Content Marketing: Practical Enactments and Performative Ideas

- an inquiry into what constitutes content marketing in Sweden

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Abstract

This thesis presents an inquiry into the concept and phenomena of content marketing and its corresponding market in Sweden by attending to its constituent practices. By adopting a practice based approach to markets, influenced by recent developments in economic sociology, it utilizes a constructivist view of markets as constantly forming and emerging. This allows examination of a concept that is novel, ambiguously defined yet increasingly popular by focusing on its practical enactments along with actors' conceptions and ideas in order to study what constitutes content marketing. By archival analysis of trade media, examination of industry media and in-depth interviews with content marketing practitioners the paper highlights the formatting effect of ideas on practice, the existence of multiple and conflicting definitions and enactments of content marketing and the implications thereof. It also shows how different categories of content marketing practice are connected and interlinked, before arriving at a definition drawing on practitioners descriptions, enactments and ideas central to the market. The thesis contributes with an inquiry into content marketing where academic research is scant and also provides an empirical application of theory from the growing research tradition concerned with a practice approach to markets.

Keywords: Content Marketing, Market practice, Performativity, Multiplicity, Shaping of Markets

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1. Introduction

"Coca-Cola says that they won't make any commercials by 2020. This have had a major impact on the marketing industry. Everyone reacts and thinks - if Coca-Cola is going to stop with commercials, what will they do? and then you become interested and want to find out more" -B.O. Johansson, Spoon 2014.

In November 2013 Coca-Cola declared that *"Content is King, and the Corporate Website is Dead"*. The company announced that they were shifting their marketing focus towards publishing content based on what their consumers find relevant (Coca-Cola 2013). Coca-Cola is not alone in advocating content marketing as the future of marketing. Other multinational companies such as L'Oreal, Virgin Mobile and American Express have also embraced the concept (Forbes, 2012).

In Sweden, content marketing has only recently risen as a popular term among marketing practitioners. Increasingly figuring in marketing blogs, trade media and progressing into the vocabularies of consultancy firms and marketing departments. With multinationals like Coca-Cola and Red Bull held up like banners, proponents and evangelists have launched the concept as a new remedy for the ad fatigue that seem to plague many consumer markets (Tns-sifo 2014). Successful content marketing also promises to make B2B and B2C customers alike seek out the firm, its products and services rather than the more traditional, opposite marketing arrangement. Yet despite this, it is not entirely clear what content marketing is. In a survey among members of the Association of Swedish Advertisers, an organization representing Swedish advertisers, 69 % of the respondents replied they knew what content marketing was, although only 46 % came up with an answer that fully corresponded with the definition used in the survey (Novus rapport om content marketing 2013). The same research also indicated 53% of the responding firms would increase their content marketing investments during 2014.

Resume, a Swedish trade magazine for media and marketing, described content marketing as *"a format where editorial material is published for marketing purposes"* (Resume 2014). However, there is little agreement and such a definition would align with some practitioners views while not others. The consensus that can be discerned point to a core criteria of relevant and valuable content for a defined target audience and common examples include producing

and distributing: customer magazines, annual reports, white papers, informative media, blogs, podcasts, newsletters and social media efforts for marketing purposes.

The term entered the Swedish market in earnest during late 2012 and through 2013 but has been building momentum internationally and especially in the USA for more than a decade where it was coined and popularized by Joe Pulizzi. Building a business around it, Pulizzi has through the content marketing Institute remained one of the key influencers and proponents of content marketing. In the Swedish market, it is the former editorial communication agencies that most prominently and visibly have embraced the term. Recently renamed content agencies, these firms have a strong heritage in producing customer magazines and editorial communication. But there are also others, PR and advertising agencies along with different configurations of consultants, strategists and experts seek to position themselves in this emerging Swedish market.

While agreement is in short supply, ideas and descriptions of what content marketing is or is not, along with normative formulations about how different actors should use it, are less so. There exists a variety of sources offering informal and formal definitions, explicit and implicit. Some are traceable adaptations of existing definitions while others are not. The market is also to some extent engaged in a tug-of-war about ownership of the term, where some voice fears about the term becoming washed out as varying actors seek to utilize the positive connotations it currently holds.

Taken together, this paints a picture of a market where ideas about content marketing along with more practical enactments such as the production of a customer magazine struggle for credibility as content marketing practices. This leaves the term in the odd and somewhat paradoxical position of being widely and increasingly adopted, but to a large extent undefined outside the context of each case of application. In order to understand content marketing then, it is not sufficient to examine existing definitions, it is also necessary to look at what actors do, their practical enactments. Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006; 2007) among others has proposed a view of markets as enacted through practice, offering a way to examine and describe content marketing through the practices that constitute it. But given the existence of multiple ideas and descriptions of content marketing, it is also necessary to incorporate these and their role in influencing practice.

Efforts in sociological research has highlighted the performative role of theory and ideas on practice, i.e. their role in forming and influencing market activities (Callon 1998; MacKenzie and Millo 2003; MacKenzie 2003; 2004). By adopting what has emerged as a practice based approach to markets (Araujo et al. 2010), it is possible to investigate what content marketing is by incorporating actors market activities in addition to descriptions and definitions of content marketing. This entails a perspective of markets as something malleable, constantly forming and where the performative role of ideas in shaping practice is central (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006; 2007). In this forming research tradition, there is also a call for empirical research utilizing a perspective of markets as constituted by practice (Nenonen et al. 2013).

The increasing popularity of the term and concept among practitioners and growing number of non-academic normative and descriptive efforts, provide a rationale for examining practice to understand content marketing. A lack of academic research in addition to limited clarity regarding what the term encompasses, how actors relate to, use it and what shapes and formats this emerging Swedish market formed the basis of inquiry for this thesis.

By adopting a practice based approach to markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006; 2007), this thesis is an attempt to examine what content marketing is, its essence and what constitutes it. By investigating how practice and ideas participate in the shaping of a Swedish market for content marketing it attempts to show:

What constitutes content marketing?

2. Theoretical Chapter - A Practice Based Approach to Markets

The following sections offer an overview of central concepts in a practice based approach of markets - central to our investigation of what constitutes content marketing. It serves primarily as a useful perspective but also as a theoretical framework as it equip us with the tools needed to examine what constitutes the market of content marketing. Specifically, Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006; 2007) have devised a heuristic model of markets as constituted by practice, which serves as the theoretical basis for analysis. This allows examination of differing and multiple types of practices and enactments of content marketing. For the sake of clarity, some attention is first given to how we define markets, market practice, the notions of performativity and multiplicity and our view of actors before our adoption of the model is presented.

2.1 Markets

In this perspective markets are distinctly different from neoclassical definitions and here markets are viewed not simply as spaces intended to host transactions or mechanisms to facilitate economic exchange but rather as social phenomena, enacted and constructed through practices (Callon 1998:30; Araujo et al. 2010:8; Storbacka and Nenonen 2011; Vargo and Lusch 2011). The definition used in this thesis is adopted from Nenonen et al. (2013:3) who view markets as "*...on-going socio-material enactments that organize economized exchanges*.". Such a definition incorporates the notion of markets as constituted by practice (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006; 2007) and a view of markets as calculative collective devices (Callon 1998a:3; Callon and Muniesa 2005). By stressing enactments, it furthermore acknowledges that it in principle is impossible to fully describe all characteristics of concrete markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006; 2007). Lastly, it also makes possible a view of actors that includes non-humans (cf. Latour 1992).

2.2 Market Practice

In the context of the commonly employed division between theory and practice, Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) point out that market practice is commonly used to denote all that is not marketing theory. Such a view is in principle differentiated from one that recognize the performative role of theory and ideas and rather treat their existence as something separate from practice. This entails a definition of market practice as "*all activities that contribute to constitute markets"* (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006:842). In this case this consequently means all practices that contribute to constitute the market of content marketing. This definition,

while broad, allows a move away from efforts to ex post or ex ante definitions of markets anchored in depictions and representations of a single reality. Making it more compatible with the view of markets as constantly emerging enactments.

2.3 Performativity

Central to this study is the role of ideas and theory within social science in shaping what they seek to describe. The performativity thesis (Callon 1998), with roots in science studies and sociology of science has been especially influential in advancing this line of thought in recent decades within economic sociology and the recent practice turn in marketing (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006; 2007; Araujo 2007; MacKenzie et al. 2007; Swedberg 2009:364).

For Callon (1998a:29-30), economics are not distinctly detached from economies and questions the meaningfulness of distinguishing between reality and the discourse explaining it. Thereby clearly distancing his view from positivistic ones on the role of science, and the separation of a *world out there* and a *world of ideas*. Rather, "*...economics, in the broad sense of the term, performs, shapes and formats the economy,...*"[1] (Callon 1998a:2). In this perspective, theory and ideas within natural as well as social sciences, even with descriptive intentions, inevitably takes on a performative role in the reality they describe (Law and Urry 2005; Callon 2007:337). In short, performativity of social and economic is defined as the shaping and influencing effects theories and ideas have on the reality they describe (Callon 1998a:2). These effects significantly extend beyond introducing discourse and assumptions from science to practitioners, to a central position in shaping practice (Ferraro et al. 2005; Araujo 2007).

Performativity in this sense has been studied in a number of fields within economics broadly defined, such as accounting (Miller 1998; Carsten 2013), finance and financial markets (Knorr-Cetina and Bruegger 2002; MacKenzie 2004; Alissa 2013), industrial purchasing (Rinallo and Golfetto 2006) and marketing (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006; 2007; Araujo 2007).

Building on the work of Callon (1998), MacKenzie (2004) makes a useful distinction between what he terms Austinan and Generic performativity. The former *"... in which economics*

[1]Economics in the broad sense of the term includes all types of economic practices and forms of knowledge with which economic actors are engaged in and equipped with in markets (Callon 1998a:30). Which includes theories and ideas of economies, markets and other such fields.

brings into being the relationships it describes." (MacKenzie 2004:1) refers to especially strong links between theory and practice. By application such theories become inseparable from what they sought to portray (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006). While such strong links are assumed to be rare, Mackenzie's (2004) examination of stock option pricing theory and its link to stock option markets is one example however.

Generic performativity in turn denotes weaker, non-exclusive but significant links between theory, ideas and practice (MacKenzie 2004). More general economic and market theories can be placed in this category (MacKenzie 2004), for example the efficient-market hypothesis (MacKenzie et al. 2007:5), or influences from economics on legislation, regulation and de-regulation of markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006). Ideas of content marketing can also be seen as an example of generic performativity since the lack of theories entails that ideas about content marketing are predominant in this process. Ideas that as a rule stem from several sources within the market itself.

2.4 Multiplicity

When discussing the performative role of theory and ideas, one sooner or later encounter issues regarding multiple efforts, intentionally or not, to shape practice. In economics and ideas related to markets, such multiple efforts are likely very common (Kjellberg 2008). Market actors do not necessarily share the same perspectives of the market and its contents. For example, varying and sometimes contradicting definitions and descriptions of content marketing by different actors can be found. Instead, actors can be expected to act in accordance with their own view of the market and its related practices, regardless of incompatibility or contradiction with other views and ideas (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006).

Consider for example different depictions of markets or segments, different views of the firm existing internally in different departments (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006), competing explanations of macro phenomena, differences in strategy and so on. These, in addition to many other practices partake in creating varying, multiple, overlapping and possibly contradicting views of markets (Callon 1998; Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006; 2007). In the case of content marketing, this is visible, since multiple actors, from different backgrounds and with different views of the term, pronounce that they engage in content marketing activities.

By acknowledging the performative role of theory and ideas and that actors may hold different and possibly conflicting views of markets, the role of theory and ideas cannot be

viewed simply as several efforts to describe a single reality. But rather that theories and ideas take part in shaping multiple enactments of reality (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006; Law and Urry 2005). As market environments are likely to host several of these enactments (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006, Araujo et al. 2010), it becomes necessary to consider performative multiplicity of market practices. In short, this means that market actors employ multiple theory and ideas, along with more concrete market activities, which play a significant role in performing markets. What market actors in this perspective then mean, warrants some closer inspection.

2.5 Agency in a Practice Based Approach

While we do not make any categorical assumptions concerning micro and macro levels of practice, a focus on specific market practices necessitates attention to activities and agency on a micro level (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006; Andersson et al. 2008). Two distinctive notions are important to the view of agency employed here, material and temporally emergent agency.

Firstly, and similar to Andersson et al. (2008), actors are regarded as actors via recognition by, or in interaction with, others. This means that agency is dependent on some type of contact or interface to which others can relate. Consequently, what is considered an actor is also not limited to human individuals but also include non-human entities, such as different content agencies and the trade organization. Market practices, in the sense of *"...all activities that contribute to constitute markets"* (Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006:842; 2007:141) does not necessarily originate from a single human individual. It is not farfetched to assume that many of these originate from institutions, organizations or groups of actors of some other nature. Practices can therefore not be limited to actions carried out by human individuals and thus a view of agency and agents that go beyond human individuals is required (Andersson et al. 2008).

Secondly, market agency is closely linked to market practice, and the entity engaging in market practice will emerge as an actor mutually with that practice and thus be an actor at that specific point in space and time (Andersson et al. 2008). Viewing markets as constituted by practice is to acknowledge them as *"temporally emergent"* (Andersson et al. 2008:69). This must extend to discussions of agency with the implication that what constitutes agents is spatially and temporally specific, simply because market practices are.

While more specific vocabularies and investigations exist(Andersson et al. 2008; Hagberg and Kjellberg 2010), it is sufficient to use the term actor to include human individuals, collectives and non-human entities.

2.6 Model of Markets as Constituted by Practice

Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006; 2007) present a heuristic model (Figure 1) to explain how markets are constructed and enacted through three types of market practice: exchange practice, representational practices and normalizing practices. This model provide two things, first it offers a way to conceptualize markets with emphasis on practice. Secondly, it provides a way to categorize market activities and empirical investigations of market practice in concrete markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007).

Exchange practices refer to the concrete activities related to consummating specific economic exchange but also activities facilitating or contributing to exchange (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). This category includes activities related to specifying details and terms of economic exchanges, such as negotiations related to price, product or service specifications along with the actual consummation of deals (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). In the case of content marketing, exchange practices include those activities that are involved in firms' content marketing efforts, such as the production and distribution of editorial content for a magazine, podcasts, and videos.

Representational practices denote activities that contribute or consist of efforts to portray markets or how they work (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). They result in images depicting the market or some part of it and are necessary in order to concretize markets, which in essence are abstract entities. Representational practices can be thought of as actors' sense-making efforts by concretizing or conceptualizing markets in order to be able to speak about and understand them. Examples include efforts to analyze an industry, information used in strategizing market action, segmentation and categorization of market actors. It can also be the formulation of a definition or explanation of the term content marketing. Another example are the statistics about firms' content marketing spending mentioned in the introduction chapter.

Finally, Normalizing practices represent activities that affect, or are intended to affect, the construction and establishment of norms and guiding principles in markets and how these should be shaped or reshaped (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). In this category one can find market reforms, regulation and rules regarding different aspects of market activity, but also

voluntary standards. Additionally, the use of normative models and conceptualizations and activities of strategic planning also belong in this category (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). While a definition of content marketing is in itself a depiction of a certain set of practices, making its formulation a representational practice. The utilization of a definition however, or efforts to spread it are normalizing practices as they instead seek to affect established or emerging norms and/or formulate normative objectives for actors.

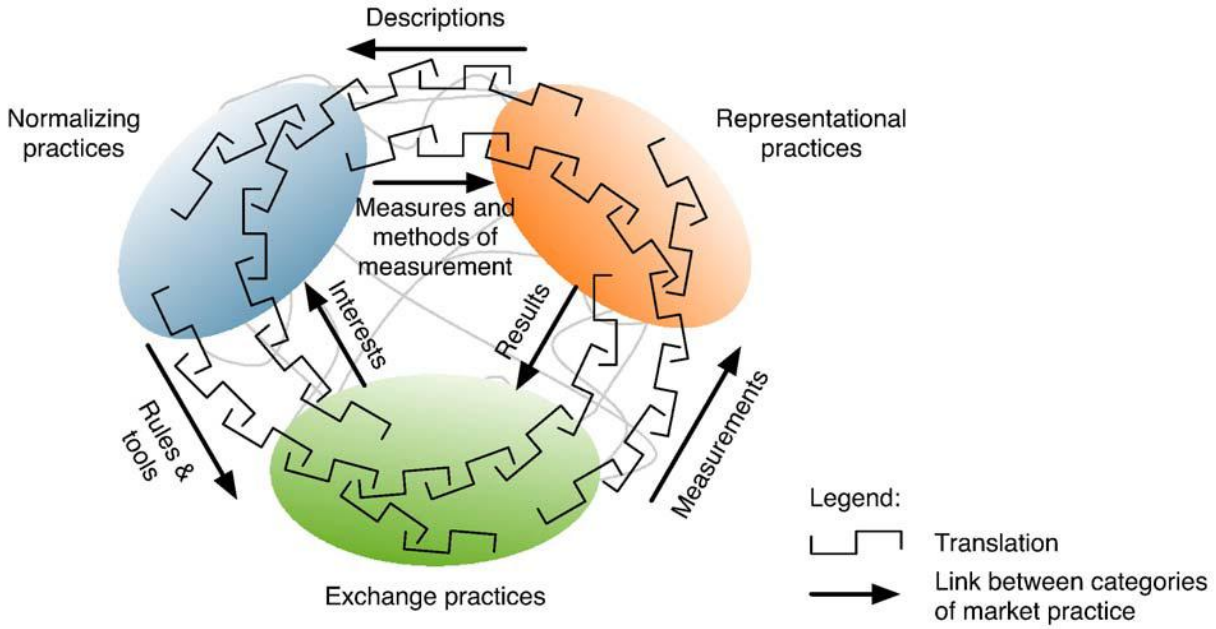

Figure 1. A practice based model of markets. adopted from Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006:843

Practices within and between the three categories are conceptualized to be connected by sets of translations. These play a central role in this view of markets and merit a short elaboration. What Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007) refer to as translations is close to the meaning given to the term in actor-network-theory (cf. Latour 1986; Callon 1986). In short, it is the social process of spreading something through time and space between actors, things but also theories and ideas (Latour 1987; Latour 2005:107-8). It is thus a displacement but also a processes of transformation (Callon 1986:18), the actor that 'picks up', to borrow the words of Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006), what is being spread, is a contributor to its existence as it is inevitably transformed or altered in some more or less significant way. This also indicates that the 'picking up' is a requirement for the process to occur (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006) and that translation has a central role in constructing and contributing to what is being spread (Osborne & Rose 1999; Latour 2005:247).

Returning to the adoption of the model, markets, which are defined as "*on-going socio-material enactments that organize economized exchanges*" (Nenonen et al. 2013:3), are continuously emerging and is constantly being shaped by the interactions and translations within and between the three broad categories of practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006; 2007). This entails that practices performed by actors are likely to intersect and to potentially affect each other in significant ways (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007).

Representational practices affect exchange practices by providing results of what the market is and looks like (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). The results take the shape of images, definitions and simplifications, which represents exchanges and actors within the market. In a similar way, representational practices also influence normalizing practice through descriptions (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). The description provided by representational practices functions as a starting point to develop norms and normative objectives. The description is consequently used to establish guidelines of how and how not to use, the provided information.

The implications is in turn shared with the exchange practice as rules and tools (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). The practitioners within the exchange practices use these rules and tools as guidelines of how to execute certain tasks. Normalizing practices also directly affect representational practices by enabling them to reach results and conclusions, by outlining what to measure as well as methods of measurement (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007).

The norms, guidelines, rules and tools that are created as normalizing practices are not merely influenced by the images supplied through representational practices but also by the interest shown through exchange practices. Some suggested rules might be met with much resistance or support from actors within exchange practices. This interest can and does shape the outcome of the created norms and rules, equally as much as the images and descriptions provided through the representational practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). Exchange practices also influence representational practices by providing variables to measure (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). The re-presentation of the market that representational practices supply is based on data, collected from exchange practices, which are transformed into more comprehensive figures, tables, images etc.

How each practice influences the next, both in direct and in-direct ways, demonstrates how the market is constructed through a continuous process. Process of translations connect

differing practices and thus significantly contributes to both the construction and the foundation of markets. Therefore, it is the process rather than the end result that best explain what a market consists of (Latour 1986:29).

2.7 Summing up

The practice-based approach that is central to this investigation serves as an underlying principle throughout this thesis. In viewing markets as constantly emerging, (Andersson et al. 2008) it is possible to investigate how markets actors' practical enactments and utilization of theory and ideas together form and shape content marketing. When discussing the role of performativity it is inevitable to encounter multiple, sometimes contradicting, efforts (Callon 1998). Consequently, markets are as a rule built up by several enactments (Araujo et al. 2010) and Kjellberg and Helgesson's (2007) heuristic model offers a way to conceptualize the market, categorize activities and empirical investigations while incorporating these central notions.

3. Method Chapter

Examining content marketing and the ideas that shape it from a practice based perspective entails a focus of empirical investigations centered around on practice. The methodological chapter outlines the choices and considerations made in our investigation of the practices that constitutes the market of content marketing.

Although the main interest is closely tied to what the concept means and encapsulates at the present, it is necessary to give attention both to the recent emergence of the concept as well as where it stands at the time of writing. The latter as it directly relates to the purpose of the study and the former as it is arguably needed to make any informed inferences about the practices that constitute content marketing. The study thus draws on empirical material relating both to recent and current practice.

3.1 Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

All research is conducted based on some foundational assumptions (Mir and Watson 2001; Bryman and Bell 2011:23,26). Clarity, consistency and facilitating critical scrutiny are commonly held as arguments for the explicitness of such assumptions and adoption of perspectives in business studies although many view their implicit presence as sufficient (Bryman and Bell 2011:20,23,28). A stance is adopted where explicit mention of basic assumptions is considered to be appropriate if constructive and useful to the presentation of the study and inquiry in itself.

As Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) points out, investigation and inquiry into markets as enacted by practice inevitably involves some important philosophical aspects of science. This necessitates some remarks concerning the ontological and epistemological stance adopted. This thesis make use of the more elaborate considerations and implications of Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) and summarize this philosophical stance as practical constructivism; a relativist ontology and realist epistemology (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006; Andersson et al. 2008).

This entails an ontological position where emphasize is put on the emergent nature of reality. No principal assumptions of whether social reality is exclusively existing, independent of human perception or entirely constructed and having no independent existence are made (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006). Social reality is viewed to be constantly constructed, through enactment and realization by and between entities, both human and non-human. This also

entails accepting the possible existence of differing, overlapping and sometimes contradicting parts of social reality.

From this ontological position, epistemological concerns become less central. It avoids assumptions regarding the existence of a single reality as it enables recognizing multiple practices enacting multiple realities. Thus making evaluating the validity of different knowledge claims on a single reality less of a concern (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006; Andersson et al. 2008). This mindset enable a focus on how the world is made and enacted rather than directing attention on how to make sense of it (Andersson et al. 2008).

These considerations have the implication that it is possible to incorporate, conceptualize and meaningfully synthesize multiple and possibly contradicting practical enactments of content marketing, i.e. different types of practice. But also multiple and possibly contradicting performative ideas, i.e. actors definitions, descriptions and normative formulations of content marketing in a very concrete sense.

3.2 Research Approach

Concerning the relationship between theory and research, the current study includes aspects related to both inductive and deductive stances. A deductive stance is commonly associated with testing of existing theory and propositions by the use of hypotheses (Bryman and Bell 2011:11-12; Cooper and Schindler 2011:73; Zikmund et al. 2012:43). Neither hypothesis testing nor evaluation of theory is the main goal of this study, at most it is possible to argue for an implicit evaluation of theory albeit without clear aim for revision. Although elements of a deductive approach are present in the sense that a starting point exists in the theoretical perspectives of markets as constituted by practice. There are also elements of an inductive approach, commonly associated with constructing generalizable inferences, i.e. theory, from observations (Bryman and Bell 2011:13; Cooper and Schindler 2011:73; Zikmund et al. 2012:44). Most notably because what is investigated, content marketing, lacks firm conceptual underpinnings in theory. An investigation into its constituting practices would result in something reminiscent of theory building; as frames are constructed around the concept. Subscribing to the view held by Bryman and Bell (2011:14) of inductive and deductive approaches as tendencies or leanings rather than clear-cut routes and conclude that the approach employed has an inductive leaning, although with less emphasis on theory generation than a polarized definition of induction might suggest.

Furthermore, the study adopts a qualitative approach, in line with the constructivist perspective and inductive leaning (Bryman and Bell 2011:27). Its' appropriateness is based primarily on the interest in market practices, where a quantitative approach would prove problematic as: (1) few if any assumptions are made concerning structure among practitioners and other agents or their nature and (2) because it is not possible to ex-ante define content marketing whereby defining any population of practitioners other than in abstract or conceptual form becomes difficult. Quantitative efforts are significantly less applicable as a main approach because of this.

3.3 Sources of Data

The study draws on secondary as well as primary sources of data, the remainder of the method chapter provides an overview of the considerations made in relation to these two types of data.

3.3.1 Secondary Data Sources

A central question regarding secondary data relates to which point in time data should be collected. This question comes down to whether interest lies in a general phenomena, a type of practice, which with contemporary definitions can be viewed as content marketing, including both historical and recent practices, regardless of how these were framed at the time. The alternative is an interest in practice in conjunction with the emergence of the concept and terminology and the performative roles these play.

It is more fruitful to incorporate the terminology as well as its corresponding practices as it too may play a central part in the multiple performative processes and practices that constitute it. Understanding the importance of the term itself, by focusing exclusively on phenomena compatible with a certain definition would deemphasize the role of the term in shaping representational and/or normalizing practices and weaken our ability to make sense of what constitutes content marketing. In short, no assumptions that exclude the possibility of the concept being part of the phenomena are made. Rather, this is expected and a starting point for data collection should then coincide with the temporal emergence of the term.

Media Archival Data

The term content marketing is commonly credited to have been coined by Joe Pulizzi (also founder of Content Marketing Institute[2]) around 2001, however it would take several years for the term to incrementally become established and recognized in Sweden. To map this process,

[2]From here on CMI

a media archival search was conducted extending back to 2005. This was the first year an article with content marketing as a subject matter was published in the trade media examined (more on choice of media sources below). While older articles include 'content' in their subject matters, these concern a wide range of topics unrelated to content marketing.

The data-sourcing program Retriever was used to overview and find media articles, which included articles both in print and online. Retriever is a provider of media coverage analysis and editorial research in the Nordic region and provides information from magazines, newspapers, radio, TV, web and social media (Retriever, 2014).

An initial search among Swedish news media articles resulted in 69 320 hits containing the word content. A similar search using the search words content marketing resulted in 554 hits. To avoid excluding articles concerning closely related terms and possible subcategories to content marketing[3], the sources with the highest number of hits from both searches were included in the first list of media sources. Those selected through this process were Resume, Dagens Media, Affärsvärlden, My Newsdesk, Cisionwire, Presskontakt and Webfinaner.

MyNewsdesk, Presskontakt and Cisionwire are all platforms for press releases. The material from these sources were to a large extent similar versions of the same material, i.e. the same press release. Webfinanser does not produce their own material but rather publish material and press releases from other media sources and was for this reason excluded from further searches as those articles do to a large extent appear in other data sources as well. Additionally, Affärsvärlden was also excluded from further searches as the 13 articles of the originally 4378 included that could be linked to content marketing were all parts of annual reports or press releases rather than media articles.

For the second search of Resume and Dagens Media articles, two leading trade magazines for media and marketing (Orvesto Konsument 2013: Helår, 2014), was also expanded to using 'content' as search word. Again, due to the multiple meanings and use of the word content, many articles included the word without necessarily being related to content marketing. One example of this is content management, referring to management of information. This search resulted in 492 articles that were subsequently read and categorized.

[3]While we had no definite list of such terms. The sometimes ambiguousness use and meaning of the term content marketing warranted that some effort was made to include closely related terms. We also wanted to include material related to content agencies, content strategy etc.

Categorization of Media Articles

The 492 articles from Resume and Dagens Media were placed into three broad categories depending on the content of the article. These categories were named: Informative, Awards and Firms and Deals. While going through the selected articles, we also found that in some articles the terms *Branded Content* and *Editorial Communication** was used as synonyms, compliments or instead of content marketing. To include all information about content marketing and gain an understanding of how the term emerged, a search was also made on these two words and the result was included in the findings.

The articles coded as Informative, included general information about content marketing, the development of the term, examples of content marketing activities as well as articles about branded content activities. Under the category of Awards, articles containing information about award nominations and winners, in a price category for content marketing or branded content, were placed. Finally, articles about specific firm activities, deals, recruitment or results were categorized under Firms and Deals. Table 1 shows the coding process and category requirements for the articles, as well as the percentage it made out of the total of 272 articles that concerned content marketing which were used for analysis.

Category	**Percentage**
Informative General information about content marketing, including activities, development, examples, guidelines and branded content activities.	33 %
Awards Information about nominations and winners of awards in a price category for content marketing or branded content	30 %
Firms and Deals News about content agencies, their development, recruitments, business, deals, activities and/or results.	37 %

Figure 2 Categorization of Media articles

Industry Produced Texts and Media

Industry produced text make up a significant part of the available written material on content marketing. While many sources offering such texts exist, two texts were selected for analysis. The first is the book *Epic Content Marketing- How to Tell a Different Story, Break through the Clutter, and Win More Customers by Marketing Less* by Joe Pulizzi (2014). This volume

uses much the same material, including statistics and models that is offered by the CMI and can in essence be regarded as more elaborate, printed version. This choice is also warranted as those statistics are to our knowledge the most cited and used among practitioners. The second text is the book *Content Marketing - värdeskapande marknadskommunikation",* by Thomas Barregren and Pia Tegborg (2013), this was selected due to being the first and at the time of writing only published Swedish book on the subject.[4] In addition to this a Facebook forum for Swedish actors within the content marketing industry was monitored. This lead to the inclusion of a discussion concerning the content marketing term and definition.

3.3.2 Primary Data Sources

The aim with the collection of primary data was to examine practitioners and activities likely to significantly influence the on-going formation of the content marketing concept and constituent practices. With reference to Kjellberg and Helgesson's (2006) heuristic model, this entailed attempting to examine practitioners and practices that incorporate production of representations of content marketing, efforts of normalization in addition to more concrete exchange activities related to content marketing. This also entails that it must be possible to regard practitioners and/or groups of practitioners as content marketing actors and not actors of some other type. As previously mentioned, agency in our view is dependent on recognition by significant other(s) and closely tied to practice. Simply put, an actor is regarded a content marketing actor if (1) it engages in content marketing practices and (2) is acknowledged as a content marketing actor by someone else.

To represent the recognition criteria, mentioning in media articles and industry awards was primarily used but also membership in the industry organization Swedish Content Agencies was taken into account. To incorporate the link to practice, only actors who communicate engagement in content marketing practices were selected. This allowed avoidance of a priori categorization of actors.

Selection Process

The selection of actors entailed a non-random purposive sampling process (Potter 1996:107; Bryman and Bell 2011:442) grounded in the media archival search. Here content agencies were significantly overrepresented as professionals engaging in content marketing activities. These were also of particular interest as they were typically engaged in all three categories of

[4]Although whitepapers, blogs and other such material exists. As a rule initiated and distributed by agencies and other professionals.

market practices, thereby constituting a significantly rich source of data and likely to play a central role in shaping the market.

Certain content agencies were mentioned more frequently than others in the archival search. This provided a preliminary indication of the degrees of centrality these firms held in the sense of content marketing practitioners. Agencies of varying size and number of hits form the archival search was deliberately chosen to ensure richness of data. While the selection of larger agencies was based primarily on number of hits in the archival search and the content of these media articles, the smaller agencies were selected by examining which firms had recently been awarded industry awards.

Sampling was continued until additional data did not yield new significant insights concerning the practices these actors engage in. While the saturation concept in qualitative research is contested (c.f. Morse 1994; Dey 1999; Bowen 2008) we maintain that the sample used provides a reasonable degree of saturation (e.g. Strauss and Corbin 1998:136)

In addition to content agencies, the trade organization Swedish Content Agencies was included with reference to its role as a trade organization. The trade organization is also initiator for the industry award Guldbladet. The award consists of 17 categories, which encompass various content marketing activities. Most of the categories are channel specific, however some categories, such as best content solution, cuts through multiple channels. At the webpage, all categories as well as the evaluation criteria for each category, are presented (Guldbladet 2014). Additionally, Thomas Barregren and Pia Tegborg at KNTNT and Per Torberger at One Man Show was also selected. While not content agencies, Barregren and Torberger were identified as active initiators and participants of online discussions among practitioners engaged in content marketing as well in hosting and participate as talkers in content marketing events. KNTNT and One Man show thus meet our requirement for agency. Resulting in a total sample of 11 actors and 13 respondents.

Company/Agency	Nameof respondent/s	Example of clients	Example of content marketing cases	Hits in archivalsearch
Appelberg	Maria Westman	Scania, Microsoft and SKF	• Atlas Copco's customer magazine *Achieve.* • Web-TV, short videos for Skoda.	67
Chiffer	Peter Söderberg	MTG Media, BMW Sweden and Hemnet	• Granngårdens company blog and customer magazine *Grannliv* • Part of the development and producing of MTG/Metros app *Klipster*	14
JG Communication	Pontus Staunstrup	Assa Abloy, KPMG and Ericsson	• Restructuring Vattenfalls intranet • Developing and producing Online Videos for Assa Abloy	26
KNTNT	Thomas Barregren & Pia Tegborg	Jaktia, Holistic	• Content Meetup 2014 • Content marketing strategy for Jaktia	2
Make Your Mark	Anders Ingårda	Focus on retail industry, such as Åhlens City and Kappahl	• Kappahls customer magazine • Lagerhouse customer magazine *Happy*	17
Newsroom	Leif Simonsson & Gun Rosendahl	Bilia, Liseberg and the Swedish Church	• Staff magazine for employees within geriatric care in Gothenburg.	3
OTW	Anders Rask	ICA, Barncancerfonden and H&M	• ICA's customer magazine *Buffe* • Hockey-app for TV4	121
One Man Show	Per Torberger	7-eleven, Forsman & Bodenfors and Puustelli	• Web and Social Media for Puustelli Miinus • Staff magazine 7-eleven	0
Redaktörerna	Lars Ragnå	Uppsala University, Nelly and Swedbank	• Staff magazine for employees at Uppsala University called *Universen* • Swedbanks digital newsletter to customers	31
Spoon	Björn Owen Johansson	Sats, if and Posten	• Ving's travel magazine for Ipads • Online videos for Volvo Trucks	231
Swedish ContentAgencies	Elisabeth Thörnsten	Trade organization for content agencies	Arrange the annual award for practitioners working with content marketing *Guldbaldet*	40

Figure 3. List of primary data sources, name of respondent, example of cases and clients and amount of hits in the media archival search in Resume and Dagens Media from January 2005- April 2014

Data Collection - Semi-structured Interviews

Data collection from these actors was made through semi-structured face-to-face interviewing. This allowed us to gain in-depth and complex information with a low risk of respondent misinterpretation or skipping of questions (Bryman and Bell 2011:467; Zikmund et al. 2013:149). A semi-structured approach was chosen over un-structured in order to better ensure consistency between interviews while still maintaining contextual flexibility.

Interviews were carried out with an effort to follow Kvale's (1996:148-49) and Bryman and Bell's (2011:476) criteria for the interviewer. Additionally, a multiple interviewer approach was taken where both authors were present at interviews to allow for more careful observation and better coverage of topics and relevant follow-up questions (Bechhofer et al. 1984). Interviews lasted between 45 to 70 minutes. As a complement to the interviews, data was also collected from the chosen actors' web pages to access formal definitions, examine what type of material actors made available and how this was presented.

Interview Guide

As a data collection instrument, the interview guide had to both take into account our practice perspective to markets and additionally be able to include the context of content marketing To our knowledge there does not exist any previous qualitative measures that appropriately met these requirements.

The semi-structured interview were based on a set of questions that aimed to achieve insights in the three practices, representational, normalizing and exchange, brought forward in Kjellberg & Helgesson (2007) model. The interview guide was developed following criteria for preparation offered by Bryman and Bell (2011:475-6).

Although, creating questions that categorically that relate to only one of the three practices is difficult. Both because of the complexity and variety of forms practices can take but also because of the interconnectedness of the three types of practices. In some cases, answers provided were better indicators of categorization than wording of questions. For example question 8 (Figure 4), which depending on the direction of the answer may provide insights about representational and/or normalizing practices. This was somewhat expected and does not constitute an issue of validity, rather, this leeway is preferable in order to gain insights into the types of activities actors engage in.

An attempt to categories the questions used were nevertheless made. Questions regarding concrete work activities, actions and perceptions of the spread of content marketing were used

to gain insight into exchange practices. Questions concerning the image and/or self-image of agencies, the term, industry or the use of such images were used for representational practice. Finally, questions regarding benefits, usefulness, general applicability and best practice were similarly used to capture normalizing practices. An overview of this is offered below.

All interviews were conducted in Swedish. Transcripts were back-translated using Brislin's (1970; 1980) model for translation. Translation into English and back to Swedish was done by both researchers respectively.

Background and Uncategorized Questions	• 1.What is your role at _____ ? • 2.How long have you worked at _____? • 3.Tell us a little about you background, what have you done previously? • 19. Where do you think the term content marketing is heading? Will we see more or less of it?
Exchange Practices	• 11.When did you first hear about content marketing? • 12.When did you start working with content marketing at _____ ? a)Why did you start working with content marketing? • 13.How do you/in which way do you work with content marketing? • 16.How do you perceive the development and spread of the term over time? When did it start becoming common? a) When did become more common? b) Why at this time?
Representational Practices	• 4. You are a Content agency[5], what does that mean? Has _____ always been a Content agency? if not, what did you do prior to that and what did you call yourselves/the firm? • 5.In what industry would you say you are situated in? • 6.What would you say Content Marketing is about? • Does it differ from how other actors use the term? • 7.Do you at _____ have a pronounced description or definition of Content Marketing? Is it explicit internally? • 8.The definition, or image you have of what Content Marketing is, where does it come from? Is it your own or are you inspired by someone else?6 a) How did you arrive at that definition? b) Why from that source? • 17.Do you sometimes have to explain or educate customers or others of what Content Marketing is?[7]
Normalizing Practices	• 9. Is a common description or definition of content market needed among practitioners? • 10. Does such a definition exist? a) problematic or constructive with several definitions? • 14. What are the advantages with content marketing in relation to traditional marketing? • 15. Is content marketing for everyone? a) are there industries, products, types of businesses where it works better or worse?

Figure 4 Interview questions and corresponding theoretical category. Numbers preceding each question indicate the default order during interviews.

[5]Or other type of organization, trade organization etc.
[6]Two follow up questions were used depending on direction of answer. Although b) is categorized as Normalizing practice, we present it together with the main question for clarity.
[7]Depending on the direction of answers, this could be categorized either as representational or normalizing practices.

4. Empirical Chapter

The following sections present central aspects of the empirical investigation. It begins by offering an overview of the emergence and use of the term in Sweden, followed by central aspects regarding the terms constituent practices, essential ideas and sources of agreement and disagreement in the market.

4.1 The Emergence of Content Marketing in Sweden

The results from the media archival search show a clear increase in the number of media articles related to content marketing in 2012 and even more so during 2013 and the first quarter of 2014. A similar picture also emerged during the interviews. Most state 2012 as the year agencies and other actors began using the term in earnest and early 2013 as the starting point for its steep increase in popularity. The reasons given for this apparent surge in popularity vary. On a general level, Chiffer, JG Communication, OTW, Redaktörerna, Spoon, Appelberg and Swedish Content Agencies all regarded content marketing's increased popularity as a reaction to customers' ad fatigue.

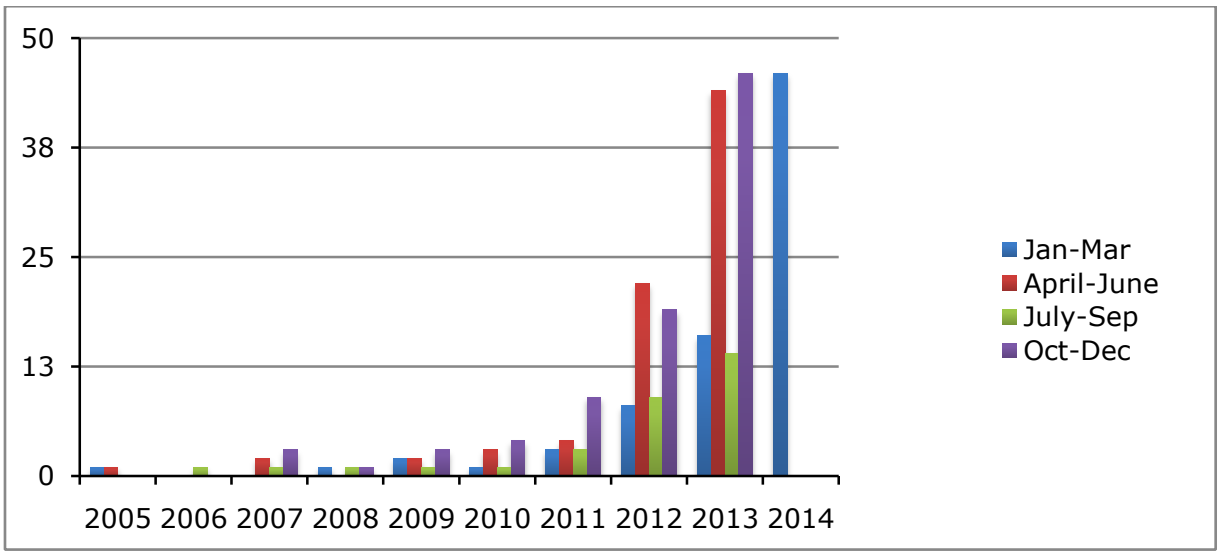

Figure 5 Chart indicating number of hits in media archival search or Resume and Dagens Media by year and quarter from January 2005 to April 2014

There is wide agreement among the respondents that content marketing as a term was introduced much later in Sweden compared to the USA or the UK. Examining search statistics from Google Trends corroborate this view.

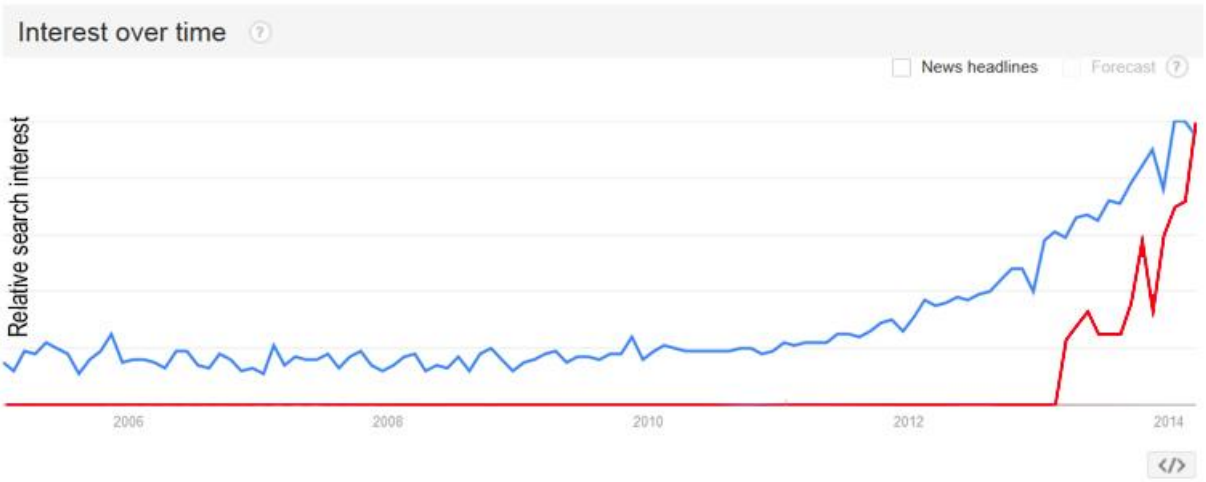

Figure 6 Chart generated through Google Trends using search word 'content marketing'. Blue line represents worldwide search, red line represents Swedish search interest relative to the highest point in the chart which shows the highest interest to date. (Google Trend 2014a; Google Trend 2014b).

OTW and Redaktörerna both acknowledge trade media to have a role in spreading and increasing knowledge of content marketing, thereby popularizing its use. The name change of the trade organization to Swedish Content Agencies in 2012 coincided with the increasing use of the term in trade media and practitioners. The agencies Make Your Mark and Chiffer saw this as the starting point for its wider use and there is also some sentiment that this name change has played a role in anchoring the term in Sweden.

Two of the respondents, Rask at OTW and Barregren at KNTNT, both with professional backgrounds within Web-agencies and IT respectively, also mentioned that technological developments have facilitated firms production and distribution of content in their own channels. Making it easier for companies to be their own publisher. Another aspect mentioned was the increased focus and investments by multinationals such as the Coca-Cola Company and Red Bull in content marketing efforts.

"Coca-Cola says that they won't make any commercials by 2020. This have had a major impact on the marketing industry. Everyone reacts and thinks - if Coca-Cola is going to stop with commercials, what will they do? and then you become interested and want to find out more" -B.O. Johansson, Spoon 2014.

But there are also actors to take a more questioning stance toward the term while still maintaining the reasonableness and value of the practices behind it.

"Trends come and go. Today, everything fluctuates really quickly, an expression like this pop up and then everything is supposed to be content marketing"- L. Simonsson, Newsroom 2014.

4.1.2 Acceptance the Term

Content agencies generally have their roots in custom publishing, which historically has had a close connection to the development and production of trade and customer magazines. Agencies have seen their practices develop along with technological advancements, changing media habits and consumption. In particular, this has entailed an incremental rise of new and often digital channels in addition to a stronger focus on strategic planning needed from the advertiser of marketer to manage this change. Despite the consensus about this change, views vary of to what extent the agencies are carrying on, doing largely the same as before, only now calling it something else; content marketing.

None of the agencies explicitly called themselves content agencies a few years ago and rather utilized terms like communication, editorial communication or custom publishing agencies. The name change of the trade organization from Swedish Custom Publishers[8] to Swedish Content Agencies passed after a vote among the agencies and coincided, as pointed out, with a general increase in use of the term. The name change of the trade organization was according to Elisabeth Thörnsten, CEO at Swedish Content Agencies, made to highlight the fact that the editorial communication agencies increasingly worked with much more than custom publishing and magazines.

This relatively new label has forced different responses. While some actors such as Redaktörerna, Newsroom and Appelberg expressed some ambivalence towards the term, others such as Spoon, OTW and JG Communication embraced it with open arms. Johansson at Spoon also suggest that it could have been problematic if the Swedish content agencies did not embrace the term, since most of their clients read American marketing blogs and might have been confused by differing terms. Furthermore, most agencies thought the new definition of their practices was beneficial due to the increased interest in content marketing and since it is perceived to attribute them a degree of credibility.

"Defining ourselves as a content agency made it easier to explain the role we could play to our customers. They know what an Advertisement agency do, or a PR agency, but what could we do for them? When we started talking to them about the importance of creating the right

[8] Loosely translated from Sveriges Uppdragspublicister

content for their own channels they could see the value of it" -P. Staunstrup, JG Communication 2014.

The differing opinions on the name change of Swedish Content Agencies also included differences in how the actors relate to the term. Swedish Content Agencies explained that some agencies readily adopted content marketing as a defining term while others were not as comfortable and more reluctantly, if at all incorporated the term in their vocabulary and market communication. In practice, this meant that some actively make use of the term in how they describe what they do, who they are and incorporate it in sales pitches and marketing efforts. While others rather emphasize terms like editorial communication or valuable content and do not actively use the term content marketing. Typically these agencies do not distance themselves from the term either, but it is not always central or even explicit in communication with customers and other stakeholders.

Interestingly, there is also some disagreement on the validity of using the terms content marketing and editorial communication interchangeably.

"There has been an incredible amount of terms describing editorial communication. I actually think that content marketing, or editorial communication which it was previously called, pretty much is two expressions of the same thing" - M. Westman, Appelberg 2014.

Others actors such as Redaktörerna and Chiffer view editorial communication to be a predecessor to content marketing. A third term, branded content was also frequently occurring in the media archival search in content marketing contexts, although less so during the interviews. The use of the terms branded content, editorial communication and in particular content marketing in the two chosen media, Dagens Media and Resume, have all increased in the last few years. This also mirrors the ambiguity concerning the relation between the terms content marketing and editorial communication.

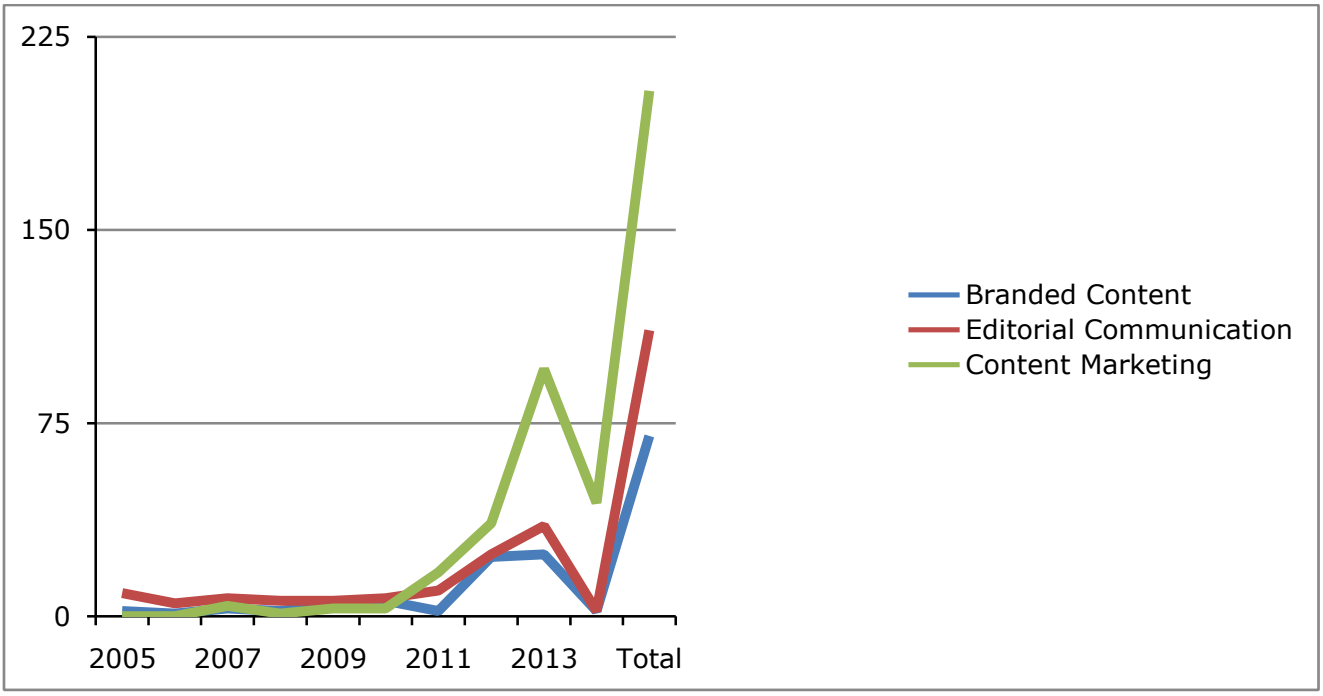

Figure 7 Chart indicating number of search hits for branded content, editorial communication and content marketing respectively in Resume and Dagens Media during 2005-2014.

4.1.3 Spread of the Term

The adoption and incorporation of the content marketing term were among some agencies partially a reaction to customers' emerging interest, who increasingly began to ask and talk about content marketing. Rask at OTW mentions that during the spring 2014, briefs that they have been given actually requests a content strategy or a content partner. A year ago customers were not using these terms he tells us, but rather asked about producing a webpage or to create a magazine.

Respondents also reported increasing levels of awareness and general knowledge about content marketing among customer firms, having gained momentum in particular during 2013. The level of knowledge varies greatly between customer firms however, there is often a need to explain and educate to some degree.

”Two years ago, very few talked about content [editorial]. But now at least they [customers] have heard about it” - P. Söderberg, Chiffer 2014.

Even though many relations with customers involve some explaining, two respondents mention that the increased awareness of the term has made it far easier to get the opportunity to book a meeting where the agencies could explain more about the concept. Staunstrup at JG Communication mentioned how educating others about content marketing is a part of content marketing itself and is a way for them to ”*practice what they preach”*. Apart from talking

about the concept of content marketing during client meetings, they also hold lectures about content marketing and provide white papers and case documents of best practice on their website. Several of the other actors also spread information about content marketing. Examples of this are Spoon that has released several videos as well as both digital and printed information about the term or KNTNT, Torberger and Swedish Content Agenices, who all arrange content marketing events and seminars.

Ragnå at Redaktörerna suggest that some of their customers have clear conceptions of what content marketing is. He elaborates by explaining that a description of the term to their clients is seen more as a way to find common ground, because their definition may not necessarily be better than their clients. Whereas others see a greater need to educate, much due to differing views of what content marketing is or is not.

"They think they know, I claim they don't know, then I get to explain why" - T. Barregren, KNTNT 2014.

4.2 What is Content Marketing

During the interviews and conversations with market practitioners, it is clear that Joe Pulizzi is held to be the one to coin the term content marketing and is regarded instrumental in its development. Several of the Swedish actors refer and relate to Joe Pulizzi, and the CMI almost by default when describing what content marketing is. Pulizzi's (2014) formal definition therefore serves as a logical starting point when presenting how practitioners view content marketing.

"*Content marketing is a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience –with the objective of driving profitable customer action*." (Pulizzi 2014:5)

Additionally, several market practitioners have referred to four criteria, which are commonly presented in combination with the definition above.

"*Content marketing's purpose is to attract and retain customers by consistently* ***creating and curating relevant and valuable content*** *with the* ***intention of changing or enhancing consumer behavior***. *It is an* ***ongoing process*** *that is best integrated into your overall marketing strategy, and it focuses on* ***owning media****, not renting it"*(Content Marketing Institute 2014, emphasis in original).

4.2.1 Practitioners Descriptions and Definitions

All interviewees were asked to describe what they perceive content marketing to be, highlighting differences in terms of definitions but also their use and general attitudes about how the market have adopted and use the term.

Thomas Barregren, co-founder and CEO of KNTNT perhaps best epitomize one end of the spectrum. Here, utilization of what is perceived as the most common and established definition, the one offered by CMI and Pulizzi (2014), is almost self evident. Barregren argues that there is no point having a term that is so broad that it becomes all encompassing and that the point of a term is rather to explain something specific. He adds that he finds Pulizzi's definition lacking in itself and instead prefers to use an adaptation of Pulizzi's (2014) and CMI's four principles mentioned above. Adaptations of these criteria are also presented in more detail in Barregren and Tegborg (2013) as well as in a debate article in Resume (Barregren 2014). Where the author highlight how these criteria must be fulfilled in order for something to be considered content marketing.

The adoption of a definition on the grounds that it is the most common or established is not shared among all actors. On the other side of the spectrum exist broader descriptions and more liberal views of definitions and their use. Torberger at One Man Show and Staunstrup at JG Communication put more emphasis on aspects of usefulness, relevance and perceived value of the content rather than clear-cut criteria. Others regard a definition as a useful start, but point out that there are many exceptions where a clear-cut definition fits less well.

"It is not incredibly important that when you have put up that fence, you keep inside of it. The important thing is that you do things that work, which makes a difference for the customer. But we believe quite a bit in the American CMI's definition. To the extent there is a definition, that's the one most start with." - L. Ragnå, Redaktörerna 2014.

Staunstrup at JG Communication also experience ambiguity when it comes to content marketing in relation to other terms. Contending that others call it Inbound Marketing or Permission Marketing[9] and that distinctions are sometimes hard to make. Others regard a definition as a useful start, but point out that there are many exceptions where a clear cut definition fits less well.

[9] The term was popularize by Seth Godin. It builds on the idea of only providing marketing messages to the people that have permitted it. Permission marketing is the privilege (not the right) of delivering anticipated, personal and relevant messages to people who actually want to get them (Seth Godin 2008).

Both the trade organization Swedish Content Agencies and Spoon provided clear descriptions of what they regard as content marketing. In our discussions, it becomes clear that these description are somewhat plastic. Swedish Content Agencies state that their definition, while satisfied with it, might not be final and a subject for potential revision. Spoon in turn, distributes a printed or digital pamphlet called "Spoons guide to content marketing", which contains a definition that differ from the description provided during the interview. This is pointed out by Johansson himself, who also authored the text. There is an evident transition from a more detailed and as a result more narrow definition in the pamphlet to one which is intentionally broader.

"*For a long time we said for example that content marketing could only be in owned channels. And that's what we thought. ... So we have simply revised our definition."*- B.O. Johansson, Spoon 2014.

However, the core, both Swedish Content Agencies and Spoon contends, remains the same. Johansson at Spoon concludes that he believes the definition will continue to change, although the ”*intention of editorial material that provide value for the receiver”* will always stay the same, or else it would not be content marketing anymore.

It is clear that there are both consistencies and inconsistencies among market practitioners concerning the terminology and what it contains. Consistencies in terms of some common denominators used to describe the core of what the term encompasses, and inconsistencies regarding its outer boundaries, what activities to include and where, if at all, a line in the sand should be drawn.

4.2.2 The Role of Channels

Whether communication channels should be an explicit part of descriptions and definitions of content marketing is an apparent source of disagreement. Among the Swedish actors are again Barregren and KNTNT at one end, drawing heavily on the work of Pulizzi and CMI, arguing that content marketing should be communicated only in owned and not paid media channels. This debate can be seen on the Swedish Content Marketing Forum on Facebook, where there is a long discussion about whether or not native advertisement could be considered content marketing. Barregren argues that native advertisement does not fulfill all four criteria and is consequently not content marketing. Torberger on the other hand, does not believe that content marketing is channel dependent. He states that the communication defines the channel

and not the other way around. Torberger continues by pointing out that CMI's definition ” (...) *focuses on owning media, not renting it*.” and suggests that Barregren's translation reduced some of the flexibility of that sentence. ”*Firstly, CMI is not the truth. Secondly, ”focus on” is not the same as exclusionary.”*(Per Torberger, Facebook 2014). This statement was met by an explanation *”Focus is on owned media, before earned media and not at all at paid media.”*(Thomas Barregren, Facebook 2014). However, Barregren acknowledges that within the industry, the question of whether owned media channels should be a defining characteristic of content marketing is a contested one and that it is sometimes hard to distinguish between paid and owned media. All respondents agree that content marketing is mainly in owned channels and discussions about what is and is not owned channels where brought up during a few of the interviews.

"Content is mainly important in owned channels. So that's where we do most of our business. Of course, there are grey areas. Where does owned media end and paid media begin?. You can push something on Facebook, but you don't own the channel and you can pay to have it promoted. There is no clear division.. We define ourselves as a content agency that works with our customers owned channels, including social media."- P. Staunstrup, JG Communication 2014.

Swedish Content Agencies’ formal definition also mentions channels, but not as a requirement, nor do they make any set distinction between owned or paid channels. Thörnsten suggest that it is impossible to talk about content marketing without mentioning channels, although the most important aspect is that the customer gets the communication that is suitable for them. Söderberg at Chiffer supports this view by emphasizing that rather than discussing owned or paid channels as a requirement for defining content marketing, the focus should be on utilizing the right channels and that this might result in using several channels, both owned and paid. After showing us a successful content marketing case from one of their customers, Söderberg concludes:

"*All these parts, the magazine, light [short version] magazine, Facebook, newsletter, [short] movies, Instagram, Twitter, blog, retail support, together form all the content*." - P. Söderberg, Chiffer 2014

Johansson at Spoon is also adopting multi-channel communication. While they have as a starting point used CMI's definition, he acknowledges that the inclusion of channels in

describing the concept is problematic. Ragnå at Redaktörerna express similar thoughts and expects to see more employment of multiple and different channels. Newsroom also hesitates to make owned channels a defining characteristic, contending that it limits what can be considered content marketing. Torberger at One Man Show offers a view that perhaps most starkly contrasts that of CMI and KNTNT. He primarily emphasizes the centrality of relevance and value of the content itself, but also the need to use appropriate means of communication. A similar notion is expressed by Westman at Appelberg who believes that the channel is important but it can be anything, depending on what best suits the target group.

"*Some say that it [content marketing] must use certain channels, your own and earned channels. I think that it's completely irrelevant, you can do it everywhere and every time. It's like saying, advertising can only be done in daily press, but not somewhere else. But why? I think it is silly*." - P. Torberger, One Man Show2014.

4.3 Sources of Inspiration

The interviewees were also asked to try to pinpoint significant sources, if they had any, regarding how they treated the term and the definition they used. An understandably difficult task where several interviewees had a hard time pinpointing specific sources. While others could readily provide us with sources. Swedish Content Agencies' definition is authored by several member agencies during efforts to create recommendations for cooperation agreements.

"... It became so obvious that we also needed to explain clearly what content marketing is. So it comes from that work." - E. Thörnsten, Swedish Content Agencies 2014

KNTNT and Barregren is, as mentioned previously, the primary advocate of CMI's definition but not the only actor to use it. Chiffer mentions Barregren's definition as their primary inspiration source for their own definition, which by proxy make CMI the original source here as well. Johansson at Spoon also credits Pulizzi for the term's origin but contend that Spoon has revisited and changed their definition over time, which is the case for other agencies as well such as OTW and Redaktörerna. Staunstrup at JG Communication, who developed their definition, state that several sources have been important during this process and explain its development as something of an interactional process.

"*I have come up with the working definition we use, but of course that was inspired by what others have said in the past like Kristina Halvarson and Joe Pulizzi. I read a lot and discuss content with a lot of people, both inside the agency and in the content community. What I write or talk about gets picked up by others, so in that sense I'm helping to shape the industry as well.*"- P. Staunstrup, JG Communication 2014

Those with implicit or broader definitions have a harder time pinpointing sources, for example, Ingårda at Make Your Mark, who have a more implicit definition, state no specific source and rather point to their own organic development of their definition.

See Figure 8 for a summary of all investigated actors definitions, both written and spoken, as well as source of inspiration.

Source	Spoken Definition	Written Definition on Website	Definition Inspired by
Swedish Content Agencies	Refers to their webpage	Content Marketing is communication that is relevant and interesting for the receiver. It builds on the principle that the content itself has a great value for the receiver. By putting the brand in an editorial environment and in a larger context the sender get the opportunity to build the brand and initiate or strengthen commercial relationships. The traditional channel for content marketing is customer magazines but now all kinds of media channels, both printed and digital are utilized.	Defined jointly with member agencies
KNTNT	Relevant and valuable content which is published in an owned channels as a continuous process with an intention of changing or enhancing consumer behavior.	Content marketing is a long lasting effort on systematic production and continuous distribution in owned channels of content that the target group finds relevant and valuable with the purpose of changing or enhancing consumer behavior.	CMI
Redaktörerna	Refers to CMI definition	No written definition	CMI
Spoon	Relevant, engaging and believable communication that are made on the receivers terms, which gives it an additional value with the purpose of building long-lasting relations and establish the picture of the brand as an expert within their field	Relevant, engaging and believable communication that are made on the receivers terms, which gives it an additional value with the purpose of building long-lasting relations and establish the picture of the brand as an expert within their field	CMI
Newsroom	Refers to Swedish Content Agencies definition	No written definition	Swedish ContentAgencies
Make Your Mark	Broad term that includes everything that has to do with the delivery of content.	No written definition	No specific inspiration
One man show	...creating valuable content for a clear target group with the purpose of increasing sales or influence the recipient in one way or another .	No written definition	No specific inspiration

JG Communication	Relevant, value-creating content that meets the target groups needs and eventually leads to achieving a set goal.	No written definition	Serveral sources of inspiration, such as CMI, Hubspot, Seth Godin, Kristina Halvarson etc.
Appelberg	A type of communication that uses content, a strong message as the main carrier and gives effect to the customer. Relevant message handling that reaches the set goals.	No written definition	No specific inspiration
Chiffer	Refers to CMI and Thomas Barregren's definition	No written definition	CMI, Thomas Barregren.
OTW	Creating and distributing content that our target group wants to take apart of.	No written definition	CMI
CMI		Content marketing is a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience –with the objective of driving profitable customer action. Content marketing's purpose is to attract and retain customers by consistently creating and curating relevant and valuable content with the intention of changing or enhancing consumer behavior. It is an ongoing process that is best integrated into your overall marketing strategy, and it focuses on owning media, not renting it	

Figure 8 Summary of actors' written and spoken definitions as well as stated sources of inspiration

Several of the respondents definitions varied slightly in their wording, however, the bottom message are overall similar. There are three main aspects that could be found in the majority of definitions, relevance, value and reaching a set goal[10]. Relevance, were used by the majority of the respondents in their definitions, except by One Man Show and Make Your Mark, where they all agreed that content marketing have to be relevant to the target group. Closely linked to this is the word value, which was also used in most of the actors definitions, except Appelberg and Make Your Mark's definition. To be valuable to the receiver, the target group have to be clearly defined, which is also something the respondents highlighted during the interviews.

"If you have something interesting to say and you want to share it, you have information or knowledge of what is important to your receiver, then it becomes relevant"- P. Söderberg, Chiffer 2014.

The third aspect of content marketing that all actors but two mentioned and agreed on was that content marketing should have an intention of changing or enhancing consumer behavior. This statement was communicated by terms of building brand image, establishing relationship to consumer, increasing sales and simply just meeting the set goals etc. Pulizzi (2013d) states that if content marketing does not enhance or change the behavior of a customer, it is just content. The two actors that did not specifically mention this in their definition still made other claims that suggested that they believed this statement to be true.

As mentioned previously there were also some inconsistencies regarding the meaning of content marketing. Only KNTNT and CMI, hence also Chiffer and Redaktörerna who refers to these two definitions, mentions that they believe that content marketing needs to be a continuous process. As in the previously mentioned example there are not comments from the other actors that contradicts this statement. However, unlike the previously mentioned example, it is not as clear that all of the other actors not mentioning the continuous process agrees.

The most apparent, controversial difference and the largest source of discussion, lays in the role of communication channels in defining what is and is not content marketing. While KNTNT is the only one who strongly believes that content marketing is only made in owned communication channels all other actors touch upon the subject within the interviews,

[10] The agencies that referred to other actors definition is included as a supporter of their definition and all it includes.

although not in their definitions. Swedish Content Agencies states that content marketing was traditionally done in owned customer magazines but are now utilizing other media channels as well. Whether they are owned or not is not revealed by their definition.

4.4 The Need of a Common Definition

While it is clear that there are somewhat differing views of what content marketing is and should be. There is also the question of whether more consensus is needed and if a lack thereof is considered problematic. Torberger at One Man Show does not experience the lack of a common definition a problem, except on a theoretical level. He points to a difficulty of establishing boundaries and draw a parallel to the complexity of discerning what can or can't be considered advertisement. On a similar note, Ingårda at Make Your Mark does not see any pressing problem either as he contends that the term has yet to be fully established. Both because of its relative novelty but also since other types of agencies, such as advertising and media production, may want a part in establishing the term. The latter is a main reason as to why a definition is needed according to other actors such as Johansson at Spoon and Ragnå at Redaktörerna.

"*It decreases the risk of the term being hijacked by anybody who wants to tag along, free-ride on a hyped term. Even though they do not really do anything you would define as content marketing."* - L. Ragnå, Redaktörerna2014

Rask at OTW mentions that because content marketing is regarded with great interest at the moment, many different disciplines tries to make their interpretation of the expression, causing a degree of confusion. While asserting that some guidance is needed, Swedish Content Agencies do not see it as an imminent problem that there is no common definition, but a potential one if definitions go too much in different directions. Newsroom, JG Communication, Appelberg and KNTNT all regard an agreed upon definition as.

4.5 Benefits of Content Marketing

The most commonly mentioned benefit of content marketing among the respondents was that the target group was interested in the material they received. Unlike traditional advertisement that are forced upon customers who often ignore it, content marketing communicates with the receiver on their terms.

"We are extremely ad fatigued and prefer to shift our attention elsewhere if we are exposed to advertising messages. Here content marketing is better, because you create content that you (the customer) what to spend time on. This way you get earned attention instead of bought"-

A. Rask, OTW 2014.

This functions as a foundation for other benefits. Because the target group is interested in the relevant information they receive, they are willing to interact with it and potentially for prolonged periods. This interaction facilitates establishing deeper relationships with customers, in turn making the marketing activity very cost effective, especially in owned media channels. Providing the consumer with information they find useful and believable also adds to the senders credibility in the area the content concerns. In addition, successfully working with owned media channels was mentioned to enable firms to earlier interact with customers in their buying process. A regular distribution frequency, common for many content marketing activities is also held to contribute to brand awareness and the sender firms position in customers top of mind.

There were also two additional points that stood out. The first a perceived benefit of content marketing in situations where the firms wants or needs to educate customers, especially in business-to-business contexts. The second relates to benefits from a employer perspective.

"The employees thinks it is cool to work for a company that gives away knowledge and are not only trying to make money, which makes it easier to keep and recruit staff" - T. Barregren, KNTNT 2014

4.6 The Applicability of Content Marketing

Most respondents agree on the applicability of content marketing across industries, product and service types. While a majority of the content agencies had mostly B2B clients, it can be used in both B2B and B2C contexts, although the communication was reported to look somewhat different. This focus was, according to some respondents, based in the more complex nature of the offerings and the need for closer relationships in B2B.

"More people say they know their target group better and have better contact with the customers [in B2B] and considering that, it could be easier" - E. Thörnsten, Swedish Content Agencies 2014.

In some situations and contexts, it is allegedly easier to implement content marketing. Torberger at One Man Show argued that it is easier to use content marketing in industries that have products that builds on knowledge or an interest, such as fishing. Söderberg at Chiffer explained how it is easier to use content marketing if there exists a customer club or a CRM system to build on. Barregren at KNTNT in turn mentioned that it could be beneficial for

companies in heavily regulated industries to use content marketing, as they often have issues with traditional market communication due to legal reasons.

4. 7 Future Direction of the Term

A common belief among several respondents is the possibility of content marketing to be a passing trend that at the moment is peaking. Most contend however that the underlying concepts and principles will not decrease in use, commonly referring to increasing ad fatigue and related phenomena and a need to adjust market communication to this.

"In 5 years people will not talk about content marketing like they do now but everyone will keep doing it and our kind of agencies will still be needed. It won't just be exchanged to some other trend. It's more like a paradigm shift within marketing"- B.O. Johansson, Spoon 2014.

Other respondents also argued that content marketing is still so new that most companies are only in their starting phases of implementing it, thereby prolonging its popularity. The trade organization Swedish Content Agencies foresee an expanding market for content marketing where agencies will specializing in different areas.

But there also exist less positive views that highlight a risk with the high interest and demand for content marketing as this may cause a variety of actors to try to benefit from what is perceived to be a hype. Thereby potentially marketing less qualified or unrelated practices content marketing, in turn leading to disappointed customer firms and a drop of interest on a macro level.

5. Analysis Chapter

The shaping of a market is a continuous process where the market is constantly being formed and shaped through performative practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007; Nenonen et al. 2013). Ideas are shared, accepted or dismissed by the actors within the market, who actively contribute to develop ideas through interpretations before they are shared once more. Such processes are evident in the case of both Spoon and Swedish Content Agencies, who both reported having definitions of content marketing that are continuously under construction and development. The interpretations, or translations, can result in very different and sometimes contradicting ideas, even if the original source of information was agreed upon. However, these multiple enactments of the market is not necessarily negative for the development of the market. On the contrary, controversies may spur further discussion, which in turn results in the spreading of more ideas, new and altered. Hence the continuous process of market formation.

It is also clear that these ideas have taken the performative role MacKenzie (2004) showed theory to possess. The existence of multiple, varying yet influential ideas amounts to a clear example of generic performativity (MacKenzie 2004) as these both shape and construct practice. Additionally, the market lack the clear cut link between ideas and practice characterizing Austinian performativity (MacKenzie 2004). The existence of multiple competing ideas is also argument against this case but is in line with conceptualizations of generic performativity (MacKenzie 2004; Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006).

By utilizing Kjellberg and Helgesson's (2007) heuristic model, the following sections aim to demonstrate how representational, normalizing and exchange practices are shaped by multiple performativities. Through empirical examples this chapter shows how content marketing practices within these broad categories are linked, affect each other, have shaped the Swedish market and continue to do so.

5.1 Representational Practices

There exists some consensus, most notably perhaps concerning what constitutes the core of content marketing, use-value and relevance. Still, there are some areas with different and somewhat conflicting efforts to shape market representations, in line with the high probability of multiple enactments comprised within a market (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006). The question of the inclusion or exclusion of media channels may seem trivial but has potentially significant consequences for actors' market representations. Including media channels as a

defining characteristic entails creating and utilizing market representations that are much more discriminating of exchange practices than ones created and proponed by actors that put less emphasis on media channels.

Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) expect actors to strive for support of their views and market representations in normalizing and exchange practices. An example of this process is an article by Barregren published as a blog post on KNTNT's website and as a debate article in Resume. In it, Barregren make use of CMI's definition in order to exclude certain exchange practices, such as inbound marketing. The definition put forward by CMI is used as a way to determine and corroborate the market representation argued for by Barregren. Thus CMI's definition, in itself a representation, is utilized to formulate and construct normative objectives, translated and transported as methods of measurement to create market representations that exclude certain types of exchange practices.

The interviews, in addition to the discussion the article in Resume initiated, strongly indicate multiple efforts to shape representations of content marketing (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006). Among the content agencies and the trade organization Swedish Content Agencies, market representations are commonly less categorical and more including. Additionally, they seek to justify their definitions with links to exchange practices rather than norms. This is mirrored by the emphasis put on use-value and relevance for the target group and that an achieved effect or result is what matters, rather than staying true to norms of how content marketing activities should be conducted. It is also visible among those who regard their work to have been essentially the same for more than a decade, and who view content marketing as primarily a new name, a new market representation.

While common definitions of content marketing is usually viewed in a positive light, this has resulted in vaguer descriptions and less coherence. Actors such as Johansson and Ragnå highlighted the danger of too inclusive definitions that risk being watered-down or 'hijacked' by other actor groups. This perceived risk also accentuate a sense of ownership of the term content marketing. There is a concern that other actor groups might ruin the term by associating and dubbing practices of content marketing that are alien to the representation(s) of the content agencies. While there is no apparent evidence of any intentionality of this, the name change of the trade organization can be seen as a way to safeguard or claim the term which at the time increased in popularity. Similarly can Barregren and KNTNT's efforts and arguments for the CMI definition be seen as defense of what is regarded as the representation

with the best claim. The main difference is that the content agencies and trade organization do this by linking their representation(s) to exchange practices and KNTNT and Barregren to normalizing practices. Links that are used as efforts to provide the representations with relevance and credibility (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006).

5.1.1 The Role of Measures and Methods of Measurement in Shaping Market Representations

We have encountered primarily two sources of numerical representations that actors commonly have referred to. Most common are those from CMI but also the research initiated by Swedish Content Agencies, carried out by the Swedish public research firm Novus. While not everyone make use of such representations, their formation provides a clear example of how methods of measurement and measurements are linked and affect the construction of market representations (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006).

In Spoons guide to content marketing, percentages of the number of marketers who use content marketing are adaptations from figures from CMI, presented to refer to either American marketers or marketers in general. In articles and blog posts, KNTNT mostly refer to marketers in general and adaptations of figures provided by CMI. It is in the nature of these formats not to include too much detail concerning the research and method behind figures and numerical representations. Thus we are not in a position to assess the reasonableness of the level of detail in such material , still it has a significant effect on the formation of market representations.

Figures and representations of how many/what kind of marketers engage in content marketing are dependent on how content marketing practices are defined. Returning to Kjellberg and Helgesson's (2006; 2007) heuristic model of markets, this is likely to significantly affect the formation of representational practices. This because the use of a certain definition in this context inevitably results in translation(s) of the definition into certain methods of measurement. The mobilization of a defining description has a central part in constructing and establishing normative objectives for actors, especially those who make active use of a certain description or definition.

5.1.2 The Role of Measurements in Shaping Market Representations

The acquisition of measurements from exchange practices are directly dependent on how narrowly or broad content marketing is defined and how this definition is translated in order to produce representations of the market.

The importance of such translations are evident in light of figures such as 90 % of B2B and B2C firms use content marketing (KNTNT 2014) and 91% of all B2B marketers use content marketing (Spoons guide till content marketing 2013). Even more so when considering separate representations together, for example the figures provided by Novus indicating that 46% of Swedish marketers actually know what content marketing is. Taken together, these representations are only moderately useful as depictions of the market as they are constructed using different measurements and in conjunction paint a rather confusing picture. This presents an interesting venue, in the use of American or international measurements in constructing representations of a Swedish market. Without assessing the validity of such generalizations it is clear that such processes occur and could potentially play a significant role in constructing the market representations the actors use and take part in producing.

5.2 Normalizing Practices

The most obvious case of competing efforts to shape normalizing practices is related to the disagreement concerning the appropriateness of certain definitions and how actors should relate to a definition of content marketing. As Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) point out, the existence of multiple efforts to shape normalizing practices is not necessarily problematic for a collective of market actors. While there are clear disagreements among several of the actors about how content agencies and others should relate to and use definitions. This has also initiated interaction and dialogue between actors who argue for differing normative objectives. The discussion sparked by Barregren's article mentioned above is one such example, the name change of the trade organization can be seen as a result of another. Interaction initiated by competing efforts to shape market norms can naturally take a variety of forms and directions. There is undoubtedly potential for such interaction to have constructive outcomes, for example an eventual stabilization of norms, or their future overhaul.

Guldbladet can be viewed as a set of normalizing practices as it seeks to award successful content marketing efforts. The 17 categories, while making no claim to completely mirror all content marketing practices, still comprise an image of the exchange practices that are to be potentially awarded. The process of awarding however, is more than a construction of a market representation and in fact closer to what Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007) term a formation of normative objectives. They have a function as normative objective for the actors carrying out the exchange practices that are awarded. Since in order to be awarded, an actor must, in addition to outperform other candidates, perform activities that fall within the frames

of a particular award, for example Best B2B customer magazine, best annual report or best member/organization magazine. By awarding certain exchange practices, Swedish Content Agencies formulates norms in terms of how content marketing should be conducted. This process occurs regardless of the trade organizations' existing or non-existing intentions to use Guldbladet as a normative tool.

In principle it is hard to determine the effect on exchange practices of such formations, as they are dependent not only on SCA's efforts, but also on the significance ascribed to them by other actors and the links of translations that connects them to exchange practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). In fact it is likely that for Guldbladet to have any visible effect as a mobilizer and formulator of normative objectives, it requires a certain degree of recognition and significance ascribed to it by market actors. Such criteria is arguably met by Guldbladet as the only established trade award of content marketing in Sweden. and the use such awards have for agencies as unofficial marks of quality, especially in marketing contexts. Indicating that the process of awarding exchange practices, functions as a formulation of normative objectives.

5.2.1 The Role of Descriptions in Shaping Norms

The significance ascribed to CMI by Swedish actors entails that representations produced by CMI, created with links primarily to American and/or International exchange practices, take part in shaping norms and normative objectives for Swedish actors. While content marketing may be relatively novel for many Swedish actors, it is arguably less so for their American counterparts. Hinting of a time lag that may signify differences in knowledge levels, awareness or some other attribute between the American and Swedish marketer. Which in turn creates the possibility of a scenario where market representations that better mirror an American market are applied to the Swedish.

Also, what norms actors endorse and/or seek to formulate are dependent on the type of descriptions employed. Normative formulations, such as how-to guides, white papers, but also strategic formulations and intentions of actors will be strongly affected as different market representations and are incorporated and translated into normative objectives. Again, the centrality given to channels in representations of content marketing practices serve as an illustration. Take for example the strategic development of a content marketing campaign, using representations that explicitly include certain channels and possibly exclude others are likely to result in formulating normative objectives where channels have a central place. Using representations that do not, increases the likelihood of assigning channels a less central

role. Possibly this becomes a question for the marketer at a later stage, such as in the formulation of implementation of the campaign.

5.2.2 The role of Interests in Shaping Norms

Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007) expect interests of various actors to influence the formation of norms and normative objectives. Definitions of content marketing, with their function of including and/or excluding practices are important normative tools in this market. As actors hold differing views of how to relate to, use and define content marketing, it is likely that these views are influenced by actors different or converging interest.

It is hard to argue for a separation of actors commercial interests from their adaptations or adoptions of definitions of content marketing. A definition that includes a wider range of practices will result in market representations that are correspondingly inclusive. Among Swedish firms, where awareness and knowledge about content marketing is increasing yet limited, an inclusive definition paints a picture of marketers commonly engaging in content marketing practices, but perhaps not to their full potential. Hence the need for content agencies, strategists and consultants to help firms better reach that potential. An inclusive definition may contribute to the raison d'être of content agencies, strategists and consultants that adopt such a definition. Likewise, those actors that argue for and adopt more excluding, and as a consequence more precise definitions have an interest in the formulation and construction of market norms being in a direction that favor their view. Since such normative objectives, if spread and recognized by others, provides a way to legitimize their services and commercial offering.

To put it bluntly, a vague and/or inclusive definition entails that actors can call a much wider range of activities and commercial offerings content marketing and still benefit from the positive aspects the popularity of the term provides. A narrower and/or excluding definition provides actors with a rhetoric to reject competitors activities and offerings as outside the frames of content marketing while at the same time highlighting the actors own activities as ‘true’ content marketing.

Interests from customer firms also affect the formation market norms. As pointed out by Rask at OTW, customers are increasingly requesting content strategies or looking for an external partner for producing content, using a vocabulary that was not common a year earlier. Making it important for content agencies and other actors to take into account not only the images customers have of what content marketing is, but also expectations on how it should be done.

This also highlights the possibility of incongruence between views held by customer and service providing firms.

There is also the question of the applicability and potential success of content marketing efforts in different contexts. Naturally, it is in the interest of a service provider to, as a starting point, argue for the broad application and usefulness of its offering, as it increases the potential customer population. A similar logic could explain, at least partially, the consensus among the actors concerning the applicability of content marketing across contexts such as B2C, B2B, different industries or product types, when few actors have proportionate distributions among these. To assess the reasonableness of such logic is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it shows how interests grounded in exchange practices can influence the construction of normative objectives.

5.3 Exchange Practices

The public research report initiated by Swedish Content Agencies indicate that firms have increasingly adopted content marketing practices and will continue to do so. At the same time the knowledge level of content marketing among marketers is low in relation to the spending on such efforts. This image of the general knowledge level among marketers, corroborated to a large extent in our interviews, set the stage for a market dependent on resources and expertise external to most firms. In addition to this, most content agencies agree on the applicability of content marketing in basically all industries, product or service types and target group. This is also mirrored in most market representations, typically with very high percentages of market professionals engaging in content marketing.

This means that, intentionally or not, market representations are used as a way to configure buyer seller configurations (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006). perhaps most significantly as they paint a picture of the necessity for marketers and firms to utilize the knowledge and resources of content agencies, consultants and experts. Thereby amounting to an effort to shape exchange practices.

Depending on what market representation is employed, inconsistencies occur between some sets of exchange practices. The popularity and positive connotations the term content marketing currently have, entails that different actor groups seek to adopt it as a label of activities that correspond more or less well with the meaning contained in a certain representation. This introduces the possibility of inconsistencies between exchange practices on the one hand and still establishing norms and market representation on the other, creating

multiple enactments of the market. Multiple enactments that each include exchange practices that correspond with some representations and norms but not others. Again, the practices connected to producing inbound marketing or the curation of a Facebook page are examples of exchange practices that align with some market representations and norms but not others.

5.3.1 How Results Shape Exchange Practices

Links between representational and exchange practices are stated by Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007) as highly likely in most markets and this connection is evident among the actors we studied as well. The recurring reference to market representations in the form of statistics, images, graphs etc. from CMI is an obvious example. The importance actors (some more than others) ascribe to CMI highlights an interesting case where American or International market representation(s) influence exchange practices of Swedish actors. Another example is that the clients of Swedish content agencies read material from American blogs concerned with content marketing. While market representations are approximations rather than accurate descriptions due to markets constant emergence and multiple enactments. It is inevitable to at least consider the potential discrepancy resulting from translations of representations of a certain market to exchange practices of another.

Another example where representational practices influenced exchange practices is the name change of the trade organization Swedish Content Agencies. The name change could be seen as both a proactive and reactive action. Reactive, since the name change took place during a time when the terms popularity was booming and multiple agencies was trying to claim the role as experts within the field. Proactive, since it seized the opportunity to ’own’ the term content marketing, by uniting their members to agree on calling themselves content agencies. This action directly influenced exchange practices since many agencies, as a result, started to include the term in their own communication, externally and to some extent but also internally. This could also in turn be viewed as a process of alignment of multiple enactments (Araujo et al. 2010:7) in favor of one that is more commonly agreed upon.

5.3.2 The Role of Rules and Tools in Shaping Exchange Practices

Rules and tools exist primarily as guidelines linking norms and normative objectives to exchange practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007) and exist in a variety of formats in the market. These are shared through videos, books, blogs, white papers, articles, brochures etc. A prominent example is Epic Content Marketing (Pulizzi 2014), which offer readers a book with examples and suggestions of how to best use content marketing. All of these suggestions are based on the definition and description of content marketing authored by CMI, and Joe

Pulizzi. Similarly, Spoon has in addition to their representational guide and video about content marketing, also released a range of videos and other digital guides, which provide guidelines of for example how to best use content marketing within e-retailing. Another example of normalizing guidelines are JG communication that provides a range of white papers as well as case documents about content marketing for free on their website. In addition to this, many actors such as Torberger, KNTNT and Swedish Content Agencies also arrange seminars about content marketing, where practitioners meet and interact. Additionally, agencies also seek to share their adopted norms during lectures or client meetings, where explanations of what content marketing is and how to best use it, is part of the routine.

The most prominent providers of rules and tools are to some extent the ones that makes the most explicit claim of owning the term. Actors that continuously provide information and guidelines about content marketing consequently receive a larger role as an influencer in the Swedish market. Their practices will affect how other actors conduct and develop their practices and hence, their role becomes pivotal in shaping the market.

Latour (1986:29) highlights the important and central role of translations in the development and spread of ideas. However, these ideas have to be acknowledged and 'picked-up' by some other actor(s) to have any impact on the construction of the market (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007). Reasonably, actors that produce material that is widely spread are more likely to play a more central role in shaping exchange practices. The more actors that 'picks-up' an actor's specific idea, the more influential the originator of that idea is likely to become. As a consequence, these actors might have a better chance of becoming leading in shaping ideas about content marketing and normative objectives, in a way that is beneficial for them. Attaining a leading position in turn results in other actors referring to that leadership for answers and guidelines, creating a positive spiral.

5.4 Summing up

Content marketing practices connected in Sweden are very strongly connected to existing images and norms about how content marketing should be conducted. The fact that the term itself was only recently introduced into many practitioners vocabularies contributes significantly to the reliance the market has on representations and norms. Some of these have achieved a level of authority that let them strongly shape other types of practice. It is possible to consider a time lag between the Swedish and for example the American market, not

perhaps in economic activities as several actors have pointed to the emergence of content marketing as business as usual, albeit with a new name. But there exist a time lag in terms of the introduction of the norms and representations that have risen as especially influential.

Adopting a temporal viewpoint of the emergence of the content marketing term in Sweden, exchange practices has prior and during the emergence in late 2012- 2013 remained relatively stable. After this however, highly influential norms and representations began in earnest to transform each other and the formulation of exchange practice. At the moment of writing, the market cannot be considered stable, but can rather be characterized by a state of fluidity. Competing sets of norms and to some extent incompatible market representations provide a foundation for change and reformulation of practice. Disagreements and efforts to shape different practices may in time lead to a stabilization of the market. Either through agreement and relative consensus regarding market norms, representations and formulation of exchange activities or through somewhat stable co-existence of different versions of the market.

It has primarily been content agencies (previously editorial communication agencies) that has sought to assume a leading role in shaping the term content marketing in Sweden. By seeking to formulate norms and normative objectives, they shape exchange practices in accordance with their view of content marketing, further seeking to establish a central role in the market. The name change of the trade organization has also served as a way to demonstrate this even further, in addition to revealing an intention to strengthen the groups influence and credibility as an actor group. But there are also other actors, unrelated to the content agencies, that have managed to establish their position as experts within the market. By referring to an already established expert within the field, credibility can be achieved almost by association, or through a process that can almost be likened with borrowing.

The instability stemming from conflicting viewpoints and disagreements has a significant shaping role as it fosters interaction as discussion between actors. We are not in a position to determine whether this leads to stability and consensus or fluidity and schisms, but its role as a force of development in either direction is clear. Disagreements and inconsistencies can also be the result of varying differences in adaptations of a single source, highlighting the relevance of the translation concept. The propagation of an adaptation of a certain set of norms have been observed to cause reverberations among actors who argue for their translation, or a different set of norms altogether.

Below is a conceptualization of the main findings, based on and adapted from Kjellberg and Helgesson's (2006) heuristic model of markets as enacted through practice.

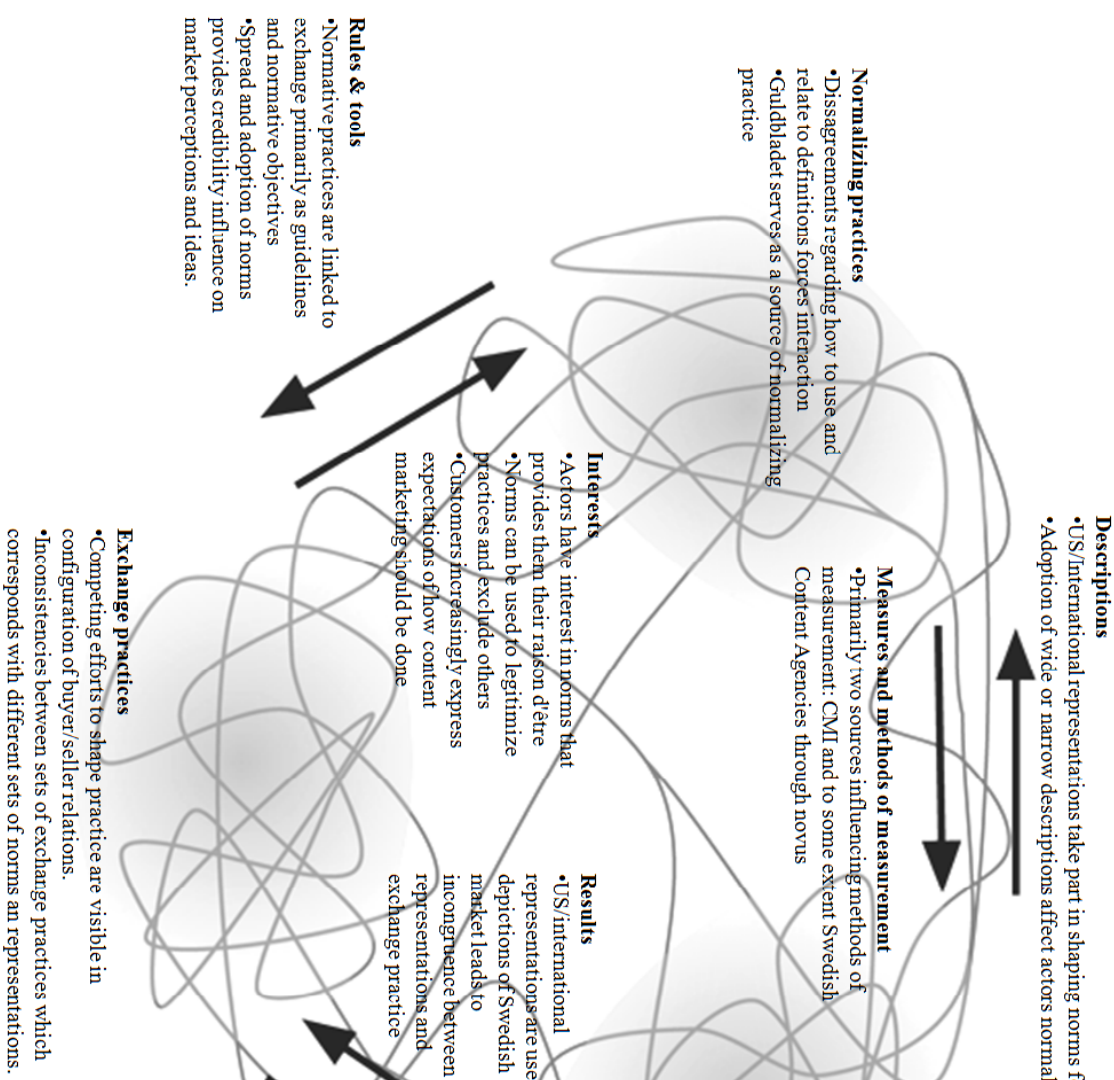

Figure 9 Conceptual summary of findings. Adaptation of Kjellberg and Helgesson's (2006) practice based model of markets.

6. Conclusions

In this thesis great significance has been assigned to ideas of content marketing taking form as market representations and parts of actors normative efforts. Considering that the market is viewed to be fluid rather than stable and that norms regarding mode and format of economic exchange are still formulating, this make sense. The fact that there is no agreed upon definition, no clear ownership of the term (although some actors make convincing cases), in addition to the short time span the term has figured among Swedish actors all sets the stage for a clash of ideas. Ideas become central both as they are arguably needed as a foundation for the markets' construction but also as tools in processes that are almost political.

The configuration of exchange activities is somewhat more stable, although not static. Content marketing practices have been evolving alongside technology and customer firms awareness and knowledge levels are steadily increasing. But such developments are arguably better characterized as progress than dramatic change. The fluidity of exchange practices are rather reverberations from changing or conflicting norms or representations, which can include or exclude certain types of exchange practices or affect buyer-seller configurations.

Content marketing practices in Sweden are shaped to a large extent by partly conflicting ideas of what content marketing is, what it is not, how it should be used and the intricate connections and transformation processes that connect these ideas. There is explicit agreement however of the centrality of value and relevance of the content contained in any content marketing effort. The empirical findings also point to common ground, although less explicit, regarding that content marketing must affect or influence the target audience in a way that is valuable to the sender and initiator. Implying that having a more or less defined target group or audience is also a requisite for content marketing. This is close to the formal definition offered by Pulizzi (2014) and CMI albeit without the four principles.

"*Content marketing is a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience –with the objective of driving profitable customer action*." (Pulizzi 2014:5)

This shows both the significance ascribed to this actor in the market but also amount to an argument for the soundness of a view of market practices as linked through translations. The fact that there is agreement, although not entirely explicit, among the actors of a view of content marketing that is close to this definition highlights this process. The content of this

definition has spread, integrated (and partially changed) into these actors ideas and conceptions of content marketing.

Disagreements rather seem to stem from Pulizzi's (2014) extended definition that includes the four principles, as highlighted by the discussion of channels. The disagreement may well originate from the issues relating to the translation and consequent transformation of the definition, causing it to change meaning and hence making it more excluding. Or it could simply be the fact that some actors have differing interests driving their arguments. From the empirical investigation it is however clear that the majority of actors believes that content marketing belong primarily, but not exclusively, in owned channels.

Although there are mixed opinions concerning the need for a common definition, problems attached to not having one along with varying levels of utilizing definitions at all; there seems to exist a silent agreement of what content marketing is. Potentially making a formal, agreed upon definition somewhat redundant. The moderate level of clarity that exist at the moment and the broad but not exact consensus this implies, allows content agencies to draw a circle around their own practices, excluding others, while at the same time enabling leeway regarding their own actions and practices. Enough to retain an 'ownership' of the term while still allowing for development and some diversification of their practices. Allowing them to seriously compete with advertising and PR agencies of customer firms marketing budgets.

Despite this, it makes sense to at least attempt to define the concept of content marketing. Building on practical enactments, implicit and implicit descriptions of content marketing practices and existing definitions, the following definition is offered:

Content marketing is the creation, distribution and/or curation of content valuable and relevant to a target group or audience.

This definition is close but not entirely similar to that of Pulizzi (2014:5) and CMI. It does not emphasize the objective of profits as this is likely a desired outcome for most actors but not necessarily a defining characteristic. *Curation of content* also captures the often mid- to long term perspective of content marketing arguably better than *"consistent content"* (Pulizzi 2014:5). This as several of the actors interviewed expect content marketing to be more commonly performed by firms themselves in addition to agencies and other specialist actors. Consequently, curation is a better descriptor of content marketing efforts that may well be

initially produced by an agency or specialist but at least partially maintained by a customer firm.

This definition is compatible with most if not all of the interviewed actors descriptions although less narrow than some prefer. This should not be regarded as taking a principal stance for a narrow or broad definition. Rather this is an attempt to capture the consensus in the Swedish market while still incorporating significant sources of practitioners definitions.

In light of our practical constructivist perspective, this definition has its obvious limitations and its validity is directly determined by its correspondence with the practices it attempts to describe. As such it will likely lose some of this validity as the market changes. It succeeds however in shedding light on the current state of content marketing in Sweden and in conjunction with preceding discussions illustrate what constitutes content marketing.

7. Managerial Implications

For practitioners this thesis provides an overview of what constitutes content marketing in Sweden. As such it has explained how and why the concept at the moment is difficult to define and pinpoint. Building on the conceptions and consensus of significant actors and industry sources it also offers a definition of content marketing. This can well be used in practice by those who seek such a definition.

But perhaps most importantly the discussions in this theses highlights the performative role of ideas concerning content marketing. And the multitude of both practical and conceptual enactments. The most useful managerial implication is arguably an awareness of this matter, the potential discrepancies that results from it and the critical perspective practitioners should equip themselves with. A critical and aware practitioner will be in a significantly better position to evaluate and interpret the many market representations and normative formulations that exist at the moment. For customer firms this means being better equipped to navigate the market and for agencies and specialists to better formulate and position their offerings.

8. Research Implications

Two venues are apparent in light of this thesis. The first concerns content marketing which at the time of writing has received scant attention in academic research. There are evident opportunities in examining content marketing using a variety of theoretical perspectives. One such example is the similarity between valuable content and notions of value in the establishing Service dominant Logic perspective (e.g. Vargo and Lusch 2004;2008; Grönroos et al. 2013). Other useful paths would be to critically study the effects and outcomes of content marketing, including relational and network aspects as well as economic. There is also a need for empirical investigations focusing on other actor groups and in particular customer firms, PR and advertisement agencies.

This thesis has entailed an empirical application of a practice based approach to markets (Araujo et al. 2010; Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006; 2007). The second venue consists of a further need to study market practices and how they as emerging and changing activities constitute and continually shape markets (Kjellberg et al. 2012). This applies to all manner of markets and contexts, but a longitudinal study examining content marketing and its corresponding market is an apt opportunity to examine the market plasticity concept recently proposed by Nenonen et al. (2013).

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