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## Identifying the Level and Effectiveness of Content Marketing: Case Company X

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<p>The purpose of this study was to get knowledge of content marketing concepts, strategies, benefits and challenges. The research aimed to identify the level and effectiveness of content marketing in social media platforms in insurance company X. This research was conducted as a case study for insurance company X.</p> <p>The literature review was conducted from various sources and it intends to give the reader a presentation of marketing theories related to marketing communication and content marketing. Additionally, the role of social media in content marketing is carried out through the literature review.</p> <p>The qualitative research method was selected for gathering data and analyzing the research results. The qualitative research data consisted of four in-depth semi-structured interviews with marketing experts of insurance company X. Findings were analysed together with the literature review.</p> <p>The results of the literature review and interview with respondents revealed the importance of content marketing in the digital marketing world. By examining the content marketing in company X, their level of commitment, content marketing strategy, measurement and future trends, the author was able to identify the level and efficiency of content marketing in company X. Company X is using content marketing as part of their strategic marketing communication strategy, and its significance will grow in future.</p>	
Keywords	Content marketing, content marketing strategy, digital marketing, social media platforms

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## 1 Introduction

Digitalization has changed marketing practices once for all, and hence marketers have to adapt to the changed circumstances and meet the needs of technologically conscious consumers that has access to information at the tap of a button. Before the Internet and search engines, a consumer did not have a lot of ways to gather information about a specific product, service or company. Availability of information has formed a situation where a consumer can check prices, read reviews and make product comparison in a few minutes. This has led to a situation where a customer is more likely to make the purchasing decision before even contacting the company.

“Content is king” is a common saying these days in the world of digitalization and marketing. Consumers are likely exposed to content marketing in their everyday life. When seeing marketing texts or videos, the consumer does not necessarily realize the content marketing purpose behind it. Facing a massive amount of marketing messaging every day has taught consumers to block interruptive messages, which is making it harder for marketers to compete with the attention of the consumer. In addition, for a consumer it is easy to find glowing recommendations for competing companies, so standing out from the crowd is important. According to Pulizzi (2014a) content marketing offers a solution for this problem when content for the customer is valuable, meaningful and motivating. Content marketing aims to get consumer interested in the company and make a meaningful relationship with them. Consumers will turn back to the company when it starts from a consumer’s own interest. Valuable content marketing strategy helps customers to find the company when a need for a product or service arises, and often even before that. (Pulizzi, 2014a)

Latest research made by Kubo and IRO research “Customer communication and content marketing trends 2019” show that only 17 % of companies in Finland are in advanced stage in content marketing, 32 % of companies are in growing stage and 46 % of companies are in the early stage with using content marketing. (Kubo, 2019) According to a study made by Content Marketing Institute (2018), 91% of North-American companies that participated to the study said that they are using content marketing in their organization. (Content Marketing Institute, 2018)

Despite the research into content marketing trends, there is a lack of researches examining the state of content marketing used in companies operating in Finland, and how

they are strategically using content marketing in their social media marketing. According to research in 2015, companies which are using content marketing are often lacking documented content marketing strategy, targeting the right audience is deficient and efficiency is not measured properly. (Kubo, 2015).

### 1.1 Objective of the thesis and research question

The objective as well as the research question of this thesis is to identify whether a content marketing strategy exists within company X as well as reviewing the effectiveness of the current content marketing carried out. The level and effectiveness of content marketing will be limited to concern only social media marketing.

The research mentioned in the preface supports the view that content marketing is becoming common practice but is still at relatively early phase of development. In addition, quite a few companies are struggling with content strategy, target audience and measuring efficiency. For these reasons, understanding how company X is performing in terms of content marketing is important in order to benefit from content marketing in the future.

In order to answer these research questions as comprehensively as possible, this thesis uses both primary and secondary data. The literature review for this thesis is collected from existing literature; various books, articles and studies about content marketing and social media. The literature review in chapter 2 will offer a foundation for theoretical framework which the study will use. Theoretical background is used as foundation, and the findings will be compared to theoretical models, as well as with secondary research. Research methodology will be further discussed in chapter 3.

### 1.2 Case company X

For confidentiality reasons, the name or other identifiable information of the company X won't be mentioned in this thesis.

Company X is an insurance company operating in Finland. The main goal of insurance is to provide safety for people, business and societies and secure their financial situations in unexpected situations. Without insurances, financial losses could be disastrous in case of an unpredictable accident or damage.

Company X uses its value and vision in order to provide healthier and safer life for their customers. They provide and sell both statutory and voluntary insurance products for private consumers, businesses and farms. In addition, company X offers services like asset management and real estate asset management. Company X has offices all around in Finland in many cities. Company X employs more than 3,000 employees. (Company X, 2019)

According to the trusted brand survey "*luotetuin merkki*", Company X has been one of the most trustworthy insurance company in Finland for the last four years. EPSI rating (national survey of customer satisfaction) showed that company X got third place as most satisfied customers in the financial sector in 2018. In addition, company X had the most satisfied customers among the new customers. (Luotetuinmerkki.fi, 2019, EPSI, 2018, Company X, 2018)

## 2 Literature review

In order to understand the role of content marketing and how it benefits case company X in their social media marketing, it is crucial to take a view at marketing and how digital marketing has impacted in the development of content marketing.

### 2.1 Role of marketing

Marketing has been an important part of business for decades. One of its broadly definitions made by Kotler (2013) is "marketing is a social and managerial process by which individuals and organizations obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging value with others". Needs in this concept are states of felt deprivation, such as physical needs, social needs or individual needs. Needs differ from wants, because they are part of the human nature and survival, and therefore were not created by marketers. Wants, in turn, are usually shaped by individual desires and culture. Wants arise from needs, but same need can be satisfied with different wants – depending on the person and society. Wants in turn are becoming demands, when they are supported by buying. In other words, marketing can be defined as a process where companies create value for its customers, satisfy their customers needs, and therefore to build meaningful customer relationship in order to capture value from customers in return. (Kotler, 2013).

#### 2.1.1 The marketing mix

The marketing mix is foundational marketing framework which is a combination of tactical marketing factors; price, promotion, place and product – known as 4P:s. The objective of marketing mix is that the company uses these factors in order to produce the wanted response within the target market. Product can be either a physical product or a service. Product includes a variety of other dimensions like variety, quality, design, features and brand name. Price is basically the amount of money customers are willing to pay for the product or service. In addition to the price, also discounts, allowances, credit terms and payment periods are included to "price" factor. Place determines the distribution of the product or service, and how it is available to the target customers. Channels of distribution, logistics, transportation and locations are all things to consider when determining placement factor. Promotion is a set of activities such as advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations. (Kotler, 2013)



## Marketing Strategy and the Marketing Mix

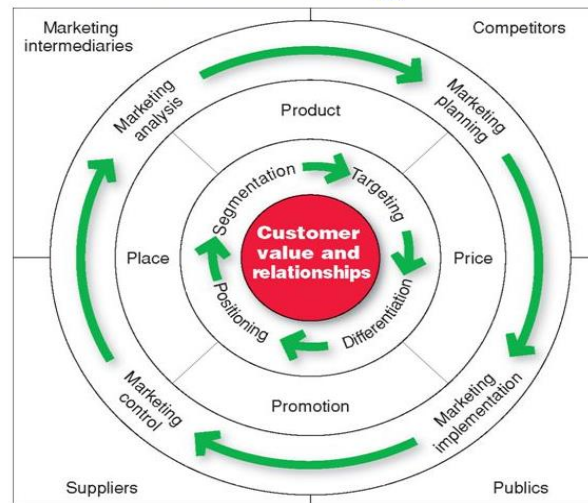


Figure 1: Marketing strategy and the Marketing Mix

After the Marketing mix emerged in 1965, it has developed a discussion of whether the 4P model can or cannot be used in constantly changing world. After several shortcomings of the Marketing mix, majority of authors have suggested that Marketing mix model with 4P:s should be updated or not used at all. According to Constantinides (2006) the main criticism is focused on three different areas; internal orientation, lack of consumer interactivity and lack of strategic elements. (Constantinides, 2006)

For the critique about internal orientation, Kotler (2013) introduces a view for 4P's concept which includes more the buyer's and not a seller's view and corrects the lack of customer orientation. In the age of customer relationships, the "4C's" model includes the following factors: customer solution (product), customer cost (price), convenience (placement) and communication (promotion) .



Figure 2: 4Ps vs. 4Cs. Own illustration.

Product, price, promotion and placement are major decision ideas where marketing professionals allocate corporate resources to achieve their goals. Goldsmith (1999) states that by adding three new decision elements should be integrated to the marketing mix: personnel, physical assets, and procedures, which forms 7Ps model. After careful selection of target market, marketers should develop a systematic plan to these customers and create meaningful and long-term relationships. Competitive tool, personalization, is one of the most crucial for marketers in today's business. Personalisation strategy has become even more important during an Internet commerce, because Internet advertising can be personalised and individual for consumers. Even though product or service is not personalised, some degree of personalization of the other marketing mix elements (like promotion) may be possible, and therefore should be considered. As a summary, it is suggested that alongside with the 7Ps, personalisation should become as one of the featured elements. (Goldsmith, 1999). This view of importance of personalisation is important in terms of content marketing, as content marketing aims to provide individualised content for the consumers.

### 2.1.2 Marketing communications

Before moving to the section of digital marketing, a review of marketing communications early evolution should be discussed briefly. Egan (2007) has defined marketing communications as follows:

“Marketing communications are the means by which working a supplier of goods, services, values and/or ideas represent themselves to their target

audience with the goal of stimulating dialogue leading to better commercial or other relationships.” (Egan, 2007)

Marketing has originally been defined around the selling of products or services the business produced. Subsequently after the rapid industrialization economy, the focus of marketing’s demand promotion transformed to the “marketing concept”, which reflected the changes that were on the marketplace. These changes included customer demands, increased competition and fight for market shares. (Kashani, 2006)

### 2.1.2.1 Communications mix

As discussed in the previous sections, the marketing mix helps to approach different marketing challenges. For one of P’s, promotion, has been later referred a more extensive model – marketing communications mix (figure 3). Marketing communications mix lists all of the communication tools needed as marketing communication tool. It is also referred as promotion mix in some literature (Smith and Taylor, 2004)



Figure 3: Communications Mix, Smith and Taylor (2004). Own illustration.

Marketing communication has sometimes been mistaken to consider only advertising, since it is in a visible role in marketing communications mix, and because promotion was mainly dominated by mass advertising. However, during the last decades, marketing communications has exceeded that of an advertising and promotion when discussing how a company presents itself to its audience. (Egan, 2007)

Integrated marketing communication has been referred as “the attempt to present a consistent message across the available promotional mix elements.” This attempt has been important since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and with the multiplication of communication channels later on, the coordination of different marketing messages aiming to characterize an exclusive image to all stakeholder groups has become very important, but more difficult to achieve. (Kitchen and Burgamann, 2010)

During the time of digitalization and growth in social media, some marketing communication tools are becoming less significant than others. Some of the most traditional tools of marketing communications has been replaced by new marketing communication tools that are more relevant for the digital time. As Pulizzi (2014a) states, companies and brands have been telling stories during history, but the difference for content marketing is that now it is more relevant than ever.

## 2.2 Digital marketing

The first chapter of literature reviewed the marketing mix and marketing communications, and their relation to today’s marketing. The second section of literature reviews how marketing technique has shift from outbound to inbound marketing. As digital marketing has a strong link to social media and content marketing, it is briefly covered in order to explain the development of content marketing in social media.

### 2.2.1 From outbound to inbound marketing

Due to the change from traditional to digital marketing, marketing is now shifting from marketing towards serving smaller and more focused customer groups. Consumers do not use mass medias as much as before and they are becoming more immune to all marketing communication from traditional mass media.

Juslen (2009) describes and defines the differences between outbound and inbound marketing. Outbound-marketing is a marketing tactic which is based on interrupting a consumer on a one-way marketing communication. Most traditional tools for outbound marketing are newspapers, tv, exhibitions and email newsletters. Traditional outbound tools are expensive to use, which makes it even more expensive when consumer behavior is changing. Consumer today do not watch television or read newspapers to see advertisements or discount offers, but to receive either entertainment or useful information. Consumers are learning to change their way of using media and are getting clever with

avoiding advertisements. Growing problem with outbound marketing is that consumers are getting immune to all consistent marketing messaging. (Juslen, 2009)

Inbound marketing has emerged as term during the same time as digital marketing. This is basically an opposite to outbound marketing. Inbound marketing is based on quality content, which attracts customers closer to brand, and interactively communicates with the consumer throughout the customer journey. Consumers have the right to decide what kind of information, where they and when they want to find it. Inbound marketing world puts marketers to transform themselves from imposing interruptive messages to creating qualitative content. Hence, marketing strategy is shifting towards content strategy. According to Juslen (2009), inbound marketing should be divided in three central points. First, a company must have an encouraging internet platform, where the company can actively publish content which is serving its focus group. Secondly, all content has to be easily found from search engines and social media. Thirdly, a company must consider how to turn a visitor in their website into the paying customer.

Financial benefits of inbound marketing are based in three factors. Inbound marketing uses either free or rather inexpensive marketing tools compared to traditional marketing tools. Hence, saved budget can be used for creating quality content. Inbound marketing is easier to point out to a specific target audience, which minimize the amount of customers that are not part of the target audience. (Juslen, 2009) Based on the information, inbound marketing is a long-term investment, and short-term financial benefit are minimal.

## 2.3 Social media marketing

The second chapter introduces the definition of social media, how social marketing works, and how consumer behavior has changed in the era of social media. As this thesis discusses about content marketing in social media, it is important to highlight how social media has participated in creation of content marketing today.

### 2.3.1 Definition of social media

Pull-marketing is a strategy where the company aims to catch the attention and interest of consumers who are seeking a product, service, advice or information. According to Chaffey and Smith (2013) the Internet is one pull marketing environment, where search engine optimization (SEO) and social media are used to lure consumers to companies

websites. Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg (2013) states the definition of social media as follows:

“Social media are the online means of communication, conveyance, collaboration and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities and organizations by technological capabilities and mobility.” (Solomon, M., Bamossy, G., Askegaard S., Hogg, M. 2013)

Today’s technological and digital landscape offers an exciting and fresh channel of communication and therefore platforms for content marketing. Internet sites (e.g Facebook, Twitter and Youtube) allows marketers to share content that is not relevant of appropriate for the company’s website. Company might inform its stakeholders for an upcoming event by announcing it on Facebook, since it might not be noted from company’s website. (Kho, 2008) Social media marketing provides a flexible message type, frequency and content, and platforms which increase user interaction and in best cases motivate users to share content of the company. (Singaraju, Nguyen, Niininen, and Sullivan-Mort 2016). The great power of social media today allows companies to practice the data as a tool to find out how well-known they are and compare the information with the recognition of their competitors (Palmer and Koenig-Lewis, 2009). Hence, social media provides a way to connect with stakeholders and shareholders beyond the standard practice.

### 2.3.2 Consumer behavior in social media marketing

Today’s online world, social media has completely changed the way people interact with one another, allowing people to create relationships without geographic and demographic barriers. In top of that, social media help to facilitate global collaborations in innovation. A good example of social media increasing social inclusivity is crowd-sourcing approach. (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan 2016)

Jefferson and Tanton (2015) states that three trends; the internet, social media and lack of trust in sales messages are transforming buyer behaviour today. The weight of social conformity is increasing across the world, and consumers care more about the opinions of others. Consumers search information, options and answers from Internet. Recommendations are more and more often asked from social networks and influencers on

social media. Customers are more willing to share their opinions and to compose massive amount of reviews. In this environment, customers adjust more to social opinions. This trend is continuing and growing, and embracing this trend is not easy. While doing purchase decisions, consumers have commonly been driven by individual preference as well as by an ambition for social conformity. The degree of the importance for each of these two factors differ from one person to another as well as across industries and categories. In recent years, the trend has spurred the growth of communal rating systems such as TripAdvisor and Yelp Especially word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and family are the most trusted form of advertising. Customers today are not influenced by authority and expertise as before. (Jefferson and Tanton, 2015; Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan, 2016) Thus, one could say; sales process is controlled by a buyer and not a seller.

In search of a broader understanding of consumers use of social media and especially of how social media can best satisfy consumers needs and wants, it has been argued by researchers Hoffman and Novak that “the fundamental interactivity of social media acknowledges four goals: connect, create, consume and control.” These capabilities of social media certainly explain why social media is so popular. “Connect” goals are associated with materiality needs, and eternal position of control, intrinsic motivation to connect with others and positive appraisal of the social media groups. “Create” goals is associated with competence and self-determination needs, higher social media involvement and building self-esteem. “Consume” goals come out to be intrinsically motivated and negatively associated with competence and autonomy. Control goals in turn, satisfy the needs of autonomy and competence, and are associated with social media knowledge. It is concluded that social media goals are supported by individual needs and motivations. (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2013)

One of the reasons for development of content marketing is the changed behavior of consumers. For this reason, it is important to discuss what factors have changed consumer behavior in the recent years.

### 2.3.3 AIDA model applied to content creation

AIDA model, created by Elias St Elmo Lewis back in 1898, was profoundly made for print media planning, but it is still widely used in marketing and sales. The AIDA model has been applied widely for marketing and sales, and during the recent years even more to online marketing strategy. Still, its applicability for social media remains partly unknown.

Current finding shows that the model can indeed be applied in strategizing the use of social media for marketing purposes. (Hassan, Namid and Shirattudin, 2014).

Heinze, Flecher, Rashid and Cruz (2017) have used traditional AIDA model for content creation. As the original AIDA model, it also includes four steps: attention, interest, desire and action. First stage, attention, means capturing the consumers attention and creating awareness for the company's existence and brand image, as well as products and services the company is offering. Measuring success at this stage can be done through number of visitors, number of pages visited and the average duration of a website visit.

Second stage, interest, highlights the relevance and usefulness of the content the consumer sees. Content must be easily accessible, well-formatted and visually interesting in order to raise interest among consumers. (Heinze, Flecher, Rashid and Cruz 2017)

Third stage, desire, suggests generating an existing and relevant user experience by displaying the content necessary to make a purchase decision through images, videos or text. It is suggested to associate products and services with positive third-party reviews and celebrity endorsement and offer online promotions and special offer campaigns. Success in desire stage include the gained new followers on owned and external channels and repeat visitors. (Heinze, Flecher, Rashid and Cruz 2017)

Final stage, action, leads the consumer to complete the wanted activity on the website. In order to complete this stage, clear and obvious call-to-action should be visible and easily accessible. Calls-to-actions are often large clickable words saying things like "follow us", "buy now" and "free trial". Best practice for calls-to-action includes keeping the number of calls-to-action as minimal as possible, and using active, encouraging language. Number of sales and earned positive user generated content reviews of comments measure the success of action stage. (Heinze, Flecher, Rashid and Cruz 2017)

In addition to AIDA model, Keronen and Tanni (2013) introduce a FIGA model which is specifically designed for content and online marketing. Its purpose is not to question AIDA model completely, because the basics of marketing has remained the same. AIDA model focuses on contacting with large amount of audience, and the amount is decreasing when going closer to the "action" stage. During the times of content marketing, FIGA model aims to connect with small target audience.



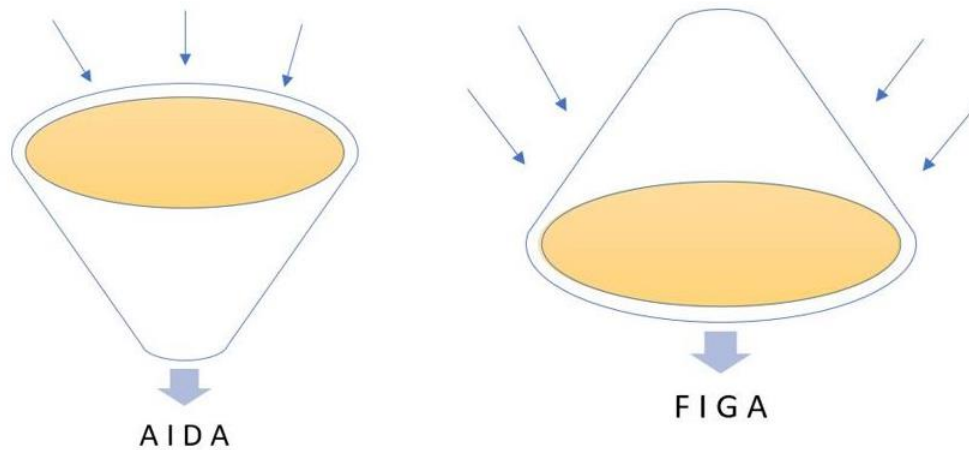


Figure 4: AIDA model applied for content creation, Keronen and Tanni (2013). Own illustration.

FIGA model basically turns the original AIDA model upside down (figure 4). First step is that target audience finds (F) the company's content from different online channels. If the content is right for the audience, the audience can identify (I) with the company. Identifying with the company makes the target to engaged (G), and therefore are willing and interested to hear more information and relate that to their own situation and life. This will in turn lead to action (A), which is the first step in AIDA model, but last in FIGA model. (Keronen and Tanni, 2013)

## 2.4 Content marketing

Last part of the literature review discusses about content marketing. How content marketing is executed successfully, what objectives companies might have in terms of content marketing, as well as measuring the effectiveness will be discussed. Additionally, challenges of content marketing as well as the strategy of content marketing will be discussed further.

### 2.4.1 Definition of content marketing

Content marketing as a term is not clearly defined, and it can be determined in different ways. Terms of "content" and "content marketing" are comparably recent additions to the business language. Content means the words, pictures and videos on the page or screen which the buyer is looking at. It means sharing knowledge and information for customers.

Valuable content in turn, is content too, but with bigger purpose. The information is created for a specific audience of clients and customers, which educates, helps or inspires them. (Jefferson and Tanton, 2015)

Content Marketing Institute defines content marketing as “the approach of giving content that the consumer values”, which requires for a deeper emotional connection with the target audience. (Content Marketing Institute, 2018). Furthermore, the ability of offering valuable content need not only having a deep understanding of what will appeals to the audience, but it also requires empathy to feel like the audience, which typifies emotional intelligence. Pulizzi and Barret (2008) define digital content marketing as “the creation and distribution of educational and/or compelling content in multiple formats to attract and/or retain customers.”

#### 2.4.2 Objectives of content marketing

How the content marketing is adapted to practice depends on the company and wanted objective. Content marketing can be used to Balties (2015) lists the most used reasons and objectives of using content marketing as a marketing practice. Content marketing can be used to increase brand awareness, finding solutions related to low amount of customers and developing customer loyalty, engagement, and trust (Balties 2015). One of the objectives of content marketing is to turn potential customers into buying customers, and existing customers into committed customers. Consistent content marketing will lead to meaningful relationship between customer and company, which offers a path to two-way communication rather than one-way information push from company to customer. (Clark, 2012)

In addition, content marketing has role in making leads and increasing sales. If the company has a problem with the product of service they are offering, they can create a need for their product of service or test a new product or business idea. (Balties, 2015). In terms of employer image, content marketing can be used to attract potential employees, when the content marketing is communicating about corporate vision and culture. This in turn, helps employees with same values to consider the company as a new employer. (Hall, 2013).

### 2.4.3 Successful content marketing

Jefferson and Tanton (2015) describe the features of companies which implement successful and valuable content marketing. Companies are focusing on marketing online, and they build relationships on social media. Their content is about creating and sharing entertaining, useful, well-produced and meaningful content, instead of pushing direct sales messages. Valuable content is made for wakening interest, starting conversation and building trust and is focused for a niche audience. Information - knowledge, expertise and ideas - are shared generously, often and for carefully picked audience.

Also Holliwan and Rowley (2014) suggests that content is an important component of inbound marketing techniques. Thus, understanding how content can be used in engaging consumers is a key to the development of an efficient inbound marketing approach. Because there are uncertainties relating to definition of content marketing, their research seeks to address these. To sum up, Holliwan and Rowley (2014) describe that good quality content includes rich media content (videos, podcasts and user-generated content) as well as static content forming web pages.

Gamble (2016) provides an insight to why visuals are important in content marketing. Due to information overload together with people's short attention span lead to challenge where marketers have to put effort on eye-catching content. Adding visuals to words can improve learning significantly, and integrated visual-verbal language improves communication and learning by measurable amounts. The challenge of visual content marketing by pointing out how traditional content of textual and data are difficult to transform into interesting visual content. (Gamble, 2016).

Tucker (2013) has introduced the theory of successful content marketing. "The strategy the four pillars of successful contents" explains the foundations of good content. First step is to know customer's goals. Who are the targeted customers, where do they consume content, and what content they respond to can be discovered with using usability studies, site analytics and customer research. Second step, the company's objectives tell what are the purpose of content channels from customer's perspective, and what is their key message the company wants to convey. Third is content topics, which tells what subjects the content should cover. Fourth is the tone of voice. The personality of the company needs to be clearly communicated through out all content. (Tucker, 2013)

In order to digital and social media marketing to succeed, digital marketing requires the existence of a content marketing. Whether the company's online communication is a success or not, it depends to a considerable extent on the quality of its content marketing. Today, every company which wants to remain competitive on the digital market must develop content marketing adapted to its target audience and distributed by the social networks. (Jefferson and Tanton, 2015)

Whereas marketers have multiple web tools available, also consumers can create and publish content via blogs, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, LinkedIn and other social network channels. Consumer-generated marketing is a growing form of customer-engagement marketing. Consumers have an important role in shaping the brand image with using their own experience and experiences of other consumers. (Kotler, 2016) In other words, all online information has changed from publisher-centric to consumer-centric content. Consumers gain more control over their decision-making processes in today's technologically advanced society. When the traditional media model becomes antiquated, researchers are trying to understand consumers motivational factors that drive them to go online in order to find information. (Moriuchi, 2016) According to several studies, consumers spend a major amount of their time online and in social networks, and therefore consumer-generated content is a form of today's modern marketing. (Jefferson and Tanton, 2015)

#### 2.4.4 Target marketing and buyer personas

In order to content marketing to succeed, companies have to be aware of different consumer groups they are trying to reach. As Egan (2007) says, segmentation and consumer targeting are about dividing a larger market into a smaller market segments. Consumers in each segment has their own personal needs, wants and desires. Therefore, consumers are more attracted to a specific kind of content in different way than others. When content is designed for the right target group, it will satisfy their needs. In most cases, target markets are more profitable because the customers are proven to be more loyal, are using the services or products of the company often and are more reachable than other target markets. (Egan, 2007)

Before making consumer market segmentation, well-defined target audience starts with defining a buyer persona. Buyer persona is usually defined as fictional and ideal customer the company is trying to attract. Defining buyer persona with care should be the first thing to do, as it has influence on company's marketing strategy. A buyer persona

can tell what social media platforms target audience is using, or how much they spend time online. (Simpson, 2017)

In a consumer market segmentation, consumers are divided into segments based on demographical, geodemographical and lifestyle classifications. Demographical segmentation is usually based on gender and/or age, but also to earnings, social class and life stage. Geodemographics is a mixture of demographic and location factors. Lifestyle segmentation uses interests, opinions and values as a segmentation criteria. (Egan, 2007) Identifying customer's needs, desires, problems and opinions should go beyond demographical and location factors. In addition, it should be determined what is the desired impact on target audience, by basically determining how target audience will react after receiving content. (Kurvinen and Laurila, 2014). When the company is using time and effort to understand the underlying motives, it will help to create a more efficient and better targeted content marketing. (Hakola and Hiila, 2012)

As discussed in previous sections about change of traditional marketing to digital marketing, marketing has to be segmented and targeted to consumer groups in social media. In order to do that, companies must know their consumers and their demographical and lifestyle factors.

As discussed in the part with social media, in order to engage with potential and existing customers it is highly important to be visible and active where companies customers are. Eley and Tilley (2009) has stated that in order to engage with consumers in social media, companies must follow four steps. These are to listen, join, participate and create. By listening what consumers are discussing about their products and services in various social media platforms and online communities, the company can get important information in order to develop their actions. Joining to social networks, and especially social media platforms is a way to listen consumers, but also to participate to conversation. Participation means that the company will reply to discussions and blog posts consumers are taking part of. Participation is an important part of brand building, since it communicates to consumers that they are valued and respected. Only after these steps are concluded, company can start to create and share their own content; photos, informatics, stories and news. By constantly monitoring, commenting and posting content in social media, consumers will start to take part of the content cycle and hence engage with the company. (Eley & Tilley, 2009)

#### 2.4.5 Content marketing strategy

Making a strategy for how the company uses content marketing online and in social media is crucial part of successful content marketing. Still, according to studies companies does not have an explicit content marketing plan. Study made by eConsultancy (2012), showed that 39 per cent of brands have an explicit content marketing plan, and 60 per cent of the content was “irrelevant and boring”, focusing only to products. According to survey made by Content Marketing Institute (2018), 37 per cent of B2B marketers said that their company does documented content marketing strategy, and 38 per cent of marketers said they do have it but is not documented. (Content Marketing Institute, 2018). Despite the great use of social media marketing, surprisingly majority of companies do not have determined social media strategy, and only few of them know how social media marketing impacts business. (Keinänen and Kuivalainen, 2015)

The most effective company websites are built with a deep understanding of the buyer’s interests, needs and expectations. Visual design, content, organization and navigation should all work smoothly together to enable consumers to find information easily and spend time in website without getting frustrated. Heine, Fletcher, Rashid and Cruz (2017) explain this with the term “information architecture”, as how companies organise and structure their websites. Clear information architecture creates a more coherent, perceptive and pleasant experience for consumers.

Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid and Cruz (2017) describe content marketing as a cyclical process, which integrates the four stages informed by campaign management processes. First and the most important and essential stage of making a content marketing strategy, is planning. As discussed in previous sections, content marketing could have many possible objectives. Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid and Cruz (2017) indicate that planning the content marketing strategy should start by simply setting a goal of what is the purpose of the content marketing. Whether it is to raise awareness, improve brand image, increase traffic in website or make leads for sales department, setting a clear goal is the first thing to do. After that, defining and segmenting target audience is done. Managing resources, whether it is financial budget or personnel, are included in the plan. In the end, clear schedule and editorial calendar are made. (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid and Cruz, 2017)



Figure 5: Content marketing planning stages. Own illustration.

The action stage includes everything from content creation such as filming videos, writing a blog or social media post, or taking pictures. Content development and implementation are part of action stage. Observing content marketing strategy includes tracking and measuring how content marketing works and monitoring if the strategy is working. Reflect part means evaluating the content. (Heinze, Fletcher, Cruz, Rashid 2017)

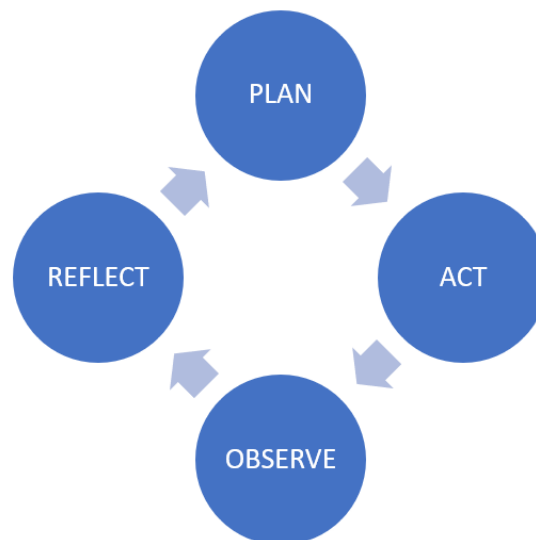


Figure 6: Content marketing strategy process. Own illustration.

## 2.4.6 Social media platforms

Important part of making a content marketing strategy to social media, is to decide what social media platforms the company will use and what kind of content they are sharing. As content is more about quality than quantity, it is not beneficial for company to be active in every possible social media platform. Every social media platform has its own user group, and hence the social media platform has to be picked accordingly. In addition, social media platforms have differences which determine what kind of content is beneficial to share. The key is to define clear company profiles and target audiences, as well as strategy that is directing the content creation. (Hakola and Hiila, 2012)

Today there are countless social media platforms, from multinational corporations to small entrepreneurs, for mass market or the smallest niche markets. In this section, four social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn) are included for closer investigation, since these four ones are the platforms company X is using for content marketing purposes.

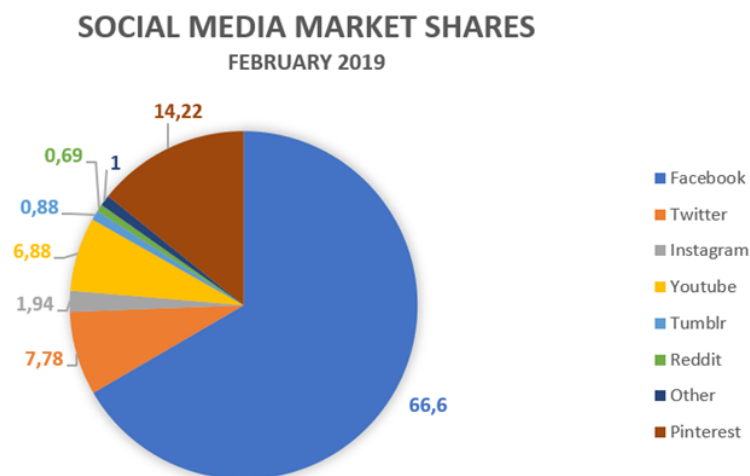


Figure 7: Social Media Market Shares (February 2019). Own illustration.

One of the most popular and successful social networks ever launched is *Facebook*. According to Facebook Newsroom (2018), Facebook was founded in 2004 and their mission was to “give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together.” It’s nearly two billion monthly users worldwide use Facebook to connect with their friends and family, as well as create, share and watch information relevant to them. (Facebook Newsroom, 2018) A study made by Palmer and Koenig-Lewis



(2009) shows that the attractiveness of Facebook for its users is based on curiosity, enjoyment and excitement. (Palmer and Koenig-Lewis, 2009)

For its users Facebook offers a variety of tools to use. Facebook users create a profile, where the user can add and share information about him or herself. Facebook page is never identical, and it's constantly shaped based on its user's activity. If the user likes, comments or shares content from another Facebook page or profile, the user starts to receive more information about this site. Therefore, the user sees information that brings value to one's social media usage. (Facebook Newsroom, 2018)

As a marketing platform, Facebook is easy way to engage with the target audience. It is free for businesses as well, but companies can use paid advertisements in order to make sure their posts get wanted visibility within the right target audience. Facebook increases customer satisfaction when the company's information is found without a major effort and its customers can get in touch with them quickly. (Hansson, Wrangmo, & Solberg, 2013). By reading customer reviews, comments and conversations, companies can absorb valuable customer information and use the information in order to create a Facebook age which provides relevant information about upcoming changes, updates and product introductions. (Palmer-Koenig-Lewis, 2009)

*Twitter* is a social networking and microblogging service launched in 2006. It allows its users to write and send short posts, which are maximum 140 characters in length, called "tweets". (Tweeter.net.com, 2019). As Facebook, it is also used by personal and business reasons. According to Twitter Business (2019), 500 million tweets are sent every day, and hundreds of millions of people use Twitter to explore links, trends, moments and articles to finding out latest news. (Twitter Business, 2019.)

For companies Twitter offers a way to broadcast latest news and blog posts, connect with consumers and enables internal collaboration and group communication. The power of Twitter for businesses is that the company's press releases can be published in Twitter and it can be reached by more targeted and relevant audience. The problem with Twitter as a marketing platform is that since tweets are sent rapidly and in massive amounts every day, they have a tendency to get lost in tweet overload if they don't catch the attention of the reader (Tweeter.net.com, 2019).

*Instagram* is a social network founded in 2010. It's functions are mainly based on posting and sharing pictures and videos. Instagram offers its users to film and edit photos and videos for either public use or for limited audience by its privacy settings. (Instagram, 2017). Pictures and videos are often quickly interpreted and easily understood and will more likely raise emotions on its viewers than just a text. According to Rezvani (2014) Instagram allows companies to use visual story telling technique in their marketing communication, when to visual content is more universal than verbal content. (Rezvani, 2014). As a downside it can be concluded that users are not willing to read verbal information about the company or the product, which makes it more difficult for companies to communicate as they have wanted. (DeMers, 2017).

*LinkedIn* is designed for everyone who is interested in their professional life. It is a platform where employers and employees can connect with each other and other professionals. LinkedIn was based on 2002 and it has 560 million users around the world. LinkedIn for companies is a great way to find talented people for employment. In addition, it can be used to improve brand image and employer image. LinkedIn is one of the most potential and growing social media platforms. (LinkedIn, 2019)

#### 2.4.7 Measuring the efficiency of content marketing

Regardless of a deluge in adoption of content marketing strategy, measuring the impact of content on the company business might be complicated and filled with strategic and tool challenges. Considering the content analytics are still rather inceptive, there are few to no standards that sufficiently capture the impact of content on the business whether from revenue, brand or operational perspective. Content marketers might have a problem with selecting the right metrics and generally choose for measuring volume, rather than impact when impact metrics are too complicated to measure, or the required data or tools are not available. (Etlinger and Lieb, 2015).

Measuring the efficiency of content marketing can be done in multiple different ways. Pulizzi (2014b) list four main types of content marketing metrics; consumption, sharing, sales, and lead generation. Consumption metrics include page views, video views, downloads and social conversations. Sharing metrics; likes, shares, tweets and forwards, tell if the content is working and is worthwhile of sharing with others. Lead generation metrics tell how often consumption of content result in a lead. These include subscriptions, form completions, blog comments and conversion rate. Lastly, sales metrics tell if the ultimate

goal of content marketing, growing business, has worked out. Leads and sales are tracked by online sales, offline sales, manual reporting and anecdotes. (Pulizzi, 2014b)

Metrics Pulizzi (2014b) suggested were easy to track and calculate. Still, some questions are harder to answer than others. Keronen and Tanni (2013) point out that company might have difficulties in answering the following questions: How the company should use and benefit from the data they have gathered? Can the results point out how the company has connected with the wanted target audience? Keronen and Tanni (2013) suggests dividing the measuring tools into two different categories:

- 1) Measuring the efficiency of content marketing process
- 2) Measuring the impact of content on customer interface

For measuring the efficiency of content marketing process, it is suggested to focus on evaluating the content which is determined on content marketing strategy. In order to measure the impact of content on customer interface, it is not sufficient to only measure online activity, and therefore sales and customer service are playing a key role in order to collect important customer feedback. (Keronen and Tanni, 2013).

#### 2.4.8 Challenges of content marketing

It has been established that companies can benefit from social media when consumers are promoting it by using positive reviews and comments. As a negative side, consumers can also write negative comments and complaints when they are dissatisfied with a product or service they have received. (Palmer and Koenig-Lewis, 2009). Research has shown that the best way for companies with negative feedback is not to delete or ignore them, but to answer the way customer feels that their complaints are taken seriously (Champoux, Durgee and McGlynn, 2012) Public and negative feedback can make damage on company's reputation, which is a challenge for companies trying to improve brand image or engage with the customers.

Using social media marketing is also ethical question. In terms of credibility level, consumers rely more on reviews by other users rather than expert's comments. If companies pay for consumers in order to write only positive reviews in exchange for discount rates or money, there is an additional risk that consumers are influenced by unreliable reviews. (Palmer and Koenig-Lewis, 2009). This challenge of social media strongly links to the

importance of content marketing, and how it can be used to influence on consumers opinions about the brand.

As any marketing method, also content marketing has challenges. Content marketing needs long-term commitment and making long-term content needs time and patience. Because content marketing is done in multiple ways and different channels, a company has to master all of them at the same time. Lack of time and knowhow in the company can be challenge for making a successful content marketing. Additionally, measuring the efficiency of content marketing can be difficult, if the wrong measurement method is used or measuring is not used at all. (Norall, 2014)

A recent study made by Microsoft Corp. in 2015, an average human loses concentration after eight seconds, which emphasizes the influence of increasingly digitalized lifestyle on the brain. During the year 2000 when mobile revolution began, the average attention span was 12 seconds (McSpadden, 2015). Hence, presented content has to be so captivating that the consumer doesn't scroll down on the screen without getting familiar with the content.

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Research methods

Academic research is commonly defined through many kinds of activities: making surveys, collecting and analyzing data, presenting statistics, description of interviews and introducing personal views. (Hirsjärvi, Remes, Sajavaara, 2007). One of the definitions for research is “a scientific and systematic research for pertinent information on a specific topic.” Therefore, research is contributing to existing pool of knowledge made for its advancement. (Kothari, 2004)

#### 3.2 Objectives of research projects

Marketing research projects have three types of objectives, and the research method for these objectives are exploratory, descriptive and causal research. Exploratory research method means gaining preliminary information, which in turn helps defining the research problem and suggesting preliminary hypothesis. Descriptive research in turn aims to describe problems and situations, as well as attitudes of potential and existing customers. Causal research is about testing hypotheses about cause-and-effect relationships. Researches are often started with exploratory research followed by descriptive or causal research. (Kotler, 2016). The objective of this thesis was to do a descriptive research.

#### 3.3 Primary and secondary data

A research normally consists of two kinds of data, primary and secondary. Primary data is collected by an author itself from first-hand sources for the specific purpose of the research. Primary data is gathered by using methods like surveys, interviews or experiments. Secondary data is information that already exists and is collected by other people or for other research. Secondary data is collected from studies, articles, surveys or experiments. (Kotler, 2016)

#### 3.4 Qualitative and quantitative research method

Research methods can be divided into quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative research describes research where empirical investigation of preliminary theory, definitions of terms or answers are expressed in statistical and numerical form.

Quantitative research is often done by using surveys or questionnaires as a data collection method. (Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara, 2007)

Qualitative research method in turn means exploratory research. Objective of qualitative research method is to gain deeper understanding of underlying reasons, motivations and perceptions, which in hand offers insights to the problem and supports to develop hypotheses for quantitative research. Instead of predicting hypothesis, qualitative research aims to find and present facts. The method of collecting data uses people as an instrument, and the target group is gathered appropriately and judiciously and rather than randomly. (Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara, 2007)

Mixed research means method of using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Mixed research method helps the researcher to use both inductive and deductive reasoning techniques. Hence, it gives more accurate answer to the research questions which cannot be comprehensively answered by qualitative or quantitative research alone. (Sreejesh and Mohapatra, 2014) This research will use qualitative research methods to conduct primary data.

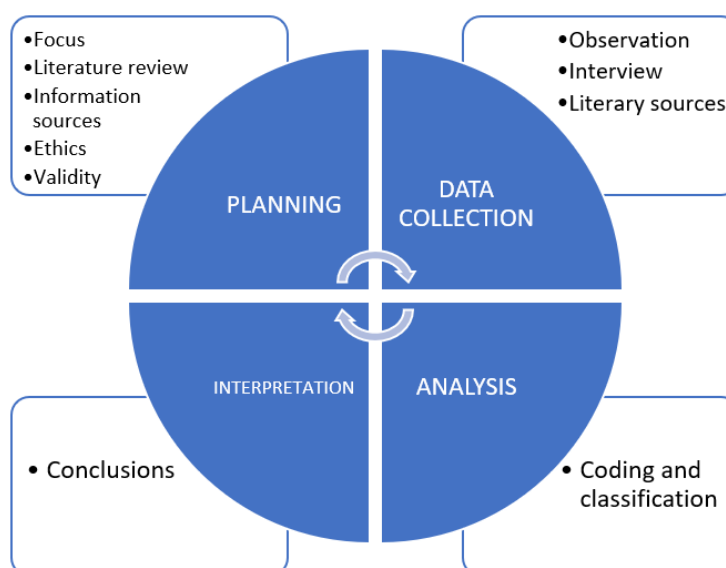


Figure 8: Qualitative research flow chart (Kananen, 2015). Own illustration.

### 3.5 In-depth interviews

In-depth interview is a qualitative research approach where the researcher executes interviews with individuals suitable for answering the wanted questions. Interviews are often conducted on a one-to-one basis, and for this reason these interviews are often called as individual depth interviews. The idea of in-depth interview is that both the research and the interviewer are allowed to interact and express their opinions, views and thoughts freely. The decision of how structured the interview should be lays on the expertise of the interviewer, wanted responds and suitability for the research question. (Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree, 2014).

Individual in-depth interviews can be divided into three categories. These categories are standardized interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews. Standardized interview technique uses pre-determined set of questions, which will be presented in sequential order and as they are worded. Standardized interview technique enables systematic data collection, which in turn helps to compare results analytically. (Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree, 2014).

Unstructured interview is an opposite of standardized interview type. Interview is a flowing and natural discussion, where interviewer asks questions about certain topics they wish to cover during the interview. The respondent has a freedom to choose the direction of the conversation and indicate personal opinions or experiences. Unstructured interview type therefore helps to develop an understanding between the interviewer and the respondent. (Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree, 2014)

Interviews can offer six classes of data, depending how the question is formed and presented to the respondent. According to Davies (2007), six categories are:

1. Facts about the “here and now” – *Do you work in the company?*
2. What the respondent knows – *Do you know how many employees the company has?*
3. Facts about past events – *What have you studied before?*
4. Feelings – *How does these changes make you feel?*
5. Attitudes or opinions – *In your opinion, is this strategy efficient enough?*
6. Beliefs – *Do you believe that this will succeed?*

Boundaries between the six categories are not always absolute or clear, but they offer guidelines on what kind of questions interviewer can present to respondents and help respondents to understand and implement the question better. (Davies, 2007).

### 3.5.1 Conducting interviews

This research used semi-structured interview style. Semi-structured interviews allow the interview to have some flexibility, but the interviewer assures that that the interview is limited to the topics and themes important to the research. In semi-structured interviews the interviewer has the power to use modified wordings and assign a specific time frame for different topics. Technique is largely used with busy executives and experts of the topic. Flexibility as regards to wording of the questions may lead to bias, due to different responses from individual respondents.

The empirical part of this research was made in order to answer research question, interview was made with four employees working in the company X. Every respondent was working with either content marketing and/or marketing communication in their daily work tasks. Two of the respondents are also working with social media channels. Two of the respondents were working as a supervisor or/and executive level.

Every interview was given a 30 minutes time slot and they were conducted in the company's headquarter. In the beginning of the interview the topic of the research and confidentiality were introduced. All interviews were tape recorded, and respondents were told how tapes will be used, saved and deleted. Interviewers were told that interviews were confidential, and their identity or the company's name wouldn't be visible in the research. Interview was conducted in Finnish in order to help respondents to answer questions more comprehensively. Answering in foreign language (like English) could lead to situation where the respondents refuse to answer questions she or he doesn't feel comfortable or does not have a sufficient language level.

In the beginning respondents were asked to respond to three questions. First question asked that how many years respondent had worked with content creation, content marketing or social media. Second question indicated how long they had been working in the case company X in years. Third question was about their educational background and level of education. All the respondents were willing answer these questions. Structure of the interview will be introduced in figure (9). Interview was divided into three



themes; strategic content marketing (objectives), content marketing in social media (benefits and challenges, social media platforms, measuring the efficiency), and future of content marketing (current situation and future trends). Questions were given at the beginning of the interview, and they were not shown beforehand. This way the responses would be spontaneous.

Respondents were asked to answer to the questions however they felt suitable, and to ask additional questions if something seemed unclear. Respondents were told they could skip questions if they wanted. Interviews were aimed to be conversational and natural, rather than structured and testing. It was highlighted that all opinions and views were valuable information, and there is not right or wrong ways to answer to the asked questions. Interviewer had a freedom to ask additional extra question depending on the expertise of the respondents. After the interviews were conducted, tapes were transcribed and parts relevant for the research were translated in English.

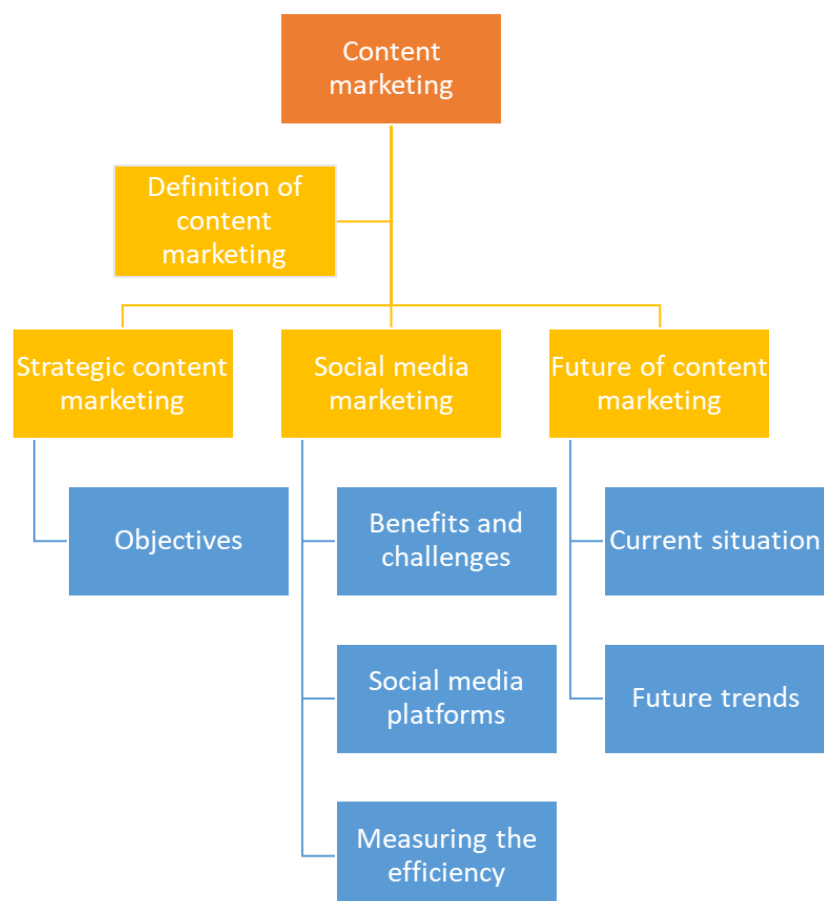


Figure 9: Structure of the in-depth interview

### 3.6 Limitations

Content marketing and social media are both very broad topics to handle in a bachelor's thesis. Literature review offered a well-grounded foundation for what content marketing is, how companies can benefit from content marketing, how companies can form a content marketing strategy and what objectives companies can try to reach with the use of content marketing. Nevertheless, it is important to state that many details are only discussed briefly or left out completely. Interesting areas and theories of content marketing are excluded of this thesis in order to answer presented research questions as broadly as possible.

This research focuses on unrevealing reasons on how company X is benefiting of using content marketing and how what kind of role content marketing plays in the future.

## 4 Research results

At the beginning of the interview, all respondents were asked three background questions. Respondents were asked about their educational background, how many they had worked in the company X, and how many years they had worked either in content marketing, social media or marketing communications.

Every respondent had working experience from content marketing, social media or marketing communications for at least two years, and the answers varied between two and five years. Most of the respondents had been working in the company for less than two years, and one participant had been working for six years. One of the participants did not have any higher degree of education, and the rest of the respondents had a Master's degree. Respondents worked in both managerial and employee level, but in the same organization. All participants worked together on a daily basis.

### 4.1 Strategic content marketing

The first research question of this research was to find out how marketing professionals in company X define content marketing. For this reason, the first question was to ask respondents to define content marketing by using their own words. By starting with the defining what content marketing is, it would also make respondents to be prepared for more specific questions.

It came out that giving the definition of content marketing was a bit more difficult for some of the respondents than to others. Respondent 1 indicated that content marketing is hard to define personally but sees content marketing as offering suitable content for consumers who are in the different stages of the customer journey process. Respondent 2 emphasized the meaning of storytelling in today's content marketing, where the company tries to create a story which has a deeper meaning rather than just "empty" information. When the content is interesting enough, the customer will approach the company and not contrarily. Offered content should be what the customer wants and needs, and it should not be "force fed" or interrupting. Respondent 3 felt that the important factor is to turn the traditional marketing model upside down, and the focus should be on the customer rather than in the business. In other words, the interests of the customers should be more important than the interest of the company. For this reason, it is important to

understand different buyer personas and what kind of content the company is offering to them.

“I would say that for example defining buyer personas is something that can quickly go wrong. I could say that I am defining you as a person who is interested about this and that and for some watch or dress or whatever, but maybe I should rather understand why you are interested about them... And that way we can talk about the deeper form of content marketing, we should have a deeper understanding of our customers rather than superficial hunch.” (Respondent 3)

Respondent acknowledged the importance of buyer personas in the content marketing scene. Respondent emphasized in the quotation that instead of making assumptions about the customers, their motivations behind should be considered on a deeper level.

The first theme of the interview was to shortly discuss the strategy in content marketing. Respondents were asked if company X has a strategy for content marketing. All the respondents agreed that they do have a content marketing plan in the company, but it was not published yet since it has been made rather recently, and therefore comments about the plan weren't given. Still, they all mentioned that the content marketing plan is very much considered, but it is still on the process. Some participants told that the process is still in an early stage but did not voluntarily indicate a specific reason for it. The company X has an external communication strategy which includes content marketing and social media marketing. The content marketing plan is, therefore, part of a bigger marketing plan.

“Our current working strategy is to create a help desk, which uses analytics, content creation and marketing for content creation. Analytics and customer relations show us how our customers are alike, what kind of content these customers need, and after that our social media team and marketing communications share this content in different channels.” (Respondent 4)

Respondent 4 pictured the content marketing process on a very tangible level. Based on the comments from respondents, it came out that company X has a vision of how content marketing will be used in the future and are eager to develop their process. Company X has started to gather a special team only for the needs of content marketing, and all the respondents were sure to say that content marketing will have a major role in marketing strategy.

Even though the content marketing plan was not confirmed, respondents were asked about the role of content marketing in the communication strategy. All respondents strongly agreed that the role of content marketing has a central role in the communication strategy.

“Well let’s just say that it is the essence of everything we do... like we should start from the target groups and from the thinking that who are we doing this for, and especially in social media, we will in future personalize social media platforms more” (Respondent 3)

As content marketing can be organized in multiple different ways, it was important for the research to understand how content marketing is organized in company X. Respondents were given the freedom to comment on what parts they want and the question was not limited to discuss about a specific part of content marketing.

Respondents told that most of the content marketing is done as in-house, and especially social media is strongly done independently without outsourced services. Respondents feel that level of knowledge and experience between employees is at a very good level, and hence outsourced services are not seen as valuable as an insourced content marketing process. Company X uses outsourced services mainly with creating videos, where they use an external consultancy firm.

#### 4.2 Objectives of content marketing

As a part of the content marketing strategy, it was important to figure out what are the biggest objectives with the use of content marketing. One of the general objectives mentioned often was to speed the process from the early stage, so content marketing strategy would move into practice.

“—with the use of content marketing, we can help the customer to move on to the next stage in the customer journey.”  
(Respondent 4)

“By using storytelling, we inform like the value and benefits of how the customer can benefit the most of our services.” (Respondent 2)

Few respondents talked about the importance of a customer journey. The content marketing objective depends on the customer who is targeted. Content marketing is used for both attracting new customers (awareness) and to make current customers to purchase more products and become more loyal towards the company. Current customers are being informed about the services and products the company offers. Content marketing should also cover and consider all the steps of a customer journey, in order to understand when the customer is becoming from potential customer to an existing one.

Since company X is working in the insurance business, a major part of corporate income is to compensate damages the insured is eligible according to the insurance contract. For this reason, content marketing is also used to spread information that might prevent damages to happen.

“In addition of people buying our products, it does not work in the long run if the damages keep happening remarkably, we will run out of money. The objective is therefore to prevent damages.” (Respondent 4)

Guidance of how damages can be prevented is used as a part of a business strategy. This content is provided for mainly to existing customers. This guidance can be for example "How to prevent pipes freezing in winter".

#### 4.3 Content marketing in social media

Company X uses content marketing in various platforms of social media. Based on the preliminary research and the answers from respondents, company X uses content marketing on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. In addition, respondents mention

YouTube, but it doesn't have a significant role in content marketing. Therefore, YouTube will not be discussed in this research.

When asking about the criteria of how a specific social media platform is chosen, the respondents have relatively same comments. LinkedIn is the most potential platform, which is growing fastest. Company X uses LinkedIn for marketing about itself to current and potential employees and businesses. LinkedIn enables the company to write longer posts than for example Twitter – which is used for mostly fast communications. The objective of Twitter is to create a brand image of company X as a professional and responsible company. Respondent 3 explains this over the target group; Twitter has more professionals and business-oriented people than for example Facebook, which is more general and “nationwide”. Twitter does not offer customers that much as other channels, and for that reason, it is used mostly for sharing announcements.

“I am going to say that the biggest factor is how we reach people from different (social media) platforms, what kind of people we are trying to reach and what is the function of it.”  
(Respondent 3)

Biggest social media platforms are Instagram and Facebook. Instagram's biggest benefit is visuality, pictures, and videos. Half of the respondents say that Instagram is mainly done for improving brand image and employer image. Facebook is a platform where most of the company's customers are, and for that reason, it is the biggest platform the company uses. Company X shares multiple kinds of content in social media. These include social media posts, infographics, videos, pictures, and blog posts. It is important that not all content is served for everyone.

Respondents were asked to describe the “good” content in social media. Most of the participants started their comment by indicating that as social media and marketing experts, data and statistics will have an impact on how they answer. All the responses very emphasizing that content which brings reactions and discussion are the best kind of content.

“—good content makes a lot of reactions, and not just only likes, but also that people would discuss it and that way could bring communication.” (Respondent 1)

“Something that makes people discuss.” (Respondent 3)

Respondent 3 gave a very clear example of what kind of content is appealing. As an insurance company, company X shares tip lists, as “5 reasons why you should buy home insurance.” When the content is easy to read, understandable and rather short, it appeals to customers. Long texts which include a lot of background information are not popular. It is also very important that the content brings value to its reader.

Another popular content has been customer stories in a video form. These videos tell about a customer who has experienced a tragedy in life, and insurance company X has been able to help. These videos are often touching and arise emotions and “that could have been me” -feelings in a viewer.

Biggest benefits by using social media in terms of content marketing were all related to visibility, speed and a massive amount of target customers. Sharing content in social media is fast, easy and inexpensive compared to traditional marketing platforms like TV and radio. Customers react to content and start a discussion, which is visible for the company. Content marketing was seen as a financially beneficial marketing technique. Traditional marketing is more expensive, and it is not as trusted. Content marketing helps to get organic visibility in social media, which is cost efficient for company X.

Respondent 2 states that the biggest benefit with the usage of social media as a marketing platform is increasing sales. Social media is a crucial part of online selling, creating awareness and improving brand image.

Two of the respondents gave comments about how the company X use social media to bring customers to their websites. Company X creates news articles about a specific product which they then publish on their website. This article is written in order to make the customer interest about the product, and at the end of the article, the company offers links where the customer can make a purchase or read more relevant information. These news articles are shared in social media for the right target groups.

“Maybe it is that with the use of social media we can share the things we aim to share... like if we think about some news article or something like that what we share in social media, a major percent of the readers come from the social media



and that is where is the mass (of the customers).” (Respondent 2)

Comments about challenges with social media differed relatively much between the participants. Part of the challenges with social media content marketing is relating to the fact that company X works in an insurance business. As an addition, respondents say that in general gaining and maintaining trust in social media as a company is not easy. Customers do not follow company unless they offer content which is valuable and relevant for them personally. When the followers of the company are not all identical, it means that the company needs to offer beneficial content to all kinds of target groups. All the respondents agreed that offering similar content in every social media platform does not work. Another challenge that most of the participants bring out is that it is very difficult to please everyone.

As an insurance company, company X has limitations of what they can and cannot comment publicly. Sometimes customers want to discuss their private claim issue publicly in social media, but for confidentiality reasons company X has to ask the customer to use other communication channels for discussion. These privacy and confidentiality issues limit the communication from the company’s side, which may seem as negligence for the customer, and hurt the brand image.

“Well if we traditionally speak about insurance companies, the topics we are dealing with, they include a lot of emotions and negative aspects and, like, we are speaking about accidents and deaths and that sort of things - - so we have to be able to speak about them clearly enough and maybe in a soft way, but the way people still understand the seriousness of the topic” (Respondent 2)

The amount of different content in social media is enormous, which means that the content can easily get lost in the feed. Content can be created by anyone, and differentiation can be challenging. Social media also brings out issues about resources. Social media is never sleeping, which means that the company should be alert at any time. This is a problem with the traditional “nine to five” working schedule.

#### 4.4 Measuring the efficiency

Measuring efficiency is a crucial part of a content marketing strategy. Respondents were asked how the efficiency is measured, and what kind of measuring methods they are using.

Visibility and awareness are measured in multiple different ways. On a countable level, respondents mention the number of followers on social media pages, amount of visitors and amount of reactions (likes, shares, comments) and how many times a video or post is watched. In addition, the amount of time spent watching the video or reading an article is measured. Facebook analytics tell about the actual cost of some advertisements. Numbers are measured on a monthly basis and used for improving the processes.

“We measure the number of advertisements that are visible in social media, how many of the viewers will go and click the articles and move forward to the purchase stage to our websites”. (Respondent 4)

Respondent demonstrate how content marketing is measured from a customer journey point of view. It is pointed out that the numbers tell only part of the truth and the reasons for the numbers has to investigate before making a conclusion about the efficiency of content marketing.

#### 4.5 Future of content marketing

Before moving to the last theme of the interview about the future of content marketing, respondents were asked to evaluate how well company X is performing in content marketing at this point.

Respondents evaluated the current situation to be at a sufficient level, but still at a very early stage. Comparing to competitors and other organizations, respondents feel that they are performing well. Still, every answer is underlining that much is needed to be done. The process of content marketing is still under development, and major changes are rather difficult to make due to the relatively large size of the company. Company X wants to cut down the habit of making content just out of the thought that something has to be done all the time, which describes the current situation.

In the final theme of interviews, respondents were asked to describe how they see the future and trends of content marketing. One respondent describes that direct marketing has come to its end. Corporate social responsibility is believed to be as an important factor in the future of marketing. The brand image of company is an important factor when consumers are making buying decisions. Being honest is part of being responsible, and it is believed that consumers do not want to see so polished advertisements from companies.

Respondents feel that in future they have to get even closer to their potential and existing customer. Understanding the everyday life of the customers is a base for deeper interaction, which is needed in order to form a stronger relationship with customers. Being able to discuss and present even severe topics (i.e life insurance) better is something the company X hopes to reach in the future.

Visuality is trusted to grow in the future of content. An example of visuality is videos, which is believed to become even more popular and widely accepted among consumers and marketers. Internationally, for example, live videos are used notably but using them in case company X has been rather low so far. The reason for this is told to be high confidentiality regulation which complicates filming live videos.

One respondent argued that demographics like age and gender will have a less significant role in forming a target audience. Values, lifestyles, and interests will have a bigger impact on how companies will define their target audience and hence the content they are offering. Respondents sees this as a positive and interesting change, but at the same time challenging.

“Advertising analytics will change, we cannot decide that what kind of target audience we are offering content, and we will offer content based on the interests and values of the target group, rather than demographics” (Respondent 3)

Data is believed to play even a bigger role than content marketing than it ever has. Data from both potential and existing customers will develop to the level where building smaller and more specific focus groups will be possible.

“I think we will move from the generic “now it is time to switch summer tires” messaging to more specific messaging, like “this and this road might have more reindeers, be careful” or something like this.” (Respondent 4)

After respondents were discussed how content marketing will change in the future, they were asked to tell their own opinions on how content marketing could be developed in the company X. The overall process is at the moment the biggest development area. Target audience and the purpose of the content is needed to be determined before anything else is done. Understanding the target audience has to be developed in the future. After this, the content and channels of distribution could be considered. Every social media platform has to have an exact strategy which is the most suitable concerning the target audience and the content.

## 5 Analysis and discussion

This section discusses and analyses the most important findings of this research. Findings are based on the literature review, as well as interview results presented in the previous chapter.

Based on the results it came out that all respondents are familiar with content marketing as a marketing technique and agree that it is a relevant and vital part of today's social media marketing. It seemed that respondents had similar thoughts about what content marketing is, but still, there was some struggling with defining the essence of content marketing. Valuable content, storytelling and focusing on the needs of the consumer were seen as the most important factors in content marketing, which support the descriptions of content marketing in academic literature. Views did not differ from definitions in academic literature notably, which shows that content marketing as a topic is familiar to all of the respondents.

As discussed in literature review, traditional marketing models like AIDA is in digital marketing theories updated to fit better on the demands of consumers. FIGA model by Keronen and Tanni (2013) presented a new model that is more suitable for content marketing. As displayed in results, respondents also feel important that focus should be more on the consumer's interest rather than the company's interest. Respondent suggest that traditional marketing models should hence turn "upside down". Even though it was not established what marketing model respondents were referring to, they seem to have a similar view as Keronen and Tanni (2013).

Results from company X supported the theory that determining the right target audience is highly essential in content marketing. As described in the literature review, the target audience can be defined by using demographical and lifestyle factors. (Egan, 2007) Based on the answers it can be concluded, the company X will in future use less demographical factors like age and gender to determine their target audience, and company X wants to understand better what are customer's lifestyles, values, interests, and opinions. It was established that defining buyer persona in a right way is a first step to do in order for content marketing strategy to work. This might be a challenge for company X in the future and shows there is demand for a better customer understanding and research.

Results showed that company X uses content marketing in multiple social media platforms. Social media platforms are mainly selected based on their strengths in communication methods, as well as wanted objective and target audience. All of the platforms have an individual objective, which also influences on what kind of content is shared. Company X pays attention to valuable content, which has a significant role in their social media strategy. Respondents indicated that good content makes reactions and discussion are the best kinds of content. Intrudingly, data about effective content in company X has shown that informative articles that are written in a list form (e.g “5 tips for buying a home insurance”) get more reactions. This supports the earlier theories (McSpadden, 2015) of how content should be relevant for the customer, but also short enough, so the reader will have patience to read the article. Nevertheless, getting reactions is a good start, but it does not necessarily go hand in hand with increasing sales. Personalising social media channels was told to be one of the areas of development for the company X. In order to succeed in content marketing, company X has to first know their target audience, and after that develop a plan how social media platforms could be more personalized.

Clark (2012) indicated in the literature review that one of the objectives of content marketing is to turn potential customers into buying customers and existing customers into committed customers. This objective was also mentioned in the interview with the respondents. Results also pointed out that content marketing objective may depend on the target customer. In addition, raising awareness and visibility were mentioned when discussing about objectives of content marketing. Based on the interview results, company X did not seem to have one specific objective with the use of content marketing. Without specific objective, planning a content marketing strategy can be difficult.

In addition to objectives listed in the literature review, one of the objectives mentioned in the results was to prevent damages that insurance company X is eligible to compensate. Hence, content marketing in insurance company X is used in order to save costs. This result was brought a new insight to the objectives of content marketing. It also emphasises that the objectives of content marketing are depending on the business field as well.

Measuring the efficiency of content marketing seems to be on a rather concrete level in the company. Company X measures consumption, sharing and lead generation. Measuring the impact on sales is not coming through from their answers. As discussed in the

literature review by Elinger and Lieb (2015), measuring volume is often easier than measuring impact, especially to customer interface. Respondents point out that numbers are not telling the whole story of how efficient content marketing is, and therefore they have to do better research before making rushing into conclusions. Company X should decide metrics to measure the efficiency of content marketing, and they should be suitable for the desired objective.

Challenges with the use of content marketing and social media varied between the respondents. One of the issues mentioned was that maintaining trust in social media is difficult, especially because company X operates in insurance business. Comparing to other business fields, insurance companies often tend to have strict confidentiality rules, and therefore they cannot always comment cases in public. Building a brand image as responsible and trustworthy company is therefore more difficult for company X. This is a problem that is almost impossible to solve only with using content marketing.

Preface section discussed the current using of content marketing in Finnish companies. Studies made by Kubo (2019) showed that most of the companies are in advanced, growing or early stage in the usage of content marketing. Based on the research results, company X is in a growing stage in the usage of content marketing. Respondents tell that company X is still in rather early stage, but it is difficult to say what are they comparing to and how the content marketing has developed in the company X in the last few years. In a summary, company X seems to have a clear vision of the commitment to strategic content marketing and plan how they are using effective content marketing in the future. Interview results indicated that company X has a documented content marketing strategy, even though it was not yet confirmed in public. This shows that company X has acknowledged that successful content marketing is made in long-term and demands systematic evaluation of the process. Results also showed that content marketing is part of the bigger marketing plan.

In addition to current situation, the author wanted to research that what extent company X aims to use content marketing in future. The respondent of company X indicated that the current performing in content marketing was on a sufficient level, but still much is needed to be done. Based on the answers of the respondents, company X has a sufficient level of expertise in content marketing, but as many companies, they have problems with scheduling and allocating resources. Respondents did not voluntarily indicate any specific reason for why strategic content marketing is still at a rather early stage. All

the respondents had worked in the company for a relatively short amount of time, which might be a reason why content marketing has been taken seriously during the last few years.

In summary, it came clear that content marketing has a major role right now but will have an even bigger impact in the future. This is measurably due to the new marketing communication strategy the company has been preparing.

Content marketing is used in many industries, and this research was focusing mainly to insurance field. Hence, the conclusions cannot be generalised and one must take into consideration that results are collected from a relatively small group of respondents, all within the same company. When the work experience from every participant is relatively small, in some extent it has influence on how they answered.



## 6 Conclusion

This objective of this research was to conduct a research for the company X about content marketing in social media. The research question of this thesis was to identify whether a content marketing strategy exists within company X as well as reviewing the effectiveness of the current content marketing carried out.

This research started by giving an introduction to the relevance of content marketing in the times of digitalization, as well as presenting the research question and research objective mentioned above. Literature review was divided into four sections about role of marketing and marketing communications relation to the topic, digital marketing, social media marketing and content marketing. Literature review was used to make a decision about the research method, and what implications should be made in order to answer the research question.

After literature review, the methodology part gave a presentation of how the empirical research was conducted. Chosen qualitative research method and decision of data collection method was justified, and the process of conducting the interviews were discussed further. At the end, limitations pointed out the potential weaknesses occurred in the research. Research results were presented in chapter 4, and analysis and discussion were presented in the chapter 5.

The theoretical models of content marketing and social media marketing were used as a foundation for this study, and to some extent it was studied how much the results harmonized with the given theoretical background. Since content marketing is a constantly developing field of science, new theories, processes and methods are constantly developed.

This research was made with considering theoretical, ethical and practical issues throughout the study. As demonstrated in chapter 3, the methodology of this research was carefully planned and executed. Possible biases were taken into consideration, and one of them is the translating interviews from Finnish to English. Hence, there is a change that something was lost in translation. In addition, the semi-structured interview offered to ask additional questions to some extent, but still many questions and discussions could have been continued in order to get more comprehensive results. Nevertheless, the

amount of data collected from the interviews was on an appropriate level, so there was no lack of significant data.

As relation to the research question, company X has understanding on what content marketing is and what is the role of social media in content marketing. Understanding the customer and the needs, wants, goals, and beliefs are seen as an important base for content marketing. Benefits of social media are acknowledged, and content marketing strategy is adjusted to fit to social media platforms according their features, target groups and objective. Company X is using content marketing as part of their strategic marketing communication strategy, and it's significance will grow in future. Content marketing is seen as cost-effective way to raise awareness and increase sales. Biggest challenges for company X were the lack of understanding their buyer persona and building a brand image as responsible insurance company.

Content marketing is a field which is still relatively shortly discussed in academic literature. For this reason, future research about this topic is strongly welcomed. Based on this thesis, future researchers could investigate many different and interesting research problems.

In terms of company X, this research offered a great starting point for investigating content marketing. Because of the limitations of the thesis, interesting areas like comparison with competitor companies was left out. This would be a good research question to do in future, to compare how company X is performing in content marketing compared to its competitors. Conducting a wider target customer research for the company X would help them to determine better their buyer personas. In addition, the research could focus on how content marketing specifically benefits the company in terms of visibility, sales or brand image. As a suggestion to the company X, they could investigate whether the content they are producing is relevant for their target audience. Additionally, they should set up a specific goal and measurement systems in order to know how efficient their content marketing is.

Since content marketing is not investigated in company X before, it is to be hoped that conducting this research in company X raised questions and discussion about how they are performing in content marketing and how they could develop their actions in future.

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## Figure references

Figure 1: Marketing strategy and the Marketing mix. [Online] Available at: <[https://www.google.com/search?q=marketing+strategy+and+marketing+mix&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiSv7LzI9ThAhXjo4sKHX1mC14Q\\_AUIDigB&biw=1280&bih=561&dpr=1.5#imgrc=sFQLF9noyGKryM](https://www.google.com/search?q=marketing+strategy+and+marketing+mix&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiSv7LzI9ThAhXjo4sKHX1mC14Q_AUIDigB&biw=1280&bih=561&dpr=1.5#imgrc=sFQLF9noyGKryM)>. [Accessed 15 April 2019]

Figure 2: 4P's vs. 4C's. Own illustration.

Figure 3: Communications mix. Own illustration.

Figure 4: AIDA model applied for content creation, Keronen and Tanni (2013). Own illustration.

Figure 5: Content marketing planning stages. Own illustration.

Figure 6: Content marketing strategy process. Own illustration.

Figure 7: Social media market shares (February 2019) [Online] Information available at: <[gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/worldwide/2019](https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/worldwide/2019)>. Accessed 26 March 2019. Own illustration.

Figure 8: Qualitative Research Flow Chart, Kananen, J, (2015) *Rafting through the thesis process: step by step guide to thesis*. Jyväskylä University. Own illustration.

Figure 9: Structure of the in-depth interview. Own illustration.



## Appendices

### Interview questions

Haastattelija/Interviewer: Sara-Sofia Kuusisto

Topic: Content Marketing in Company X

- Interviewees are aware of the thesis, the topic and the purpose of the interview.
- Time limitation of 30 minutes.
- No right or wrong answers; every answer is highly appreciated.
- An interviewee can skip questions if needed or wanted.
- The interview will be recorded and transcribed. Recorded tapes will be deleted after the thesis is graded.
- Identity (name, age, gender) and the company name is hidden in the final version.

#### Taustakysymykset/Background information:

- Kauanko olet työskennellyt sisältömarkkinoinnin, sosiaalisen median tai markkinoitviestinnän parissa? /How long you have worked with content marketing, social media or marketing communications?
- Kauanko olet työskennellyt yritys X:ssä? /How long you have worked in company X?
- Mikä on koulutustaustasi? /What is your education level?

#### Kysymykset/Questions:

1. Miten määrittelisit sisältömarkkinoinnin? How would you define content marketing?
2. Miten määrittelisit strategisen sisältömarkkinoinnin? How would you define strategic content marketing?
3. Onko yrityksellä olemassa strategia sisältömarkkinoinnin toteuttamiseen? Does the company have a content marketing strategy?
4. Mikä on sisältömarkkinoinnin rooli yrityksen viestintästrategiassa? What is the role of content marketing in the company's marketing communication strategy?
5. Mitkä ovat yrityksen suurimmat tavoitteet sisältömarkkinoinnin käytössä? What are the most significant objectives with using content marketing?



6. Millaisia ongelmia sisältömarkkinoinnin luomisessa on? What problems creating content marketing strategy has?
7. Mitä on mielestäsi onnistunut sisältö ja sisältömarkkinointi? How would you describe successful content and successful content marketing?
8. Missä sosiaalisen median kanavissa yritys käyttää sisältömarkkinointia? What kind of social media platforms the company is using for content marketing?
9. Millä kriteereillä tietty sosiaalisen median kanava valitaan? What criteria's are used when choosing a social media platform?
10. Eroaako jaettu sisältö eri sosiaalisen median kanavien välillä ja jos eroaa niin miten? How does the shared content differ between social media platforms, and if does; how?
11. Mitkä ovat suurimmat hyödyt sosiaalisen median käytössä sisältömarkkinoinnin kannalta? What are the biggest benefits in social media usage?
12. Millaisia haasteita sosiaalinen media tuo sisältömarkkinoinnin käyttöön? Missä asioissa mielestäsi sisältömarkkinointi ei toimi? What challenges social media has in terms of content marketing? What problems content marketing can't solve?
13. Millaisia mittareita käytetään sisältömarkkinoinnin tehokkuuden mittaamiseen sosiaalisessa mediassa? What measurement scales are used when measuring the effectiveness of content marketing in social media?
14. Miten näet sisältömarkkinoinnin tulevaisuuden? How do you see the future of content marketing (in general)?
15. Miten uskot sisältömarkkinoinnin kehittyvän tulevaisuudessa, näetkö jotakin trendejä? How do you think content marketing will develop in future, do you see any upcoming trends?
16. Miten kehittäisit sisältömarkkinointia yrityksessä? How would you develop content marketing in future in the company X?
17. Vapaa-muotoiset kommentit, haluatko täydentää annettuja vastauksia tai lisätä jotakin? Optional comments; do you want to add something or tell something that was not asked?