

**LAPPEENRANTA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

LUT School of Business and Management

Master's Programme in International Marketing Management

**THE ROLE OF LIVE STREAMING IN MARKETING  
COMMUNICATIONS AND CORPORATE BRANDING**

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## ABSTRACT

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The goal of this study is to examine the role of live streaming in marketing communications and corporate branding in Finnish B2B and B2C companies. Even though studies on new digital marketing communications methods are emerging, there is a clear need for better understanding on the subject. Especially videos and live streaming in the content marketing context lack a proper research.

The study is a qualitative case study, which has been carried out through semi-structured interviews for five case companies operating in both B2B and B2C markets. The study reveals the motives, usage purposes, objectives, benefits and challenges, and the process of live streaming, which are then reflected on the case companies' marketing communications and corporate branding practices and the earlier literature on the subject. The study reveals that the biggest benefits of live streaming include authenticity, which allows companies to differentiate and create brand awareness, and the possibility to reach a wider audience. However, in order to attract and engage audiences with live streaming companies need to understand their target groups and create content that resonates with the audience.

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Tämän työn tavoitteena on selvittää, miten suomalaiset B2B- ja B2C-yritykset hyödyntävät livestriimausta osana markkinointiviestintää ja yritysbrändäystä. Vaikka digitaalisen markkinoinnin ja markkinointiviestinnän tutkimuskenttä kehittyy kovaa vauhtia, parempaa tietämystä aiheesta kaivataan edelleen. Erityisesti videoiden ja livestriimauksen hyödyntäminen osana sisältömarkkinointia on jäänyt vähäiselle huomiolle.

Tutkimus on kvalitatiivinen tapaustutkimus, jossa haastateltiin viittä eri alalla toimivaa case-yritystä. Tutkimuksessa pyritään selvittämään livestriimauksen motiivit, käyttötarkoitukset, tavoitteet, edut ja haasteet sekä livestriimausprosessi, ja vertaamaan näitä yritysten markkinointiviestintä- ja brändistrategiaan sekä aiheesta tehtyihin aikaisempiin tutkimuksiin. Tutkimustulosten perusteella voidaan todeta, että livestriimauksen tärkeimmät edut ovat sen autenttisuus, jonka kautta yritykset voivat erottautua ja luoda bränditietoisuutta, ja mahdollisuus tavoittaa laajempia yleisöjä. Mielenkiintoinen ja kohderyhmille relevantti sisältö on kuitenkin avainasemassa yleisön houuttelemisessa ja osallistamisessa livestriimauksen kautta.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

*“The weakening of the control of media content by the major media organizations brings forth an era of a digital, networked world that blends commercial and noncommercial content, digital services of many types and, perhaps most importantly for consumers, interpersonal connectivity. The onus is on scholars and practitioners in marketing and advertising to develop the theories, concepts and methods to allow brands to successfully participate in this world.”* (Mulhern 2009)

The environment where today’s businesses have to operate in is shaped by globalization, digitalization, and information overload. This creates pressure for companies to differentiate themselves and participate in different conversations with various stakeholders. Companies are utilizing the power of branding to create competitive advantage, and different marketing communications channels play a big role in the process. However, the field of digital marketing communications is evolving quickly, and companies need useful frameworks to grasp the opportunities of these different channels.

Online videos and live streaming have been emerging topics in media and non-academic literature. Various companies are using videos for marketing communication purposes but there is an increasing interest towards live videos. The increasing usage of live streaming as a marketing communications tool in both B2C and B2B companies as well as a personal interest towards live streaming worked as the inspiration for this study, which examines how Finnish B2C and B2B companies are using live streaming as part of marketing communications and corporate branding. The study is a qualitative case study, which is conducted through five semi-structured interviews. Since the academic literature on live streaming is nearly non-existent this study aims at shedding light on the topic, and hopefully works as a motivation for further research.



## **1.1 Literature review**

The literary review is based on the academic literature on corporate branding, digital marketing communications and video marketing. Corporate branding is the oldest field of research, and there are several studies on the topic. However, studies on digital marketing communications have started to emerge as academics have realized the importance of providing a useful framework for companies. Even though several researches have been conducted on the topic, there are still several gaps in the research. Especially video marketing lacks a useful framework as well as live streaming since they are both fairly new topics for both companies and academics. However, it needs to be highlighted that the field of digital marketing and digital communications is changing continuously and academic literature generally follows practice.

Branding is a broadly examined area, and several researches can be found on brand building and brand management. Throughout the branding literature it comes evident that brands are the basis for long-term profitability and competitive advantage, and that there is a need for proper brand management (Aaker 1996, 8; Keller 1999; Keller 2009). Since then companies have realized the benefits of corporate brands compared to single product brands, and researchers have gotten interested in providing companies a useful framework for corporate brand building. Fetscherin and Usunier (2012) have noticed that most of the articles on corporate branding have been written in the field of business and management. Additionally, Pillai (2012) has identified that the literature has merged into streams of corporate brand, corporate branding, and corporate brand management, and that corporate branding is closely linked to terms like corporate image, corporate personality, corporate reputation, and corporate identity. Researchers (Aaker 1996, 117; Abratt & Kleyn 2012; Pillai 2012) agree that corporate brands provide economies of scale and scope when multiple product brands can be associated with one, broader, corporate brand, and Balmer and Gray (2003) note that corporate brands are the

basis for competitive advantage. Abratt and Kleyn (2012), on the other hand, argue that all organizations have a corporate brand whether they communicate it effectively or not.

Additionally, there is a good amount of literature on corporate brand building and management (Abratt & Kleyn 2012; Balmer & Gray 2003; Chang, Chiang & Han 2012; De Chernatony & Harris 2000; Hatch & Schultz 2003; Pillai 2012; Urde 2003). According to Urde (2003), corporate brand building needs to be based on core values that build the identity of a brand, and which work as guiding principles for internal and external brand building. There is also a notion in the literature that corporate branding process requires managing multiple elements. De Chernatony and Harris (2000) highlight the importance of observing the congruency between six identity components (vision, culture, positioning, personality, relationships, and presentation) and the external brand reputation, and Hatch and Schultz (2003) note that corporate branding needs to be based on the interaction between vision, culture, and image. Additionally, studies show that corporate brand management concerns both internal and external stakeholders, and the role of employees and organizational culture is vital (de Chernatony & Harris 2000; Hatch & Schultz 2003), but strategy, brand leadership, brand-focused HRM, and brand communications should also be taken into consideration (Chang, Chiang and Han 2012).

Corporate branding is part of a bigger concept of corporate marketing. According to Balmer and Greyser (2006), corporate marketing should integrate corporate identity, corporate branding, corporate communications, and corporate reputation. Similarly, Balmer (2006) presents a corporate marketing mix, which consists of character (corporate identity), culture (organizational identity), conceptualizations (corporate reputation), covenant (corporate brand management), constituencies (marketing and stakeholder management), and communication (corporate communication). Malmelin and Hakala (2009), on the other hand, state that brand

forms the center of communications and it steers the goals and objectives, communications channels, and strategy implementation. Thus, they propose a framework called *integrative brand management*, which has three dimensions: organization guided by the brand, communications guided by the brand, and reputation guided by the brand (Malmelin & Hakala 2009).

A central topic in research is marketing communication's role in corporate branding, and as the marketing communications environment and the way people interact are changing due to the technological development, there is a clear need for research on how branding should be done in the new digital era. Mulhern (2009) notes that the theory base for most marketing communications research is developed for mass communications, so a better understanding on digital media and communications strategy is needed. Additionally, Petek and Maja (2013) and Karjaluoto, Mustonen and Ulkuniemi (2015) have noticed that the implementation of new marketing communications tools is still in its infancy. However, studies on new marketing communications methods, such as social media marketing, content marketing, and video marketing, are gradually emerging.

Social media is a relatively recent and rapidly evolving area of research, and both academics and companies are lacking solid knowledge of it (Kilgour, Sasser & Larke 2015; Tsimonis & Diminiatris 2014). According to Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014), growth and popularity of social media, possibility to spread the brand name, presence of competitors in social media, corporate-level social media strategy, and cost reduction are external factors for social media usage in B2C environment, and the most important benefit of social media is to be able to engage with people who like the company. In addition to social media marketing, another interesting area of research is content marketing. Murthy (2011) examines the rise of thought leadership and content marketing as a differentiator and essential factor in business development in B2B context, and stresses that understanding potential customers and their buying cycles as well as creating

compelling and engaging content play a crucial role in thought leadership. Holliman and Rowley (2014), on the other hand, state that companies need to put more emphasis on their content marketing strategies because content is an important part of B2B buying processes and aims at shedding light on digital content marketing by creating a holistic framework for digital content strategies.

Additionally, multiple studies (Kilgour et al. 2015; Mulhern 2009; Valos, Haji Habibi, Casidy, Driesener & Maplestone 2016) address how digital communications can be integrated into traditional marketing communications. Mulhern (2009) proposes a framework for integrated marketing communications, which includes consumer insight, data-driven decision-making, cross-media integration and communications with a variety of stakeholders. Kilgour et al. (2015) have also noticed that consumer insight is the key to creating effective content marketing strategies. Additionally, Valos et al. (2016) state that traditional integrated marketing communications program should be modified in terms of strategy, message, organizational implementation, and measurement, in order to incorporate social media.

Using videos as part of marketing communications is a fairly new area for both companies and researchers. The earlier studies on video marketing focus heavily on examining consumer perceptions on video advertising, especially its intrusiveness and effectiveness (Brechman, Bellman, Robinson, Rask & Varan 2016; Goodrich, Schiller & Galletta 2015; Lee & Lee 2011; Li & Lo 2015; Logan 2013). Lee and Lee (2011) have studied the factors behind consumers' willingness to watch online video advertising and found that positive attitude towards watching online video ads and social pressure motivate consumers to watch online ads, and the expected outcomes of these ads include entertainment, information, relaxation, escape, passing time, and interaction. Additionally, Lee, Ham, and Kim (2013) have noticed similar motives for why people pass along online video advertisements. However, Logan's (2013) study reveals that advertisements in

online environment are overall seen more intruding, and that the entertainment value of an online ad does not contribute to an improved attitude towards advertising in online environment. This contradicts with a later study conducted by Goodrich et al. (2015) on the effects of length, humor, and informativeness of online ads on perceived intrusiveness and marketing outcomes, which states that informative and humorous ads are perceived less intrusive. Additionally, further studies on the effects of different ad elements, such as length, position, context congruity, on brand name recognition in online videos (Li & Lo 2015), and the effects of “limited-interruption” advertising, which refers to advertising used during the breaks in broadcast television (Brechman et al. 2016) have been conducted.

Luo, Wang, and Han (2013) aim at providing a more comprehensive picture on video marketing by examining the success factors behind a successful online video marketing project at an academic library in China. In the study the researchers found out that the four contributing factors to the success were that the video content was about the real campus life and it reflected the students’ experiences, it transmitted the content in a humorous, light-hearted, and refreshing style, social media was utilized in order to share the content and engage the audience, and it was done in co-operation with students (Luo et al. 2013). It can be noted that there are several gaps in the research with regard to video marketing, for example videos in the content marketing context, but there is an even bigger lack of research in the field of live streaming. One study on video streaming has been conducted by Coleen (2012), who describes a successful video streaming communication effort executed at California State University, where videos on YouTube and the library’s own web site were utilized in order to promote the library resources and services in an academic setting. The study concludes that usage of streaming videos allows libraries to market their services in a more visually appealing form, which might also result in a more positive viewer experience than what traditional text-based messages provide, and suggest that also public libraries could benefit from this.

To conclude, corporate branding is an important topic for both researchers and companies because it is a source for competitive advantage for companies. Communications play an important role in corporate brand building and management, and as new digital marketing communications channels are emerging, there is a clear need for more research on the topic. Based on the literature review it can be stated a useful framework on using videos in marketing communications is needed. For this research, live streaming was selected as the area of research due to the increasing usage of services like Periscope and Facebook Live by companies, and the lack of research on videos in the content marketing context. Additionally, live streaming is examined with relation to corporate branding, which requires efficient communications, and is an integral part of success of today's businesses.

## ***1.2 Research problem and questions***

The main problem of the research was identified through examining earlier studies and theories on marketing communications and corporate branding. Mulhern (2009) states that a better understanding on digital media and communications strategy is needed, and further examination of the topic revealed that there are certain gaps in the research. Tsimonis and Diminiatris (2014) and Kilgour et al. (2015) note that both academics and companies are lacking solid knowledge of social media, and Holliman and Rowley (2014) state that companies should put more emphasis on their content marketing strategies. Additionally, using videos as part of marketing communications is even newer area for both companies and researchers, and earlier studies on video marketing (Brechman et al. 2016; Goodrich et al. 2015; Lee & Lee 2011; Li & Lo 2015; Logan 2013) are heavily focused on examining consumer perceptions on video advertising, and its intrusiveness and effectiveness. As can be noticed, there are several research gaps regarding video marketing, for example how videos can be utilized in the context of content marketing, but there is an even bigger lack of research in the

field of live video streaming. Hence, the role of live streaming in marketing communication is a relevant and current topic to study.

It is also stated in earlier literature that a well-defined brand should be the base for corporate and marketing communications (van Riel and Fombrun 2007, 35), and that marketing communication contributes positively to brand equity by creating awareness, linking associations to the brand, creating positive judgments and feelings, and strengthening loyalty. Respectively, a strong brand increases the effectiveness of marketing communications. (Fill 2006a, 6-10; Keller 2009; Kotler & Keller 2009, 512) Thus, examining live streaming's role in corporate branding is an interesting and relevant area of research. Based on these facts, the main research question was formed:

*Q1: How are Finnish companies utilizing live streaming in marketing communications and corporate branding?*

Additionally, three sub-questions were formed to facilitate answering the main research question:

*S1: What are the motives, usage purposes, objectives, and benefits and challenges of live streaming?*

*S2: What is the process of live streaming?*

*S3: How does live streaming support corporate brand building and corporate brand strategy?*

### 1.3 Conceptual framework

Earlier literature on marketing communications and corporate branding forms the theoretical framework for the study, which aims at finding out how Finnish companies are utilizing live streaming as part of marketing communications and corporate branding. According to van Riel and Fombrun (2007, 35), corporate communications should be based on a well-defined brand, which then guides the marketing communications efforts. Thus, examining how live streaming supports corporate brand building and corporate brand management is justifiable.

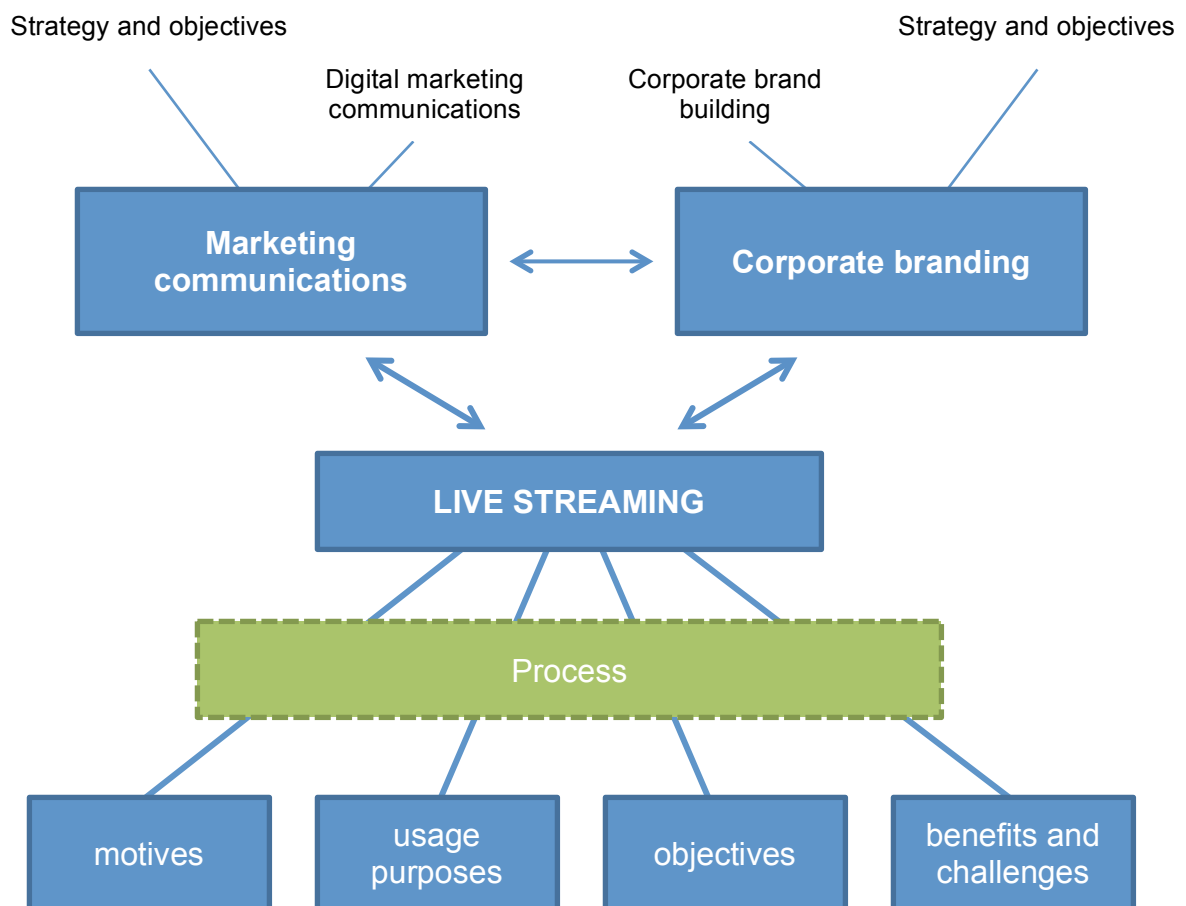


Figure 1. The conceptual framework of the research



All in all, the study reflects the role of live streaming in relation to the case companies' marketing communications and corporate branding strategies and practices through examining the motives, usage purposes, objectives, and benefits and challenges of live streaming. Additionally, the overall process of live streaming will be studied. Finally, the study aims at creating linkages between the empirical results of the research and earlier literature on corporate branding and marketing communications, and more specifically the different areas of digital marketing communications. The conceptual framework for the study is illustrated in Figure 1.

#### **1.4 Definition of key concepts**

The key concepts of the research were identified from the conceptual framework, and the theory presented in Chapters 2 and 3. The definitions clarify the main themes of the research and support understanding the study and its findings.

##### **Corporate brand**

Corporate brand is a long-term asset that reflects the whole offering of a company, and it captures the vision, values, personality, positioning, and image of the company (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 6). According to van Riel and Fombrun (2007, 107), corporate brand is *“a visual representation of a company that united groups of products and services, and makes it known to the world through the use of a single name, a shared visual identity, and a common set of symbols”*.

##### **Corporate branding**

Corporate branding refers to a set of activities performed by the company in order to build favorable associations and positive reputation among internal and external stakeholders (van Riel and Fombrun 2007, 107).

## **Marketing communications**

Marketing communications consists of communications activities that support the sales of products, services, and brands (van Riel & Fombrun 2007, 17). It is part of corporate communications and it can be used to inform, persuade, and remind consumers, either directly or indirectly, about the products, services and brands of the company. Companies can use marketing communications to link brands to people, places, events, other brands, experiences, and feelings, or to build relationships and establish dialogue with consumers. (Fill 2006a, 6, 8; Keller 2009; Kotler & Keller 2009, 510) According to Kotler and Keller (2009, 512), the eight biggest modes of marketing communication include advertising, sales promotion, events and experiences, public relations and publicity, direct marketing, interactive marketing, word-of-mouth marketing, and personal selling.

## **Digital marketing**

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 10) define digital marketing as “*achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies*”, and it involves managing the company’s online presence, such as the company web sites, social media, search engine marketing (SEO), online advertising, or e-mail marketing, which all aim at creating new customer relationships or managing existing ones through E-CRM.

## **Digital marketing communications**

Digital marketing communications can be characterized with infinite reproduction of content, consumer networking, user-generated content, and expansion of media (Mulhern 2009). Companies can have five types of online presence: transactional e-commerce sites, service-oriented relationship-building website, brand-building site, portal or media site, and social network or community site, which have

different functions of sales transactions, services, relationship-building, brand-building, and news and entertainment (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 21-22). Digital marketing communications channels include web sites, e-mail marketing, microsites, search and display ads, interstitials, online communities, mobile marketing, blogs, social networks and marketing, video and photo sharing sites, affiliate marketing, banner marketing, behavioral target marketing, content marketing, contextual marketing, native marketing, and search engine marketing (Chesebro, McMahan & Russett 2014; Keller 2009; Miller 2011, 65).

### **Social media marketing**

Social media marketing refers to the usage of social media web sites and different social media networks for promoting products or services (Investopedia 2017). According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 29-33), different types of social presence include social networks, social publishing and news, social commenting in blogs, social niche communities, social customer service, social knowledge, social bookmarking, social streaming, social search, and social commerce. Some of the social media channels, on the other hand, are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube (Sachs 2016).

### **Content marketing**

Content marketing refers to creating, distributing, and sharing compelling, valuable, relevant, and consistent content in order to attract and retain audiences, and ultimately to create profitable outcome (Content Marketing Institute 2016; Holliman & Rowley 2014). This content can be either static, such as web sites, or dynamic, such as videos and podcasts, which encourage engagement (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 43-44).

## **Video marketing**

Video marketing refers to using video content for marketing brands, products, or services, and belongs to the digital marketing context (The Digital Marketing Glossary 2013).

## **Live (video) streaming**

Video streaming refers to sending compressed content over the Internet that is displayed in real time. Thus, the content is a continuous stream of data, which is shown as it arrives. (Rouse 2017) Companies can generate streams in many ways: with smartphones, web cameras, and using video sharing services (Gilman 2015), and live videos can be broadcasted from a mobile device to multiple social media platforms (Hackl 2016). Live streaming platforms include Periscope, Facebook Live, YouTube, Meerkat, Blab, Twitch, YouNow, Livestream, Streaming Media, and Ustream (Calero 2016; Hackl 2016; Olenski 2015b; Weiss 2015).

## ***1.5 Delimitations of the study***

Theoretical delimitations have been made in the areas of branding and marketing communications. The study strives to find out how companies utilize streaming as part of external communications, and more specifically as part of marketing communications. Hence, the study does not cover other areas of corporate communications, such as internal, organizational or management communications. It should also be noted that the study is strongly linked to digital marketing communications, and does not cover offline marketing communications. Additionally, the study focuses on examining the role of live streaming with regard to corporate branding, which means that other types of branding, such as product and employer branding, are excluded from the study.

The research is limited to the Finnish market, and it studies five Finnish case companies. The companies are all from different industries and they operate either in B2C or B2B market, or both. Delimitation have not been made with regard to the nature of the market or type of the industry since live streaming is a relatively new marketing communications channel for companies, and too strict delimitations would have hindered the data collection. Thus, studying companies from different industries and markets permits a more robust examination of live streaming practices in Finnish companies. However, the results are tightly linked to the cases, which sets limitation to the generalizability of the research.

## ***1.6 Research methodology***

Live streaming as part of digital marketing communications is a very contemporary topic, and there are nearly no researches on the subject. Thus, an inductive research approach is taken in this study due to its suitability for examining new phenomena with only a limited amount of existing literature (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 127). The chosen research method is case study method, which according to Yin (2009, 4), is especially relevant when the research aims at gaining an extensive or in-depth understanding of a current phenomenon through posing “how” or “why” questions. An integral part of case study method is also forming a thorough theoretical framework, which guides the research process. Even though a steady framework on marketing communications and corporate branding could be formed, there is a paucity of prior academic literature on live streaming, and thus, theoretical statements could not be formed, and the purpose of the study is exploratory.

The study has a multiple-case design and it examines five different cases. Additionally, it is cross-sectional, which means that it studies one phenomenon, in this case live streaming, at a particular time and it is based on interviews carried over a short period of time (Saunders et al. 2009, 155). The empirical part of the

research was conducted through expert interviews. According to Saunders et al. (2009, 320, 322), semi-structured interviews are a suitable method for exploratory studies, and thus primary data was gathered from four semi-structured phone interviews and one semi-structured email interview. The structure of the interview was based on the theoretical framework, and it consisted of three parts: branding strategy and objectives, digital marketing communications strategy and objectives, and finally, live streaming practices in the case company.

The data analysis was conducted through coding, which means that different tags were created, under which the data from the interviews was combined. Codes were formed based on the three main themes of the research: branding, marketing communications, and live streaming. After the coding the research questions were answered, and ultimately, the reliability and internal and external validity of the research were examined.

## ***1.7 Structure of the thesis***

The study begins with an introduction, which presents the earlier researches on corporate branding and marketing communications, main research problem and research questions, conceptual framework, definitions of the key concepts, delimitations of the study, and the research methodology. Following the introduction, Chapters 2 and 3 present the theoretical framework for the study. Chapter 2 elaborates on marketing communications, and more specifically digital marketing communications, and Chapter 3 presents earlier theory on corporate branding. Subsequently, Chapter 4 describes the used research method and the different stages of the research, and in Chapter 5 the empirical results of the semi-structured interviews are opened and analyzed, and compared to the earlier theory on the subject. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by presenting the findings, managerial implications, and further research areas.

## 2 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

As marketing communications is becoming increasingly digital companies have new interactive channels to communicate with their stakeholders. The digital era has made it possible for companies to transmit brand images and create strong brand-customer relationships through new, interactive digital channels. In addition to other digital marketing methods, video sharing and streaming is gaining more foothold in brand creation in both B2B and B2C markets.

In order to understand the concept of marketing communications, it is crucial to take a look at the concept of corporate communications, which focuses on the organization as a whole. One definition for corporate communication is offered by van Riel and Fombrun (2007, 22, 25), who define it as managing all internal and external communications activities in order to create a specific starting point for communicating with stakeholder. It consists of management communications, marketing communications, and organizational communications. Management communications is the most strategic one and it refers to all management's communication to external and internal stakeholders, such as executive speeches. Marketing communications, on the other hand, has usually the biggest part of the budget out of all three, and it includes activities like product advertising, direct mail, personal selling, and sponsorships. Marketing communications is supported more or less by organizational communications, which includes public relations, public affairs, investor relations, environmental communication, corporate advertising, and employee communications. (van Riel & Fombrun 2007, 14)

Gillis and IABC (2011, 99) divide organizational communications into external communications, internal communications, and marketing communications. External communications include investor relations, media relations, public relations (PR), government and community affairs, philanthropy, corporate websites and blogs, and managing the corporate reputation. Internal

communications include employee newsletters, business update meetings, employee benefits and policy materials, Intranets, collaboration systems, and electronic news displays. Additionally, new social media tools, such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are migrating into organizations. Marketing communications, on the other hand, include advertising and sales materials, trade shows, customer help and feedback functions, mobile promotional apps, and e-commerce tools. (Gillis & IABC 2011, 99, 195) Creating a common starting point for corporate communication includes defining strategy, identity and brand, which form the base for management communication, marketing communication, and organizational communication (van Riel & Fombrun 2007, 35). The concept for corporate communications is illustrated in Figure 2.

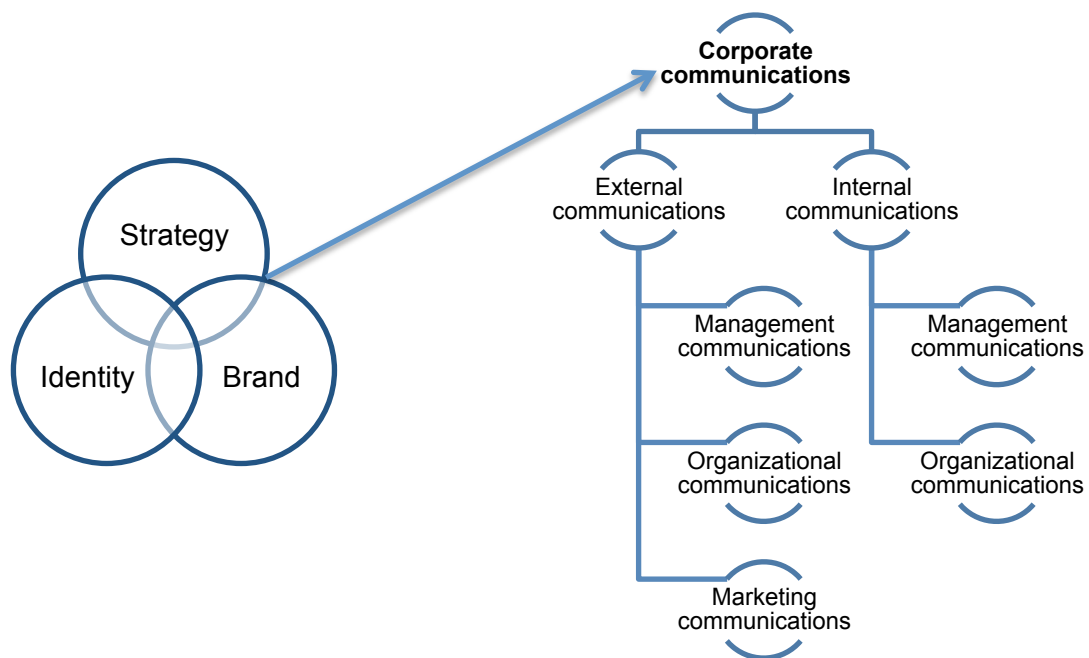


Figure 2. Corporate communications (adapted from Gillis & IABC 2011; van Riel & Fombrun 2007)

In general, marketing communications consists of communications activities that support sales of products, services and brands (van Riel & Fombrun 2007, 17). It is



part of corporate communications and it can be used to inform, persuade, and remind consumers, either directly or indirectly, about the products, services and brands of the company. Companies can use marketing communications to link brands to people, places, events, other brands, experiences, and feelings, or to build relationships and establish dialogue with consumers. In fact, today's marketing is more and more based on relational exchanges, and marketing communication is the enabler of company-stakeholder relationships. The main elements in marketing communications include engagement, audience-centricity and relationship building, and its main purpose is to serve its audience. Marketing communications contributes positively to brand equity by strengthening loyalty and creating brand images. Reciprocally, having a strong brand results in increased effectiveness of marketing communications, which means that consumers are more willing to receive marketing communications messages from a company and interpret them positively. Additionally, it is a powerful tool for increasing sales and shareholder value. Effective communication with all the stakeholders and the general public, which differ greatly from each other, requires companies to use different kind of communication methods. (Fill 2006a, 6-10; Keller 2009; Kotler & Keller 2009, 510)

Marketing communications messages are transferred through different tools, in other words the marketing communications mix. It should not be confused with media, which refers to the means by which messages are transmitted. (Fill 2006a, 20) According to Kotler and Keller (2009, 512) the eight biggest modes of communication include advertising, sales promotion, events and experiences, public relations and publicity, direct marketing, interactive marketing, word-of-mouth marketing and personal selling. As customers are spending increasing amount of time online new interactive marketing communications channels have emerged: websites, e-mail marketing, microsites, search and display ads, interstitials, sponsorships, alliances, online communities, mobile marketing, blogs, social networks and marketing, video- and photo- sharing sites, affiliate marketing,

banner marketing, behavioral target marketing, content marketing, contextual marketing, native marketing, and search engine marketing (Chesebro, McMahan & Russett 2014; Keller 2009; Miller 2011, 65). The vast amount of different online marketing communications methods reflects the fact that Internet enables companies to communicate with their stakeholders in more diverse ways than before.

The selection of marketing communications tools depends on four factors: the desired control over the channel, financial resources, credibility and the size of the target audience, and geographic scope (Fill 2006b, 26-27). Some of the questions that need to be asked regarding the communications channel selection include (Keller 2009):

- What image does a certain communication channel create?
- How are these images linked to the brand?
- How do the created images affect the consumers' willingness to purchase and use the brand?

Additionally, marketing communications is affected by internal, intermediate and external influences. Corporate and brand strategies as well as resources and a company culture are big internal influences; they can be fully managed. Intermediate influences, such as competitors, marketing agencies, customer and stakeholders can be partially managed. External influences, however, are totally uncontrollable and they include the macro-economic factors: political, economics, social, technological, environmental and legal. (Fill 2006)

The various challenges that organizations are facing today are driving companies to integrating their communications (van Riel & Fombrun 2007, 3). In order to transfer a consistent brand image and finally enable strategic positioning the marketing communication activities need to be integrated, which contributes to the

success of the marketing communications (Keller 2009; Kotler & Keller 2009, 512). Mulhern (2009) notes that integrated marketing communications means that a company needs to transmit messages to both internal and external stakeholders, i.e. employees, business partners, retailers and reporters and be relevant to all of them.

Percy (2008, 5) defines integrated marketing communications (later IMC) as *“planning and execution of all types of advertising-like and promotion-like messages selected for a brand, service, or company, in order to meet a common set of communication objectives, or more particularly, to support a single ‘positioning’.*” Marketing communications comprehends all the contact points between the brand and the market, which makes IMC an integral part in creating strong brands and highlights the importance of message consistency. The key thing in the planning of IMC is the organization’s ability to deliver a consistent message. Nowadays, integrated marketing communications has shifted strongly towards creating strong customer relationships, which is done through developing an integrated communications program, which results in a desired behaviour from the target audience. The planning process of IMC comprehends identifying target groups, setting objectives for these groups, developing marketing communications that meets the objectives, and delivering the message the best possible way. During this process the suitability of different advertising, promotion and communications options for delivering the objectives will be considered, which is a central idea in IMC. (Percy 2008, 5, 6, 25-26)

The framework for integrated marketing communications, which includes consumer insight, data-driven decision making, cross-media integration and communications with a variety of stakeholders, is now evolving. When earlier integrated marketing communications has been under the power of the communications department, now digitalization enables all stakeholders to communicate with each other – offering a possibility for building communities and strengthening the brand.

(Mulhern 2009) The planning process of integrated marketing communications is presented in Figure 3.

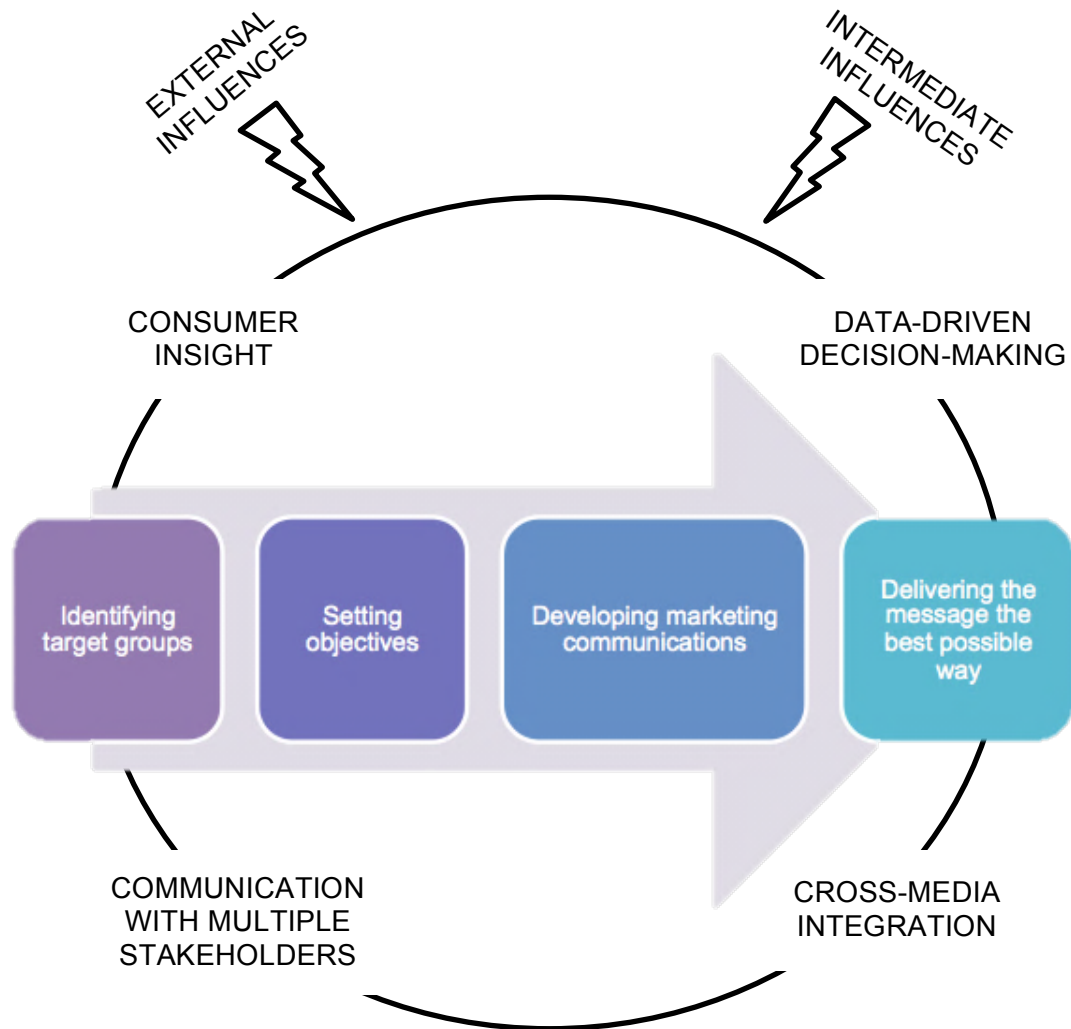


Figure 3. The planning process of integrated marketing communications (adapted from Fill 2006; Mulhern 2009; Percy 2008, 25-26)

## **2.1 Digital marketing communications**

Internet has profoundly changed marketing and advertising, and the way we interact, and distribute and receive information. The rapid development of technology has changed mass media, and communication is taking a new shape as audiences can more actively choose what content they consume, where, and when. (Chesebro et al. 2014; Kotler & Keller 2012) The new media environment is characterized with six features: individual centered, untethered, interactive, concurrent media exposure, multifaceted simultaneous consumption and convergence. New digital communication systems have shifted from mass-communication to individual-centered, and audiences have more control over the content that is produced, consumed and distributed. Media is no longer tight to a predetermined time and place but it has become mobile: people can choose where and when to read media. During media consumption they can enter, stop, pause, exit and re-enter the media. Additionally, media has become interactive, which means that audiences can extend or enhance their media experience. Interactivity enables the content producer and the audience to create a deeper relationship. Concurrent media exposure means that people are accessing multiple media channels at the same time. Due to the increasing trend of multitasking, it is highly important to pay attention to a single media experience produced. Convergence means that different media channels are merging and the boundaries are blurring, mostly due to the usage of smartphones and mobile devices. (Chesebro et al. 2014)

The Internet creates a networked information system, and its features include (Mulhern 2009):

- Infinite reproduction and sharing: media content can be shared in a digital world almost without cost.

- Modularity of content: pieces of information can be unbundled and bundled freely and according to own desire.
- Consumer networks: digitalization changes the way consumers interact with each other, which affects the buying behaviour and purchase decision making.
- User-control and content production: consumer can manage what content they receive and produce their own content.
- Content can be highly customized.
- Information streams: data on how people interact with information.

Digitalization has a massive effect on marketing communications. It enables infinite reproduction of content, consumer networking, user-generated content, and expansion of media. (Mulhern 2009) Data on consumer behaviour online is gathered constantly, which allows businesses to send tailored messages to different segments and engage with them. Real-time data makes it possible to fine-tune customer valuation and segmentation, customer response analysis, market intelligence and financial models. (Keller 2009; Kotler & Keller 2009, 57; Mulhern 2009) Online marketing is more influential than any other marketing method since it can be shared among different audiences, which makes the reach wider and the message more meaningful (Chesebro et al. 2014).

Additionally, the digital age has enabled new, interactive ways to communicate, and it enables consumers and brands to connect in a new level (Chesebro et al. 2014; Fill 2006b, 276, 281; Mulhern 2009). Communications is not a linear process anymore where the receiver is passive, but new technology has enabled more interaction. Interactivity is an antecedent of a dialogue, and the notion that companies are more willing to have a conversation with their stakeholders indicates there is more emphasis put on relationships. (Fill 2006b, 42-43) The growth of digital media has made it crucial for companies to include customer's conversations as part of their communications and manage these proactively in

different social networks. Three elements, which are pivotal for digital communications nowadays, include customer engagement, permission marketing, and content marketing. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 43-44)

The main challenges in digital communications include complexity (configuring digital marketing campaigns), responding to competitors (monitoring competitor activity), responding to changes in technology (keeping knowledge up-to-date), cost (high cost-per-click), and attention (customers becoming blind to ads). (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 43) In addition, digitalization makes it more challenging to manage brand messages across multiple channels, and thus, more efficient media planning tools are needed (Mulhern 2009).

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 10) define digital marketing as “*achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies*”, and it involves managing company online presence, which might include various forms, such as company websites, social media, search engine marketing (SEO), online advertising, or e-mail marketing. All these interactions aim at creating new customer relationships or managing existing ones through E-CRM. In order to create a strong digital strategy, it is crucial to consider the three types of media channels that exist today: paid (advertising, i.e. paid search and display ads), earned (partner networks, i.e. editorial publications, word-of-mouth), and owned media (company’s digital properties, i.e. websites, blogs, social presence). Generally, these three types overlap. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 10-12)

Companies can have different types of online presence, which can be divided into five categories: transactional e-commerce sites, service-oriented relationship-building website, brand-building site, portal or media site, and social network or community site, which have different functions of sales transactions, services, relationship-building, brand-building, and news and entertainment. Companies can combine these different categories depending on the market they serve, and

different types can be combined within a site. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 21-22)

Digital marketing strategy should be based on multichannel marketing, which means that online channels and traditional channels are integrated and interacting with each other. A good digital strategy should (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 14):

- align with the overall business strategy.
- have clear objectives with regard to business and brand development, leads, and sales.
- incorporate a compelling and differentiated value proposition.
- have a well-specified mix of online and offline communication methods.
- support customer journey and manage online customer lifecycle, including attracting visitors, converting them into customers, and ensuring retention and growth.

Digital marketing strategy development process involves four stages: setting e-marketing objectives, defining e-marketing strategy, implementing e-marketing plan, and measuring and improving (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 25). The aim in creating digital marketing communications strategy is to choose the channels, which are the most cost-efficient in achieving communications and sales objectives. When choosing the channels marketers both a macro and micro perspective need to taken into consideration. This means that the selected channel is effective and efficient independently but also well integrated with other selected online and offline channels. When looking at different online channels in micro perspective they allow extremely targeted messages, which can have an effect on the brand building blocks: salience, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings, and resonance. The six criteria, which are relevant, when considering the macro perspective, are: coverage, contribution, commonality, complementarity, versatility



and cost. (Keller 2009) Moreover, digital media channels should support business goals. RACE framework, developed by Smart Insights, can be utilized for turning digital marketing efforts into commercial value. The four steps of the framework include: reach (building brand awareness), interact (creating engagement with the audience), convert (turning audience to fans, leads or sales), and engage (building customer relationships and retaining them). (Chaffey 2016) The digital channel selection process presented by Keller (2009) combined with RACE framework is illustrated in Figure 4.

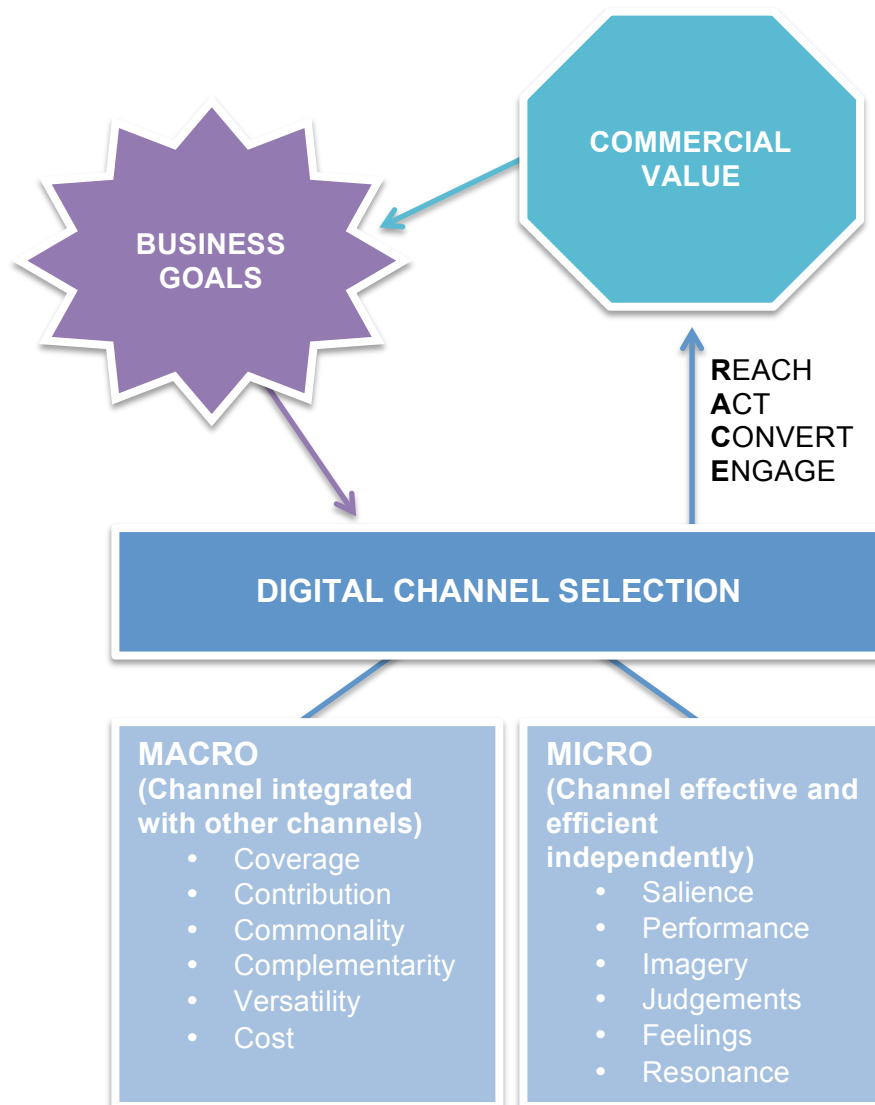


Figure 4. Digital channel selection (adapted from Chaffey 2016; Keller 2009)

Companies are gradually moving towards digital marketing communications, but in some industries the adoption is slower. Karjaluoto, Mustonen and Ulkuniemi (2015) have studied the usage of digital marketing communications (DMC) by industrial companies, and noticed that the usage of web sites, digital sales materials, and e-mail have increased in industrial companies, and DMC is mainly used for customer support and building brand and customer relationships. However, DMC is not in a central role, and its implementation and planning is not done thoroughly because industrial companies have a preference for personal communications due to the complex and long-term nature of their business relationships. (Karjaluoto, Mustonen & Ulkuniemi 2015)

Digital marketing communications includes various concepts, which evolve constantly as technology advances. Concepts related to the scope of the research include social media marketing and content marketing. These are both connected to live streaming, since live streaming is usually shared in social media and includes content that resonates with the audience.

### ***2.1.1 Social media marketing***

Marketing via social media has gained importance due to Facebook and other similar social media networks, and it has generally been more popular among B2C brands (Thompson 2014). Social media marketing is an important element in online marketing due to its customer engaging nature (Chaffey & Smith 2008). However, it is a relatively recent and rapidly developing environment, and both academics and companies are lacking solid knowledge on it (Tsimonis & Diminiatris 2014). The different types of social presence include social networks, social publishing and news, social commenting in blogs, social niche communities, social customer service, social knowledge, social bookmarking, social streaming, social search, and social commerce. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 29-33) Some

of the social media channels for businesses include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, and Yelp (Sachs 2016).

Growth and popularity of social media, possibility to spread the brand name (i.e. likes, shares, re-tweets), presence of competitors in social media, corporate-level social media strategy, and cost reduction are external factors that push the companies to use social media. Companies use social media for organizing various competitions, communicating their daily activities, introducing new products and services, providing information and advice, and serving customers. Companies feel that the most important benefit of these social media actions is to be able to engage with people who like the company, but other expected benefits include (Tsimonis & Diminiatris 2014):

- Creating, strengthening, and enhancing relationships with customers.
- Interacting and engaging with customers better than before.
- Listening to customer needs.
- Gaining brand awareness.
- Accessing new customer groups with targeted messages.
- Promoting products in a more indirect way.

The social media strategy process, illustrated in Figure 5, begins with examining the external and internal factors, which affect the firm's social media usage, and whether to get involved in social media. When the social media channels have been chosen, the company needs to define, implement and follow up the different activities. Depending on the results of the social media presence companies might revise their social media strategy, and targeting and positioning, reconsider the expected outcomes, or adjust social media activities or design new ones. (Tsimonis & Diminiatris 2014) Additionally, according to Valos et al. (2016), traditional integrated marketing communications program should be modified in

terms of strategy, message, organizational implementation, and measurement, in order to incorporate social media.

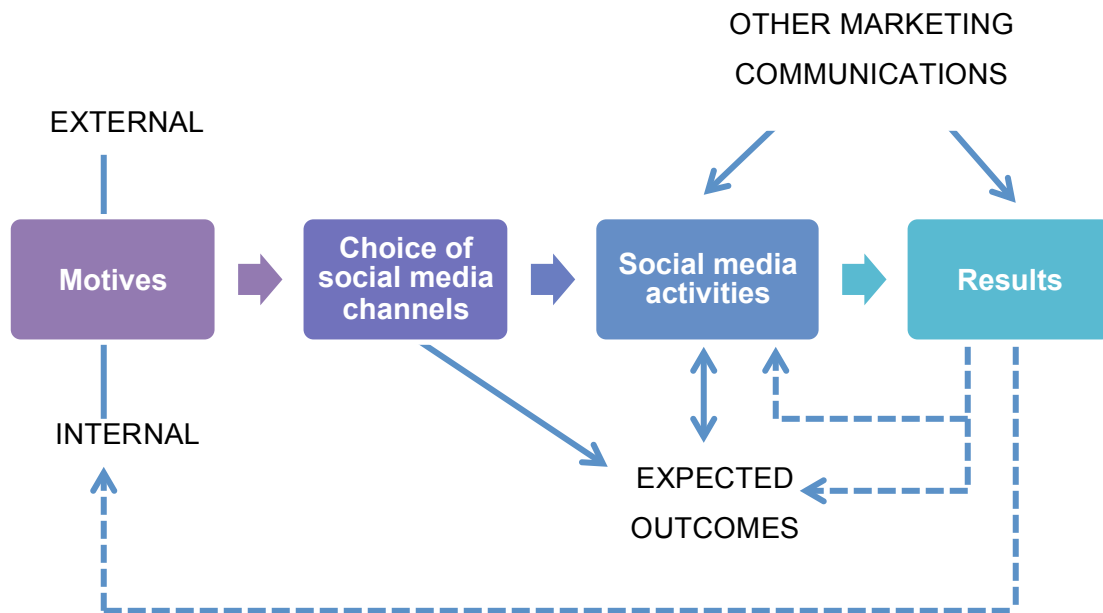


Figure 5. Social media strategy process (Tsimonis & Diminiatris 2014)

### 2.1.2 Content marketing

As a counterforce for interruptive marketing, permission marketing has emerged, which means that companies are seeking customers' permission before engaging with them. Often this means also providing something in return in a form of information or entertainment. Permission marketing requires compelling content, and that is where content marketing comes into picture. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 43-44) Content marketing differentiates companies and it is an essential factor in business development especially in B2B context (Murthy 2011), and in fact, according to a survey conducted by eConsultancy, content marketing and digital marketing techniques are a top priority for both B2B and B2C marketers (Holliman & Rowley 2014). Content Marketing Institute defines content marketing as creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content in order to

attract and retain audiences, and ultimately to create profitable outcomes (Content Marketing Institute 2016). This content can either be static, such as websites, or dynamic, such as videos and podcasts, which encourage engagement. The challenge in content marketing is the amount of different contents delivered in multiple platforms but engaging with customers is vital for companies. Some of the considerable elements in content marketing include (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 43-44; Halvorson & Rach 2012, 119):

- Engagement value
  - Which kind of content resonates with the target audience and what is the best type of content for the target audience?
- Media
  - What are the best media formats to communicate the key messages? Should the content be plain text, rich media, such as audio or streamed videos?
  - Do you have the needed resources (time, knowledge) to execute these formats?
- Audience
  - Where are the audiences?
- Syndication to different sites
- Participation
  - Content should encourage comments, ratings, and reviews, which then need to be managed.
- Access platforms
  - Is the content accessible on desktops, laptops, and mobile devices?

Choosing the right channels is essential in content marketing (Halvorson & Rach 2012, 119). In the era of content marketing, marketers do not need to go where customers are, but instead direct customers towards the company and the valuable content through different digital channels. Different digital channels and their

content have a different role in that process. The content can be used to reach, engage, or activate the audience. For example LinkedIn or Twitter can be used to reach the audience, which are then directed to a blog that engages, and through the blog the audience is guided to a website, which activates the audience, and possibly provides a lead. However, everything begins with listening to the market and gaining a better understanding on customers needs and responding to those with content. (Tanni & Keronen 2013, 39-40) Additionally, Kilgour et al. (2015) note that consumer insight is the key to creating effective content marketing strategies, and Murthy (2011) adds that understanding potential customers and their buying cycles as well as creating compelling and engaging content play a crucial role in thought leadership. Table 1 lists different digital channels and their features: whether they can be used for listening, reaching, engaging, or activating the audience, what is the length of the content lifecycle in the channel, and what is the role of that particular channel in the overall digital channel mix.

One motive for using content marketing is also the fact that organizational buying process requires information gathering before contacting possible suppliers. Companies can increase the value of content through co-creation, which has an effect the corporate brand. It is also important to focus on the needs of the target market and not use content marketing to transfer selling messages, but instead use storytelling. The main objectives for content marketing include generating leads, and creating and building brand awareness and a trustworthy brand. Valuable and relevant content is an excellent way to increase the attractiveness of inbound marketing and to build brand. There are also several challenges with creating a digital content marketing strategy: developing useful metrics and dashboards, recruiting capable storytellers, creating content with value to the customers, and making a change from a traditional selling mindset towards a relationship and reputation focused content marketing. (Holliman & Rowley 2014) According to Holliman and Rowley (2014) the following aspects are central in content marketing:

- Helping customers through digital channels, instead of selling
- Creating long-term relationships with content
- Prioritizing long-term profitability over short-term sales or lead generation
- Integrating digital content marketing with other marketing activities
- Understanding customer needs in different points of the buying process
- Developing suitable metrics

Content marketing is relevant especially for B2B companies: the expertise of the company can be put in the center of marketing through content strategy, which ultimately enables the company to respond to their customers' needs better than before. Creating expertise-intensive content marketing can affect the customer purchase process by providing information even before the customer has a purchase need, which makes it important for companies to shift from product advertising towards thought leadership. (Tanni & Keronen 2013, 12, 23) Tanni and Keronen (2012, 23) mention that content marketing is compelling because it includes expert interpretations on the current situation in a specific field, advice on developing skills and procedures, and interpretations that help understand changes. Thought leaders need to listen to their customers in order to gain a better understanding on their needs, but they also need to produce content that is relevant, reliable, and approachable. (Tanni & Keronen 2013, 27) Thought leadership can be developed through various types of content marketing, such as white papers, e-books, email newsletters, webinars, wikis, research and survey reports, photos and graphs, blogs, and finally audio and video (Meerman Scott 2010, 143-146). Content strategy is about guiding customers in digital environment, and it includes five steps (Tanni & Keronen 2013, 179):

1. Edge: Which expertise that we possess do our customer value?
2. Information window: How do we attract, engage and activate?
3. Content paths: How do we guide information searcher online through different channels?

4. Implementation: Who are involved in the every day work?
5. Measuring: How well has the content marketing succeeded online and in the customers' work?

Table 1. The nature of different digital channels and their suitability for publishing and consuming different contents (Tanni & Keronen 2013, 49-50)

Channel	Listening	Reaching	Engaging	Activating	Content lifecycle	Role in the mix of digital channels
Website	✓		✓	✓	Long	Combines the online presence, ensures the continuation of "online story"
Blog	✓		✓	✓	Long	Increases client value, engages clients into the company message, and enables interaction
Facebook	✓	✓			Short	Enables listening to the industry influencers and gaining followers, directs towards engaging content
Twitter	✓	✓			Short	Enables listening to the industry influencers and gaining followers, directs towards other engaging content or contacting
YouTube			✓	✓	Long	Increases client value by solving a problem through quality instruction videos, directs towards other engaging content or contacting
Pinterest/Instagram		✓	✓	✓		Increases client value by solving a problem through visualization, directs towards other engaging content or contacting
LinkedIn	✓	✓			Short	Enables listening to industry influencers, participating in conversations, gaining followers, directs towards other engaging content or contacting
Discussion forums	✓		✓		Long	Enables listening to industry influencers, participating in conversations, helping and being present, directs towards other engaging content or contacting
SEO	✓	✓		✓	Long	Reaches information-searching clients, directs to all different channels based on used search terms, listening to search behavior helps understanding clients
Slideshare	✓		✓	✓	Long	Increases client value by solving a problem through good presentation material or visual information, directs towards other engaging content or contacting
Articles on a website			✓		Long	Increases client value by solving a problem, directs towards other engaging content or contacting
Info graphics		✓	✓	✓	Long	Increases client value by solving a problem through visualization, directs towards other engaging content or contacting
Direct e-mail		✓		✓	Short	Reaches information-searching clients, directs towards engaging content



## **2.2 Online video marketing**

Since the first video was downloaded on YouTube in 2005 the consumption of online videos has increased significantly, and they have become a popular component of the whole online experience. In addition to YouTube, various other online video sharing platforms have gained popularity, such as Vimeo, Vine, Tudou, Hulu, and Dailymotion, which are used for entertainment, education, political, and social purposes (Chesebro et al. 2014), and videos can be seen in other social channels and blogs (Gamble 2016, 37). Additionally, videos are gaining significance in corporate communications (Kurio 2015; Shai 2015; Thompson 2014). Different video formats, such as live streaming, are booming in the era of visual marketing and firms are starting to realize their potential (Kurio 2015; Tivi 2015).

### **2.2.1 Videos in marketing communications**

Whereas in 2010 companies were still experimenting with videos (Meerman Scott 2010, 146), today companies are starting to realize the benefits of videos and utilize them as part of their internal and external communications (Kurio 2015; Thompson 2014; Tivi 2015), and many are predicting videos to gain even more significance in the future (Shai 2015; Thompson 2014). 63 per cent of the respondents of a study conducted in 2014 by Demand Metrics state that the spending for video marketing is on the rise in their company. A bigger investment in video marketing is likely to happen in the future as 82 per cent of the survey respondents have experienced video marketing successful. (Thompson 2014) The power of video marketing is its low cost. Companies can produce videos as part of their content marketing strategy in fairly low budget and still get good return on investment. (Litt 2014)

Companies are using video marketing as part of their brand development and demand generation strategies. Videos are used as a way of engaging customers and enhancing the relationship with them, since videos are both educating and entertaining. (Litt 2014) Videos can be used for multiple purposes: for brand awareness, product advertising and demonstrations, retail promotions, direct sales, product support, customer testimonials, case studies, internal trainings and employee communications, recruiting, webinars for customers, partners and integrators, conferences and events, management messages, and video blogs. (Litt 2014; Miller 2011, 11-17, 268-271; Shai 2015) Miller (2011, 64) notes that promotional videos need to be subtle, and videos need to have value for the audience. The provided information in the video need to support and supplement the message the company is transmitting in other online and offline channels, and the key is to keep the message consistent in all channels, including YouTube (Miller 2011, 64-65). Video content is a great tool for supporting thought leadership (Meerman Scott 2010, 146), personalize the company and enable direct contact with customers (Miller 2011, 64-65).

Some companies are embedding videos, which are hosted at YouTube or other additional video site, into their blogs or other online channels. Videos can be shared to the target audience in the following ways (Meerman Scott 2010, 146, 208):

- Posting it on a video-sharing site and sharing a link to the content.
- Embedding it into a blog, website or news release.
- Developing an online video channel with own URL.
- Encouraging customers to generate content.

Videos are a good way to increase brand awareness, lead generation and conversion on websites (Litt 2014; Shai 2015; Thompson 2014). According to AOL Platforms' study YouTube has been proved to convert more customers than other

online platforms. If a viewer enjoys the video content it increases their intent to purchase by 97 per cent and brand perception by 139 per cent. Positive attitude towards online video ads and social pressure have been proved to affect consumers' willingness to watch and share online videos (Lee & Lee 2011; Lee et al. 2013), and informative and humorous ads are perceived less intrusive (Goodrich et al. 2015). In addition to its remarkable results with regard to conversion, video marketing can easily be tracked and measured in order to gain a better understanding of customer needs. To capture the maximum results video marketing needs to be interconnected with marketing automation platforms and CRM tools. (Belicove 2014; Litt 2014)

When thinking about video marketing strategy, it is crucial to have a clear picture of what you want to achieve with marketing communications, and how video could possibly be utilized to achieve those objectives. Strategy for videos is similar than in overall marketing communications (Miller 2011, 22-35, 65):

- Who are the customers?
- What are the customer needs?
- What are you promoting? Company, brand, solution, employee training?
- What is the message?
- How will the results be measured?
- What type of content helps achieving the goals?
  - Repurposed commercial, infomercial, instructional video, product demonstration, customer testimonial, company introduction, expert presentation, business video blog, executive speech, company seminar, or customer or employee generated video
- How does it fit to your overall marketing mix?
  - Does it stand alone or is it part of some other campaign?

Creating video content has the same objective than other content marketing: targeting the target audience with information that addresses a problem they are facing. However, video marketing requires investing in additional equipment, such as video cameras, microphones, and special software, unlike text-based content marketing. Additionally, time needs to be invested in editing the videos. (Meerman Scott 2010, 207)

### ***2.2.2 Live streaming in marketing communications***

In addition to traditional online videos, there is a clear trend in real time videos and live streaming (Gilman 2015; Hackl 2016; Kurio 2015; Tivi 2015; Weiss 2015). According to a study by Finnish media agency Kurio (2015), Snapchat, Periscope, Facebook Live, and Blab are mentioned as the “hottest channels” for 2016 and marketing communications experts recommend companies to explore the possibilities of these channels, whether with event marketing or offering a behind the scenes video of a certain brand (Kurio 2015; Tivi 2015). Hackl (2016) notes that using live streaming requires stepping out of the box, and that PR professionals need to gain a steady understanding on new live video platforms. Additionally, there has to be a clear brand strategy in order to keep the brand consistent (Kurio 2015; Tivi 2015).

Live streaming is about to become an important component in brands’ social media programmes due to its authenticity (Kumu Communications 2016; Weiss 2012). Similarly, Mellin (2013) has noticed that streaming is becoming a natural way to share information and communicate with different audiences, and it is a way for open organizations and people to tell about themselves. Nowadays audiences value authenticity, transparency, and realness and live videos give companies the possibility to show the story behind their brand in the form of a live press conference, event, or product launch. Live video is a great tool for building a better relationship with the audience, and it can have a big effect on end customer

decision-making process in both B2C and B2B environments. Live video can be used to enhance personal and corporate brands, connect with audience in real time, and increase engagement and visibility. (Calero 2016; Hackl 2016; Olenski 2015a) Some of the benefits of online streaming include the size of the audience, better exposure, rich content, multiple platforms, and better interaction with the target market. With online streaming companies can gain a large audience by producing meaningful and interesting content, and later this audience might turn into paying customers. Companies can also educate their audiences about the company and the brand. (Olenski 2015b) Additionally, it offers a great opportunity especially for small businesses due to its easiness and cost-effectiveness (Weiss 2015).

Companies can generate streams in many ways: with smartphones, web cameras and using video sharing services (Gilman 2015), and live videos can be broadcasted from a mobile device to multiple social media platforms (Hackl 2016). Businesses are becoming familiar with Periscope and use it to educate, promote and build their brands (Gilman 2015), but live streams on different platforms can be used also for showing “how to” videos, sharing live events, releasing brand release videos, hosting interviews, showcasing a product manufacturing process, giving sneak peaks on what is happening behind the scenes, and hosting a Q&A sessions. (Calero 2016; Olenski 2015a)

When it comes to content marketing, Kumu Communications (2016) notes that there is less competition in live streaming compared to traditional blogs. Additionally, streams have a good visibility in their own platforms Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. However, the real value of streaming lies in its authenticity. The presence of the people in the stream can be sensed more easily, and hence, streaming is well suited for companies who want to transfer the reliability and professionalism of their company to their audiences. (Kumu Communications 2016) Vuoti (2017) mentions that streaming is also useful for

internal communications. It can be used for video conferencing, which allows personal contact between colleagues and strengthens fellowship. It also enables communicating internal news, which creates the feeling that the management is closer to the employees and there is more dialogue. Other mentioned usages purposes include internal trainings or events, product launches, and product guidance streams. (Vuoti 2017)

Producing a successful live stream requires practicing the stream beforehand in a closed group, preparing the content, deciding the location of the stream, ensuring that the technical elements work properly, promoting the stream beforehand, and encouraging a dialogue during the stream by asking questions and creating reactions (Pasanen 2017). Mellin (2013) states that the three main things in streaming are proper technical competencies, the position of the camera, and making sure that the remote audience is taken into account as well. Sufficient technical competencies create the base for a successful stream, and when possible risks of the stream have been identified beforehand it is easier to react to possible technical issues during the stream. However, understanding the value of the remote audience and enabling them participate is an important factor as well. The variety of live streaming platforms include Periscope, Facebook Live, YouTube, Meerkat, Blab, Twitch, YouNow, Livestream, Streaming Media, and Ustream (Calero 2016; Hackl 2016; Olenski 2015b; Weiss 2015) but the most used platforms in the Finnish market are Periscope, Facebook Live, and YouTube Live.

*Periscope* is a service offered by Twitter, which can be used for broadcasting videos either privately or publicly. The viewers can interact with the broadcaster by “liking” the video by clicking a heart button on the screen, sending comments, or sharing the stream on their Twitter account. After the broadcast the video is automatically saved on the broadcaster’s phone and is available for a replay for 24 hours. (Olenski 2015a) *Facebook Live* is a similar tool, which enables Facebook users to do live streaming. Users can send live videos from their mobile devices to

their followers who can tune into the webcast and send comments while watching the live stream. The maximum length of a stream is 30 minutes and after the stream the video will appear on the user's timeline. Additionally, Facebook allows editing the video afterwards and even adding a call to action. However, unlike in Periscope, the videos can be retrieved afterwards. (DeMers 2016; Smith 2016) Facebook Live streams show primarily for Facebook followers but can spread efficiently through the networks of the followers. Periscope on the other hand shows globally, and with an interesting title the stream can gain many viewers. With Facebook Live the streams are automatically stored on Facebook, unlike in Periscope where the streams disappear after 24 hours unless you manually choose to save them. It is also possible for the same user to send Periscope stream with one device and tweet with another one from the same account. The same goes with Facebook: you can send a live stream with one device and answer comments with another. (Kuulu 2016) *Youtube* has had a live streaming feature on desktop since 2012, but has recently added a mobile streaming feature. YouTube's mobile streaming application has similar features than other platforms: you can send live video with a push of a button, allow commenting during the stream, and send your contacts a notification that you are live. Companies can use YouTube Live for live events, customer support, news, product demonstrations, interviews, behind the scene footage, training and Q&A sessions, and infomercials. (Alton 2016; Digital Information World 2015)

### **3 BRANDING**

The various challenges that organizations are facing today are driving companies to focus on their brand. Brands are especially relevant due to the lack of trust towards products or services caused by the proliferation of information, lack of attention due to advertisement overload, homogeneity of products and services, and globalization (van Riel & Fombrun 2007, 3, 6-7). However, strong brands and reputations are the basis for long-term profitability and competitive advantage because they provide organizations with intangible value, and unique assets, skills and choices of every organization are difficult to imitate by others (Aaker 1996, 7-8; Abratt & Kleyn 2012; Pillai 2012). Brands can be used in differentiation, securing future business, creating brand loyalty, enhancing brand communications and brand image, setting up a premium price, and ultimately increasing sales. By differentiation brand personality and reputation, brands can create customer loyalty and growth. (Keller 2009; Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 51-52) A successfully implemented and coherent brand identity and positioning guides the brand and assists managers to enhance the brand strategy (Aaker 1996, 68). Branding comprehends many concepts, such as brand equity, brand identity, and brand value proposition. In addition, brand needs to be managed and communicated to all stakeholders. Marketing has a key role in creating added value, which results in differentiated perceptions on the marketing of a product or service compared to unbranded products and services. (Keller 2009; Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 51-52) The brand construct and marketing communications role in it are presented in Appendix 1.

#### ***3.1 Brand building and management***

Building a strong brand requires a thorough and consistent strategy and a holistic brand approach where programs, processes, and activities are interconnected,



which then allow companies to further drive their success. Brand building includes all the touch points that a customer has with the company. Brand is a promise and companies need to deliver that promise at every touch point. A brand promise needs to be well defined, meaningful, and relevant to the target group. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 71) According to Aaker (1996, 35-36), the key factors in creating a successful brand is to understand, develop and deploy brand identity as well as manage internal factors and pressures and create a culture that supports brand building.

Brand management encompasses the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of a brand strategy, which has to be in line with the overall corporate strategy. Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006, 55) present a branding triangle where all the company's marketing-related connections are interconnected: the company itself, collaborators (employees, wholesalers, dealers, and agencies) and customers. It is crucial to keep the company image and brand consistent throughout this triangle, since branding is about creating value in the context of the branding triangle. In addition to this, companies need to explore new value opportunities, create and deliver value and integrate this with the overall marketing, which leads to competitive advantage and long-term profitability. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 55)

Keller's customer-based brand equity model highlights the duality of brand building. There are four rational and emotional steps for brand building. The four rational steps include identity, meaning, response, and relationship. (Kotler and Pfoertsch 2006, 167; Keller 2009) Parallel to these four rational steps are four emotional steps. When the brand identity is clear brand awareness has to be created among the customers. Meaning, on the other hand, is formed through linking tangible and intangible brand associations with the brand and making sure that the brand meaning is clear in the minds of consumers. The company also needs to raise proper customer response that is linked with brand-related judgments and feelings and convert this response into a loyal relationship between the customers and the

brand. (Keller 2009) The model's four steps lead to the establishment of six brand building blocks, which are brand salience, brand performance, brand imagery, customer judgments, customer emotions, and brand resonance. Brand resonance, the most valued, can only be achieved when all the prior blocks have been established. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 167) Keller's customer-based brand equity model is illustrated in Figure 6.

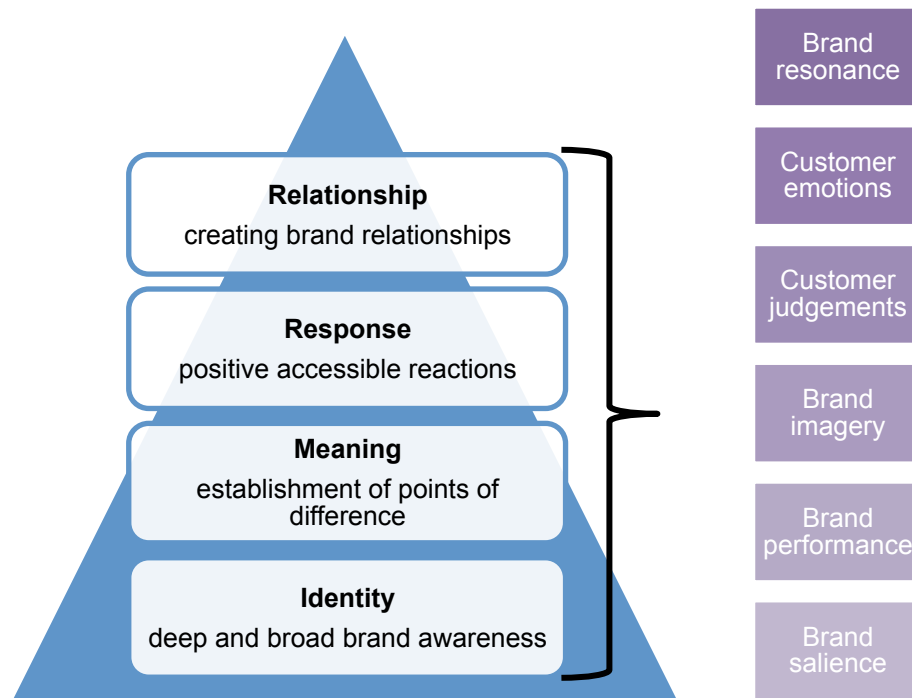


Figure 6. Keller's customer-based brand equity model (Keller 2009; Kotler and Pfoertsch 2006)

Brand resonance can be said to reflect the intensity of the relationship that the customer has with the brand as well as how actively the customer connects with the brand. Brand resonance has four dimensions, which reflect the different elements of brand loyalty: behavioral loyalty, attitudinal attachment, sense of community and active engagement. When the base for brand resonance is created (all the five brand building blocks are established) marketers can optimize the level of the resonance with various marketing communication activities, which affect one

or more brand resonance dimensions. To reach the maximal brand resonance both the intensity and activity of loyalty relationships must be augmented. The key of customer-based brand equity model is to create loyal relationships, which affect brand equity. (Keller 2009)



Figure 7. Five branding principles (Kotler and Pfoertsch 2006)

Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006, 162) present five branding principles, in addition to the traditional “three C’s” of branding, which support the brand strategy process: consistency, clarity, continuity, visibility and authenticity. The principles are illustrated in Figure 7. The brand needs to stay consistent throughout the touch points, but it needs the other four elements to support it. Brand cannot exist if it is not clear to all stakeholders what the company is and what it stands for. The company vision, mission and values are essential for brand clarity. Brand continuity means that people can rely on the brand to deliver what is promised, and thus, company should not make rapid changes in its core personality. The two other elements, visibility and authenticity, are crucial since without being visible the

brand cannot raise awareness and without authenticity the company cannot create a feeling of uniqueness. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 162-163)

### **3.2 Corporate branding**

Corporate brand is the highest level in the brand hierarchy (Aaker 1996, 242). According to van Riel and Fombrun (2007, 107) corporate brand is “*a visual representation of a company that unites groups of products and services, and makes it known to the world through the use of a single name, a shared visual identity, and a common set of symbols*”. According to Percy (2008, 66), it is the reflection of corporate meaning, which is the combination of corporate image, corporate identity and corporate reputation). An important thing is to observe the congruency between the identity components and the external brand reputation (de Chernatony and Harris 2000). Thus, corporate brand is a combination of different brand elements, and its objective is to identify and differentiate a whole product or service offering in the minds of the stakeholders (Ormeño 2007, 17).

Corporate branding, on the other hand, refers to the set of activities, which companies perform in order to create a clear, consistent and unique picture, favorable associations, and positive reputation among all stakeholders (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 80; van Riel & Fombrun 2007, 107), and it needs to be based on core values that build the identity of a brand, and which work as guiding principles for internal and external brand building (Urde 2003). According to Hatch and Schultz (2003), corporate branding needs to be based on the interaction between vision, culture, and image. Additionally, studies show that corporate brand management concerns both internal and external stakeholders, and the role of employees and organizational culture is vital (de Chernatony & Harris 2000; Hatch & Schultz 2003). Corporate branding has multiple benefits, such as talent pool generation, brand image building, winning over competition and increasing stakeholder value. With broad visibility and awareness, strong corporate brands

provide economies of scale and scope when multiple product brands can be associated with one, broader, corporate brand. (Aaker 1996, 117; Abratt & Kleyn 2012; Pillai 2012)

Abratt and Kleyn (2012) argue that all organization have a corporate brand whether they communicate it effectively or not. According to them corporate brand encompasses two elements: *corporate expression* and *stakeholder images of the organization's identity*, and the relationship of these two elements is illustrated in Figure 8. Corporate identity, on the other hand, reflects what the organization is and what it aims to be. It has two parts: the strategic choices on mission, vision, values, and culture made by the company and the corporate expression. Corporate identity includes corporate affinities, products and services, and social responsibility programmes, which reflect the organizational values and culture. This identity is then expressed through corporate brand in the form of visual identity, brand promise, brand personality and brand communications. Conclusively, the corporate brand works as an intermediary between the stakeholders and the identity. (Abratt & Kleyn 2012)

*Corporate expression* comprehends the whole corporate identity and corporate brand building activities, such as visual identity, brand promise, brand personality and communications. Communicating corporate symbols and logos enhances stakeholder recognition and associations. A strong visual identity creates a linkage to the brand, which enables stakeholders to form perceptions of a brand. Brand promise, either functional or emotional, has to be based on stakeholder needs and expectation. When these expectations are met a positive brand image can be formed, which over time creates a strong corporate reputation. Corporate reputation is the result of the interaction between stakeholders and the organization over a period of time. This means that there are multiple reputations depending on the stakeholder. Reputation is formed through interaction between multiple brand-related stimuli, such as communication, employees and agents. In

time these different perceptions will form a stakeholder's reputation of a brand. (Abratt & Kleyn 2012)

Stakeholders create their perception of a brand through brand experiences, brand relationships and brand communities, which form the second element of corporate brand: *brand image*. Stakeholders can have four types of brand experiences: sensory, affective, behavioural and intellectual. Based on these experiences they will consider whether the brand has fulfilled its promise and whether the brand personality meets the expectations. Different experiences deepen stakeholder associations and the bond with the brand. Abratt and Kleyn (2012) note that many of the studies on brand experience have been conducted in the field of consumer goods but highlight that brand experience across all the stakeholder groups, such as suppliers and distributors, should be managed and monitored as well in order to build strong corporate brands and reputations. Brand relationships, and thus corporate brand, can be strengthened through communicating and delivering the brand promise consistently across all stakeholders. (Abratt & Kleyn 2012) Abratt and Kleyn's view on corporate brand is illustrated in Figure 8.

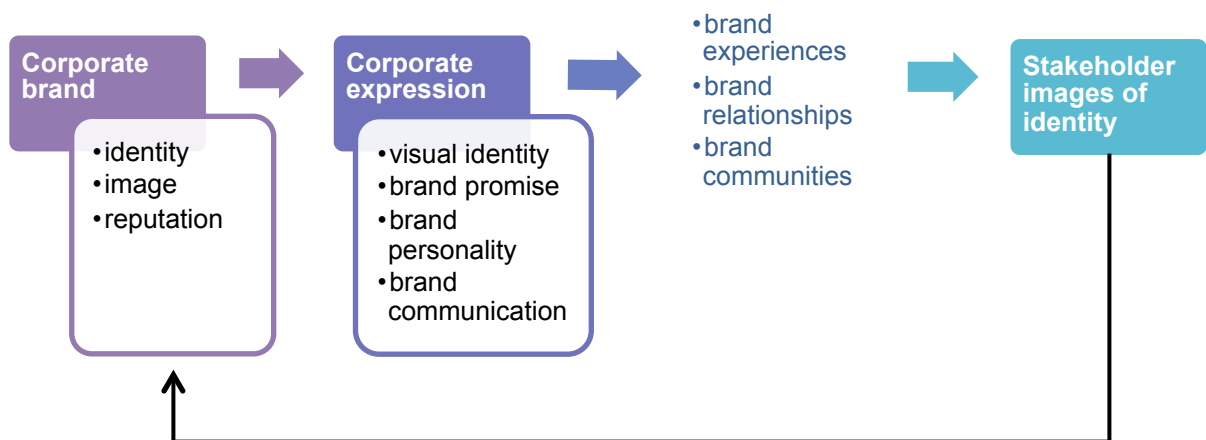


Figure 8. Abratt and Kleyn's (2012) view on corporate brand

Aaker (1996, 116-117) states that organizational associations are important elements in corporate branding, since corporate brand represents the CEO and the employees, and the associations can then be reflected on multiple product brands under the corporate brand. Even though most of the value propositions that brand identities provide are linked to a product-related benefits, like the performance or quality of a product, organizational associations play also an important role when it comes to differentiating the company, creating value proposition, and enhancing customer-brand relationships. Values, culture, people, programs, and skills are central organizational characteristics as well as community orientation, perceived quality, innovation, customer concern, presence and success, and local vs. global. (Aaker 1996, 115-118)

Some companies have a strong community orientation, which includes fair employee treatment, being environmentally cautious, and even sponsoring charities. Being a “good citizen” may arouse positive feelings, like respect, admiration, and liking, which support the creation of customer relationships. In some cases it has even been seen to increase the stock return. Creating differentiation and perceptions of social responsibility requires having a focus, being consistent over time, linking corporate social responsibility programs to the brand, and, finally, being branded. Innovation association, on the other hand, is important for companies whose target groups appreciate technology and innovation. The reputation of being innovative goes a long way: it can provide credibility for new products and support the brand when the product or service in question is not “the best” in the market. Locality of a product, on the other hand, provides a tighter link to the company’s customers in specific areas but a global brand can signal technological advancements and good resources. (Aaker 1996, 118-125, 128-130)

Organizational associations provide a value proposition that is based on functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits, which then contribute to the creation of

customer relationships. Additionally brand-customer relationship can be based on brand identity if the value proposition does not fully capture the relationship. Brand-customer relationships are more likely to emerge when the brand is either based on an organization or a person, rather than a product. These relationships are based on positive feelings, such as admiration, having fun, or belonging, which cannot be directly linked to the value proposition. (Aaker 1996, 95-103, 131)

When associations are linked to a corporate brand they provide credibility to other product classes. Credibility increases when a spokesperson, or in this case a company, is seen being expert, trustworthy and well liked. Being innovative is considered the most powerful organizational association, enabling the firm to diversify their offerings and appear credible (expert, prestigious, and trustworthy). In addition, organizational associations have a big impact inside the organization: they provide a means to clarify the culture and values inside the organization. Employees need to agree with the values of the company and have a clear picture what the company stands for in order to be motivated. (Aaker 1996, 132-135)

Corporate branding is part of a bigger concept of corporate marketing. According to Balmer and Greyser (2006), corporate marketing should integrate corporate identity, corporate branding, corporate communications, and corporate reputation. Correspondingly, Balmer (2006) presents a corporate marketing mix, which consists of six elements: character (corporate identity), culture (organizational identity), conceptualizations (corporate reputation), covenant (corporate brand management), constituencies (marketing and stakeholder management), and communication (corporate communication). Additionally, Chang et al. (2012) state that corporate branding involves numerous stakeholders and dimensions, including strategy, brand leadership, brand-focused human resource management, and brand communications. It is tightly linked with both internal and external brand identity, and it supports the creation of coherent brand image and reputation, and favorable brand identity perception. It can also help create a tighter relationship



between employees and the corporate brand. Furthermore, employees who feel connected with the corporate brand have a tendency to serve customers beyond their normal role requirements, which contributes to brand equity. Managers can improve corporate brand equity by utilizing effective communication channels to reflect a positive brand image. (Chang et al. 2012)

### ***3.3 Marketing communications and branding***

Marketing communications has a significant role in the development of brands and it enables company's stakeholders to make brand-related associations. In order to create a unique brand through marketing communications it is vital to understand which elements brands consist. Communicating the brand strengths and differences, the value it brings to the customer, and reinforcing these messages consistently brings integration to a brand. (Fill 2006b, 405-407) Corporate communications assists organizations in creating compelling and differentiated images of the company and building a strong corporate brand and reputation. In fact, one way to measure communication's effectiveness is to examine its effect on brand equity. (van Riel & Fombrun 2007, 7, 36) Among corporate communications, corporate advertising and ad-like communication activities are seen as the best way to affect corporate brand knowledge and ultimately corporate brand, since they are easily manageable tools. (Ormeño 2007, 125) Creating a corporate story can be a powerful tool in differentiation. Effective corporate story should be relevant (to the target groups), responsive (allow interaction between the audience and company), realistic (showing company's unique and enduring characteristics), and sustainable (satisfying needs of target groups and the company). (Percy 2008, 69-71)

Building corporate brand through integrated marketing communications (later IMC) is in most parts similar to building product brands through IMC. Building strong brands with IMC requires consistent brand positioning and communications

strategy throughout the market, which together result in positive brand attitude, and ultimately leads to strong brand equity (Percy 2008, 33). Percy (2008, 55) looks into the concepts of *company as a brand* through IMC's role in the areas of corporate and organizational identity and imagery, and corporate reputation. However, IMC is generally focused more on corporate imagery and identity, which means the image that is projected to the external stakeholders, rather than organizational identity and imagery. IMC stresses that brand and corporate messages need to be consistent, which means in practice that corporate communications, and especially corporate advertising, is in line with the general marketing communications. (Percy 2008, 55-56)

According to Aaker (1996, 176), brand position statement creates the basis for a communications program. The four characteristics of a brand position include being part of the identity and value proposition, having a clear target audience, active communication and demonstrating advantage. Part of active communications is comparing brand identity (the goal) with the brand image (current reality), which helps marketers gain insight for creating brand position statement and communications plans. Demonstrating an advantage means resonating with customers and differentiating from the competition. (Aaker 1996, 176-183) Kotler and Keller (2009, 516-531) state that the eight steps for developing an effective communications plan are: identifying the target audience, determining objectives, designing communications, selecting channels, establishing budget, deciding media mix, measuring results, and managing integrated marketing communications.

Malmelin and Hakala (2009) propose a framework called *integrative brand management*, which means that organization's different units and experts are integrated in order to enhance the development of business and communications. They suggest that marketing should be based on company-wide brand thinking instead of solely advertising products, and in communications the internal and

external communications should be combined in order to gain a coherent corporate communications. Integrative brand management has three dimensions (Malmelin & Hakala 2009):

1. Organisation guided by the brand: brand values and visions guide all the operations, activities and communications
2. Communications guided by the brand: when organizations puts their brand in the centre of their communications a coherent image can be reflected to all the stakeholders.
3. Reputation guided by the brand: all the narratives are shaped by the reputation which then enhances the formation of brand value.

When brand forms the centre of communications it guides the whole communications of an organization. It steers the goals and objectives, communications channels and strategy implementation. (Malmelin & Hakala 2009)

According to Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006, 167), consistency is they key when creating brands through communication and they present the concept of *holistic marketing approach*, which means that the brand is communicated throughout a branding triangle by using external, internal and interactive marketing. External marketing communications is the channel through which a company image is mainly formed. Nevertheless, internal marketing communication is also important in order to make employees part of the company they are representing. By taking care of both external and internal communications the company can ensure a coherent brand image. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 55-56)

Using interactive digital channels, which enable two-way communication, brands can deepen the relationship with their stakeholders (Chesebro et al. 2014). Interactive marketing communications (later IAMC) can have a positive impact on every brand building block presented by Keller (2009):

*Saliency:* Internet facilitates the creation of brand awareness through targeted messages to online customers. In other words, IAMC enables marketers to increase the depth and the breadth of brand awareness.

*Performance and imagery:* IAMC allows marketers to create various differentiating factors compared to competing products. It is also easy to support the brand imagery with additional information on the brand and company. By creating interesting content marketers can also affect the brand personality online.

*Judgments and feelings:* IAMC allows sight, sound and motion, which can create impact through experiential messages.

*Resonance:* IAMC is probably most useful in creating resonance among customers. Online marketing allows companies to interact with their customers daily, which can strengthen brand attachment. It helps enhance brand community among consumers and between the company and consumers through bulletin boards and blogs. However, the most impact that IAMC has is on active engagement since customers can communicate and bond with other customers.

## **4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The empirical part of the research aims at gaining an in-depth understanding on how Finnish companies utilize live streaming as part of marketing communications and corporate branding. The research is qualitative in nature and was carried out through five semi-structured interviews. This chapter will elaborate on the research methodology: the design of the research, data collection method, data analysis, and ultimately, the reliability and validity of the research.

### ***4.1 Research approach and design***

The approach of the research is inductive, which means that the research aims at developing a theory based on the collected data and data analysis. Deductive approach, on the contrary, has an objective to test hypotheses, which are formed based on prevalent theories. According to Saunders et al. (2009, 127), inductive research approach is suitable when the research topic is new and there is only a limited amount of existing literature on the phenomenon. Since live streaming as part of digital marketing communications is a very contemporary topic, and there are nearly no researches conducted on the subject, this research aims at building an initial theoretical framework from the collected data. Even though the inductive research approach allows more flexibility during the research process than deductive approach, it involves more risks since useful data patterns or theories might not always emerge. It should also be noted that the preferences and interests of the researcher play a role in the progress of the research. (Saunders et al. 2009, 127)

Saunders et al. (2009, 136-137) describe research design as the general plan on how the researcher will be answering the research questions. This plan includes objectives that are derived from the research questions, intended data sources,

research constraints, and ethical issues, which should all reflect that the plan has been thoroughly made. After the design, follows the research tactics, which include the data collection techniques, either quantitative or qualitative, and the suitable data analysis procedures. (Saunders et al. 2009, 136-137)

The most important thing in choosing the right research method is to evaluate whether it will enable the researcher to answer the research questions and meet the objectives. The chosen strategy will depend on the research questions and objectives, the amount of existing knowledge, the available time and other resources, and the researcher's philosophical base. (Saunders et al. 2009, 141)

The chosen strategy for this research is the case study method. According to Yin (2009, 4), case study method is especially relevant when the research aims at gaining an extensive or in-depth understanding of a current phenomenon through "how" or "why" questions. Thus, examining live streaming with the case study method is arguable due to the contemporary nature of the topic and the form of the research questions that aim at finding out how companies are using live streaming and how it fits in the theoretical framework of marketing communications and corporate branding. Additionally, the study incorporates a multiple-case design and examines five different cases. The clear advantage with including multiple cases, instead of only one case, is that the study is usually considered more robust due to the diverse results (Herriott & Firestone 1983 in Yin 2009, 53). However, multiple-case studies usually require a lot of resources and time (Yin 2009, 53).

Creating a theoretical framework is essential in the case study method because it supports the planning of the research design by providing a strong base for determining what kind of data needs to be collected and how, and ultimately, how the collected data should be analyzed. However, in some instances, the prior literature on the subject is poor or non-existing, and thus theoretical statements cannot be formed, which is the case in this study. (Yin 2009, 35- 37) Therefore, prior literature and researches were gathered around corporate branding, digital

marketing communications, and video marketing, which provided a good frame of reference.

Saunders et al. (2009, 139) state that a research can have one or multiple purposes, which can be exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. The lack of prior literature on live streaming determined the nature of the research to be mostly exploratory, which is suitable when the researcher aims at deepening their understanding of a problem. The three main ways to conduct such study are a search of the literature, expert interviews, and focus group interviews. The chosen methods for this research are expert interviews and search of the literature. (Saunders et al. 2009, 139-140)

## **4.2 Data collection**

The study is cross-sectional, which means that it studies one phenomenon, in this case live streaming, at a particular time and it is based on interviews carried over a short period of time (Saunders et al. 2009, 155). Following the qualitative design of the study, the collected data is non-numerical (Saunders et al. 2009, 151-152), and primary data was gathered from semi-structured interviews. The collection of primary data follows multiple-case design, and it studies five different case companies. The case companies were selected based on their experience in live streaming. Since live streaming is a relatively new marketing communications method and not many companies utilize it yet, the cases were selected from different industries and from both B2B and B2C markets. Making too strict delimitations would have possibly limited the amount of collected data, and the aim of the study was to gain a robust picture of live streaming practices in Finnish companies. The selection of some case companies was based on the company's modern way of doing marketing communications, whereas with other companies the selection was based on the industry or the market, which would possibly provide refreshing points of view.

The case companies were contacted via e-mail in order to request their willingness to participate in the research. The data was collected through four semi-structures phone interviews, due to the geographic distance, and one semi-structured email interview, due to the time limitations of the interviewee. Four of the interviews were carried out in Finnish and one in English, and they were conducted between November 2016 and January 2017. The length of the calls varied between 50 minutes and 1 hour 24 minutes. However, the data gained from the email interview was not as thorough as the data from the phone interviews, so it cannot be considered as a good representation of the case company's live streaming practices, but more as an addition to the findings of the phone interviews. According to Saunders et al. (2009, 320, 322), semi-structured interviews can be used for exploratory studies, and in such interviews the researcher typically has a list of themes and questions that will to be covered, although the emphasis of the themes or the order of questions can change depending on the interview, or there might be a need to ask further questions outside the pre-selected themes.

The interviews were anonymous but the job title of the interviewee, the company industry and market, the amount of employees, the experience in live streaming, and whether the company has international operation, were revealed as the background information. The interview structure was based on the theoretical framework and it consisted of three parts: overall brand management of the case company, digital marketing communications practices of the case company, and finally, live streaming practices of the case company. The questions were presented in a neutral form in order not to influence the interviewee's answers. The themes of the interview were sent to the interviewees beforehand in order to allow them to get to know the questions prior to the interview. In addition to the main topics of the interview, more detailed question were prepared in order to gain as in-depth picture as possible on the live streaming practices and also to support the flow of the interview. The interviews were carried out in a relaxed manner where the interviewee was encouraged to answer as much as possible and with details.



During the interviews additional questions were asked as the topics arose. The questions of the semi-structured phone interviews can be seen in Appendix 2 and the questions of the email interview (in Finnish) in Appendix 3.

### **4.3 Data analysis**

According to Saunders et al. (2009, 482), qualitative data analysis is based on meanings that are expressed through words, and it requires classifying the gathered non-standardized data into categories and forming the analysis through conceptualization. In this research, coding was applied in the data analysis. According to Miles and Huberman (1994, 56-57), coding means creating specific codes, in other words tags or labels that are used for assigning units of meaning, and which facilitate retrieving data and organizing it into different themes.

Table 2. The list of codes

<b>Branding</b>	<b>BR</b>
Aspired brand associations	BR-A
Strategy and objectives	BR-SO
<b>Marketing communications</b>	<b>MC</b>
Strategy and objectives	MC-SO
Different digital marketing communications channels	MC-D
Videos in marketing communications	MC-V
<b>Live streaming</b>	<b>LS</b>
Motives	LS-M
Usage purposes	LS-UP
Objectives	LS-O
Benefits and challenges	LS-BC
Process	LS-P

Before coding the phone interviews were recorded and transcribed in order to facilitate further analysis. Four of the interviews were transcribed from an audio recording and one of them, the email interview, was already in a written form. One of the phone interviews was conducted in English but three of them were translated from Finnish into English. The codes were created based on the three main themes of the study: corporate branding, marketing communications, and live streaming. Since the research literature on live streaming as a marketing communications channel is very limited, the researcher's knowledge on the subject deepened during the course of research, and it was possible to identify more specific categories. The data was coded and analyzed based on the list shown in Table 2. During the coding, the different case companies were marked with different colors. An example of the coding can be seen in Appendix 4.

#### ***4.4 Reliability and validity***

In order to analyze the quality of the findings, reliability and validity of the research are examined. Reliability refers to whether the data collection techniques and data analysis procedures produce consistent findings (Saunders et al. 2009, 156; Miles & Huberman 1994, 278). The main issue in evaluating the reliability of a research is whether the same results and similar observations would be achieved in other occasions and by other observers (Miles & Huberman 1994, 278). Validity, on the other hand, means whether the findings are valid as independent findings but also in a broader context (Saunders et al. 2009, 157). Thus, internal and external validity are examined separately.

One of the main elements in examining the reliability concerns the chosen research method. In this case, the case study research design was well suited due to the contemporary nature of live streaming. It was especially relevant because the research aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding on live streaming through the main research question "*How are Finnish companies utilizing live streaming in*

*marketing communications and corporate branding?*” Additionally, the semi-structured interview incorporated “how” and “why” questions, which made the case study method especially suitable. The theoretical framework on marketing communications and corporate branding literature guided the whole research process. The research gap and the research question were formed based on earlier literature, which also created the base for the semi-structured interview questions. Overall, the central objective in the research was to find similarities and differences between the theory and the empirical results.

The researcher’s decision to include multiple cases in the research contributed in the robustness of the research. Even though the differences between the case companies enabled capturing diverse experiences, having certain mutual variables, such as being a Finnish company, having used live streaming in marketing communications, and having international operations, ensured the comparability of the results. Possible observer and participant errors were taken into account as well (Robson 2002 in Saunders et al. 2009, 156-157). Designing the interview questions to be clear, easy to interpret by the respondents, and non-leading minimized the possibility for any observer error. This also facilitated analyzing the results later on. Four of the interviews were conducted via phone and one via email, which meant that no visual observations could be made and the researcher had to rely on audio recordings when interpreting the data. However, testing the recording programs beforehand ensured the quality of the recordings. Also additional questions were asked during the interview in order to gain a broader picture on the subject or specify any unclear answers. When transcribing the results the unclear parts were listened multiple times to ensure that the researcher understands the responses correctly. Overall, the data analysis was attempted to describe as transparently as possible and the objective was to provide results, which could be obtained by other researchers as well.

Interviewing people who have first-hand experience in live streaming and a very good understanding on marketing and communications practices in the company minimized the participant error. Additionally, all of the respondents had a positive attitude towards the research topic, which increased their willingness to provide truthful and thorough answers. To further ensure the reliability of the responses, the interviewees were reminded in the beginning of the interview that the answers stay anonymous, and they were encouraged to respond as much as possible without interruptions. The interviewees were also provided with a list of the interview themes beforehand in order to allow them to prepare for the interview.

Validity of the results is analyzed from the internal and external perspective. Miles and Huberman (1994, 278) describe internal validity as whether the results make sense to the readers, and whether they are valid independently. The results can be stated to be internally valid since certain patterns similarities and between the case companies emerged from the collected data. Some of the results also corresponded to the earlier theory on digital marketing communications and video marketing. Throughout the data collection and analysis the researcher searched for connections and made comparison with the earlier theory. The interview responses were also analyzed by questioning whether, for example, the experience in live streaming or the industry of the company could affect the responses in any way. Especially in the early stage of the research the ambition to find patterns and connections might have resulted in a more positive perception of the responses, but as the study proceeded the researcher tried to take as objective point of view as possible. The results of the research provide a quite sensible and thorough picture of live streaming practices in the case companies but it should be noted that further research is needed to confirm the findings since this is a preliminary study on an emerging topic.

External validity, on the other hand, refers to whether the results are valid in a broader context (Miles & Huberman 1994, 279). The results match to a great

extent with the earlier researches on digital marketing communications, which means that they have a place in the earlier literature. However, there are weaknesses in the generalizability, since the study only represents five different cases, but the delimitations of the study are clearly stated. The study describes live streaming practices in Finnish companies and provides an initial framework for live streaming. Since live streaming is a new area of study, the findings have not been replicated in other studies. However, further research avenues are stated.

## **5 EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter will elaborate on the empirical results of the research. The descriptions of the case companies are provided, and followed by the case-specific results of the semi-structured interviews. Additionally, a cross-case analysis is conducted and connections are drawn to the theory. The semi-structured interview consisted of three themes: branding, marketing communications, and live streaming, of which live streaming was in the biggest role.

### ***5.1 Case descriptions***

The empirical part of the research was carried out through semi-structured interviews for five case companies. The case companies were chosen based on the following criteria: they are all Finnish, and they have some experience in utilizing live streaming as part of marketing communications. Most of the companies have 1 or 2 years of experience in using live streaming in marketing communications, as it is a fairly new marketing communications method. The case companies were selected from different fields in order to gain a diverse picture on how Finnish companies are utilizing live streaming while still trying to discover similarities in streaming practices. All case companies operate internationally either within B2B or B2C markets, or both, but the amount of employees varies. All of the interviewees had first hand experience in streaming, and they were marketing or communications professionals, either managers or coordinators, which was important in order to capture the overall brand and communications perspective. The background information of the case companies includes the job title of the interviewee, field of the company, amount of employees, international operations, and the timeframe of how long they have been doing live streaming. The summary of the case companies can be seen in Table 3.

### **Company A**

The first case company operates internationally within the energy sector in both B2B and B2C markets. The company has 5 000-10 000 employees and they have been doing streaming for 5 years internally and for investor relations, and externally with novel video platforms for about a year. Digital Communication and Marketing Manager was interviewed.

### **Company B**

The second case company is a B2B company, which operates within media services, and they have about 70 employees in Finland and Sweden. The company has been doing streaming externally for 2 years and internally for 6 months. Sales and Marketing Manager, who is also a member of the board of directors, was interviewed.

### **Company C**

The third case company is a Finnish IT services company, which operates in the B2B market, and which has about 500 employees in Finland and Sweden. They have been doing streaming for 1-2 years: they had their first experience with Periscope a year ago, but before that they have not been doing streaming in a bigger scale. Marketing Coordinator was interviewed.

### **Company D**

The fourth case company is a Finnish B2B company, which operates internationally within the field of container handling, and they have 12 000-18 000 employees. They have been doing streaming internally for many years and for

investor relations, but a year ago they used live streaming in their product launch. Product Marketing Specialist was interviewed.

### **Company E (questionnaire via e-mail)**

The fifth case company was interviewed through an e-mail questionnaire. The company is a Finnish B2C travel company, which belongs to a bigger international organization, and they have about 50 employees in Finland. They have been doing streaming externally for about 1 year. Social Media Manager was interviewed.

Table 3. Summary of the case companies

<b>Company</b>	<b>Sector (market)</b>	<b>International operations</b>	<b>Nro of employees</b>	<b>Experience in streaming (years)</b>	<b>Title of the interviewee</b>
<b>A</b>	Energy (B2B and B2C)	yes	5 000-10 000	Externally 1 Internally 5	Digital Communications and Marketing Manager
<b>B</b>	Media services (B2B)	yes	70	Externally 2 Internally 6 months	Sales and Marketing Manager
<b>C</b>	IT services (B2B)	yes	500	Externally 1-2 Internally	Marketing Coordinator
<b>D</b>	Container handling (B2B)	yes	12 000-18 000	Externally 1 Internally several years	Product Marketing Specialist
<b>E</b>	Traveling (B2C)	yes	50	Externally 1	Social Media Manager

## ***5.2 Branding strategy and objectives***

In order to understand the role of live streaming in corporate branding, more detailed information on aspired brand associations and branding objectives were asked.



### **Company A: “Forward-going and sustainable”**

The company uses their name as an umbrella brand for all their products. The cornerstone of the brand is their slogan, which addressed the forward going nature of the brand. They also want to be known for providing sustainable options. The desired brand attributes are open, reliable, and brave, and their visual identity is clean and fresh. The objectives of branding are tightly interlinked with the marketing communications objectives, which are both derived from the overall business objectives. They are striving to establish a brand presence by co-operating with different partners: through sponsoring, events, and people.

### **Company B: “Creating experiences that are worth sharing”**

The company’s brand can be put in one slogan: they want to create experiences that are worth sharing. The aspired brand attributes of the company are close, professional yet relaxed, humane, curious and interested, brave, opinionated, businesslike, and having a face. The company wants to highlight their experts and their opinions, and create a brand promise through that: *“We want to bring out our people with their faces, in addition to our products, due to the tough competition in the digital services industry. Everything we do comes down to our people, who are excited about the world, future, and customer work, and our rocking company culture.”* With branding the company aims at bringing out their expertise and reliability. They also want to highlight thought leadership. Recently they have also been going through a brand change: *“Earlier we have been known as a social media agency but now we have been able to extend our brand into other services, like marketing, engagement, and content strategy, and we have established a good position in the market.”*

### **Company C: “Experts in digitalization”**

Being the experts in the field of digitalization is the cornerstone of the brand and everything the company does, and thus, digital ways of operating are at the heart of the company. They are an agile company, and instead of having strict branding principles, their branding and marketing communications is guided by their values, braveness, relaxedness, caring, and passion, which are also the aspired brand associations: *“We are an agile company, and we try to do our marketing, sales and everything else according to our values -- We want to do marketing and communications in our own, relaxed way, different than traditional companies. We want to be able to communicate about our amazing company spirit and great people, but also the expertise that we have.”* Additionally, issues like employer image, employee satisfaction, and employee commitment, are important for them, and they want to bring out their people with their faces. They also have a small brand book in order to keep the visual identity of the brand consistent throughout all communications channels, and to contribute to the salience of the brand in the market where there are many competitors.

Their brand position statement is to be the middle player in the market. They want to be more agile than bigger companies, but not as small as their smallest competitors. They want to be relaxed and unique so that people are not afraid to choose them but at the same time have adequate service offering for delivering bigger projects as well. With branding the company aims at generating leads, transferring their company culture further, and creating brand awareness: *“Being known is as important as generating leads. We are still on our way to the point where people know who we are without having to explain. We want to raise awareness and differentiate ourselves from the competition.”*

**Company D: “The best quality supplier and the most technologically advanced”**

The fourth case company is very international with several individual brands, which live their own lives. Thus, the brand of the company is complex. As the company is operating in a field, which is extremely conservative and practical, and where investments are big, their products and technology drive the branding: *“Our branding is very technology and product driven, and we are promoting the differences that make us better than the competitors. Our customers are very knowledgeable so we don’t only do image marketing.”* They also want to be known as the most technologically advanced: *“We want to make sure that our products are the best in the industry when we are serving our customers. -- We are always pushing forward, getting better and introducing new technology. We want to be known as the best quality supplier and the most technologically advanced.”* The objective of their branding is to be the number one Western supplier in size, revenue, market recognition, and respect, and all their branding activities are built around that.

**Company E: “Heartfelt traveling brand”**

The fifth case company wants to identify themselves as a heartfelt traveling brand and provide *“the best weeks for families and adults”*. They want to establish associations like heartfelt, professional, aware of customer needs, customer-centric, and brave. They also have clear branding objectives: *“With our branding we want to strengthen our market position in Finland and increase top-of-mind conspicuousness. We want to be the travel agency that comes to the customers’ minds first.”*

### **5.3 Marketing communications**

In order to gain an understanding on how live streaming fits the overall marketing communications strategy, more detailed information on the strategy and objectives of marketing communications were asked.

#### **5.3.1 Strategy and objectives**

##### **Company A: “Open and forward going”**

Openness in communications is very important for the first case company. In order to comply with their brand attributes, open, reliable, and brave, it is a necessity to be present in various channels and ready to participate in diverse conversations with stakeholders. As the company aims to be forward going, they want to introduce new marketing communications tools as well. The objectives for their marketing communications are derived from the overall business strategy, because marketing and communications need to support the business objectives.

##### **Company B: “Content marketing and thought leadership”**

Case company B mentions that their marketing communications activities are very integrated and the objectives of marketing communications are partly derived from their business objectives. Although at times they might take a little bit different focus in some channels, they do not draw a clear line between different channels, because they believe that their content is worth sharing in every channel. The overall objective of marketing communications is to strengthen their image as an expert: *“We are interested in what happens in the market and in the world in general. We don’t want to be seen as a ‘hard’ agency but want to highlight soft values, like empathy, sympathy, and humanity. We want to bring out individuals and their expertise.”*

### **Company C: “A mix of expertise and relaxedness”**

Company C states that they want to have the same tone in all communications. Additionally, they want to emphasize the use of digital channels in their marketing, according to their values and essence of the brand. They want to address their customers but at the same time keep their communications relaxed and humane: *“Communications doesn’t always have to be so serious. It can be transmitting the culture of the company. We want to be approachable and human-to-human.”*

### **Company D: “Behind the digital technology curve”**

Company D differs from the other case companies due to the traditional nature of the industry, where industry-related releases and publications play an important role. The industry is behind the digital technology curve, although they are gradually moving into a more digital direction with their marketing communications. Additionally, they want to have the same tone in all their channels, and the objective of their marketing communications is to reach all the important people in the industry. The fact that everyone in the industry knows each other places certain requirements for the marketing communications as well.

### **Company E: “Pioneer in travel marketing”**

Case company E mentions that their channels are very interlinked and support each other. All their marketing communication efforts form an entity, and the most important things in digital marketing are targeting the messages and measuring the results. The company was one of the first travel brands to launch Facebook Live streams, and they want to be a pioneer in travel marketing. *“With our marketing communications we want to be fresh, experimental, and modern rather than traditional.”* The main objectives of their marketing communications are branding

and sales. They also mention that most of their sales happen online so tracking the web site traffic is important.

### 5.3.2 Digital marketing communications channels

All the interviewed companies mention that their marketing communications channels are very integrated and need fit their overall marketing communications strategy and support the business objectives. Despite the integration, most of the companies can note differences between different channels. Thus, taking a closer look at the different digital channels used by the case companies, which are presented in Table 4, will assist in examining the role of live streaming in the digital marketing communications mix.

Table 4. Digital marketing communications channels used by the case companies

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>Used social media channels</b>	Facebook LinkedIn Twitter Instagram	Facebook LinkedIn Twitter Instagram	Facebook LinkedIn Twitter Instagram	Facebook LinkedIn Twitter	Facebook LinkedIn Twitter Instagram
<b>Video or real time video platforms</b>	YouTube, Instagram Stories	YouTube, Facebook Live (internally)	YouTube, Periscope	YouTube	YouTube, Facebook Live, Snapchat
<b>Other digital channels</b>	Website, SEM, brand campaigns and programs, newsletters, partner collaboration, employee advocacy	Website, content marketing and thought leadership, blogs, marketing automation, partners and networks, newsletters	Website, content marketing, blogs, digital marketing, partners and networks, SEO and SEM, e-mail newsletters	Website, digital marketing	Website, SEM, content co-operation, digital marketing
<b>Rarely used digital channels</b>	Snapchat Periscope	Snapchat Slideshare	Slideshare		
<b>Planned channels</b>	Facebook Live	New tools for streaming			

Companies C and D mention that their company web site is the center for all marketing communications. Case company C uses web site for promoting different events, managing search engine marketing, but also for sharing blog content. On the web site they have a lot of pictures of their employees, which creates a more intimate feeling, almost like the web site visitor would join their office. However, the interviewee mentions that the web site is not as interactive as their other channels, even though the tone of communication is the same. For Company D, web site represents the most important marketing communications channel: it is the key presentation of their products and services. The interviewee mentions that they place many videos and campaign sites on their web site. The importance of the company web site for Company D is most likely due to the traditional nature of the industry where customers are more comfortable searching for information on a company web site rather than other social media or digital marketing channels. Additionally, web site is the best way to present the variety of products and technology that the company offers. However, it should also be stated that all the interviewed companies have quite advanced web sites, and thus, it can be argued that web site plays an important role for them as well. In addition to web sites, all the interviewed companies use social media in their communications. *“Social media is a medium for us to bring out our voice and messages”*, says the interviewee of Company C. The interviewees can identify certain differences between Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Youtube.

Company A mentions that they use Facebook for brand building, since it has big effectiveness and many of their most essential target groups are there: *“Facebook is a mass communications method, which makes it wise to be there.”* For company C Facebook is the most active channel where the objective is to transmit a relaxed company image and post bold updates. They post quite freely about any company news, projects, or events. For company B Facebook is also a fairly active channel, where they post more relaxed updates, such as pictures of their company's sporting events. They have also noticed that uploading a video directly on

Facebook, which is not possible on Twitter or LinkedIn, will create more engagement than just sharing a link to a YouTube video. Additionally, the company uses Facebook groups and Facebook Live for internal communications if there is a need to share information or video content for the whole organization. For Companies A, B, and C Facebook seems to me a medium for reaching B2C customers and potential future employees rather than B2B customers.

Twitter, on the other hand, is the most active social media channel for company B. There they publish all their content, such as blogs, stream links, and info graphics. Company B and C agree that Twitter requires more ad hoc than Facebook. Company B considers the ad hoc nature of Twitter as an opportunity to engage with customers by having conversations with clients and by sharing trending topics that are related to the customers' business. Twitter also strengthens the company's expertise and conspicuousness. Company A agrees that Twitter allows companies to profile themselves as leading experts in a certain field. Company C uses Twitter for communicating current topics. The interviewee reminds that due to the ad hoc nature of Twitter you need to be ready to react if something happens, negative or positive. You also have to consider the tone of your tweet to prevent any misunderstandings. Company D sees that Twitter is a constant, immediate flow of the company's actions where they can make their products very concrete to their audience by for example tweeting a photo. Twitter allows them to "*communicate to the market place that this business is happening right now*", and this is something they should be doing more according to the interviewee. Companies B and C use Twitter in a more conversational way to engage with customers or communicate about current topics, whereas Company D uses it more for sharing business or products news. Even though all three companies operate in B2B market, the fields of the companies differ, which means that their target groups might have totally different interest and the content that resonates with the target groups of Companies B and C might not work for the target groups of Company D.



Company A sees similarities between Twitter and LinkedIn. Similar to Twitter, companies can use LinkedIn to profile themselves as leading experts. However, LinkedIn is more linked to certain business segments and it is a slower channel. Company B agrees that LinkedIn requires a lot less ad hoc. It is more serious, but very important channel for sharing streams because LinkedIn followers tend to react more positively to streams than for example Facebook followers. The interviewee of Company C mentions that LinkedIn is a more businesslike channel, but very important due to the growing number of visitors. Like their web site, LinkedIn is a medium to share blog content. Company D uses LinkedIn in a similar way than Twitter: to communicate current news to the market place.

Company A uses Instagram for brand building purposes: *“Instagram offers a good way to profile ourselves differently than what our kind of companies have traditionally profiled themselves.”* They have also noticed that Instagram Stories has a higher engagement rate than normal posts. Company B considers Instagram as their most relaxed channel where they have different campaigns, where they promote their blogs, and show events they are attending. Additionally, they want to transmit their fun and playful company culture through Instagram. Company C uses Instagram in a similar way: their recruitment team posts pictures of events and everyday work at the office, but also tell career stories, which makes it an important channel for employer branding. Hence, Instagram can work for both B2B and B2C companies because it allows companies to brand themselves and show a more relaxed side of the company.

YouTube is a less interactive channel according to all interviewed companies. Company A mentions that YouTube is more for people to find them and they do not develop the channel itself. Companies B, C and D upload their videos on YouTube from where the videos can be easily shared. Company B mentions that they stream directly to YouTube, and then share the streams on their main channels.

Content marketing creates a key element in marketing communications activities for Companies B and C, who both want to promote their expertise through marketing communications and show their employees with their own faces. Company B mentions that blogs are the most influential way to showcase their expertise. Those represent the value proposition of the company and introduce their writers to current and potential customers. The topics on the blog are about the life, career, values, and needs of their employees. Blogs have also had a big role in the rebranding of the company. Content-wise the company aims at moving towards bigger topics, such as future, technology, and automation, because they have noticed that their customers are interested in receiving new ideas. The blogs are then shared in all their social media channels. Like any content, blogs are an important channel for company C as well: *“Blogs support our strategy to have our people there with their own faces. It’s a good way to bring out our people.”* The interviewee thinks that blog and other content, like videos, are truly interesting areas that have gained more importance in the last years.

Newsletter has been an important tool for Company B to drive their brand change. Company C, on the other hand, uses newsletters for sending invitation and reminders to events, and for after marketing. Additionally, both companies mention that events are important for them, which goes hand in hand with the fact that they want to bring out their people. Company C wants to meet their customers face-to-face, while company B thinks that events are a good way to arouse the interest of marketing and communications managers, which are their target group. Both companies also use Slideshare to share presentations after events. The characteristics of different digital marketing communications channels used by the case companies are illustrated in Figure 9. The usage of videos as part of marketing communications is discussed separately in Chapter 5.3.3 due to its close linkage to live streaming.

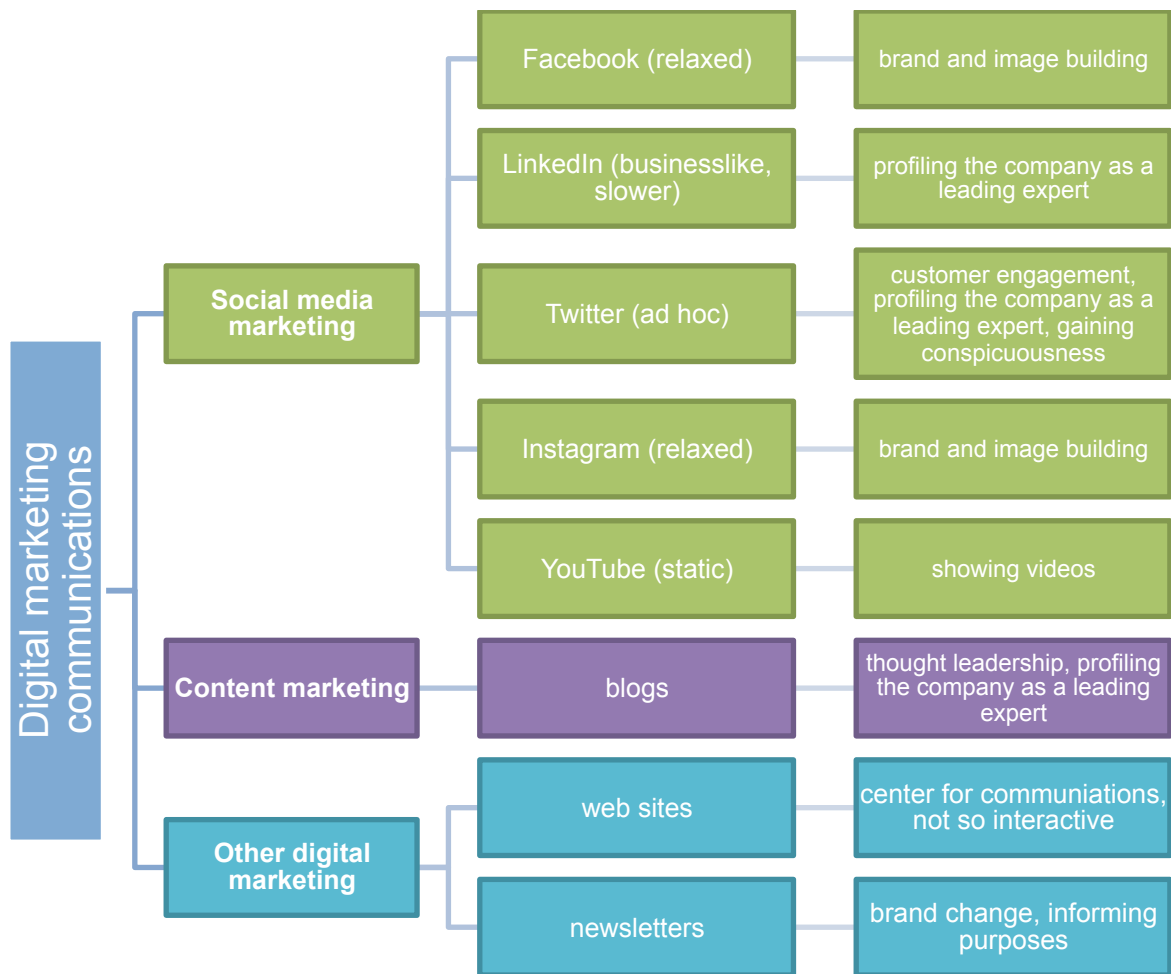


Figure 9. Characteristics of the different digital marketing communications channels used by the case companies

When the interviewees were asked what do they think is the next big thing in marketing communications, most of the companies thought that different video features and contents will be a big thing in the future in both B2B and B2C sector. In addition to videos, companies see that content marketing, and data collection and analytics are going to in a big role. Companies A and E think that content marketing is going to evolve, since people are getting distracted by interrupting ads, which don't serve the customer or the company. The interviewee of Company E thinks that companies are going to focus on better usage of content marketing: *"Companies need to come up with totally new ways to do marketing, and content*

*marketing answers this trend.*” The interviewee of Company B thinks that good data analysis will be in a central role in the future to help gain a better understanding of target groups and how to make better content for them. In general, the interviewee sees potential in technology: *“I believe in the possibilities of data, analytics, Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, and other opportunities that technology provides for marketing professionals.”* As the digital environment is constantly changing, the interviewee of Company A remarks that the most important thing is to be flexible with new digital channels: *“The most important thing with new channels is to be ready to take them into use quickly but also to be ready to give them up when they don’t work. Digital marketing communications field changes so quickly.”*

### **5.3.3 Videos in marketing communications**

Companies A, C, and D mention that they do not have an own strategy for videos, but the objectives are derived from the bigger business and marketing communications strategy. *“Everything comes down to the overall business strategy and how to build the brand, only the ways and channels change”*, says the interviewee of Company A. Since the role of videos can change into a totally different direction in a year, Company A does not want to build a special strategy for videos, however they have an own concept for social media videos. Company C makes videos based on their agile company culture: *“We don’t have a very tight strategy for videos but if something big happens in the company or there is a big event, we usually make a video.”* They try to adapt to situations, act in the moment and be flexible and do videos according to that as well. Additionally, they want to show their values by storytelling with videos. For Company D video is the main method to communicate messages in different regions and countries. The interviewee says that using videos is part of their marketing communications plan, and that video is simply a part of communicating their message: *“First comes the message what we want to say, then comes how we say it, then video will come*

*quite quickly into the picture.” He also notes that they do videos based on their corporate values: “We are an honest and simple engineering company -- and that’s how we want to be known in the market place. We do our best, keep our promises and take responsibility and this is how we do our videos.”*

Companies A, B, C, and D see videos as an important, increasing mode of communication. Company A is producing more and more videos, and they also have an own concept for social media videos. On LinkedIn the company sometimes shares full YouTube videos but for social media they make optimized videos. Those videos are typically shorter and differently produced than longer videos, and they have proven to work better. When making videos, the company always thinks of the effectiveness they want to achieve. If there is a theme the company wants to address, they think whether video is the best way to transmit the message. If they decide to make a video, they think for which channels it should be produced: *“We might produce it only for social media, or then make a longer video for our web site and then shorter videos to support it.”* According to the interviewee, using videos has clear benefits: *“Compared to a still picture or a text, video is the best way to tell stories in a compact form and create an emotion-based dimension to any experience.”* The interviewee mentions that consumers are willing to watch videos and different channels are guiding companies towards using videos, for example Facebook’s algorithms which support videos.

Company B produces videos and streams for client projects, thus the role of videos is very important for them. The company also produces videos for own marketing communications purposes, and shares them on YouTube and other channels. They also use videos for internal communications or to practice for customer cases if there is a new thing they need to pilot before suggesting it to a client. Videos have an important role in internal communications as well. Overall, videos work as a concrete work sample of the company, and through streams the company aims at maximizing coverage.

For Company C videos are a way to show in a relaxed way what they are as a company: *“With our videos we want to bring out what we do and who works here, and of course our projects. We want the potential customers and job seekers to get interested in us. -- For example I got interested in working here because I saw a video about our company culture and values.”* They have also recently launched an external tool for filming and editing videos for internal communications.

Company D invests a lot in videos and believes that they are a good way to communicate sophisticated technical information to their current and potential customers instead of multi-page product brochures. With their new product line they produced an animated 3D video that showcased all their products in one video. Additionally, videos have a big role in internal communications. The interviewee believes that videos are the best way to communicate important news, such as organizational changes or acquisitions, and adds, *“pictures and videos are increasingly the mode of interaction and communication.”*

Most of the companies think that videos will be a big thing in the future. The interviewee of Company B believes that different video features and contents will be important especially in the B2C market. Company C thinks that using videos will be a big thing in the future in both B2B and B2C sectors: *“Already now you can see various videos, shorter and longer, in social media, and I would see that using videos will increase. I am not sure how much live streaming, but I think that both will be present in everyday business: in events, creating employer image, and promoting a company.”* The interviewee of Company D thinks that the importance of video as a mode of information is just going to increase, but notes that the meaning of video might change quickly: *“Already now you see that video means a different thing.”* The interviewee sees a trend in 3D animations, which will presumably get better and cheaper in the future. Additionally, the interviewee of Company E mentions that, *“Live streaming and ‘my day’ type of documenting can be seen in many social media channels and I think companies are there soon too.”*

## **5.4 Live streaming**

The central theme in the semi-structured interview was live streaming, which is handled more in-depth in this chapter. The motives, usage purposes, objectives, benefits and challenges, and process of live streaming are opened.

### **5.4.1 Motives**

Companies A, C, and E mention that a big internal motive to start live streaming was the forward going nature of their company and brand. They mention that they are open for new communications channels and willing to try new things and ways to communicate. The interviewee of Company A mentions that their company has a positive attitude towards piloting new tools, and the interviewee of Company C says that Periscope was an easy way to start streaming and to test for free whether a bigger stream would work as well. For company E streaming was also a way to differentiate and support their brand attributes: *“Live streaming was part of our experimental marketing. We felt that starting live streaming would strengthen our position as a vanguard when it comes to the brand.”* For company D live streaming was a new way to support their product launch.

In addition to internal motives, companies A, B, and C started live streaming due to external motives and practical purposes. Company A mentions that before starting Periscope they were wondering whether they are too forward thinking, but after benchmarking others and realizing that many companies use it as well they decided to give it ago. All in all the company was considering the possible risks of the channel and whether other companies use it, and decided that if some other credible company has used it they can use that as a justification. The interviewee of Company B points out that there is a need for streaming events in the market: sometimes their customers cannot join certain events in person, but would still like to be able to participate. Also Company C mentions that they want to share the

content for those who cannot attend. In addition to responding to customer needs, Company B mentions that they want to create good customer experiences: *“There is a need for events streams in the market. We want to bring our events close to the people, and create and share good customer experiences.”* Taking into consideration the nature of the target groups of Companies B and C, which operate in B2B market, it can be assumed that B2B customers are more willing to proactively watch expert speeches and industry events, and thus, there is a clear demand for live streaming. The internal and external motives for live streaming are illustrated in Figure 10.

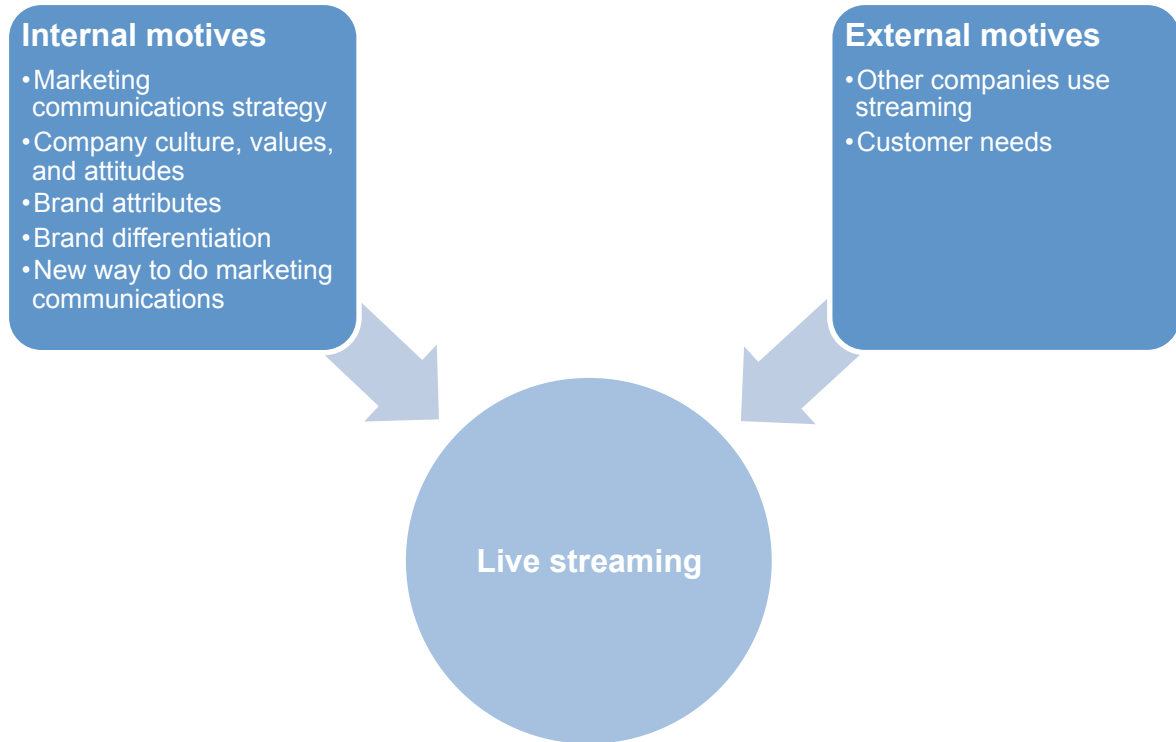


Figure 10. Internal and external motives for live streaming

#### **5.4.2 Usage purposes**

For Company A streaming is not a permanent channel and they do not do continuous storytelling with streams, but it adds to the selection of communications



channels. They have done webcasts externally longer than internally, and it has been an important tool for reaching investors and analysts. They have used streaming in some of their events and in some occasions for media and clients, and could consider using streaming for example in a campaign to reach a specific target group. Internally they use streaming for staff information meetings so that people can join in globally. Streaming is used mostly for staff meetings and bigger events, instead of daily communication. The interviewee thinks that there are many possibilities to use it internally but, partly due to technical limitation, their external communications develops faster than internal communications. The company has considered starting using Facebook Live, since it is a new way to reach people. They could think of using it in partner co-operations, for example work with a person or a community. They are not using Periscope actively, but could consider using it in a suitable event.

*“The themes and topics of our streams are pretty similar with our other content marketing”,* says the interviewee of Company B. The company wants to produce streams that people are interested in and that are worth sharing: *“We produce content that we think our networks want to share as well, for example about automation, technology, trends and marketing management.”* Most of the streams the company produces for their B2B and B2C clients. These streams can be seminars or events but the company produces similar streams for their own marketing communications purposes as well. Company B stresses the importance of reaching people who cannot attend certain events in person, and has gotten positive feedback on their event stream. In the future they would like to utilize their streams even more, for example after a year from the stream write a blog post around it to increase the conspicuousness of their experts. In addition to external streams, internal streams are as important for company B. They stream internal training sessions and meetings to enable people who are not at the office to join the streams. Streaming is also the channel to communicate bigger and more important company announcements.

Company C streams client and internal events through Periscope or with an external partner. The company organizes smaller meet-ups and after-works, which they stream through Periscope either for their own employees or external audience, who cannot attend in person. Additionally, they are planning to start using streaming for internal communications and information sharing, and to use Facebook Live and YouTube Live in a smaller event. Both Companies B and C promote their streams afterwards. The interviewee of Company C thinks that streams and smaller videos are very important assets when it comes to the after marketing of an event: *“Afterwards we can break down the speeches into smaller videos and use them for marketing the event and our company.”* Company B promotes the recorded streams afterwards more than other content because it takes more resources to produce them.

For company D, taking into consideration the fairly conservative nature of the industry, live streaming a new way to promote products. With their product launch they did a live stream, where people could log in, listen to the presentation, and post questions: *“It was the first time we did it. It was partially good but it was a good learning experience.”* Externally they have a long tradition of doing corporate level streams for investors and analysts but they see other possibilities for streaming as well. The interviewee mentions that they have been thinking of executing a roadshow kind of live stream, or doing a webinar with experts in order to share industry expertise and knowledge. Internally they have not done streaming yet but the interviewee sees an opportunity in using streaming for cross-continental communication or streaming internal news: *“It (streaming) could be used in internal communications, for example to bring different offices together. Bringing people virtually together would be the most important use for us this year.”*

For company E live streaming represents a totally different way of doing marketing communications and they make streams for different reasons than other videos. They did a live stream where they had a host and two competing couples

completing challenges abroad during a week: *“It was a totally new way to do things and I think we could differentiate ourselves pretty well from the competition with that campaign.”* The main objective for the company in a stream is to engage their customers already during the stream, and for that particular stream the audience could participate by commenting and voting for the winner. All the current and planned internal and external usage purposes for streaming mentioned by the case companies are presented in Figure 11.

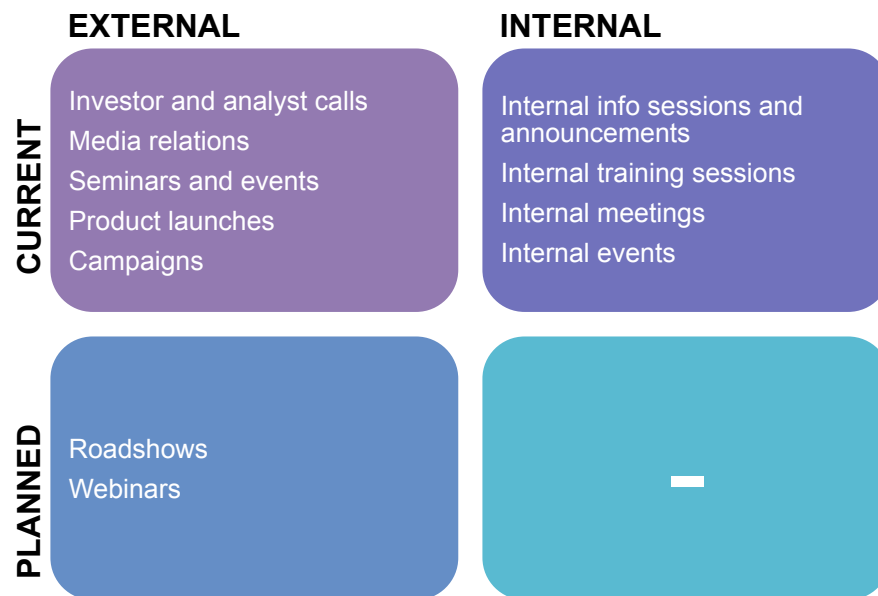


Figure 11. Current and planned external and internal live streaming usage purposes

Companies A and D are both big international companies with thousands of employees, so using streaming for investor relations call is an important usage purpose for them. Company A seems to be more forward going than Company D when it comes to taking new marketing communications channels into use, but it needs to be noted that Company A works also in B2C market whereas Company D operated in a conservative B2B market, where it might be more difficult to introduce new marketing communications channels. Companies B and C seem to

use live streaming for similar purposes, for external events and seminars, and internal communications. This might be due to the similar nature of the companies. They are both B2B companies operating in Finland and Sweden, and their target groups are possibly very interested in streamed events, and they are easy to reach through Twitter or LinkedIn. Both of the companies also want to bring out their experts and expertise, so streamed events and seminars are a good way to do that. The interviewees of both companies also think that streaming is a useful tool for internal communications, and for sharing internal events and news. For Company E, which operated solely in B2C market, live streaming is a new way to do marketing communications and engage with customers.

### **5.4.3 Objectives**

All the interviewed companies mention that individual marketing communications channels need to support the overall marketing communications strategy and business objectives. However, Companies B, C, and E have set some individual objectives for streaming. Company B has set clear objectives, which come partly from their overall marketing communications strategy, which highlights producing content that is worth sharing. The company wants to produce quality content that helps their target groups and reaches many networks: *“We want to produce content that is worth sharing. We don’t produce streams if people are not interested in them. The most important thing is to have customers, partners and stakeholder interested. It gives a possibility to grow our and our partners’ business.”* Creating quality content is also linked with creating good customer experiences. The objectives are also brand-related: *“We want to bring our brand forward, and create awareness with our live streams. We are well known for what we do, but we want more conspicuousness for our video production expertise.”*

Company C aims at increasing the coverage of their events: *“Stream enables people who cannot attend the event in person to be virtually present. -- In the end*

*we realized that it's a great way to double or even triple the amount of attendants."* They also want to transfer their relaxed company culture and the approachable feeling of their meet-ups. Thus, the objectives for streaming are partly similar for companies B and C: brand and image related. For company E the objective of streaming is to engage their customers: *"We want to think how to engage our customer already during the video. This is also the challenge."*

Since brand and identity should guide the corporate communications (van Riel & Fombrun 2007, 35), and since one of the mentioned objectives for live streaming was brand and image building, it is worth examining how well live streaming supports corporate branding. The relationship between live streaming and the case companies' brand strategy is examined based on live streaming ability to support the aspired brand attributes and branding objectives of case companies. Another dimension is to examine which five branding principles, consistency, clarity, continuity, visibility, and authenticity, presented by Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) does live streaming support.

Live streaming can be said to support the brand strategies of the case companies. Table 5 illustrates the brand associations and branding objectives of the case companies, which live streaming supports. Companies A, B, C, and E named brave as one of their aspired brand associations. Live streaming supports this association, since taking a new marketing communications tool, such as streaming, into usage reflects the braveness of a company. Additionally, Company A mentions that live streaming supports the forward-going nature of their brand, where as Company E thinks that live streaming differentiates them as a vanguard among other travel companies. Company D, however, differs from the other companies due to the conservative nature of the industry where branding needs to be technology and product driven. Live streaming also allows Companies B and C to bring out their employees with their own faces, which reflects associations like close, humane, and having a face. For Company B live streaming is a way to show

the relaxed nature of their brand. Thus, live streaming is considered a new, bold way to interact with stakeholders and show the people behind the company.

For Company B live streaming is a way to increase brand awareness and showcase their video expertise, but at the same time bring out their experts and their experience and by this drive thought leadership. Company C also wants to bring out their employees, and live streaming provides a great tool for creating brand awareness and bringing out the company culture. Additionally, live streaming fits the overall business strategy of both companies since they mention that being digital is the basis for everything they do. For Companies D and E live streaming is a new way to do marketing communications, but the interviewee of Company E mentions that it also helps to create top-of-mind conspicuousness by allowing them to differentiate themselves.

Among the five branding principles of Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) live streaming supports especially visibility and authenticity. Live streaming allows companies to increase the visibility of their brand by reaching wider audiences and differentiating among competitors. It is also an authentic communications method, which allows stakeholders to form feelings of the uniqueness of the brand. By creating a coherent visual layout for a stream in forms of presentation and slides it is possible to keep the brand consistent. However, new digital communications platforms do not always allow using the exact brand font or color, which might pose a challenge for the visual identity of a brand. Doing marketing communications according to vision, mission, and values of the company supports clarity, but also the continuity, of a brand. For Companies B and C digital is the basis for everything they do, and thus live streaming suits well in their overall strategy. Additionally, it allows Company B to show that they are interested in different phenomena, and Company C to transfer their company culture.

Table 5. The brand associations and branding objectives supported by live streaming

Company	Supports	
	<i>Brand associations</i>	<i>Branding objectives</i>
<b>A</b>	Open, brave, forward-going	
<b>B</b>	Close, brave, humane, opinionated, having a face	Creating awareness for their video expertise, thought leadership, bringing out expertise, (digital way of doing business)
<b>C</b>	Brave, relaxed	Bringing out people and company culture, creating brand awareness, (digital way of doing business)
<b>D</b>		Supporting product expertise in a new way
<b>E</b>	Brave	Increasing top-of-mind conspicuousness

#### **5.4.4 Benefits and challenges**

Companies B and C see that streaming is as a good way to increase the amount of participants in an event. *“Through stream you can get a lot more audience and you have a chance to communicate your message and your brand to a bigger audience that what is present. Stream enables people who cannot attend the event in person to be virtually present”*, says the interviewee of Company C. The interviewee of Company B believes that live streaming gives a lot to the viewer if there is an event and the viewers are not in the Helsinki region.

The interviewee of Company A states that streams have similar benefits than traditional videos, but they are more authentic. However, authenticity can be both a negative and a positive side: *“If you have a place where you have a great atmosphere it is purely positive, but at the same time there can be sounds on the background and elements that cannot be controlled. It is more unpredictable than traditional video production but at the same time the benefits can be bigger.”* The interviewee of Company C thinks also that the authenticity of streaming can be both a good and a bad thing. According to the interviewee, streams include more

spontaneous elements than traditional videos, but also feelings that happen in the moment: *“With traditional videos you can retake a scene many times and cut all the small mistakes but in streams you can’t. It is an honest and unforgivable method because there is no time to correct the mistakes. Streaming is a more genuine and real way to communicate what is happening at the moment. It’s more current. It’s a media of this moment.”*

Companies A and E think that live streaming supports their brand in a positive way. *“Live streaming fits our brand because we want to be forward going”*, notes the interviewee of Company A, and the interviewee of Company E agrees: *“We believe it strengthens our position as a vanguard and a brave travel agency.”* For company C streaming is a clear way to transmit their relaxed company culture: *“Through live picture we can communicate what kind of people work here better than through text. How our people and office looks tells about us as a company.”* For Companies A and E that operate in B2C market, streaming can be a new exiting way to engage with customers, and for Company C it corresponds to the essence of their brand to be digital. However, for Company D streaming as a marketing communications method itself might not be enough to have a huge effect on the brand because their target groups are not utilizing modern marketing communications tools but more interested in receiving the content in the easiest form possible.

Companies B, C, and E mention technical difficulties as a challenge for streaming. *“Technical details are the most demanding part of streaming. If technology fails people tend to think that it’s the company fault, which affects the brand. The key thing, however, is to keep going happily and bravely”*, notes the interviewee of Company B. The interviewee of Company C agrees: *“The stream can also backfire. It is not flattering for the brand if the stream has not been done properly, if it’s unclear, or if you can only see a shoulder of the speaker”*. Also the interviewee of Company E thinks that technical challenges are a big factor in live streaming:



*“Technical issues are an everyday challenge with live.”* During their campaign they faced technical issues two days out of five, but the most important thing is to react quickly. The interviewee of Company B also highlights the importance of improving the readiness to react to technical issues.

Companies D and E think that attracting the audience is challenging in streaming. Company D tried many marketing activities in order to gain audience for their product launch stream: *“We marketed directly to our customers, we had a local person to market the stream, we used a mailing list, and we also promoted the stream on LinkedIn. Ultimately, the audience came from LinkedIn and the local marketing activities, and not a single person came from the mailing list.”* The interviewee notes that there is a big competition for people’s attention. Company E has had similar challenges with their stream. The interviewee stresses that most of the engagement should happen during the video, not after, and that’s the biggest challenge in streaming: *“It is difficult to get the people to watch the stream and keep them there the whole stream. Engaging with customers is also the challenge during live streaming.”* The interviewee of Company D also thinks that engaging with audience during the stream is a challenge: *“You have to be very interesting not to lose the audience, because it is so easy to just click exit.”* Gaining an audience for streaming might be a challenge for Company D due to the conservative nature of the industry, where industry-related publications play a big role. Thus, customers are more used to traditional marketing communications channels and not yet ready to adapt new digital channels. For Company E the difficulty might arise from nature the B2C market, where people are overloaded with marketing messages even more than in B2B markets (van Riel & Fombrun 2007, 3, 6-7).

However, the interviewee of Company D has noticed that streaming does not fit all purposes. The company produces many traditional and 3D videos of their products, and in order to present the functionalities of a product the video and the

angles need to be planned beforehand and edited in a certain way, and this is something that live streaming cannot do. The interviewee also mentions two other challenges: the experience of the speakers, and tracking the audience of the stream. For the product launch stream it was essential to have own employees as speakers due to the highly sophisticated technical details of the new product, but since the speakers were not professional presenters, it was challenging. For the same reason the company prefers to record their internal news beforehand: *“We don’t do internal news as live streams because it could be clumsy.”* Another issue that Company D faced with their stream was the fact that they could not track the audience of the stream and reach them afterwards, although some people provided them with their email addresses if they wanted to be contacted after the stream.

According to Keller (2009), developing an integrated interactive marketing communications program requires evaluated from both a micro and macro perspective. Macro perspective refers to the overall efficiency of the program, whereas micro perspective means how well a certain channel contributes to the creation of brand equity. Thus, the mentioned advantages and challenges are examined in the context of corporate brand building, and Figure 12 presents the effect of each advantage and challenge on each brand building block: salience, performance and imagery, judgments and emotions, and resonance.

Live streaming enables companies to reach wider audiences, when everyone does not have to be physically present. Therefore it can have a positive effect on both salience, in other words brand awareness, and resonance. It can reach new customers or enhance the relationship among existing customers by offering a chance to attend an event they could not normally attend. Authenticity on the other hand has a positive impact on the judgments and emotions of the audience, since the company has a way to realistically transmit the feelings of an event or the essence of their company culture. This ultimately affects the resonance.

Differentiating the company through the usage of streaming has a positive effect on the performance and imagery since it results in differentiated perceptions of the brand in the minds of the customers.

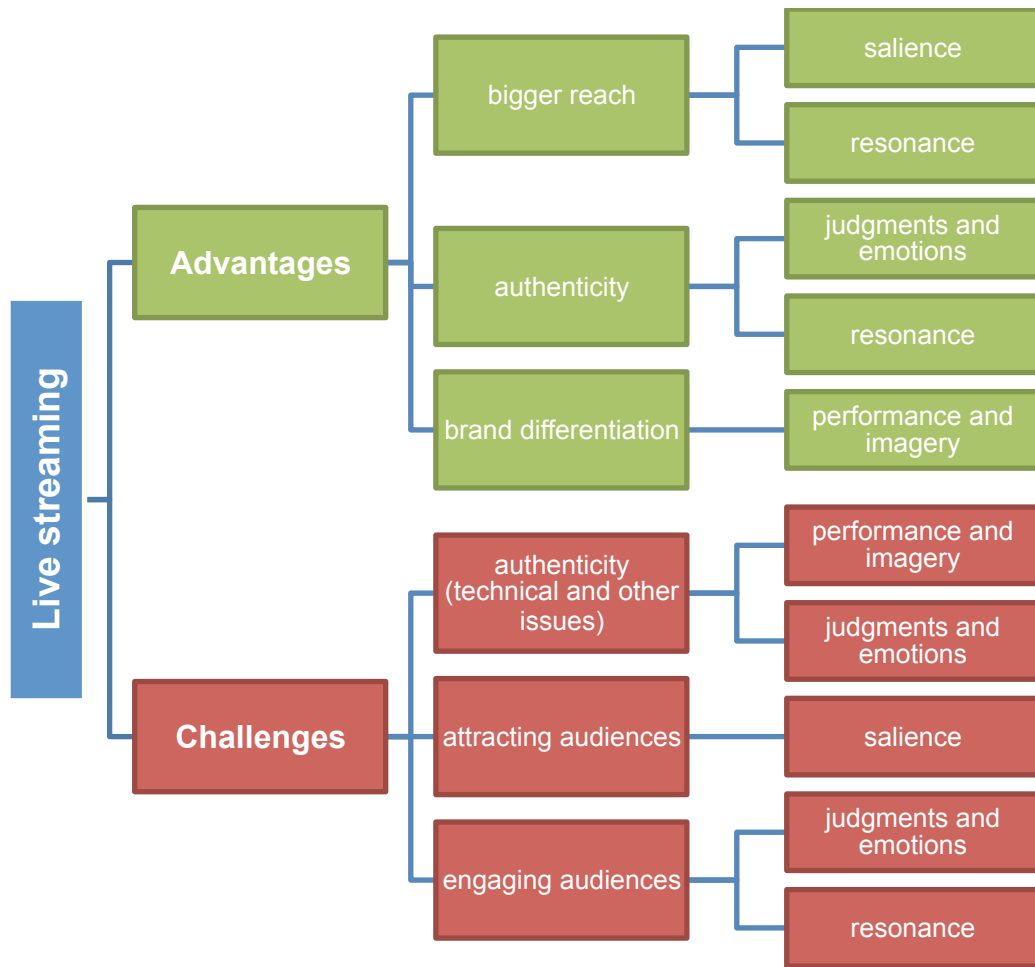


Figure 12. The effect of live streaming on brand equity creation

The challenges on the other hand can hinder the development of the brand building blocks. Authenticity can set challenges for the performance and imagery of a brand if unexpected issues occur during the stream. Consumers might think that these issues, content or technology related, reflects the company's overall performance. Technical and other issues can also hinder the development of judgments and emotions. Attracting audiences affects directly the salience of a

brand, since customers are not aware of the stream. If the company is not able to engage customers during the stream it can prevent the development of judgments and emotions, and ultimately resonance.

#### **5.4.5 Process**

The elements that were discovered regarding the process of live streaming include strategic aspects as well as practical aspects before, during, and after streaming.

##### *Strategy*

Before starting streaming Company A sees that it is crucial to think strategically what is the purpose of the stream, can the effectiveness and all the target groups be reached, and what kind of brand image does the company want to reflect. Additionally the company considers the possible risks, like in any new communications channels: *“You have to realize the risks related to the tool and channel, and produce the streams professionally.”* Company C has similar points: *“You have to think who is the audience, what is the content and what kind of company image and brand you want to build with this stream.”* Company D would think of the audience as well: *“If it is not relevant to the audience, don’t do it.”*

Based on the results of the study, the decision to use streaming in digital marketing communications has been applied to the social media channel selection process presented by Tsimonis and Diminiatris (2014) due to the similarities between the processes. Figure 13 illustrates the external and internal motives that drive companies to use streaming, which together with expected outcomes (objectives) affect the selection of the social media channels, in this case live streaming. Additionally, other social media activities have an effect on the selection of the channels as well as the results, which will then affect the internal motives to use live streaming.

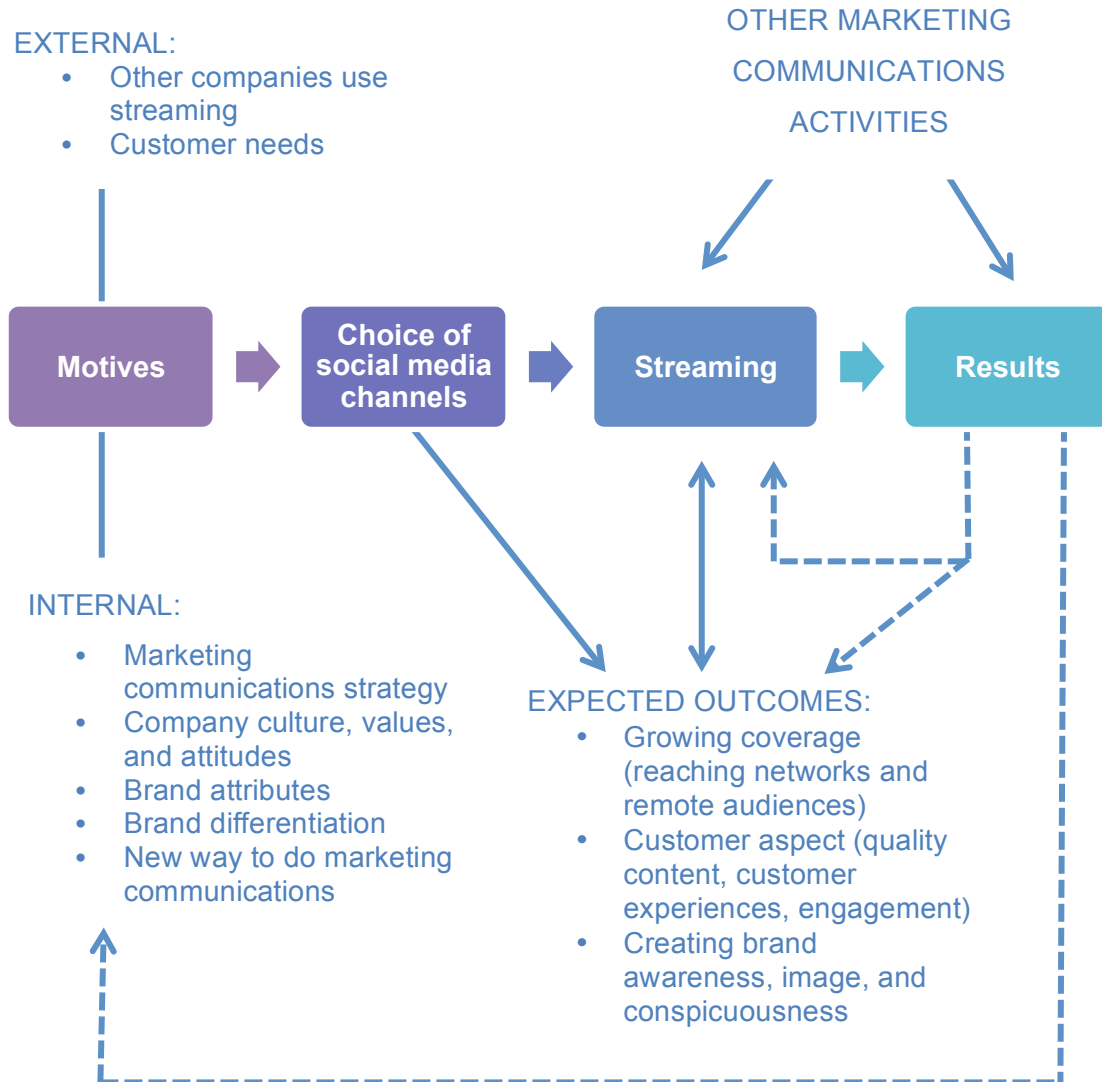


Figure 13. The process of selecting streaming as the used marketing communications channel (adapted from Tsimonis & Diminiatris 2014)

When it comes to the stream itself, Company B mentions that it is crucial to have an overall plan for the stream in terms of the target group, message, objectives, channels, and promotion. The interviewee notes that the most important part is the content, and the expert and their needs, but sharing and promoting the stream is part of the palette. Thorough planning decreases the need for ad hoc: *“We aim at predicting 80% of the stream, so it would make our work easier, but some ad hoc*

*and third party issues cannot be predicted.”* Companies A and E also rely on planning. *“Even though people talk about live streaming these things are usually thought beforehand and what to do if something goes wrong”,* says the interviewee of company A. Company E agrees: *“Streaming requires a lot of planning beforehand, both technique and content wise. You have to think where to film, at what time, with what equipment, who films, how to get the voice sound proper, what is the internet connection, what to say, how to make audience participate, and who follows the conversation during the stream.”* Additionally, Company B highlights the importance setting numerical objectives for the streams, such as number of views and viewers: *“It cannot only be a nice YouTube video but it has to bring business benefits and coverage.”*

According to Company B, data analytics has an important role in gaining a better understanding of the market, and this way producing better streams. Companies B and D encourage trying out new things, both content and execution wise, in order to produce better streams. *“It is good to have established processes but if you want to create a bigger phenomenon with your stream, you have to differentiate, put yourself out there, and don’t be afraid to fail. Just go there and test”,* says the interviewee of Company B. The interviewee of Company E agrees: *“It’s good to try different contents to try what works for the target audience.”* The interviewee of Company A also encourages piloting new things.

### *In-house or external partner*

One big theme for the interviewees was whether to produce the streams in-house or with an external partner. According to most of the companies the content is the most important part in a stream, and the intended usage purpose guides the selection of the streaming method. However, the type of the audience and the aspired brand image place certain quality requirements as well. Thus, the used streaming method and its quality are very interlinked with the content of the stream

and for whom the content is targeted for, which all together have an effect on the brand image of the company.

The interviewee of Company A remarks that whether to produce the stream in-house or with an external expert depends on the situation: *“If we make a brand campaign we want to do it with better equipment and think more how it is produced. But we have also done streaming with a smart phone from one of our events and have realized that it works as well. It really depends on the situation when we use a partner and when we do in-house. If the content is relevant to have available immediately for the audience it’s better to make it faster. Then we do it lighter, and there is no time for editing.”* Although content comes first for Company A, the interviewee remarks that how the stream looks and sounds affects the brand, and thus the quality of the used equipment is important as well: *“The braveness and forward going nature comes from the content, and the technical aspect is a smaller detail. -- Content is the most important part of the stream, but of course brand and quality criteria needs to be taken into consideration as well.”*

Even though company C does not have a certain strategy for live streaming, they execute event streams differently based on the size of the event. The interviewee highlights that the nature of the audience places certain criteria for the quality of the stream, and even though Periscope is a great tool for smaller events, there are differences in the quality: *“It is quite limited what you can film with Periscope, and thus it is wise to have a partner if you want to film a bigger event, since they have the technique and knowhow to produce the stream.”* Bigger events, with for example 400 participants, the company produces with an external partner who takes care of the filming and editing, so that they can focus on other things during the event. Smaller events, with less than 100 participants, Company C produce in-house. Company D produces their videos and streams with an external partner, who takes care of the technical elements.

Producing streams in-house has certain advantages according to the interviewees of Company A and C. *“We haven’t gone in the direction where everything needs to be professionally produced, because social media is about being authentic and sometimes it is more valuable that the video is available immediate than produced with professional equipment”*, says the interviewee of Company A, and continues: *“In social media companies need to have an identity that can be grasped; they need to be approachable and open. If the videos would be professionally produced, they would be ads and that doesn’t work for us or for the customer.”* This suits well with their marketing communications strategy and objectives, which highlight openness. Company C also aims for a more authentic feel with their smaller streams: *“What’s happening at the location is more important than perfect execution. The real feeling is the most important thing.”* Both companies mention that they do streaming quite lightly and by experimenting. The interviewee of Company C mentions that their Periscope streams are usually very relaxed. The aim is to have free communication between the present and remote audience: *“We don’t have a certain script. We might have an agenda that builds frames for the stream, but otherwise we want to communicate freely and authentically who we are, and we want to bring a relaxed atmosphere into the event and stream.”* This aligns with their branding objectives since employer image and bring out their company culture is an important aspect for them as well as transmitting a relaxed feeling.

In addition to using an external partner, the most used in-house streaming platforms among the case companies include Periscope, Facebook Live, and YouTube. The streaming platforms used by the case companies are presented in Table 6. Company C uses Periscope regularly. They have thought about taking Facebook Live or YouTube Live into use even though they have experienced Periscope as a useful tool: *“Periscope is an inexpensive way to transmit quality event content or an interesting speech. -- Periscope is a great way for us to transfer our relaxed company culture and the approachable feeling of our meet-*



ups.” However, the downside of the platform is that what you can film with it is very limited or you have to have experience to find the best angles. For this reason the company uses external partners for bigger streams.

Table 6. Live streaming platforms used by the case companies

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>Periscope</b>	One pilot		X		
<b>Facebook Live</b>	Thought about	Internally	Thought about		X
<b>YouTube</b>		X			
<b>YouTube Live</b>			Thought about		
<b>External partners</b>	X		X	X	
<b>Own streaming platforms</b>	X	Planned		X	

Company A, on the contrary, sees more potential in Facebook Live, but has not tried it yet: *“Facebook live is a new way to reach people and we could think about using it in partner co-operations, for example work with a person or a community.”* They think that the strength of Facebook Live is that it reaches masses. With Periscope they realized that the audience is small and that they already have better ways to do streaming: *“We would need to come up with another way to use Periscope, for example events, but at the moment we haven’t had any suitable events.”* They think that Periscope competes with producing professional live streams in some web service and sharing the link in social media. For the company it came as a surprise how short Periscope’s travel was: *“There was so much talk about it that when we piloted Periscope we thought it was going to become one of our established channels but soon it dropped out and now people are talking about Facebook Live.”* Company E uses mostly Facebook Live for streaming, but mentions that one challenge with the platform is that most people watch videos and streams without voice so subtitles would be essential, but it is not possible to add

the subtitles until after the stream. Both Companies A and E operate in B2C market, which means that their target groups are more present in Facebook than the typical target groups of B2B companies, which makes Facebook Live a wise tool for streaming. Whereas, for Company B that operates in B2B market, Facebook Live is for sharing internal trainings, meetings, or info sessions.

Only Company B uses YouTube for streaming: they stream directly to YouTube and then share the stream in their main channels. Company C mentions that they upload some of their recorded streams on YouTube: *“With Periscope the stream is available the next 24 hours but there are services with which you can record the stream, and it is also possible to put it on YouTube.”* Most of the companies, however, use YouTube only for traditional videos.

A rough process map of the selection of the streaming method can be drawn based on the interviews (illustrated in Figure 15), even though sometimes the selected method is very dependent on the situation.

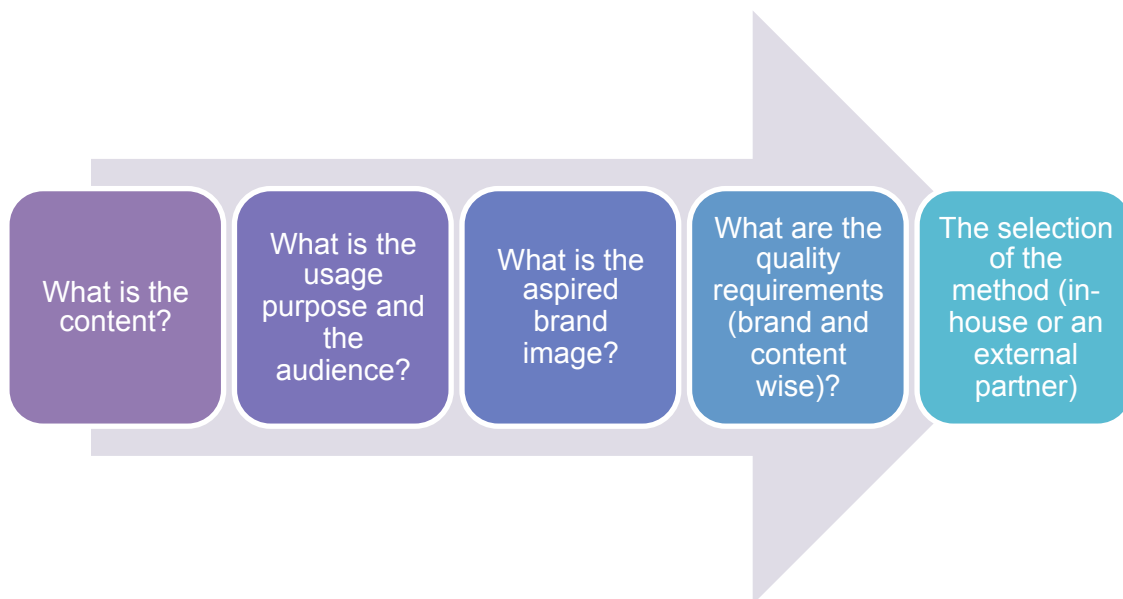


Figure 14. Live streaming method selection process

### *Practical aspects*

When the streaming method has been selected, there are several practical elements that need to be taken care of before, during, and after the stream. Practical preparations before the stream include planning the visuals, doing a technical check, going through the stream step by step, training the speakers, and taking care of confidentiality. During the stream the flow of the stream and technical issues need to be managed, and after the streams companies focus on post-marketing.

Company B has an extensive experience in streaming so they have certain established ways to prepare a stream: *“The beginning of the stream is mainly about planning the visuals. We plan the visuals and go them through with the participants. The overall look of the event in the visual sense needs to be pretty.”* The planning of a stream starts with receiving the speaker notes, which are then attached to the stream. After that the visual materials, where the picture of the speaker, Twitter handle, job title, and company name are visible, are prepared. In addition to the visuals the company does a technical check and goes through the stream step by step: how long does the event last, when does it end, and who are the speakers. *“If it’s our own stream we visit the venue and have a meeting with their lighting, sound and video editors and experts and go through pretty thoroughly what to do if something happens. We take technical details into consideration because quality is important for us”*, says the interviewee. They also organize training for their own speakers.

Likewise, Company C streams events that include presentations from different speakers. In bigger productions with an external partner, the company prepares slides with the speaker’s name, job title, subject of the presentation, and title of the event for the pauses: *“When the stream starts it is very easy to link this slide to the stream and then you have the next one ready for the pauses.”* For Periscope, the

company writes the name of the event and speaker, and the subject of the presentation in the title section, which is a good way to profile the event, because when people log onto the stream they might not know what kind of event it is. The company also makes a technical check to make sure that all the needed equipment is ready for the stream. The interviewee mentions that small practical things, such as poor lighting can affect the quality of Periscope stream drastically, and thus the camera needs to be close to the speaker. They also make sure that they have permission from the speaker and everyone attending to event for using the material afterwards. The interviewee highlights that one important thing is also protecting sensitive information, because streaming enables information to go into the Internet in real time and if the speaker is not knowledgeable of what their talking about, it might be very harmful: *“It is very important to inform the people that it (event) will be streamed and make sure that there is nothing client sensitive material on the background. You have to pay attention when filming in business environments.”* Overall, the streaming practices of Companies B and C align since both of the companies stream events and speeches, which require similar preparations.

The interviewee of Company A mentions that sometimes new digital channels require improvisation: *“Even though it would not be possible to use our exact brand font, we have to come up with new ways that would reflect the visual and identity aspects of our brand the best possible way.”*

During the stream, Company C, which uses Periscope, has at least one person supervising the stream for possible comments and likes, and tracking the amount of viewers. The person also takes care of the technical issues, such as does the stream work or is the battery running out. *“We don’t just leave the phone to record and go do other stuff. You have to be active during the stream”*, mentions the interviewee. Company E agrees: *“You have to follow the conversation all the time during the stream and make sure that there won’t be any technical problems.”*

Additionally, the interviewee of Company C reminds that the speaker needs to pay attention to the remote audience as much as the audience that is present: *“This is a thing that many presenters are still not doing and which should be kept in mind.”* Also the interviewee of Company D notes that how you behave on the stream is important, and whether you address your audience respectfully or thank them.

Company C was also thinking whether to enable Periscope’s comment section. They thought that inappropriate comments could be a risk, but in the end decided to give the audience an opportunity the comment because they wanted to have open discussion between the participants of the stream. Company E also thinks that it is very important to engage the audience during the stream.

Company D’s product launch stream was more scripted. During the stream they were using a split screen where they showed slides on the other side and speaker on the other side. Due to the use of a split screen the company was also able to show product videos during the stream. The stream was produced with an external partner, who took care of the technical issues, but they had a person monitoring and taking down questions, which were then answered at the end of the stream in order to avoid the stream getting interrupted. The company could consider doing a similar stream again but with very different expectations and probably for different reasons, and in much lighter way: *“We were scripting too much, we were thinking too much of a performance, when it should be more quick and dirty and maybe more informal.”* The company thinks that streams could work better if they were done more often, and in a lighter and more conversational way. And so that there are not so much money put into it. However, the interviewee considers the product launch as a good learning experience for the company. Even though Companies C, D, and E all differ from each other, a central aspect during the stream seem to be ensuring the engagement with the audience.

Most of the companies use the streams afterwards. *“With streams we do more after marketing than with blogs because they are bigger productions”*, says the interviewee of Company B. The company uses a lot of resources for filming, editing and cutting. After the streams they cut the stream into shorter videos, which are then shared in different channels. They also share the video with their speakers and networks to increase the reach. Company C also reuses the streams after confirming with the speakers that they have permission to use the material. With Periscope the stream is available for 24 hours, but the interviewee notes that there are services with which you can record the stream, and if wanted, upload it on YouTube. The recorded streams can then be linked to some campaigns, other marketing activities, or to promote future events. Company E also states that they edit the streams, add subtitles, and promote the video. In addition, Company B and E follow the analytics to make sure that the stream is meeting the objectives, and if they are not, think what could have been done better. *“We have to follow analytics to see what our target group thinks of the video so that we are producing value and experiences that are worth sharing”*, says the interviewee of Company B.

## **6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Findings**

*S1: What are the motives, usage purposes, objectives, and benefits and challenges of live streaming?*

Streaming is clearly a new way for companies to do marketing communications, and the internal motives for streaming include the branding and marketing communications strategy of the company, the company culture, values, and attitudes, brand differentiation, and employing a new way to do marketing communications. The fact that other companies are using streaming and the need to respond to customer needs are external motives that drive companies to use live streaming. Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) have noticed similar motives for social media usage in B2C environment: the possibility to spread the brand name, the presence of competitors in social media, and corporate-level social media strategy.

Companies use live streaming in seminars, events, and product launches, and they see opportunities in roadshows and webinars. Similar usage purposes have been identified in online articles on live streaming but a variety of other usage purposes have been mentioned as well, such as “how to” videos, brand release videos, interviews, showcasing a product manufacturing process, and customer support (Alton 2016; Calero 2016; Digital Information World 2015; Olenski 2015a), which the case companies have not adapted yet. Overall, live streaming seems to fit well in the content marketing context. According to the case companies, the key aspects in video streaming is listening to customer needs and producing content that is relevant and valuable to the target groups, integrating digital content marketing with other marketing activities, and developing suitable metrics, which

are also mentioned in the earlier literature on content marketing (Content Marketing Institute 2016; Holliman & Rowley 2014; Tanni & Keronen 2013, 27).

The central objectives and expected outcomes of live streaming mentioned by the case companies include growing coverage by reaching networks and remote audiences, engaging with audiences, creating good content and customer experiences, creating brand awareness, image, and conspicuousness, bringing out the company culture, and differentiating the company. Similar objectives have been identified in earlier literature on content and video marketing. Holliman and Rowley (2014) mention lead generation and creating brand awareness and a trustworthy brand as the main objectives in content marketing, and Meerman Scott (2010, 207) mentions that video marketing should be about targeting the audience with information that addresses a problem they are facing. However, additional objectives with live streaming seem to be increasing the amount of audience, bringing out the company culture, and engaging with customers, which are identified also in online articles on live streaming (Calero 2016; Hackl 2016; Olenski 2015a).

The benefits of live streaming, according to the case companies, include brand differentiation, reaching networks and remote audiences, and authenticity. Similar benefits have been identified by Litt (2014), Shai (2015), Thompson (2014), and Tsimonis and Diminiatris (2014), who state that brand development and differentiation are important advantages in social media and video marketing. Articles on live streaming, on the other hand, have highlighted better exposure by reaching wider audiences (Olenski 2015b) and authenticity (Kumu Communications 2016; Vuoti 2017; Weiss 2012) as advantages. Mellin (2013) states that live streaming is a way for open organizations and people to tell about themselves, and Kumu Communications (2017) adds that streaming is well suited for companies who want to transfer the reliability and professionalism of their company to their audiences. Thus, authenticity seems to be the clear advantage in



live streaming when compared to other digital marketing communications methods. However, while streaming brings a more authentic side to the digital marketing communications mix, it can be both good and bad. Authenticity enables companies to transmit feelings that happen in the moment as well as reflect the company culture, but it can also backfire if it is not done properly. Whereas traditional videos can be edited, there is no room for mistakes in live streaming.

Live streaming requires more technical competencies than text-based content marketing, and some of the challenges include technical difficulties, and attracting and engaging audiences. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 43) and Halvorson and Rach (2012, 119) also mention the lack of attention as one of the challenges in digital communications. However, attracting and engaging audiences conflicts with earlier literature that states that live videos are suitable for connecting with audience in real time, and increasing engagement (Calero 2016; Hackl 2016; Olenski 2015a).

## *S2: What is the process of live streaming?*

The study identified different stages of the case companies' live streaming practices: strategic decisions and practicalities before, during, and after the stream. Even though streams are considered more authentic than traditional videos, there is a lot of planning involved. A well-planned stream decreases the need for ad hoc but the key thing is to keep the streams relaxed.

Before deciding to use streaming, the case companies think about the purpose, effectiveness and risks of the stream, the brand and company image that will be reflected through the stream, and the fit of the stream to the overall marketing communication strategy. Likewise, Keller (2009) highlights the need for proper planning, and states that when creating digital marketing communications strategy it is crucial to choose the channels, which are the most cost-efficient in achieving

communications and sales objectives. Respectively, the importance of brand and image has been highlighted earlier in other researches and articles on live streaming (Kurio 2015; Tivi 2015) and marketing communications (Keller 2009).

When companies have decided to use streaming in marketing communications, the overall planning process includes identifying target groups, setting objectives, defining a strategy and implement it, and finally measuring the results and improving the streams. Creating useful and quality content with streams is also an important factor for the case companies as well as using effective promotion channels. Audience-centricity and responding to customer needs have been pointed out as central elements also in literature on marketing communications (Fill 2006a, 6-10; Keller 2009; Kotler & Keller 2009, 516-531; Tanni & Keronen 2013, 39-40) and video marketing (Meerman Scott 2010, 207). Additionally, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 43-44) and Halvorson and Rach (2012, 119) mention that in content marketing it is crucial to think the engagement value of certain content, and what kind of content resonates with the target audience the best. The planning process of live streaming mentioned by the case companies supports the earlier theories on content and video marketing planning, where central aspects are identifying the target groups, creating content that has engagement value to the audience, reaching the audiences through promotion, measuring the results, and making sure that the method fits the overall marketing mix (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 43-44; Halvorson & Rach 2012, 119; Meerman Scott 2010, 207; Miller 2011, 22-28).

An important thing for the interviewed companies appeared to be the decision of whether to produce the stream in-house or use an external partner, which is both a strategic and practical decision. The used streaming method and its quality are very interlinked with the content of the stream and for whom the content is targeted, which all together have an effect on the brand image of the company. The resources and capabilities of the company also guide the selection of the

method: working with an external partner means that they are responsible for the technical execution of the stream. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 43-44) and Halvorson and Rach (2012, 119) have identified that content marketing planning includes deciding the type of content (plain text or rich media, such as audio or streamed videos) and taking into consideration the needed resources to execute these formats (time, knowledge). Even though sometimes the selected method is very dependent on the situation, a rough process of the streaming method includes the following steps:

1. What is the content?
2. What are the usage purpose and the audience?
3. What is the aspired brand image?
4. What are the quality requirements (brand and content wise)?

The case companies use Periscope, Facebook Live, and YouTube for streaming. Periscope arouses mixed feelings among the case companies: one uses it regularly and sees it as an inexpensive and easy way to share events while one sees that the trend around Periscope is slowly fading. Using Facebook Live for streaming, on the other hand, seems to be increasing, and it is more suited for B2C companies because their target groups are more present in Facebook than the typical target groups of B2B companies. All of these platforms have been mentioned in online articles, but other streaming platforms include Meerkat, Blab, Twitch, YouNow, Livestream, Streaming Media, and Ustream (Calero 2016; Hackl 2016; Olenski 2015b; Weiss 2015). Articles on different platforms do not note clear differences between them. Kuulu (2016) mentions that Facebook Live streams show primarily for Facebook followers but can spread efficiently through the networks of the followers, whereas a Periscope stream can achieve a global audience with an interesting title. The biggest difference between Periscope and Facebook Live seems to be that on Periscope the stream is available for 24 hours after the stream, whereas in Facebook the stream can be easily retrieved

afterwards, which is also identified in several online articles (DeMers 2016; Kuulu 2016; Olensi 2015a; Smith, 2016).

In addition to the strategic choices, the practical planning of a stream includes questions like:

- Where to film?
- When to film?
- Who films? With what equipment? (*in-house or external partner?*)
- What are the technical requirements?
- Who are the speakers?
- How long does the stream last?
- Who follows the conversation during the stream?

The practical planning also includes planning the visuals based on the speaker notes (slides between the speeches), doing a technical check, going through the stream step by step, training speakers if needed, and taking care of confidentiality (when filming in a business environment) and asking for permission to film from the speaker and everyone present. In general, the case companies want to keep their streams relaxed and not too scripted. The main thing during the stream is to make sure that there is someone supervising the stream: following the conversations, comments, and questions, tracking the viewers, and making sure there are no technical issues. If the company is doing a stream with an external partner, the partner takes care of the technical aspect, which allows the company to focus on other things. It is also important that the speakers pay attention to the remote audience as well. Similar issues with regard to live streaming have been raised in online blogs. Especially the technical competencies have been brought out, but also ensuring engagement with the remote audiences has been highlighted (Mellin 2013; Pasanen 2017).

After streaming most companies edit the streams for later distribution and cut them into smaller videos that can be used in marketing afterwards. These smaller videos can be linked to campaigns, other marketing activities, or to promote future events. When streaming with Facebook Live, companies can add subtitles to the stream afterwards, which enables watching the stream even without the sound. Companies also follow the analytics, and make possible improvements accordingly.

*S3: How does live streaming support corporate brand building and corporate brand strategy?*

Another dimension of the study was to examine how live streaming supports corporate branding, which has not been studied before. Live streaming is seen a new marketing communications method, which supports brand attributes like forward going and vanguard. It also helps to add a more personal touch to the brand by letting stakeholder see another side of the company, which is also mention in earlier literature (Calero 2016; Hackl 2016; Kurio 2015; Olenski 2015a; Tivi 2015). The relationship between live streaming and the case companies' branding strategy was examined based on live streaming ability to support the aspired brand attributes and branding objectives of case companies. Another dimension was added by examining which five branding principles presented by Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) live streaming support. Additionally, live streaming's ability to supports brand building was examined.

Live streaming can be said to support the brand strategies of the case companies. The most important associations that live streaming supports are brave, forward going, vanguard, close, humane, and relaxed. Taking a new marketing communications method into use, in this case live streaming, can differentiate the company as brave and forward going, or even a vanguard among the competitors. It also facilitates creating associations like close and humane by bringing out

employees with their own faces and allowing the viewers see the relaxed company culture. Thus, live streaming is considered a new, bold way to interact with stakeholders and show the people behind the company.

The main branding objectives supported by live streaming including creating brand awareness and differentiation, bringing out the expert of the company and their expertise, driving thought leadership, bringing out the company culture, and adding a new channel to the marketing communications mix. Correspondingly, Kumu Communications (2016) note that streaming is well suited for companies who want to transfer the reliability and professionalism of their company to their audiences. Additionally, other articles (Calero 2016; Hackl 2016; Olenski 2015a; Olenski 2015b) conclude that live streaming is great for increasing the amount of audience, bringing out the company culture, and engaging with customers.

Among the five branding principles mentioned by Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006), live streaming supports especially visibility and authenticity. Live streaming allows companies to increase the visibility of their brand by reaching wider audiences and differentiating among competitors. It is also an authentic communications method, which allows stakeholders to form feelings of uniqueness of the brand. The brand associations and branding objectives of the case companies that live streaming supports were illustrated in Table 5.

The role of live streaming in brand building was examined more in-depth through the effect of each advantage and challenge of live streaming on the brand building blocks. The case companies mention that the biggest advantages of streaming include gaining a bigger reach, authenticity, and brand differentiation, while the biggest challenges are authenticity (technical issues), and attracting and engaging audiences.

Live streaming can be seen to affect the salience of a brand in positive way by enabling the company to reach wider audiences. However, since streaming is very dependent on a certain time, it might be difficult to gain a proper audience. But once the audience has been established, live streaming can have a positive impact on the performance and imagery of a brand by differentiating the company as forward going and digital, even though unexpected technical or other issues might result in a more negative perceptions of the overall performance of the company. Authenticity of live streaming, on the other hand, can improve the judgments and emotions of the target group by transmitting company culture and showing feelings that happen in the moment. Although technical issues, the lack of engagement with the audience, and uninteresting content can cause negative judgments and emotions in the minds of the target groups, and ultimately hinder the development of the highest brand building block, resonance. However, live streaming can have a positive effect on resonance by reaching current customers in a new way and enhancing the relationship by allowing them to digitally join an event or take a look at what is happening inside the company. Additionally, authenticity, which builds positive judgments and emotions, can have a huge role in creating resonance between the brand and the customers.

*Q1: How are Finnish companies utilizing live streaming in marketing communications and corporate branding?*

The main research question aims at complementing the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 1.3 by comparing the different characteristics of live streaming with marketing communications and corporate branding practices of the case companies and the earlier literature.

All the interviewed companies mention that individual marketing communications channels need to support the overall marketing communications strategy and business objectives, which is also stated in the earlier literature (Chaffey 2016;

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 14). The case companies also highlight that their marketing communications are very integrated, which complies with earlier theories on marketing communications that highlight integration in marketing communications (Keller 2009; Kotler & Keller 2009, 512; Mulhern 2009; Percy 2008, 33; van Riel & Fombrun 2007, 3). Some of the things, which guide the marketing communications of the case companies, include openness and driving thought leaderships through content marketing. Also being able to bring out a relaxed company culture, operating in a digital way, and being the industry leader are important. The objectives of marketing communications include strengthening an expert image, reaching people, building brand, and driving sales. The main objectives of live streaming, on the other hand, include reaching networks and remote audiences, creating quality content, customer experiences and engagement, and creating brand awareness, image and conspicuousness. Thus, the objectives are similar and live streaming can be seen to support the marketing communications of the organizations. This also confirms that the objectives for live streaming are derived from the business and marketing communications strategies, as stated by the case companies.

Although the marketing communications channels are very integrated, the different digital channels have different characteristics, which were presented in Figure 9. Facebook and Instagram are considered suitable for building the corporate brand and transmitting a relaxed image, whereas LinkedIn, which is more business like, and Twitter, which is more ad hoc, can be used for driving thought leadership. According to the case companies, content marketing is useful for driving thought leadership and profiling the company as a leading expert. Live streaming can be seen to have similar characteristic than other digital marketing communications channels. It is seen as suitable for brand building, transmitting company culture, and driving thought leadership, and live streaming platforms Periscope, Facebook Live, and YouTube Live can be seen to complement Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. However, streaming adds a new dimension to the content marketing



environment by allowing companies to transmit expert speeches and events to their stakeholders in real time, and to execute product marketing in a new way.

Authenticity seems to be something that other digital channels cannot provide as well as live streaming that allows stakeholders to gain a more intimate and direct interaction with the company. Authenticity, however, can be both good and bad, since it enables companies to transmit feelings that happen in the moment as well as reflect the company culture, but it can also harm the brand if there are technical problems or other uncontrollable elements. There might be more risks related to live streaming, but at the same time the gains can be bigger. In addition to authenticity, live streaming allows companies to reach audiences that are not able to attend their events or seminars in person. Live streams allow better interaction in real time, whereas traditional videos are more static, but the content of the stream has to be relevant and interesting to the target group.

Live streaming requires technical competencies, which some companies might experience as a challenge due to lack of, either technical or time, resources. Even though live streaming refers to filming live events, it requires a lot of planning before, during, and after, just like traditional video marketing. Additionally, it should be noted that the authenticity of the channel means that anything can happen during the stream, good or bad. The process of live streaming is quite similar to overall digital marketing communications planning (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012; Percy 2008, 25-26): identifying target groups, setting objectives, defining a strategy and implement it, and finally measuring the results and improving the streams. One of the biggest questions is whether to produce the stream in-house or with an external expert. The used streaming method and its quality are very interlinked with the content of the stream and for whom the content is targeted, which all together have an effect on the brand image of the company. However, the idea is to keep streaming relaxed. Engaging with the audience at the moment of the stream is sometimes a challenge but afterwards the streams can be cut into smaller videos

and utilized in marketing. Thus, the lifecycle of a stream is much longer and not limited to a certain time.

To conclude, live streaming is still a new way for companies to do marketing communications, and there are many usage purposes for streaming that Finnish companies are still not utilizing. However, there is a clear trend in real time videos and live streaming (Gilman 2015; Hackl 2016; Kurio 2015; Tivi 2015; Weiss 2015), and most of the case companies see that better usage of content marketing and especially video content will gain more significance in the future. Video content is seen as an important tool for storytelling, creating emotional-based dimensions, communicating complicated information, and creating employer and company images. Correspondingly, the results of the study reveal that live streaming supports corporate brand building and corporate brand strategy. The effect of live streaming on corporate brand building was examined through Keller's six brand building blocks, and its effect on corporate brand strategy through the case companies' marketing communications strategies and Kotler and Pfoertsch's (2006) corporate branding principles.

The different advantages and challenges of live streaming can have both a negative and a positive effect on the six brand building blocks. Live streaming's ability to reach wider audiences contributes to the salience of a brand, while streaming can also affect the performance and imagery by differentiating the company. Authenticity, on the other hand, affects the judgments and emotions, and ultimately the resonance, and allowing current customers to see another side of the company can increase the resonance. The challenge of reaching audiences can affect the salience negatively, and unexpected technical and other issues (authenticity) can affect the performance and imagery. Additionally, the lack of engagement with the audience and uninteresting content can cause negative judgments and emotions and hinder the development of resonance.

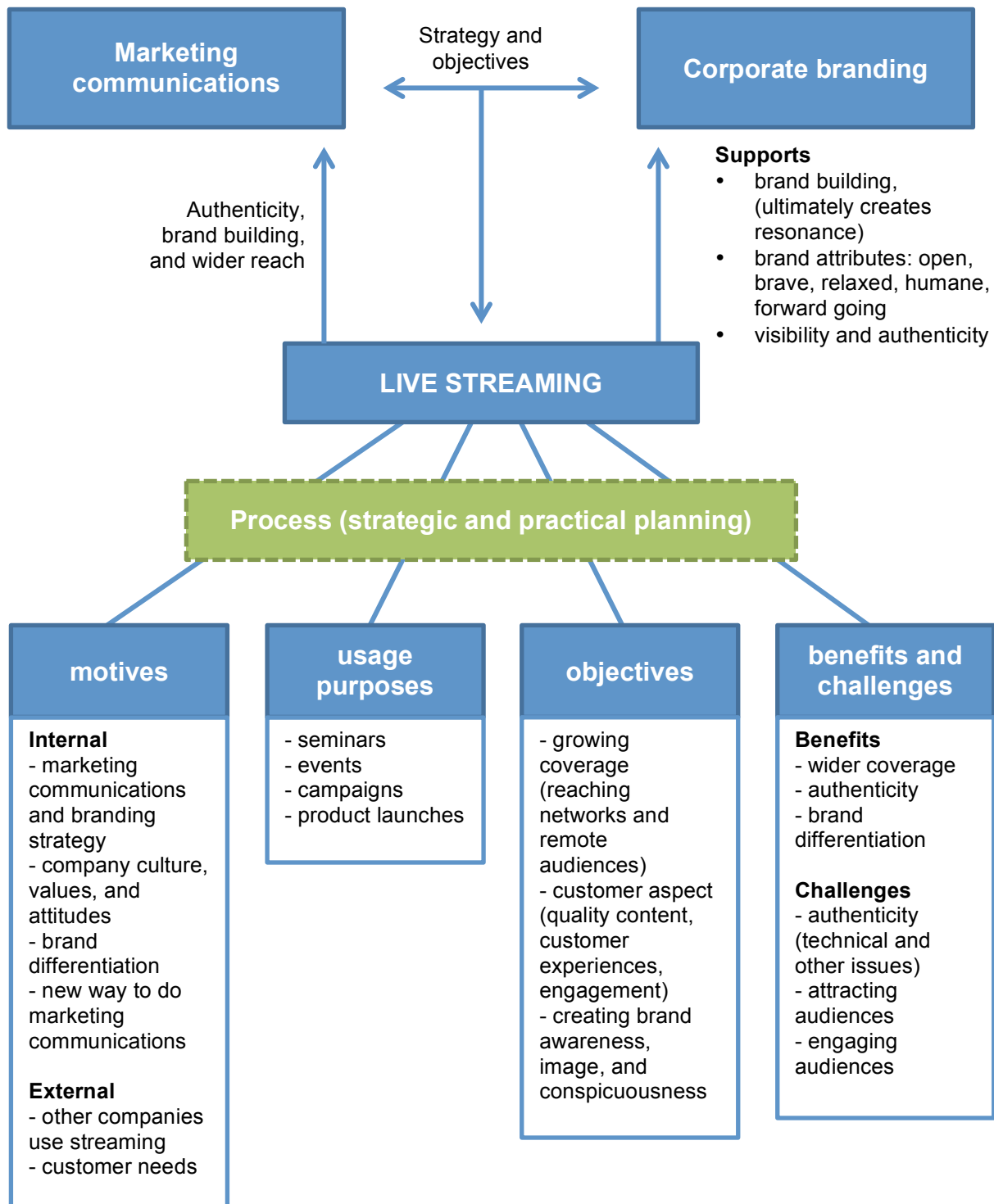


Figure 15. Live streaming's role in marketing communications and corporate branding

Live streaming also supports brand attributes, such as open, brave, humane, relaxed and forward going. Thus, live streaming is considered a new, bold way to interact with stakeholders and show the people behind the company. Additionally, live streaming increases brand awareness due to its wider reach. It is also a way to drive thought leadership by bringing out the experts of the company. When it comes to Kotler and Pfoertsch's (2006) branding principles, live streaming supports especially visibility and authenticity. In conclusion, live streaming supports differentiation, creates brand awareness, and allows companies to show an authentic and relaxed side of their company. Figure 15 presents the role of live streaming in marketing communications and corporate branding.

## ***6.2 Managerial implications***

As mentioned earlier in this study, digital marketing communications is a fast evolving area, which partly lacks useful frameworks. The main objective of the research was to gain an in-depth understanding on how live streaming is utilized in Finnish companies and provide a useful framework for companies who are considering starting live streaming. The aim of the study was also to encourage companies to take new digital marketing communication methods into use.

Live streaming adds to the collection of digital marketing communications channels. However, it should be tightly linked to the overall business and marketing and communications strategy, and there should be clear reasons to use live streaming. Live streaming should also be well integrated with other marketing communications channels, but also complement them. Live streaming is a great way to differentiate and bring corporate brands closer to people, and bring out the values and culture of a company. It is also a great tool for driving thought leadership by transmitting the expertise of the company. Streams can be used for all size events, seminars, product launches, and with specific marketing campaigns. With streaming companies can gain a wider audience and interact with

remote stakeholders because streams are not tied to a certain location. Hence, streams enable better engagement with stakeholders but the stream needs to be well executed and the content interesting and relevant to the target groups. Streaming is a new way to do marketing communications, which can result in enhanced customer experiences, and as mentioned before, streaming can differentiate the company as a vanguard and forward going. Live streaming's clear benefit lies in its authenticity. It allows companies to show a truthful picture of the company, even though the fact that everything happens in real time creates some challenges. However, with live streaming companies can improve the stakeholders' judgments and emotions of the brand, and ultimately create resonance.

The process of live streaming includes strategic and practical planning. In addition to making sure that live streaming supports overall business objectives and is well integrated with other marketing communications, a more detailed strategic planning involves identifying target groups, setting objectives, defining a strategy and implement it, and measuring the results and improving. It is crucial to have a clear picture of the customer needs and what kind of content resonates with the target groups in order to attract and engage customers with the stream. Understanding the target group creates the base for a successful stream. It also guides the selection of whether to produce the stream in-house or with an external partner. The content and the target group of a stream sets requirements for the quality of the stream, which then has a clear effect on the corporate brand.

Practical planning before, during, and after the stream comprehends questions like when and where to film, who films, what is the content, and who follows the conversation and technical issues during the stream. Visual planning is also necessary as well as taking care of permissions to film, and information security when filming in a business environment. A big element in live streaming is to plan how to engage with the audience, whether it's creating questions or enabling commenting. Afterwards the stream can be cut into smaller video, which can be

utilized in other marketing. Thus, the life cycle of a stream is longer than just a stream happening at a certain time. Also following the analytics and making sure that the set objectives have been met, is important, and if not, think about what could be done differently next time.

Additionally, it should be noted that live streaming requires more technical competencies than traditional text-based content marketing. However, live streaming can be done together with an external partner who has the technical knowledge. Streams of smaller events can be done with own equipment, with a mobile phone or another recording device, and there are multiple platforms, which can be used, for example Periscope, Facebook Live and YouTube Live. Facebook Live is especially useful for B2C companies, since many target groups can be found on Facebook.

Even though streaming requires planning, it is a relaxed channel where audiences can experience real feelings and interact directly with the company. Even though it is good to ensure beforehand that possible issues can be reacted quickly during the stream, the stream should not be too scripted. However, content is the king also in live streaming. Without good content it is difficult to attract and engage audiences, because the competition for attention is tough and people have power to choose when and where to read messages and watch videos. However, there are more benefits than risks in live streaming, and today's companies should be fearless about employing new marketing communications method, which allow better interaction with stakeholders.

### ***6.3 Limitations and further research***

Live streaming is a fairly new way of doing marketing communications, and thus, requires further research. This cross-sectional study aimed at shedding light on the topic by examining how five different case companies are currently utilizing live

streaming in marketing communications and corporate branding. Thus, the study is limited to external communications, and more precisely marketing communications. It also examined the role of live streaming in corporate branding, and other branding areas were left out. It should also be noted that there are weaknesses in the generalizability of the research because it examines five different cases in the Finnish market. Thus, the results should be examined in their context.

Using live videos as part of marketing communications and corporate branding should be studied further to gain a broader understanding of the topic. However, in addition to using live streaming in marketing communications, some case companies mentioned that live streaming has an important role in their internal communications. Thus, a possible future area for research could be examining live streaming's role in other areas of corporate communications, such as internal communications. Another interesting research avenue could be related to employer branding, for example what is live streaming's role in supporting employee engagement or attracting possible future employees. As traditional video marketing has been widely studied from the customer's perspective, this could be an interesting perspective to take with regard to video streaming as well. Some of companies also used other real-time video platforms, such as Snapchat and Instagram Stories, and thus, "my day" type of videos would also be an interesting area for further studies.

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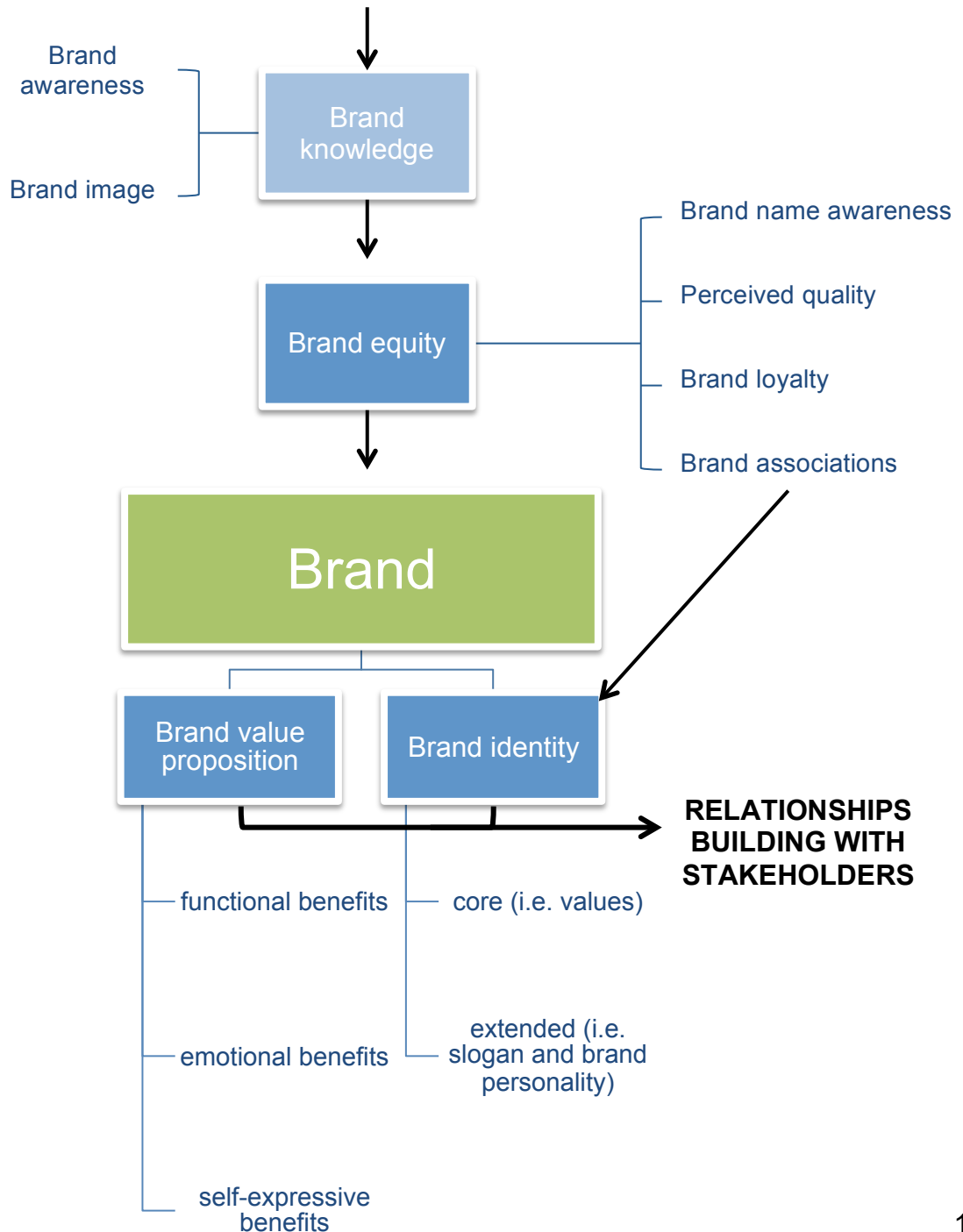
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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1. Brand construct and the role of marketing communications in branding (adapted from Aaker 1996; Keller 2009)

### MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES



## **APPENDIX 2. Questions of the semi-structured phone interview**

### **Live video streaming and corporate branding**

This study aims at finding out how Finnish companies utilize live video streaming in marketing communications and corporate branding. The research is qualitative in nature and the answers will stay anonymous.

The duration of the interview is approximately one hour and it consists of three parts. In the first part you are asked questions regarding your company's corporate brand and brand management. The second part will focus on the overall marketing communications practices. However, the emphasis is on the third part, which aims at finding out how live video streaming is used in your company and how it is connected to your marketing communications and corporate brand.

#### **I: Corporate brand**

1. How would you define your corporate brand? (*i.e. brand identity, brand promise, or position statement*)
2. Which corporate associations does your company want to establish?
3. What do you want to achieve with corporate branding? What are the objectives?

#### **II: Marketing communications**

4. Which are the key elements and objectives in your marketing and communications strategy?
5. Which digital marketing communications channels does your company use? What is the purpose of each channel? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each channel?

### **III: Live video streaming**

6. How long have you been doing live video streaming internally and externally?
7. What were your expectations when you first started live video streaming? For example was there any hesitation in the beginning?
8. Which platforms do you use for streaming? How do you use them internally and externally? Are there any differences between platforms?
9. Do you have a strategy for live video streaming? If not, what guides the streaming?
10. What is the role of live video streaming in your marketing communications mix?
11. What does it give to your corporate brand?
12. What is the role of live video streaming among other digital channels and traditional videos? What are the pros and cons compared to other channels (practical aspect and corporate brand wise)?
13. How would you describe a normal “process” of live video streaming? Planning, execution, follow up?
14. What is the role of the content in the streams? What kind of content do you have and does it differ from your other content marketing activities, such as blogs and traditional videos?
15. Describe a live video streaming experience/campaign that has been very successful. In your opinion, which elements made it successful?
16. Describe a live video streaming experience/campaign that has not gone as planned? In your opinion, which elements made it not so successful?
17. What do you think are the most important things, which need to be taken into consideration when streaming?

## **APPENDIX 3. Questions of the e-mail interview (in Finnish)**

### **Livestriimaus ja yritysbrändi**

Tämän haastattelututkimuksen tarkoituksena on kartoittaa, miten suomalaiset yritykset hyödyntävät livestriimausta osana markkinointiviestintää ja yritysbrändäystä. Tutkimus on kvalitatiivinen ja vastaukset tullaan käsittelemään anonymisti.

Haastattelu koostuu kolmesta osasta. Ensimmäinen osa käsittelee yrityksen yritysbrändiä ja sen eri elementtejä. Toisessa osassa kartoitetaan yrityksen markkinointiviestinnän keinoja. Haastattelun pääpaino on kolmannessa osassa, jossa keskitytään livestriimaukseen niin strategisella kuin käytännön tasolla.

#### **Taustakysymykset:**

- Kauan olette tehneet striimausta sisäisesti/ulkoisesti?
- Toimitteko kansainvälisesti?
- Kuinka monta työntekijää yrityksellänne on noin suurin piirtein?
- Millä sanalla kuvailisitte toimialaanne?

#### **I: Yritysbrändi**

1. Miten määrittelette (yritys)brändinne? Voitte kertoa esimerkiksi, mikä on brändi-identiteettinne, brändilupauksenne tai brändipositionne.
2. Millaisia miellelyhtymiä/brändiassosiaatioita haluatte liitettävän yritysbrändiinne?
3. Millaisia asioita haluatte saavuttaa brändäyksellä? Mitkä ovat brändäyksen tavoitteet?

## **II: Markkinointiviestintä**

4. Mitkä ovat markkinointi- ja viestintästrategianne kulmakivet ja tavoitteet?
5. Mitä digitaalisia markkinointiviestinnän keinoja yrityksenne käyttää, sisäisesti ja ulkoisesti? Mikä on eri kanavien rooli, entä niiden hyvät ja huonot puolet?

## **III: Livestriimaus**

6. Ennen kuin aloititte livestriimauksen, mitkä olivat ennako-odotuksenne?
7. Mitä livestriimauslustoja yrityksenne käyttää? Entä muita uudenlaisia videoalustoja (esim. Snapchat, Instagram Stories)? Mihin tarkoitukseen käytettä niitä sisäisesti ja ulkoisesti? Mitkä ovat niiden hyvät ja huonot puolet?
8. Onko yrityksessänne laadittu strategia livestriimauksen suhteen? Jos ei, minkä pohjalta mietitte livestriimauksen tarpeellisuutta ja tavoitteita?
9. Miten koette livestriimauksen yhdistyvän markkinointi- ja viestintästrategiaanne? Mitä strategian elementtejä se tukee/ei tue?
10. Miten koette livestriimauksen yhdistyvän (yritys)brändiinne? Mitä brändin osa-alueita se tukee/ei tue?
11. Mikä on livestriimauksen rooli muiden digitaalisten kanavien, ja etenkin perinteisten videoiden (YouTube tai verkkosivuilla julkaistavat videot), joukossa? Mitkä ovat sen hyvät ja huonot puolet verrattuna muihin kanaviin (käytännön toteutuksen kannalta ja vaikutus brändiin)?
12. Miten kuvailisitte normaalia livestriimausprosessianne tai -tilannetta? Mitä tapahtuu ennen striimausta, sen aikana ja jälkeen?
13. Mikä on sisällön rooli livestriimauksessa? Millaista sisältöä tuotate, entä eroaako se muusta sisältömarkkinoinnista tai perinteisistä videoista?
14. Kuvailkaa livestriimauskokemus/-kampanja, joka on ollut erityisen onnistunut.
15. Kuvailkaa livestriimauskokemus/-kampanja, joka ei ole sujunut täysin suunnitelmien mukaisesti.

16. Mitkä ovat mielestänne keskeisimmät asiat, jotka tulee ottaa huomioon livestriimauksessa? Esimerkiksi kolme tärkeintä asiaa.
17. Minkä koet olevan seuraava "big thing" markkinointiviestinnässä?

Kiitos ajastanne!

#### APPENDIX 4. An example of the coding

**Which platforms do you use for streaming?**

I don't know, we work with partners that are specialized with that. Our partner had two of their guys setting everything up. **LS-P**

**So when you do live video streams, do external experts mainly do it?**

Yes, we have partners. **LS-P** And on corporate level when we do internal videos and when we do the investors relations call **LS-UP**, it is done with partners. We don't have people in-house to do it independently, and why would you, I don't think anybody does so.

**Do you have a special strategy for streams? How do you link these live video streams to support your strategy?**

The video activities, whatever they are, are part of our marketing communication plan. **LS-P AND MC-V** Now things are in a bit of a state of flux, but step by step we have an overall plan for the year what we are going to communicate and we are going to do many things. We have a list of tradeshows we are going to, and we have to think what we are going to communicate there. And **video is simply a part of communicating our message. First comes the message, what do we want to say, and then comes how do we want to say it, and then the video will come quite quickly into the picture.MC-V** We have to plan what is our budget, and we still have ad hoc things, but **you cant be making up this top level stuff, because then you become incoherent, so you have to repeating this message in different ways in the marketplace, in different countries and regions, and video is the main way.MC-SO AND MC-V**