

TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

School of Business and Governance

Department of Business Administration

Aleksi Svart

THE USE OF LIVE STREAMING IN MARKETING

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Supervisor: Iivi Riivits-Arkonsuo, PhD

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Aleksi Svart

(signature, date)

Student code: 157279TVTB

Student e-mail address: aleksi.svart@hotmail.com

Supervisor: Iivi Riivits-Arkonsuo, PhD:

The paper conforms to requirements in force

.....

(signature, date)

Chairman of the Defence Committee:

Permitted to the defence

.....

(name, signature, date)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to find out the ways the businesses are using live streaming in their digital marketing and discuss about the possibilities to utilize live streaming in the future. The author decided to use qualitative content analysis and interview was chosen as a data collection method. In total four interviews were conducted, of which two were e-mail interviews and two were face-to-face interviews. In addition, data from the interviews was coded to find out the most important and relevant issues regarding the research questions. In the results, two main categories were formed for each research question. The research findings suggest that companies use live streaming mainly for branding purposes. Live streaming also provides a possibility to communicate with, both existing and potential future customers, in digital environment. It is also used in internal communication to keep employees informed transparently and improve mental dynamics. Moreover, live streaming made it possible to promote products and services and aid company to enhance and polish its brand. Organizations should consider using or at least adapting live streaming into their marketing and branding strategies, because nowadays younger generations are using one or more online media channels to communicate. Livestreaming is yet rather unresearched and upcoming topic in the field of marketing so this thesis provided interesting information about the interests and prospects of using livestreaming in marketing. The author considers that quantitative longitudinal research would provide valuable statistical information in addition to qualitative researches conducted earlier.

Keywords: live streaming, digital marketing, video marketing, branding, marketing communications

INTRODUCTION

Live streaming has developed significantly in the last few years. It is not some trendy phenomenon anymore, but it has become fully accepted marketing strategic tool for many brands and organization in every industry. Brands do not have to tell customers about their product or service anymore - they can now show it live. Most popular social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Periscope and Instagram have lifted the live streaming into the clouds and making realization even easier to start live stream. These platforms have helped brands and organizations to connect more deeply and in a more interactive way with their audience. By “platform” I am referring to the computer system or service that runs live video streaming software.

From perspective of professional marketers, Live stream is a form of content that practically only five years ago was very rare in the average marketer’s toolbox. Moreover, during those times it was extremely hard to find an industry professional to execute and implement live stream processes into marketing portfolio. In addition, the technology was rather complicated and highly priced. The implementation of the actual stream also required a lot of server space, which was unaffordable for majority of companies. However, the circumstances changed quickly when YouTube brought the streaming opportunity into a solid part of its base, Periscope skyrocketed and Facebook Live was launched.

The aim of this thesis is to introduce ways how companies are using or are planning to use live streaming in their marketing. The idea of this thesis was born due the author’s own interest and enthusiasm for digital marketing. Although digital marketing is continuously evolving and new tools for digital marketing strategies are invented, there is yet room for further research regarding this field of study. Video content has grown exponentially in the past few years and there are high expectations what live video streaming could offer in the future. There are many unstudied aspects in live stream that could be researched further to provide companies more insight of the benefits of live streaming.

Even though live streaming is not novelty anymore, it still lacks information when it comes to scientific literature. Due to this fact, the author is going to use information that is collected through online sources together with three live streaming books to get information that is up-to-date and reliable. The purpose of this thesis is to find out the ways the businesses are using live streaming in their digital marketing and discuss the possibilities to utilize live streaming in the future.

The research questions are:

Question 1: How organizations are using live streaming in their marketing?

Question 2: What are the benefits of live streaming in organizations marketing communication?

The first chapter focuses on real time, digital, content, video and mobile marketing in order to provide the reader deeper understanding about the topic and show how these factors have affected current popularity of live streaming. The second chapter is built around the concept of live streaming which is explained profoundly and what possible streaming platforms companies could use. Moreover, the author will show possible live streaming strategies and how companies are using live streaming in today's marketing actions. Additionally, using live streaming as an internal communication instrument will be discussed. Furthermore, to provide reader better understanding, the author going to cover what challenges companies might face when implementing live streaming into their marketing strategy. In chapter three, the author is going to discuss about research methodology, how the research was conducted, analysis and finally is the research reliability and validity of this thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Iivi Riivits-Arkonsuo from the bottom of my hearth for the amazing guidance, encouragement and advices during this thesis. To be honest, I was an extremely lucky to have a such amazing supervisor who always gave me advices and pushed me forward. Furthermore, I must express my gratitude to my dear room-mates Kalle Salminen and Aleksi Hangasjärvi for keeping me up-to-date when I was busy at running my company in Finland. I know that without them and their support, this journey would have been so much harder and challenging.

1. DIGITAL, REAL TIME & CONTENT MARKETING

In this chapter, digital and real time marketing will be discussed due to the fact that those have had an influence on the rapid development of live streaming. Current use of live streaming is strongly based on changes in marketing environment, which is affected by fast pace in the development of new technology and the need for closer interaction with the customer. Moreover, this chapter is going to cover mobile and video marketing because live streaming is strongly present in that field as well. Finally, I am going to discuss how company's brand could benefit of live streaming.

1.1. Digital marketing strategy

The reason behind the current popularity of live videos is the development of digital and especially mobile technology. Digital channels have grown to be a significant part of corporate marketing communications and through them, companies are able to communicate with customers and clients. It is also possible to perpetrate new purchases, provide information and offers and eventually accomplish extra sales. Digital marketing generally refers to communication between the company and its' customers. Moreover, digital marketing also refers to interaction with the use of digital channels, information technology, such as Internet, e-mail and mobile communications. Nowadays, it is also possible for companies to take advantage of social media as a part of digital marketing strategy and thus differentiate from competitors. In other words, Digital marketing strategies are actions that company is going to use to achieve online marketing goals. (Merisavo, Vesanen, Raulas & Virtanen 2006, 27-30.)

Digital marketing is not going replace traditional marketing communications, such as television, radio and print advertising – rather to supplement them. The excellent ability to target to right customer group and the possibility to interact with them have integrated digital marketing as an integral part of today's marketing communications. Along with the change in consumer media behavior, marketing has also generally shifted from traditional "sender to receiver" style-oriented communication into two-way communication. This kind of interactive communication has its

roots in customer relationship marketing. As a result, the power of consumers have grown significantly and they have options to choose the content what they want to follow. (Karjaluo 2010, 127.)

1.2. Digital marketing communications

Digital marketing communication (DMC) is a concept for which no single definition exists. However, Merisavo has defined digital marketing communication as a communication and interaction between a company or a brand and its customers using digital channels (Internet, e-mail, mobile phones and television. In other words, DMC means the use of digital media such as Internet, mobile media and other interactive channels, such as interactive television. Interactive television is a system that gives the viewer the opportunity to participate in television programs. It can also be applied to video conferencing. (Karjaluo 2010, 13.)

DMC is not a synonym for internet marketing, although these concepts have a lot of similar content. Digital marketing communication differs from Internet marketing. Mainly as regards the fact that DMC covers not only the Internet but also other channels. For example, a person who has never used the Internet can receive digital marketing communications through their mobile phone. (Karjaluo 2010, 13.)

The most popular forms of digital marketing include electronic direct marketing, such as e-mail and mobile marketing. In addition, Internet advertising covering corporate websites, campaign sites, online advertising such as banners and search engine marketing are also part of digital marketing. Lesser known forms are viral marketing, advergames, mobile marketing, social media, interactive television, web seminars and competitions, and so on. For example, the use of social media through new internet services (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) have also inspired advertisers to consider how social media could be used in marketing communications. (Karjaluo 2010, 14.)

In summary, digital marketing communication is just a new form of communication that is often more cost-effective method to reach the target audience. Digital marketing communication works particularly well with an existing customer relationship - for example in customer marketing. Furthermore, as the target groups are increasingly using the Internet and mobile

media, advertisers are also more interested in viewing and working on those medias using new communication tools. (Karjaluoto 2010, 14.)

1.3. Real time marketing

The genuine aim of marketing has originally been to guide consumers' attention to a place that is relevant to the marketer. To achieve this attention means that businesses need to be visible and be heard where consumers are present. Over the years, marketers have constantly been developing new ways to be a part of consumers everyday life. Thus, the Internet and social media have also brought their own challenges to marketing professionals. Nowadays, it is not enough anymore to only draw consumers attention - the company has to offer something that is meaningful and timely. (Kerns 2014, 14.)

In order to maintain customers' interest, companies need to keep up with customers changing interests. Thus, this is the reason why real time marketing was developed. Technology is driven by the growing demand for real-time information from an increasingly impatient audience. Real time marketing means timely marketing in digital channels with the aim of targeting the right message at the right time. In addition to that, marketing is based on information, that is based on customer's earlier behavior. This information is likely to be most viewed content, responsive advertisements or earlier purchase history. Moreover, real time tracking and optimization of the results are also part of real time marketing. (Kallio 2015.) One of the most experienced real time marketing companies is Google, which offers primarily Internet services (Kerns 2014, 20).

A good example of real-time marketing is the advertisement made by Oreo which was released back in the year of 2013. In the ad, during Super bowl –event there happened a power cut and lights went out. It did not took long before Oreo released a picture in Twitter of Oreo cookie in the dark together with a text "you can still dunk in the dark". The twitter became popular in social media and brought positive visibility to Oreo. (Rothenberg 2015.)

1.4. Content marketing

Content marketing is proportionately unexamined area for academic research and it does not have a clear definition. However, Pulizzi (2013) defines content marketing as follow: "Content

marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.” In addition to that, Pulizzi continues to describe content marketing as “Content marketing is owning media as opposed to renting it. It is a marketing process to attract and retain customers by consistently creating and curating content in order to change or enhance a consumer’s behavior”. (Feng & Ots 2015.)

In content marketing it is important to create valuable and logical content which can entice customers to make deals. Content marketing includes a variety of things such as e-commerce and video. With well-made content marketing, company can streamline and support the purchasing process. Content Marketing provides also additional benefits as it supports other digital marketing channels. It provides additional content for social media marketing and helps to showcase in Google's search results. Thus, businesses should focus on content marketing especially because of the fact that it significantly affects search engine results. (Feng & Ots 2015.)

A content strategy is planned for content marketing. The content strategy is comprehensive vision of business strategy. Ergo, what kind of messages and content the company has in which channel, which target group they are directed to and how they are produced while being managed. It is a plan of how to influence the desired target groups with the right content - while improving the long-term business. The content strategy guides the company's content marketing. The aim is to create content for customers, as well as for the company, in pursuit of the desired results. The key is to get customers to commit to the company and its brand, while also committing to the company's content and marketing. (Feng & Ots 2015.)

1.5. Video & mobile marketing

Video marketing is one of the content marketing methods. In content marketing strategy, company can create videos, texts, books, or graphics for their products or services that they can use for marketing a company. For example, the company can provide added value to consumers in social media. Video marketing is important for company’s other digital marketing tools. Videos lend a helping hand to a customer to better understand the benefits of the products and services. Products and services will be easily presented to customers in a matter of seconds. At

the same it time it can be both, entertaining and beneficial, because a video will stay in the minds of customers better than other ordinary ads. Embedded videos on the company’s website will also make the customer to stay longer on the site. It provides one’s brand message more time to sink in to the minds of customers. Moreover, if a company’s CEO or other member from the organization is performing on a video, the trust between actors will likely increase significantly. Besides, it is easier to watch video than read a text. (Virtakainen 2016.)

According to Karjaluo (2006) currently almost every consumer has a mobile phone/smart phone and most of them are able to use data connection and access the Internet. Developments in mobile technology and its rapid popularization among consumers have also given birth to new marketing sector; mobile marketing. Mobile marketing is a marketing method that takes place via mobile devices. It uses modern mobile technology, such as location services, to tailor marketing campaigns based on customer's location or frequently visited places. Moreover, according to Strom et al., (2014) The Mobile Marketing Association define mobile marketing as “a set of practices that enable firms to communicate and engage with their customer in an interactive and relevant manner through any mobile device or Personal Digital Assistants” (Kuswaha & Agrawal, 2015). In a nutshell, mobile marketing means utilizing mobile media as a part of organizations marketing communications. (Karjaluo 2006, 151-156.)

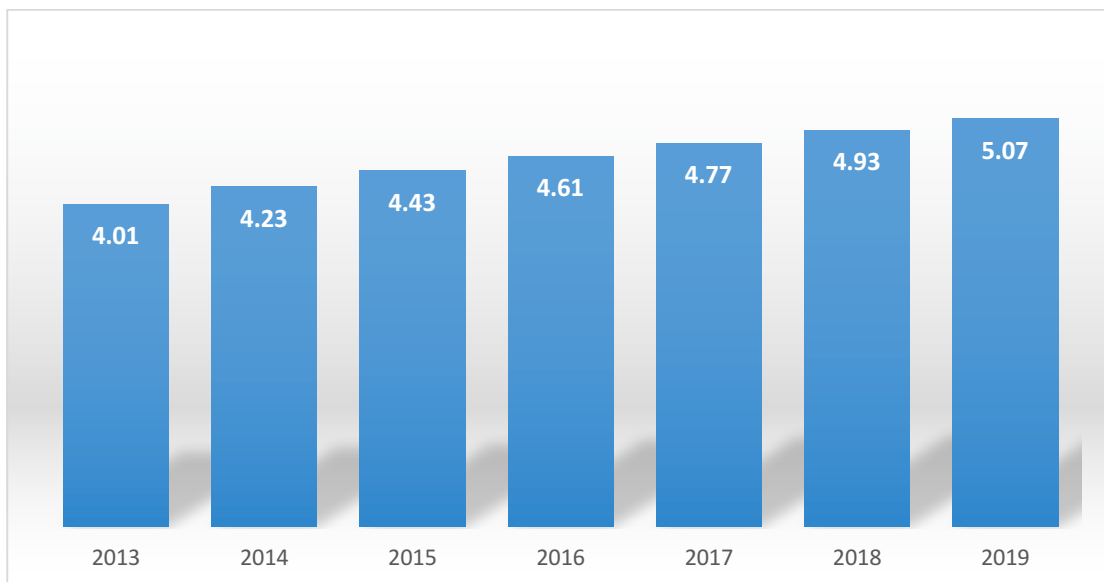


Figure 1: Number of mobile phone users worldwide from 2013 to 2019 (in billion).

Source: The Statista Portal (2018)

This picture above illustrates the number of mobile phone users from 2013 to 2019. As we can see from the picture, the number of mobile phone users are expected to reach five billion in 2019. According to the Statista, in 2016, 62.9 percent of the population worldwide possessed mobile phone and it is predicted that in 2019 this grow is going to increase up to 67 percent. We could say that mobile marketing is an excellent opportunity to reach large amount of people around the globe and it is not just a passing trend anymore. (The Statista Portal 2018.)

As mentioned before, mobile phones are playing a significant role in live streaming business and should be undoubtedly integrated part of any online marketing strategy. Rapid development in mobile technology has resulted in huge increase in video traffic. Nowadays, consumers are able to watch real time and live video content regardless of the time and place. In video marketing, YouTube is the absolute market leader. According to Megan O'Neill (2015) 76 percent of millennials follow brands on YouTube. In addition to that, 48 percent of millennials watch more videos online compared to average Internet user (Smulski 2017). These results indicate that mobile and video marketing combined are becoming more and more important for businesses.

1.6. Branding in social media context

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, 61) define social media as a group of internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0. They allow creation and exchange of user generated content. Because of the fast penetration of social media into society, organizations are using them even more as a part of their marketing and brand building activities. (Georgios Tsimonis & Sergios Dimitriadis 2014.) Moreover, Peters (2016) states that live streaming is a great way to promote corporate's brand in multiple ways. Corporations could offer its customers a sneak peek of behind the scenes and show them how their product is manufactured. Moreover, corporations can offer special announcements and tell the customers what is happening inside the company and keep them informed. Furthermore, questions and answers are great way for them to increase interaction with their customers by answering their questions in real time. Moreover, social media offers an opening to organizations' to connect with customers by using social media with a greater reach (Tsimonis et al. 2014). Additionally, Agrawal and Yiliyasi (2010) state that social media is not limited only to social networking platforms like Facebook and Twitter, Professional social media platform such as LinkedIn, media sharing platforms YouTube and Instagram and business communities Amazon.

Companies have started to utilize mixture of social media networks in order to accomplish many kinds of organizational goals. (Valos, Habibi, Casidy, Driesener and Maplestone 2016.) Also Barenblatt (2015) states that especially younger generation are also known as generation Z are using one or more social media platform to communicate (Duffet 2016).

There are number of reasons why organizations' should use social media in their branding. Firstly, social media can strengthen and raise company's brand awareness. Secondly, organizations could reach out customers who are not necessarily familiar with organizations products or services. Thirdly, organizations could efficiently develop and ameliorate relationships with their customers. For the fourth, with strengthened relationships, organizations could generate extra sales. (Tsimonis et al. 2014.)

Recent studies have shown that firms' are increasing their budgets towards social media, suggesting that brands are even more interested in establishing their presence in social media, interacting with their customers and building deeper relationships with them. This shift can be examined by several factors. Firstly, response rate are declining. It means that customers continuously ignore firms' online advertisements such as online banners, E-mail and spam. Secondly, the rapid development in technology. Population on the web is increasing and new social media tools are emerging continuously. That makes social media very attractive. Thirdly, customers' preferences are changing. (Tsimonis et al. 2014.) However, Vorvoreanu (2009) states that consumers do not necessarily interact with organizations through social media as much as before. Vorvoreanu argued that consumers prefer more formal media like e-mails and telephones when interacting with the organizations. The reason for this might be the results from fast development in technology and applications features on many social media platforms. (Ruehl & Ingenhoff 2015.)

In social media, trust is one of the most important issues and customers see their friends more trustworthy than firms'. With the effective use of social media, firms' can operate with lower costs compared to other expensive marketing campaigns (Tsimonis et al. 2014). Additionally, live streaming could also be used in customer support. This way the company can show authenticity and increase the trust with its customers (Peters 2016).

2. LIVE STREAMING

The aim of this chapter is to provide information about live streaming. I am going to discuss what live streaming is and how organizations' could create effective live streaming strategy. Moreover, I am going to describe step-by-step the process of live streaming, what tools you need and what kind of possible streaming platforms organizations could use. In addition, I will demonstrate how big and well-known companies are already using live streaming as a marketing and branding tool. Furthermore, I am going to profoundly cover how organizations' could use live streaming as their internal communication tool. In the last part, I will finish up presenting possible benefits and challenges that might follow if the process is executed correctly.

2.1. What is live streaming?

Live streaming is a thrilling technology that has changed the way we connect with people around the world. By utilizing the power of the Internet and incredible technology, companies can easily transform their office, parlour or any other room into worldwide stage. (Wasen 2017, 7-8.) Live streaming is term that is used to describe the process of broadcasting real time or live video footage to an audience over the Internet (Cambridge Dictionary 2018). In principle, live streaming is a data transferring technique where it is processed so that it flows as a continuous stream in real time. Thus, live streaming allows one to broadcast an event on the Internet as it is occurring. Moreover, live streaming allows one to consume both, audio and video, straight from the Internet without having to download it first on one's computer.

Live streaming process



Figure 2: Process of live stream
Source: Kaltura Knowledge (2018)

The process of live streaming requires four elements to become successful. Those are video source, streaming encoder, distribution server and of course viewer or listener. Video source can be anything from webcam to high tech cameras which are controlled from a professional control room. The job of streaming encoder is to change the finished video signal from the camera to web-friendly data. This means basically that signal needs to be squeezed down to data rate that is small enough in order to be streamed. That compressed signal has to be wrapped into specific format before it can be sent. So in a nutshell, larger rate means higher quality. Because of smaller rates it does not need that much resources and thus it can be sent and received using less bandwidth. (Kaltura Knowledge 2018.)

On the other hand, distribution center accepts the streaming output into its final format. If the live streaming event is intended to be received by only one user, one might not necessarily need distribution channel. The viewer or the listener are the ones who watch or listen live stream content through a streaming platform that is embedded in web or a mobile app. This is where the Internet connection kicks in. That makes it possible for end user to receive the live stream uninterrupted. It is needless to say that stable internet connection offers better quality in audio and video. (Kaltura Knowledge 2018.)

2.2. Live video streaming platforms

YouTube and Facebook are without a doubt the world's largest video advertising platforms at the moment. Facebook is the largest social media platform. On the other hand, YouTube is the largest search engine after Google. Moreover, according to Google's predictions, 80 percent of the Internet traffic will be presented in a form of video by 2020. Even though YouTube and Facebook differ from each other in many ways, they still offer endless opportunities for companies to do digital advertising. Companies should consider using both platforms simultaneously because it will lead to faster growth in audience. Richards (2017) also points out that companies should not forget the fact that each platform has its own different and unique audience. (Richards 2018, 477-492.)

Facebook Live is live video streaming service that allows users to broadcast content straight from their mobile device into Facebook news feed. At the beginning, Facebook live was only for mobile devices but nowadays it also supports desktop computers. Starting a live stream in

Facebook is pretty simple. One just has to download the Facebook App, open it and go to live with just one tap. (Burgett 2018.) Moreover, one of the biggest advantage of Facebook Live is that Facebook has user base in the billions. The possible audience that company could reach by using Facebook Live streams is enormous.

YouTube provides a noteworthy alternative to other streaming services and online meeting tools - such as webinars. It combines the possibility of direct broadcasting and interaction. It also allows users to edit saved live broadcasts later. YouTube Live has many benefits. First and foremost, most of the users have a Google account, the service is free and all streamed videos are automatically saved in the user's YouTube channel. Furthermore, the service has important web conferencing features, so that the service could be used in small-scale network meetings. (Röksä 2018.)

2.3. Strategy for live streaming

Before the company start thinking about launching a live streaming event, company should have a clear goal why and how they are going to use it. Some companies might want to increase their sales, some are looking for new customers or maybe just to increase the engagement with their employees. In this chapter, the author will discuss different methods' and strategies for live streaming.

As a part of company's marketing plan, the company should also create a strategy to one's live streaming event. The nature of live streaming is that it should be as least staged as possible. Live streaming videos are meant to be natural. Of course, some kind of rough script could be used, but if unexpected event occurs one just has to welcome it with open hands. The best case what live streaming offers for brands is that it allows brands to drop the corporate veil, connect human-to-human. It also allows viewers to participate in brand storytelling in ways that enrich their customer experience. One of the biggest and challenging questions is how the company can keep their audience engaged. According to Wasen (2017) one way of keeping audience engaged is to ask them questions. It is possible to make a poll and encourage one's audience for discussion. (Wasen 2017.)

Another way to increase engagement in live stream is to provide special resources or incentives to viewers. Counter Strike Global Offensive (CS: GO) is one of the most popular game available at the moment. When CS: GO caster is doing a live stream, it is possible to increase engagement by giving gifts randomly to viewers. Those gifts are usually something what you can use in the game when playing. In addition it is possible to sell them for real money. This is perhaps the most invigorating thing for viewers and this strategy certainly work if you want to keep the engagement. Therefore, companies should consider this as an alternative strategy when starting the a live streaming event.

Like every event, companies should promote their live streaming event early enough in order to maximize the engagement. According to Delgado (2016), 14 days of heavy promoting will increase your live stream engagement by 26 percent. In addition to that, companies should also decide when and what time they should go live. In the ON24 Webinar Report, researchers found out that attendance for live streaming videos occurred mostly on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. On the other side of the coin, worst weekdays for live streaming were Mondays and Fridays. (ON24 2014.)

However, this does not necessarily mean that companies should not try Mondays and Fridays to do live streaming. Everything depends on who are company's target audience, what is the mission and what is the content to offer to viewers. To highlight this, video game live streams tend to have higher viewer rates during Sundays and Mondays. In a nutshell, companies should try and test which weekdays are best for them. Moreover, companies should also share the recorded live stream on demand. Even though the event is happening live, it does not necessarily mean that everyone who are interested in it are able to watch live - for example due to different time zones. Furthermore, there is a good possibility that when you share a video your audience will share it as well. (ON24 2014.)

Lastly, companies should choose the streaming platform that is easily accessible. It was discussed earlier that everything depends on target audience and their ways to use social media. A streaming platform titled Twitch is mostly focused on video games related. Nowadays, Facebook Live and YouTube live are suitable to almost everything. Choosing the right streaming platform does not necessarily succeed at first but after a few tries company should be able to find the right streaming platform.

2.4. Live streaming in the current business world

Nowadays, Consumers want companies to be more transparent and approachable for more interactive communication. Brands should also react almost immediately to trends and relevant issues that are important to consumers. Thus, one of the greatest benefit in live streaming is its real time and interaction. Brands are able to create even more personal bonds with the customers by giving them an opportunity to participate and discuss in real time about important moments what company wants to share and show. One of the best feature in live streaming is their reasonable price and cost-effectiveness. Marketers can utilize them for free - albeit chargeable features can make live stream even more profitable. Moreover, companies do not need long planning periods and plentiful production team for broadcasting. (Richman 2017.)

Wasen (2017), on the other hand, sees that live streaming is offering companies many different ways to utilize real time in their marketing communication. One good way for using live streaming is to use it in product launches and bulletin whereupon, companies get the opportunity to increase recognition and maintain the consumers interest and enthusiasm. By adding an online audience to your product launch, demonstration or promotional event is a great way to boost attendance at this type unique event. (Wasen 2017, 15.)

Earlier I discussed about brands and how people refers to buy products and services from companies they trust. This goes without saying that, live streaming is excellent tool for companies to build trust with their customers. One way of doing so is by creating live video to show your customers' company's transparency. By utilizing live streaming right and efficiently companies can now add face to themselves making them even more trustable and transparent. Furthermore, one of the best ways of using live streaming is to use it in online customer service tool to solve customer concerns. Companies could troubleshoot the issue on the solution live streaming video. This ways, live streaming offers customers a way to talk and engage with an actual human being instead of bot and save customers time without pointless waiting in the support line queue. (Richman 2017.)

2.5. Live streaming as a company's internal communication tool

In a nutshell, live streaming is all about two-way communication between sender and receiver. Live video streaming has the power to forward messages fast and effectively not just company's

external audience and customers but also with company's employees and executives. Thus, live video streaming has started to play huge role in corporate internal communications. In addition to that, internal communication helps employees to do the work easier when corporate's internal communication is in check. Moreover, internal communication is needed for building trust, transparency, relationships and maintaining the culture of the corporation. Live streaming allows top executives to communicate with their employees more authentic and human way. Furthermore, executives can reach employees no matter where the employees are located. (Blair 2017.)

Live streaming as an internal communication tool might also turn out as cost effective tool in sharing information. Not only it is cost effective, but it will lead in higher engagement between the company and employees and helps them to understand the big picture. Dunkin' Brands offer a great example how they use live streaming in their internal communication. Their headquarters use live streaming to communicate with their remote employees and thus keeping them updated about the latest news what is happening. According to Kelly, "Livestream is an effective tool for everyone in an entire global department to hear the same message in a consistent way, at the same time that their colleagues are hearing it". Thus, consistent messaging allows teams to be engaged and informed around the world. (Livestream 2016.)

When it comes to external relationships, companies are using live streaming in shareholder meetings. This means that investors participate rate will increase and ultimately save money at the possible traveling costs. Furthermore, live videos can be used to share reports, results and draw conclusions in complex issues in more sufficient way. When it comes to franchised companies, live video streaming helps company's staff and franchise owners to narrow the geographic gap. Furthermore, live streaming ensures that the brand image is maintained and qualities of the products are not compromised. (Blair 2017.)

On the other side of the coin, live streaming could be used effectively in employee engagement and training. Nowadays, written communication is old school and because of that companies have moved on to the training through videos. Live video trainings will forward company's message for hundreds of employees quickly and at lower cost, because employees do not have to travel in order to attend in the training sessions that company offers (Mark Blair 2017). To highlight this, the IRS replaced in-person employee trainings to video trainings. According to the

IRS statistics, IRS managed to reduce their training costs by 83 percent and traveling costs by 87 percent. (IRS 2017.)

2.6. Challenges in live streaming

Even though real-time and unique content are great opportunities in live streaming, they bring also certain challenges for marketing. Lähdevuori (2015) explains that one of the Periscope's problems is that during the live stream, audience might practice verbal harassment through spam comments. Furthermore, Social media is developing extremely fast and thus, legislation has challenges to keep up with these developments. Therefore, the popularity of live videos has brought copyright issues to the legal distribution of broadcasts. For example, people have been broadcasting major sport events and premieres of films in social media. (Leppänen 2015.) When broadcasting content that is produced by someone else, such as speaker or performer of the event, permission of this person is required before hand (Mediakasvatus, 2014).

Periscope has strict conditions what kind of live video and content is allowed to send. Even though Periscope is trying to prevent abuses by allowing users to report inappropriate videos to their site, misuses might happen time to time. There have been some unfortunate cases where people have broadcasted suicides, terrorism related videos and drunk driving. (MTV 2015.) Moreover, when company is broadcasting live content through Internet, there is always the possibility that something unexpected might happen. For example, speaker/performer might get sudden attack during the broadcast or end up in accident. Even if company has good instructions how to react in these kinds of events it is still hard to prevent everything. (Leppänen 2015.) Therefore, when company is starting to implement live streaming as a part of their marketing they should train their staff sufficiently before starting the live streaming broadcast. Live streaming might be hectic and there is a chance that employee might reveal unintentionally some business secrets during the live stream.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was done by qualitative approach and was carried out through four interviews. Two of them were E-mail interviews and two were face-to-face interviews. In this chapter, I am going to elaborate the research methodology: What was the design of the research, how the data was collected, analysis of the data and reliability and validity of the research.

3.1. The purpose of the research and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to find the ways how companies are using live streaming in their marketing and what are the benefits of using it. To get the answers for these problems, two main research questions were formed. Based on the answers from interviews, the author tried to get widest and holistic view as possible of this field.

The research questions are:

Question 1: How organizations are using live streaming in their marketing?

Question 2: What are the benefits of live streaming in organizations marketing communication?

In this thesis, the author is going to use qualitative research method with the help of interviews. Qualitative research means research which attempts to describe real life and explore the phenomenon that is being studied comprehensively as much as possible (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 152). The idiosyncrasy of the qualitative research includes text producing data method, highlighting the point of view of the subject being studied, material-based analysis, non-hypothesis and position of researcher (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 15-19). Qualitative approach was decided because author wanted to gain deeper understanding how companies are using live streaming in practice.

3.2. Interview as a research method

The research materials were collected through semi-structured thematic interviews. There were four interviewees who are working in marketing department in small, middle size and large-scale enterprise. Four interviews were done via e-mail and two were personal interview, which were conducted in company's headquarters in face-to-face. Interview can be defined as a kind of a discussion in which the researcher tries to discover what interests him/her about the interviewee (Eskola & Vastamäki 2001, 24). According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2010) interview is a situation that is planned in advance and where the aim is to gain reliable information from the areas relevant to the research problem. Moreover, it is interviewer's responsibility that interview is going to happen and that interviewer has the ability to process confidential information what the interviewee is going to tell. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, 43.) Furthermore, the interview is also characterized by the clear roles of the both parties (Ruusuvuori & Tiittula 2005, 22).

In this thesis, the goal was to find out the thoughts, memories, as well as experiences concerning the research topic, whereupon the interviews proved to be the most reasonable way to collect data. The decision to use interview as a research method was influenced by the benefits interviews could offer. Those are flexibility in data collection, the possibility of deepening and clarifying the data, the possibility of supplementing the material with new interviews if needed (Hirsjärvi et al 2004, 194-195). Especially the flexibility and the opportunity to deepen and clarify the material were important, because the author wanted to find out the depth of the cause and effect. This would not have been successful, for example, by means of a questionnaire alone.

3.3. Qualitative content analysis

The analytical method author used in this research was qualitative content analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to summarize the collected material so that the description of the phenomenon studied can be described in general form. (Kyngäs & Vanhanen 1999, 4.) Content analysis has three distinct approaches: conventional, directed or summative. The difference being the basis of analysis and classification either in the material or in the completed theoretical framework. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 116.) In this research, the author chose to use conventional analysis due to the concepts were created based on the research material.

In content analysis, material is studied in isolation, looking for similarities and differences in search and summarizing. Content analysis is like a discourse analysis, but the difference is that in content analysis the content exists already in a written form. The researcher is able to use books, diaries, interviews, speeches and discussions. Content analysis aims to create a comprehensible description of the investigated phenomenon, which links the results to the wider context and other findings of the phenomenon. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2003, 105.) Content analysis can thus mean both qualitative content analysis and quantitative breakdown of content, and both can be utilized when analyzing the same material. Content analysis can be continued by producing quantified results, for example from the verbally described material. In the qualitative content analysis of the research material, the material is first fragmented into small parts, conceptualized and finally reorganized into a novel entity. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2003, 109-116.)

3.4. Coding and analysis of the research material

In this research, I received nine full A4 paper of data. Firstly I started to analyze them and read the material to get acquainted with its content. This is included in the conventional analysis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 109). In order to get familiar with the content I made notebook where I listed interviewees' answers to my research questions. After that, I started marking papers with using different kind of colored pencils in order to perceive what concepts arise the most in the interviews. This method is called coding. Speaking of codes, according to Eskola & Suoranta (2000), coding refers to markers (numbers, letters, other characters) or other means of parsing notes and classifications made to the material, such as underlining's by colored pencil. Encoding is not necessary, but makes it easier to handle the data: certain texts are quickly found in comparison with the fact that no labeling was made in the text. By tagging with the same codes texts that speak of the same or similar things, the material can be made and facilitated by the analysis (Eskola & Suoranta 2000, 155).

Coding units can be words, sentences, rows, paragraphs or longer textures - depending on the starting points and goals. Manual material can be encoded in littered, printed papers, for example, colored pencils, underlining and various characters, such as numbers and letters. Instead of coding manually, the opportunities offered by information technology can also be used. Using an ordinary word processor and its functions (e.g. underline or paint in color, different fonts, shades, footnotes, word search) is an alternative to using pencils. In addition to

word processing programs, there are special programs specifically designed to handle and manage qualitative texts. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006.) I encoded using different color pencils that analyzing the content would become easier. With the help of coding, I got a better vision of the most important issues regarding to my research questions. You do not have to repeatedly read all the text in order to find the certain thing or sentence you want to find and look more closely. In order to do that, I used red color pencil for answers which answered my first research questions. In the same way, I used blue color pencil for answers which answered my second research question.

The following step was to find similarities from different interviews and squeezing them under one proper concept. This process is called as clustering. It is also worth pointing out that the research makes critical decisions. The last part of the analysis is titled as abstraction. In practice the abstraction means that the material is attached to the theoretical concepts and the classification of the material is continued in upper and lower classes. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 109-113.) In this research, I managed to form three main groups, which are marketing, branding and communication. The reason why these are the main groups is that live streaming is developed by the need of more effective communication between company and customers. This will lead to brand strengthening and new ways to do marketing via digital channels. In the next chapter, I am going to analyze these results more deeply.

4. RESULTS

This chapter is going to elaborate the results of the research and the author will illustrate those with charts to provide the reader clear picture of the factors that have an effect on the use of live streaming and the benefits of using live streaming in marketing communication. The interviews were divided into three main themes which were: digital marketing, live streaming in marketing and branding in digital channels.

4.1. The use of live streaming in organizations

The aim of this chapter is to answer to the question how organizations are using live streaming in their marketing. The author divided the results into two main categories which are: digital marketing and branding. Some interesting answer examples to each main category will be presented. All the relevant subcategory concepts will be opened to provide the reader with knowledge how the main categories were formed. At the end of this chapter the illustrative chart will be showed.

Digital marketing

Digital marketing seems to be a relevant issue in today's company operations. It is used to many different purposes such as promote products and services, increase sales, reach potential new customers, strengthen customer relationships and inform them. The following example provides one aspect of how digital marketing is used in a company:

"Operating in todays music business is such a hard task. Customers attention is not easy to maintain due to a huge amount of information flowing from different platforms. For instance when releasing a new single track, we use platforms like FB, IG, Youtube and Snapchat. Our target audience is using the most. When it comes to digital marketing, we need seriously consider what is the ROI of each campaign. For example, a good quality musicvideo costs roughly 20000€ which is

not easily covered with music sales. On the other hand, if we managed to make it good, we can deepen relationships with customers and potentially get new ones.”

Branding

Using live streaming for enhancing corporate branding was highlighted in all interviews. Apparently, companies are interested in increasing brand value or polishing the brand image via live streams. Providing customer with a chance to experience a company in more human way was mentioned as well. Live stream offers a possibility to build trust between actors and to increase brand awareness. Brand identity could be communicated to customers so that they can more easily relate to the company. The following example points out the possibility to increase brand awareness to provide the people with reliable information regarding the company and its products.

“We have a strong brand with excellent products but we have had also our difficulties in the past. Now our goal is to make the brand awareness even better so people would have the right info about our company, goals and products.”

Trying to build brand value and polish the brand is not an easy task – and it should not be taken too lightly. Live stream has many possibilities but the lack of proper process can end up in damaging the brand seriously.

“Sure, live streaming gives limitless opportunities to share brand in multiple environments and in a creative way.” Off course this channel can also damage the brand, if it is used in a unprofessional way.”

In the following chart, the author is putting together the main concepts and categories to illustrate how the results were formed.

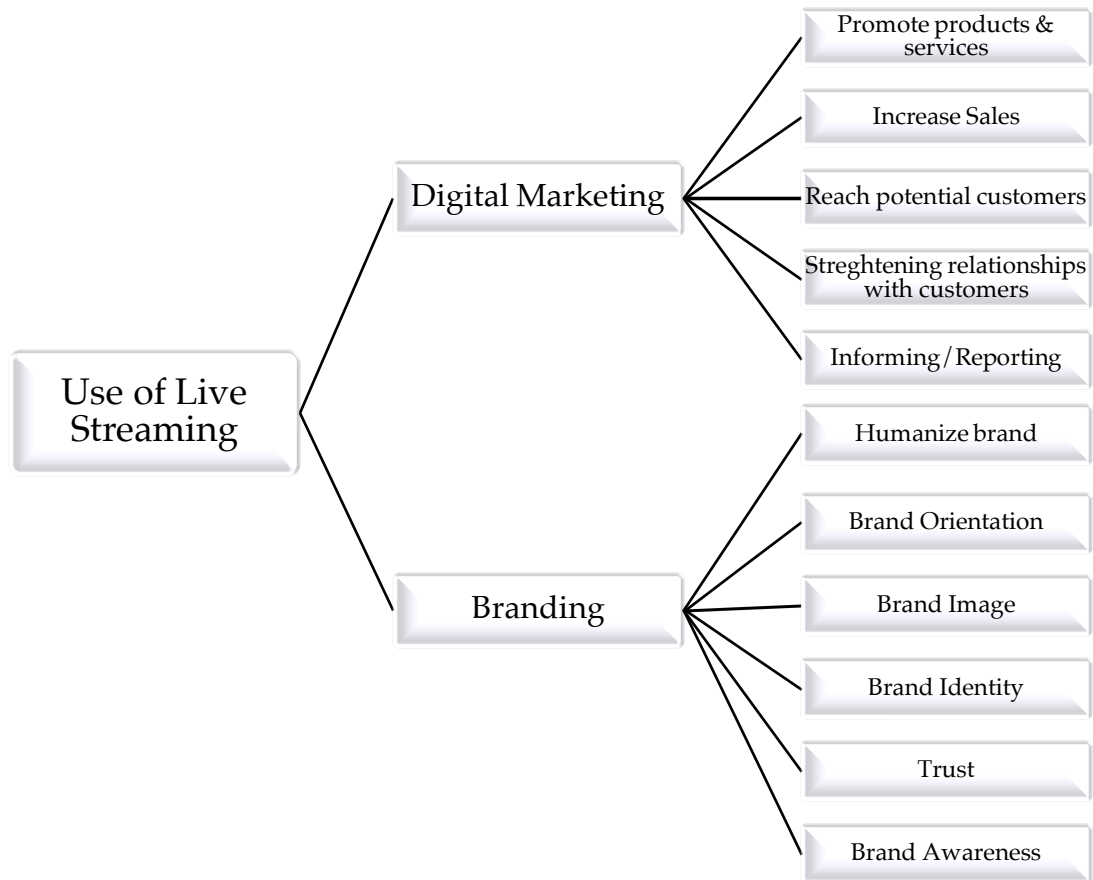


Figure 3: Utilization of live streaming

Compiled by the author: interviews

Chart above illustrates how use of live streaming could be used in company's digital marketing and branding activities.

4.2. The use of live streaming in marketing communication

This chapter focuses on answering to the question what are the benefits of using live streaming in organizations marketing communication. The author divided the results into two main categories which are: internal factors and external factors. All the relevant subcategory concepts

will be opened to provide the reader with knowledge how the main categories were formed. At the end of this chapter the illustrative chart will be provided.

Internal factors

Many answers included the possibility to utilize live stream in company's internal context. For instance, live stream could boost up collectivity among colleagues. Additionally, it was mentioned that live streaming could act as a new innovative way of to do communication inside the company which could result in increased inspiration among employees. According to results, it also eases real time informing and reporting.

"Early this year, our company started using informing and reporting sessions on a weekly basis. We found out that it was an easy way to communicate all the important topics at once without forcing distance workers to attend the meeting at the main office."

One company pointed out that live stream also helps to keep the company's processes more transparent among business partners. This resulted in enhanced loyalty.

"In the past we have had some issues with staying transparent enough to our business partners. This has decreased the level of trust and loyalty among us. Using live stream in opening up our costs and profits was a good move to improve our collaboration."

External factors

External factors consist of benefits live streaming has on marketing communication among stakeholders outside of the company. Four sub categories were formed. These subcategories include brand differentiation, update the current strategy, answering to competition and brand image. In the following example live stream helped in communication of a new brand image.

"Our business strategy was earlier based on being the most cost-effective solution in the market. And still our goal is to be the pain in the ass to our rivalries. That's the reason why we started using live stream on Facebook where we showed funny

and interesting ways to use our product in unoriginal way. That's how we managed convey our difference-based brand image to our potential customers."

The example below was not so successful. It was consider being way too resource consuming.

"Roughly one year ago I noticed the potential of using digital marketing like videos and streaming. My business was facing a lot of competition and it was hard to keep my business "breathing above the surface financially". Advertising through live stream brought me few new clients but not enough compared to the resources I put into it. I either did not feel comfortable when acting out in a stream."

In the following chart, the main concepts and categories are illustrated.

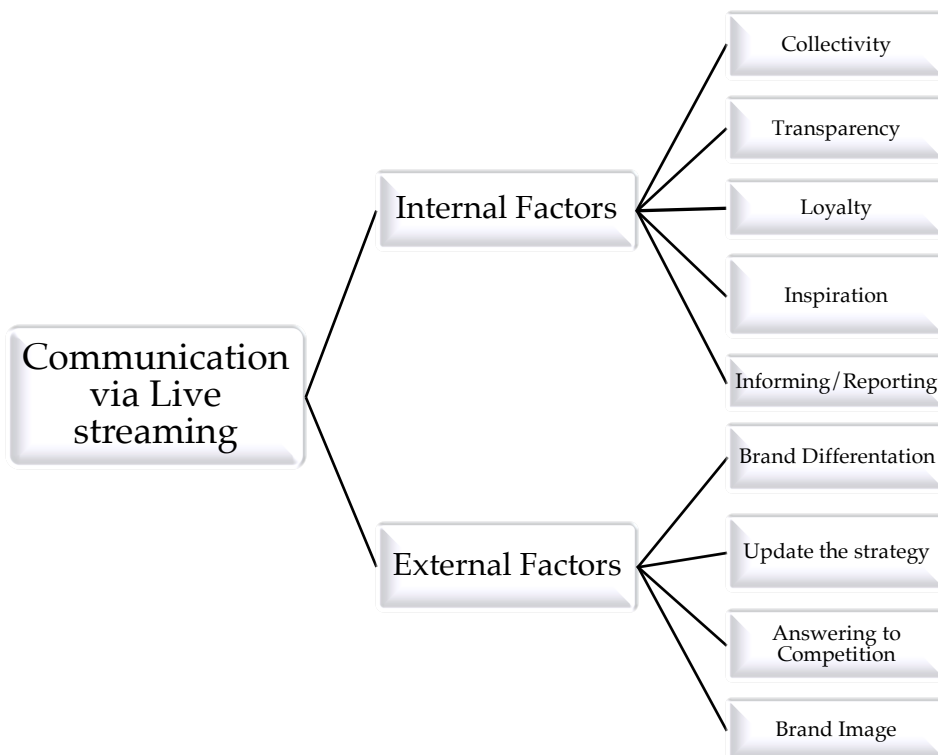


Figure 4: Communication via live streaming

Compiled by the author: Interviews

Chart above illustrates how communication via live streaming could be divided into internal and external factors.

5. DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the author is going to scrutinize the research findings in the light of existing theory material. The most interesting findings will be summarized and pointed out. Moreover, conclusions will be drawn based on the comparison of findings and theory. In the last part, the author will analyze the reliability and validity of the research.

5.1. The ways of using live streaming

Based on the findings of this research, live streaming provides a possibility to communicate with, both existing and potential future customers, in digital environment. According to the findings, live streaming made it possible to promote products and services in different up-to-date platforms. Additionally, live streaming helped the company enhance and polish its brand in a way that differs from its competitors. This finding goes hand in hand with Blair (2017) who was presenting the brand value of live streaming.

Companies will be required to put a lot of effort into the production and implementation of live streams. As Feng and Ots (2015) define, in content marketing the marketer manages to tailor such a content that finds its way to targeted customer group and eventually results in additional purchases. According to the findings of this research, companies understand the potential getting added value through live streams but even the best quality will not guarantee desired outcomes. There is a chance that the expected cost-effectivity goals are not going to be achieved - at the worst, causing damage to the company's and its brands. Anyhow, live streaming is a great tool to make a difference how company could interact with their customers (Wasen 2017, 13).

One interesting finding was the aspect of branding in social media context. As Peters (2016) pointed out, live streaming is a great way to support corporate's brand in multiple ways. The company can provide content like behind the scenes material or footage from manufacturing process. Based on the findings, widening brand awareness is really important and live stream

could be used to correct misinformation of a brand and conveying right info about the company and its products. According to Tsimonis et al (2014) social media can strengthen company's brand could efficiently develop deeper relationships with customers. To reach this goal, the company must take into an account the fact that competition is extremely hard in some business environments - such as music business. According to the findings, companies are facing the challenge to maintain customers' attention. Basically, they are fighting for the customers consumed time but in today's world that is not easily achieved. Customers want to feel entertained. As Kerns (2014) mention that a company is required to offer something that is meaningful and timely. One idea that popped out the results was that providing funny and innovative content could work out rather well. Anyhow, as Leppänen (2015) states that anything could happen during a broadcast and a company cannot prevent mistakes in advance.

One important aspect that should be taken into account is the possibility of using live streaming both internally and externally. According to the results, in some cases, live streams helped to increase the level of transparency, which resulted in higher level of trust and loyalty among business partners. This finding supports the thoughts of Blair (2017) who wrote that live stream is a more authentic and human way of communication inside the company. Both, the theory and results, support the issue that live stream is very useful in a company where some employees are doing distance work.

Additionally, Blair (2017) states that companies are using live streaming for instance in shareholder meetings. Live streaming was widely used as an informing and reporting tool. Especially the fact of communicating in real time environment was seen as a great advantage. As Kallio (2015) writes, there is a demand for real-time information from an increasingly impatient audience. The author cannot imagine many more real-time information demanding issues than sharing financial statements of corporations listed in stock exchanges. The practical solution to keep stakeholder informed is one of live streams ultimate benefits.

Although the majority of the results had a positive tone regarding live streams, there were some cases where it had not brought enough results as a digital communication tool. Perhaps the user had not managed to keep one's audience engaged enough (Wasen 2017) or the timing was totally wrong (ON24 2014) but it is worth pointing out that live stream is not a key to inevitable success. As mentioned in results, the company has to consider all the aspects from right platforms to possible financial returns on investments. Overall, as in every marketing process,

there is the chance to make it or to fail. Yet, there is clearly an interest and demand for companies to utilize live streams as a part of their digital marketing operations.

5.2. Reliability and validity

Eskola and Suoranta (1998, 211) consider that the most important criterion for reliability in research is the researcher himself, whereby the evaluation of reliability extends throughout the whole research process. Moreover, according to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2003, 135) there are no unambiguous guidelines for evaluating qualitative research. They emphasize the consistency of coherence in the overall research. They are emphasizing the need for consistency of the whole research. Reliability and validity is improved with the consistent working process of this research. Although this field of digital marketing is not yet researched enough, the author got carefully acquainted with the topic and it's main concepts. Additionally, one managed to scrap together enough relevant content for theory part.

According to Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2009, 23-24) the selection of the research topic is an ethical choice itself. It is important to reflect who is choosing the topic and why. This topic was chosen due to the personal ambition and interest by the author. Neither can one argue that live streaming is not an up-to-date issue in today's world of digital marketing. The author conducted the research by interviews with were carried out both digitally and personally. The strength of using interviews is that it gives the interviewee enough space to express one's honest opinions by using own words. In this research, during the face-to-face interviews, more questions came up as the conversation moved on. Even though researchers are trying to avoid mistakes, the reliability and qualifications of the results may vary.

The validity and reliability of a case study can be measured by four tests. These are construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. Construct validity means finding the instruments that can be used to investigate the phenomenon being studied. This requires the definition of terms related to the phenomenon studied and the modification of these terms into measurable form. (Yin 2009 40-42.) The author put much effort into defining all the relevant concepts, which were used in this research. As for the analysis, according to Eskola and Suoranta (1998, 216-217) it is important that the analysis is made by using random picks from the research material. To clarify this process to the reader, the author provided many examples of how the

interviewees had answered and how the categories were formed. This way the reader was able to follow the process of analysis.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, live streaming is still a new way for organizations to do marketing and there are still many usage purposes which companies are not utilizing. However, there are clear signs that live streaming is gaining more ground in organizations' marketing activities. The aim of this thesis is to introduce ways how companies are using or are planning to use live streaming in their marketing.

The results point out that, live streaming is part of organizations digital marketing processes and it helps organization to reach both new and existing customers. Companies utilize live streaming for branding purposes as well. Additionally, according to research findings, live streaming is undoubtedly a great communication tool. The results indicate that organizations are using live streaming both externally and internally to communicate with their employees and customers. This is based on the fact that organizations' are in a need of new and unique tools for communication. Especially younger generations are using one or more online communication systems and thus, organizations should try and keep up with the changes to stay ahead from other competitors on the industry.

On the other hand, the findings state that even though live streaming provides limitless opportunities to do digital marketing and branding, it still do not fit for everyone. Just like any other marketing process, live streaming also needs enough resources to succeed and it has to become implemented professionally to get the best out of it – and even good resources will not guarantee goals to be achieved. Live streaming could be considered of still being in early stages of it's lifecycle and many new innovative ways to use it is yet to come. Live streaming is also lacking academic research – and it is highly needed. Currently, know-how and know-what in live streaming is mostly in the hands of business professionals and marketers. For instance, it would be interesting to find out the possibilities to utilize live streaming for educational purposes.

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APPENDICES

E-mail Interview

1. What kind of digital marketing communication tools your company uses (online PR, digital PR, social media, E-mail advertising, video and mobile marketing, etc.)? Which one you prefer the most?
2. What is the purpose of using these digital marketing communication tools? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each channel?
3. What is the aim of your company's digital marketing strategy?
4. What is the role of live video streaming in your marketing communication mix?
5. Is your company using live streaming as a marketing tool? If not, are you planning to use it someday? If yes, how?
6. What live streaming platforms you are using (Facebook Live, YouTube Live, Periscope)? Some other? And why these?
7. What are the possible benefits/disadvantages why company should use Live streaming as a part of their marketing strategies?
8. What do you think about the future of live video streaming in marketing?
9. Is your company using live video streaming as a company's internal communication tool?
10. Moreover, what kind of content you are streaming when broadcasting?
11. What strategies your company is using to gain more brand awareness/ brand image in the markets?
12. What are the objectives of your corporate branding? What do you want to achieve?
13. Do you think that your corporate brand could benefit from live streaming? Why, why not?
14. Is there something specific you would like to add or tell about?

15. Do you have some advices how brands should use live video streaming in their marketing and branding strategies?

Face-to-face interview - Flashdrive