The concept of success in B2B digital marketing activities, from one company perspective
Bachelor Project in Business Administration

Title: The concept of success in B2B digital marketing activities, from one company perspective
Authors: Hanna Becirspahic and Ella Rhodin
Tutor: Jenny Balkow
Date: 2018-05-21

Key terms: Digital marketing success, Marketing Performance, Digital Metrics, Content, Digital content

Abstract

Background: Due to the digital advancement and the development of digital medias, there has been a significant shift in marketing. New marketing strategies and tactics have evolved and traditional marketing has moved towards digital marketing. Moreover, the digital advancement not only brings new ways of conducting marketing activities in a cost efficient way, but it has also become easier to track and measure digital marketing activities. New tools and techniques can be employed in order to measure and analyze digital marketing outcomes. However, there are still many challenges with the measurements, which means that many companies are not able to leverage on the benefits the measurements bring. Moreover, the usage of digital marketing in B2B has started to excel. B2B companies have started to see the value in using online digital media and because of that, the importance of measuring and analyzing digital marketing activities have also become vital for B2B companies.

Purpose: The purpose of the thesis is to get an understanding of the concept success in B2B digital marketing activities. In order to get an understanding of the concept success, the thesis will examine how success can be evaluated and analyzed in B2B digital marketing activities.

Design/Method: This thesis adopted a case study approach, which consisted of several cases within one company. A qualitative approach was chosen where in-depth interviews were conducted. Data in terms of statistics from the company’s Web analytical tools was also used.
**Conclusion:** The authors of this thesis found that measuring, analyzing and evaluating the performance of digital marketing activities was done differently within the company and by that, in this study, the concept of success in the digital marketing activities was perceived differently. Even though statistical data was used when the digital marketing activities were evaluated, success was still evident to be a subjective term. It was also evident that reflecting on and analyzing the content of the digital marketing activities were important. However, what was viewed as relevant content in the digital marketing activities was perceived differently. Therefore, the view of success of digital marketing activities was assessed differently.
Acknowledgements

The authors of this thesis would like to express their sincerest gratification to all of those who have been involved in and supported this study. First of all, we would like to thank our tutor, Jenny Balkow for all the great support and the guidance she provided us with. Secondly, we would like to address our sincerest appreciation to the company who has been a huge part of this thesis and contributed with useful resources. We would also express our gratitude to all the respondents who agreed to participate in this study and who have provided insightful knowledge. Lastly, we want to address our appreciation to the company’s digital analyst who supported us with the different cases.
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1. Introduction

In this section the background of the topic will be introduced. The problem discussion will be presented which is followed by the purpose of the study and the research questions.

1.1 Background

Digitalization is changing the marketing environment. New possibilities to develop marketing strategies and tactics have emerged due to the advancement of new digital technologies (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Moreover, the technological advancement together with the changes in consumer behavior make companies rethink their marketing strategies in order to adapt in accordance to the digital environment (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). Therefore, companies have moved into the digital environment and there has been a shift from using traditional marketing to engaging in digital marketing. Today digital marketing concerns using digital technologies to create targeted and integrated communication in order to build relationships while measuring the results (Smith, 2007). Examples of common digital marketing tactics are marketing on the website, social media marketing and search engine optimization (Järvinen, 2016). Among those, one of the most preferred marketing strategy has become using social media (Kirtis & Karahan, 2011). Social media could be defined as activities that are carried out online by using conversational media such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or blogs, in order to share information (Safko & Brake, 2009). Moreover, another shift undertaken in the digital environment is that companies are moving from being business-centric to being customer-centric in their marketing activities (Matt, Hess & Benlian, 2015). This is because consumers have instant access to a vast amount of information and that information is used by the consumer to support their buying decisions (Sharma, 2002; Lazoc & Lut, 2013). For companies this means that creating influential content becomes a core value of the digital marketing activities. In digital marketing, firms are not pushing their promotional offers towards the customers, instead firms are creating valuable content in order to attract, retain and by that transform customers into loyal customers (Weber, 2011). Creating valuable content is therefore
more about “earning” the customers’ attention in contrast to the traditional marketing styles (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2009).

The use of digital marketing is more apparent in Business-to-Consumers (B2C) companies than in Business-to-Business (B2B) industries (Rapp, Beitelspacher, Grewal & Hughes, 2013). It has been noted that, since B2B firms have long and complex buying processes and face-to-face selling is preferable, digital media has not been utilized because of its non-personal communication and sales supporting objectives (Rosenbloom, 2007; Singh & Koshyb, 2011). Yet, today, B2B firms have realized the value of digital media and have thereby increased their presence on digital medias, though it is still not used as widely in contrast to B2C companies (Harrison, Plotkin & Stanley, 2017). A study conducted by Kho (2008) showed that B2B companies may derive the same benefits as B2C firms by using social media. More precisely, Kho (2008) concluded that B2B companies can strengthen their relationship with customers when using social media. It has been suggested in the literature that B2B firms can leverage on digital media and use it as an effective marketing tool (Järvinen, Tollinen, Karjaluoto & Jayawardhena, 2012). For example, B2B firms use digital media to attract new and potential customers, drive traffic to its website and maintain existing conversation with current customers (Järvinen et al., 2012). Further, other studies have shown that B2B firms can use digital tools to support their brands because digital media can be used for creating brand awareness and improve current brand attitudes (Drèze & Husssherr, 2003; Manchanda, Dubé, Goh & Chintagunta, 2006).

The digital development not only provides new media’s where marketing activities can be executed, it has also become easier for firms to access, collect and analyze marketing activities by using digital data (Pickton, 2005; Russell, 2009). Using digital measuring tools brings the advantage of measuring the outcome of marketing activities, at the same time as collecting information about the customers has become much more simple compared to traditional medias (Järvinen et al., 2012). In order to handle and effectively measure marketing activities in this digital environment, useful analytical tools are necessary. Therefore, the integration of digital measuring tools in the marketing mix can be important for B2B companies (Järvinen et al., 2012). There are several examples of such tools where customer data can be gathered. One of those effective measurements
tools that marketers can adopt is Web analytics (WA), which measures click-stream data on websites. Social media data or “Big Social data” can also be gathered from social medias, such as Facebook and Instagram (Manovich 2011; Burgess & Bruns 2012). Also, social media monitoring (SMM) is another way to gather social data in terms of tracking electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and information about specific keywords (Sponder, 2012).

1.2 Problem Discussion

Up to date existing research have indicated that the ability to carefully and correctly assess marketing performance is crucial for enhancing business performance and the success of the marketing activities (O’Sullivan & Abela, 2007; O’Sullivan, Abela & Hutchinson, 2009). The literature has described commonly used approaches when analyzing the outcome of marketing activities and assessing the success level. The marketing performance literature describes several approaches which are used when assessing performance and by that the success. Traditional performance approaches are financial and nonfinancial approaches. An example of a financial approach is efficiency, while examples of nonfinancial approaches are effectiveness, adaptability and benchmarking (Walker & Brown, 2004; Clark, 2000; Courty & Marschke, 2004). This means that today there are several ways to approach performance in order to evaluate success.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, B2B digital marketing has started to excel. B2B companies have recognized the value of employing digital marketing, not only because of its beneficial tools and cost efficiency, but also because of the ability to measure and evaluate marketing activities (Batrinca & Treleaven, 2015). Being able to measure marketing activities is important in order to understand what content is working and by that marketing activities can be optimized (Simpson, 2017). Owing to the fact that B2B companies are characterized by lengthy and complex sales cycles, have fewer customers and fewer transactions, many companies have found it difficult to demonstrate the relationship between marketing and its results (Webster, Malter & Ganesan, 2005). However, in line with the digital development, new tools and techniques of measuring marketing activities have emerged. These new ways of measuring bring many benefits
to businesses as they are able to gather real-time data and optimize their digital marketing efforts accordingly. However, since B2B digital marketing is fairly new, how to measure it and what to measure is unclear (Fisher, 2009). Authors have suggested that one of the main barrier for B2B companies when entering the digital environment is the lack of measuring and developing a measuring framework for assessing marketing activities (Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström & Freundt, 2014; Fisher, 2009). According to Chaffey and Patron (2012) many marketers have failed to manage the digital marketing analytics and can therefore not gain the benefit the tools may provide. One of the many challenges with measuring digital marketing activities companies face is the information overload. The data gathered on the web and social media comes in great quantities, is complex and can both be structured or unstructured (Steiglitz, Dang-Xuan, Bruns & Neuberger, 2014). Moreover, according to Mintz and Currim (2013), the available metrics is increasing substantially and as a result measuring digital activities becomes a challenge. In other words, choosing the right measurements and metrics that will benefit the company can be a struggle. Further, studies have also shown that the ability to analyze and interpret the data is crucial in order to gain beneficial insights, but that is also a challenge today (Chaffey & Patron, 2012).

It is not only important to be able to measure in order to evaluate the digital marketing activities, it is also necessary to understand what drives success in the digital environment. In the digital environment, the quality of the content has become a crucial element when aiming towards success (Baltes, 2015). It has been suggested that higher digital marketing performance is connected to companies that put more effort in their content generation (Wang, Malthouse, Calder & Uzunoglu, 2017). Today, the content needs to be engaging, educating, evoke feelings and attract customer interest (Liu-Thompkins & Rogerson, 2012; Lin & Lu, 2011). Wang et al. (2017) therefore state that understanding the content and its effects on the customers is therefore of high importance. This understanding is in turn derived from the data and its analysis which, if successfully interpreted, may lead to more relevant content and a greater understanding of the origin of successful digital marketing (Minelli, Chambers & Dhiraj, 2012). In other words, an understanding of how content affect the outcome of digital marketing activities is important to analyze and consider.
To summarize, the literature shows that there are several ways of approaching marketing performance. The way marketing activities are executed and measured are constantly changing. It is therefore of high interest, both in academia, the managerial world and for marketing students how marketing activities success can be approached, measured and also how it can be evaluated and analyzed.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the concept success in B2B digital marketing activities. This will be done by investigating and exploring how digital marketing activities are approached, evaluated, and analyzed. The aim of the study is to contribute with new and useful insights in terms of how a B2B company practically evaluate its marketing activities in the digital environment.

1.4 Research questions

In order to fulfill the purpose two research questions have been developed.

RQ1: How is success evaluated and analyzed in B2B digital marketing activities?

RQ2: What measures and approaches are emphasized the most in B2B when evaluating the success of digital marketing activities?

1.5 Delimitations

In order to conduct an in-depth analysis and a detailed examination concerning the success in digital marketing activities, the study was narrowed down to focus on one company. Concerning the sample, it was limited to participants who were relevant in terms of their influence on the company’s digital marketing channels. A requirement for the cases, which were chosen by the company’s digital analyst, was that the activities should have been carried out within the last three months. The reason for using cases that were close in time was to reassure that all participants had been involved in the activities and that they remembered them.
2. **Theoretical Frame of reference**

This section will present theories in regards to the research topic and the research questions. These theories will serve as a theoretical foundation when the empirical data is analyzed later on.

Broadly speaking, defining success is difficult because of the many perspectives of how to assess success. Barnes and Ho (2012) explain that success is an individual evaluation, which is subjective and difficult to generalize. Therefore, in order to understand how success is assessed in digital marketing activities, different approaches on how to evaluate success will first be explained. The literature shows that there are some recurring performance perspectives used to assess the success in marketing. Traditional performance approaches are financial and nonfinancial approaches. Within these approaches various perspectives and approaches can be taken, which are efficiency, effectiveness, adaptability and benchmarks (Walker & Brown, 2004; Clark, 2000; Courty & Marschke, 2004). An overview of these approaches is necessary in order to grasp an understanding of how success can be evaluated from different perspectives. Furthermore, the different approaches of success are followed by a discussion of metrics and tools available in the digital environment and the challenges of using metrics in the assessment of performance. Due to the fact that metrics and tools are used to measure digital marketing activities today an understanding of them is necessary. Finally, metrics and tools, which have improved the possibilities of measuring digital marketing activities, have also facilitated finding the connections between the content of digital marketing activities and successful activities. Therefore, an understanding of how effective content is created and analyzed in digital marketing is necessary.

### 2.1 Financial- and nonfinancial approaches

Financial and nonfinancial approaches of performance are important to consider in the assessment of success. This becomes evident in the literature, since several authors have used financial and nonfinancial measurements in their studies in order to assess success. One example is a study conducted by Walker & Brown (2004), where the purpose was to find out how entrepreneurs define success in their business. The criteria used in the
research were financial and nonfinancial approaches, and the result showed that both of them were used by entrepreneurs in the assessment of success (Walker & Brown, 2004). Not only are these approaches used on a company level, as the study mentioned above, financial and nonfinancial are general approaches, which are also used in order to assess marketing performance (Clark 1999), which makes them interesting in this study.

According to Venkatraman & Ramanujam (1986), assessing financial performance is useful when evaluating economic goals. Examples of financial measures that are commonly used are profitability and sales growth (Venkatraman & Ramanujam, 1986; Ambler, Kokkinaki & Puntoni, 2004). Ansoff (1965) also describe return on investment (ROI) as another common financial measure of marketing performance. ROI is the ratio which measures the outcome of an investment in regards to the input (Walker & Ruekert, 1987). The financial approach when assessing marketing activities is often valued by the sales department, since they are short-term oriented and their role in the company is to close deals and thereby show financial results (Homburg & Jensen, 2007). One advantage of using a financial approach is that the value of marketing activities can be assessed in objective means rather than subjective (Clark, 2001). Further, Clark (2001) discusses the weaknesses of solely using financial performance in the evaluation of activities. He describes that it is a poor approach to use when aiming to understand the future, since financial measures show what has occurred rather than what is going to happen next (Clark, 2001). Another weakness is that measures such as sales and profitability are short term approaches and thereby ignore the long-term marketing value of customers (Clark, 2001; Chakravarthy, 1986; Ambler et al., 2004; Srivastava, Shervani & Fahey, 1998). An example of this reasoning is found in a study conducted by Rust, Ambler, Carpenter, Kumar and Srivastava (2004), who investigated the result of marketing activities. The study showed that a price promotion could be seen as positive for the firm in terms of financial measures such as cash flows and revenues. However, the marketing action of reducing the price can lead to inviting competition and thereby reducing the brand equity, which is a nonfinancial measure (Rust et al., 2004). Therefore, it has been suggested by Clark (2001) and Clark (1999) that nonfinancial measures are becoming more important.

In contrast to the financial approach, the nonfinancial approach focuses on intangible values such as customer retention, business reputation, and brand awareness, which are
long term measures (Ahmad, Wilson & Kummerow, 2011; Ambler, 2003). When using nonfinancial measures an understanding of what customers believe, feel, and an understanding of their behavior is obtained by measuring their attitudes and behavioral intentions (Rust et al., 2004). An understanding of what, for example, an advertising or service improvements generate in nonfinancial terms can help develop and strengthen long term assets such as customer equity and brand equity (Rust et al., 2004). Therefore, the nonfinancial approach is often valued by, for example, the marketing department since the aim of the marketing is to create long term assets, such as brand awareness, which means that they value the long term performance of the company (Cespedes, 1995). However, Clark (2001) has identified a weakness in using a nonfinancial approach, namely the challenge of connecting the long term value of the customer with the profitability of the firm. In other words, this difficulty occurs because nonfinancial performance cannot be considered in monetary terms and that makes the measurement subjective compared to financial measures (Goodman & Pennings, 1977; Lewin & Minton, 1986). The literature above shows that there are advantages and disadvantages with both financial and nonfinancial approaches, and that a combination of both is preferable. Therefore, different techniques of how one can approach performance financially and non-financially will be discussed below.

2.1.1 Efficiency and Effectiveness

Efficiency and effectiveness are perspectives within performance which are important to consider and distinguish. Efficiency is usually a financial approach, while effectiveness is usually a nonfinancial approach. These perspectives are often mentioned in the marketing literature as important perspectives when evaluating success (Clark, 2000), and are therefore important to understand when investigating how the assessment of success is carried out in this study.

Efficiency is often described as doing things right (Sheth & Sisodia, 2002). The goal when aiming for efficiency is to utilize resources fully, such as skill, time, effort, and money. Marketing activities should require as few resources as possible in order to be efficient (Clark, 2000). When aiming for efficiency, the strategy is often to reduce the marketing budget (Hanssens & Pauwels, 2016). The level of efficiency is measured by comparing marketing inputs to marketing outputs (Bonoma & Clark, 1988) and
examples of measures are shareholder value and return on marketing investment (Clark & Ambler, 2001; Hanssens & Pauwels, 2016).

Effectiveness, on the contrary, is explained as doing the right things (Sheth & Sisodia, 2002). The effectiveness of the marketing activities is evaluated by comparing the outcome with the goal set by the management, which is often assessed with a nonfinancial approach (Goodman & Pennings, 1977; Lewin & Minton, 1986). For example, marketing managers usually set up long term goals such as increasing market share and brand awareness and then compare the outcomes to the goals in order to decide the level of effectiveness (Hanssens & Pauwels, 2016). Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016) further describe the use of effectiveness at three different levels. One of them is business effectiveness, which measures how marketing communication activities add value to sales, sales leads and how well the activities contribute to the business goal. Next level is marketing effectiveness, where the focus is on measuring customer lifetime value, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and brand enhancement (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). The third level is digital marketing effectiveness, which includes the evaluation of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), such as unique visitors, duration of visits and repeated visits. By that, companies have the opportunity to improve customer experience, which in turn can improve the company’s level of success (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). The process when measuring performance with an effectiveness approach include activities such as gathering data, reporting results, analyzing data and taking advantage of the insights (Bourne, Kennerley, & Franco-Santos, 2005; Bourne, Mills, Wilcox, Neely, & Platts, 2000). It can therefore be said that the effectiveness approach often is time consuming and requires expertise within the topic.

Since the efficiency and the effectiveness perspectives approach performance in various ways it could be misleading not to distinguish between them. Several authors therefore emphasize the importance in differentiating efficiency and effectiveness and consider both perspectives when evaluating the performance (Walker & Ruekert, 1987; Morgan, Clark & Gooner, 2002). For example, investing less money in marketing communications can be determined as efficient, however such action can lead to less brand awareness and thereby reduce the effectiveness (Walker & Ruekert, 1987).
Therefore, separating these two approaches and taking advantage of both of them is described as important in the literature.

### 2.1.2 Adaptability

Adaptability is another nonfinancial approach, which is described in the literature as important when assessing performance. According to Walker and Ruekert (1987) and Clark (2000) the level of adaptability is determined by the company’s ability to innovate, react, and adapt to changes in the environment. Further, Kim, Basu, Naidu and Cavusgil (2011) points out that adaptability, in terms of the innovativeness and ability of meeting customers’ needs in new ways is important to consider in the assessment of success. In order to consider the company as adaptable, the marketing strategy and the marketing mix need to be harmonized with the external environment (Lambkin & Day, 1989). The environment could be defined differently. According to Aaker (1995), the environment consists of the government, the economy, the technology, the culture and demographics. In contrast, Clark, Varadarajan & Pride (1994) argue that there are several dimensions in the environment, such as the level of threat, dependency and the routine. Other considered environment factors in terms of competitors and customer trends, (Boulding et al., 1994), which are more relevant in this study.

### 2.1.3 Benchmark

Another nonfinancial approach when evaluating performance is to use benchmarks. A benchmark is a comparison between an achieved result and previous results. In addition, the performance can be benchmarked to competitors and industry performance standards in order to determine the success (Ponnezhil & Mohayaddin, 2012; Courty & Marschke, 2004). Using a benchmark can therefore result in insights regarding how well a promotion went and the need of action to improve the result (Courty & Marschke, 2004). O’Sullivan and Abela (2007) conducted a study with the purpose to understand how the performance of marketing activities was measured. One of the most emphasized measures in the study was the use of benchmarks, which shows that benchmark approaches are commonly used when evaluating performance. Moreover, it has been suggested that a challenge regarding benchmarking is to determine what
numbers to compare the results with. According to Rust et al. (2004) each situation is unique and depending on the company the benchmark numbers are selected differently. In order to reduce the challenge, Fisher (2009) suggests that clear goals should be set and thereby relevant benchmarks in relation to the goals can be established.

2.1.4 How digitalization has affected the performance approaches

It has been suggested that the digitalization has altered the way marketing performance is approached and how it can be measured (Batrinca & Treleaven, 2015). As mentioned earlier, measuring performance financially is important. However, in the digital environment is has been shown that measuring the financial outcome of digital marketing activities is difficult. In other words, connecting a digital media campaign to sales is problematic (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). Therefore, this has also affected the efficiency approach. Even though, it has been shown that using digital marketing is cost effective, which means that it can improve the efficiency of the marketing activities, it is still difficult to measure the output of the marketing activities (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). Moreover, as mentioned earlier, there are some limitations when using financial approaches when evaluating the performance. This is also evident in the digital environment. Nonfinancial approaches are also necessary in the digital environment as it shows other customer impacts in terms of users’ online behavior (Agostina & Sidorova, 2016; Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). It has therefore been suggested that emphasis should be also be placed on nonfinancial approaches when evaluating digital marketing activities (McCann & Barlow, 2015). It is therefore argued that both financial and nonfinancial approaches are necessary in the assessment of marketing performance in the digital environment (McCann & Barlow, 2015; Murdough, 2009).

2.2 Digital marketing metrics selection and digital tools

The previous section illustrates that there are many ways in which performance can be approached. However, in order to assess performance, useful metrics and measures are necessary when evaluating digital marketing activities. This section will present metrics and tools that can be used in the digital environment in order to assess the success.
2.2.1 Digital metrics selection

In line with the digital development, new ways of measuring and by that assessing successfullness of the marketing activities have emerged. It has been argued that by using digital marketing, measuring its effectiveness is facilitated due to all available data and metrics (Järvinen & Karjaluoto, 2015; Pickton, 2005; Russell, 2009). Digital marketing metrics can be defined as “a measure that indicates the effectiveness of digital marketing activities integrated across different channels and platforms in meeting customer, business and marketing objectives” (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016 p.553).

The technological advancement has resulted in an immense amount of data that can be gathered in order to analyze and monitor digital marketing performance (Misirlis & Vlachopoulou, 2018). However, there are still many challenges of how to connect the right metrics to a specific digital marketing activity. In the literature it has been suggested that the lack of competence of how to measure is a challenge (Järvinen et al., 2012). Accordingly, Mehmeth and Clarke (2016) have pointed out that resources and, in particular, the time and the ability to measure the return of activities are challenges. The amount of available data also makes it a difficult task to determine which data is useful and which one is not. For example, Leeflang et al. (2014) and McCann and Barlow (2015), state that the social media metrics and the digital metrics are constantly increasing, which means that measuring the digital activities has become extremely complex. This means that the most difficult part is not to obtain necessary information, but rather the right information (Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ogniben & Pauwels, 2013). As a result, many organizations today use metrics that are easily available, easy to understand or metrics that are provided by the social networking operators, though these metrics may not be the most relevant ones for the company (Peters et al., 2013). In order to gain insight from the data and leverage on its benefits, proper analysis and interpretation is vital (Järvinen & Karjaluoto, 2015). However, it has been shown that the knowledge of how to measure, analyze and interpret digital marketing activities is currently lacking (Saura, Palos-Sánchez & Suárez, 2017; Leeflang et al., 2014). Therefore, analytics specialists are needed in companies, since the measures can be very complex to understand and interpret (Hanssens & Pauwels, 2016; Leeflang et al., 2014). Even though digital experts are needed, a clear communication between all employees...
involved in the digital marketing is still vital in order for all involved to comprehend the insights from data (Hanssens & Pauwels, 2016).

It has been argued in the literature that there is no holistic and standard approach for choosing the most appropriate metrics that should be analyzed (Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Azam & Qamar, 2011). For example, Järvinen and Karjaluoto (2015) argue that there is no metric system that can be created to fit all organizations, but rather a useful metrics system is dependent on the organizational context. Due to the fact that there are many different ways of measuring digital marketing, it has instead been suggested by many authors that what to measure and which metrics to choose in order to obtain meaningful insights should be guided by the company’s overall marketing strategies, goals and objectives (McCann & Barlow, 2015; Fisher, 2009; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010; Murdough, 2009). Another common practice of how to guide digital marketing measurement, suggested by Chaffey and Patron (2012), is to identify the KPIs. As argued by Chaffey and Patron (2012), “KPIs are an important category of measurement as they show the overall performance of a process and its sub-processes” (p.38). Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles (2013), suggested a framework where the KPIs that should be in focus are engagement metrics (i.e. how the user interact with the activity), user-generated content metrics (i.e. what users say about the activity) and user metrics (i.e. how users interact with the marketing activities). They also suggested that all the metrics should be benchmarked toward competitors (Cvijikj et al., 2013). In the literature other common KPIs that have guided the measurements in the digital era have been conversion rate which describes the percentage of users who take a desired action, types of users such as new users versus returned users and also type of source which indicates the traffic source the users come from (Saura et al., 2017).

The literature illustrates that there are many ways in which the metrics can be grouped and categorized. For instance, Hoffman and Fodor (2010) suggest that metrics should be categorized based on different brand measure where brand awareness metrics such as number of visitors to the website and followers on social media and brand engagement metrics such as number of likes and comments on social media and the average time spent on the website should be emphasized. In contrast, Chaffey and Patron (2012) propose that metrics could be divided in categories based on contact volume and reach
measures where traffic metrics such as number of prospects, site visitors, fans and followers are being studied. Also, Solcansky, Sychrova & Milichovsky (2011) illustrate in their study that metrics can be grouped into categories either based on behavioral measures or attitudinal measures. Behavioral measures include metrics such as reach (i.e. how many have seen the message), frequency (i.e. how many times the message has been shown) whereas, attitudinal measure include metrics such as customer loyalty and liking (Solcansky et al., 2011). In contrast, Hoffman and Fodor (2010) argue that metrics in terms of reach and frequency are traditional metrics and are not suitable in the digital environment. Spiller and Tauten (2015) also propose that metrics should be categorized based on activity, interaction and return. Activity metrics are input focused such as the number of time the organization post on social media, interaction metrics are process focused and include measures on how user engage with the posts, while return metrics measures the financial return such as lead generation and ROI (Spiller & Tauten, 2015). It has been suggested that in the digital environment both financial and nonfinancial metrics should be evaluated (McCann & Barlow, 2015; Murdough, 2009). However, authors have found that measuring the financial contribution of digital media is a complex challenge (Fisher, 2009; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). Thus, Hoffman and Fodor (2010) instead suggest that measuring the return of digital media should be done by tracking customers online behavior. In other words, customer investment where one tracks how customers interact with the marketing activities and then trace if it resulted in a future purchase is how the challenge of measuring financially can be approached (Hoffman & Fodor 2010).

Even though authors have suggested that metrics can be grouped in many different ways, common characteristics they all share are that they are either quantitative metrics or qualitative metrics. The quantitative metrics usually include click-stream indicators such as traffic (number of visitors on the site), impressions (number of times an ad or an image is being viewed) and leads conversion (number of users who sign up on the website or download some content) (Saura et al., 2017). In other words, quantitative metrics usually show the total audience and exposure. In contrast, qualitative measures are used to better understand the users’ and customers’ belief, attitudes and feelings online (Peters et al., 2013). It has therefore been suggested in the literature that marketers should study qualitative metrics rather than quantitative metrics. Fisher
Peters et al. (2013) and Tiago and Veríssimo (2014) have shown that qualitative measures, more particularly engagement metrics, should be considered rather than pure numbers that the quantitative metrics provide. Peters et al. (2013) suggested that in the digital environment it is sometimes more important to study the quality of the contact instead of focus on the volume of the contact which, they argue, is more sustainable for success in the long run. Examples of qualitative engagement metrics that are crucial to consider are the likes, the comments and the sharing of branded content on social media sights (Peters et al., 2013). In other words, it can be argued that since the development of social networking sites, qualitative metrics that measures user’s interaction with the company should be in focus (Saura et al., 2017).

2.2.2 Metrics collection and digital analytical tools

As mentioned previously, in order to assess the success of marketing activities, collecting various metrics in order to effectively measure the digital activities is necessary. The literature has shown that there are various approaches of how this type of metrics can be collected.

One way to collect data is called default data collection. This method is based on collecting data that is already provided by various social media platforms (van Dam & van de Velden, 2015; Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2015). In other words, different social media platforms provide their own statistical data that can be collected and measured by companies in relation to the company's own social media pages and accounts. Another approach to collect data is the process of manually collecting unstructured data on social channels in terms of number of “likes”, “comments” and “shares” (Agostino & Sidorova, 2016). Farrugia, Hurley, Payne and Quigley (2011) have suggested that this approach can be useful when social media channels have a low number of users, since the process can be time-consuming. A third approach to collect data which many companies adopt today is to use digital analytics tools. One of these tools, frequently discussed in the literature and adopted by many firms adopt today is Web analytics (WA). As defined by the Web Analytics Association (2008), WA is “the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of Internet data for the purpose of understanding and optimizing Web usage” (p.3). WA is therefore seen as a necessary tool for handling the vast amount of information connected to a company’s website. Järvinen and Karjaluoto
(2015) explain that WA as a tool is used to gather click-stream data showing how visitors navigate, behave and interact with the website as well as how the users ended up on the website (e.g. links on social media, search engines or links in emails). In other words, WA is used in conjunction with digital marketing since it is used to grasp customers’ response to digital marketing activities (Nakatani & Chuang, 2011). For example, WA can measure how many users who visit a company's website after a campaign and how many of these users that are turn into leads. An example of one of the most common web analytical tool is Google analytics. However, as mentioned, WA only measures metrics in relation to the company’s own website. In order to capture other data in connection to social media channel which way be relevant to analyze, other tools have to be used. Social media analytics (SMA) tools can gather social media data or “Big Social data” from social networking sites (Manovich, 2011; Burgess & Bruns, 2012). The purpose of SMA tools is tracking, modeling and analyzing a large scale of data (Stieglitz et al., 2014). Marketers can use such tools to capture social media data in order to track conversations online, gather information about customers as well as feedback and comments from customers (Fan & Gordon, 2014). SMM is another method marketer’s use to gather social data in terms of tracking eWOM and information about specific keywords (Sponder, 2012). SMM can be a useful tool for sentiment analysis because it can track customers’ opinions such as attitudes, views and emotions related to the company or a product across the various digital channels (Pang & Lee, 2008). Since eWOM may have a significant effect on a company’s reputation it has become crucial for companies to monitor this as well (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004), which is another reason why SMM can be an important digital tool.

2.3 The importance of content in digital marketing

As mentioned previously, there are many ways of assessing performance and there are several metrics that can be used. The increase of metrics in the digital environment have also facilitated determining the connection between digital content and a successful result. An additional aspect to consider when evaluating digital marketing success in B2B is therefore to analyze the relevance of content of the activities (Baltes, 2015).
The management of content in B2B companies have become important in today's digital environment (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). When producing content in B2B marketing it is important to target the right audience and to ensure the content is relevant, informative and engaging so that relationships can be built (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). The idea of relevant content is therefore to earn the audience’s attention and interest, in contrast to traditional advertising where the aim is to push information on the consumer (Wang et al., 2017). Common objectives when creating relevant content in B2B is to generate brand awareness, building a brand image and obtaining leads (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). In line with this, a study conducted by Wang et al. (2017) showed that companies putting an effort in their digital content actually receive a higher amount of sales leads. In other words, managing digital content effectively is an opportunity to increase sales. Accordingly, Holliman and Rowley (2014) found that relevant content generates more leads, which is explained by the increased probability that a visitor leaves personal information when the content is attracting. An example of this was given by Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) who suggested that if the content in a white paper or company report is relevant and catches the attention of a visitor, the user could be willing to leave personal information such as an e-mail address, which can be useful for the company. Therefore, examining the amount of obtained leads becomes interesting in the evaluation of the relevance of content (Holliman & Rowley, 2014).

It is not only important to create valuable content, but by monitoring which content is successful the company can, as a result, improve the relevance of the content and by that hopefully create higher interest for the brand or the product (Wang et al., 2017). Biemans, Brencic and Malshe (2010) also pointed out the importance of understanding the content and its effect on the consumer in order to subsequently improve the relevance of the content. They stated that this could be done by connecting data, such as the amount of leads generated back to the various marketing activities (Biemans et al., 2010). In line with this, there are different studies on how content can be evaluated and analyzed. De Vries, Gensler and Leeflang (2012) carried out a study in order to investigate how actions, such as likes and comments could be obtained on social media through the content. In order to investigate what type of content generated action, the content was analyzed through different characteristics, such as information, interaction and entertainment (De Vries et al., 2012). In terms of increasing the amount of likes and
comments the study showed that entertainment had a negative effect while interactive content had a positive effect and lead to action (De Vries et al., 2012). In contrast, a study conducted by Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson (2012) showed that the level of entertainment and information affect the popularity of YouTube videos. Berger and Milkman (2012) have suggested that users interest and drive to share a post depend on how useful the information is, which goes in line with the study conducted by Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson (2012). Further, a study by Lin and Lu (2011) showed that the content needs to be interactive in order to generate comments, which is also in line with the study conducted by De Vries et al. (2012). In addition, Lin and Lu (2011) found that consumers use social media to seek information. They therefore suggested that brand posts including information of the product and the brand gained more popularity (Lin & Lu, 2011). Moreover, Berger and Milkman (2012) illustrated that an additional an important aspect is emotions. They found content with that anger, anxiety, awe and surprise had a positive effect on the popularity of a post. In their study they found that posts with an emotional appeal were more likely to become viral.

2.4 Summary of frame of reference

To sum up, the literature shows that it is important to assess success from both financial and nonfinancial perspectives in order to both grasp the long-term and the short-term value of marketing activities. Understanding the different perspectives is also important in order to realize how the perspectives affect the assessment of success. The literature also describes that there are various techniques efficiency, effectiveness, adaptability and benchmarks that can be used when viewing performance. The different perspectives and techniques will therefore be used in order to find if and when they are used when the success of digital marketing activities are being evaluated. Further, when using these perspectives, the collection of metrics and usage of digital tools is important to understand. The literature shows that there are many challenges today regarding the usage of metrics and that selecting the most relevant metrics can be difficult. Therefore, examining if and how metrics are used and which metrics are used in the evaluation process of the digital marketing activities is interesting in this study. Moreover, the literature has shown that in order to assess the success of digital marketing activities, analyzing the content and linking the content to successful results is important in order to realize which type of content is successful. Therefore, obtaining insights in how
content is analyzed according to the digital marketing literature is of interest in this study.
3. Methodology & Method

This section will present the chosen research philosophy and the research approach. Furthermore, the techniques in terms of data collection, the sampling method and the data analysis will be presented. Finally, the credibility and trustworthiness will be discussed.

3.1 Research philosophy

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) argue that there are five main research philosophies within research in business management, namely positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism and pragmatisms. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) argue that the research falls within interpretivism when the aim of the research is to understand unique and complex business situations and understand how people embrace and interpret the social world. Hence, this thesis falls near the interpretivist philosophy since the aim of the thesis is to explore the concept of success and how it can be evaluated, which is a rather unique and complex issue that cannot be quantified in objective terms. Also, since the concept of success is subjective and can be interpreted differently a qualitative study is necessary in order to gain an in-depth understanding, which according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) is a suitable approach when the research falls within the interpretivism.

3.2 Research approach

When deciding upon a research approach there are three main approaches that can be undertaken, particularly the deductive, inductive and abductive approach (Saunders et al., 2009). The deductive approach starts with the development of theories or hypothesis based on existing knowledge, which are then empirically tested by the research strategy. The deductive approach therefore concerns the confirmation or modifications of existing theories (Saunders et al., 2009). In contrast, Saunders et al. (2009) describe the inductive approach as an approach where a theory is developed based on the analysis and interpretation of the findings. The inductive approach is used to better understand
the nature of a more complex issue (Saunders et al., 2009). The third approach is the abductive approach, which can be viewed as a combination of the other two where the researcher both emphasize the findings while at the same time moving back to review existing literature (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In this study, the key themes that were used during the data collection, searched for in the data and later used as a guide during the analysis were derived from the theoretical chapter. Hence, it can be argued that the thesis owes to the deductive reasoning. However, the study allowed for new and other interpretations of the findings and by that it also includes elements of the inductive reasoning. It can therefore be argued that the thesis contains element of both approaches.

3.3 Case studies

Concerning the purpose of a research it can either be exploratory, explanatory or descriptive. Sanders et al. (2012) describe an exploratory study as gaining an in-depth understanding and information about the phenomenon. Hence, in order to gain rich insights into, interpret and gain an understanding of how digital marketing activity success is evaluated, this thesis is exploratory in nature. Therefore, the case study as a research strategy was chosen. In this study, the “cases” refers to different digital marketing activities. Yin (2009) states that a case study allows the researcher to get a profound understanding of the phenomena in a specific and complex context. Also, Yin (2009) suggests that a case study can be suitable when the aim of the research is to explore the phenomenon. These are also reasons why the authors of the thesis find the case study suitable. Furthermore, Saunders et al. (2009) state that multiple cases are preferable in contrast to a single case study because the researchers can identify if the phenomena occur in various situations. Another advantage of multiple cases is that data evidence can be generated from different cases compared to a single case (Yin, 2009). However, there have been some arguments about the issues concerning case studies. One issue with case studies that has gained debate is concerns about the credibility and trustworthiness of case studies (Gummesson, 2007). Therefore, to address this issue, a discussion concerning the trustworthiness of this study will be presented later in this chapter. Another disadvantage with case studies is that the outcome is difficult to generalize (Yin, 2009). This study does not seek to statistically generalize the findings,
instead the aim is to get rich insights into the concept of digital marketing success in B2B by using different digital marketing cases.

3.4 Company and cases selection

The research was conducted within one company operating in the textile flooring industry. By using one company, the aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject. The company is a family business which produces design flooring and currently has 98 employees. The company was interesting since it has moved from being a traditional company that operates offline to a company that is moving towards digitizing both its marketing activities and its operation. Moreover, the company has an online presence and are active on digital medias where it executes most of its communication. The company’s largest market is B2B, which makes it interesting because B2B companies are not as established on social media and other digital communication channels compared to B2C companies. Moreover, the company provided the authors with access to the company resources such as the employees and digital analytical data, which is another reason for selecting the company. These resources were seen as valuable in this exploratory study since there was a possibility to observe and analyze different data. In order to obtain rich insight about the phenomenon, nine cases in terms of digital marketing activities were used. The cases were selected freely by the company’s digital analyst. The criteria for the cases was that they had to be derived from the company’s main digital channels and be relatively close in time.

3.5 Literature review

In order to ensure the literature review is trustworthy, several steps were taken in the exploration process. Firstly, databases such as Scopus, Emerald insights and Science direct were used to assure that only peer-reviewed articles were selected. Secondly, keywords connected to the purpose of the thesis were used in order to find relevant articles of the topic. Some of the important keywords in this thesis were digital marketing success, marketing performance, digital metrics, digital measurement and digital marketing content. Thirdly, by using, for example, Scopus, the articles could be ranked in regards to the amount of citations, which was helpful since it indicates that the
articles are of high relevance. Furthermore, on Science direct the articles could be ranked in regards to their relevance, which was a valuable function as well. Finally, in order to find the most trustworthy information, often mentioned authors were identified and by that their articles were considered as relevant.

3.6 Data collection

Saunders et al. (2009) claim that there are two main data collection methods commonly used within business administration research, particularly quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data is numeric data where surveys and questionnaires are commonly used techniques. In contrast, qualitative data is non-numeric data where interviews are one of the most common technique (Saunders et al., 2009). For this study a qualitative approach was chosen since the aim of the thesis was to explore and gain an in-depth and clear understanding of the concept success in digital marketing activities and how those activities are evaluated and analyzed. Therefore, the subject matter is rather complex to quantify in numerical terms, which the quantitative method implies.

3.6.1 Statistics

For the cases in this study, data from digital analytics programs and tools was necessary in order to investigate how the marketing activities are measured and how success is evaluated. Moreover, data in terms of numbers and statistics was vital in this study as it serves as a base of measuring digital activities and by that it allows to assess the successfulness. Therefore, different metrics and statistics from Google Analytics and Social media analytics were provided from the company in regards to the cases, which was later used in the interviews.

3.6.2 Interviews

Together with the digital analytics, interviews were conducted. Saunders et al. (2009) presents three different approaches when conducting interviews which depend on the structure and the formality of the interview. The interview approaches are structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interview is a highly formal type of interview where the aim of the interview is to gather quantifiable data by using
predetermined questions such as a questionnaire (Saunders et al., 2009). In contrast, semi-structured and unstructured interviews are used to gather more qualitative data, and as a result rich insights and a deep understanding of the phenomenon can be obtained (King, 2004). Since this study is exploratory in nature and the purpose was to gain a deeper understanding, semi-structured and unstructured interviews were suitable in order to gather the data.

The advantage of using semi-structured and unstructured interviews was that it allowed the authors to explore and seek rich insight into the phenomenon. Moreover, another advantage was that probing questions could be asked in order to elaborate more on the topic, which according to Saunders et al. (2009) is beneficial when the aim is to explore. Lastly, semi-structured and unstructured interviews also gave the authors the ability to identify new areas that had not been encountered on prior to the interviews. The unstructured interview method was used when interviewing the digital analyst in order for him to speak freely about the cases he put forward and how he assessed success of the various cases. Semi-structured interviews were used when interviewing the other respondents. Since the respondents’ opinions about these specific cases were of interest, the interviews had to be structured to some extent, but still providing the respondents with the opportunity to speak freely and answer additional questions.

3.6.2.1 Interview outline

In total five face-to-face interviews were conducted in Ulricehamn, Sweden. All interviews were held between 28th of March and 24th of April and lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. All the respondents have Swedish as their native language and the interviews were therefore conducted in Swedish. All the interviews were timed and voice recorded (see Table 1).

The interview sessions consisted of three parts. During the first part, general questions about the respondents and their positions in the company were asked. Also, questions concerning their habits of using digital channels both privately and for work were asked. These questions were asked in order to become familiar with the respondents as well as it was a way to build mutual trust. During part two, the cases were presented and
the respondents were asked open questions about each case. For example, they were asked if they remembered any of the cases and if so why etc. During this part, only the case in question was shown and nothing else (i.e. no data and no statistics). The respondents were instead told that they could ask for any information they found necessary when evaluating and analyzing the cases and if so, it would be provided. This technique was used in order to reduce any bias, since the aim was for the respondents to ask for the information when evaluating the case, instead of pushing information on them. The rest of the data and statistics were instead shown during the last part of the interviews. The respondents were given the opportunity to use the data if they found it necessary.

3.6.2.2 Sample selection for the interviews

Since the study was conducted within one company, the sample size was small and the purpose of the study was exploratory, non-probability sampling was more suitable compared to random sampling (Saunders et al., 2009). Saunders et al. (2009) describe that there are several non-probability sampling techniques that can be employed such as quota, convenience, snowball and purposive sampling. The purposive sampling technique was most suitable in this study since purposive sampling allows for judgmentally selecting the respondents based on both certain characteristics and the rich information they may provide in regards to the research objectives (Saunders et al., 2009). The respondents for this study were selected based on their position within the company and their relation to the company’s digital channels. The common characteristics that the respondents shared were that they possess certain insights into and have knowledge concerning the company’s digital marketing channels. Also, selecting respondents with different professional backgrounds and at various positions was necessary in order to obtain rich information and various perspectives on how success can be determined.

The digital analyst was selected based on his analytical skills and also because he together with the digital content manager, who was also selected, create and decide what the company is going to communicate on its digital channels. The marketing manager was selected since she is in charge of the communication, as well as the decision maker concerning the company’s overall marketing. The reason for selecting
the communication strategy specialist was that he is consulting the company and is involved in developing the company’s digital communication channels. For instance, he developed the company’s website. Today he is consulting the company because of his inbound marketing expertise. Lastly, the area sales manager was chosen because he monitors the company’s digital channels among the foreign partners. Further, he sometimes requests certain content that should be communicated. As illustrated, all the respondents have different positions and main tasks, however they all are related to company’s digital channels and were therefore suitable in this study. For a detailed description see Table 1.

Table 1: Interview overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years at the position</th>
<th>Digital Media Usage</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration (min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital analyst</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>On a daily basis</td>
<td>March 28 (\sim) 2018</td>
<td>96.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>On a daily basis</td>
<td>April 11 (\sim) 2018</td>
<td>65.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication strategy specialist</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Has consulted the company for 11 years</td>
<td>On a daily basis</td>
<td>April 12 (\sim) 2018</td>
<td>55.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital content manager</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>On a daily basis</td>
<td>April 13 (\sim) 2018</td>
<td>51.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area sales manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>On a daily basis</td>
<td>April 24 (\sim) 2018</td>
<td>64.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6.3 Data analysis

Saunders et al. (2009) suggest that the process of collecting qualitative data and subsequently preparing it for analysis consist of several steps (e.g. summarizing,
categorizing, structuring and drawing conclusions). Thus, all the interviews were voice recorded and later transcribed into writing. Together with the notes from the interviews, all the relevant data was summarized case by case. By summarizing the most relevant data, key points and common themes could be identified. Subsequently, the data was categorized into themes, where the themes were derived from the theoretical chapter in order to organize a logical structure.

Regarding the analysis, Yin (2009) presents various techniques that can be undertaken in case studies, particularly pattern matching, time series analysis, explanation building and cross-case synthesis. When analyzing the findings of this study the cross-case method was undertaken, which Yin (2009) argues is a vital technique when at least two cases are being deployed. Moreover, when having more than one case, matching and comparing findings among the cases is necessary because each case is treated as a separate study (Yin, 2009). Therefore, the aim was to categories the finding into various themes in order to identify if there were connections between the cases and among the respondents and if there were any similarities or differences.

3.6.4 Ensuring quality and trustworthiness of the study

In order to ensure the quality and the trustworthiness of the research, various methods need to be taken into account. Guba and Lincoln (1985) distinguish between four methods that need to be considered in a qualitative research, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Therefore, these four methods will be discussed as well as the steps taken in order to strengthen the trustworthiness of this study.

Guba and Lincoln (1985) argue that credibility is one of the most crucial criterion to consider in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the research and that credibility is determined by the extent to which the research findings represents the true value (i.e. the reality). One strategy that can be used to enhance the credibility is triangulation. Patton (1999) illustrates four types of triangulation, namely method triangulation, source triangulation, analyst triangulation and theory/perspective triangulation. In order to address triangulation in this study, different data sources and various respondents
have been used. In other words, both digital analytics and in-depth interviews have been used. Respondents with various positions within the company have also been interviewed in order to ensure different viewpoints in the study.

Transferability is another method and it refers to the ability to apply the findings of the research to another context. Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggest that thick description and purposive sampling can be used to facilitate the transferability. Thick description is a technique where the researcher provides the reader with rich information concerning the context of the research, methodology and data collection and by that a judgment if the findings can be applicable to other settings can be made (Guba, 1981). Purposive sampling may also facilitate the transferability as rich description in regards to the characteristics of the participants and how they are suitable for the purpose of the study are presented (Bitsch, 2005). In order to address the transferability issues, detailed information concerning the research process have been presented. The methodology, method, data collection choices, description of the organization in the study and detailed information about the participants have been presented. Information concerning the length of the interview sessions and when the interviews took place have also been presented.

Dependability refers to the consistency of the findings and if the research were to be repeated similar results would be obtained (Guba, 1981). There are several techniques that can be employed to address the dependability issues such as audit trial, stepwise replication and code-recode strategy (Anney, 2014). In this thesis, stepwise replication was used where the authors of the thesis analyzed the results separately and then compared and discussed them. Moreover, according to Shenton (2004), a rich description of the research process in terms of methodology, method and data collection is necessary in order for others to determine if the research practices were adequate or not. This is also important as the information provided may facilitate repetition of the study for other researches (Shenton, 2004). Hence, a careful description of the methodology and method have been presented to enable future research.

Confirmability is another method and Guba (1981) illustrates confirmability to the extent the research findings are derived from the participants’ experiences and not from
the researchers’ perspective. In other words, the extent to which credibility can be achieved is based on the researchers’ objectiveness and naturalness towards the findings (Shenton, 2004). In this research, in order to address the issue of confirmability, transparency in terms of the motivations and the decisions concerning the selection of the method and theories during the thesis process have been addressed. The argument for the chosen method, the reasons for favoring the approach and the weaknesses of the method is illustrated.
4. Empirical findings

This section presents the empirical findings. Each case will be presented separately in accordance with the categories performance approach, digital metrics and content.

4.1 Metrics definitions

In regards to the theoretical section where several metrics were presented and in regards to the different case descriptions following below and the interviews various types of digital analytical metrics and measures are presented. These metrics were provided by company’s digital analytical tools. Several useful metrics definitions will therefore be presented first (see Table 2,3,4,5) and followed by the cases.

Table 2: Google analytics metrics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>metric</th>
<th>Data which provides information on the average length a visitor spends on each page on the website (Mangold, 2018).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average session duration</td>
<td>The percentage of the visitors that come to the website and only views on page before leaving the website (Mangold, 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bounce rate</td>
<td>When contact occurs with a potential customer and the company receives some information of the person (Atinternet, N.D.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>A new user is a person who visits a website the first time during a certain period of time (Mangold, 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New users</td>
<td>When a visitor has seen a page on the website it is described as a page view. If viewing five different pages on the website, the data presents as five page views (Mangold, 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page views per session</td>
<td>The average number of page views a visitor clicks into when visiting the website (Mangold, 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sessions</td>
<td>A person who visits your website. Even if one user visits the website several times during one day, that person is still counted as one user (Mangold, 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique page view</td>
<td>If a visitor visits the same page on the website several times, it is counted as one unique page view, instead of several (Mangold, 2018).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3: Newsletter metrics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Click rate</td>
<td>Percentage that shows how many users clicks on something in the email, for example a link (Mailchimp, 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open rate</td>
<td>Presents the percentage of people that opened the email (Mailchimp, 2018).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: Social media metrics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>A comment on social media is often given by a person who wants to express their thoughts about the post (Haydon, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>Liking something on social medias indicates that you enjoy it or believes it is interesting (Haydon, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shares</td>
<td>Sharing a post means spreading the post from someone else (Haydon, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views of YouTube</td>
<td>How many times a video has been watched (Support Google, N. D.).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5: LinkedIn metrics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clicks</td>
<td>The amount of clicks on the post, for example the number of people who clicks on the company’s name or logo (LinkedIn, 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>The percentage of interactions with the post such as “liking” and “commenting”, in relations to the amount of impressions (LinkedIn, 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impressions/views</td>
<td>The number of views of a post. The view should last for at least 300 milliseconds and a minimum of 50 percent of the content should be viewed on the visitor’s screen (LinkedIn, 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social action</td>
<td>The amount of comments, likes and shares of the posts (LinkedIn, 2018)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Case 1

Case 1 (Figure 1) is an Instagram post, which was published on the 8th of March 2018. The picture shows the two owners of the company. The statistics from Google Analytics showed that the picture resulted in five users visiting the company’s website, where four users were “new users” to the site. The bounce rate was 40 percent and the page views per session was 3.6 pages. Lastly, the average session duration was two minutes and 17 seconds. The company’s Instagram account currently has 13 100 followers.

Performance approach

According to the digital analyst, the Instagram post was successful since the engagement of the case was four percent. He explained that the engagement index in the industry, which he usually benchmarks towards, is approximately three to five percent on Instagram. This is therefore the goal the company strive towards when posting on Instagram. He also believed that there is a value in posting this picture of the two female owners, since it helps to strengthen the company’s brand image in a long term perspective. The post showed that the company takes a stand in an important question, which he believed increases the brand value. The marketing manager mentioned that it is interesting to benchmark the results with other companies in order to assess how they
have performed and in this case they had performed pretty well. The areas sales manager compared this case with the company’s previous activities on Instagram in order to assess the success and noted that this case had performed well. He noted that this post is important in brand building and thereby it can eventually lead to more in sales, which he perceived as an overall goal with the marketing.

*Digital metrics*

According to the digital analyst the engagement was the most important metric when evaluating the success of case 1. He pointed out that the important measures when analyzing the engagement are likes, comments and shares. Hence, he stated:

“*Likes are okay. But in relation to the conversation, the comments and shares, likes are not worth much*” -Digital analyst.

According to the marketing manager, comments and likes are important metrics when assessing how successful the post was and since this post had many likes it increased the exposure, which was good. The communication strategy specialist considered likes and comments, which in his opinion is important on Instagram. The content manager also valued likes and comments since, based on how many likes and comments the post receives, the reach and exposure becomes higher.

*Content*

When determining if the Instagram activity was successful, the digital analyst evaluated the content of the post. He stated that by posting this picture on the International women’s day and embracing the strength of woman, the company shows that it stands for equality, which as a result strengthens the brand image. In addition, he stated that content connected to external trends, such as international women’s day usually is successful. According to the marketing manager, content showing the two owners is almost always successful. She explained that these two women are very successful, they represent the essence of the brand and that people do not get tired of this type of content. In her opinion, posts showing how the company takes a political stand often results in higher engagement. The communication strategy specialist also commented
on the content when he evaluated the post. He saw this post as successful due to its contribution to the company’s brand image. The area sales manager recognized case 1 immediately when he saw the post and commented:

“I believe that everything involving the sisters in the communication is very good. Both from a brand building and sales perspective, since they are two very colorful women that runs a global company”- Area sales manager.

4.3 Case 2

Figure 2

Case 2 (Figure 2) is a Facebook post, which was published on the company’s Facebook page 21st of March 2018. The photo illustrates some of the company's employees. All the employees dressed up in denim shirts and black jeans as a prank for an employee who had resigned. The company’s Facebook page currently has 17,629 followers. From Google Analytics, the post generated 29 users to the website where 19 of them were new users. The bounce rate was 70.27 percent and the average number of session was 2.24. Lastly, the average session duration was three minutes and 16 seconds.
Performance approach

The marketing manager stated that she did not know if there was any clear purpose or goal with the post and that it was therefore tricky to evaluate this activity. The goal and the purpose of the post is therefore something she assessed when evaluating the post.

Digital metrics

The digital analyst focused on the metrics when assessing the post. He described that the engagement rate was very low and that it is something he always takes into account when determining if a post is good or bad. He concluded that by looking at likes and comments the post was successful, but by studying the engagement in relation to the followers on Facebook the post was not successful. The communication strategy specialist also believed that the post did not result in much engagement. However, he mentioned that by studying the data from Google Analytics, the post generated many users to the company’s website, but that the bounce rate was high. When the communication strategy specialist was asked why the click rate and the bounce rate are metrics that he pays attention to he explained that those metrics show if the landing page (where the users end up when clicking on the link) delivers what it intends to. The content manager thought the post created some kind of engagement and she believed that was interesting. She also mentioned that the statistics shown by Google Analytics were higher for this activity compared to the first case, which she saw as successful.

Content

The digital analyst believed that relevant content is newsworthy content, which is the key to engagement. He stated that this post is not newsworthy, and therefore not seen as successful. The communication strategy specialist also commented on the content and mentioned that from an employer branding perspective, this post delivered a feeling of the company culture and by that it can be determined as successful. The content manager analyzed the content of the picture and she believed the post had been appreciated because it highlighted the company culture. She stated that this was a good post because it is important that the company does not only post pictures on its product,
but also posts that illustrates the company’s unique culture. Further, the area sales manager believed that this case was amazing because it showed the organizational culture, but he did not think the picture was relevant for increasing sales.

4.4 Case 3

![Image of a Facebook post](image)

**Figure 3**

Case 3 (Figure 3) represents a Facebook post, which was published 21st of March 2018. It is a referral post that illustrates one of the company new flooring design in a real office setting. The statistics from Google Analytics displayed the following: number of page views were 22, where unique page views were 20, average session duration was four minutes and eleven seconds and the bounce rate was 85.71 percent.

**Performance approach**

According to the communication strategy specialist, the post did not generate many likes nor any engagement, but he described that it was still a relevant post in the company’s social media feed. He explained that in order to evaluate the activity, one
must always ask themselves what the goal of the post is and how much effort has been put into the activity. He further described that by effort he refers to the time, money and resources that has been put into the activity. He illustrated that this post had probably not taken more than two minutes to upload and by that one cannot expect that much of return. In other words, he compared the input in the case to the outcome in terms of likes when evaluating the case. He continued to explain that he would always benchmark the Google Analytic statistics that the post generated to the standard measures for the industry. He also pointed out that in order to fully evaluate the activity, goals must be set, which the result then can be measured towards.

**Digital metrics**

The marketing manager explained that this post was successful because by looking at the Google Analytics data the post had generated traffic to the company’s website, and samples of the products were requested after the post was published. In a similar manner the digital analyst stated that the sales intensify when this type of posts are published, but the problem is that it is difficult to connect the purchase to the activity because of the firms lengthy and complex sales process. The digital analyst further mentioned that by viewing the engagement rate the post was not good, however the post had generated traffic to the company’s website and two samples had been requested. He therefore believed the post was successful. In contrast, the content manager paid attention to the number of likes and she believed 26 likes were very low and the case was not successful. The area sales manager did not mention anything regarding the metrics when assessing the success in this picture, although when he viewed the data in part three of the interview he used the low amount of likes to support his opinion.

**Content**

The digital analyst paid a lot of attention to the content of the picture. He stated that the content in post was more relevant as it aligned better to the business compared to case 2. He described that since the post only generated 26 likes and one comment, it was not good even though the the content of the post was relevant for the business. The marketing manager believed this type of content that shows the company’s product is
vital in their digital channels. She believed this content was inspiring and a good referral post. According to the area sales manager, this post was boring. He mentioned that the post was perhaps successful in terms of brand building, but from his perspective as a sales manager the picture was not successful. He said:

“This picture does not tell me anything. I probably would not have liked it, because I do not see this picture as very contributing” - Area sales manager.

4.5 Case 4

Case 4 (Figure 4) is a newsletter that the firm sent out 18\textsuperscript{th} of March 2018 to 29107 email addresses. The newsletter “What is welding” highlights one of the company’s
new environmental friendly product. The newsletter describes the product and how the company is currently working for greener and environmental friendly solutions for all its products. The Google Analytics data showed that the opening rate of the newsletter was 23.4 percent while the click rate was 3.3 percent. Moreover, the number of page views was 149 of which 133 were unique page views. Average session duration was one minute and 44 seconds and the bounce rate was 44.55 percent.

*Performance approach*

The content manager described that she always benchmarks the opening rate and the click rate to other companies when evaluating the newsletter. Additionally, the communication strategy specialist described that he benchmarked the statistics that the newsletter generated towards the standard values of the industry. He also mentioned that it is important have goals with every activity, which can be evaluated when assessing the performance of the activity. The content manager mentioned that setting a goal with every newsletter is important and that it is something the company is working towards. She further stated that she usually benchmarks the newsletters to previous newsletters in order to determine whether it is successful or not.

*Digital metrics*

The digital analyst took metrics into account and he believed the newsletter was successful. He described that the intention of the newsletter was not to encourage ordering of samples, but the newsletter actually resulted in many users who clicked on the link in the newsletter and ended up on the company’s website where samples were requested. In other words, leads were generated. According to the marketing manager, the opening rate and the click rate are the metrics she considered as important when evaluating this post. When she was asked why those metrics were important she stated:

“The opening rate is important because it shows that people have actually opened the email and by that they have at least seen that the newsletter is from our company. Those who then clicked on the link are somehow interested, and that is important” - Marketing Manager.
In line with the communication strategy specialist's opinion, the content manager paid attention to the opening rate when evaluating the newsletter. She further stated that the click rate is also a metric she observes in the evaluation, although in this case she believed it was difficult to assess the success level.

**Content**

In terms of the content, the marketing manager thought the newsletter was relevant in terms of a long term brand building perspective. She described that by sending this newsletter, the company associates its brand with environmental friendliness. In other words, she believed the newsletter was successful since it supported the brand building. The communication strategy specialist commented on the content and believed it was very relevant as it clearly showed how the company work towards being environmental friendly and sustainable. He said that the content appeals to him because the communication is very clear and the message is getting through.

“*I believe the newsletter clearly indicates what the company stands for and how the company resonates around environmental friendliness and a healthy working environment. It certainly demonstrates the value of the brand and the products and by that I believe the newsletter was successful*” - Communication strategy specialist.

The area sales manager perceived this newsletter as very important since it communicates a new environmentally friendly product.
4.6 Case 5

Case 5 (Figure 5) is a YouTube video which was a part of one of the company’s larger campaign when a new collection was launched. The video was published 5\textsuperscript{th} of March 2018 and it generated 626 833 views. Viewing the data from Google Analytics, the number of users that came to the company’s website was 34 of which 28 where new users to the website. The bounce rate was 43.66 percent, the average session duration was six minutes and 45 seconds. Lastly, the number of page views were 3.93 pages.

Performance approach

The marketing manager mentioned this YouTube video when she was asked if she remembered a successful digital marketing activity. She explained that they had put a lot of resources into the campaign and the outcome had been much higher than expected. She said:

“We did set several goals for the campaign, and we achieved those goals at an early stage which means we have to evaluate them”- The marketing manager.
Lastly, the marketing manager mentioned that when she benchmarked the result from this campaign to the another YouTube video that the company created a couple of years ago, this one had been much more successful. Accordingly, the digital analyst believed the campaign was a success because the predetermined goals had been achieved. He also stated that he believed this campaign was a huge success when comparing the time and resources they had put into it with the return it gained.

_Digital metrics_

The marketing manager mentioned that she assessed the success of the video based on the views and because the video had increased the traffic to the website. She mentioned that even though the video did not generate around 6000 new visitors to the site, they could still determine that the traffic had increased a lot. Subsequently, the digital content manager said that the video had gained a lot of exposure. She said that the video had received a lot views and by that she believed it was really successful. The communication strategy specialist focused mainly on the metrics when he was to assess the success of the case. He mentioned that he could judge the video based on likes, clicks and impressions, but he found it more important to think one step further. He explained that he would focus on the leads, the quality of those leads and the result of those leads. According to him, this video was really successful based on the number of views and the exposure. Although, since he did not know how many leads it generated in it was hard to assess the campaign fully.

The area sales manager did not believe the metrics were important. When he viewed the metrics in part three of the interview he pointed out that he knew that the video obtained 600 000 views. However, he questioned the importance of reach, since he was uncertain about the connection between the exposure of the video and how that will eventually contribute sales.
The marketing manager believed that this case was successful, which she based on the creative content. She explained that the aim with the YouTube video was only to create a “social video” that would generate an interest for the company by showing the brand. She described:

“We are creating content that no one else in the textile flooring industry is doing and we have really succeeded in that sense” - Marketing manager.

Likewise, the digital analyst analyzed the content and mentioned that, if the company does not meet any goals that have been set for the campaigns, it is probably because the content is not interesting or not relevant. In this case, he explained that the content must have been very relevant because the video became a huge success. The area sales manager believed that the content is the most important part to consider in the assessment. In his opinion the message of the video was not clear. He said the video was beautiful, but he did not understand the message and that affected his judgement.
4.7 Case 6

Case 6 (Figure 6) is a LinkedIn post which refers to a project in an office in Gothenburg. Data from LinkedIn analytics showed 61 clicks, 3,557 impressions, 36 social actions and 2.73 percent in engagement. Google Analytics showed that the post generated 55 views on the website, 49 unique views, a bounce rate of 82.86 percent and the average session duration was three minutes and 17 seconds.

**Performance approach**

According to the digital analyst the company’s goal on LinkedIn is to receive 50 clicks, and since this post received 61 clicks, he believed that this post was successful. The digital content manager benchmarked this project post with similar posts on LinkedIn in order to assess the success. She saw this case as successful compared to earlier posts on LinkedIn.
Digital metrics

The digital analyst pointed out two important metrics, namely the amount of clicks and the engagement rate. In his opinion 61 clicks and 2.81 percent in engagement are pretty good numbers. Even though the content did not create high engagement, the marketing manager perceived this posts as important due to the traffic it generated to the website. She definitely viewed this post as successful and important. The communication strategy specialist highlighted the metrics, clicks and number of leads. However, in order to evaluate the success he would require more data beyond the statistics. Hence, he believed that gathering several metrics is important when evaluating. According to the digital content manager the amount of shares was the first number that came to mind. She also believed that likes and comments are important metrics. Her impression of the post was that it was pretty good. The area sales manager did not mention the metrics until he received the information in part 3 of the interview. According to him, 28 likes is low and it supported his opinion regarding the case being uninteresting. In addition, he said that half of the likes probably came from the employees and that their engagement does not result in anything relevant for the company.

Content

Sharing referral projects which show the company’s product was seen as successful by the marketing manager, because this type of content acts as a sales supporting activity. She said that potential buyers can get inspired when the company create content that shows its projects. The communication strategy specialist was positive to the content and perceived the content as informative and as an important post in the feed. The area sales manager explained that these types of posts are very important from a sales perspective, since customers usually want to see how the product can be used before making a purchase. However, he mentioned that this picture did not show the product in a desirable manner, which made him uncertain regarding his assessment.
4.8 Case 7

This case (Figure 7) is a slideshow which was published on LinkedIn. The slideshow illustrates the company’s different products in various studio environments. LinkedIn’s own measuring statistics showed that the post resulted in 13,331 impressions, 2,749 video views, 53 clicks and 1.01 percent in engagement.

**Performance approach**

The marketing manager believed that case 7 was done half-heartedly. She acknowledged that it probably had to do with the resources, time and effort put into the case. According to her, the small input resulted in a weak result. In the communication strategy specialist’s opinion, the evaluation of this case should be carried out by examining the predetermined goals. Although, he pointed out that it is not realistic to have goals for each posts, instead overall content goals and campaign goals should be set. A comparison between similar cases was also seen as important in the assessment by him. In contrast, the digital content manager stated that it is difficult to evaluate this post since she did not have much to compare it with. The sales area manager highlighted the importance of the purpose and goal of case 7. He said that these posts
are important when launching new collections. The aim in the beginning of a launching period is to show the new products and create awareness of a new collection. Later after the launching period these pictures are not successful in his opinion, because the aim of the post should rather be sales supporting.

**Digital metrics**

According to the digital analyst the reach was an important metric concerning this post, since people are more passive on LinkedIn and do not interact that much with the posts compared to, for example, Instagram. According to the communication strategy specialist likes, impressions and clicks were important metrics. He concluded that 53 clicks are a good number. In addition, he believed the sales numbers to be interesting information when deciding if a post was successful or not. He also stated that another important metric to consider is the amount of leads obtained from a post. In contrast, the digital content manager used the amount of views in order to evaluate the success in this case. She thought that 2 700 clicks were something very positive. The area sales manager pointed out that this case had more likes compared to other cases, but for him the likes were not something important that he would consider when evaluating the case.

**Content**

In the marketing manager's opinion, it was difficult to state whether this post was successful or not. In terms of the content she explained that it was communicated with a creative approach, since the content is presented in a creative slideshow. Though, she believed that the post was done half-heartedly. The digital content manager stated that she valued this post because it was movable and therefore sees this case as a creative and good one. She explained that this type of content is important because it is creative in that sense that it is a slideshow and not only a picture.
4.9 Case 8

Figure 8

Case 8 (Figure 8) is an Instagram post. The post is a referral post which shows the company’s flooring in an office where it has been installed. Google Analytics showed that the post resulted in seven new users to the website, seven sessions, the bounce rate was 85.71 percent, the page views were 1.14 and the average session duration on the site was seven seconds.

Performance approach

The digital analyst did not believe that this post was successful. He explained that the goal of each Instagram post is to receive four percent in engagement rate. The engagement rate was not high in this case and the picture only received 131 likes, which he believed was bad. According to the communication strategy specialist he could not make a fair judgement concerning the success for this post without knowing the purpose and goals.

Digital metrics

When assessing success of case 8, the digital analyst used the amount of likes and comments. He also explained that a problem on Instagram is that they rarely can track
purchases back to an Instagram post. Therefore he stated that they can not only use metrics to make an assessment. He said:

“As an architect you perhaps see our product when you scroll through your Instagram feed in the evening. However, it is perhaps not until the day after, when you are at work, that the samples are being ordered” – The digital analyst.

The communication strategy specialist paid attention to the amount of likes and the engagement rate. He did not consider this post as successful. Event though, the post generated in nine clicks to the web site, he believed that it could be seen as good in comparison to case 1. He also stated that it is sometimes difficult to understand everything measured but the measures need to be connected to the business results. He said that KPIs should be established to guide the measurement. According to the digital content manager, the amount of likes and comments were seen as important. 131 likes, which the picture generated were seen as little by her. Therefore, in her opinion the post was not successful.

Content

Making sure that the content is relevant is important according to the digital analyst. He said that he evaluates the relevance of the content by looking at the engagement. This post was seen as less successful due to the low amount of likes and comments. In the marketing manager’s opinion, the content did not reflect the brand. Not only was the post described as a bad picture of the product, it was also described as not being aligned with the image of the company. The marketing manager did not see the purpose of the picture and questioned if anyone would get an interest in the products by seeing this picture. Her assessment of this post was that it was not successful. The communication strategy specialist described the content of case 8 the following way:

“According to me this is a dead picture, it would not surprise me if it generated few likes” – Communication strategy specialist.

He continued by explaining that it is difficult to analyze each post itself, but in the long term it is important to see patterns regarding the result. The area sales manager described this picture the following way:
“It’s no wow effect, but it fulfills its purpose and shows the product in a suitable environment. But yeah, it does not touch many feelings.” - Area sales manager.

4.10 Case 9

Figure 9

The last case (Figure 9) from the company's website and is a news article about a new product, which was a part of a new collection. The post includes both pictures and text which illustrate the new collection. Google Analytics showed that case 9 resulted in 1,296 views and 1,098 unique views. The average session duration was one minute and 41 seconds and the bounce rate was 68.88 percent.
Performance approach

According to the digital analyst an important factor when assessing success is to compare the outcome to the predetermined goals. The predetermined goal in this case was to achieve a certain number of sample orders. In his opinion this post was therefore successful, because more samples had been ordered from the website than expected. The communication strategy specialist also mentioned the importance in setting clear goals and thereby success can be evaluated. He said that the goal in this case was to receive leads, such as sample orders, which the they did. Further, he pointed out that another key aspect is to compare the results with other posts, which can serve as a guide in the evaluation process.

Digital metrics

The digital analyst was satisfied with this post and believed it was successful. He said that the purpose was to make people click on the new collections shown in the article and he therefore measured the amount of clicks on the post. Another interesting metric to analyze was the leads, which in this case was the amount of ordered samples. He put forward that almost ten percent of the people who viewed the post ordered a sample, which according to him was a satisfying number. According to the communication strategy specialist important measures were clicks and also the amount of ordered samples. The communication strategy specialist believed the bounce rate was high and the time spent on the page was quite low, which was not satisfying numbers. The digital content manager believed that it was very important to follow up the metrics and reflect on it. Important metrics for her when evaluating the post were the clicks, the session duration on the site and the bounce rate. In her opinion it was important that the visitor clicked on several links in order to go further on to the website, as it was a sign of the content being interesting.
Content

In order to evaluate the success of this post the marketing manager analyzed the content. In this case she believed that the post was successful since the content communicated relevant information about the collection and also because the company’s brand image really came through in the pictures.
5. Analysis

This section presents the analysis. In the analysis the empirical findings will be analyzed in accordance to the theories outlined in the frame of reference. The section is divided into the categories performance approaches, metrics and content.

5.1 Performance approach

From the results it appears that the nonfinancial approaches were used when the performance of the cases was evaluated (i.e. if the cases were successful or not was not evaluated in monetary terms). A possible explanation of why the assessment of success was through nonfinancial approaches and not a financial approach, could be because of the difficulty of connecting an individual marketing activity to a financial outcome, which Hoffman and Fodor (2010) describe as a challenge in the digital environment. In other words, linking a financial result back to an individual case is very difficult. Another possible explanation of why the financial approach was not evident in this study could be due to the company’s complex sales cycle, which the respondents illustrated. Namely, the purchases are not always made by the same person who decides that the product should be ordered. This may indicate that in B2B it is difficult to link a purchase back to a digital marketing campaign and thereby assessing digital marketing activities financially can be challenging.

Furthermore, in the majority of the cases, the performance was evaluated by comparing the result with a predetermined goal. In other words, an effectiveness approach was used when evaluating the performance. When the cases were evaluated in this study the focus seemed to be on what the goal was and to which extent the marketing activity contributed to the company’s overall marketing goals. This is in line with Clark’s (2000) study, who suggests that an effectiveness approach is important in the evaluation of marketing activities performance, particularly it is important to consider how the result is in line with the predetermined marketing goals. An interesting finding is that the respondents in this study seemed to have different goals with the digital marketing activities. For instance, in case 1 all respondents evaluated the post as successful,
because of its contribution to the brand image, which is an overall marketing goal they have. A note is that the area sales manager did not view the post as the most important activity since it was not a sales supporting activity, which is his goal with the marketing activities, though he saw it as successful. A possible explanation of why the digital analyst, the digital content manager, the marketing manager and the communication strategy specialist believed this case was successful could be due to its contribution to their overall goal on Instagram, which is to increase brand awareness and brand building. Measures such as brand awareness are seen as long term by Hanssens and Pauwels (2016), and thereby it may be argued that the respondents, who work in the marketing department, have a long term approach when assessing success. This is also in line with what Cespedes (1995) points out, namely that marketing departments often value the long term marketing performance for the business. Furthermore, as the area sales manager mentioned, and as the literature describes, the sales department values short term objectives in form of sales (Homburg & Jensen, 2007). An explanation of why the area sales manager believed that this post was successful, even though he does not have the same goals as the marketing department, could be that there is a clear communication between the marketing department and other employees concerning how these digital marketing activities should contribute to the company.

An additional pattern found in the respondents’ evaluation of the cases was that the efficiency approach was rarely used. It was only evident in case 5 (the YouTube video, that was a part of a larger marketing campaign). The digital analyst, the marketing manager and the communication strategy specialist highlighted that the large amount of resources that had been invested in the project and that the output in regards to their efforts was therefore important to consider. Even though the company had recently released the campaign, they could already recognize high returns in form of sales, which according to them was successful. Important to emphasize here is that in this study it seemed that the efficiency approach was only important when larger campaigns were evaluated. Bonoma and Clark (1988) describe efficiency as important in the performance evaluation, which is in line with our findings to some extent, though it was only evident when the case was part of a larger campaign and not in the assessment of success on individual activities. Another possible explanation of why the input and output was emphasized in case 5 could be because of the high amount of resources that
had been required in order to create the movie. Hence, it was evident that it was more important to analyze the input in relation to the output and to evaluate more thoroughly when more resources in terms of time and money had been invested compared to the other digital marketing activities that had not required a large amount of resources.

Efficiency and effectiveness were both found to be used in the assessment of success of digital marketing activities. However, the effectiveness approach was evident in all cases, while the efficiency approach was mostly found in one case. It has been suggested in the literature that both of the approaches should be emphasized when evaluating performance as success can be viewed from different perspectives (Walker & Ruekert, 1987; Morgan et al. 2002). Nevertheless, in this study the findings showed that the effectiveness approach was emphasized much more. A possible explanation for this could be because of the challenge described by Hoffman and Fodor (2010), which is that marketing activities are difficult to connect to financial outcomes. If those connections are not possible, the efficiency perspective, which is a financial approach, may be difficult to use when evaluating digital marketing activities.

In this study, four out of five respondents pointed out benchmarking, or in other words, the comparison between other companies’ performance and the results from the company’s earlier marketing activities, as an important aspect when assessing the performance of the different cases. They perceived it as important because a comparison indicates if similar activities needs to be improved and if the activity was successful in regards to the regular performance. The digital content manager even commented that she could not evaluate the success of case 7, since she did not have much to compare it with. The importance of using benchmarks when evaluating performance is also illustrated in the literature where Ponzezhit and Mohayaddin (2012) state that benchmarking is an important guide in the evaluation of performance. Courty and Marschke (2004) also mentions that one advantage of benchmarking is that it can show if future activities needs to be improved. This was found as a useful approach in this study since the respondents almost always benchmarked the results. This finding may therefore indicate that no matter what digital activity that was evaluated, benchmarking the results was almost always a useful approach.
Some of the respondents considered another important aspect in the assessment of success, namely the adoption of the activities to the external environment. Topics such as female rights, equality and environmental questions are highly discussed in the society today. This makes the respondents view posts in regards to these subjects as successful, since the marketing activities thereby is in line with what the customer expect. The respondents described that they usually get a favorable response when publishing messages connected to the topics mentioned above, which makes them successful. Boulding et al. (1994) and Clark (2000) describe that a company which adapts its marketing strategy and marketing mix to the environment can be successful. It was therefore evident in this study that some of the respondents evaluated success based on how well the digital marketing activity was in line with the external environment, which may indicate that sometimes a broader perspective needs to be considered when evaluating digital marketing activities.

5.2 Digital metrics

One of the objectives when conducting the interviews was to examine if the respondents took the analytical data into account and how the respondents analyzed and interpreted the analytical data when making judgement about success.

All of the respondents did take some analytical data into account when making their judgement, yet it varied what type of data the respondent took into account and how important the data was. More or less every respondent took the engagement rate or studied the engagement closely when making their judgement. The respondents believed the engagement was an important metric as it shows how much the users interact with the content. A reason for why the respondent believed it was important could be because, as suggested by Lin and Lu (2011), if users interact with the content it indicates if the activity is relevant or not. Concerning the engagement, the “likes” and the “comments” were the most important metrics for the respondent. The fact that all the respondent believed the engagement to be important could be because as Fisher (2009), Peters et al. (2013) and Tiago and Veríssimo (2015) have suggested, it is very important on social media to study the engagement in order to understand how users behave. Furthermore, Peters et al. (2013) also stated in their study that it is sometimes more preferable to study the quality of interaction rather than numbers of interaction
and this also seems to be in line with what the digital analyst and the content manager did (i.e. sometimes they perceived that the comments were more important than the number of likes). A reason for why the other respondents did not value the level of engagement (i.e. a comment is more valuable than a like) could be because likes are enough to judge the success for them. For instance, the marketing manager explained that when a post on Instagram receives many likes it is more likely that the post will be exposed to more users as Instagram’s selectively choose the reach of the post based on the number of likes and comments. Hence, she thought that when a post gets many likes the reach increases and that is something she views as important because it indicates that the brand message is being spread, which is important to her as a marketing manager. This is in line with that Hoffman and Fodor (2010) suggested, namely that brand awareness metrics need to be considered.

Another commonality among the respondents was that they many times selected the metric based on the aim and the goal of the post. For example, the digital analyst mentioned that the goal when the company posts activities on social media is to obtain three to five percent in engagement. Therefore, the engagement metrics in terms of likes, comments and shares were sometimes the most important metrics when evaluating. This finding can also be linked to the literature where many authors (e.g. McCann & Barlow 2015; Fisher 2009; Hoffman & Fodor 2010; Mardough, 2010) have suggested that when selecting metrics, they should always be in line with the marketing goals and objectives because it shows that right metrics are being selected.

What is also evident from the study is that it seems that different data is used among the various cases. For instance, sometimes the engagement metrics is more preferable among some cases, while at other times the traffic data such as the number of users coming to the website is more important. A possible explanation is that it differs depending on the channel where the case is distributed. For instance, it becomes natural that traffic metrics are more important when the case concerns a newsletter or a post on the website, compared to when an activity is posted on social media. For instance, the digital analyst mentioned that on social media it is all about obtaining engagement, thus engagement becomes more important when judging the success. However, an interesting finding is that it seems that almost all the respondents tend to base their
judgement, when evaluating the case, on the data analytics that showed the highest number. For instance, in some cases the likes were very low, but the traffic metrics were high and by that some respondents view the case as successful. At other times, the engagement rate was very low but the traffic metrics were high and by that the case was a success. One explanation for this reasoning could be that the respondents tend to view the metrics that are easily available and easy to interpret because choosing the right metrics is a challenge for them. Just as Peters et al. (2013) argue, today many organizations face challenges with choosing the appropriate metrics and as a result metrics that are easy to understand or easily available are considered. Another reason could be that as Keegan and Rowley (2017), Azam and Qamar (2011) and Järvinen and Karjalauto (2015) argue, there is no holistic framework that guide the selection of metrics today. That could be a reason why the respondents are not clear about which metrics is the most important one. This finding also illustrates that judging the performance is still human biased. In other words, even though the data is objective the respondents emphasize subjective decisions when they evaluate.

Another discovery among the respondents is that most of them seemed to evaluate the success based on one or few metrics such as the engagement, except the communication strategy specialist. He stated that he could make judgements based on likes and comments, but he prefers to evaluate the whole journey (i.e. the journey from a prospect to a purchase), when he is evaluating success. In other words, he tends to make decisions based on the return that the activity may generate. This may indicate that the communications strategy specialist is more data driven in his judgment, because of his role as a consultant within the area of inbound marketing, while the others are not. An explanation of why the other respondents did not think in the same term as the strategic communication specialist, could be as Fisher (2009) and Fodor and Hoffman (2010) indicate, is very challenging to measure the return of digital marketing activities today, which means that the respondents do not consider financial return when judging the success of the activities. Even though, McCann and Barlow (2015) and Murdough (2009) state that organizations should measure both financially and non financially, this finding indicate that it may not always be the case. Another explanation could be that since the company has complex and lengthy sales processes, financial return is
something that may not be taken into account when judging the success of their digital marketing activities.

It was evident that the respondents emphasized the analytical data to a different extent in their judgements. Maybe some respondents do not see the value of basing their judgment on the data while others rely on the data to a wider extent to assess the level of success. A surprising finding was that the digital analyst did not rely on the metrics to a wide extent in relation to his position as a digital analyst. An explanation could be that, as argued by Chaffey and Patron (2012) there are still many challenges in how the metrics should be used, interpreted and analyzed. Another reason could be as suggested by Mehmeth and Clarke (2016), the lack of time is one of the reasons why many organizations find it hard to leverage on the analytical data. Hence, the findings may indicate that there is challenges in using digital metrics today and the lack of time is a challenge as well.

5.3 Content

It became evident in this study that the content was a key aspect to consider when assessing the success among the cases. This is in line with what Baltes (2015) suggested, namely that the reflection on content is important in the process of assessing success. However, the respondents analyzed and reflected upon the content differently.

In this study all respondent believed that the relevance of the content was important when evaluating success of a case, because they viewed relevant content as successful, which is in line with Wang et al. (2017), who argue that relevant content is key to success in digital marketing. However, an interesting finding was how the relevance of the content was determined, which differed among the respondents. The communication strategy specialist believed the content was relevant when it generated leads. This goes in line with a study conducted by Biemans et al. (2010), who describe that data, such as leads, is an important aspect in the evaluation of the relevance of the content. The reason why the communication strategy specialist pointed out leads as important could be due to his position as a communication strategy specialist consultant in the company. His expertise is within inbound marketing, which is all about generating leads. In contrast, the digital analyst valued the engagement when determining the relevance of
the content. Evaluating the actions taken by visitors or followers when assessing the success of content is also what De Vries et al. (2012) suggested in their study. The primary task of a digital analyst is to analyze the metrics, which probably explains why he values the metrics engagement when analyzing the content. On the other hand, the marketing manager and the digital content manager pointed out the consistency between the content and the brand image and brand values in order to decide the content relevance. Their reasoning could be based on their positions where they are responsible for carrying out marketing activities which are in line with the company’s communication concept, in other words, in accordance with the brand image. The area sales manager, on the other hand, believed that content is relevant when it is useful for the sales processes. A possible explanation of why the area sales manager believes this could be due to his objectives of increasing sales, and thereby he values marketing activities that are sales supporting. The reason for his opinions could be explained by the findings in a study conducted by Berger and Milkman (2012), who pointed out that useful content is content that is informative and useful for the customers.

The evaluation of the cases was also discussed in terms of if the content created emotions for the audience and if the content was informative. The digital content manager said that when the company takes a political stand the engagement becomes high, therefore she considered posts such as case 1, which evokes feelings, as successful. Another example is case 4, the YouTube video, which was created in order to generate feelings towards the brand. The reflection of the content bringing forth emotions was mostly evident in cases concerning social media. A possible explanation for focusing on emotions on social medias could be explained by a study conducted by Berger and Milkman (2012), who showed that posts on social media that generate strong emotions for the audience are more likely to become popular. In contrast, the cases such as the newsletter and activities on the website, were seen as more informative, and therefore the purpose was not to achieve an emotional experience but rather inform the audience. This is in line with what Holliman and Rowley (2014) suggested as important in their study, which was that effective content needs to be informative. Hence, these findings may indicate that the content is and should be analyzed differently depending on the digital channel where it is distributed.
From the results it also appears that, in regards to the cases on social media, the content should be connected to the overall goal of being present on social media, which according to the majority of respondents, is to create brand awareness and brand image. These findings are in line with what Holliman and Rowley (2014) have identified, they state that the content in the digital channels should create brand awareness, building a brand image, obtaining leads and engaging customers. A difference between the literature and this study was that the focus on obtaining leads on social media was not evident in the majority of the cases. The key in assessing the success of a post was mostly based on the actual message and how the case was connected to the company and how it engaged the audience, instead of focusing on lead generation. The reason for this could be that the respondents find it difficult to generate leads on social media, due to the complex sales cycle. However, considering the generation of leads it was evident in two cases. Regarding Case 4 (the newsletter) and case 9 (the post on the website) it was clear that in addition to looking at the message it was also important to study if the content generated leads. For example, in case 9, the digital analyst and communication strategy specialist reflected on the amount of ordered samples when evaluating the success through content. The reason for the importance of leads being in focus in these two cases could be because of the simplicity of following users’ actions on the website or actions in regards to newsletters compared to tracking actions on social media cases, which may indicate that once again the activity is evaluated and analyzed differently depending on the media channel.
In this section the conclusion is presented. The conclusion if followed by a discussion of the findings in a wider perspective. Finally, the limitations, suggestions for future research and implications are discussed.

6.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to gain an understanding of the concept success in B2B digital marketing activities. Therefore, the aim was to investigate how success of digital marketing activities is evaluated and analyzed in a B2B company. In addition, identifying what measures and approaches are emphasized the most in the evaluation process was another objective. In order to fulfill the purpose, several cases within one B2B company were utilized. The cases together with digital statistics were used during five interviews with participants at different positions in the company.

One of the key findings was that the nonfinancial approach, namely the effectiveness approach was most commonly used when the success of digital marketing activities was evaluated. In other words, if the predetermined goals had been achieved, the digital marketing activity was seen as successful. As mentioned, nonfinancial approaches were commonly used, except when the digital marketing activity was a part of a larger campaign that had required multiple resources. When the digital activity was a part of a larger campaign, the evaluation of the success was approached from an efficiency perspective, where the invested resources were compared to the outcome of the campaign.

When evaluating the success, the second key finding was that metrics were considered as important to some extent. Metrics in terms of engagement and sometimes the traffic metrics in terms of numbers of users visiting the website after a digital marketing activity, were most emphasized measures when success was evaluated. However, surprisingly, when the digital marketing activities were determined to be successful or not, metrics were less emphasized than expected. Interestingly, the results showed that
in this study, the large amount of digital data that is available today may be a complex challenge and is not fully taken advantage of.

Additionally, a third finding was that the content was almost always analyzed when the success of the various digital marketing activities was evaluated. If the content in the marketing activities was relevant or not was identified as an important aspect when evaluating the success. Yet, the relevance of the content was perceived differently, which resulted in various opinions whether the digital marketing activity was successful or not. It was also evident that the content was managed and evaluated differently depending on which digital communication channel the content was distributed through.

Based on the results, the concept of success in B2B digital marketing activities was found to be perceived differently in this study. Therefore, what success is in regards to digital marketing activities in B2B is very subjective and thereby it is difficult to find a common meaning of the concept. Though, in this study, taking performance and metrics into consideration and analyzing the content were evident to be important in the assessment of success of the digital marketing activities.

### 6.2 Discussion

Despite the fact that the findings presented in the conclusion are related to the purpose and the research questions, the authors of this thesis want to emphasize additional findings that are not related to the purpose, but are of interest.

First of all, during the interviews the authors of this thesis found that the different participants seemed to have different goals and perspective related to the digital marketing activities. For instance, the area sales manager’s goal with all the digital marketing activities was that the activity should, in the end, support sales. In other words, he viewed the digital marketing as a way of presenting referral projects that potential customers would find inspiring. In contrast, the content manager and the marketing manager believed the purpose of the digital marketing activities was brand building (i.e. activities that increased the brand image and spread brand awareness were
important). This contrast raises the questions regarding whose goals and perspective should be prioritized in order for the digital marketing to be successful. In other words, should the company set common goals for the digital marketing activities or leverage on the various goals that exist today? Moreover, since the respondents viewed the aim of the digital marketing activities differently and perceived the relevance of the content differently, another point of discussion is whom the digital marketing activities should target. Specifically, who is the marketing communication aimed at? Since the B2B buying unit consists of several individuals, it raises the question of whose needs should be addressed in the digital marketing communication. Is it the buyer or maybe the decision maker? It was evident in this study that the target audience of the different digital marketing activities was not clearly defined.

Another noteworthy finding was that “likes” or “comments” were measures that often were taken into consideration when evaluating the success (i.e. if the digital marketing activity had generated many likes and comments it was seen as successful). Yet, one respondent mentioned that sometimes the quality if the data should be analyzed rather than the quantity of the data. In B2B it is sometimes more important to emphasize who is liking and commenting the post, since that person may be a key individual in the buying unit. This raises the question whether the amount of likes really matters in B2B when the focus should instead be on who is liking the post. Just because a picture on Instagram obtains 100 likes, 50 of those likes may be from employees working at the company. Does the number of likes really matter then? Building on this, it is also interesting to discuss the importance of tools such as Google Analytics in B2B. It is interesting because Google Analytics gathers the amount of click-stream data, but not the quality of that data. For instance, in B2C where the consumer is the decision maker and the one who buys, the amount of click-stream data perhaps matters greatly. Yet, how important is the amount of click-stream data in B2B where a user visiting the website is a consumer and not the one who buys the product. Therefore, interesting to note is how much a B2B company can leverage on tools such as Google Analytics when those tools only display quantitative data and not any qualitative data.
6.3 Limitations, future research and implications

The study was conducted within one company, which is a limitation because of the reduced possibility of generalizing the findings. Conducting case studies also limits the ability to generalize the findings, since every situation is unique. Due to the fact that the study is based on one company, it may not give an accurate picture of how the concept of success is determined in other companies. Moreover, since the size of the sample in this study was rather small a larger sample would be preferred in order to obtain a broader perspective of the topic. Moreover, time and resources were other limitations in this study. Conducting the study during a longer time frame may therefore result in other or richer insights.

Since focus of the study was to gain in-depth insights within one company, future researches could use several companies in order to obtain a broader perspective. In order to achieve richer results, future studies could be carried out during a longer time frame since certain digital marketing activities may not show the results immediately. Another suggestion for future research could be to investigate the concept of success in digital marketing from the customer perspective since this study focused on a company perspective. Moreover, the relevance of using digital tools in B2B companies is another interesting issue to investigate further. Lastly, interesting perspectives to study could be to compare the concept of success in B2C companies with B2B companies and investigate if there are any differences and similarities.

This thesis contributes with insights in how a B2B company assess success of digital marketing activities. By conducting an in-depth investigation in one company, one perspective was obtained, which could act as a foundation in further studies. The key components identified in this study could guide companies in their evaluation process since it introduced important aspects to consider when evaluating digital marketing activities. Moreover, the results in this study show that the evaluation of digital marketing activities differed among individuals and it therefore needs to be considered. Finally, this study highlighted the importance of reflecting on digital marketing activities within the B2B sector and that an understanding of metrics is vital in order to draw on its benefits. These implications could therefore be useful for the company.
utilized in this study, other companies and managers who use digital marketing in its communication.
7. References


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