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Bachelor's Thesis

**The Role of Video Based Content Marketing as a Part of Modern Marketing
Communications**

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Video is the future of content marketing. That is, if it's not the here and now”, declares Chris Trimble (2014) in his article, *“Why online video is the future of content marketing”*. The popularity of video use for marketing purposes has increased significantly in the past few years (eMarketer, 2012) and the video based content marketing seems to be gaining an ever increasing number of supporters (Trimble, 2014; Friedlin, 2014). The field of marketing communications has gone through considerable changes in the recent years due to the rapid digitalization, overall changes in marketing communications thinking as well as the attitudes of the message recipients (Karjaluo, 2010). Media use has also diversified remarkably and different contents are tailored for different media channels in order to distribute the company's message more comprehensively (Karjaluo, 2010; Kotler & Armstrong, 2014). These acknowledgements indicated that it would be necessary and interesting to take a deeper look into video based content marketing as a marketing phenomenon. The objective of this thesis is to study the possibilities that video as a format provides in terms of content marketing as a part of modern marketing communications.

1.1 Research Problems, Objectives and Limitations

The study is divided into the main research question and four sub-questions. The more specific sub-questions help clarify the objectives of the study. The main research question is:

“What is the role of video based content marketing in modern marketing communications?”

The sub-questions of the study are:

“What is content marketing?”

“What benefits and challenges are related to video as a content marketing tool?”

“What are the most essential appeals used in video content marketing?”

"What is the current state and the future of video based content marketing in Finland?"

Content marketing is one of the most talked about phenomena in marketing nowadays and the main goal of the study is to find out what content marketing actually is, and what are its most essential features and characteristics. The main focus will be on the possibilities that video format provides in the field of content marketing. The theoretical part of the study is not limited to any specific country, but to study the role of video based content marketing as a part of modern marketing communications in general. The empirical part is carried out by doing interviews and its objective is to get an overall picture of video based content marketing from professionals working in the industry. In addition to the overall picture, the empirical part focuses on the Finnish context in particular as the interviewees backgrounds provide with accurate views in the field's development in the country. There are interviewees from both marketing and video production backgrounds, in order to get a broader and more diverse perspective on the studied issue. The fourth sub-question of the research, *what is the current state and the future of video based content marketing in Finland*, is limited to the empirical section only.

1.2 Literature Review

Content marketing has been around for a long time, but as various studies show (e.g. eMarketer, 2014. CMI/marketingprofs, 2012), its role in companies' marketing strategies has become hugely important just in the recent years, not the least thanks to the increased use and importance of the internet and the platforms it provides. Despite the popularity of the term *content marketing*, the field of content marketing per se lacks academic literature and therefore this thesis focuses on studying content marketing from the marketing communications point of view. Content marketing has been a hot topic for some time and therefore lots of studies (eMarketer, Cisco) and articles can be found on the use of video based content marketing. From the books, I have mostly used *Principles of Marketing* by Kotler and Armstrong (2014), focusing primarily on the chapter "*New communications thinking*" and *Marketing Communications* by De Pelsmacker et al. (2013), focusing on the chapter "e-communications" in particular. Also Fill's *Marketing communications* (2013) and

Advertising by Fill et al. (2013) were widely used in the thesis. Various up-to-date articles discuss the features and role of content marketing in today's marketing communications.

1.3 Research Methodology

The study is carried out by using qualitative research as a research method. Qualitative research means a complete group of different interpretative research methods, although it faces difficulties in absolute definition as it does not have a theory or paradigm of its own (Metsämuuronen, 2006, 2003). The study consists of theory part based on marketing communications literature and the empirical part where the material has been collected by interviews from the professionals of the video production and marketing industries. The type of the interviews is a semi-structured interview, which means that the questions are pre-defined and are same to all the interviewees. However, as opposed to structured interview, there are no predefined answer alternatives, which makes it possible for the interviewee to answer in own words. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 86)

The people interviewed are professionals in marketing and video production industry, who have witnessed first-hand the rapid growth of the industry. The interviewees are the founder and CEO of the video production company *Anatom Pictures*, Jan-Erik Olin, founder and CEO of digital agency and video production company OWL Helsinki, Isak Kullman and the project director of the marketing agency *TBWA Helsinki*, Markus Ahlbäck.

1.4 Theoretical Framework and the Structure of the Study

The structure of the study can be divided into four main parts that are Introduction, Theoretical part, Empirical part and Summary and Conclusions. The first part introduces the study's background, the objectives, the research questions, theoretical framework and the key concepts. The theoretical framework pictured below demonstrates the structure of the study.

Theoretical Framework

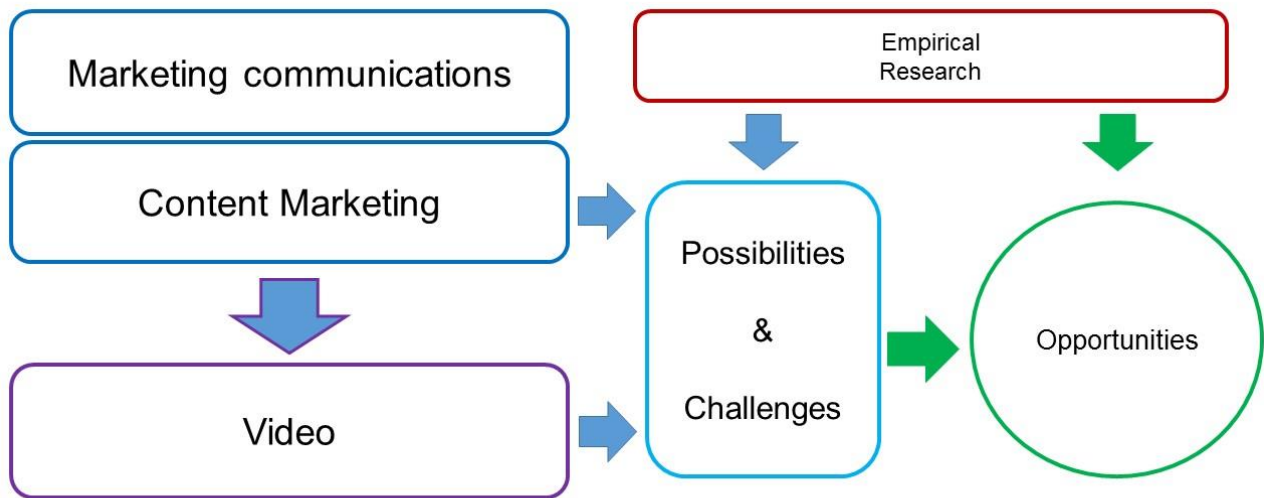


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

The theory section is found in the second chapter and it takes a deeper look at the theory of the key concepts of the study. Content marketing will be studied as an entity of its own and from the marketing communications point of view based on existing literature, articles and studies. The benefits and challenges of video format as a content marketing tool are also looked into. Third section, the empirical part, consists of the results of the qualitative research that has been collected by interviewing professionals of marketing and video production industries. The interview is semi-structured and the questions are same to every interviewee. The questions are made based on the theory part of this study. The final part, Summary and Conclusions, investigates the study as a whole and compares the results of the empirical study to the theory section. The final part also introduces possible subjects for further studies.

1.5 Key Concepts of the Study

Marketing

Marketing has many more detailed definitions but the simplest one is perhaps “Marketing is managing profitable customer relationships”. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014)

Marketing communications

The definition of marketing communications by Fill (2014) goes as follows: “Marketing communications is a process through which organizations and audiences engage with one another. Through an understanding of an audiences preferred communication environments, participants seek to develop and present messages, before evaluating and acting upon any responses. By conveying messages that are of significant value, participants are encouraged to offer attitudinal, emotional and behavioral responses.”

Content marketing

“The technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire and engage a clearly defined target audience in order to drive profitable customer action”. (Pulizzi, 2010)

2. CONTENT MARKETING AS A PART OF MODERN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

The concept of content marketing is widely acknowledged to be difficult to define in a manner that everybody would agree on. According to content marketing expert Doug Kessler, there is marketing that is clearly not content marketing, like for instance a supermarket discount ad, and there's marketing that clearly is content marketing, for example the Pepsi Max *Uncle Drew* campaign (De Clerck, 2014). However, a definition by Joe Pulizzi (2010), "The technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire and engage a clearly defined target audience in order to drive profitable customer action" is an often used and widely accepted one (De Clerck, 2014). Pulizzi also states that content marketing is more about focusing on the underlying reality that consumers and prospective buyers are more empowered of, rather than the label itself (De Clerck, 2014). Simply defined, it can be said that content marketing is about telling a story (Ryan, 2014, 280). The diversification of media use and the ever growing importance of online marketing have made it necessary for companies to stand out from their competitors and shape their brand images in new and more creative ways (Karjaluoma 2010; De Pelsmacker et al. 2013).

The use of content marketing has increased in an explosive fashion in the digital era. Internet offers the possibility to distribute content marketing material, mostly videos, all over the world in no time. Content marketing was on top of the digital priority list in 2013, according to Econsultancy's annual survey. (Friedlin, 2014) Despite the difficulties in finding the absolute definition for the term, the popularity of content marketing is unquestionable. The figure below represents how the number of *Google* searches for content marketing has increased in the past years. It shows that the popularity of the search has over quadrupled between the years 2012 and 2014.

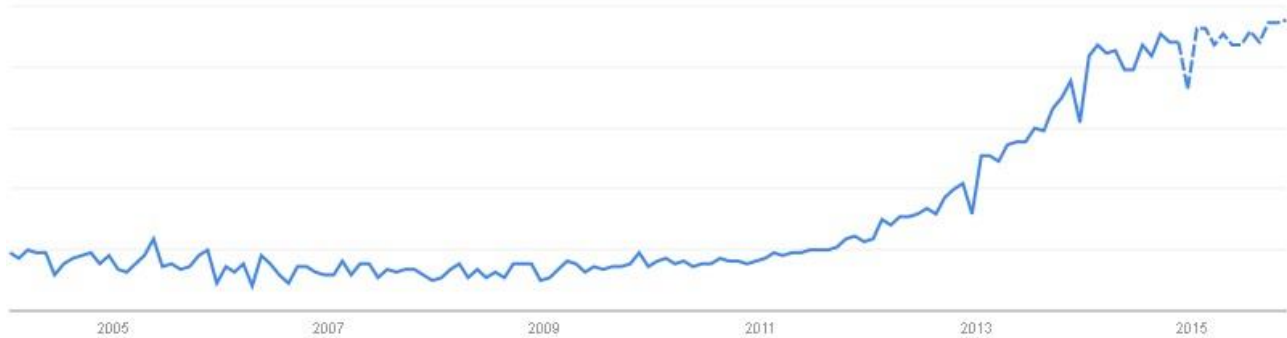


Figure 2. Google search trend: Content Marketing, Interest over time (Google, 2014)

2.1 Marketing Communications

Despite the distinct nature of content marketing, it still is marketing after all. In any type of marketing it is important to take in to the consideration the fundamentals of marketing communications. A goal of marketing in general, and of marketing communications in particular, is to move target customers through the buying process and it once again starts with understanding customer needs and wants (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 436). Fill et al. (2013) introduce marketing communications as an exchange process. Generally for an exchange to happen there has to be two or more parties involved that are able to offer something to the other and that are also willing to enter the exchange process. The exchange process in marketing communications consists of four main elements that are: researching customer needs and wants (1), identifying, selecting and targeting certain groups of customers that share these same kind of needs and wants (2), developing an offering that satisfies these needs at a suitable price and that is available through particular distribution channels (3), and last, making the target group aware of the designed offering (4). These elements combined are the “marketing mix” also known as the classic 4P’s model introduced by McCarthy in 1960. Basic task of marketing can be seen as creating a marketing program consisting of these four P’s in order to facilitate the exchange process. The use of marketing communications can also be seen fundamentally in two different ways, shaping brand image or shaping customer behavior. In terms of shaping brand image, advertising has been used to establish feelings, emotions and beliefs about a brand or an organization. This first way applies essentially to content marketing as according to studies

brand awareness and shaping brand image is something companies look to achieve through content marketing (CMI/Marketingprofs, 2012).

Video based content marketing has nowadays significantly better conditions to become successful. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2014), marketing thinking has considerably changed through the digitalization and blurring of the lines between the new and traditional marketing message distribution channels. Many marketers nowadays consider themselves as managers of “brand content”. Kotler and Armstrong (2014) introduce a new marketing communications framework, which builds on broader concept on how and by whom brand content is created, controlled and distributed. The new classification singles out the four major types of media: Paid, owned, earned and shared (POES). *Paid media* includes promotional channels paid by the sponsor, such as TV and print media, as well as paid online and digital media, for example search- or display ads. *Owned media* refers to promotional channels owned and controlled by the marketer, such as company websites, blogs and owned social media pages. *Earned media* includes PR-media channels, like TV, newspapers, online video sites etc. that are not directly paid or controlled by the marketer. *Shared media* means media that is shared by consumers with other consumers or brands, for example social media, mobile media, viral channels and the traditional word-of-mouth.

Kotler and Armstrong (2014) add that, marketers are using more and more owned, shared and earned media instead of the traditional paid media. Paid media is still important, but the versatility of the content use is being understood and taken advantage of, as marketers might ask themselves, what more can they do with their content. Careful integration and taking advantage of all the *POES* channels is important in order to get the message through to as broad audience as possible. As a successful example of this integrated brand messaging, Kotler and Armstrong (2014) introduce *Old Spice's*, “*The man your man could smell like*” campaign, that started as a paid TV commercial, which was then posted on their website (owned) and then went viral (shared) and got plenty of attention from different professionals, which resulted in a lot of coverage across the internet and TV (earned). (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014)

Identifying the target audience is an essential part of the process. Whether the audience may be individuals, groups, special publics, or the general public, the target audience will heavily affect the marketer's decisions on what will be said, how it will be said, when it will be said, where it will be said, and who will say it. In the case of determining the communication objectives, content marketing might hold a special kind of meaning compared to the more traditional kind of marketing. However, once the target audience has been defined, marketers must determine the desired response (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 436). For instance in Red Bull's case, the desired response is the awe experienced by the viewer which will lead to purchase decision through the positive brand image, rather than through the customer's knowledge of the product's qualities. (Iqbal, 2013, 117)

In the ever digitalizing field of marketing, De Pelsmacker et al. (2013) make a distinction in the marketing goals that can be used in internet based electronic marketing (e-marketing). They introduce four specific marketing goals that are slightly different from the more conventional ones. The goals are generating brand awareness, shaping brand image and brand attitudes, generating trial and creating loyalty. Generating brand awareness means putting or reinforcing the brand in the evoked set of consumers. They state that most researches and cases on this subject find that stimulating brand awareness is ideally achieved for example via online advertising. Shaping brand image and brand attitudes means defining, reinforcing or changing the set of associations that differentiate the brand from competing products as well as improving the consumers' judgment or knowledge about the brand. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2013) In fact, studies in 2012 (CMI/Marketingprofs) show that the top three organizational goals for content marketing in the B2B field were Brand awareness (79%), Customer acquisition (74%) and Lead generation (71%) (Brinker, 2012). The goals correspond well to the overall e-marketing goals by De Pelsmacker et al. (2013)

2.2 Designing a Message

The message an organization sends is a critical aspect of any marketing communications (Fill, 2013, 763). After defining the desired audience response, the communicator then is to develop an effective message. Ideally, a marketing message should get attention, hold interest, arouse desire, and obtain action. The AIDA-model framework (pictured below) shows the desirable qualities of a good marketing message. When composing the message, the marketing communicator must decide what to say (message content) and how to say it (message structure and format). (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 437)

The AIDA - model



Figure 3. The AIDA-model

The steps in the AIDA-model represent capturing the consumer's attention ("hey, what is that?"), generating interest ("that looks interesting"), arousing desire ("I'd like to get one") and finally creating action ("I'll go buy me one"). (Hanlon, 2013) However, nowadays it is widely acknowledged that brand communications process is not as simple as the basic form of the AIDA-model suggests. The brands nowadays look to send more emotional, and therefore more complex, messages to the consumer. Therefore it has been recognized, as

a result, that the business of brand experience is more subtle than the rationality of AIDA once suggested. However, despite the new terminology, the fundamental structures of the AIDA model remain steadily in place. (Barnham, 2008) Penn (2006) discusses also the nature of the marketing message when the consumer does not consciously go through the steps of the AIDA model, stating that for example in Coca Cola's case, an advertisement transmits the same emotional messages that consumers have received countless times before, leading to the ad to potentially bypassing the conscious mind completely just because there is no need to process it and retain it in working memory.

2.2.1 Message Content and Structure

The marketer has to come up with the appeal or theme that will produce the desired response. There are traditionally three types of appeals: rational, emotional, and moral. *Rational appeals* relate to the audience's self-interest, which means that they need to show that the product will produce the desired benefits, showing for example a product's quality, economy, value, or performance. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 437) Shimp (2010) states that an advertisement needs to stick in the memory of the recipient. The "sticky theory" is based on the idea that the advertisement is to be remembered, and through that, to impact and change the target audience's behavior or attitudes. Potential common features of a marketing message that has a long lasting and sticky impact are listed in the table below. It is to be added, that not all these features should be included in a marketing message, especially to one of content marketing, but nevertheless, the list provides a useful checklist for the creator of a marketing message. These features can also be divided into two categories, depending on whether the transmitted message should provide the receiver with more product-oriented information, or to appeal to the emotional senses of the recipient. (Fill et al. 2013)

1. Simplicity – Represents brand’s core idea
2. Unexpectedness – Deviation from target audience’s expectations
3. Concreteness – Using tangible, substantive words and demonstrations
4. Credibility – Have sense of authority and reasons for acceptance
5. Emotionality – Tap into feelings
6. Storytelling – Incorporating other “sticky” features

Figure 4. Shimp’s common features of sticky advertising (2010)

Emotional appeals, that are essential especially in content marketing, are nowadays commonly used as products are becoming increasingly similar and the consumers increasingly aware of what is available. Communicators may use emotional appeals ranging from love, joy, and humor to fear and guilt as well as sex, music, fantasy and surrealism. (Fill et al. 2013). Also emotional appeals can be such as family appeal (McDonald’s) or national pride appeal (Ram trucks) (Copley, 2007, 417). Advocates of emotional messages claim that they attract more attention and create more belief in the brand. The idea behind the emotional appeal is that consumers often feel before they think, and persuasion is emotional in nature. Good storytelling in a commercial often strikes an emotional chord. *Moral appeals* are directed to an audience’s view on what they consider as “right” and “proper.” They are often used to urge people to support social causes, such as a cleaner environment or helping the disadvantaged. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 437)

Nowadays, humor is widely used in video advertising in general by companies from all kinds of backgrounds. For example, according to *USA Today’s* ad meter consumer rankings of last year’s Super Bowl, 9 of the top 10 most popular ads used humor. Ideally, humor can capture attention, put people on good mood, and give a brand personality. For example, the aforementioned *Pepsi Max’s Uncle Drew* campaign and various Budweiser ads have

successfully used humor so well, that the ads are actively searched from Youtube and have millions of views. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 437) Humor is also found to be a more effective appeal when used in marketing low rather than high involvement products (Fill et al. 2013). However, using humor in advertising requires carefulness, as it has its pitfalls. When poorly used, it can detract from comprehension, wear out its idea, overshadow the product, and annoy or even insult consumers. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 437) Another challenging aspect when using humor is the fact that jokes tend to wear out after multiple repetitions and as such the ad might lose its effectiveness. Additionally, humor has been used to controversial purposes in camouflaging deceptive advertising, which obviously raises ethical questions. (Fill et al. 2013)

Marketing message has traditionally three main structure issues to handle. The first one is whether the marketer should come to a conclusion within the message or to ask questions and letting the audience draw their own conclusions. Research suggests that it is often better to leave it up to the customer to draw the conclusion. Secondly, the marketer should decide whether to present the strongest arguments first or last. Surely, presenting the strongest arguments first catches the audience's attention better, but might lead to anticlimactic ending. The third issue concerns the question whether to present one-sided or two-sided arguments. Presenting one-sided argument means only to promote the product's good qualities, as two-sided arguments also inform the customer of product's possible shortcomings. One sided arguments are often better when actively selling products, but presenting two sided arguments might improve the advertiser's credibility and make buyers more resistant to competitor attacks. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 439)

2.3 Specific Features of Content Marketing

Content marketing has become an essential ingredient in the marketing mix for brands as they seek to establish deeper relationships with their consumers and promote their own story (Maeve, 2013). An important characteristic for a content marketing message is that it for example entertains, amuses, informs and is something that consumers genuinely want to engage with and pass along to others. Additionally, content marketing can be described

more as a pull, rather than a push strategy as the content's main objective is to attract, not to interrupt. (Miller and Washington, 2013)

Content marketing itself is not new; the first well known example of content marketing goes all the way back to the end of 19th century, when the tractor manufacturer John Deere started publishing its own magazine, *The Furrow* (Ryan, 2014, 299). However, today's best known success story of extremely high profile content marketing is undoubtedly the energy drink brand Red Bull. They have been producing breathtaking videos of various extreme sports for years, culminating in multi-million dollar productions such as the snowboarding movies *That's it that's all* (2008), *Art of Flight* (2011) and most importantly, the world famous parachute jump, *Red Bull Stratos* (2012), which has been hailed to be perhaps the greatest marketing stunt of all time (Heitner, 2012). The live webcast was distributed through 280 digital partners, gathering 52 million viewers, making it the most-watched live stream in history. It also raised sales, as in the six months immediately following *Stratos*, sales rose 7% to \$1.6 billion in the U.S. (Zmuda, 2013). The manner in which for example Red Bull has integrated its diverse messages, is a model of success that cuts straight to the heart of building deep emotional connections with customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, 450). The brand's social media activities generate considerable amount of word-of-mouth communication in between peers which creates a strong sense of credibility (Fill et al. 2013). It can also be stated that the power of good content or story can be seen in the consumers' willingness to pass it along to others (Hatch et al. 2003).

According to Hemsley (2014), customers trust businesses providing useful content that informs and educates rather than interrupts their lives, and it must be linked to brand and not sales objectives. As such, if a brand gets this right the reward is likely be increased sales and loyalty. The importance of emotion aspect of content marketing is highlighted in a more drastic way by John Cave, who is the digital director at online travel agency verycheapholidays.co.uk. He claims that "If content does not elicit a strong emotion or opinion, it is 'dead in the water'". (Burrows, 2014)

2.3.1 Role of Video as a Marketing Tool

Good videos are obviously nice to watch, but just how popular it is to both watch and create online content video material nowadays? Regardless of the content, video format offers some unquestionable benefits as a marketing tool. Video is naturally engaging and, in this age of information overload, it's vital for especially small businesses to offer content that is easy to digest, because if not, consumers will simply move on. Forrester's researchers say that *"If a picture paints 1,000 words then one minute of video is worth 1.8 million"*. According to statistics by Cisco, by the year 2017, video will account for 69% of all consumer internet traffic and the online video traffic alone will have almost trebled. (Trimble, 2014)

The benefits include for example its easiness for the viewer, possibility to transmit information quickly and the ability to attract attention. On platforms like Youtube, User-generated content (UGC) is something that should be taken into consideration as footage created by the end users is becoming more common by the day as it can help drive organizational creativity. According to Christodoulides et al. (2011) for something to be considered as UGC the content has to be: (1) published on a publicly accessible website or social networking site, (2) has to show some creative effort and (3) to be created outside professional routines or practices. (Fill et al. 2013)

Videos are being watched more and more as for example Youtube alone has more than 1 billion unique users each month (Youtube, 2014), and already on 2012 it had over 400 million videos viewed daily (Murdico, 2013). Videos are also easily searchable, as well as both easily and frequently shared. Videos also offer real time feedback in the comment fields and are easily measurable, as the online players' analytics are easily accessible. One of the greater advantages is that videos are mobile in today's modern societies, as smartphones and tablets are carried around by most. (Murdico, 2013) According to Ciampa (2013), YouTube is no longer just a marketing platform that is "nice to have", but a must-have video content marketing engine. More importantly, YouTube and online video respond very positively to effective, actionable and well-targeted video content marketing.

Already in 2009 the numbers of online viewers was considered staggering, and the most remarkable aspect was especially when viewed as a percentage of Internet users, as well as a percentage of the population. According to eMarketer, back in the end of 2007, nearly 80% of all U.S. Internet users viewed video online at least once a month, which is over half of the population. The figure itself is remarkable, but the reality is that viewers' hunger for online video is greater than their ability to properly receive it. (Miletsky, 2010)

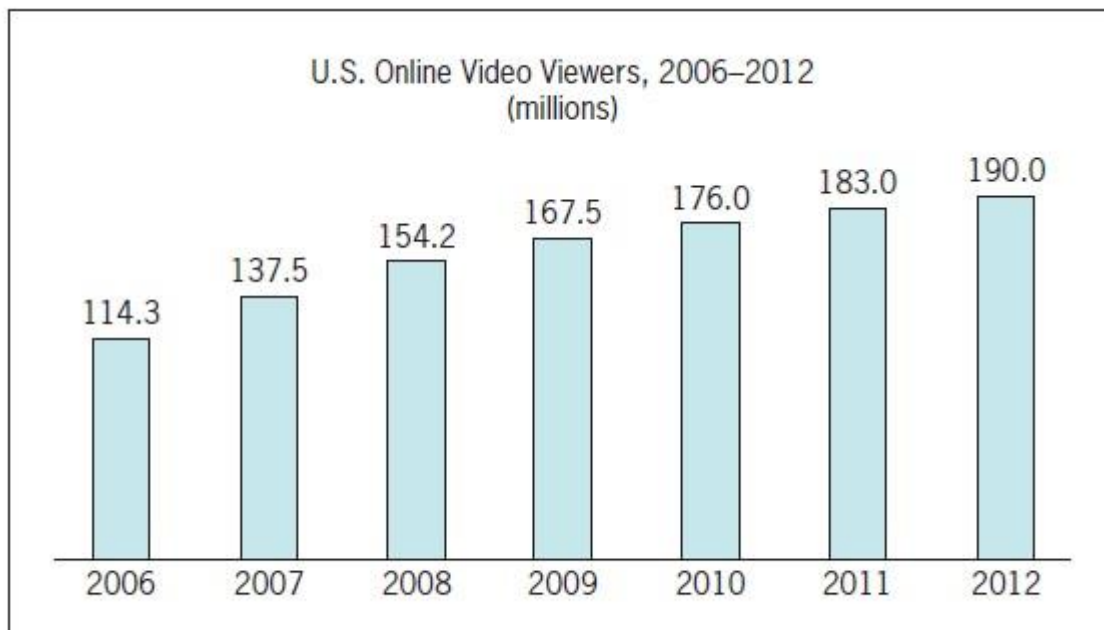


Figure 5. Internet-TV audience hits critical mass (eMarketer.com)

In 2012, 87 percent of marketing agencies in the U.S. were using video in their content marketing (eMarketer, 2012). While in 2014 the Importance of User Controlled Digital Video-Sharing Channels was rated either very important or somewhat important by 58% of marketing professionals in North America (eMarketer, 2014). The same study indicates that despite Youtube's popularity and convenience, there still is more to the issue. It discusses the companies' preferences in terms of platforms to host their video content in. The study suggests that the industry is moving towards a very much combined future, as nearly two-thirds of respondents favored a combination of their own websites and external platforms (e.g. Youtube). This combination was preferred as it would result in the best ROI (Return of Investment). Nearly 60% of marketing professionals stated that it was important to have a

secure video-sharing channel controlled by the brand. The responses also showed that owned platforms allowed them to gather more data on their video audiences. (eMarketer, 2014) According to an article by David Burrows in Marketing Week (2014), video is where brands are putting their money right now. In UK, a yearly rise of video advertising from 2013 to the first half of 2014, was a whopping 59%, while mobile video saw a rise of 196%. A fifth of all internet and mobile advertising budget is used on videos. Burrows also states that according to researches, people will engage further if they find the content in the videos compelling. (Burrows, 2014)

2.3.2 Challenges in Content Marketing

Hemsley (2014) mentions “the three big challenges in content marketing” above others in his article (Marketing Week). Firstly, as discussed, content marketing is more about focusing on the underlying realities and issues behind the products or services and therefore it is important *not plugging the product*. In many cases, it might be difficult avoiding mentioning products and services within your content, but it is better that people are educated about something and through that, they are more likely to trust the brands that are providing that information. Secondly, *making the content engaging, credible and simple* can turn out to be difficult. Even in the cases when the content is not particularly marketing- or sales-led, consumer cynicism can remain an issue when people see who is providing the information. The challenge is making sure that the content is credible and touches the audience's needs at a particular moment. Also, it is important to keep in mind that building trust may take time. The third big challenge is the one of *measurement*. Measurability is always important and in content marketing it is difficult as it is in no direct way linked to sales and it might be hard to know to know which pieces of content or which events had the most positive effect. However, the possibility of measuring how long people are spending watching content, the number of return visits and the social sharing of content, delivers valuable information of the content's effectiveness. (Hemsley, 2014)

Additionally, in terms of distributing the content marketing videos, the nature of the internet aside of the great benefits, it also has a downside. Viral phenomena, which means *spreading*

or becoming popular very quickly through communication from one person to another, especially on the internet (Cambridge dictionary, 2014) can either be a very good or a very bad thing. The thing about viral marketing is that the spreading of the message – as any virus – might be impossible to be controlled by the marketer. This could lead in some cases to negative associations with the brand and a dilution of brand assets if dissatisfied customers share their anger to their contacts. Because of this, marketers should consider trying out their viral marketing campaigns on a smaller scale. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2013, 502) Video also has to make its appeal to the viewer swiftly. According to research by Visible Measures, 20% of the viewers will click away from a video in 10 seconds or fewer and almost 60% by 2 minutes. Those numbers remain the same regardless of the video's length. (Follett, 2014)

3. VIDEO BASED CONTENT MARKETING IN FINLAND: RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

This chapter of the study concentrates on the results of the empirical research. The empirical part was carried out by interviewing three professionals of the field, all with different backgrounds in order to get a picture as diverse and profound as possible of the studied issue. The questions of the interview were based on the theory of the study and the aim was to get information of the perceptions of content marketing, as well as the current state, and the future of video content marketing in Finland. The interviewees of the study are the founder and CEO of digital video production agency Anatom Pictures, Jan-Erik Olin, Founder and CEO of digital agency OWL Helsinki, Isak Kullman and project director of marketing agency TBWA\Helsinki Markus Ahlbäck.

3.1 Background of the Case-Companies

Anatom Pictures is a creative video production company founded in Helsinki in 2010 by the first interviewee Jan-Erik Olin and the associate Tom Hakala. The company started off by making music videos and quickly broadened to marketing- and advertisement videos, in which the company is mainly focused nowadays. They offer a full service from planning, creating and producing, to publishing and distributing content to reach their customers' desired audiences. (Anatom pictures, 2014)

The second interviewee is the project manager Markus Ahlbäck from TBWA\Helsinki. TBWA\Helsinki is one of the biggest marketing agencies in Finland and it is a part of TBWA\Worldwide, which is a global network that brings together 11,000 people operating in 274 agencies worldwide. The company describes itself as an agency that “*creates and manages brand behavior in the modern world through disruptive ideas brought to life across the media arts landscape*”. The company states that its aim is to be not only the best marketing network but also one of the most creative companies in the world. In 2010, it was recognized by Advertising Age as the “Best International Network of the Decade”. (TBWA, 2014)

Third interviewee, Isak Kullman is the founder and CEO of the digital agency OWL Helsinki which focuses on video production. The company represents the newcomers of the industry, having been active since the early 2013. OWL Helsinki describes itself as a company that offers *Visual communication created through a mix of creativity, design and business understanding*. Kullman has worked in the marketing industry since 2009.

3.2 Concept of Content Marketing

The ambiguous nature of the term *content marketing* comes up also in the empirical part, as each interviewee have different descriptions on the subject, however with the same core idea. The broadness of the perception was the biggest difference. Ahlbäck (2014) describes content marketing briefly as *“slightly disguised marketing communication with entertaining or useful features for the end user, or doing something that is in itself cool, and adding brand image to it.”* Kullman (2014) started by highlighting the difficulty on where to draw the line on what is and what is not content marketing. He argues that the term is also often misused, and that it cannot be defined *solely* on the purpose, the platform, the format or the content. However, one main point was that content marketing should not be pushing the message to the customer. It should be something that the customer genuinely wants to engage in. Something that the customer wants to *see, share, discuss, experience or learn from*. Another essential point is that the belief in what is behind the message, be it a person or a brand, strengthens. Ideally it should make a brand less a corporation and more a friend, and to improve the brand's credibility. Ahlbäck (2014) also emphasized the importance of personality aspect in content marketing.

Olin (2014) states that from the marketing message creator's point of view, content marketing means presenting the marketer's desired message to the customer in an understandable and interesting way. The content marketing message has to fit the company's brand image in order to avoid giving a contradictory image to the consumer. Another ideal feature for a content marketing video in general, is that it *goes viral*, which

means spreading in the internet spontaneously, this is also something that the companies' actively pursue.

3.3 Overview of the Industry

All interviewees state that both the supply and demand in the video production industry have increased significantly in the past years. Olin (2014) argues that this has led to tightened competition in terms of both prices and quality of the work. Speaking of the important reasons to this transition, Ahlbäck (2014) points out that especially the platforms where to distribute the digital content (e.g. Youtube) have been the key factor in making the video marketing more customer-oriented. In addition, Kullman (2014) states that the fact that good quality video has become easier and cheaper to produce in a credible fashion has been one of the main reasons leading to the increase of the video use for marketing purposes.

Companies have also started investing more especially in video based content marketing. One reason for this is that since it is nowadays cheaper to make good quality videos in general, companies have realized that video can be used in so many more ways than just traditional TV-commercials, and that many different videos with slightly different content can be produced and used to build up a more comprehensive brand image (Kullman, 2014). The nature of content marketing video is seen as something that the customer can more easily relate to, in comparison to traditional TV-ads. One of the main advantages seen in content marketing video is that it can provoke interest through emotional experiences brought on by personal identification. (Ahlbäck 2014). Ahlbäck (2014) adds, that traditional TV-ads and content marketing videos are not necessarily so far apart any more. The often *seemingly rugged* nature of content marketing videos has been brought to TV. Content marketing videos often seem “less produced”, although they actually can be even more produced than a traditional TV-ad.

In an international comparison, the Finnish industry has its clear strengths and weaknesses. Olin (2014) argues that professionalism in video production in Finland is world class, but the budgets used in content marketing are significantly smaller compared to the bigger markets.

Particularly in content marketing, Ahlbäck (2014) claims that the Finnish industry is still very much in the learning phase, however some progress has been made in the recent years. Kullman (2014) says that Finnish marketing industry is very careful in what it does, that for example marketers want to see that certain concept or idea for a video has already been seen to work somewhere else. He adds that Finland is very advanced in technology, but significantly behind in the content.

Kullman (2014) argues that the main reason in being behind the frontrunners in content marketing videos, is that Finnish companies do not have the courage to invest in it in the long run. The companies are often being too hasty in their content marketing and only want to make a single video, instead of taking more strategic approach. And so, if they don't get the results they would have instantly wanted, they rule content marketing to be pointless. Due to its subtle nature, creating and shaping the brand image through successful content marketing may take years and this is not understood by many. (Kullman, 2014)

The interviewees all state that the example for video based content marketing in Finland is taken mainly from the bigger markets, the U.S., UK and Western Europe. The U.S is clearly the number one in content marketing, but the field is levelling. However, Kullman (2014) adds that although big markets with big budgets are a natural source to take influence from, nowadays thanks to the internet it is also easier to find influence from not so conventional sources, like India, for instance. Additionally, where the content marketing is done with small budgets, creativity is required and as such it is possible to find new cheap and creative solutions from seemingly unlikely sources. However, it has to be kept in mind that, content marketing can be very culture and market bound as same emotional appeals don't often apply in different nationalities and cultures.

3.4 Benefits, Challenges and Features of Video based Content Marketing

All the interviewees shared the same views about the most important aspects of video's benefits as a content marketing tool. The main points made were that the desired message can be presented in a quick, interesting and viewer-friendly way. The fact that video can combine so many features, (e.g. sound, moving/still picture) stimulate many senses at once and make the message more concrete and understandable, makes it generally more efficient way to touch the viewer (Kullman, 2014). Kullman (2014) adds that through touching the viewer, one may understand the message more profoundly and associate the message with the brand better. As content marketing videos are mostly distributed and shared in the internet, Ahlbäck (2014) states that the fact that audiences are moving more and more from television towards the internet is a clear advantage as it makes it possible to reach ever increasing number of viewers with content marketing videos.

3.4.1 Challenges

As one of the main threats, Olin (2014) names the risk of making a video with a message that can easily be misinterpreted or that can be conflicting with the brand's existing image. Ahlbäck (2014) states that "trying too hard" to make a clever or funny CM video might turn out to create a pretentious and factitious image of the brand. Also creating a content marketing video that is not enough related to the brand, in other words drifting too far apart of what the brand stands for, might end up in an awkward and confusing result and be a threat as such. Kullman (2014) highlights the aspect that the companies' managers might not realize how a modern viewer uses videos or how to benefit from the possibilities videos can offer. Also attempting to stuff too much information in too little time and space, with too little resources, easily leads to the message to fade or become distorted. This way the message might also be presented incorrectly and be inappropriate or even insulting. (Kullman, 2014)

3.5 Features, Appeals and Aims of Video Content Marketing

Kullman (2014) states that the versatility of the video use has increased significantly as big companies invest also in more "homemade" seeming material and small businesses are

nowadays ready to invest big in their content marketing. Also the use of different distribution channels is understood better, and same companies make content tailored for different platforms and purposes. Also timing of the videos has become increasingly important. (Kullman, 2014) Ahlbäck (2014) states that one characteristic element for content marketing videos is the seemingly realistic and homespun looks, even if the videos would actually have required more resources and production effort than a traditional TV-ad that looks neat and carefully finalized.

The rapid increase of the video use has resulted in the increase of the requirements of the quality of both the content and production. In general, the video has to be interesting in terms of both storytelling and visual presentation to stand out from the huge mass of videos. Today's viewer is also a lot more impatient, so the desired message is to be presented swiftly and clearly. Due to the viewer impatience, the length of videos in general has reduced as well and looks to reduce even more in the future. (Olin, 2014)

3.5.1 Appeals

In terms of message appeals used in content marketing, the interviewees highlighted the importance of emotional appeals. Olin (2014) stated that the term "feeling-video" is widely used in the industry, which refers to videos designed to provoke certain experience or emotion in the viewer and as such help form a desired image and association of the brand in the viewer's mind. In addition, Ahlbäck (2014) states that taking advantage of dramatic and surprise elements in the content are often used to help create these emotions in the viewer, to take the viewer through a scale of emotions in order to achieve a more profound impact. He adds that appealing to intelligence and humor is also widely used, humor especially in Finland. However as discussed earlier, using funny or clever content has its pitfalls, as it might backfire as appearing pretentious or inappropriate. Kullman (2014) argues that in content marketing rational appeals also play an important role, as the aim is often to be helpful. Therefore understanding the customers' needs and presenting them at the right moment is essential.

3.5.2 Aims

Strengthening the brand image is the number one aim in content marketing in opinion of the interviewees. Ahlbäck (2014) clarifies that although in any marketing, increasing the sales is always pursued, in content marketing it is aimed to be achieved through different kind of thought process. The feelings and emotions created by content marketing aim to improve the brand image, which will ideally lead to the purchase decision. In comparison to traditional advertising which often aims to generate more direct action. Ahlbäck (2014) also highlights importance of becoming “the customer’s friend” as one of the most essential aims in content marketing stating that *“If a brand sent you a friend request, you would accept it.”*

Kullman (2014) points out that video content marketing makes it possible to touch the customer in a way that other marketing communications can’t. It also makes it possible for the brand to highlight its own expertise by offering either to new or existing customers something useful or entertaining and to be there when the customer needs it. Being helpful and a “friend” is essential in generating customer loyalty. But in the end, the aim in marketing is always the increase of sales. Olin (2014) argues that as increase of the sales is naturally pursued with marketing in general, the downside is that a content marketing video’s direct effect in sales is really difficult to measure.

3.6 Platforms and Social Media

The use of online platforms such as *Youtube* and *Vimeo* has increased in an explosive fashion in the recent years. Expectedly, the interviewees as well highlight the platforms’ importance to the video based content marketing as one of the single most essential aspects. Without these reliable and functional platforms, it would be really difficult to reach audiences in such magnitude as now. Also the fact that these platforms have audiences of their own makes it possible to reach a lot of people outside of the initial target group. Youtube users for example, also create a lot of content of their own. This *user generated content* has driven the whole industry forward, as aspects of the Youtube phenomena have been adopted and actively searched to be used in content marketing and brand communications.

(Ahlbäck, 2014) Olin (2014) states that, as *Youtube* has been one of the key factors in the rise of content video marketing, especially the availability of millions of videos has contributed to the aforementioned viewer impatience, resulting in these risen requirements in video content and quality.

Kullman (2014) says that being able to globally distribute videos with no additional cost has been extremely essential in the development of the industry. He also points out that just uploading the video does not automatically gather views. Finding the meeting points with the audiences is still as crucial as ever. Therefore, paid advertisement space still plays an essential role aside of the social media, although “earning the media” is characteristic for good content marketing. *Call to action* (CAT) functions, which lead the viewer for example where the marketer’s service or product can be purchased, are becoming more common and important. Also different kinds of analytics provided by the platform are increasingly important in determining the video’s effect (e.g. ROI), aside of just the number of views. The analytics are likely to become more sophisticated and the use will increase in the future. However being global, faster and available for everyone is the most important aspect in these distribution platforms. (Kullman, 2014)

Many brands look to take advantage of the so-called *viral* phenomena, campaigns with marketing messages that spread in the internet spontaneously. Companies always want to increase brand awareness, directly or indirectly, as it almost always has *some* positive correlation to sales. It is also extremely important that the content appeals to the so called *opinion leaders*, the ones that are followed by many and whose shared material is considered worth taking a closer look into. In the social media one shares what one wants to share and therefore it makes the shared material at least somewhat credible. Due to the growing number of videos, the masses have become increasingly critical and therefore the video has to be more and more interesting or entertaining. (Ahlbäck, 2014) Olin (2014) also confirms that although ad space can be purchased from different channels of social media, the paid ad is practically never as credible as the one shared by peers. That’s why the spreading of the video in the social media has to be earned with good and entertaining enough material. (Olin, 2014)

As one of the most essential points in social media, Kullman (2014) points out that the potential customer can be reached without additional cost. Furthermore, nowadays people have gotten so used to having ads in their computers and mobiles, that the marketer is basically at the consumer's home or pocket without the consumer being bothered by it. Additionally, the nature of content marketing is that it is not traditional advertising as it is usually far less pushy or annoying than what an average consumer considers as advertising. As such, content marketing videos are not often considered as marketing by the consumer, but just nice, helpful or entertaining videos. Kullman (2014) adds that every company would have use for distributing own content through different free of charge social media channels. He also points out that social media is more than just e.g. Facebook, that different forums in the internet that for example provide the help of experts, also use content marketing in a way that is maybe traditionally not perceived as being one. An example could be a tutorial video that helps the customer with certain tasks while maybe subtly bringing to the viewer's attention that certain problem could be solved by certain product or service. In these circles the experts also create brands of themselves, through educational content marketing. (Kullman, 2014)

3.7 Future Predictions

When asked about how negative market fluctuations, such as recessions, affect the use of content marketing videos in general, all interviewees had a slightly different perception. However, because the use of video production in content marketing is an ongoing fad, none could say anything for sure. Olin (2014) said that it definitely has a negative effect, and as marketing budget is usually the one that is reduced first, video is probably among the first ones to be cut. Ahlbäck (2014) sees the issue in different light as he perceives that bad market situation might even have positive correlation to video use. This is because videos are nowadays relatively cheap to produce and the existence of cost effective platforms helps the distribution. According to Ahlbäck (2014), the biggest difference in the bad market situation is likely to be just in the distribution channels of the videos, cutting the budget from for example the TV-rights and concentrating more on the online content. Kullman (2014) argues that even though marketing budget is usually the first one to be cut, video is

nowadays so essential part of it that videos will always be made, whatever the situation. Kullman's (2014) view on the subject is that, the productions are likely to be smaller and fewer, and distribution channels might change in difficult market situations.

All three interviewees believe firmly that the video use in content marketing will increase even more in the future. Olin (2014) says that thanks to development of technology, it is possible to produce credible good quality videos cost effectively by basically anybody, leading to the competition being even tighter in the future. Ahlbäck (2014) believes that as even bigger audiences move from TV to the Internet, it makes increasing the use of content marketing worthwhile. However, the audiences become increasingly aware and critical about the features of content marketing, which raises the standard of the content in terms of entertainment and attractiveness. Also the possibilities that content marketing offers are being understood and are likely to be taken advantage of in the future.

Kullman (2014) states that content marketing will be used in more comprehensive way and that single phenomena will be integrated to be a part of bigger entities and connected to marketing communications as an essential part. Content marketing will be seen from a more strategic point of view and the projects will be more in long term. The differences in content marketing competition will even out as the use will become even more common. Kullman (2014) adds that, thanks to the diversification of content marketing, more than just the company's marketing personnel will have a chance to contribute significantly in how the content will be.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This section of the thesis summarizes the findings of the study's previous chapters. The conclusions based on the theory and empirical parts are also presented. The main objective

of the study was to examine the possibilities video format provides in content marketing as a part of modern marketing communications. The thesis's other aims were to study content marketing as a phenomenon and its features, as well as its role in the Finnish marketing and video production industry. The study was carried out by exploring the existing academic marketing literature, articles and researches, and also by empirical means through interviewing professionals of both marketing- and video production industry. The results of the empirical part support firmly the views presented on the theory section. Both parts indicate that the importance of video based content marketing in modern marketing communications has grown significantly and is likely to grow even more in the future.

Despite the popularity of *content marketing*, the term itself lacks an ultimate definition. However, after examining the literature and interviewing the professionals, the common perception of what is the core idea and what are the core elements of content marketing, were practically the same everywhere.

Content marketing is considered to be for example:

- Entertaining or useful
- Genuinely wanted to be engaged with
- Wanted to e.g. see, share, discuss, experience or learn from
- Brand image enhancing
- Not closely related to the label or product
- A pull, not a push
- A story
- Attracting

The biggest question is, where to draw the line between what is and what is not content marketing, as any marketing message might contain elements of content marketing and still not be considered as one. That classification may be up to an individual to decide with the given explanations. Based on the study, it can be said that video content marketing can be ideal for generating brand awareness, and shaping brand image and attitudes. Good content marketing can bring the brand closer to the customer in a friendly way, and help create more comprehensive brand image. The most essential findings regarding the features and

possibilities of video content marketing are listed in the tables below. The tables are divided into findings in theory part (table 1.) and empirical part (table 2.).

The theory part:

Table 1.

| | |
|---|--|
| Features and opportunities of video | Features and opportunities of video content marketing |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worth “1.8 million words” • Naturally engaging • Use is huge, will multiply • Ever increasing viewer numbers • Platforms • Measurability is easy in terms of views | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform and educate • Entertaining • Attracting • Storytelling • Ideally genuinely interesting content • Viral phenomena |
| Challenges | Aims |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not plugging the product • Making engaging enough content • Measurability • Backfiring of a viral campaign • Appeal has to be swift • Message coming out wrong | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing brand image • Brand awareness • Customer acquisition • Increasing sales (through brand image) |
| Appeals | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional • Rational • Humor | |

The Empirical part:

Table 2.

| Features and opportunities of video | Features and opportunities of video content marketing |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Versatility, possibility to combine sound and different visual elements • Possibility to present message in an interesting, entertaining and quick way • Viewer-friendly • Shareable • Online platforms & social media • Viral campaigns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homespun, realistic, naturally approachable appearance • Touching the viewer in a way other marketing communications can't • Creating more comprehensive brand image • Offering an emotional experience • Far less annoying compared to traditional advertising, often not perceived as marketing by the viewer |
| Challenges in content marketing | Appeals |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicting, distorted or confusing message • Might appear pretentious • Being unrelated • Not understanding the possibilities • Lack of strategic perspective • Being too cheap • Tight competition • Having to differentiate from the ever increasing mass | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional • Rational • Humor • Helping, educating, assisting |
| Aims | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand Image • Being customers friend • Highlighting own expertise • Increase of sales (indirectly) | |

As it can be seen from the tables above, the perceptions and findings related to video content marketing do not differ significantly between theory and empirical parts. The interviewees in the empirical part emphasized the brand's friendliness aspect and the fact

that the ever tightening competition sets the quality standards for the content to be higher and higher. Some researches of the theory part, concerning the increase of video use, confirmed and strengthened the hunch that video use will increase, both in general and in content marketing. The rapid advancing of technology leads to the conditions and competition in video production evening out even further, so the technological aspect is not likely to be an issue in the future, highlighting the actual content's importance. Diversification of the distribution channels is an extremely essential aspect for video content marketing. The free of charge platforms (e.g. Youtube) make it possible for a brand to tailor different content for different purposes, without having to pay for the additional distribution, which is ideal in order to create a more comprehensive brand image.

The AIDA-model demonstrated in the theory part could be seen in a distinct way in terms of content marketing. Mostly in content marketing, the marketing message is distinct from the traditional ones as it does not particularly aim in direct action, but to especially capture attention and arouse interest in the brand. However, if the brand is well enough established in the consumers head, it very well might lead to desire and all the way to the purchase. For example, let's say the first Red Bull mountain biking videos made the viewer think, "what is this Red Bull anyways" as nowadays seeing a Red Bull video would lead to the same customer go "maybe I'll go get me a Red Bull". But as said, it is not the product itself that is in the spotlight but the brand image, and when the content marketing is well enough executed, it can work even more efficiently in generating action than a marketing message designed for that particular purpose. In terms of the message structure, as the purpose of content marketing is not often directly to sell, but rather to enhance brand image, the traditional message structure issues do not necessarily apply. Using the given structure elements in the theory section and the nature of content marketing introduced, a stereotypical content marketing message structure could be: (1) letting the customer draw own conclusions, (2) present the essentialities in the end with a (3) positive, but realistic illustration of the brand's or product's qualities.

As suggestions for further studies, I would consider examining cultural differences in content marketing or exploring video content marketing from a more strategic point of view. As content marketing lacks academic literature, further studies should include more

interviewees, from even more diverse backgrounds. Content marketing as a part of marketing strategy would be an interesting study subject.

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ATTACHMENTS

Interview questions:

Backgrounds:

1. When have you begun working in your current position/the industry? What is the background of the company you work in?
2. How would you describe the development of the industry during your years active?
3. How has the companies' investing in content marketing videos changed during your years active?

General:

4. What does content marketing as a concept mean to you? (Briefly)
5. What do you consider to be the biggest advantages and opportunities of video as a format in content marketing?
6. What kind of possible threats, challenges or downsides video content marketing might have for a company?
7. How has the content of the videos changed during your time active? How do you think it will change in the future?
8. How would you describe the online platforms' (e.g. Youtube, Vimeo) importance to the development of video content marketing?
9. How would you describe the importance of social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) to the development of video content marketing?
10. How do you see Finland's progressiveness in the field of video content marketing in an international comparison? How is the Finnish industry different?
11. From where does Finland get its example for video content marketing? What countries or markets are the trendsetters/frontrunners in video content marketing?

12. What are the most essential appeals used in especially video content marketing (compared to other kinds or marketing communications)? How do you see the appeals will change?
13. How do you see the market fluctuations affect the use of video content marketing?
14. How do you see the use of video production develop as a tool of content marketing?
15. Especially what kinds of effects do you think companies pursue with video content marketing? How are these objectives different from other forms of marketing communications?