li> <li>-unorganized business culture (FR)</li> <li>-less rational decision making (FR)</li> </ul> <p>French target customer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-high standard of living</li> <li>-international</li> <li>-Parisians</li> <li>-lives in Northern France (climate</li> </ul>	<p>Social media channels to be used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Facebook</li> <li>- YouTube (videos)</li> <li>-Instagram</li> <li>-Google</li> <li>-Pinterest</li> <li>-LinkedIn (in B2B)</li> <li>-Blogs (experts who locals trust should test the product and review it, interior bloggers)</li> <li>-social medias of retailers</li> </ul>	<p>Important factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- building trust</li> <li>-building awareness and visibility</li> <li>-monitoring and evaluating of progress</li> <li>-building reliability</li> <li>-showing quality</li> <li>-showing where the product comes from</li> <li>-finding a local representative/partner</li> <li>-knowing the local audience and circumstances (cost efficient, safe)</li> <li>-understanding different regions in the target country and choosing the right one</li> <li>-knowing competition and customers</li> </ul> <p>Appealing marketing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- tells a story</li> <li>-creates feelings</li> <li>-combines local values and manners to itself</li> </ul>	<p>Important factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-converting leads into sales</li> <li>-having a well targeted strategy and evaluating the progress</li> <li>-presenting the benefits/adding value while selling the product</li> <li>-selling the Kirami experience</li> </ul> <p>Important in producing content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-tone of voice</li> <li>-language</li> </ul> <p>Surprising a French customer positively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-originality</li> <li>-humour</li> <li>-unexpected</li> </ul>

	and location of retailers)			
<p>Business done with France:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-export in consumer goods</li> <li>-B2B marketing</li> <li>- tourism (leisure time)</li> </ul>	<p>Differences amongst the interviewees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conservativeness (FR)</li> <li>-less attention on regulation (FR)</li> <li>-more confident with new products (FR)</li> </ul>	<p>Communicating in social media with customers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-separate content marketing strategy for France</li> <li>-separate Facebook platform (French language), using the language the customer approaching uses</li> <li>- encouraging people to share experiences</li> </ul>	<p>Differences amongst the interviewees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-usage of email marketing</li> <li>- emphasizing Scandinavian design and showing Finnish culture</li> <li>-combining French events to the Finnish product</li> </ul>	<p>Differences amongst the interviewees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-personalizing social media material for the French</li> </ul>
	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-awareness: not knowing Finland</li> <li>-selling an unfamiliar product</li> <li>-message sent by the company needs to be understood correctly by the customer</li> <li>-values may differ based on regions (determining the target market)</li> </ul>	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- activating the French in Kirami's social media</li> <li>-finding outdoor and interior bloggers</li> </ul>	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-choosing the right local partner (partner may take over the business)</li> <li>-communicating often with customers</li> </ul>	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-need to produce separate material/utilization of existing material</li> <li>-standing out in social media</li> <li>-message misunderstood by the customer</li> <li>-incorrect language</li> </ul>