CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Because of the given timeframe to complete this independent study and to stick to the given schedule, the emphasis will be on situation analysis of the content, leaving out content marketing processes such as content ideation, creation and promotion.

3.1 Data Collection Procedures

Research methods are based on existing customer data, web success metrics, key performance indicators (KPIs), search engine algorithms, customer lifecycle content marketing theories and new customer insights that was gathered during the customer research. Each data collection procedure and theory are explained in chapter 4.

In this study all data is based on real figures and has been collected using various web analytic tools and interviews. KPIs were gathered and analyzed using web analytic tools Google Analytics, Google Keyword Planner Tool, Google Search Console, SEMrush tool, Moz Open Site Explorer, Moz Bar, SERP Checker Tool and SimilarWeb. All key metrics are explained in chapter 4.

Google ranking factors are based on official Google statements, on how their search engine algorithms work. To support these theories, this study has also taken into consideration proven SEO experts' theories, how to rank in Google. All these theories are explained during this study, and Google rankings have been monitored in real time with Moz Open Site Explorer, SERP Checker Tool and SEMrush. In addition, optimizing meta tags were completely based on the methodology and rules based on Google guidelines.

For the purposes of analyzing the domain site structure, blog and HTML elements, a WordPress content management system was used to find the faults of MyAgent domain and their blog. Also, to find content gaps in their website for content and SEO audits, MOZ crawlers were used.

Keyword research was mainly conducted by Google Keyword Planner, to identify search volumes, competition and bids of given keywords. To find out which keywords competitors were ranking, SEMrush and SimilarWeb tools were used.

3.2 Target audience interviews

In the end of chapter 4, more traditional customer research methods were used. As part of this study, a questionnaire was planned to find out customer preferences and their pain points, in order to target right content for customer groups in future.

3.2.1 Population and sample size

In order for the survey to be representative for an entire *population*, researchers need to calculate the number of respondents. However, first step was to determine the population.

Population consists of Finnish startups, small and medium size business owners. For obvious reasons it would have been impossible to survey all startup, small and medium size business owners of Finland. Thus, a sample of these business owners are the solution for this issue. A sample is a selection of respondents chosen in such a way that they represent the total population as good as possible.

Potential responders were first chosen from a public Finnish company register. First the companies were sorted by the sales revenue, leaving out companies with revenue more than 10 million euros. To make sample size even smaller, companies outside Helsinki (capital city of Finland) were left out. These companies were then contacted via email, would they be willing to participate to a research. After 100 business owners accepted, the sample size was limited to that number.

3.2.2 Research Design

Research design was originally planned to be qualitative research and having on depth one-on-one interviews with interviewees via Skype-application. However, two first interviews pointed out that it would have taken too much time to carry out hundred interviews in given timeframe. There were some major issues organizing these interviews, mainly because of five-hour time difference between Thailand and Finland. Top on that, there was also internet connection problems that seemed to frustrate interviewees which had an impact on their answers.

After few interviews research design was changed to quantitative research. A questionnaire was sent via email for those business owners who agreed to participate to this research. They had one-month time to answer to those questions and then send answer back.

It was expected, that many companies would forget or simply would be too lazy to answer the questions this way. Therefore, these questionnaires were sent now over two hundred companies, in order to get hundred replies back. And eventually it worked. The questionnaire can be found in chapter 4.

3.3 Multi channel data collection

Interviews were just a small part of this study. This study is emphasizing that resolving the research problem will require a set of methods that form content strategy together, as discussed in previous chapter, as well as understanding KPIs and the given web analytical tools. These methods are: aligning mission and vision statements with content, conducting performance overview, SEO audit, content audit, customer research, keyword research, setting objectives and understanding ROI of content marketing. Only after the given processes, high-quality, relevant and targeted content can be created and promoted.