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DIGITAL CONTENT AND MAKING IT VIRAL IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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The purpose of the study is to find out what factors of digital content influence whether consumers create eWOM about it or not in social media. The aim is to help companies to understand the nature of virality and to create and publish better, more shared content in their website and social media. This is done by forming hypotheses of possible factors that might cause virality based on earlier literature and testing those with regression analyses in the empirical part of the study.

Results of the study reveal nine factors of content that increase virality and make new theoretical contributions. Content should be interesting, neutral, surprising, entertaining, impractical, longer (more words in articles and Facebook posts), use variety of content tactics (blog posts and pictures increase virality) or be shared by an opinion leader or a celebrity.
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Tutkimuksen tavoite on selvittää digitaalisen sisällön ominaisuuksia, jotka vaikuttavat ryhtyvätkö kuluttajat jakamaan, tykkäämään ja kommentoimaan sitä sosiaalisessa mediassa. Tällä pyritään auttamaan yrityksiä ymmärtämään paremmin viraisuutta, jotta he pystyisivät tuottamaan ja julkaisemaan nettisivuillaan ja sosiaalisessa mediassa parempaa sisältöä, jota kuluttajat jakaisivat enemmän. Tutkimus toteutetaan muodostamalla hypoteeseja mahdollisista ominaisuuksista kirjallisuuden perusteella ja testaamalla niitä regressioanalyseillä empirisessä osiossa.

Tulokset paljastavat yhdeksän piirrettä, jotka lisäävät viraisuutta: kiinnostavuus, neutraalisuus, yllättävyys, viihtytävyys, epäkäytännöllisyys, artikkelin ja Facebook julkaisun pituus, eri sisältö taktikoiden käyttö (erityisesti blogit ja kuvat lisäävät viraisuutta) sekä kun mielipidevaikutta tai kuuluisuus jakaa sisällön.
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1 INTRODUCTION

The introduction chapter goes through background of the study, introduces research problem, objectives and key concepts. It gives brief taste of the methodology and used literature of later chapter. Theoretical framework, delimitations and structure of the theses are introduced to give readers best possible idea what this study is all about.

1.1 Background of the study

Content has been forever important tool for marketing professionals but recently its role in building digital reputation has put it back to the spotlight (Keller, 2012). Several digital marketing professionals are naming it as one of the key marketing trends in 2014 (Spenner, 2014; Loomba, 2014; Lieb, 2014; Juvonen, 2014). According to Social Media Today 78 % of Chief Marketing Officers believe that custom content is the future marketing (Dyer, 2013), so its role keeps just growing in the near future.

Content in marketing is not here only to stay, but also one of the most effective marketing strategies. It is all about creating valuable information for target audience. (Harad, 2013) This way, by using storytelling, it aims to attract, acquire and engage potential customers (Solomon, 2013). Content Marketing Institute (2013) (CMI) also listed customer loyalty, website traffic and sales to the list of main goals which companies have when using content in marketing. The benefits are even bigger when company manages to deliver so good content that audience shares it and promotes the company as a thought leader of the industry (Marzec, 2013).

Getting people share content and creating electronic word of mouth is one key objective for organizations’ when they plan their advertising campaigns
(Keller, 2012). The number of people sharing content in social media is actually the second’s most popular way to measure the effectiveness of content (CMI, 2013). Consumers rely more on word of mouth, which is delivered by other consumers making it more credible non-commercial source of information (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Chu and Kim, 2011). Marketing made by the company is losing ground to what consumers say and share to another in social media (Blackshaw, 2011).

Social media creates a completely new communication style by offering digital services where to communicate with others. It has made it easier for consumers to get in contact with each other, as well as engage and participate in brand communication. (Jahn and Kunz, 2012) It is clear for companies that getting people talk and share their content is important and beneficial, but the fact why some digital content is shared more is less known. Companies create content and hope that people will share it with other, but some of their attempts fail completely. Cashmore (2009) has even argued that virality is just random.

There are several studies on what motivates people to share content (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Xie et al., 2012), but what kind of content is being shared most is not known as well. Berger and Milkman (2012) examined content characteristics and how emotions evoked by content affect virality. This research, like some others, studied forwarding content via e-mail, where audience size is small. There has not done research on content sharing in social media, where the audience size is much bigger, hundreds.

Idea of this study is to find out what kind of content makes people share it in social media. This information is very valid for most of companies because according to CMI (2013) 90 % of B2C companies are using content marketing and the number is growing every year. The fact is that when more and more companies are focusing on content in marketing, it becomes harder to actually stand out and get customers attention.
1.2 Research problem and objectives

This study explores how digital content should be done so that people would share it more in social media. It tries to find out what is the content like that goes viral and is being talked about. The ultimate purpose is to help companies to create better, more shared content, so that they can enjoy all benefits of content and content marketing.

The topic combines digital content to word of mouth and viral marketing. Area of the study is presented in Figure 1. Research cap is in the point where all the subjects overlap. The main research question below crystalizes the idea of this study and the following supportive questions assist solving it.

**Research question:**

*How companies make digital content viral in social media?*

**Sub-questions:**

*Why companies should use digital content in marketing?*

*What are the benefits of viral content?*

*What internal factors of content effect on virality?*

*What external factors of content effect on virality?*

The sub-questions are discussed in the literature review so that right questions are found and can be asked in the empirical part of the study. Importance and usage possibilities of digital content in marketing are opened up as well as the benefits of getting content viral in social media. Theory is also used to form hypotheses of internal and external factors of content that might effect on virality. These factors are tested in the empirical part of the study to find out what makes digital content viral in social media.
1.3 The key concepts

*Digital content*

Digital content differs from other content types by its form and portability to online environment. When digital content is used in marketing is defined as “a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action” according to Pulizzi (2012). Schneider (2012) ads that content is used strategically to satisfy consumers' need for inspiration, solutions, education and entertainment through storytelling.

*Electronic word of mouth*

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communication is any positive or negative statement about a product or company via the Internet made by potential, actual and former customers (Hennig-Thurau et.al., 2004). Traditional word of mouth (WOM) is done orally between receiver and sender who know
each other, so the main difference to eWOM is the platform where it happens. In eWOM the number of involved parties is much bigger and parties do not always know each other. (Reynolds-McIlney and Taran, 2010)

**Viral marketing**

Viral marketing is defined as eWOM in which consumers are encouraged to pass some form of marketing message related to a company, brand or product within their social networks (Bampo et al., 2008; Kaplan et al., 2011). Succeeding it creates virality (Oxford dictionaries 2014).

**Virality**

Virality is piece of information being rapidly and widely spread around the Internet from one user to another (Oxford dictionaries 2014). Because of lack of proper definition, we have determined that it includes liking, sharing and commenting a social media publication. It also creates virality if consumers send content privately to another by email or in social media chat or just talk about it traditional way. This though is not the viral behavior this study tries to find out, but the visible and measurable one in social media that is spread to consumer’s whole social network.

**Social media**

Social media is defined as information technologies, which by using Internet-based platforms supports interpersonal communication and collaboration. Social media is best known from sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter, each of which is used by hundreds of millions of people. (Kane et al., 2014) These virtual communities can be seen as word of mouth networks (De Valck et al., 2009) and liking, sharing and commenting are forms of eWOM communication (de Vries et al., 2012).
**Digital marketing**

Digital marketing or e-marketing is the practice of promoting company’s products and services in digital media channels (Smith, 2011), such as the Internet, smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices. Opposite for digital media are traditional media channels, such as print newspapers, magazines and direct mail, radio, television and outdoor advertising. (Mulhern, 2009)

### 1.4 Literature review

Even though content in marketing is not a new phenomenon, there has not been made much research of it. On the other hand there are studies of concepts related to content marketing, such as storytelling and content sharing, so it can be seen studied indirectly. Lack of academic literature in field of content usage in marketing has made the theoretical background focus more on word of mouth and viral marketing literature.

WOM research began over 50 years ago and it has been studied quite thoroughly since then and for a good reason, several studies show that it is the most powerful marketing technique (Rosen, 2000; Silverman, 2001). In the mid-1990’s research took a new direction towards eWOM, when era of the Internet began and communication was transferred to online environment. Motivation to participate in eWOM has especially been topic of interest for many researchers like Henning-Thurau et al. (2004), Bronner et al. (2011) and Abrantes et al. (2013). eWOM is very popular object for word of mouth research even today and there is still need for more studies (Abrantes et al., 2013).

Viral marketing research began a little after eWOM. Motives why people share content are widely studied also in this field (Phelps et al., 2004; Mengze et al., 2014; Ho, 2010). Several studies show also that emotions play huge role whether or not messages goes viral. Lindgreen and Vanhamme (2005) studied that surprise has major role for viral success.
Ads with pleasant emotional tones have the same affect according to Eckler and Bolls (2011). On the contrary Phelps et al. (2004) discovered that it has no impact on virality whether content is positive or negative, while Brown, Bhadury, and Pope (2010) that eWOM is greater when content evokes negative emotions. The results are conflicting, but those might have something to do with the methodology used.

Article what makes online content viral by Berger and Milkman (2012), is perhaps closest to this study. Like mentioned in the section background of the study they studied how emotions, but also some other control variables, affect virality. Their study although concerned only sharing content person-to-person by email. Future studies, where the audience size would be bigger, were requested. Content characteristics' effect on sharing has not being studied further and all the aspects, why certain content goes viral, are still not known. This study tries to fill this hole and give managers concrete tips how to make their content marketing more attractive in the eyes of consumer.

1.5 Theoretical framework

The purpose of digital content is to produce valuable content for target audience and this way increase for example sales, loyalty and engagement of consumers (Pulizzi, 2012). By analyzing content sharing the study tries to find out how companies can create better content for marketing purposes.

Theoretical framework of the study is presented in Figure 2. The basic idea is to find out what should digital content be like so that people would share it in social media, in other words, create eWOM and make content viral. This is done by analyzing what internal content characteristics and external reasons increase virality. Possible characteristics and external reasons are identified in the literature part of study based. Social media is an important platform in the study where the case company publishes and consumers
share the content. Some of the content is in a form of an article, which can be found behind a link in social media post. Therefore the origin of some of the digital content is website instead of social media.

Figure 2: Theoretical framework

1.6 Methodology

Different research design frameworks can be classified into three groups: exploratory, descriptive and causal. The study aims to understand nature of highly shared content – how content’s characteristics influence sharing and virality. Thus, it uses causal research design, because it enables examine the relationship between different content characteristics and virality. (Saunders et al., 2009, 350-352; Iacobucci and Churchill, 2010, 58) The study can also be called deductive because hypotheses are deduced from the theory (Saunders et al., 2009). Idea is that previous literature will help finding the most important content characteristics affecting share behavior. Hypotheses are formed base on those findings and tested in the empirical part of the study.
The study is based on a data that will be collected from a case company’s Facebook page and website in a three months period. Data contains huge amount of information: original posts, day of the week, primary content tactic, number of shares, likes, and comments in Facebook, number of likes in website, length of articles and characters of Facebook posts. After the data is collected there will be three coders/assistants that expand it by analyzing if a post is positive, practical, entertaining, interesting or surprising. Relationship between content characteristics and virality is being analyzed by using regression analysis. Facebook likes, shares and comments are the dependent variables that measure virality of the content. Therefore there will be three regressions each containing 21 independent variable.

1.7 Delimitations

There are multiple delimitations made in the study. First, because the point is to find out what kind of content consumers share and create eWOM about, the focus is only on B2C companies. Theoretical background and empirical evidence are gathered from this point of view.

Second, even though about 90 % of WOM takes place offline (Keller, 2012), the focus is on electronic, which is easier to measure and much less studied phenomenon. The study also focuses on a small part of eWOM, which is born from the willingness to share content created by a company. Technically this means sharing, liking and commenting company’s Facebook posts or sharing it straight behind the link from company website.

Third, the study talks about social media even though the only analyzed platform is Facebook. Other social media channels are not that popular for sharing company content in Finland so those are left outside of data gathering and final analysis. The size of data coming from other channels would be too small to analyze.
Fourth, there is huge variety of possible content forms which can be used in marketing: social media, blogs, articles on company’s website, electronic and print newsletters, videos, mobile content and apps, in-person events, digital and print magazines. This study focuses only on types of content that uses digital channels because the main idea is to find out what content is being shared in social media. Other forms, like print and in-person events, are shared much less if at all. Digital channels and content forms are also more popular and effective on average than other channels and forms. (CMI, 2013) For the sake of simplicity digital content is talked only as content in this study.

Fifth, it is commonly known that personal characteristics and values of consumers influence on their information sharing and social media behavior, but those factors are left out of this study to avoid the study to expand too wide. To be able to study also personal characteristics it would require a questionnaire or something similar that is based on data straight from consumers. Because of this we are not able to study all possible factors that would influence on virality, like consumer motives and attitude. These factors are although noticed in the limitations of study and suggestions for future research section.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

The study is divided into six chapters. After introduction the second chapter defines eWOM and viral marketing and possible causes for virality, which are social currency, triggers, emotions, public, practical value and stories. The third chapter discusses content, its different forms and tactics and how it can be used as marketing communication tool. These two chapters form the literature part of the study and hypotheses are formed based on it.

The forth chapter starts the empirical part of the study by introducing the research method and design, case company and how the data is collected
and coded. After this, the actual analyzes is conducted by performing regression analyses for each hypothesis. Also factors related to consumers reached and engaged in social media and some descriptive information about dependent and independent variables of the study are described. The last chapter concludes the findings and discusses managerial and theoretical implications of the study along with limitations and suggestions for the further research.
2 VIRALITY

This chapter’s main point is to find out what content characteristics and motives might cause virality. First there is little background about eWOM and viral marketing research and the terms are defined. Then possible causes of virality are introduced and hypotheses are formed at the end of each section based on the literature.

2.1 Electronic word of mouth

Word of mouth (WOM) research began over 50 years ago and it has been studied quite thoroughly since then and for a good reason, several studies show that it is the most powerful marketing technique (Engel et al., 1969; Rosen, 2000; Silverman, 2001). According to CIA:MediaEdge 76% of consumers found WOM as a main influencer in their purchase decision while the corresponding number to traditional advertising was only 15% (Kirby and Marsden, 2006).

Arndt was one of the first researchers who studied influence of WOM on customer behavior already in the 1960’s (Buttle, 1998). He defined WOM as “oral person to person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, regarding a brand, product or a service” (Arndt, 1967, 291).

Granitz and Ward (1996) predicted that there was going to be a new platform for WOM communication – the Internet. And in the mid-1990’s research took a new direction towards electronic word of mouth (eWOM), when the era of the Internet began and communication was transferred to online environment. Since, it has been found out that the benefits of WOM can be achieved faster through virtual networks (Phelps et al., 2004).

The term eWoM refers to “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is
made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, 39). According to Bickart and Schindler (2001) consumer find eWOM content more relevant and it has greater credibility to them than corporate Websites. The impact is even bigger to consumer behavior when the message involves good experience (Kawakami et al., 2013).

When comparing WOM and eWOM the biggest difference is the platform where it happens: offline versus online. Typical offline channels are face-to-face, telephone and traditional mail while online interaction happens through social networks, email, instant messages, chats, forums and blogs. Henning-Thurau et al. (2004) also identified three characteristics that separate eWOM from traditional WOM: eWOM is typically anonymous, many individuals can receive the same message and different consumers can access the same message at different points in time. However, when eWOM happens in social media, especially in Facebook, it is almost exceptionally not done anonymously but with own face and name.

Compared to the traditional ways of marketing eWOM has significantly longer carryover effects (Trusov et al., 2009). eWOM can also reach people with lower costs if it manages to harness the willingness of customers to pass along the marketing message in social networks. Messages from other customers’ social network sites probably have more impact than the traditional marketing and eWOM can reach customers who are trying to avoid marketing messages. (Gardner et al., 2013) Henning-Thurau et al. (2004) found eWOM even more powerful than traditional WOM even though it might be less personal; it is immediate, has significant reach and credibility and is publicly available.

eWOM is very popular object for WOM research even today and there is still need for more studies (Abrantes et al., 2013). Motivation to participate in eWOM has especially been topic of interest for many researchers like Henning-Thurau et al. (2004), Bronner et al. (2011) and Abrantes et al. (2013). In past years many researchers have also combined viral marketing
and eWOM (Phelps et al., 2001; Van der Lans et al., 2010; Berger and Milkman, 2012). These will be discussed more in the later section ‘Causes of virality’.

2.2 Viral marketing

Viral marketing research trend began only a little after eWOM, when Jurvetson and Draper introduced the term in 1996 (Phelps et al., 2004). Like many times with new terms, there have been disagreements about its definition. Still most researchers view viral marketing as form of WOM advertising in which consumers spread the word about products or services in their social networks by telling others about it (e.g. Datta et al., 2005; San José-Cabezudo and Camarero-Izquierdo, 2012; Henke, 2013).

Viral marketing can be called to a WOM strategy in which marketers create content around a goal of causing viewers spontaneously spread it by sending it to friends (Zarrella, 2007; Gardner, 2013). Van der Lans et al. (2010) adds that consumers share and spread marketing-relevant information, which is sent out deliberately by marketers to stimulate and capitalize WOM behavior. One purpose of viral marketing is to acquire new customers by encouraging customers to honest communication among others (Shirky, 2000). Viral marketing can also create brand awareness quite cheaply compared to other marketing methods because of its large reach of consumers in a short amount of time (Kirby and Marsden, 2006, 87-90; Henning-Thurau et al., 2004).

Marketing is no longer just marketer-to-consumer communication, but also consumer-to-consumer communication which is encouraged by marketers (Chiu et al., 2007). Zarrella (2007) defines viral marketing campaigns as any online content, which is created with the intention to go viral. This includes non-interactive media like videos, articles, blog posts, memes and podcasts, as well as interactive content like games and tools. (Zarella, 2007)
Miquel-Romero and Adame-Sanchez (2013) describes viral marketing as information, which spreads spontaneously among individuals. They compare it to a chain where company releases a virus (a message) and lets it to spread by itself. Because of the way it spreads, it is common to refer viral marketing to a flu virus. Customers are infected with an advertising message that passes like an uncontrollable flu virus from one consumer to another. (Montgomery, 2001) This requires that few consumers receive the message first before they can transmit it to others, who can in turn transmit it again (Neuborne, 2001). First recipients are very important consequently, without them the message would not begin spreading.

Viral marketing messages are not bound to a geographic location, because the transfer of messages happens in the Internet and therefore have the potential to reach consumers on a global scale in a very short time (Van der Lans and Van Bruggen, 2011). Traditional WOM on the other hand is usually local and slow (Datta et al., 2005). The main difference between viral marketing and eWOM is that one is the cause and another is the effect. Viral marketing builds awareness and buzz, which generates eWOM. Positive eWOM causes trials and acquisitions. (Ferguson, 2008)

Kirby and Marsden (2006) combine viral, WOM and buzz marketing techniques under connected marketing term. According to them difference between these techniques are that viral marketing is a campaign harnessing eWOM connections, WOM marketing uses offline connections and buzz marketing harnesses both.

### 2.3 Causes of virality

To be able to manage eWOM and viral marketing one must understand what motivates customers to share content and their consumption experiences with others (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011; Mills, 2012). This section tries to answer to question: what causes virality?
There could be several ways to divide causes of virality into different groups but the study uses framework from Berger (2013a, 27-28), called STEPPS. STEPPS gives the most comprehensive view of all factors affecting virality by considering six different aspects. The letter combination is illustrated in Figure 3 and it comes from words: social currency, triggers, emotions, public, practical value and stories. These factors are being opened up in own sections below. Some of the sections might collapse a little because there are similar variables affecting to them.

![Figure 3: STEPPS – causes of virality (Berger, 2013a, 27-28)](image)

### 2.3.1 Social currency

It is commonly known that people care on what others think of them and how they look to others. They might want to look cool, smart, interesting or just different. Social media offers a way to people to build a desirable image of them. They share stuff that makes them look good in the eyes of others, to earn social currency. (Berger, 2013, 29-31)

Wojnicki and Godes (2008) found out that people share practical information for self-enhancement purposes. This means that people are trying to build a picture of themselves as smart person who has lot of knowledge. Sharing eWOM is never just communicating information but something about consumers themselves (Wojnicki and Godes, 2008). Most people have need for others to think highly of them, and sharing interesting things helps them
to achieve this goal, it makes them seem more interesting (Berger and Schwartz, 2011).

Consumers have tendency to talk about things that provide them social currency (Hughes, 2005). According to The New York Times (2011) 68 % of consumers share content which help them to define themselves, to give people a better sense of whom they are and what is important to them. Consumers might also think about possible consequences when sharing content. Content that they believe that would result positive outcomes is favored over those with negative consequences. (Bandura, 1997) Xie et al. (2012) on the contrary did not found that outcome expectations would significantly motivate online sharing behavior.

Berger and Milkman (2012) suggested that identity signaling, self-presentation motives and affiliation goals may play a strong role in sharing content, when it is done to a larger audience. In their study broadcasting was done in a very narrow focus and further studies with broader appeal were requested. Larger audience would definitely be the case when talking about sharing content in social media, where consumers have on average 338 Facebook friends (Smith, 2014).

Berger (2013a, 29-32; 2013b) also mentions that social currency involves consumers by making them feel like insiders. Some loyalty programs are based on this idea as well. Companies can have secret menus to loyal top customers. They can have special deals for shoppers in the middle of the night, bars with secret entrances disguised as a phone booth or rooms where you need a password to enter. Nothing spreads WOM as fast as poorly protected secret. (Berger, 2013a, 29-40; Berger, 2013b)

2.3.2 Triggers

Triggers are things and context that makes people to remember a product, story or idea - something that triggers a memory trace. According to Berger
(2013, 61-63), easily memorable information stays top of mind and tip of the tongue. When people remember something they are more likely to share it with others. (Berger, 2013, 61-64)

But what can an environmental cue be like? Rebecca Black’s song Friday has been mocked as one of the most horrible song ever, but still people watched it over 300 million times in year 2011. Berger (2013b) suggests that the secret of the songs success is the link to something customers thought once of week – Friday. Consumers remember the song when they start to think Fridays and that is why the views of the YouTube video spike every Friday and start to rise couple days before it, like can be seen in Figure 4. (Berger, 2013b)

![Figure 4: Searches for ‘Rebecca Black’ on YouTube (Berger, 2013b)](image)

Lee and Labroo (2004) found out that participants of their study rated a bottle of ketchup more favorable after watching a story about a fast-food restaurant than about a supermarket. Fast-food restaurants are more closely linked to ketchup, so the story triggered people liking ketchup more. (Lee and Labroo, 2004) Usage situations and products that are used more frequently should be more top of mind, like breakfast cereals compared to birthday cake, and therefore the cues of those trigger more eWOM (Berger and Schwartz, 2011).

Berger and Schwartz (2011) studied how product characteristics shape immediate and ongoing WOM. They suggested that many of the day-to-day conversations are more like small talk about whatever happen to come to
mind, and therefore things are rather driven by accessibility than interest, especially in ongoing WOM. Their study showed that more public visibility or cues by the environment create more immediate, ongoing and overall WOM. More interesting products on the other hand receive more immediate WOM right after consumers have experienced it, but the fact how interesting, surprising or novel the product is does not affect ongoing WOM. Consequently, products and marketing messages should rather be designed more visible and consider the structure of environment so that it is triggered by more cues. (Berger and Schwartz, 2011)

Sharing and liking content in social media is more likely to happen immediately or not at all. There is huge information flood in Facebook, which makes messages disappear there easily. Even though people would see same message again, why would they suddenly feel urge to share or like it if they did not before? In electronic environment WOM is mainly immediate so different time frames are not important. Therefore how interesting message is should influence whether it is shared or not. We build following hypothesis:

\[ H1: \text{Interesting content increases virality.} \]

### 2.3.3 Emotion

It is clear that emotions affect virality. When people feel something they want share it with others – pass along a feeling. Several studies (e.g. Phelps, 2004; Botha, 2013) show that emotions play huge role whether or not messages goes viral, but there are inconsistent findings which emotions have the biggest impact (Botha, 2013).

There is ongoing debate whether people more likely share positive or negative content. Berger and Milkman (2012) found out that positive news are more viral in their study of forwarding emails. Eckler and Bolls (2011) support this view by finding that ads with pleasant emotional tones are more likely to be shared. Botha and Reyneke (2013) also found out that videos
that trigger a positive emotional reaction are shared more likely than videos with negative or no emotional reaction. On the contrary Phelps et al. (2004) discovered that it has no impact on virality whether content is positive or negative. Brown, Bhadury, and Pope (2010) argued that eWOM is greater when content evokes negative emotions. In their study the more severe the consequences of violence were, more likely consumers would share the message.

Lindgreen and Vanhamme (2005) found out that surprise has major role for viral success. Cho (2009) got similar results in her online video ads study. Unexpected online video ads create more eWOM than expected ones, which means that surprise plays important role in diffusion of the ad. Other studies (e.g. Porter and Golan, 2006; Eckler and Bolls, 2011) also support the view that surprising, even shocking, content (like sexuality, nudity and violence) make consumers share it by creating intensive emotional responses in them. One person that Kietzmann and Canhoto (2013, 151) interviewed in their study crystalizes it: “I don’t feel the need to mention an ad when it is what I expected it to be, it must ‘wow’ me for it to be posted on my Facebook wall”.

Phelps et al. (2004) studied motives to pass along an email. They wound out that four of the top five motives involve enjoyment and entertainment. According to them, humor was number one way to make a message spread. Kietzmann and Canhoto (2013, 151) support this by finding similar results between humor and eWOM. It does not matter whether content is positive or negative, it just has to be funny. Some of their interviewees said: “I only discuss ads if they are particularly entertaining / viral” and “I don’t talk about a brand’s advertising unless I can make a joke about it”. BuzzSumo (2014) supports this by adding that awe, laughter and amusement are common factors with the most shared articles based on analysis of 100 million articles.

Strong negative emotions like fear and sadness can also make consumers share content (Phelps et al., 2004). Berger and Milkman (2012) found out
that positive emotions are shared more than negative ones; however some negative emotions are more viral than others. Content that makes consumers feel anxious and anger is more likely to get viral than those that cause sadness. The key when making content viral is that it activates and arouses consumers. Awe, anger and anxiety are high-arousal emotions and they activate consumers, while sadness is low-arousal emotion and it deactivates them. (Berger and Milkman, 2012) High-arousal emotions cause major physiological change in your body, such as laughter, tears or goose bumps. Low-arousal emotions evoke less intense response, like happiness, frustration and sadness. (McNeal, 2012)

Henke (2013) suggested that instead of separate emotions, online flow state is the key of virality. According to Rodriguez-Sanchez et al. (2008) flow includes absorption, enjoyment and intrinsic interest. Flow state consumer is fully concentrated, absent-minded and loses sense of time. The study of Henke (2013) indicates that consumers who experience flow are more likely to pass along the online video. Also it does not matter whether the content is pleasant or unpleasant as long as the consumer gets into a flow state. (Henke, 2013)

We suggest that consumers share more likely positive than negative content. Positive content helps them to earn more social currency in the long run; no one wants to be the one always complaining. Sharing positive, really surprising and entertaining content makes others to think that he or she is fun to be around. We form following hypotheses:

**H2:** Positive content increases virality more than negative.

**H3:** Unexpected content increases virality.

**H4:** Entertaining content increases virality.
2.3.4 Public

The more public something is the more consumers will imitate it. Consumers have tendency to observe others and if they see one doing something – using certain product or sharing a message or content – they might follow it. Therefore public visibility should also effect on eWOM (Berger and Schwartz, 2011).

There are two different kinds of products: public (e.g. cars) and private (e.g. toothbrush). Consumers are more aware of publicly visible products, which they can see that others are using. That should increase product accessibility and boost the possibility that people end up having conversation about the product. (Berger and Schwartz, 2011) For example, a person might see someone drinking a new soda flavor and ask what does it taste like, but what is the chance that will happen with more private products like toilet paper. Things that are being consumed more publicly are making the product more accessible at times when conversations are possible (Berger and Schwartz, 2011).

Getting content shared by an opinion leader or celebrity can make a huge difference how public the message becomes. Even just one influential person sharing the message can increase 31.8 % the number of social shares (BuzzSumo, 2014). Litvin et al. (2008, 458) define opinion leaders as people who are “interested in particular product fields and who make an effort to expose themselves to mass media sources and are trusted by opinion seekers to provide knowledgeable advice”.

When celebrities mention a brand or shares content in social media, the message is received by thousands, even hundreds thousands, of followers. Jin and Phua (2014) found out that consumers who expose to a positive message by a celebrity with a high number of followers show higher post exposure product involvement and buying intention. Message from celebrity with a low number of followers does not however indicate the same unless
the message is negative, which causes followers to show higher intention to spread eWOM. (Jin and Phua, 2014)

Consumers who share content increase its public visibility in social media. The possibility that a person even sees a message is much higher when others are spreading it, because that way it might end up in their newsfeed. Facebook’s algorithm tends to show content it guesses that an individual might like based on edge (engagement), affinity, weight and time. Especially edges other consumers have done have huge impact whether Facebook sees the content interesting and shows it to more fans of the page. Edges, also called as engagement, are shares, likes, comments and clicks consumers do in Facebook posts. (Socialbakers, 2014)

We suggest that the threshold to share content is smaller if others have done it before. Consumers might even see it necessary to share content when so many others have done before them. Opinion leaders and celebrities sharing content increase its visibility, which automatically causes more eWOM. Based on before we form following hypothesis:

$H5$: If opinion leader or celebrity shares content, it increases virality.

### 2.3.5 Practical value

People love helping others. And what would be a better way to help than sharing some practical information with friends. Phelps et al. (2004) found out that almost half of emails about free stuff and helpful tips are passed along. Their study showed that two of top six emails sharing motives were related to helping. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) named concern to help others as major cause of eWOM. Several other studies (Berger and Milkman, 2012; Xie et al., 2012) have found also evidence, which speaks for importance of content’s practicality.
Sharing informative content in social media can make consumers feel pleasant by giving them opportunity to provide knowledge or help to others (Wasko and Faraj, 2003). Constant et al. (1994) suggested that sharing useful content to others enhances consumers’ confidence in their ability to help and it makes feel more satisfied with them. Consumers may also expect to receive reciprocal benefits when sharing valuable information with others (Kankanhalli et al., 2005), like feedback and that others will correspondingly share information they have bumped into (Wasko and Faraj, 2003). Though according to Xie et al. (2012), this is not the case; consumers rather just gain satisfaction from helping others without expecting reciprocal benefits from it (Xie et al., 2012).

Multiple studies (e.g. Ho, 2012; Xie et al., 2012) have identified altruism as an important motive for people to create eWOM. Altruism in this case means that one is willing to help others by forwarding informative content on Facebook without expecting returns (Hsu and Lin, 2008). Consumers can simply forward valuable, practical information because they enjoy helping others. Xie et al. (2012) found that altruism and sharing material to improve the welfare of others were the primary motivators for sharing content in Facebook.

Berger and Milkman (2012) found out in their study that informative content, that consumer experience practically useful for others, increases the possibility that the information gets shared by 30%. However, there are studies (e.g. Xie et al., 2012), which indicates that consumers do not care whether content is useful to others, but rather shared stuff that they found interesting.

We suggest that consumers truly love helping others for altruistic reasons and therefore practicality of content creates more eWOM. Following hypothesis is built:

\( H6: \) Practical content increases virality.
2.3.6 Stories

People have huge tendency to tell and share stories. Telling stories is in fact the oldest form of entertainment. People’s need for narratives is embedded deep in their brain. (Guber, 2011) Stories are the conjunctive factor in all of the really viral content (Berger, 2013a, 179-180).

Before going any further with stories role of virality, it must be defined, what is a story. According to Fog, Munch and Blanchette (2010, 33-35) a story should contain four elements: message, conflict, characters and plot. These elements can be used in a huge variety of ways depending on the story’s purpose and how it is told. Story is constructed around a conflict, which is set in motion by a change that disturbs the harmony of the beginning and a force to take action to restore it. For an example and clearance pretty much all movies are build this way. Different phases of a story are introduced more accurately in Figure 5. (Fog et al., 2010, 34-36, 45)

![Figure 5: Phases of a story (Fog et al., 2012, 45)](image-url)
There are several studies (e.g. Berger, 2013a; Morrissey, 2008), which speak on the half of stories role in making content viral. Firstly stories are much easier to remember than data, facts and figures. When data and other information are hidden inside a story consumer can be moved both emotionally and intellectually and the data is remembered better. (Aaker, 2013) Secondly data alone rarely engaged consumers to move them to take action. Stories on the other hand do this by connecting a single person to others by triggering emotions and making people want to share the experience with others. (Guber, 2011) Companies should take advantage of it and hide information inside a story; use content like it would be a Trojan horse. To become viral products and ideas should embed in stories that people want to tell others. (Berger, 2013a, 179-180)

The secret of a good story according to Morrissey (2008, 13) is to “keep it dead simple, make it personal and give people a reason to pass it on”. Many other viral campaign fails because of too flashy technology or in-depth storytelling. There is a risk that storytelling overcomplicates the process and does not give consumer the instant gratification he expected. Consumers are so busy and there is so much content that the first two seconds are crucial whether content captures consumer or loses it. (Morrissey, 2008)

When communicating with one another, consumers usually do it in a form of stories. The focus of their stories is to make sense of who they are and what they consume. (Delgadillo and Escalas, 2004) Stories with personal touch would therefore increase eWOM. Consumers would more likely share content that includes a story that helps them to express themselves. Cafferky (2005) even says that WOM is based on storytelling. According to Delgadillo and Escalas (2004) consumer WOM communication has many narrative elements and can thus be seen as being in the form of a story. Company’s role is to provide stories to consumers and encourage them to share those stories (Cafferky, 2005).
We suggest that to be shared more stories need to catch consumers' attention and the key to do so is simplicity. Also stories that are part of consumers' life – stories that helps telling who they are – are shared more. We form following hypotheses:

*H7: If content is in a form of a story, it increases virality.*
3 DIGITAL CONTENT

This chapter focuses on digital content by defining it, discussing its role as marketing communication tool and introducing different content tactics. It also forms hypotheses about how content tactics effect on virality and what content characteristics might cause virality in social media.

3.1 Content as marketing communication tool

Consumers are consuming more and more content in online environment (Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson, 2013). Companies have realized this and the benefits of content and have taken it into their marketing communication mix. According to Pulizzi (2012) purpose of content is to attract and retain customers by creating relevant and valuable content with the intention of changing consumer’s behavior. He also suggests that to be able to successfully use content in marketing, content needs to be targeted to right audience, offer educational, entertaining or helpful information, integrate storytelling within an organization, build a community and create credible content that is not related to the brand. (Pulizzi, 2012)

Content Marketing Association (2015) introduced five biggest reasons for using content in marketing: increase sales, retain customers, build or reposition brand, ability to integrate to different channels and engage customers’ long term. Pulizzi (2011) adds that many marketing operations are impossible without content creation, like social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), public relations (PR) and inbound marketing, where content is the key to inbound traffic and leads. He names seven business goals that content creations help to achieve: brand awareness or reinforcement, lead conversion or nurturing, customer conversion, customer service, customer loyalty/retention, customer upsell and passionate subscribers. Content also feeds social media engagement and establishes company’s reputation. (Cohen 2013)
Content has to answer a need – not only tell a story about how wonderful attributes products have. Instead content should respond to the audience’s hopes and fears. (Reinebach, 2013) Good relevant content will bring customers and if company keeps publishing it over time, customers will not only come back but they will think the company as leading authority of the industry (Kennedy, 2014). Non-commercial content is important when trying to get people create eWOM about company’s content (Malhotra et al., 2013) because consumers might find commercial content less credible (Van Reijmersdal et al., 2010). This is actually one of the issues of using content in marketing: how to get commercial messages inside of content without losing its credibility.

Companies should provide one or more of these three things when sharing content: education, editorial and entertainment. Education is about teaching even complex thing in a simple form so it is easy-to-digest for the audience. When talking about editorial, company presents its own perspective about things. It has to share its opinion and show its values. Content can also be for enjoyment. When people find something entertaining they will come back for it. (Harad, 2013)

When companies share content it combines the usage of different media channels: owned, earned and paid media (Lusk, 2014). Owned media refers to channels that company controls and does not pay for usage, such as website, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and company blog. This is the channel that is used to release the company created content. Earned media refers to activities that are done by other entities such as consumers and journalists. Consumers create eWOM when sharing company’s content, which is earned free media for the company. Paid media is advertising where company pays to a third party to show its messages or content. (Stephens and Galak, 2012)

Many companies rely only on the power of their content and they have replaced out-bound efforts with in-bound efforts. They see their brands as publishers and they are forgetting paid marketing. Instead content could be
published as an ad to get new prospects effectively. This will generate new
viewers and opportunities for engagement. (Greschler, 2013) Company can
for example share an article from its website in Facebook, but to extend the
reach, it has to pay a little sum to widen its visibility.

Some studies (e.g. Stephen and Galak, 2012) suggested that earned media
has greater impact on consumers’ action than paid media. Therefore its role
as a marketing channel should be emphasized. Trusov, Bucklin, and Pau-
wels (2009) even found out that eWOM as a social earned media might
have greater impact on consumer actions than traditional earned media
(WOM) and paid media together. Social earned media might also have sub-
stantial long-term impact on sales (Stephen and Galak, 2012). Stephen and
Galak (2012) even suggested that companies could just focus on generating
social media activity and eWOM when thinking different ways to get more
sales through earned media.

3.2 Content strategy

According to CMI’s (2013) study 39 % of B2C companies have a docu-
mented content strategy. If comparing the most and least effective content
marketers, 60 % of the first group has a strategy, while only 12 % of the
least effective ones have one. (CMI, 2013) Therefore having a content strat-
ey matters whether company’s content marketing works or not.

Before writing a content strategy it is important to understand company’s
goals and mission because content needs to be created for supporting mar-
keting or business goals – not just for the fun of doing content (Linn, 2014a).
Kennedy (2014) continues that content strategy creation starts from com-
pany’s mission. Defining why the company or its brand exists, helps to un-
derstand the purpose of content program. Content should provide custom-
ers meaningful and engaging information, which supports and helps realize
the mission. (Kennedy, 2014)
Content strategy should include at least three parts: persona development and content mapping, content channels and content tactics. Persona development and content mapping is about defining the target audience and recognizing their informational needs, which helps to create content they need (Linn, 2014b). Content which contains interest and relevant information for the target group is the most important driver to join the brand fan page (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). Channel plan answers to question: what channels should company use to distribute its content (Linn, 2014b)? Possible distribution channels are for example print, online, in-person, mobile or social media (Pulizzi, 2012). Content tactics on the other hand are different forms of content, which can be used in chosen channels, such as blogs and videos in online channel or magazines in print channel. Possible digital content tactics are introduced and discussed more in the next section.

3.3 Content tactics

Important aspect, when using content in marketing and actually achieving the set goals, is choosing the correct form of branded content. To choose the right content form requires analyzing the audience: what type of content would they prefer? Generally it can be said that some content tactics are better than others, but there is no single form that would output all the others. Still there are many tactics that are gathering more attention online than others and those tactics we are trying to find out in this section. (Patel, 2014a)

CMI’s (2013) study of how B2C companies are doing content marketing reveals that there are 27 different content tactics. Over three quarters of these types, 22, are concerning digital content forms (or can be both print and digital, e.g. annual reports). Content tactics are divided into two groups in Figure 6 based on whether its channel is digital or something else, like print or in-person event.
On average companies are using on 12 of these tactics. The most used content form is social media, which 88% of companies are using. Other almost as popular tactics are articles on own website, electronic newsletters, blogs and videos. Over 70% of companies are using these content forms. CMI’s (2013) study also shows that companies are focusing on content tactics, which they believe are more effective. The five most popular forms are also on the top ten list of most effective – over 55% of companies have confidence on those tactics. Other worth mentioning content tactics are articles on other websites, case studies, infographics and online presentations, which are used 39-65% of companies. (CMI, 2013)

Least used tactics are games, virtual conferences, electronic books, licensed content, research reports, webinars and annual reports. All used less than 30% of companies. These forms are also believed to be less effective, except webinars, which is in the top ten list of most effective content tactics. (CMI, 2013)
Next the most popular and interesting tactics are introduced in more details. These tactics are articles on own and other website, blogs, videos and social media. Electronic newsletters are missing in the list because companies do not commonly post those on Facebook and therefore it would be impossible to study how much eWOM those create in social media.

3.3.1 Articles

Patel (2014a) names “15 types of content that will drive you more traffic”. His list goes into more details compared to the CMI’s (2013). He introduces five content types that go under “articles on own website” tactic: book reviews, opinion posts, product reviews, how-to posts, lists and interviews. These are good examples of articles that people like sharing.

BuzzSumo (2014) analyzed different types of articles that contained lists, infographics and videos or answered to questions what, why and how. The most shared articles were infographics and articles that contained lists. According to them lists are popular because they give the reader an exact idea on what to expect and is easy to read. While, infographics are extremely visual and this makes digesting a huge amount of information easier. On the contrary videos and how-to articles got least shares. What and why articles were in the middle. (BuzzSumo, 2014)

Producing own content is not always necessary. Sometimes company can just share on their website or in social media good relevant content others have made. This can be information related to the company, such as interviews and product assessments, but also ideas and thoughts about the industry.
3.3.2 Blogs

Herring et al. (2005) define a blog as a frequently edited webpage which main purpose is record individual articles and display them in chronological order”. Blogs are seen as more reliable source of information, because people can discuss there more freely about topics (e.g. negative opinions) that traditional media ignores (Johnson and Kaye, 2004).

Blogs that companies’ have can be referred as corporate blogs to make a difference to people’s own personal blogs and which companies often use for product placements (Bohórquez et al. 2009). Thought leaders of companies share their expertise and experiences with interested consumers in corporate blogs. They can discuss their views about relevant issues in the firm and start discussions and advice consumers. (Singh et al. 2008) Blog generates instant traffic and is an effective tool to create direct and more human communication and interaction with consumers (Lee et al. 2006)

3.3.3 Videos

Online video audience is growing constantly. In fact, watching online video has become people’s favorite new pastime. It is argued, that of all consumer Internet traffic, 69 % will be caused by online video by year 2017. (Martin, 2014)

Good video can be about a company’s brand, because when it is done well, it is actually more about the content than the brand itself. Heavily branded videos can quickly turn off consumers, while videos that are more focused on the content itself and driving virality can be much more effective, even from the point of view of delivering the brand message. (Savitz, 2013)

Content can altogether vary from entertaining to instructional. To find out what works for the audience, company should get feedback and make modifications. According to personal interviews made by Hennig et al. (2012)
video should be either humorous or interesting – make people laugh or think – to get shares. Video also needs to have a catchy title and an intriguing video thumbnail. Many of the interviewees ad that over a minute video is too long. (Hennig et al. 2012) This can be a huge challenge if doing eductive videos.

Botha and Reyneke (2013) also suggested that video content should be as general as possible so that consumers would more like affiliate with the content or the joke and share it. When consumers are more familiar with the content they have stronger emotional reaction to the video. On the contrary when the content is unfamiliar consumers have little if any emotional reaction to the video. Consumers need to connect with the video emotionally before forwarding it to others. (Botha and Reyneke, 2013)

3.3.4 Social media

Social media is the most used content tactic like mentioned in the previous section (CMI, 2013). It is great way to show personality of the company and of course – content. Company can easily start discussions and really connect with the audience. (Quinn, 2014)

B2C companies in are using on average four different social media platforms. The number one place to be is Facebook, then Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn. Companies believe also that the same top four are the most effective social media channels, but the order is little different: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn. If the confidence cap is limited only to large companies, YouTube is seen as the most effective channel. (CMI, 2013) This would speak highly on the half of videos effectiveness.

Companies cannot succeed in social media without having something interesting to say. Social media should be used as a vehicle to distribute interesting stories across the Internet. (Redsicker, 2011) Social media can be used to create own content, but also as a channel to promote other content
tactics. It can be used not only to engage consumers, but also to help sustain views and generating new leads by advertising new and good quality content. Consumers are in social media so it is a good way to reach them, by sending multiple messages across networks. (Creschler, 2013)

BuzzSumo (2014) suggested that content is being shared in social media different amounts on different days of the week. According to them consumers share most content on Tuesdays, Mondays and Thursdays. Content gets on average two times more shares on weekdays compared to weekends. (BuzzSumo, 2014) On the contrary Bullas (2012) found out that posts get most shares on Wednesdays, Sundays and Saturdays and Patel (2014b) that Thursdays and Fridays are the best days to get shares. There seem to be huge contradictions about which day of week consumers share most content. All studies seem to give different results. Anyhow, it must be taken into consideration that the day of releasing new content might effect to the number of shares even though we hypothesis that it does not have any influence on it.

The length of an article also effects on sharing. BuzzSumo (2014) found out that longer articles are shared more than short ones. Articles that had over 3 000 words where shared almost twice more than articles that had less than 1 000 words. Berger and Milkman (2012) suggested consistently that longer articles are shared more than shorter ones. It although might be because the topics of the longer articles are more engaging (Berger and Milkman, 2012).

The length of the Facebook post is also important when considering how much instant eWOM it produces. Consumers are busy and bored with the massive amount of information Facebook gives. They have only a few seconds to glimpse a message and then they move on if it does not catch their attention immediately. According to Arnold (2012) shorter messages are shared much more than longer ones. Tiny posts, with less than 70 characters, get over six times more likes and comments than medium and large ones, which have more than 141 characters. Small posts, with 71 to 140
characters, get almost four times as many. Bullas (2012) found out similar results, posts with less than 80 characteristics get over 66 % more engagement than others.

Several studies (Track Social, 2012; BuzzSumo, 2014) suggest that photos are the best way to get consumers share more content. Posts with photos get over two to three times more shares than posts with video, link or status. This might be because consumers are skeptical that videos and links to articles are not worth of their time. (Track Social, 2012; BuzzSumo, 2014) Bullas (2012) calls simplicity the key to generate more eWOM. According to him the most effective way is to use only a single photo. Complicated posts that contain link or video do not receive nearly as much eWOM. (Bullas, 2012) Kienzler (1997) supports the importance of photo by saying that it causes more emotional impact than just text and it therefore earns more importance in eyes of consumers.

Based on the literature we form following hypotheses:

\( H8: \text{Day of week does not have impact on virality.} \)

\( H9: \text{ Longer articles increase virality.} \)

\( H10: \text{ Shorter Facebook posts increase virality.} \)

\( H11: \text{ Facebook posts with a photo are shared more than other content types.} \)
4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces research design, data collecting and coding but also briefly the case company, its content strategy and chosen content tactics.

4.1 Research design

Different research design frameworks can be classified into three groups: exploratory, descriptive and causal. The study aimed to understand nature of highly shared content – how content characteristics influence sharing and virality. Thus, it used causal research design, because it enabled examine the relationship between different content characteristics and virality. (Saunders et al., 2009, 351-352; Iacobucci and Churchill, 2010, 58) The study could also have been called deductive because hypotheses were deduced from the theory (Saunders et al., 2009, 360). Idea was that previous literature would help finding the most important content characteristics affecting share behavior. Hypotheses were formed base on those findings and tested in the study.

The study was done quantitatively because it makes it possible to replicate the study and examine causal relationships (Bryman and Bell, 2007, 158). The data was collected from a single case company and therefore it can also be called as a case study. Qualitative approach dominates the case study research field (Bryman and Bell, 2007, 175) but the digital virality phenomenon made it possible to get quantitative data from a case company. The study could also have been executed by using multiple case companies in different industries, but because of the lack of resources only one company was chosen.
4.2 Case company and content strategy

The data was collected from one case company that works in sport industry. It imports and manufactures sports equipment and organized different kind of trainings. We chose to give only little information about the case company because we believe that more detailed information would not give any extra value for the study. Therefore, we limited the given information to be related to company’s industry and the field it works in. Before started collecting data and carrying out the actual study, we created a content strategy for the case company and chose what content tactics we would use based on the theory part of the study.

The case company wanted to be a leading expert of its industry. It wanted consumers to know that it offers best products for professional and home trainers and it has best coaches and trainings in Finland. By using content the company attempted to bring out the expertise of its coaches and excellence of products, but also teach better ways to move and train. The focus was on educational and editorial content, but entertainment was also present. The company used content only in digital channels and it focused on following content tactics: social media, articles, blogs and videos. Other tactics were not that relevant for the target audience and are therefore not used except for a couple text posts.

4.3 Data collection and codification

The data was collected from the case company’s Facebook page and website during a three months period 1.6-1.9.2014. It contained a huge amount of information: original posts, day of the week, primary content tactic, number of shares, likes and comments in Facebook, numbers of likes in website, length of articles and characters of Facebook posts.
The original idea was to analyze four dependent variables: likes, shares and comments in Facebook and likes in website. Many of the posts contained a link that transferred into an article in the case company’s website, but likes made there did not show in Facebook – only in the page of a concerned article. To understand better what kind of content was liked and shared in social media, also liking numbers from articles in website needed to be analyzed. By collecting sharing, liking and commenting numbers from both sources, the study hoped to be able to get more accurate number of virality. The liking numbers from website articles were collected two days after there was released a post in Facebook about the article to make sure that most of the consumers visiting an article found their way there from social media and not from other sources like Google organic search. Sadly the number of website publications was too small, only 34, which made it unsuitable for regression analysis. This assumption was tested by actually performing the regression analysis with website likes as the dependent variable, and the results proved that is was not statistically significant and suitable. Therefore website likes were left out of the study and it was performed with three remaining dependent variables.

Social media was technically the primary content tactic in all cases, because all content studied was published in Facebook. To make some differences between the content, we classified all posts based on its primary element. These elements were used to classify the content into different tactics: article, video, blog, picture and only text.

It was also analyzed whether content was in a form of a story by comparing if it included typical elements of a story: message, conflict, characteristics and a plot. There was no single Facebook post that contained all these elements so we focused to analyze only if articles and blogs had those story elements. Because of that the small amount of observations might effect on the results. Originally there was idea to test also if stories that were interesting were shared more, but in the data all stories were interesting according to our test audience (coders), which made testing it impossible.
We were aware of some opinion leaders and celebrities that were fans of the case company’s Facebook page. There were some bloggers, musicians and opinion leaders in sport industry field. These people were identified and checked if one or more of them shared our content. This gave us a great opportunity to analyze whether shares of celebrities and opinion leaders could increase virality of the content. The focus was only on the shares they made and not on likes or comments. Impact on shares is much bigger than likes on possible friends, fans and other followers of these celebrities and opinion leaders, because the message is then more likely to be seen and meant for them.

The numbers of words used in the articles and the number of characters used in the Facebook posts were also collected. The exact numbers of words in the articles were examined from the admin side of the website that calculated and announced the numbers automatically. In the case of Facebook posts the numbers of characters were estimates and those were divided into four groups: tiny (<71), small (71-140), medium (141-300) and large (>300).

There was a little problem with the hypothesis 2, positive versus negative content, and it was not possible to study in the form it was originally presented, because none of the content used was truly negative. However, there were differences in the positivity of the content and quite lot of it could be described as neutral. This gave us an idea to study how positivity of the content affected virality when compared to neutral content.

Consumers can be reached in Facebook organically or by using paid advertising. The study separated the origin of reached consumers and was this way able to get shares, likes and comments that came without paying. In addition, Facebook posts that contained some kind of a competition were not included in the data to avoid distort of the results. Competitions included many times a request to like or comment the post, which naturally caused that consumers liked, shared and commented those more than other average posts in hope to win something.
The data was expanded by three coders/assistants who were put to analyze content characteristics of Facebook posts and articles. These coders were interested in sports, lived in Helsinki and were between ages 25-34. Two of them were female and one male. Content should evoke similar emotions in different people (Berger, 2012) so the study used only answers that all the coders answered similarly. The analysis was done dichotomously, which means that the coders had to choose between two alternative choices, such as was the content interesting or not. All in all we asked them to answer whether they found content interesting, positive, surprising, entertaining and practical. We gave them five questions to help them to analyze characteristics of the content:

- Do you find the content positive or neutral?
- Do you find the content interesting?
- Does the content surprise you in any way?
- Do you enjoy watching or reading the content; does it make you feel entertained?
- Does the content give practical advices?

The data was coded in Microsoft Excel and transferred to SAS (Statistical Analysis System) software, where the actual analysis was done. This will be discussed more in the next chapter.
5 ANALYSES AND RESULTS

In this chapter the results of the empirical study are presented. First demographic factors of consumers who have seen and engaged to the digital content posts in Facebook are presented. Second descriptive information of the variables is introduced and third research hypothesis are tested.

5.1 Factors related to consumers reached and engaged in Facebook

In the four months period case company’s Facebook posts reached over 150,000 views. Almost two thirds of the reached consumers (61%) were males and most of them were between ages 25-34 (47%) and 35-44 (33%). It is quite similar than the fan group of the Facebook page in which 57% were males and 38% were between ages 25-34 and 26% between ages 35-44. The difference came from paid advertising and the fact that this age group shared the information most actively to their friends.

There was 29,211 unique engaging activities done in the time period, which means that the engaging percent was 18.7. In Facebook engaging means activities that consumer does when seeing a post: shares, likes, comments and clicks. It is not possible to get engagement data about gender and different age groups from Facebook that would not include clicks and therefore it is part of the Table 1 even though it is not a dependent variable. In total females (54%) engaged to the content little more often than males. However, the true engaging percent for females was even bigger (26%), because females were reached much less than males (14% engaged), which means that female who saw a Facebook post were more likely to share, like or comment it. The most engaged consumers were between ages 25-34 (41%) and 35-44 (37%). Table 1 presents more accurate numbers of reached and engaged consumers.
Table 1: Demographic factors of consumers reached and engaged in Facebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People reached in Facebook</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60 628</td>
<td>39 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>94 828</td>
<td>61 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>155 456</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-17</td>
<td>2 099</td>
<td>1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>12 436</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>73 064</td>
<td>47 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>51 300</td>
<td>33 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>12 436</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 +</td>
<td>4 120</td>
<td>3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>155 456</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People engaged in Facebook</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15 774</td>
<td>54 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13 437</td>
<td>46 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29 211</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-17</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>2 337</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>11 977</td>
<td>41 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>10 808</td>
<td>37 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>3 505</td>
<td>12 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 +</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29 211</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 Descriptive information of variables

Variables that were used in the regression analysis are presented in the Table 2 to help understand the nature of the data. These variables were divided into two groups based on whether those were dependent (3 variables) or independent (21 variables). The Table 2 reports mean, median, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values for the variables. The number of observations was 99, which is a good number for the purposes of this study. According to Nummenmaa (2008, 304) the minimum number of observation for regression analysis should be 50, but in ideal situation there is 100 observations or more.

The study chose to use three different dependent variables even though those could have been combined into one engagement variable. By not combining those, shares, likes, comments in Facebook were able to analyze separately. In total consumers liked the 99 posts 2872 times and commented 174 times and shared 190 times. Numbers of shares and comments were less than 7 % of the likes. Means and medians of Facebook shares, likes and comments were quite close to each other, which meant that those were divided symmetrically (Nummenmaa, 2008, 58).

There were 21 independent variables and 19 of them were dummy variables that received a value 0 or 1. Five of the independent variables could be classified under term content tactic and seven under term day of the week, which are the hypotheses 11 and 8. In addition, mean and median of Facebook characters and words in articles were quite close to each other when taking into consideration the huge variety of values that can be seen from the difference between the minimum and maximum values. Because means and medians of independent variables were close to each other the data was divided symmetrically (Nummenmaa, 2008, 58).

The data contained couple observations that did not quite follow the general trend of the rest of the data and could therefore be seen as outliers. Still, the data was not modified because those observations were not false but
rather captured abnormal viral behavior. These observations should not be deleted only for being rare because those are the ones that help capture the unknown nature of virality. (Nummenmaa, 2008, 153)

Table 2: Descriptive information of variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FB likes</td>
<td>29.01</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20.04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FB shares</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FB comments</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprise</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertaining</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion leader</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicality</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FB characters</td>
<td>169.09</td>
<td>134.48</td>
<td>111.61</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>397.96</td>
<td>341.50</td>
<td>349.79</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1442</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequencies of independent dummy variables are presented in the Figure 7. It shows how the data was divided between different content tactics and days of the week, but also for example how many of the 99 observations were found interesting or surprising. The most common days to post in Facebook were Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. Least posts were published in Saturday and Sunday. Picture, video and article on the other hand were most common content tactics, while text was least used tactic. Over 60 of
the posts were found interesting and almost 50 practical and positive, while
26 surprising and 13 entertaining. 23 of these posts were shared by an opin-
ion leader or celebrity and 14 were in a form of a story.

Figure 7: Frequencies of independent dummy variables.

5.3 Regression analysis

The main research method of the study was linear multiple regression anal-
ysis, which can be used for estimating the relationship between a single
dependent variable and many independent variables. The chosen inde-
pendent variables explain the dependent variable. Table 3 describes how
results of the following section’s regressions can be interpreted.
(Metsämuuronen 2003, 577-600)
Table 3: Explanation for regression analysis tables (Metsämuuronen, 2003, 577-600)

**Dependent variable:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Multiple correlation coefficients tell the correlation between the predictor variable and the criterion variable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>Represents the proportion of variation in the dependent variable that is explained by its linear relationship with independent variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R2</td>
<td>Provides a better estimation of R2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Result of F-test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>Significance (p-value) of the F-test. If Sig. &lt; 0.05 statistically significant.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Independent variable:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>The initial regression coefficient of the variable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Standardized coefficient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>Explains how good the regression is. T-value should be bigger than two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>Significance of the t-test, if Sig. &lt; 0.05 statistically significant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tol &amp; VIF</td>
<td>Describes multicollinearity between variables. If Tol is close to 0.2 and VIF over 4, there is lot of multicollinearity and variable should be deleted from the regression.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before performing the actual regressions, absence of collinearity was checked with correlation analysis. Pearson’s correlation analysis was used to test correlation between independent variables to make sure that those were not too large to cause multicollinearity in the regression analyses. Table 4 presents the correlation matrix where all connections above average have been highlighted. The analysis revealed that there was average connection between entertainment and surprise and entertainment and story. There was also quite strong connection between story and blog. In total, multicollinearity was not a problem, but was monitored in the regression analyses with tolerance and VIF values.
Table 4: Correlation matrix

|     | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8     | 9     | 10    | 11    | 12    | 13    | 14    | 15    | 16    | 17    | 18    | 19    | 20    | 21    |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1.  | Interest | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 2.  | Positive | 0.226 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 3.  | Surprise | 0.403 | 0.331 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 4.  | Entertainment | 0.232 | 0.126 | 0.584 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 5.  | Opinion leader | 0.316 | 0.266 | 0.378 | 0.423 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 6.  | Practicality | 0.034 | -0.214 | -0.178 | -0.146 | 0.173 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 7.  | Story     | 0.307 | 0.328 | 0.482 | 0.529 | 0.463 | 0.062 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 8.  | Characteristics | -0.029 | -0.092 | 0.011 | 0.067 | 0.195 | 0.458 | 0.146 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 9.  | Words     | -0.127 | 0.09  | 0.281 | 0.376 | 0.211 | 0.100 | 0.367 | 0.182 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 10. | Picture   | -0.106 | 0.237 | 0.029 | 0.014 | -0.155 | 0.178 | -0.082 | 0.088 | -0.122 | 0.029 | -0.036 | -0.028 | -0.006 | 0.064 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |
| 11. | Article   | 0.246  | -0.204 | -0.030 | 0.049 | 0.121 | 0.262 | -0.036 | 0.156 | -0.404 | -0.402 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 12. | Blog      | 0.239  | 0.205 | 0.370 | 0.397 | 0.325 | 0.109 | 0.779 | 0.038 | 0.404 | -0.219 | -0.184 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 13. | Video     | -0.159 | -0.186 | -0.182 | -0.119 | -0.195 | -0.261 | 0.041 | 0.000 | -0.445 | -0.374 | -0.204 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 14. | Link      | -0.271 | 0.019 | -0.122 | -0.080 | -0.113 | 0.002 | -0.083 | 0.008 | 0.000 | -0.142 | -0.119 | -0.065 | -0.132 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |
| 15. | Monday    | -0.115 | 0.095 | 0.021 | 0.014 | -0.155 | 0.178 | -0.082 | 0.088 | -0.122 | 0.029 | -0.036 | -0.028 | -0.006 | 0.064 | 1     |       |       |       |       |       |
| 16. | Tuesday   | 0.033  | -0.077 | -0.141 | 0.018 | 0.183 | 0.228 | 0.002 | 0.113 | -0.336 | -0.094 | 0.210 | -0.078 | -0.008 | -0.106 | -0.211 | 1     |       |       |       |       |
| 17. | Wednesday | 0.177  | 0.015 | 0.154 | -0.098 | 0.193 | 0.139 | 0.123 | -0.043 | 0.287 | -0.086 | 0.044 | 0.136 | 0.001 | -0.093 | -0.185 | -0.236 | 1     |       |       |       |
| 18. | Thursday  | -0.041 | -0.153 | 0.060 | 0.039 | -0.058 | 0.004 | 0.027 | 0.231 | -0.157 | 0.008 | -0.002 | -0.010 | 0.033 | -0.076 | -0.151 | -0.193 | -0.169 | 1     |       |       |
| 19. | Friday    | 0.177  | 0.068 | 0.033 | 0.061 | 0.067 | -0.129 | 0.046 | 0.011 | 0.226 | -0.143 | 0.044 | 0.042 | 0.119 | -0.093 | -0.185 | -0.236 | -0.207 | -0.169 | 1     |       |
| 20. | Saturday  | -0.095 | -0.037 | -0.124 | -0.031 | -0.184 | -0.332 | -0.040 | -0.340 | 0.177 | 0.270 | -0.195 | 0.011 | -0.142 | 0.101 | -0.136 | -0.174 | -0.153 | -0.124 | -0.153 | 1     |
| 21. | Sunday    | -0.238 | 0.101 | -0.009 | -0.006 | -0.163 | -0.219 | -0.120 | -0.137 | 0.000 | 0.112 | -0.172 | -0.094 | -0.028 | 0.316 | -0.120 | -0.154 | -0.135 | -0.110 | -0.135 | -0.099 | 1     |
We also checked were the dependent variables normally distributed and that the sample size was above minimum. Distributions were tested with histograms and normal distribution curves that are presented in the appendices 1, 2 and 3. Histograms revealed that none of the variables were normally distributed, but rather skewed right, which might cause that some of the hypotheses were rejected falsely. In addition, like mentioned in the previous section, the data contained 99 observations, which made it large enough to perform regression analysis with multiple independent variables. Still, the number of independent variables was so huge that it might also cause false rejection of hypotheses. (Nummenmaa, 2008, 151-152, 316)

5.4 Results of regression analysis

There were three regression analyses performed with 21 independent variables. Dependent variables were Facebook likes, shares and comments. These analyses answered at the same to the 10 hypothesis formed in the earlier chapters. However, this section focuses more on interpretation of the regression analyses and the hypotheses will be discussed more in the next summary section.

Like the correlation matrix indicated, multicollinearity was not a problem in regressions based on the tolerance and VIF values, which were in the allowed limits (Tol. > 0.2 and VIF < 4). Therefore, none of the independent variables needed to be removed from the analyses. All the analyses were also statistically significant and explained quite well the dependent variable; likes and shares were though explained much better than comments.

Table 5 shows the results of regression analysis where like was dependent variable. The model explains 51 % of Facebook likes and there are only three statistically significant independent variables at the level of 0.05, surprise, picture and blog. Because beta-factors of surprise, picture and blog are positive ($\beta = 0.435$, $\beta = 0.189$ and $\beta = 0.375$), it means that content that
is surprising or its type is a picture or blog increases Facebook likes. There are also three variables in the model that are significant at the level of 0.1: interest, video and Thursday. Video content has small negative impact on likes ($\beta = -0.180$, $p = 0.066$), while interesting content increases the number of likes ($\beta = 0.142$, $p = 0.068$). Also if content is published on Thursday, it has little more likes than content that is published in other weekdays ($\beta = 0.163$, $p = 0.072$).

Table 5: Regression analysis with Facebook likes as dependent variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>Adj. R</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FB likes</td>
<td>0.775</td>
<td>0.600</td>
<td>0.510</td>
<td>6.665</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>21.032</td>
<td>3.253</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest*</td>
<td>5.929</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>1.848</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>2.543</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.686</td>
<td>0.494</td>
<td>0.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprise***</td>
<td>19.799</td>
<td>0.435</td>
<td>4.117</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>-3.976</td>
<td>-0.067</td>
<td>-0.635</td>
<td>0.527</td>
<td>0.449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion leader</td>
<td>3.237</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.719</td>
<td>0.475</td>
<td>0.555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicality</td>
<td>-3.871</td>
<td>-0.097</td>
<td>-0.923</td>
<td>0.359</td>
<td>0.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>-7.726</td>
<td>-0.134</td>
<td>-0.982</td>
<td>0.329</td>
<td>0.267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>-3.336</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
<td>-0.741</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>0.524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog***</td>
<td>26.112</td>
<td>0.375</td>
<td>3.032</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video*</td>
<td>-7.903</td>
<td>-0.180</td>
<td>-1.865</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture**</td>
<td>8.090</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>2.491</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>-10.331</td>
<td>-0.136</td>
<td>-1.326</td>
<td>0.198</td>
<td>0.659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>2.667</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.499</td>
<td>0.619</td>
<td>0.580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>2.956</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.486</td>
<td>0.621</td>
<td>0.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>4.077</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.830</td>
<td>0.409</td>
<td>0.585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday*</td>
<td>9.977</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>1.822</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>2.061</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.426</td>
<td>0.672</td>
<td>0.602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>1.977</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.294</td>
<td>0.770</td>
<td>0.489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>3.048</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.436</td>
<td>0.664</td>
<td>0.554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>-0.312</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td>-0.174</td>
<td>0.862</td>
<td>0.624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>-0.172</td>
<td>0.864</td>
<td>0.430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *<0.1, **<0.05, ***<0.01
Regression analysis where Facebook shares are a dependent variable can be seen in the Table 6 and the model explains 55.9 % of shares. There are seven significant variables at the level of 0.05. Firstly positive content decreases the number of Facebook shares ($\beta = -0.230$) and the same effect has on practical content ($\beta = -0.208$). Conversely, entertaining content ($\beta = 0.172$) and content that is shared by an opinion leader or a celebrity ($\beta = 0.633$) increases shares made by consumers. Length of article or blog ($\beta = 0.263$) and the number of characters ($\beta = 0.159$) in Facebook posts has also positive effect on shares. There are also two content types that effect on the number of Facebook shares: blog ($\beta = 0.422$) increases and article ($\beta = -0.191, p = 0.81$) decreases.
Table 6: Regression analysis with Facebook shares as dependent variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adj. R</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FB shares</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.640</td>
<td>0.559</td>
<td>7.905</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Tol</th>
<th>VIF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>0.648</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>0.489</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.236</td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td>0.628</td>
<td>1.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive***</td>
<td>-1.362</td>
<td>-0.210</td>
<td>-2.720</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.591</td>
<td>1.691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprise</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.950</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>2.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment**</td>
<td>1.498</td>
<td>0.172</td>
<td>2.060</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.449</td>
<td>2.228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion leader***</td>
<td>4.004</td>
<td>0.633</td>
<td>6.321</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.555</td>
<td>1.803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicality**</td>
<td>-1.225</td>
<td>-0.208</td>
<td>-2.030</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.457</td>
<td>2.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>-1.271</td>
<td>-0.150</td>
<td>-1.122</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>0.267</td>
<td>3.744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article*</td>
<td>-1.295</td>
<td>-0.191</td>
<td>-1.769</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.524</td>
<td>1.907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog***</td>
<td>4.324</td>
<td>0.422</td>
<td>3.487</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.328</td>
<td>3.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>-0.378</td>
<td>-0.058</td>
<td>-0.620</td>
<td>0.537</td>
<td>0.540</td>
<td>1.851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td>0.781</td>
<td>0.798</td>
<td>1.254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.958</td>
<td>0.659</td>
<td>1.325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>0.675</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.877</td>
<td>0.383</td>
<td>0.580</td>
<td>1.725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>0.586</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.796</td>
<td>0.453</td>
<td>0.510</td>
<td>1.624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.896</td>
<td>0.585</td>
<td>1.709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>0.601</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>0.787</td>
<td>0.434</td>
<td>0.628</td>
<td>1.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.997</td>
<td>0.602</td>
<td>1.661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>-1.147</td>
<td>-0.117</td>
<td>-1.215</td>
<td>0.217</td>
<td>0.489</td>
<td>2.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>-0.315</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>-0.323</td>
<td>0.747</td>
<td>0.554</td>
<td>1.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters**</td>
<td>0.470</td>
<td>0.159</td>
<td>2.112</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.624</td>
<td>1.602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words**</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.263</td>
<td>2.586</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.430</td>
<td>2.328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *<0.1, **<0.05, ***<0.01

Table 7 shows the regression analysis where Facebook comments are the dependent variable. The model explains only 23.1 % of the comments even though there are more statistically significant variables than in the two other models. There are six variables significant at the level of 0.05 and three at the level of 0.1. Interesting content is commented more than uninteresting (β = 0.244) and if an opinion leader or a celebrity has shared content, it also increases the number of comments (β = 0.258). Positivity and practicality of the content has a negative impact on Facebook comments (β = -0.272 and β = -0.267). Article and video are content types that have also negative impact on comments (β = -0.285 and β = -0.237, p = 0.062), while blog and picture impact positively on comments (β = 0.996, p = 0.097 and β = 0.252).
Monday is the only day of week that increases the number of comments ($\beta = 0.191$, $p = 0.064$).

Table 7: Regression analysis with Facebook comments as dependent variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FB comments</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>Adj. R</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.402</td>
<td>2.116</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest**</td>
<td>1.373</td>
<td>0.244</td>
<td>2.103</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive**</td>
<td>-1.476</td>
<td>-0.272</td>
<td>-2.271</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprise</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>0.913</td>
<td>0.448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>1.264</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td>1.149</td>
<td>0.254</td>
<td>0.449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion leader**</td>
<td>1.651</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>2.087</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicality**</td>
<td>-1.446</td>
<td>-0.267</td>
<td>-2.059</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>0.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.945</td>
<td>0.267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article**</td>
<td>-1.772</td>
<td>-0.285</td>
<td>-2.242</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog*</td>
<td>1.627</td>
<td>0.996</td>
<td>1.633</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video*</td>
<td>-1.409</td>
<td>-0.237</td>
<td>-1.894</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture**</td>
<td>1.458</td>
<td>0.252</td>
<td>2.483</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>-0.929</td>
<td>-0.068</td>
<td>-0.657</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>0.659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday*</td>
<td>1.484</td>
<td>0.191</td>
<td>1.873</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>0.952</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.838</td>
<td>0.427</td>
<td>0.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>-0.100</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
<td>-0.116</td>
<td>0.908</td>
<td>0.585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.992</td>
<td>0.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>-0.699</td>
<td>-0.097</td>
<td>-0.822</td>
<td>0.413</td>
<td>0.602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>-1.590</td>
<td>-0.177</td>
<td>-1.347</td>
<td>0.182</td>
<td>0.489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>0.873</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>0.712</td>
<td>0.479</td>
<td>0.554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>0.477</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>0.624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.699</td>
<td>0.968</td>
<td>0.430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *<0.1, **<0.05

5.5 Summary of results

Earlier, there were ten hypotheses formed and in this section those are discussed, analyzed and either accepted or rejected based on the results of the regression analyses. Regressions gave statistically relevant results for
all, except one hypothesis. Table 8 summarizes the results and shows the level of virality of each variable.

Table 8: Summary of the results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Level of virality</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>H1: Interesting content increases virality.</strong></td>
<td>FB likes*, FB comments**</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H2: Positive content increases virality more than neutral.</strong></td>
<td>-FB shares***, -FB comments**</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H3: Unexpected content increases virality.</strong></td>
<td>FB likes***</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H4: Entertaining content increases virality.</strong></td>
<td>FB shares**</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H5: If opinion leader or celebrity shares content, it increases virality.</strong></td>
<td>FB shares***, FB comments**</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H6: Practical content increases virality.</strong></td>
<td>-FB shares**, -FB comments**</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H7: If content is in a form of a story, it increases virality.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H8: Day of week does not have impact on virality.</strong></td>
<td>FB likes*, FB comments**</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H9: Longer articles increase virality.</strong></td>
<td>FB shares**</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H10: Shorter Facebook posts increase virality.</strong></td>
<td>FB shares**</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H11: Facebook posts with a photo are shared more than other content types.</strong></td>
<td>FB likes*, FB shares*, FB comments*</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *<0.1, **<0.05, ***<0.01, ͫ= results includes multiple variables, - = negative impact

Liking, sharing or commenting posts are the three activities consumer can do in Facebook that would increase virality. To make difference between these activities, likes and comments are meant more clearly for the publisher of the content, while shares are meant for friends and followers, for own social network. We suggest that consumers do not think much when liking or commenting a post that others might see their activities also. And even if they recognize it, they see it as a normal activity that everybody are doing and they do not think it effects on the image others have on them or do not care. Liking someone’s post is the easiest activity consumer can do in social media, just one click. Comments and share take more time and
planning. When sharing content, consumer intentionally publishes it in own or someone else’s wall. Content published in own wall is meant for bigger part of one’s social network, while content published in someone’s wall for one or small group of people.

**H1: Interesting content increases virality.**

According to the regressions, interesting content increases the number of Facebook likes and comments, which means that the hypothesis is accepted. This supports the findings of Berger and Schwartz (2011) that interesting products are talked more immediately. Our study reveals that interesting content makes consumers want to take part of an online conversation and like it more often, but it does not effect on content sharing.

**H2: Positive content is shared more often than negative.**

Earlier studies have had very contradictory results whether positive or negative content is shared more and our study did not solve this problem (e.g. Berger and Milkman, 2012; Phelps et al., 2004; Brown et al., 2010). Like mentioned earlier the original hypothesis could not be studied, because of lack of negative Facebook posts and data. Therefore, positive content was studied with respect to neutral content. Based on the results positivity of content decreases virality. Content that is neutral instead of positive is shared and commented more in Facebook. Positivity does not have any impact on Facebook likes. It seems to be easier for consumers to share and comment content that is neutral and does not try to create over positive picture of the content. Over positivity might be seen as advertising more clearly and consumers do not want to share commercial content and help advertising a company.
**H3: Unexpected content increases virality.**

Surprising content increases Facebook likes and therefore the hypothesis is accepted. This supports findings of Lindgreen and Vanhamme (2005) that surprise has a major role. According to our results surprise has biggest impact on likes of all content characteristics. It would have been interesting to see if the content was more surprising, even shocking, would there have been statistically significant influence on shares and comments. Liking someone’s post is the easiest activity consumer can do in social media. It can be seen as a natural reaction for something they do not expect to happen.

**H4: Entertaining content increases virality.**

Entertaining content increases Facebook shares but it does not have impact on likes or comments. This accepted hypothesis supports arguments of earlier studies (Phelps et al., 2004; Kietzmann and Canhoto, 2013; BuzzSumo, 2014), which indicated that consumers want to share amusing content. According to them though humor is one of the most important reasons to make content go viral, unlike in our study. This might be caused by the fact that the level of entertainment (arousability of content) was not taken into consideration and all entertaining content was seen as equal. In other words, content that made consumers smile and content that made them laugh was not separated. This raises a question: Would really funny content have even bigger impact on virality?

**H5: If opinion leader or celebrity shares content, it increases virality.**

The hypothesis is accepted because content that is shared by an opinion leader or celebrity is also shared and commented more by consumers. Our results indicate that having one or more influential person sharing the content there will be 63.3 % more shares and 25.8 % comments than in other
posts. This supports the findings of BuzzSumo (2014) that it increases social shares 31.8% if a post is shared by even one influential person. Based on our results and previous studies there is no doubt that it would not increase virality of content, if opinion leader or celebrity shares content in their own social media. It increases the number of consumers reach by a post and might also influence to the willingness of people to share or comment it when someone they know and value has already done it.

**H6: Practicality of content increases virality.**

Unlike the hypothesis predicted, practicality of content decreases the number of shares and comments. This does not mean that consumers do not share practical content at all, but they share and comment it less than impractical content. This is very contradictory to earlier studies (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Berger and Milkman, 2012), which though were done in different sharing platform - email. It could be that consumers do not want to share practical content to all in their social media network, but to some individual friends or family members that they know would benefit from the information.

**H7: If content is in a form of a story, it increases virality.**

Story is the only characteristic of content that does not have any statistically relevant results and therefore the hypothesis is rejected. This is in conflict with earlier studies (e.g. Berger, 2013a; Morrissey, 2008) that indicated that stories are of the conjunctive factor in all of the really viral content. In our data stories correlated quite strongly with blog posts. Tol. and VIF values of story were just within the allowable range, but could multicollinearity still have effected to the results? In addition, there were only some blog posts and articles that were in a form of a story and because of it the number of posts that included a story was pretty small. This might have also distorted the results, which are not reliable based on all before.
**H8: Day of week does not have impact on virality.**

The regression analysis revealed that the day of the week does not have major impact on likes, shares or comments significant at the level of 0.5. However, if the results are examined at the 0.1 significance level, there are two exceptions for it: Facebook likes and Thursday and Facebook comments and Monday. It would indicate that content that is published on Thursdays, is liked little more than content published on any other weekday and correspondingly there are more comments in posts that are published in Mondays. Previous studies (BuzzSumo, 2014; Patel, 2014b) also indicated that Thursdays and Mondays are one of the days content is shared more, so this finding supports partly them. Still we argue that our results are not generalizable and it depends on a case if virality is bigger on some days of week than others. There were more content published on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays than on Mondays and Thursdays, and according to earlier studies (e.g. BuzzSumo, 2014) if there are multiple posts published in Facebook in the same day it decreases the number of shares. Therefore the hypothesis is accepted and day of week does not have impact on virality.

**H9: Longer articles increase virality.**

The hypothesis is accepted, because articles length influences positively to Facebook shares. It seems that longer articles and blog posts are often more engaging than shorter ones, like Berger and Milkman (2012) suggested, and therefore shared more. The average length of an article was about 400 words, which means that our data contained much shorter articles than in researches of BuzzSumo (2014) and Berger and Milkman (2012). If compared to their studies most of our articles could be classified as short and some to belong to the lower middle class.
**H10: Shorter Facebook posts increase virality.**

 Longer Facebook posts are shared more in Facebook than posts with fewer characters. This means that the hypothesis is rejected against of the original expectations and earlier studies (e.g. Bullas, 2012; BuzzSumo, 2014). Consumers seem to value more the message of a post rather than shortness when it comes to content sharing.

**H11: Facebook posts with a photo are shared more than other content types.**

In our study there are five different content types: blog, article, picture, video and plain text. The results reveal that blog posts receive more likes and shares and picture more likes and comments than other types and if the post is an article it gets fewer comments than other types. Also, if the 0.1 % statistical level is examined, videos decrease the number of likes and comments and articles shares. Posts with just text do not have any statistical impact on likes, shares and comments. The results adapt the average likes, shares and comments of different tactics that were presented in the Figure 8 in section 5.2. The hypothesis is rejected because blog posts increase more virality than posts with a photo. Consumers seem to value more the message and context of a post than simplicity. Still, simplicity in a form of a photo is also a good social media tactic when thinking virality unlike a post with just text. In ideal situation company would use a variety of different tactics because it is important to give different kind of simulations for consumers, otherwise they might get bored and do not react as hoped.
6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarizes the results and findings of this study. First the key findings are summarized and after it managerial and theoretical implications of this study are presented. Idea is to present suggestive guidelines for managerial use on what kind of digital content they should create to get more shares and get consumers engaged to it. Discussion of theoretical implications is based on the literature introduced in the study and the matters arisen in the regression analyses. Lastly limitations and suggestions for further research are discussed.

6.1 Conclusions

There are multiple reasons for companies to use digital content in their marketing but one of the most important ones is its ability to increase sales when done properly. Content helps to build brand awareness and reinforce the existing bond between a company and possible or existing customers. It pulls consumers to a company’s website through search engines, social media and other different channels where the content can be published and shared. Content has a big role in different stages of buying process. Like mentioned already, it brings leads and traffic to website, but also helps to convert them into customers, nurtures them, is part of online customer service, makes them more loyal and increases retention and upsells. It engages consumers and makes them to subscribe a company’s social media channel or even a newsletter.

Content is published in own media and its visibility can be increased with paid advertising and earned media, where consumers share content in social media or other online platforms and at the same time create eWOM and virality. If a company manages to harness the willingness of customers to pass along the marketing message in social networks, it reaches a lot more people for much lower costs. Content that is spread by other consumers,
even friends, has bigger influence than paid advertising and it might reach consumers who are trying to avoid marketing messages. Viral content reaches more consumers in a shorter amount of time, is more credibly and costs less than paid advertising. Because of these benefits of virality, companies should create more content with a hidden agenda of getting it shared in social media and making consumers create eWOM about it. Unfortunately tools for this have been missing and the purpose of our research is to shed light for it.

Our findings reveal several internal and external factors of content that effect on virality and those are summarized in the Figure 8, which is the final form of the theoretical framework of the study. Different factors are marked in the figure with colors, internal with green and external with red. In total there are nine factors that increase virality and eight of them are internal.

Interesting content increases the number of likes and comments in Facebook, while surprising effects only on likes and entertaining on shares. Positivity and practicality of content affect negatively on shares and comments, which means that consumers prefer more neutral and less informative and educational content. Length of articles and Facebook posts increases shares, which indicates that consumers value more the message itself rather than simplicity and distinctiveness from the information flood with shortness. Content tactic seem to also influence on virality: blog post and picture positively whereas article and video negatively. Blog and article effect on likes and shares, while picture and video on likes and comments. The only external reason that increases virality is opinion leaders and celebrities who share content. If one or more of them shares content, it increases the number of shares and comments of the post. Our findings are based on a data mainly (78 %) from 25-44 years old males (54 %) and females (46 %), so the results are generalizable in that age group.
Figure 8: Final theoretical framework with all factors that influence on virality.

6.2 Theoretical implications

Our research makes several contributions. First, it takes part of to the ongoing debate whether consumers share positive or negative content and brings there a totally new angle between positive and neutral content. Our results indicate that in fact positivity of content does not increase virality, instead consumers prefer neutral content when it is published by a company. Consumers might see content that contains over positive words more easily as advertising than posts that express the message in more neutral way. Therefore they share and comment more posts that are neutral and where they can focus on the message and the content itself.

Second, there is a lack of academic research about the effect of content tactic to virality. The only studies concerning this matter are made by con-
sultant firms (e.g. Track Social, 2012; BuzzSumo, 2014) for mainly marketing purposes of their own services and how the studies were conducted is mostly unknown. Our results are therefore first in real academic literature and those also differ from the ones made by consultant firms. Those studies did not separate articles and blogs from each other and claimed that picture was the most shared tactic over video, article and pure text posts. We found out that blog is the most liked and shared tactic and picture gets the second place by increasing likes and comments. Blog post had quite high correlation with stories, which could indicate that consumers really like to share stories to others, even though our results indicate otherwise.

Third, we propose that day of week does not have generalizable influence on virality, unlike earlier studies made by consultant firms have insisted (e.g. BuzzSumo, 2014). There were no results that would have supported this at the significance level of 0.05 and the earlier studies have not even taken significances into consideration but rather just calculated average shares for different days of week. Content can be published any day and it does not influence whether consumers engage to it or not. The thing that does matters is if consumers are not reached as well in some of the days.

Forth, unlike earlier studied indicated (e.g. Bullas, 2012), our results reveal that longer Facebook posts are shared more than shorter ones. Therefore we suggest that consumers care more about what the content and the message is actually about when sharing it instead of noticing and sharing it because it is so short. There needs to be something worth of sharing and worth of attention and that is more likely to happen if there are more words used. Also we find out that longer Facebook posts are shared more than really short ones. This is in line with earlier studies (e.g. Berger and Milkman, 2012), which found out that giganticly long articles are shared more than quite short ones. Comparing to them, all our articles were short, which causes that we unintentionally got results about different length short articles.
Fifth, our results indicate that practicality does not increase virality, more likely decreases it, which is in contradiction to earlier studies (e.g. Berger and Milkman, 2012; Phelps et al., 2004). These studies have though concerned eWOM sharing through email and not in social media environment, which means that the audience size is completely different. Of course in social media messages can also be addressed to someone but there is still huge amount of other people who see it. Berger and Milkman (2012) in fact asked future research about how audience size influences on what consumers share. We propose that practicality decreases virality when the audience size is big, because consumers do not want to share informative content for their entire social network as much as for individual people. This supports the findings of Xie et al. (2012), which indicates that consumers do not care whether content is useful to others, but rather shared stuff that they found interesting.

Our study also examined virality and eWOM from a different perspective than previous studies, which mostly were not conducted in social media environment (e.g. Berger and Milkman, 2012) and if those were (e.g. BuzzSumo, 2014), they did not take likes and comments as part of the virality, but focused only on shares. Our results supported earlier findings about importance of interesting, surprising and entertaining content and that influencers like opinion leaders and celebrities have huge impact on virality.

6.3 Managerial implications

These findings have also important managerial implications. Many companies create lot of digital content and publish it in social media, but there is a lack of knowledge how they can make the content more viral. Companies want and even try to understand the nature of virality but it is more often based on just a hunch as their followers like more nice looking pictures than articles. Our findings might help them to go beyond this and actually seeing some internal and external factors that cause digital content to get more
shares, likes and comments in social media. These results can also be used in planning a successful viral marketing campaign and give managers knowledge about all the benefits of content and how harness those.

Companies should not present their product related content in too positive light in social media as marketers often tend to do, but to use neutral words and focus more on emotions the content evokes. If content is interesting, entertaining and/or surprising and expressed with neutral words, consumers tend to spread this kind of content more. Key is to evoke emotions without looking too obviously like advertisement by avoiding presenting content in too positive angle. Opinion leaders and celebrities also rather share this kind of content for their followers if they like the company and its products. To increase virality manager should consider cooperation with some influential people to get them share company’s content for their followers. It is undeniable that influencers have huge impact on making content viral but also with their help content reaches lot more people and creates brand awareness.

When creating a position of industry’s opinion leader, practical, educational content is necessary. It interests consumers who find the content relevant, but it is hard to get them share it to others as much as entertaining and surprising content. Practical content should evoke strong emotions if one of its goals is to be more viral. Still, in order to connect with consumers and to create as much highly shared content, company should use multiple different types of content, not just practical, and different content tactics. Our findings indicate that blog posts are shared more than other content forms. Blog posts of our research had elements of story and those talked provocative about the industry and expressed opinions strongly – those made consumers feel. Company should use lot different tactics to be able to evoke emotions. Variation is important, otherwise consumers are going to be bored if they do not get new stimuli. Therefore even practical video articles can be popular in social media, as long as it is in good balance with other tactics.
6.4 Limitations of the study and suggestions for the further research

This section discusses limitation that might have influenced on the results and suggests further research directions. The biggest limitation of the study was the small size of the data. First, there were only 99 observations in the data, which might cause regression analyses to be unreliable in some cases. Mainly this might cause that some of the results are not significantly relevant even though those would have been if the data was larger. Small data size was especially a problem when studying the independent variable story, where the positive observations were only found from articles and blogs published in the website. Therefore we propose that despite our results that story would not effect on virality, it actually does.

Second, the lack of observations made it impossible to perform statistically significant regression analysis on website likes. The data would have contained only 34 observation, which is the total sum of articles and blog posts published in company’s website. This caused that all of the eWOM activities were not able to take into consideration and part of the study like was planned. The study should be implemented again with a larger data so that these problems could be eliminated. This could also help to the lack of normal distribution, which might also that cause some of the hypotheses were rejected falsely.

The data was collected from a one case company and all the content was related to sports. This could lead to the fact that the results are not generalizable to other industries and companies. The study should be performed again with multiple companies from different industries to get more reliability for the results. Despite this, the findings support mainly earlier studies, which would talk from behave of the reliability of the results.

All in all, the coders found the job quite hard especially with adjectives interesting and entertaining. They described the job as followed: “Yes, I think many of these articles and videos interesting, maybe even too many. There
should be a scale that would make it possible for me to classify some of the posts more interesting than another.” “It is hard to say if I am entertained. Yeah, like watching and reading this stuff, but I guess that I am not super entertained, I just find this subject interesting and many of these advices helpful.” If the study would have used for example five point Likert scale, there might have been more significant results, because the level of emotion would have been taken into account better. The situation would have also been completely different if these coders would not have been interested in sports and getting tips and advices, in other words part of the target audience of the company.

The theoretical background revealed some possible factors that could effect on virality, but lacks in the data and the research method made studying those impossible. Based on the literature we were able to make following consumptions that could work as subjects for future research:

A1) Consumers share content that helps them to earn social currency, look better in the eyes of others.
A2) Consumers share content that is important to them and helps them to express who they are.
A3) Content that is more top of mind and has more environmental cues is shared more.
A4) Content that makes people feel like insiders increases virality.
A5) Content that triggers high-arousal emotions increases virality.
A6) Content that makes consumer go into a flow state is shared more.
A7) Content that is of public products is shared more than private.

To be able to study consumptions A1, A2, A4 and A6 the data should have been based on a consumer questionnaire. For consumption A3 there is no established research method and the lack of different high and low-arousal emotions made it impossible to study A5. It was our intention to study consumption A7 by categorizing content that included mention, picture or video of a product into public and private products. The idea was to do this by
analyzing whether products were more often used in public or private situations. In action it did not work out because all the products involved were private in their nature. Therefore this content characteristic could not be analyzed.
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Histogram with normal distribution curve of Facebook likes
Appendix 2: Histogram with normal distribution curve of Facebook comments
Appendix 3: Histogram with normal distribution curve of Facebook shares