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Anna Rassi

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Anna Rassi

**INTENDED BRAND PERSONALITY COMMUNICATION TO B2C CUSTOMERS VIA  
CONTENT MARKETING**

1<sup>st</sup> Supervisor: Professor Asta Salmi

2<sup>nd</sup> Supervisor: Associate Professor Anssi Tarkiainen

## ABSTRACT

<b>Author:</b>	Rassi, Anna
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This study examines brand personality communication in content marketing context. The objective is to find out how intended brand personality can be created via content marketing. The research studies how companies create brand personality, how they utilize content marketing and how personality is considered in their content marketing. The study utilizes qualitative research method: two content marketing specialists are interviewed and the branding and content marketing of two brands is observed. The findings indicate that most companies have defined a brand personality and that the use of content marketing varies a lot between companies, depending on the experience level. Also, most companies do consider brand identity and personality in their content marketing, in a way that all content stem from them. However, creating personality is rarely the main objective of content marketing. This study shows that content marketing has however enormous potential in creating and reinforcing personality characteristics, as one content can include multiple indicators of brand personality. Indicators can be for example the tone of voice, the way of execution, visuals, stories, characters or music, depending on content type.

## TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää, miten haluttua brändipersonallisuutta voidaan viestiä sisältömarkkinoinnilla. Tutkimuksessa pyritään selvittää miten yritykset luovat brändipersonallisuutta ja hyödyntävät sisältömarkkinointia, sekä miten brändin persoonallisuus otetaan huomioon sisältömarkkinoinnissa. Kvalitatiivinen tutkimus toteutetaan haastattelemalla kahta sisältömarkkinointiasiantuntijaa sekä havainnoimalla kahden brändin sisältömarkkinointia ja brändin rakentamista. Tutkimuksen mukaan useimmat yritykset ovat määritelleet brändilleen persoonallisuuden ja sisältömarkkinoinnin hyödyntäminen vaihtelee yrityksien kokemustasosta riippuen. Brändin identiteetti ja persoonallisuus otetaan useimmiten huomioon sisältömarkkinoinnissa siten, että brändi ohjaa kaikkea sisältöä. Brändipersonallisuuden luominen on kuitenkin harvoin sisältömarkkinoinnin tärkein päämäärä. Tutkimus kuitenkin osoittaa, että sisältömarkkinoinnilla pystytään tehokkaasti luomaan ja vahvistamaan persoonallisuuspiirteitä, koska yhteen sisältöön pystytään upottamaan monia persoonallisuuden indikaattoreita. Näitä voi olla esimerkiksi äänensävy, toteutustapa, visuaaliset vihjeet, tarinat, hahmot tai musiikki, sisällön tyypistä riippuen.

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14<sup>th</sup> of May in Espoo,

Anna Rassi

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the aim is to provide the reader with an overall view of the thesis. Introduction leads reader to the subject, explains why topic is chosen and justifies why it is important to study it. In order to accomplish this, background to the subject is given, research questions are formed and preliminary literature review is made. Theoretical framework, as well as definitions and delimitations are also explained. Lastly, the author describes research methodology and the structure of the study.

## **1.1. Background**

In a global marketplace with endless possibilities, it is crucial to stand out. Strong brands have clear, valued and enduring point of difference comparing to other brands (Davis 2002). Brands are increasingly used to differentiate the offering and to develop customer loyalty. They also help to build integrated marketing communications, by ensuring continuity throughout marketing messages. (Baines et al. 2008, 314-315) Brands have the capability to tap into the emotional side of consumers. They can help consumers express themselves (Belk 1988) and therefore consumers seek brands that complement their self-images (Baines et al. 2008, 316) Specifically, brand personality has an ability to develop the emotional aspects of a brand (Landon 1974) and increase the personal meaning of a brand to the consumer (Levy 1959). This emotional and symbolic approach to branding (Keller 1998) is especially convenient because the emotional associations are hard to copy (Baines et al. 2008, 315). Therefore brand personality has a potential to become a sustainable competitive advantage for a company. Aaker (1997) defines brand personality as a set of human characteristics associated with a brand. Brands and brand personalities are communicated to

consumers through marketing communications. The fundamentals of marketing communications are changing in these turbulent times.

In the era of co-creation, sharing and engagement, marketers no longer tell consumers what they need. (Budikova 2014; Light 2014) This type of traditional marketing has become less effective partly due to growing ad ignorance and ad avoidance (Cho & Cheon 2004). Internet is a pull marketing environment (Chaffey & Smith 2013) and therefore marketers need to understand that by providing engaging content, they will be sought out by potential customers themselves. As marketing is becoming more personal and consumer-driven, customers want a constant and continuous flow of content that is valuable, relevant and engaging (Budikova 2014; Light 2014). Content can be for instance articles, blog posts, videos, social media or live events. (Light 2014) Consumers are engaging with double the amount of online content each year, while trying to make the purchase decision, which makes it vital for the companies to be in this pool of options at the crucial moment of decision-making (Pulizzi 2012). Content marketing describes the shift from selling to helping (Holliman & Rowley 2014), which is necessary as providing relevant information to the right audience at the right time reduces the feeling of disruption, which is the reason behind ad avoidance. In content marketing, the message is consistent with receivers' goals and therefore may even assist in achieving them (Cho & Cheon 2004).

Not a lot of research have been conducted about how companies try to formulate brand personality online. Specifically, there is no research about how companies attempt to communicate brand personality via content marketing. Thus, it is necessary to study the traditional concept of brand personality in the current context of content marketing. Do firms consider the personality of their brand when practising content marketing?

## **1.2. Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to examine how can companies utilize content marketing in their efforts to communicate intended brand personality. The scientific goal of this study is to add knowledge about content marketing and produce knowledge about brand personality creation in content marketing context. The managerial objective, on the other hand, is to provide information for companies and marketers about how content marketing can be used in creating the intended brand personality. The main research question can be defined as follows:

*How can intended brand personality be communicated via content marketing?*

In order to achieve the goals of this study, the main research question is divided into three sub-research questions.

*How companies create and communicate intended brand personality?*

*How companies utilize content marketing?*

*How companies consider brand personality in their content marketing?*

## **1.3. Literature Review**

The theory used in this thesis is divided into brand personality literature and content marketing literature. The most influential researchers of brand personality are Jennifer Aaker (1997) and David Aaker (1996). The concept of brand personality was first defined by Jennifer Aaker in 1997 as “a set of human characteristics associated with a brand”. She developed BPS (Brand Personality Scale) that has been widely used to

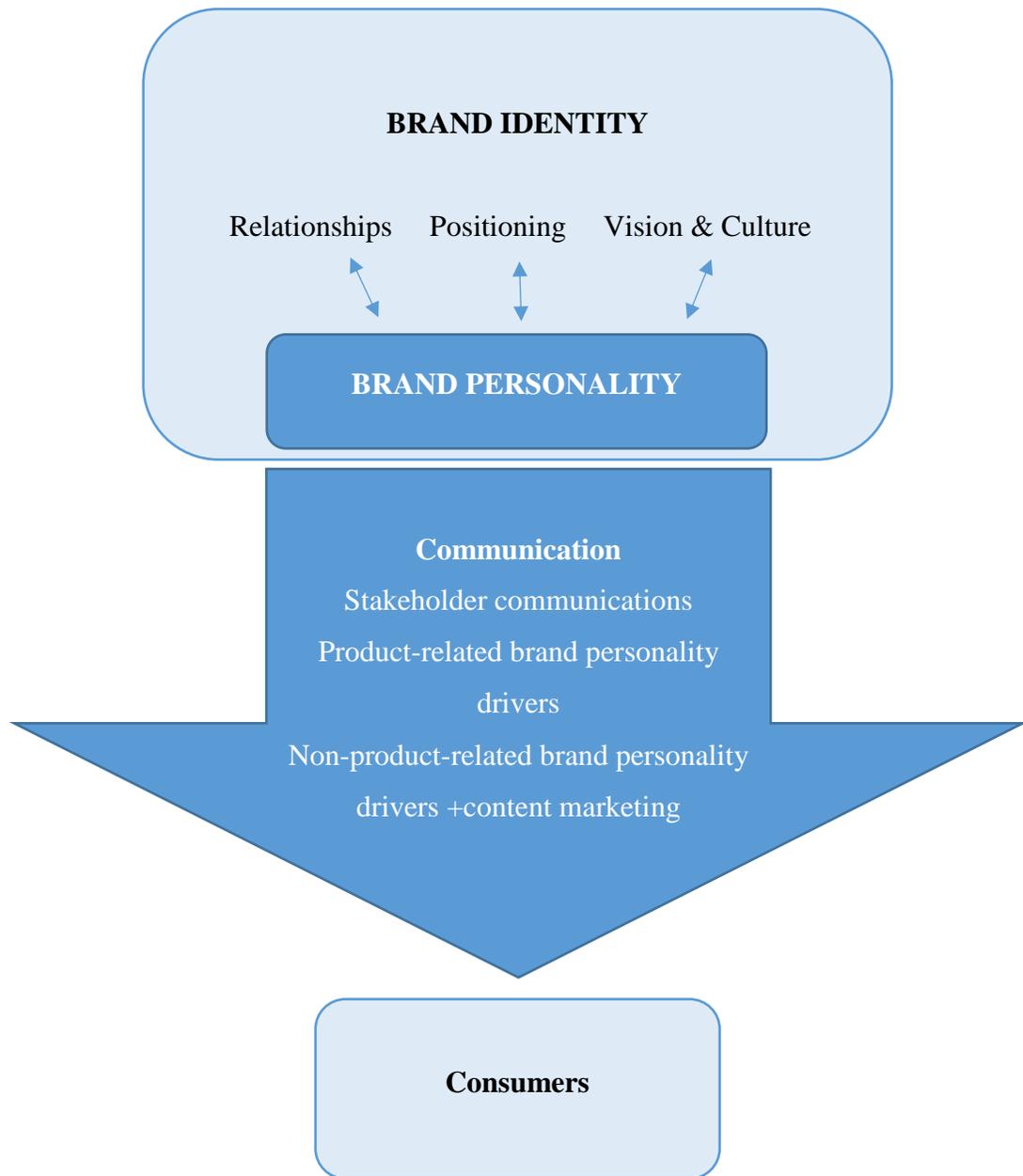
measure brand personality in quantitative studies. She also created brand personality framework that consists of five dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. This framework is more suitable for qualitative research. There is relatively little brand personality research from the company perspective about creating and communicating intended brand personality, whereas much research has been made from the consumer perspective, especially about brand personality consequences on consumer perceptions (e.g. Louis & Lombart 2010; Mengxia 2007). However, David Aaker (1996) discussed the product-related and non-product-related drivers that affect brand personality formulation. De Chernatory (1999) created a brand identity model in which brand personality is a crucial factor. The model is used because brand identity and personality are tightly associated with each other, and also because by implementing the model, we are able to place brand personality into bigger picture. Brand identity model describes the creation of brand identity from company perspective. Despite these two theories, there is a need for more research on communicating intended brand personality, especially as they do not consider brand personality creation in the digital era. There are only few studies about creating brand personality online (Okazaki 2006; Müller & Chandon 2003; Ankomah Opoku, Abratt, Bendixen & Pitt 2007), which leave many questions unanswered.

Content marketing as a phenomenon is not new, however it was conceptualized and studied in academia only recently. Therefore, its theoretical framework is largely lacking and inadequate. Holliman and Rowley (2014) conducted the first peer reviewed study in digital content marketing. Their perspective was B2B markets but the findings are suitable for B2C context as well. In addition to Holliman and Rowley's article, many books have been written about content marketing (e.g. Rose & Pulizzi 2012; Handley & Chapman 2011). Light (2014) studied how to engage consumers with brand journalism, which is closely associated with the concept of content marketing. There have also been quite a few studies about brand storytelling (Baker & Boyle 2009; Pulizzi 2012; Woodside 2010; Chiu, Hsieh & Kuo 2012), which is important form of content marketing. Additionally, creation of brand-related content through co-creation and user-

generated content has aroused quite a lot of interest in academia (e.g. Ind et al. 2013; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000; Luetjens & Stanforth 2007). So far there is no academic research that takes brand personality into account in content marketing. However, Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) introduced the concept of brand persona that assures consistency in brand storytelling. Also many other studies acknowledge the need for consistency in content marketing (e.g. Light 2014; Baker & Boyle 2009).

#### **1.4. Theoretical Framework**

In the chapter of brand personality, two main models are utilized. First, De Chernatory's (1999) brand identity model is used to describe how brand identity is formed. Then Aaker's (1996) brand personality drivers are applied in order to illustrate ways to communicate brand personality. In the content marketing chapter, the findings of Holliman and Rowley (2014) are widely used, together with theory of brand journalism (Light 2014) and brand storytelling (Baker & Boyle 2009; Pulizzi 2012; Woodside 2010; Chiu, Hsieh & Kuo 2012). The following Figure 1. portrays the theoretical framework of the study. It shows brand personality's role in brand identity formation. Other factors affecting brand identity are stakeholder relationships and positioning as well as brand values and culture. All these factors interact and together form brand's identity. Brand identity and brand personality are presented to the consumers through stakeholder communications as well as product-related- and non-product-related brand personality drivers. In the internet era, also digital marketing communications need to be taken into account as a way of communicating intended brand personality. This research focuses on content marketing's potential as a non-product-related personality driver of the digital times.



**Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of the Research**

## **1.5. Definitions & Delimitations**

### **Branding**

Branding considers the actions that companies take in order to help consumers differentiate between their offering and other products or services in a market. Successful branding leads to strong, positive and long-lasting impressions of a brand. Successful brands evoke feelings and emotions in addition to being perceived as providers of functional products. Some brands are more emotional, whereas other brands are more rational and information-based. For instance product category plays an important role in determining the emotional vs. rational orientation of the brand. (Baines et al. 2008, 312-313)

### **Brand identity**

Aaker defines brand identity as “a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain”. This set of associations shows what the brand stands for and additionally gives a promise to customers from the organization members. Drawing from De Chernatory’s brand identity model (1999), brand identity formulates through five dimensions: positioning, brand personality, values and culture, relationships with stakeholders and brand identity presentation. Brand identity is aspirational: it describes how the brand wants to be perceived, whereas brand image means how brand actually is perceived by consumers and other stakeholders. (Aaker 1996, 68-71) Therefore brand image is always subjective in each customer’s mind (Lindberg-Repo 2005, 67).

### **Brand personality**

The concepts of brand identity and brand personality are tightly associated with one another, which makes cutting clear lines between these overlapping concepts difficult

(Freling & Forbes 2005b). Thus also in this study, brand personality is closely associated with the concept of brand identity. According to De Chernatory (1999) and Plummer (1985), brand personality is one dimension of brand identity. Aaker defined brand personality as "a set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker 1997). According to Aaker (1996, 141) brand personality constructs of demographic characteristics, lifestyle characteristics and human personality traits. According to Hawkins et al. (2001, 376) brand personality describes "what type of person the brand would be if it were human and what it would do and like". Plummer (1985) divides brand personality into two aspects: brand personality statement and brand personality profile. Brand personality statement describes the company's idea of brand personality. It works as a strategic tool that guides the marketing communications of the company. Brand personality profile, on the other hand, describes consumer perceptions of brand's personality.

## **Content marketing**

Academia is still lacking a proper definition of content marketing. However, content marketing can be defined as a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, compelling, relevant and consistent content by the brand itself, which can be for example corporate magazines, blog posts, webinars, newsletters, videos or podcasts. The aim of content marketing is to generate positive behaviour from existing or prospective customers. (Pulizzi 2012K; CMI 2016a) According to the study by Holliman and Rowley (2014), this happens by engaging consumers at the right time in their purchasing consideration processes, in a way that it encourages them to convert to a financial outcome.

## **Delimitations**

Branding is a wide concept and therefore this research is focused on brand personality. Specifically, this study focuses on intended brand personality or brand personality

statement, as brand personality is studied from the company perspective. Hence, unlike most brand personality research, the effects of brand personality to consumer perceptions is not the focus in this study. Instead, this research focuses on how companies attempt to communicate the intended brand personality and the desired characteristics, so that consumers would perceive it as intended. Additionally, brand personality approach directs research into more emotional branding, as the concept has a lot to do with self-image and self-expression. What comes to studying content marketing, this study focuses on it as a creative strategy, instead of going deep into the technical aspects, such as search engine optimization et cetera. In addition, this research will not cover measurement and analytics of content marketing.

## **1.6. Research Methodology**

This research is conducted by using qualitative research method. It is the most suitable method because the nature of the research phenomenon – communication of brand personality via content marketing – demands descriptive approach. The objective of qualitative research is to understand, describe and explain (Gibbs 2007, 94). Qualitative approach is suitable also because it enables the use of multiple methods, such as interviews, observation and utilization of academic literature (Metsämuuronen 2005, 222). Case study approach is also used, as it is suitable for qualitative method with the objective to understand the research phenomenon more profoundly (Metsämuuronen 2008, 18). Case study is suitable in answering research questions like “how” and “what” (Robson 1993, 44), which makes it applicable for this thesis, as the main research question is *How can intended brand personality be communicated via content marketing?* Case study approach also brings a sense of complexity and specificity to the research and helps to understand companies comprehensively (Koskinen, Alasuutari & Peltonen 2005, 156).

The empirical research was made by interviewing two content marketing professionals from different media agencies and by observing one additional case company's branding and content marketing. The interviews were semi-structured, where the interviewer constructs the questions and the interviewees answer them in their own words (Koskinen et al. 2005, 104-105). The interviews were implemented in phone and via email. In addition to the second interview, the author observed this consultant's customer company's content marketing, to get a more comprehensive idea of what kind of content was shared. The interviews were executed between December 2016 and January 2017 and the observations were made between December 2016 and April 2017. The interviewees were chosen with the attempt to gain a broad perspective on companies' branding and content marketing operations. Hence the content marketing professionals chosen, have different kinds of customer companies, that vary for example in sizes and industries. Lastly, the author chose Red Bull as a case company that reflects the research subject – communicating brand personality via content marketing – well, and observed Red Bull's branding and content marketing.

## **1.7. Structure of the Study**

Literature review has two parts: brand personality and content marketing. First, the author examines what brand personality means. After describing the origin, features and objectives of the concept, brand personality creation is discussed by using the brand identity model. Then, the author studies what are the product- and non-product-related factors that affect brand personality. Lastly, online brand personality is examined. The second part of the literature review consists of studying the features of content marketing, as well as its objectives. Here, the author also looks into content marketing strategy and content marketing channels. Additionally, content creation process is examined. In the last part of this chapter, content marketing is looked into from the perspective of intended brand personality: here, a synthesis of brand personality communication and content marketing is created. After the theoretical part,

research design and methods are described. In the following chapter, the author goes through the empirical results found in the interviews and via observation. The findings are also contrasted into academic literature on the subject. Next, summary and conclusions of the findings are made and theoretical contributions and managerial implications are addressed. Lastly, limitations of the study are acknowledged and directions for future research are recommended.

## **2. CREATING INTENDED BRAND PERSONALITY**

This chapter gives a comprehensive view on brand personality communication. The chapter starts with looking into the concept of brand personality – what is it, why is it important? Then, the author moves on to examining brand personality creation process, that is, how companies communicate the intended brand personality. Here, De Chernatory's brand identity model (1999) and Aaker's brand personality drivers (1996, 145-149) are utilized.

### **2.1. What Is Brand Personality?**

The effectiveness of brand personality stems from animism, as people associate human personality traits to brands (Aaker 1997). Freling and Forbes' (2005a) study suggests that consumers associate strong, positive personalities to brands because of "a natural human tendency to anthropomorphise nonhuman objects". Louis and Lombart (2010) argue that the reason behind this tendency is to help interactions with the intangible world. Tendency to humanize products is what makes symbolic use of brands possible (Aaker 1997). It has to do with pride of ownership, satisfaction in consumption, social admiration and anxiety about lack of use (Leiss, Lkine & Jhally 1997, 246).

Same way than human personality, brand personality is distinctive and enduring. As mentioned, personality constructs of demographic characteristics, lifestyle characteristics and human personality traits. Therefore, the concept considers characteristics like gender, age and socioeconomic class and human personality traits such as thoughtfulness, sentimentality and friendliness. (Aaker 1996, 141-144) Aaker (1997) developed a framework of brand personality dimensions, that has been widely accepted in academia. She suggested five key dimensions of personality: sincerity,

excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness, which can be seen in more detail in Table 1. These dimensions – especially excitement, sincerity and competence – are similar with the big five of human personality traits. Sophistication and ruggedness, on the other hand, are more aspirational dimensions (Aaker 1997), that have no equivalent in terms of human personality (Louis & Lombart 2010).

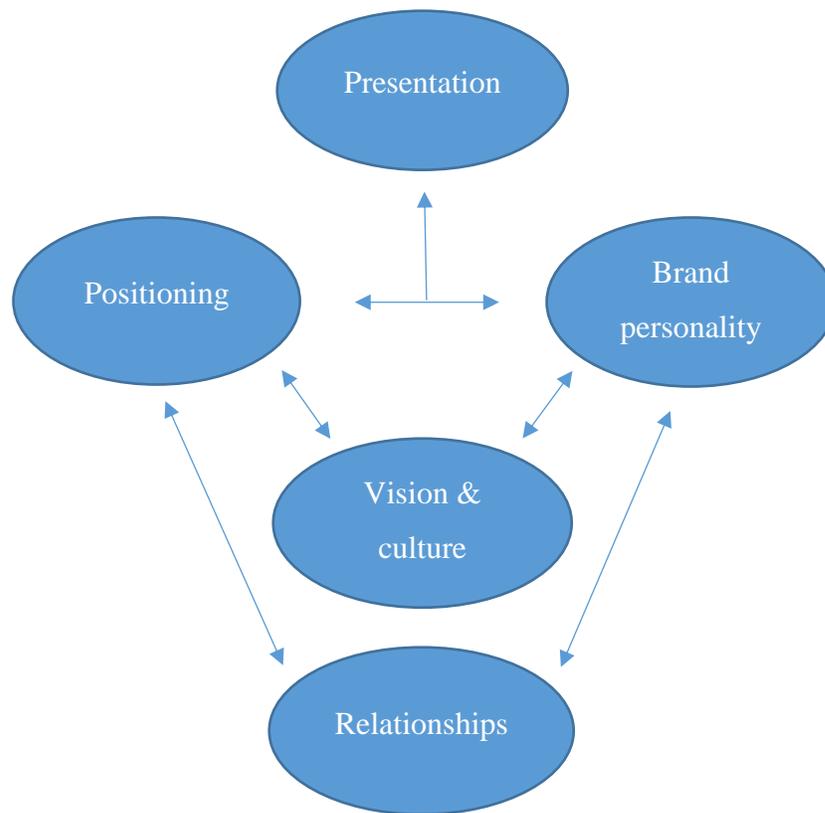
**Table 1. Brand Personality Framework Dimensions (Aaker 1997)**

<b>Sincerity</b>	<b>Excitement</b>	<b>Competence</b>	<b>Sophistication</b>	<b>Ruggedness</b>
Down-to-earth	Daring	Reliable	Upper class	Outdoorsy
Honest	Spirited	Intelligent	Charming	Tough
Wholesome	Imaginative	Successful		
Cheerful	Up-to-date			

Why is it important to create a clear and distinctive personality for a brand? Strong brand personality has significant positive impact on consumer behavior (Louis & Lombart 2010). Studies indicate that brand personality influence the attachment, commitment and loyalty towards a brand (Louis & Lombart 2010; Mengxia 2007) Thus brand personality is often the basis for long-term customer-brand relationship (Hawkins et al. 2001, 376). Many other consequences of brand personality have also been recognized in academia: brand preference, perceived brand quality, attitude and trust towards the brand and intentions of future purchase. (Louis & Lombart 2010; Mengxia 2007) Freling and Forbes' study (2005b) shows that strong and favorable personality leads to more positive brand associations and product evaluations. All in all, differentiated, strong and favorable brand personality can help companies to gain brand equity (Freling & Forbes 2005b).

## **2.2. Brand Identity Formulation**

De Chernatory (1999) presented a model that shows how brand identity is formed. The model considers five factors: positioning, brand personality, relationships to stakeholders, brand vision and culture and finally, brand presentation. All these factors work together, influencing each other constantly, and at the same time forming brand's identity as whole. According to De Chernatory, brand vision and culture drive the attempted positioning, personality and the relationships that follow. All of this is presented to stakeholders, to reflect their self-images, both aspirational and actual. In this study, the focus of the stakeholders is on current and potential. For example, relationships to staff will not have as much emphasis in this research, as they had in the original model. In the original model, De Chernatory stresses the importance of employees in the formulation and communication of brand identity. This is of course justified, since brand is built through the entire customer experience, not only via marketing (Davis 2002). De Chernatory's brand identity is not a perfect model – as it considers many parties and they all influence each other constantly, some of the causal relationships remain unclear. However, the model gives a comprehensive understanding of what brand identity consists of, brand personality being an important factor in its formulation. The following Figure 2. illustrates the formation of brand identity.



**Figure 2. Brand Identity Model (De Chernatory 1999)**

### 2.2.1. Vision & Culture

First, brand needs to have a clear vision – it needs to be clear to which direction the brand wants to go. A vision describes what brand wants to become in the future (Baines et al. 2008, 160). Collins and Porras (1996, 192) argue that when setting the vision, the company’s environment needs to be taken into account at least five years ahead. In order to develop a strategy to accomplish the vision, the culture of the brand needs to be examined. (De Chernatory 1999) Culture is often defined simply as a set of shared meanings that enables members of a group to interpret the environment and act upon it (Schein 1984). According to Schein (1984), organizational culture is the set of basic

assumptions that a group has adopted in learning to cope with its external and internal problems, and that have proven valid and are hence passed on to new group members. According to Schein, organizational culture has several levels: visible artifacts, the values of the key organization members and the mental models or basic assumptions of brand builders. De Chernatory divides values into two categories: core and secondary values. Core values are those that have remained, whereas secondary values have changed over time. By examining the gaps between desired and current corporate culture, it can be clarified how suitable the corporate culture is to achieve the stated vision. As mentioned, the vision and culture guide positioning, brand personality and subsequent relationships. (De Chernatory 1999)

### **2.2.2. Positioning**

The attempted positioning should be aligned with core values and the brand vision, in order to formulate a uniform brand identity (De Chernatory 1999) Drawing from Kotler and Keller (2012, 298) and Baines et al. (2008, 234) definitions, positioning means planning the company's offering and identity in a way that it differentiates the brand from others in the minds of customers, with the objective to give consumer a reason for buying. Positioning is also important so that consumers understand the value that each brand represents (2008/2011, 234). De Chernatory considers positioning as functional domain of the brand. (De Chernatory 1999) However, in this thesis, the view of Baines et al. (2008, 234) is applied. According to it, positioning has two elements: physical attributes and the emotional side: the way in which brand is communicated. In order to position successfully, both elements must be considered as they fuse together in the minds of consumers. The first element considers the capability and functionality that a brand has to offer. The communication element, on the other hand, considers how brand is communicated and how consumers perceive the brand compared to competitors. (Baines et al. 2008, 234) This element is crucial as it does not include

what a brand does to a product, but what it does to the minds of consumers (Ries & Trout 1972).

### **2.2.3. Brand Personality**

Core values and brand vision are also fundamental factors behind brand personality (De Chernatory 1999). Brand personality was defined above as a set of human characteristics associated with a brand. The brand values can be easily communicated to customers through brand personality, which reduces the customer need for information search and information processing. (Aaker 1997) De Chernatory's model considers the connection between brand personality and positioning. He argues that in addition to checking if the values match the intended personality, it needs to be ensured that the positioning matches the personality. This, according to De Chernatory, is a link that managers often fail to consider. (De Chernatory 1999)

### **2.2.4. Relationships**

After defining brand personality, relationships start to evolve. Brand identity model considers relationships from staff to other staff, staff to customers and staff to other stakeholders. All these relationships are reflected by the brand values, as they are inherent in the brand personality. (De Chernatory 1999, Fournier 1998) De Chernatory stresses that the brand has an active role in relationships, through staff interacting with different stakeholders. (De Chernatory 1999) In today's information technology -driven society, the active role of brand in relationships is emphasized. Staff, or brand, is interacting with consumers not only through selling, but also via many interactive platforms that web 2.0 and social media offers. Internet era makes it even more important to involve staff in assessing how well relationships reinforce values, brand personality and positioning, since interaction has become more frequent (Modified from

De Chernatory 1999). Managers need to make sure that employees create relationships consistent with core values of the company, so that unified brand identity can be formed (De Chernatory 1999).

### **2.2.5. Presentation**

Lastly brand identity has to be presented to stakeholders. This should be done in a way that it appeals to both actual and aspirational self-images of consumers. (De Chernatory 1999) According to Blythe (2009, 168-169), brand personality is a reflection of consumers' actual or ideal self-images. In other words, brand personality tends to reflect how consumers see themselves or how they wish to perceive themselves. So in order to create a connection between brand and stakeholders, the brand needs to resonate with consumers' internal self-images (Belk 1988; Hogg & Mitchell 1996). According to Belk (1988) people's possessions are crucial contributor to their identities and a reflection of these identities. Tuan (1980, 472) agrees and states: "Our fragile sense of self needs support, and this we get by having and possessing things because, to a large degree, we are what we have and possess." Aaker's findings (1997) suggest that some brands appeal more to consumers' aspirational self-images; Sophistication and ruggedness are personality dimensions that consumers often desire but may not necessarily have. Since different stakeholders have different points of contact with the brand, there is a risk of conflicting messages that managers should consider. Managers should therefore advise employees to consider and identify the signals they send to all stakeholders, so that more cohesive brand identity presentation can be created. (De Chernatory 1999) In addition to stakeholder relationships, other ways to present or communicate brand identity and brand personality are product-related and non-product-related brand personality drivers (Aaker 1996) that will be explained in the following chapter.

## **2.3. Brand Personality Drivers**

Similar to personality of a person, brand personality is affected by everything related to a brand. According to Aaker (1996), product-related characteristics can be more important when creating brand personality. Product-related characteristics include product category, packaging, price and product attributes. Non-product-related characteristics, on the other hand, consist of user imagery, sponsorships, symbol, age, advertising style, country of origin, company image, CEO identification and celebrity endorsers. (Aaker 1996, 145-149) In this study, the focus is on non-product-related characteristics, since content marketing falls into that category.

### **2.3.1. Product-related Brand Personality Drivers**

Even the product category can have an effect on brand's personality (Aaker 1996, 145). If the company works in an industry that is considered to have certain characteristics, also the brand is often associated to this type of personality. For example, a company in banking industry can easily be perceived as old and serious. On the contrary, company working in e-commerce instantly has young and up-to-date brand personality. Packaging should also be considered from the perspective of brand personality (Aaker 1996, 145). For instance, Victoria's Secret uses premium bags and wraps the products into pink silk paper, which reinforces brand's sophisticated (feminine, sexy) character.

Many times, also product attributes affect brand personality (Aaker 1996, 146). For example, if a cosmetic product has all natural ingredients, it gives the brand down-to-earth, honest character. Then again, if a sports watch is made of a very durable sapphire glass, the brand personality becomes tough and outdoorsy. On the other hand, brand personality can reinforce or represent certain product attributes (Aaker 1996, 146). For instance, if a company gives the brand an athletic personality, like when

Subway used athletes actively in their advertising, it is easier for customers to believe that Subway's products are healthy. Also the pricing of the products affects brand's character, as high-priced products are easily associated to upper class personality (Aaker 1996, 146).

### **2.3.2. Non-product-related Brand Personality Drivers**

In addition to product-related drivers, non-product-related factors affect brand personality. Brand personality can be created via user imagery, celebrity endorsers or CEO identification. Using actual people to create brand personality is effective – as user imagery, celebrity or CEO is already a person, it is easier for customers to conceptualize the brand personality. (Modified from Aaker 1996, 146-147) Content to this, Aaker (1997) states: “personality traits come to be associated with the brand in a direct way by the people associated with the brand”. User imagery can stem from either typical or idealized users. Typical users are the ones that people see using the brand, whereas idealized users are seen in for instance advertisements of the brand. (Aaker 1996, 147) According to Hayes et al. (2011, 113), user imagery is the most important feature when creating brand personality. In addition to the fact that personality traits are directly transferrable from user to a brand, what makes user-imagery powerful, is that when consumers use a brand to express themselves, user imagery assists them in recognizing and choosing the brands that represent the characteristics they want to communicate. Additionally, abstract brand associations like user-imagery, are more powerful in influencing the formation of brand perceptions. (Aaker 1996 145-146; Biel 1993, 67-82; Parker 2009; Plummer 1985) As mentioned, also a personality of a visible CEO can be used to affect the brand's character (Aaker 1996, 147). Examples of visible CEO's are Bill Gates for Microsoft and Steve Jobs for Apple. An example of utilizing celebrity endorser is when Nespresso used George Clooney in their advertising, and this way gave the brand a charming personality.

Targeted sponsorships can also be used when creating brand personality. Brand can sponsor activities, for example events that match the intended brand personality. Age of the brand can also affect the brand's personality: brands that are newer in the market, like Apple, tend to have a younger personality than brands that have in in the market longer – for example IBM. However, company can actively try to overcome the age pressure and manage the brand personality in other direction. (Aaker 1996, 147) Symbol can be powerful tool in creating and reinforcing brand personality. It has a lot of potential because it is easily controlled by company and has very strong associations. (Aaker 1996, 148) Sometimes country of origin gives the brand certain characteristics stereotypical to that country (Aaker 1996, 146). For example, Lumene's Finnish origin reinforces the brand's down-to-earth, honest character. Additionally, company image can affect personality of a brand.

Lastly, but importantly, advertising style of the brand affects its personality (Aaker 1996, 146). According to Hayes et al. (2011), advertisements can be influential in communicating intended brand personality to consumers, particularly because multiple personality drivers can be combined to form an advertisement. For example, an advertisement can include user imagery, country-of-origin and product attributes. This way advertising can be used to control what kind of personality becomes associated with the brand, although the researchers remark that most times advertising influences personality in medium or long term time frame, not via one single advertisement (Hayes et al. 2011). However, the effectiveness of traditional push advertising has reduced notably. This is due to internet revolution and rising consumer expectations. (Light 2014) According to Cho and Cheon's (2004) study, people avoid advertising on the internet mostly because they perceive that online advertisements impede their goals. Therefore the researchers suggest that instead of using intrusive and unexpected ads, companies should provide consumers with highly targeted, customized and context-congruent marketing messages online. (Cho & Cheon 2004) Consumers today should not be underestimated: they recognize if content is pre-packaged, standardized and mass-marketed sales pitch that companies try to represent as personalization.

Consumers demand to be respected and valued as individuals who deserve personal, engaging content that puts their needs first. (Light 2014) Aaker's model should therefore be revised and extended in a way that it considers pull marketing methods in addition to traditional push advertising.

## **2.4. Online Brand Personality**

The past research in academia has largely focused on brand personality creation in offline environment. Muller and Chandon (2003) were one of the first researchers to study online brand personality. They tested the impact of website visit to brand personality perceptions of consumers. The study suggests that the perceptions about sincerity/trustworthiness and youthfulness/modernity towards the brand increased after the visit. These brand personality perceptions increased more when the visit experience was positive. Okazaki (2006), on the other hand, contributed to the online brand personality research by taking the perspective of companies. He studied how intended brand personality is created by providing stimuli to consumers through online communications. However, his research was limited to the communications through company websites. The study suggests that website communications alone may not be able to recreate dimensions of brand personality, largely due to low budget for this medium. However, budgets for online communications have certainly arisen after this research was conducted, as the potential of internet has become better recognized. Nevertheless, Okazaki's research shows that internet has at least the ability to enhance and complement brand personality dimensions. Opoku et al. (2007) also studied communication of brand personality via company website. Their findings suggest that intended brand personality dimensions and positioning should be considered when designing the website. The past research in online brand personality communication is clearly lacking, as it focuses only on website communications, and leaves many questions unanswered.

### **3. CONTENT MARKETING**

In this chapter, content marketing is examined as a mean of marketing communications. The chapter starts with defining the concept and moves on to describing the objectives of content marketing. Additionally, content marketing strategy, content marketing channels and content creation are studied. Lastly, the concepts of content marketing and brand personality are tied together to form a synthesis.

#### **3.1. What Is Content Marketing?**

Prior to the study of Holliman and Rowley (2014), no peer reviewed research has been made about digital content marketing in the academic world. However, several books have been written on the subject by for example Rose and Pulizzi (2012) and Handley and Chapman (2011). According to Holliman and Rowley (2014), content marketing is an inbound marketing technique. Inbound marketing promotes companies to take customer-centric approach to marketing communications. This means that instead of using direct selling messages and brand-centric approach, companies focus on customers' needs and are sought by customers themselves, which enhances trust towards the company's marketing message. (Holliman & Rowley 2014) In content marketing, companies benefit from the content indirectly by attracting or retaining customers, whereas in traditional marketing the consequence is direct (Pulizzi 2012).

In order to create a successful inbound marketing strategy, it must be comprehended how content can be utilized in marketing communications in order to achieve customer engagement (Holliman & Rowley 2014) Content consists of static content forming web pages and dynamic rich media content, such as videos, podcasts, user-generated content and interactive product selectors (Holliman & Rowley 2014; Smith & Chaffey 2013). Handley and Chapman (2012) define content as "anything created and uploaded

to a website, including words, images and other interactive materials". Holliman and Rowley (2014) state that digital content is often utilized in order to pull customers to the company website with the object to build relationships. According to them, this content is usually provided to customers free.

In addition to customer-centric approach, content marketing requires companies to take publishing approach to their marketing communications (Holliman & Rowley 2014). According to Pulizzi (2012) and Light (2014), all brands these days have to think and act as if they were media companies. "Everyone is the media and everyone is a publisher", Handley and Chapman (2012) state. Pulizzi claims that taking publishing approach is the only way to attract and retain customers. Marketing departments are going through a transition of becoming more and more like publishing departments (Pulizzi 2012). According to Pulizzi (2012), "the future of marketing department is half marketing and half publishing." He suggests that in the future, as the brand stories develop, brands are able to comment on real-time news, just like media companies.

Light (2014) discusses the concept of brand journalism. Researcher states that "brand journalism is about communicating multi-faceted, complex set of brand messages in an integrated manner." This is what content marketing is all about. According to Light (2014), companies should think of their marketing communications as the creation of "brand magazine", in which different subjects, topics and messages form an interesting, relevant, dynamic yet consistent entity. Over time, brand journalism tells the whole story of a brand. However, publishing does not equal content marketing. According to Content Marketing Institute (Pulizzi 2015), content marketing focuses on owning the publishing media, not renting a space in someone else's platform. This is what separates content marketing from native advertising, in which valuable content is placed on a platform owned by someone else (e.g. sponsored content post in a personal blog), in exchange for payment (Pulizzi 2015).

### **3.2. Content Marketing Objectives**

Multiple objectives of content marketing have been recognized in academia. Companies can for example pursue brand awareness or reinforcement (Rose & Pulizzi 2011). Digital content marketing is especially convenient in spreading awareness, since it enables and encourages sharing (Light 2014). Additionally, companies can seek conversion, from both existing and prospective customers (Rose & Pulizzi 2011; Pulizzi 2012). An objective of content marketing can also be to improve search engine optimization (Pulizzi 2012), since providing content enables companies to be found from search engines. Being found by customers themselves, content marketing generates trust among them (Holliman & Rowley 2014). No matter where consumers find the brand, through SEO or social media, the company's objective is to impact the consumer at the critical time of considering purchase (Holliman & Rowley 2014). Content to this, Light (2014) states that by providing content, company can help consumers make better brand decisions. Other objectives are customer service and customer upsell (Rose & Pulizzi 2011). According to Holliman and Rowley (2014), instead of focusing on short term sales or lead generation, long term objectives like gaining trusted authority position should be prioritized.

Nowadays marketers appreciate lasting brand-customer relationships as the focus is moving from the number of followers to the quality of followers (Budikova 2014). Hence one of the most important content marketing objectives is customer engagement and the loyalty it encourages. Passionate subscribers are achieved by providing interesting content constantly and continually. (Light 2014; Rose & Pulizzi 2011) In addition, company can use content to enhance the brand experience by adding depth and relevance (Light 2014). It important to remark that in the end, despite the means, content marketing always aims at financial benefits for the company (Pulizzi 2014, 48-79)

### **3.3. Content Marketing Strategy**

In order to ensure that content marketing reaches its objectives, content marketing strategy needs to be crafted. According to article written by Gulden (2012), the most essential parts of content marketing strategy are to recruit talented writers, produce quality content and get people to discuss your brand in a new manner. According to CMI (2016b) there are five elements that are usually included in a content marketing strategy. First the reasons, possible risks and vision of success need to be clarified. Then, a business plan should be conducted; this should include goals, plans how to add unique value through content and details of business model, as well as obstacles and opportunities that may encounter. Third element is target audience description that considers target customers' needs and possible content engagement cycles. Fourth element is brand story: what messages brand wants to communicate and how they are distinctive to competitors. Lastly, a plan is made about which channels are used and how they will be integrated in order to create a consistent brand. (CMI 2016b) It is important to remark that content marketing strategy should not be separated from strategies considering other marketing techniques. Instead, it should be an integrated part of all marketing tactics used – for example social media, public relations, pay-per-click (PPC) and search engine optimization (CMI 2016a).

### **3.4. Content Marketing Channels**

Company websites are generally considered the main channel to publish content. Website content can have enormous effects on the length of stay, activities undertaken and attempt to revisit the site (Fill 2009, 751). Karayanni and Baltas (2003) divide website content into two parts: company and customer content. Company content considers information about the company itself as well as its markets, organization culture and values. According to the researchers, company content is crucial in order

to gain credibility. Their findings also suggest that it is important to promote corporate identity when planning the website content. Customer content, on the other hand, includes providing information for customer questions and collecting market data. Rosen and Purinton (2004) remark that website should not burden consumers with too much information, but all the necessary information should be available in a functional manner. Fill (2009, 754) states that when it comes to website content, there should be a balance, firstly between information, products and services, and secondly between functional attributes and emotional appeals. Also search engine optimization (SEO) should be considered when designing the site, as it is necessary in order for consumers to find the website content. SEO refers to the process of pursuing a high organic ranking position in search engines (Fill 2009, 782) and this should be done by improving the content for real (white hat SEO) (Malaga 2010), in a way that it creates value for customers, as the objective of content marketing is to provide consumers with relevant and compelling content.

Additionally, marketers can utilize blogs to publish content. Corporate blogs are online platforms where companies post content for consumers. Blogging can for example be used as a mean to provide information as oppose to consumer quests, or to offer a solution for exploratory consumer browsing, which makes it suitable for content marketing. (Ahuja & Medury 2010) According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), blogs are a great way to improve transparency of the organization. Additionally, the possibility to comment the posts creates interactivity, which, according to the researchers, generates consumer engagement (Fieseler 2010; Ahuja & Medury 2010). Consumer comments are also a valuable source of market information, as companies can for example learn how their brands are perceived. Blogs also promote authenticity, as they are associated to a real person – this way blogs humanize otherwise faceless business. (Singh, Veron-Jackson & Cullinane 2008) They offer a less formal and more relaxed way to distribute content, in a simple manner (Fill 2009, 791). Blogs are becoming more and more influential as audience and contributors are expanding. Same applies to podcasts, (Constantinides & Fountain 2008) that are digital audio or video that is streamed or

downloaded to portable devices (Constantinides & Fountain 2008). Many studies can be found about utilizing podcasts in educational purposes, but there is no research about them in marketing context. Podcasts are especially applicable in content marketing because of their consumer-oriented nature – consumers can decide what, when and how many times they listen (Fill 2009, 793).

Although content marketing focuses on owning the publishing media, content published on social media platforms, such as content communities (e.g. Youtube) and social networking sites (e.g. Instagram) is indeed also content marketing. These channels are especially attractive to content marketers because of their high popularity (Kaplan & Haenlein 2009). These social media sites can be used not only for publishing itself, but also to direct traffic to company-owned publishing platforms. E-mail newsletters fall into the category of direct marketing techniques (Chittenden & Rettie 2002), and can also be used to direct consumer traffic to the content, same way as social media sites. In other words, newsletters can be used in promoting content that company offers. Therefore, e-mail newsletters are useful in spreading the content. For instance, a newsletter can make receiver aware of company's new blog or mobile app.

Branded mobile applications are also an important mean of content marketing as they provide useful content to consumers and this way create engagement. Branded application is a software that consumers can download into their mobile device. It displays a brand identity all the way through consumer experience. Brand identity can be present in the app in many ways: for example in the name of the app or by displaying the logo or symbol. Applications can increase interest towards the brand, create user engagement and have positive impact on brand attitudes. Apps are proven especially effective in this when they are informational and the focus is on the user. (Bellman, Potter, Tre-leaven-Hassard, Robinson & Varan 2011) Peng, Chen and Wen (2014) added that consistent with the demands of content marketing, apps need to satisfy both functional and emotional needs of consumers. They also remark that companies must exploit the established brand name and try to improve their brand image at all times,

so that positive feelings towards the brand are evoked. Budikova (2014) argues that in the future, it becomes crucial that content is easily consumed via mobile. This means not only the growing potential of branded apps, but also that content must be conveniently consumed by mobile device, no matter which channel is used to distribute it.

### **3.5. Content Creation**

Ind et al. (2013) state that to become a successful company, a thorough understanding of customers and their needs and desires needs to be achieved. The key success factor in content creation is to know your audience. According to Pulizzi (2012), careful targeting is crucial. He claims that many content marketers fail to find their niche, and therefore end up trying to attain too wide of a target audience.” Brands will accomplish their marketing goals, not mainly through interruptive media, but by creating and distributing the most valuable information on the planet for that particular niche”, he suggests. Pulizzi (2012) states that the biggest challenge for companies is the creation of engaging content. According to Davis (2012, 23), engaging content often has little to do with the company’s offering. Instead, the content is created to match target audience’s needs. For instance, Finnish energy company Helen provides consumers with short comedy videos, which have little to do with their offering. Instead of boring consumers with informative facts about energy sector, Helen offers entertainment that people want to consume, through comedy. Company’s miniature series “The Yrjö Show” has proved very popular in Finland and abroad. (Kauppalehti 2016) A study conducted by Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs shows that although most companies do utilize some type of content marketing in their marketing communications, most of them fail to create content that is truly interesting and engaging to customers and this way it does not bring results to the company (Pulizzi 2012). Therefore, a careful examination of one’s target audience and its needs is essential in order to create truly engaging content.

Storytelling is an effective way of content marketing. According to Wuebben (2012, 5), content can be used to tell a brand's story, in a way that it touches the current and prospective customers and others. McKee (2003) suggests that best way to persuade someone is to tell a compelling story. Storytelling makes it possible to not only include a lot of information in the message, but also to influence customers emotionally. However, the researcher points out, that it is not easy to persuade with a story: it demands a lot of creativity, insight and good storytelling skills to present something memorable that influences the customer's emotions and energy. Whereas creating a traditional advertising message that rationally justifies the purchase, requires a lot less creativity. Imagination, insight and good storytelling skills are the way to customers' hearts, while conventional argumentative rhetoric these days often leads to customers simply ignoring the marketing message. "Stories are how we remember; we tend to forget lists and bullet points", McKee argues. (McKee 2003) Laakso (2003, 66) agrees that by causing strong emotions, stories help people to remember the information they perceive. All this shows that stories are a powerful tool and therefore should be utilized in branding as well. According to Aaltonen and Heikkilä (2003, 17-18), the most successful companies tell stories that succeed in touching customers and evoking strong emotions. What makes brand story engaging then? Chiu, Hsieh and Kuo (2012) suggest that there are four characteristics that make brand story engaging to customers: authenticity, humor, reversal and conciseness. Light (2014), on the other hand, claims that brand stories need to be continuous, flexible and interesting. He adds that a good brand story is at the same globally consistent, regionally differentiated and personally relevant. Baker and Boyle (2014), in turn, argue that great stories are universal, relevant, and those that enlighten and entertain listeners and touch their emotions. They also remark that great story has certain openness to it, which allows the story to evolve over time.

According to the study conducted by CMI and MarketingProfs, the second biggest challenge is to produce enough content and as third comes the budget for the

production of content (Pulizzi 2012). In order to overcome these challenges in content creation, companies can exploit resources that they already possess – their employees and customers. One way to create content is to leverage company's own employees, which according to Pulizzi (2012), is what the best content marketers are doing. By engaging employees in the content creation process, companies are able to benefit from their expertise. Employees can for example post in the company blog or share videos. (Pulizzi 2012) Pioneer companies have their own in-house newsroom and production studio for content creation (Budikova 2014).

World wide web provides endless possibilities for utilizing co-creation in creating digital content. In co-creation, in addition to managers and employees, also consumers are engaged in the brand development (Ind et al. 2013). Budikova (2014) claims that companies aim to build more individual brand relationships by involving consumers in co-creation. Leveraging customers as content creators enables companies to gain insights of their customers by engaging with them and exploring their emotions, feelings and memories (Ind et al. 2013). In other words, co-creation offers a window to explore target audience's needs, which is key to successful content marketing. This way co-creation can be the solution for the biggest challenge in content marketing – how to create truly engaging content for the target audience. In addition of being a great way to learn about consumers, co-creation raises the capacity of insight in content creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000). Tapscott also (2007) remarks the potential of co-creation in exploiting ideas of a vast and global pool of talent. Additional benefits of user-generated content are low cost of production (Tapscott 2007) and brand advocacy (Luetjens & Stanforth 2007). Study of Luetjens and Stanforth (2007) suggests that consumers who contribute to UGC, are likely to share opinions of company's products and services with others. When utilizing consumers in content creation, creating trusting online environment that encourages creativity, is essential (Ind et al. 2013).

In addition to exploiting employees and consumers, many companies leverage outside experts in content creation. Study of Content Marketing Institute shows that over fifty

percent of brands outsource part of their content creation, and the percentage is rising each year. (Pulizzi 2012) This is opposing to Budikova's (2014) prediction, that companies start to shift from agencies to in-house content production. In addition to agencies, key influencers in the industry can be used as content creators (Budikova 2014). For example, many brands co-operate with bloggers to exploit their expertise in the content creation. Blogger can for example take over brand's social media channel for certain amount of time. Sometimes brands create content together with bloggers. An example of this is a co-operation of a fashion brand Vila together with a fashion blogger Annika Ollila (Vila 2016), where the blogger styled looks of Vila's products that were photographed on Annika by the company. Utilizing outside experts often has higher costs than leveraging employees and consumers. However, if this kind of co-operation is well-thought, it can add a lot of value for the content, for example by increasing content attractiveness because a key influencer is involved (Budikova 2014).

### **3.6. Intended Brand Personality in Content Marketing**

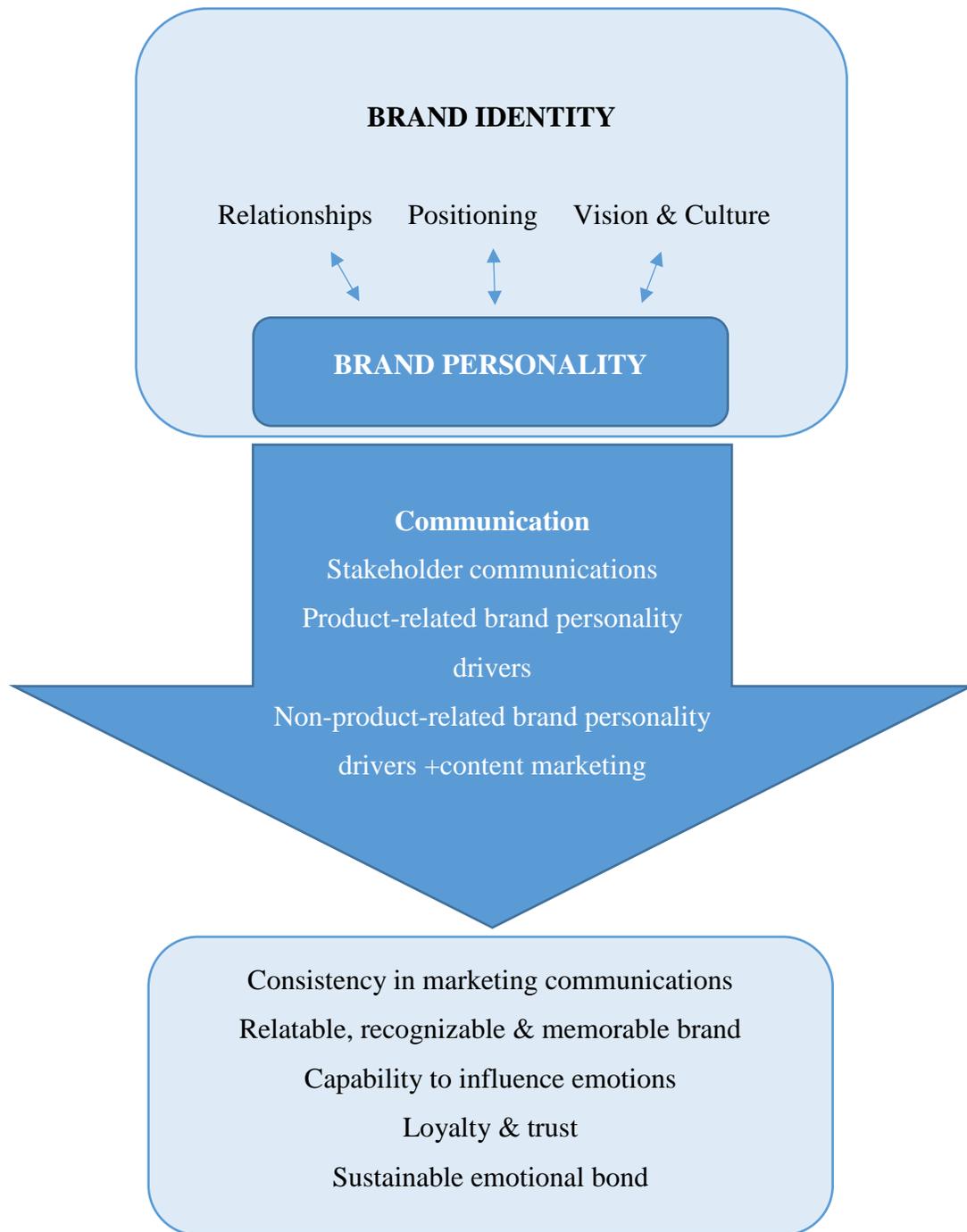
As mentioned, there is no academic research that considers brand personality and content marketing. Hence in this chapter, a summary and synthesis about brand personality communication and content marketing is constructed. Brand personality can be created through stakeholder communications (De Chernatory 1999) as well as product-related and non-product-related drivers (Aaker 1996, 154-146). Advertising is one of the most influential drivers of brand personality as many other personality drivers can be combined into one advertisement and this way strong brand personality can be created. (Hayes et al. 2011) However, these days traditional advertising is not enough, but also pull marketing methods need to be involved in marketing communications. A good example of pull marketing methods is content marketing, in which compelling content is provided to consumers with the objective to create engagement and hence generate positive behavior from existing and potential customers (Pulizzi 2012K; CMI 2016a; Holliman & Rowley 2014). Content marketing has the same potential to create

brand personality by combining many personality drivers: content can include for example user imagery, celebrity endorser, product attributes and brand logo.

In academia, it is agreed that consistency is everything in marketing communications. Brand personality is one way to achieve consistency throughout marketing messages. According to Plummer (2000), brand personality statement is the objective of all marketing communications and therefore it should be an important part of creative strategy (Plummer 2000). It is essential for the people creating marketing messages to know what the intended brand personality is (Aaker & Fournier 1995). Similarly, content marketers need to be aware of the intended brand personality. Content marketing without consideration of brand personality is like focusing on single marketing message without considering what kind of brand the messages form altogether.

Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) introduced the concept of brand persona that assures consistency in brand storytelling. They stress that it is important to consider the brand persona when creating brand stories. Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) define brand persona as "the articulated form of the brand's character and personality". They argue that this brand persona creates sustainable emotional bond between brand and a customer, as it is easy to recognize and memorable. Brand persona is needed to assure consistency – it is the point of reference that customers relate to, no matter what the story is. (Herskovitz & Crystal 2010) Brand persona seems to be the glue that holds all the brand stories together. "A brand narrative without a well-defined, recognizable, memorable, and compelling persona can become a series of disconnected adventures, jumping from narrative to narrative in search of something that might resonate with its audiences", Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) argue. The brand persona has to remain stable across the different stories it appears in. The researchers claim that brand persona -driven storytelling has the capability to influence attitudes and emotions of customers more powerfully, which leads to loyalty and trust towards the brand. All in all, Herskovitz and Crystal's point is that brand persona should come first, and the story should evolve from that. They point out that a common mistake for companies is to

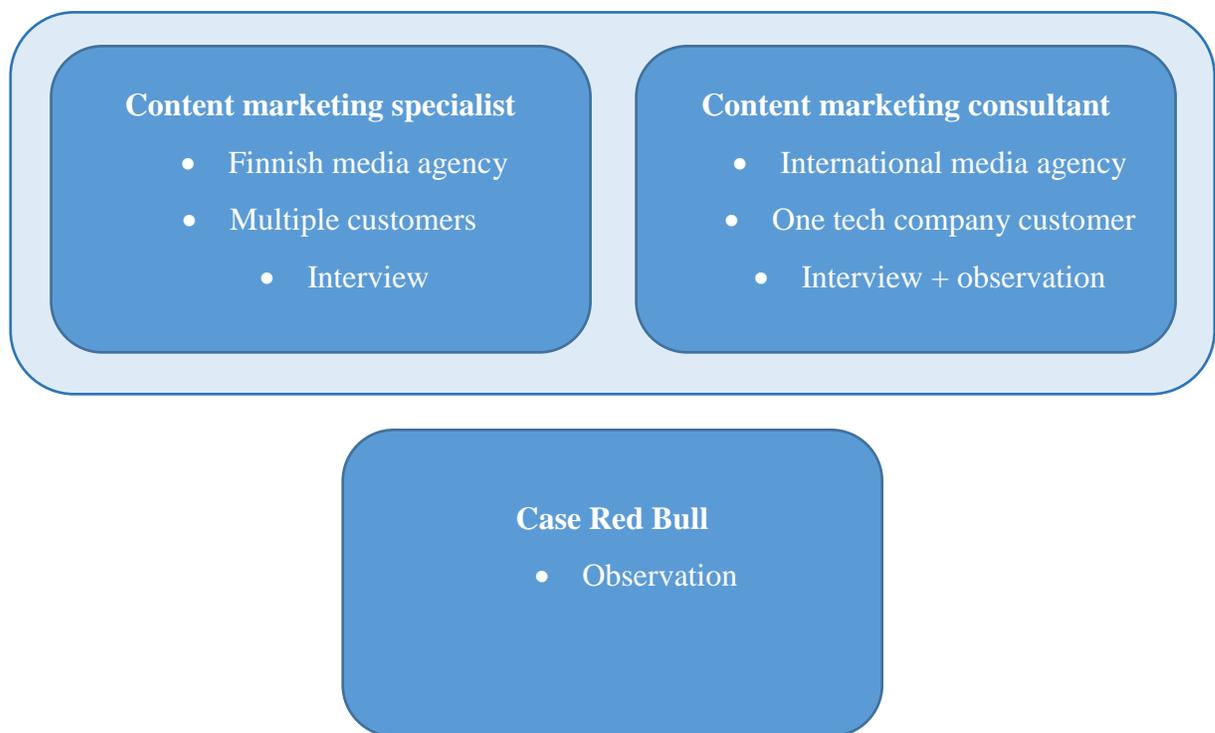
focus on the plot of the story before the persona. As brand persona is the articulated form of brand personality, and storytelling way of content marketing, it can be said that brand personality driven content marketing has the capability to influence attitudes and emotions more powerfully, which leads to brand loyalty and trust. Therefore, brand personality should come first and all content should evolve from that. The following Figure 3. portrays a synthesis of this study's theoretical findings.



**Figure 3. Synthesis of Theoretical Findings** (Aaker 1996; De Chernatory 1999; Herskovitz & Crystal 2010)

## 4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Both primary and secondary data were utilized in order to respond to the research questions. First, two content marketing professionals from two different media agencies were interviewed to get an idea of how content marketing is generally utilized. Lastly, the author chose a case company that reflects the research subject – communicating brand personality via content marketing – well. Red Bull was chosen as a good example. So, all in all, there were three cases – the two content marketing professionals from two media agencies and the case Red Bull (See Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Empirical Cases of the Research**

Red Bull was studied by observing secondary data of the company and its marketing. Online articles about Red Bull were utilized in order to get an idea of Red Bull's brand personality and content marketing. In order to answer to the main research question – how intended brand personality can be communicated via content marketing – Red Bull's branded content online was observed and analyzed. This study focuses on analyzing the moving images, as they are the most dominant part of the case company's content marketing. However, also one larger-scale content marketing project was analyzed, because it reflects the brand's personality well. The analysis of Red Bull's branded contents was made keeping in mind the brand's personality. The author analyzed the verbals and visuals of the moving images, as well as the story behind them. Characters, plots, tone of voice, locations and music were analyzed.

The interviewees were chosen in a way that a broad view of the subject could be achieved. The first interviewee is a content marketing specialist, who works in a Finnish media agency. The specialist has multiple customer companies, that vary in terms of company size and industry. She runs content marketing projects for the client companies. Her tasks vary from smaller projects to entirely outsourced content creation. Additionally, she works with social media content and community management. The author chose to interview a specialist with many clients in order to set light on how things are generally done when it comes to B2C content marketing. The second interviewee is a social media account manager, who works in an international media agency. Her job is to consult one client company about content marketing in social media. The client is a multinational technology company, and the consultant is in charge of the brand's social media content in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. In addition to the interview, the author observed the tech company's content marketing in other channels. This way, other content marketing channels in addition to social media – such as corporate blogs and website content – could also be analyzed and a broader view could be obtained. This interviewee was chosen because it provides a specific case example about content marketing in big, multinational corporation. In order to avoid confusion, the author refers to the first interviewee with

many clients as a specialist, and to the second interviewee (with the tech company client) as a consultant.

As Saunders et al. (2009, 320) suggests, the semi-structured interviews in this study met three demands. First, the interviewer is able to prepare the interview, being aware of the topic and the quality of questions beforehand. Also, there can be differences between the content and the flow in the interviews, as each interviewee has their own expertise et cetera. Finally, the interviewer can present additional questions that are needed to obtain all the necessary data. The interview questions were made based on the theoretical part of the study, as well as on the research questions. The interview questions differed slightly between the two interviews, as they had different amount of client companies. The purpose of the interviews is to add knowledge about content marketing and brand personality communication and finally, to answer the research questions.

The interviews were executed first by email and after that, in some cases the discussion continued by a phone conversation so that the interviewees could elaborate and explain their answers and the interviewer had the chance to present additional questions. If there was no need for a phone conversation, the additional questions were sent by email as well. Email and phone interviews were chosen due to interviewees' tight schedules and their preferences, and because in some cases, circumstances (e.g. interviewee abroad) demanded it. Another reason for choosing email interviews, was that the documentation is easy and accurate, and the conversation does not get easily sidetracked. What comes to the documentation of the phone interview, the discussion was not recorded, but notes were made in order to recall all the important information. Some of the interviews were executed in English, and some in Finnish. The results of the Finnish interviews were translated into English afterwards.

## **5. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

In this chapter, the author goes through the empirical results found in the interviews and via observation. This chapter has two parts. In both parts, the results are arranged to correspond with the theoretical part of the research and the findings are contrasted into theory. First, the findings of the interviews are presented in order to set light on how companies generally operate when it comes to branding and content marketing. In the second part, Red Bull case is presented as an example of successful brand personality creation via content marketing.

### **5.1. Interviews with the Content Marketing Professionals**

This is the first part of the empirical results and findings. In this chapter, the author goes through the findings of the interviews, starting with branding manners and moving on to content marketing. Lastly, these findings are summarized and synthesized to form an understanding of the connection between brand personality and content marketing.

#### **5.1.1. Brand Personalities and their Communication**

According to the content marketing specialist, her clients are very aware of the brand guidelines and other brand-related issues, as they usually represent the marketing or communications of the company. Additionally, her clients are often big companies, in which the brand is well thought. The agency often receives a brand book and other material, as well as discusses the brand values, culture, positioning, personality and how to approach customers, together with the client company. In other words, clients have defined brand identity and brand personality, and these are also clearly communicated to the media agency. So, in most cases, the agency takes brand as

given. However, there are some cases in which brand identity and personality are not taken as given, but the agency needs to work on these to attain clarification. For example, if a company is new to the Finnish market, the brand must be positioned in oppose to Finnish competitors in the industry. The agency must contemplate together with the client, what is the way to approach consumers in contrast to competitors' approaches. Other situations in which the agency needs to rethink positioning with the client, are increased competition in the market or a change of strategy. Content to academia (De Chernatory 1999), the specialist recognizes the link between positioning and brand personality. She understands that personality characteristics exist inside the position of the brand. This way, when position of the brand is changing, also brand personality changes.

The consultant's tech customer, on the other hand, has a desire to create and maintain a brand identity, but the company struggles with that. According to the consultant, the customer aims to be innovative and "ahead of the curve". "The aim is to create new, exiting innovations and to be known from those and to appeal to people who also uphold those characteristics", she explains. Apparently, the tech customer has no intended brand personality, or at least the customer does not communicate it to the media agency. So, it can be interpreted that brand personality is at least not a key aspect to the tech company's branding. However, by observing company's content marketing, it seems like the company aims to emphasize certain characteristics of the brand, such as innovativeness, modernity and honesty.

### **5.1.2. Content Marketing of Companies**

This chapter examines how companies generally utilize content marketing. Research findings about content marketing objectives, strategies, channels, as well as content creation itself are presented.

## **Objectives**

In the Finnish media agency, measurable goals for the content are always set. These can be for example conversions, leads or engagement. The goal of content marketing can also be for example to create a brand community. The specialist emphasizes that content marketing always aims to support general business objectives, so the content marketing objectives stem from there. This is content to Pulizzi's view (2014, 48-79) that no matter what the means are, content marketing always aims at financial benefits for the company. The specialist also remarks that content marketing objectives are often achieved only after longer time. She considers it challenging that the results of content marketing are not visible fast enough, comparing to the money spent and effort made. "In order to clarify the objectives of content marketing for the company, a content strategy is constructed", the specialist explains. According to the other interviewee, her tech customer's most important content marketing objectives are to raise awareness of the brand and new products as well as to drive traffic to the company website (i.e. conversions). Awareness and conversions as objectives are also recognized in academia (Rose & Pulizzi 2011; Pulizzi 2012), and digital content marketing is considered especially powerful in spreading awareness, as it enables and encourages sharing (Light 2014).

## **Strategy**

Although the need for content marketing strategy is identified (CMI 2016a; CMI 2016b; Gulden 2012), the content marketing specialist remarks that most customer companies not yet have one. However, the companies do have some idea about what they want to communicate to consumers via content marketing. At the beginning of the cooperation, the media agency helps companies to define a content strategy. The strategy answers to the questions *to whom, where, why, what, and how*. As the most essential thing in content marketing are the target groups, the strategy creation starts with defining them. According to the specialist, there is usually a lot of work in the

clarification of key target groups. Next, the channels to reach the target groups are clarified. For example, young people are easy to reach in social media. In addition, the strategy defines the goals of content marketing – what the company wants to achieve with content. Here, also the measurement and analytics of the results are covered. Additionally, content strategy clarifies what kind of messages and tone of voice are used to reach the target group.

Like many customers of the specialist, the multinational technology company does not have a content marketing strategy either. Although there is not a clear strategy written down, the company has defined for example target groups and goals they want to pursue. They also have an idea what kind of content they want to be created for the brand. Unlike in the Finnish media agency, the international agency does not draw a strategy for the company. The goals, target groups and content type are discussed with the customer, but a formal strategy is not formed. The consultant recognizes that a written content marketing strategy would simplify and unify the operations of a big company.

## **Channels**

In the Finnish media agency, content marketing channels are completely chosen according to the target groups. For example, in case of a young target group, social media tends to be effective. According to the specialist, target groups also define the suitable content type. However, the interviewee rather talks about meeting points than of channels – what are the right meeting points for each target group. Many new channels, such as brand applications, Snapchat and live video streaming through Periscope and Facebook are tried out, although the specialist is not yet certain of their effectiveness. The specialist has not used podcasts with her clients, but she has run into them in the media, so they are already utilized in Finland, for example by tele-company DNA. In her opinion, what comes to the new content marketing channels, the challenge is to get enough followers so that it is profitable to produce content.

In case of the technology company, multiple content marketing channels are utilized. Content is shared through social media channels, company website, corporate blog and e-mail marketing. Of social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube are used in B2C marketing. The content marketing consultant agrees with the specialist, that there are different audiences in different platforms, and remarks that because of this the content should be adjusted for each channel. For example, there is a younger audience on Instagram. Additionally, the tech company considers that Twitter is the best channel to post news, whereas on Instagram, lifestyle images work the best. Facebook, on the other hand, is a platform that suits for content which is a mix of news and lifestyle images. Although the media agency sees it important to adjust the tech company's content to each channel, in reality, the adjustment is rarely made. This is, according to the consultant, due to lack of content and often also lack of customer's effort to differentiate the content. This indicates to the challenge of producing enough content, recognized also in academia (Pulizzi 2012). So, in the end, many times the same content ends up in Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Clearly the need to differentiate content stems from the diversity of the brand and its target groups.

In addition to content marketing in social media, technology company utilizes corporate blogs and company website to publish content. The multinational corporation has multiple blogs. They have both global and regional blogs, in which news about the corporation and its offering are posted. However, most of the posts are not linked to actual people by publishing the writer's name, which, according to Singh et al. (2008) would be a great way to promote authenticity and humanize a big, faceless corporation. Tech company seems to utilize blogs as a way to increase transparency (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010) and to reinforce certain brand associations, such as innovativeness and sustainability. The tech company website, on the other hand, is mainly used for sharing product-related content and functional attributes such as support, which is considered customer content (Karayanni & Baltas 2003). There is also some company content (Karayanni & Baltas 2003) considering corporate culture and values, however

these aspects are more in display in the corporate blogs. It seems like the technology company has considered their corporate identity when planning the website content, as Karayanni and Baltas (2003) suggest. According to the researchers, company content is also needed for the website to gain credibility. According to Fill (2009, 754), a balance between functional attributes and emotional appeals is needed. The focus of the tech company website is rational and there are only few emotional aspects. The emotional aspects are mainly the above-mentioned company content about values et cetera. Hence the rational-emotional balance is not quite achieved. Balance between information, products and services (Fill 2009, 754), is on the other hand, achieved.

### **Content Creation**

According to the content marketing consultant, the biggest challenge of content marketing is to make the content relevant and engaging. The creation of truly engaging content is identified as the biggest challenge of content marketing also in academia (Pulizzi 2012). According to the consultant, this challenge is partly due to the contradiction between what the company wants from the content and what the consumers want from it. In other words, it is hard to create content for the client company that pleases both the company and the consumer. The company wants the product to be pushed in the content, in a way that the product appears as the hero of the video or image. Consumers, on the other hand, appreciate lifestyle content and behind the scenes material that shows the human side of a big corporation. This view of the content marketing consultant is in line with Singh et al. (2008) statement that content marketing can be a great way to humanize otherwise faceless business.

Companies seem to not yet realize that the most important thing in content marketing is indeed to engage customers, and many times this happens by creating content that has little to do with company's product, and more to do with consumers and their needs (Davis 2012, 23). While the media agency knows that content that is too focused on the product does not work, the client company does not always agree and demands

content that pushes the product. “We have campaigns that are done with big budgets that push the product, and those are the ones that perform the worst in our channels”, the consultant explains. In these campaigns, the engaging element of content is missing.

Careful targeting is crucial in order to create engaging content (Pulizzi 2012). Content to this, the specialist emphasizes that defining target group is the most important thing in content marketing. Her client companies usually have three to five target groups because after that, content marketing becomes challenging if target audience is too fragmented. As mentioned, the Finnish media agency does a lot of work to clarify the target groups for the customer. Sometimes, if a client has both B2B and B2C customers, the agency has to educate the company that B2C customers are not a homogenous mass, but need to be divided into different segments. What comes to tech company’s practices, careful targeting is not quite achieved. According to the content marketing consultant, the tech company has defined a target group, however they also aim to talk to average consumer, which, according to the interviewee, leads to the brand being a bit “all over the place”. The consultant agrees with Pulizzi (2012), that the tech company tries to attain too wide of a target audience, which makes it difficult to provide engaging content.

As the clients of the content marketing specialist vary in terms of company size and industry, also the degree of outsourcing varies. The co-operations vary from small scale native advertising to wholly outsourced content marketing. According to the specialist, companies often have either a small in-house team or at least some content creators in marketing or communications department, for example social media coordinators. In addition, the client often has other partners in addition to this particular media agency, so the outsourced content creation may be divided between several partners. These can be for example advertising agency, media agency and content marketing agency. According to the second interviewee, the technology company outsources most of its content marketing. Her job as an agency personnel is to recommend content for the

customer and plan it in to their content calendar. The agency receives some material from the company and the consultant's job is to decide which channels it should be posted in and write copies to go with it. In other words, the consultant coordinates and creates content for social media channels together with the client.

According to the specialist, co-creation is often utilized by B2C brands. For example, FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) brands and brands in the tourism industry many times create content together with consumers. For instance, a travel agency brings user recommendations from social media as a part of their website content. The specialist remarks that in many target groups, peer reviews are highly valued. Therefore, companies can benefit a lot from lifting user-generated content into their content marketing channels. In case of the tech company, on the other hand, co-creation together with consumers is not utilized. "The customer has strict legal guidelines which means that we cannot share consumer content in our channels. If we want to share consumer created content we have to get people to sign elaborate contracts which is not appealing to people" the consultant explains. Drawing from the interviews, industry seems to have an effect on the utilization of user-generated content.

The content created for the specialist's clients stem from commercial or marketing calendar and from the strategic themes of the company. Hence the ideas for content creation come from these, the specialist explains. The other interviewee's opinion is content with the view of the specialist: the ideas for content creation come from need (i.e. Christmas, event or new product launch) or from the global headquarters. The agency gets seasonal and campaign content from the headquarters, whereas other content is created locally. "For example, now the customer is launching a new smart swatch but the assets we get from headquarters do not feature some functions that are useful here in the Nordics, so we are creating content for that", the consultant explains. As mentioned, consumers prefer lifestyle and behind-the-scenes content that humanizes the big corporation. Additionally, the tech company's consultant says that

short videos and texts work best in social media. According to her, this is due to the fact that people have short attention spans in social media. This is content with Budikova's view (2014) that for shorter formats are more attractive to consumers in social media.

### **5.1.3. Brand Personalities in Content Marketing**

According to the specialist, brand is always taken into account in content marketing. Positioning, personality, values, culture and the way to approach consumers affect the means by which content marketing is done. In other words, the dimensions of brand identity model (De Chernatory 1999), including brand personality, are considered. The specialist states that all marketing communications, including content marketing, stem from the essence of the brand. "Brand identity and brand personality are the foundations of content marketing; content marketing evolves from there" she explains. This is content to the views of Plummer (2000) and Aaker and Fournier (1995), that intended brand personality should guide all marketing communications and this way be an important part of creative strategy. According to the specialist, brand personality affects especially the tone of voice used in the company's content marketing. The influence of brand personality on the tone of voice is significant. The specialist explains that the tone of voice is different for example when the brand personality is elitist versus when it is tough (sophistication vs. ruggedness by Aaker 1997). The tone of voice can be for example professional, formal or unformal, depending on the brand personality.

However, the specialist has never had a client company whose main goal of content marketing is to communicate an intended brand identity or personality. For her, brand identity is the foundation of content marketing, not the goal of it. In her opinion, content marketing is not branding-focused, at least not in Finland. The main goal of content marketing with her clients is not creating or reinforcing brand associations, although customers often have certain characteristics (e.g. Finnish origin) they wish to

emphasize. She explains that content marketing is rather utilized alongside advertising, with the objective to bring up the sales. In her opinion, this is due to the decreased effectiveness of traditional advertising, as the use of ad blockers is increasing and the traditional channels are no longer relevant. The advantage of content marketing, on the other hand, is that it can be practiced in any channel, the specialist remarks. However, she is aware that content marketing could be utilized in branding as well, for example to raise brand awareness or if a certain brand wants to position themselves as tough and extreme. Nevertheless, at the moment, this is not the case with her clients. As the content strategy determines the goals of content marketing, if communicating brand personality would be an important objective of content marketing, the strategy would include how personality will be communicated to consumers.

As the tech company has not defined a brand personality, it is obviously not really considered in content marketing. Communicating brand personality is not an objective of the tech company's content marketing. Brand identity, on the other hand, is defined, and the company wishes to communicate it to consumers via content. Nevertheless, the main objective of the tech company's content marketing is not branding. Instead of aiming to create or reinforce an intended brand identity, other objectives more straightly connected to financials (conversions, traffic and awareness) dominate and drive content marketing. Shorter term financials are prioritized over long-term brand gains, which is common but not recommended according to academia (Holliman & Rowley 2014). Hence, although the company wishes to communicate the intended brand identity via content, in reality, it is most of the time not communicated, at least when it comes to social media content. This has led to inconsistency in content marketing (Herskovitz & Crystal 2010), as the consultant felt that the brand is a bit "all over the place". However, by observing tech company's corporate blogs, some characteristics of the brand personality – although not defined – can be recognized. Subjects of contents consistently refer to certain personality characteristics. Corporate blogs' posts emphasize innovative, modern, honest and caring nature of the brand. For example, blog posts tell how the company continuously seeks new ways to innovate and keep

up with the rapidly changing world. What comes to honest and caring nature, there are blog posts about fighting the global challenges and helping those in need. The company also clearly communicates that it cares about its employees.

According to the consultant, the brand identity statement is often not followed in content marketing and there are many reasons for this. Although there is an intended brand identity, the big size and diversity of the brand make it difficult to match global and local strategies. Hence, even though there are clear brand guidelines, the consultant finds that they are often not followed. The multinational tech company defines its target group as individuals who are ready adopt new and are trendsetters in their own communities. However, at the same time the company tries to talk to an average consumer too, which, according to the consultant, makes the customer vague about their requests. "...the customer has an ideal image of what they wish to create, but in reality, that ideal image is hard to reach", the consultant summarizes. Hence the media agency is forced to compromise by taking into account both the target group and average consumer, which leads to the fact that content is not always aligned with brand identity. Additionally, what makes the situation even more challenging, is that different departments of the customer company, such as mobile or TV department, have different expectations for the content.

#### **5.4. Case Red Bull**

Red Bull is the world's most consumed energy drink, sold by an Austrian company Red Bull GmbH, founded in the mid 1980's. The launch of Red Bull Energy Drink created a completely new product category and with the help of unique marketing concept, after 29 years the product has spread into 171 countries and 62 billion cans have been sold so far. The company has nearly 12 000 employees in 171 countries. (Ayyar 2015; Red Bull 2017a) In 2016, Forbes listed Red Bull as #74 of world's most valuable brands (Forbes 2017). One of the main reasons for the brand's success is its strong brand

personality and top-of-the-line content marketing. Red Bull is a good example of successful emotional branding. The company has managed to increase the meaning of a brand for the consumer (Levy 1959) and to create lasting emotional bond between consumer and the brand. Red Bull is no longer a beverage company but a lifestyle icon (Cnossen et al. 2017). “Since the beginning, it has been a brand philosophy and how to look upon the world, rather than pure marketing for consumer goods”, CEO Mateschitz stated in a rare interview for FastCoCompany (2017). Instead of selling the tangible product, Red Bull sells associations and a lifestyle (Carlaw 2011). Red Bull’s brand helps the consumers to express themselves (Belk 1988) and brand personality has become a lasting competitive advantage for them.

Red Bull was one of the first brands to create generally valuable content that its customers sought out (Ayyar 2015). “Red Bull is a publishing empire that also happens to sell a beverage.” O’Brien (2012) stated in an online article for Mashable. This statement describes how important part of Red Bull’s brand content is. In 2007, Red Bull created its own multi-platform media company, Red Bull Media House. The company offers high quality media products for TV, mobile, digital, audio and print, with a focus on sports, culture and lifestyle. It produces, publishes, distributes and licenses premium content. Red Bull Media House (RBMH) started in Europe but later expanded to America as well. Nowadays company has around 1000 employees, according to RBMH LinkedIn profile. Today, Red Bull Media House has become one of the world’s leading media companies. (LinkedIn; Red Bull Media House 2017a)

#### **5.4.1. Red Bull Brand Personality and its Communication**

David Aaker (2017) recognized two different brand personalities of Red Bull that live side-by-side. First, there is the serious athlete successfully working his way through difficult challenges. According to Red Bull’s CEO, the brand stands for the promise that it “gives you wings”, which means that it assists people to achieve whatever they want,

by providing for example energy, power, skills and abilities. Red Bull encourages people to have an active lifestyle, take challenges and be performance-oriented. “When you work or study, do your very best. When you do sports, go for your limits. When you have fun or just relax, be aware of it and appreciate it”, Mateschitz demonstrates. (FastCoCompany 2017) The other personality is fun-loving and humorous, which can be recognized for example in Red Bull’s slogan “Red Bull gives you wings” and in their funny cartoon ads (Aaker 2017) on TV. Fun character is also presented in many of the contents Red Bull produces. Both successful and fun character of Red Bull brand personality co-exist well together, as even when athletes are encountering difficult challenges, the fun factor is always present, because of the nature of the extreme sports. In the following table, Red Bull’s brand personality characteristics have been classified by using brand personality dimensions by Aaker (1997). The classification indicates that dominating dimensions of Red Bull’s brand personality are sincerity, excitement and competence. Excitement seems to be the most powerful dimension.

**Table 2. Red Bull’s Brand Personality Classified with Five Dimensions Framework (Modified from Aaker 1997)**

<b>Sincerity</b>	<b>Excitement</b>	<b>Competence</b>	<b>Sophistication</b>	<b>Ruggedness</b>
Authentic	Adventurous	Successful	Cool	Extreme
Down-to-earth	Exciting	Ambitious	Edgy	Dangerous
Fun	Risk-taker	Performance-oriented		
Playful	Adrenaline-packed	Energetic		
Young-minded	Brave	Passionate		
	Freewheeling			
	Bold			
	Creative			

Drawing from De Chernatory's brand identity model (1999), the brand identity of Red Bull is formed by positioning, brand personality, vision and culture, relationships and brand identity presentation (See Figure 3).



**Figure 4. Red Bull Brand Identity Formation** (Modified from De Chernatory 1999)

Corporate culture and brand personality are the most dominant factors forming the brand identity of Red Bull. They have a clear link between them, as the brand personality is stemming from the corporate culture. Red Bull's adventurous brand personality is a reflection of the company's freewheeling, quirky corporate culture (Pangarkar & Agarwal 2013). Drawing from Aaker's thoughts (1997), Red Bull has been successful in communicating the brand values through brand personality. Company's founder Mateschitz personifies Red Bull's corporate culture, as he relies on his gut-feeling instead of research, avoids bureaucracy and pursues his passion for flying. Content with this passion and the slogan of the brand, Red Bull has even paid for flying lessons for its employees. (Pangarkar & Agarwal 2013) Red Bull also has its own air force team (Red Bull 2017b). Privately-owned organization enables this kind of culture that emphasizes passion over efficiency. Shareholders of a publicly owned company would not be happy about some of the decisions made in Red Bull: for example, the caps of Red Bull mineral water can only be sealed on the nights of full moon (Financial Times 2011). The company's corporate culture makes Red Bull's brand personality authentic, as the people behind the company truly share the values that the brand represents.

The positioning of Red Bull can be divided into functional and emotional positioning, as Baines et al. (2008, 234) suggest. The most important functional attribute of Red Bull is that it provides energy. This attribute differentiates Red Bull from for example many sodas. The emotional positioning is important for Red Bull, as it differentiates brand from competing energy drink producers. For example, while Red Bull promises to provide energy, skills and abilities for people so that they can achieve their dreams and goals in life, Monster's slogan is "Unleash the beast!" which creates a totally different association. Hence Red Bull is associated with intellectual efforts and Monster is more often associated with partying for example. Even though all energy drinks are more or less related to extreme sports, the brands create different brand associations and thus consumers perceive them differently. What comes to stakeholder relationships, Red Bull has strong, a little unconventional relationship with its consumers. Red Bull treats

its customers as friends instead of customers. Instead of persuading the consumers to buy, Red Bull is hanging out with them, and this seems to be working: customers prefer being cool and doing exciting things with their favorite brand in oppose to being sold to (Ayyar 2015).

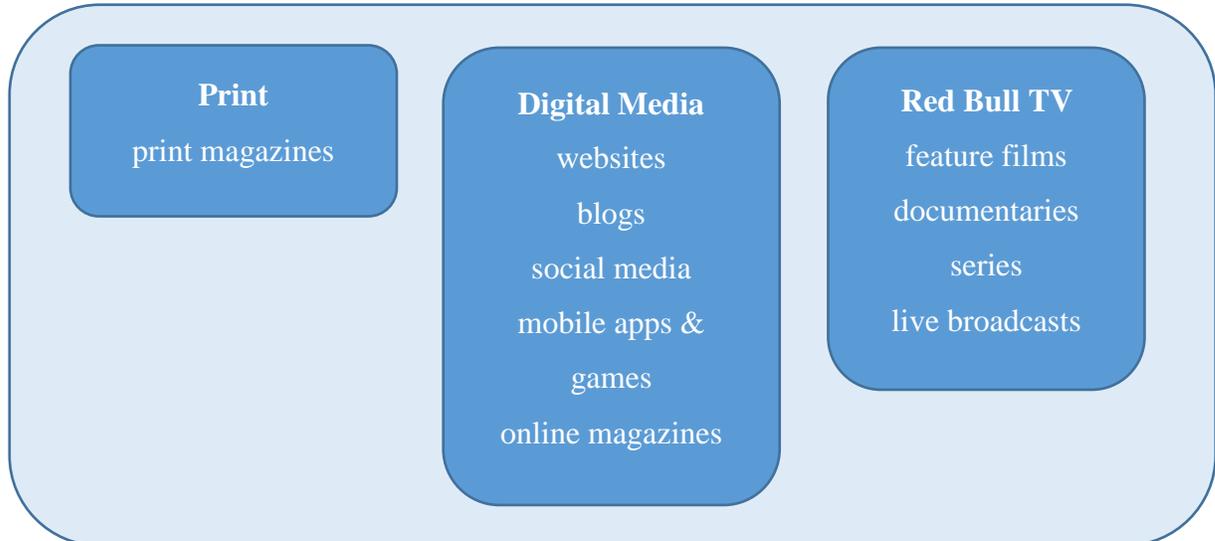
Red Bull's brand identity and personality is presented to consumers via above-mentioned friendly relationships, but also through a couple of Aaker's brand personality drivers (1996). The main brand personality drivers of Red Bull seem to be sponsorships and content marketing. Advertising is also used, but the focus is clearly on sponsorships and content marketing, while traditional advertising is used to support them. Red Bull uses advertising to create and reinforce especially the fun character of its brand personality. "Red Bull gives you wings" slogan and funny cartoons have been seen in their TV advertisements. Energetic character is also often reinforced. For instance, there is a Red Bull ad in which Santa is flying without his reindeers after having Red Bull energy drink (Youtube 2014a). Another ad tells about a superhero, who hears a woman calling for help. He opens the fridge looking for Red Bull, but as it turns out, he has run out. He shuts the window and shrugs his. "No Red Bull, no wings" the ad displays. (Youtube 2010a)

Just as its content marketing, Red Bull takes its sponsorships to the extreme as well. This is important as involvement in extreme sports adds authenticity of the brand. "Red Bull believes in owning teams and events rather than being one of several sponsors", states Aaker (2017) in an online article for Prophet. Additionally, Red Bull has a wide range of relatively inexpensive sponsorships (600 athletes worldwide) instead of few high-profile ones (Aaker 2012; FastCoCompany 2017). Red Bull's strategy focuses on the cumulative impact that the Red Bull umbrella brand creates. These sponsorships are successful especially because they are very on-brand and highly consistent in long term. Also, the creativeness and edginess of the sponsorships create buzz in media. (Aaker 2012) Judging by all of this, it seems like sponsorships and content marketing

go hand in hand in Red Bull's marketing strategy, and together form the foundations of the Red Bull brand personality.

#### 5.4.2. Red Bull's Content Marketing

Red Bull understands how pull marketing and putting customers and their needs to the centrum benefits the brand. The company is putting lots of efforts into being able to offer compelling premium content to customers free of charge, and this effort has paid off, as content marketing has become one of the main factors behind Red Bull's success. Red Bull publishes content through all media channels and all types of devices (LinkedIn 2017). Content is published in digital media, print and TV (See Figure 5), and customized also for mobile devices (Red Bull Media House 2017a).



**Figure 5. Red Bull Content Marketing Channels** (LinkedIn 2012; Red Bull Media House 2017a)

Digital media includes websites, such as redbullrecords.com, redbullairforce.com, redbullstratos.com and redbullcontentpool.com. Red Bull Content Pool is an innovative platform that offers wide selection of content free of charge for consumers and partners, who share it forward. Content pool provides over 90 000 high quality photos and 15 000 HD videos to download for free and with all rights cleared for editorial use. Additionally, Content Pool Premium offers for example TV and cinema products that can be licensed for commercial use like broadcasting or home entertainment. (Red Bull Media House 2017c) In addition to Red Bull websites, digital media includes blogs (e.g. Red Bull Stratos blog) and social media channels. Red Bull also has mobile applications and games (e.g. Red Bull Racers, Red Bull TV, Red Bull Air Race the Game) and online magazines such as All In and @Large (Red Bull Media House 2017b). For Red Bull TV, Red Bull Media House produces series, documentaries and feature films focused on sports and lifestyle (LinkedIn 2017). Red Bull TV also shows live events such as FIA World Rally Championships, surfing competitions, even Rio Carnival (Red Bull TV 2017 Live Events). Red Bull's print, on the other hand, includes magazines like Red Bulletin that covers subjects from sports, lifestyle and culture. Red Bulletin is also available online and as an app and e-paper, which describes Red Bull's diverse use of content marketing channels. (Red Bulletin 2017) Many times Red Bull shares the same content in multiple channels, for example a series is often published in both Red Bull TV and Youtube. Sharing the same content in different channels is possible for Red Bull because they have a clear and specific target group.

Content is produced in Red Bull Media House and in co-operation with the athletes. RBMH has a production studio, where writers, filmmakers, editors and other creatives produce premium content (O'Brien 2012). By involving famous athletes Red Bull benefits from their reputation, as including them increases content attractiveness (Budikova 2014). Red Bull Media House also collaborates with other media companies to create content. Additionally, user-generated content is utilized in Red Bull's marketing. The company has formed a partnership with GoPro – a UGC pioneer – that includes for example content production and distribution (Red Bull Media House 2016).

GoPro cameras are convenient for harnessing very on-brand UGC about adrenaline-packed activities, and the co-operation will broaden Red Bull's opportunities for UGC utilization.

Red Bull chooses not to reveal its marketing strategies (O'Brien 2012). Therefore, they can only be speculated on the basis of company's actions. However, Red Bull Media House states that its mission is to fascinate (Red Bull Media House 2017a). RBMH clearly wants to offer compelling content, that amazes and astonishes, even surprises the viewers. Part of Red Bull's content marketing strategy is clearly creating this kind of newsworthy content that organically spreads around internet. Red Bull's content marketing objectives seem to be promoting brand personality and to create consumer engagement. In the next chapter, the author gives examples of Red Bull's engaging contents and examines how brand personality is created through them.

In order to engage consumers successfully, Red Bull practices careful targeting, like Pulizzi (2012) suggests. Red Bull's main target group is 18- to 34-year-old men who enjoy being outdoors, taking risks and having fun. The company began to approach the target group by sponsoring extreme athletes like mountain bikers and base jumpers, as well as "e-sports". These were all the kind of sports that did not already have big brands dominating the sponsorships. Red Bull was successful picking niche sports that however had significant audiences and followers suitable for its target audience profile. (Ayyar 2015) Red Bull found an effective way to reach its target audience, as the brand went where the audience already was – to the races and online. With this kind of natural meeting point, Red Bull was able to pull its audience in, without having to push marketing messages out.

In addition to defining a specific target group, Red Bull understands that in order to engage consumers with content, the product has to become second. This is content to Davis's (2012, 23) view. Consumers are not going to watch a video, TV series, or a movie about an energy drink. Therefore, Red Bull puts its customers first, which can be

seen in Red Bull's videos that were made together with street trials biker MacAskill.. Instead of focusing on the energy drink, the focus of the videos is on bike stunts, views and the story that each video tells. Although the focus is not Red Bull, there is some subtle branding to discover. MacAskill wears a Red Bull helmet, drinks the energy drink at some point and there is a race car with the brand logo as a set piece. However, it is clear that the story becomes first, and the energy drink second. According to Nick Amies, a freelancer for Red Bull's lifestyle magazine Red Bulletin, he has never been asked to include Red Bull into any of his stories (O'Brien 2012). "The promotion of the brand comes through the activities I cover", he says. "...The idea is for The Red Bulletin to be seen as a great lifestyle magazine first and a Red Bull project second", Amies continues in his interview for Mashable.

According to McKee (2003), in order to persuade with a story, much creativity, insight and good storytelling skills are needed, as the story needs to touch consumer's emotions and energy, be memorable. Red Bull is a talented storyteller, as it has managed to evoke feelings and create customer engagement with its creative stories that keep astonishing the consumers. Out of the box thinking, low hierarchy culture and talented writers, photographers and other creative types are all behind Red Bull's successful storytelling. The academia identified many characters that make a brand story engaging to customers. Red Bull fulfills many of them, as their stories are authentic, humorous (Chiu, Hsies & Kuo 2012), continuous, interesting (Light 2014), universal, relevant, enlightening, entertaining and touching (Baker & Boyle 2014). Red Bull's stories are examined in the following chapter.

### **5.4.3. Red Bull Brand Personality in Content Marketing – Analysis of the Branded Contents**

Moving images seem to be the essence of Red Bull's content marketing, so they are the focus of analysis here. However, also one larger content marketing project of Red

Bull is analyzed. The chosen contents are analyzed with an emphasis on brand personality – how can Red Bull’s brand personality be seen in the videos? How does Red Bull create and reinforce the characteristics of its brand personality?

### **Way Back Home, Imagine & Epecuen with Danny MacAskill (Videos)**

Red Bull has made three videos in co-operation with a street trials rider Danny MacAskill. The videos were shared in social media and Red Bull TV. Although Way Back Home, Imagine and Epecuen are all evolved around MacAskill’s incredible skill, there is also a clear story in each video. All videos are premium quality with impressive production and talented photographers et cetera. Despite the professional execution, the videos are not over-produced and the feeling remains authentic. Way Back Home was the first of three videos Red Bull made with MacAskill. It follows MacAskill’s bike journey from Edinburg back to his home town Dunvegan in the Isle of Skye. His amazing stunts have somewhat 39 million viewers. (Youtube 2010b) The energetic character of Red Bull’s brand personality is clearly communicated in Way Back Home, as the journey is long. There is also an everyman theme: MacAskill is just a regular man on his way home. His clothes and appearance are very everyman, as are the locations. This all creates authentic, down-to-earth character to Red Bull’s brand personality, even though MacAskill’s skills are extraordinary. Also the indie music on the background by The Jezabels and Loch Lomond adds authenticity.

The second video, Imagine (60 million views), gives the viewer a possibility to get inside MacAskill’s mind. Imagine starts by representing MacAskill as a child, playing in his room with a miniature bike, doing stunts with building blocks. MacAskill’s childhood home and its surroundings are also shown in the beginning. The video continues to an imaginary world full of huge building blocks and other toys, where the grown-up MacAskill makes stunts with his bike. In the end, the video goes back to his childhood room and his mother tells him to stop playing and come for a tea. (Youtube 2013) Everyman theme clearly continues in this video, as MacAskill is represented as

a normal boy. This once again, reinforces the authentic character of brand personality, which is especially important because most of this video is “non-realistic”, as it happens in imaginary world, inside MacAskill’s mind. Additionally, creativity is emphasized. MacAskill’s stunts in all the videos surely demand a creative mind. However, the creativity of Red Bull’s brand personality is most clearly represented in *Imagine*, as MacAskill’s creative mind is demonstrated: he builds constructions by using building blocks, pens, cards et cetera to realize his vision. This also indicates the playfulness of Red Bull brand. *Imagine* has more powerful music than the other videos, and the song – Houston’s *Runaway* – can be interpreted to indicate rebellion.

In the third video, *Epecuen* (12 million views), MacAskill brings back to life the forgotten town of Epecuén in Argentina. The town has been submerged for most of the past 25 years. In the beginning of the film, Epecuen’s only resident throughout those times, Pablo Novac, cycles in the ruins of the town on a rusty bike, explaining about the history and ending with: “I no longer see what use this place has for us now...”. Then MacAskill comes and explores Epecuen’s ruins creatively by bike. (Youtube 2014b) Although adventurous and exciting character of the brand comes through in all the videos, they are perhaps most represented in *Epecuen*, because the nature of the location is unknown, spooky even. Using an old man and telling a story with this kind of meaning, adds some caring and sincerity to otherwise bold brand personality. Also, at some point during the video, MacAskill stops to look around, clearly contemplating the history and respecting the town. There is once again indie music by The Jezabels on the background, which adds authenticity. All in all, *Way Back Home*, *Imagine* and *Epecuen* all demonstrate the extreme, risk-taking nature of Red Bull’s brand personality, as MacAskill bravely takes risks when biking in extreme conditions. Additionally, the talented storytelling in each video reinforces the authentic and sincere character of Red Bull’s brand personality.

### **Last Call for Mr. Paul (Video)**

Red Bull made Last Call for Mr. Paul video together with a free-runner Jason Paul and shared it in social media. In the video, Jason Paul is late for his flight so he uses his amazing free-running skills in pursuit to catch his flight on time. Young and reckless Jason freewheelingly passes the security check of Munich airport and dodges from the airport staff all the way to the aircraft. (Youtube 2016) He has a laidback appearance with Red Bull cap and cool casual black clothes. Jason is a well-thought representation of Red Bull's brand personality. When Jason finally makes it to his seat, he realizes he is on the wrong plane. This reflects the humorous brand personality of Red Bull. Half way the video, he grabs Red Bull Energy Drink from a man for more energy, so the drink is present in the content, but again, surely not the center of it.

### **Behind the Lines – Deeper (Reality series)**

Behind the Lines is a Red Bull TV series that follows big wave surfer Andrew Cotton's journey. The series shows what drives Cotton to track down the world's most giant swells and whether the few seconds of glory that the perfect wave brings is worth the hard work. The episodes concern mental and physical preparation, the equipment, how to track down the giants and finally, the reward in the end that makes it all worthwhile. Episodes are from six to eight minutes, which makes it easy to watch another one, and to become engaged like this. (Red Bull TV 2015) Competence, excitement and ruggedness are strongly communicated brand personality traits in this series. Cotton is very persistent and ambitious, and talks a lot about the importance to believe in oneself. Big wave surfing is very stressful at times, and Cotton needs to cope with exhaustion. The excitement comes from risk-taking and adrenaline. Cotton's life is constantly at risk, but then again, big wave surfing is high risk - high reward sport, full of adrenaline. Also, every track-down is an adventure. The series concerns how to cope with fear, what good can come of it, and how it is important to keep calm in dangerous situations. The tough surfing conditions reflect the ruggedness of Red Bull brand. Cotton surfs in

stormy weather and sometimes the big swell is chased down to the freezing North, where a snow storm tests Cotton and his crew. The informal tone of voice and the little jokes in the series, reinforce the laid-back, fun-loving brand personality, which is otherwise not so visible in this particular series.

### **Who is JOB? (Reality series)**

Who is JOB? is a Red Bull TV show that follows a champion pro surfer Jamie O'Brien's dream life. The surfer from Hawaii travels the world with his friends and the show captures the craziness of his cool everyday life – surfing, partying, contests, girls, joking around and most importantly, having fun with friends. (Red Bull TV 2017) Who is JOB? is more about the fun-loving character of Red Bull's brand personality, whereas Behind the Lines was about competence and braveness. O'Brien and his friends' *live while we're young* -mentality reinforces Red Bull's young-minded brand personality. In Who is JOB?, there is a lot of joking around. In one episode, O'Brien and his friend are in Bali, when they decide to get a makeover trying to get the dorky tourist -look. After, they take a surfing lesson in Kuta Beach, pretending to never have tried surfing before. The fun-loving personality is also stemming from the informal, joking-type of tone of voice that O'Brien and his friends use. The series is all about having fun, enjoying life and doing what you love. In one episode, there is a story about almost 50-years-old lifestyle surfer, who doesn't surf professionally but only because he enjoys being in the water. He lives very modestly and says he doesn't need much. Surfing is his, and O'Brien's, love-of-the-life sport, which creates and reinforces Red Bull's passionate and authentic brand personality. Although it could be said that O'Brien lives a privileged life, O'Brien is good-hearted as he for example volunteers for Surf Experience Day where children can surf together with pro surfers. In Who is JOB?, O'Brien speaks nicely about others and according to other people in the series, he is modest and giving. This all creates sincerity of the brand personality, which balances the fun-loving and crazy character.

## **Stratos Mission (Content Marketing Project)**

The most famous content marketing project of Red Bull, or perhaps any company, is the Stratos mission. Stratos-related content was shared in social media, Red Bull TV, website and blog. With the help of a team of experts, Felix Baumgartner rose to approximately 39 kilometers in a stratospheric balloon and made a freefall jump before parachuting to the ground. Stratos became a world record jump. (Red Bull Stratos 2017a) Almost 8 million people watched the jump live on Red Bull TV (Cabral 2012). Red Bull built a lot of content around the whole project. Nine HD cameras, three digital cinematography cameras and three digital still cameras were installed in the capsule, whereas Baumgartner wore three additional cameras. In addition, there was of course more video technology on the ground. (Red Bull Stratos 2017b) Stratos-related content was published in many platforms. In addition to social media posts and video footage on Red Bull TV, the project deserved its own web page. On the Stratos web page, there is a gallery section with images and videos of the project (Red Bull Stratos 2017c). There is also a blog devoted for the project (Red Bull Stratos 2017d). Stratos creates and reinforces especially competence and excitement of Red Bull's brand personality. Competence comes from ambitious goals and the successful outcome. Red Bull stated that the project's mission was to transcend human limits (Red Bull Stratos 217a) and according to Stratos webpage (Red Bull Stratos 2017a), Baumgartner's successful jump in 2012 "holds the potential to provide valuable medical and scientific research data for future pioneers". Exciting character is reinforced through the brave risk-taking. Life support engineer Mike Todd commented on the risky project as follows: "On the way up without even opening the capsule door you can find yourself in a life or death situation. So it's extremely dangerous" (Red Bull Stratos 2017a).

## **Conclusion**

Brand personality statement is the objective of all Red Bull's marketing communications, including content marketing, as Plummer (2000) suggested it should

be. Content with Aaker and Fournier's view (1995) that it is essential for the people creating marketing messages to know what the intended brand personality is, content creators at Red Bull are clearly aware of the intended brand personality, and it guides the whole content creation process. Everything in Red Bull's content screams the brand's personality. Red Bull has a consistent brand persona (Herskovitz & Crystal 2010) in all the contents analyzed: despite the content and the story within, there is a cool, brave, successful yet playful brand persona present in each video, TV series or project. Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) emphasized that brand persona should come first, and the story should evolve from that, and this is clearly the case with Red Bull's branded content. All Red Bull's content marketing clearly stem from brand personality, which is highly consistent. Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) claimed that brand persona - driven storytelling has the capability to influence attitudes and emotions of customers more powerfully, which leads to loyalty and trust towards the brand. The Red Bull case study surely gives its full support to this claim.

## **6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

In this chapter, the findings of the research are summarized. More synthesis is created between the results of the empirical interviews and the case study, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of brand personalities and content marketing, as well as their connection. After going through the findings as well as theoretical contributions and managerial implications, limitations of the study are identified and direction for further research is indicated.

### **6.1. Summary and Conclusions of the Findings**

This chapter presents the summary and conclusions of this study's findings. They are classified using the research questions of this study. First, the three sub-questions are answered and finally, an answer is provided to the main research question. The sub-questions lead towards and contribute to the main question.

#### **SRQ1. How companies create and communicate intended brand personality?**

Brand personality is a factor of brand identity, which also includes positioning, values and culture, relationships and brand identity presentation. Hence brand personality stems from all these factors. They are linked together and constantly interacted. (De Chernatory 1999) In order to form a coherent and strong brand, it is important that all these factors are aligned with each other. Consistent brand has the ability to engage customers emotionally. This research combines De Chernatory's (1999) brand identity model and Aaker's (1996) theory of brand personality drivers – drawing from them, brand personality can be communicated via stakeholder communications, product-related and non-product-related personality drivers. This study concentrated on the non-product-related drivers. Companies use many non-product-related drivers to

create a brand personality. It is important for companies to think what are the drivers that have the most potential to communicate specifically their brand's character. Marketers should select a couple of personality drivers that suit to their brand personality best and concentrate on them. Also, different personality drivers can be used to create different personality characters of the same brand. For example, advertising can communicate the fun nature of the brand, whereas sponsorships can emphasize the ambitious character. This study takes into consideration brand personality creation in online environment, and therefore adds content marketing to Aaker's (1996) list of non-product-related personality drivers, as an option with lots of potential to communicate intended brand personality.

Not all companies have defined an intended brand personality. In this case, there is a need for clarification of positioning and targeting, before a brand personality statement can be formed. Large and diverse brands sometimes have challenges in this area, as they struggle with pleasing both their target group and the general public. Globalization of a brand adds challenge to branding because local and global brands need to be aligned. Clarification of positioning, target groups and brand personality is however extremely important, as lack of brand personality leads to inconsistency in marketing communications. The importance of brand personality raises when the product marketed is more used to express self-image, rather than to functional purposes. Accordingly, brand personality is an important part of emotional branding. Some industries use more emotional branding than others, but emotional branding can have potential to add value to any product.

However, most companies have defined a brand personality statement. They have clear brand guidelines that are communicated to people working in or for the company. There is often a brand book that discusses values, culture, positioning, personality and how to approach customers. Nonetheless, sometimes the brand personality needs to be adjusted. This can be the case for example if a company enters new markets, changes its strategy or the competition increases. The need to adjust personality often

stems from changes in positioning. Well defined brand personality directs company's operations and hence makes them highly consistent. When personality is visible in everything the company does – whether it is customer service, sponsorships, advertising or content marketing – it becomes authentic.

## **SRQ2. How companies utilize content marketing?**

Companies have different ideas of content marketing. Most companies are still new to content marketing, whereas some have more experience and more advanced practices. Hence the content marketing objectives and strategies, as well as channels and content creators vary between companies with different levels of experience. Content marketing objectives always stem from financial objectives, as Pulizzi (2014, 48-79) already stated in academia. The most common objectives are lead-, conversion- and traffic generation. These are shorter term goals compared to for example branding aims. More experienced content marketers understand that customer engagement is also an important objective to pursue. They often have general branding objectives for content, such as brand awareness. Especially digital content marketing is convenient in promoting awareness, as digital media provides possibilities to share the content forward easily (Light 2014). Forerunners take branding via content marketing even further from spreading awareness, by having more specific branding goals to the content. Instead of only spreading the word that the brand exists, they also consider what kind of brand they want to communicate to customers. This means that companies consider what kind of brand identity and personality they want to promote with content. As new objectives come along with experience and expertise, the previous objectives of course remain as well. This study reveals that content marketers find it challenging that the results of content marketing often become visible only in longer timeframe – not fast enough comparing to the money spent and effort made.

Most companies do not yet have a clear content marketing strategy, as many companies are new into content marketing. Lack of content marketing strategies

indicates that companies are still familiarizing themselves to content marketing and there is still a lot to learn. However, companies often do have an idea of what they want to achieve with content marketing, who they want to approach and what they wish to communicate to customers with the content. To turn ideas into concrete plans and actions, many companies use outside agencies and experts. The first thing to do in these co-operations is to clarify *to whom, where, what* and *how*. Some agencies only discuss these to get an idea, whereas other agencies take it further and create a formal written content marketing strategy. The latter option clarifies content marketing to content producers and other employees and adds consistency. The strategy constructed starts with defining key target groups and appropriate channels to approach them. This study reveals that there is usually a lot of work in the clarification of the key target groups, because they are not as clear to the companies as they should be, in order to understand the target customer and this way create truly engaging content for them. On the basis of the key target groups, content marketing channels are chosen. The objective here is to find a natural meeting point with the target audience. Strategy also includes the objectives of content marketing as well as appropriate measurements and analytics. Lastly, strategy states what content is produced and what kind of tone of voice is used in it.

Companies use a diverse range of content marketing channels. According to this study, one perceived advantage of content marketing is that it can be practiced in any channel. Companies often begin the content marketing from smaller efforts, for instance with corporate blogging or posting on social media. Websites are also one of the most common channels used. More experienced and curious content marketers are also utilizing live streaming, which is one of the new ways to publish content. Many new channels like Snapchat, podcasts and live video streaming options are tested but there is still little evidence of their effectiveness. The challenge with using new channels is to acquire enough followers so that it is profitable to produce content. Forerunners of marketing are developing innovative ways to publish content. They are utilizing the possibilities that digital media offers, by creating branded applications and games for

consumers. Forerunners of content marketing have also created large and diverse platforms for content publishing. For example, Red Bull has created a unique media platform Red Bull Content Pool that provides diverse range of high quality photos and videos for editorial use, free of charge and with all rights cleared. The company also has its own Red Bull TV that shows live events, TV series and movies. According to this study, key target groups define the channels chosen. Also, if the company has diverse target groups, it is important that content is adjusted to each channel. The more specific the target group, the less adjustments have to be made between channels.

The biggest challenge of content marketing is to create engaging content (Pulizzi 2012). According to this study, the way to engaging content is to put customers first. This study also confirmed that defining target groups is one of the most important things in successful content marketing (Pulizzi 2012): in order to create truly engaging content to the customers, the company needs to know exactly who they are. The fragmentation of target audience adds challenge to content creation, as different target groups have different interests. Hence it is important that there aren't too many groups. Focus on customers also means that the product may not be the center of content (Davis 2012, 23). This study demonstrated that companies whose content focuses on target customer's needs rather than to pushing the product, perform better. Content that focuses too much on the product itself, often performs the worst. Instead, it is needed to create content around a subject that the target customer is interested in – whatever that is. Not all companies understand this and for example when working with outside agencies, they insist creating content around the product, which leads to worse outcomes. Of course, in some cases creating content around the product comes naturally and makes an interesting content. For example, if online store sells running shoes and a blog post is created about how different shoes fit into different running techniques. However, even when the subjects are drawn from consumer interests, it is important that content is in on-brand. Content focused on an interesting topic can also include subtle branding without irritating consumers and losing the compelling and engaging quality.

The degree of outsourcing varies in content marketing. Companies often have a small in-house team or at least some content creators (e.g. social media coordinator) in their marketing department. Additionally, companies co-operate with outside agencies and they usually have multiple partners to help with content marketing. The co-operations vary from smaller to bigger scale co-operations, depending on the customer company's needs. Forerunners, on the other hand, have proper in-house production studios with writers, photographers et cetera. Some pioneers have even founded their own publishing companies, that not only produce content for their brand, but also license content for the use of other companies and media partners. Co-creation with customers is utilized in many companies' content marketing. According to this study, user-generated content (UGC) is especially popular in fast-moving consumer goods and tourism industry. An example of easily using UGC is to lift user reviews from social media to company website. Apparently, it is not so common to utilize more creative methods of UGC, such as inviting customers to take pictures and videos related to the brand or product. However, the pioneers of content marketing, are doing this. Some companies have decided not to use user generated content due to their strict legal guidelines. In addition to utilizing outside agencies and customers in content creation, some companies – often the more experienced content marketers – are including key influencers in content creation. By including influencers, brand can benefit from their reputation and make content more attractive (Budikova 2014).

The following table portrays the evolution of content marketing, as companies gain more experience and discover new potentials of content marketing. The different stages of learning are not mutually exclusive. For example, as the content marketing of a company evolves, the previous objectives and channels remain, even though new ones appear. Also, these are only guiding examples, with the purpose to get an idea and understanding of the experience curve. In reality, it is difficult to draw the line between for example beginners and more experienced content marketers.

**Table 3. The Evolution of Content Marketing with Experience**

	<b>Beginners</b>	<b>Experienced</b>	<b>Forerunners</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	Conversions Traffic Leads	Brand awareness Customer engagement	Brand identity & personality communication
<b>Strategy</b>	Ideas of objectives, target customers & content types	Formal written strategy	Formal written strategy
<b>Channels</b>	Websites Blogs Social media	Live streaming Podcasts	Apps Games Innovative content platforms
<b>Content creators</b>	Small in-house studio or individual content creators Outside agencies	Influencers UGC	Own production studio Own publishing company

**SRQ3. How companies consider brand personality in their content marketing?**

Brand identity and personality are most of the time considered in content marketing. Brand is the basis of all marketing communications, including content marketing. Hence all content stems from brand identity and personality. All parts of brand identity – personality, positioning, culture, vision and the way customers are approached – affect the way content marketing is done. This is important in order to achieve consistency in content marketing. According to this study, brand personality significantly affects the tone of voice used in branded content. For example, a sophisticated brand often uses

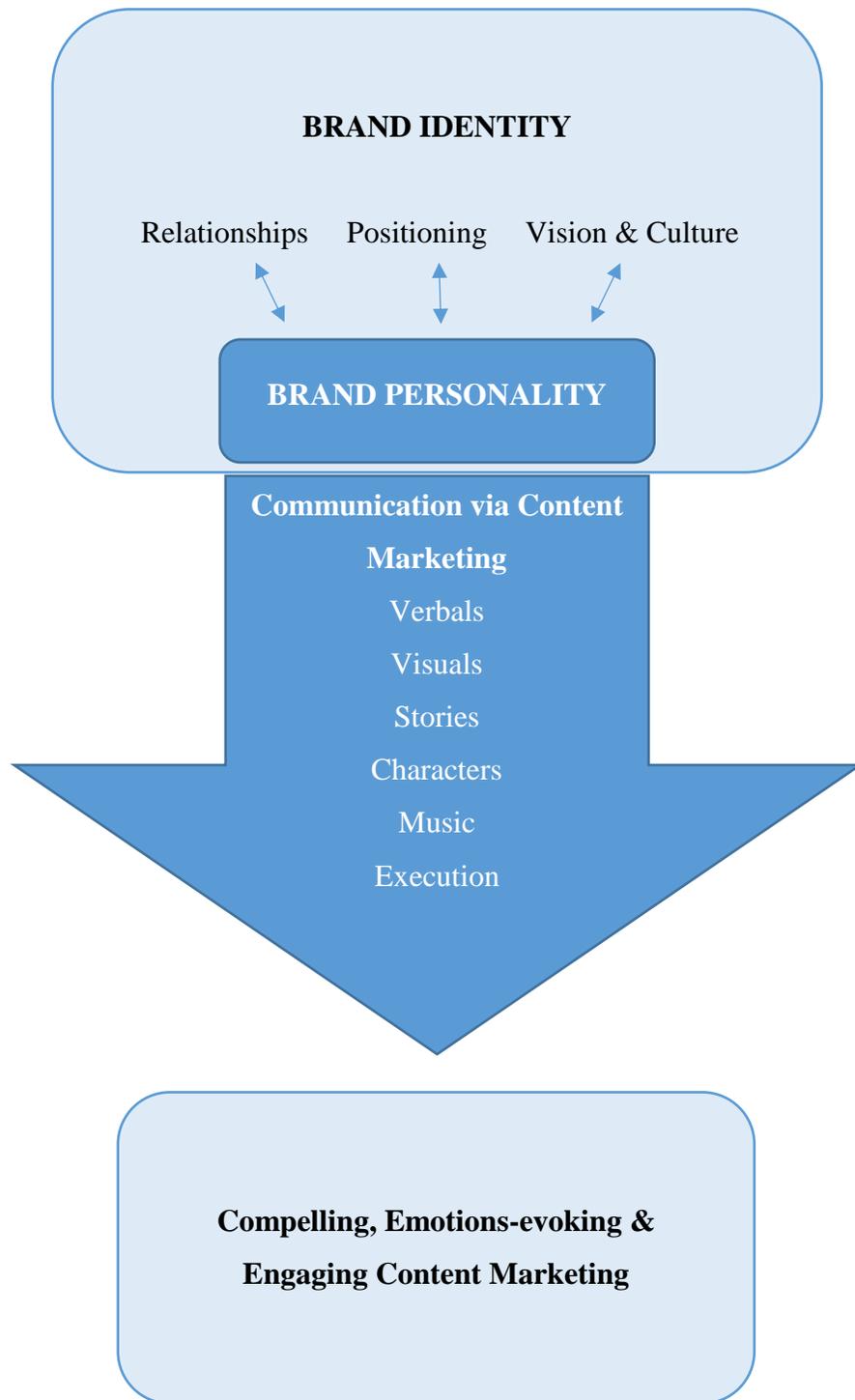
formal tone of voice, whereas laid-back brand can use informal or even rough tone of voice in their content. However, not all companies consider brand personality in their content marketing. This can be the case if brand personality is not clearly defined, which often has to do with struggles in positioning and targeting. Unclear brand personality complicates content marketers' job, as incomplete brand guidelines are difficult to follow.

Although personality is most of the time considered, communicating brand personality is generally not the top priority of content marketing. In most cases, branding goals are replaced by shorter-term goals, such as traffic or conversions. This study revealed that at least in Finland, content marketing is currently utilized mainly as an alternative to advertising, with the objective to bring up the sales, rather than in branding purposes. Brand is not the goal but the basis of content marketing. However, the forerunners do utilize content marketing for brand building. These companies have well-thought-out brand of which all employees are aware of. Forerunners' brand identity and personality guide their whole content marketing, as communicating them is the ultimate goal of the content – like Plummer (2000) suggested it should be. Personality is considered in the stories, as well as in the language and visuals used. In the future, other companies can be expected to follow the example of the forerunners and start using content marketing in branding as well. The followers have already started to recognize the potential of content marketing in branding, but not yet started to act on it. At the moment, they only consider it an additional benefit if the brand identity or personality is also communicated, in addition to gaining short term financials.

### **MRQ How can intended brand personality be communicated via content marketing?**

The research proved that content marketing is an excellent way to communicate brand personality to consumers. What makes it so powerful, is the fact that one content can involve multiple indicators of brand personality. Tone of voice used in contents is one

of the most important ways to communicate brand personality via content. Tone of voice can be for example formal, informal, funny or bold, depending on the brand. However, in addition to the language used, there are many other ways to communicate personality traits through content. In addition to words, also visuals make a difference. Brand personality can stem from visuals such as locations, clothes and appearances of characters. In moving images, music can also create or reinforce brand personality. Additionally, the story behind the content indicates brand personality with its plots and characters, their attitudes and the way they act in different situations. Even the way of execution has the potential to indicate personality – the execution can be for example very professional, especially creative, modern or traditional. The following figure illustrates how brand's personality can be communicated to consumers via content.



**Figure 6. Brand Personality Communication via Content marketing**

## **6.2. Theoretical Contributions and Managerial Implications**

The scientific goal of this study was to add knowledge about content marketing and produce knowledge about brand personality creation in content marketing context. Many findings were in line and compatible with the existing theory. This study contributed to online brand personality theory – which previously only covered personality creation via website content – by examining also other channels of digital media, such as social media and blogs. The research also contributed to content marketing theory, by adding knowledge especially about companies' different ways to practice it and how increased experience affects the use of content marketing. Additionally, the study successfully combined brand personality and content marketing theories, showing that brand personality can be effectively communicated via content marketing. Content marketing has enormous potential in emotional branding, that most companies not yet take advantage of. Diversity of content marketing allows the use of creativity when promoting brand characteristics, as content can include multiple personality indicators.

The managerial objective was to provide information for companies and marketers about how content marketing can be used in communicating the intended brand personality to consumers. The study emphasizes the importance of defining brand personality and making sure that everyone in the company is aware of it. Brand guidelines need to be clear and consistently communicated through the whole company. In order to successfully create an intended personality, the brand personality statement has to be kept in mind and followed in all marketing communications, including content marketing. Therefore, it is crucial that the content creators understand the intended brand personality and think about it as the ultimate objective of content marketing. In order to communicate intended brand personality via content, marketers should pay attention to the tone of voice, the way of execution, visuals, music, and stories, as well as their characters, keeping in mind the brand personality statement.

### **6.3. Limitations and Direction for Further Research**

Two content marketing professionals were interviewed and two brands observed for this research. Although the cases were selected with the purpose to gain a comprehensive view of how different companies practice content marketing and create brand personality, new research with more diverse case studies would enable even more comprehensive view on the subject. To complement this qualitative study, also quantitative research should be conducted so that wide range of companies could be included and this way a better understanding of companies' practices could be formed. Judging by academia and the interviews, brand personality is difficult to separate from other brand associations, which created challenge to the research. Additionally, what comes to content marketing, measuring was left out of this study, which is however important part of content marketing and should be included in further research.

Prior brand personality studies concentrated on consumer perceptions, so more research of brand personality creation from companies' side is needed. However, although there is quite a lot of research about consumer perceptions of brand personalities, it has not been made from content marketing perspective. Therefore, it is also important to study how consumers perceive and register brand characteristics in content marketing. This research proved the potential of content marketing in brand personality creation, yet more research is needed on the potential of digital media in promoting personality. Additionally, more research needs to be made on digital content marketing generally, especially about the power new channels, such as applications and podcasts. Also, it is important to study the content marketing trend of 2017 – measuring (Kubo 2017). In addition to studying how general content marketing gains can be measured, future research should also study how companies can measure specifically branding gains achieved by content marketing.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### To the content marketing specialist with multiple clients

#### Brand identity & personality

- Are customers clear about the brand identity (=set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. combination of positioning, brand personality, values & culture, relationships with stakeholders and brand identity presentation)
- Are customers clear about the intended brand personality (=set of human characteristics associated with a brand, for example demographic characteristics, lifestyle characteristics and human personality traits) they want to communicate via content?

#### Content marketing

- What is your role in companies' content marketing?
- What part of content marketing customers tend to outsource?
- Do customers have content marketing strategy?
- What are the most common objectives for content marketing?
- What are the challenges of content marketing?
- What affects to the choice of channels used? ( e.g. industry)
- What kind of content is shared in each channel? (e.g. stories)
- What kind of content is perceived the most well-received?
- How do companies get ideas for content creation?
- Is co-creation of content together with consumers utilized?

- Are customers clear about the message they want to communicate via content marketing?

### **Brand personalities & content marketing**

- Are brand personalities considered in content marketing?
- How are brand personalities considered in content marketing? (If not, how brand identity/brand is considered? How consistency is assured?)
- How do you communicate intended brand personality to consumers via content?
- Do you consider communicating brand personality an important objective of content marketing?
- Can you tell me an example of how brand personality is communicated via content marketing?

### **To the content marketing consultant of the tech company**

#### **Brand identity & personality**

- Are customers clear about the brand identity (=set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. combination of positioning, brand personality, values & culture, relationships with stakeholders and brand identity presentation)
- How would you describe customer's brand's identity?
- Are customers clear about the intended brand personality (=set of human characteristics associated with a brand, for example demographic characteristics, lifestyle characteristics and human personality traits) they want to communicate via content?
- How would you describe customer's brand personality?

## **Content marketing**

- What is your role in companies' content marketing?
- What part of content marketing customers tend to outsource?
- Do customers have content marketing strategy?
- What are the most common objectives for content marketing?
- What are the challenges of content marketing?
- What content marketing channels are used? (website, corporate blog, e-mail, social media, podcasts) What affects the channel choice?
- What kind of content is shared in each channel? (e.g. stories)
- What kind of content is perceived the most well-received?
- How do companies get ideas for content creation?
- Is co-creation of content together with consumers utilized?
- Are customers clear about the message they want to communicate via content marketing?

## **Brand personalities & content marketing**

- Are brand personalities considered in content marketing?
- How are brand personalities considered in content marketing? (If not, how brand identity/brand is considered? How consistency is assured?)
- How do you communicate intended brand personality to consumers via content?
- Do you consider communicating brand personality an important objective of content marketing?
- Can you tell me an example of how brand personality is communicated via content marketing?