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ENGAGING USERS AS CONTENT CREATORS IN MARKETING

Bachelor's thesis

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I declare that I have compiled the paper independently

and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors

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ABSTRACT

User generated content is a form of content marketing. The aim of this study is to examine the possibilities of content marketing when users have created the content to be used in marketing. User generated content has become popular due to social media platforms where it is possible to share personal content. User generated content encourages direct communication between companies and consumers. The research problem is to solve the best motivators for user generated content creators and the most used platform to engage users to generate content for marketing purposes. This thesis uses quantitative methods and a survey is created for solving the research problem. The results of the survey are compared with previous framework and analysed in findings of the results. The main results indicate that campaigns held in social media are the most effective method to engage users to create content. Prizes and own will are equally important. The best platform to share user generated content is the most visited and visually attractive platform. Instagram and Facebook are almost equal in the results. Authenticity in user generated content is essential. It has value to be shared. The results show that consumers trust brands in the same level as they trust in user generated content. The communication increases when users generate the content for marketing.

Keywords: User generated content, social media, campaigns, marketing

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine the possibilities of content marketing when users have created the content to be used for marketing purposes. The topic has been chosen, since user generated content marketing has risen among the recent years to be one of the most popular methods of marketing, and, as a generally accepted marketing tool. The reason this has happened is the popularity of social media sites and platforms where users can easily share their content to the world to be commented and shared further. In user, generated content marketing the key for successful communication is to message directly to the target audience, and by doing that with user created content it is interesting to investigate how effective or influential it truly is.

The chosen topic is relevant in today's market due to platforms that encourage sharing other peoples' videos, images and thoughts. The thesis is inspired by several other works in the field of user generated content, also including a part where users help to build interfaces in technological industries. The focus is however concentrating on user generated content used for marketing purposes. Motivations and authenticity of the content is explored as well.

The research problem is to solve the best motivators for user generated content creators and the most used platform to engage users to generate content for marketing purposes. The main research questions are "What kind of motivators could companies use to engage user generated content?", "Which are the most effective platforms to accomplish user generated content worthy of marketing?" and "How much authenticity matters in user generated content comparing it with brand's own content?". These research questions are answered in results as well as discussed in the conclusion.

The research problem will be investigated through theoretical contradiction and part of the research will have empirical data to help solving the research problem. This thesis will go through the topic of user generated content in the context of marketing online using theory and previous frameworks as guidelines and later comparing it with empirical study conducted by the author. The research for the empirical study is implemented by using quantitative methods and the

materials for the study's data gathering is collected by using social media and online communication tools.

This bachelor's thesis has three parts. The first chapter familiarizes with the theory in user generated content marketing and introduces common methods how to use it well in the marketing field. For instance, one of the important aspect discussed is, defining, what is content and how the content should be spread to the customers online. The authenticity and forms of the content is also handled in this chapter. The importance of two-way marketing is observed also, since it leads lastly to the phase where customer engagement is encouraged even producing the desired user generated content for marketing purposes. The first chapter also includes the practical elements of social media and how it can be effectively utilized in user generated content marketing. Social media is one of the most used places to share and exchange thoughts, thus it is relevant to this topic. Various social media platforms have been taken into consideration in this chapter, but mostly the most popular that are used in everyday lives of the customers.

The second chapter will go through the methods chosen for this bachelor's thesis and it defines the competence of these methods. The design of the survey is justified as well. The essential goal is to use methods that answer to the research questions and that will solve the problem. The last chapter goes through the results of the quantitative study and analyses it comparing it to previous studies in the user generated content marketing field.

The author thanks all the respondents of the survey who participated and people who guided him through in the process of making the bachelor's thesis about user generated content in marketing.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF USER GENERATED CONTENT

User generated content should awake feelings with customers to provide extra value for the companies using it. Positive experiences span the target group with enjoyable services and products that are designed by customer experience in mind. When the customer experience is conducted greatly, the user generated content is passed over for other customers to enjoy. Traditional content marketing is based on creating solutions that are creative and with solutions that will engage the customers in online environment. Mainly, user generated content marketing is a way of marketing which considers the customers first hand to be part of the process. The content can be everything from information to combined sounds and videos that will add co-value to a company's customers. However, measuring what is truly good and authentic content to be used in marketing, can be challenging. Great content in content marketing and user generated content marketing includes matters that create value and presents issues that are important in practice to the customers. This chapter will introduce topics that relate specifically on user generated content in detail from its various forms to motivation eventually leading to social media and two-way marketing used in user generated content.

1.1. Forms of user generated content

The forms of user generated content can be presented in various ways. The most common case of user generated content includes pictures or videos. User generated content is part of earned media, which differs from paid media which includes modern content marketing. User generated content can also include anything between, Facebook status updates, reviews, blogs and Instagram photos, basically what social media allows (Knoblauch 2014). Users can generate content that can give companies leverage in marketing. The simplest form of user generated content is pictures with descriptions and the more complex are videos with precisely considered audio and messages. The

most important issue is to have content that creates impressions and affects to the customers to call the content worthy of marketing.

Companies can hire special content creators or they can choose to use user created content, but then it is not user generated content anymore as they are paid to do it. Furthermore, it is important to realize where the company will achieve their attention of the potential customers. Platform matters also when talking about business-to-business customers as does the content. However, there already exists organizations spending time producing amusing videos and uploading them to YouTube (Kaplan, Haenlein 2010). They could be even claiming it is user created content in social media, but it truly is not, it is content marketing. Defining the difference in social media sites, which content is created by users which by companies might be occasionally complicated.

As part of user generated content and as a form, there exits user generated content led by organizational guidelines. It could be argued that it is not pure form of user generated content marketing, but it is relevant to take it under consideration. This especially concerns industries with user generated data sources and information technology driven companies (Lukyanenko et. al, 2017). These companies also use user generated content for other than marketing purposes, such as developing open domain software's and database designs. The challenging part is however, when speaking of user generated content in the mentioned database and feedback-based environment is to tell what really user generated content is and what is the developer's content when having open settings for user generated content. (Lukyanenko et. al 2016). The same core idea can be used for marketing purposes, essentially to engage users to try out content creation and simultaneously giving direct feedback to companies and other customers by sharing user generated content.

1.2. Vlog and blogs as a part of user generated content

Vlogging ergo video logging has been popularized in recent years mainly because of the available technology. Vloggers upload videos about products they use or their personal life, thus increasing traffic from subscribers and anonymous viewers (Lee, Watkins 2016). These vloggers have many followers and they identify with them, thus it is one of the best places to implement user generated

content marketing. The target audience can be even broader than in standard social media networking sites and services like YouTube allow commercial breaks between videos, thus Facebook has implemented this too in last few years. Nevertheless, a company can market their products by using content creators and their own commercials to ensure best results out of the platform.

Blogs are written by communities, but in most cases the blogs are written by individual people. These blogs are style posts that anyone can read and it provides almost always a way of other people to comment them. (Juslen 2009) Because blogs give anyone the chance to express themselves blogs have gained vast popularity in a short time. The importance of blogs in the context of this paper is that the consumers can express themselves and give opinions in a form of comment to other consumers about products and services. Furthermore, blogs have become even more closer to traditional journalism, since their credibility has grown over the years among users (Johnson, Kaye 2004). Nonetheless, blogs rely heavily on stories and content that would be left out on traditional media (Johnson, Kaye 2004). Due to this reason blogs are an ingenious place to share user generated content, although blogs themselves are user generated there exits many blogs that are sponsored by brands or companies which are part of paid media. In early 2000s journalists did perceive bloggers as amateurs but currently the perception has changed, since many media publishers rely on blogs as their sources, too (Johnson, Kaye 2004). Additionally, blogs create awareness for consumers and companies in a different light than paid media and it could be more approachable because of the reviews right there on the blog and possible electronic word-of-mouth action. It has been proven that user reviews as a part of user generated content can in fact influence sales by having influential effects on consumers (Duan, Gu, Whinston 2008). Reviews can be also discussed in vlogs and blogs and thus these are part of user generated content.

1.3. Motivating on creation of user generated content

It has not been very broadly researched what makes users to generate content for marketers, although the idea of creating content should start from the users themselves to be authentic. Nevertheless, there exits countless possibilities and motives why users create content and share to their favorite social media sites for everybody to enjoy and share thoughts with each other.

Basically, the simplest but challenging matter to execute is to engage users for conversation to avoid the content to drown in the feed of social media sites, for example, whereas motivation needs to be taken into consideration for further use of user generated content. Sharing specific content in social media and especially when creating and sharing own user generated content it is a matter of social interaction. Users tend to build self-image of themselves in social media and social media is a place where it is possible to share one's own personal presence in different forms. This means that users think either consciously or subconsciously do they want to share their generated content or not.

When looking closer at user generated content and thinking when it is truly a great way of satisfaction for other users to enjoy the content it is at least challenging to evaluate the purpose behind this and if it sincerely does help the marketing in social media or are others just annoyed. For example, reasons motivated for internal motivation might be for instance versatility, meaningfulness or the making of successful experiences. Hence, internal motivation meets the needs of the highest level, such as the need for self-realization and development. Participation can also be motivator for users to generate new content, because while participating to an event or campaign the users themselves can get visibility, too.

In figure 1. The contribution to user generated content is defined by three stages, ultimately leading to meta contribution. This model presents why many contributors leave and merely some sustain (Crowston, Fagnot 2018). Only a couple of contributors on user generated content stay and become meta contributors. The first stage begins with simple things, like hitting the edit button. The second stage includes the sustained contributors who continue even after the possible content is generated. The third stage in Figure 1. shows as meta contributor who are contributors with clear structuring skills and awareness of the work to be done to generate user generated content. (Crowston, Fagnot 2018).
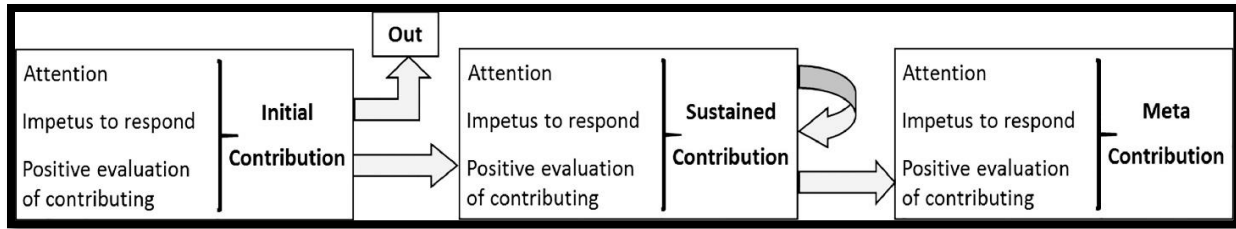
Figure 1. Motivation stages
Source: Crowston, Fagnot (2018)

This model of motivational stages presents why many contributors might leave early and merely some sustain (Crowston, Fagnot 2018). Only a couple of contributors on user generated content stay and become meta contributors. The first stage begins with simple things, like hitting the edit button. The second stage includes the sustained contributors who continue even after the possible content is generated. The third stage in Figure 1. shows as meta contributor who are contributors with clear structuring skills and awareness of the work to be done to generate user generated content. (Crowston, Fagnot 2018). Attention, impetus to respond and positive evaluation of contributing also differs amongst these contributors. Simply attention grows to keep user generators interested in the project to become meta contributors at last. Impetus to respond is quite the same between sustained and meta contributors although meta contributors might have more motivation, since it is more of a feeling-based perception or feeling mandatory to do something. Ultimately, the study found out that social aspects were also as important to meta contributors than to others. (Crowston, Fagnot 2018) Lastly the model as seen in Figure 1. Includes the positive evaluation of contributing. This is a step that compares the possible benefits that might occur from contributing (Crowston, Fagnot 2018). This step varies since on the model showed, the initial stage curiosity can be fulfilled quick in the initial stage it deserves its place, but on the stage of meta contributors the feedback being positive, or negative does not really matter. (Crowston, Fagnot 2018) Motivation is different in different stages on trying, thus if companies want user generated content to flow out naturally users should be encouraged by the ease of trying to create.

Other way of motivating users to create content is through humor. This is part of affecting emotions and appealing to emotions in a user generated campaign or as a motivator, it could eventually lead into great results that can be later used in marketing. In its simplest it could be stated that funny or humorous content is not so personal to share and that is why it could be easier to get users

motivated to create content. Insightful motivators will create memories with the consumers who are creating user generated content and it gives them a reason to follow them in social media. However, to get consumers motivated to create content it can be creative as a company, since if it is a competition or a share a hashtag campaign, consumers will participate to them, because of different reasons but essentially for the same reasons they participate to anything else.

1.4. Sharing authentic user generated content

Digital media has changed the interaction between consumers and marketers. It is possible to share and comment on user generated content and use it for marketing purposes due to online platforms like social media sites. However, the biggest problem for companies acting in social media is to find satisfactory content to share, especially when made by users. Essentially, the content generated by other customers brings an instant social interaction, simultaneously giving an idea to other customers what they could try or buy. Nonetheless, platforms differ, and it is important to notice which platform a company is using for sharing the user generated content. For instance, previous study has shown that brand related user generated content is much more factual in YouTube than it is on Twitter due to differences in the platform and Facebook is somewhere in between them as a platform (Smith, Fischer, Yongjian 2012). One can argue that different brands that engages user generated content get along better in different platforms due to their nature, but it is useful to research where to engage user generated content before sharing it on a platform where the audience could be narrower than hoped.

Companies need to be creative, when it comes to sharing user generated content. However, authenticity is the influential factor, when sharing user generated content, to avoid doubts about paid semi-professional users, consumers could notice earned content from user generated content. (Ann, 2015). Thus, checking the content's origins that users have created is to be done before sharing it, to guarantee that it truly is authentic. Also, sharing authentic pictures generated by other users, the possibility of relating to those moments or thoughts is increased even more with authenticity (Gallegos 2018). Followers of companies or brands social media sites are naturally interested in the naturality and authenticity of the content created by them, but also, they will be delighted by another users' generated content. If a company shares pictures or other media

generated by users, it will naturally encourage also other companies to share user generated content. Though it is important to ask permission to use user generated content if it happens to be for instance, a great influential picture that would provide added value for marketing and customers, too. After all this rule applies when it is not about online competition, which has guidelines and authorizations handled. Of course, all of this is not always necessary, since some platforms allow certain transparency in their user agreements to permit personal data and picture usage for commercial purposes. Therefore, it is good to check user agreements on the platform where a company is sharing the user generated content.

1.5. User generated content marketing campaigns

Companies are more active in social media than ever before. Arranging campaigns in social media is a great way of creating user generated content. For example, consumers could be asked to take a picture of the company's product or share funny advice concerning their services. Thus, consumers who have created content could participate in the prize draws. However, it is important to make the available prizes so attractive that participation is interesting to those who are not as active content providers but rather general consumers. Another excellent incentive is the social aspects of prizes, since consumers can share their success stories online to attract newer potential customers from their personal network.

A good example of a successful campaign is from Coca-Cola. In 2011 'Share a Coke' campaign was launched in Australia, where the bottles had random names of people instead of the original logo of Coca-Cola. In Figure 1. it is possible to see an example of the campaign Coca-Cola is still hosting, where the names are in to the bottle itself instead of the logo. It in fact increased their revenue by two per cent in the same year by doing so (Flockler 2017). In 2016 Coca-Cola had another user generated content campaign where they contributed with a music application Shazam by having a contest called: 'Share a Coke and a Song'. In the contest, some beverages had lyrics with Shazam's logo on the side and by scanning the logo users could record a video lip-syncing the song and later sharing it on a social media by using a hashtag #ShareaCoke. (Flockler 2017) Coca-Cola is one of the greatest marketers and pioneers and in the area of user generated content they have one of the biggest success stories there is.

Figure 2. Instagram picture from #shareacoke campaign (2018)
Source: Instagram

User generated content marketing campaigns do not always work as desired. Many companies fail to deliver effective user generated campaigns by playing too safe or simply planning it poorly (Coote 2017). One of the greatest fails belongs to McDonalds when they had a campaign, where users could share stories by using a hashtag #McDStories (Coote 2017). Their plan was to attract consumers by nice memories that they have about McDonalds. However, the tweets were not as hoped and the campaign failed. (Coote 2017) The tweets judged the company and its' products very heavily and big part of the user generated content was sarcastic or mean. Thus, it is crucial to note when planning a user generated content campaign what are the possible outcomes. It should be asked does it add extra value for the brand and the customers and will it help in marketing in the future. Internet after all is a good place for anonymity, but the campaign should be set within certain kind of limits to avoid unnecessary things that the company's brand or image might not offer.

Having a user generated content campaign is an effective way of building trust and relationships with the target audience, but if there exit negative feelings targeted to the brand or the company it is not sensible to give a hashtag to the most critical and loudest consumers to play with it as they please (Coote 2017). It is relevant to note that using user generated content instead of company's or brands own content as a part of a campaign, it is ultimately part of co-creation process where

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audiences can reflect themselves participating in to the content creation (French 2016). Naturally, researching the markets before conducting any campaigns or events that include user generated content, should be done with care. On the other hand, these campaigns might also give the brand or company the feedback they needed to hear to develop in certain areas. Giving users the voice could also be positive as seen in the examples of Coca-Cola.

1.6. Importance of aesthetics in user generated content

It's not simple to know what the consumers truly need in the context of user generated content, since even, if the target group is limited, there exits matters about consumers that the company does not necessarily know about. Inspecting at the user generated content for marketing usage, the company could get an idea of this information, but it is not often presented in research or corresponding acts, such as purchasing behavior. Reviewing the content generated by users, an analysis should be executed to avoid mistakes in the future while sharing the content into social media to be reviewed by brand communities that will share it onwards and participate on generating new user generated content.

Brands are used for to identify with others or showing certain status elements with your environment. In marketing the user created content has a big part of sharing brand items with other consumers. User generated content can be defined as content that has been created outside professional practices (Kaplan, Haenlein, 2010). There are multiple benefits by using user created content in marketing due to the visual platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram, which are both great places for brand marketing. Nowadays, Instagram is one of the most popular platforms for these mentioned purposes. Using a snapshot aesthetic will result in higher credibility of the brand's Instagram account (Colliander, Marder 2018). Likes in Instagram will provide immediate feedback for a brand and create response directly from customers but how it could be used building brand loyalty is a different issue.

As seen in the Figure 3. below, the theoretical connection is visualized by comparing word-of-mouth attitude in traditional marketing to social media brand visibility. This has been tested by using new methods assessing incentives in a precise setting free of puzzling factors (Colliander,

Marder 2018). Also, to achieve validity, fashion was used in this framework as the product category. Findings were that building brand loyalty in Instagram were that using a snapshot aesthetic, as opposed to using a traditional studio aesthetic, when marketing a fashion label on Instagram resulted in more likes of the images and a higher perceived credibility of the brand behind the account factors (Colliander, Marder 2018). Pictures do matter in user generated content and if the content in them is great it is more likely to encourage conversation among other users and thus, it is creating positive attitudes towards the brand when user generated content is shared and executed correctly. Aesthetic is the first matter that consumers notice and thus user generated content has naturally have invested in the visuals that it will appeal to wide audiences. In the best possible scenario, the authentic user generated aesthetically appealing picture will boost the company's reputation in social media and create electronic word-of-mouth conversation to share for other users.
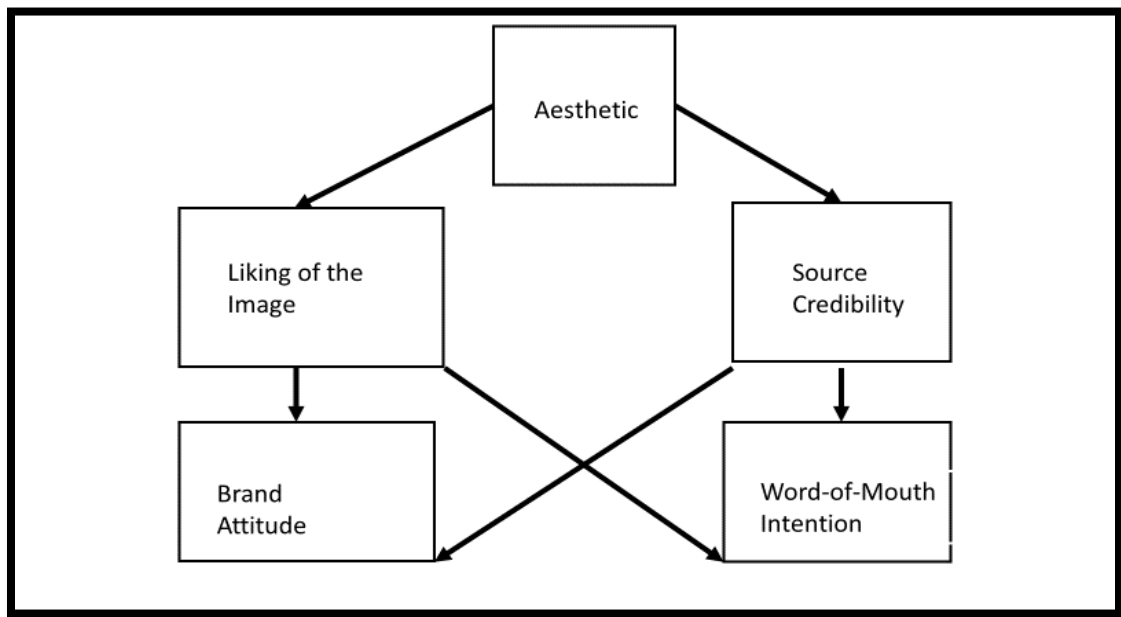

Figure 3. A model photo of aesthetic impact in social media
Source: Colliander, Marder (2018)

Brand loyalty is one essential part to generate new user generated content, because it can be used as marketing leverage in the future. It is also possible to attract and gain new customers with the user generated content by seen as superior to other brands. (Gotter 2017) Letting users tell brand's story with their generated content is one of the most efficient ways to be used in marketing (Gotter

2017). Like mentioned earlier that authenticity is important to consumers by using user generated content authenticity in consumers' eyes is guaranteed. In the best case it will impact the customers to even share other users content or create their own and spread the word online about the brand.

1.7. Social media and two-way marketing in user generated content marketing

Marketing for directly to customers using content marketing one of the best possible ways to implement this is to use the social media platforms that customers themselves use. As mentioned earlier content marketing is not one-way marketing it is two-way marketing. It utilizes communication and conversation among customers. Simple answer for companies is to use the social media and find their target audiences there to effectively market their products and services social media marketing is a marketing process, where gaining attention through social media is used for promoting products and services in form of content. The rudimentary aim, in its' purest form should be to achieve satisfactory level of sales and strengthen general brand awareness. (Augustini 2014; Murdock 2012) Nevertheless, marketing in social media is about receiving and exchanging insights and ideas. It is about communicating with company's customers.

Since social media is crowded by potential customers, companies have made their way in to the social media. Nearly ten years back social media emphasized on the word media rather than the word social, though the relevant part is, the word social (Drury 2008). Principally, social media can track peoples ages and likings, hence this reasoning makes social media easily the best option to share content.

Challenges do exist in social media marketing. Companies need to remember social media type kind of sites have existed a while now and acting there should be carefully thought before engaging, since there is no need any more to create a forum for the company's customers it is just important to attract them to participate (Muniz Jr., Schau 2011). And since content marketing is including two-way conversation the companies sharing user created content need to take the responsibility of the content shared.

How to measure what is the best social media platform for content marketing is challenging. One of the possible ways how to measure the best platform for a company can be some criteria that limits the project for user created content, meaning that, for example within collaborative projects which project simply gets the most visibility. This could be later measured by using simple view count. Nevertheless, the main idea finding the best platform is examining content communities. Their main objective is the sharing the user created content between other users, and content communities exist for a wide range of different media types (Kaplan, Haenlein, 2010).

One-way marketing is basically the traditional way of marketing, where conversation is hosted by a company. However, a two-way conversation will connect brands and consumers more closely together. A two-way marketing technique is ultimately a dialogue, where brands speak and, listen to their consumer audience, simultaneously responding to their desired wants and needs. (Edgecomb, 2017) Nevertheless, traditional mass media is often connected by one-way marketing but the weakness is that peoples' natural actions encourage interaction between other people, hence Internet and social media are different platforms, thus they enable sharing of thoughts. Furthermore, online communication has enabled a fine place for two-way communication.

In the context of user generated content marketing two-way marketing is a part of it, since companies and brands encourage, instead of direct communication, to generate new content for them. The conversation needs to be held that both sides will communicate. Two-way marketing is basically a corner stone for today's companies, since they have pages in social media, which is a platform where many consumers spend their time and get their information. Consumers will except companies to listen their ideas and in the context of user generated content, to the feedback that they will get both from the company and the brand or company. Although in internet the freedom of speech is happening it is not possible to avoid negative images and content but if the users are happy with the brand or company they might spread positive images about it and help in marketing needs, too (Eisenhauer 2012). Nevertheless, if negative strikes happen against the brand or a company they should answer publicly but with words and phrases familiar to the consumers. Basically, in social media there is no need to be too formal it could even banish certain customers. (Eisenhauer 2012) Lastly, it is great to note that two-way communication will enhance

relationships with customers and earn new media to the company's side to generate new user created content.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter presents, which research methods where used and why these methods were chosen. The research method used in this bachelor's thesis is quantitative methods. In quantitative methods, it is simple to do easily understandable generalizations and compare its' gathered data to previous researches executed. It is also possible to create numerical charts that help to understand the research problem and questions in a clear way.

2.1. Design of the research

This research uses the online survey method to gather data. The target group of this thesis' respondents consist of people who are using social media and who expose to user generated content used in marketing. To confirm this that this survey consists only of people that use social media it was shared in social media services through private messages. Naturally, the survey is anonymous, which means that privacy of the respondents is protected.

The design of research questions gives an indication of what kind of information is desired to be obtained. The questions are reflecting the research problem. There are multiple choice questions and statements included with a possibility to answer openly to a few of them if a perfect solution is not given. Age and gender are taken into the consideration, but no hypothesis is created before executing the survey. Rating scale is used in a few questions to compare them with previous frameworks. There are thirteen questions in total and these questions were carefully considered to be a part of the survey. Not all the questions are compulsory to answer so there might be some answers left unanswered. The variables chosen in the questions were selected to reflect the several possible outcomes that it is possible to explain and describe the differences between respondents' answers.

The derivation to these questions that are chosen to this survey is that their design is reflecting the various parts of theory that is introduced in the previous chapter. This allows for comparison with the theoretical framework of user generated content and aids to find a solution to the research problem and to the research questions. The questions are designed that the motivation on creating user generated content, authenticity, campaigns, usage of social media sites, and the possible influence of content made by brands in comparison to users are examined. The aim is to have clear answers to the research questions by designing the survey this way and clarify the few chosen possibilities of engaging users as content creators in marketing.

2.2. Sampling method and data analysis

Quantitative research is based on the concepts of statistical unit and sample. Thus, sampling method used is to be clarified and justified in the selection of part of this bachelor's thesis. The sampling method used is called snowball sampling. This method allowed the author to use friends as respondents and their friends of friends. The advantages of using this method is the possibility to chain respondents that would otherwise be difficult to sample. The process is also relatively easy and competent to execute, and it requires much less labor force than any other available sampling methods. (Dudovsky 2018) The reason why this method was chosen is to gain diverse answers from all available acquaintances for answering. People chosen for the sample were sleeted by their availability and will of cooperation but as mentioned earlier most of the people who responded shared the survey onwards to their friends.

Data analysis in this bachelor's thesis will consist of two charts, numerical comparing by the amount of answers and comparing the results with the theory presented in the first chapter. The quantitative research is analyzed by using general descriptive statistics to give direction for the comparison. The graphical charts are created from the data gathered from the survey to explain the variables and the distribution that the data has provided. The data was gathered in April 2018.

3. RESULTS

This chapter goes through the online survey results and compares it with previous studies and framework done in the user generated content that were handled in the therethical framework in this bachelor's thesis. Findings of the survey results includes and summarizes the part where the research questions are answered and comparison is done, leading to solving the research problem. Reccomendations are given in the last part what the author could have done in a different way as well as it gives suggestions for further research to be done. The aim of the survey is briefly explained through and some data is in graphical form to help understanding the numerical data.

3.1. Survey results

The survey was created using Google forms. It got 56 responses total. The survey was created to help answering the research questions and solve the research problem. There is five age groups in total. Major part of the respondents were in the age group of 22-30 years old, to be exact 34 of them. The second biggest age group consisted of 15-21 years old which was 12 of the total number of respondents. In age gropus 31-39 and 40-59 both consisted of eight respondents. Two respondents were over 60 years old. Conserning the demographics the gender was also asked in the survey, 40 are male and 16 are female.

The survey continues by asking stating that "I often generate content for the brands that I like". In this section of the survey the answers are allocated quite evenly. However most of the answers in the rating scale were in neutral or below neutral when the scale was rated from one to five. After this respondents were asked a multiple choice question about the importance of authenticity. Basically, in this part they were given three options, created by brands, consumers or companies. The respondents answers were allocated between created by consumers and created by brands

mostly, since created by brands got 27 of the total answers and created by consumers got 25 of the total answers, companies got only four votes for this question. After this the respondents were asked to rate how important autheticity is to them. From one to five rating scale number four is the most popular one being a part of 21 people's cjoice of the total responses. Similar question were also asked after this, conserning online reviews and their effect on purchase decisions. Same results came from this answer number four being the dominant choice in the rating scale from one to five were five is checking always the reviews before purchasing and one is never checking them.

Next in the survey is the part were social media usage on different platforms is measured, will to join campaigns and motivators of creating new content is asked. Instagram is the most popular platform followed by Facebook then YouTube. The visits of social media sites is also examined in the survey and everyday usage got over half of the answers from the 56 participants. The possibility of taking part of creating user generated content was also asked from the respondents with 37 answers being positive. The main motivators turned out to be prizes, contests and their own will to generate content. However 31 people of the respondents were never actually joined on any online competitions or campaigns held by brands or companies before. Lastly, there were asked whose opinion matters the most while making the purchase decisions and the most popular answer was friend. This question was included due to the part of theory were the aesthetics are valued as an important part of user generated content in marketing. The other reason why this question is included is that, due to the nature of the thisr research question where the brands own content is simply compared with user generated content. Furthermore, authenticity and the aesthetics of a single piece of user generated content are both ways to differentiate in social media feeds to be noticed by the target audiences. These were discussed in the theory, thus this question is included. Nevertheless, the most influencing opinion on purchase decisions according to the survey does not come from brands but from relatives, spouses and friends. The people that are closest seem to have a larger influence than brands or companies.

One question of the survey was added later. The purpose was to find out which is the most popular form of user generated content, also as part of authenticity and popularity of the user generated content. The various forms are introduced in the theorethical framework, thus the question was relevant to include to the survey. However, this multiple choice question got only 13 responses,

since it was added later to the survey but intrestingly enough, videos, pictures and stories (on Instagram or Snapchat) were the most popular options, videos having five votes and pictures four.

3.2. Findings of the survey results

In the survey the main focus is to answer the research questions which are the followed: "What kind of motivators could companies use to engage user generated content?", "Which are the most effective platforms to accomplish user generated content worthy of marketing?" and "How much authenticity matters in user generated content comparing it with brand's own content?". Starting with the motivators this was asked in a way that what would get them interested in creating user created content and also would they join user created content campaigns in social media. The most effective platforms were handled in the part which platforms currently are the most popular in the opinion of the respondents and how often they use social media sites. Autheticity and questions conserning it were asked in the begging of the survey alongside with the statement that I will create user generated content. The importance of authenticity is exaamined in a way that the rating scale will give numerical answers to the research questions.

To answer the first research question about what kind of motivators should a company use for generating user generated content it is important to go through theoretical framework presented in this area and compare the results of the survey. The possible motivators given in this survey were prizes, contests, hashtag campaigns, quizzes and own will. Naturally these are not the only motivators there is, but as the theoretical framework did provide the information that one of the biggest reason for doing anything is out of curiosity and later because of social reasons. The author of this bachelor's thesis has a hypothesis is that reasons to be motivated is mostly becoming from internal factors which turned out to almost be correct but prizes were just a bit more popular option for motivation for creating user generated content. Prizes go along with contests, which seems to be a great way if companies want to encourage user generated content to happen.

In Figure 4. it is presented that prizes, own will and contests are the major motivators for creating user generated content. Comparing to the theory this is part of the campaign part where it is noted

that having contests and campaigns will motivate users to generate content but also build relationships with them and trust. Therefore, companies should use prizes and contests to generate new content which they can later use for marketing purposes.
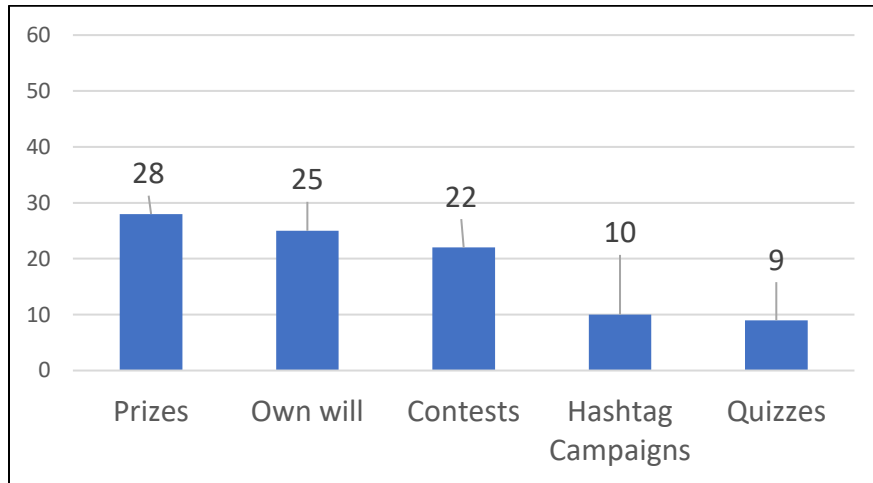

Figure 4. What would motivate you to create user generated content to your favourite brand? (n=56)
Source: created by author (2018)

The second research question handles the issue of the most popular social media platforms. Essentially, this question is included to find out whether there would exist a truly superior social media platform for sharing the user generated content. First, the regularity of social media usage was discovered in the survey. As mentioned in the results major part of the respondents use social media daily. Then the most popular platform was asked to rate five different platforms from first to last. This was done, since the obvious answer for marketers using user generated content could be that they would go on every social media platform but if there is a situation that there is a need to choose some specific platform where to campaign with user generated content, this question was included for this survey to find out which platform could it be. In the theoretical framework, Instagram's popularity as an easy snapshot tool and aesthetically superior platform was one of the best platforms for user generated content. There is also easy to communicate with consumers and promote hashtag campaigns like in the example of Coca-Cola.

In figure 5. the most visited social media platforms are presented according to the survey results. Surprisingly Facebook holds the second place so if a company wants to share their user generated

content they should at least share it in Instagram and Facebook. Sharing user generated content is effortless to these platforms but it is relevant to notice the rules and user agreements of these services. Fortunately, in both platforms all basic information about the users is public and sharable for commercial purposes if they have agreed on it.
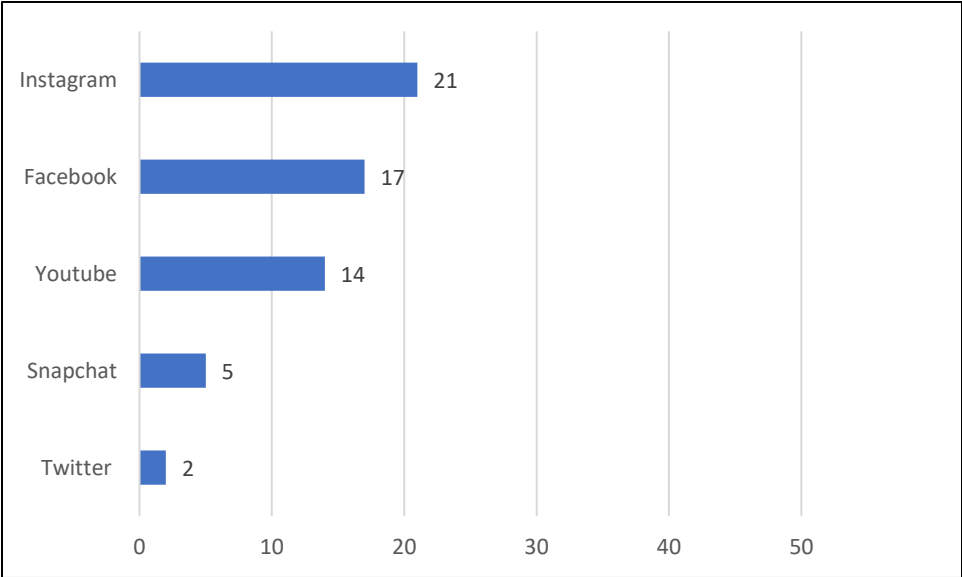

Figure 5. The primarily visited social media sites (n=56)
Source: created by author (2018)

The last research question deals with the authenticity of the user generated content. The last question is: "How much authenticity matters in user generated content comparing it with brand's own content?". In this survey, the first question to lead to this authenticity issue is by asking the opinion of the respondents about user generated content versus brands and companies. Brands are find out to be the most authentic among the respondents by with the difference of two answers since user generated content had 25 as the most authentic content and brands had the trust of 27 respondents. But if the aesthetics are taken into part of consideration in user generated content as a differentiative way the most popular influencer of answering a part of the last research questions when comparing user generated content to brand's own is that the most influencing opinion comes from relatives, spouses and friends instead of brand's. However, the format of the question is not directly asking about the aesthetics, which are a part of the theoretical framework but nonetheless, the influence of brand's is not as large or not as conscious to the respondents, since only six persons put first the influence of brands when making purchase decision, but it was the most popular option

to be in fourth place. To clarify there were options of influence of friends, spouses, relatives, brands, celebrities and influencers. The people that are closest seem to have a larger influence than brands or companies. Although, the sample is relatively small it can be assumed according to the results that brands and user generated content be equal when used in marketing. It is worth to note that the respondents did not earlier create content to brands but 37 of them would participate in the future on generating content to their favorited brands. This proves the theory about brand loyalty and the importance of aesthetics in user generated content discussed in the theoretical framework, where brand loyalty is noted to be an important part on producing new user generated content. Nevertheless, it can be argued that users trust brands as much as themselves as content creators when it comes to authenticity. In the theoretical framework it is discovered that users do care about authenticity and the origins of the content can be proven right, thus the content generated by other customers will encourage to direct communication between companies and consumers. Lastly, the content made by brands will also have the same effect probably, since it was highly appreciated in the results of the survey. This originates from the theory that consumers and brands can have similar type of relationships online as well with other users. Therefore, the authenticity in both cases does matter.

To solve the research problem which is to solve the best motivators for user generated content creators and the most used platform to engage users to generate content for marketing purposes, the solution is that companies should engage on two-way communication and have contests around producing new user generated content in social media. By doing so, it will enhance the loyalty of customers as well as motivate and engage them to create user generated content that can be later be used in marketing. This will strengthen relationship and courage users to talk about the company's or brand's content shared in social media. Nevertheless, it is challenging to be certain which is the best platform for sharing user generated content but according to the results it is Instagram and Facebook. The popularity of Instagram can be explained, since it is constantly evolving a bit faster than Facebook to compete with other social media platforms. Principally, one could say that the most competitive social media platform should be the best platform for holding contests and sharing user generated content online.

3.3. Suggestions for further research

The author of this bachelor's thesis reccomends further research in the area of examining various forms of user generated content and more detailed version of solving the source of motivation. It will be challenging to find out the best motivators since the stages of motivators depends on the person. Since in the results the competitions and prizes are chosen to be the best incentives for motivators, also internal motives could be examined more in detail. Meaning that the motivation of users own will could be social or even semi proffessional practice. The forms of user generated content are introduced in the first part of the bachelor's thesis and also the vlogs and blogs as a part of user generated content. In the survey the forms of content question is introduced and put there late, thus the author did not include that data to be included in the conclusion of the survey results. Ultimately, user generated content is about sharing and communicating between consumers, brands and companies, therefore this area of user generated content can be researched as well, since it is relatively new form of marketing.

CONCLUSION

In this bachelor's thesis, several topics has been discussed, since the topic is relatively broad but convenient. The main topic is engaging users as content creators in marketing. This thesis did have a broad look over the whole user generated system that nowadays thrives. Firstly, this bachelor's thesis explored the theoretical framework and previous studies done in the field of marketing and user generated content. Forms of user generated content are introduced there, and motivation of the creators is taken under to consideration. Authenticity is explored and different platforms where to share user generated content. The chapter also includes theory with parts of the importance of aesthetics, brand loyalty and the role if social media sites in general, in the field of user generated content used for marketing purposes. One-way marketing is an old term, since nowadays the major part of consumers has moved online and the companies with them, thus the final part of the chapter addresses marketing campaigns in social media and the essential two-way marketing. The campaigns do engage for the content creation and communication two-way communication. The second and third chapter go through the methods used in this bachelor's thesis and discusses the results. Design of the research is justified along with sampling methods and data analysis tools.

User generated content is a great way of communicating with the consumers in social media. In the best case, it will attract new customers and strengthen the trust with current ones. The various forms of user generated content are an effective marketing tools since consumers can create videos and take pictures to share their thoughts in social media about the companies. These can be included in the content marketing strategies or companies can run competitions for the best pictures or videos for get a large audiences attention.

The main research problem of this bachelor's thesis is to solve the best motivators for user generated content creators and the most used platform to engage users to generate content for marketing purposes. This problem was solved using the quantitative methods and literature review

including theoretical framework in user generated content marketing. To give the research problem a solution it was achievable to do it by using the presented research questions. The research questions were "What kind of motivators could companies use to engage user generated content?", "Which are the most effective platforms to accomplish user generated content worthy of marketing?" and "How much authenticity matters in user generated content comparing it with brand's own content?". These questions were answered in the results part of the thesis. The conclusion of these questions as well as the problem itself, is that there exist several motivators, but clearly competitions and campaigns with prizes are the most appreciated among the consumers. The platform where companies should share their user generated content is Facebook and Instagram to get the most attention while marketing with user generated content. When it comes to authenticity the results showed that consumers trust brands in the same level as in user generated content. This proves that in today's market people are aware of brands and they have relationships with them which are similar with other users.

The purpose of the bachelor's thesis was to examine the possibilities in content marketing when users have created the content that can be used for marketing purposes. The topic was chosen, as user generated content has occurred to be a widespread practice in recent years. The findings present that the topic is relevant and that user generating content has its fair place in the field of marketing. It is an excellent way of communication as well as getting feedback from users. The aesthetics of snapshots are clearly having a strong place in user generated content and these are great for marketing purposes. The possibilities of Instagram and Snapchat stories as part of user generated content should be researched in the future as the quantitative research showed that it is rising form of created content. Although the applicability of that question is not so strong, thus it got only few responses. The areas of further research should include the various forms of user generated content and which is the most effective way of user generated content to communicate with the consumers. Eventually engaging users as content creators in marketing, they will need to feel that they are part of a story with their favorite brands and their friends favourite brands, too. Consequently, the communication will be stronger by using and engaging the users to act as content creators in marketing.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Survey questions and data

1.Age (n=56)

15-21: 21,4%
22-30: 60,7%
31-39: 7,1%
40-59: 7,1%
60+:   3,6%

2.Gender? (n=56)

Male: 71,4%

Female: 28,6%

3.I often generate content for the brands that I like. (pictures, videos, reviews, blogs) (n=56)

I never create content-I often do generate content

1-5 rating scale

21,4%	26,6%	25%	16,1%	8,9%
1	2	3	4	5

4.What kind of content you find to be the most authentic? (n=56)

Created by consumers: 44,6%

Created by brands: 48,2%

Created by companies: 7,1%

5.How important authenticity in user generated content is to you? (n=56)

Not important-Very important 1-5 rating scale

3,6%	16,1%	17,9%	37,5%	25%
1	2	3	4	5

6.How much does online reviews effect on your purchase decisions? (n=56)

I do not read reviews-I always check reviews before purchasing (scale 1-5)

1,8%	12,5%	23,2%	35,7%	26,8%
1	2	3	4	5

7.Would you participate on creating content of your favourite brands? (n=56)

Yes: 66,1%

No: 33,9%

8.What would motivate you to create user generated content to your favorite brand? (multiple options provided, more than one to be selected, sorted by the number of answers below) (n=56)

Prizes: 28

Contests: 22

Hashtag campaigns: 10

Quizzes: 9

My own will (internal motives): 27

Other: 1

9.In your opinion what is the best form of user generated content? (n=13)
Videos: 5 (36,5%)
Pictures: 4 (30,8%)
Stories (Instagram, Snapchat): 2 (15,4%)
Blogs: 1 (7,7%)
Audio (music, podcasts): 1 (7,7%)

10.What are your primary visited social media sites? (Rated from first to fifth only first choice included in the data) (n=56)

Instagram	36 %
Facebook	29 %
Youtube	24 %
Snapchat	8 %
Twitter	3 %

11. How often you visit social media sites? (n=56)

I do not use social media- Everyday (1-5 rating scale)

0	5,4%	21,4%	23,2%	50%
1	2	3	4	5

12.Have you ever participated on online competitions or campaigns in social media? (n=56)

Yes: 43,6%

No: 56,4%

13.Whose opinion matters the most to your purchase decision? (Rated from first to sixth only first choice included in the data) (n=59)

Relative	Spouse	Friend	Brand	Celebrity	Influencer
20,3 %	23,7 %	32,2 %	10,2 %	6,8 %	6,8 %