

CHALLENGES OF A CONTENT CREATOR IN THE ERA OF DIGITAL MARKETING

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Abstract

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Abstract <p>The digital era has shaped the marketing world and thus marketers must adapt and find out new ways to attract customers. Today, 'content' is a familiar word among digital marketers. The purpose of this study is to examine the challenges and limitations that content creators encounter in their work.</p> <p>The study is divided into two main parts: theoretical and empirical. The theoretical part of the study consists of two sections that concentrate on discussing the concepts of digital, inbound, and content marketing as well as brand. The theoretical framework of the study is based on the published literature related to the field.</p> <p>The empirical part of the study examines the results through different themes. The themes have been divided as follows: content, content culture, content strategy, target market, search engine optimisation and technology, and brand. The study was conducted as a qualitative research, and the data was gathered by interviewing three content marketing professionals.</p> <p>The results of the study indicate that there are many challenges and limitations concerning the content creator's work. Intense competition, lack of time and lack of support are considered as the main challenges in content creation. The results of the study can advise companies and professionals on how to better streamline content creation.</p>		
Keywords Digital marketing, Content marketing, Content creator, Challenges		

Tiivistelmä

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Tiivistelmä <p>Digitaalinen aikakausi on muokannut markkinoinnin maailmaa, ja täten markkinoijien täytyy sopeutua ja löytää uusia keinoja asiakkaiden kiinnostuksen herättämiseksi. Tänä päivänä, 'sisältö' on tuttu sana digitaalisten markkinoijien keskuudessa. Tämän työn tarkoituksena on tutkia, minkälaisia haasteita tai rajoitteita sisällöntuottajat kohtaavat työssään.</p> <p>Työ on jaettu kahteen pääosa-alueeseen, teoreettiseen ja empiiriseen osa-alueeseen. Työn teoreettinen osa koostuu kahdesta osasta, jotka keskittyvät käsittelemään digitaalisen-, inbound-, ja sisältömarkkinoinnin, sekä brändin käsitteitä. Työn teoreettinen viitekehys perustuu julkaistuun kirjallisuuteen aiheesta.</p> <p>Työn empiirinen osa tarkastelee tuloksia teemoittain. Teemat on jaettu seuraavasti: sisältö, sisältökulttuuri, sisältöstrategia, kohdemarkkina, hakukoneoptimointi ja teknologia, ja brändi. Työ toteutettiin kvalitatiivisena tutkimuksena, ja data kerättiin haastatelmalla kolmea sisältömarkkinoinnin ammattilaista alalta.</p> <p>Työn tulokset osoittavat, että on monia haasteita ja rajoitteita liittyen sisällöntuottajan työhön. Kova kilpailu, ajan sekä tuen puute koetaan suurimpina haasteina sisällöntuotossa. Työn tulokset voivat ohjeistaa yrityksiä ja ammattilaisia siinä, miten sisällöntuotantoa voidaan tehostaa.</p>		
Avainsanat Digitaalinen markkinointi, Sisältömarkkinointi, Sisällöntuottaja, Haasteet		

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

The origins of marketing go far back in time. Since the ancient world, the styles of marketing have developed and changed. (Ryan 2016, 3.) The past decades have formed the era of digital marketing, and majority of businesses use digital marketing strategy in conjunction with other strategies in the company. The effect of digital marketing has been studied extensively in the recent years. One of the most influential part of digital marketing is the concept of content marketing. Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach that concentrates on creating informative and valuable content to better attract customers (Content Marketing Institute 2019a).

It is stated that companies that are using content marketing as a part of their marketing strategy should also employ professionals to produce the content (Weber 2017). Content creator is the person whose purpose is to create the informative and valuable content for the company's digital channels. Some of the previous researches indicate consumers' increasing interest towards entertaining and informative content in the form of social media posts, news articles and videos (HubSpot Research 2016).

A considerable amount of research has been conducted about the technical side of the content creation, but little research has done considering the work itself. Content creators have a significant role in the implementation of the digital marketing strategy in the company. With this in mind, the author became interested that what kind of factors might be challenging in the work of a content creator. The challenges are important to identify that the quality and the flow of work could be improved.

1.2 Objectives, research questions and limitations of the study

The purpose of this study is to discover the challenges or limitations that content creators might encounter in their work. The aim is to clearly identify the reasons behind the challenges and analyse them. The results of the study could advise companies and professionals how to better streamline content creation. The concept of brand is studied to understand if it has any influence to create challenges in content creation.

The main question this study is trying to answer is:

1. What kind of challenges or limitations does content creators encounter in their job?

To achieve the answer to the main question, the following sub-questions are used:

- a. Do the actions of the company create challenges or limitations to content creator's work? If yes, how?
- b. Do the changing technology challenge or limit the work of a content creator? If yes, how?
- c. Do brand challenge or limit the work of a content creator? If yes, how?

The study concentrates only on large-size companies that has employed a content creator to be a part of their marketing team. Marketing agencies are not included.

1.3 Theoretical framework

Chapters two and three of the study explain the main theories used in the research. To answer the research questions, the concepts of digital, inbound and content marketing as well as branding must be opened. Chapter two discusses the theories that are related to digital marketing. First, the concept of digital marketing is discussed to get an overview of the field related to content creation. This allows the study to proceed to the more relevant concepts and encompass the research problem. Chapter three discusses the theory of brand and how it is related to content marketing.

In addition to the researches conducted by marketing agencies, the author did not find many earlier studies concerning the challenges of content creators. The theoretical framework of the study is based on the published literature of digital marketing and brand.

1.4 Research methodology and data collection

The study is conducted as a form of qualitative research to receive as comprehensive results as possible. Qualitative research is a strategy that aims to understand data rather than explain it. It concentrates on quality such as words when the contrasting term quantitative primary focus is on numbers. (Hammersley 2013, 1-2.)

The study uses a deductive content analysing approach. Deductive analysing is explained as a logical argumentation that examines the research data through the theoretical part of the study. However, earlier theory can be questioned, and new conclusions can be made. (Adams, Khan & Raeside 2014, 9-10.) The data in the study is based on primary data, and it has been gathered via semi-structured theme interviews.

1.5 Structure of the study

The structure of the study is presented in below Figure 1. The study consists of two main parts, theoretical and empirical. The theoretical part focuses on explaining the key

theories of the study. It is divided into two main sections; digital marketing and brand. These concepts are closely related to content creation and are necessary to be explained for the purpose of the study. Chapter two that concentrates on digital marketing also deepens to study other concepts such as inbound and content marketing. The research methods and the results of the research is covered in the empirical part of the study. After the empirical part, the answers for the research questions and suggestions for further researches are presented in the conclusion part of the study.

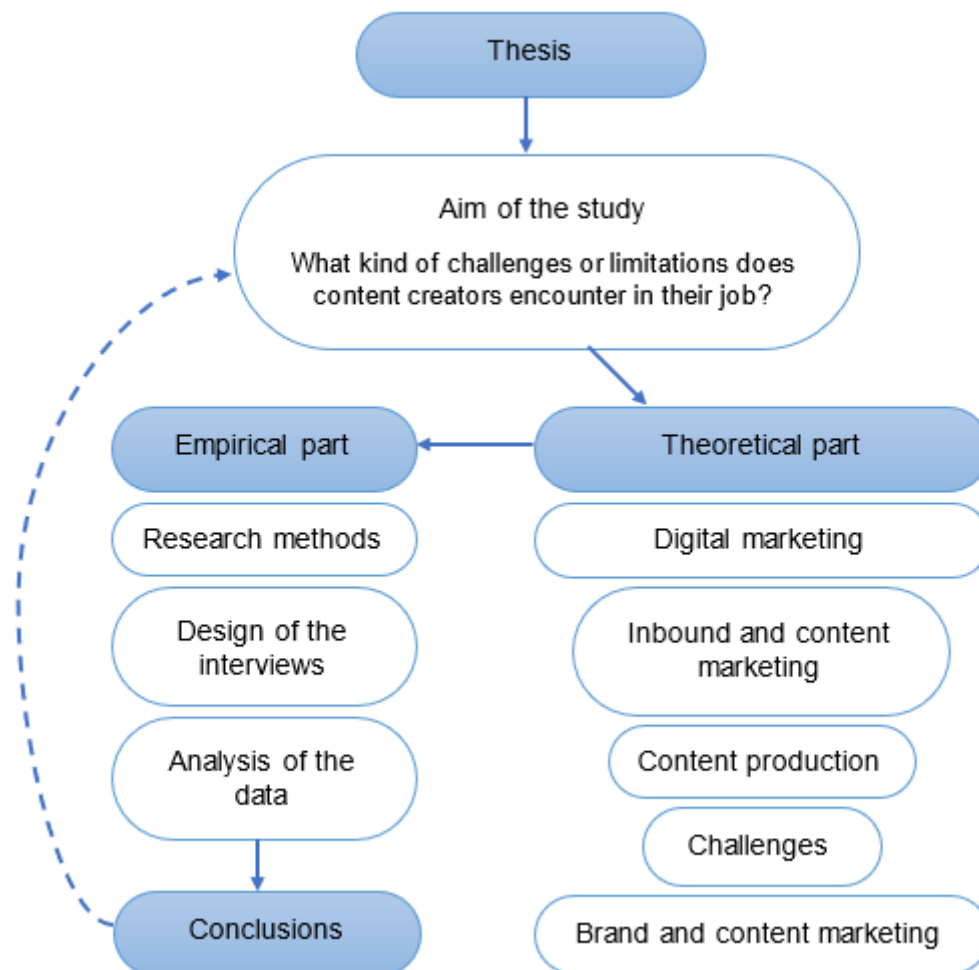


Figure 1 The structure of the study

2 DIGITAL MARKETING

2.1 Digital marketing umbrella

The term 'digital marketing umbrella' was developed by industry marketing experts to reflect all the product or service-related marketing activities that use digital technologies such as the Internet, mobile phones, display advertising, and other digital tools (Kumar 2017).

As Figure 2 below presents, the digital marketing umbrella covers the central elements that businesses must focus on when they use digital marketing as a part of their marketing strategy.

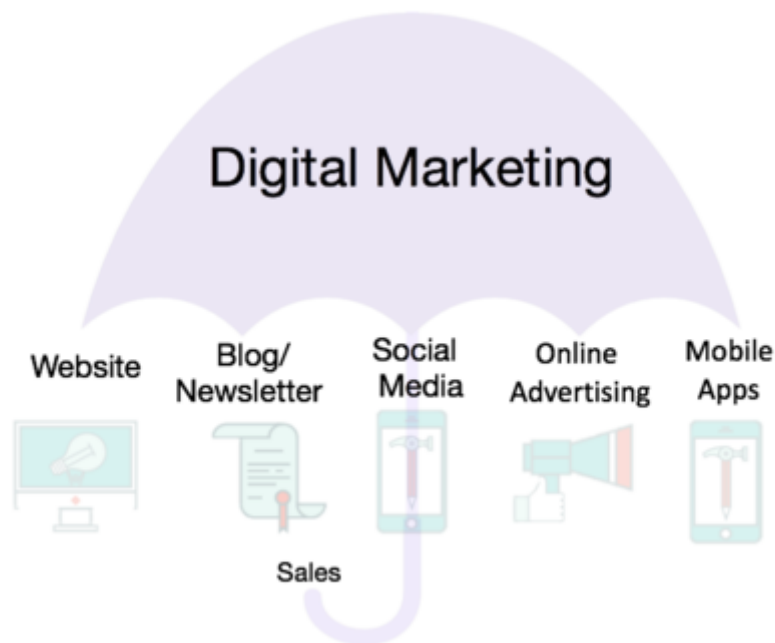


Figure 2 Digital marketing umbrella (Elevate My Brand 2017)

2.2 Definition and history of digital marketing

Before this paper dives into the world of digital content and the key methods of marketing around it, it is important to first explain digital marketing and how it differs from traditional marketing. Second, it is important to briefly look back in time and find out how the digital marketing era started and began to develop.

Digital marketing contains the efforts of marketing that use an electronic device or the Internet (Alexander 2018). Wymbs (2011, 95) has expanded on this definition and emphasized that there are two main factors that are necessary preconditions for digital marketing to exist. First, access platforms such as mobile phones, computers, tablets, or smart TVs

enable customers to access digital marketing. Second, the communication channels pass on the information to the targeted audience. These channels include organizational websites, blogs, portals, search engines, e-mail, instant messaging, and text messaging. For digital marketing to be as effective as possible, it must be mixed with other marketing efforts such as direct mail, phone, or face-to-face marketing. Digital marketing is a constantly developing concept and does not only change alongside technology; its main influence flows from the customers and their behaviour in the digital world.

The primary difference between digital and traditional marketing is that the former exploits digital technologies and enables easy interaction between parties, whereas the latter is more directed towards mass communication (Wymbs 2011, 95). However, if technology is cut out of the picture, digital marketing shares the same core values as traditional marketing: marketers are trying to connect with consumers to build relationships that may eventually lead to sales (Ryan 2016, 12).

Marketing is strongly associated with advertising, and some sources have even conflated the definitions of both. Ryan (2016, 2) has written that the purpose of advertising is to influence people to make the choices that organizations desire. More specifically, companies aim to increase their sales and visibility with personalised stories and messages. A brief review of the history of advertising is necessary to understand the history of digital marketing.

Over the centuries, advertising styles have changed as people exploit different tools to influence others. The human voice is the oldest influencer of all. As time passed, someone began to draw oral stories on cave walls. These stories demonstrate to the present-day world that images have been affecting people and their behaviours for a long time. The first adverts started to appear in newspapers in the 17th century after the development of printing. These adverts sparked the first form of mass-advertising. Paper advertising continued strongly through several centuries until radio and television took over the new advertising era in the 20th century. The Internet followed to allow the era of digital marketing to develop to the form that the world knows today. (Ryan 2016, 3.)

2.3 Development of the Internet and technology

Computers and the Internet used to only be a communication tool that was largely used by US scientists and military officers until it started to spread worldwide in 1990s. The Internet's larger audience meant that it had to be more user friendly, and it was accordingly further developed. (Ryan 2010, 89, 99-101.) The World Wide Web ('the Web') is a

significant part of the Internet, and its purpose is to unify information (Pallen 1995). The Internet became a more interactive place alongside the development of the Web.

The first version of the Web, Web 1.0, was mainly informative and did not allow users to comment or provide feedback (WittyCookie 2012). In the beginning of the 1990s and within the era of Web 1.0, the first banner advertisements and steps towards search engine optimisation appeared. The launch of Google and its rapid growth kicked off the modern internet age, and the change to the Web 2.0 in the early 2000s enabled the Internet to become more a social place. (Kingsnorth 2016, 7.) The Web 2.0 allowed interaction between users and websites, which encouraged users to participate and create content. Therefore, applications such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram were born, enabling new ways of marketing. (Ryan 2010, 140-141; Kingsnorth 2016, 7.) In sum, the development of the Web enhanced the usability of the Internet.

In today's world, the Internet is widely accessible. Broadband, which is high-speed internet, was introduced and released for residential users after the beginning of 2000s. This enabled users to access the Internet at almost any time and anywhere they wanted, which rapidly increased the numbers of users worldwide. Today, internet connection speeds have increased considerably so that information can travel within seconds. Before broadband, users needed to dial-up to connect a slow and cumbersome internet that was expensive and difficult to access. (Ryan 2016, 12; DeMers 2016.) The marketing industry has changed dramatically after the development of internet connections and technologies. Digital content has evolved, and picture and video have come to support the text content. (Ryan 2016, 269.)

There is a massive consumer base for digital marketing. According to Statista (2019a), there are now around 4.4 billion people using the Internet, which is more than half of the world's population. The same statistics also indicate that the amount of unique mobile internet users has grown to 4 billion. This supports Ryan's (2016, 185) statement that mobile internet offers powerful possibilities for marketers to engage people both now and in the future.

The main ways of using digital marketing have been Internet-based search marketing and digital advertising such as banner ads. As Wymbs (2011, 95) has stated, the customers will set the ways of doing digital marketing in the future because trends demonstrate increasing mobile usage and socialising among people. Consumers are increasingly after informational content and are usually annoyed by interruptive banner advertising. Some of the challenges that digital marketers now face include keeping up with the changing

trends and figuring out how to release the right kind of information at the right time and through the right platforms. (Wymbs 2011, 95; Kingsnorth 2016, 49.)

2.4 Inbound and content marketing

Marketing styles have changed over time, and digital marketing is increasingly used in conjunction with traditional marketing. Content has increased in importance in the modern business world. This part of the study studies more about content and inbound marketing: definitions, how those are used, and why.

Inbound marketing is a bunch of different technologies, tools, and processes that operate together to generate traffic into organizations' websites. A part of this traffic will turn into leads for the sales team and eventually into customers. (Carver 2017.) Halligan and Shah, inventors of the term 'inbound marketing' and founders of the inbound marketing company HubSpot, have stated that inbound marketing is a more efficient way to attract, engage, and delight the customer (Halligan & Shah 2017, xviii).

For inbound marketing to be as efficient as possible, it requires web pages that are well organized and search-engine optimized, contact capture methods and places to store contact information, email marketing integration that maintains customer relationships, marketing automation tools, tools that help the company to publish their content at the right time, and analytics that help to evaluate the website and its content performance (Carver 2017). Search engine optimisation (SEO) is one of the core processes to make the content visible for consumers. Search engine optimisation is explained in greater detail in the subchapter 2.6.3.

Digital marketing is nothing without content. As Ryan (2016, 206) has written, 'content is now at the heart of everything you do online'. However, the exact definition of 'content marketing' can be elusive. Kingsnorth (2016, 232) has stated that Google alone presents around 53 million results in response to a search for the term. He has emphasised the importance of the factors that determine the quality of the content instead of trying to categorise content marketing. Content should strive to be credible, shareable, useful or fun, interesting, relevant, different, and on brand. The Content Marketing Institute (2019a) (CMI) is in agreement and defines the term as 'the strategic marketing approach of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action'. They have emphasized that content marketing focuses on forming trustful customer relationships by creating valuable and informative content rather than broadcasting product-based messages to customers.

Content has been defined by Kingsnorth (2016, 235) as follows: 'content is anything that can help engage the end users of your product or service'. There are various ways for how content can appear: website articles, news, case studies, blogs, video, mobile content, infographics, images, and podcasts, just to name few. Ryan (2016, 205-206) has underlined that content is an effective method to contact possible customers during the whole customer cycle: at the time of research, purchase, and review.

The Furrow case

Although the concept of digital marketing is new, there is a long history of content marketing. One of the oldest-known content marketers is John Deere, a farming equipment company founded in 1837 in Illinois, US. John Deere built and strengthened his company's brand for 60 years. Next, he published the first edition of a news magazine called *The Furrow*. *The Furrow* was intended to provide information for farmers to gain better results in farming. In the early 1900s, there were already four million consumers reading the magazine. John Deere got all the core components right so that it attracted this degree of attention: *Furrow's* content was valuable; engaging; informative; and above all, it built brand loyalty and developed relationships between farmers and John Deere. (McCoy 2017.) Other examples of early content marketers include Michelin, the tyre manufacturer, which began to produce a maintenance guide for motorists with added travel and accommodation recommendations in 1900. Another example is Nike, which published a booklet called *Jogging* that boosted the sport of running in the US in 1966. Before the era of digital marketing, content was distributed by direct mail. (Ryan 2016, 206.)

The difference between content and inbound marketing has been described by Carver (2017), who has written that 'content marketing is a component of inbound marketing'. In other words, content is the centre that attracts the possible customers to the organization's website, blog, and other social sites. Inbound marketing refers to those tools and methods that make the content findable and user friendly. Holliman and Rowley (2014, 271-272) have stated that content marketing is strongly associated with inbound marketing, publishing, and storytelling.

2.4.1 Why inbound and content marketing?

According to Google Trends, the terms inbound and content marketing have been growing in use since early 2010s. Figure 3 depicts the Google search interest of the terms inbound and content marketing between 2004 and 2019. (Google Trends 2019a; Google Trends 2019b.) Kingsnorth (2016, 238) has suggested that there are two main factors affecting the popularity of content marketing: first, changing consumer behaviour, and second,

Google. Fishkin and Høgenhaven (2013, 1) have claimed that the main reasons why marketers are choosing inbound marketing as a part of their strategy are Google and the rising popularity of search engine optimisation.

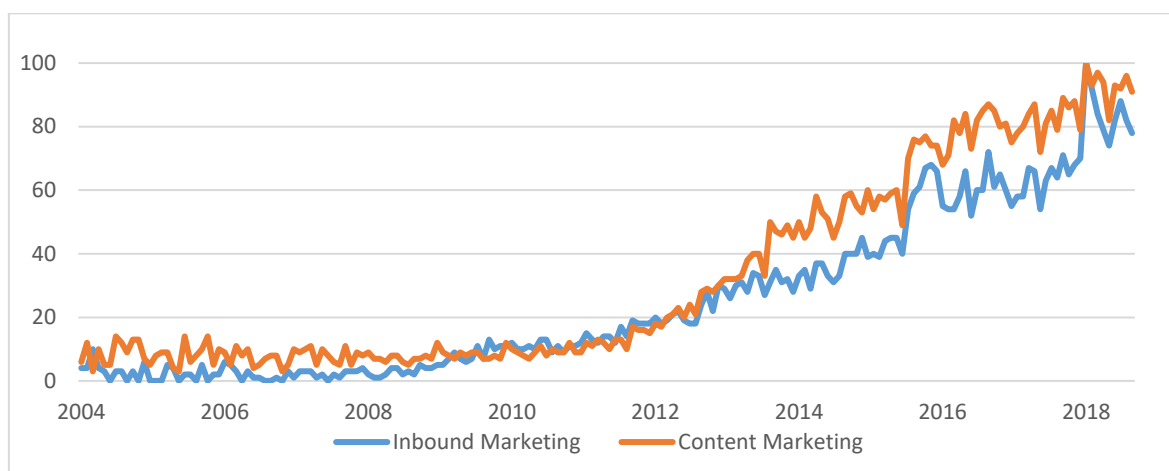


Figure 3 Inbound and content marketing search volumes 2004 – present (Google Trends 2019a; Google Trends 2019b)

The Internet has changed consumer behaviour by affect the elements of the purchase cycle: awareness, product research, peer reviews, and decision making. Before the Internet, advertising occurred in-store and through TV or radio commercials. Consumers needed to ask their inner circle for their opinions about products, and the final buying decision was made in isolation. Currently, consumers only need to type the name of the product into a search engine (mostly Google) to gather information and search for peer reviews.

(Kingsnorth 2016, 238.) Halligan and Shah (2017, 6) have stated that marketing methods should change with the changing customer behaviour: if the company does not evolve, it is left behind. Today, people are increasingly use the Internet to gather information and do their shopping. Search engines are the primary source to seek information, and Google is the most popular. (Halligan & Shah 2017, 6; Statista 2019b.)

2.4.2 Content marketing channels

Marketing agencies and other businesses have tried to determine the current trends in the industry and analyse where the consumer moves. Some of the agencies have conducted surveys about customer behaviour and different tactics that marketers use with regard to content marketing. A HubSpot research consumer behaviour survey from 2016 (Figure 4) has indicated the content types that consumers desire to see more of in the future. As Figure 4 indicates, the most favourite content types are social media posts, news articles, and videos. Podcasts and long-form content are the least favoured.

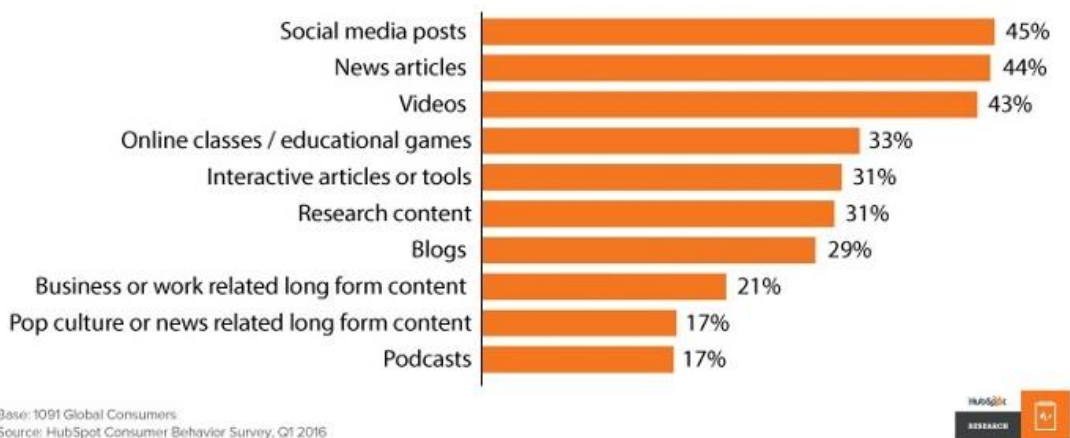
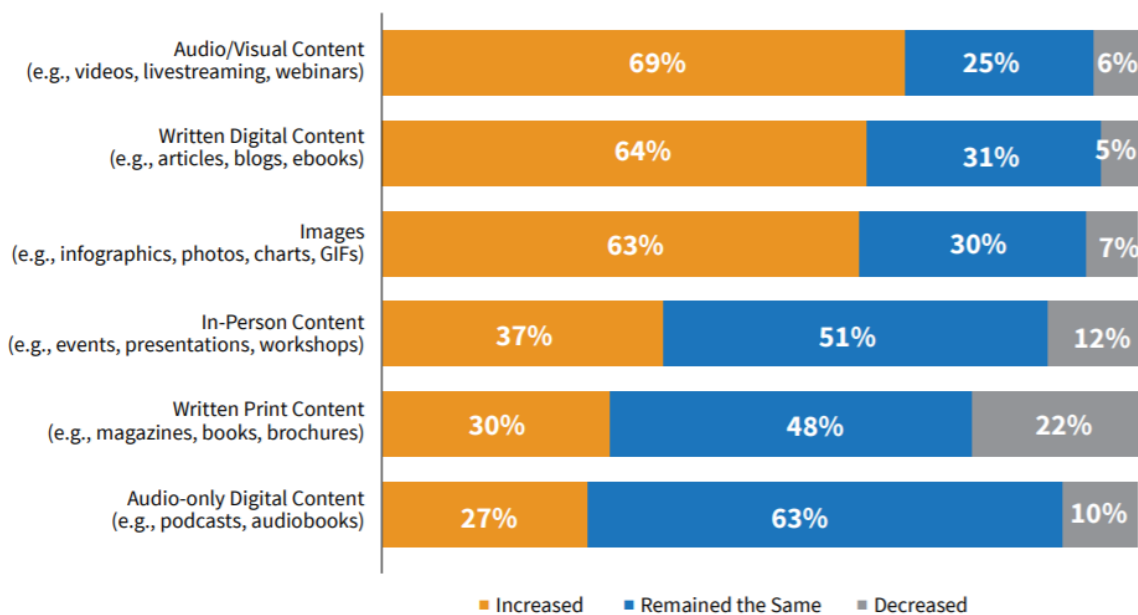


Figure 4 Consumer behaviour survey (HubSpot Research 2016)

The HubSpot survey from three years ago pointed out the increasing interest of people who want to consume visual content. Figure 5 below demonstrates how business-to-consumer (B2C) marketers have changed their use of different content types between 2018 and 2019. Businesses have notably increased their use of audio and visual content by 69% and written digital content by 64% compared with one year ago. This upturn coheres with consumers’ desires as depicted in Figure 4.



Base: B2C content marketers whose organizations use each type/format listed.
B2C Content Marketing 2019: Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Figure 5 Change in the use of content types between 2018 and 2019 (Content Marketing Institute 2019b)

Video has become a key part of the digital marketing mix because it is a cheap, accessible, and easy-to-use medium. Marketers are increasingly using video with brand communications, and it seems to be a smart strategy; Cisco (2019) has predicted that video will cover over 80% of internet traffic by 2022. (Ryan 2016, 269.)

2.5 Native advertising

As the popularity of content marketing constantly increases, the method of doing content-based advertising also increase accordingly. Native advertising is now one of the largest trends in the digital marketing world. Native advertising involves companies using other parties to advertise their brand so that the advertising assimilates seamlessly into the overall style of the host site. People become easily annoyed by banner advertisements and marketers are accordingly seeking new ways to attract the consumer. Native advertising provides an opportunity to brands to communicate and engage with the customers in places where they naturally spend time. Content is the link between a consumer and a brand. (Ryan 2016, 227, 233.)

The favoured environments to utilise native advertising are different news magazines and social media. For example, *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat* (ESS), a Finnish daily newspaper, offers space in its webpages for native articles that allow video and text content. Businesses can buy a certain amount campaign time for their content for ESS to store it on its pages. (Mediatalo ESA 2019.) According to Ryan (2016, 234), native advertising brings 5 to 20 times better engagement with customers than banner advertisements. He has also stated that with increasing mobile usage, native advertising is the only method that works on mobile.

There are many critics of native advertising. People have difficulties in recognising that they are seeing advertisements because they sometimes blend so perfectly into the provider's content. (Mudge & Shaheen 2017, 10.) Therefore, native campaigns need to be labelled as 'sponsored' or 'promoted' to provide a clear message to the receiver that they are facing advertising (Ryan 2016, 234). Different agencies are constantly ensuring that the principles are followed. In the United States, the Federal Trade Commission operates to protect the consumer and provides guidance for businesses on how to correctly use digital marketing methods. (Federal Trade Commission 2015.) The EU has also determined some common regulations regarding native advertising. However, each EU member state can interpret the rules in their own way. (IAB Europe 2016.)

2.6 Content production

At this point, the study has gone through the concepts of digital-, inbound- and content marketing. This subchapter focuses on explaining more about content and how the marketing professionals are using it to engage different audiences.

Weber (2017) has stated that companies that are using inbound marketing as a part of their marketing strategy should also employ professionals to produce the content. This could save significant amounts of time, money, and stress. A content creator produces entertaining or informational material that attracts the target audience. The aim is to transform the company's ideas into content that is valuable for the business. Today, content creators are engaging with new and existing customers on their brands' behalf. The most common ways to produce content are blog posts, videos, eBooks, photos, and infographics. (Butler 2019; Weber 2017.)

Hietajärvi (2018) has defined the job title 'content creator' more from a profession perspective. There is typically a strategy to achieve certain objectives behind all the beautiful pictures and flowing blog posts in a company's social media page or website. A content creators' typical workday includes creative brainstorming, writing, photographing, designing, and interacting with consumers by answering their comments. They also need to analyse data and follow what kind of content works and what does not. Ryan (2016, 222-223) has emphasized that it is important to allow time for brainstorming and to always keep the target audience in mind to be able to deliver effective results in the digital marketing world. The next portion of this study explains more about segmentation, and the rest of the chapter continues to discuss content strategy, data analysis and SEO.

2.6.1 Segmentation and the target market

The starting point for any kind of marketing is the customer. Whether the focus is more on business-to-consumer (B2C) or business-to-business (B2B) marketing, it is important to analyse customers' behaviour, decisions, and purchasing processes so that the business can eventually reach its objectives. (Bergström & Leppänen 2016, 82.) Creating a picture of an imaginary 'buyer persona' helps the business to define the ideal customer and to understand customers' needs better. Such businesses can optimise customer segments and sales strategies. (Digital Marketing Institute 2019b.) Kingsnorth (2016, 95) has supported this by noting that identifying a few different personas would be a 'useful way to understand the personality and potential behaviours of customers'.

Customer segmentation refers to dividing the customer base into different groups by their characteristics such as age, gender, living area, interests, and spending habits. In the digital marketing world, these segments can be split as follows (for example): previous buyers, new buyers, and the key social channel users. Companies that define their customer segments can customise their products, customer service, and marketing strategies to fit the best for a certain segment to gain better results in marketing and selling. (Melnic 2016, 52-53; Digital Marketing Institute 2019b; Bergström & Leppänen 2016, 115.)

Once the customers have been divided into different segments, the company needs to choose the main segment or segments to focus on. These segments are called the target audience or target market. The target market is the most valuable segment for the business and is often already defined in the start-up phase of the company. After the company chooses the target market, it must decide the strategies of how to position the product or service in relation to the competitors. Pricing and promotion create a certain image of the product for the targeted audience. The company needs to understand the customer's expectations and what the competitors offer to determine how to best satisfy the customer. This is called market positioning and is presented in Figure 6. (Bergström & Leppänen 2016, 116, 121.)

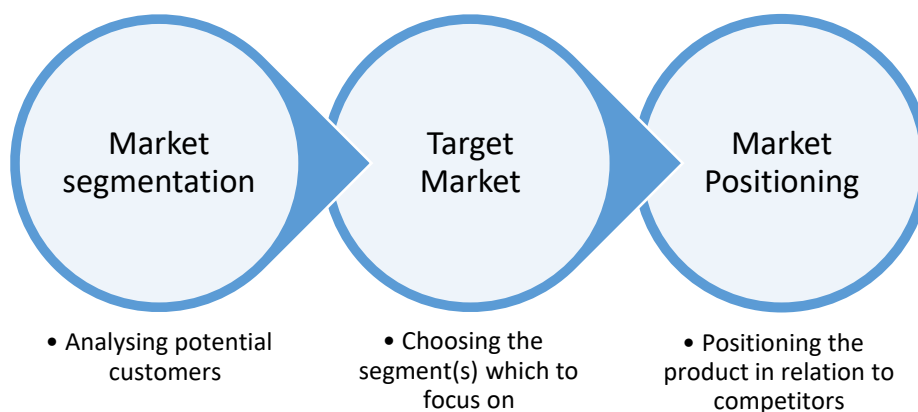


Figure 6 Segmentation process (Bergström & Leppänen 2016, 117)

2.6.2 Content strategy and data analysis

A majority of organisations (93%) value content as a business asset (Content Marketing Institute 2018, 9). Therefore, it is important for the company to follow a strategy that is structured, specific, and documented. One of the key indicators of successful content marketing is documented content marketing strategy. However, only 33% of B2C and 39% of

B2B marketers have a documented content strategy in place. A survey by CMI has indicated that those organisations that have a documented strategy achieve their targeted results more often than those who do not. (Patel 2016; Content Marketing Institute 2019b, 11; Content Marketing Institute 2019c, 2, 12.)

Ryan (2016, 218) has stated that key performance indicators (KPIs) are an essential part of the content strategy. The intended objective of KPIs is to identify the most relevant aspects that are important for the company's present and future success (Parmenter 2010, 4). Some examples of these aspects are the progress of the digital campaigns, site traffic numbers, conversion rates (amount of the site traffic that end up buying the product or service). Strategy should try to improve these in the best way possible. (Ryan 2016, 25.)

Patel (2016) has stated that strategy is like having a goal in mind. Figure 7 below demonstrates the acronym formula by which Patel believes the set goals are achievable. SMART Goals represents five keywords that can be applied when defining a content marketing strategy. The business should choose their tactics for how to produce content (such as infographics, guides, videos, photos), be able to measure the usefulness of the content, set attainable goals, target the business objectives, and have milestones that are feasibly attainable within a certain timeframe.

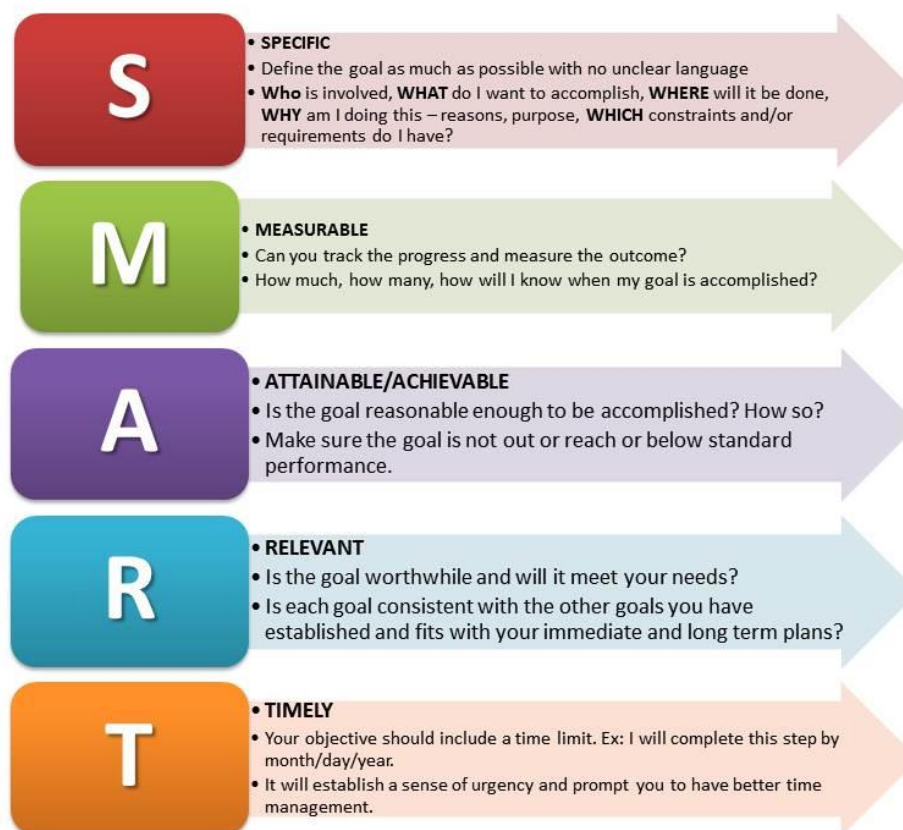


Figure 7 SMART Goals acronym formula (Patel 2016)

Vermeulen (2017) has argued that strategies should not be considered only as goals. He has argued that an efficient strategy should instruct the business on what to do and what not to do. Goals only speak of what the desired outcome would be but not how to achieve it.

Time is one of the most significant investments for creating content. Consumers are constantly online in some part of the world, and companies that wish to be effective must have a reliable strategy that aims to produce significant amounts of fresh, relevant, and relatable content. (Ryan 2016, 207.) It is likely that content creators have many content projects going on at the same time and may wish to use a content calendar to keep everything on time and in order. A content calendar could be as simple as a plain Excel sheet but should at least contain a publishing date, location of where to publish, author, designer, targeted audience, title, synopsis, required assets, and any dependencies. (Kingsnorth 2016, 249.)

A content strategy is not carved in stone and can change or develop over time. When creating or developing a content strategy, it is important to evaluate all the data that is available to determine what is working and what is not. Marketers can use different analytic tools to determine which pages converted best into sales or what kind of content is the most shared and visited. (Ryan 2016, 217-218.) Kingsnorth (2016, 246-247) has emphasized that keeping an eye on business competitors is crucial because it provides an idea of what kind of content is being consumed and where it is being consumed.

2.6.3 Search engine optimisation (SEO)

Google dominates the search engines' market share, and many companies consequently centralize their SEO around Google. Still, the tactics that they use are often adaptable to other search engines as well. Search engine optimisation aims to make the company's content as visible as possible in the search results pages. (Kingsnorth 2016, 90-91.) Marketing software company Moz has defined SEO as 'the practice of increasing both the quality and quantity of website traffic, as well as exposure to your brand, through non-paid search engine results' (Moz 2019).

Search engines use algorithms to assess how the sites are ranked. Currently, Google's algorithms evaluate sites in many ways but predominantly search for value-engaging and functional content that also adapts well to different devices. Regularly updated algorithms ensure low manipulation levels so that nobody can trick their way into higher ranks in the search result pages. However, there are other ways that marketers can analyse the value

of content, for example by clarifying the most visited landing sites and brainstorming possible keywords such as search terms through imaginary buyer personas. (Kingsnorth 2016, 93-97.)

Buyer personas can help the business to define the characteristics of potential customers. Kingsnorth (2016, 95-97) has written about how to use the persona's perspectives to find out which keywords to use in SEO. Marketers who review personas individually can identify some of the keywords that they might use to search content. For example, a woman in her 30s with young kids living in the New York City might use such words as 'fast', 'babysitter', and 'in New York'. Companies can also use keyword research tools provided by third parties (e.g., Google Adwords) to determine the search volumes for different terms.

Search engines continually strive to enhance the user experience, and that is why they prefer unique and quality content. When content creators engage in SEO, they should keep in mind that the content is for the audience instead of search engines. This enables the most successful results. (Ryan 2016, 219; Kingsnorth 2016, 101.)

2.6.4 Challenges and issues

Subchapter 2.5.2 of this study points out the importance of having a structured content marketing strategy. Content strategy is used to successfully engage the target market and more efficiently guide marketers towards the desired outcome (Ryan 2016, 216-217). Ryan (2016, 216) has emphasized that indistinct or wholly undefined content strategy usually fails to deliver the desired results and can thus complicate the work of a content creator.

Kingsnorth (2016, 242) has stated that one of the problems of producing flowing content is that most of the companies operates in silos. Each department, from the top-level executives to the IT department in the basement, works separately and in different parts of the building. When each stream operates individually, it is difficult to stay up-to-date and maintain a steady content culture. Kingsnorth has emphasised that content marketing needs every department's input to make sure that the greatest benefit from the content is achieved. Pulizzi (2012, 121) has agreed and written that content is often also being created in various departments within the organization. This creates misunderstandings between the people, and the content might not eventually align.

Chapter 2.3 explains the factors that determine if the content is high quality. According to Kingsnorth (2016, 232), content should be simultaneously credible, shareable, useful or fun, interesting, relevant, different, and on brand. However, all these elements are often

tough to achieve at the same time. It is important that content creators understand their target audience and can view the created content from their perspective. The target audience needs to find the content relevant and interesting if they are to consume it in the first place. It can be crucial for the business to forget to link the content with business objectives and their consumer interests. If the content is irrelevant and does not make sense to the consumer, it often also lacks credibility. Unconvincing content can hamper customer engagement, and if the consumer does not view the content to be useful or does not differentiate from the competitor, it can lose its value. These pillars form the type of content that is shareable, and the volume of shared content often indicates that it is valuable.

(Kingsnorth 2016, 233-235.)

Search engines prevent sites from manipulating their rankings in the results pages by updating the engine's algorithms. Although this is positive for equalising rivalry, algorithm updates have also made it generally difficult to analyse the search engine data. This can make the work of a content creator more challenging. (Kingsnorth 2016, 93-94.)

3 ABOUT BRAND

3.1 Brand definition

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general understanding for the term 'brand' and point out why brands are valuable for companies. This chapter also presents the relationship between brand and content marketing.

Building an effective and successful brand is arguably the most important issue for any kind of marketing strategy. Branding can be a competitive advantage. It can be a sign of trust, and it can represent an individual, organization, product, service, or any other thing. (Dănălache 2017.) The literature contains many different contexts with regard to the term 'brand' that it needs some defining.

Dănălache (2017) has argued that at its simplest, the term 'brand' is a mode of influence. He has stated that in an organizational context, the brand represents the organization as a whole, its processes, and its behaviour. An organisational brand can be used to support the organization's products or services, which can be branded as well. From the customers' point of view, the brand may increase their trust, which can be a supportive factor in a decision to purchase. Customers may use the brand to ensure the quality of the goods or services, gain more information, or even increase their own individual 'brand'.

Even though the brand is often reflective of the companies or products, it has a wide variety of aspects. Therefore, it is difficult to provide an exact definition of branding. However, its main purpose is to provide information, which then differentiates it from other brands and provides added value. The brand relates to everything that the customer, user, or follower knows or feels about the object of branding. An effective brand should trigger a positive memory or feeling. (Hansen & Christensen 2003, 13-15.)

Tan (2010) has supported Hansen and Christensen's (2003) view and stated that a brand is a much-debated subject in the marketing and advertising world. However, he has stated that there are two general points of agreement around the term. He has referred to Calkins' (2005) statement that a 'brand is a set of associations linked to a name, mark, or symbol associated with a product or service' and that it is created through interaction between customer and a brand, which consist of many different touchpoints.

3.2 Brand value through brand equity

According to Melewar and Christopher's (2003, 158) paper, one of a brand's success factors is that it needs to deliver value for the customer. Brand equity measures the total

value of the brand for organization. David Aaker, a marketing and branding specialist, is the creator of the Aaker model of brand equity. The model consists of five components: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary brand assets. These components enable measurement of the value of a certain product or service and the financial brand value. (Man 2016, 121-122; Prophet 2016.)

High brand equity levels and thus a valuable brand is the outcome of people's positive attitudes towards the brand. Hansen and Christensen (2003, 13-14) have stated that there are products or services that contain a certain element that makes the customer view the brand in a positive light. This element is business-specific and can be anything that the customer perceives to be valuable. (Hansen & Christensen 2003, 13-14.)

3.3 Brand and content marketing

Content strives to be valuable to better engage the customers. This part of the study briefly presents the relationship between brand and content marketing.

One of the objectives of content marketing is to increase the company's brand awareness (Baltes 2015, 114). Ryan (2016, 206) has supported this statement by pointing out that content marketing is a powerful tool in brand-building because its purpose lies in adding value to the customer. When the customer receive content that is informative and helpful, they are more likely to form a positive stance toward the associated brand. A strong brand can support a company's content marketing if marketers remember and know how to associate the brand with content. A brand that wishes to gain success and better engage the audience should help consumers see the link between content and that brand. (Pulizzi 2012, 116; Kingsnorth 2016, 234-235.)

Wuebben (2012) has stated that the story of a brand can be best told through content (Holliman & Rowley 2014, 272). The internet era and proliferation of the social media channels have increased the importance of brand stories being one of the most competitive factors in marketing (All 2013, as cited in Cronin 2016, 87).

Generally, the larger companies tend to have brand guidelines to support the work of content creators. These guidelines might include creative suggestions, tonal guidance, and the set boundaries for the brand marketing. (Kingsnorth 2016, 246.) Wheeler (2012, 2) has written that 'people fall in love with the brands, trust them, and believe in their superiority'. Brand identity consists of the elements that are visible and concrete, such as design, colours, and logos. (Wheeler 2012, 4-5.) Every brand should also have a voice that communicates the brand elements. Content marketers communicate with this voice in speaking and writing. A tone of voice is defined by the company's values and can be

formal or casual. (Kingsnorth 2016, 216.) Both brand identity and voice guide the content creator to produce quality content.

4 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Research and data collection methods

The study is conducted as a form of qualitative research and uses a deductive content-analysing approach. The content analysis exploits theming, counting and searching for connections (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 152). This study aims to discover the challenges or limitations that content creators might encounter in their work. Therefore, this study used semi-structured theme interviews that were based on the theoretical framework of the study. The other four parts in this chapter include discussion about the interviews, design of the interview questions, analysis, and the key findings of the data.

4.2 Semi-structured theme interviews

Three digital marketing professionals were interviewed for the study. Each interviewee represented a different company with a focus on either B2B marketing, or B2C marketing, or both. The study concentrated on companies that has employed a content creator, no marketing agencies were interviewed. All the companies were large. One of the companies was Finnish, and two were Australian. Interviewees were found through the author's own contacts, LinkedIn, and internet search. Although the sample of the research was small, the quality and number of the questions yielded plenty of information.

Two of the interviews were conducted via telephone at agreed times. The third interview with interviewee 1 was conducted via a questionnaire that followed the same semi-structure as the phone interviews. This questionnaire was organised because of practical matters considering location and schedule differences between the author and that participant. This might affect the depth of that participant's answers because there was more time to ponder the questions. In addition, the questionnaire was carried out in the Finnish language and the interviewee 1's answers have been translated into English for the purpose of the study. The interviews were arranged and conducted during April and May 2019.

4.3 Designing interview questions

The interview questions were designed on the basis of the information presented in the theoretical part of the study. The questionnaire and the telephone interviews consisted of 10 main questions that were followed up with sub-questions. The questions were structured so that the interviewees could follow easily and stay within the subject with their answers. All the questions can be found in the appendices (Appendix 1).

The questions were divided into six themes. Most of the themes represented the primary arguments for the kind of challenges that can be in content creation. The author also researched whether the company brand had any impact in creating challenges to content creation. The 10th question was more open than the previous ones, and interviewees were able to point out other challenges they had experienced. The themes were divided as follows:

1. Content
2. Content culture
3. Content strategy
4. Target market
5. SEO and technology
6. Brand.

4.4 Analysis of the data

The first part of the interview consisted of background questions that defined the interviewees' working industry, target market, title, responsibilities, and the years in the industry. This mapping also made it possible for the author to analyse if there was a resemblance or divergence between different backgrounds. Second, the interview questions were presented one by one in a certain order. The interviewees' answers are in appendices to maintain the study's clear structure.

4.4.1 Interviewees' background information

Tables 1 and 2 below specify the interviewees' backgrounds in the company that they were working in. Two of the interviewees were from the retail industry, and one was from recruitment. All the respondents shared similar kinds of work responsibilities, including brainstorming, creating, and maintaining the company's content. The interviewees have worked in the industry for two and a half to four years.

Table 1 Interviewees' company information

Participants	Industry of the company	Target market
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Interviewee 1	Retail	Mainly consumers (B2C), but the company also has its own unit for business sale purposes
Interviewee 2	Recruitment industry	Both B2C and B2B
Interviewee 3	Retail	More B2C than B2B

Table 2 Interviewees' personal information

Participants	Job title	Responsibilities	Years in the industry
Interviewee 1	Social Media Coordinator	Content brainstorming, production, and updating the company's digital and social media marketing channels.	2.5
Interviewee 2	Content Creator and Social Media Coordinator	Creating content for mostly digital platforms including blogs, social posts, images, videos, collateral, emails etc. Additionally, there is regular content such as tenders or capability statements that need to be produced. Coordinating and planning the company's social media and assisting in event planning and promotion.	3
Interviewee 3	Content Coordinator	Content brainstorming, producing and maintaining content in different channels, and communicating with various stakeholders.	4

4.4.2 Content production channels and the creating cycle

This subchapter analyses the subject of content, which was the subject of the first two interview questions. First, the author researched where and how often the participants produced content within the company. These questions were followed by further questions that considered if the channels, brainstorming, lack of information, information overload, or limited amount of time caused challenges in content creation. The exact answers for the questions analysed in this chapter are in the appendices (Appendix 2 & 3).

All participants replied that they were creating content in a company's website and social media channels with daily updates. However, updating did not always refer to the new content but sometimes referred to old content that had to be re-published. Two out of three mentioned Facebook as one of the social media content distribution channels. Content were mainly produced in written form such as blog posts, product information, and articles. Interviewee 3 responded that they created video content.

Interviewees 1 and 3 occasionally found it challenging to produce content in multiple channels at the same time. Even so, no one believed any channel to be more difficult than another to create content. Yet all the interviewees agreed that different forms of content took different time to create; for example, long written posts and videos were more time consuming.

Interviewee 2 emphasised that sometimes the limitation of the provided topics and the limited amount of time created challenges for brainstorming new content. The same interviewee also stated that the lack of information caused challenges and that it was sometimes difficult to keep up to date with the information needed for creating content. This was mainly because other departments were less interested in sharing the knowledge related to their expertise. In fact, each participant felt that the information deficiency was challenging and that it was time consuming to be educated. Interviewee 1 mentioned that the content brainstorming was not difficult, but budgeting and regulations limited the results. Producing product information content was a challenge, especially when the product range was extensive.

Interviewee 1 stated that the similarity of the industries and intense competition caused challenges in publishing the most updated information for the customers. Interviewee 3 concurred with the challenge of significant competition. Interviewee 3 also mentioned that it was more difficult to create content and stand out from the information mass if the marketed brand was weak and unpopular. Interviewee 2 stated that it was difficult to stand out

because the content was about a service instead of a product. All interviewees agreed that the amount of time for creating quality content was occasionally restricted.

4.4.3 Content culture in the company

The third question sought to determine whether the different departments supported or hampered content creators' work. In other words, this question sought to determine if there was fluent content culture in the company. Interviewees 1 and 3 responded that they worked closely with the other departments in the company. Interviewee 2 replied that they sometimes did so. However, all participants confirmed that the content-related information flow between the departments was not fluent or felt unbalanced. For the comprehensive answers, see Appendix 4.

4.4.4 Content strategy

The challenges related to content strategy were discussed in the fourth question. Each participant answered yes to the question 'does your company have a defined content strategy?'. Nevertheless, none of them had a documented strategy.

Answers to, planning of, and timing the content fell under the content creator's responsibilities. However, tone of voice, themes, and guidance came from the strategy. Interviewee 2 and 3 stated that it is not hard at all to follow the defined content strategy, whereas interviewee 1 found doing so to be sometimes challenging. Interviewee 1 explained as follows:

The metrics and objectives defined for marketing success do not always meet the prevalent perceptions with the rest of the company. There are also different strategies between the channels – catalogue is aimed for a certain target group, but the objectives of influential marketing, for example, are quite different.

The answer indicates that the set objectives for content marketing were exaggerated and that several strategies demanded the content creator's time and vigilance. Interviewees 1 and 2 both emphasised that a clearly defined content strategy supported content creators' work. For the comprehensive answers, see Appendix 5.

4.4.5 Target market

All interviewees responded that the company's target market was carefully defined and that there were many target markets. Interviewee 1 described the target market as wide, and that the challenge was for the content to remain equally interesting to everyone. Interviewee 2 found it more challenging to create content for employers because 'they have

less time and less interest in reading online content'. The same interviewee continued that the employers usually were more after numbers and ratings than written content. Interviewee 3 supported the first interviewee by responding that wider audiences generate more challenges in content creation.

The author also determined if the interviewees identified with the following statement that is presented in the theory part of the study.

- Statement: Content should be simultaneously credible, shareable, useful or fun, interesting, relevant, different, and on brand. Yet all these elements are often tough to achieve at the same time. (Kingsnorth 2016, 232.)

All participants agreed with the statement. The author enquired if some parts of the statement were particularly difficult to implement in content creation. Interviewee 1 pointed out that it was challenging to differ from competitors and include brand into content creation. Another point was that the same tone of voice was difficult to adapt into each product when the product range was wide and consisted of multiple categories. Interviewee 1 stated that creating content that considered the company's responsibilities created personal conflicts when the business was based on consumption. Interviewee 2 found it challenging to be interesting to many people at the same time because 'some people will find some of your content interesting but not others'. Interviewee 3 responded that producing fun content can be especially challenging when the focus was on presenting quality. For the comprehensive answers, see appendices 6 and 7.

4.4.6 SEO and technology

The subjects of SEO and technology were discussed. All participants responded that they paid significant attention to SEO. Only interviewee 2 believed that SEO sometimes complicated the creation of quality content. Interviewee 2 explained that forgetting certain uses of language and adding significant amounts of pictures in content might lower the search engine rankings.

All participants stated that they analysed data and that they had enough tools available for that task. Interviewees 1 and 2 both agreed that the data analysis was sometimes challenging because the data might be inconsistent, unclear, or sometimes not even available. Interviewee 2 added that continuous monitoring of numbers decreases creativity in work. Interviewee 3 answered that they had a separate team for analysing data.

None of the interviewees experienced that the technology development brought challenges to the content creation. All interviewees produced content for both mobile and

computer. Two participants did not find it to be challenging to produce content for multiple devices. Interviewee 1 mentioned that creating mobile content with a computer as a working tool required some adaptation. For the comprehensive answers, see appendices 8 and 9.

4.4.7 Brand

Each participant stated that the business brand has been considered in content creation. However, interviewee 1 mentioned that the need for trade occasionally obscured the visibility of the business brand.

The interviewees agreed that the brand supported brainstorming in content creation to some extent. Interviewees 1 and 3 stated that the business brand did not support so much brainstorming, but interviewee 1 added that company's product brands supported brainstorming.

The brand was occasionally experienced as a limiting factor in content creation. Interviewee 1 stated that the company's product brands needed to be prioritised over the other brands and that this sometimes created challenges. Interviewee 2 responded that content needed to be created within company's brand guidelines but did not find that to be a major challenge. Interviewee 3 supported interviewee 2's view that brand guidelines needed to be followed but may sometimes limit desired content ideas. For the comprehensive answers, see Appendix 10.

4.4.8 Additional discussion of other challenges

The last question in the interview was an open one that enabled the participants to present other challenges or limitations that they encountered in their job. Each participant responded differently.

Interviewee 1 responded that the other departments in the company did not always respect the professionalism of the content creators and sometimes understated their work. Also, the interviewee experienced decreased personal enthusiasm towards content creation in their free time. Interviewee 2 experienced a challenge to find people in the company who would be willing to assist with and feature in video content. Interviewee 3 stated that the suppliers' brands limited content creation because of the strict advertising policies around the products. For the comprehensive answers, see Appendix 11.

4.5 Key findings

The company's internal content culture might be difficult to build and maintain. When different departments are working as individual groups without interaction, the information flow is often intermittent. This could negatively affect the work of content creation. (Kingsnorth 2016, 242; Pulizzi 2012, 121.) All the interviewees answered that the information flow between the business departments was challenging, even though they worked closely or sometimes together with the other departments. One interviewee pointed out that it was challenging to receive any information from the other teams in the company without asking or even after asking. The other teams did not consider it to be their responsibility to share their knowledge. At the end of the interview, interviewee 1 mentioned that the title and responsibilities of a company's content creator were sometimes underrated. These factors suggest that organisations should educate their employees to understand the importance and meaning of each department in the company. If the business cannot justify the existence of a content creator, they are already straying from the path of success in content marketing.

Content strategy was considered to be the directing factor in content creation. All participants answered that they were following defined content strategy within the company. However, none of the strategies were documented. The CMI's 2019 survey indicates that companies that have a documented content strategy achieve their objectives more often (Content Marketing Institute 2019b, 11; Content Marketing Institute 2019c, 2, 12). One participant stated that following the content strategy sometimes creates challenges when the metrics and objectives are in contradiction with the other perceptions in the company. Digital content creates better relationships and attracts consumers more than the methods used in traditional marketing. For this reason, companies should provide themselves with a clear strategy to achieve the set objectives and better guide the content creator.

The Internet and the technologies that support the use of it has been in development over a few decades (Ryan 2010, 89, 99-101). None of the interviewees felt that technology development created challenges for content creation. By contrast, it was experienced as a helping factor. However, all the respondents had been working in the industry for only four years, which could indicate that any major changes in the technological world may not have occurred in that short period of time.

Analysis of the data was a challenge when the data was sometimes deficient, inconsistent, or not available. Participants emphasised the importance of SEO in content creation. One interviewee stated that concentrating on certain language, such as keywords that search engines preferred, complicated the creation of quality content. The same

interviewee also pointed out that adding pictures to content might be preferable for consumers but not for search engines. However, Kingsnorth (2016, 101) has stated that content should be optimised for the audience and not for search engines to gain the most successful results. Thus, even though search engines are increasingly valuing quality content, the individual gimmicks still have an impact on content visibility in the search engines.

A brand can support a company's content marketing. When the customer perceives the content to be valuable and connects it to the brand, there is an increased probability of positive thinking and engagement towards the brand. (Ryan 2016, 206.) The interviewees' answers indicate that the company's brand had been considered in content creation. However, the answers contributed towards the understanding that the brand remained in the background in the creation process. The brand was experienced as a supporting factor. One participant also mentioned that the concentration was more about making profit than increasing the brand visibility.

The brand guidelines were specified by the company, and content creators needed to work between these guidelines. Even though this was occasionally experienced as a limit, one participant stated that sticking to the guidelines was something that content creators needed to adapt to in every company. Tone of voice is usually one part of the brand guidelines and it communicates the key elements of the brand (Kingsnorth 2016, 216). One participant mentioned that their company is reviewing and developing the tone of voice in their marketing communications. This should facilitate the visibility of the brand when creating content in the future. The interviewee from the retail industry expressed that the company's product brands were more present in content creation than the business brand because the product brands needed to be first highlighted. This could occasionally lead to challenges if a better alternative for the content could be found from other brand categories. The author assumed that the brand guidelines may be a limiting factor regarding content creation but understood that it was necessary from the company's perspective to maintain standardised and consistent communication. From the content creator's perspective, this can limit creativity.

Intense competition and a wide target audience were highlighted as a challenge in content creation. Today, the information load is so massive that it is difficult to draw peoples' attention. It was challenging to be the first to provide the most accurate or updated information. With similar products or services, it could be challenging to differ from competitors in the same industry. The interviewee from the recruitment industry felt that it was more challenging to create content and draw attention when marketing a service instead of a

product. Some of the other limitations pointed out during the interviews were budget, suppliers' strict brand policies, and time.

The author also aimed to compare if the similarities or differences in the interviewees' background information caused variation in the provided answers. Overall, the answers indicated many similarities but less differences. This was probably because all the interviewees were professionals in the same field, and the background information did not differ significantly. The sample size was too small to compare between multiple industries or the years worked in the industry.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Answers to research questions

The objective of this study is to research the challenges or limitations of a company's content creator. This chapter provides the answers to the main research question as well as the sub-questions. The sub-questions have been used to achieve as comprehensive answer as possible to the main research question. The research questions are as follows:

1. What kind of challenges or limitations does content creators encounter in their job?
 - a. Do the actions of the company create challenges or limitations to content creator's work? If yes, how?
 - b. Do the changes in technology challenge or limit the work of a content creator? If yes, how?
 - c. Do brand challenge or limit the work of a content creator? If yes, how?

That the main question can be answered, the sub-questions must be examined first. Based on this study, the answer to the first sub-question 1a is yes. It is identified that if the content culture in the company is divided, it has a negative effect on the information flow. Deficient information flow creates challenges concerning the work of a content creator. In addition, wide target market, budget and other regulations were experienced as a challenge. All these factors can be categorized as company related.

Answer to the second sub-question 1b was no. None of the participants experience the technological development as a challenge but perceive it as a supporting factor.

Third sub-question 1c concerns brand, which has experienced somewhat challenging in content creation. Brand guidelines must be followed when creating content, and this sets certain conditions for content creation. This can limit content creator's creativity. Company's product brands are experienced as a challenge when the product range is narrow because the product brands need to be first highlighted in content. On the other hand, suppliers' strict brand policies are considered challenging to adapt to when creating content.

Answer to the main research question 1 is yes. In addition to all the above, major challenge concerning content creation is intense competition. The results indicate that publishing the most updated information and standing out with the content from the information mass is a significant challenge for content creators. The success of content marketing is strongly based on providing informative and valuable content for the customers. However, creating quality content is time-consuming and the resources are limited, especially time.

Search engine optimisation is another limitative factor in the creation of quality content. It is experienced that often the content that attracts the customer the most is not in favour of search engines. Data analysing is a method to evaluate the content. Analysis of data is perceived as a challenge when there is a lack in quality or quantity of the data. The following table 3 summarises the main challenges of the content creator based on the interviews.

Table 3 Summary of the interview answers compared to the research questions

<p>a. Do the actions of the company create challenges or limitations to content creator's work? If yes, how?</p>	<p>✓ Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divided content culture and lack of support • Wide target market • Budget & other regulations
<p>b. Do the changes in technology challenge or limit the work of a content creator? If yes, how?</p>	<p>✓ No</p>
<p>c. Do brand challenge or limit the work of a content creator? If yes, how?</p>	<p>✓ Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand guidelines • Product brands • Suppliers' strict brand policies
<p>1. What kind of challenges or limitations does content creators encounter in their job?</p>	<p>In addition to the above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition • Time • SEO • Data analysing

5.2 Validity and reliability of the study

The study was valid and reliable. The study was conducted in order and transparently. The interview questions were designed based on the theoretical part of the study and the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way. Open ended questions made it possible for the interviewees to answer rather freely and the interviewer to lead the conversation. One interviewee answered to the interview questions through questionnaire. Even

though the questionnaire included the same questions as the telephone interviews, it needs to be considered that there has been more time to think answers to the questions. All the participants are professionals in their field of work and has been working in the marketing field at least two and a half years.

The validity and reliability of the study could have been improved if the sample size was larger than three participants. Greater sample size would have extended the diversity of the data. This could have raised new challenges concerning content creation. In addition, the interviewees represented only two industries which did not enable the comparison across multiple different industries. Two of the interviews were conducted via telephone with the second language of the author. It may be possible that there have been some minor misunderstandings between the author and the participant.

5.3 Possible further studies

The study identified many challenges regarding to the work of a content creator. Many of these challenges could be studied further, and research how to overcome these obstacles. One of the challenges that was experienced was the lack of appreciation towards the content creator's work. This communicates that companies' internal content culture might be fragile, and the purpose of a content creator is unknown or misunderstood. Content culture could be a potential topic for further research. New study could examine more deeply, whether the stated lack of support presented in this study is widely experienced. If the awareness of the issue could extend to companies' management level, actions could be made to improve the content culture in the company. This could eventually lead to better results in content creation.

6 SUMMARY

The study aims to identify the challenges or limitations that content creators might encounter in their work. The author approaches the study with qualitative research method. This method enables the better understanding and identifying of the challenges. Primary data is used, and it is collected via semi-structured theme interviews. The study focuses on companies that has employed a content creator to be a part of their marketing team, no marketing agencies were included.

The study consists of two main parts, theoretical and empirical. The theoretical part of the study is divided into two sections that explores the concepts of digital, inbound and content marketing as well as the concept of brand. In order to understand more about the research problem, chapter two first discusses briefly the history of advertising and digital marketing. Through this, the concepts of inbound and content marketing can be opened. The term native advertising is explained. The concept of content marketing emphasises the importance of content creation. The terms target market, content strategy, data analysis and SEO are explained to get a comprehensive depiction considering the work of a content creator. Chapter three focuses to discuss the relationship between brand and content marketing.

The empirical part of the study consists of five sections: the research and data collection methods, discussion about the interviews, design of the interview questions, analysis and the key findings of the data. Three content marketing professionals were interviewed for the study. All the participants were professionals in their field of work and has been working in the field of marketing at least two and a half years. The participants' answers are analysed and examined through the theoretical part of the study and the key findings is discussed.

The study answers successfully to all introduced research questions. The answers indicate many challenges and limitations that content creators encounter in their work. Primary challenges occur when the content creator experiences intense competition, lack of time, and lack of support from other departments in the company. Overall, the answers indicated many similarities but less differences.

The results of the study can advise companies and professionals of how to better streamline content creation. Some of the challenges could be further studied to resolve the reasons behind them and this way to improve the company's content creation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 Interview questions of the study

Background questions

1. In which industry does the company work?
2. Does the company concentrate more on business-to-business or business-to-consumer marketing (B2B/B2C)? Or both?
3. Could you define your job title and responsibilities in the company?
4. How long have you been working in the industry?

Content

1. Where do you produce content? (Websites, social media etc.)
 - 1.1. If you produce content on multiple channels, do you feel it challenging? Why?
 - 1.2. Do you feel that it is more challenging to create content on some channel than other? Could you briefly explain why?
2. People consumes content every day. How often do you create or update content in your company?
 - 2.1. Do you feel that coming up and creating new content continuously is challenging? If yes, why?
 - 2.2. Do you feel that the lack of information sometimes creates challenges? (e.g. unfamiliar product, subject or law) How?
 - 2.3. Do you feel that it is hard to stand out with content or to get the consumers' attention? If yes, why?
 - 2.4. Do you feel that you have enough time to create good content?

Content culture

3. Do you work together with the other business departments in the company? (e.g. IT, sales, finance)

3.1. Do all the business departments work in the same office?

3.2. Do you feel that the information flow between the business departments is challenging or does it make your work more difficult?

Content strategy

4. A clear strategy defines the business objectives and the steps how to achieve them. Does your company have a defined content strategy?

4.1. If yes, is it documented? Do you feel that the strategy helps your work?
How?

4.2. Do you feel that it is hard to follow the strategy? If yes, why?

4.3. If not, do you feel that a clear strategy would help you with your work?

Target market

5. Is your company's target market carefully defined? Are there many of them?

5.1. Could you describe your target market with a few words? Do you feel that it is challenging to create content for this target market? If yes, which kind?

5.2. If your company has a wide target market, do you feel that it causes challenges with content creation? If yes, what kind of challenges?

6. One definition state that content should be simultaneously credible, shareable, useful or fun, interesting, relevant, different and on brand. Yet all these elements are often tough to achieve at the same time. Do you agree?

6.1. Is it particularly difficult to implement some of these? Why?

SEO and technology

7. How much attention do you pay to search engine optimization (SEO)?
 - 7.1. Does SEO complicate creating quality content? If yes, why?
 - 7.2. Do you analyse data? Do you feel that there are enough tools available for it?
 - 7.3. Do you feel that the data analysing is challenging? If yes, why?
8. Do you feel that the technology development brings challenges to the content creation? How?
 - 8.1. Do you create different content to different devices (e.g. mobile, pc)? If yes, does it bring any challenges?

Brand

9. Has the company's business brand been considered in the content creation?
 - 9.1. Do the company's brand support brainstorming in content creation? How?
 - 9.2. Does the brand limit your work in any way? If yes, how? (e.g. creativity, can't use certain words or colours)

Open discussion

10. What other challenges and/or limitations do you encounter in your job?

APPENDIX 2 Interviewees' answers to the first question

Participants	1. Where do you produce content? (Websites, social media etc.)	1.1 If you produce content on multiple channels, do you find it challenging? Why?	1.2 Do you feel that it is more challenging to create content on some channel than other? Could you briefly explain why?
Interviewee 1	The company's external communications consist of a physical promotional magazine and posters, TV and radio advertising, online shop, a content hub, an investor relations and communications website, and various social media channels.	Sometimes yes. Digitality is a relatively new area for the company, and for example the generation differences sometimes create challenges between departments to understand what content works on which channel.	I have not yet encountered any channel-related challenges. Of course, the material produced for the content hub takes more time than a single Facebook post.
Interviewee 2	Company website & blog, social media (Facebook/LinkedIn/Twitter), internal and external emails & private documents for B2B.	I don't find it challenging as most content can be adjusted edited from the longest form content to be suitable for other channels.	Not challenging. However, more some content can be more time consuming to create. For example, blogs take longer than images or short posts due to the research time and length of the content.
Interviewee 3	Company website, there is also separate section for articles, social medias such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.	Kind of yes. It is more time consuming and needs more resources to produce content for example in video form than text.	Content creation itself is not more challenging to some channel than other. But as said, video content is definitely more time and resource consuming than text.

APPENDIX 3 Interviewees' answers to the second question

Participants	2. People consumes content every day. How often do you create or update content in your company?	2.1 Do you feel that coming up and creating new content continuously is challenging? If yes, why?	2.2 Do you feel that the lack of information sometimes creates challenges? (e.g. unfamiliar product, subject or law) How?
Interviewee 1	Digital content is continuously collected and produced. Social media channels are updated on daily basis, and the aim is to add more material to content hub weekly.	The brainstorming itself is relatively effortless, but if there is known an exact budget or other regulations, it will of course create own limitations to the result.	<p>As the product range of our company is extensive and constantly changing, there sometimes comes challenges with product information. For example, in content hub you need to keep an eye on that the hyperlinks are up to date, as the products may exit the online store, or the URL for a single product can be changed to "more functional" without notice.</p> <p>The marketing department is very awake what comes to the legislation, but other departments may sometimes present inordinate and/or unlawful demands considering advertising that the marketing department then rectifies.</p>
Interviewee 2	As I am the only content creator in the company, I try to achieve 4 blogs per month, 3 new company specific	Yes, it can be. Being limited to create content for specific topics can seem repetitive at times and does limit the ideas of	Yes of course. Often, I will request information from sales staff or other staff who might have more know how. This has proven to be a difficult

	pieces of collateral or B2C targeted images and update the website as necessary. We re-share existing content daily either from our own content or external links.	content you can produce. Additionally, as mentioned prior, being the only content creator means I have limited time to consistently create quality content. I would rather create something great than many mediocre things – so this can be challenging to stay ahead and create so many new pieces of content.	task as people do not feel it is their job to have to share or summarise that information. I often have to do my own research about things I know little about. Half my job is learning and becoming an ‘expert’ myself. I also spend a lot of time trying to follow up or aid open communication in order to get more information.
Interviewee 3	Especially just before and in the beginning of different campaigns the workload can be heavy. Regular updates are done on a daily basis.	Not too much. Our team is quite large and so there is a lot of different ideas. Seasons, various sports and campaigns helps with content creating.	Sometimes yes. Even though suppliers provide the product information, sometimes more detailed information is needed which is time consuming to get.
	2.3 Do you feel that it is hard to stand out with content or to get the consumers’ attention? If yes, why?	2.4 Do you feel that you have enough time to create good content?	
Interviewee 1	It is not that difficult, but because the industry is not particularly special and competitors know the same trends and phenomena as we do, it is challenging to be	Occasionally working days and weeks are longer than agreed.	

	the first to publish up-to-date information.		
Interviewee 2	<p>It can be. Unpaid content gets less attention for one thing. Secondly, not having as many interactive followers as other pages on social means less reach.</p> <p>Also, there is just such an enormous amount of content circulating the internet now that it is hard for consumers to keep interested in information they've probably seen displayed in several other places. Because the nature of our company is a service rather than a product – this impact heavily on how interested consumers are. Although we have a target audience, I find that most successful content online is either advice or a product.</p>	<p>Sometimes I wish I had more time to create more quality content. However, I do have enough time currently to produce what I need to produce monthly.</p>	
Interviewee 3	<p>Of course, it is challenging when there is so much information provided in different sites. We constantly follow how the produced</p>	<p>Yes and no. Always when preparing for the campaign, it feels that there is time, but the closer the launch of the campaign is, the time</p>	

	<p>content is received. Some brands attract customers more than others, so it is easier to create content for strong brands.</p>	<p>often runs out. Especially when communicating with many stakeholders.</p>	
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APPENDIX 4 Interviewees' answers to the third question

Participants	3. Do you work together with the other business departments in the company? (e.g. IT, sales, finance)	3.1 Do all the business departments work in the same office?	3.2 Do you feel that the information flow between the business departments is challenging or does it make your work more difficult?
Interviewee 1	Yes. Marketing department works together with sales and we also work closely with the purchasing organization. As a social media coordinator, I will also co-operate with the communications team.	99% of out-of-store operations are at the head office, but part of the purchases is located in China.	Yes.
Interviewee 2	Sometimes, yes.	Yes.	There is some transparency however for content specifically it can be difficult.
Interviewee 3	Yes constantly.	Mostly yes.	I feel it quite unbalanced, since we are the ones who often are seeking for answers.

APPENDIX 5 Interviewees' answers to the fourth question

Participants	4. A clear strategy defines the business objectives and the steps how to achieve them. Does your company have a defined content strategy?		
Interviewee 1	A kind of, yes.		
Interviewee 2	Yes.		
Interviewee 3	Yes.		
	4.1 If yes, is it documented? Do you feel that the strategy helps your work? How?	4.2 Do you feel that it is hard to follow the strategy? If yes, why?	4.3 If not, do you feel that a clear strategy would help you with your work?
Interviewee 1	There is no clear single document of the strategy, the intention and objectives are rather found from the backbone of the content creators.	Sometimes yes, because the metrics and objectives defined for marketing success do not always meet the prevalent perceptions with the rest of the company. There are also different strategies between the channels – catalogue is aimed for a certain target group, but the objectives of influential marketing, for example, are quite different. Marketing department understands this, but the rest of the departments always do not.	A clear, unified line that is recognized throughout the building would make working easier.

Interviewee 2	<p>Loosely. I plan digital content every month – this helps to ensure other stakeholders in the business know what is being published. It also plays the part of a to-do list for me to make sure all content listed is complete by the date it is due to be posted. Other content is more ad-hoc. But it will have a consistent tone of voice and themes as per content strategy. For example, our content is largely produced around 4 – 5 main themes.</p>	<p>Not at all. But there are times where you have to improvise or do ad-hoc content depending on external factors.</p>	<p>Strategy is definitely useful. It would help anyone with their work in my opinion especially content creators who often need some kind of brief in order to produce content to a company's standards.</p>
Interviewee 3	<p>At least I am not aware of it. Yes I feel that strategy provides guidance for working.</p>	<p>No. Strategy is for guidance and help, rather than rules that needs to be followed.</p>	

APPENDIX 6 Interviewees' answers to the fifth question

Participants	5. Is your company's target market carefully defined? Are there many of them?	5.1 Could you describe your target market with a few words? Do you feel that it is challenging to create content for this target market? If yes, which kind?	5.2 If your company has a wide target market, do you feel that it causes challenges with content creation? If yes, what kind of challenges?
Interviewee 1	The customer base as a whole is very wide, and we have many target groups.	Wide. The biggest challenge that I have identified is that content should remain equally interesting for various target groups and at the same time reach out towards a completely new range of customers.	Same as previous.
Interviewee 2	Yes. There are plenty of them.	Generally speaking, job seekers and employers. It is more difficult to create content for employers as they have less time and less interest in reading online content. It is also largely about numbers and rates to them when it comes to tender documents or capability statements rather than the written content.	I don't think the target market is too wide for us. I think it is quite clear what kind of content our target audience would be interested in.

Interviewee 3	Yes and there are many.	As a sports retailer, target markets are based on different sports and hobbies. Target markets varies in sizes, so creating interesting content for wider audiences can be more challenging. However, there are different challenges in different target markets.	Same as previous.
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APPENDIX 7 Interviewees' answers to the sixth question

<p>Participants</p>	<p>6. One definition state that content should be simultaneously credible, shareable, useful or fun, interesting, relevant, different and on brand. Yet all these elements are often tough to achieve at the same time. Do you agree?</p>	<p>6.1 Is it particularly difficult to implement some of these? Why?</p>
<p>Interviewee 1</p>	<p>Pretty much. Because of the wide range of products, the exact tone of voice is challenging to implement for each product category. It is difficult to tell about windshield washing fluid and natural cosmetics in the same tone. Producing content concerning company's responsibility brings mostly personal challenges, when the business is based on consumption.</p>	<p>Of course, it is always difficult to differ from competitors. Also, including brand into content making is at times a challenge, when in a listed company the profit sometimes goes ahead of the brand image.</p>
<p>Interviewee 2</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>To be 'fun' is not always 'on brand' for one example. However, businesses like ours should always be credible, useful, relevant, different and on brand. Being interesting is a matter of perspective, as some people will find some of your content interesting but not others. Though it is important to avoid being bland or unrelatable. Content should be shareable for your target market and all employees of the company. It can also be fun too but not every piece of content will be fun in a professional workplace, unfortunately this would be an unrealistic goal. Being different</p>

		<p>is very important, but you have to pinpoint and be focused on what your difference is – I think differences should find a home in a company's corporate social responsibility and they should find a cause or causes which are important to them in order to stand out and have deeper purpose.</p>
Interviewee 3	Yes.	<p>Hmm... especially producing fun and 'catchy' content can be challenging to produce, when focusing on product quality.</p>

APPENDIX 8 Interviewees' answers to the seventh question

Participants	7. How much attention do you pay to search engine optimization (SEO)?		
Interviewee 1	It is one of the cornerstones of the content production, especially in the terms of the content hub and online shopping campaign pages (e.g. Black Friday, birthdays, Christmas).		
Interviewee 2	Quite a bit when it comes to website content and blogs.		
Interviewee 3	A lot. It is something that almost everyone does this day, so we cannot ignore it.		
	7.1 Does SEO complicate creating quality content? If yes, why?	7.2 Do you analyse data? Do you feel that there are enough tools available for it?	7.3 Do you feel that the data analysing is challenging? If yes, why?
Interviewee 1	Not much.	Yes, with those channels where it is possible, and the tools are sufficient.	It also has its own challenges, because sometimes I need to create content which directs the customer to the store. Data conversions are easy to follow for e-commerce, but of course, if social media advertisement directs customer to the brick and mortar store, there is no precise data available.
Interviewee 2	Sometimes. You can't use the same content for the same company but in	Yes. We have enough tools at present however I think it is worth	It can be. Sometimes results are inconsistent or not clear. At

	<p>different countries – it will lower your Google rating. You also have to be mindful and selective when it comes to the language you use. And using more images – although great for consumers is not always favoured when it comes to SEO. So... these things do complicate quality content.</p>	<p>investing in more tools for larger companies.</p>	<p>the moment, our data sits in several different places which also makes this task time consuming. Additionally, being a creative means numbers are not the most fun thing to look at for a long period of time.</p>
<p>Interviewee 3</p>	<p>There are quite many things that need to be considered when producing content, and SEO thinking is one of them. We are using tools that help with SEO.</p>	<p>Yes, it is analysed by data specialists.</p>	

APPENDIX 9 Interviewees' answers to the eight question

Participants	8. Do you feel that the technology development brings challenges to the content creation? How?	8.1 Do you create different content to different devices (e.g. mobile, pc)? If yes, does it bring any challenges?
Interviewee 1	No, on the contrary.	The intent is to make all the digital and social media content "mobile first", so the own ways of working have required adaption when the main tool for working is computer.
Interviewee 2	I do not.	Most content I produce is accessible via both pc and mobile without any changes.
Interviewee 3	No, I do not.	We produce content for pc and mobile. I do not see it challenging.

APPENDIX 10 Interviewees' answers to the ninth question

Participants	9. Has the company's business brand been considered in the content creation?	9.1 Do the company's brand support brainstorming in content creation? How?	9.2 Does the brand limit your work in any way? If yes, how? (e.g. creativity, can't use certain words or colours)
Interviewee 1	It is the intention, but like I mentioned earlier, the need of trade sometimes squashes the visibility of the business brand. The company also has its own brands, which of course are highlighted over the other brands always when possible.	Well yeah... Maybe more the company's own product brands than the actual company brand. If for example I will write content about what should you buy for the festivals, I need to first include the products that represents company's own product brand. The tone of voice in marketing communications is currently under review, and it is going to be developed in order to get the most consistent tone for all channels that supports the company brand.	Company brand does not, company's product brands yes – the product range they represent may sometimes be narrow, but even so, those products are highlighted before alternative products.
Interviewee 2	100%, it has to be...	To some extent. Within the marketing team we often discuss content and since coming on board I frequently reach out to the rest of the company for ideas and	Yes, you have to stick to brand guidelines including colours, tone and topics/themes up for discussion. But I don't consider this a challenge majority of

		important topics to cover for our industry.	the time because it is something you would encounter at any company and it is part of the job to work around what a company requires and wants.
Interviewee 3	Of course, yes.	Company brand not so much.	Company's brand guidelines need to be followed and it includes different alignments considering all the communication. This can sometimes conflict with desired ideas.

APPENDIX 11 Interviewees' answers to the tenth question

Participants	10. What other challenges and/or limitations do you encounter in your job?
Interviewee 1	<p>“Here everyone is a graphic designer/copywriter/marketing planner/content producer” – other departments do not always respect the professionalism of the marketing content creators. Personally, I can be quite at peace, but sometimes, through many detours, I hear opinions and “opinions” about how some content has been implemented – down to individual wording.</p> <p>Content creation as a job has also caused the lack of interest towards personal content creation (blogging, photographing, taking videos). On weekends, taking the camera or laptop out is just the last thing to think about.</p>
Interviewee 2	Finding people in the company open to assist and feature in video content.
Interviewee 3	Sometimes other brands have strict policies considering advertising which need to be followed.