

The structure and function of a car industry homepage: a genre approach

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The structure and function of a car industry homepage: a genre approach.

1. Objective of the study

The objective of this study was to analyze company homepages from a genre perspective to gain some new knowledge of the general guidelines for online communication. The pages of three car companies were analyzed from structural and communicational points of view. To narrow the sample down, a focus on two countries – Finland and the U.S. – was taken, thus altogether six homepages were exposed to closer inspection. The chosen car manufacturers were BMW, Ford and Toyota.

More specifically, the aim of the study was to answer three research questions:

1. What are the key functions of a company homepage?
2. How is a company homepage structured?
3. How is modern technology utilized on a company homepage?

2. Methodology and theoretical framework

The method used in this study was a qualitative analysis consisting of a detailed structural analysis and an analysis informed by genre theory. Screenshots of the case pages were acquired on March 25th 2009 and the core of the analysis was based on them. However, as the Internet is not a static medium, some parts of the analysis had to be conducted using live, online pages.

The theoretical framework is largely based on a model created by the Belgian online research and consulting agency InSites and presented by De Pelsmacker, Geuens and Van Der Bergh (2001). The framework gives the website genre – and more specifically the homepage genre – a central role encapsulating communication and technology. The four elements from the InSites model – content, design, browsing and interactivity – were thus categorized under communication and technology and analyzed through these concepts.

3. Findings and Conclusions

The selection of the case pages and entities was made anticipating both variety and similarity. It seems, however, that the car industry in the western countries is so globalized and homogenized that at the end the six pages showed more similarities than differences. Through these similarities a general structure could be drafted, which consisted of five different elements: logo, navigation bars, dominating picture with links, secondary pictures with collection of links and general generic text-links. These elements can also be seen to correspond to the move structure of genre theory.

A commercial homepage has three main functions: to deliver news, to build and maintain company image and to introduce the website. The third function was discovered as the core function of a company website, while the other two seem to operate as supporting functions. Technology acts in a two-folded role on commercial homepages: it enables a wide variety of functions but at the same time it limits the communication process through the specific nature of web literacy. Ultimately, a company homepage firstly acts as a guide to the website and secondly, as a company business card online.

Keywords: Internet, commercial homepage, commercial website, online communication, homepage structure, webpage structure, web-mediated genres

Autoteollisuuden kotisivujen rakenne ja toiminta: genre-teoreettinen lähestymistapa

1. Tutkimuksen tavoitteet

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli löytää yleisiä suuntaviivoja yrityksen verkkoviestintään. Kolmen autovalmistajan (BMW, Ford ja Toyota) kotisivuja eri maista tarkasteltiin sekä rakenteelliselta että viestinnälliseltä kannalta. Otoksen tehostamiseksi suomalaiset ja amerikkalaiset sivut otettiin erityistarkasteluun, joiden kautta pureuduttiin autoteollisuuden verkkoviestintään genreteorian ja verkkosivurakenteen analyysin kautta.

Tarkemmin, tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli vastata kolmeen tutkimuskysymykseen:

1. Mitkä ovat yrityksen kotisivun tärkeimmät tehtävät?
2. Millainen on yrityksen kotisivun rakenne?
3. Miten modernia teknologiaa on hyödynnetty yrityksen kotisivulla?

2. Tutkimusmenetelmät ja teoreettinen viitekehys

Verkkoviestinnän genreteoria ja rakenteellinen analyysi toimivat perustana tutkimuksen kvalitatiiviselle analyysille. Analysointi suoritettiin valittujen autovalmistajien kotisivuista otettujen kuvakaappausten perusteella, joiden lisäksi myös verkossa olevia, reaaliaikaisia sivuja käytettiin tutkimuksen tukena. Pääpaino analyysityössä oli kuitenkin kuvakaappauksella otetuissa kuvissa ja niiden arvioinnissa.

Teoreettinen viitekehys perustui pääosiltaan belgialaisen tutkimusyhtiön, InSites'in luomaan malliin, johon viittasivat mm. De Pelsmacker, Geuens ja Van Der Bergh (2001). Viitekehys sijoittaa verkkosivugenren – ja tarkemmin ottaen kotisivugenren – keskeiseen rooliin viestinnän ja teknologian taustavoimaksi. InSites'in mallin neljä osaa – sisältö, suunnittelu, selailu ja vuorovaikutteisuus – analysoitiin lopulta viestinnän ja teknologian kautta.

3. Tutkimuksen tulokset ja johtopäätökset

Tutkimuskohteen, sivujen ja tahojen valinta tehtiin siten, että odotusarvo sekä eroavaisuuksille että samankaltaisuuksille oli korkea. Tutkimuksessa kävi kuitenkin ilmi, että länsimainen autoteollisuus on niin kansainvälistä ja yhtenäistä, että kaikki valitut kotisivut olivat enemmän ja vähemmän toistensa kaltaisia. Näiden samankaltaisuuksien kautta löytyi tosin keino määrittellä yleinen autoteollisuuden kotisivurakenne, joka rakentui viidestä eri osasta: tuotemerkistä, navigointipalkista, hallitsevasta kuvasta, toissijaisista kuvista ja linkeistä sekä sivun alareunaan sijoitetuista yleisistä tekstilinkeistä. Nämä osat korreloivat myös genreteorian muoto-luokituksen kanssa.

Kaupallisella kotisivulla on kolme päätehtävää: välittää uutisia, ylläpitää yrityksen ilmettä sekä esitellä ja edustaa kyseistä verkkosivustoa. Tutkimuksessa viimeiseksi mainittu osoittautui kotisivun ydintehtäväksi kahden muun jäädessä enemmän tukitoimintojen osiin. Teknologialla on kaupallisilla kotisivuilla kaksijakoinen rooli, sillä se yhtäällä tarjoaa lähes rajattomia mahdollisuuksia verkkoviestinnälle, mutta toisaalla taas rajoittaa ilmaisua verkon erilaistuneen viestintäkäytännön kautta. Pohjimmiltaan yrityksen kotisivu toimii ensisijaisesti etusivuna ja oppaana kyseiselle verkkosivustolle ja toissijaisesti yhtiön käyntikorttina verkossa.

Avainsanat: Internet, kaupallinen kotisivu, kaupallinen verkkosivusto, verkkoviestintä, kotisivun rakenne, verkkosivun rakenne, verkkoviestinnän genreteoria

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1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the core parts and ideas of the paper. It starts off by presenting the background of the study and then moves on to the research problem, objectives and questions. After these, the main terminology used in this thesis is defined. The chapter ends with an introduction to the structure of the whole paper.

1.1 Background of the study

The Internet has taken ground since the end of the second millennium, and today it is really the most important global Medium. Globalization, the seeming coherence of cultures and constantly evolving communication technology are all rooted to the Internet and its web that has spread everywhere. The World-Wide Web has also affected the business world in several ways. Today it is not enough to perform well, let your product speak for itself and lean back – instead a company must lean forward, communicate with the consumers and each other and make sure to be found. No modern company can afford staying out of the Internet: it is the modern day phonebook, business card, coffee-table discussion and a personal assistant.

The roots of the Internet lie in the military world and the U.S. army: the American ministry of defense initiated the creation of a network so decentralized that no military strike could paralyze it. The next group grasping on the challenges of the Net were the scientists and educators in the academic world, who turned the military-based system to serve educational needs (Robinson, 2000). The father of the world-wide web and the Internet as we know it today is Tim Berners-Lee, who was keen to find a more effective way to distribute knowledge and information among scientists and researchers (Alasilta, 2002). In the process he created the basis for the digital home of billions of people today.

The Internet's importance and meaning to the global economy today is two-fold, since the developed world is starting to be fully digitalized and web-savvy while the third world countries can provide internet access to only a fraction of their citizens. Thus,

despite the fact that the Internet is a truly global medium, it still reaches just the richest minority of the world population. On the other hand, the Internet is taking on a bigger role by the day in the Western countries, and its importance is starting to reach beyond general consumer use. As consumers rush online, the businesses have been there since the beginning. But the Internet is not what it used to be: the rapid development of technologies has brought along such a great amount of possibilities that the old method of handling online communication beside “the real work” is not recommendable today. Thus, as more attention is paid to the online presence of companies’ the more the consumers expect. This returns the ball to the home base and motivates the companies and marketers to constantly come up with more advanced and innovative means for online presence. This constant race for new adaptations has inspired this thesis, as the combination of web-widgets and traditional business communication seems somewhat challenging. So how do companies turn this challenge to success and can some general guidelines be found in our present online life?

Another inspiration for the thesis grew from my professional background: after working with media and advertising for three years the evolution and constantly developing possibilities of the Internet have shaped the media scene rapidly. Information technology and the way people consume media daily have evolved in the past years in a way that has brought the whole media business to a turning point. This professional curiosity has thus helped me in forming the research questions and motivated me through the study.

1.2 Research problem

The Internet is filled with sites, worlds, outlooks and messages and the variety of the vast web is constantly growing and diversifying. The possibilities available within modern technology are almost unlimited, but at the same time consumers are getting more web-literate, more demanding and most of all, more critical. In practice this means that it is not enough to set up a basic website with electronic versions of financial statement, annual report and company contact information anymore. Consumers and

business associates want more, but at the same time it has to be less: for example a company homepage should fit on one screen, but this one screen has to be able to provide answers to all general questions a visitor might have. And as all business and communication is transferring to a digitalized, networked era a company cannot really afford staying away from the Internet.

Along with the almost unlimited possibilities there is also a great risk of doing more harm than good. The ways of being present online are manifold, from display advertising to company websites and social networks to online forums and blogs. To assure a tighter focus and relevance of this thesis, it investigates the presence a company itself has the best opportunity to affect: company homepage.

Despite the narrower point-of-view that limits the study to company homepages, the Internet is still an enormous contextual entity. The vastness is further underlined by the fact that the Internet is a truly global forum: when something is posted online, it is there for anyone in the world to see. Still, all websites are not equal: there are huge sites that collect the majority of the traffic – and there are small sites where hardly anyone ever ends up to (Koiso-Kanttila, 2006, p. 16). This is not an issue to all businesses, as some companies settle for an URL to print on business cards and a one-page website containing traditional contact information. However, as mentioned above: consumers are getting more web savvy and so should businesses. Thus, many companies are now wrestling with the growing selection of possibilities, developing demands from customers and considering the limitations among possibilities. Consumers want to be wowed but effectively serviced at the same time. So, is it possible to make a company-site so lucrative that it will generate traffic – and at the same time stay relevant and informative? Are there some ways to make sure the site will attract consumers and serve their needs in the best possible way? Is there a recipe for a good company website, or even some tips on how to build one? These are some of the issues I will look into in this study: what are the elements and functions that a business homepage must have? How do technology and communication meet on this modern platform?

The main research questions are set later in subchapter 1.4 and they revolve around this problem area: what should a modern homepage contain, how the current pages are constructed and in what way does technology limit communication? Or are possibilities so vast that the selection and freedom of choice create more problems than limitations?

1.3 Research objectives

As has been above, the Internet is a medium of almost unlimited possibilities. These possibilities create variation online, while on the other hand, a growing number of similar or at least resembling sites and pages can be found. This makes us ask if some of the possibilities are better than other, as certain ideas are repeated and replicated. These ideas can be anything from structure to the use of text, pictures, colors or animation. One objective of this study is to recognize and define some of these generalized ideas through the selected sample of homepages.

Text is seen as a central part of a communication medium, as it is traditionally placed in its core as either written or spoken messages. When reviewing online communication, we can see that text has kept its place in some parts, as emailing, instant messaging or blogging are all focally based on written text. But in some other parts the meaning of text has decreased and words have been replaced by visual, scannable objects. Due to this difference in the way of reading online compared to more traditional texts, online communication has also been forced to adjust in the situation. The most distinctive adaptation of this difference is the development of online grammar and the use of hypertext. Another objective of this study is to recognize these subtle characteristics that distinguish online texts from traditional ones and explain the relevance behind this phenomenon.

In this paper I will investigate the homepages of three global car manufacturers and approach the problems described above through the selected sample. The three car manufacturers chosen for the study were determined by geographical and distributional factors. Firstly, the chosen make of a car must be available globally. Secondly, I wanted

to look at cars manufactured in different parts of the world. And thirdly, to increase the possibility of greater variation, the selected manufacturers are slightly differently positioned according to their consumer communications. Based on these criteria the selection turned out to be the American Ford, the German BMW and the Japanese Toyota. All three are well established, global brands with a long tradition and history. They all are also somewhat differently positioned as BMW can be seen as a luxury car, Ford as a compact city car and Toyota as an everyman's car.

To make sure the study will not be too one-eyed I will not only focus on the global site of the car manufacturer, but will examine their sites in a variety of countries and take two countries – Finland and The U.S. – under closer inspection. By reviewing each manufacturer first as a global actor and taking an overview of a selection of their homepages in various countries, I can get my hands on to the corporate level and create a background to a more detailed study of the homepages of the two countries. The other countries the homepages of which will be reviewed are Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, The United Kingdom, Ireland and Canada. Also, some additional country-pages were visited, depending on the car manufacturer in question. However, the home country of the site has a minor role in the study itself and it is included here to support the structural assumptions of a globally almost uniform web-mediated genre scene.

In bottom line the objective of this study is to explore company homepages within car industry to see if a homepage genre and structural format can be identified.

1.4 Research questions

To investigate the research problem described above and to reach the presented objectives, the following questions were formulated:

What are the key functions of a company homepage?

How is a car industry homepage structured?

How is modern technology utilized on a modern homepage?

1.5 Definitions

1.5.1 Homepage, website and webpage

Homepage is a generally used term when someone is talking about their company or their own websites. A strictly defined meaning of a homepage is the webpage that the browser is set to when it starts up (Daintith and Wright, 2008) – which currently seems to be Google for many Internet user. But also a common meaning to the term refers to the main webpage for a collection of webpages (Daintith and Wright, 2008), more specifically “the first page that a visitor to a website encounters” (Ince, 2003).

Website is a broader concept than a homepage – strictly defined it is a virtual location on the World Wide Web. In other words, a website is a related collection of webpages and the first page the user lands to is often called a homepage. (ibid) The terms website and homepage are often used interchangeably, but in this thesis I will use the latter when speaking about the landing or front page of a company website and the former when dealing with the whole set of webpages collected under the same URL-address.

The third term, webpage, is strictly “a hypertext document connected to the World Wide Web” (Soanes and Stevenson, 2005), but generally it is a single page, referenced by one URL-address, that can be many screens long and contain a variety of data. In this thesis the term webpage refers to all other pages within a website but the homepage.

1.5.2 Communication

Communication in general is usually defined as “the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium.” (Soanes and Stevenson, 2005). In this thesis I concentrate on communication online, which is characterized by interactivity, rapidity and constant change. As the Internet offers two-way communication possibilities and is truly a global medium, business communication online includes both internal and external communications. Company websites can also be used for a variety of communicational purposes: inform about current events and

news, contain company and/or brand image, collect customer information and maintain investor relations (Truell, Zhao, Alexander and Whitesel, 2005). In this thesis communication is thus used as a general term to online communication and all its uses. The ideology behind online communication is further discussed in Chapter 2.

1.6 Structure of the study

This study is structured as follows: after this introduction, Chapter 2 presents the literature review, in which previous studies and related literature are presented. The main focus in the literature review is naturally on the Internet: its evolution, business possibilities and general effects on business communication. Also culture and communication will be looked into in the literature review, but the main focus is still on the Internet and its conventions. Chapter 3 discusses the methods chosen for conducting this study and also the reasons behind the selection of the empirical method; the trustworthiness of the study is discussed in this chapter also. Chapter 4 presents the case entities: the car manufacturers, their history and tradition. The analysis can also be found in this chapter. Chapter 5 concludes with discussion, presents the main challenges of the study, gives recommendations for further research and wraps the thesis up.

2. Literature Review

This chapter is a brief overview on the existing literature and studies on the subjects of the commercial Internet, websites, homepages, online communication and genre analysis. As commercial websites are in the core of this thesis, the chapter begins with that topic and mainly creates a background and historical view on the phenomenon itself. If we do not know where we are coming from, it is very difficult, if not impossible to conduct an analysis on any matter. After the overall look on the history and current situation of the commercial Internet, the review will focus on the two key aspects of this study: structural analysis and evaluation of a website and genre analysis online. The different approaches to evaluating websites and webpages and the evolution of the research tradition are the main issues dealt with in subchapter 2.3. Genre theorists have really found the Internet just during the past ten years and web-mediated genres have not been researched to a great extent even today. Thus, subchapter 2.4 provides a brief look at the traditional genre theory after which it dives into the current discussion on web-mediated genres and the challenges they provide.

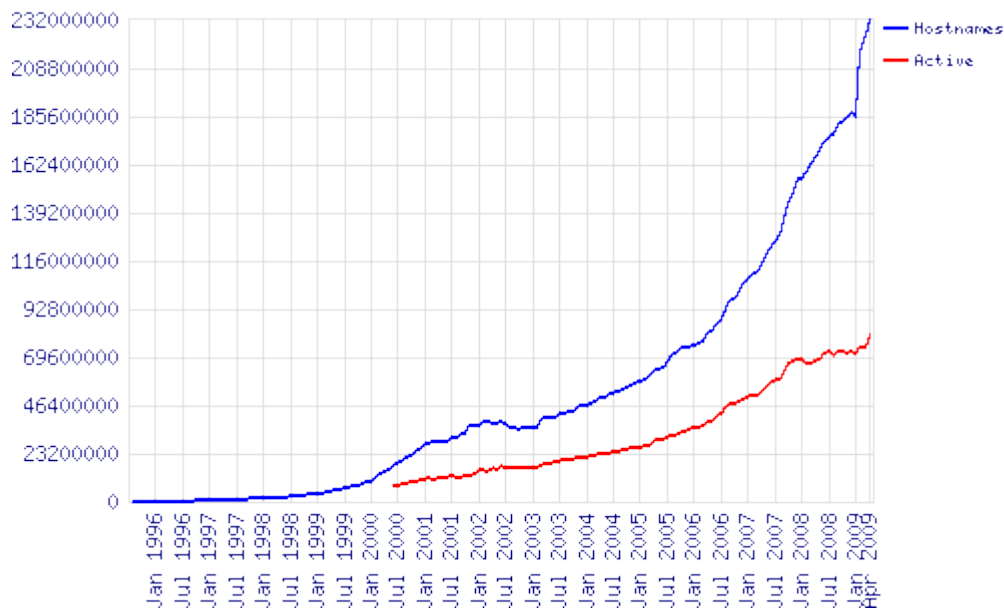
At the end of the chapter I pull the two elements (i.e. structural analysis and genre analysis) together and form a theoretical framework for this study.

2.1 Commercial Internet history

As mentioned earlier in the introduction (see p. 8), the Internet was created partly by the U.S. military, the academic world and finally the scientists of Cern (Alasilta, 2002). Commercially the Internet got its wings through the concept of the world-wide web created by Tim Berners-Lee in 1989. The biggest transformation from a net to the www was the switch from a dull text based environment into a network that could handle images (Robinson, 2000). Also, at the end of the 1980's the first high-speed connections were established between the supercomputers of those days (Steinbock, 2000) that made the transmission of images possible. At that time, with the visual possibilities, the Internet started to draw the attention of marketing professionals, but it still took almost a

decade for a real, open and unlimited Internet to evolve to a point where it could really be used for marketing purposes.

According to Netcraft (Netcraft, 2009) there were over 231 million websites in the World Wide Web in April 2009. Out of these over 200 million hostnames approximately 80 million are active, which means that there has been interaction during the surveyed month. Netcraft is an UK based Internet Services Company that has tracked the Internet development since 1995, and from the graph below the growth and its scope can clearly be seen.



Picture 1: Total Sites Across All Domains August 1995 - April 2009 (Netcraft, 2009)

As the Internet has taken giant leaps forward in this millennium the pace does not seem to decelerate: according to the latest Netcraft survey (2009) the amount of websites was increased by six million new hostnames in the last month (March 2009 to April 2009).

As the Internet as a whole has been growing more or less steadily since its creation, marketing online has followed the example by developing eventually but yet rapidly. In some ways the Internet as a marketing channel managed to surprise some people while others foresaw the potential and upcoming breakthrough all the time. The latter group has described the era from the 1960's to the 21st century as a flux that flowed from the

4P's through transitional and current marketplace to the modern interactive markets (Steinbock, 2000). In the beginning of the millennium many researchers predicted that through the expansion of the World Wide Web and the Internet, marketing will become easier, more interactive, quicker and most of all give more and more control to the consumer (ibid, p. 26). Through the rapid growth in social media and all the time widening bandwidths all of these predictions have in a way or another come true. Steinbock (2000), however, points out that both worlds exist and prosper side by side today: traditional marketing is still up and running while consumers have a widening variety of choices on what contents to consume online and more importantly when and how to be reached by a marketer. Passive masses consuming newspapers and commercial television live peacefully with the digitally attuned consumers, who almost live their lives in the digitalized reality of the Internet. According to Steinbock (2000), no one really knows whether it is just a transition towards a fully digitalized marketing reality or a lasting state of marketing for the time being.

2.2 Company websites

Company websites – or brand websites – can be used for many different purposes. The most common uses are either to communicate with the target group or to commit the users to the brand (De Pelsmacker, Geuens and Van Der Bergh, 2001). A company can also have a lively dialogue with the consumers through their website, which also enables them to collect user data for marketing and research purposes.

Geissler (2006) also suggests that the content on a company website strengthens the relationship between the company and the website visitor. However, there is a fine line between how much information is enough and how much is too much. In his research Geissler (2006) found out that information can easily be overflowing, which can leave a consumer feeling annoyed and confused. On the other hand the users might get frustrated when they cannot find even the basic information on a company website. Thus he reminds that the company must consider carefully how much information is enough and what can be left out when building a website because this will then have an

effect on the attitudes, buying intentions and attention holders of a website visitor, when they come across the site.

Alasilta (2002) points out that every website and a single webpage within it must have its own purpose, which helps to determine what is offered on the site, to which the site is targeted to and how the supply is executed. At the same time the role of the website within the corporate communication strategy should be defined. Alasilta (2002) also argues that the knowledge of the so called internet grammar underpins the site's readability and skim value. These properties can also be backed up by choosing the right active words, links, activated graphics and making sure the vocabulary used is coherent.

In Chapter 1 (see p.13) company websites and their communicational purposes were briefly discussed. In addition to the uses brought up in the introduction (Truell et al., 2005, p. 2), i.e. dissemination of company information, maintenance of investor relations, collection of customer data and reinforcement of company identity, company websites can also enhance the company's competitiveness and improve its image (Hill & White, 2000).

Despite the many opportunities the Internet brings to company communication, it does not come without challenges. One of the biggest challenges according to Truell et al. (2005) is to define a target group for a company website. This definition can sometimes be crucial for website success, as through it the company can define the way their customers get information and move around the world wide web. Alasilta (2002) also pointed this out as one of the cornerstones of successful online communication: in addition to what to communicate, the company should also know who they are talking to. Still, the heterogeneity of company websites is the reality today, and Esrock and Liechty (2000, p. 330) remind us that "the corporate site must meet the needs of each audience without simultaneously alienating other groups". They also add, that companies can take part in and encourage their customers to a direct discussion on different issues they see as important. Thus, the Internet presents a challenge to

traditional forms of communication, but at the same time it imposes a dynamic format for presenting corporate information (Truell et al., 2005).

2.2.1 Company homepage

As mentioned in the introduction, a homepage is the front page of a website. The homepage is the first contact the visitor has with the website and thus it has a crucial role of making the first impression of the company (Svinhufvud 2005, 13). If the homepage fails in this task, the visitor might not go further into the website or might even leave and never come back (Geissler 2006, p. 69). Kortetjärvi-Nurmi, Kuronen and Ollikainen (2003) argue that as to website functionality and ability to create interest, consumers are more impatient online than with more traditional texts: if they cannot find what they are looking for quickly enough, they will move on to another site. This is a real challenge to both technical solutions and content choices. From the technical point of view the logic of navigation, on-site search function, the speed of opening the site and even the font size can be crucial when it comes to getting hold of the consumer.

Askehave and Nielsen (2003, p.19) describe a homepage as being “a condensation of the most important information on the site” that serves as a scannable introduction to the site. They point out that a homepage is not required to provide a complete overview of the site, but a pertinent selection of topics to guide the readers further to the information they are looking for. Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2003) remind us that when creating content to a website as a whole, one should remember that a web text is different from other types of texts. They further argue that web texts are a separate niche altogether. Hypertext is probably the most distinguishing characteristic of a web text, as with hypertext the reader can freely choose what, when and in which order to read. This fundamental difference between web texts and traditional forms of text is most commonly realized by links. Askehave and Nielsen (2003, p.25) divide links to structural and associative links. The former refers to the hierarchical organization of information on the website, i.e. what should come first and what should come last and

the latter can be defined through association, as what the reader most likely would like to know more about.

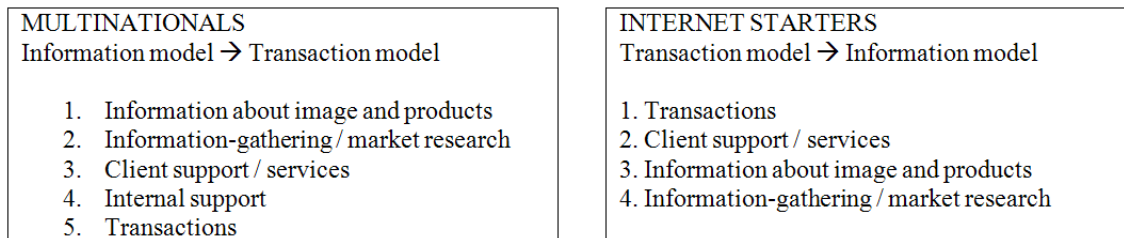
Schmidt (2004) has identified 7 different types of links that all manage different things and should be maintained separately. Internal or on-site links point within the site whereas outbound links point beyond the site the link is on. An inbound link points to the site in question from another site while an inbound bookmark refers to the links that are stored on a single PC. These first four are the most commonly used and thus the easiest to understand. The most complex ones are software-embedded inbound links that Schmidt defines as follows: a site-specific software-embedded inbound link is a link that is coded into software, for example a product fact sheet. A non-site-specific software-embedded inbound link is related to files that exist on a website for specific reasons, for example a common robots.txt that is usually included for search engine robots. The last type of links Schmidt mentions is an offline-link, that refers to links that can be found beyond digital environment, for example URL-addresses on business cards, advertising materials or user guides.

Askehave and Nielsen (2003) looked at homepages in their research and divided the most common links into two categories: generic and specific links. Generic links support the homepage's introductory role and provide access to the main topics of the website. Generic links are commonly situated at the navigation bar where they can easily be accessed and presented without any further explanation of relevance besides the noun link is expressed with. Specific links are just the opposite: they are usually accompanied by a brief description on the subject matter that explain the relevance of the link and give a reader an option to find out more by following the link.

2.3 Elements of company website

The specific criteria that may make a difference between a successful and a less successful website have been discussed. When starting to evaluate company websites, though, the first action should be to determine what kind of a site is in question. Quelch and Klein (1996) have divided site characteristics into two main types: the ones that

evolve from information model to transaction model and those that do the evolution the other way around. Traditionally large multinational companies have started their web presence by posting basic information and brand image building material online, but with time they have brought more interactive possibilities and transactions to their sites. On the other end, smaller transaction-focused companies have often started off online by bringing their services to the web, and later added more information on the site to build their brand image. The two types of website development are presented in Picture 2 below.



Picture 2: Development cycles for websites on the net, (Quelch and Klein, 1996, p. 62)

Hoffman and Novak (1997) present another way of categorizing websites by dividing them into traffic control sites and destination sites. The former is built to direct users to other websites, which basically refer to search engines and portal sites, and the latter represents the sites the former direct to. As Hoffman and Novak (1997) point out, a destination site as a concept is very broad, and thus it is further divided into presence sites, online storefronts and content sites. Presence sites are built to reach a broader market or support brand awareness and image. They are very basic sites with limited interactive elements, basically virtual reminders of the company and its products. Online storefronts give control to the consumer by providing traditional catalogue possibilities on the web. By having this kind of a website, a company can reduce transaction costs while building customer relationships and creating emotional commitment to the users. Content site refers to a site that offers time-sensitive or on-time information. This kind of a site is often hosted by a medium that provides stock market data or other current and quickly changing information.

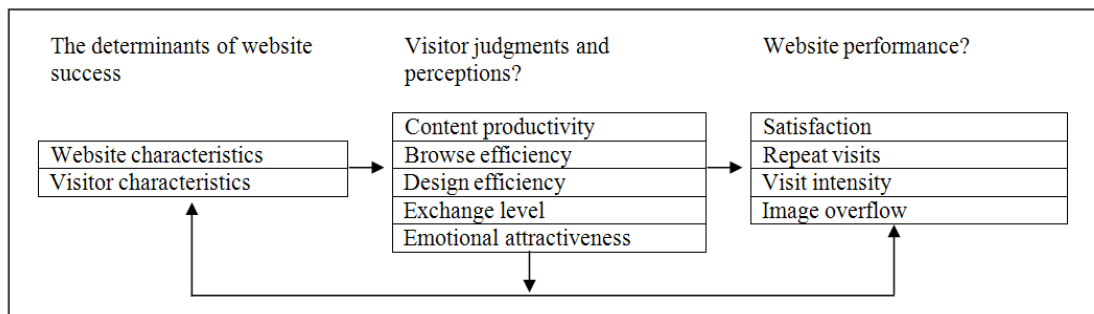
After determining the site character, De Pelsmacker et al. (2001, pp. 422-423) suggest that a website evaluator can move forward to the other factor that is often used to evaluate a website: visitor characteristics. It is relevant to know what the core target group of the website is and what they look for from the site. De Pelsmacker et al. (2001) state that there certainly is a difference in the profiles of the users of a food producer site and a university site. They argue that the users' knowledge and experience of the Internet reflects to his/her expectations and preferences, which in turn have an effect to the perceived value of a website and further on to user satisfaction.

Thus, this perceived value and satisfaction of websites can be reviewed by taking these two – site and visitor characteristics – into account. A Belgian online research and consulting agency InSites has built a model, which presents website performance (InSites, 1996; as presented in De Pelsmacker et al., 2001, pp. 422-423). The model includes five core elements:

1. Content productivity	- Is the site providing the right content? - Is the information sufficient, relevant, up-to-date and answering all the visitors' questions?
2. Browse efficiency	- Is the site easy to navigate? - Is the homepage guidance performing well? - Is it possible to find your way to the right information in a few clicks?
3. Design efficiency	- Are the website layout, style and design appreciated? - Are all the icons and hyperlinks interpreted in the right way?
4. Exchange level	- Is the site using the interactive characteristics of the internet? - Is it providing personalized information or interactive calculation or simulation tools?
5. Emotional attractiveness	- Is the website overall considered as amusing, entertaining, captivating or is it viewed as dull?

Table 1: Five core elements that explain website performance. (InSites 2001; as presented in De Pelsmacker et al., 2001, pp. 423-424)

Besides the critical factors in Table 1, websites can also be measured by mapping out customer satisfaction and the amount and frequency of re-visits or looking into the site's effect on the company image. The whole model is presented in the picture below:



Picture 3: The InSites website performance cycle, (www.insites.be; as presented in De Pelsmacker et al., 2001, p. 424)

2.4 Genre approach online

Professional genres have been studied since the 1980's, mainly in applied linguistics. The traditional focus of genre research has been in written text or speech, but since the digital revolution and the explosive growth of the World Wide Web new studies have emerged with the Internet as the focus of study. Askehave and Nielsen (2003) challenged the traditional genre theory by creating a concept of web-mediated genres, which I will use for further analysis of the chosen web sites and more specifically for the homepages of the sites.

2.4.1 Genre theory in general

Swales (1990) built a three-level genre model based on the definition below that has laid ground to the traditional genre model.

“A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style.” (Swales, 1990, p. 58)

In the Swales model communicative purpose is realized by move structure that is realized by rhetorical strategies (Askehave and Nielsen, 2003, p. 4). The communicative purpose refers to the purpose of the communicative events that is intended to be met

with the genre at hand. These purposes need to be shared and the genre-texts in question cannot be isolated from each other (ibid). If we consider a fairytale as a genre, the usual communicative purposes of them are to entertain and educate. Thus many traditional fairytales have a lesson to be learned hidden among the entertaining story. A move structure can be defined as the way genres fulfill their communicative purpose. In other words it is the structure of the genre and it is usually based on conventionalized internal practices of each discourse community (ibid, p. 5). If we continue with the fairytale example, the structure is usually constructed by starting with the presentations of location and characters, then building up some tension which is culminated by a conflict or a climax after which the balance is again restored with a happy ending. This structure defines the fairytale as representative of that genre and each phase or a plot change is a move – as building the move structure of the genre.

As there now are definitions for what is said (communicative purpose) and how the message is structured (move structure), the obvious last step is to answer the question about the style of the message. Rhetorical strategies refer to the form the communicative intention is realized – in other words, it is the way the message is built both verbally and visually (ibid, p. 6). Referring to the fairytale example, the opening “Once upon a time...” is a rhetorical strategy to let the reader know from the very beginning that we are now dealing with the fairytale genre.

Genres evolve slowly and it takes years for a discourse community to agree upon a conventional way of communicating or responding to new situations. Thus it took almost a decade for web-mediated genres to be acknowledged and researched. According to Askehave and Nielsen (2003, p. 8) copying and handbooks on web design and writing are some of the cornerstones behind web-mediated genres. And when dealing with these genres, one should remember that the web is constantly changing but also that webpages are more complex than traditional paper documents (Santini, 2007, p. 2). In no means are web-mediated genres a straightforward issue – on the contrary: it is not enough that the World Wide Web is fluid and almost alive, but the texts on the Internet are rarely composed of one single element of traditional genres, but a complex

and constantly changing mix of them. Santini (2007, p. 8) suggests that a broad characterization of genres is used when dealing with the web environment, and defines genre as follows: “genres are named communication artifacts characterized by conventions, raising expectations, showing hybridism or individualization, and undergoing evolution.”

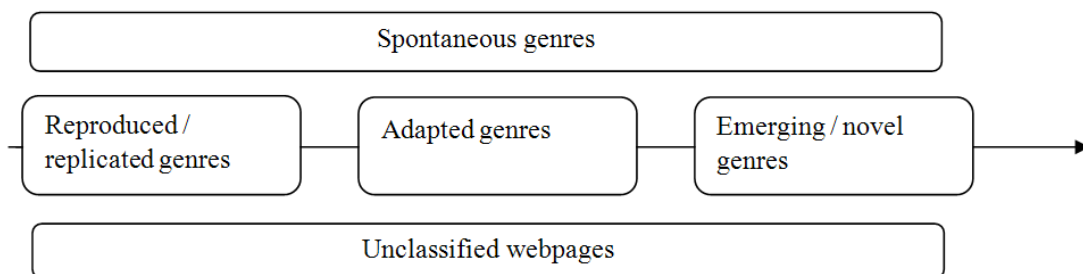
2.4.2 Homepage as a genre

According to Askehave and Nielsen (2003) a homepage has two overall functions: to introduce the content of a website to the user and to act as a gateway to the site. Apart from this introductory role, they identify two other functions a homepage fulfills: creating and maintaining the image of the homepage owner and presenting news. By all these means the homepage can be defined as “the top-level document of a website”. Askehave and Nielsen argue, however, that a homepage has its roots in the communication history: it can be traced back to, for example, a newspaper front page or the introductory parts of a speech that lay down the agenda of the forthcoming presentation. Thus a homepage is regarded as the first touch to the website or as a content indicator for what the site is all about.

Probably the biggest challenge with web-mediated genres comes from the heterogeneity of webpages: the Internet includes pages that could easily be analyzed as a genre, while at the same time there are sites filled with different genres and sites that constitute no apparent genre to be recognized or classified. According to Santini (2007) the frequency of intertwining verbal and visual elements makes this kind of diversity possible. She (ibid, p. 2) further explains the phenomenon as follows “web pages have a visual organization that allows the inclusion of several functions or several texts with different communicative purposes in a single document.” In other words, webpages can have several non-related messages and texts on one document, that still make a solid whole as a web-mediated text. Also the visual elements (pictures, video clips, fonts etc.) can have many different forms within one webpage, without undermining its status as a document. Thus Santini (ibid) calls webpages “containers of multiple texts” – which

basically means, that webpages should not be artificially torn apart, because in this case the whole really is the sum of its parts.

A homepage has been one of the first forms of web mediated texts that have gotten recognized as a genre (Askehave and Nielsen, 2003). The reasons behind this recognition are simple: homepage is one of the first forms of web expression and presence and thus has generated a form and a content that has now almost become conventionalized. Askehave and Nielsen (2003) also point out that the homepage has no clear parallel outside the web, and thus it is purely a web-generated genre. Other genres recognized from the Internet early on were brochure, resource, catalogue, search engine and game (Shepherd and Watters1999), as they all “serve communicative purposes unique to the web” (Crowston et al. 2000, p. 9) and represent different levels of functionality. Genre research in the Internet emerged during the early 2000’s and now the web-mediated genre repertoire includes reproduced or replicated genres, adapted genres, emergent or novel genres with spontaneous genres and unclassified webpages hovering on the outskirts of the genre definitions (Santini, 2007 p. 4).



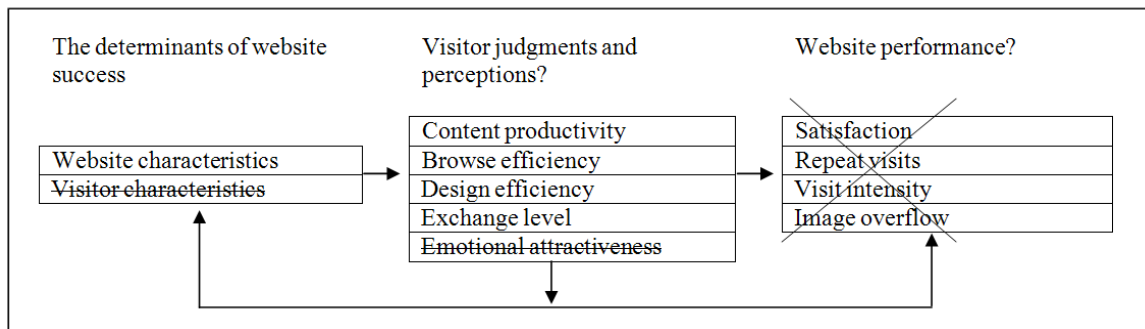
Picture 4: Genre evolution on the web (Santini, 2007 p. 5)

The pace of web genre evolution has been described in somewhat contradictory terms, since for example Rehm (2006) describes it as a slow-going process, while, among others, Shepherd and Watters (2004) portray web genre definition as “trying to hit a moving target” due to the rapid changes in genre repertoire caused by the functionality of the new medium. This brings us back to the fact that if webpages are heterogeneous and constantly changing, so are genres. As Orlikowski and Yates (1994, p. 25) have

pointed out, genres tend to overlap and mix which makes it really difficult to draw clear lines between them – and the same applies to web-mediated genres.

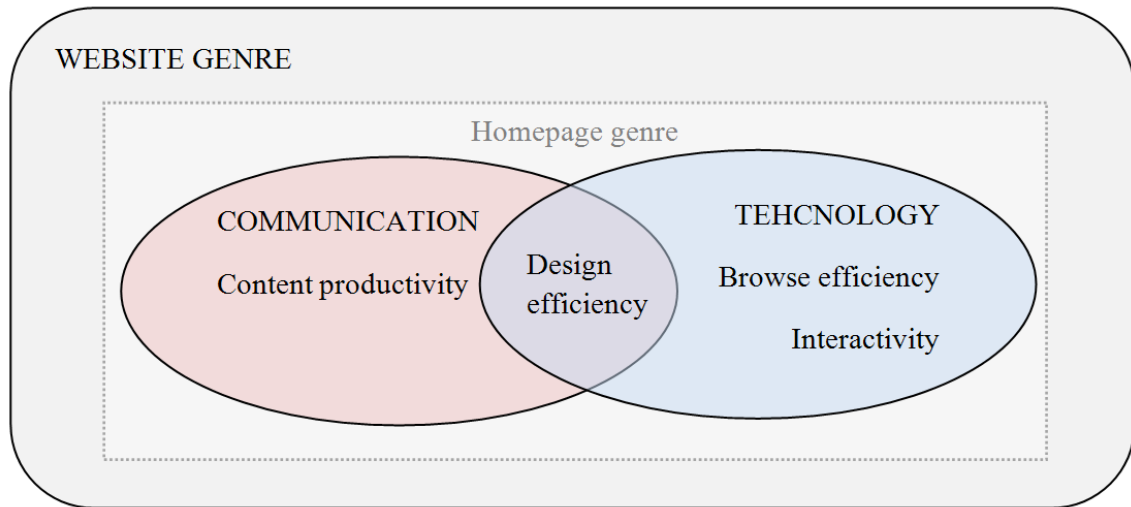
2.5 Theoretical framework

To establish a logical foundation for this study a framework needed to be created based on the presented overview of earlier research on online genre theory and website performance. The framework is based on the website performance cycle (See p. 23), but since this study is all qualitative and no visitor- or user tracking or surveys were performed, some of its elements had to be left out as shown in the picture below.



Picture 5: Website performance cycle, modified for the purposes of the present study.

To enable a deeper analysis, the genre theory has to be included in the framework. But as mentioned above, genres and more specifically web-mediated ones are in a constant flux and thus it is the website as a genre that affects the homepage structure in both the communicative and the technological sense. Web-mediated genres are simultaneously limited and enabled by technology and communication. These aspects turn the picture of the website performance cycle as follows:



Picture 6: Theoretical framework of the study

In the framework the elements of the performance cycle have been categorized by their contribution to a homepage: content productivity and the relevance of the material on the site are most dependent on the messages the company wants to communicate while browse efficiency and the levels of interaction provided by a page have more to do with technological issues. The design-element is situated in the intersection of these fields because it cannot really be unambiguously categorized under either title since it contributes equally to both. At the same time design is enabled by both communication and technology, and thus this dialog cannot be overlooked in this study.

A homepage is always located within a particular website, which means that the restrictions and possibilities generated by technology and communication also both limit and enable the website genre as a whole. As this thesis concentrates on the homepage of a website, the homepage genre is emphasized in the analysis of the structural and communicational elements. Nevertheless, it all boils down to the website and the online genre theory. None of the particles included in the theoretical framework should be investigated separately, yet they all have a relevant, independent role at any webpage.

In practice the presented theoretical framework gives tools for this two-folded analysis reported in this thesis. I will look at the content and the design of the chosen homepages

from the communicative point-of-view: what is said and how. First of all, homepage is a gateway to a website and it is generated to communicate this in a relevant and efficient way. Secondly, a homepage is constructed of a series of bits, pixels and hundreds of pages of code that is built to communicate with a computer – not a human being. As technological advancements have enabled a rapid development of website outlooks and generations, at the same time communication on the websites has boiled down to minimalism. Thus, lastly, communication on a webpage is technology and vice versa – and what it comes down to is currently known as web-mediated genre theory and online grammar.

In the analysis (see Chapter 4) I have adapted the Insites definitions to the following four (see p. 22) elements and modified them to fit the presented theoretical framework as follows:

	COMMUNICATION	TECHNOLOGY
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the site provide the right content? - Is the information sufficient, relevant and up-to-date? 	
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the website layout, style and design coherent? - Are all the visual elements relevant and unambiguous? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are all the technical possibilities utilized in a relevant way?
Browsing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the site easy to navigate? - Is the homepage guidance performing well? - Is it possible to find your way to the right information in a few clicks?
Interaction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the site using the interactive characteristics of the internet? - Is it providing personalized information or interactive calculation or simulation tools?

Table 2: The four elements analyzed in the study

These are the questions used in the analysis of the case homepages and the active structures behind them. And along this outline, I will also identify and assort the elements present at my case homepages and define the roles they play on a company website, thus generating a business webpage genre and its structures.

3. Methodology and data

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the empirical research conducted for the analysis of commercial homepages. The chapter begins with descriptions of the chosen method and the selection and description of the case homepages. A discussion of the trustworthiness of the study will end this chapter.

3.1 Qualitative research: structural examination within the genre approach

Qualitative research is traditionally referred to as the study of human behavior from their own perspective, with the ambition to understand it and give it a form or figure (Denzin et al., 2000). It is characteristic to a qualitative study that no numerical or statistical data is available, but the subject itself is densely described. When compared to quantitative methodology where an extensive sample is aimed for, qualitative research can sometimes be taken unnecessarily lightly (ibid). But in reality qualitative research is a dense slice of the empirical world while quantitative is usually aiming to large sample-sizes – and both methodologies support each other in the scientific world.

This study is conducted by using qualitative methods, more specifically structural analysis within the genre framework. The theoretical framework presented in the previous chapter will guide us through the whole study. Still, trustworthiness of this study is discussed later on in this chapter.

3.2 Selection of webpages

The selection of websites, and more closely the homepages, was done by the criteria already discussed in the introduction (see p. 4). When starting to plan this study the criteria was to look at large enough sites that also have an international aspect to them. The reason behind this was the original thought of integrating a country specific dimension to the analysis along with the structural and communicational aspects. Soon it became apparent, that “the cultural aspect” would most likely blow the whole process

out of proportion and throw the original ideas aside by bringing too many moving parts to the table. Thus the focus of the study was sharpened to include just structure and communication but the already selected set of web sites remained.

With the criteria described above I decided to select car manufacturers as the main limitation primarily due to the fact that most of the car brands are genuinely global and their websites can be found in almost every country. A secondary parameter narrowing the selection was the fact that the chosen makes of cars are manufactured in different parts of the world, which gave me an opportunity to widen the pallet in that sense too. The last factor in the equation was the general stereotyping of the car manufacturers by their customer positioning. Through the earlier mentioned filters I ended up selecting the three car brands: All-American Ford, German luxury BMW and Japanese everyman Toyota. And despite the fact that culture was later dropped from the list of the factors investigated, I still looked at the car brands in an international scope but concentrated specially on two different contexts: on their Finnish and American homepages. The reason I ended up with the two countries had mainly to do with two things: language and geographical location. Firstly, to guarantee a competitive and fair analysis I had to choose the case pages among the ones that were constructed in a language I master. Secondly, to restore the chance of noticeable variation I wanted to review two pages as far from each other geographically as possible. Thus, the selected countries emerged. Despite the focus on the two countries, other sites of the car companies were observed to gain a more thorough and coherent picture of the position of online communication in the corporate strategy. All three companies had international templates in use to some extent, which could not have been spotted without the scanning of the sites beyond the selected six.

3.3 Data collection

The ambitious attempt to analyze the entire websites of the car companies was rejected at an early stage. Modern websites are so complex, multi-leveled and heterogeneously spread out that the amount of work required for a worthwhile result would have been

excessive. Thus, the decision to concentrate solely on the homepages of the chosen car manufacturers was not difficult to make.

The screenshots of the homepages were taken on March 25th 2009, after which the analysis was done mainly through the captured pictures. The decision to conduct the study with screenshots was made simply to avoid the effects of the dynamic and constantly changing Internet: a homepage visited yesterday can be completely different today. Live pages were used in the analysis to recover some functions and determine references of links. The main analysis was conducted based on the screenshots, which can be found in the appendices (see appendix p. 71-79).

3.4 Description of Data

In the next subchapters I will go through the selected pages in detail and describe the features and elements present there. Firstly, I will take a coherent look on the situation globally on every account, after which the country-specific case sites will be gone through in more detail.

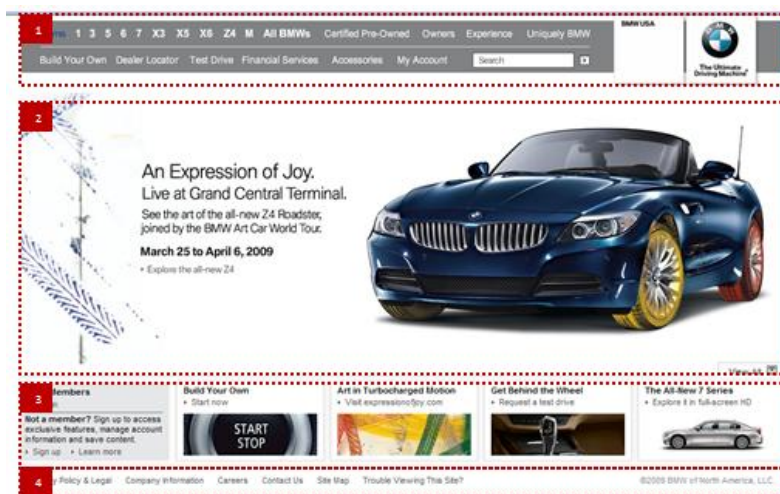
3.4.1 BMW

After investigating several different BMW sites, it became apparent that they have a global company template in use. The BMW template consists of a few elements of which a gray navigation bar at the top of the page containing generic links to different BMW models and other country specific information is probably the most distinguishing one. The navigation bar is constructed of two rows of links: the top row presents all the different models, market for a pre-owned BMW, owner links and BMW experiences. The second row is more localized with the dealer contact information, financial services and several, locally relevant links. The navigation bar reaches to two white boxes at the top right-hand corner of the page of which the first states the BMW country in question and the second contains the BMW-logo and slogan.

The template also places a large picture under the header, which varies from country to country depending on the on-going campaigning and the existing selection of different

BMW models. Under the picture there is some variation depending on the country – this variation is limited to two, though. There are either five boxes containing internal links and pictures or two narrower columns containing six combinations of small pictures and internal, specific links with a third, wider column with a quick links-drop menu and a picking of an on-going campaign. At the bottom of each page is a row with generic links to the company information, recruiting news, site map and other such issues.

3.4.1.1 www.bmwusa.com



Picture 7: www.bmwusa.com, 25.3.2009

On the US site the large picture (2) presents BMW Z4 Roadster with a campaign message announcing that the BMW Art Car World Tour is at Grand Central Terminal for the next two weeks. When entering the site the main frame presents a short film of BMW’s art-campaign Expression of Joy, in which an artist was given a giant canvas, paints and a BMW Z4 to create a work of art. The idea behind this short intro is the fact that the art generated last November will also be showcased in the Grand Central Terminal.

The American BMW-homepage (see Picture 7) follows the above global template with a gray navigation bar (1) with the logo and English slogan “The Ultimate Driving Machine” over a large picture of the latest

BMW-model. In the US

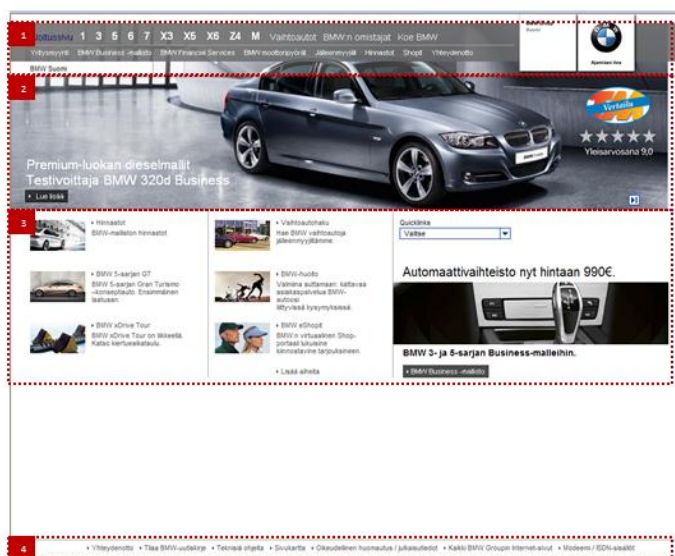
After the animated intro the picture of a dark blue convertible on a white background remains static. The picture of the car is on the right and the frame is pulled together with some blue-painted tire tracks on the left edge. The text is located between these visual objects and spiced up with a specific link to Z4 page.

The American BMW-site uses the former of the two bottom-formats (3): under the large picture there are five boxes that present internal links to BMW-member services, customization services, the Expression of Joy-campaign page, test drive request form and a presentation of a new BMW 7 series.

Below the boxes are generic links (4) to the BMW privacy policy and legal, company information, recruiting adverts, contact information, site map and help for those who cannot view the site for a technical reason. These links are written with a gray-shaded, small font, so unless a reader is looking for them specifically they can easily escape unnoticed.

The gray navigation bar consists of two rows as in all BMW sites globally. In the American site customization is present everywhere which can be noticed from the more localized second row of the navigation bar as it announces with the first link from the left “Build Your Own” and ends the six-link row with “My Account”.

3.4.1.2 www.bmw.fi



Picture 8: www.bmw.fi, 25.3.2009

The Finnish BMW-homepage (see Picture 8) hosts a 320d Business-model in the large picture (2). Two sliding pictures of a gray car rotate in the frame: one from forward sideways and another from behind. The reason for selecting this specific model to the large picture is also apparent: it won the esteemed comparison test of a

Finnish technology magazine Tekniikan Maailma of which there is a logo on the right side of the picture.

Unlike the American counterpart, the Finnish BMW-site uses the latter of the two optional bottom-page formats (3). Thus, there are six specific internal links with pictures to price lists, BMW 5-series GT selection, BMW xDrive Tour presenting their 4-wheel drive range, pre-owned market, servicing information and e-shopping possibilities. The third, wider column includes the quick links-drop menu and an offer of automatic transmission to BMW business-models.

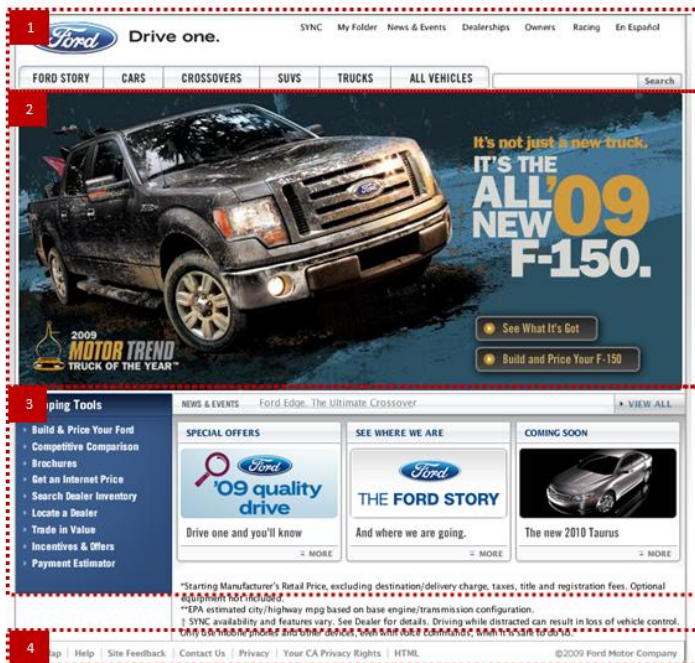
The bottom-row (4) on the Finnish homepage consists of contact information, BMW-newsletter subscription, technical instructions, site map, legal notifications and publishing information, link to all BMW Group sites and an option for readers with slower internet connection.

The Finnish navigation bar (1) is built in the same manner as on all BMW-sites with different models, pre-owned, owners and experiences on the top-row. The more localized second row has eight generic links: business sales, BMW business models, financial services, motorcycles, dealer information, price lists, accessories shops and contacting form.

3.4.2 Ford

Unlike BMW, Ford does not have a global template in use, but instead territorial sharing can be noticed. Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Italian and French Ford-pages have the same structure as the Finnish one, while British, Irish and German Ford-dealers a different online format. North American Ford-sites have their own look and structure, which I will go through more thoroughly in the following chapter. The other thing separating American and European Ford-looks is the slogan: in Europe consumers are told to “Feel the difference” while Americans “Drive one”. Thus an assumption can be made, that Ford in Europe is somewhat different than it is in its home country.

3.4.2.1 www.fordvehicles.com



Picture 9: www.fordvehicles.com, 25.3.2009

is structured somewhat traditionally: the Ford-logo and slogan are at the top-left corner of the page accompanied with generic text-links on the left and underlined by a gray-shaded navigation bar consisting of more generic links (1). The navigation bar is constructed of internal links within the Ford-site, as the links refer to the Ford story and the subsections of different model categories (cars, crossovers, SUV's or trucks). On the other hand, the links at the top-right of the page refer to special features, dealer information, news, racing activities and Ford-owners own pages. The user can also switch the language of the page to Spanish at the top-right-corner.

The page is dominated by a rustic picture of a new but muddy F-150 truck that is accompanied by the relevant marketing lines and links (2). The text appears with a simple animation when entering the page, after which the picture as a whole stays static. A reference to the 2009 Motor Trend "Truck of The Year" award, that the showcased model won, is also included in the picture.

The American Ford's URL-address differs slightly from the standard, as the plain dot-com-address is reserved to the Ford Motor Company as a whole. So, to keep the case pages comparable, I chose to analyze the page that displays Ford vehicles as it carries the same functions as its Finnish counterpart.

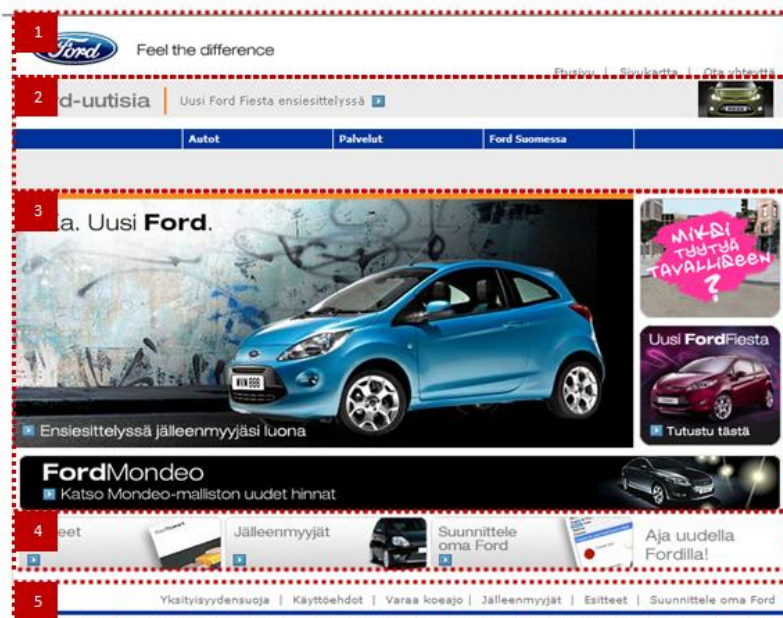
The American Ford-homepage (see Picture 9) is

The bottom-section of the page is dedicated to links and further information (3). Below the picture is a ticker presenting news and events – in practice there are four headlines of novelties or on-going projects in rotation that are also specific links to the presented news. A dark blue box on the left side of the page is showcasing Ford shopping tools. This sidebar contains links to customization and comparison tools, brochures, dealer inventory and location search, payment estimator, incentives, offers and several value and price calculators. Beside the blue sidebar and below the news-ticker is a row of three light-colored boxes presenting special offers, the Ford-story and soon out-coming novelties. In the case page, the special offer-box is dedicated to Ford’s driving quality and the tests supporting the claim and coming soon-box showcases the 2010 Taurus. The Ford Story is a more fixed element than the other two, so it most likely remains very much the same through time.

The page is outlined at the bottom by a row of generic text-links (4) to the site map, help, site feedback, contact information, privacy policy and viewing options.

3.4.2.2 www.ford.fi

The Finnish Ford-homepage (see Picture 10) follows the Central European template that



Picture 10: www.ford.fi, 25.3.2009

consists of distinct elements: Ford-logo and slogan at the top with generic links to site map and contact information (1), blue-gray navigation bar (2), a body of pictures (3) and generic visual links (4) to brochures, dealer information and a customization toolkit. At

the bottom of the whole page is a lace-up of common and often legally required links (5): privacy policy, terms of use, booking of a test drive, dealer information, brochures and the customization tool.

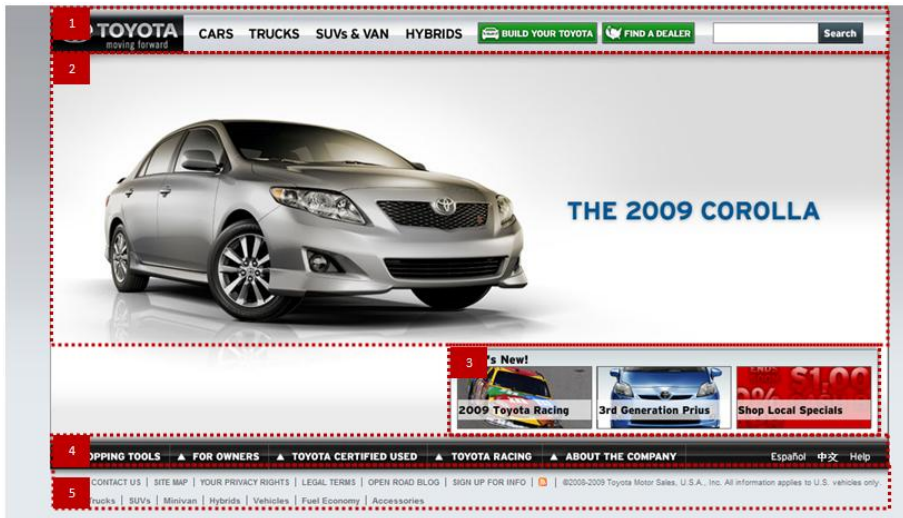
The navigation bar (2) consists of rotating text-links to Ford-News and static links to car models, services and Finnish Ford imports. An orange strip separates the navigation bar from a body of pictures (3) that is dominated by a large take on a blue Ford Ka on the left side of the page. On the Ka's left side there are two smaller picture boxes one upon the other featuring a light-blue Ford Kuga in a rotating picture with a promotional message "Miksi tyytyä tavalliseen?" ("why settle for an ordinary?") and a static picture of a purple Ford Fiesta. The visual element is completed with a wide banner of Mondeo-collection below the mentioned units.

The page is framed at the bottom with light gray boxes that contain visual generic links (4) to brochures, dealer information and customization toolkit. The boxes tint to the same shade of gray the navigation bar uses. Generic text-links to privacy policy, terms of use etc. are located below the boxes and those are underlined with a dark blue strip that gives a strong frame to the page as a whole by tying it together with the same color that is already visible in the navigation bar.

3.4.3 Toyota

Toyota is even more fractured in web design than Ford since there are almost as many homepage designs as there are countries with Toyota available. The Finnish Toyota-site does have siblings in the central Europe, as at least German, Danish and French Toyota-sites share a template with the Finnish dealers. But when going to Toyota's home the lay-out of www.toyota.jp is totally unique compared to other Toyota-sites worldwide. And the heterogeneity continues in North America, as The Canadian site is something totally different than our case site from the US. The case sites will be described in further detail in the following chapters.

3.4.3.1 www.toyota.com



Picture 11: www.toyota.com, 25.3.2009

The American Toyota-site (see Picture 11) has a very gray overlook with a gray 2009 Corolla presented in a static picture in the middle (2) and different

shades of gray in all navigational elements. The top navigation bar (1) is constructed so that on the left end of it is Toyota-logo and slogan (moving forward) on a dark gray background and at the other end of the bar a search-function. Between these ends there are generic links to different car types (trucks, SUV's, vans and hybrids) on a light gray background and a dealer locator and Toyota customizer as separate, green buttons. The links on the gray background are actually a bit more than links: they are extending quick-links that show the existing selection when the cursor is placed on them.

Below the large picture there are three on-site visual links under a heading "What's new?" (3). Novelties during the case period were the Toyota racing team, 3rd generation Prius and local specials, which referred to localized discounts and special price campaigns. These links also have functionality, as they transform from a generic to a specific link when the cursor hits on them.

The bottom navigations on the Toyota-site are two-folded: firstly there is a framing dark gray bottom navigation bar giving the page some posture and secondly there are general generic links below it. On the bottom navigation bar there are generic links to shopping tools, owner pages, certified used Toyotas, Toyota racing and company information.

This navigation bar has similar functionality as its top-page counterpart: by placing the cursor on a link an extending quick-menu pops up from the bar.

The text-links below the bottom navigation bar are traditional generic links to contact information, site map, privacy policy, legal terminology, news letter, RSS-feed and a company blog. There is also a second row of these generic links that is dedicated to the model selection and Toyota accessories.

3.4.3.2 www.toyota.fi



Picture 12: www.toyota.fi, 25.3.2009

The Finnish Toyota-homepage (see Picture 12), and more specifically the central European template is clearly two-folded: the top of the page is dedicated to the brand and the visual appearance of Toyota while the bottom provides a comprehensive selection of links to each Toyota model, servicing, guarantees, recruiting, education, safety and so forth.

On the Finnish Toyota homepage the company logo can be found from the top left corner (1). A gray navigation bar below the logo and the white space hosting it consists of links to all Toyota models available in Finland. The Finnish page has a similar property as its American counterpart, as the navigation bar extends to showcase the

model in question in more detail when the cursor is placed on top of the bar. On the right top corner are first a quick-link to the homepage and a phone number to Toyota info (1). These both run through the site, which means that the mentioned links can be found on every page of the site at the same spot. Below the site-through links are generic links to four main categories of the site: collection, services, innovations and company information.

The main picture of the site (2) is dynamic and consists of four different pictures of four different Toyota models: Auris, RAV4, Corolla Verso and Corolla Diesel. All pictures in the rotation include text that anchors them to the Toyota collection and tempt consumers with discounts and giveaways.

Below the main picture (3) the space is divided into four columns, of which the first three from left are specific internal links to an offer-page concerning the weekend show 28.-29.3., to a RAV4-related competition page and to an AYGO page. The fourth column (4) consists of links only, and it presents generic internal links to test drive bookings, contact information, newsletter subscription, brochures, accessories and certified used Toyota's.

As mentioned, the bottom of the page is made up of a wide variety of internal links. The text links are typed in white font on a gray background and grouped according to their purposes: the links in the first column refer to all the different Toyota models, the second column links point to price lists, customization services, used Toyota markets and online brochures while the third set of links is steering towards all different services Toyota offers, including insurance and leasing. The last two columns are short and simple: they both include three headings and provide general information on Toyota, their innovation and the possibilities they offer in general.

3.5 Analysis of trustworthiness

When doing a quantitative study it is common to evaluate its validity, reliability, generalisability and objectivity. But when dealing with a qualitative approach the

corresponding set of evaluative dimensions is blurred (Sinkovics, Penz and Ghauri, 2008). Sinkovics et al. suggest that in qualitative research scientists could use terms credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability instead, and as parallel criteria to the traditional quantitative evaluations. Morrow (2005) matched the terms as credibility corresponding to internal validity, transferability to external validity, dependability to reliability and confirmability to objectivity. She points out, though, that these correspondences should not to be taken totally one-to-one, as they would accomplish exactly the same goals as their corresponding counterparts in quantitative research. But definitely this can be taken as a guideline when assessing the trustworthiness of a qualitative research.

3.5.1 Credibility and transferability

In quantitative research validity is used to evaluate the extent to which a study fulfills its purpose and analyzes what it was supposed to do. In other words, the empirical research should measure the exact issues they were planned to measure (Yin 1989). However, validity does not require objective truth but rather an interpretation in accordance with the social world (Kvale, 1996, 41). Validity can be divided into internal, external and concept validity.

In qualitative research internal validity corresponds with credibility, as it requires unity between theoretical conclusions, concepts and empirical data. In other words, credibility is achieved if the connection between theoretical and idea concepts follows the main thread. In this thesis credibility was assured by constructing a theoretical framework for the empirical part of the research based on the literature presented in the literature review. Thus, the main thread is conducted from the existing literature, but it is a combination of several different parts of it. And this thread is followed through the whole thesis in the form of the theoretical framework.

External validity corresponds with transferability in qualitative research. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Morrow, 2005). In qualitative research

transferability is primarily the responsibility of the researcher who does the generalizing. In this thesis, literature was used as the main source of data and the central research context and assumptions were described with deliberation. Still, as the material used in this study were the homepages of car manufacturers, taking the conclusions from this paper to some other field of business can be questionable. This study definitely gives a ground for similar studies on other areas and when it comes to transferability, it can be concluded that at least within the car industry the transferability of this study was maintained and the responsibility of the next “transfer” of this context can be passed on.

3.5.2 Dependability

In quantitative research the term reliability is used to describe the intention to minimize the errors and biases of a study (Yin 1989, 45). In other words, the same results should arise if two different researchers would do the same study by using the same data. In qualitative research the term suggested to be used on the same situation is dependability.

In this thesis my personal point-of-view and experience on media and marketing combined with the intangible nature of the subject researched makes it very difficult to draw solid, undisputable conclusions. Thus the dependability of the study can be questioned. Also, as the homepage analysis is a rather new field of research, a lot of disputes go on among scholars on the recommended methods to use. Due to some controversy and the heterogeneity of the methodology found around the subject matter I ended up choosing two approaches that I put together to build my framework on. Thus the discussion presented in this thesis may be affected by intentional or unintentional data inaccuracies. The reasons behind these misrepresentations can be, for example, a need to feel important by over-emphasizing personal input on successful processes (Huber & Power 1985; as presented in Kujala & Nenola 1998, 34).

3.5.3 Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research relates to objectivity in the quantitative side. Objectivity refers to the integrity of the research in such sense, that the results should be drawn from the data instead of subjective experiences of feelings (Morrow, 2005). In qualitative research the part that the researcher brings into the study is usually bigger than in quantitative methodology, thus the role of confirmability is focal in qualitative research. Morrow (2005) defines confirmability as the degree to which the results can be confirmed by others. In this thesis confirmability of the study is controlled by a continual follow-up with my thesis supervisor and countless discussion with my peers and colleagues.

4. Analysis and discussion

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion it inspired on the car manufacturer homepages chosen to this study. First the pages are analyzed by the means provided by the theoretical framework (see p. 28) after which the relevance of the findings is discussed further.

4.1 Analysis

In Chapter 2 (see p. 20) it was mentioned that the first step of analyzing a website is to determine what kind of a website is in question. Two ways were presented for doing this: determining the starting point of a site – whether it has started as information or a transaction site (Quelch and Klein, 1996) – and defining the character of the site as either a traffic control site or a destination site (Hoffman & Novak, 1997). As there is no access to the roots of the selected websites, there is no way of determining in the evolution and only assumptions can be made on the matter. The other division can be made easily, as all the case websites are rather destination sites than search engine-like traffic control sites. However, several pages among the sample did offer a search function and many of them redirect visitors even beyond the website itself, which gives these sites also some traffic control site-features. This is mainly due to the fact that the sample consisted of homepages which have a big role on directing traffic within the website, although the sites represent the destination site category. Thus, the problem of establishing between the two website characteristics comes down to the difference between a website as a whole and its homepage. All websites examined in this study are more destination sites than traffic control sites.

When studying the notion of destination site further, it was stated in Chapter 2 (see p. 21) that Hoffman and Novak (1997) divided destination sites further to presence sites, online storefronts and content sites, which all have their separate characteristics. The modern internet and especially business websites have evolved significantly since 1997 when Hoffman and Novak presented their division, and thus all sites in this study fulfill

the characterizations of all three categories: they support brand awareness and image, offer interactive possibilities and transactions, and they also provide up-to-date company news and event information.

The second step on website analysis according to the previous literature discussed in Chapter 2 is to define the site target group (see p. 22). Since this cannot be measured within this study either, only assumptions are made. As the case websites are from the car industry and cars are traditionally perceived as a very masculine field of business, a presumption of a masculine target group can be made. However, many car manufacturers target some of their models clearly to other demographic groups, for example Ford Ka is often considered as a traditional “second car” targeted to women, while Toyota RAV4 is apparently a very masculine choice for “the men who choose their own paths”. Thus, any clear definition on the target groups of the entire sites cannot really be made. However, some assumptions based on the current campaigns and their target groups could be drawn, but in a larger scale these presumptions do not really have an effect on the analysis as a whole, and thus those are not made.

These two basic divisions on the case sites provided a good lead-in for the theoretical framework and the further analysis of the case pages according to it. The two factors presented above were taken as given background factors in this study and an analysis based on the created framework will be put forward in the following subchapters.

4.1.1 Website genre

As discussed in Chapter 2 Swales (1990) based his genre theory on three elements: communicative purpose, move structure and rhetorical strategies (see pp. 23-17). These elements are also present when we look at web-mediated genres and, more specifically, at the case pages. As mentioned before, all sites looked at in this study can be categorized as destination sites, which mean that they have mainly an informing and image building role in the company communication. But as all the case sites act simultaneously as presence sites, online storefronts and partly also as content sites providing up-to-date information about the companies, the communicative purposes of

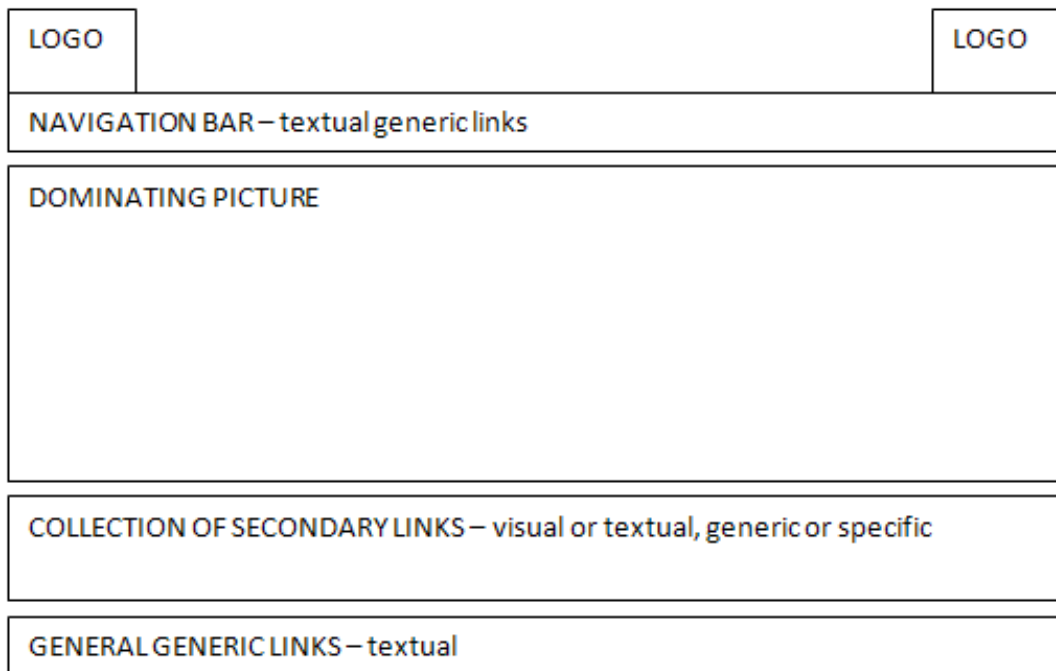
the sites are multifaceted. According to Askehave and Nielsen (2003) (see p. 25) a homepage can in some level be drawn parallel with a newspaper front page, when the primary communicative purpose boils down to the introductory function. They, however, also point out that a homepage has two other functions in addition to the introductory one: to create and maintain the image of the homepage owner and to present news. These three functions can also be found in all case pages, as a navigation bar containing the focal links, a company logo and visuals of current products and at least some kind of a news feed or events calendar are all present on every page. Thus the heterogeneity of web-mediated genres can be established through the case pages: there is no one separate communicative purpose to be specified, but a collective message of a website as a whole condensed into a homepage.

4.1.2 Homepage genre

A homepage as a genre is one of the first acknowledgements online genre theory has accomplished (see p. 26). As mentioned in Chapter 2 (see p. 24) Askehave and Nielsen (2003) argue that the conventionalized form of modern homepages have their roots on the one hand in handbooks on web design and on the other hand on plain copying. In the early days of the Internet, tested and approved customs and templates were widely copied and quoted also in the early handbooks. Thus some general move structures originating from those days can be pointed out from the case pages, too.

All sites present the company logo at the top of the page: Ford and Toyota on the left top-corner and BMW on the right. Also, all case pages showcase a selected model in a large, page dominating picture with relevant marketing lines – and in some cases the picture is also decorated with a test result logo. Below the large picture is in all cases a collection of current campaign and novelty related links either in a generic or in a specific form. In most cases these links present secondary examples of on-going marketing activities and are enhanced with a visual execution. Whether it is a coincidence or not, all case pages have a gray navigation bar or other dominating elements in different shades of gray. Lastly, all pages – except the Finnish Toyota page

– have a row of general, generic links at the bottom of the page in plain text. Thus a general summary of a company homepage and its move structure according to this sample could be presented as follows:



Picture 13: General structure of a car industry homepage

Thus the moves on a company homepage include the presence of a company logo, a navigation bar, a dominating picture, a collection of secondary links and a strip of general links at the bottom of the page. When generalizing this structure beyond the sample of this study, the navigation bar has to be handled as a moving element as it can be situated instead of the top of the page to either side or even at the bottom. Also the collection of secondary links can be located in various ways around the page, but rarely are those situated above the dominant picture.

When analyzing webpages and web-mediated genres in general, the difference between move structure and rhetorical strategies seem to overlap in many ways. However, as rhetorical strategy gives a reader an indication on which genre they will be dealing with, a homepage gives itself up right from the start by being situated in an online

environment. As this study was conducted with an offline-data – the screenshots of the Finnish and American homepages – the online-characteristics of a homepage was in a minor role. Thus a separation between a homepage and the rest of the webpages is the more significant factor when it comes to homepage rhetorical strategy. So, what generally separates homepage from any other kind of a webpage is its role as a gatekeeper or introducer to the site. Even though in modern websites many of the homepage elements run through the entire site, on the case sites two elements can be found that set the homepage apart from the rest of the sites pages: the dominant picture and the secondary links. Many sub pages on the case sites have a large picture and/or relevant links below or beside it, but the setting of the picture and the links are different enough for a consumer to notice that the page in question is not the homepage of the site. Thus, even though in all cases logo and navigation bars run through the site making those elements general webpage particles, the dominant picture and the nature of the secondary links separate the homepage as a genre of its own.

4.1.3 Communication

Communication online was discussed in Chapter 2 (see p.18). The main challenges pointed out there were the difficulty of defining a target group for a single homepage, the heterogeneity of users in general, and the rapid and constant change of the Internet as a communication environment. But as there are challenges, there are also opportunities: the rapidly changing environment of the Internet gives companies a good possibility to stay in close touch with their customers and in ideal cases personalize their services according to them. Also, a lively dialogue can help in constructing a closer relationship between a company and a consumer that can create brand-loyalty and generate re-purchase-rates.

The dilemma of a target group and its definition was discussed earlier in this chapter, but when taking a closer look to communication the dilemma really becomes concrete. The issue actually has two sides to it: firstly the already discussed difficulty of defining target groups online but secondly the vast opportunities for personalization and

individualized discussions in the global environment. Thus, many companies are struggling with the ways of overcoming these dilemmas by offering their customers personalized pages that require registration or divide their sites into clear categories for different target groups. A homepage is actually in the core of the whole ordeal since it usually is the first touching point to the site; thus it should not be discriminating in any way – but at the same time the homepage should also be able to address every visitor as an individual.

In the next two subchapters I will focus on the communicational elements from the theoretical framework, and take a closer look at the case pages with the tools provided there.

4.1.3.1 Content

In the question-set modified to fit the theoretical framework, the questions for the content-element comprise of content quality and the amount and nature of the information on the page. The questions are as follows:

- Does the site provide the right content?
- Is the information sufficient, relevant and up-to-date?

Since there was no user survey or interviews conducted in this study, the correctness of the content cannot really be assessed. In all cases, making a division to “right” or “wrong” content is controversial and in this study I interpreted the original InSites question of right content to meaning whether the user finds the expected information on the page or not. Thus, the right content really falls under relevance in an analysis on the case page content.

As indicated above, the measures used for analyzing the content of the case pages are relevance, sufficiency and topicality. When assessing car manufacturers’ pages, relevant information can be categorized under a few headings: collection information, contact information, dealer information and current information. This division can be made by looking through the case pages and observing which sections can be found on all of

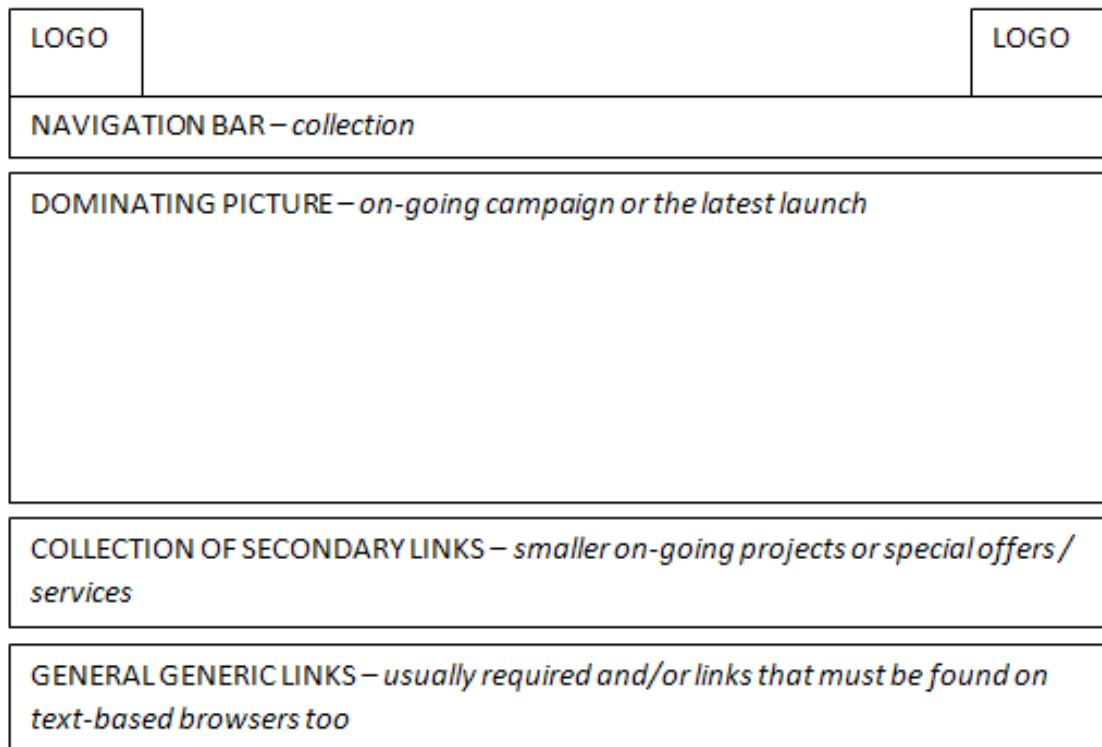
them. Naturally these motivations driving users to car companies' pages could have been studied more thoroughly by conducting a user survey or interviews, but as the expectations of the users are not in the core of this study, the present assumptions on the matter give the needed tools for the cause.

As can be seen above, topicality and relevance collide in some parts. Consumers look for the latest information on the websites and all case pages also deliver that: there is information on the latest novelties, a news feed and current events calendar and in most cases also the main picture of the page repeats the message of the on-going campaign or promotion. All this information is definitely relevant to the consumer, but at the same time it is also confirming the website's position in the company communication strategy as the channel that always provides the latest news and announcements.

Sufficiency of content is in traditional genre theory related to quantity and quality and most of all, the combination of the two. When looking at the content of a webpage, quantity loses importance and the saying "less is more" is truly realized. This is due to the fact that the web environment requires different means of communication than traditional texts, due, for example, to the use of hypertext. The other side of the discussion boils down to the communicative purposes of a homepage, which were identified earlier in this chapter (to introduce, to deliver news and to build and maintain the image) (see p. 47). As the homepage has its role as a front page, it is not required to deliver information per se, but to help the visitors to find what they are looking for. On the other hand, homepage is usually the first touch to the website for a user, so it also should be both simple and extensive while being loyal to the brand image.

All case pages are coherent when it comes to content. As mentioned earlier, there were certain elements that could be found on all pages (collection, dealers, contact information and news) and due to a similar structure of the pages (see p.49) the arrangement of the content was somewhat parallel too. All pages have their collection on the top navigation bar and the current campaign presented in the dominant picture. Smaller campaigns and special offers with company history or other company specific information are presented as smaller secondary links while other possibly legally

required links and general guidelines can be found at the bottom as generic text links. The structure of the contents can also be presented as below:



Picture 14: General contents of the different car industry homepage elements

4.1.3.2 Design

When thinking about car buyers and car enthusiasts, the stereotypical associations usually mentioned are masculinity, luxury and safety. The thoughts are somewhat controversial and very stereotypical, but the first impressions are also what come to play when a potential customer comes across a car manufacturer’s site for the first time. The questions on design from the communicational point-of-view in the theoretical framework relate to the relevance of the visual elements and the coherence of the layout and style. The questions are set as follows:

- Are visual elements relevant and unambiguous?
- Is the layout/style/design coherent?

The relevance and unambiguity of the visual elements relate closely to the general structure of a commercial homepage presented earlier (see p.49, Picture 13) and through that also to the webpage contents (see Picture 14). As mentioned earlier, less is usually more when it comes to web communication, and visual elements have an important role online. This is largely due to the opportunities online environment offers with links, hypertext and audiovisual possibilities. On the case pages, the visual elements and their position follow the presented pattern: all pages have a dominant picture of selected vehicles in the center surrounded by a generic navigation bar above, selection of secondary, supportive links below and official text links at the bottom. The structure definitely is unambiguous and as discussed in the previous subchapter, the content of the pages can be regarded as relevant. The only of the case pages that has a different, a bit more complex structure and visual look is the European Toyota-page layout (see p. 41). The upper part follows the general structure presented earlier, but the bottom is taken over by a large gray box containing almost all the same links that can be found from the upper parts. The relevance of this visual solution is somewhat vague, since the bottom part does not seem to bring anything really new to the page. The structure is also problematic design wise since the page does not fit to one screen, which can be a big minus among some consumers. This feature will be further discussed in the Technology subchapter (see p.55).

When it comes to coherence of the page design, the case pages should be discussed from two perspectives: separately and together. If all the pages are looked at together as representatives of car industry homepages, the most noticeable common feature is the color gray: all pages have a gray navigation bar and beside that, different shades of gray are very commonly used. Half of the case pages even extend the grayness to the promotional pictures by showcasing a gray car. The reasons behind the popularity of color gray can be manifold, but generally it is related to the clinical presence of gray: few love it but hardly anyone deeply hates it. Thus, gray is a safer color to use in cars than for example the more passionate red or calm blue which both have its fans but also haters.

The other shared feature comes naturally from the page structure: as the pages are very similarly structured, the visual impression is inevitably parallel. The bottom line here might be that in a long run car business is image business: cars are one of the most traditional symbols of wealth, which unavoidably brings a certain hint of luxury to the car manufacturer's homepages. Lushness and flamboyance are not apparent, but it can be spotted in the pictures as for example some extra-shine, a laid-back feeling or the choice of the highlighted car models. Another point-of-view behind the similarity of all case pages can come down to trust: exaggeration can be very risky in such a high-interest, infrequent purchase industry as the car industry. Car manufacturers want to impress but also assure the potential buyers on the sensibility of the purchase – thus the well-proven formats are widely used and novelties are carefully considered.

Separately reviewed the coherence of the pages is not so obvious as when viewing the pages together. The best example of global coherence is BMW that uses a global web template in all its official websites. But besides the structure or templates, the collection and global campaigning also bring coherence to each set of case homepages. Naturally the selections vary from country and continent to another, but in a large picture, the same and similar cars are available in all over the world. In addition, all pages looked at are very similar when it comes to webpage design.

4.1.4 Technology

The Internet has its roots in technology: as the U.S. Army started to develop their communication towards a system that would be harder to destroy, the cornerstone of the project was in technology. Today when talking about technology and webpages, discussions usually concentrate on one of the following three subject categories: functionality, variety of possibilities or the future. As no one can say what the future brings, it is very challenging to take that aspect into account in this particular discussion. The other two have their own – but also overlapping – properties, which guarantee that both will be discussed under all sub-headings of this chapter.

4.1.4.1 Design

As for design, this thesis aims to answer one question:

- Are all the technical possibilities utilized in a relevant way?

Modern technology enables various things on a commercial website. The technology has come a long way since the transmission of images became possible in the late 1980's (see p. 15). Back then computers took up entire rooms and a simple transmission could last for days. Now, as the era of broadband and mobile web is here, plain pictures can even start to feel a little outdated. Web designers have developed much more complex and impressive ways to communicate online and thus modern webpages are filled with graphics, videos, animations and special features.

In the case pages a moderate selection of the latest technical innovations are used. As mentioned earlier, all pages have a large picture dominating the space. And all except the American Toyota-page also have at least some form of animation attached to the picture; either there are several pictures in rotation (all Finnish sites) or the picture or the text with it come up with an animated intro (American Ford and BMW). Also some of the secondary links have animated or automated features, for example the American Ford-site has a function that unveils the specific link under a picture or a logo once the cursor is placed on it. The Toyota's extending links on both sites are also a good example of a good and relevant use of modern technology (see p. 40).

As an answer to the central question we could say that probably not all the technological possibilities are utilized, but those that are, can be considered relevant and value adding features. When it comes to functionality and design, a clear and coherent structure of the pages furthers the flexible and consumer friendly use of the pages and helps visitors to find the information they are looking for. The structure also gives the design general guidelines within which to operate, and thus the functional value of the page is restored.

4.1.4.2 Browsing

Browsing mainly refers to the general usability of a website: how the links work, if the loading time of pages is reasonable and how quickly the pages open. In the theoretical framework browsing was estimated through three questions:

- Is the site easy to navigate?
- Is the homepage guidance performing well?
- Is it possible to find your way to the wanted info with a few clicks?

All the above questions refer more to the functionality of a website as a whole instead of an individual webpage, since it is generally difficult to browse a single page. Anyhow, some features of a homepage are worth looking at from a browsing perspective, functionality being the most important one.

As well as browsing, also functionality on webpages and websites usually refer to the ease of navigation, speed of opening the site and performance on different browsers and systems. Often large pictures, animations or video content stall the loading of webpages. The development of band-widths in the recent years combined with the rapid evolution of hardware has taken the sharpest edge off this problem. Thus, even though all case pages included a large picture and majority of them also hosted some kind of an animation or picture rotation, all pages opened rather quickly and without any extra delays. Also the extra features presented on the pages – for example the extending quick-links on Toyota-pages or drop menu on BMW’s European pages – worked without any problems.

One central feature of a homepage is that it fits to one screen. Modern consumers are accustomed to skim and get the needed information preferably with one glimpse. This feature was already discussed earlier in this chapter (see p. 36) in the context of communication design. Due to the recent, rapid development of both hardware and mobile devices enabling web browsing, the “one page rule” has become even more critical. As mentioned earlier, the European Toyota-pages were generally the page-layout that did not fit into one screen due to the bicentric structure of the page. But

considering navigation and browsing, this can really be considered as a flaw on a company homepage, which has effects on user experiences especially in the long run. The problem most likely would not even exist on homepages of some other category – which will be discussed further in the discussion subchapter.

As mentioned above, the questions presented in the beginning of this chapter all have more to do with the functionality and browsing on a website level. When looking at the case homepages and the websites they represent, the questions can be answered, though: all sites are reasonably easy to navigate and they all have very well functioning homepage guidance. To find a comprehensive answer to the third question (“Is it possible to find your way to the right information in a few clicks?”), a more thorough user experiment should be conducted.

4.1.4.3 Interactivity

As discussed in Chapter 2 (see p. 17) De Pelsmacker et al. (2001) state that communication with the consumers is one of the most common uses of a modern company website. They also mention that conducting a “lively dialogue with the consumers” is one of the most important assets a modern company can get through an efficient web presence. This communication and dialogue is usually referred to as interactivity, and in this thesis it is approached through two questions:

- Are the interactive characteristics of the internet used?
- Are personalized information, interactive calculation or simulation available on the page?

The case pages consisted of several elements that can be considered interactive: links, search functions, different calculators, contact forms and owner-pages. As mentioned in Chapter 2 (see p. 19) one of the most institutionalized form of interactivity online is hypertext that gives the user a possibility to choose what, when and in which order to consume. In this thesis, though, interactivity is taken beyond the concept of links and hypertext and just truly interactive and activating elements of the case pages are examined.

All case pages provided a dealer locator and a contact form with which a consumer can get a direct contact to the company. Apart from those the practices are diverse. The majority of the pages also offered a customization calculator and personalized owner pages, but the variety of the selection is vast. As this thesis concentrates on analyzing the homepage of the chosen entities instead of complete online websites, discussing interactivity has to be left rather light. This is due to the fact that the main data used in this analysis are the screenshots of the pages taken on March 25th 2009 – and as the main work has been done with pictures rather than the online pages, there is a limited possibility to assess whether some of the interactive elements are placed behind a drop menu or extending quick links. Thus this analysis is conducted by only assessing the direct links and functions clearly visible on the homepage and it does not commit itself to anything that is not in sight on the screenshots.

When it comes to the framing questions of this element of the study, it can be stated that interactive characteristics of the Internet are widely used from links to search functions and personalized owner pages. The majority of the sites are also providing interactive calculation and simulation on the customization tools and pre-owned value calculators. One peculiar feature that appeared was that only the American pages offered a search function visible on the homepage. Most likely the Finnish pages have the element too, but it is not considered important enough to be placed on the front page of the site.

4.2 Discussion

This study started off from a dual perspective: firstly, from the author's personal user experiences of company websites and secondly, from professional curiosity on the driving forces behind commercial presence online. From the beginning to the end the study has been two-fold; investigating the dimensions of business and communication, communication and technology and finally form and function.

The Internet provides a variety of means for different entities to be present, offer services and generate discussion. In the beginning the Internet was more of an extension to traditional communication consisting of very similar formats of texts and

photographs that were used outside the web. But as technology developed and consumers began being more aware, the ways of being present online has evolved and transformed. As it has been mentioned several times before in this thesis, web texts are very different from the traditional forms of text and online communication has to be handled as an independent entity if it is to be dealt with efficiently. The modern Internet is built of a variety of different kinds of sites and pages, and company sites are just one branch of a big tree. The limitations and requirements listed in this thesis – for example the need of a homepage to fit on one screen – are related to company websites. But when it comes to wikis, blogs, research sites or even forums, it is not so important anymore whether or not the page fits to one screen. And especially in blogs it seldom is even possible. Thus, when reading this thesis it should be borne in mind that the focus of this study is on the commercial Internet and more closely on company homepages.

Despite the fact that the Internet is not a true novelty anymore, its technology is changing and developing in such a pace that new possibilities are constantly generated. These changes and possibilities of the evolving and growing network are in the core of this study. Traditionally companies have started off online in one of two ways: by building from basic information to interactivity or vice versa. Today the websites generally contain both the above properties right from the start as they very often build company image by providing services and transaction possibilities online. And as commercial web presence is no longer a straight forward issue of simply posting the company address and phone numbers online, but an important part of company communication, this orderliness should also be visible in the World Wide Web. This study took a closer look at this playing field and was able to indicate a general structure under all the animation, pictorial illuminations and technical splinter.

As discussed earlier, generally a company homepage has three main functions: to deliver news, to maintain company image and to introduce the website behind it. In this study the analysis of the case pages revealed that, when it comes to general functionality the introductory role is in the core. This characteristic is the primary dictator when determining the contents and structure of a company website and it can be seen in the

case pages: the amount of text presented on a page is minimal while the chosen vocabulary and design are clearly guiding. Visitors are not expected to spend time on the homepage, but to continue further, deeper to the site – which leaves the homepage with a mere role of a gatekeeper or a guide.

The other two functions of a homepage – news and image building – should not be underestimated, though. It was apparent that along with the introductory role, company websites are also an important part of company image building and maintenance. All case pages are very visual and the atmospheres of the sites are not created by coincidence. And one focal part of a company image is also being up-to-date, which covers both functions: the pages should contain the latest information along with the latest technology and models.

Technically up-to-date-pages can easily become a chaotic collection of moving images, expanding widgets and cacophony of both voices and picture if no selection among the possibilities is done. So much is possible in the modern Internet, that the gamut of potential combinations is vast. And to add yet another piece to the immense variety, the consumers have great expectations for new and innovational ways of being present online. Thus it is important to stay in control and limit the technical solutions on a homepage. The case pages are all visual but not confusing by offering a moderate selection of moving images or animation in relevant contexts. Almost all also fit to one screen and load quickly regardless of the browser used – which leads us to the other aspect of technicality: browsing. Because, down the line, it does not matter how brilliant and lucrative a website is if it does not work properly. Web users get generally very annoyed with for example long loading times, unnecessary animation and scrolling up and down pages unless it is well justified. Thus the rule of thumb in all online communication is “less is more”.

When less is more and a variety of businesses compete for consumers’ attention, some conventions are more than likely to be formed. Askehave and Nielsen (2001) (see p. 24) stated that a wide use of handbooks and copying for the similarities and structural homogeneity of websites. But is it not just natural to adapt already proven formats

instead of inventing the wheel over and over again? Apparently at least the car industry has thought so, since these conventions and formats can be recognized on the case pages, as a very similar structure throughout the sample pages. Whether it has to do with the industry or the web-mediated genre is not determined here. The recognized structure is very basic-looking, so there is no reason to believe that it would be something unique or industry specific. To confirm this assumption, a separate, further study should be conducted.

4.2.1 Country-specific characteristics

In the introduction (see p. 11) the selection of the case companies and homepages was partly justified with possible country-specific or even cultural differences that could be discovered. Due to narrowing the scope of the study the concept of culture and national differences were left out, but as the study progressed some things could be found to justify including this subchapter to the thesis. However, more than differences, similarities could be found, which leads us to ask if the globalization process has really evened out all possible differences within various cultures and countries or if there is room for localization within large multinational corporations.

Some differences have already been pointed out between the Finnish and the American homepages: Americans have a search function on the homepage and Finns use more animation or moving images on the pages. When it comes to content, the pages are similar to an almost touching extent: all host a large picture, all offer information on their collection on a gray navigation bar and all have diligently placed the company logo on either of the top corners of the page. But when taking a closer look, some minor country-specific variation can be spotted on the pages. For example the Finnish BMW-page has highlighted a possibility to get a BMW with automatic transmission for only 990€, as the feature is basically a taken fact in the U.S. At the same time the American sites focus more on creating an atmosphere and feeling with their pages by selecting convertibles, muddy trucks or clean, almost clinical shiny grey cars for the dominating pictures, as Finns seem to bring up special offers, discounts and financial contract

opportunities with the pictures. So, minor differences in the nuances, but as analyzed earlier in this chapter, great amount of similarities.

5. Conclusion

The Internet is already at its twenties, but still it seems to have novelty value and surprising potential in the business world. Modern technology and its development has brought the Internet closer and closer to every westerner's life – and as consumers have settled in to the World Wide Web, businesses do eventually follow.

In this thesis the commercial Internet has been in the focus through the growing business presence online. Companies and entities have a variety of ways of being present on the Internet, but this study concentrated on the one way that companies have the most impact on: company website and more closely its homepage. The first chapter of this conclusion summarizes the process and draws an overall picture of the whole study. In subchapter 5.2 the limitations of the study are looked at, which lead to suggestions for further study in the same chapter. The managerial implications end the chapter with more hands on linkages to business life.

5.1 Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore company homepages with a car industry focus to see if a homepage genre and structural format could be identified. Also an interest towards online communication practices and the impact of the rapidly evolving World Wide Web steered the processes of this study. The study was motivated by both personal interest and professional curiosity towards the Internet as an effective communications means and a commercial medium. The research questions that the study set out to answer were related to the form and function of a company homepage and the technical possibilities and challenges presented by the constantly changing online environment. The set of questions were examined through the lenses of genre theory and structural analysis, which both were used in creating the theoretical framework for the study. While the genre theory provided the solid base for the analysis, structural cohesion and global communicational models could be explored.

As a result of the analysis of the homepages of three car manufacturers and a more thorough examination of the Finnish and American homepages, the general role and structure of a car industry homepage were identified. The key findings of the study culminate to the homepage functions identified by Askehave and Nielsen (2003). These general roles of a homepage form a base for the entire genre and set the limits for a homepage structure. The homepage roles – to present the site, to provide latest information and to create and maintain the company image – gave a solid foundation for the qualitative analysis conducted in this study. Through the analysis the above key functions of a homepage were discussed. Also, more particularly, the general structure of a car industry homepage was identified and the diverse ways of using modern technology revealed.

The findings of this study suggest that global car manufacturers have a very similar approach to their online communication all over the world. The vast use of gray and the coherent page structure also seems to indicate that the practices within the industry have settled to the presented format and despite local differences the global corporate image is clearly communicated on the company homepages. To evaluate the implications of this study for a company planning on going online is a challenging task since the sample size and focus were so narrow. But this study does take the first step towards revealing possible underlying practices that steer the creation of company homepages even beyond car industry. Whether the structure presented in this paper can be generalized or not has to be established by another study.

5.2 Limitations of the study and proposals for further research

This study had two major limitations: the chosen methodology and the field of business of the selected case homepages. At the same time these limitations can be seen as advantages, since they in part give this study posture and potential for further research. When it comes to methodology, the decision on grasping the subject matter through visual and generic analysis instead of user surveys or interviews was made through a thorough deliberation. By ruling the user experiences out of this study more room for

structural and communicational observation was gained and a more concrete scope for the study defined. Also, the decision of choosing six case pages among car industry websites was a deliberate one, since the industry itself is so vast that variety among its online communication was expected to be found. By concentrating on one large field, possibilities for finding some uniform patterns in homepage structure and communication were perceived greater than if pages from variety of industries would have been chosen. And thus, this study and the patterns it revealed can be used for further research.

This study offers a variety of possibilities for further research, e.g. the above mentioned possibility to compare the general structure of a homepage identified in this thesis to the homepages of companies on other fields of business. Another way to deepen this study is to extend it to include entire websites, as this paper concentrated on homepages only. Also, by taking user experiences along by conducting user surveys or interviews some new aspects and different angles could be found. This study was deliberately outlined the way it was, which left many interesting doors closed. But these doors are not intended to stay closed, and thus this study can actually be just an opening for many further, interesting studies.

5.3 Managerial implications

The Internet has been growing rapidly at least for the last ten years, when it has really entered to consumers' everyday life. This has brought digitalization also to businesses challenging the more traditional ways of communicating, advertising and even working. Today many professions are dependable on the Internet and the tools it has brought along: email, internet telephones, online data transmissions and company intranets. Due to this rather swift invasion of digitalization and evolution of global networks, companies should also consider their communication strategies anew. Modern consumers search the net for everything, and if generalizing it can be said that if a company cannot be found online, to some consumers it means that the company does not exist. Thus, online communication and web-presence should definitely be integrated

as a part of a company's communications strategy and due to the reasons described above careful attention should be paid to the findability of company website.

Web grammar and active vocabulary were touched briefly in the literature, but this is another important issue that should be paid special attention to when building a company website. Web texts are different from more traditional types of text mainly due to the differing ways of use: skimming and selective reading are the common ways of consuming web texts while for example books are consumed with time and dedication. An online-consumer is usually after some specific information and s/he wishes to get to it quickly. Thus the homepage should be constructed in a way that helps consumers finding what they are looking for, but also offers something extra that can lure them back later.

In the longer run, different templates and possibilities will come along and the structure and elements of a company homepage is a good example of this. The basic structure presented in this thesis is the skeleton on which a company can build an exponential number of different arrangements of a homepage. Also, the structure presented here is just a general conceptualization of the web-mediated genre known as a homepage. Thus, it should be remembered that when constructing a homepage, the starting point should not be any general structure, but the company strategy and goals. Because, at the bottom line is still more important what is said, than the way it is said.

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Appendix

The screenshot shows the BMW USA website interface. At the top left is the BMW USA logo and the slogan "The Ultimate Driving Machine". A navigation menu includes links for Home, 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, X3, X5, X6, Z4, M, All BMWs, Certified Pre-Owned, Owners, Experience, and Uniquely BMW. Below the menu is a search bar and a "Search" button. The main content area features a large image of a blue BMW Z4 Roadster with yellow wheels. Text below the car reads: "An Expression of Joy. Live at Grand Central Terminal. See the art of the all-new Z4 Roadster, joined by the BMW Art Car World Tour. March 25 to April 6, 2009". A link "Explore the all-new Z4" is provided. To the right of the car image are four promotional boxes: "BMW Members" (Sign in, Not a member? Sign up to access exclusive features, manage account information and save content, Sign up), "Build Your Own" (Start now, START STOP), "Art in Turbocharged Motion" (Visit expressionofjoy.com), and "Get Behind the Wheel" (Request a test drive). A "View All" link is also present. The footer contains links for Privacy Policy & Legal, Company Information, Careers, Contact Us, Site Map, and Trouble Viewing This Site? The copyright notice "©2009 BMW of North America, LLC." is located at the bottom right.

Appendix 15 www.bmwusa.com

Alitussivu [1](#) [3](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [X3](#) [X5](#) [X6](#) [Z4](#) [M](#) [Vaihtautot](#) [BMW:n omistajat](#) [Koe BMW](#)

[Yritysmyynti](#) [BMW Business -mallisto](#) [BMW Financial Services](#) [BMW moottorivärit](#) [Jälleenmyyjät](#) [Hinnastot](#) [Shoppit](#) [Yrityksenotto](#)

BMW Suomi






Yleisarvosana 9,0

Premium-luokan dieselmallit
Testivoittaja BMW 320d Business

[Lue lisää](#)

Hinnastot
BMW-malliston hinnastot

BMW 5-sarjan GT
BMW 5-sarjan Gran Turismo -konseptiauto. Ensimmäinen laatuun.

BMW xDrive Tour
BMW xDrive Tour on liikkeellä. Katso kertuekalatuu.

Vaihtotukihu
Hae BMW vaihtautoja jälleenmyyjiltämme.

BMW-huolto
Valmista auttamaan: kattavaa asiakaspalvelua BMW-autoosi liittyvässä kysymyksissä.

BMW eShopit
BMW:n virtuaalinen Shop-portaali lukuisine kinnostavine tarjouksineen.

[Lisää aiheita](#)

Quicklinks

Automaattivaihteisto nyt hintaan 990€.



BMW 3- ja 5-sarjan Business-malleihin.

[BMW Business -mallisto](#)

[Yhteydenotto](#) [Tilaa BMW-uutiskirje](#) [Teknisiä ohjeita](#) [Sivukartta](#) [Oikeudellinen huomautus / julkaisutiedot](#) [Kaikki BMW Groupin Internet-sivut](#) [Modeemi / ISDN-sisäilöt](#)

AUTOSSIVU [1](#) [3](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [X3](#) [X5](#) [X6](#) [Z4](#) [M](#) [Vaihtoautot](#) [BMW:n omistajat](#) [Koe BMW](#)

[Yritysmyynti](#) [BMW Business -mallisto](#) [BMW Financial Services](#) [BMW moottoripyörät](#) [Jälleenmyyjät](#) [Hinnastot](#) [Shopt](#) [Yhteystiedot](#)

BMW Suomi




Alueen koe



Yleisarvosana 9,0



**Premium-luokan dieselmallit
Testivoittaja BMW 320d Business**

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Hinnastot
BMW-malliston hinnastot



BMW 5-sarjan GT
BMW 5-sarjan Gran Turismo -konseptiauto. Ensimmäinen laatuaan.



BMW xDrive Tour
BMW xDrive Tour on liikkeellä. Katso kiertuekalau.

Vaihtoautohaku
Hae BMW vaihtoautoja jälleenmyyjiltämme.



BMW-huolto
Valmiina autittamaan: kattavaa asiakaspalvelua BMW-autoosi liityvissä kysymyksissä.



BMW eShopit
BMW:n virtuaalinen Shop-portaali lukuisine kiinnostavine tarjouksineen.

[Lisää aiheita](#)

Quicklinks
Vaihte

Automaattivaihteisto nyt hintaan 990€.




BMW 3- ja 5-sarjan Business-malleihin.

[BMW Business-mallisto](#)

[Yhteystiedot](#) [Tilaa BMW-uutiskirje](#) [Teknisiä ohjeita](#) [Sivukartta](#) [Oikeudellinen huomautus / julkaisutiedot](#) [Kaikki BMW Groupin Internet-sivut](#) [iModeeni / ISDN-sisällöt](#)

[Etusivu](#) | [Sivukarta](#) | [Ota yhteyttä](#)


Feel the difference

Ford-uutisia | [Uusi Ford Fiesta ensiesittelyssä](#)

[Autot](#) | [Palvelut](#) | [Ford Suomessa](#)


Ka. Uusi Ford.


[Ensiesittelyssä jälleenmyyjäsi luona](#)


FordMondeo | [Katso Mondeo-malliston uudet hinnat](#)

[Esitteet](#) | [Jälleenmyyjät](#) | [Suunnittele oma Ford](#) | [Aja uudella Fordilla!](#)

[Yksityisyysdenuoja](#) | [Käyttöehdot](#) | [Varaa koeajo](#) | [Jälleenmyyjät](#) | [Esitteet](#) | [Suunnittele oma Ford](#)




Uusi FordFiesta
[Tutustu tästä](#)



Etusivu | Sivukartta | Ota yhteyttä

Feel the difference

Ford- uutisia | Raikas ja pirteä täysin uusi Ford Ka [»](#)

Autot | **Palvelut** | **Ford Suomessa**

Ka. Uusi Ford.

Ensiesittelyssä jälleenmyyjäsi luona

FordKuga [» Tutustu tästä](#)

Uusi Ford Fiesta [» Tutustu tästä](#)

FordMondeo [» Katso Mondeo-malliston uudet hinnat](#)

Esitteet [»](#)

Jälleenmyyjät [»](#)

Suunnittele oma Ford [»](#)

Aja uudella Fordilla!

Yksityisyysasuaja | Käyttöehdot | Varaa koeajo | Jälleenmyyjät | Esitteet | Suunnittele oma Ford

Appendix 19 www.ford.fi

Feel the difference

Etusivu | Sivukartta | Ota yhteyttä

Ford-uitisia | Syyskuun 2008 uutiset

Autot | **Palvelut** | Ford Suomessa

Ka. Uusi Ford.

Ensiesittelyssä jälleenmyyjäsi luona

FordMondeo
Katso Mondeo-malliston uudet hinnat

Esitteet

Jälleenmyyjät

Suunnittele oma Ford

Aja uudella Fordilla!

FordKuga
Tutustu tästä

Uusi Ford Fiesta
Tutustu tästä


Yksityisyysdenuoja | Käyttöehdot | Varaa koeajo | Jälleenmyyjät | Esitteet | Suunnittele oma Ford

Appendix 20 www.ford.fi

[SYNC](#) | [My Folder](#) | [News & Events](#) | [Dealerships](#) | [Owners](#) | [Racing](#) | [En Español](#)

[Ford](#) | **Drive one.**

[FORD STORY](#) | [CARS](#) | [CROSSOVERS](#) | [SUVS](#) | [TRUCKS](#) | [ALL VEHICLES](#)



IT'S THE ALL'09 NEW F-150.
It's not just a new truck.


[See What It's Got](#)
[Build and Price Your F-150](#)

Shopping Tools

- » [Build & Price Your Ford](#)
- » [Competitive Comparison](#)
- » [Brochures](#)
- » [Get an Internet Price](#)
- » [Search Dealer Inventory](#)
- » [Locate a Dealer](#)
- » [Trade In Value](#)
- » [Incentives & Offers](#)
- » [Payment Estimator](#)

NEWS & EVENTS | [Ford Edge: The Ultimate Crossover](#)

SPECIAL OFFERS




'09 quality drive

Drive one and you'll know

[= MORE](#)

SEE WHERE WE ARE




THE FORD STORY

And where we are going.

[= MORE](#)

COMING SOON



The new 2010 Taurus

[= MORE](#)

*Starting Manufacturer's Retail Price, excluding destination/delivery charge, taxes, title and registration fees. Optional equipment included. †EPA estimated city/highway mpg based on base engine/transmission configuration. ‡EPA estimated city/highway mpg based on base engine/transmission configuration. ††EPA estimated city/highway mpg based on base engine/transmission configuration. ‡ SYNC availability and features vary. See Dealer for details. Driving while distracted can result in loss of vehicle control. Only use mobile phones and other devices, even with voice commands, when it is safe to do so.

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Appendix 21 www.fordvehicles.com



TOYOTA

Mallisto | Palvelut | Innovaatiot | Tietoa Toyotasta

AVIGO | Yaris | Auris | Corolla | Corolla Verso | Ayaxia | Prius | RAV4 | LC | L200 | Hilux | Hiace | Dyna | Kulkuvälik

RAV4 diesel bensen hinnalla tai 2 000 euron varusteet bensinimalleihin.

Rahoitus korko 1,9% – ei muita kuluja

Tutustu tarjouksemi!

Ohittamattomissa etujäsenä voit saada nyt 1000 euron alustuksen ja 4 nkk:n viikonloppuunäytössä 28.-29.3. 1,9% rahoitus- tarjous voimassa vielä 31.3. saakka.

Voitko muuttajaksi?
Voit muuttaa nyt ensimallitiläsi.

Uudistunut AYGO – versoa
Uudistunut AYGO – versoa on nyt saatavilla kolmella eri varustetasolla. Arvotamme!

Yhteistyö
Ota yhteyttä

Ilma myynti- ja huoltoajat

Tilaa uutiskirje

Leikki & ilon auto

Verotuksella oma Toyota

Ilma vakuutus

Uusi uutuus 1 / 3

- AYGO
- Yaris
- Auris
- Corolla
- Corolla Verso
- Ayaxia
- Prius
- RAV4
- Land Cruiser
- Land Cruiser
- LC

Toyota Rent

- Huoltoajajat
- Toyota Vakutus
- Toyota Seuramus
- Takuu
- Taxi Free
- Toyota Info
- Tilaa

Clean Power Diesel

- Tunallisuus
- Konseptiautot

Koulu

- Yhteisöt
- Työpaikat

Appendix 22 www.toyota.fi



Appendix 23 www.toyota.fi



TOYOTA

[AVG0](#)
[Yeni](#)
[Auris](#)
[Corolla](#)
[Corolla Verso](#)
[Avensis](#)
[Prius](#)
[RAV4](#)
[LC 150](#)
[HiLux](#)
[Proace](#)
[Dyna](#)
[Käyttömallit](#)

[Etusivu](#)
[Etusivu](#)
[Tietoja meistä](#)
[Tietoa Toyotasta](#)

Corolla Verso 2.2 D-4D Superior.
Asiakasetu jopa **3700 euroa.**



Rahoituskorko 1,9% – ei muita kuluja

Tutustu tarjouksemme!

Ohittamattomia etuja nyt Toyota-mallistossa viikonloppunäytelyssä 28.-29.3. 1,9% rahoituskorko on voimassa vielä 31.3. saakka.



Voitaa mukavampi! Uudistunut RAV4 nyt ensiesiintyisää.



Uudistunut AYGO – varas AYGO Blue kesä ja osallistut seikkailupaketin arvontaan!

Venäjän kausi
Ota yhteyttä
Hes myyjät ja huoltopalvelut
Tämä uudistaja
Lisää & lue lisää
Varmistakaa oma Toyota
Hes sähköpostilla

Clean Power Diesel
Tunnealus
Korostaulut

Toyota Rent
Huoltopalvelut
Toyota Vakuutus
Toyota Seuramus
Takuu
Taxi Free
Toyota Info
Tilaus

Dyna
Venukiele uusi
Toyota
Käyttömallit
Tulossa
Toyota
Avenis
Hinnastot
Verkkosivostet
Yeni-lemmat
Toyota
Valitotulot



TOYOTA

**Corolla diesel bensiin hintaan.
Etusi 930-3330 euroa.**

Rahoituskorko 1,9% – ei muita kuluja

Mallisto | Palvelut | Innovaatiot | Tietoa Toyotasta

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[AVGO](#) | [Yaris](#) | [Corolla](#) | [C-HR](#) | [RAV4](#) | [Prius](#) | [SUV](#) | [L20](#) | [L20E](#) | [L20H](#) | [PHEV](#) | [Hybridit](#) | [Käyttömallit](#)

Tutustu tarjouksemi!

Ohittamattomia etuja nyt Toyota-mallistossa viikonloppunäytelyssä 28.-29.3. 1,9% rahoitus- tarjous voimassa vielä 31.3. saakka.



Voitaa mukavampi! Uudistunut RAV4 nyt ensiesittelyssä.



Uudistunut AVGO - versio AVGO Blue korolla ja osallistut seikkailupaketin arvoon!

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TOYOTA
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THE 2009 COROLLA

What's New!
2009 Toyota Racing

Shop Local Specials

ESUS \$100

3rd Generation Prius

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Appendix 26 www.toyota.com

The screenshot displays the Toyota website's promotional page for the 2009 Camry. The main visual is a silver 2009 Camry parked on a reflective surface, with the text "THE 2009 CAMRY" overlaid in large white letters. The page features a top navigation bar with the Toyota logo and "moving forward" slogan, and a menu with categories: CARS, TRUCKS, SUVs & VAN, and HYBRIDS. A search bar and a "FIND A DEALER" button are also present. On the right side, there are three promotional boxes: "What's New!" featuring a 2009 Toyota Racing car, "3rd Generation Prius" with a blue Prius image, and "Shop Local Specials" with a red "ENDS \$100" banner. A footer contains links for "SHOPPING TOOLS", "FOR OWNERS", "CERTIFIED USED", "RACING", and "ABOUT THE COMPANY", along with social media and contact information.

Appendix 27 www.toyota.com

TOYOTA
moving forward

CARS TRUCKS SUVs & VAN HYBRIDS

BUILD YOUR TOYOTA FIND A DEALER

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PRESENTING THE NEW
TOYOTA VENZA

What's New!
2009 Toyota Racing

3rd Generation Prius

Shop Local Specials
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