



**Content Marketing Strategy for Affiliate Marketing E-Commerce  
Company in the Dutch market. Case: Bonusway Oy**

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## Abstract

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<b>Report/Thesis Title</b> Content Marketing Strategy for Driving Growth in Affiliate Marketing E-commerce in the Dutch market
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<p>This project-based thesis focuses on creating a content marketing strategy for the commissioning company, Bonusway Oy, in the Dutch market. The company is active in the affiliate marketing and e-commerce industries. The goal of the thesis is to provide Bonusway with suggestions to improve their content marketing strategy. The objective of the content marketing strategy is to acquire new users and consequently, increase sales.</p> <p>The thesis consists of a theoretical part and an empirical part to analyze the company's current situation. The theoretical part discusses the topics of inbound marketing and content marketing and its relevant elements, such as Search Engine Optimization, user-generated content, social media marketing. The theoretical part includes research on tools like SOSTAC marketing planning model and Artificial Intelligence for text generation. The empirical part focuses on analyzing the commissioning company's current content marketing strategy and its competitors, which the author of the thesis presents through a SWOT analysis. The analysis is followed by suggestions from the author on how Bonusway can improve their content marketing strategy.</p> <p>The research methods for the thesis consisted mostly of qualitative research methods. The author used desktop study and research through literature review for creating the theoretical framework. An interview with the Dutch country manager was conducted to gain information on the company's current situation. The author combined this information with the theoretical framework to analyze the current situation and the competitors and define improvements for the content marketing strategy.</p> <p>The author's research and analysis showed the importance of quality content, SEO, UGC and social media marketing in developing a content marketing strategy. It also showed that AI can be a helpful tool for content generation. It is beneficial for the commissioning company to implement the author's recommendations if they want to improve their content marketing strategy to drive growth in the Dutch market. However, the finished product does not contain a full implementation phase and therefore its results and success are not part of this project.</p>
<b>Key words</b> Content marketing, Affiliate marketing, E-Commerce, Inbound marketing, User-generated content, SEO, SOSTAC, Social media marketing, Artificial Intelligence

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# 1 Introduction

This is a project-based bachelor's thesis in function of the author's CRM and Communications specialization in the International Business part-time bachelor's degree at Haaga-Helia University in Helsinki, Finland. This first chapter provides background to the thesis topic and the project objective with its project tasks. Next, the author provides information on the project scope, the international aspect of the thesis, the benefits of the thesis for both the author and the commissioning company and risk management. Lastly, this chapter includes an explanation of the most important key words related to the thesis topic.

## 1.1 Background to the topic

The aim of this thesis is to create a content marketing strategy for the Dutch market in which the thesis' commissioning company, Bonusway Oy, is active. The thesis deep-dives into different aspects of content marketing, the commissioning company's current content marketing strategy for its Dutch market and the ways it can be improved.

Content is what generates the biggest part of the commissioning company's revenue. Having gone through a period of declining revenue and restructuring the company and its markets, the commissioning company has expressed a need to review its content marketing strategy. They hope to incorporate more user-generated content to accelerate its growth in the Dutch market.

## 1.2 Project Objective

The project objective (PO) of this thesis is to provide Bonusway with a content marketing strategy they can use in their Dutch market. The outcomes of the thesis are meant to improve the company's current content strategy, increase user-generated content from Dutch users and support revenue growth in the Dutch market.

This project objective has been divided into the following project tasks:

PT1. Preparing theoretical framework

PT2. Analyzing the company's current content strategy

PT3. Developing the new content marketing strategy

PT4. Evaluating project management and project outcomes

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Project Task	Theoretical Framework	Project Management Methods	Outcomes
PT1. Preparing theoretical framework	Content marketing, targeted marketing, SEO, user-generated content, AI	Literature review, desktop study	Theoretical framework as a base for the project
PT2. Analyzing the company's current content strategy	Utilizing outcome of PT1	SWOT analysis, desktop study, company interview	Description of current content strategy
PT3. Developing the content marketing strategy and implementing examples	Utilizing outcomes of PT1 and PT2	Working in Word and Excel, social media, desktop study	Recommendations for content marketing strategy with examples
PT4. Evaluating project management and project outcome	Analyzing results, gaining feedback from company	Desktop study, company feedback	Review and conclusion of the project

### 1.3 Delimitation and Project scope

The thesis will focus on the content marketing strategy for the Dutch market where Bonusway has been active since the beginning of 2020. The thesis does not discuss other markets in which the company is active.

The industry the company is active in, is affiliate marketing and e-commerce. Therefore, the thesis will focus on inbound marketing activities that are beneficial for the company. The thesis focuses on B2C communications.

The commissioning company has asked to focus on increasing user-generated content within the content marketing strategy. The thesis includes content for social media platforms that are relevant

to the company, Instagram and Facebook and the company's Dutch website and app. Other social media platforms are not discussed in this thesis.

#### 1.4 Benefits

There are benefits for all the stakeholders involved with this thesis. The commissioning company has been struggling with its content marketing strategy, acquiring new users and increasing revenue. The thesis aims to support the company with suggestions on how they can improve their strategy and accelerate growth in the Dutch market.

By optimising the commissioning company's content strategy, their users will be able to take advantage of content that is even more informative, engaging and inspiring than before and will see the many benefits of using the company's services.

The author benefits because they are finally able to apply what they have learnt throughout their studies in their bachelor degree to a real life case and company. As the author would like to continue working within the affiliate marketing industry, this thesis will therefore be a valuable asset to their CV in the future.

#### 1.5 Key concepts

In this part of the thesis, key concepts that are relevant to the thesis topic are explained for better understanding to the reader.

**E-commerce** stands for electronic commerce and can simply be defined as doing business on the Internet, where money is exchanged for goods or services between a company and an end consumer (Gagandeep & Kumar 2012).

**Affiliate marketing** is a marketing strategy used by companies that are active in e-commerce (Duffy 2005). It's a newer type of performance-based internet marketing in which an affiliate advertiser compensates an affiliate for each customer referred through the affiliate's marketing effort in the form of a commission (Dwivedi, Rana & Alryalat 2017) (Duffy 2005).

**Content marketing** is a form of digital marketing where digital content is published on electronic channels such as websites and social media to satisfy customer demand and generate a profit. (Kee & Yazdanifard 2015).

**Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** is a set of techniques to optimize website content to improve their ranking in search engine results. It generates organic traffic to a website.

**Social Media Marketing** is a form of Internet marketing in which companies use social networking websites as a marketing tool (Rohit, Rana, & Varsha 2013.).

**User-generated content (UGC)** is media content that has been created by ordinary people, according to Daugherty, Eastin & Bright. When content is created by paid professionals, it is referred to as **paid content**.

**Automated text-generation (ATG)**, also referred to as **text generative AI**, are artificial intelligence (AI) agents that can generate large-scale humanlike text (Colleoni, Illia & Zyglidopoulos 2023, 201-210).

## **1.6 Commissioning company and the international aspect**

Bonusway Oy is a Finnish SME that was established in 2011. Essentially, Bonusway is a cashback website where their loyal users receive cashback as a reward when they use the company's affiliate links to purchase a product or service from a merchant listed on the Bonusway website. The company's operating model is based on affiliate marketing (Bonusway 2022).

Bonusway is active in 17 different countries, including Finland and the Netherlands. The company has a specific website and app for each country, with 5 million users in total worldwide (Bonusway 2022). On their websites and apps, they share the best deals and discounts in e-commerce with their users. This results in their users always shopping online for the lowest prices and earning cashback rewards, and the merchants that are promoted on Bonusway, generating more sales.

The company's headquarters are located in Helsinki, Finland. They currently employ around 10 people. In 2021, Bonusway had a turnover of 2.3 million euros (Bonusway 2022).

The international aspect of the thesis is met because the commissioning company is active in many countries, and as the author is employed by the company to work for the Dutch market, the thesis' objective is aimed at the Dutch market, one of the company's biggest markets.

## 2 Content marketing as a strategy in e-commerce

In this chapter, the author sets up a theoretical framework (PT1) for the thesis. The theoretical framework helps to understand the theory of content marketing and how to develop a content marketing strategy. The theoretical framework includes the necessary steps and processes that need to be carried out and the data that needs to be collected to create a successful content marketing strategy. Figure 1 visualizes the theoretical framework for this thesis and includes the chapter numbers in which each part is discussed.

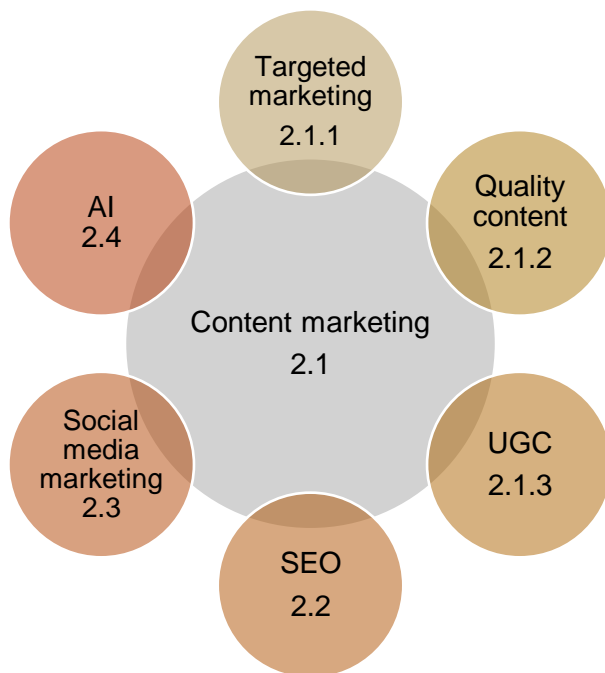


Figure 1. The theoretical framework

### 2.1 Content Marketing

Marketing is an ever-evolving field. Due to numerous technological innovations, the rise of Web 2.0 and the increased use of social media, traditional marketing practices have become less and less successful. Every company now needs a dynamic digital marketing strategy if they want to stay relevant in the online marketplace. A big part of an effective digital marketing strategy, which is often still overlooked by many companies, is content marketing. Content marketing falls under the digital inbound marketing category, which are marketing techniques that attract new customers in an organic way (Casais & Lopes 2022, 1-17). Other inbound marketing techniques are SEO and social media marketing, which are also discussed in this thesis.

According to the Content Marketing Institute, content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain



a clearly defined audience and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action. The demand for content is growing fast, and several studies have shown that 61% of consumers are more likely to make a purchase from businesses that put out custom content (Gupta 2015). This percentage keeps on growing. It shows the importance of content marketing for every company. With the right content marketing strategy, they can educate and entertain their audience and build a lasting relationship with them. (Champion 2018, 22). But a framework needs to be in place first for the content to be great and effective.

The definition of content marketing by the Content Marketing Institute points out several important aspects of content marketing. Firstly, for content marketing to be effective, it is essential that the target audience is clearly defined. Secondly, the content that is put out, needs to be of excellent quality. And lastly, content marketing leads to revenue growth.

Revenue growth and new user acquisition are the end goals of the content marketing strategy for Bonusway. Therefore, the target audience needs to be defined first so that the strategy includes content that is created specifically for that target audience.

There are many tools that can be used for creating a content marketing strategy. The SOSTAC marketing planning model is one of the most popular tools. It was created in the 1990s by PR Smith. The six letters in SOSTAC stand for the six steps that are part of the model: Situation, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Action, and Control. (Chaffey 2022). Each step answers a specific question. Figure 2 visualizes the SOSTAC model.



Figure 2. The SOSTAC marketing planning model (adapted from Smart Insights 2022)

With the first step, Situation, the current situation is analyzed. It is suggested to investigate the company's current marketing activities and their performance, their target market, their resources,

current trends and competitors. A SWOT analysis is recommended to be conducted here. Secondly, it is important to specify the Objectives that the company wants to reach. The company's vision needs to be defined, SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) goals set and the KPI's to go along with that need to be selected. Often, the 5S goals are used here: Sell, Serve, Sizzle, Speak and Save. (Nilsson 27 January 2023). The following figure visualizes the 5S goals and their meaning.

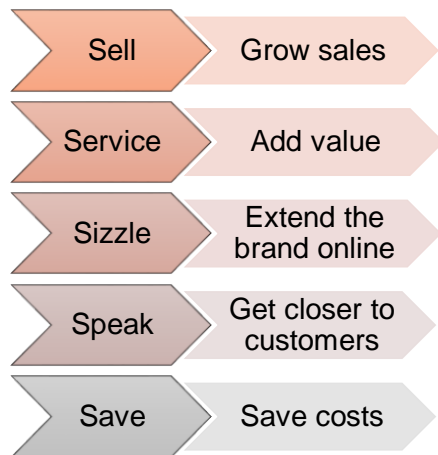


Figure 3. The 5S goals (adapted from Chaffey 2019)

In the third step, the Strategy needs to be broadly defined. This step suggests to look at factors such as Segmenting, Targeting, Positioning and the Marketing Mix. With step four, Tactics, the methods, tools, and techniques that will be used to reach the customers need to be selected. In step five, Action, the details of the previous step are specified: who does what. (Nilsson 27 January 2023).

Lastly, to ensure your plan is working, it is essential to monitor the progress. The selected KPI's need to be followed up on and reviewed, and feedback needs to be implemented. (Nilsson 27 January 2023).

Alongside the SOSTAC marketing planning model, the Content Marketing Matrix, a creation of Smart Insights, can be used as a content mapping tool and for content ideation (Smart Insights 2022). The tool is divided in four marketing goals: Entertain, Inspire, Convince and Educate and each goals includes different types of content. The following figure is an illustration of the Content Marketing Matrix.

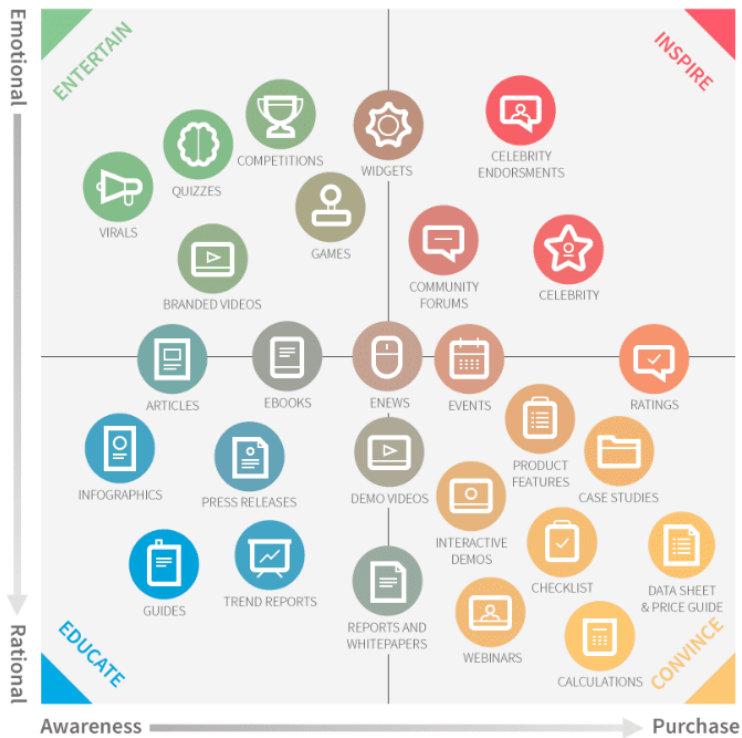


Figure 4. The Content Marketing Matrix (Chaffey 2022)

### 2.1.1 Targeted marketing

Content marketing is about creating content for your audience and what they consider valuable (Champion 2018, 22). Therefore it is essential to know and understand who the target market is for Bonusway in their Dutch market. Then the content they create can reflect the audience's interests and be valuable for them.

A target market is essentially a group of customers at which a company aims most of their marketing efforts. It means this group has been identified as the people that are the right fit for what a company has to offer. These are the people a company wants to attract as customers. Some companies can have several target groups. (Cahill 1997, 10-13).

To define the company's target audience, it is necessary to consider factors such as their users' demographics, their shopping behavior and habits and their income to section the target market into smaller segments. This process is called market segmentation. It is also beneficial to consider their Internet and smartphone usage, social media usage and current trends to identify which communication channels are best to reach them.

### **2.1.2 Quality content**

After defining the target audience and identifying their interests, their preferences and current trends, the next step is to determine which kind of content the audience likes to consume, and which content will convince them to use Bonusway for their online and mobile shopping. All marketers globally agree that for content to be efficient, it needs to be of high quality.

It is essential to look at what quality content entails. Jefferson and Taton (2015, 23) use the term valuable content, meaning that the content creates value for a particular audience by educating, helping, or inspiring them. Quality content should be relevant, interesting, and interactive, and meets the needs of the customer, rather than solely selling or promoting a product or service (Casais & Lopes 2022, 1-17). The customer should not be aware that they are being sold something but feel as if one of their problems is being solved.

Google rewards websites that contain quality content with a higher ranking in its search engine result pages (SERPs), which is discussed in part 2.1.3 of this thesis. According to their Google Search Essentials (2023), content should be helpful, reliable and people-first. This means that the information included in the content should be accurate and easy to understand. On top of that, quality content should not only include text, but it goes hand in hand with other elements such as images, design, and layout. (Montti 2021).

Another important aspect of quality content is that it needs to be engaging. When content makes the customer want to engage, companies can acquire important feedback from them regarding their product or service or even their content. (Casais & Lopes 2022, 1-17). This can lead to customers writing high quality reviews, which in return leads to better Google search ranking and possibly convincing other customers to buy your product or service. Evaluating and monitoring the content is therefore crucial.

The impact of quality content should not be underestimated. Quality content can increase brand awareness, trust, and loyalty. It can change the way a customer views a company. When the content is valuable to the customer, it also becomes valuable to the company as it will positively impact profit. (Jefferson & Taton 2015, 23).

### **2.1.3 User-generated content (UGC)**

As the commissioning company has expressed a need for increasing user-generated content, this concept will be included in the project. With the increased use of social media, there has also been an increase in user-generated content (UGC), sometimes referred to as consumer-generated content. UGC is content created by a consumer who has experienced a service or product. This

content can be produced in the form of reviews, videos, or photos for example. The creation of UGC is usually on a voluntary, nonpaid basis, but sometimes companies sponsor or pay consumers for UGC. The user then shares this content with the public on the Internet, on UGC platforms such as social media, forums, or blogs. (Moriuchi 2019, 2). Out of all social media platforms, Instagram contains the most user-generated content (Mazouri 2021).

The importance of user-generated content cannot be overlooked by companies, as it functions as some type of electronic word-of-mouth marketing. UGC has proven to be very influential on purchase decision-making and has become more important than companies' own content. (Moriuchi 2019, 2). 92% of consumers worldwide have said they trust user-generated content more than any other advertising (Nielsen 2012). They prefer word-of-mouth recommendations from their family and friends, and other satisfied consumers' organic content as a second choice, because it gives a more authentic view on a product or service. Consumers look for information on something they want to purchase to social media instead of traditional media.

Especially reviews have proven to drive sales (Moriuchi 2019, 102). With this kind of impact on purchasing behavior, the ROI on user-generated content is very high and should be an essential part of any company's content marketing strategy. Therefore, it's important to know what drives consumers to create UGC.

According to Moriuchio (2019, 37-43), consumers create their own content because of several reasons. One main reason is that it allows them to express themselves and feel like they are useful, contributing to society by sharing information on a product or service others might be looking for. Another reason is that they want to fulfill their own social interaction needs, as they hope their content might attract readers which will respond or interact with their content. This interaction is important for businesses because it creates a feeling of community, and people like feeling they belong to a community. Lastly, Maslow's self-actualization also plays an important part as to why consumers create content. It should be no surprise here that UGC is mostly created by younger people, although Generation X also has started to participate more. (Moriuchio 2019, 37-43).

There are different ways to stimulate or increase UGC on different platforms. The easiest way is through social media. On social media, the use of hashtags is an important strategy for stimulating UGC. Many brands create their own branded hashtags and include it in their bio with a call to action (CTA) on their social media profile to encourage users to post their own content with the brand's hashtag. Companies can also ask the users to tag their brand's profile in their content. (Thomas 1 June 2021).

Another effective way to increase UGC is by hosting UGC giveaways or contests on social media. For example, asking your Instagram followers to create a photo or video, post it on their social media with the branded hashtag. The creator of the best photo or video can then win a prize. Incentives like discounts or being reposted on the brand's Instagram page when followers post a review or mention the brand on social media is another way to motivate followers to create UGC. (Thomas 1 June 2021).

Clearly, UGC needs to be a part of any company's content marketing strategy and therefore it is included in this thesis. User-generated content is useful for creating brand awareness, learning more about your audience, building trust and community with customers and most importantly: it does not necessarily require a lot of time and resources.

## **2.2 Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

Another type of inbound marketing is Search Engine Optimization (SEO). With SEO, companies can increase the visibility and reachability of their content (Vinerean 2017). SEO is one of two ways to improve the search engine rankings of a website. The other way is by Search Engine Marketing (SEM), such as paid advertising.

With an enormous amount of data available on the Internet, a search engine ranking system was needed for search engines being able to classify and optimize all this information more easily. As Google receives more than 3.5 billion search inquiries daily, which makes up over 75% of the market share of search engines, ranking high in its search results is crucial for businesses (Kečo, Poturak & Tutnić 2022). It is one of the main ways to attract new customers and has a high ROI, when it is done the right way. Some companies choose to invest externally in SEO specialists, and other companies choose to have SEO done in-house by their marketing team without any extra cost.

Through SEO, certain parts of a website can be adjusted to rank higher in search engine ranking pages (SERP). Some of those adjustments need to be done by a company's development team, and others by the marketing team (Kečo, Poturak & Tutnić 2022). Search engines rank information by relevancy, so the more relevant a website's content is to a search result, the higher it will rank. This means that the marketing team needs to ensure that the website's content is relevant to what their users are looking for. They can do this by doing keyword research to ensure they use the right, relevant keywords in the text, meta titles, and meta descriptions on their website. Meta titles and meta descriptions are part of a website's HTML. A meta title defines the title of a webpage, and a meta description is a summary of the content on the webpage (Keenan 2023).

Next to the quality of the content on a website's pages, the freshness of the content is also important for Google rankings (Hayes January 2015). New, relevant content should be added to a website regularly. A good way to do this, is by adding customer's reviews to the website. And although Google claims that the length of the content is not one of their ranking factors, marketers have claimed for years that word count does matter. Opinions on how many words quality content should contain depend on the type of content and differ from anywhere between 300 to even 2500 words for a blogpost (Hollingsworth 22 November 2021). That does not mean that shorter content cannot be used, but it is better suited for landing pages and descriptive text. 300 to 500 words is recommended for those (Great Content 2023).

A study by First Page Sage, the largest SEO firm in the United States that has continuously studied Google's algorithm for more than 10 years, shows that consistent publication of engaging content is still the most important ranking factor for 2023 (Bailyn 13 December 2022). Keywords in meta titles are the second most important factor, followed by backlinks, niche expertise and user engagement.

To increase their search engine ranking on Google and subsequently become more relevant and easier to find for their target audience, it is essential that SEO is part of Bonusway's content marketing strategy. All meta titles, text and links on their website needs to contain the keywords the target audience is looking for, and content needs to be updated regularly.

### **2.3 Social media marketing**

With the emergence of the Internet and social media, the power of consumers has increased. Social media includes all Internet-based technological applications where its users can create and exchange their own content and interact with others. Examples are blogs, social media networking sites like Facebook and Instagram, online forums, and content community sites like Pinterest and Youtube, to name a few. Social media has changed the way that people shop as it provides them with an abundance of information on goods and services. Obviously, this has impacted companies' marketing strategies globally. They are faced with new challenges and must adjust their tactics. (Alves, Fernandes & Raposo 2016). Some of these challenges include growing a social media presence and measuring the return on investment (ROI).

Even though Google cannot rank social media content in its SERPs, the impact of quality content on social media cannot be underestimated. Through social media, companies can engage their customers and even directly interact with them in ways that weren't possible before the existence of social media. Likely positive outcomes from companies being active on social media are

gathering valuable feedback from users and creating brand awareness in an organic way, thus being inexpensive.

Therefore, including social media in Bonusway's content marketing strategy is essential. Once again, quality content will be the most important part of doing social media marketing. But selecting the right social media channels is also crucial, as is the frequency of promoting content on there. (Patruti Baltes 2015). Which social media channels to choose, depends on the needs of the company and the preferred channels of their target market. Thorough analysis of these is needed to ensure making the right choices, such as with the SOSTAC tool.

## **2.4 AI as a tool for content generation**

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to develop, an AI-driven future is on its way. Therefore, the author discusses its implementations for the digital marketing field in this part of the thesis. One recent societal topic and trend has been generative AI and its use in content creation.

Generative AI (GenAI) tools have become increasingly popular. It's a technology that combines natural language processing (NLP) with machine learning algorithms to create a conversational AI chatbot that can answer users' questions and generate different types of data such as text, images, videos in a variety of languages (George, George & Martin 2023).

Currently, ChatGPT is the most well-known GenAI platform. It has become popular in correlation with content marketing because of its feature of generating human-like text. This is revolutionary as it is the first GenAI that can understand factors such as context and intent, unlike previous auto-generating models (George, George & Martin 2023). The text that ChatGPT generates, is more engaging and less robot-like. That, plus the benefit of being able to generate hundreds of words in a very short amount of time, makes ChatGPT an interesting tool for content creation, most specifically for SEO purposes. Especially for smaller or startup companies, with limited marketing budget and resources, text-generative AI could be a powerful help to improve their search engine ranking.

With the buzz this innovative technology has created being so recent, not a lot of academic research can be found on the topic yet. However, prominent search marketers are discussing ChatGPT's efficiency for SEO purposes online and seem divided on the topic, with one side praising and the other side criticizing the tool's automated text-generation. One of its main weaknesses, according to ChatGPT creator OpenAI, is that the tool can occasionally generate incorrect or outdated output, as it's not connected to the Internet and has limited knowledge of anything that has happened after 2021 (Demers 2023). In terms of SEO, this means that ChatGPT might not be up to date on keyword research.



Another concern to consider with using ChatGPT for SEO purposes, is Google's own guidelines towards AI-generated content. AI-generated content falls under the category of auto-generated content, which Google algorithms classify as low-quality content and even spam (Goodwin 2022). If Google detects that content was written by a robot, it will rank the website poorly on its SERPs.

In conclusion, human intervention is still needed when using text-generative AI for content marketing. These innovative GenAI tools generate a lot of content in a short amount of time, which makes them time-efficient and affordable. But the output needs to be reviewed by a professional who can fix grammatical mistakes, check its accuracy, and add value to the generated words to ensure the quality of the content. It's also critical that a professional writes the prompts for the text generation to make sure the output is as specific as possible. As Acunzo (2015) wrote, producing more volumes of content should not be at the expense of quality.

### **3 Project Management Methods and Report Structure**

In the thesis, the author uses a combination of desktop study and qualitative and quantitative research methods, depending on each Project Task.

For PT1. Preparing the theoretical framework, the author uses desktop study and literature, such as books and journals about the industry. Next, the author writes the theory which includes the relevant keywords, of which the outcome is the theoretical framework.

To fulfil PT2. Analyzing the company's current content strategy, the author collects data from the company's documents and Intranet and the company's Dutch country manager. The author interviews the Dutch country manager through asking a set of questions in a structured manner. Through this, answers about all necessary parts of the content marketing strategy will be collected. Additional questions might be asked if needed. Combining the collected data with the theoretical framework, the author of the thesis makes their own analysis of the company's inbound marketing activity. The outcome is a thorough description of the company's current content marketing strategy for the Dutch market, the needs of the company and the needs of the users.

For PT3. Developing the content marketing strategy, the theoretical framework and the data collected through PT1 and PT2 are used as data sources. The theoretical framework provides the method of creating a content marketing strategy. The outcome of PT3 is a description of the new content marketing strategy as proposed by the author, and examples of its implementation are shown.

In the last part of the thesis, in PT4. Evaluating project management and project outcome the author evaluates the results of the project. They use the company's feedback and website and social media analytics to provide an overview of the results. Lastly, the author formulates the conclusion of the project. Figure 5 gives a complete overview of the research and project management methods.

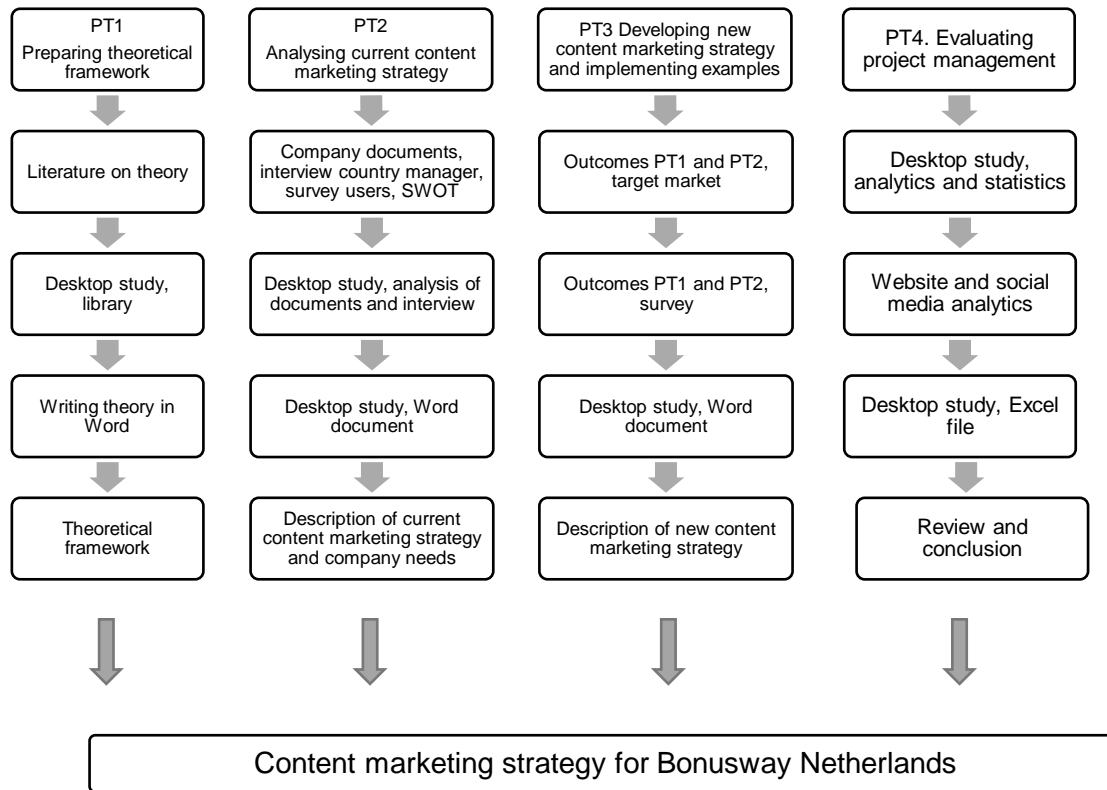


Figure 5. Project management design

## **4 Situation analysis**

The following chapter of this thesis consists of a thorough situation analysis of the commissioning company by using elements from the SOSTAC model. The author discusses the current inbound marketing activities, defines the target market, and analyzes relevant trends and competition. The outcome of the analysis is summarized in a SWOT analysis. At the end of the chapter, the author specifies the objectives for the content marketing strategy accordingly.

### **4.1 Situation**

In this part, the author analyses the current inbound marketing activities in the Netherlands, including content marketing, SEO, and social media marketing. The author has gathered information through an interview with the company's country manager for the Netherlands and by auditing the company's content on their website, app, social media channels and e-mails.

#### **4.1.1 Inbound marketing activities**

The type of content Bonusway puts out is divided over their website, app, e-mails, and social media platforms. Content on the website consists of short text with an image in the form of current offers and discounts, web shops with logo, description and SEO text, and longer blogposts.

The offers usually contain less than 100 words in the text and a title containing keywords and call-to-action. The length of the web shop descriptions varies and is not consistent. Some include a long SEO text, and some do not. The metatag titles are not filled in, even though there is the option to do that in the company's admin system. The blog is not visible on the homepage of the website and can only be found when clicking through the 'help' section. There has been no activity on the blog since April 2022, and before that, posting happened inconsistently and incoherently. Some blog posts do not contain a title or image. There are no links to the Bonusway social media pages on the website.

The website content appears on the Bonusway app as well. Additionally, through the app they can send app pushes to their users. Some app pushes are automated, for example to remind users they have not used the service in a while, and some are sent manually by the Bonusway team, consisting of the latest, most interesting offer.

Through e-mail, Bonusway sends both AI-automated and manual weekly mailings with current offers and deals. The AI-automated e-mails include personalized offers for each user and are sent on Tuesdays. The Dutch content team writes the manual mailings and selects the promoted offers that are included based on popularity, then sends them out on Fridays. Send out times are based

off optimal times recommended by the e-mail platform the company uses. The manual mailings have an average open rate of 30% and average click through rate of 3%, which are good results. A clear system is in place for the e-mail marketing. (Perdieus 4 April 2023).

As for social media, Bonusway has both an Instagram and a Facebook page. However, activity on there has been very inconsistent and there is no engagement with followers (Perdieus 4 April 2023). They currently have 265 followers on Instagram and 19 000 followers on Facebook.

When Bonusway became active in the Netherlands in the beginning of 2020, they attempted to actively add as much content to the website as possible, in the form of offers and participating web shops. They focused on SEO for a while, but the strategy there was mostly to focus on keywords and length of the text instead of the quality because there have never been any guidelines on how to execute SEO within the company. (Perdieus 4 April 2023). When the author looks for Bonusway on Google through several keywords, Bonusway is never on the first page of the search results.

There is an option for UGC on the Bonusway website, with the possibility for users to add reviews and their own favorite deals or products to the website. However, this option has never really been utilized in the Netherlands, even though this option was quite popular in the CEE countries' Bonusway websites (Perdieus 4 April 2023). The number of reviews about the Dutch website and app are rather low and the ratings could be improved. Additionally, on Trustpilot they have a score of 2.7/5 with 10 reviews.

In conclusion, with a lack of guidelines and resources, as the team is small, means there has not been a clear content marketing strategy for Bonusway Netherlands. Setting up specific guidelines would be beneficial for the company and could even be used in other markets as well.

#### **4.1.2 Target market**

Next, the author defines the target market for Bonusway Netherlands by using data provided by the company. This data consists of information on Bonusway active users' demographics and shopping behavior. Additionally, their interests, social media usage and relevant trends in e-commerce are analyzed.

As of March 2023, Bonusway has 669 179 users in their Dutch market. When registering for a Bonusway account, the user can choose to fill or don't fill in their age to their profile. Of the 669 179 users, 170 928 or 25.55% have filled in their age in their profile. However, only 9043 of the people who have filled in their age are 'active' users, meaning they have made a purchase through Bonusway in the past 12 months (Bonusway 2023). The author uses the data about the active users for this thesis, which is presented in the following figure.

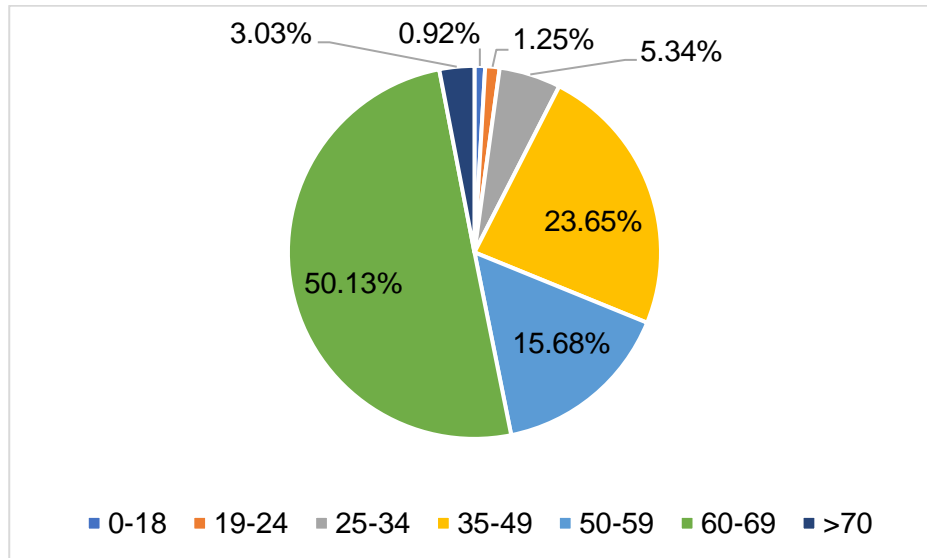


Figure 6. Bonusway Dutch active users by age category

Active users from the age category 60-69 make up half of the users of Bonusway in the Netherlands. The age categories of 35-49 and 50-59 are also quite significantly big groups of Bonusway active users, with almost 24 percent and almost 16 percent consecutively. (Bonusway 2023).

From the active users who have filled in their gender during registration, the division between women and men is almost equally 50 percent, with women amounting for only slightly more than 50 percent (Bonusway 2023).

In terms of demographics, the target market of Bonusway Netherlands is defined as Dutch women and men above 60 years old. However, the age groups of 35-49 and 50-59 are also rather significant and should also be taken into consideration within the company's marketing efforts.

#### 4.1.3 Trends

The most popular shopping category among Bonusway active users so far in 2023 has been Travel, which amounts to 30 percent of the monthly revenue on average. Electronics is a close second popular category with 28.40 percent, and the third popular category is Fashion with 15.30 percent. Other categories such as Entertainment, Health and Beauty and Food and Drink all make up for less than 5 percent (Bonusway 2023). In Figure 7, the average share of monthly revenue by category is visualized.

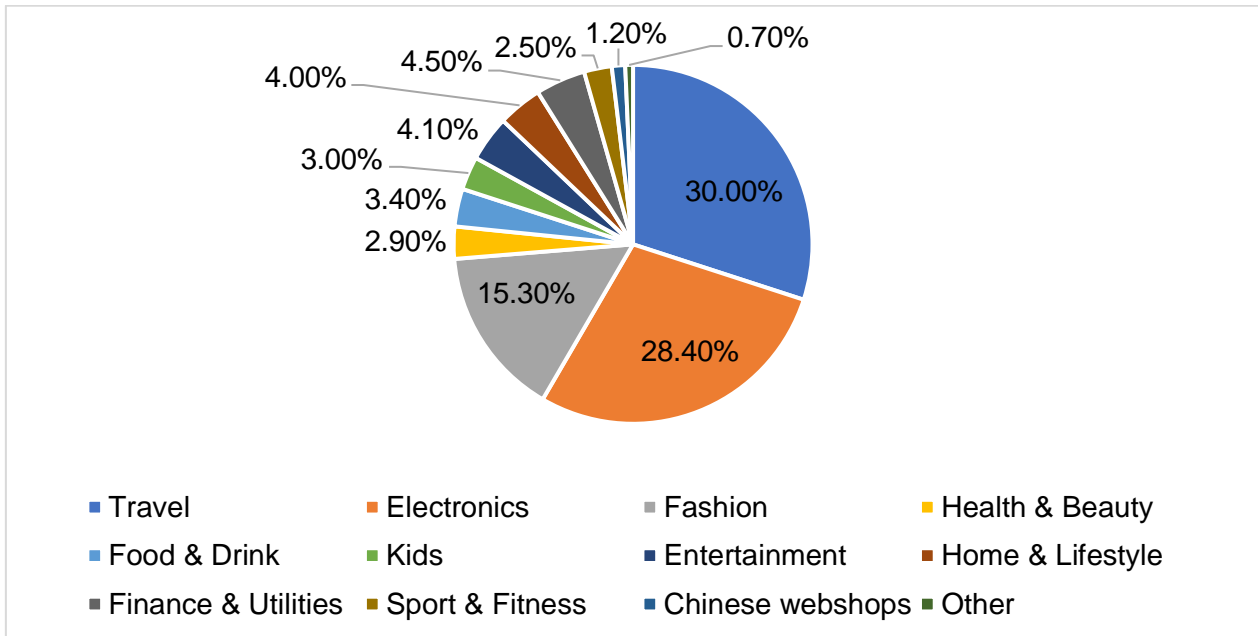


Figure 7. Average share of monthly revenue by category in 2023

E-commerce has grown exponentially during the last decade due to an increase of Internet and smartphone usage, and more recently because of the Covid-19 pandemic. These factors have drastically impacted consumer's shopping behavior (Ionescu & al. 2022). People are online all the time now because of their smartphones, which has made shopping even more accessible. This trend translates to Bonusway active users as well, with 45.50 percent of them shopping through the mobile app in March 2023 (Bonusway 2023).

Social media usage is high in the Netherlands and keeps on increasing. In January of 2023, the Netherlands counted 15.50 million social media users, or 88.1 percent of the total Dutch population. The most popular social media networks are Facebook with 8.05 million users and Instagram with 7.65 million users. (Kemp 2023).

All this information helps the author to specify the target market even further: Dutch people above the age of 35 who are interested in online shopping and finding deals and discounts online, and are mostly interested in travelling, electronics, and fashion.

#### 4.1.4 Competitor analysis

For the competitor analysis, the author has selected 2 of Bonusway's biggest competitors. These competitors are similar cashback websites, with the same kind of offerings as Bonusway in terms of web shop assortment and deals with cashback rewards. The analysis focuses on the content marketing of those competitors. The author analyzes the quality and offerings of the content on their websites and social media.

The first competitor to analyze is Shopbuddies. On their website, they add a lot of new offers daily. These include a short title including keywords and call-to-action with a short descriptive text under 100 words, like Bonusway. All the web shops have a short description of under 100 words and a metatag title that contains keywords. They are consistently posting relevant content on their blog once a month. However, the blogposts are rather short with less than 300 words. All the content on the website is easy to navigate and find. When searching relevant keywords on Google such as 'cashback Nederland', Shopbuddies is not found organically, but through paid advertising on the first page of the search results.

Shopbuddies does giveaways often on their website and promote them on every page on the website. Giveaways are for members only, so creating a Shopbuddies account is required. In May 2023, they are hosting a giveaway for a 250 euro gift card for the web shop Bol.com, which is actually one of Bonusway's most popular shops. Shopbuddies also has a mobile app.

The Shopbuddies website contains a lot of reviews, ranging from two thousand to a few hundred reviews for their Top 20 web shops. They have more than a thousand reviews on Trustpilot with a 4.1/5 score.

Shopbuddies is active on Instagram with 1108 followers and on Facebook with 11000 followers. They post on both pages every 3-4 days. Their Instagram feed looks visually pleasing. Each post contains an image that they created and contains yellow and blue colors, which makes everything look coherent. They post a mix of offers including the amount of the cashback reward, information on their services, user reviews and giveaways. Their posts contain short texts with questions, emojis, and hashtags but they do not have their own hashtag. There does not seem to be a lot of engagement from followers. The figure underneath is a screenshot of Shopbuddies' Instagram feed.





Figure 7. Screenshot of Shopbuddies.nl Instagram feed

The second competitor is CashbackXL. The website contains similar pages to Bonusway, with web shops, deals and discounts. However, they have no blog, and all their content is short. Web shop descriptions consist of only 2 sentences and offers only consist of a metatag title with keywords and call-to-action. They add new offers to their website regularly and they also have a mobile app. When searching relevant keywords on Google such as 'cashback Nederland', CashbackXL is found organically as the third search result on the first page, so their SEO strategy is working.

The CashbackXL website contains a lot of user reviews. They have 476 reviews with a rating of 9.1/10 on Kiyoh. They do not appear to have a Trustpilot page.

CashbackXL has an Instagram page with 247 followers and their posts look similar to what Bonusway posts, nothing visually pleasing or coherent, only offers and deals. Their last post was in January 2019 and there has been no activity since then. Their Facebook page has 11000 followers but no new content since May 2021.

In conclusion, both are strong competition for Bonusway in their own way. Shopbuddies creates a lot of content and is visible online with their nicely curated social media profiles, but still needs paid advertising to show up in Google's search results on the first page. CashbackXL, with a lot less and shorter content, shows up organically in the search results. This proves again that the quality of the keywords and content is more important than the length of the content when it comes to SEO. However, Shopbuddies still has a lot more user-generated content.

#### 4.1.5 SWOT

This part of the thesis summarizes the author's findings on Bonusway's current situation through a SWOT analysis. The SWOT analysis consists of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strengths and Weaknesses assess internal factors while Opportunities and Threats assess external factors.

Bonusway's has several Strengths. They have a strong existing range of popular web shops in popular categories, such as Booking.com for travel and Bol.com for electronics. Their content team adds many new offers to the website (and app) daily. They have a mobile app that is already used by half of their active users. They have a set system in place for their e-mail marketing with good results.

The Weaknesses are next. The first one is the reason for this thesis, which is a lack of content strategy and clear guidelines for the content in the Netherlands. Their Dutch content team is small and needs to spread their time over various responsibilities and tasks, which sometimes leaves limited time for thorough content creation. Their website is easy to navigate, but some content like the blog is more difficult to find as an external platform, WordPress, is used for this.

This leads to several opportunities for Bonusway to improve. Their SEO strategy needs to be optimized, to attract traffic and new users in an organic way. AI can be a helpful tool to generate more content. The social media presence needs to become consistent, to increase visibility and brand awareness and hopefully increase engagement with users. This could lead to more UGC. Users need to be made aware of the option to add their own offers and reviews to the website and Trustpilot. The content team should also add new web shops they partner with to their offering on the website regularly.

Right now, a big part of their revenue is dependent on a few web shops, mostly from the travel and electronics category. This can be a Threat, as these categories are fragile. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic the travel category torpedoed. Therefore, a wider range of web shops is a good idea. Lastly, there is a lot of competition in the affiliate marketing industry in the Netherlands, especially with other cashback services. The competitor analysis shows they are strong, especially regarding content marketing.

The Table 2. below visualizes a summary of the conducted SWOT analysis.

Table 2. SWOT analysis of Bonusway Netherlands

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong existing range of popular web shops</li> <li>• High number of new offers daily</li> <li>• Mobile app</li> <li>• E-mail marketing is strong</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of content strategy or guidelines</li> <li>• Small team with limited time for content</li> <li>• Some content is difficult to find or navigate, like the blog</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimizing SEO to attract organic traffic</li> <li>• Using social media for visibility and engagement</li> <li>• Increasing UGC: reviews and offers on website</li> <li>• Utilizing AI for text generation</li> <li>• Adding more web shops to the website to stay relevant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong competition</li> <li>• Relying on a few big web shops for most of the revenue</li> </ul>

## 4.2 Objectives

In the last part of this chapter, the author sets the objectives for the content marketing strategy for Bonusway. The SWOT analysis is a good tool to draw conclusions on the parts Bonusway can improve, so the author bases the objectives off this analysis. Using the 5S goals, the author formulates the objectives in Figure 9 underneath the paragraphs to visualize the objectives.

Firstly, the Sell goal for the Bonusway content marketing strategy is new user acquisition. To achieve this goal, they must increase brand awareness and drive more traffic to their website and app. Creating valuable content, being present on social media and optimizing SEO are the key to drive users to the website. Additionally, re-activating lapsed users is the secondary objective. Providing them with valuable content will encourage lapsed users to use Bonusway's service again.

Secondly, the Speak goal is increasing customer engagement. This goal can be achieved by increasing their visibility on social media and encouraging UGC. Next, adding value (Serve) is

done by sharing content that is valuable to the target market. This means including their interests in the content but also extra efforts such as giveaways, for example.

The company can Save on time by using AI as a tool for longer text generation, but this still needs to be reviewed and edited by the content team. They can also Save on costs by driving traffic to the website in an organic way, through improving their SEO.

The last goal is to improve customer satisfaction levels. By optimizing the content marketing strategy, the satisfaction levels will grow. The users need to be encouraged to provide their opinions in reviews on the Bonusway website.

Sell	Speak	Serve	Save	Sizzle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Acquire new users</li> <li>•Re-activate lapsed users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Increase engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Share valuable content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Use AI for longer text generation</li> <li>•Improve SEO for driving organic traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Improve customer satisfaction</li> </ul>

Figure 9. 5S goals for Bonusway content marketing strategy

## **5 Improving the content marketing strategy**

During this chapter of the thesis, the author suggests recommendations on the topics that have been described in the theoretical framework. The author utilizes the theoretical framework and elements of the SOSTAC model, Strategy, Tactics and Actions, and Control, to formulate the recommendations. With these recommendations, the commissioning company can improve their current content marketing strategy and set clear guidelines for the Dutch market.

### **5.1 Strategy**

It is essential to define a strategy to reach the objectives that were set. To do this, the author keeps the company's vision in mind together with the target market and the companies' strengths. Essentially, the theoretical framework for this thesis makes up the base for the strategy: the components of content marketing SEO, UGC and social media marketing, supported by quality content and AI, are the key elements to an effective content marketing strategy for Bonusway.

SEO will drive more organic traffic to the Bonusway app. When this traffic sees the value of Bonusway can add to their lives through interesting, accurate and valuable content, they will convert to new users. AI text generation can be a good support for Bonusway when it comes to SEO, as it will help the content team save time.

Valuable content will increase the customer satisfaction and encourage the user to create their own content and write a review. Other people who come across this UGC, will learn about Bonusway and are hopefully convinced to start using their service as well, or start using it again.

Social media marketing will support Bonusway in increasing their visibility and brand awareness, which is needed with the current competition. With valuable content and regular posting, Bonusway can increase their users' engagement and reactivate lapsed users.

### **5.2 Tactics & Actions**

Now the strategy has been defined, the author proposes their recommendations through specific tactics and actions. With these recommendations, the Bonusway content marketing strategy will improve, and the company has new tools to reach the objectives. This part of the thesis also includes examples of the suggestions' implementations.

### 5.2.1 Recommendations for SEO

From the theoretical framework that the author has set up, it is clear that keyword research is essential to writing quality SEO content. The author recommends that keyword research is conducted periodically, every quarter, to ensure that the website content is up to date, relevant and valuable to their target market.

A free tool like Ubersuggest is ideal for doing keyword research and generating keyword ideas. Keywords that have high search volumes and are trending are good to use. They are also ranked by SEO difficulty, so choosing easier keywords is best.

The author has generated a list of 20 keywords that can be used in the second quarter of 2023. The list is visualized in the following figure.

<b>Keywords</b>	
cashback nederland	waarom cashback
wat is cashback	cashback jumbo
hoe werkt cashback	cashback websites nederland
cashback zorgverzekering	samsung cashback nederland
cashback actie philips	korting berekenen
cashback actie lg	kortingscode aboutyou
cashback app nederland	kortingscode bonprix
cashback apps nederland	cashback bol com
beste cashback sites	cashback booking
cashback expert	cashback vergelijk

Figure 10. List of keywords for Bonusway

The keywords can be used in blogposts, offers, web shop descriptions, metatag titles, and so on. The author suggests that the Bonusway blog becomes more visible on the website. A relevant blogpost should be written at least once per month. These blogposts should be informative and valuable. From the keywords list many ideas for blogpost topics can be derived, such as ‘How does cashback work?’ or ‘How can I get cashback at Booking.com’ for example. The proposed length for a blogpost is at least 300 words, as long as the content is valuable to the target market.

The author recommends that all the meta titles and meta descriptions for individual web shop pages are filled in as soon as possible. Right now, this is not the case and has a negative impact on the SEO rankings. The meta title can be short, just one sentence, and contains relevant keywords, such as ‘Receive cashback and discount on your purchases at *store name*’. The meta description should be 160 words maximum (Keenan 2023). To ensure that all meta titles and meta descriptions are filled in, the author suggests adding them for 10 web shops per day, starting with the Top 20 web shops and continuing from there. This does not require a lot of time to do. With 1400 participating web shops on the Dutch Bonusway website, this task would take 20 weeks to fulfill. The author has started the task and the following figure is an example from the company’s own admin network, where this title and description need to be filled in on each web shop’s profile.

Meta Title	Ontvang cashback bij Bol.cor
Meta Description	Shop voordelig bij Bol.com di

Figure 11. Example of meta title and meta description in Bonusway admin network

An AI text generation tool as ChatGPT is a good tool content creation, but the author suggests to only use it when longer texts need to be written, such as web shop descriptions. Shorter text like offers can be written by a person, as quality is more important than the length.

With ChatGPT, the prompt that a person enters before generating the text, is crucial for its quality. Therefore, the author has experimented with ChatGPT and created a specific prompt that can be used and adjusted for web shop descriptions to ensure that the text is valuable and relevant:

*“Write a 300-word description in Dutch in the second person about [web shop name] to promote on Bonusway.nl. Mention the store’s best products, that you can receive [% number] cashback there through Bonusway.nl and include the keywords: [keyword], [keyword] and [keyword].”*

With a specific prompt like this, the result was human-like and only needing a few minor adjustments by a person. The author suggests that a person always reviews the AI-generated text and adjust it where needed. With this method, the Dutch content team can update their web shop descriptions regularly, ensuring its quality and value to the users. The author recommends doing this for the Top 20 stores. The next figure illustrates an example of a web shop description in Dutch with the author's prompt.

Ben je op zoek naar de beste deals voor het boeken van je volgende vakantie? Dan is Booking.com de perfecte website voor jou! Hier vind je een uitgebreid aanbod aan accommodaties, van luxe resorts tot gezellige B&B's en alles daar tussenin.

Booking.com staat bekend om zijn gebruiksvriendelijke platform en uitstekende klantenservice. Je kunt gemakkelijk filteren op locatie, prijsklasse en type accommodatie, zodat je snel de perfecte plek vindt om te verblijven tijdens je reis.

En het beste van alles is dat je nu kunt profiteren van cashback bij het boeken van je verblijf via Bonusway.nl. Door te boeken via deze website ontvang je maar liefst 4% cashback op je boeking. Dat is toch een mooi voordeel!

Dus waar wacht je nog op? Ga naar Booking.com via Bonusway.nl en boek je volgende vakantie met cashback! Vergeet niet om gebruik te maken van de handige zoekfilters en de uitstekende klantenservice van Booking.com om jouw ideale accommodatie te vinden. Met cashback op je boeking kun je nog meer genieten van je reis!

Figure 12. Web shop description generated by ChatGPT

New web shops should be added to the Bonusway website regularly to ensure fresh content and to stay relevant to their users. The author recommends adding at least 2 new web shops weekly, and the prompt can be used in ChatGPT to write the web shop description more quickly.

### 5.2.2 Recommendations for Social Media Marketing

Bonusway utilizes the relevant social media networks for reaching their target audience, Instagram and Facebook. It is important that they increase their presence on these platforms. Firstly, the author suggests a consistent posting schedule of at least 2 posts per week. The Dutch content team creates and plans the Facebook and Instagram through the same tool, Meta Business Suite, so the same post can serve on both platforms.

The author recommends creating a more cohesive and visually interesting feed with valuable posts. The Content Marketing Matrix helps to generate ideas. Based off the previously conducted keyword research, users are looking for a lot of information about cashback. Infographics, checklists, calculations, ratings and reviews and demo's are good for this purpose and can also be used on the website and app. This can also reduce customer service inquiries. To increase followers and engagement, the author recommends doing giveaways once a month, as the competition does this as well.



Using designing tool like Canva helps to make the feed look more coherent. The author has created several templates, using colors from the Bonusway visual guidelines. These can be repurposed and adapted as needed for content creation. The following figure illustrates some examples of types of content with the templates.



Figure 13. Examples of content for social media

### 5.2.3 Recommendations for UGC

User-generated content for Bonusway consists of reviews on their website, reviews on Trustpilot, offers and deals on their website and tags or mentions on social media.

Users are not aware of the option to add their own reviews and deals to the website. It is important to inform them they can do this. The author suggests writing a blogpost and sending an e-mail about this to their users. This blogpost and e-mail should emphasize the value of the user's contribution to them. For example, the title could be: 'Did you know that you can help others by sharing your opinion?'. This caters to the users' self-expression and self-realization needs.

To gain more reviews on Trustpilot, the author suggests including information on this option with triggered automated e-mails that Bonusway sends when users make a new purchase through them. One of these triggered e-mails is an e-mail to tell them their cashback reward got approved, which is a positive e-mail, so to this e-mail can be added a sentence like 'Tell us about your experience with Bonusway' and link to Trustpilot.

Rewarding the users for their review is also a possibility, for example by giving them extra cashback or automatically being entered into a giveaway of some sorts when they write a review or share a deal on the website. A gift card for one of the Top 20 stores is a good idea in that case.

As Bonusway increases their social media presence, their posts should utilize hashtags. A free hashtag generator, AI-based, can be used to find relevant hashtags for Instagram and Facebook posts. Additionally, they can create a personal hashtag and promote it in their bio on their social media profiles. The author proposes the hashtag #mybonusway so encourage followers to post their own content, such as purchases made through Bonusway or amount of cashback they have already saved.

### **5.3 Other recommendations**

In this part, the author wants to highlight the trend of mobile shopping. This should be taken into consideration as it will likely only grow even bigger. Therefore, the author recommends focusing on app pushes. They should be sent out consistently, at least twice a week. These can be planned on any day and the system will use intelligent delivery to send the app push to the user at the appropriate time. The app pushes should not only be used to promote offers, but also to create awareness with users about reviews and share valuable content.

### **5.4 Control**

With any strategy, it is important to measure and follow up on its progress and results. Then the company can draw conclusions on what is working and what is not, so they can repeat actions or adjust them if necessary. Therefore, the author has established which KPI's needs to be tracked for each aspect of the content marketing strategy.

To measure the results of the SEO strategy, the company should track the organic traffic to their website and organic new users in their website's analytics.

On their social media networks, Bonusway should track their number of followers, likes, comments, saves and clicks to their website. The link to their website on social media has a specific utm tag that can be recognized to count these website visits and any purchases made through these links can also be tracked.

UGC can be measured by the number of reviews and its ratings, numbers of offers added by users to the website, number of times Bonusway is tagged in a post, or their hashtag is utilized.

For analyzing the results from the app pushes, the company can track open rate and click through rate in their analytics and number of purchases made through app pushes.

## **6 Conclusion**

In the last chapter of the thesis, the author discusses the outcomes of the project so far and suggests recommendations for further research. The chapter ends with an evaluation of the project management and methods used and a self-reflection by the author.

### **6.1 Project outcomes**

As the timeframe in which the thesis was written was only 4 months, the author cannot report on the outcomes of the project yet. A content marketing strategy exists of many different elements, and it takes time to implement all of them and track their results. As the author works for the commissioning company, they are responsible for implementing the suggestions and will continue to do so during the following months after the thesis is finished. The established KPI's will be measured to follow up on the results of the content marketing strategy.

### **6.2 Recommendations for future research**

This thesis focused on inbound marketing activities with key elements chosen by the author. The theoretical and empirical part discusses content marketing, social media marketing, SEO and UGC for the commissioning company. Some of the elements could have benefited from even more research. The author suggests that the commissioning company implements the suggestions to start with and tracks their results and go from there to develop these elements even further.

The project would have benefited from including outbound marketing activities such as paid advertising, to create a full digital marketing strategy. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to the timeframe of the project and therefore the author decided to focus on inbound marketing activities only. The author recommends that the company combines the content marketing strategy with paid advertising to reach their objective of new user acquisition.

### **6.3 Evaluation of project management and research methods**

The project consisted mostly of qualitative research methods in the form of desk study and literature review. The author used a variety of sources, from books to e-books, journals and even blogs. The author also conducted an interview with the company's country manager for the Dutch market which was beneficial for analyzing the current situation. Initially, the plan was to also conduct a survey with the target market. Unfortunately, this didn't happen because of time management, but it could have benefited the research on the target market and their preferences.

In terms of project management, the actual writing of the thesis started slower than expected, and the research for setting up the theoretical framework took a lot more time than initially planned. However, the author was able to manage everything in the end and finished the thesis on time.

#### **6.4 Self-reflection on learning**

The thesis planning process began in September 2022, but the majority of the thesis was written between February and May 2023, so the timeframe was rather short. It was interesting to deep dive into the topic of content marketing, which was only part of 1 (elective) course during the degree. At the beginning of the thesis planning process, I felt unprepared to start my thesis on this topic because of my limited knowledge.

Setting up the theoretical framework and conducting research took up most of the time while working on the thesis, but it has allowed me to discover the topic on my own terms and broaden my knowledge on it, and it has sparked an interest to keep learning more about digital marketing in general. Overall, this project will benefit me and my career and I am proud of the finished result.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1. Interview Questions for Dutch country manager Bonusway**

What is the current content marketing strategy in the Dutch market?

Can you elaborate on the SEO marketing strategy for the Dutch market?

Which types of content does Bonusway produce and on which platforms?

What is missing from the content marketing strategy?

What do you want to be included next in the content marketing strategy?

How has UGC been for Bonusway Netherlands so far?

What would the ideal UGC look like for Bonusway Netherlands?