



B2B Videos for Sales Outreach General analysis and a model extension for product videos

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ABSTRACT

Due to the growing importance of videos for B2B sales outreach, this study proposes an extended model based on the Corporate-Video Model by Büsching and Meidel (2016) and a qualitative survey with high-ranking company representatives. The findings comprise seven complementary categories: structure, communication, product display, information content, unique selling proposition, value-based selling, and dramaturgy of product videos. The model extension aids practitioners in analyzing and conceptualizing compelling B2B product videos.

Keywords: Sales, B2B, product videos

Introduction

Ever since the rise of the internet and the advent of social media, consumer behavior and the effectiveness of advertisement channels have changed unprecedentedly (Saura et al., 2020). While marketing content was mainly text-based in the early days of the internet, this has changed considerably with an ever-increasing shift to more video-based content (Cecil, 2013).

Although historically, online video has been adapted faster by B2C companies, B2B is catching up quickly. The reasons for this are multi-fold: B2B purchasers are getting younger, more reliant on mobile devices, get in touch with sales later, and influence decision-making even if they are not on the executive level (Snyder et al., 2015). Within the marketing industry, 64% already believe B2B videos are a must-have and consider them the third most crucial marketing instrument

(Adam et al., 2014). Since B2B product videos are becoming significantly more critical for purchasing decisions of procurement managers (Khare & Hurst, 2018), having a concept to implement this video format is necessary, particularly concerning sales outreach.

1. Implementing videos into the B2B sales strategy

B2B or corporate videos are "audiovisual entities with moving images and sound and can be designed with graphics, animations, and further special effects" (Büsching & Meidel, 2016). They are solely used in a B2B context and aim to "inform, entertain, advertise, educate, motivate, sell and bind customers" (Büsching & Meidel, 2016). The video's length depends on the video's goal, format, and publishing channel.

With digitalization and the increasing availability of detailed information on the internet, the buying journey of



purchasers has changed. According to a study by Gartner, B2B buyers invest only 17% of their time considering a purchase with the potential supplier while they devote 27% of their time to independent research (Adamson & Toman, 2020). Hence, providing the buyer with enough convincing information on the internet is essential. Video content can play a pivotal role in this strategy. First, the medium video enables an efficient and fast information presentation.

Furthermore, video content is more eye-catching. Moving images attract more attention which can be explained by studies showing that they increase arousal and heart rate more than non-moving images (Mowat, 2018). Additionally, the medium of video can convey lasting emotions, trust, and brand effects with comparably very few words (Cecil, 2013) by "putting a human face on the organization" (Waters & Jones, 2011). Lastly, video allows for tracking and straightforwardly analyzing views to assess engagement levels and interests and use the data for possible lead generation (Litt, 2014).

However, there is still room for improvement. While tracking and contacting potential customers downloading white papers or similar resources is relatively simple, it is still challenging to capture video viewers to trigger nurturing activities leading to missed opportunities (Litt, 2014). Ideally, video viewing data must be integrated into existing programs like marketing automation platforms (MAP) and customer relationship systems (CRM) to use the data collected and turn prospects into customers (Litt, 2014). Further challenges companies are facing are high production costs, missing know-how regarding complex production processes, and increased time and resource expenditures (Büsching & Meidel, 2016).

2. B2B videos along the sales funnel

For B2B videos to be compelling and sales-generating, they must enable the customer to move forward in their customer journey and buying process. Therefore, the sales funnel framework by Ghirvu (2013) will be used as a guideline to categorize the different formats of B2B videos and their usage in the sales process.

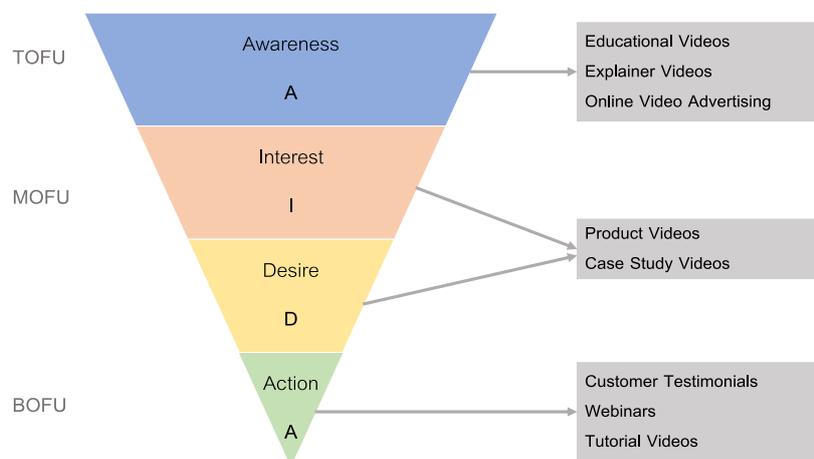


Illustration 1: The Sales Funnel regarding the usage of B2B videos (own illustration based on Ghirvu (2013))

The top of the funnel concentrates on generating leads and awareness. Videos targeted to that stage should enable the buyer to recognize the problem or issue they are facing and slightly emphasize the company's solution (Jain, 2021). The most suitable video formats at this stage are:

- Educational videos
- Explainer videos
- Online video advertising

Educational videos each have a vast target audience and belong to the category of thought leadership and inbound marketing (Jain, 2021). Instead of concentrating on hard selling by presenting the company's brand or product, these videos discuss general industry topics customers are interested in and thereby demonstrate the brand's competence and expert knowledge (Kniňová, 2020). They create trust and strengthen customer relationships (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). According to a study by BurdaForward from 2016, a vast majority (77,7%)

of the around 650 respondents watch videos for information gathering long before other reasons like entertainment (50,4%) or relaxation (44,8%) (Knab & Dancu, 2016).

Explainer videos are short videos conveying complex content to a target group. Most importantly, the videos use storytelling to entertain the audience while avoiding much detail (Krämer, Böhrs & Ilemann, 2016). In a B2B context, explainer videos are primarily used to explain the company's product or service (Böhrs & Krämer, 2017). According to a study from Böhrs and Krämer for the Marketing Review St. Gallen, 71% of Germans already have experience with explainer videos compared to people from the USA, where only 47% stated the latter.

Online video advertising can be characterized as follows: Videos are persuasive, include promotional branding messages, and are published in an online environment (Alanne, 2017). The content is shared organically on social networks from peer to



peer, which increases brand awareness, and strengthens the consumer-brand relationship (Hayes, Shan, & Whitehill King, 2017).

After the company gains the customer's attention, the interest and desire stage of the sales funnel must be targeted by nurturing the generated leads. The customers are interested in a possible solution to the issue, are exploring their different options, and select suitable companies fitting their needs and budget (Jain, 2021). Therefore, the company must provide trustworthy information about the specific solution or products offered to increase interest and differentiate from the competition (Mowat, 2018). This can be achieved, for example, with:

- More specific product information videos
- Case studies

Product videos are audiovisual content created by the company to present the product and its respective use to the consumer within a short time (Flavián, Gurrea & Orús, 2017). Through these videos, customers can see the product in action, understand it, and derive the advantages and added value for themselves or their company easily and conveniently (Benz, 2020). According to a study by Animoto, nearly three-quarters of customers are more likely to buy a product or service if they have seen an explanatory product video before (Priebe, 2014). Furthermore, 92% of shoppers say that visual effects influence their purchase decision and 64% of users are likely to shop after watching the product video (Barthwal, 2019).

Case study videos are one of the best forms of social proof. They help potential clients understand how the company's product solved another customer's problem. They can then transfer real-life examples to their pain points and visualize how the product could help them. (Jain, 2021).

At the bottom of the funnel is the action stage. It is the final step of the purchasing decision where the customers' behavior must transfer from consuming information to consuming the product. The company must help the customer to conquer some final doubts (Mowat, 2018). Therefore, the calls to action must be placed very prominently to trigger a reaction to purchase. There are also multiple categories of videos that could fit especially to this stage of the process:

- Customer testimonial videos
- Webinars
- Tutorial videos

Testimonial videos are very similar to case study videos as they humanize the case study and create a personalized, emotional response. In the video, customers highlight, from their point of view, their successful experience with the company's product or service (Jain, 2021). Testimonials are primarily narratives providing information about the company, the

challenges the own business had to face, the implemented solution and benefits for the customer, and an outline of future perspectives for the company (Sokolova, 2020). They have an exceptionally high conversion rate, and more than 50 % of customers perceive the reviews and experiences of other customers as the most credible source of information about a product (Jain, 2021). Furthermore, 64.9 % of customers exposed to such testimonial videos show a willingness to buy.

"Webinars are synchronous, real-time online meeting events that gather people together at a specific time to listen to, observe and participate in a presentation" (Lande, 2011). The presenter uses interactive tools to capture attention, increase interactivity, and maintain engagement throughout the webinar (Amado-Salvatierra et al., 2020). With webinars, companies want to create value for the customers, educate them and build trust and credibility.

Video tutorials are easy-to-digest videos and are used to transfer knowledge by displaying the product's workflow as part of a learning process (Nasir & Bargstädt, 2017). It provides customers with a self-service option for solving issues and learning new features after buying the product. At the same time, they relieve customer support teams and, in the long run, reduce the probability of customers returning the products or stopping to use them after only a short time.

To conclude, different types of B2B videos should be implemented across distinct stages of the sales funnel of B2B companies. However, the full potential of B2B videos is not yet realized due to lacking experience concerning the conception, production, and distribution of videos, as well as difficulty in measuring their success (Büsching & Meidel, 2014).

The aim of the Corporate Video Model (Büsching & Meidel, 2014) is to provide a solution for this critical issue. Hence it will be briefly presented in the following.

3. The Corporate-Video-Model

The Corporate Video Model provides a holistic approach regarding the requirements for conception, production, and analysis of this increasingly vital format, with the primary aim of "achieving measurable sales success" (Büsching & Meidel, 2014). The model consists of six categories, whose interaction is considered crucial for the realization and evaluation of B2B videos: (1) brand, (2) target & target group, (3) content, (4) production, (5) media channels and (6) KPI & Project Management.

A score from one to four is assigned depending on the degree of the respective category's fulfillment. A higher score indicates a higher quality of the video. However, this is "usually associated with an increased resource usage" (Büsching & Meidel, 2014), i.e., with more time, effort, and cost.

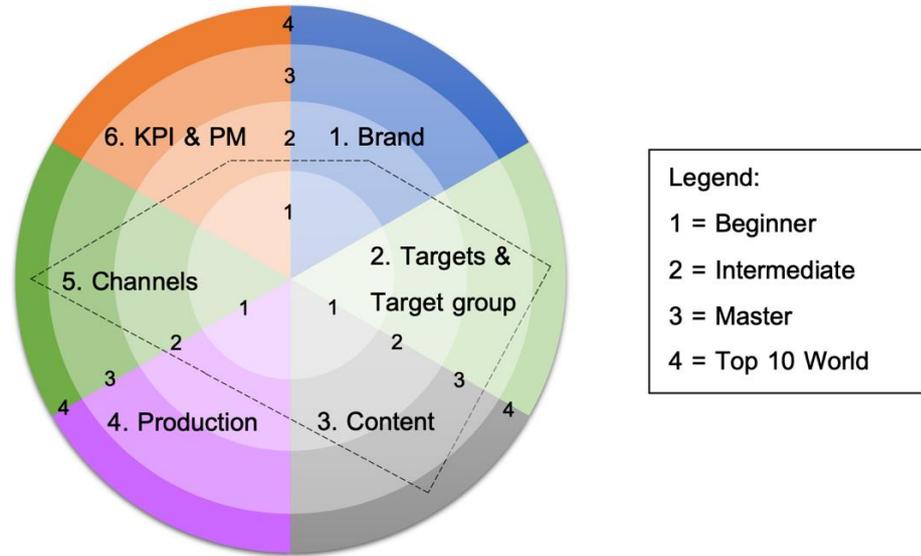


Illustration 2: Graphical Illustration of the Corporate-Video-Model

Legend:
 1 = Beginner
 2 = Intermediate
 3 = Master
 4 = Top 10 World

As previously elaborated, the format of product videos has become increasingly crucial in the B2B sector as a touchpoint to further guide the customer into the sales funnel. Nevertheless, the Corporate Video Model only provides a broad overview and no further specifications for companies to follow. Therefore, an extension is proposed, which provides new categories featuring success factors for creating a content concept for B2B product videos.

4. Methodology

The methodological approach is based on reviewing existing literature and qualitative research to achieve the objective mentioned above. A semi-structured, in-depth online interview with high-ranking company representatives was conducted for the systematic data collection and analysis regarding the status quo in Germany.

Table 1: Overview of conducted expert interviews

Company	Interviewee’s position	Industry
Hilti AG (large enterprise)	Area Sales Manager	Power tool technology
Festo SE & Co. KG (large enterprise)	Head of Market Media Creation	Automation technology
flexperto GmbH (small company)	Head of Marketing	Software and cloud services
apic.ai (startup)	Chief Technology Officer (CTO)	Software development
VAUDE Sport GmbH & Co. KG (medium-sized company)	Team Leader for Event, Sponsoring and Cooperations	Mountaineering equipment and outdoor clothing
Inspirion GmbH (medium-sized company)	CEO	Promotional items
GEA Group (large enterprise)	Strategic Procurement Manager	Special mechanical engineering and plant engineering

4.1. Results-the Product Video Content Extension

The following model extension consists of seven categories: Structure, Communication, Product display, Information content, USP, Value-based selling, and Dramaturgy.

Structure

The structure of a video is decisive for most of the following categories since it ensures that content is organized in a coherent and semantically understandable way for the target audience (Vasconcelos & Lippman, 2000). According to two



participants, the structure of the video is determined while creating the script. The script can be visualized with the help of a storyboard that illustrates the structure of the video, i.e., the subsequent order of scenes.

Communication

The communication category is decisive in ensuring the effective transmission of product information to the target audience. In this respect, the video format enables the combination of the “three Vs of communication, [namely] verbal, vocal and visual” (Waters & Jones, 2011), which should significantly enhance the viewer’s recall of the core messages.

Concerning the verbal aspect of communication, it is imperative to tailor the language to the specific target audience the video is intended to reach, as emphasized by two interviewees. Furthermore, the effectiveness of communication can be increased by harmoniously combining the three V’s of communication, i.e., by depicting protagonists who present the product in a professional, authentic and target-group-oriented manner with the help of relevant text elements (Flavián, Gurrea & Orús, 2017; Corduan, 2018).

Product display

Regarding product display, the best product videos enable viewers to fully understand the product’s features and functionality by letting them experience the product and its dynamics lively, even though they cannot physically and haptically examine it. According to one participant, a variety of stylistic video elements are required for a video to provide a vivid product experience. Furthermore, he is convinced that for a message to be delivered, it must be visible.

Information content

The following content category of the proposed framework aims to guide the producer to achieve optimal information density and length to match the viewer’s attention span. Several interviewees agreed on the importance of effective storyboards to ensure that all the relevant information is included. Regarding the length of such videos, one participant reported that the average attention span varied around one to two minutes. The other interviewees complied with this opinion, as they identified the viewers’ attention span as extremely short.

Unique selling proposition

While it might be common practice to demonstrate a product’s unique selling proposition (USP) to prospective customers in personal sales conversations, it needs to be more frequently addressed in product videos. As one interviewee stated, the best product videos in this category clearly explain the product’s USP by comparing it to competing products and their features.

Value-based selling

According to one interviewee, the most critical element of a product video is to demonstrate which cost savings, time savings, and efficiency enhancements prospective customers can realize with the help of the displayed product. As confirmed by all of the participants, the value-based selling approach should

not only be applied in personal sales conversations but incorporated in product videos as well.

Dramaturgy

Dramatic and stylistic elements are crucial tools to evoke strong positive or negative emotions. As one participant elaborated, the music’s pace and style depend on the focus level of the customer and the emotions the companies want to convey. Another commonly used instrument is storytelling. In the context of product videos, this instrument can be used to introduce and present the product entertainingly (Mowat, 2018). Consequently, the customer is emotionally incentivized to change their behavior, potentially leading to a purchasing decision (Mowat, 2018). At the same time, practitioners should be careful to use dramatic elements sparingly, as this could cause clients to question the company’s professionalism.

4.2. Future outlook and limitations

Videos as a communication tool in B2B Sales will become increasingly important for every company to attract, convince, and retain customers. They have the potential to engage potential customers during all stages of the sales cycle (Litt, 2014). Videos can convey lasting emotions and put an authentic feel to the company. Therefore, the videos should be genuine and pure, as stated by one interview partner.

However, it is crucial to implement tools to measure and track video views and engagement by CRM or MAP systems. Furthermore, video content must be embedded into an overall strategy and in synergy with other marketing and sales measures (Mowat, 2018), which the participants also emphasized.

This research, however, is subject to several limitations. First, the number of interviews is insufficient to infer the results to a general population. Second, the self-reported data may be subject to biases. Thus, the data should not be independently justified. To verify and confirm the study’s results, further quantitative research has to be conducted to cross-reference the proposed model extension. Additionally, the findings recommend conducting future research regarding other possible dimensions of the CVM Model or the effect of product videos on the buyer’s purchasing decision.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed the status quo and future outlook of B2B videos by first identifying the main advantages and disadvantages of this instrument for companies, followed by an evaluation of different video formats concerning the sales cycle. B2B videos enable an efficient and fast information presentation, are eye-catching, and convey lasting emotions. Therefore, they are a valuable tool to enable more sales outreach.

Nevertheless, the assessment and evaluation and the valuable conception of different B2B videos are still complex for many companies. The Corporate Video Model, proposed by Büsching and Meidel (2014), provides a framework to solve this issue. By conducting semi-structured interviews with company representatives, seven subcategories could be defined, adding to the existing Corporate-Video Model: Structure, Communication, Product display, Information content, Unique Selling Proposition,



Value-based selling, and Dramaturgy. The suggested seven categories for the content of B2B product videos should guide companies to plan, design, and create successful B2B product videos by determining key success factors. Furthermore, the categories enable critical analysis of existing B2B product videos for companies to compare different videos or generate new ideas for future projects.

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