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BLOGS AS PART OF A COMPANY'S INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

LAHTI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED
SCIENCES

Degree programme in International
Business

Bachelor's Thesis

2.11.2014

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QVICK, AINO:

Blogs as Part of a Company's Integrated
Marketing Communications Strategy

Bachelor's Thesis in International Business, 50 pages, 2 pages of appendices

Autumn 2014

ABSTRACT

As the marketing media is constantly changing, companies have to learn new skills on how to grab the attention of consumers and how to create information that makes the customer remain loyal. This is getting harder all the time as people have learned how to skip all the unwanted information they are not interested in.

Marketing today should be in a form of an integrated marketing communications strategy; a continuous flow between all the means of marketing that the company is using. Blogs are used for content marketing: telling stories, sharing experiences, thoughts and opinions that are company related. They are also used for informing about company's products and describing their working methods.

Peikko Group Oy, Ferroplan Oy and Finnair Oyj are all examples of Finnish companies that use a blog as a part of their company's integrated marketing communications strategy. These case companies were interviewed to find out how they have succeeded in their marketing and what the cornerstones of having a company blog are.

This thesis is conducted by using the combination of qualitative research methodology and deductive research approach. The data is collected through primary data and secondary data. The primary data is collected from interviews carried out in the companies and the secondary data is comprised of data gathered from journals, articles, books and electronic sources.

First, the author takes an overall look at integrated marketing communications, the evolution of marketing and blog marketing. This information is combined from different publications and drawn into basic lines of blog marketing and marketing eras from marketing 1.0 to marketing 4.0. Then, the qualitative research part of the thesis is carried out and the answers of the case companies are examined. In the end, the thesis is concluded with the results of the qualitative research that is based on the theoretical part of the thesis.

The study leads the author to conclude that blogs have great value for a company's marketing in today's fast-paced business and marketing environment.

Key words: Blog, integrated communication, marketing, social media, Peikko Group, Ferroplan, Finnair

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Syksy 2014

TIIVISTELMÄ

Markkinointi on jatkuvassa muutoksessa ja yritysten täytyy pysyä kehityksessä mukana säilyttääkseen asiakkaiden huomio. Tämä vaikeutuu koko ajan ihmisten sivuuttaessa yhä taitavammin tiedon, joka ei heitä kiinnosta. Markkinointi tulisi toteuttaa integroidun markkinointiviestinnän strategian periaatteita noudattaen. Sen tulisi olla kaikkien yrityksen käyttämien markkinointivälineiden yhtenäinen jatkumo.

Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on selvittää, mitä edellytyksiä vaaditaan blogien käyttämiseen toimivana osana yrityksen integroitua markkinointiviestintästrategiaa.

Peikko Group Oy, Ferroplan Oy ja Finnair Oyj ovat suomalaisia yrityksiä, jotka käyttävät blogia osana yritystensä integroitua markkinointiviestinnän strategiaa. Yrityksiä haastatteleamalla pyritään selvittämään blogimarkkinoinnin kulmakivet ja menestyksen edellytykset.

Tämä opinnäytetyö tehdään käyttämällä yhdistelmää kvalitatiivisesta menetelmästä ja deduktiivisesta tutkimusotteesta. Tieto kerätään ensi- ja toissijaisista lähteistä. Ensisijainen tieto kerätään yrityksille tehdyistä haastatteluista ja toissijainen tieto kootaan aikakauslehtijulkaisuista, artikkeleista, kirjoista ja internetistä.

Tutkimus alkaa yleiskatsauksella integroituun markkinointiviestintään, markkinoinnin kehitykseen 1.0:sta 4.0:an ja blogimarkkinointiin. Tämän jälkeen opinnäytetyön kvalitatiivinen osuus käydään läpi haastattelujen vastausten perusteella. Lopuksi tutkimus saatetaan päätökseen teoreettisen tiedon ja kvalitatiivisen tutkimuksen tuloksia hyödyntäen.

Tutkimuksen tuloksena kirjoittaja päätyy siihen, että blogimarkkinoilla on suuri arvo nykypäivän nopeatempoisessa yritysmaailmassa.

Avainsanat: blogi, integroitu viestintä, markkinointi, sosiaalinen media, Peikko Group, Ferroplan, Finnair

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Marketing and means to market have grown enormously during the past years. E-commerce was enabled due to the growth of Internet and allowed firms even more ways than before to reach the consumers and to discuss with them. (Perreault Jr, William D., Cannon, Joseph, P., McCarthy & E. Jerome 2012.) E-commerce provided a way to extend the businesses of companies in a new marketplace – the internet. It was possible to get into new markets, as via internet the access to new places around the world became easier than ever before. Buyers and sellers – people doing business – could reach each other with no additional costs or special arrangements as they could meet whenever online. Companies could reach for more revenues, as it was possible to remove all extra insufficiencies from the way. (Goswami 2002.)

Because of the huge business and technology development, firms have added to their forms of original marketing different types of marketing through social media. Blogs have become a mean of marketing for firms and marketers, as they allow the interaction between the marketer/writer of the blog and the consumer, which is the style of marketing that consumers are nowadays fond of. Blogs have a personal style of writing that is not always in the form of an advertisement or news, so consumers do not feel that they are being pushed to buy anything, but they feel that different products or services are recommended to them. (Perreault Jr, William D., Cannon, Joseph, P., McCarthy & E. Jerome 2012.)

Blogs, before known as weblogs, named by Jorn Barger, are nowadays found all over the Internet. Blogs are websites that are updated often and the entries are shown in chronological order. (Weblogs as a bridging genre 2005, 142.) First, blogs mostly consisted of personal notes of the writer, the possibility of commenting by readers and links to other webpages that appear in the form of posts. However in 1999 when Blogger (which is one of many tools for creating blogs) was established, blog writers started, in addition to what blogs first consisted of, to add entries that were reminiscent to short journal texts. These updates included blogger's own thoughts and observations of everyday life,

personal matters and all in all everything about anything and were updated even more than once a day. (Blood 2000.) As the amount of blogs has exploded, nowadays blogs include also advertisements in many different forms such as texts, banners and links. Blogs are also used for commercial purposes. (Weblogs as a bridging genre 2005, 163).

Before consumers buy something, they ask for opinions and tips from their friends and search on the Internet. Consumers want to know about a product that interests them before they buy it, preventing themselves from making bad choices and purchases. In addition, consumers do not only want to search for information but they also want to share their own experiences - good or bad – straight away to others. Consumers as well tend to believe that information that comes from a reliable source, as from someone they know, is better information. This is what blogs are good for. Social media can be considered same as word-of-mouth, as in both forms it is expected that the consumer starts the conversation and keeps it alive. In blogs kept by companies, the companies start the conversation, but the essence of it is the consumer continuing the discussion, asking questions, linking the text forward in internet and so forth. The difficulty in marketing through blogs and social media is the same as in word-of-mouth; consumers do not like pushy, too eager, or spam kind of marketing. It is important to give them a positive experience without tricks and controlling. (Evans 2008.)

According to Hubspot statistics, 57 % of marketers got customers through blogging, and the companies that blogged more than twenty times per month achieved five times more traffic on their website, compared to those who blogged less than four times per month. Also, in 2010, most people visited and read blogs more than once per day and the same year, almost 40 % of US companies used blogging for their marketing and the ones that used blogs got 50 % more visitors to their company websites in comparison to those who did not use blog as a marketing tool. (Hubspot 2012.)

1.2 Thesis objectives and research questions

The statistics and information above show some basic ideas why blogging should be a part of companies' marketing. That is the reason why this thesis is conducted;

to see how a company benefits from using a blog as one of its marketing tools and also to use this information and knowledge in the future working-life as well as to guide companies on the basic knowledgment of how to use a marketing blog successfully. The aim of this thesis is to understand the possibilities that having a company blog gives and how these are reached in the best manner. Because the marketing environment has changed and is changing constantly, it is important to research the next steps for the companies on how to use their marketing more efficiently. Also, as blogging is still a fairly new concept, there are not that many research yet available. Because the technology and internet are a part of most peoples life today, it is vital for companies to come to the same level – if they are not yet. Furthermore, it is essential to conduct studies on new marketing means and how to use them, as to guide companies as well as entrepreneurs, as not everyone has the skills of using modern marketing the way it could be used.

The purpose of the thesis is to study blogs in the use of companies' marketing and the potential the blogs have and if there are some possible negative impacts. The study also looks deeper into three company blogs as a real life example and examines through qualitative research whether the companies themselves find the use of the blog positive and whether it has increased their sales or had other mentionable effects. The three studied Finnish companies are Peikko Group Oy, Ferroplan Oy and Finnair Oyj. Also, previous studies about blogs are examined and combined with this study to find out what makes a successful company blog.

Though it is mentionable that while searching Finnish companies with their own company blog, the author found it rather difficult and time consuming as it was not that easy to find company blogs.

This study is conducted to find out the answer to the main research question that is:

-How can blogs be utilized as part of a company's integrated marketing communications strategy?

To achieve the main objective, five sub-questions are also answered:

-What is integrated marketing communications strategy?

-What kind of role can blogs have as a part of integrated marketing communications strategy?

-How can blogs be used effectively?

-What are the biggest challenges for the case companies to use blogs as a part of their integrated marketing communications strategy?

1.3 Scope and Limitations

This thesis will not go through the basic definitions of marketing, but concentrate on searching the proper ways to implement it in the vigorously changing marketing and purchasing environment. Neither will it research many company blogs, but concentrate on three real world examples (Peikko Group, Ferroplan and Finnair) to give an understanding of the possibilities that blogs can have in marketing and to show how real companies have implemented it and included it in their own marketing communications strategy. One of the limitations of the thesis lies in the fact that as a qualitative research, the opinions and the facts of the questionnaire lies on the answers of solely three companies. Had more companies been interviewed, the thesis would have a broader understanding of how companies feel about having blogs as a part of their marketing.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study is mostly based on theories of marketing communications and questionnaire concerning blogs as a part of it.

The theoretical part consists of observing how marketing has developed during digital age and what the four different levels of marketing are. The evolution of marketing and social media is described with the basic qualities of blog marketing and blogs in general. As blog is a relatively new concept, there are not that many studies about it.

This study also looks into marketing communications strategy and blogs as a part of it.

SWOT analysis is used later in Chapter 4 to study the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of blogs as a part of companies marketing.

SWOT analysis is a tool for analyzing the company's internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) audits, focusing on the present time and the future. The SWOT analysis may be done for a marketing strategy – as is the case in this study. Only the relevant issues should be shown in SWOT analysis for it to be useful and not to contain too much information.

SWOT analysis is a useful tool for the company to know on what to focus on, what possible impacts that come from outside the company are and what the development points are. (Kotler, P., Kartajaya, Hermawan, Setiawan & Iwan 1999, 94.)

1.5 Research Methodology and Data Collection

This study is conducted by using qualitative research methodology and deductive research approach. Qualitative research is an in-depth study of a phenomena or an issue in interest. Qualitative research differs from quantitative research by being more personal, exploratory and detailed research whereas quantitative research consists of numerical data. (Mack, N. 2005, 2-3.)

Deductive research approach is a way of conducting a study where a hypothesis – or several – are developed based on data that already exists. (Saunders, M., Lewis, Philip, Thornhill & Adrian 2009, 127.) Data is gathered through primary and secondary data. Primary data is information that is gathered by the author for the purpose of a particular study for example in the form of questionnaires and secondary data on the contrary, is data that already exists for example in previous studies or books. (Boslaugh 2009.) Primary data is gathered through the qualitative research of three companies – Peikko Group, Ferroplan and Finnair - using a blog in their own marketing. This is done by a questionnaire via e-mail. The questionnaire consists of eight questions that support each other on finding out the answers on how the companies feel they are succeeding in writing their company blog, their main objectives and reasons of writing it, the biggest challenges and so forth.

These three particular companies were selected because of their experience on blogging from the perspective of a company. All the companies had written their blogs for several years at the time of the research. The companies had multiple blog posts and clearly had the knowledge of what are some of the factors that make a good company blog. This can be stated by studying the company blogs and the knowledge gathered from other sources. Secondary data is collected from sources such as the internet, books and journals. Below is shown the research methods in a form of a figure.

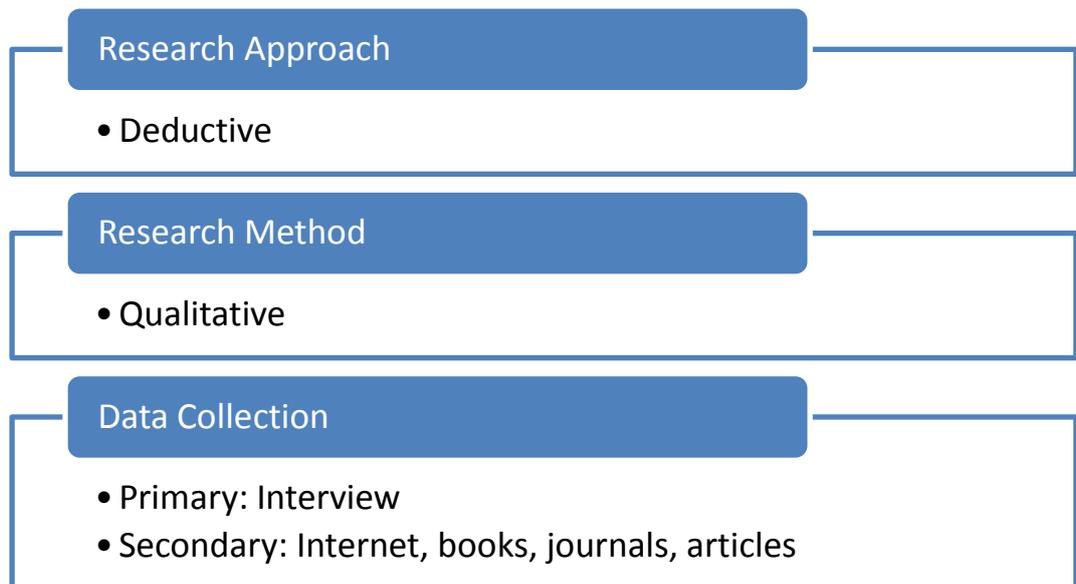


Figure 1: Research Methods

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis will start with the introduction and background information of internet and marketing/social media marketing and by going through the research methods used. Also all the marketing eras from marketing 1.0 to marketing 4.0 will be examined and explained. Thereafter, the definition and implementation of marketing communications will be studied including the evolvement of it, what does it include and how it can be used.

After that the thesis will continue on basic information concerning blogging and modern marketing environment together with the basic suggestions and instructions on how to start a company blog and what should be considered. After

the theoretical part, the study will continue to its qualitative part, to the research study, where three companies are interviewed and the results will be given at the end of the thesis. Few improvements are recommended by the author as well for the company blogs. The study will result in the findings of what makes a good company marketing blog and end to the conclusion.

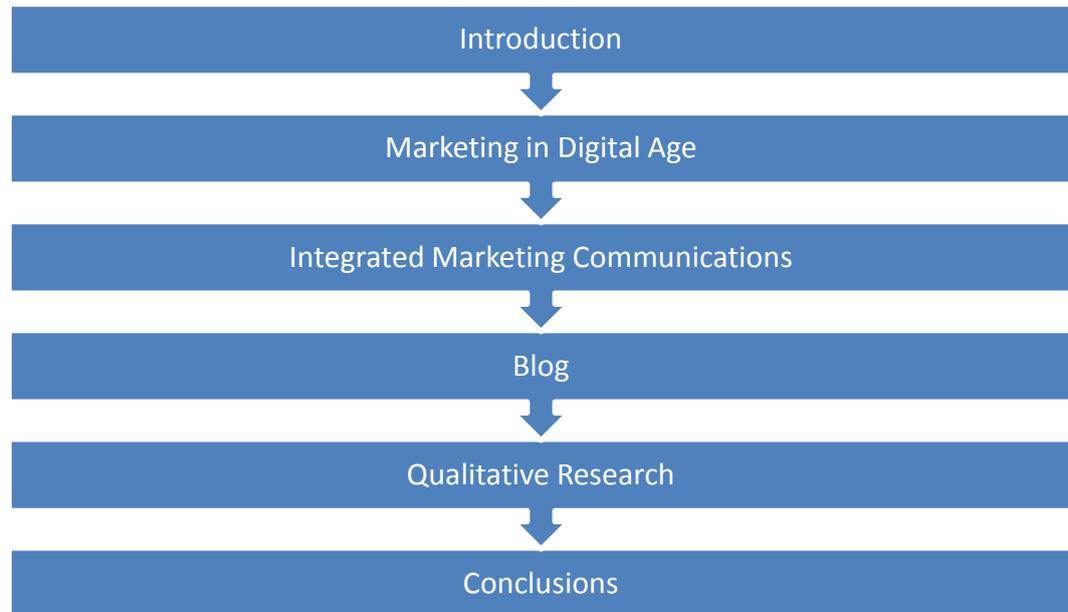


Figure 2: Thesis Structure

2 MARKETING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

In this chapter, the evolution of the internet era and digital age will be discussed as well as how the marketing thinking has changed. Business marketing is all the time changing and has already changed. It is not enough anymore to put an ad to a newspaper or send an e-mail, in addition to these traditional marketing methods, more is now needed. Customers need nowadays even more engagement from companies than before and they might not consider marketing apart from the product, company or experience but they think that the marketing itself is “it”. Consumers might leave the room during TV commercials or fast-forward them with a digital video recorder, skip e-mails and move to social media when they want information about a product or a company. (Quarterly 2011.) That is why this thesis will try to answer the question of how to use blogs as part of a company’s integrated marketing communications strategy in addition to original marketing.

2.1 Internet and social media

The definition of the term internet was developed in 1995. In the beginning of the 1990’s first web pages were created. Before the web, people already knew the internet (from 1960’s) and the e-mail. (Schultz, Don E., Patti, Charles H., Kitchen & Philip, J. 2011.)

The internet was created as a network for surviving an attack in the times of the Cold War. It was created by the Defense Department’s Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) in the 1960’s and was mainly used by governmental organizations and research universities. This creation of a distributed network was revolutionary as it made constant communication possible. Of course the internet that we know now is far from the internet in the 1960’s but that is where it started from and later began to expand. (Arens, William F., Weigold, Michael F., Arens & Christian 2011, 526.)

The first computer designed to common use was introduced in 1951 which made the customer communications more advanced. The development of customer relationship management (CRM) was in the 1980’s and 1990’s which partly led to

the customer-centric management in the beginning of 1990's. During recession in 1990's, companies started by marketing programs to maintain customer loyalty and to keep the old customers instead of trying to get new ones all the time (Schultz, Don E., Patti, Charles H., Kitchen & Philip, J. 2011). The low-cost tool for doing this and marketing at times when money resources are restricted is social media (The History of Social Media and its Impact on Business 2011).

The internet, when it was established, offered a new communication, sales and marketing channel with a very low cost. As the internet is not really increasing any additional costs, almost everyone can access it making the online traffics huge. This means that the messages and communications available need to be prioritized as what are important and needed, so that all the messages in the company are coherent in all forms of communication tools. It needs to be considered what tools are the most effective for the company and which one is priority number one in investing. In the past communication was based on only one communication channel, which was the printing press. But roughly 30 years ago, things changed and after that have kept on changing and still continue to do so. (The evolution of direct, data and digital marketing 2013.)

Telephone is considered to be the first form of social media from the 1950's. Today, social media also uses digital media. Digital media as a concept has changed from what it was in the 1950's. Now, it is also a part of social network, which is a network of all kinds of social interactions. In the 1990's a number of social networking sites were created along with some blogging services such as Blogger. In 2000 there was a huge leap in social media websites which changed the interaction of people with similar interests. Conversation is the key element in social media and by this can make the company brand name more visible and customers more dedicated to it. (The History of Social Media and its Impact on Business 2011.) Social media can be defined as the practices, behaviours and activities that occur between communities of people – presumably with similar interests – sharing information such as knowledge, tips and opinions online. (Safko, Lon, Brake & David K. 2009, 6.)

Now let's look deeper into the evolution of marketing and how it has changed from the past.

2.2 From marketing 1.0 to 4.0

Marketing has changed dramatically from the past and keeps on changing. Many marketers are still using marketing as they used before, but change is really needed as customers demand more and more. In the 1990's until around 2001, marketers saw that internet was a cheaper way to sell products and target marketing more easily as customers were able to buy products from e-commerce. Still, marketers did not change their marketing methods even though the media of marketing had changed. (Borges 2009, ix-xii.)

In the 1990's marketing resembled electronic brochures, meaning that people could only read what was on the internet and look at the pictures but could not participate in any interaction with it. Company websites were like this before it was possible to communicate through online discussions. (Juslén 2012.) When WordPress, YouTube and Facebook were founded all during 2000-2005, ordinary people started using internet in their everyday life, not only by studying information but also by producing and sharing it with others. Consumers started to get more power on the information they want to receive and when they want to receive it. Consumers can change the channel, fast-forward the ads or by subscribing get more detailed and targeted news and marketing to their e-mail or phone and so on. This way, almost all the information consumers are not willing to receive, they will not receive as they can eliminate all the unwanted data. This makes marketing harder as the marketers and companies do not anymore have all of the power. Also, much more effort has to be put on marketing to be able to reach the wanted customers and communities, to whom the marketing and products/services are targeted. Marketing has to appeal to that particular group of consumers. (Borges 2009, 1, 25-28.)

The table below shows the main differences between these three different levels of marketing and after that each of them will be covered separately.

Table 1: Comparison of Marketing 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 (Kotler, P., Kartajaya, Hermawan, Setiawan & Iwan 2010, 6)

	Marketing 1.0	Marketing 2.0	Marketing 3.0
	Product-centric marketing	Consumer-oriented marketing	Values-driven marketing
Objective	Sell products	Satisfy and retain the consumers	Make the world a better place
Enabling forces	Industrial revolution	Information technology	New wave technology
How companies see the market	Mass buyers with physical needs	Smarter consumer with mind and heart	Whole human with mind, heart and spirit
Key marketing concept	Product development	Differentiation	Values
Company marketing guidelines	Product specification	Corporate and product positioning	Corporate mission, vision and values
Value Propositions	Functional	Functional and emotional	Functional, emotional and spiritual
Interaction with customers	One-to-many transaction	One-to-one relationship	Many-to-many collaboration

2.3 Marketing 1.0

Production technology was the driving force in Marketing 1.0 where the product and selling it was the main point (Kotler, P., Kartajaya, Hermawan, Setiawan & Iwan 2010, 3). Marketing 1.0 can be defined as marketing that interrupts and

might be unwelcome for customers. It is one way marketing, meaning there is no communication between the marketers and customers, but the marketers are in a way shouting the information to them. This is outbound marketing. Even though marketing has moved forward, marketing 1.0 is still in use, although it is not anymore as effective as it used to be. (Borges 2009, 25.) The era of 1.0 was mainly during 1989 to 1995 (Weber 2009, 13). A few examples of traditional marketing 1.0 are television commercials, radio and print (Borges 2009, 27). Marketing 1.0 is more of a straight kind of advertising used by massmedia (Juslén 2012). It is essential to use content marketing in all-over marketing strategy. Content marketing is marketing that is done by creating valuable and relevant content constantly to attract consumers and changing their behaviour (meaning making them buy) and more importantly trying to make them stay loyal. This type of marketing is the essence of for example marketing in blogs as it is not straight advertising but communicating with the audience and consumers. (Pulizzi 2007-2014.)

2.4 Marketing 2.0

Information technology drove marketing to the next level, to marketing 2.0, which focuses on the customer (Kotler, P., Kartajaya, Hermawan, Setiawan & Iwan 2010, 4). Web 2.0 (defined similar to social media) enables writing in the web and not only reading from it as in web 1.0. People can write comments or produce their own content; anyone can also share someone else's content as well as the writer itself. Web 2.0 is about interaction and communication, producing and sharing. Marketing 2.0 is about inbound marketing; creating and sharing information to the world and attracting customers in a way they are not interrupted. Marketers who use inbound marketing get higher return on investment (ROI) as the ones that are stuck with old marketing methods are failing to do so. Customers want to be heard, want to know whom they are buying from and build a relationship with the seller. Engaging with customers online in social media is very important. Whether a company is active in social media or not, people might be – and probably are – talking about the brand, company or their products. If the company is not active, it cannot follow what people are talking about them or if they are talking about their own needs as consumers or about the

competitors. If they are active, they can learn about the discussions in social media and take part in it. Being active gives new ideas also from competitors and makes it easy for companies to follow them, as well as follow the needs, wants and ideas of consumers and react to them before competitors. (Borges 2009, 40-47.) Social media, blogs and search engines are a part of marketing 2.0 and the characteristics are that it should answer to the needs of customers, be easily found and have the permission of the customer for the marketing (in contrast to shouting and interrupting in Marketing 1.0). (Juslén 2012).

2.5 Marketing 3.0

Every time the world faces changes in financial aspects and other aspects as well, the consumers change their behaviour and this leads to a change in marketing. The recent economic growth has been faster in the Eastern countries than in the Western countries and the power of economy is moving towards East. Acts against the rise of pollution, climate change and other environmental issues are vital and also customers demand them, but they are also adding costs to businesses at the same time. Now we are hitting the 3.0 marketing which means that there is a change from customer focus to focus on humanity. Values play a big role in this marketing level. Companies that use Marketing 3.0 should be aware of general society matters that are related to their business. Marketing 3.0 was enabled by the new wave technology, which has developed from information technology. New wave technology is about connection and interaction between groups and individuals. It invites the consumers to take a part in the development of companies' products as they cannot change the world themselves. The cooperation is not only between companies and consumers but also companies and their shareholders and employees. Even though Marketing 3.0 still focuses on consumer, it has more characteristics in it. It does not treat people as consumers but looks and thinks of them as whole human beings with their spirits, minds and hearts. Consumers do not care for only products but they want to find solutions for making the world a better place. They search for the companies that can satisfy all their needs in economic, social and environmental justice to reach their mission and values. Companies have to be environmentally aware and have high corporate responsibility. Not only the consumers have big expectations from companies and

their products and services, but companies themselves thrive for more in Marketing 3.0. They try to provide solutions to the society's problems so the missions and values of the companies are extensive and more caring than before. They want to change and make the world a better place and for this they need their customers and from here we get to the point that collaboration is the key word in Marketing 3.0. Companies using Marketing 3.0 provide consumers that struggle with for instance pandemic diseases and increased poverty, with answers and hope. As these are major issues, values that companies have, hold a great importance for consumers and differentiation is done by the values the companies hold. Consumers want to find a company that meets their own values and ways of thinking in every aspect. (Kotler, P., Kartajaya, Hermawan, Setiawan & Iwan 2010, 4-5, 12, 17-18.)

2.6 Marketing 4.0

Weber (2009, 220) states that there is also Marketing 4.0, that he describes as emotive net, existing at the moment. This kind of marketing is emotional and controversial as the media now is very visual and is about interaction between members and communities as well as the internet is available anywhere at any time. Almost anyone can access the internet on their mobile phones, laptops and other access devices. Marketing 4.0 is emotional as it allows all sorts of experiences of emotions and the feel of satisfaction for the customer. Marketing 4.0 - is as Marketing 3.0 – interaction and communication in social media at any place the customer wants.

2.7 Content marketing

As content marketing is the core of marketing in social media and using blogs as a part of companies' marketing, next part will take a deeper look into what does it actually mean and what kind of marketing it is (Pulizzi 2007-2014.)

Companies have always been telling stories as a part of their marketing campaigns, so actually content marketing is not a new thing. Also before television or radio, stories were told for example in newspapers. People read the story and like it, and they do not feel they are forced to read a real advertisement

even though it is included in the text. Content marketing is about telling stories; creating valuable and relevant information with the goal to make a difference in consumer behaviour, to change it or to try to make it better than it already is. It is a continuous flow that should be covered in all parts of marketing communication tools. Blogs are like this; companies communicate with customers, tell stories to them, write articles, help the readers in some particular issue or even ask for help from the readers. This is an ongoing process between the customers and the company and it is marketing without selling. Companies tell things the readers learn about or give them tips and advice that makes the customers smarter. The core of this is that if the companies give the consumers useful and helpful information non-stop, they ultimately give their loyalty to the company. Content marketing can be considered successful when it makes people read, think and behave differently. (Institute 2007.)

3 INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Integrated marketing communications, in this thesis referred as IMC, is defined and described in this chapter. IMC is the main topic of this thesis and it relates to all the subjects that are gone through in this research. This chapter will tell what integrated marketing communications actually means.

3.1 Definition and history

Integration was quite simple in the end of the 1980's and in the beginning of the 1990's. So when the concept of integrated marketing communications was created, some critics saw that there was nothing new about it. Marketers didn't see the need to change their marketing methods, as they considered the current methods good enough. As the internet was introduced, new methods were indeed needed. Consumers were now communicators with the marketers, not only passively receiving the marketing messages and persuasions to buy from marketers. Nowadays the consumers are using the technology and the internet the way only the marketers used to, the consumers are building relationships with the suppliers and influencing marketers; communication is now mutual. Actually, the word "the world" is wrong, as the development of technology is not divided equally around the world. Some countries, for example China and India have taken a fast leap from having no mobile phones to now being the dominating countries in the use of mobile phones. Also Finland is one of the leading countries in the digital communication development. Because of the uneven development around the world, integrated marketing communication has varying understanding, approach and research in different countries and parts of world (Schultz, Don E., Patti, Charles H., Kitchen & Philip J. 2011).

3.2 Evolution and implementation

Before, marketing communications was one-way information from the marketers and now it is a two-way communication between marketers and consumers. It used to be that companies wanted to get as much new consumers as possible but today the focus is on creating relationships and keeping the already existing customers loyal to the brand and thus not losing them. Now marketing

communications is not merely promotion and advertising but communication done by combination of many different tools. (Bairstow 2011.)

The “push” marketing has developed to “pull” marketing, in which the information is not pushed to consumers but the new marketing consists of instant and electronic word-of-mouth (WOM) and customers themselves control the web search and have a great power in defining the marketplace (Schultz, Don E., Patti, Charles H., Kitchen & Philip J. 2011). This kind of viral marketing resembles WOM as it is something the companies cannot control; people say whatever they want to, be it positive or negative (Weber 2009, 41-42). The main idea of integrated marketing communications is that it is a planning process where all the marketing methods, sources and communication tools such as public relations, social media and advertising are combined into one program - into an information flow - so that the cost is as low as possible and the effect on the consumer is maximized. IMC influences companies’ marketing channel, customer-focused communications and internal communications. These communication tools used to be handled separately in companies and different employees in different sectors were in charge of only one part or one area, and did not have any idea of what other employees were doing. Nevertheless, it is important to think of the whole marketing concept as the consumers see it: a continuous information flow. (Schultz, Don E., Patti, Charles H., Kitchen & Philip J. 2011.)

Integrated marketing communications aim at building brand awareness to consumers. The brand values should be represented in all parts of the IMC as well as the personality, brand image and the segmentation, targeting and positioning of the brand should match the different mediums used. Brands that consumers know are more likely to be purchased than unknown brands. People tend to have a certain opinion about brands they know even though they have not purchased them and if asked, probably the majority of people could describe well known brands for instance Coca-Cola or Pepsi although they had not tried or purchased them. (Hackley 2010, 290.)

The communication methods that are used in marketing, must every time come from the need of the customer. This means, that the method is decided only after knowing to whom the marketing is targeted to. And when this is known, the

method that best suits the customers in question and drives them to make the purchase is selected. Using IMC, a company can contact customers wherever they feel the need is; in other words where the customers are. As an example, where Olympics are held there are also people. Companies can create visible marketing campaigns to these sites at the single time they feel there are customers. Putting a slogan or clever sentence on the napkins of every McDonald's or Chinese restaurant in the city the Olympics are held, it is almost inevitable that the company/brand in question gets attention. The main target of integrated marketing communications is not only to rise the awareness of the brand to the consumers and make their feelings about the brand more positive, but the action is the objective meaning the company needs to affect the consumers behaviour – to make them purchase the brand. A one time purchase is of course also positive, but again, not the objective. The aim is to make the consumers to keep buying the brand and thus become brand loyal. When this is achieved, IMC has been worth a while – and the money. (Shimp 2010, 8-10.)

Integrated marketing communications comprise of making the flow between some of the marketing mix and the promotional mix elements continuous. Marketing mix includes the 4P's which are product, price, place and promotion, the promotion being most relevant in this matter. Promotional mix includes advertising and other promotional communication tools such as personal selling and direct mail that are all a part of integrated marketing communications. (Hackley 2010, 9.) Below is shown a figure which shows the basic marketing mix with the newest promotional matters that are essential in today's marketing and included in it.



Figure 3: The Components of Promotion. (Clow, Kenneth E., Baack & Donald 2007, 9)

The information flow can be a combination of various different medias and communication tools. For example for an advertising campaign it is effective to use a combination of TV, print ads in newspapers, business publications or magazines and online advertising (Shimp 2010, 53-55). Below in table 2 are shown different marketing communications tools, which can then be combined to integrated marketing communication.

Table 2: The Tools of Integrated Marketing Communications (Shimp 2010, 7).

<p>1. Media Advertising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TV • Radio • Magazines • Newspapers <p>2. Direct Response and Interactive Advertising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct mail • Telephone solicitation • Online advertising <p>3. Place Advertising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Billboards and bulletins • Posters • Transit ads • Cinema ads <p>4. Store Signage and Point-of-Purchase Advertising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External store signs • In-store shelf signs • Shopping cart ads • In-store radio and TV 	<p>5. Trade- and Consumer-Oriented Promotions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade deals and buying allowances • Display and advertising allowances • Trade shows • Cooperative advertising • Samples • Coupons • Premiums • Refunds/rebates • Contests/sweepstakes • Promotional games • Bonus packs • Price-off deals 	<p>6. Event Marketing and Sponsorships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsorship of sporting events • Sponsorship of arts, fairs, and festivals • Sponsorship of causes <p>7. Marketing-Oriented Public Relations and Publicity</p> <p>8. Personal Selling</p>
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When using the combination of different marketing methods, it is important that the same message is carried through the various medias. The message needs to be consistent and must speak with the same voice throughout to avoid duplicate messages. (Shimp 2010, 7-9.)

Using IMC ables the maximation on return on investment (ROI) and creation of effective marketing programs. Integrated marketing communication is needed because of the changes in media, marketing and advertising. The changes have been to interactive and digital media from traditional advertising, to specialized media from mass media, to universal internet access from limited internet access and so forth. (Journalism 2014.)

When planning marketing communication, it is important to keep in mind, that plans should be made to fit the long-term marketing strategy. The company has to think to the future and about the objectives it wants to achieve. The main point should be on the future objectives such as brand loyalty, not in immediate achievements and goals. Of course these objectives that are set in the future, might not be achieved in many years, but they create more value to the company in the long-term. When planning a marketing campaign, the most cost-effective tool(s)

and suitable combinations of mediums should be considered to get the brand publicity to reach the optimal levels. Demographic features for example age, sex and lifestyle should be taken into consideration to reach the correct audience in a right way. (Hackley 2010, 20.)

Because of different approaches and definitions available for integrated marketing communications strategy, even today many companies find it a bit hard to use IMC effectively in the right way, and according to the academic literature even though the perspective has changed during the past 10 years. There is still misunderstanding on how to implement it correctly. IMC should not be observed only as marketing communication or marketing, but it needs to be thought as a whole of branding and different forms of media. IMC should be customer-centric and understood fully in its whole appearance for the companies to use it in the most effective way. Simple guidelines of the basics of IMC done by academics would prevent companies from misinterpretation. (IMC is dead. Long live IMC: Academics' versus practitioners' views 2011.)

4 BLOG

In this chapter the definition of blog is gone through and what does a blog consist of. Some tips are given on how to build a successful company blog and what needs to be considered before and during launching one. The aims and objectives of a company blog are examined and the blog marketing is studied. This chapter aims to give a picture of what is considered as a proper company blog and what are the prerequisites for it.

4.1 Definition

Blogs, or in its full length web logs, are tools for communicating online with practically anyone and creating text, pictures, videos and links to other websites and blogs to share with the world (Shimp 2010, 401-402). They consist of posts that enable commenting, they include thoughts, ideas and tips from the writer. They can be considered similar to journals. Some are personal journal kind of blogs where the writer describes his or hers everyday life or it can be about some particular subject, a news blog or a political blog. A blog can be about anything the writer wants it to be. Blogs can be also company blogs which is the subject that is covered in this thesis. Company blogs can be internal for communication to employees or created to the public to read. First blogs were harder to use and required some skills in technology but later blogs began to take an easier form of use and also people with no wide technical knowledge can launch one. (Safko, Lon, Brake & David K. 2009, 167-169.)

4.2 Company blog

A company blog is one of the most effective ways to create a community in social media and it is now one of the main marketing strategies. (Hackley 2010, 56.) Communication is the key element of blogs. Blogs create communication and when consumers get answers to their questions, they feel that the company really cares about them and their thoughts and this way builds trust between the consumer and the company, and this is what companies need today. (Safko, Lon, Brake & David K. 2009, 161.)

The aim of a blog is to create buzz. Buzz marketing means the creation of talk around the product, service or whatever the company is trying to sell, the brand or the company itself. Creating buzz affects positively on the company. (Gardner 2005.) For creating blogs, companies need to learn new skills if they already do not have employees whose skills can be utilized in keeping up a company blog (Hackley 2010, 56).

Worldwide there are over 100 million blogs, not all of them are updated actively but the number of blogs tells that they are worth to study. A company blog can be a very effective tool in a marketing plan if it is carried out properly but there is a risk of failure if it is managed poorly. The key to a good company blog is to have a clear strategy before getting started. It is important to consider also the objectives, how to measure success in social media (company blog) and allocation of resources. The company should consider the main topic or theme of the blog and whether they already have staff in their company available for blogging. Also, the frequency of blog posts should be considered, so that the blog is updated frequently and is not silent for months. An important question is, if there is personnel available for blogging, how many persons there are and is there going to be one or many writers, who will answer the comments and how will the company respond to possible negative comments or feedback. Responding to comments is valuable for the audience, as they want conversations and do not want to feel ignored. (Borges 2009.)

If the company does not already have an overview of company blogs that exist, in the field of their industry mainly, it is recommended to search and read other company blogs that already exist to learn from them. A well written blog should have personality, a human voice and show the personality of the company or the blogger/bloggers. If a competitor company has a blog with no personality it is a great advantage to create a company blog that attracts audience with personality. (Borges 2009.) Keeping the text and comments in a conversational tone appeals to the audience as being too formal might push them away because there is no sense of human voice (Gardner 2005).

Promoting a blog is essential to get audience and customers subscribing your company blog. (Borges 2009, 179.) The blog should be found easily as no one

will search for it if it takes a lot of time (Juslén 2012). The main thing is not to promote it on actually focusing on the company but on the audience and customers, telling them how the blog will help them and why they would be interested in following it and what do they benefit from it (Borges 2009, 179-182). There should be something available that is interesting for the customers and helps them in something such as solve their problems (Juslén 2012). All this is needed not only to catch the consumer's attention one time they visit the page – but also to make them return to the page again and again. And then hopefully, when the consumer is planning to make a purchase – her or she will remember the company. (Jefferson, Sonja, Tanton & Sharon 2013, 8-9.)

It is possible to share a link to your blog on all of the other marketing communications the company has and ideally it will spread virally in the social media by the customers. Adding the blog address to any – or all – of the social media sites the company has, on the business card, presentations, Twitter or LinkedIn profile makes the customers aware of it. Having the new blog posts automatically updated on other of the social media sites of the company is a way of promoting it more frequently. Placing social media sharing buttons (such as Twitter and Facebook) at the end of every blog posts enables anyone to share it on their own Twitter or Facebook site; again enabling it to go viral. (Borges 2009, 179-182.)

Of course as several opportunities have risks in it, so does blogging. Risks are that a company does not consider or chooses poorly the strategy and objectives of the blog. This is avoided by good preparation and thought before setting up a company blog. Negative comments may be a risk if they are not handled in a good manner. It is important to think before answering, what is the course of the answers. A good way to respond to negative comments is in a professional, polite and positive manner. If there is no need to answer to a negative comment without further negative effects, it can be left out. There also lies a risk in not taking the company blogging seriously. If the blog is started, the company should be committed to it to engage the audience, to get a community and not to lose it when it is achieved. (Borges 2009, 179-182.)

Below is shown a SWOT analysis that indicates some of the internal strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats of having a blog as part of a company's integrated marketing communication.

Table 3: SWOT Analysis

INTERNAL	
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving a human voice to company • Communication between consumers and companies • Being seen and available in social media • Enhancing customer loyalty
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor knowledge on how to write a blog • Not having the time or resources • Publishing wrong kind of information
EXTERNAL	
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all companies have a company blog – yet • Consumers spend a lot of time on social media • People share links on their own pages of what they like
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative comments from blog readers • Other companies realize the possibilities of having a blog and have more resource to do it

- People also share links and comments about what they do NOT like on their own pages

4.3 Measuring Effectiveness

It is important to measure the success and effectiveness of the marketing in the blog to know whether or not to continue on the same practices. It might be hard to measure the success in social media but there are different kinds of tools, like website analytics, to do that. Naturally the goals have to be set before the effectiveness of the efforts made can be monitored and stated, whether they are successful or not. The company itself can measure the success by looking at few things, for example: how many subscribes does the blog have, how much people are commenting on posts and how many times someone has posted the link of the blog to social media. Nonetheless, it is crucial to keep in mind that social media marketing does not always immediately create buzz or get huge audience but it takes time to build relationships with the audience. (Evans 2010, 29,116.)

4.4 How to get started

When getting started with actually creating the blog site, several things should be considered before and also during blogging. Few things were already mentioned above, but let us go through a couple of things more. All the steps in actually setting the blog up will not be discovered as many of the blog tools/sites have step-by-step guides on how to work.

When in social media, the company should think about why they are active in social media, what is the target of being there? If the company just “is” there, it is likely that the company is not gaining much from it. So what is the target of starting the blog; maybe increasing sales, building brand awareness or attracting new customers? A clear strategy should be on mind when starting a blog; will the blog be journal-like or not, will it post pictures or audio, what will the voice and personality of the writer be like, to whom will it be targeted? If, for example, the

personality of the blog keeps on changing, the blog might seem a bit irrational and does not catch the attention of the consumers. It should stay similar throughout the blog and the texts. There are many issues to think and when they are all decided they should stay the same the whole time during the blog. (Talonen 2013.) How the company blog will be integrated to the other marketing communications and digital channels is also to be considered, as a blog is not there to replace the traditional marketing media of the company, but to accompany the other tools of media (Evans 2008).

To build the brand and the reputation by writing a company blog is one of the main things and this is mainly the task of the company, but as in social media anyone can write anything – the texts and opinions of the consumers have a big effect as well and should not be considered worthless. Because consumers want to get answers if they have something to ask, a good idea is to include a separate question and answer (Q&A) page to bring the experts closer to the customers. This also makes it easier for others to search information as many people might want to ask the same thing. (Talonen 2013.)

To actually start the blog, there are few basic steps. First, the blogging platform should be selected as there are several ones available on the Internet, for example Blogger and WordPress. Then, does the blog stay at its platform, where it is created, or should it be in connection with the website of the company. In that case anyone who visits the website would find out that the company has a blog as well. This might get more traffic to the blog site. Afterwards, writing down keywords that describe the company and the blog, what it consists of and what is relevant to it. This way people will find it more easily and it will pop up on Google more likely. Then what is left is to start with the first blog post and to carry on with it. (Evans 2010, 274.)

5 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

For this part of the thesis, a qualitative research was conducted. The research was a questionnaire that consisted of eight questions answered via e-mail by three Finnish companies. These three companies are Peikko Group, Ferroplan and Finnair. The companies in question were selected because they are Finnish companies that operate also internationally apart from Ferroplan Oy that operates mostly in Finland. The companies have many years of experience of writing a company blog and have succeeded in it as the companies feel that the blogs are supporting their marketing and relationships with customers. Also, they all have followers and readers that support the previous statement of succeeding. The questionnaire consisted of eight questions concerning writing a company blog as a part of their integrated marketing communications. The same eight questions were sent to all companies and the writers of the company blogs themselves answered them in all cases. These questions were selected because they gather information of what are the necessary issues of having a company blog. They are based on the theories and main points of what was found in the research at the beginning of this thesis. All questions support each other and are useful in finding out what is like to have a blog as part of a company's marketing.

This chapter will start with a small overview of the three companies and then the questionnaire is covered with the answers of all the companies and in the end, some developments for the blogs are suggested by the author. The previous content in this thesis and the findings of the deductive research will also be compared to the findings of the questionnaire – whether they are similar or differ a lot from each other.

Peikko Group is a family-owned company that was founded in 1965 in Finland. Peikko is a supplier of concrete connections and composite structures with fastening technology for it. Peikko operates worldwide and has sales offices in more than 30 countries for example in North America and Asia. The headquarters of Peikko Group is in Lahti, Finland and overall the company is run by over 1000 professionals. The CEO of Peikko is Topi Paananen, who himself writes the company blog and also answered the questionnaire for this thesis. (Peikko 2014.)

Ferroplan is a manufacturer of conveyor solutions that are designed for handling piece goods and bulk cargo (Ferroplan 2014). Ferroplan Oy is a 30-year old family-owned company, which headquarters is in Orimattila, Finland. Ferroplan operates mainly in Finland and is leading in their field. (Intolog 2010.) The marketing manager of Ferroplan is Minna Patosalmi, who is the one that updates the blog and also answered to the questionnaire of the thesis (Ferroplan 2014).

Finnair is a Finnish company which was founded on 1 November in 1923 and is one of the oldest continuously operating airlines. The company specializes nowadays in flights between Asia and Europe and the basis of the company's growth strategy is the growing markets of Asia, fast flight connections and competitiveness. Worldwide they have over 70 destinations. This year (2014) at the end of June, Finnair employed 5200 employees. One of their recent objectives is for instance to double from the 2010 level the Asian revenues by the year 2020. (Finnair 2014.) Tomi Tervo, a pilot who co-writes the blog, from Finnair answered the questions for the thesis.

5.1 Questionnaire and answers

Because the questionnaire is qualitative, all of the questions will be gone through one by one.

The first question was, how long has the blog been written and who is responsible for writing it?

Peikko Group started writing their blog at the same time as they updated their website www.peikko.com, which was about two years ago. First, the blog was planned to be updated by multiple authors but it was hard to convince others to be writers of the blog, so Topi Paananen, the CEO of Peikko, started writing the blog by himself and still does so. **The main topic of the blog** is Peikko related, meaning construction in various countries. Paananen estimates that he writes the blog circa 2-3 times per month, as he has updated it around 75 times altogether during the past two years. (Paananen 2014.)

Ferroplan started their blog in May 2011 so they have written their blog for over three years. Minna Patosalmi herself as the Marketing Manager writes the blog by

herself. **Main topics of the blog** of Ferroplan are also of course company related; things and phenomenon that happen around it. Such things are for example exhibitions, brochures, campaigns, management, summer jobs, marketing, good and bad service, home web pages, writing and performing; everything that affects working life. The blog is updated regularly – once a week, every Wednesday, excluding summer holidays. (Patosalmi 2014.)

Finnairs' blog has many writers and all of the writers are responsible for their own blogs and own subjects they are writing about. Tomi Tervo has written his part of the Finnair blog for three years now. He says he has not been extremely active writing it since he is writing it in his free time and of course, has to take the time writing it from other activities he has on his free time. He is responsible for writing the blog by himself but does not have any deadlines or mandatory time frames as it is solely voluntary. **The basic theme of the blog** is describing the work of pilots, how they think and what are they like as personalities and as workers as well. The blog also tries to describe how the pilots are feeling and what kind of thoughts do they have during their work and how they experience them. Tomi Tervo states, that personally he is very interested in all kinds of flight safety issues. As the blog has many writers about different issues, the safety issues are for the most part left to Tervo's colleague Jussi Ekman. This enables two different approaches to their profession – in two separate blogs. The goal is to write 3-4 blog posts per year. (Tervo 2014.)

As found out in the research for this thesis, before starting to write a company blog, clear objectives should be decided and it is important from time to time check whether the objectives have been reached.

The objectives of writing the company blog of Peikko Group was to create more updated content to their home page, this was the main focus and was reached. The second objective was to bring personal content to their home web page. Based on the feedback Peikko has received, this has worked as well to some extent. As found in the research of the thesis by the author as well, Paananen knows that people in social media like personal content. He also states that with the company blog, people who apply for a job in Peikko Group get a better picture of how the company works, how it thinks and also understand the international

setting of Peikko. Paananen comments that a Japanese applicant – who had read the blog - had approached him. (Paananen 2014.)

For Ferroplan, **the main objective of the blog** is to stand out from the very traditional industry they are working in. Mostly, it is about the image they want to reach; they want to stand out as a youthful and forward-going company. By the feedback they have received, it is possible to say that among the readers the objective has been reached. Even though some objectives have been reached, the aim is still to increase the number of the readers of the company blog. (Patosalmi 2014.)

The main objectives for the blog of Finnair are creating a picture to their readers about the personalities of the pilots, their profession and also to give them a better image of what they really do in the cockpit. Tervo says that he tries to raise different positive points of view in the work of pilots and to give the readers – in Tervo’s own words – “good vibes” and to give them positive public image about their pilots as a group. From the feedback he has received, Tervo says he thinks he has succeeded pretty well at the objective. Tervo has an Instagram account as well (@finnairtomi) where he tries to create the same positive image as through the blog, but not as much with text but using photos and images that he takes during his workdays. (Tervo 2014.)

Next in the questionnaire was asked, **whether the blog has had positive effects on the company or its marketing, and if some effects have been found, how they have been measured.** Paananen says that as the blog name is shown in the front page of www.peikko.com, the title of the blog is very important. For that reason, he often uses product names in the titles. This way, it is possible to get more google-hits that do not cost anything for the company. So far, Peikko has not yet been measuring hits from the blog. (Paananen 2014.)

In Patosalmi’s opinion, their blog has had positive effects. She measures and keeps track of the amount of visitors the blog has and also monitors how and from where the visitors enter the blog. Patosalmi also gets direct feedback of the blog in person and via e-mail. The feedback she has gotten has only been positive and supportive. (Patosalmi 2014.)

Tervo says that he thinks that the blog has had some positive effects on the public image of the company and on their profession. Tervo has no means to measure the effectiveness but the feedback and replies he gets into the blog posts. (Tervo 2014.)

When asked about negative effects the blog might have, Paananen stated he did not know any negative effects on having a company blog (Paananen 2014).

Patosalmi tells as one negative effect that writing and updating the blog once a week is a hard job (Patosalmi 2014). Tervo as well comments that from the company's perspective, he cannot find any negative effects the blog might have. But he also says that from the individual's point of view, a negative aspect is that writing the blog is away from the free time he has, because he does not write it during his work time. Tervo adds that as the work for the blog is fully voluntary, he does not have any great pressures on updating it. (Tervo 2014.)

Thus, it could be said that having and writing a company blog has much more positive effects than negative ones. This outcome is the same as the author of the thesis also found out; even though the work effort put in the blog might be hard or it might not be easy to convince other ones to write it, it is worth a while because of the positive effects it has for the company and for its marketing. Of course, many times the workload of writing a company blog covers is taken from the work time, not from free time.

The biggest challenges in having a company blog was in Paananen's opinion making more content to the site as all the content that is published needs to be properly thought. Nonetheless, he did not see any great challenges. (Paananen 2014.)

Patosalmi from Ferroplan considered that the biggest challenge in having a blog as a part of their company's integrated marketing communication is how to have the whole personnel included in the blog, if not writing but producing ideas for it. (Patosalmi 2014.)

Tervo believes that he is not the best person to answer the question of what are the biggest challenges, as he is not doing the work of communication or marketing managers. But in his own opinion, he thinks that the biggest challenges might be

to motivate workers into writing a company blog in their free time and says, that the ones to write on their free time should be individuals who enjoy writing anyway. It is also hard to find those individuals that are able to write well – even though he states that everyone is an amateur, not a writer. (Tervo 2014.)

Even though Peikko's blog has only a few subscribers, it still creates traffic and people visit it. **The estimation of visitors of Paananen** is that some hundreds of views per blog post which he comments to be good enough in this case. Paananen places every blog update link to his own LinkedIn page (where he has almost 600 contacts; business partners, customers and so on) so there are many “thumbs up” and comments there. He himself considers that more important is the quality, not the volume. (Paananen 2014.)

Concerning the followers, subscribers and traffic of the blog, Patosalmi counts that the blog has been watched during this year's (2014) first six months 11 211 times, which is around 430 times per week. Followers, who have subscribed to an e-mail reminder, are altogether 48 and that means that other followers amount to approximately 300-500 per week. Depending on the article and the subject, the blogposts get comments from 0-10. (Patosalmi 2014.)

Tervo has no idea of **the amount of subscribers or active followers of the blog** he writes. He states that usually each of the blog posts creates some conversation in the form of few replies to the text. In contrary, he does know that his other PR-project, the Instagram account, has a little bit over 3000 followers. As a comment from the writer of the thesis; maybe they could be better linked to each other, so that the vast amount of the Instagram followers would also know about the company blog that Tervo writes and that way also follow that one. Though, he has written a blog post where he tells about the Instagram account and has linked the profile to the text – but maybe the cohesion could be still bigger. (Tervo 2014.)

Last question was **whether the writers intend to continue writing their company blogs** to what Paananen asks why should he not, as the company blog with pictures works fine, as not all contacts are yet on Twitter (Paananen 2014). Patosalmi also continues writing their company blog even though she states that the work is hard and lonely (Patosalmi 2014). Tervo too has planned to continue

writing the company blog of Finnair every now and then. He will continue to do so as frequently as his other responsibilities and calendar allow it. (Tervo 2014.)

5.2 Results

From the results of this questionnaire it was clear that having a company blog as a part of its integrated marketing communications strategy and updating it regularly does more good than harm to a company and its marketing. Not many negative aspects were pointed out, but they were mostly about not finding employees who would want to write the blog. It seemed difficult to find the time that creating and writing the blog posts actually takes. There are so many positive effects that the minor negative effects do not prevent a company of establishing a blog.

All of the three companies, Peikko, Ferroplan and Finnair, had thought about their objectives and are also monitoring if they are reaching them. When the objectives are reached, it is good to think of new objectives to have some kind of goal for writing the blog. This way, the blog always has something to reach for and something to go towards to.

As it is understandable that writing a blog, updating it frequently and thinking about new subjects is quite hard and time taking, blogs should be updated regularly so that the readers do not lose their interest. As a suggestion, Peikko could update the blog a bit more, if it would be able to have someone else besides Paananen to write it. Maybe it would be interesting to have some other point of view from the company to give the blog more diversity. Nevertheless, the blog is interesting even to someone who does not know all the vocabulary of the field of industry. The blog has characteristic and personality and also includes humor. Pictures are a big plus for the blog as it was found out in the research part of the thesis that people like pictures, videos and so on, on blogs and in social media. Peikko company blog posts include a number of posts of Paananen travelling around the world and exploring for example the construction sites and commenting them with pictures. The blog is written in English, which enables people all around the world to read it and learn about Peikko Group.

The company blog of Ferroplan has a very good pace of updating the blog - once a week. This keeps the readers all the time aboard as they already know when to expect the next update. The blog also includes photos, which help the reader. The posts are about current issues that affect working life, such as unemployment of youth and of course company related subjects. The texts have a clear personality and include humor as well. The blog is written in Finnish, so it is not for international readers, as the company mainly does business in Finland.

Tervo is given the same suggestion from the author as Peikko: that he could update the blog more regularly, even though it is very understandable that it is not updated as often as it could be, because it is purely written during the free time of Tervo. The posts are interesting and descriptive, about the work, feelings and working days of a pilot, including pictures and videos for instance. These two pages as suggested before could be even more linked to each other and for example a text of the blog that is related to an Instagram photo could be linked on the page of the Instagram photo. This way, the followers would get the feeling and emotion that the picture creates, with the text of the pilot himself and what he felt during his work day, even though Tervo does often update the pictures with a brief text as well. The blog is updated in English which makes it possible for international readers to follow it. But as a remark it has to be said, that the Finnair blog itself is updated regularly as it is written by several other writers as well, not solely Tervo.

All of the blogs are easily found from the home pages of the companies, as well as other links to social media. Also, the blogs are linked at the end of each e-mail of Peikko and Ferroplan as well as the link to the company home pages. This is an important form of advertising of the blog and it enables the company to get more visibility and to increase the traffic to the blog. All of the company sites should be somehow connected to each other and links to them should be easily found from all of the sites, or at least from the home page. Advertising the blog in all possible means and all possible sites is crucial.

As the key in social media and company blog is communication, it is important to create it. In the blogs the writers ask opinions of the readers, questions and open discussions to create communication. It is normal to ask the readers' opinion at

the end of a blogpost, so that after reading the text the readers right away answer to the discussion and share their own point of view of the subject. Also, the social media sharing buttons at the end of each text that enable for instance liking, sharing or tweeting are found from all of the company blogs and again enable the texts to be shared all over internet, which creates conversation, traffic flow and buzz.

Creating keywords to every blogpost is also important for google-hits and traffic that is created when someone for example googles a word and that word in question brings the blogpost to the search. All of the company blogs have listed their keywords on the side of the blog page and add these words at the end of their posts. This way, if someone is interested in reading only posts that concern as for an example “education”, these posts are easily found by clicking the keyword.

In the blogs the comments are answered at the same tone and personality as the posts are written and the texts have a conversational, human voice. This appeals to readers and consumers as it is not pushy or forcing anything and as covered before in the research part of the thesis, this is what consumers demand today, at the age of Marketing 3.0.

Even though the companies do answer to the comments themselves, it would be good to have a place for questions and answers (Q&A) that are frequently asked. This would allow the experts (in this case the writers of the blogs) to get closer to the stakeholders and customers, as there would be an open place for only asking questions that are on the minds of customers. Naturally, there could be someone else as an expert, whose only task of the blog would be finding out the answers and answering to the customers. (Talonen 2012.)

All in all, the company blogs that were interviewed for this thesis, shared the same things and focus that was found important during the research. Even though there is always something to improve, the companies that were interviewed had very good blogs and had obviously studied about having a company blog before starting one.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

6.1 Answers for research questions

In this chapter, the author concludes the thesis by going through the research questions mainly and answers to them as well as examines the findings of the research.

As stated before, it was difficult to find Finnish companies with company blogs, so these three interviewed companies are pioneers in this field. Companies that do not yet write a company blog could be pioneers in the field if starting one in the near future. This can be a great advantage to a company before everyone finds out the opportunity having a company blog can have on its marketing.

The research paper was done to answer the question on how blogs can be used as part of a company's integrated marketing communications strategy. As found out that along the evolution of marketing, the habits and preferences of consumers have also changed. This has meant a change in the way of how the marketers have to think, attract new customers and keep the old customers along as well. Blogs have become a big part of companies integrated marketing strategy and as found out, they can affect very positively in a company's marketing if used properly.

Integrated marketing communications strategy should nowadays be part of all companies marketing strategies as the marketing has so many different aspects and parts that should be considered as a continuous flow and be all the way linked with all of its parts.

This was also how the companies used marketing in the case companies. As found out from the questionnaire, all of the three companies (Peikko, Ferroplan and Finnair) had their means of marketing connected with each other. All of the companies' internet sites and social media links were connected to the home pages of these companies. They were connected with each other and sent similar kind of messages to consumers, not confusing them with mixed information.

It was clear that some of the researched companies had very good knowledge of what it means to have a company blog and making it effective; regular updates,

pictures, texts written in human voice with a conversational tone, creating conversation with readers and answering politely to them, marking key-words, adding social media buttons to blog and on every post, clear objectives and reaching to them as few examples.

It is also important to measure the effectiveness of the blog, to see whether it has increased the sales for example or created some wanted image/picture of the company. The traffic that comes to the blog should also be measured to see if the blog actually has traffic and where does it come from so in other words, what creates the traffic? All the blogs also used keywords which are a simple and easy way in creating free google-hits to the blog. Of course if the blog is linked to the home-page, updated to the company Facebook page or linked at the end of every e-mail, the blog gets more traffic from all of these. This also was used well in the companies that were interviewed.

A company blog can also create a different kind of image to the company than it has had before. This is why the texts and the personality of the texts and the whole blog should be well thought. If the texts are written a bit indifferently without any personality or human voice, and are more of advertising like, the readers will feel that they are being pushed to buy something and that the blog is not written with thought. If the writers do not answer to the questions and comments of the readers, or answer to them in an impolite manner, again the readers are not feeling that the company wants to hear their voice or cares about their customers. And that all in all is not a good way in creating relationship with customers or enhancing the already existing customer relationship and loyalty.

Biggest challenges were not as big as the author of the thesis had thought. Or at least not from the point of view of the writers that were interviewed. The author had thought that more challenges would be named, but in contrast there were very few and small ones stated. Challenges were that personnel to actually write the company blog were not easily found. The challenge is to find the ones that like writing and are somewhat good at doing it and also the ones that are ready to devote the time to write it, even if it means to use free-time or time from other work duties. As the writers of the interviewed companies had a high status in these companies (CEO, Marketing Manager and a pilot), the writer of the thesis

was surprised in a very positive way and was convinced that the writers (who must be very busy in their jobs already) themselves committed their time for updating the blogs and answering the comments as well as creating the material and new subjects to write about. This created a feeling that these companies do care about their customers and want to have a relationship with them as well as hear the voice of the customers.

Below is shown a chart that summarizes the key points of the questionnaire.

Table 4: Summary

	Peikko Group	Ferroplan Oy	Finnair
How long has the blog been written?	~ 2 years.	Over 3 years.	3 years.
Who writes it?	Topi Paananen, the CEO.	Marketing Manager, Minna Patosalmi.	Tomi Tervo, a pilot (Finnair blog altogether has several writers).
Main topic?	Peikko related; construction in various countries.	Company related; exhibitions, campaigns, management, marketing and so on.	Work of pilots for example the way they think, feelings and thoughts, their personalities.
How often updated?	~2-3 times per month.	Once a week, every Wednesday.	Goal is to write 3-4 posts per year.
Main objective? Has it been reached?	Create updated content to home page and to bring personal content to the home page.	Stand out from the very traditional industry they are working in – to stand out as	Create positive image of the personalities of pilots, their profession and

	First objective has been reached and second to some extent.	youthful company. According to feedback it has been reached.	what they really do. According to feedback, it has been reached pretty well.
Has the blog had positive effects on the company or its marketing? How it is measured?	Has not been measuring hits from the blog yet.	It has had positive effects. Track is kept on the amount of visitors. Also where and how they come from.	It has had some positive effects on the public image of the company and profession. Has not measured effectiveness.
Any negative sides of having a company blog?	Does not know any.	Writing and updating the blog once a week is a hard job.	Writing the blog is away from free time Tervo has.
What are the biggest challenges on having a company blog?	Creating all the time new content, but not any large challenges.	How to include the whole personnel in the blog, even producing ideas.	From Tervo's own side, to motivate workers to write a blog during their free time and to find people who can write well.
Does the blog have a lot of followers, traffic, comments?	Few subscribers, but more traffic and visitors. ~some hundreds views per post. Many "thumbs up" e.g. in	Around 430 visitors per week. 48 subscribers, other followers ~300-500 per week. Blog posts get 0-10	Does not know the amount of followers. Usually each post creates conversation.

	LinkedIn.	comments.	
Do you intend to continue writing your company blog?	Why not, as it works fine.	Yes, even though it is lonely and hard work.	Yes, every now and then, when Tervo's calendar allows it.

6.2 Validity and reliability

It is important to discuss whether the study and research are valid and reliable. In this study the qualitative research part was conducted via questionnaire to three different Finnish companies (Peikko Group, Ferroplan and Finnair) that are using blogs as part of their companies integrated marketing communications strategy. The questions were marketing and company blog related and people with many years' experience of writing a company blog answered to these questions. Moreover, the theories and facts of the study were gathered from reliable sources such as books, journals and internet pages that were mostly published in the past ten years. Consequently, this study can be said to be valid. In the questionnaire part, the questions did not lead the respondents to answer in any particular way but were neutral. These questions would presumably remain the same, even if the questionnaire would be redone. Although, the answers might vary a bit if more people would take part to the questionnaire, but considering that all of the three respondent companies had rather similar answers, therefore this study can be stated to be reliable.

6.3 Suggestions on further research

As blogs as part of company's integrated marketing communication is fairly new, not much research have yet been conducted. Number of blogs is rising constantly – also in the business environment which means that more research is also done. This thesis was conducted with a questionnaire from the point of view of companies. Since this study did not cover at all the opinions of consumers through actual interview or questionnaire, that would be suggested to be done in the future.

A survey should be done from the point of view of consumers and actually interview them and their needs. That would give the companies much more information about the needs of their possible customers. Even more preferable would be to do a survey for a particular company, to see what their already existing customers and prospective customers want as in regard of company blogs and marketing. That could be included as part of a company's future marketing plan.

7 SUMMARY

Marketing has grown tremendously during the past decades. We have moved from Marketing 1.0 to Marketing 3.0. Marketing 1.0 is all about selling the product and now the focus is not solely on the product but on the consumer as a whole human being with his or her mind, heart and spirit. The purpose of this Marketing 3.0 is to provide people solutions to make the world a better place and to help people in all aspects of their lives. Companies also have more corporate responsibility and they are more environmentally aware. Even though Marketing 1.0 is still in use, companies should move forward to newer marketing eras – preferably to Marketing 3.0. Using Marketing 3.0 would lift companies to the same level with the consumers of today. That would make it easier to focus marketing more effectively and to increase sales.

Today consumers do not settle for anything. They demand more and more all the time. Customers need more engagement from companies than they used to do before and want themselves to be noticed and their voices and opinions to be heard. They want a relationship with the companies they are engaged with and are loyal to. This kind of engagement is possible through company blogs and social media, including conversation between companies and consumers. Through social media consumers feel they are noticed and that they can affect companies as well.

Marketing communications used to be a one-way information flow from marketers to consumers. Nowadays it is a two-way communication that occurs between the marketers and consumers. The “push” marketing has developed to “pull” marketing which means that the information is not anymore pushed into consumers but the goal is to get the consumers to approach the companies.

Integrated marketing communications include all different marketing methods and communication tools, for example, social media, public relations and advertising. These forms of marketing are combined into a continuous flow so that the information stays the same through all the channels (for example TV, print ads in newspapers and online advertising) and the effect on consumers is maximized. The marketing methods that are selected should come from the need of the

customers – not from the need of the company. This way the marketing can be easily targeted to the right customers with the correct marketing methods.

Integrated marketing communications should be part of a company's marketing plan and implementation. To cope with the challenges of social media and the growing needs of consumers, the means of marketing should be integrated with each other. Social media offers so much of everything that people have learned how to not pay attention to those things and advertisements that they are not interested in. Companies have to be more imaginative than ever to catch the interest of the consumers.

The focus of this thesis was blogs as part of a company's integrated marketing communications strategy. The main points in creating a successful company blog are well done and planned content marketing, regular updates, texts in a conversational tone in a human voice, well thought objectives and answers to the comments and opinions of the readers in a polite manner. The integration between the company and the customers is very important and should not be neglected.

In today's world, people do not want push marketing, but what they seek for is pull marketing – companies giving them information and tips that they do not want to skip and that pulls their attention to learn more about the company and their products and state of mind.

A blog is a fairly new concept and this is why there are not too many studies to be found on the subject. A company blog is one of the most effective tools to create a community in social media. It is an easy way to create communication and to show that a company also has a human voice and a way to show the personality of the company. As consumers get answers to their questions through a blog, they feel they are not ignored but that the company really cares about their opinion.

Clear objectives and strategies should be planned before starting a company blog. This makes it easier for the writer of the blog to keep the blog on the planned course and to go towards the objectives. This makes the blog more coherent.

While the author of this thesis was searching for Finnish companies with a company blog, she found out that it was quite hard to find companies having

blogs. As all companies do not have a company blog – at least not yet, the companies starting a blog in the near future would have advantage compared to their competitors.

From the qualitative research of the thesis, it was also found out that blogs – when done properly – can be a great part in a company's integrated marketing communications strategy. The research was done via e-mail to three companies (Peikko Group Oy, Ferroplan Oy and Finnair Oyj) to find out what company blog writers consider the negative sides, challenges and right ways of writing it. It was found that having a company blog is time consuming but worth it as it has more positive effects compared to negative effects. Also the answers to the questionnaire were similar to the findings of the author's research from literature and other studies.

All in all, the author does not see obstacles in creating a company blog. The negative sides of having one were so minor compared to the positive effects the company blog can have, that there is no reason why a company should not start writing one. Having a company blog can be a huge opportunity and give the company competitive advantage compared to those who do not have one.

As the world is changing all the time, the marketing methods have to be changed. It is really important to engage the customers in a relationship with a company and keep them loyal to it. Otherwise it is hard to prevent the customers changing the company they want to buy their products from. The companies need to offer an experience to consumers – selling and marketing the product is not enough.

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8 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Questionnaire to three companies concerning their company blogs as part of their marketing strategy

This is the questionnaire that was sent to three real-life companies and examined in this thesis.

1. How long have you written your company blog? Who is responsible for writing it?
2. What is the main topic of the blog and how often have you planned to update it?
3. What are the main objectives of writing the blog? And have you reached your objective?
4. Has the blog had positive effects on the company or its marketing? If yes, what effects? And how do you measure them?
5. Are there any negative sides of having a company blog? If yes, what?
6. What are the biggest challenges in having a company blog as one part of marketing strategy?
7. Does your blog have a lot of followers/subscribers/traffic? Or does it create conversation? Comments?
8. Do you intend to continue writing your company blog?