

LAPPEENRANTA-LAHTI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY LUT  
School of Business and Management  
Business Administration

*Darja Soubatch*

**DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY CREATION FOR SME B2B  
SUBCONTRACTOR COMPANY IN CONTEXT OF VALUE CO-CREATION.**

Examiners: Professor Olli Kuivalainen

D.Sc. Heini Vanninen

## ABSTRACT

Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology LUT

School of Business and Management

International Marketing Management

Darja Soubatch

**Digital marketing strategy creation for SME B2B subcontractor company in context of value co-creation.**

Master's thesis

2021

54 pages, 8 figures, 4 tables and 1 appendix

Examiners: Professor Olli Kuivalainen and Postdoctoral Researcher Heini Vanninen

Keywords: value co-creation, digital marketing, marketing strategy, subcontractor industry, industrial subcontractor

The aim of the thesis is to clarify how digital marketing strategy should be created for an industrial subcontractor company when context is value co-creation. The objective is to detect factors of value co-creational activities that will help the company to create marketing content to support company's value proposition. In addition, the goal is to find out how digital marketing strategy can be used to support customers' consideration phase.

The research was conducted as a qualitative case study by interviewing ten people. Part of the interviewees work in the case company in managerial positions and part in responsibility specialist position. In addition to interviews, own observations made through working in the company were used as well as information that is available online.

As a result of this thesis, it can be said that the company should take a role of an expert more often. The content provided via digital platforms should be educative and provide new information to customers. Content should also strive to start a conversation with customers and explain how customers can participate in solution development process and be value co-creators. Company should also start to gather references from customers which can be later posted on the company's digital channels (webpage and social media accounts).

## TIIVISTELMÄ

Lappeenrannan-Lahden teknillinen yliopisto LUT

LUT School of Business and Management

Kansainvälisen Markkinoinnin Johtaminen

Darja Soubatch

Digitaalisen markkinointistrategian luominen PK B2B yritykselle arvon yhteisluomisen kontekstissa.

Pro Gradu -Tutkielma

2021

54 sivua, 8 kuvaa, 4 taulukkoa ja 1 liite

Tarkastajat: Professori Olli Kuivalainen, Tutkijatohtori Heini Vanninen

Avainsanat: Arvon yhteisluominen, Digitaalinen markkinointi, markkinointistrategia, alihankkija, teollisuusalihankkija

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää, miten luodaan digitaalinen markkinointistrategia teollisuusalan alihankkijayritykselle, kun kontekstina on arvon yhteisluominen. Tavoitteena on tunnistaa sellaiset arvon yhteisluontitekijät, jotka auttavat yritystä tuottamaan markkinointisisältöä, joka tukee yrityksen arvolupausta. Lisäksi päämääränä on tutkia, miten digitaalista markkinointistrategiaa voidaan hyödyntää tukemaan asiakkaan harkintavaihetta.

Tutkimus on toteutettu laadullisena tapaustutkimuksena haastattelemalla kymmentä henkilöä. Osa haastatelluista työskentelee kohdeyrityksen johtotehtävissä ja osa työskentelee erinäisissä asiantuntijatehtävissä. Haastattelujen lisäksi tutkimuksessa käytetään omia havaintoja, joita on tehty kohdeyrityksen työntekijänä. Sen lisäksi internetistä saatavia tietoja yrityksestä on käytetty tutkimuksessa.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että yrityksen tulisi tuoda aktiivisemmin esille omaa asiantuntijuutta. Digitaalisen sisällön tulisi olla opettavaista ja tarjota asiakkaille uutta informaatiota. Sisällön tulisi myös pyrkiä herättämään keskustelua asiakkaiden kanssa ja selittää, millä tavoin asiakas voi osallistua ratkaisun kehitysprosessiin ja olla arvon yhteisluoja. Yrityksen tulisi myös panostaa referenssien keräämiseen, jotta referenssejä voitaisiin käyttää tulevaisuudessa yrityksen kotisivuilla ja sosiaalisessa mediassa.

## Acknowledgements

The time spent in LUT was very special and I cherish every experience which I acquired while studying there. I still remember the amount of joy that I felt when I heard that I was accepted to LUT. This thesis is a good final assignment, and I am excited to see what future has prepared for me after graduation and to use acquired knowledge to build a career.

The process of writing thesis was not easy for me. I would like to give special thanks to Professor Olli Kuivalainen, who has kindly guided me through the process and provided his valuable insights and opinions. I would also like to thank CEO of NMC Cellfoam Oy Heikki Hauhia, who helped me through the process and believed in me all the time. Many thanks to all the interviewees for agreeing to interviews and for providing their own valuable knowledge.

I would also like to thank my boyfriend and his family, my family and dear friends who have supported and helped me during this process. Without these people in my life this process would have been too hard. Therefore, I am extremely thankful to all of you.

*03.08.2021*

*Darja Soubatch*

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	Background of the study .....	1
1.2	Research objectives and delimitations .....	3
1.3	Research questions .....	4
1.4	Data collection and research methodology .....	5
1.5	Theoretical framework and key concepts.....	7
1.6	Outline of the study .....	11
2	Value co-creation process.....	12
2.1	Customer sphere.....	13
2.2	Provider sphere.....	13
2.3	Joint sphere.....	14
2.4	Formation of customer's value expectations.....	16
3	Digital marketing strategy creation .....	18
3.1	STP- process .....	20
3.2	Value proposition.....	21
3.3	Marketing goals.....	21
4	Industrial subcontractor as a service industry .....	23
4.1	Meaning of subcontractor .....	23
4.2	What can be anticipated from subcontractor company? .....	24
4.3	Digital marketing in subcontractor industry .....	24
4.4	Co-creation in subcontractor industry .....	25
5	Research Design .....	26
5.1	Methodology.....	26
5.2	Data collection .....	28
5.3	Data analysis process .....	30
6	Empirical study - Application of digital marketing strategy .....	31
6.1	Background of the study .....	31
6.2	Analysis of current state of digital marketing activities.....	32
6.3	Possibilities for Co-creation activities between supplier and customer companies .....	36
6.4	Digital marketing communication analysis .....	40
6.4.1	Competitive advantage .....	40
6.4.2	Goals & Objectives .....	44
6.4.3	Company's value proposition.....	45
6.5	Development of digital marketing strategy concept .....	47

7	Discussion and conclusions .....	49
7.1	Reflecting theory into empirical findings .....	49
7.2	Discussion of the research questions and managerial implications .....	50
7.3	Limitations and propositions for future research .....	53
7.4	Conclusions .....	54
	References.....	55
	Appendices.....	59

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the study

Figure 2. Main aspects of value co-creation and roles

Figure 3. Customer roles in value co-creation

Figure 4. Service level expectations

Figure 5. Digital marketing strategy creation process

Figure 6. Supplier's process

Figure 7. Company's process for new projects according to interviews

Figure 8. Representation of digital marketing strategy concept

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. Marketing activities

Table 2. Number of interviewees & reasons to interview

Table 3. Visualization of digital marketing challenges according to interviews

Table 4: Visualization of the case company's internal strengths and weaknesses according to interviews

# 1 Introduction

The structure of this study is following. First, the background of the study will be introduced. Research objectives and delimitations will be discussed. Then research questions will be introduced, and a data collection plan and research methodology will be presented. This is followed by explaining the theoretical framework and key concepts. Finally, there is an outline of the study.

## 1.1 Background of the study

The aim of this research is to investigate value co-creation possibilities through digital marketing and how to create a digital marketing strategy that will contribute to these topics. While globalization opens new markets and possibilities to the firms, it also creates a lot of pressure for firms to remain competitive. Thus, companies must be able to create superior value for their customers through the capability to innovate the service offerings. (O’Cass & Sok 2013; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004) Globalization, deregulation, outsourcing, and the convergence of industries and technologies empower customers with a vague offering to choose from and companies are facing more and more competition in the business field. Thus, value co-creation abilities are nearly essential for a company to become and remain competitive in the modern environment and ecosystem.

The phenomenon of value co-creation became a key concept within service marketing and business management. (Saarijärvi et al. 2013). The purpose of marketing in this context is to communicate to customers the right value via the firm’s value proposition. (O’Cass & Sok 2013) According to Bakhtieva (2017) role of digital marketing has become more strategic and combining. Customers today are more educated and sophisticated; markets are more fragmented and customer empowerment is rising in every area of the internet (Kucuk 2011). Customers can also access an unlimited amount of information and find suppliers around the globe. Since there is lots of information accessible and available from the internet customers are more educated and they make more intelligent choices when purchasing something. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004)



The ability to listen and provide customers with the exact solution for their needs can be a powerful competitive advantage for the company. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004; Saarijärvi et al. 2013) This means that businesses must learn how to use their relationships and networks to access silent information, innovative ideas, and value co-creation competencies. Long-lasting relationships with suppliers bring a more stable flow of quality and on-time supplies as well as competitive prices. (Ndubisi & Natarajan 2016)

Content marketing is playing an important role in impacting B2B customer's sourcing and partnering processes and it is important for businesses to develop their content marketing strategies accordingly. (Holliman & Rowley 2014) B2B companies are less flexible in the adoption of the new trend since it usually requires big investments to be able to modify the product/ service if the business model of the company does not fundamentally include customization. According to Kucuk (2011), traditional marketing value drivers such as marketing mix elements 4Ps do no longer function on the internet in the same way as they used to function in physical markets to build value. Thus, the re-conceptualization of new marketing value drivers with e-marketing value driver such as 4c: connectivity, content, community, and commitment are in place. The current situation of digital marketing in the case company is very poor. The company has its website and social media profiles on LinkedIn and Facebook, which is a reasonable amount of social media profiles for an SME company. However, profiles and webpage are not managed on a regular basis, and they lack a strategy for content, frequency of publications, and visibility in search engine machines.

Theoretical research on e-marketing is quite lacking and fragmented. Also, Jussila, Kärkkäinen, & Aramo-Immonen (2014) mention that there is a need for more clear empirical research of social media specifically in the context of B2B companies, that operate only in a business-to-business market. Holliman & Rowley (2014) bring up those practitioners which act as publishers often neglect to even consider user-generated content and the value that this might bring to community and brand building. Thus, this is also one of the lacking themes in academic literature.

O'Cass & Sok (2013) bring up that there is not enough academic research done in theorizing and testing the role of service marketing capability in enhancing value offering -perceived value-in-use relationship. Despite on rapid growth of Internet usage and different social media platforms, many academics (Stockdale & Standing 2004; Gilmore et al., 2007) have brought up that most organizations and especially SMEs do not have a clear strategy and

knowledge on how to exploit digital tools for marketing purposes. In b2b companies that develop products for other companies the usage of social media is not well understood either, therefore this research will be important for case company and industrial B2B subcontractors to advance their perception of the importance of digital marketing activities.

## 1.2 Research objectives and delimitations

The focus of this research is on creating a digital marketing strategy through the value co-creation process since phenomena of value co-creation are arising. To stay competitive firms should involve customers more in the process of customizing the service to match customers' expectations. Based on the literature review, there is not much research done on the role of service marketing capability in enhancing value offering. Also, in subcontracting b2b industry the usage of digital marketing is not well understood, thus there is a need for empirical research of social media exploitation in B2B companies. The objective of this research will be on examining how to combine key concepts of value co-creation and digital marketing content so that they will form a manageable, understandable, and profitable digital marketing strategy.

The aim of the study is to create a strategy that will help the case company to get involved with customers' processes of creating a new project and partnering with a customer in designing and developing actual components for different projects and in the end manufacture the parts for the customer. Although the end result is a physical product, there are many steps of services that facilitate the production of the end product. Product is always tailored upon customers' needs and demands and there is no one standardized product that needs to be marketed. Therefore, this research focuses on services rather than on products.

To narrow down the research topic there should be limitations. While conducting this research the contexts of B2B market, industrial subcontractor industry, and small & medium-size enterprises (SME) should be taken into consideration. B2B limitation is important to include into the research since the company is doing business with different firms and does not sell directly to the private consumers thus marketing to the private consumers (B2C) is an irrelevant topic in this research. Small & medium size enterprise is also a limitation that is addressed to the case company, since it is defined as a medium-size company, these limitations are not addressed to the customer companies, they can be huge corporations or small one-person companies.

Also, this research will not focus on the whole digital marketing creation process, just on those parts that support customers' consideration process of choosing the supplier to be the partner for value co-creation for the customer. The company's segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP) information cannot be disclosed. Therefore, in research will be discussed the importance of the STP process, but research will not focus on analyzing the company's STP factors.

This research will focus only on a joint sphere and customers' expectations since it is crucial for the supplier to understand the need of customers and provide marketing content accordingly. Therefore, research is limited to the dyadic relationship between supplier (seller) and customer (buyer) other stakeholders of the case company's stakeholders for example suppliers of the case company and logistic department will be excluded from this research.

Geographically this research is limited to the Finnish market. Although the company has a huge number of international customers who operate in other countries and not in Finland, the company needs also to focus on the domestic market. The webpage a social media accounts of the case company use the Finnish language; therefore, language sets up a limitation to the Finnish market as well. If the company wishes to apply the same marketing strategy to other counties as well, market situation analysis should be done accordingly.

### 1.3 Research questions

Since the main research goal is to create a digital marketing strategy for the industrial b2b subcontracting company in value co-creation the main research goal will be divided into sub-questions in order to help to generate an answer for the main research question which is:

***Q1: What kind of factors contribute to creating a digital marketing strategy for an industrial B2B subcontracting company, when the aspect of value co-creation is considered?***

It should be understood what value customers expect from a subcontractor. Since it is not possible for this research type to investigate and to know what new customers might want and expect logical way is to focus on already existing customer relationships. Hence the first sub-question is:

***SQ1: How can value co-creation be utilized to satisfy the needs of the customer?***

The second sub-question focuses on the marketing aspect and marketing mix 4C tool. 4C stands for Customer value, cost, convenience, and communication. In this research, the focus is on the communication phase. The second sub-question should contribute to the marketing strategy aspect of the main research problem. Therefore, the second sub-question is:

***SQ2: How can a marketing strategy be used to support customers' consideration phase?***

#### 1.4 Data collection and research methodology

This research will be conducted as a multi-method qualitative study. The study focuses on only one case company; therefore, it is a single case study. For the theoretical part will be used peer-reviewed academic literature and internet sources. Academic literature creates a base for this research and aims to explain already existing concepts and theories. The nature of this research is a combination of exploratory and evaluative natures. It aims to explore value co-creation possibilities in the company through open-ended questions and if needed interview's direction can be changed if it suits better the flow of conversation. Exploratory nature helps to clarify understanding of a certain issue and phenomena through open questions. Evaluative nature of the research helps to find out how well for example processes or business strategies work. (Saunders 2015, 175). The combination of these two natures is helpful when an interviewee does not have an answer to a certain question then the conversation can be modified in the process and the questions can be rephrased. Also, evaluative nature of the research helps to evaluate how well interviewees know their customers, the aim of questions related that part is to explore what interviewees know about customer expectations and at the same time evaluate is it enough or should there be more actions done to deepen that knowledge level.

Primary data for the empirical part of this research will be collected from semi-structured individual interviews of internal stakeholders, own observations, and competitors' webpages. These three sources are all non-numerical, therefore research is qualitative and is based on interpretation of answers of interviewees and other observations. (Saunders 2015, 165) Internal stakeholder groups will be the technical department, CEO, purchasing department, and sales department. By examining information from interviews the aim is to figure out the level of knowledge about customers' expectations and the company's

capabilities to be a value co-creator. Own expertise will be used as well since the researcher has been working in the case company for a year in a customer service team before starting the study.

Research focuses on analyzing the current situation of the case company's digital marketing presence, it does not focus on the past it focuses on the current timeline and provides a strategy for the future. The research applies only to the case company since only the case company's current situation will be discussed, other companies might be inspired by this research, but the analyses should be done always separately, the outcome this research provides is not suitable for all b2b subcontractor companies.

SWOT analysis will be conducted through analysis of the interviewee's answers by groups. After analyzing and filling out a SWOT analysis of the groups the results will be cross-examined, and the company's SWOT matrix will be filled. The aim is to identify silent information, silent capabilities, new ideas on how to incorporate value co-creation with customers into the processes and thought that into marketing as well. In this research SWOT analysis will be used to analyze factors that may help or complicate to achieve the digital marketing goals of the case company. After identifying SWOT factors company will be able to focus on improving its own weaknesses and be more aware of its own strengths and improve them even further. Recognizing external threats helps the company to make alterations to its own strategy, for example, to be prepared to make investments in new technologies if there is a threat to lose a significant number of customers without certain technology. Opportunities lead the way for development.

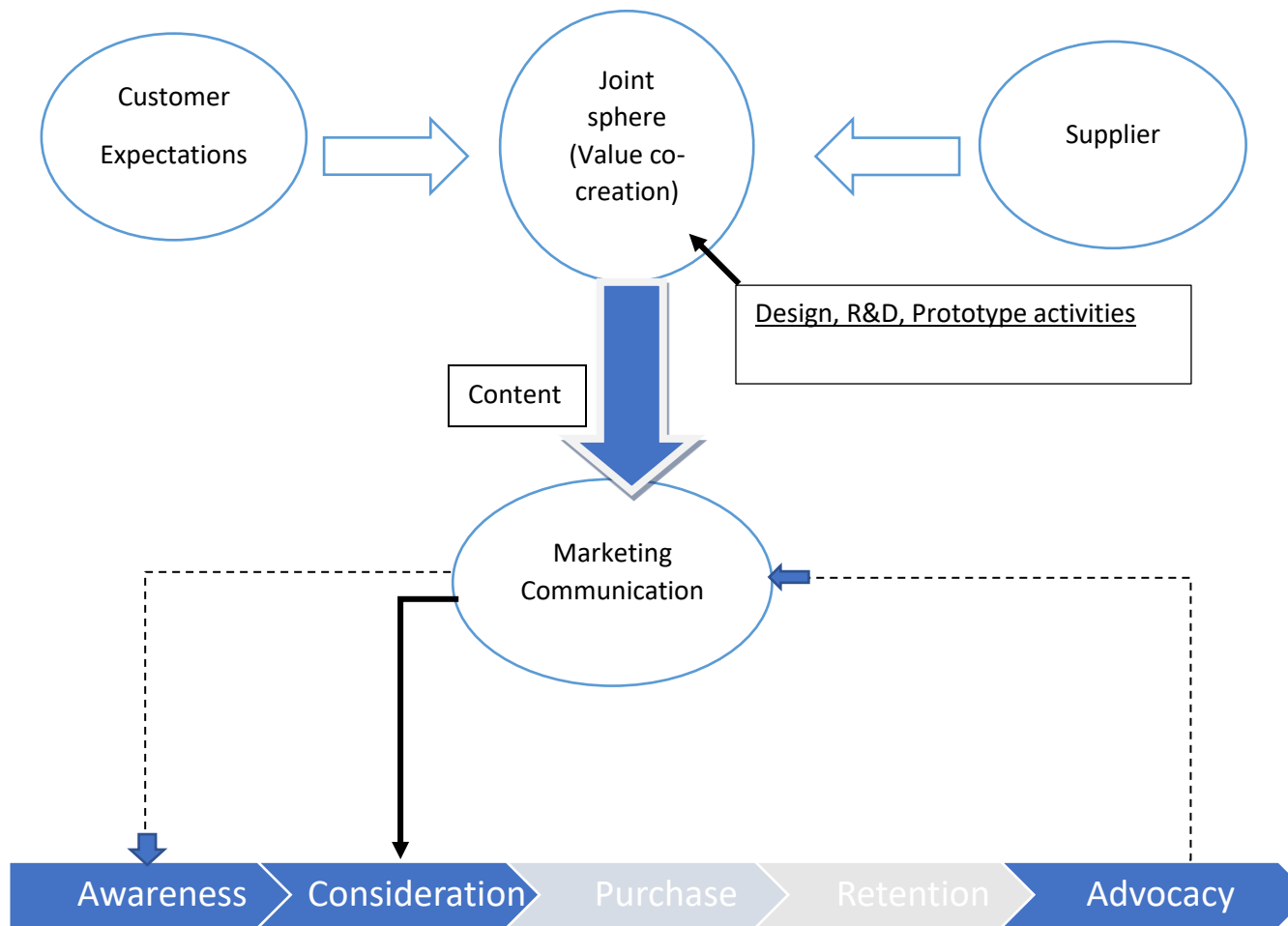
The case company has five major customer sectors differentiated: construction, automobile & vehicles, machinery, electric and electronics, and sport and leisure industries. Since the company has a huge number of clients it is impossible to arrange interviews with all the clients. Therefore, the sales personnel of the case company will be interviewed as experts in their field. Salespersons are communicating tightly with the customers and are the first ones who clients usually contact. Members of the sales crew are experienced and have been working in the company with different customers successfully, they will be able to provide more broad insights through combining their experience with their clientele. Therefore, the decision has been made that customers of the company will not be interviewed. Customer perspective will be researched through internal interviews. The quality of answers will bring

up how well does the company know its clients and if there is a need for improvement in the ways that the sales department for example communicates with customers.

Interviewing the purchasing department will give information about how the case company itself searches for new suppliers when there is a need for new materials and what do the purchasers value in their consideration step. Purchasers' insights are valuable for this research, since they search, evaluate, and make the purchasing decision, performing nearly the same operations that new customers of the case company do. The prediction is that purchasers and salespeople value different things and aspects. This is logical since these parties have different goals. Also, the case company's purchasers can be more open and honest in the interview if compared with the purchasers of the customers. It might be that customers' purchasers would not be able to give answers without trying to gain something for themselves.

## 1.5 Theoretical framework and key concepts

The focus of this research is on the consideration aspect of the customers' journey. The content for social media and web pages is derived from the joint sphere see figure 1. That way content should communicate how the customer can be engaged in value co-creation activities.



**Figure 1: Theoretical framework of the study**

Framework of the research is structured as follows. First the value expectations of the customer and value co-creation process should be studied. To understand potential new customers and their expectations, company needs to identify how current customers want to be incorporated in value co-creation process, what roles customers can take in co-creation process. All this information generates content for marketing which should be used in acquiring new customers' attention.

The second phase is to determine what kind of content is interesting and essential to support customers' decision making to initiate the relationship with the supplier. Again, framework proposes that by studying already established relationships and by using value co-creational material for content generation for marketing purposes, this will create more visibility in Search engine optimization (SEO) and creating more awareness among potential new customers. Customers' advocacy also creates visibility for the company, and it is important

to get customer feedback via social media channels. Still, company cannot demand nor supervise customer advocacy phase and that is why this phase is not discussed in this research. This research will focus only on the researching what content supports customers consideration phase. Therefore, in framework picture the connection of marketing communication with consideration phase is bolded and connections with awareness and advocacy phases are marked with striped line.

*Value co-creation.* According to Saarijärvi. Et al. (2013) value co-creation is about reinventing value in terms of the value-creating system itself into the system where different actors of the supply chain such as suppliers, allies, customers and business partners interact together to co-produce value. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) define value co-creation as unique experience that is created with the customer. Grönroos & Voima (2013) link value co-creation to the Service-dominant logic (SDL) which means that value for the customer is created through provider-consumer interaction. With value co-creation customers and firm try to support each other's value creating processes for example through co-production, co-development, and co-design. (Saarijärvi. Et. al. 2013)

In this research value co-creation means listening, customizing, and interaction. The aim of value co-creation is to deepen relationship between supplier and customer through getting more involved in customers value chains and aiming to become a strong partner who could take a part in designing and customizing new projects with its customers. Creating an experience for customer.

*Digital marketing.* To define what is digital marketing we should first define what is marketing per se. Phillip Kotler defines marketing as:

*“...the science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit. Marketing identifies unfulfilled needs and desires. It defines, measures, and quantifies the size of the identified market and the profit potential. It pinpoints which segments the company is capable of serving best and it designs and promotes the appropriate products and services.”* (Kotler Marketing group 2020).

American Marketing Association (AMA) (2017) defines marketing as:



*“...the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large”.*

Digital marketing is any form of marketing that exists online. Businesses use digital channels such as search engines, social media, different websites, and email to create connection with current and potential customers. (Hubspot 2020) Digital marketing can also be used as an umbrella term describing the process of using digital technologies which help to reach out to new customers, build customer preferences, promote brands, retain customers, and increase sales. (Kannan & Li 2016) To do this company has to provide content that will be valuable to the customer and also engage customer in content co-creation.

In empirical part of this study term digital marketing is referring to using combination of SEO, social media including email, and company's web page. These three tools will help customer to find company from Internet's vague offering, increase awareness about the case company and providing interesting information and knowledge to keep customers interested in the case company's offering. The aim of using those tools is to explore, create, and deliver value to satisfy the needs of existing and potential customers.

*Content marketing.* Content marketing is a technique or approach used in social media environments. By employing marketing automation software company can analyze deeper the needs of potential customers and provide valuable content at the right time. (Holliman & Rowley 2014) Content marketing may appear in many forms such as webinars, white papers, newsletters, digital brochures, blog texts, social media posts, infographics, videos, and pictures for example. It is important to understand needs and interests of company's customers, because if the provided content is for too broad audience, then the lead generation will be poor and actually potential customers will lack of the information that is valuable for them. High-quality content focuses on providing value to the customers, not on promoting company products and services. (Järvinen & Taiminen 2015)

Holliman & Rowley (2014) define digital content marketing as follows:

*“B2B digital content marketing involves creating, distributing and sharing relevant, compelling and timely content to engage customers at the appropriate point in their buying*

*consideration processes, such that it encourages them to convert to a business building outcome.”*

## 1.6 Outline of the study

The structure of the study is following. After the introduction part, there's a theoretical section that consists of three parts. The first part is about the value co-creation process in the dyadic relationship between customer and supplier. The value co-creation process is discussed through three main aspects that form value co-creation: customer sphere, provider sphere, and joint sphere. Then value & service expectation formation is discussed to create a basis to understanding what factors affect customers' expectations. Co-creation activities will be discussed at the end of the first part. In the second theoretical part, the focus is on the formation of a digital marketing strategy. Elements for marketing strategy creation will be presented. Such elements are targeting, value proposition, and marketing goal formation. The third part of the theoretical section is introducing industrial subcontractors as a service industry. The meaning of subcontractor, in general, is discussed as well as what can be anticipated from a subcontractor. The state of marketing in the subcontractor industry is discussed and what co-creation activities can be incorporated into the industrial subcontractor industry.

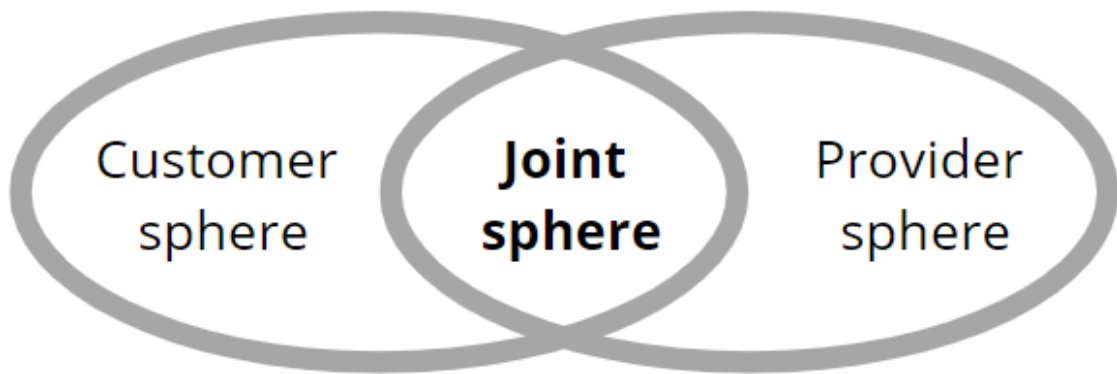
After the theoretical part research design will be presented. Methodology, data collection plan, and analysis methods will be discussed and justified. After this, the empirical part of the research begins with a description of the background of the case since it will provide context to the study. The case company's current marketing situation will be analyzed as well as the current situation of value co-creation activity possibilities will be presented. Then follows an assessment of possible value co-creation activities which may provide valuable content for digital marketing. Finally, based on assessments of value co-creation which provides valuable content and marketing factors, the digital marketing strategy will be proposed. The use of strategy is explained and illustrated.

At the end of the study discussion and conclusions are presented. First, the theory is reflected to empirical research findings in order to find similarities and differences. Then, research questions will be answered, and the managerial implications of the study will be discussed. Next, the study's reliability and validity are evaluated. After this, limitations and

propositions for future research are presented and finally, conclusions of the study are discussed.

## 2 Value co-creation process

The value co-creation process consists of three main aspects: customer sphere, provider sphere, and joint sphere (Grönroos & Voima 2013). The main focus of this research is on joint sphere, where the value co-creation happens and roles of both parties are as value co-creators (figure 2). It is still important to understand the customer and provider spheres as well and how value is created in different spheres. Grönroos and Voima (2013) point out that value creation cannot be explicitly defined, since all actors of the value creation process take part in value creation. Hollbrook (1994) defined value as an “interactive, relativistic preference experience” Gummerus (2013) interprets this definition as “value is an experience based on the interaction between subject and an object”. The object can be also a service that customer experiences. It is not limited only to a physical product.



Customer's role	Value creator	Value co-creator	
Provider's role	Value facilitator	Value co-creator	Value facilitator

**Figure 2: Main aspects of value co-creation and roles (adapted from Grönroos & Voima 2013)**

For a business-customer value emerges from the whole spectrum of interactions between the customer and the supplier. These interactions also include so-called hidden services, that support successful use of the core resources. Hidden services are the services that facilitate

the successful creation of an experience for the customer. For example, the timing of deliveries, kept timetables, supplier's invoicing systems, claim handling processes, and other services that affect customers' experiences and form the whole perception of the firm to customer. (Gummerus 2013) These services are not always seen as services rather than nuances companies should acknowledge that also maybe small nuances in company's perception can make a huge difference to customer's perception. In the next chapters customers-, providers-, and joint spheres will be discussed. The main focus of this research will be kept on the joint sphere.

## 2.1 Customer sphere

The customer sphere is closed from the supplier (Grönroos & Voima 2013) In this sphere customer creates value for itself independently from the supplier via series of activities that the customer performs in order to achieve a particular goal. (Gummerus 2013) The value creation process is rather complicated, and it is more than a visible part of service provision.

Customers create value through experiences. Experiences are accumulated from customers' past, present, and envisioned future experiences. These experiences and expectations of the experience are constructed from customers' own imagination or word of mouth, which is something that customer hears from another customer. These kinds of influencing aspects are beyond the firm's control. Supplier can act here only as a value facilitator and provide the customer with the resources that will facilitate the customer to turn those resources into value. To be able to create an experience that will generate value customer has first to use the service. Therefore, the customer generates value-in-use. (Grönroos & Voima 2013) Value creation concentrates on how the customer uses the service and what the customer does with the service in their own life. In case of this research the context is not on customers' own life rather it is on customers' business activities. Activities of other parties affect value creation only indirectly. Customers can invite other parties to participate in the value creation process, which means that the joint sphere will be created, and value can be co-created. (Gummerus 2013)

## 2.2 Provider sphere

Providers' sphere consists of providers' processes and supply chain, in which the provider operates and through which the end result is achieved. That result may be service or process.

Grönroos & Voima (2013) state that the firm is fundamentally the facilitator of value for the customer. Since by using services provided by the firm customers create value-in-use for themselves. Supplier is in charge of its own production processes, thus provider sphere is a closed sphere. In this sphere firm designs, develops, manufactures, and delivers resources. These resources represent potential value for the customers and enable value creation for the customer. Still, it is not enough for the firm just to produce the service, it should also be justified to the customers how these services help customers to achieve value and how they will help to solve customers' needs. (Grönroos 2008)

By accessing customers' closed sphere and interacting with the customer joint sphere is created. Both parties then can combine their processes into a merged, interactive, coordinated process, which will establish a value co-creation platform. (Grönroos & Voima 2013)

### 2.3 Joint sphere

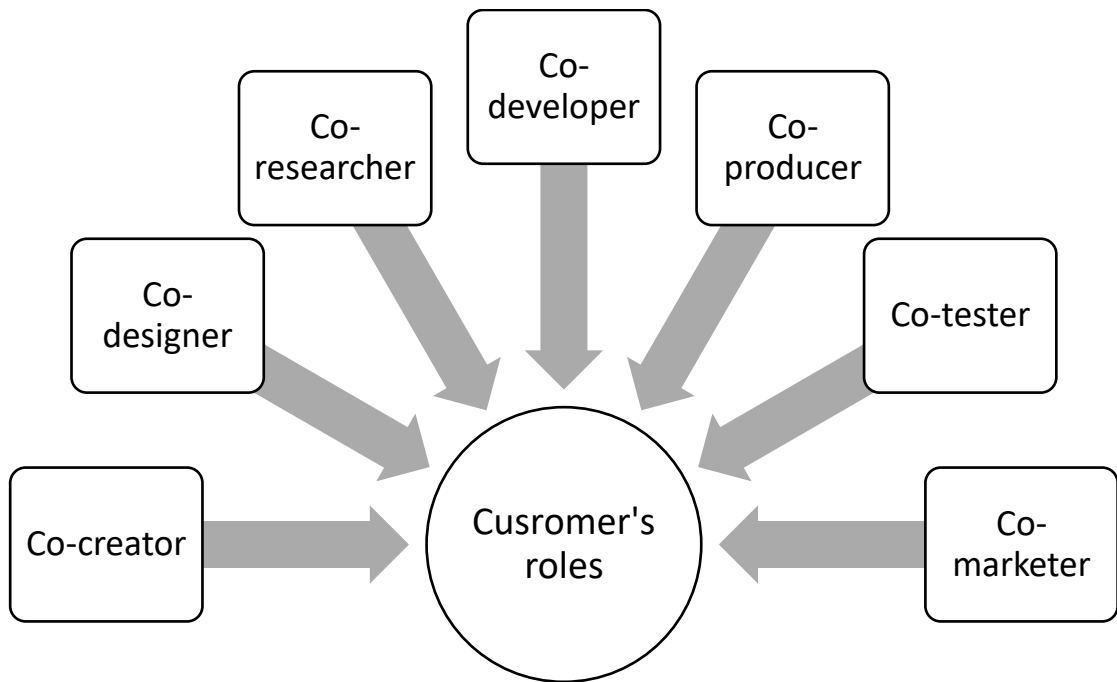
Value co-creation appears in the joint sphere. According to Gummerus (2013), Co-creation takes place when all parties participate willingly in the activities, all parties acknowledge their and the other parties' roles as contributors, and all parties benefit. According to Grönroos & Voima (2013) in the ultimate joint production perspective, the company "invents value by enabling customers' own value-creation activities". This definition brings well together both the customer and the provider sphere together into one merged joint sphere. Of course, both customer and company have still their own independent activities that are not affected by the other party, but to achieve the best possible solution parties merge their resources and gain mutual benefit from it.

Value co-creation is about deepening the relationship between customer and supplier. It requires respect, understanding of the other party's business and expectations, as well as trust. If there is no trust between parties and for example information asymmetry takes place then the value cannot be created together, therefore co-creation is impossible. To establish trust and to deepen the co-creational activities company should think more about how to become involved in customers' supply chain and how the value could be co-created. Nambisan & Baron (2007) found that customers can be involved in co-creation activities through product ideation, design and development, testing, and product support, as well as co-create content for marketing.

To provide customized solutions co-creation activities are nearly a prerequisite for success. Since it is difficult to define system-specific value for every customer, the supplier must approach every customer as a separate entity (Gummerus 2013). By doing that supplier is able to focus on each customers' needs and requirements as well as modify and customize the end result that will serve customers' needs the best. In service-dominant logic, the value is created through experiences from the services (Gummerus 2013). For example, designing the solution for the customer with the customer itself creates an experience for the customer. If the service is easy to use, interactive, and fast it will create a positive experience for the customer, and the customer will come back more likely than if the customer got poor quality service experience.

Value co-creation happens when both parties, provider, and customer interact with each other and are fundamental to customers' positive perception of the value of the marketing offering (Anker et al. 2015) In joint sphere customers can have many different roles for example as co-creator, co-designer, co-producer (Saarijärvi et Kannan 2013) or designer, product tester, product support specialist, and product marketer as Nambisan and Nambisan (2008) have identified five roles of a customer in innovation and value co-creation.

The providers' service model is a set of activities that take place from receiving an idea up to delivering service of product to customers. This service model includes a diverse range of value-creation processes, for example, design and development of new products, production, logistics, and demand forecasting. (Saarijärvi et Kannan 2013) Other processes may be researching, prototype testing, marketing. When all these activities are combined (see figure 3) it can be seen that there is actually no limit to how a customer can co-create value with a provider and what roles a customer can take.



**Figure 3: Customer roles in value co-creation (own interpretation)**

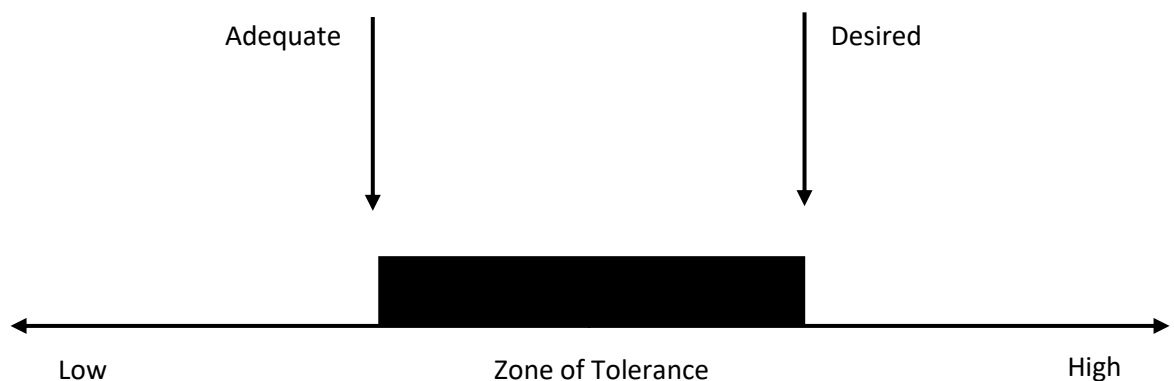
Customers' resources as for example, time, willingness, budget, and knowledge set limitations to customer's role as a value co-creator. If customer is not willing or does not have possibility to participate in multitude of activities, then customer picks itself what is the degree of participation in the process.

#### 2.4 Formation of customer's value expectations

To provide to the customers what they want, it is important to identify their needs and expectations (Hsieh & Yuan 2010). While creating marketing content for digital sources company must learn about their customers' expectations. By learning about expectations, the company will be able to provide valuable content and to communicate its own value proposition to the customers. The right content will generate more leads and target those customers that the company wants to attract. Also, expectation management gives to companies tools to interact with their customers and explain how the supplier can affect customers' perceptions and how to communicate the real value proposition. It is important to not overpromise and underdeliver since it will affect the relationship negatively and the relationship might not even be formed.

Parasuraman et al. (1991) proposed that customers' service expectations are based on two levels: desired and adequate. Between them is a zone of tolerance see figure 4. Desired

service level is the service that the customer expects to receive. The zone of tolerance is the zone between desired and adequate levels. The size of the zone of tolerance can vary depending on customers' experience and the situation.



**Figure 4: Service level expectations (Parasuraman et al. 1991)**

Since service level expectations are based on customer believes about what service should provide and how it can be provided, the service expectations are different for different customers. Customers' experience, level of emergency, and current situation are examples of factors that influence the expectations (Parasuraman et al. 1991). Based on those circumstances some customers may have much higher expectations with higher desired levels, therefore, the zone of tolerance is different (Hsieh & Yuan 2010). The lowest service level is an adequate level, thus, to make a customer satisfied with the level of service company's goal should be to fulfill customers desired level and even exceed that level. The company should collect data from the customers about how well the service provided correlates with the level that customer expected to receive. This will help company to improve level of provided services and increase level of customer satisfaction. More importantly the information collected from customer should be saved to CRM system, so that it could be accessed easily by all parties that may need the information.

Expectations can be created from imagination, from hearing from someone about their own experiences, and from the very need of the customer. Customer's previous experiences also affect expectations vaguely. If they have experienced something alike in the past and that



experience was good, then customers will be prone to imagine that in the future they will receive an even better service experience. The adequate service level is what the customer finds acceptable, but it will not be the best possible and memorable experience. Therefore, by providing services that reach an only adequate level, the provider cannot be sure about customers' retention willingness.

For B2B customers the expectations are formulated through the nature of the business that the company is in, also actions of the competitors affect expectations (Hsieh & Yuan 2010). If the other suppliers act in a certain way the same level is expected from a new supplier as well. Therefore, it is essential for suppliers to go through customer expectations and demands. In the industrial subcontractor field, technical details are very important. That is why in order to establish stability in the relationship between customer and supplier for example technical requirements have to be discussed in detail to meet customer minimum demands. By understanding and acknowledging customer expectations suppliers can modify their offering more suitable to customer individual needs. In the industrial business sphere, this may mean big investments for example to the new machinery, which will facilitate to provide wider service offering to customers.

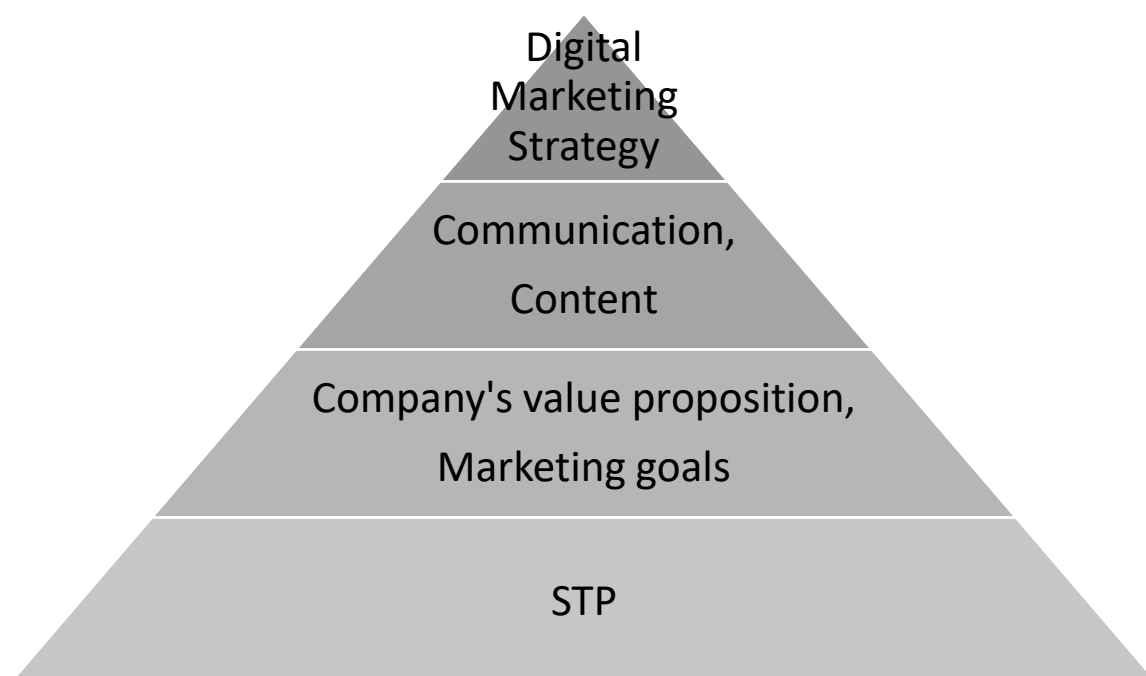
### 3 Digital marketing strategy creation

To create a marketing strategy company should pay attention to many different aspects as the company's resources, goals, objectives (Shaw 2020). Corporate strategy creates guidelines for marketing strategy creation. The company's goals and objectives that are mentioned in corporate strategy create a fundament for marketing. Marketing activities performed by a company should help and support achieving those goals. Goals for marketing can be for example create brand awareness, provide leads, and increasing brand engagement. A clear marketing strategy should be built around the company's value proposition which will communicate to the customers what the company stands for, how it operates, and why the company should be in the business. (Barone 2021)

Marketing strategy allows a company to focus on available resources and utilize them in a way that achieves corporate strategy goals, boost sales and gain leverage over competitors.

Overall marketing is not a standalone activity, it is rather about the joint effort of the company's different departments as creative, financial, sales, and technical departments.

Marketing strategy is built based on a process of segmentation, targeting & positioning, known as the STP process. STP process helps to formulate the marketing strategy of the company and select focuses for 4C's of the marketing mix (communication, customer needs, costs, and convenience). (Wu & Li 2018) In order to analyze how the company should segment & target customers and position itself market situation analysis be performed. As well as the company's values and value proposition and marketing goals should be stated clearly see figure 5.



***Figure 5: Digital marketing strategy creation process (Own interpretation)***

Swot analysis is a tool that focuses on internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) factors that affect a company's business and is based on qualitative data (Basset et al. 2018). Competitor analysis can bring up gaps and niches in the market that have not been occupied yet by others. Also, competitor analysis shows what kind of information in the context of digital marketing competitors provide to their customers and what channels they use. By analyzing competitors' styles of communication on digital media

case company can create own style of communication so that it will stand out from its' competitors.

To create that own unique communication style company should think about 4 c's of the Marketing Mix. 4 C's stands for cost, convenience, communication, customer (Wu & Li 2018), these four aspects help focus on the company's niche marketing where it is important to understand what customers truly want and how customers should be targeted in marketing activities. In this research the full 4C – model will not be investigated only communication and customer aspects.

### 3.1 STP- process

Segmentation, targeting, and positioning processes help to guide a company to apply the correct marketing mix. Segmentation means dividing customers' markets into sub-categories. Segmentation can be done by demographic, psychographic, behavioral, and geographic characteristics for example. When the market is segmented into smaller and more defined parts it is easier for companies to create marketing content that will be interesting to a certain segment. It makes sure that correct content is provided to the correct audience and stays relevant to the audience.

Targeting decisions are outcomes of segmentation analysis. Since different customers have different interests and desires it is important to narrow the target group which the company wishes to reach and provide content that will be interesting to the company's target group. It is nearly impossible to impress all segments with a unique value proposition. (Skålén. Et al. 2015) When knowing what kind of customer the company wants to attract and engage in conversation it will be easier to focus on that specific target group and to provide interesting content for that group. At the same time company will be able to learn about their customers more and satisfy their needs and wants more precisely. (Shaw 2020)

Positioning is basically how customers perceive a company's offering. It is not about what the product or service is made for or how it should be used per se. It is about how customers perceive and what do they think about the company and the company's offering. For example, the company can position itself as high technology-oriented or as a provider of cheap technology, which obviously cannot be of very high technology.

### 3.2 Value proposition

In order to create a marketing strategy company's own values and values that it proposes to its' customers should be thought through. A company should think about what it values in its own activities, what are the values that affect the company's choices. Values of the company affects also company's value proposition; the value that the company offers to its customers.

Marketing strategy revolves around value proposition. It is the core message of the company's marketing activities, and it summarizes the reason why this company should be considered as a supplier. Value proposition not only affects the tone of the company's communication style, but it also is a key element of the company's brand. (Barone 2021) The value proposition should be communicated to potential customers through actions of advertising, promotions, and sales department (Mongay 2006). These concrete marketing actions should be planned and discussed in a marketing plan, which is more guidance for actions. In marketing strategy value proposition should be identified and strategy should be built upon that proposition.

### 3.3 Marketing goals

Marketing goals are derived from the company's business strategy and goals. These derived goals help to focus on key elements that the company wishes to achieve through marketing activities. When goals are clear it is easier for companies to create a marketing action plan to achieve those goals.

Clear goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. These aspects create SMART-framework, which is vaguely used in marketing strategy creation. (Blanchard 2020) In this research marketing goals will be set according to the company's strategic goals and those goals will be revised with the SMART- framework. Only those goals which fit into SMART and the company's goals will be set. SMART-framework will not be discussed in this research in detail, since it is not relevant to marketing strategy creation per se.

Such activities as Search engine optimization (SEO), Social media presence, webpage maintenance, and Search Engine Advertisement (SEA) are examples of marketing activities

through different channels. These channels can be divided into four categories based on the viewpoint of which party controls the communications (the company itself or the target audience) and whether the communication type is One-way or Two-way communication (see table 1). One-way communication means that parties cannot interact with each other on the platform. For example, when company creates own webpages and there is no field for customers to leave their comment to, then it is considered as a one-way communication platform. When the platform enables interaction and having a discussion between parties, then the channel is considered as a two-way communication channel. (Shankar & Balasubramanian 2009) For example, social media is a two-way communication platform where parties can leave their comments and interact with each other.

	High company control	Low company control	Marketing Goal	Value to customer
One-way	<p>Website</p> <p>E-mail newsletters</p> <p>Banner adverting</p>	<p>SEO</p> <p>SEA</p>	<p>Retain existing customers &amp; acquire new</p> <p>Increase brand presence</p> <p>Optimize brand positioning</p> <p>Improve customer experience</p>	<p>Easy accessibility /Findability.</p> <p>Educational information.</p>

Two-way	Company generated blogs  Company's own communities / platforms	Social Media	Increase traffic  Improve customer advocacy  Diversify lead sources	Possibility to share own experiences.  Possibility to connect with other company's customers
---------	--	--------------	---	--

**Table 1: Marketing activities (adaptation from Shankar & Balasubramanian 2009)**

## 4 Industrial subcontractor as a service industry

In this chapter industrial subcontracting industry is introduced more closely. The meaning of a subcontracting relationship is presented and what can be anticipated from a subcontractor party is discussed. After this, the current situation of digital marketing is presented and different value co-creation activities in the industrial subcontractor industry are analyzed.

### 4.1 Meaning of subcontractor

The subcontractor utilizes own expertise and machinery to manufacture products for other companies according to their order. (Tilastokeskus 2021)

Subcontractors do not usually have products of their own. Products are manufactured according to customers' specifications and needs. Still, in order to produce a product that meets customers' requirements subcontractor provides complementary services, such as designing, installation, delivery, and searching for the right materials for the end product for example. Since there is no clear product range that needs to be marketed, subcontractors should focus more on a holistic concept of their offering. (Blombäck & Alelsson 2007) The product itself is an end result, but the processes and services that support the formation of the end result should be the main focus in subcontractors' marketing activities and value proposition.

By promoting own skills and knowledge subcontractor can communicate clearly to their possible customers what can be expected from the subcontractor. For a customer, it will be also easier to evaluate the capabilities of subcontractor and make decisions when evaluating which subcontractor company will meet customers' demands more accurately.

#### 4.2 What can be anticipated from subcontractor company?

Therefore, trust and relationship building is very important criteria in subcontracting business (Errasti et al. 2007). For starting the project both parties customer and subcontractor should first discuss and create a subcontracting agreement which will be the basis of the relationship and indicate what are customers' demands are. In subcontracting agreement, all legal terms regarding ordering, payment, delivery, etc. are covered, and based on that agreement both parties have symmetric information. (Canello et al 2017) Later it is important to cover such topics with the customer as customers' expectations, technical demands, and measurements of the requested product, and also material attributes. This step is the place for value co-creation since it requires collaboration between subcontractor and customer. Both parties willingly participate in the solution formulation step so that it will benefit them both. Continuous interaction between subcontractors and their customers favors a continuous process of interaction and learning for both parties. (Canello et al 2017) Therefore, the subcontractor can learn about customers' needs in early step and improve own capabilities to match those needs. This way customers will be able to continue the subcontracting relationship. (Errasti et al. 2007)

Buyers should be able to rely on information that helps to determine subcontractors' abilities since buyers do have limited time and information on researching suppliers. To minimize the risk of choosing the wrong subcontractor buyers tend to rely on subcontractors with whom they already have functioning relationships or companies which are well known. This kind of risk minimization strategy may lead to buyers choosing a safe supplier even if its' offer is not the cheapest one. (Blombäck & Axelsson 2007)

#### 4.3 Digital marketing in subcontractor industry

Traditionally industrial companies are not that advanced in marketing activities. They tend usually to be so focused on delivering the product/service so that they do not pay attention to marketing activities (Karjaluoto et al. 2015). This aspect should be re-evaluated if

subcontractor company strives to develop its own brand, search for new business segments and opportunities, serve more demanding customers (Errasti et al. 2007) According to Karjaluoto et al. (2015) marketing activities help in four main objectives:

- 1 Increasing efficiency of communications.
- 2 Fosters customer relationship communications and interactions.
- 3 Creates awareness and helps build brands.
- 4 Generates sales leads.

These four main objectives are also the main objectives of industrial companies when using social media. Nowadays, customers have the power in information sharing via the Internet where they can share their experiences and opinions. Therefore, companies now acknowledge more and more that they need to listen to their customers more and engage customers in conversations, open communication and transparency are also important factors when communicating with customers. (Karjaluoto et al. 2015) The subcontractor should still be cautious of information that it posts online so that it will not hurt subcontractor's clients' business activities by exposing secret information.

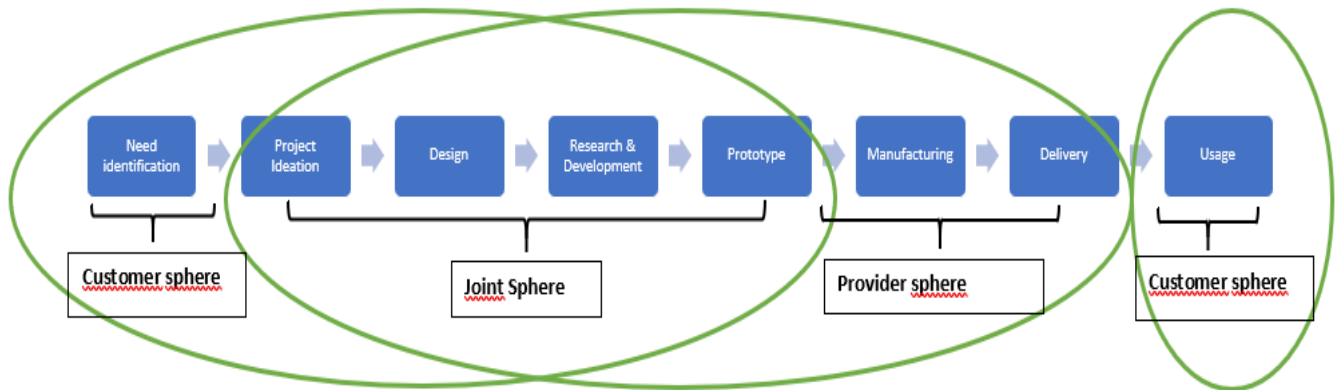
#### 4.4 Co-creation in subcontractor industry

Since subcontractors do not usually have their own products and they need a customer to initiate the process of manufacturing, dialog between parties is inevitable. The quality of this dialog affects the quality of provided customer experience and satisfaction. If the quality of the dialog is poor from the very beginning, there are more chances for miscommunication and misunderstanding which may result in incorrect service or product in the end. Therefore, to avoid these issues customer should have a role as a value co-creator in the supplier's process of service provision to the extent that the customer wishes to participate and has resources to.

The manufacturing process of industrial subcontractors can be for example as shown in picture B; Ideation of new project, Design, Research & Development (R&D), Prototype manufacturing, and delivery. Need identification for a new solution comes from the customer's sphere and as well as usage of the end solution belongs to the customer and their possible end customers. In this research, four customer roles will be used in the joint sphere:



co-innovator, co-designer, co-developer, and product tester. These four roles suit the best suppliers service provision model (Figure 6).



**Figure 6: supplier’s process**

New project ideas come from customers, the case company does not invent new projects, the ideas come from customers. After the new idea is discussed, the solution should be designed, and research & development (R&D) of the solution are conducted as well. Case company usually involves customers to design, R&D, and prototype testing but this process is not standardized. After these steps supplier manufactures and delivers the goods. A customer uses goods after receiving them.

## 5 Research Design

In this chapter methodology of the research will be introduced. As well as data collection methods for the theoretical and for the empirical parts will be discussed. Also, data analysis process will be explained.

### 5.1 Methodology

Theoretical part consists of peer-reviewed academic literature and internet sources. Academic literature creates a framework for this research and aims to explain already existing concepts and theories as well as provide information about previously conducted researches. Literature for the research is searched via the internet library provided by

Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology (LUT). Only peer-reviewed articles are used. Some academic literature sources were found from references of other academic resources and these kinds of sources are first searched from the internet library of the university, if not found they are searched via Google. Nonacademic sources are used as well since those sources provide fresh insights on some of the concepts and how those concepts could be used. Especially these types of sources are used in context of digital marketing, since there are more fresh and creative insights available in nonacademic sources.

For the empirical part of this research semi-structured individual interviews of internal stakeholders, own observations, and competitors' webpages are used. These three sources are all non-numerical, therefore research is qualitative and is based on interpretation of answers of interviewees and other observations. Open-ended questions for interviews were sent to interviewees upfront so that they had time to familiarize themselves with the questions and think of answers before the actual interview. The interview was recorded through video call so that emotions and gestures could be captured. These nuances help in the interpretation of data. The aim of using interview questions is to gather information from experienced specialists and managers which know their customers, and who work in customer interface daily. By examining information from interviews the aim is to explore and evaluate the level of knowledge about customers' expectations and the company's capabilities to be a value co-creator. Also, the current state of digital marketing situation in company, and potential challenges in company's processes related to marketing and value co-creation topics are explored and evaluated. Own expertise will be used as well since the researcher has been working in the case company for a year in the customer service team before starting the research, which is also part of customer interface actors.

Research focuses on analyzing the current situation of the case company's digital marketing presence, it does not focus on the past it focuses on the current timeline and provides a strategy for the future. Research is applicable only to case company since only the case company's current situation is discussed, other companies might be inspired by this research, but the analyses should be done always separately, the outcome that this research provides is not suitable for all B2B subcontractor companies.

## 5.2 Data collection

Questions for semi-structured interviews are designed after conducting a literature review. Topics of interview focus on the same general topic that are discussed in the literature review being Digital marketing, and Value co-creation. These topics are also the most relevant topics to the main research question. Interviews were held in February. Totally there were 12 interviews conducted, from which 10 will be analyzed in detail in this study (see Table 2) since 2 of them have been made with Swedish colleagues and later on the study has been restricted to the Finnish market. This does not mean that 2 interviews were made for nothing, they still gave the researcher valuable information for future managerial implications, even though those interviews will not be analyzed for this study according to geographical delimitations of the research. At first, the Swedish colleagues were invited to participate in the interviews since the Swedish and the Finnish subsidiaries should have been very similar in their processes, capabilities, and activities according to leaders of both companies. Also, they both used copy-paste technique in their websites. The copy-paste technique in this situation means that the content was created in Finland by employees of the case company and then just translated to the Swedish language without adjusting content to suit Swedish audience. During the interviews it was clear that subsidiaries are indeed similar, but the environment and audience is not. Finns and Swedes respond to different types of contents and marketing strategy which is applicable in one country will not suit other country as is. Therefore, in future the Swedish subsidiary should be researched separately, and the digital marketing strategy should be adapted to suit the Swedish audience. However, interviews with the Swedish colleagues reminded that even if countries are geographically close to each other, there might still be differences in cultures and ways of interpreting information. (Hofstede Insights 2021)

The time when interviews are held is impossible to standardize for example only to the morning period since interviews are held during working days and informants have other work duties as well. So, interviews are scheduled in a way that the informant would have 1.5 hours to participate in the interview session. If the time proposed does not suit the informant, then the informant is asked to propose the time which suits him/her the best. Questions are sent to informants a few weeks before an interview. In the same e-mail, informants are thanked for taking participation and for their time devoted to the interview. Also, they all

are notified that the interview will be held through videocall, and it will be recorded. As well e-mail notified informants that the interview is anonymous and confidential only the researcher will know who said what, but the answers will be processed without mentioning names nor will be shown to others.

	Number of interviewees	
Department	Occupation	Why to interview
Technical developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 – Manager</li> <li>• 4 - Specialists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co creation possibilities?</li> <li>• Service development possibilities?</li> <li>• Technical perspective for the marketing?</li> <li>• How new ideas are born? Information search?</li> </ul>
Purchasing department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 - Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What information is valuable for purchasers?</li> <li>• How is information of new material supplier gathered?</li> </ul>
Sales department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 – Managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer relationship?</li> <li>• Customers desires?</li> <li>• Customer journey?</li> </ul>
CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 - Officer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Company strategy?</li> <li>• Future goals and possibilities? To align marketing strategy with those aspects.</li> </ul>

***Table 2: Number of interviewees & reasons to interview***

In the beginning, all interviewees were asked about how they are and what is happening in their life to loosen up the nature of the interview and to establish a relationship with an interviewee, so that the conversation would have more discussion feel to it not just asking and answering questions. Firstly, questions general questions about the company were asked, then questions about the company’s marketing situation were asked. After which, questions about value and value co-creation were asked. Some questions were adapted more suitable

to interviewees' positions in the company. For example, questions asked from the purchasing department and technical sales were slightly different due to the work nature of interviewees. Questions asked from the purchasing department focused more on how they act as a purchaser and how do they search for information online, what do they value etc. The company's CEO has been also interviewed and questions asked from him focused more on the company's goals and future plans rather than questions about how the company sells its solutions to customers since CEO does not participate in sales activities.

Own observations are used as complementary to the semi-structured interview data collection method since the researcher has worked in the company for a year. Observation aims to provide complementary knowledge to interviews. Observation helps to understand the symbolic world of the informants and their perceptions about their social situation.

### 5.3 Data analysis process

The process of data analysis starts with transcribing the interviews. The data sampling method was chosen for the analysis process. Therefore, only those sections of each audio recording that are used in the research are transcribed. (Saunders et al. 2015) The records were listened twice, and transcripts were checked carefully also gestures and voice tones were noticed if they were relevant to the interviewee's response. For example, if the response has a sarcastic tone of voice, it is important to take into account when response is analyzed. Since interviews were made in the Finnish language the responses were translated into the English language to fit the research.

After data sampling is done the names of the informants are changed to codes. Since, these interviews were made as anonymous interviews, no names of interviewees are disclosed. Also, interviewees' positions in the firm and working departments are not disclosed. This decision is made to secure the complete anonymity of the interviewees since it would be not fair to disclose for example what department the interviewee works in because from some departments there was only one person interviewed. Anonymity is provided to interviewees for more honest answers. That way interviewees do not need to think twice before answering questions. To provide equal anonymity to all interviewees the coding was made simple from T1 to T10, the letter "T" in this case does not symbolize any word, it is used to replace informants' names. The interview questions (see appendix 1) are composed in a way that they cover one theme at once which helps also with the data analysis process. The answers

to certain themes are gathered which enables us to compare and analyze them more efficiently. Using T”X”-coding instead of coding according to themes allows answers of informants to have a conversation, even though there was no actual conversation between informants.

In some cases, quantification of responses will be provided. Quantification will be used to show how many respondents brought up exactly the same reasoning for certain challenges in the case company. Although this research is not quantitative research quantification of some answers is useful because it gathers information together and enables to create of a figure, which shows well the importance of the matter.

## 6 Empirical study - Application of digital marketing strategy

In this chapter background of the study will be introduced. Analysis of the current state of digital marketing activities will be performed also the company’s main challenges in digital marketing will be introduced. After that, possibilities for Co-creation activities between supplier and customer companies will be discussed and identified. Next digital marketing communication analysis will be studied through discussing the case company’s competitive advantages, goals, and objectives for digital marketing, and lastly, the company’s value proposition will be proposed. Then all gathered information will be summed up in the development of the digital marketing strategy sub-chapter.

### 6.1 Background of the study

NMC Cellfoam Oy is a branch of NMC Cellfoam corporation. The corporation was established in Belgium in 1950 by entrepreneur Gert Noël. The corporation is a family-owned business therefore there is no annual documentation online available for different stakeholders. NMC Cellfoam specializes in synthetic foams, and it has 22 locations around the world.

Branch in Finland was acquired in 2011 by merging two separate companies into NMC Cellfoam subsidiary. Subsidiary situated in Tampere; Finland specializes in converting

materials into functional solutions for their customers. This research is focused on the Finnish subsidiary. Subsidiary consists of different inner departments such as sales-, technical sales- customer service-, purchase-, quality & development-, engineering-, and manufacturing departments. There are about 30 staff members in the office and about 30 staff members in the manufacturing department. NMC Cellfoam designs, manufactures, and delivers solutions according to customer's needs and criteria. Solutions can be related to sealing, damping, isolation, soundproofing, spots & leisure, protection.

## 6.2 Analysis of current state of digital marketing activities

Marketing in the case company as in many other companies as well is currently managed by the sales department. Unfortunately, in case company's sales department there is no-one who could have taken actions towards developing marketing activities, which this research aims to help with. Case company does have its own webpage in the Finnish language, LinkedIn, and Facebook accounts. These are a reasonable amount of social media accounts when managed properly with help of a clear strategy which this study aims to provide, and which is currently lacking. General guidelines of how to use the company's logo properly, colors, and outlines that the company should use in marketing, are provided by the marketing department of headquarter in Belgium. However, headquarter does not provide marketing material, such as pictures, texts nor ideas for some kind of themes that could have been explored in social media. Therefore, the Finnish subsidiary has the power to decide for itself what material it wants to acquire and use in its own marketing activities. Acquiring marketing materials means purchasing photos and videos and content from marketing companies, which can come and do for example a photoshoot at the company's premises or shoot a video clip at the company's manufacture or in other places which fit the idea of the video. It is good that the case company is able to use service providers, which have the experience and knowledge in taking professional looking photos and also redacting them for example. That way company's visual content looks professional, since there are no poor-quality pictures that employees take by themselves and post in random context. However, currently there is not much of photo and video material to choose from, therefore the company should pay attention in future to acquire more of visual content which supports the case company's value proposition.

During observation of how marketing activities are performed, some issues were noticed, and those issues require changes so that company will have a unified style in communication in digital and real dimensions in future. Currently social media posts are not targeted to target groups, posts get published randomly without an agreed timespan just whenever the company has something to announce to its followers. Therefore, the company must use target groups that are given on organization-level and aim to target these groups with posts. Visually posts should have a signature look and color pallet so that visual elements would be associated with the company by target groups.

Also, another interesting observation was made, whenever employees need information from the Internet, they automatically use the English language to search for information. T6 explains this tendency "...there is not much of information provided in the Finnish language, if you want to search something fast, it is easiest to use the English language, many Finnish companies have information in English as well." Yet still, case company's websites are available only in the Finnish language, which is illogical. During interviews informants T1, T4, T6, T8, and T9 expressed the need for having an English version of the website as well since many other Finnish companies use the same tactic as the case company and search information in the English language, this will also be helpful to customers abroad. "There is a limited amount of business in Finland since it is such a small country, we do have customers from other countries, and we should keep attracting them in future as well," said T6, this also supports the idea of having webpages and social media content in the English language. That way the information will be more accessible and available which will attract customers that are looking for information to be able to make more intelligent choices (Pralhad & Ramaswamy 2004; Bakhtieva 2013).

During interviews when discussed what are company's main goals for digital marketing in their opinion also was asked a question about what they think is the company's main challenge in digital marketing (see Table 3). The chart represents how many of the ten informants mentioned different challenges. Informants mentioned many times the same challenges, these challenges were not given to informants to choose from, therefore, they could not have been able to mention the same challenges nearly altogether. This means, that employees of the company are aware that there are challenges, and it is interesting that they mentioned same challenges. Two challenges rose as main challenges since they were mentioned by half or more than a half informant group of ten people. Low visibility /



Poor findability – challenge was mentioned by five out of ten informants: T2, T3, T6, T7, T8. Poor knowledge of the case company’s capabilities-challenge was mentioned by seven out of ten informants: T2, T3, T4, T6, T5, T9, T10



**Table 3: visualization of digital marketing challenges according to interviews**

The two main challenges that the company faces in Finland are a poor rate of findability, and visibility through Search Engines this challenge was mentioned by five of ten informants. This is an issue since, if company is not easy to find online it means that a lot of possible customers choose another subcontractor which was easier to find. This means that the case company has less business and less revenue. (Oh et al. 2016) T2 proposes “In my opinion, we should get more visibility and I don’t mean only current and potential new customers, but end-users should know about us as well.” T3 supports T2’s viewpoint by saying “Nobody knows about us; it is not easy to find us if a person does not know the name of the company. I mean it is not easy for our target audience to find us since there are not many variations for search word that would come upon our webpage.” Interestingly T5 has also noticed that it is problematic to find from search engine to company’s webpage “In this industry same things have many names, for example, there are three ways of calling die-cutting...” informant mentions the possible variations, they are not translatable in English, but they are really different and some of them refer to old dialect of Finnish language.

Therefore, it would be very important to research how people address things and try to embed those words into SEO so that it would lead to the case company's webpage. Informant T5 mentions that "...nobody knows where I work, when I say company's name people just think that I make it up..." These comments make it clear that the company's current webpages do not satisfy employees and they find webpages to be not informative enough. However, it is positive that the company has web pages overall, since even if those pages do not attract lots of visitors, for example, if a customer knows that he is looking for information about particularly the case company he will find information and more importantly contact information to be in touch with company's representatives.

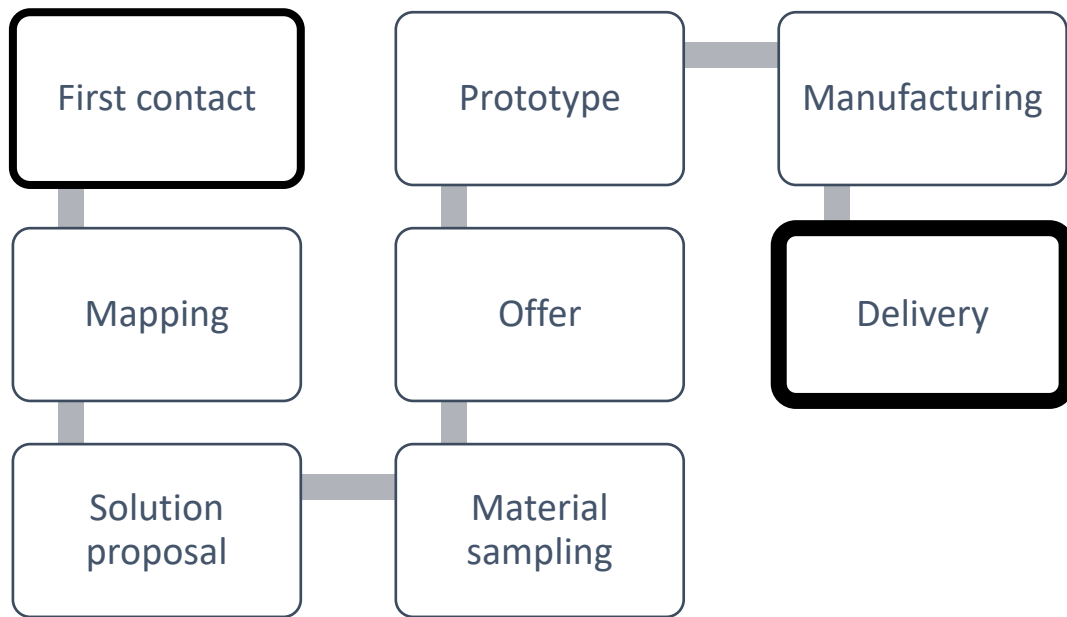
The second major challenge is poor knowledge of the company's capabilities among potential and existing customers, this challenge was mentioned by seven informants out of ten. Informant T1 said, "...it would be nice if people in industrial business would know why we exist and what do we do...somehow we need to know how to communicate our capabilities to public..." T7 expresses concern that the company has not been able to keep customers updated: "...we post if we have time...and you can only guess (laughs) how good are we in writing content for marketing purposes...". T6 also brings up an important point of view: "We should prove to our supplies as well that we have capabilities to be an important and interesting distributor of their materials.". So, the content should not only target potential customers, but it should also target potential and current material suppliers and current customers as well. "...for example, when a current customer comes to visit our factory and sees all the machinery, he asks that why we have not mentioned about this before, well, yeah, why don't we see that maybe we can help current customers with more than one project." informant T4 wonders. Firstly, the company has to go through all company's capabilities internally, which will give all different departments a better perspective on what are the options of services that the company can offer to its customers. After this step is done gathered information about different capabilities should be placed on the company's webpage and adjusted to fit SEO.

These challenges refer to the lack of optimized content on channels hosted by the company. Other challenges mentioned are also important to recognize, these challenges will be taken care of when two main challenges will be solved. By enhancing the company's visibility and findability company will simultaneously start to create a stronger brand in the Finnish market, which will mean that there will be more of potential customers visiting the webpages

and contacting the case company (Oh et al. 2016) and the company's name will become more recognizable. As well as when improving customer's knowledge about the company's capabilities by better quality content will simultaneously bring the company's digital presence to this era and sent a clear message to customers. Also, more modern online presence can differentiate the case company from other industrial subcontractors, since as Karjaluo et al. (2015) mentioned usually subcontractor companies do not pay much of attention to marketing activities.

### 6.3 Possibilities for Co-creation activities between supplier and customer companies

Company's processes differ depending on customers status whether it is new or already existing customership, as well as does a customer has a ready plan for production or does he require case company's input and help to develop the solution. Processes are not strictly standardized but there is a guideline to which sales and technical sales personnel stick. The company's process (Figure 7) for new projects consists of the first contact with the customer, mapping customer's needs, proceeding to material and solution proposal, sending material samples to customer if needed, after which the offer is done. When the customer accepts the offer the solution is designed and the prototype is manufactured. If the customer notices that the prototype needs change the changes are made and a new prototype is manufactured until the solution suit customer perfectly. When the prototype is accepted and the customer makes an order the order is manufactured, packed, and delivered.



**Figure 7: company's process for new projects according to interviews**

Making an offer, manufacturing products, and delivering them are operations of the provider sphere since they are fully managed by the company as a provider. The first contact is usually initiated by the customer; therefore, it belongs to the customer sphere. There is still plenty of space for co-creation activities. “Mapping customer needs is a very important process. The importance cannot be stressed enough since the better the need is mapped the less there is space for failure and customer’s dissatisfaction and reclamation.” – says T1. Informant T4 also supports the comment of T1 about the importance of information mapping activity: “Information mapping is essential to understand what customers expect from us and what the customer requirements for the particular solution are. Some customers want to tell you everything and the more you ask and get information from the customer the better you will be able to propose a solution. If customer answers questions incompletely, there is a bigger possibility for mistakes later in the process” According to these answers of informants mapping process can be seen as co-creational activity. The customer’s active participation in the mapping process is necessary for gathering information for a full picture of the customer’s needs and requirements. Both customer and provider are contributing their time as a resource to this activity.

The mapping process can also be seen as an expectation mapping process. The purpose of this activity is to identify customers’ needs and expectations in order to be able to provide the correct value to the customer through correct solution that will fit the customer’s needs.

Also, provided value may even exceed the customer's expectations which according to Parasuraman et al. (1991) should be company's goal. Informant T2 says "...the value expectations should be discussed with the sales team, the technical sales team focuses on solution mapping process...". This is an interesting point of view, since it indicates that informant does not perceive solution mapping process as a special stage, which may bring special value to the customer. T3 also says that "...the technical sales team cuts straight to the case, there is not much of discussing values...". Perhaps employees of the case company understand term "value to the customer" differently in different teams. T7 sees term "value to the customer" differently than informants T2 and T3. T7 says "...longer cases provide more information, of course we cannot just ask customers that "Oh, hi what do you value?" but while talking with customers and when you get to get deeper inside their minds, you can try to figure out what the customer really wants. And I can say that sometimes the problem is not at all what customer indicates, sometimes the problem is completely different than what customer originally has said." Here are two different point of views for understanding the mapping procedure. Own observations support that teams do indeed understand many terms differently and it is natural, since they focus on different aspects of value creation. The technical sales team is more focused on understanding what product will solve customers' needs and the sales team is more focused on understanding what is the core of customers' need, what is so called ultimate need. Both focuses on providing value to the customer and both of them are important. The case company still should hire a consultant and organize courses to educate employees understand that how the actions that employees perform bring value to the customers.

Solution proposal activity is a combination of successful mapping and expertise that company provides to its customers. Both parties provide their resources and knowledge to develop a solution that will solve customer's needs. "The most successful solution proposals are a result of discussion where engineers and sales representatives from both parties participate in. Engineers can bring their vision from a more technical point of view and sales representatives bring their own inputs to the table..." concludes T5. In this step, the customer can take the role of co-creator and co-developer. By initiating open discussion and brainstorming between parties there can be born new ideas that have not been thought of. At this point also other possible projects can be discussed, and the company has a perfect opportunity to tell about its own capabilities since when people with different roles in

organizations hear the same thing they can still understand information differently and have different ideas.

Choosing the correct material is crucial for a successful solution. “We provide our expertise in materials and propose to customers few options to choose from. It is important to also provide own recommendations so that customer will not feel lost.” – says T7. “We should be proud of our expertise that we have in materials, we also have the broadest material assortment and if there is need to acquire new material, we will get it for customer” adds T6. Customers can take the role of co-tester and test whether the material fits well, and the material’s technical features are suitable for the end application. Also, customer can have own material which customer wants to convert in different shape or form. After the material is agreed on supplier makes an offer, which includes information about what has been agreed on with the customer while negotiating. When an offer is accepted, and a customer makes an order supplier proceeds with prototype manufacturing, and the customer has again an important role as a co-tester. Before producing big batches of any solution both parties supplier, and customer should be sure that the solution is correct and perfectly fits its final destination. If the prototype needs to be adjusted or corrected the process goes back to the development step.

After the prototype is found suitable the manufacturing process starts. The manufacturing step is covered completely by the supplier and the customer cannot participate here, since the supplier owns the machinery and has knowledge of how to operate the machinery. Delivery is the next step after manufacturing, the supplier delivers the goods by using their own shipping methods or method that the customer indicates to be used. “Customer role as a co-tester is very important for us. When we know that customer has tested and approved the solution, we can move to produce bigger batches without hesitations.” T3

Finally, when an order is received by a customer it is applied to the end destination. The customer fully owns the process of usage since the supplier cannot affect that process (Grönroos & Voima 2013). However, customers can be co-marketers (Saarijärvi et Kannan 2013). As a co-marketer customer can talk about supplier company on own social media channels, leave comments about own experience and recommend supplier company to own partners verbally. Still, it should not be disregarded that customer can also talk about own negative experiences and make harm to the supplier’s brand image. When detecting negative comments online the supplier should react to those comments also online and try to figure

out what went wrong and correct occurred issues. According to T2 “Customers have been extremely satisfied with the services provided especially when a customer does not have any designs ready and we develop together the design and customers’ ideas start to become more real, there you can see that customer gets excited. It is really such an advantage that we can help customers with drawings and product development and the customer does not need to get another party involved.” “We do have many possibilities for co-creation, but we hardly acknowledge them. We should identify co-creation possibilities better, then we could communicate these possibilities to a customer and sell the relationship not only service or product...” worries T8.

Currently, customers can participate in the company's process in many ways as co-developer, co-creator, co-tester, and co-marketer. The problem is these possibilities are not acknowledged inside the company. Therefore, the company does not position itself as a partner through content on social media and webpage. By identifying these co-creational possibilities company will be able to communicate better its own strengths as a partner not just as a manufacturer. This will also bring value for the customer when they will know better about the capabilities of the supplier and that customer can be involved in the process if a customer wants to. In no circumstances this should be communicated to customer in a way that customer will feel itself obliged to participate in the process. Therefore, the content for digital marketing should communicate correct message to the customers. Customer should feel that participation is not mandatory but welcomed and that customer’s participation for example in the mapping process is valuable to the case company as well and it helps to provide better solution for the customer in the end.

## 6.4 Digital marketing communication analysis

### 6.4.1 Competitive advantage

To understand the case company’s competitive advantages SWOT analysis is performed on a basis of interview results. The analysis is restricted to analyzing internal factors, strengths and weaknesses. Since these are internal factors, the analysis will not focus on comparing factors to competitors’ strengths and weaknesses. Also, one reason for this decision is the lack of information online about competitors’ ways of operation, which is of course a major weakness for the competitors.

According to interviews, the case company has many internal strengths to be able to provide and improve value co-creational activities. The case company is a part of a big corporation; therefore, it has big resources behind supporting the company, this factor was mentioned by informants all interviewees as a strength factor. Still, informant T4 was a little bit skeptical whether the case company exploits opportunities that being a part of a big corporation brings to its full capacity. Bigger resources help the company to invest more money into development activities if needed and the knowledge of experts in different countries can be exchanged when needed. The corporation can also exchange other knowledge about markets and trends that occur in their market area, this factor was mentioned by six informants out of ten. That improves market knowledge and strives to prepare corporate to be ready for new demands, for example, the change in material preferences or new manufacturing methods. Based on own observations there seems to be some resilience from a headquarter which might not see perspectives in development own operation methods and therefore the case company cannot exploit the power of the organization to its full capacity.

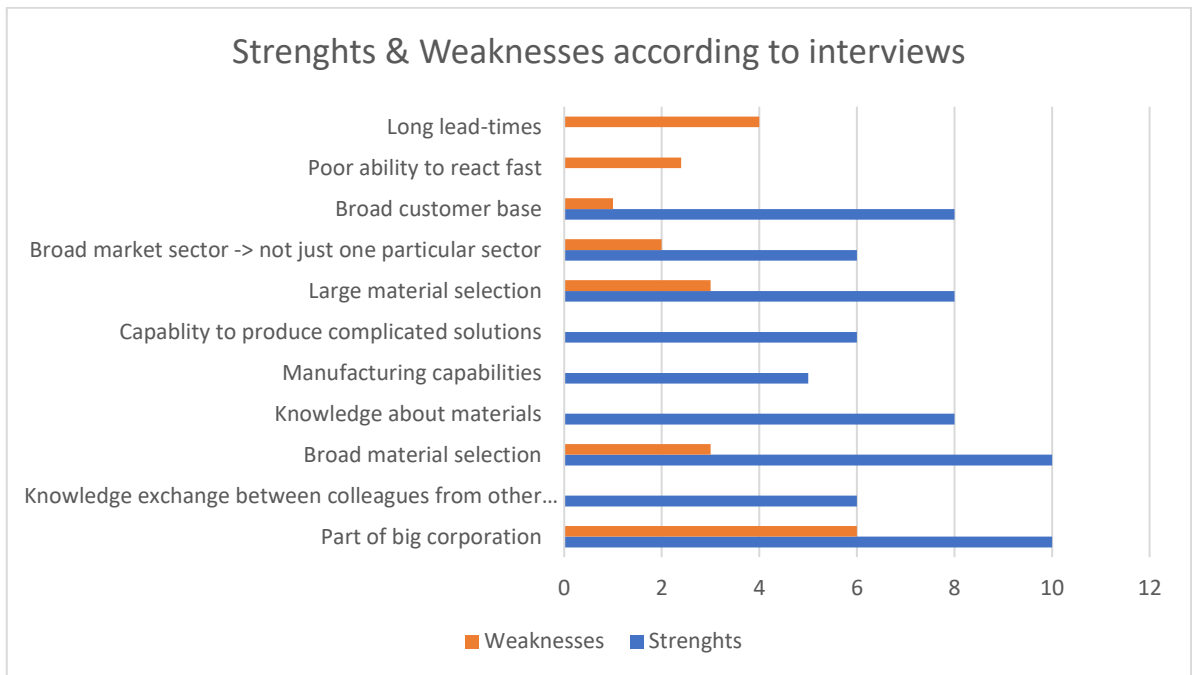
The second most frequently mentioned strength is that company has a very broad selection of different materials, it was also mentioned by all ten interviewees. T1 states “I would mention that our competitive advantages are...broad material selection, we have extremely broad selection...” also informant T2 says “...we are clearly more versatile in material selection and manufacturing methods than our competitors...” Indeed, the case company has a very broad portfolio of material variety.

Yet, there is no lot of information on the company’s webpage about materials used (Cellfoam 2021). There is mentioned that the company uses different materials, but what are those different materials company does not mention anywhere. Since this is one of the major strengths that the company possesses it should be shown more in content provided by the company online. Informants also proposed the idea of adding a tool for material selection to the webpage, so that customers could see all materials available online and choose from them the material, that they want. On the other hand, by adding this tool to public access company would jeopardize the strength of its own material expertise and informant T4 expresses own fear about this material selector “...customer while not having specific information about the materials could unwittingly choose a material that does not fit the end solution.” Another problem is that customers could choose too expensive material since they do not know what the most cost-efficient material is. Thus, the case company should keep



the power of material knowledge inside the company. This is also one of the company's competitive advantages on the market, therefore it should be kept inside the company and shared with the customers in form of blog publications for example. The company could start an online blog and tell there about the perks of different materials and in what cases different materials suits best. Informant T6 proposes that the company could also do online seminars for customers and educate them about materials.

Not only company has great expertise in materials it also has abilities to produce complicated solutions. The machinery and people in the technical and manufacturing departments are skilled to design and produce any shape or form needed for the customer. The company's machinery is enough to produce solutions from the beginning by itself and not use any subcontractors which saves costs as well as enables the company to produce big batches at once. Informant T4 mentions: "The materials we use enable us to provide more complex solutions for our customers... we know a lot about the materials we use, we don't just sell them, we actually are experts in our branch." Many other informants express as well that complex solutions for customers are something that interests the company to target in the future. According to informant T7 company has the ability to produce different solutions not only sealing solutions for example but many more as well, therefore there is no need for the company to restrict its own line of business to only one line. This brings the company another strength which is a broad customer base. This factor was mentioned as a strength by eight informants out of ten. A broad customer base enables the company to be engaged in many different projects simultaneously and employees have variation throughout the work time, that way employees will not feel bored by doing the same things every day repeatedly.



**Table 4: visualization of the case company’s internal strenghts and weaknesses according to interviews**

Despite many strengths, there are also weaknesses. Many of the weaknesses mentioned were derived from strengths. It seems that factors that are the company’s strengths are simultaneously its weaknesses. Acknowledging weaknesses is important so that there could be done actions to transform weaknesses into strengths. T2 mentions that “...broad customer base means that our ability to react fast weakens...”. T7 supports T2’s viewpoint but with different reasoning; “Big resources and opportunities may turn against us and our ability to react fast enough can be not fast enough...”. However, informant T4 sees that even when a competitor can manufacture the product itself faster, a competitor cannot provide additional services such as design & development activities for customers. Own observations support T4’s argument, even if confirmed lead-time is longer than usual customers stay loyal to their supplier for whatever reason. This shows that occasional longer lead times do not scare customers completely away, of course, this is not something that the company should nor wants to aim for.

According to interviews strengths still predominate weaknesses. A company’s internal competitive advantages in terms of value co-creation are the capability to interact with a customer in a way that customers can participate and affect the process. The second advantage is the company’s experience and deep knowledge in technical solution

development. The third competitive advantage is the capability to manufacture solutions from broad material selection and broad machinery range.

#### 6.4.2 Goals & Objectives

While asking informants about what they think the company's goals and objectives for digital marketing are answers were very similar to each other. Still, the roles of informants in the company and level of knowledge of digital media had an impact on answers. For example, the age of informants was a factor that clearly was linked to the depth of answers. According to informant T1, the most important goal is to "...improve the company's visibility online so that we would be more known in industrial circles, what we exist and what do we do." This sentence was also mentioned by informants T3, T6, T7, and T10. Informant T2 also supports this point of view and adds "...we should strive to be visible not only to new and already existing customers but also to the end consumers as well." This viewpoint is a little contradictory to the company's goals since the company does not sell to regular customers, only to other business customers. However, Kian Chong et al. (2010) proposed that B2B companies should also be visible to regular customers since they could be interested in purchasing the company's products via retailers who are case company's customers and therefore business strives.

T10 mentioned that goal should be "...creating customer awareness, but also learn how to be aware of customers' needs as well..." this informant was the only one who mentioned that not only customers should learn more about the case company, but that company can learn from customers as well and use that information to produce content that is interesting for customers. Aiming for better customer awareness was mentioned by other informants as well, but no one else saw that there is a possibility to create awareness about customers as well. This is something that clearly needs to be communicated to personnel better and that way for example sales department will be able to target customers who might be interested in new projects. Informant T7 was the only one who mentioned anything about marketing automation: "The main goal of digital marketing is automation, also the objective of digital marketing is to support sales department and provide leads. The sales department does not work without marketing and vice versa." From own observations company has not yet invested in marketing automation. Some projects for SEO have been held but it has not been

consistent, also eight words that were optimized in search engines have not been chosen fully correctly since the company does not have a person who would have analyzed which word should be optimized and how customers search for information. Therefore, indeed company should invest more in SEO activities, this time it should be done in a way that supports better findability via search engines.

T2 mentioned: “Since the company’s goal is to get more complex projects digital marketing strategy should also support this goal.” Other informants support this goal as well, still, they did not use words as “complex projects” but still there have been such mentions as “...provide more information about or capabilities...” (T6), “...position us as wanted partner...” (T9) and “...finding new business opportunities...” (T10). These mentions support the need to market the company’s abilities to be involved in more complex projects. T6 mentions as well very interesting point of view that also material suppliers are usually interested in the company’s online presence. They evaluate through the information available online is the company “...interesting converter, if we are not interesting to suppliers, we will not get their materials...” this comment is interesting because usually, it seems that every purchase is good and the fact that some supplies might refuse to sell own materials to a potential customer if it is not “interesting enough” talks about businesses specific attributes. Therefore, one of the digital marketing goals should also be to create a brand image, that will communicate the company’s value proposition with help of the company’s expertise and different capabilities.

To sum it up goals and objectives of case company’s digital marketing are:

- Create brand awareness through improving visibility online.
- Provide leads, which will support the sales department.
- Communicate the company’s value proposition.

#### 6.4.3 Company’s value proposition

Case company’s customer interface is divided into two categories area sales-team and technical sales-team. In the interview, the focus was on figuring out what value these teams bring to the customer since the customer interacts firstly with either one of the team members. Informant T1 sees that the sales team can offer a good customer experience and they offer availability so that if a customer has any challenges customer can call or write a

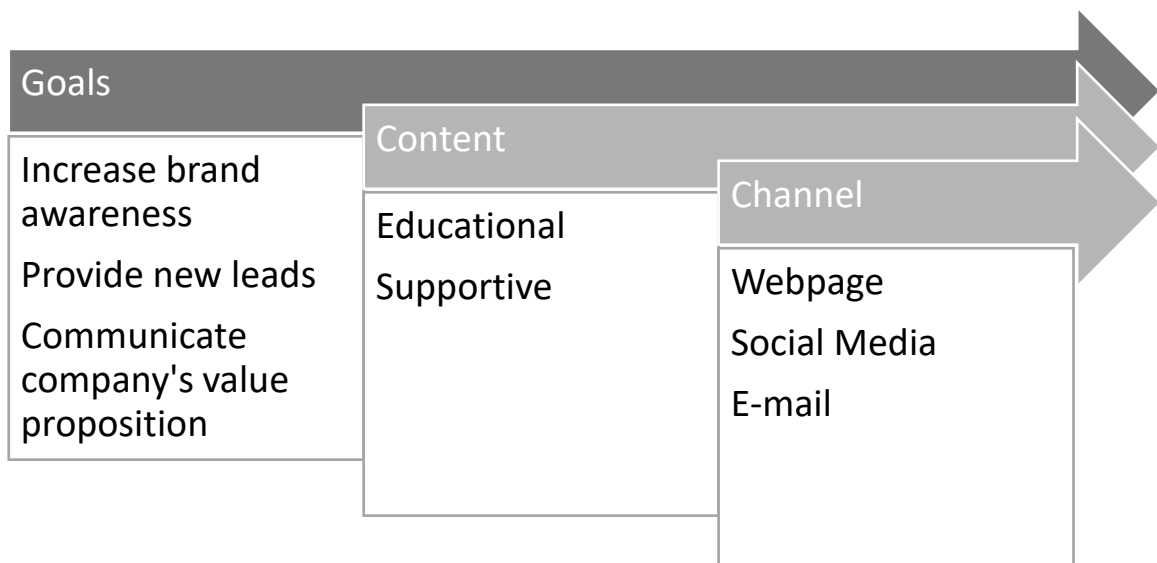
message to their own sales representative which will try to solve the challenge. Each customer has their own sales representative in the company. “Sales sell relationship and technical sales sells solutions...”. T1 also mentions that the technical sales team is more devoted to problem-solving which is related to the solution. This team does not focus that much on relationship management since it is more suitable and natural to the sales team. Informant T2 supports these arguments proposed by T1. T2 says “sales-team brings more of customer-oriented approach, they have deeper market knowledge, and they follow the trends on market, whereas technical sales-team adds more of detailed expertise related to technical issues...”. Informants T7 and T9 both add a very interesting point of view, they both point out that both teams also discuss with customers variations of different solution, they do not just sell what customer asks for but also provides additional information what else could be done and how the company can help customers in other projects as well.

Members of both teams have expressed that they see this synergy of both teams as a good thing. “...it is impossible to know everything about everything...it is good that we have inhouse specialist whom you can call and ask for example for technical help... some customers want to know details about how our certain machines work and then I just call to a buddy and ask for help, it is fast, and you can always count on help, this works another way around as well,” says T7. T7 also adds that sometimes when you already know the customer it is good to propose a meeting with both customers purchaser and engineer “...these meetings usually are very powerful, since engineers start to throw ideas and discuss different possibilities that might never be discussed before...”. Informant T8 sums “We produce value to our customer through our expertise, services, and solutions. And we should stay on this track since we do not want to be a department store, where the customer just comes and grabs material and cuts it into pieces at home.”

Based on these interview results it can be stated that case company’s value proposition is to offer customers knowledge and expertise in developing and manufacturing solution that suits customers company the best. This value proposition should be clearly stated in all marketing activities performed by the case company not just in digital media. That way company’s image will stay consistent and the message that the company wants to communicate to its customers will be clear and coherent.

## 6.5 Development of digital marketing strategy concept

As interview analysis has shown company's goals and objectives for digital marketing are the creation of brand awareness, providing leads, and communicating the company's value proposition to customers (see figure 8). These goals should be achieved through marketing activities on social media and the company's webpage as well as through other marketing activities such as e-mail newsletters, attending different fairs, and through overall company's presence. For example, when a potential customer visits company, it should be done in a manner that the customer will know and remember that he/she visited exactly this company. This means that the company's brand image should be visible also in the interior of the office and the clothing of employees.



**Figure 8: Representation of digital marketing strategy concept (own interpretation)**

The company's value proposition that should be communicated to the audience through digital marketing is that company offers knowledge and expertise in developing and manufacturing solutions that suit their customer companies the best. This value proposition communicates that the company stands for respecting knowledge and expertise and that company also strives to develop these aspects even more. The company operates in a way that is considering of customer needs and strives to offer the best possible solution for the customer.

To communicate the company's value proposition successfully company should focus on keywords of the proposition, knowledge, and expertise. Communication style should support these keywords, therefore content published by the company needs to be educational and supportive. Educational content means that the company should provide content that will bring new information to customers and the end customers as well. Educational content should also strive to be interesting and tempting so that customers will be interested to reach the company for more information. The case company has big potential for providing educational content. For example, information about materials could be very new to customers, since most of them are not experts in choosing materials, they just seek for solution. Still, by providing this type of information company will demonstrate how well they know the materials they use and show customers different types where materials can be applied. This information will be interesting for new customers as well it will get already existing customers thinking outside the box and it could lead to new projects for the case company.

Supportive content should communicate to customers that company seeks support solving customers need by providing own expertise. Supportive content also should communicate to customers about all co-creational activities that customers can contribute to. Since the customer can participate in the company's process in many ways as co-developer, co-creator, co-tester, and co-marketer content should communicate how it benefits the customer to participate in the process. More importantly, it should be communicated in a way that customers will not feel obliged to participate but to showcase possibilities.

Content forms should variate as well. Pictures, videos, and stories posted by the company should communicate the same value proposition but in a different form. Content posted must not do any harm to customers' business, therefore the sales team should discuss with customers what can and cannot be posted. A questionnaire that will help sales-team to discuss these aspects should be created. Also, a customer relationship management (CRM) tool should be implemented so that there will be more transparent information flow inside the case company and employees especially sales and marketing departments will know what was agreed with each customer.

This research provides a good frame for a future marketing manager of the case company. By following the recommendations of this research manager will be able to perform marketing activities with a value proposition that will support the company's capabilities

and explain to customers what the company is doing and why they should contact the case company.

## 7 Discussion and conclusions

In this chapter, the results of the research will be discussed, and conclusions will be made. Firstly, the theoretical part will be reflected in empirical findings and compared what does theory correlates with the finding and what differences there can be found. Then research questions will be answered based on empirical findings, also managerial implications will be discussed. Then limitations and propositions for future research will be made. Finally, conclusions will be summarized.

### 7.1 Reflecting theory into empirical findings

The academic literature (Grönroos & Voima 2013; Hollbrook 1994; Gummerus 2013; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004; Saarijärvi et al. 2013) provides in-depth knowledge to value co-creation. It explains what roles there can be between supplier and customer and what different spheres mean. It explains where lines are drawn in theory what activities belong to the providers' sphere, what belongs to the customers' sphere, and what value co-creation means. Empirical findings support that there exist three different spheres, although it was not clear where the lines should be drawn. In interviews, informants brought up many times that everything depends on the occasion and should be discussed every time separately with the customer in what activities the customer wants to participate in, this also supports the value co-creation theory that customers can have simultaneously many different roles in the process (Saarijärvi et Kannan 2013). It is also great to notice that value co-creation is happening in the case company currently as well, but it was not getting the attention that it deserves. Reasons for that can be the lack of a CRM system, which could help to manage relationships with the customers better. Another reason can be that company did not have a person with an education in marketing who could have noticed that the company does not actually sell the product itself but sells solutions as a result of many different services through communication with customers. Empirical findings support the importance of co-creation in subcontracting industry. When discussing what roles customers can take during the process informants proposed many different possibilities, nobody said that customer does



not need to participate in the process, at least the customer should give to subcontractor needed information so that the subcontractor party would be able to produce what customer orders, this is also co-creation, where customer acts as a co-developer.

Theory about customers service level expectations was also supported by empirical findings but in a slightly different manner. In the empirical part, the importance of mapping customers' needs and demands is mentioned many times, and it is important to be able to provide the correct end product for the customer. Those informants who mentioned the importance of need-mapping did not agree at first that the company provides solutions as a result of services, they were certain that the company provides only products without any services. Although, they changed their minds in process of the interview and started to see that the services indeed take a big role in the creation of the end solution to the customer. In future the case company should provide trainings to employees about value and how to provide value to the customer. That way employees will understand more deeply term value and will see how their actions bring value to the customers and what it means to the customers as well.

Empirical findings of the subcontractor company's marketing situation proved the theory right. The situation of marketing and especially digital marketing is unfortunately very primitive if exists at all. The subcontractor company does not see marketing as its strength and does not know how to advance its own marketing activities successfully. However, it was relieving to notice that informants did know what goals the company should achieve via digital marketing. It tells that company knows what is lacking but does not have the correct resources to move forward with achieving the goals. Informants also know what value the company offers to the customer, but it is not communicated via digital media channels to customers as of yet. It can be stated that theory and empirical findings do not differ from each other much. They complement each other in a way where theory helps to understand the causality of empirical findings.

## 7.2 Discussion of the research questions and managerial implications

The answer to the first sub-question which was "How can value co-creation be utilized to satisfy the needs of the customer?" is that value co-creation should be utilized to understand customers better and learn from them. It offers customers a variety to choose from activities

that they wish to participate in. Through co-creation customer is able to learn from subcontractor company new things about materials, applications, and what else can be done by utilizing the subcontractor's capabilities and expertise. The value co-creation concept allows subcontractor company's customers to be included in the process of developing the solution. Customer can participate with own resources to process and have an impact on the end result. There is less space for errors and mistakes when communication with a customer is clear and regular. Also, customer can impact solution development process in the very beginning if sees that solution needs to be altered or changed. In no circumstances value co-creation should mean that customer needs to work for a subcontractor company. Co-creation means securing that customer is heard and that his/her voice matters in the process of developing.

The answer to the second sub-question which was "How can digital marketing strategy be used to support customers' consideration phase?" is that through marketing strategy company can ensure that it targets correct customer groups with the correct content. Digital marketing strategy helps the company to stay focused on the message that the company wants to deliver to its customers. The value proposition is key to strategy formulation; therefore, marketing activities should align with the value proposition statement.

The company should focus on providing information that will be easy to find, therefore it should be SEO optimized. Content should explain to customers what the company means when proposes to be a value co-creator. Examples through references will provide a better understanding to new customers how the company was able to help existing customers at the same time it will give the company more credibility because references provide proof that the company does not just say anything to win a new customer over but is ready to also support words with facts. To be able to post any references that are related to solutions used by customers company must first ask for permission from customers and ensure that posted information will not do any harm to the customer's business, therefore references are better to be double-checked by customers as well.

Answers to sub-questions help to answer the main research question "What kind of factors contribute to creating a digital marketing strategy for an industrial B2B subcontracting company when the aspect of value co-creation is considered?". Many factors contribute to creating a digital marketing strategy in the context of value creation. First of all, the company should explain the meaning of value co-creation internally so that all internal stakeholders

know what it means and how it benefits the company and employees as well. Therefore, internal marketing is important to create and maintain. Because when employees understand what the company wishes to achieve, they can contribute to marketing activities for example by posting online in their own social media channels and communicate the idea of value co-creation to customers as well. It is easier to sell an idea to a customer when it is fully understood by employees. Employees can participate in the development of the value co-creation concept inside the company and perhaps even find new possible roles for customers in process of solution development.

Another important factor is that company should provide reference stories and educational content so that customers will be able to find their way to the company's webpage and read more information from there. Ideally, this should lead to contacting the customer via a lead that the webpage provides or the customer will contact the company first. Either way, the key factor here is high quality and interesting content. Digital marketing platforms do provide a possibility for discussion; therefore, the content should also strive to initiate communication and aim to engage customers to react to posted content. In the context of a B2B subcontractor industry, this could be easier said than done if the company does not know about the interests of their customers, therefore it is important to interview long-time customers about the topics that may interest them online. Content should not be generic and something that is self-evident, because it will not be interesting for customers and can even push customers away.

The company should be able to discuss with customers about restrictions of information disclosure and what stories can be used as a reference. References will show to new potential customers examples of how the company was able to help customers with the need that they had. To support reference stories company should also focus on providing information about its own capabilities and aim for initiating conversation with potential customers. Information about company capabilities may be new to current customers as well which can lead to new projects with already exciting customers, which creates more content for references and turning customers into advocates, that recommend the company's services to other actors as well.

This research gives ideas for marketing and supply chain managers on incorporating value co-creation way of thinking into different subcontractor business industries. The research proposes many different value co-creational roles for customers which managers of the

subcontractor companies can propose to the own customers as well. That way company's focus will shift from solely fulfilling customers' orders to having discussions with customers about many other possibilities and ideas.

### 7.3 Limitations and propositions for future research

Since this research is case research there exist some limitations in the study. Chosen method and data collection bring along some limitations to the study. The methodology chosen for this research is the qualitative case study, therefore the results of the study are not applicable to all B2B subcontractor companies. Data were collected only inside the company, so there is no indication about what informants from other similar companies would say or how would have the case company's customers answer questions. Case company NMC Cellfoam Oy does not represent all industrial B2B subcontracting companies, therefore the outcomes of the research cannot be generalized. However, B2B subcontractors who may have similar problems in their processes for example in their digital marketing visibility or findability can find new viewpoint from this research. Value co-creation is not that recognized term in subcontracting markets. Therefore, this research can bring clarification to other subcontractor companies who interact with their customers on a daily basis, but they do not know how these activities can be defined and how they can be used in company's marketing activities. Another limitation is that not all managers and employees of the case company were interviewed. Other employees and managers could have given completely different information. However, chosen informants have been working in the case company for many years and have great knowledge of the case company's situation. Limited permission to expose publicly the company's strategy affected the quality of the analysis as well. Therefore, when the company will apply the proposed strategy, it should be paired with the company's business strategy.

In future research customers should be interviewed as well, it would be better to use a quantitative research method, that way response style will be more standardized, and there will not be changing the subject of the discussion as it may happen with qualitative interviews. The quantitative method will also save customers time since they are very busy and do not easily agree to interviews due to lack of time. It could be interesting to interview the owners of the whole organization. To see what their point of view about marketing, in

general, would be and what do they think about value co-creation and relationship building with the customers.

## 7.4 Conclusions

This study consists of theoretical and empirical parts. In the introduction chapter the topic of the research, research problems, and theoretical framework were introduced. In the second chapter value co-creation process was presented, which was not familiar to the case company before. The theory also showed different ways to approach value co-creation and what roles there could be for the company's customers to take. Also, it explains the importance of customer's value expectation formation and how it may affect the company's positioning in customer's minds. The third chapter discussed digital marketing strategy creation through STP-process, value proposition, and setting marketing goals. The fourth chapter introduces industrial subcontractors as a service industry. In the fifth chapter research design and methodology were discussed. The sixth chapter focused on analyzing the results of the empirical research. Finally in the seventh chapter research questions were answered, limitations and future research propositions, theoretical and managerial implications are made.

Prior research indicated that there are not enough empirical researches done in the context of digital marketing strategy creation for B2B subcontractor companies. This research provides an empirical point of view that supports theoretical findings. The goal of the research was to identify what kind of factors contribute to creating a digital marketing strategy for B2B subcontracting companies in the context of value co-creation. Research met this goal and identified that company should be braver and not be afraid that competitors will get the information about the company's capabilities since customers can tell the company's competitors about the capabilities that other companies propose. Also, this research found out that the case company should focus on its role of an expert in its own business field and be a supportive partner to its customers by sharing the knowledge and expertise to tackle the need that the customer has.

## References

- American Marketing Association. Definitions of Marketing. (2017) [online]. [accessed 25.11.2020] Available at: <https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/>
- Anker, T. B. Sparks, L., Moutinho, L., & Gronroos, C. (2015) Consumer dominant value creation: A theoretical response to the recent call for a consumer dominant logic for marketing. *European journal of marketing*. 49 (3-4), 532–560.
- Bakhtieva, E. (2017) B2B digital marketing strategy: a framework for assessing digital touchpoints and increasing customer loyalty based on Austrian companies from heating, ventilation and air conditioning industry. *Oeconomia Copernicana*. 8 (3), 463–475C.
- Barone, A. (2021) Marketing Strategy. What is a Marketing Strategy? Investopedia. [online]. [accessed 05.03.2021] Available at: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/marketing-strategy.asp>
- Basset, M. A., Mohamed, M., Sangaiah, A. K., & Jain, V. (2018). An integrated neutrosophic AHP and SWOT method for strategic planning methodology selection. *Benchmarking: an International Journal*, 25(7), 2546–2564.
- Blanchard, K. (2020) A Fresh Look as SMART Goals. KenBlanchard. [online]. [accessed 02.02.2021] Available at: <https://www.kenblanchardbooks.com/a-fresh-look-at-smart-goals/>
- Blombäck, A., & Axelsson, B. (2007). The role of corporate brand image in the selection of new subcontractors. *The Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 22(6), 418–430.
- Canello, J., Pavone, P., & Testa, S. (2017). Same same, but different: the heterogeneous nature of subcontractors inside Italian industrial districts. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 29(7-8), 791–813.
- Cellfoam (2021) Materiaalit. [online]. [accessed 05.03.2021] Available at: <https://cellfoam.fi/materiaalit>

- Errasti, A., Beach, R., Oyarbide, A., & Santos, J. (2007). A process for developing partnerships with subcontractors in the construction industry: An empirical study. *International Journal of Project Management*, 25(3), 250–256.
- Gilmore, A. et al. (2007) E-marketing and SMEs: operational lessons for the future. *European business review*. 19 (3), 234–247.
- Grönroos, C. & Voima, P. (2013) Critical service logic: making sense of value creation and co-creation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. 41 (2), 133–150.
- Gummerus, J. (2013) Value creation processes and value outcomes in marketing theory: Strangers or siblings? *Marketing theory*. 13 (1), 19–46.
- Hsieh, Y. & Yuan, S. (2010) Modeling service experience design processes with customer expectation management: A system dynamics perspective. *Kybernetes*. 39 (7), 1128–1144.
- Hofstede Insights. Country comparison. (2012) [online]. [accessed 27.07.2021] Available at: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/finland,sweden/>
- Holbrook, M.B. (1994) The Nature of Customer's Value: An Axiology of Service in Consumption Experience. In: Rust, R.T. and Oliver, R.L., Eds., *Service Quality: New Directions in Theory and Practice*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, 21-71.
- Holliman, G. & Rowley, J. (2014) Business to business digital content marketing: marketers' perceptions of best practice. *Journal of research in interactive marketing*. 8 (4), 269–293.
- Hubspot. What Is Digital Marketing. (2020) [online]. [accessed 05.12.2020] Available at: <https://www.hubspot.com/digital-marketing>
- Järvinen, J. & Taiminen, H. (2016) Harnessing marketing automation for B2B content marketing. *Industrial marketing management*. 54 164–175.
- Jussila, J. J. et al. (2014) Social media utilization in business-to-business relationships of technology industry firms. *Computers in human behavior*. 30 606–613.
- Karjaluoto, H., Mustonen, N., & Ulkuniemi, P. (2015). The role of digital channels in industrial marketing communications. *The Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 30(6), 703–710.

- Kian Chong, W., Shafaghi, M., Woollaston, C., & Lui, V. (2010). B2B e-marketplace: an e-marketing framework for B2B commerce. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 28(3), 310–329.
- Kotler Marketing Group. Dr. Philip Kotler Answers Your Questions on Marketing. (2020) [online]. [accessed 20.11.2020]. Available at: <https://www.kotlermarketing.com/>
- Kucuk, S. U. (2011) Towards integrated e-marketing value creation process. *Journal of direct, data and digital marketing practice*. 12 (4), 345–363.
- Lazerson, M. & Lorenzoni, G. (1999) The firms that feed industrial districts: A return to the Italian source. *Industrial and corporate change*. 8 (2), 235–266.
- Li, H. (Alice), Jain, S., & Kannan, P.K. “Optimal Design of Free Samples for Digital Products and Services.” *Journal of marketing research* 56, no. 3 (2019): 419–438.
- Mongay, J. (2006) Strategic Marketing. A literature review on definitions, concepts and boundaries. Autonomous University of Barcelona, SBS Swiss Business School. [online]. [accessed 05.02.2021] Available at: <https://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/41840/>
- Nambisan, S. & Baron, R. A. (2007) Interactions in virtual customer environments: Implications for product support and customer relationship management. *Journal of interactive marketing*. [Online] 21 (2), 42–62.
- Nambisan, S. & Nambisan, P. (2008) How to profit from a better ‘virtual customer environment’. *MIT Sloan management review*. 49 (3), 53–.
- Ndubisi, N. O. & Natarajan, R. (2016) Marketing Relationships in the New Millennium B2B Sector. *Psychology & marketing*. 33 (4), 227–231.
- O’Cass, A. & Sok, P. (2013) Exploring innovation driven value creation in B2B service firms: The roles of the manager, employees, and customers in value creation. *Journal of business research*. 66 (8), 1074–1084.
- Oh, H., Bae, J., Currim, I. S., Lim, J., & Zhang, Y. (2016). Marketing spending, firm visibility, and asymmetric stock returns of corporate social responsibility strengths and concerns. *European Journal of Marketing*, 50(5/6), 838–862.



- Parasuraman, A., Berry, L. L., & Zeithaml, V. A. (1991). Understanding Customer Expectations of Service. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 32(3), 39–.
- Prahalad, C.K, and Venkat Ramaswamy. “Co-Creation Experiences: The Next Practice in Value Creation.” *Journal of interactive marketing* 18.3 (2004): 5–14. Web.
- Saarijärvi, H. Kannan, P.K. Kuusela, H. (2013) Value co-creation: theoretical approaches and practical implications. *European business review*. 25 (1), 6–19.
- Saunders, Mark, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill. *Research Methods for Business Students*: 7. Ed. Harlow u.a: Pearson, 2015.
- Shaw, A.A. (2020) What is Marketing Strategy? – Definition & Overview. Marketingtutor. [online]. [accessed 04.04.2021] Available at: <https://www.marketingtutor.net/what-is-marketing-strategy/>
- Shankar, V. & Balasubramanian, S. (2009) Mobile Marketing: A Synthesis and Prognosis. *Journal of interactive marketing*. 23 (2), 118–129.
- Skålén, P., Gummerus, J., von Koskull, C., & Magnusson, P. R. (2015). Exploring value propositions and service innovation: a service-dominant logic study. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(2), 137–158.
- Stockdale, R. & Standing, C. (2004) Benefits and barriers of electronic marketplace participation: an SME perspective. *Journal of enterprise information management*. 17 (4), 301–311.
- Tilastokeskus. (2021) Alihankinta. [online]. [accessed 04.04.2021] Available at: <https://www.stat.fi/meta/kas/alihankinta.html#tab3>
- Wu, Y.-L. & Li, E. Y. (2018) Marketing mix, customer value, and customer loyalty in social commerce: A stimulus-organism-response perspective. *Internet research*. 28 (1), 74–104.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview form

<p><i>All interviewees</i></p>	<p>General questions (background)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What kind of services company provides?</li> <li>2. What business company is in?</li> <li>3. Who are our competitors?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Primary competitors? (Those who are in the same business as we are)</li> <li>b. Secondary competitors? (Those who are in business that could possibly replace our business)</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. How do company differ from the competitors?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What are competitive advantages?</li> </ol> </li> <li>5. What is the main goal for digital marketing?</li> <li>6. What company wants to achieve via digital marketing?</li> </ol>
<p><i>Sales+tec.sales</i></p>	<p>Marketing</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. What is the customer journey in your experience?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Does customer reach you when they already have exact need planned or earlier?</li> </ol> </li> <li>8. How customers reach you usually?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Email?</li> <li>b. Phone call?</li> <li>c. Other?</li> </ol> </li> <li>9. What do customers ask most of the time?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What are frequently asked questions?</li> </ol> </li> <li>10. What content you use in selling process? What do you use for example as a reference?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Do you use:</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

	Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. stories?</li> <li>ii. Pictures?</li> <li>iii. Videos?</li> <li>iv. Reports?</li> </ul> <p>11. After the purchase has occurred how do you enhance the customer relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Do you contact customer after purchase?</li> <li>b. Do you ask about the satisfaction?</li> <li>c. Do you ask for review?</li> </ul> <p>12. How you discuss with the customer what customer values are?</p> <p>13. What value does sales department bring to the customer?</p> <p>14. What value technical sales department bring to the customer?</p> <p>15. When customer reaches you how do you proceed with mapping the customers need?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Do you ask about customers desired expectations?</li> </ul> <p>16. What is the process when developing solution for the customer?</p> <p>17. How can customer influence the process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Does customer take active part in co-creation of the solution or is customer outside the creation process?</li> </ul> <p>18. Do customers usually want to be integrated in the process?</p> <p>19. Do you think that the company has abilities to do more project development together with the customer?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What are the tools required for that?</li> </ul>
--	-------	--

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. What roles customer can take? Co-designer, co-developer, product tester for example?</li> </ul>
<b><i>Purchasing department</i></b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20. What is company's purchase journey?</li> <li>21. From where do you search for new information? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Especially on the Internet, what engines you use for looking for a new supplier?</li> </ul> </li> <li>22. What kind of information do you search for? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Is it references? Stories/pictures?</li> <li>b. Technical documentation?</li> <li>c. Videos?</li> </ul> </li> <li>23. What do you value in purchase journey while considering different suppliers?</li> <li>24. Does the company engage in some ways with its' suppliers in value co-creation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Does company start own projects with supplies in developing suitable solution for company's needs?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b><i>CEO</i></b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25. What is the main goal for digital marketing?</li> <li>26. What company wants to achieve via digital marketing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What are company's expectation of digital marketing?</li> <li>b. Desired outcome?</li> </ul> </li> <li>27. How much resources company can put to digital marketing?</li> </ul>