



Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific
Research



Sheikh Al-Arabi Tebessi University
-Tebessa -

Faculty of Economics, Commercial and Management Sciences

Department: Commercial Sciences

Serial number:/2024

Thesis submitted to complete the requirements for obtaining an
academic master's degree (LMD)

Division: Commercial Sciences

Specialisation: Service Marketing

Entitled:

**The Role of Customer Acquisition Strategy in The Growth
of Start-ups:**

A Case Study of Sarl Artec Int – Annaba -

Prepared by:

- Abdedaime Kamel

Supervised by the professor

- Dr. Rais Abderrahmane

Members of the Jury

Name & Surname	Degree	Quality
Rahem Farid	PHD	President
Litim Khaled	PHD	Examiner
Rais Abderrahmane	DR	Supervisor

Academic Year: 2023 – 2024

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2.	Methodology of Research	5
2.1	Research Approach.....	5
2.2	Research Design.....	6
2.3	Collection and Analysis of Data	8
2.3.1	Questionnaires & Interviews.....	10
2.3.2	Online Sources of Data	11
3	Existing Literature & Optimal Approaches for Building a Customer Acquisition Strategy	12
3.1	Definition of Marketing.....	12
3.2	Marketing Strategy	13
3.2.1.	Marketing Strategy Definition.....	14
3.3	Outbound Marketing & Marketing Mix	16
3.4	Digital Marketing	18
3.5	Inbound Marketing.....	19
3.5.1	Content Marketing Value in Inbound Marketing Strategy.....	20
3.5.2	Funnel Framework of Inbound Marketing	22
3.5.3	Flywheel Framework in Inbound Marketing	25
3.5.4	Ideal Customer = Buyer Persona	26
3.5.5	Customer Journey.....	28
3.5.6	Lead As a Magnet in Inbound Marketing	31
3.6	Integrated Tools & Marketing Technology	34
3.6.1	CRM	34
3.6.2	Email.....	35
3.6.3	Website.....	36

3.6.4	Landing Pages	36
3.7	Conceptual framework	37
4	Current State Analysis of the Marketing Practices at the Case Start-up	39
4.1	Current Marketing and Customer Acquisition Practices at The Case Start-Up	40
4.2	Analysis of the Case Start-up Customer Acquisition Practices.....	42
4.2.1	Attract phase.....	42
4.2.2	Convert phase.....	44
4.3	Lead management – Odoo CRM	45
4.4	Competitors	45
4.5	Customer feedback	48
5	Creating a Customer Acquisition Strategy	50
5.1	Overview of the proposal building stage.....	50
5.1.1	Review of the Conceptual Framework	51
5.1.2	Strat-up Team Participation	51
5.2	Objective and Metrics.....	51
5.3	Buyer Persona	52
5.4	Customer Journey	55
5.5	Lead generation	57
5.5.1	Content Importance for Lead Generation.....	57
5.5.2	Website Importance in Lead Generation.....	58
5.5.3	Lead capture	60
5.5.4	Sales Qualified Lead nurturing	61
5.5.5	Lead generation summary	61
5.6	Digital Tools and Channels	62
5.7	Implementation plan funnel.....	66
5.8	Summary of the Draft Proposal	69

6	Validation of the Proposal	71
6.1	Review of the Validation Process.	71
6.1.1	Updated Website.....	72
6.1.2	Email Content production.....	73
6.1.3	Landing Pages and Lead Manager	75
6.2	Final Proposal	77
7	Conclusion	78
	References	A

Appendices

Appendix 1. The start-up team survey.

Appendix 2. The customer survey.

Appendix 3. Buyer persona survey.

Glossary

CRM Customer Relationship management

ML Marketing qualified Lead.

SQL Sales Qualified Lead

SEO Search Engine Optimization

SEM Search Engine Marketing

List of Figures

Figure 1 Applied research Vs Basic research (Saunders et al. 2019, p.11-12).-----	5
Figure 2 Research Design of the Thesis-----	7
Figure 3 SOSTAC (Chaffey & Smith 2013 p. 538). -----	15
Figure 4 Elements of Outbound Marketing Strategy (adapted from: (Cooke, 2024)) -----	16
Figure 5 Content marketing in B2B (Source: (Stahl, 2023)) -----	21
Figure 6 Inbound marketing framework illustrated by (Halligan & Shah 2014).-----	22
Figure 7 Funnel vs Flywheel model (adapted from Velocity23, 2024).-----	25
Figure 8 Buyer persona Cooper, the Stay-at-Home Dad (Neck et.al 2021, p.431). 27	
Figure 9 Customer journey (HubSpot, 2024) -----	28
Figure 10 Customer journey map template example (DannaConnect, 2021) -----	30
Figure 11 Explanation of Lead (Monat 2011) -----	33
Figure 12 Conceptual framework of this thesis. -----	38
Figure 13 Focus areas of current customer acquisition strategy -----	42
Figure 14 Reasons Why Businesses May Not Want to Deal with Integrated Solution Providers -----	48
Figure 15 Buyer persona profile-----	53
Figure 16 Customer Journey for Head of IT -----	56
Figure 17 LinkedIn campaign manager page (LinkedIn, 2024) -----	64
Figure 18 Lead capture form Sarl Artec Int. -----	65
Figure 19 Initial Implementation plan funnel -----	66
Figure 20 Case study Sarl Artec Int Website New Look, 2024. -----	72
Figure 21 Case study Sarl Artec Int Website SEO results, 2024. -----	73
Figure 22 Case study Sarl Artec Int Website Google SEO results, 2024-----	73
Figure 23 Odoo Email marketing.-----	74
Figure 24 Odoo Link-tracker -----	74
Figure 25 Odoo Mass-Mail-Summary -----	74
Figure 26 Odoo Lead list Process -----	75
Figure 27 Odoo Lead Scoring and messaging -----	76

List of Tables

Table 1 Details of Data collections 1-3 used in this study.	9
Table 2 Internal documents used in the current state analysis, Data 1	10
Table 3 Elements of strategic marketing planning.....	13
Table 4 Facts regarding email (Patel, 2020)	35
Table 5 Start-up case study vs. their competitor’s analysis.....	46
Table 6 The customer acquisition strategy elements of the final proposal.....	77

Acknowledgement

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to my beloved family and friends for their unwavering support throughout this journey. Additionally, I am immensely grateful to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Abderrahmane Rais, for his continuous belief in me, even during times when I was not as present. Abderrahmane, your dedication has not gone unnoticed, and I am truly thankful for all your efforts.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Ahmed Bendjelloul for his exceptional support and kindness, not only during the thesis writing process but also during my involvement in his start-up. Your generosity and encouragement have played a positive role in shaping my path, and I cannot thank you enough for your unwavering commitment.

To everyone who has been a part of this journey, whether through support, guidance, or simply being there, I am deeply appreciative of each and every one of you. Your contributions have made a significant impact on my life, and I am truly grateful for the role you have played in helping me reach this point. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Abstract

This thesis outlines a systematic approach to developing a customer acquisition strategy for a case study start-up. It emphasises the integration of inbound marketing principles, the creation of a detailed buyer persona, the mapping of the customer journey, the implementation of lead generation processes, and the establishment of an efficient implementation plan. The research aims to provide valuable insights and practical recommendations to optimise customer acquisition activities, enhance market visibility, and support sustainable growth for start-ups in a competitive business environment. Through a combination of theoretical frameworks and practical applications, the study offers a structured roadmap for businesses to attract and retain customers effectively, ultimately fostering long-term success and growth.

Keywords: Inbound marketing, buyer persona, customer journey, lead generation, customer acquisition, CRM

ملخص:

تقدم هذه الدراسة العلمية منهجًا مختلفًا لتطوير استراتيجية اكتساب العملاء لشركة ناشئة كدراسة حالة. تركز الدراسة على دمج مبادئ التسويق الداخلي وإنشاء تصور مفصل للعميل المثالي ورسم خريطة رحلة العميل وتنفيذ عمليات توليد العملاء المحتملين ووضع خطة تنفيذ فعالة. يهدف البحث إلى تقديم رؤى قيمة وتوصيات عملية لتحسين أنشطة اكتساب العملاء وتعزيز الرؤية السوقية ودعم النمو المستدام للشركات الناشئة في بيئة أعمال تنافسية. من خلال الجمع بين الأطر النظرية والتطبيقات العملية، توفر الدراسة خارطة طريق منظمة للشركات لجذب العملاء والاحتفاظ بهم بفعالية، مما يعزز النجاح والنمو على المدى الطويل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التسويق الداخلي، شخصية المشتري، رحلة العميل، توليد العملاء المحتملين، اكتساب العملاء، إدارة علاقات العملاء (CRM)

1 Introduction

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in academic research focused on various aspects of entrepreneurship. This research has explored the entire spectrum of entrepreneurial activities, ranging from the inception of new ventures to their subsequent growth and development. This surge in scholarly interest has had a profound impact on the start-up ecosystem, prompting many new ventures to adopt innovative methodologies in order to differentiate themselves and succeed in an increasingly competitive and complex market.

One of the key factors that determine the sustainability and growth of start-ups is their marketing strategies, particularly those related to customer acquisition. Start-ups often face resource constraints and limited strategic options, making it crucial for them to develop effective customer acquisition strategies. These strategies not only help start-ups overcome challenges related to scalability and market penetration but also enable them to build a substantial customer base with minimal infrastructure support.

This paper aims to delve into the foundations of customer acquisition strategy and highlight its fundamental relevance to the growth of start-ups. By offering insights into tailored approaches, the paper seeks to provide start-ups with valuable guidance on how to cultivate a strong customer base while operating within their resource limitations.

1.1 Background and Significance

"Entrepreneurship" has become a buzzword, with many young, ambitious individuals establishing new companies. These start-ups are now recognised as significant drivers of the global economy. Researchers have studied various aspects of start-ups, including their creation processes, business models, strategies, success factors, and the dynamics of entrepreneurial ecosystems. The definitive growth of start-ups signals that new strategies may be more beneficial than traditional ones, helping them secure a strong market position. Today, the success of a start-up hinges not just on innovation, a developed product, or better service but significantly on a solid commercialization strategy. This work focuses on the problem of customer acquisition in start-ups, aiming to understand the critical role this strategy plays in their growth.

1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Study

Efforts to acquire customers are a major focus for early-stage companies developing their business models. The success of a start-up is heavily dependent on its ability to gain and retain customers. Customer acquisition generally follows a hierarchy of effects, where a potential customer passes through stages before making a purchase: awareness, interest, desire, and action. In essence, the core of a business lies with the customer. Effective customer management is strategic and should be integral to the company. Start-ups face competition not only from local rivals but also from global players, making customer acquisition even more critical. The role of customers in the growth of a start-up is broad, as customers are the reason businesses exist. Understanding this role is essential for comprehending business growth.

1.3 Problem Statement & Research Objectives

Almost any start-up faces challenges in effectively acquiring new customers and expanding their market presence. Despite recognising the importance of marketing strategies for growth, the start-up lacks a clear direction and struggles to identify the root causes hindering its customer acquisition efforts. There is a need to develop a sustainable customer acquisition strategy that aligns with the start-up's growth aspirations and overcomes existing limitations in marketing effectiveness.

Research Objectives:

- To develop a customer acquisition strategy that integrates inbound marketing techniques to enhance lead generation and attract a larger customer base.
- To provide the case study start-up with resources and guidance to optimise its customer acquisition activities and facilitate long-term growth.
- To assess the effectiveness of the proposed customer acquisition strategy in improving the start-up's customer base and market visibility.
- To explore the role of data tracking and analysis in enhancing marketing efforts and customer engagement for the start-up.

- To contribute to the body of knowledge in customer acquisition strategies through a rigorous research approach that combines theoretical insights with practical applications.

These objectives aim to address the identified problem statement by focusing on developing a comprehensive customer acquisition strategy, leveraging inbound marketing principles, and emphasising the importance of data-driven decision-making in marketing initiatives for sustainable growth and improved customer acquisition outcomes.

1.4 Key Research Questions

Given the traits of the customer acquisition process, this research addresses the following questions:

- How can the integration of inbound marketing principles enhance the customer acquisition strategies of a start-up?
- What are the critical components of a successful customer acquisition strategy for a start-up in comparison to its competitors?
- How can theoretical insights and industry best practices be effectively applied to optimise the customer acquisition strategy of the case start-up?
- What is the significance of data analysis and feedback in refining and improving the customer acquisition strategy for sustainable growth?
- How can the start-up team utilise internal feedback and industry benchmarks to tailor a comprehensive customer acquisition approach for long-term success?

The research motivation stems from the complex interplay between customer acquisition strategy, financing, and user base growth in early-stage start-ups. Although start-up growth has been studied, understanding how customer acquisition strategy relates to growth is relatively new. This research assumes that the way start-ups obtain clients is directly related to their growth and that the design of their development strategy, including funding plans, plays a significant role.

1.5 Thesis Outline

The goal of this research is to equip start-up companies with a roadmap for effective customer acquisition that aligns with their growth aspirations. By emphasizing the significance of stakeholder engagement and the implementation of practical strategies, this thesis aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice in the realm of customer acquisition. Through a thorough exploration of inbound marketing strategies, the study seeks to offer a valuable resource for start-ups seeking to establish a strong foundation for sustainable growth and success in today's competitive business landscape.

This thesis consists of seven sections. The first section provides an overview of the business challenges faced by the start-up and discusses the marketing outcomes that are addressed in this thesis. Moving on, the second section delves into the methodology and materials used to conduct the study. The third section explores relevant literature and examines best practices in the field of marketing strategy, with a particular emphasis on inbound marketing.

Continuing further, the fourth section presents a comprehensive report on the findings of the analysis conducted on the current state of the start-up. In the fifth section, the initial proposal is presented, outlining the suggested approach or solution to the identified challenges. The sixth section focuses on reporting the outcomes of the early testing and validation conducted to assess the viability and effectiveness of the proposed solution. Finally, the seventh section serves as the conclusion of the thesis, summarizing the key findings, insights, and recommendations derived from the study.

2. Methodology of Research

The Introduction section has presented a summary of the goal, the business problem, and the result. In this section, we will outline the selected research approach, research design, methods for data analysis, and the approach for data collection.

2.1 Research Approach

Regarding the research family, as illustrated in Figure 1, Saunders et al. (2019) claim that management and business research initiatives ought to be positioned on a continuum that challenges basic research with its context and goal. Also, the findings from empirical studies demonstrate that basic research is ineffective, whereas applied research is quite efficient. (Fan et al, 2021).

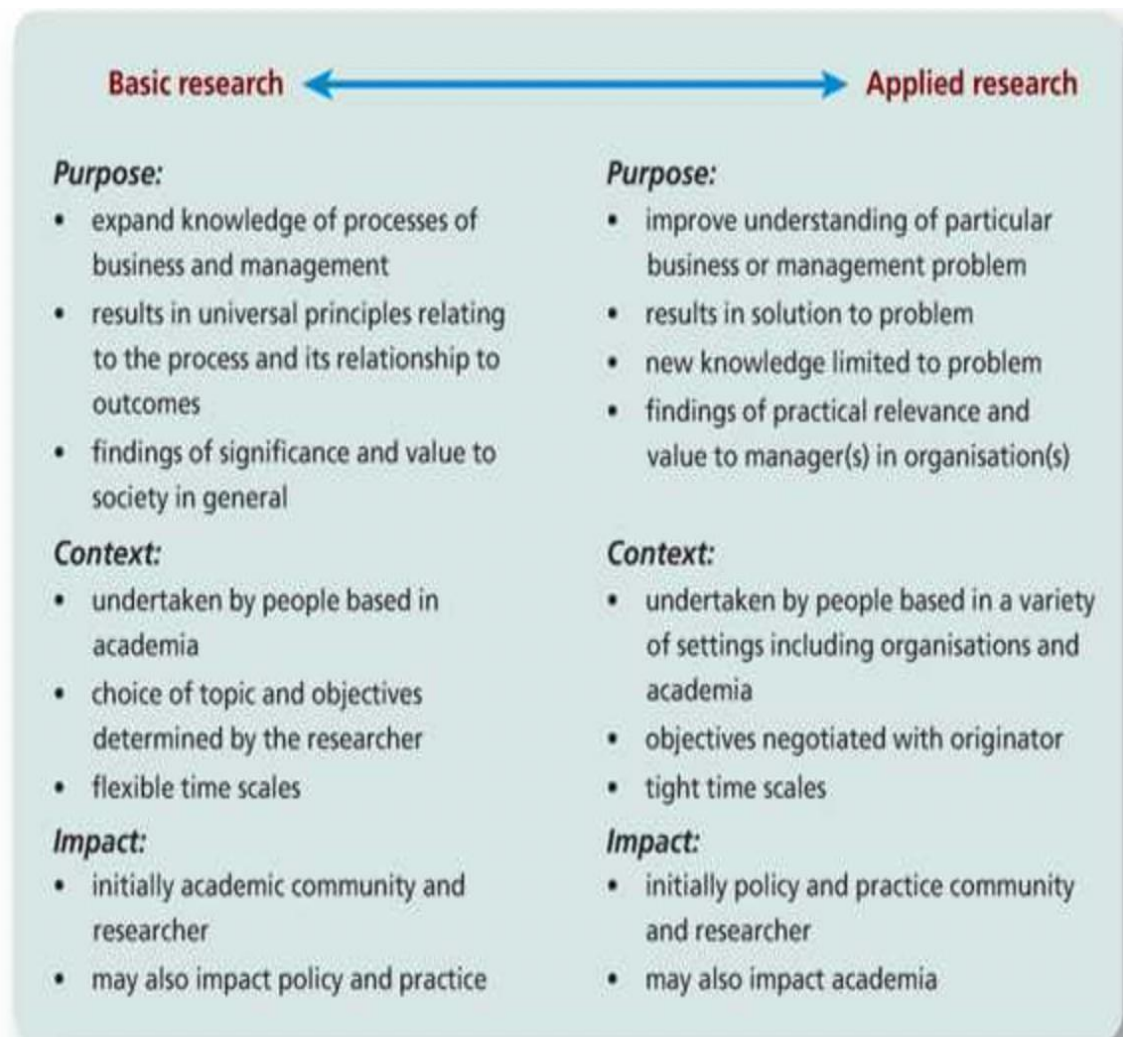


Figure 1 Applied research Vs Basic research (Saunders et al. 2019, p.11-12).

According to Saunders et al. (2019), the fundamental research family is more concerned with advancing knowledge than with resolving specific problems. It is sometimes referred to as "pure research" or "basic research" and is frequently employed at academic institutions to expand scientific theories.

The applied research family, conversely, looks for answers to challenges that arise in everyday life.

Regarding the selection of the research methodology, action research operates in the domain of strategies, realistic tasks, and structured organisational systems in the setting of business and marketing in a variety of industries and across a range of company activities and disciplines (Blichfeldt & Andersen, 2005; Shani & Coghlan, 2019).

To carry out this study, applied action research was selected because the objective is to cover the theory-practice gap and produce a common understanding of how to approach the issue, The integration of research and development elements is commonly linked to the continuous improvement and progress of the case study marketing strategy (Bourner & Brook, 2019). The result of this study is typically a change in the better use of the customer acquisition strategy for start-up growth. This research also supports the business challenge and the objective of the case study.

To fulfil the study's goal, primarily qualitative research approaches were employed, and therefore the data collection methods were designed for collecting the necessary data and ensuring the study's outcome. The qualitative research approach in this study is evident in the use of semi-structured and open-ended questions in individual and team interviews, which provide personal opinions and suggestions that might be very valuable when building a customer acquisition strategy.

2.2 Research Design

The research design outlines the conceptual framework for the study's conduct. Figure 2 depicts the research design for this thesis.

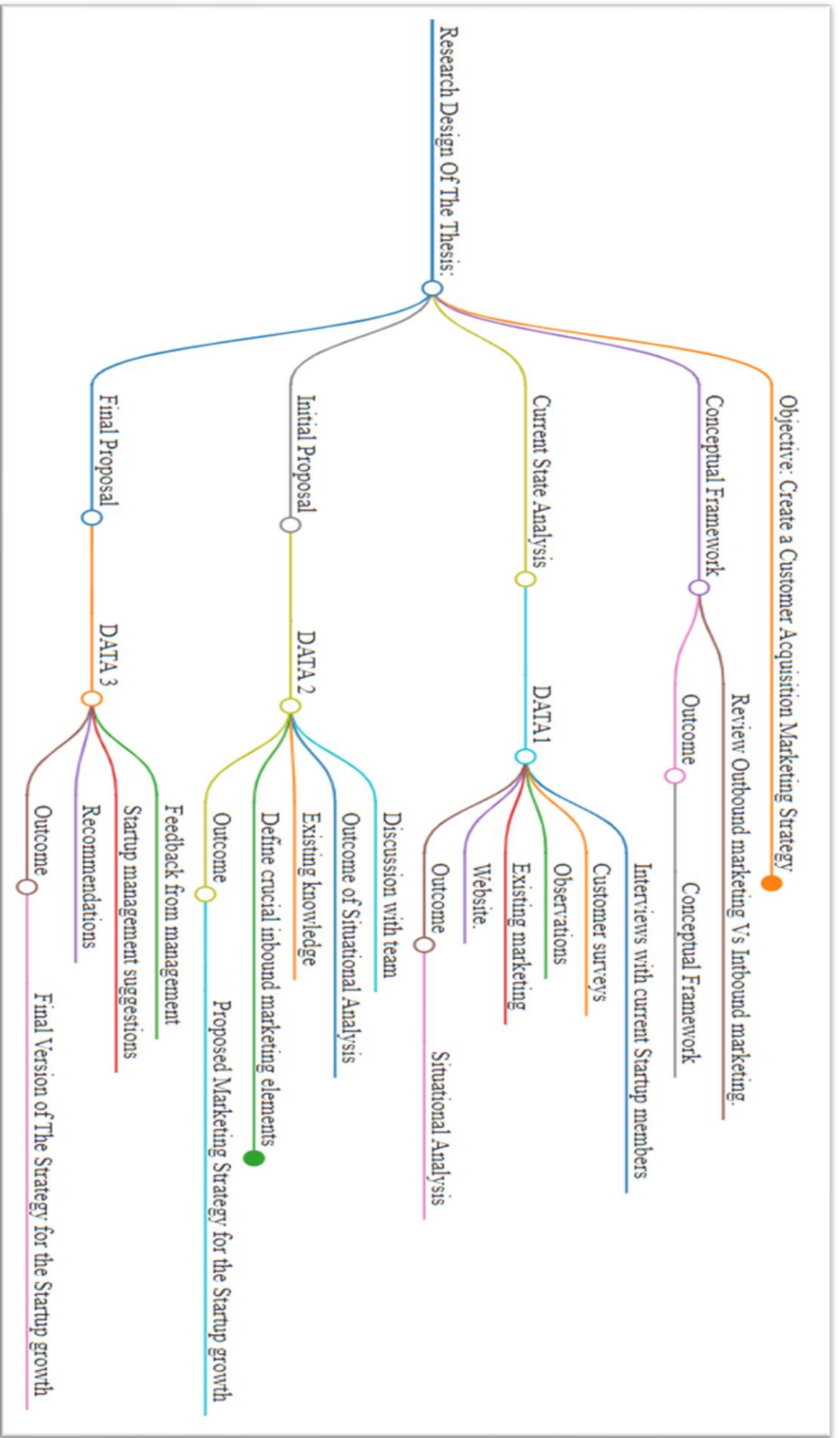


Figure 2 Research Design of the Thesis

As illustrated in Figure 2, this thesis's research approach is comprised of five steps: goal setting, conceptual framework development, present state analysis, preliminary proposal creation, and final step development of a customer acquisition strategy. Qualitative or quantitative metrics for ensuring start-up growth and attracting more potential customers must be established in the objective step.

The definitions and concepts of inbound approaches to marketing and customer acquisition are the main topics of the conceptual framework. This thesis also looks at inbound marketing's function in start-ups, as well as how it might raise knowledge and enhance marketing in general to assist in determining the resources and techniques needed to develop a customer acquisition strategy for the case study start-up.

To attain a better understanding of actual situation, the case company's present marketing initiatives are examined in the following phase. The primary sources of (Data 1) include interviews with the company's important partners, observations, and already-existing records.

The following step involves creating an initial customer acquisition strategy that the case study start-up can utilise and update as a long-term plan. This proposal is based on suitable concepts from marketing literature that have been discussed and integrated with recommendations (Data 2) for the case study start-up's new customer acquisition campaigns.

The final step involves team meetings and in-person conversations with the case study start-up's important parties to confirm the initial customer acquisition strategy (Data 3). The final acquisition strategy will be completed using their reviews and suggestions.

2.3 Collection and Analysis of Data

Internal files, Start-up key partners meetings, interviews and other useful resources provide the data for this thesis.

There are three phases to collect data. The goal of Data 1 is to gather information through interviews at the start-up for the present status analysis. Finding facts and evidence to assess the existing state of business and marketing initiatives is the

goal of Data 1 collection. Onward in the thesis, the analysis based on Data 1 will be very important as it looks for the strengths and flaws that are crucial for creating the new customer acquisition strategy. The subjects of the interview contribute to two categories of participants: (1) employees, which include the CEO, Product manager, and Customer relationship manager and (2) customers, which include current and prospective customers.

The interviews are conducted with the specific goal of recording their thoughts and insights to assess their actual marketing efforts, particularly the customer acquisition process. The interview was selected as the research choice since it is the most efficient means of obtaining the necessary information and data for this thesis. The case study start-up's current marketing materials will also be studied and examined to gain a better understanding of the situation as it stands today. The details of the Data 1, Data 2, and Data 3 collections utilised in this research are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Details of Data collections 1-3 used in this study.

Data Source	Content	Participants	Documented as	Purpose
Data 1	Interviews Internal files	CEO Product Manager Customer Relationship Manager Existing Customer reviews Potential Customers Website LinkedIn profiles Facebook page CEO Accounts	Written notes	To evaluate the marketing efforts To analyse marketing process and strategy
Data 2 (Initial Proposal phase)	Brainstorming session	CEO Product Manager Customer Relationship Manager	Written notes	Create a preliminary customer acquisition strategy
Data 3 (Final Strategy elements)	Team meeting	CEO Product Manager Customer Relationship Manager	Written notes	Listening to reviews and feedback and finalising the Strategy

With the help of elements chosen from the Data 1 collection, Literature knowledge and best practices and the outcomes of the current state analysis, Data 2 gathering aims to develop an initial proposal for a customer acquisition strategy.

The validation process, which entails getting feedback on the proposal's quality from the case study start-up management, is where Data 3 collection originates. The strategy is finally completed and adjusted with the help of management input.

2.3.1 Questionnaires & Interviews

The main technique for gathering data was individual interviews. Through questionnaires, participants were contacted to gain a better understanding of the case study start-up present situation. Because they could offer the most insights and comprehend the actual circumstances, Next, interviews with potential customers were limited to individuals who were familiar with the case study start-up's operations and those of their competitors.

A variety of internal reports and files on sales and marketing were also examined as part of the study. To provide information regarding the present marketing at the start-up, the study also examined the recorded results of earlier marketing evaluations. Lastly, the most recent records regarding the current state of business in the market were also examined. Table 2 displays the specifics of the study's internal files.

Table 2 Internal documents used in the current state analysis, Data 1

	Name of the document	Description
A	Company online sales presentation	Detailed information about case company, references, projects, figures.
B	Prior Marketing surveys	Customer satisfaction reports.
C	Competitor analysis	Information about their market strategies, pricing.
D	Market research report	Old External freelancer prepared document regarding the market.

2.3.2 Online Sources of Data

The marketing strategy and the competitors of the case study start-up was also examined in this thesis, and information was gathered from their website and other internet sources. This section of the analysis used information from their website to create a benchmark that gave information about their services and contrasted them with those of their closest competitors. By keeping updated on their activity on social media platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn, the case study start-up's and its competition's marketing strategies have also been examined.

Section 3 delves into literatures, knowledge and optimal approaches to customer acquisition subjects.

3 Existing Literature & Optimal Approaches for Building a Customer Acquisition Strategy

This section will cover the practices and literature that exist for marketing and creating customer acquisition strategies. This Section will also explore the impact of technology on the traditional marketing approach and emphasise the utilisation of inbound marketing tactics to assist start-ups in growing and attracting customers.

3.1 Definition of Marketing

The subject of marketing is one that marketers discuss the most. The meanings of marketing have evolved substantially throughout time. Marketing is defined by one word: "customer," according to Gosnay & Richardson. (2008). Marketing comprehends the identity of your customers, their preferences, and their requirements, enabling you to provide them with optimal satisfaction and service (Gosnay & Richardson, 2008).

Philip Kotler came up with one of the most widely recognised definitions of marketing. Many others were expanding their definitions after his. He describes marketing as an activity in business that involves determining the wants and needs of an organisation's customers, discovering the target markets that the company may effectively service, and developing appropriate products and services suited to these markets (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). He is regarded as the founding father of modern marketing.

The founders of the revolutionary cloud CRM system HubSpot, which is used by numerous millions of marketers worldwide, came up with a different definition that is worth considering. They define marketing as an organisation's efforts designed to attract customers to its offerings by successfully communicating a message. To demonstrate service value, build brand loyalty, and boost sales over the long term, content marketing aims to provide prospects and customers with a unique value (HubSpot, 2023).

Raimova (2022) offers a more sophisticated interpretation of marketing. According to her, marketing is a comprehensive, data-driven, and flexible procedure that links brands with their most suitable consumers to achieve particular business outcomes (Raimova & Erkin, 2022).

The above ideas ought to be considered since the study's objective is to determine how to attract new leads, and understanding the needs and interests of potential customers is fundamental.

The following subsection will cover the relationship between strategy and marketing.

3.2 Marketing Strategy

Despite the differences between business and marketing strategies, the company's goals and objectives cannot be achieved without alignment between the two (Taylor, 2018). Taylor stated that the marketing strategy needs to influence the business strategy. The outcomes that might be expected from marketing initiatives depend on the degree to which a business strategy integrates a marketing strategy. Long-term goals can be met by the company with the aid of a well-implemented strategy for marketing. According to Taylor, companies should consider search engine optimisation, inbound marketing, and social media as technologies that can be integrated into their marketing strategy rather than treating them as separate tactics. (Taylor, 2018)

The concept of marketing strategy is also introduced by Brennan et al. (2011); however, according to them, in order to get a competitive advantage, a marketing strategy should be defined as strategic marketing planning (Brennan et al, 2011). According to Brennan et al. (2011), there are three essential components of strategic marketing planning.

Table 3 Elements of strategic marketing planning

Elements of strategic marketing planning (Brennan et al. 2011, p.92):	
1	Long-term outcomes should be the main goal of strategic marketing. Simultaneously, outside parties need to be kept in mind and continuously observed.
2	The success of the entire business can be impacted by strategic marketing decisions. Input from every member of the management group is needed.
3	Roles vary depending on the market. Managers must keep in mind that while services and products must be linked with the company's overall objectives, they must be managed differently in different markets.

Both Taylor (2018) and Brennan et al. (2011) appear to hold the same opinion that the entire organisation's management need to participate in the decision-making when developing a marketing strategy. They also appear to concur that marketing plans must

be continuously reviewed and modified as necessary to conform to the aims and objectives of the business. To implement the plans and meet those goals, a variety of marketing methods and tools have to be employed.

The upcoming section aims to explore multiple understandings of a marketing strategy.

3.2.1. Marketing Strategy Definition

A successful marketing Strategy is crucial for a company's success, focusing on long-term goals and aspirations. A well-thought-out strategy should detail how and when to deploy resources, define marketing goals and create strategies to achieve them. A marketing strategy should provide detailed information on target markets and a roadmap to reach them while minimizing wasted effort and resources. A good marketing plan should present the company's internal environment using SWOT and PESTLE analysis, and include market and customer research. (Yaneva, 2020)

Planning a marketing strategy is crucial for staying within boundaries and gaining a competitive advantage. The strategy should be comprehensive, flexible, and consider the likelihood of change. Regular updates are necessary to account for customers' shifting wants and needs. (Morgan et al., 2019)

Market segmentation is essential for understanding customer needs, pain points, buying behaviours, and channels. Today's technology enables two-way interaction and establishing trust with customers. Defining communications is vital in a marketing strategy, choosing tactics like buzz marketing, sales promoting, online advertising, mobile marketing, and personal selling. (Wood, 2017)

Kotler suggests that a strategic marketing plan should include an executive summary, opportunity and issue analysis, current situation, objectives, strategy, controls, projected profit-and-loss statement, and action programs that looks at 3 years forward. (Kotler, 2000).

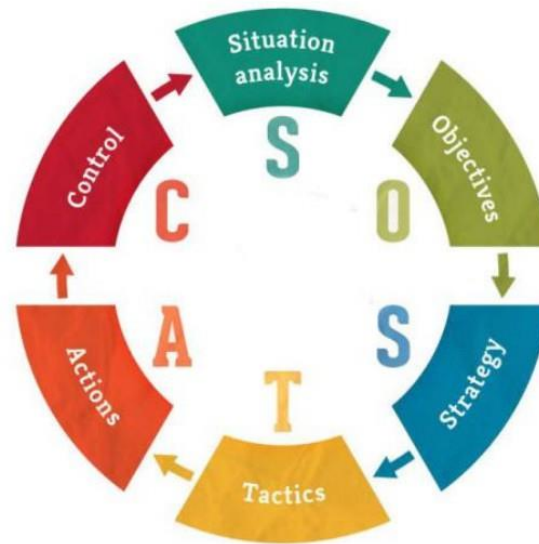


Figure 3 SOSTAC (Chaffey & Smith 2013 p. 538).

Employing the SOSTAC framework is a valuable tool for creating a strong marketing plan. SOSTAC represents Situation analysis, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Action, and Control. It is a systematic planning approach used by professionals to create various types of plans, including corporate plans, marketing plans, and digital marketing plans. (Chaffey & Smith, 2013)

The planning system begins with situation analysis, which provides an overview of the existing state of the marketplace and its customer base. Additionally, it serves as a valuable tool for projecting future customer growth and provides feedback on previous strategies. Followed by setting the objectives, to answer the main question why? Successful goals are measurable and come with clear deadlines. The next step is strategy, which summarises how to fulfil objectives and provides direction on how to acquire, convert, and retain customers. The next step is tactics, which outline the marketing mix, communication mix, channel mix and tactical tools. The final step is action, which formalises who is responsible for what and what procedures are necessary for change to happen. The control step focuses on determining success or failure and allows for easier changes if needed. (Reason & Bradbury, 2008)

Authors have varied approaches and frameworks for developing a marketing plan, and their perspectives differ on the appropriate level of detail for a marketing plan.

The following section will explore the push and pull marketing approaches in our digital era.

3.3 Outbound Marketing & Marketing Mix

Marketing has traditionally taken an outbound approach, which involves strategically placing advertisements across major media platforms, including print and digital channels. This watering strategy effectively targets a large audience, similar to the focused nourishing of plants. This classical strategy aims to build a yielding basis for conversions by identifying new customers, providing opportunities, and exploiting incremental sales. Typically, this requires using targeted outreach efforts, such as cold calling, or proactive tactics to initiate client involvement.

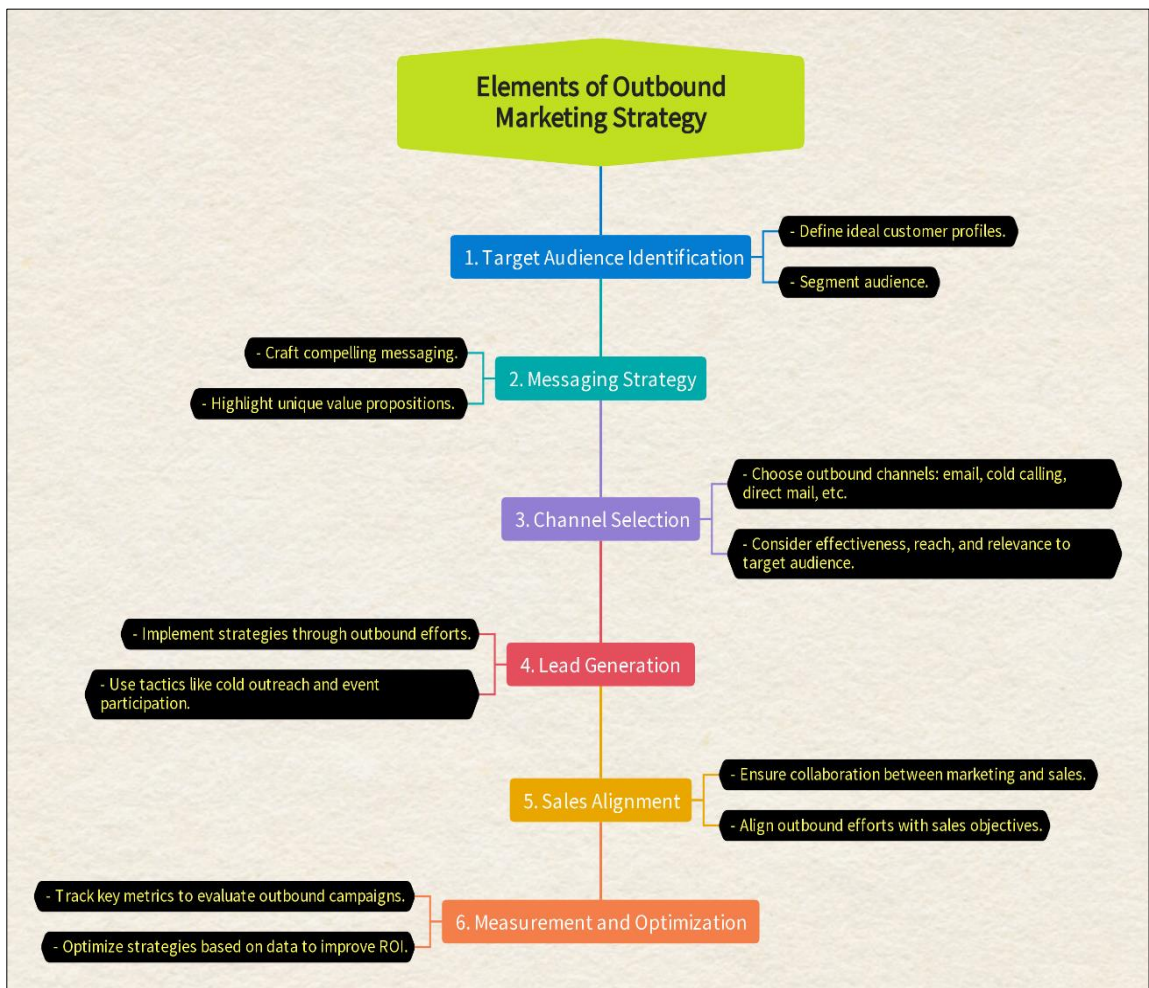


Figure 4 Elements of Outbound Marketing Strategy (adapted from: (Cooke, 2024))

While some argue that inbound marketing has always been the more effective approach, Brian Halligan, the founder of HubSpot, disagrees. He suggests that outbound marketing has become more crucial over the years, with numerous studies backing up its efficacy. However, Halligan also notes that outbound marketing tends to yield a lower return on investment and is often more expensive to operate compared to inbound marketing. (Halligan, 2021).

As reported by Halligan (2021), outbound marketing's decreased effectiveness stems from two key factors. Firstly, intrusive tactics such as unsolicited calls and emails often push customers to take measures to block or avoid them, leading to resistance and frustration. Secondly, with the rise of digital transformation, customers have developed a preference for distance, self-directed interactions, such as online browsing and research, over physical events like trade fairs. This shift has dramatically changed the way businesses operate and deliver value to customers. As a result, digital channels have become the primary source of information for buyers, who increasingly rely on online research and verification before making a purchase.

Outbound marketing appears to have lost its attractiveness as a result of changes in customer behaviour. The issue is that modern customers find old outbound methods overly disruptive and unpleasant. Notably, prominent corporations such as Coca-Cola, Adidas, and McDonald's use outbound marketing strategies to reach a larger audience. While many businesses continue to rely on outbound initiatives to increase market share, some use them wisely as part of a broader marketing strategy, frequently combining them with other tactics usually related to the marketing mix to have a greater impact.

The key to success for many outbound marketers lies in using the marketing mix to create products and services that resonate with their target audience. This approach can be used for both immediate and long-term goals, forming a solid foundation for a marketing strategy. (Palmer, 2012).

Ettenson et al. (2013) argue that the old 4P's marketing framework needs to be redesigned. For more than 50 years, the product, place, price, and promotion mix have served as the foundation of marketing strategy, intending to maximise revenues by optimising the marketing mix. However, in the B2B sector, the strategy often prioritises product features over solution delivery, which can be problematic. (Ettenson et al, 2013)

These authors identify three major flaws in the 4Ps concept. For starters, it pushes sales and marketing teams to emphasise product quality and technology as unique selling features, but in B2B settings, they become expectations rather than differentiators. Second, the model minimises the significance of convincing customers of the advantages of their offerings. Third, it restricts B2B marketers from using their reputation as credible problem-solving experts and consultants. According to these

researchers, the solution needs to expand the focus from products and services to solutions, from place to access, from price to value, and from promotion to education. This SAVE paradigm directs marketers to consider changing their strategy and focusing on providing value to customers over simply promoting products and services. (Ettenson et al. 2013).

In this thesis, the whole 7Ps approach will be applied. The aspects of people, process, and physiological evidence are particularly essential for the case start-up in creating an excellent customer experience that will help them acquire new leads present in the digital world.

Next will examine the modern customers and the digital marketing.

3.4 Digital Marketing

Our life, world and businesses became more digital than ever, so is marketing. So, on the subject of digital marketing, Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2019) describe it as the strategic integration of internet-based technologies with traditional marketing methods to achieve specific marketing objectives. They also highlight the importance of managing a company's online presence across various digital platforms, including websites, social media, email, and more (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2019).

Saheb and his colleague researchers took a slightly different approach, defining digital marketing as the targeted and measurable application of digital technologies to drive customer acquisition, retention, and relationship-building. This approach emphasises the use of digital channels to communicate with modern customers in a clear and quantifiable manner (Saheb et al, 2021).

In a broader sense, digital marketing involves a multifaceted approach that puts the customer at the heart of every online interaction. Chaffey & Smith (2013) suggest that this customer-centric strategy leverages digital media channels such as search marketing, social media marketing, and content marketing to foster closer relationships with customers, gain a deeper understanding of their needs, and ultimately drive sales growth. Digital marketing is thus about creating a seamless and engaging online experience that meets customers' needs and exceeds their expectations.

All definitions concur that digital marketing involves harnessing digital channels to achieve predetermined marketing outcomes. Chaffey and Smith's definition resonates

particularly well with the topic of this thesis, given its emphasis on a customer-centric approach.

As researchers have noted, the vast majority of millennial consumers rely on digital sources for information gathering (Halligan & Shah, 2014). This online research typically involves exploring three key domains: blogs, social media platforms, and search engines such as Google and Bing, which are the primary lines for information gathering, facilitating quick and easy access to a vast array of data.

A normal person searches the internet multiple times a day and considers these searches to be more useful than sifting through spam emails, advertisements, or sales pitches. In addition to search engines, people who are looking for information also tend to turn to blog postings and social media platforms, which are frequently utilised for making purchases. Despite this, advertising continues to be a vital component of business growth, and start-ups need to implement marketing strategies that correspond with how consumers prefer to obtain information before making purchases (Halligan & Shah, 2014).

Following section and subsections will dive in the pull marketing details of inbound marketing and its components.

3.5 Inbound Marketing

The concept of inbound marketing was first proposed by Halligan and Shah, the founders of HubSpot, in 2006. They argued that this pull marketing approach involves creating a valuable customer experience that benefits the start-up, ultimately leading to business growth and customer loyalty (Halligan & Shah, 2014). By providing informative and relevant content, companies can effectively "pull" customers towards them through inbound marketing. This strategy leverages innovative web-based tools and channels to achieve its objectives (Halligan & Shah, 2014).

In contrast to traditional outbound marketing techniques, inbound marketing relies on prospective customers discovering a business on their own without being directly targeted by the sales teams. This approach demands significant effort and dedication over an extended period. Identifying the most effective channels for reaching the target audience is crucial, as this allows companies to tailor their strategy accordingly. Inbound marketing is also commonly referred to as earned media or organic marketing

(Fishkin & Høgenhaven, 2013).

Inbound marketing, as a strategy, is designed to engage and retain customers through the provision of bespoke and compelling content that resonates with their requirements. This encompasses a variety of content forms, including blogs, landing pages, videos, e-books, and infographics. The fundamental principle underpinning inbound marketing is the ability to guide customers in recognising their needs and illustrating how a specific product can address those needs effectively. By establishing credibility and enhancing the brand's value, businesses can lay the groundwork for successful inbound marketing campaigns. The adoption of inbound marketing techniques empowers businesses to exert a more pronounced influence on their target demographic, thereby bolstering brand visibility and driving lead-generation initiatives to fruition.

By furnishing customers with vital information, start-ups can empower them to make more informed purchasing decisions. This transparency enables customers to quickly identify the most suitable products or services, expediting the sales process and reducing the time it takes to close a deal.

Inbound marketing stands out from its outbound counterpart by making content readily available online, thereby increasing brand exposure and facilitating easy access to valuable information.

Next, we will examine content importance in inbound marketing

3.5.1 Content Marketing Value in Inbound Marketing Strategy

In his 1996 essay, "Content is King," the founder of Microsoft, Bill Gates foresaw the future of the Internet. He stated that content stands to generate significant revenue online. (Gates, 1996).

Holliman & Rowley (2014) see content marketing as strategic to engages with users at the critical decision-making stage, encouraging them to take a positive action towards the business. This strategy requires content that is free of sales demands and instead focuses on the target audience's specific interests. This distinguishing feature separates content marketing from traditional advertising and explains its effectiveness as an inbound marketing strategy that consumers willingly choose to interact with (Holliman & Rowley, 2014).

The growth of free and easily accessible technologies on the social web has contributed to the spread of both online and offline content marketing, allowing businesses of all sizes to compete for visibility and impact (Gunelius, 2011).

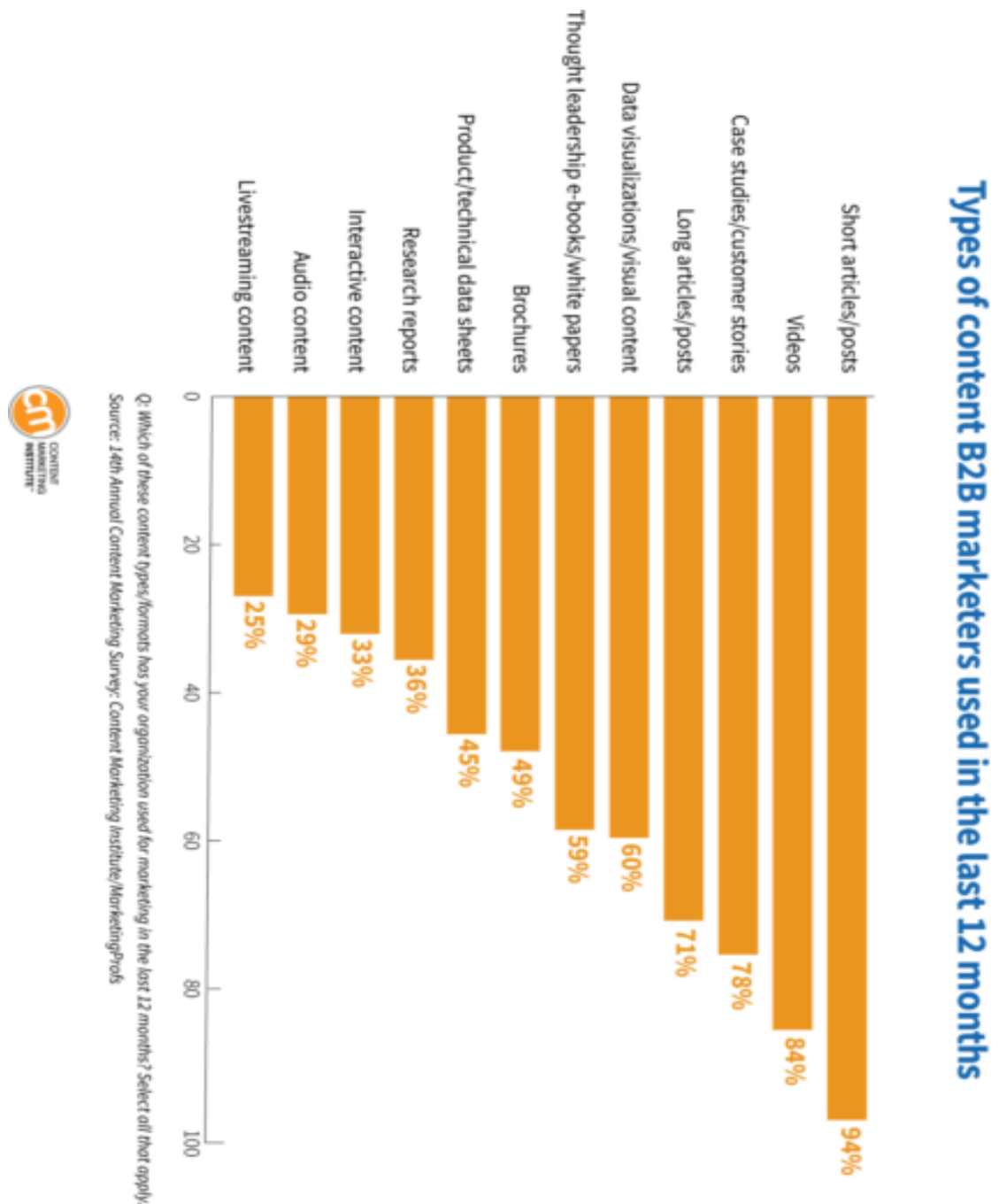


Figure 5 Content marketing in B2B (Source: (Stahl, 2023))

Figure 5 depicts the latest types of content used in B2B marketing.

Following sections will explore the frameworks of inbound marketing.

3.5.2 Funnel Framework of Inbound Marketing

To grasp the intricacies of inbound marketing, it is essential to comprehend the four-step framework developed by Halligan & Shah (2014). This procedural breakdown allows businesses and marketers to anticipate specific expectations, tasks, and milestones to successfully attract potential customers, convert them into qualified leads, and ultimately cultivate delighted customers who enthusiastically recommend their products or services. Each phase of the process corresponds to a distinct customer experience, spanning pre-purchase preparation, during-purchase engagement, and post-purchase retention. Furthermore, companies and marketers are provided with practical guidance on implementing and refining various strategies at each stage of the process.

The inbound marketing methodology is visualized through the use of an intuitive funnel, providing a clear roadmap for converting potential customers into leads, customers, and promoters. According to Halligan & Shah's diagram, published on the HubSpot website, the potential outcomes at each stage are meticulously outlined, offering marketers a comprehensive understanding of the inbound marketing framework.



Figure 6 Inbound marketing framework illustrated by (Halligan & Shah 2014).

Their ideology states that there are four steps in the process, all of which must be achieved in order to proceed. Below is a more thorough explanation of the entire procedure as shown above in figure 6.

Attract (Strangers into visitors)

The inbound marketing framework begins with the crucial stage of attracting leads among all the visitors. As HubSpot notes in 2023, companies must first identify who they should target and who is worth the effort.

During this stage, potential customers are enticed to learn more about a product or service when they engage with content that sparks their interest. By creating valuable content tailored to their buyer persona, companies can establish trust with their audience. This, in turn, enables potential buyers to seek answers before interacting with the company's representatives, allowing companies to accelerate their journey through the sales funnel.

Rather than attempting to attract everyone who might be interested, it is more effective to focus on those most likely to become leads and eventually satisfied customers. A well-planned content strategy simplifies the attraction phase. A range of tools, including blogs, social media like Facebook and LinkedIn, and videos can be leveraged to achieve success. Moreover, high-quality SEO and SEM should be prioritised, as recommended by Halligan & Shah (2014).

Convert (Visitors into leads)

To effectively convert potential customers, it is crucial to focus on nurturing leads through the lead funnel. By providing solutions and insights tailored to their needs, customers are encouraged to take action, leading to increased commitment (Halligan & Shah, 2014). Utilising marketing automation tools can streamline this process, enabling efficient tracking and improvement of lead progression.

Establishing relationships with unknown individuals requires time and resources, demanding a strategic investment from companies. To access customer information, businesses must offer something valuable in exchange, creating a mutually beneficial exchange. This value can be disseminated through engaging landing pages or forms, initiating the relationship-building process effectively.

Inbound marketers need to follow up with visitors who convert to leads through well-designed call-to-actions (CTAs), landing pages, webinars, forms, by using targeted email marketing campaigns or live chat on the business website. Marketers need to make sure that potential customers can obtain thorough information about a product or service during this engagement phase. They should also use a customer relationship management (CRM) system that allows them to track leads and keep track of prior contacts. As it offers a platform for tracking lead growth and refining marketing tactics, a CRM system is critical to inbound marketing.

Close (Leads into customers)

A vital stage in any sales process is turning leads into paying customers. At this stage, potential customers have already demonstrated interest in your products or services and have come to regard you as an authority in your field. They are now primed to make a purchase, having concluded that your offering is the most suitable solution for their needs.

Effective email marketing can be a powerful tool for nurturing leads and driving conversions. By leveraging email marketing, businesses can generate interest in making a purchase and persuade leads to take the plunge. One of the key advantages of email marketing is its ability to be segmented, allowing you to tailor your communications to specific stages of the inbound marketing funnel. For instance, customers who have progressed beyond the initial conversion stage can be targeted with promotional emails, highlighting ongoing specials and updates. This targeted approach can prompt even the most hesitant leads to make a purchase.

Another valuable strategy for converting leads into paying customers is lead scoring. By assigning a score to each lead based on their behaviour, businesses can identify those that are most likely to convert. This enables companies to differentiate between high-value and low-value leads, allocating resources more effectively. By prioritising the most promising leads, businesses can maximize their conversion rates and drive revenue growth.

Delight (Customers into promoters)

the delight phase is where companies focus on assisting customers in achieving their goals. It's crucial to understand that the success of the customer directly correlates with the success of the company. Utilising various tools, such as feedback surveys, loyalty programs, and chat systems, can facilitate this phase effectively.

By using these technologies, it is possible to create and publish content that is tailored to the needs of the customer through the most optimal platforms at the most appropriate times. Every year, for example, sending birthday greetings or customised messages or offers serves to improve the consumer's experience (Halligan & Shah, 2021).

Historically, the funnel model has been a cornerstone of inbound marketing, but that understanding has evolved. Halligan (2018) conceptualised the inbound flywheel model to reorient the strategy around the customer, moving beyond a sole focus on leads. This paradigm shift positions the customer at the very heart of the campaign.

The inbound framework model will serve as the foundation for this customer acquisition strategy proposal and play a pivotal role in the growth of start-ups. A detailed breakdown of actions for each phase will be presented subsequently. Following, we will see how the funnel framework evolved.

3.5.3 Flywheel Framework in Inbound Marketing

Brian Halligan brought forth his business growth model “the flywheel concept” in 2018, which is a paradigm-shifting alternative to the conventional sales funnel. Halligan's ground-breaking concept revolved around giving the customer's voice first priority, taking into account their wants and needs from the moment of purchase to the end of the client relationship. Flywheel is a customer-focused concept that offers mutually beneficial outcomes for both sides.

In this regard. The flywheel idea starts an ongoing loop that links loyalty to product purchase conversations and, in turn, promotes better understanding and growth. Figure 7 visually represents the two approaches and shows how the flywheel and sales funnel differ from one another.

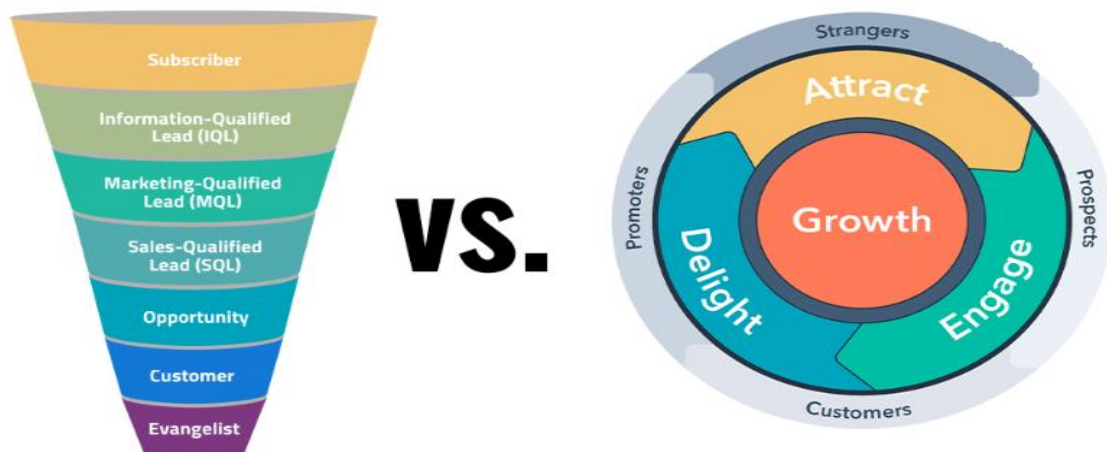


Figure 7 Funnel vs Flywheel model (adapted from Velocity23, 2024).

The Flywheel concept, pioneered by HubSpot, is based on the idea that an organisation may achieve more momentum when all of its employees collaborate together to provide a superior customer experience. It's interesting to note that James Watt is credited with creating the flywheel, a device that is centuries old and consists of a wheel or disc fixed on a strong axis. Because of its adaptability, it is widely used in many different industries. Engines run smoothly because of the flywheel's special capacity to store kinetic energy as spinning momentum.

The Flywheel concept can be viewed as a continuous cycle in the business world, where consumers' energy is swiftly returned to them, hence fuelling their growth. This concept's main idea is momentum, and the marketing flywheel's efficacy depends on it. The consumer is at the centre of the sales flywheel, which is a circular process that serves as an input rather than an output for sales and marketing efforts. Start-ups can build a self-sustaining momentum that determines their growth by putting the needs of their customers first.

Next, we will examine the ideal customer notion.

3.5.4 Ideal Customer = Buyer Persona

The concept of buyer personas has quickly grown to be vital to inbound marketing tactics following the flywheel concept. These personas are pivotal tools for characterising the target audience and enabling customised marketing strategies. The debate around buyer personas, which is still relatively new, has become very common among marketers and has been adopted extensively in practice.

A conceptual depiction of the ideal customer that a start-up seeks to attract with its products or services is called a buyer persona. Through the careful examination of psychographics, behavioural economics, and consumer demographics, this characterisation is created (Wright, 2017).

Wright and Klepek (2019) have comparable definitions. According to Klepek (2019), a buyer persona is a comprehensive depiction of a marketing professional's ideal client based on data, behaviour, demographics, motivation, and aspirations.

However, according to Halligan and Shah (2016), the founders of HubSpot define a buyer persona as the company's ideal buyer exhibited in an engaging manner that makes the business believe it is communicating with a specific individual.

Neck et al. (2021) emphasise the importance of creating buyer personas in comprehending one's audience, asserting that demographics and psychographics provide only a superficial understanding. They argue that these aspects merely help build a buyer profile, lacking depth into customer behaviour. For instance, while demographics offer details like location, age, and marital status, they fail to illuminate purchasing patterns. Similarly, psychographics may reveal traits such as regular mosque attendance and skills in management, but they don't provide much information about the intricacies of purchasing decisions. Building buyer personas is becoming a powerful strategy for predicting customer behaviour inside an organisation (Neck et al., 2021).

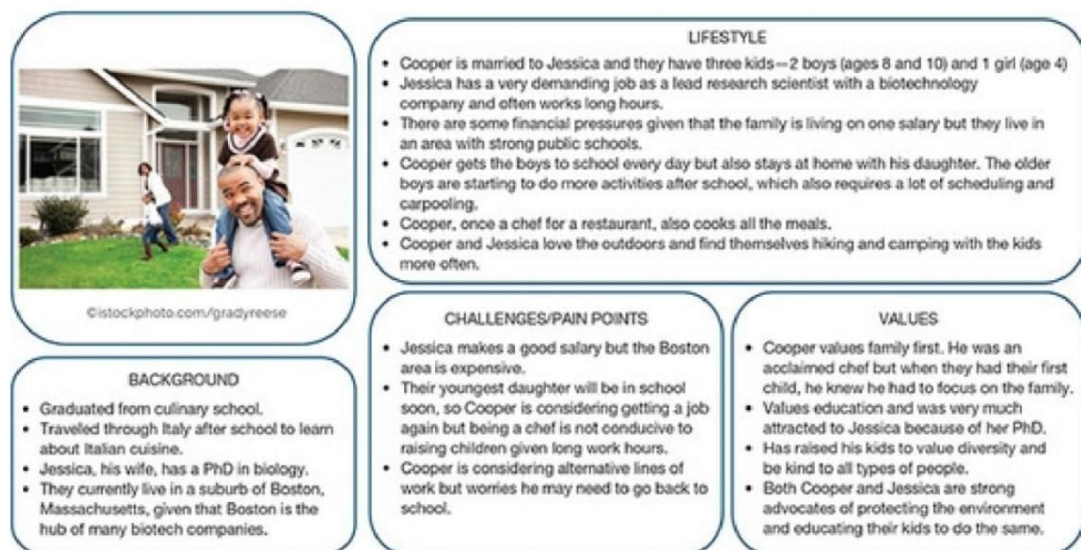


Figure 8 Buyer persona Cooper, the Stay-at-Home Dad (Neck et.al 2021, p.431).

The creation of buyer personas necessitates a methodical approach, as noted by Neck et al. (2021). Conducting focused, in-depth interviews with prospective customers is one of the best strategies for creating such characters. These interviews are meant to capture the core of the customers' stories so that businesses can establish a stronger relationship with the people they want to impact. In order to accomplish this, a number of important topics should be covered in the interviews, such as demographics, objectives and difficulties, values and anxieties, complaints and pain areas, interests, and more (Neck et al., 2021). Start-ups can create thorough buyer personas by combining information from current customers' profiles with data obtained from

interviews. This method makes it easier to comprehend the target market, which helps start-ups better customise their marketing strategies. Figure 8 above shows an example.

It's also important to remember that, even if buyer personas are a great way to depict the ideal customer, creating an exclusive persona might be helpful in some situations. Start-ups would save their resources when developing a model specifically for certain types of customers. In fact, by identifying who the company's clients are not, these kinds of buyer personas might aid in comprehending the company's clientele. In creating a client acquisition system, the buyer persona will be essential.

Neck et al.'s ideas will be the source of guidance for this paper's buyer persona. The customer journey will be the next tactic that is covered.

3.5.5 Customer Journey

Developing inbound marketing strategies that generate results begins with a relentless focus on customer satisfaction. Marketers may create a flow of leads and revenue by learning in depth what prospects prefer and dislike. Moreover, determining and resolving clients' pain points depends just as much on marketing language that is customised to the exact phase of the purchasing process.

In fact, the customer journey may be seen as a sequence of small stages, starting with the initial awareness of the brand, continuing with an analysis of offerings, and ending with the choice to make a purchase (Halligan & Shah, 2021). Interestingly, HubSpot has broken down that journey into five simple phases, which outline specific steps that marketers might undertake at each level to meet the needs of customers as illustrated in figure 9 below.



Figure 9 Customer journey (Agius, 2024)

In the awareness stage, customers identify problems and seek information. Brands provide educational content via blogs and social media to offer solutions without pushing sales.

In the consideration stage, customers compare brands and offerings. Product marketing content, distributed across websites and social media, helps them navigate choices.

In the decision stage, customers are willing to purchase. Brands streamline the purchase process with demos, consultations, and promotions.

In the retention stage, brands focus on retaining customers through exceptional support and feedback mechanisms like surveys.

In the loyalty stage, loyal customers advocate for the brand. Brands ensure an outstanding end-to-end experience and incentivize continued patronage. (Agius, 2023).

To gain a deeper understanding of the consumer experience, businesses often turn to customer journey mapping. This visual representation of the customer's path to purchase or engagement with a brand provides a comprehensive framework for identifying key touchpoints, pivotal moments, and influential factors that shape their journey. By mapping these experiences, businesses can better appreciate the emotional and psychological nuances that underpin customer behaviour, ultimately informing strategic decisions that drive loyalty, retention, and revenue growth. In doing so, it is essential to consider the emotional highs and lows that customers may experience along the way, as well as the organisation's desired outcomes (Lucid Content Team, 2017).

The foundation of customer journey maps often relies on timelines of events. Companies need to incorporate various occurrences into these maps, such as customers' initial website visits, subsequent product interactions, any purchases made, receipt of onboarding emails, and requests for cancellations.

In 2016, Salesforce conducted a study that exhibited the advantages associated with developing customer journey maps. Businesses may identify the precise touchpoints and situations where their potential customers interact with them by making these kinds of maps. With the use of this data, start-ups may better prioritise and improve certain aspects of their operations and get better results. Customer journey maps also give

start-ups the chance to compare the perceived standard of customer service with their real experience and obtain relevant information.

Businesses generally believe that their customer experience process is flawless, but customer journey maps can highlight the unpleasant reality. Notably, customer journey maps also make it easier to determine which development plans are most important. A diagram displaying such a map is shown in Figure 10: a customer journey map template example.

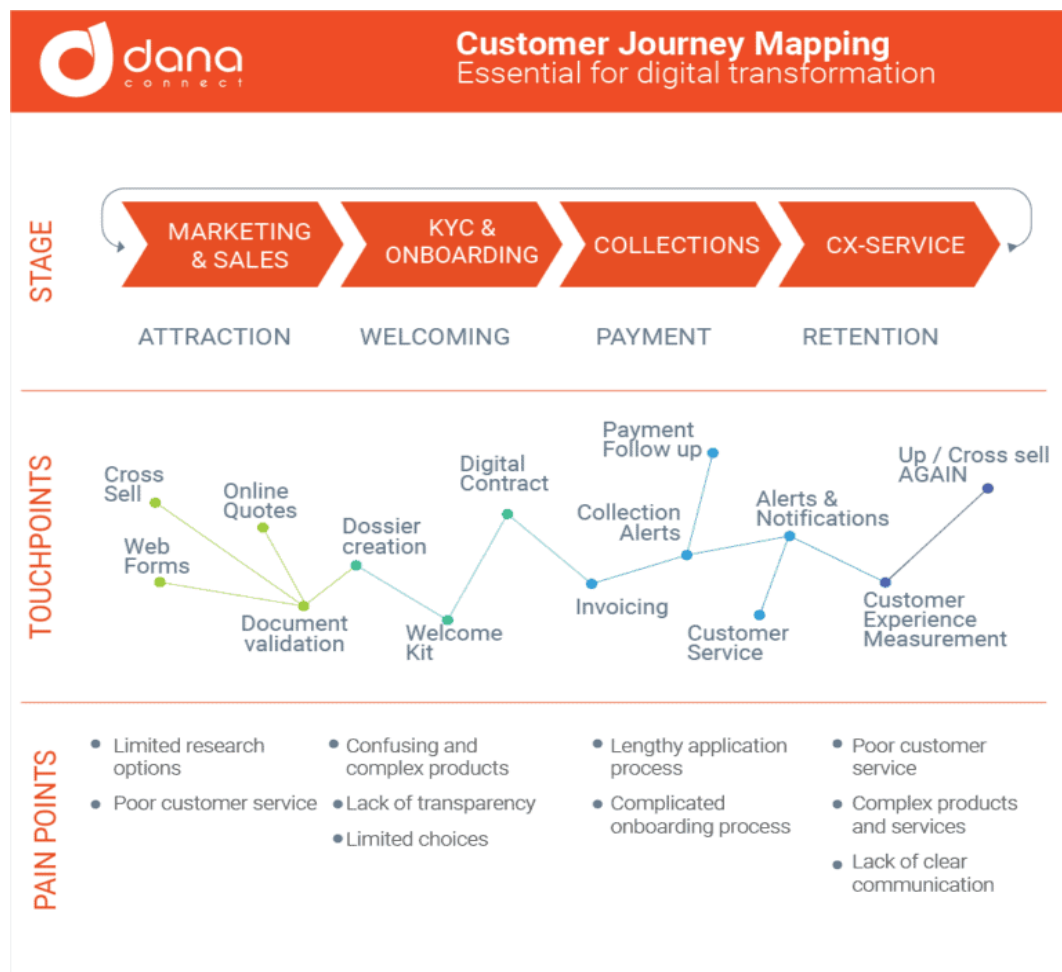


Figure 10 Customer journey map template example (DannaConnect, 2023)

The process of creating a customer journey map typically begins once a business has developed a comprehensive understanding of its target audience, or buyer persona profile (Brenner, 2020). Not limited to marketing and sales, customer journey mapping offers numerous benefits for various departments, including content creation, design, and development. For instance, content creators can gain valuable insights into the customer's path from initial interest to post-purchase engagement, enabling them to strategically decide when to share their work to maximise engagement. Designers, too,

can draw upon this knowledge to inform their visual and experiential decisions, ensuring a more cohesive and impactful brand experience (Brenner, 2020). By understanding the entirety of the customer's journey, organisations can better navigate the complexities of the customer experience and make data-driven decisions to drive long-term success. (LinkedIn, 2024).

As previously stated, the buyer's journey is the sequence of events and communications that take place between a buyer and a business, starting from the point of initial awareness and ending with the advocacy stage. The journey map is a useful tool for showing this process since it shows the various touchpoints that customers meet during their engagement with a business. This mapping technique is critical to understanding consumer behaviour, identifying areas of discontent, and improving the customer experience in general. Using HubSpot's guiding principles, a customer journey map customised for the case study start-up will be created in later sections of the thesis.

3.5.6 Lead As a Magnet in Inbound Marketing

A lead is a potential customer who expresses interest in a business's products and services but has not met the company's qualification criteria (Monat, 2011). It is essential to acknowledge that leads can originate from both potential new customers and existing clients. A lead can be viewed as a concise digital summary, containing only the most essential contact information about both the individual and the company. This record forms a vital part of a business's customer relationship-building efforts.

Following are a few definitions of lead from famous market leaders who offer lead management services.

A lead is a prospect who has shown interest in the products or services that the firm offers. It can be a new client or someone the firm has done business with in the past. Moreover, a lead may be a person who requests more information about the goods and services the firm provides. Likewise, it might be a person joining a webinar that the firm hosts to promote what it has to offer. Following an email campaign or internet marketing ad, a lead can be captured by the business (Dynamics 365, Microsoft 2022).

"People who are interested in the company's services and products" is how Salesforce defines a lead in similar terms (Salesforce, 2023).

The categorisation of leads is a crucial aspect of marketing and sales strategies. According to HubSpot (2021), leads can be divided into four categories, each with distinct characteristics. A Sales Qualified Lead (SQL) is a contact who has expressed interest in learning more about a product, often filling out a form and seeking additional information about the product or service.

Conversely, a Marketing Qualified Lead (MQL) is a prospect who has demonstrated interest in the product through marketing efforts but does not yet require sales team intervention. A prime example of an MQL is an individual who has submitted a landing page form to claim an offer. This classification is indicative of a lead that is further along the conversion funnel.

A Product Qualified Lead (PQL), on the other hand, is a lead that has experienced the value of a product first-hand, often through a free trial, limited feature model, or other types of hands-on experience. This category comprises individuals who have taken concrete steps towards learning more about the product, thereby demonstrating a higher likelihood of conversion.

Lastly, a Service Qualified Lead (SQL) is a contact or client who has expressed interest in upgrading to a paying customer status, typically through interactions with a customer service representative. For instance, a customer may inform their customer service representative of their desire to upgrade their product subscription, indicating a strong interest in the service.

Figure 11 provides a visual representation of these interconnected ideas, below

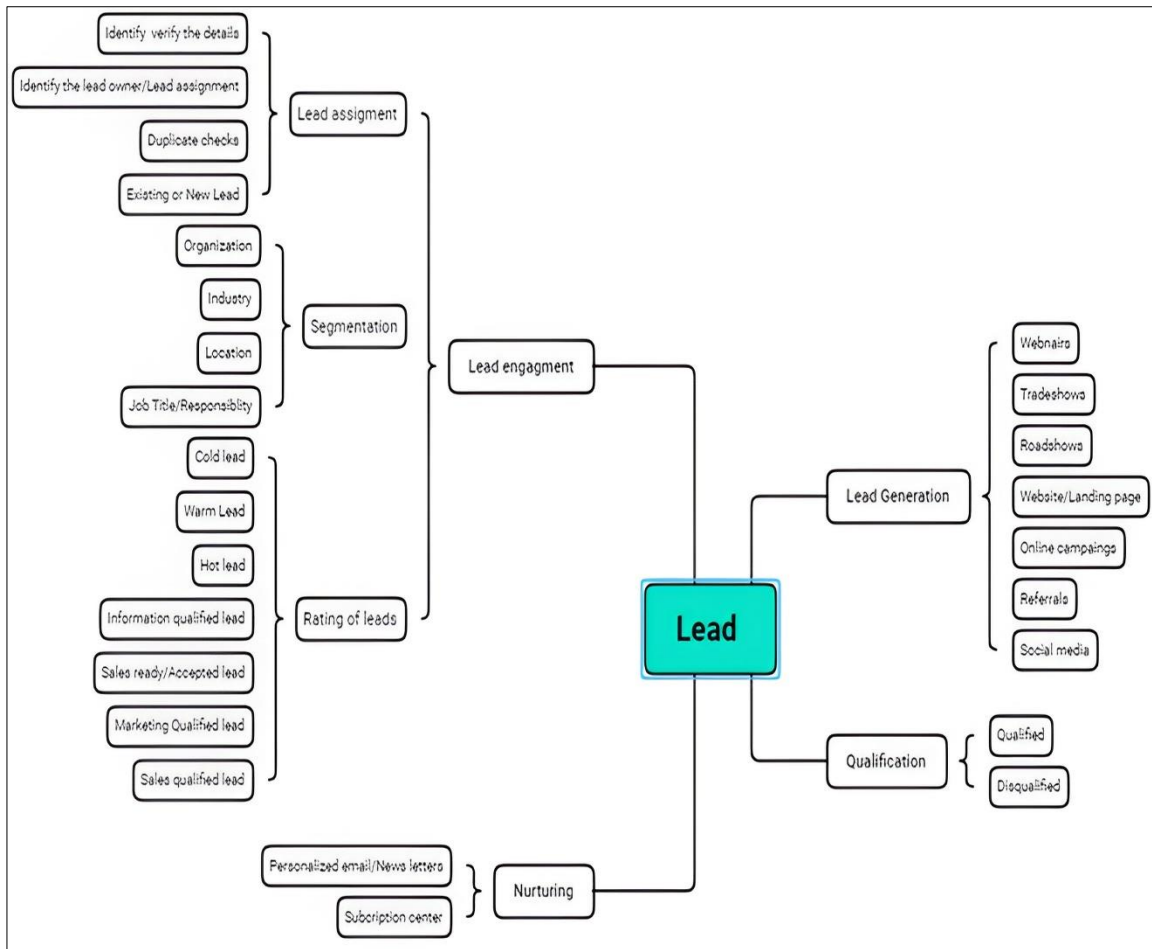


Figure 11 Explanation of Lead (Monat 2011)

To fully comprehend the concept of lead, it is imperative to familiarise oneself with the associated notions of Lead Generation, Lead Nurturing, Lead Segmentation, Lead Rating, and Lead Assignment. This thesis will focus on delving into specific aspects of these concepts in subsequent sections.

A well-structured lead generation process is vital for a company to secure top-notch leads. Essentially, lead generation involves generating consumer interest in a product or service with the ultimate goal of converting that interest into a sale. (Monat, 2011). By leveraging this process, companies are able to form connections with potential clients during the preliminary stages of their buying journey. Furthermore, the lead generation process enables companies to establish trusting relationships and facilitate customers' decision-making processes until they are prepared to make a purchasing decision (Halligan & Shah, 2021).

According to industry best practices, the grading of leads can be accomplished through manual evaluation or the use of sophisticated software that automatically calculates the

scores (Halligan & Shah, 2014). The compiled data is then stored within the company's database, where it is integrated with other relevant information about the leads.

Throughout the lead's journey, value points are assigned to each action taken, commencing the scoring process (Salesforce, 2023). This can encompass a wide range of parameters, including landing page visits, website searches, email activities, material downloads, and referral sources.

The definition of a lead, according to the authors mentioned, refers to an individual who expresses interest in a business but has not met the company's qualification standards. Consequently, Monat's interpretation of a lead and its generation process emerges as the most accessible for the author to grasp. Therefore, the author opts to adopt Monat's conceptual framework for the thesis study.

3.6 Integrated Tools & Marketing Technology

To effectively generate leads, businesses should employ specific marketing tools such as CRM systems or email marketing platforms that adhere to an inbound approach. This involves the conversion of website visitors into paying customers through the implementation of inbound marketing strategies.

In the following section, we will investigate more thoroughly the significance of CRM systems. We will also explore the importance of landing pages, website functionality, and email marketing. Additionally, we will discuss the potential integration of systems with the current CRM system used by the case company.

3.6.1 CRM

A customer relationship management system (CRM) is a valuable tool designed to assist businesses in effectively managing their interactions with both existing and potential customers. The main goals of CRM systems are to boost sales and improve customer relationships, ultimately leading to enhanced profitability, operational efficiency, and customer loyalty for the business (Salesforce, 2023).

Inbound marketing encompasses the use of social media, websites, and landing pages to engage and appeal to prospective customers online. Consequently, it is imperative

to consistently disseminate and exchange information throughout all organisational departments.

3.6.2 Email

Despite consistent annual predictions of its passing, email marketing continues to be one of the most essential tools for businesses and organisations. Email marketing provides distinct advantages that cannot be duplicated by other communication methods, including social and digital media platforms (Kiselova, 2019).

Patel's research in 2020 presented significant findings regarding email, unveiling compelling facts and figures.

Table 4 Facts regarding email (Patel, 2020)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The global number of email subscribers is projected to reach 4.1 billion by 2021, with a 3% annual growth rate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 2015, email marketing yielded a return of \$38 for every \$1 spent, with this figure increasing to \$44 for every \$1 invested in 2016.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compared to Facebook and Twitter combined, email is 40 times more effective in acquiring new customers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marketers observed a 174% increase in conversions when using email marketing compared to social media.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The average click-through rate for email is 3.57%, whereas the rates for Facebook and Twitter are 0.07% and 0.03%, respectively.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 86% of online shoppers prefer receiving promotional emails: 61% once a week, 15% daily, and at least once a month for the rest.

Within inbound marketing strategies, email is a powerful tool for informing customers and showcasing new services.

3.6.3 Website

In today's digital age, it is widely acknowledged that a website is the most crucial marketing tool for a business. (Grubor & Jaksa, 2018). Having an online presence is essential for businesses to project a professional image, reach new customers, and boost profits. Grubor & Jaksa (2018) describe a website as a digital storefront that operates round the clock, allowing businesses to reach their audience all over the globe and promote their offerings.

Above all, it empowers companies to establish credibility in the perspective of their prospective customers and offer them the necessary information.

As per the (D'Ambra, 2018) article, service-based websites need to persuade visitors to become customers. This can be achieved by building the brand reputation as a dependable, trustworthy, and expert service provider in the specific market.

Before initiating any calls, individuals visiting websites will conduct preliminary evaluations of service providers. During these evaluations, prospective customers aim to identify the most fitting business to fulfil their needs. They assess service providers based on their expertise, service standards, reputation, and longevity in the industry. Effective tools for influencing prospective customers include blog posts, reviews and videos, as well as previous customers referrals (Cleartech, 2022).

The website serves as a central hub in inbound marketing, directing leads and functioning as a crucial tool in the process.

3.6.4 Landing Pages

A landing page, as defined by Harwood (2009), is a specific type of webpage designed to be the initial point of contact for users directed from various channels such as search engine results, online ads, social media posts or email links. Its primary objective is to persuade visitors to take a specific action, often serving as an extension of online advertising efforts.

Landing pages can be integrated as part of a website or designed as standalone pages with their distinct URLs.

The primary objective of the landing page is to encourage users to engage in the desired action of the company. This action may involve making a purchase, downloading content, completing a form, navigating to another page, viewing a video, participating in a demo tour, or providing feedback on a service. A well-designed landing page effectively steers visitors through this process, ultimately converting them into customers.

3.7 Conceptual framework

The purpose of this section is to analytically review existing literature on inbound marketing and identify key methodologies and tools utilised by various authors. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of inbound marketing and its various components, as well as examine the different approaches and techniques employed by scholars in developing customer acquisition strategies using inbound marketing for the case study start-up.

The theoretical foundation of this thesis is constructed based on the relevant concepts extracted from the optimal practices, as discussed in the preceding Section 3. It is formulated to provide direction for building the customer acquisition strategy proposal, as outlined in Section 5. The conceptual framework of this thesis, illustrated in Figure 12 below, comprises a sequence of seven steps.

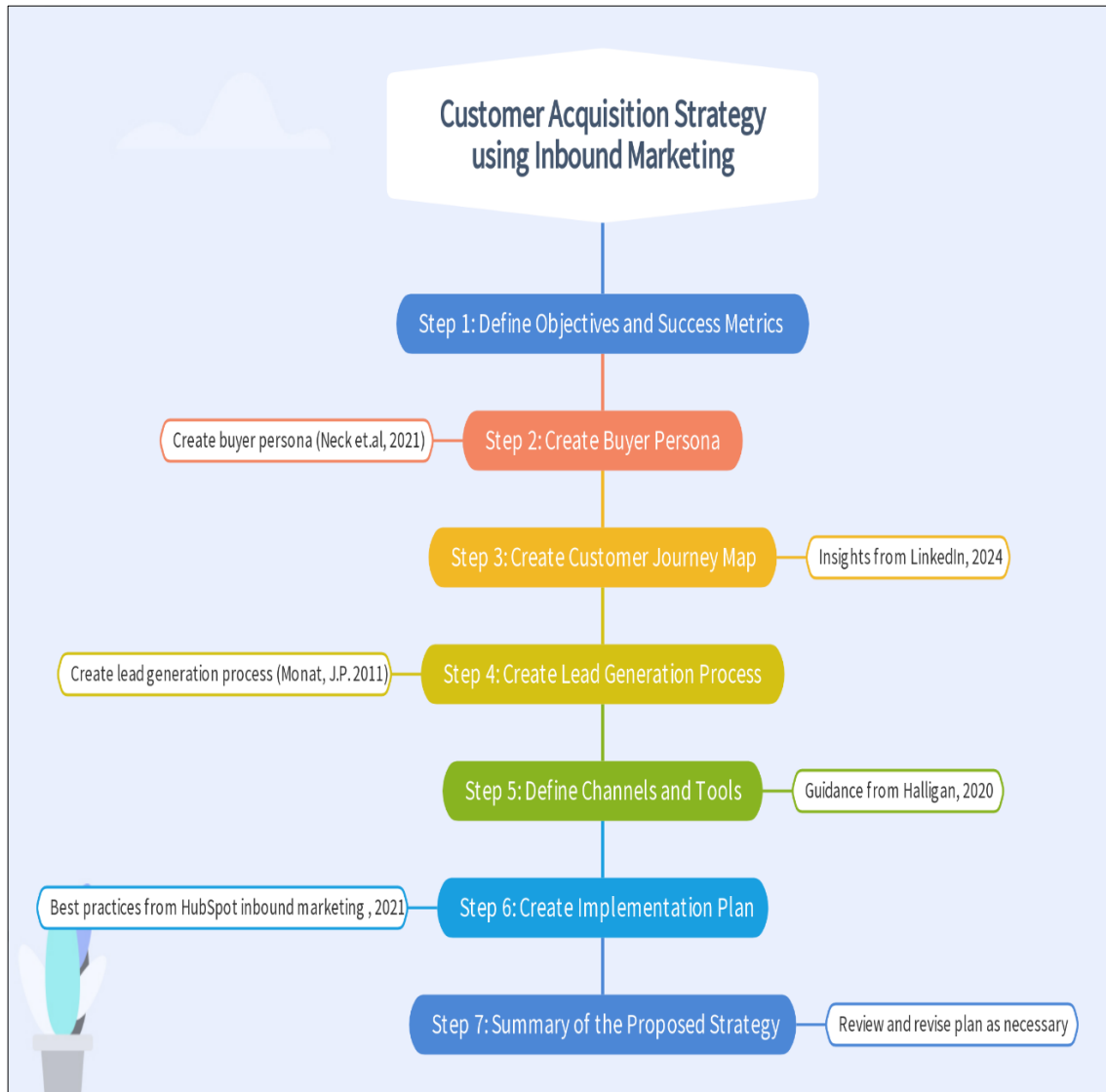


Figure 12 Conceptual framework of this thesis.

Setting the plan's goal and success criteria is an essential first step in developing a customer acquisition strategy that makes use of inbound marketing. Defining the goal and success measures is crucial for a customer acquisition strategy, as it provides a clear roadmap and measurable outcomes for the marketing efforts. It will assure the case study start-up growth, accomplishing its objectives, developing the return on investment, and gradually enhancing the aspects that don't yield acceptable results.

Making a buyer persona is the second stage. This process leads to more effective customer acquisition by guiding targeted marketing efforts and enhancing customer understanding, allowing for more personalised and targeted marketing efforts. (Neck et al., 2021).

Map-making the customer's journey is the third step. The customer journey refers to the interactions and experiences customers have with a brand, such as visiting a website, making a purchase, or receiving customer support services. The customer journey serves as a strategic roadmap that outlines the various touchpoints and stages through which customers discover and engage with the brand until they provide positive feedback after a purchase. (LinkedIn, 2024).

Step four is to plan a lead-generating workflow. By focusing on generating high-quality leads, a company can improve its chances of nurturing them into loyal customers over time. It includes strategies such as targeted advertising to attract potential customers and persuasive messaging to convert them into buyers.

Selecting the channels and tools to use to "attract, engage, close, and delight" leads is the fifth step. Inbound marketing utilises various channels and tools to reach potential clients. For instance, social media platforms are leveraged to build brand awareness, websites serve as sources of detailed information, and landing pages are designed to capture leads effectively, facilitating online engagement with prospective customers. Consistently updating and sharing data across all departments is essential for maintaining alignment and fostering collaboration within the company. This practice ensures that all teams have access to the latest information, promoting efficiency and informed decision-making (Halligan, 2021).

The next stage involves describing the strategy and its implementation. This plan outlines the specific strategies and tactics that will be used to execute the company's digital marketing objectives. It includes timelines, resources needed, key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure success, and responsibilities assigned to team members.

4 Current State Analysis of the Marketing Practices at the Case Start-up

This section analyses the case start-up's current marketing and customer acquisition practices, comparing them to competitors to evaluate strengths and weaknesses. The findings of competitor analysis and existing literature will help building a proposal for the case study start-up.

To create the proposal, interviews, website analysis, benchmarking, and data collection were utilised. The process began with conducting interviews with the management of the case study start-up. Subsequently, the website and social media accounts of the

case start-up were examined. Benchmarking was employed to compare the case start-up's marketing efforts, channels and tools with those of its market competitors. Online research focused on popular companies in the start-up's market and smaller companies of similar size with a strong online presence to collect data. These comparisons revealed significant differences between the case study start-up and its competitors, leading to the generation of ideas to improve the case start-up's inbound marketing strategy. Ultimately, an assessment was carried out to determine the advantages and disadvantages of the case study start-up.

4.1 Current Marketing and Customer Acquisition Practices at The Case Start-Up

In the course of three interviews with the team of the case study start-up, the focus was on the evaluation of the current marketing strategy and the various tools utilised for brand promotion. It was found that the start-up faces several challenges in their marketing efforts, as outlined in the next points.

Firstly, the company has never created an in-depth customer acquisition strategy. In the years of its existence. The start-up has not considered the necessity of a dynamic customer acquisition plan to expand its customer base, increase revenues, and diversify its products and services. Currently, new projects and business opportunities primarily come from word-of-mouth, public relations, and the CEO's personal network. Based on his words, this is a narrow niche that any company in Algeria specifically would reach out to them.

Secondly, the case company has been lacking in expert human capital, and as a start-up, it has not been able to nor felt the need to hire a full-time marketing manager yet. This has resulted in a lack of expertise in developing and implementing marketing strategies. Even though the CEO of the start-up has a lot of knowledge about the customer journey, buyer persona, and the importance of inbound marketing specifically. As a result, the company has struggled to effectively increase its customer base to promote its products and services to its more targets.

The CEO mentioned that due to the company's small size, given the current situation at the start-up, it is imperative to hire a dedicated marketing manager to enhance the company's marketing efforts. While the CEO possesses valuable knowledge about customer behaviour and inbound marketing, having a dedicated expert in this role will enable the company to develop and implement effective marketing strategies. With a marketing manager in place, the company can efficiently increase its customer base and effectively promote its products and services to its target market.

Recruiting a full-time marketing manager may be considered once the company grows and can support the additional position. Even though they experienced a lot of pain points with lots of customers and bad experiences, they didn't consider looking for a solution to facilitate the communication with the customers in a more professional manner that would ease and facilitate any further advocacy coming from those customers.

On a positive note, there are some aspects worth considering. The start-up an interactive website and an online presentation. The team had some podcasts and concrete LinkedIn pages to prove their proficiency; the team has also attended all the industry events, especially the CEO, who was one of the major participants and speakers at those events.

Those efforts have not resulted in generating more leads as wished for, or at least, there have not been significant outcomes to mention. This was insufficient for the expected growth progression typical of a start-up.

The author emphasised the critical importance of growth hacking strategies. These strategies rely on expanding the customer base, despite the known fact that start-ups face financial challenges in maintaining constant outbound campaigns, which are essential for a healthy marketing life cycle.

It became clear that more targeted and strategic marketing efforts were needed in order to see a noticeable impact on lead generation. The team realised that they needed to invest in more specific and tailored marketing strategies that would resonate with their target audience. With this realisation, they began to re-evaluate their approach and consider new avenues for reaching potential customers. This shift in mindset ultimately led to the development of a comprehensive marketing strategy that focused on engaging with their audience in a more meaningful way. By taking a more strategic approach to their marketing efforts, the team was able to foresee a significant increase in lead generation and ultimately achieve the growth progression they had been striving for.

Presently, the demand for holistic tech solutions is experiencing a decline. Because of the AI revolution, free access to open sources, and the pricing turbulence crisis in the global open market, loan interest rates have increased, leading to lots of customer embezzlement and shaking trust and connection with solution providers. As a result, there is considerably less demand for such a narrow field in Algeria, leading to

intensified competition. This has also significantly impacted the business of the company.

Currently, the primary focus of the case company is to generate and obtain new leads. The Start-up understand the significance of inbound marketing and intend to revamp the current approach to attract more leads, grow the customer base, and engage with leads interested in the product. As service-qualified leads and marketing qualified leads progress, they culminate in sales qualified leads. This progression provides the start-up with a competitive edge in the market, allowing it to assure growth, beat pioneers in holistic tech IT solutions, and gain an advantage.

4.2 Analysis of the Case Start-up Customer Acquisition Practices

This detailed analysis focuses on understanding and implementing the first two steps of the HubSpot lead generation model in inbound marketing to comprehend the case start-up's current customer acquisition practices. It will provide valuable insights into how the company acquires and retains customers through its current strategies.

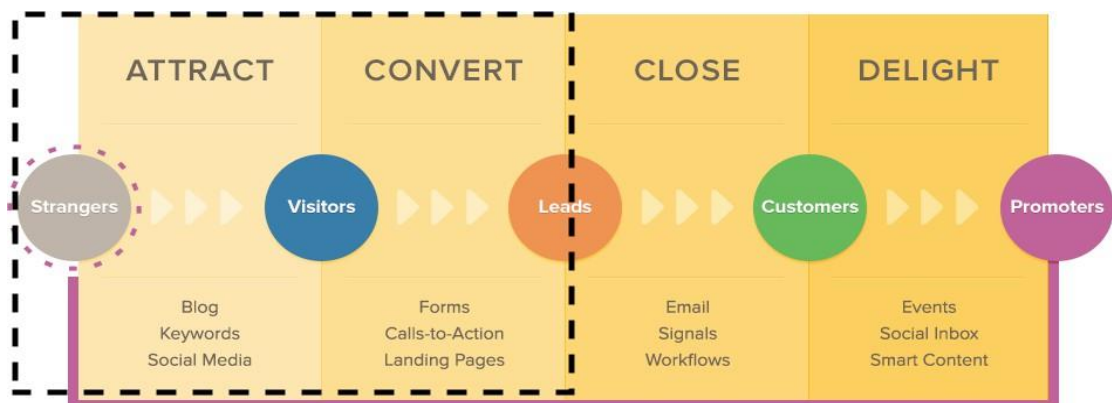


Figure 13 Focus areas of current customer acquisition strategy

4.2.1 Attract phase

To attract and acquire more customers, researching and analysing the current state of the case start-up's website and social media channels is crucial to assess their effectiveness in generating customers. During the research phase on attracting customers, the case start-up's outbound marketing strategies, such as cold outreach, cold e-mails, and event participation, are examined. This analysis helped to identify areas for improvement and optimisation to attract a larger customer base. By understanding the effectiveness of current strategies, the case start-up can make informed decisions on how to best allocate resources for customer acquisition in the future.

- Website

Although the case start-up's website is user-friendly and fast, it requires attention due to several existing problems. A major issue with the website is the infrequent content updates, which impact its credibility and search engine optimisation. Due to the specifics of the business that the case start-up is operating in, the website needs to cater to and provide information to two types of tech customers. The first group of customers is the one that seeks specific tech consultation and a single solution from the case start-up. Another group consists of integrated solution seekers who need the start-up's help to find a holistic approach and expertise for their business challenges. both of the customer groups that this thesis is focusing on acquiring.

Currently, it is also important to stress that even the Google Analytics page has not been set up for the case start-up, so in reality, the team have no idea who visits their website and when.

The website's collection of original photos taken from ongoing projects is quite limited. the visuals are brought from online image banks, which does not enhance the brand's reputation or attract potential customers. Furthermore, the website lacks modern functionalities such as a chatbot or multiple landing pages, which could greatly assist in generating leads. This has now become challenging, especially when there is a need to update or integrate it with existing systems. Nevertheless, it is important to note that a Google search of the website name reveals five extremely positive reviews about the start-up.

- LinkedIn

The primary function of the case start-up's LinkedIn page has been recruiting new team members through job advertisements. It shows 16 members with no marketing efforts in their limited accounts that would support the setup calls for acquiring a larger customer base for product leads, service leads, or sales leads from the first judgement have 683 followers, of whom around 65% are acquaintances or managers in Algerian software development companies. It is a great source for acquiring new customers; however, due to the lack of interest in inbound pull marketing methods and professional marketing partners within the team. The followers have not been really exposed to any organic content from the case start-up, so this channel has not really brought anything of value in terms of customers in an active way that can be measured through marketing efforts.

- Facebook

The Facebook page of the case start-up boasts an impressive following of 2800 individuals, with each post consistently receiving a similar number of likes. Initially established to promote different products, the page underwent a rebranding process and now caters to the case start-up's business. It is estimated that approximately 60% of the followers are relevant to the start-up's industry. Currently, the primary purpose of the Facebook page is to attract potential leads from the market. To achieve this, the start-up has set up basic Facebook ads to acquire these leads. However, due to the shared access among the start-up shareholders, there has been limited content published, and these efforts were discontinued in September 2021.

Yet the good side of the Facebook page is that it contains 11 highly motivating reviews. The delight phase of inbound marketing creates more Advocate clients, and that supports the flywheel approach. These efforts are going to be undertaken in creating the initial proposal for the customer acquisition strategy to assure the growth of the start-up.

- Instagram, TikTok, and X (twitter)

These three channels are yet to be refined. To date, the start-up has not been posting content that can be considered related to any marketing efforts except for outdated, very simple cold outbound sales messages, which can't be considered marketing content on X-platform. Compared to their rivals, which will be investigated in more detail in a following section.

- Other activities

The start-up's team has been actively engaging in various industry-related events in Algeria. Trade fairs have yielded positive results, with new customers coming on board after each event. Furthermore, new clients have been acquired through cold emails and a large volume of phone calls. Despite this, the strategy has been deemed as excessively slow, costly, and time-consuming.

4.2.2 Convert phase

Currently, there is a lack of available tools for converting potential leads into customers. Additionally, there are no tools in place to monitor website visitors or capture contact information from potential leads. The conversion of leads into customers typically

occurs through two methods. Firstly, someone may recommend the start-up to the potential lead during a meeting and request further contact. Alternatively, potential customers may be contacted through cold calling or cold emailing.

Frequently, when leads are contacted, they respond via email, a business account, or phone. In many cases, leads may have visited the start-up website at a later time, but this information goes unnoticed as there are no tracking tools in place.

4.3 Lead management – Odoo CRM

Odoo is a comprehensive software solution that helps businesses manage various aspects of their operations. Apps and modules are present for CRM, sales, eCommerce, inventory, accounting, billing, manufacturing, etc. It has a user-friendly interface, a flexible structure, and can be easily adapted, expanded, and cost-effective. These business apps are open-source and tailored to meet specific industry needs.

Odoo offers features such as lead nurturing, predictive lead scoring, live chats, URL tracking, lead analysis, mining, and enrichment.

The case study start-up has been selling Odoo CRM for a while, The team know how to benefit from features like lead nurturing, predictive lead scoring, live chats, URL tracking, lead analysis, mining, and enrichment. Moreover, Odoo is significantly more cost-effective than Salesforce or HubSpot. All the generated leads will be saved in Odoo.

4.4 Competitors

Evaluating the tactics employed by rival companies is essential for establishing a strong presence in a competitive market and expanding the business. This section will assess the current marketing and lead generation strategies of competitors, offering valuable information on how they attract new customers and which initiatives drive their success. Additionally, it will highlight key areas where the case company can enhance its operations to gain a competitive edge over competitors. The findings of this analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Start-up case study vs. their competitor's analysis

Competitor Name		SARL Artec.int	Sarl Fin-outsource	SIBIC	Cetelex Technology	Deltalog	EURL Businesna	SARL Digiwaves	SARL Insidjam COM	EURL Weasydoo
Turnover 2023		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Website	Google reviews	5 (5 stars)	No	No	1 (5 stars)	14 (4.1 stars)	14 (4.3 stars)	No	No	53 (4.9 stars)
	Website	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes
	Landing page	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	AI chat in homepage	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Blog page	Empty	No	No	Empty	No	No	No	Yes	No
Facebook	(followers)	2800	178	461	7	968	No	No	751	7700
	(reviews)	11	No	1	No	No	No	No	no	3
LinkedIn (followers)		683	2824	890	804	1573	No	487	3968	6608
Instagram (followers)		647	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Odoo Silver partner (references)		5	20	8	3	4	3	3	3	1
Presence on other platforms		Twitter, other websites	Other websites	Other websites	YouTube, other websites	Other websites	Other websites	Few websites	YouTube, other websites	no

These companies are acknowledged as the top and most well-known start-ups in the Algerian tech industry, highlighting their market dominance.

The table provides a comprehensive assessment of the case company's competitors, delving into their digital marketing and lead generation strategies across various platforms.

The analysis showed that turnover data for the competitors is not available, indicated by 'X' in the table. In contrast, the number of reviews on Google and Facebook varies across competitors. SARL Artec.int has 5 reviews, all rated at 5 stars, indicating high customer satisfaction but limited feedback volume, which may suggest a smaller customer base or selective reviewing. Cetelex Technology has a single review with a 5-star rating, suggesting positive customer experience but insufficient data to establish a trend. Deltalog and EURL Businesna have 14 reviews each, with an average rating of 4.1 stars and 4.3 stars, respectively, pointing to generally positive feedback with some room for improvement. EURL Weasydoo stands out with 53 reviews and an impressive average rating of 4.9 stars, showcasing widespread and strong customer approval. Other competitors lack Google reviews, suggesting a potential gap in customer engagement or feedback solicitation.

All competitors maintain websites and landing pages, demonstrating a basic yet essential level of digital presence necessary for effective online marketing and lead generation. Notably, none of the competitors have AI chat functionalities on their homepages, potentially affecting customer engagement and support capabilities.

Integrating AI chat could offer a competitive advantage by enhancing customer interaction and support efficiency.

SARL Artec.int has 2800 followers on Facebook and 11 reviews, showing a significant social media presence and moderate customer interaction. In contrast, Sarl Fin-
outsource and Cetelex Technology have limited Facebook activity, while Deltalog and EURL Insidjam COM have moderate presence without much engagement. EURL Weasydoo is prominent on Facebook with 7700 followers and 3 reviews, highlighting strong reach and some user interaction. On LinkedIn, SARL Insidjam COM has the highest number of followers among the competitors, indicating strong professional engagement. Only SARL Artec.int uses Instagram, with 647 followers, indicating a unique engagement strategy among the competitors.

The analysis further examines the competitors' partnerships and references. Sarl Fin-
outsource has 20 references as an Odoo Silver Partner, showcasing strong credibility and expertise in Odoo implementations. SIBIC has 8 references, reflecting solid but less extensive experience. The remaining competitors have limited references, indicating basic proficiency.

To boost credibility and attract a larger customer base, the case company is advised to focus on increasing the number and frequency of reviews on platforms such as Google and Facebook. EURL Weasydoo's extensive Google reviews greatly enhance its perceived trustworthiness. Creating and updating a blog can greatly enhance SEO, engage customers, and establish brand authority. EURL Weasydoo's active blog presence can serve as a model for others. Increasing engagement on platforms like LinkedIn and Instagram can broaden the audience reach. Finally, adding AI chat on the homepage and expanding references as an Odoo Silver Partner can demonstrate reliability and expertise.

By addressing these areas, the case company can enhance its competitive edge, attract more customers, and ultimately improve its overall business performance.

By analysing these numerical values and their implications, the case company can enhance its digital marketing and lead generation strategies to bolster its competitive position. In the end, adopting these strategies can lead to substantial business growth and success.

4.5 Customer feedback

Both the author and the owner of the case company participated in identifying the reasons why businesses may not want to deal with Integrated Solution Providers (ISPs). The survey was conducted over the phone, and the results are presented in the pie chart below.

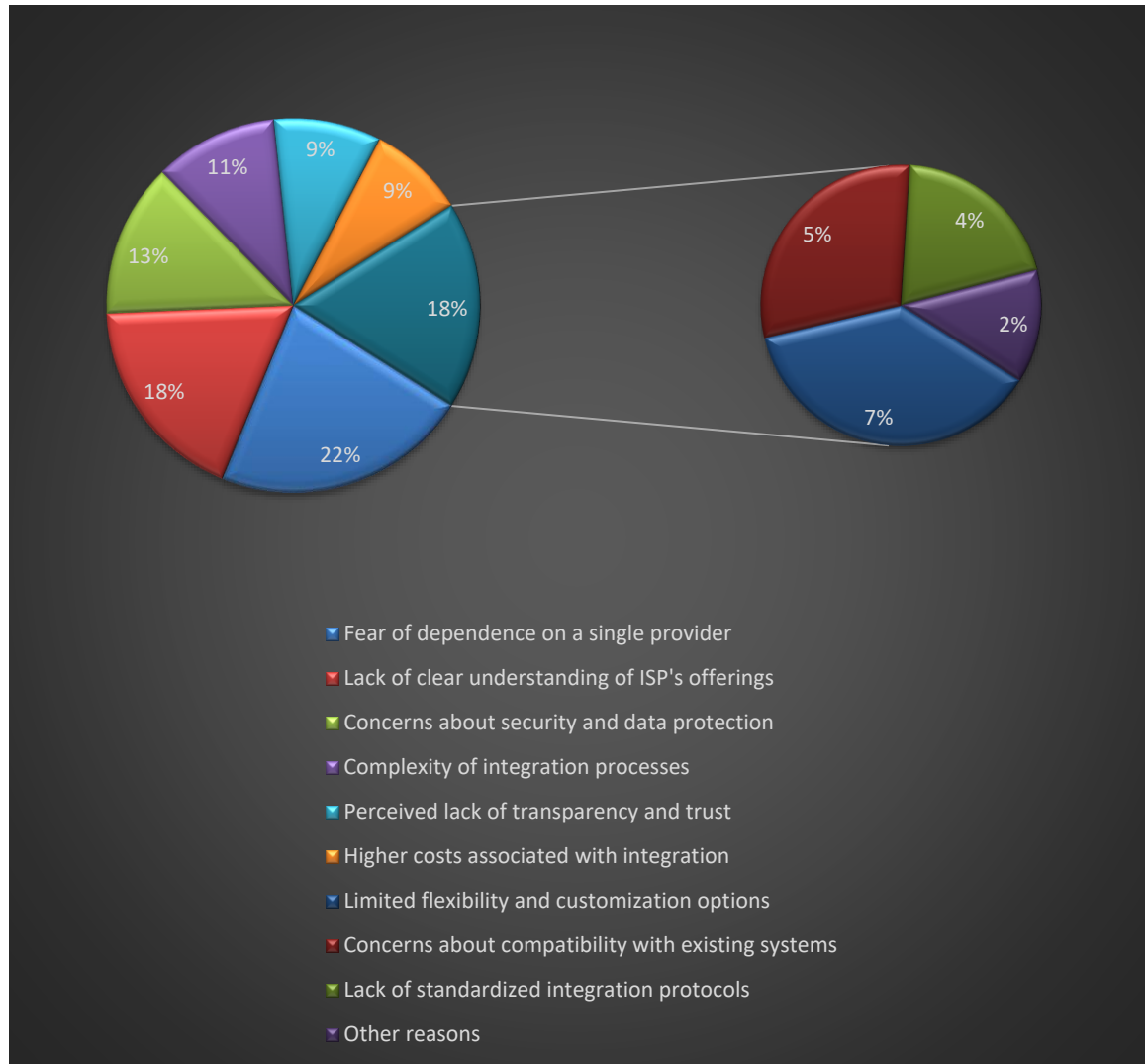


Figure 14 Reasons Why Businesses May Not Want to Deal with Integrated Solution Providers

An analysis of 64 potential and existing clients revealed the reasons why businesses may not want to deal with integrated solution providers (ISPs). The primary worry was being reliant on a single provider, mentioned by 34.2% of respondents. This indicates that companies may be reluctant to depend solely on a single ISP for their technology requirements, highlighting the necessity for diversification to reduce risk exposure.

Furthermore, 27.8% of respondents mentioned a lack of understanding of the services offered by ISPs, underscoring the need for enhanced communication and marketing strategies to bridge this gap. Moreover, security and data protection worries were

significant, with 20.5% of respondents stating these as reasons for avoiding ISPs. This highlights the importance of ISPs prioritising security and transparency to build trust with their clients.

Additional concerns encompassed the intricacy of integration processes (16.4%), perceived transparency and trust issues (14.3%), and the elevated costs linked to integration (12.9%). These results suggest that ISPs must prioritise simplifying their integration processes, being more transparent about their services, and offering competitive pricing to remain attractive to potential clients.

Furthermore, respondents mentioned restricted flexibility and customization options (10.3%), compatibility issues with current systems (8.2%), and the absence of standardized integration protocols (5.5%) as factors for avoiding ISPs.

These findings offer valuable insights for the start-up case study to tackle potential client concerns, enhance their offerings, and ultimately boost their customer acquisition strategy, and assuring their growth.

5 Creating a Customer Acquisition Strategy

This segment describes the growth solution represented in an initial proposal for the case study start-up customer acquisition strategy, which employs an inbound marketing approach. It provides recommendations and advice aimed at improving the start-up methods for acquiring customers. The proposal draws on theoretical perspectives from Section 3, Data from the current state analysis in Section 4, and feedback from the case start-up team.

Initially, this section delineates the steps involved in formulating the draft proposal. It then evaluates the feedback and recommendations from the start-up team, considering aspects like customer acquisition channels, target audience analysis, and budget implications, before presenting a preliminary version of the customer acquisition plan with an emphasis on leveraging an inbound marketing strategy.

5.1 Overview of the proposal building stage

The proposal is structured around three main components: a conceptual framework that integrates theoretical knowledge and best practices for developing a customer acquisition strategy through inbound marketing; A synthesis of findings from the current state analysis of the case start-up compared to its rivals, and recommendations from the start-up team regarding essential enhancements to the customer acquisition strategy.

To start, the best practices and theoretical recommendations from the conceptual framework were reviewed with the start-up team, and the most relevant ones were chosen. Subsequently, a detailed evaluation of the closest competitors' online marketing strategies was conducted to identify specific areas of improvement for the case start-up, such as website optimisation, social media presence, and content generation. Finally, the start-up team's feedback was collected, examined, and incorporated into the draft plan. The essential elements from the conceptual framework, current state analysis, and start-up team recommendations were combined to form the initial proposal.

Ultimately, this draft proposal aims to enhance the company's customer acquisition strategies by integrating insights from relevant theories, in-depth competitor analysis, and valuable internal feedback, ensuring a holistic and data-driven approach to customer acquisition. By doing so, the plan seeks to provide a comprehensive approach tailored to the specific needs and challenges of the case start-up.

5.1.1 Review of the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework entailed a thorough investigation and selection of pertinent knowledge and best practices to craft an inbound marketing-based customer acquisition strategy. This process underscored the significance of the crucial elements that should be incorporated into such a strategy. Additionally, it highlighted the vital aspects the company needs to consider, drawing from existing knowledge.

In essence, the conceptual framework served as a foundational tool for enhancing the start-up's approach to customer acquisition by integrating theoretical insights with practical applications, streamlining marketing efforts, and aligning strategies with industry best practices. It facilitated the integration of theoretical insights with practical applications, ensuring the strategy was both informed and adaptable to the company's specific needs. This customised approach aimed to strengthen the start-up's marketing efforts by leveraging expert knowledge and up-to-date practices.

5.1.2 Start-up Team Participation

In the third stage of developing the initial proposal, the start-up team was asked for their opinions. Due to the small size of the start-up, gathering insights for the customer acquisition strategy was relatively simple, particularly since the team understood the significance of inbound marketing and was keen to innovate their current marketing practices.

New customers are currently being attracted to the start-up through various means such as events, referrals, and personal connections. The team actively participates in personal meetings, engaging in discussions and providing valuable ideas. The insights and suggestions shared by the team have been carefully considered and integrated into the initial draft of the customer acquisition strategy.

5.2 Objective and Metrics

The primary goal of this project is to provide the case start-up with resources and guidance to help them permanently optimise their customer acquisition activities, as customer acquisition is now recognised as a vital component of the start-up's growth.

The objective of this thesis is to build a customer acquisition strategy that enhances the start-up's customer acquisition growth by leveraging an inbound marketing approach to optimise lead generation.

To reach this objective, a personalised customer acquisition strategy will be formulated to enhance both the quantity and quality of leads. By improving lead quality, the case study start-up will be able to attract leads from a specific customer segment rather than random contacts.

Qualitative metrics, rather than quantitative ones, are the most critical for evaluating this customer acquisition strategy.

Success will be assessed through validation meetings with representatives from the case start-up. The strategy will be deemed successful if it can be realistically implemented and aligns with the desired outcomes in terms of content.

The following sections will include a detailed buyer persona profile, customer journey mapping, and a comprehensive lead generation flow for the case start-up. Moreover, a breakdown of the specific marketing channels and tools to be utilised, along with a step-by-step implementation plan, will be provided.

5.3 Buyer Persona

The thesis author created the following buyer persona based on the case study start-up's current customer profiles and the findings of the literature research. The primary sources of demographic data are the case study start-up's Facebook reviews and its current data. Interviews with the case study start-up's team, and current clients provided additional data for the buyer persona profile.

Following is the buyer persona profile created as shown in Figure 15.



Ahmad Hassan

IT Manager/Head of IT

Profile

Age range: 35-45
Industry: Manufacturing, Energy, and Construction
Company size: 500-1000 employees
Location: Africa, Europe, and Middle East

Contact

Phone number: _____
Website: _____
LinkedIn: _____
Facebook: _____

Email address:

Ahmad.Hassan@example.com

Technology:

Uses Azure, Amazon Web Services
Open to new tech

Marketing:

Utilizes online channels (LinkedIn, Google Ads)

Training:

Regular IT training
open to customization

Role and Responsibilities

Oversees IT infrastructure for efficiency
Reports to CEO, collaborates with teams
Manages budgets, ensures compliance, tech updates

Goals and Objectives

Improve IT efficiency.
Data security
Explore tech for growth

Pain Points

Resource optimization
Data security
Integration across systems

Miscellaneous

Values strong supplier partnerships
Considers vendor reputation, compliance
Interested in international collaborations

Figure 15 Buyer persona profile

As described in Figure 15, the typical buyer persona for the case study start-up services is Ahmed Hassan, a 35–45-year-old IT Manager/Head of IT, overseeing the IT infrastructure in a medium-sized company (500-1000 employees) operating in the Manufacturing, Energy, and Construction industries across Africa, Europe, and the Middle East.

Ahmed's day-to-day responsibilities include overseeing the IT infrastructure, ensuring maximum uptime and efficiency, and allocating resources effectively. He reports directly to the CEO and works closely with the Operations and Maintenance teams. His biggest challenges are managing IT budgets, ensuring compliance with industry regulations, and keeping up with the latest technological advancements.

Ahmed has several goals and objectives. His most important goal is to improve the organisation's IT infrastructure, reducing costs and increasing efficiency. He also wants to ensure that the organisation's data is secure and compliant with industry regulations. Ahmed is interested in exploring new technologies and solutions that can help drive business growth and improvement.

There are several criteria for how Ahmed's work is measured. First and foremost, is the effectiveness of the IT infrastructure in supporting business operations. He is also evaluated on the security and availability of the organisation's data. Finally, his ability to keep up with the latest technological advancements and adapt the organisation's IT infrastructure to new technologies is also considered.

Ahmed's success is heavily dependent on how well he can optimise the IT resources, ensuring efficiency and reducing costs. He faces several challenges, including struggling to optimise IT resources, ensuring the security and availability of the organisation's data, and keeping up with the latest technological advancements. He often seeks help from technology providers and industry experts to address these challenges.

However, all these challenges are only contributing to his personal growth and goals. Ahmed is focused and determined to get an advancement in his own career and to contribute to the success of his organisation. He is willing to build strong relationships with technology providers, learn how to become a better IT leader, and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Ahmed typically uses online marketing channels, including LinkedIn and Google Ads, to promote his organisation's services. He is interested in exploring new marketing

strategies, including content marketing and social media advertising. Ahmed's company invests in regular training and workshops for its employees, focusing on IT and technical skills. He is open to customised training or workshops to address specific skills or knowledge gaps within his team. Ahmed's typical budget for technology, IT, and maintenance solutions is around \$100,000 to \$500,000 per year, and he prioritises spending based on business needs, ensuring that IT solutions align with business objectives. He values a strong partnership with a supplier, looking for a provider that can offer tailored solutions and excellent customer support.

5.4 Customer Journey

The buyer's journey that Ahmad Hassan goes through when making a purchase consists of five stages. These stages are – awareness, consideration, decision, retention, loyalty stage. The journey is depicted below in figure 16.

Customer Journey Map Revision

An updated visual representation of the customer journey across different stages, actions, touchpoints, pain points, emotions, and opportunities.

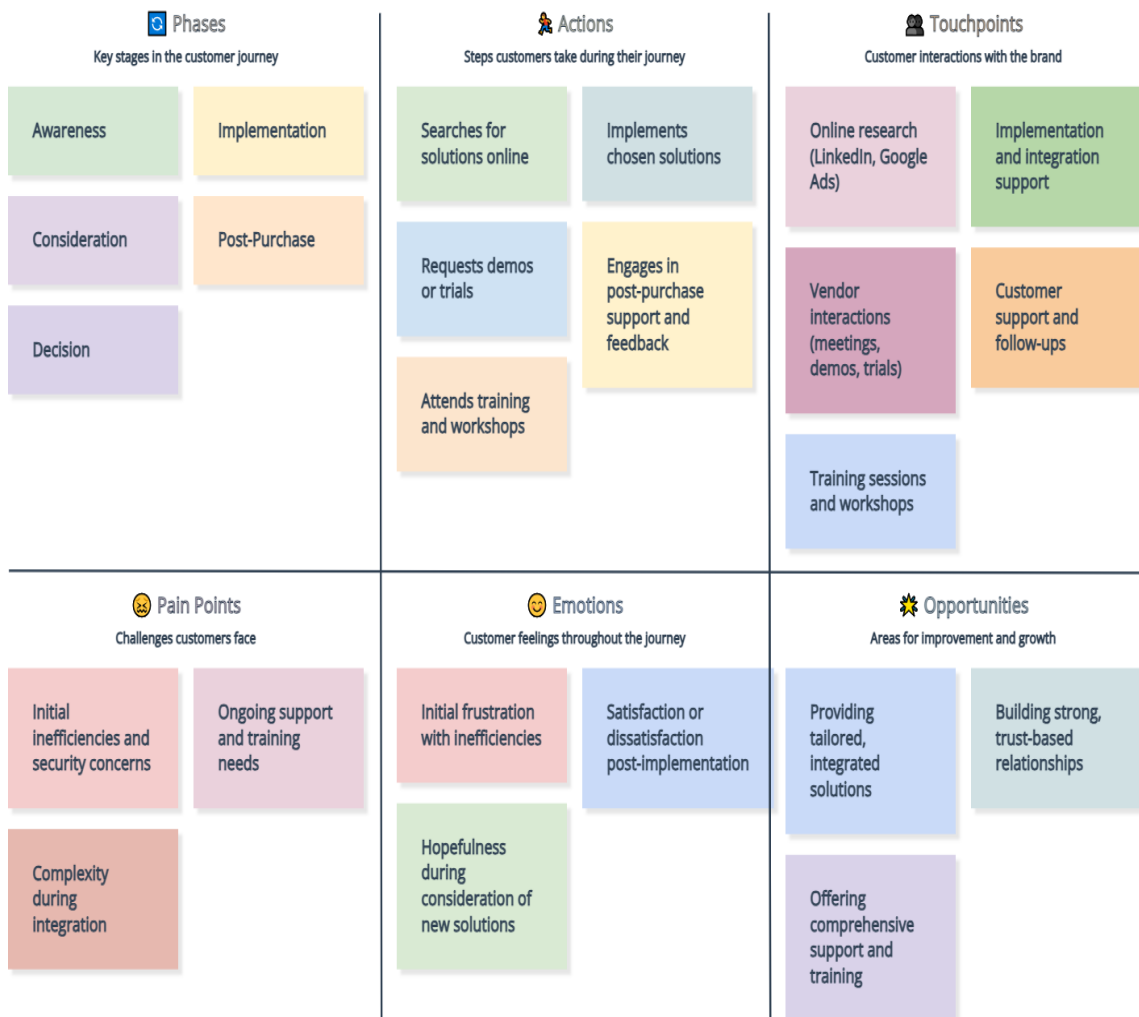


Figure 16 Customer Journey for Head of IT

Ahmed Hassan's customer journey with Start-up case study follows a typical pattern outlined in the provided customer journey map. During the awareness stage, Ahmed likely discovered Start-up case study through online research, LinkedIn, or Google Ads, starting his interaction with the company. He then moved to the consideration phase, where he likely requested demos or trials of their solutions, seeking a deeper understanding of their offerings.

Reaching the decision stage, Ahmed might have attended training sessions and workshops, gaining valuable insights into Start-up case study's capabilities. He then might implement the chosen solution, possibly engaging in post-purchase support and feedback to ensure smooth integration. During the journey, although Ahmed may have faced initial frustrations with inefficiencies, Start-up case study's continuous support

and training successfully met his needs, building trust and cultivating a strong, positive relationship.

Start-up case study's customer journey map highlights the importance of continuous interaction and support in driving customer satisfaction. The company provides a range of complete solutions customised to individual needs, ensuring a smooth and positive customer experience. This approach contributes to building trust, which in turn fosters long-term customer relationships.

The provided customer journey map is a valuable tool that offers a holistic perspective on understanding the customer experience. This tool helps Start-up case study identify possible issues and opportunities for enhancement, enabling a customer-focused strategy in their services.

5.5 Lead generation

The ultimate objective of lead generation is to turn consumer interest into a sale. Generating customer interest in a product or service is a crucial aspect of lead generation, which is essential for driving any case study start-up growth. Acquiring high-quality leads is vital for achieving this goal. To generate leads successfully, the case study start-up must utilise specific channels and steps, detailed in the upcoming sections, to establish a strong basis for revenue and growth. (Monat,2011)

5.5.1 Content Importance for Lead Generation

Lead generation heavily relies on content, demanding a tailored strategic approach that corresponds to the lead's position in the journey to enhance awareness effectively, the new business must create content showcasing its distinct value, such as cost-effectiveness and innovative features, and illustrating how it can add value to prospective customers and their organisations. Adjusting the content strategy to match the lead's progression ensures maximum engagement and conversion.

AI can significantly ease the process of generating content ideas for the case study start-up by analysing trends, customer preferences, and competitors. It can quickly produce tailored content suggestions, ensuring relevance and engagement, thereby streamlining the content creation process and enhancing lead generation efforts.

5.5.2 Website Importance in Lead Generation

The importance of websites in lead generation and the success of inbound marketing strategies are well documented. This highlights the necessity of a well-designed, functional website to attract and engage potential customers effectively.

Despite surpassing direct competitors, an analysis of the study start-up's current website indicates the need for a redesign to maintain a competitive edge. The current design lacks credibility, failing to meet visitors' expectations for a high-quality user experience. Enhancing the website's design is essential to boosting its overall impact and effectiveness.

To build trust and credibility with visitors, the case study start-up 's website should feature visuals from actual projects and real people instead of the present ones. This approach demonstrates the study start-up's real-world capabilities and personalises the brand, making it more relatable and trustworthy to potential customers.

Lead capture systems, such as AI-powered chats and chatbots, are crucial additions to the case study start-up's website. These tools provide round-the-clock assistance to visitors and help track their behaviour, significantly enhancing the website's ability to capture and convert leads.

The analysis also identified several missing key features crucial for achieving 100% synergy with the Odoo CRM system on the case study start-up 's current website. Addressing these deficiencies is critical to optimising the website's functionality and efficacy as a lead generation tool.

Being the primary touchpoint for leads, the website plays a central role in the case study start-up 's digital presence. Ensuring that the case study start-up's website is both visually appealing and functionally robust will strengthen its role as the company's business card and central hub for inbound marketing efforts.

Frequent content updates, particularly in the blog section, are vital for the case study start-up 's website. Regular updates attract more visitors, especially when the content is relevant to the industry. Moreover, fresh content enhances search engine optimisation (SEO), improving the website's visibility and attracting more organic traffic.

5.5.2.1 SEO / SEM Importance in Lead Generation

When it comes to lead generation, search engine optimisation holds immense significance as a fundamental piece in attracting leads. In today's digital age, if your business cannot be located on Google or other popular search engines, potential customers will likely encounter difficulties in discovering information about it.

Above all, SEO is essential for driving traffic to the website of the case study start-up. During the formulation of the buyer persona for the case study start-up, Ahmad Hassan, it was observed that he utilizes Google as a means to address the problem of locating individuals. He conducts searches using a variety of keywords, which the case study start-up can leverage to enhance the optimization of their website pages. These keywords may encompass general terms or specific phrases found in pay-per-click advertisements.

The importance of SEO cannot be underestimated, especially for a case study start-up aiming to establish credibility and trust for its website. When the website appears prominently in search engine rankings, it generates a sense of security for potential visitors, prompting them to click on the site with confidence.

Additionally, maintaining a highly ranked website offers a distinct advantage over competitors who have a lower rating and are included in the case study start-up. The probability of potential customers clicking on the link listed among the top positions is considerably higher.

In addition to its other benefits, SEO can provide case study start-ups with valuable data concerning their website visitors. By tracking every interaction on a search engine, it becomes possible to obtain valuable insights into user behaviour. As a result, this information can be utilised to make data-driven decisions and further enhance the website's performance for improved rankings.

Search engine marketing (SEM), similar to SEO, has the potential to significantly enhance lead generation by increasing visibility on search engine pages. Through SEM, a case study start-up can create more focused advertisements and, more importantly, obtain quantifiable outcomes.

SEM and SEO differ primarily in their approach to driving traffic to a website. SEM utilises both paid advertising and organic search traffic, while SEO focuses on

optimising a website for organic search traffic. Businesses can employ search engine marketing through Pay Per Click (PPC) campaigns and SEO strategies.

5.5.3 Lead capture

To optimise lead generation efforts, the thesis author emphasised for the case study start-up relevant studies about landing pages equipped with persuasive call-to-action (CTA) buttons serving as key tools. These pages strategically prompt potential customers to provide their contact details, facilitating progression through the buyer's journey. Functioning as digital gateways, these pages serve as entry points, guiding prospects towards deeper engagement with the case study start-up's brand.

In the field of content creation, using AI-generated content for landing pages is considered innovative as it can produce engaging content quickly. By using artificial intelligence, case study start-up representatives discovered they could quickly generate compelling content. This not only encourages visitors to share their contact information but also enhances the overall functionality and appeal of the landing page.

In today's digital landscape, case study start-ups can foresee that the integration of chatbots and AI-conversational interfaces has become paramount. These automated tools operate around the clock, engaging with visitors and providing instant responses. By promptly addressing queries and capturing contact information, chatbots not only reinforce customer satisfaction but also lay the groundwork for meaningful interactions.

At the core of modern customer engagement strategies lies personalisation, a key element that enhances the interaction between businesses and customers. Through tailored responses that align with individual preferences and needs, the case study start-up using personalised chatbots can significantly enhance the customer experience. This customisation fosters a sense of connection and relevance, forging stronger bonds between the case study start-up brand and its audience.

For the case study start-up, efficient lead qualification is pivotal in streamlining the sales process and maximising resources by ensuring targeted engagement with high-conversion potential leads. Through strategic questioning, chatbots can assess lead quality and prioritise engagement efforts. By focusing on leads with the highest potential for conversion, the case study start-up can allocate their resources wisely, optimising efficiency and efficacy.

At the final stage of this case study start-up's customer acquisition strategy, lead nurturing plays a vital role in sustaining interest, guiding leads towards conversion, and fostering long-term relationships. Once leads have been captured, it's essential for the case study start-up to sustain their interest and guide them along the buyer's journey. Through targeted communication and value-driven interactions, case study start-ups can nurture leads, gradually cultivating trust and rapport. Continual engagement nurtures an environment conducive to conversions, ultimately propelling business growth and success.

5.5.4 Sales Qualified Lead nurturing

Lead nurturing serves as a critical approach in the case study start-up's future marketing campaigns, focusing on the conversion of potential prospects into sales-qualified leads (SQL). Key to this process is the integration of Odoo CRM, which would facilitate the distribution of tailored content through email communication channels. By providing relevant content, the nurturing process not only fosters engagement but also accelerates the progression of leads through the sales funnel, thereby increasing the case study start-up's financial growth.

Furthermore, lead nurturing plays a pivotal role in elevating lead quality by selecting and prioritising prospects exhibiting high levels of engagement. By identifying these promising leads, the case study start-up team can direct their resources more efficiently, maximising the likelihood of conversion. Complementing this approach is the use of the lead-scoring method in Odoo CRM to monitor lead engagement levels systematically. This aspect of lead nurturing strategies enables the case study start-up to quantify lead interactions and readiness for conversion, thereby enabling targeted follow-up actions. Through a combination of personalised content delivery and systematic lead monitoring, lead nurturing emerges as a strategic imperative for the start-up success of the customer acquisition strategy to ensure its growth.

5.5.5 Lead generation summary

The author's suggested to the case study start-up team these improvements to Generate Leads and Acquire Customers:

- Enhance or redesign the company website for better user experience and lead generation.
- Develop landing pages equipped with compelling Call-to-Action (CTA) buttons to capture contact information.

- Craft engaging and relevant content across various formats such as blog posts, videos, and articles related to their success stories projects incorporating suggested topic ideas.
- Optimise Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) first, and later to work on Search Engine Marketing (SEM) strategies to improve online visibility and attract targeted traffic.
- Implement and leverage the capabilities of Chatbot technology to enhance customer engagement and provide personalised assistance.

Next process should experience the mentioned tools and channels and assess the efficacy of various tools and channels to determine their suitability for lead generation and customer acquisition purposes.

5.6 Digital Tools and Channels

To execute the customer acquisition strategy effectively, several tools are required: the start-up's website, Odoo CRM, start-up's email, Facebook profile, and a LinkedIn page for the start-up, through which marketing advertisements and messages can be disseminated to prospects.

The start-up's website will act as a primary hub where leads from email campaigns, landing pages, or LinkedIn ads will gather. It is essential to update and optimise the current website to attract and retain potential customers successfully.

To facilitate seamless engagement, AI-powered chatbots can be integrated into the website, providing valuable insights into customer behaviour and preferences, which can be used to refine the buyer persona. These insights can also inform targeted marketing strategies and better customer retention.

Email sequences linked to the Odoo CRM system can be utilised to convert potential leads into paying customers. These sequences enable marketers and sales professionals to prepare customised email templates and schedule their deployment, allowing for tailored communication and optimised lead nurturing. The start-up has already amassed hundreds of thousands of email addresses, all of which can be tested.

The Odoo CRM system will serve as a vital instrument for recording customer data, providing functionalities for tracking emails, connecting with the case start-up website,

and generating insightful reports and dashboards. Furthermore, Odoo's CRM module is an integral component of the case start-up's enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, which integrates various departments and teams.

LinkedIn plays a pivotal role in engaging prospective customers, enabling the case start-up to send targeted messages and tailor its ads to specific stages of the customer journey. The LinkedIn campaign manager offers user-friendly tools and a four-step process for setting goals and targeting specific audience segments. Figure 17 below demonstrates LinkedIn campaign manager page.

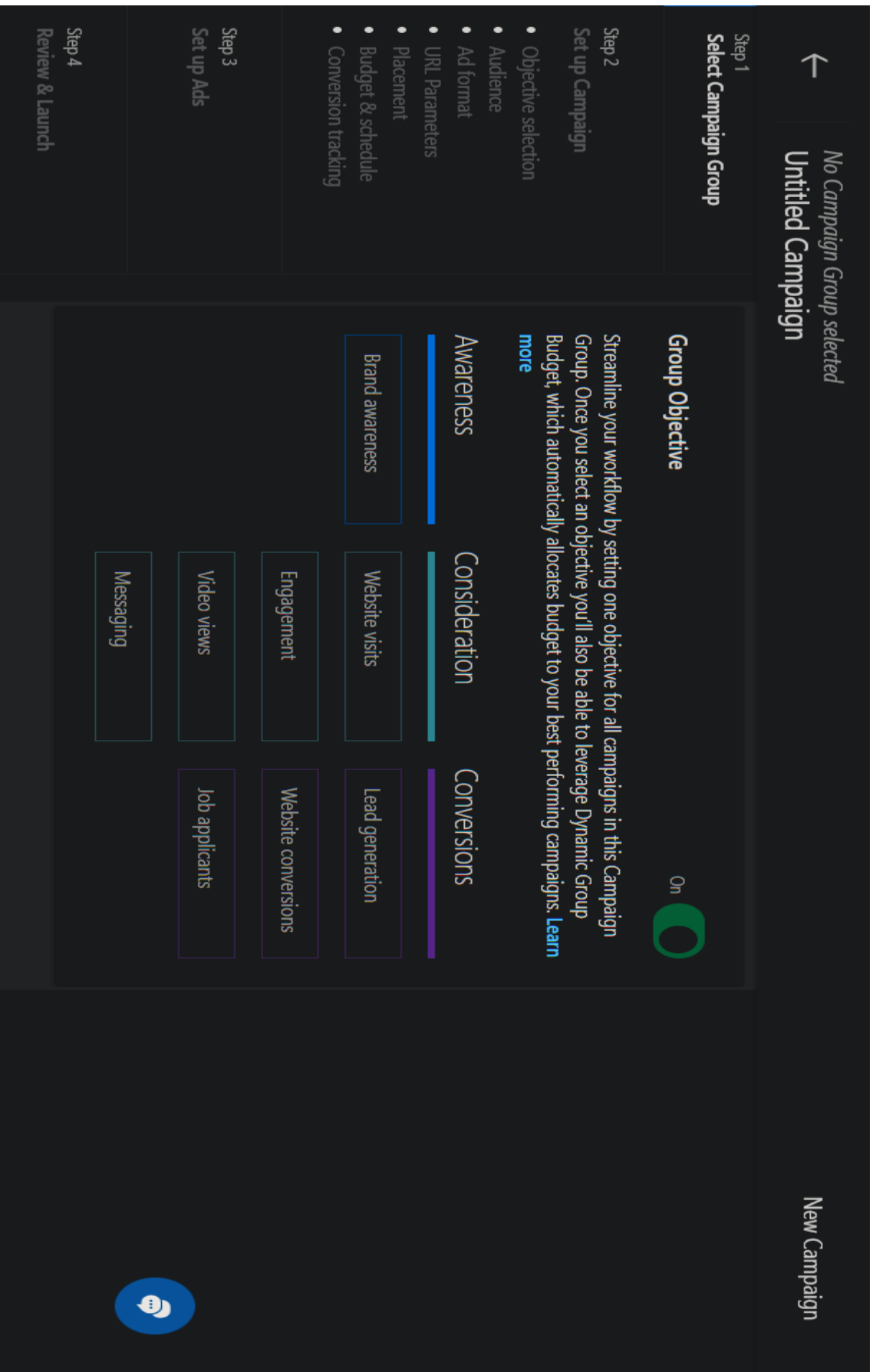


Figure 17 LinkedIn campaign manager page (LinkedIn, 2024)

Generating leads involves creating relevant content tailored to target audiences and distributing it across selected channels. Blogs, videos, SEO, and SEM marketing are effective methods for achieving this. Figure 18 shows a lead capture form on the Sarl Artec Inc. website.

Contact Us

Name *

Your e-mail address

Subject

Comment

Send

Contact us

For More Information Call Us
+213 558 15 60 14
+213 795 22 22 38
+213 671 98 94 30

Address
Algier : 1er etage, 36 Chemin Sidi Yahia, Lot 4, Hydra

Annaba : Cité Valmascoart N° 07, Bloc 02 , Étage 02

Send E-mail
contact@artec-int.com

Figure 18 Lead capture form Sarl Artec Int.

Upon capturing a lead, it is essential to make sure it is recorded in the CRM system and maintain engagement through regular communication and targeted marketing efforts. This nurturing process helps move leads closer to the purchasing stage, thereby increasing the likelihood of conversion.

Lead scoring is a crucial step in the lead management process, as it enables companies to identify valuable leads and prioritise their follow-up activities. By assigning scores based on lead behaviour and preferences, businesses can optimise their sales efforts and allocate resources more effectively.

The highest-scoring leads can be passed on to the sales department, which will continue to engage with them and nurture their interest, ultimately driving conversions and revenue growth.

5.7 Implementation plan funnel

The initial customer acquisition strategy for the case study start-up will be implemented according to the plan presented in this section. Any project or strategy must have one of these plans in place to be successful. It facilitates the clarification of the strategy's aims and objectives and offers a project road map.

In order to move forward and grow, the case study start-up must accomplish a number of steps in this process. The suggested timeline may be altered in response to the case study start-up customers' reactions to the plan. Processes can be accelerated or decelerated as needed. Figure 19 below depicts the plan.

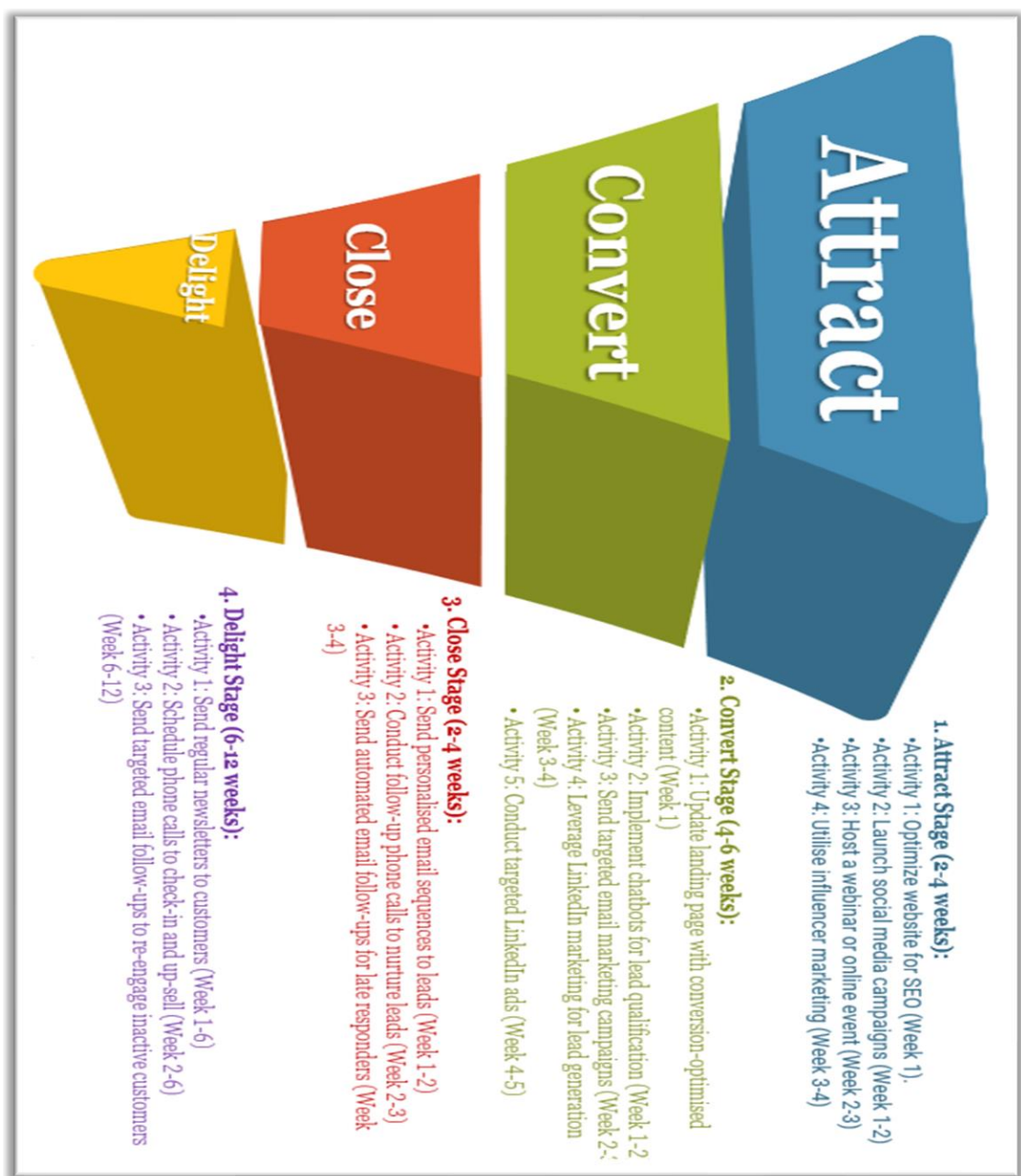


Figure 19 Initial Implementation plan funnel

The entire customer acquisition strategy funnel will take 12 to 16 weeks to complete. a beginning to ensure that it can withstand the following three to five years.

The first stage, Attract, is the most involved as it requires multiple activities such as optimising the website for SEO, launching social media campaigns, hosting webinars, and input from various parties, including marketing teams, content creators, and SEO specialists. To kick-start the 'Attract' phase, the website must be optimised for SEO by conducting keyword research, optimising content, meta descriptions, and title tags. Additionally, building high-quality backlinks from reputable sources is crucial. Moreover, improving website speed and mobile responsiveness is vital for a seamless user experience.

To further boost the attraction phase, social media campaigns should be launched, creating engaging content and running targeted ads on relevant platforms. Utilising social media listening tools can provide valuable insights into audience preferences, sentiment analysis, and real-time feedback, allowing the case study start-up to tailor content for better engagement. Furthermore, hosting a webinar or online event is an excellent way to showcase expertise and promote the event through social media, email marketing, and paid ads.

Incorporate influencer marketing to collaborate with industry influencers, co-create content, and tap into their established audience to expand the reach of the case study start-up to new potential customers.

Once all activities are completed and prepared in the 'Attract' phase, the 'Convert' stage can begin. This stage involves updating the landing page with conversion-optimised content, creating compelling headlines, clear call-to-actions, and relevant content that resonates with the target audience. The landing page should also be optimised for mobile devices to ensure a seamless user experience.

Implementing chatbots for lead qualification is another crucial step—developing a chatbot that engages visitors, gathers basic information, and qualifies leads based on pre-defined criteria. The chatbot should be integrated with the website, Odoo CRM, and social media platforms.

During the conversion stage, the case study start-up should use Odoo CRM to send targeted email marketing campaigns, segmenting the audience based on various buyer persona profiles and engagement levels to deliver personalised content and boost engagement rates. Personalised email sequences can be created to nurture leads and

provide valuable content. Additionally, leveraging LinkedIn marketing for lead generation by optimising the LinkedIn profile and company page for relevant keywords is essential.

The close stage involves sending personalised email sequences to leads and using automation tools in Odoo CRM to send emails based on lead behaviour and engagement. This ensures timely and targeted communication to effectively guide leads through the sales funnel. Tailoring email content to address specific objections and highlight product benefits is crucial. Follow-up phone calls can also be conducted to nurture leads, build relationships, and establish trust by providing expert advice and guidance.

In the final stage, known as 'Delight,' the case study start-up can send regular newsletters to customers, offering valuable content such as industry insights, customer success stories, exclusive offers, and behind-the-scenes updates on new products or services. Phone calls can be scheduled to check-in and up-sell, gathering feedback and addressing any concerns. Targeted email follow-ups can also be sent to re-engage inactive customers, offering exclusive discounts or valuable content to encourage them to return.

Flow of Stages:

Attract: Generate awareness and interest in your brand and products or services by optimising the website, launching social media campaigns, hosting webinars, and leveraging influencer marketing.

Convert: Nurture leads through valuable content and engagement, encouraging them to take action by updating the landing page, implementing chatbots, and sending targeted email marketing campaigns.

Close: Guide leads through the sales process, address their needs, and close the deal by sending personalised email sequences, conducting follow-up phone calls, and utilising automation tools.

Delight: Build customer loyalty by providing exceptional experiences, fostering ongoing relationships, and encouraging repeat business through regular newsletters, phone calls, and targeted email follow-ups.

By following this comprehensive implementation plan of the customer acquisition strategy, the case study start-up can develop a structured inbound approach to attract, convert, close, and delight customers, ultimately achieving sustainable growth.

5.8 Summary of the Draft Proposal

The customer acquisition strategy draft was developed based on insights from academic research and identified challenges from the case study start-up present state analysis. This approach ensures that the strategy is both evidence-based and tailored to address specific issues faced by the case study start-up. By grounding the proposal in robust research and real-world challenges, the foundation for a successful customer acquisition strategy is established.

The objective of the strategy is to establish a scalable framework that ensures sustainable growth by attracting and retaining new customers through an effective inbound marketing approach. This framework is designed to be adaptable, allowing the case study start-up to respond to market changes while maintaining a consistent focus on inbound marketing principles. The emphasis on scalability and sustainability ensures that the growth achieved is not only significant but also long-lasting.

Subsequently, a buyer persona representing the ideal customer profile for the case study start-up was developed to tailor marketing strategies effectively. This buyer persona is a detailed representation of the target customer, including demographic information, preferences, pain points, and buying behaviour. By understanding the ideal customer profile, the case study start-up can create more personalised and relevant marketing messages, enhancing the effectiveness of their campaigns and improving customer acquisition rates.

Furthermore, a customer journey map was developed to visualise the interactions and touchpoints of potential customers, enhancing the proposal's strategic approach. The customer journey map outlines each stage of the customer experience, from awareness to post-purchase engagement, highlighting the key interactions that influence their decision-making process. This map helps the case study start-up identify opportunities to engage and convert potential customers at each stage, ensuring a seamless and cohesive customer experience.

A subsequent stage in the proposal draft presents the lead generation process and proposes the tools that may be employed to acquire leads. The lead generation

process is critical for building a pipeline of potential customers, and the proposal includes strategies for attracting and capturing leads effectively. The suggested tools and techniques are designed to maximise reach and engagement, ensuring a steady flow of qualified leads into the sales funnel.

The thesis explored the Odoo CRM system, it offers robust features for managing customer relationships, and its marketing hub provides tools for automating and optimising lead capture processes. By integrating Odoo's capabilities, the case study start-up can enhance its ability to track and nurture leads, improving overall efficiency and conversion rates.

Specific channels such as email marketing campaigns, social media platforms, and targeted advertising channels were suggested for the case study start-up to expand its lead generation efforts. Email marketing campaigns can be tailored to different segments of the audience, delivering personalised content that resonates with potential customers. Social media platforms provide opportunities for engaging with a broader audience and building brand awareness, while targeted advertising channels allow for precise audience targeting, ensuring that marketing efforts reach the most relevant prospects.

Additionally, the implementation plan funnel for the proposed draft was displayed. This plan outlines the steps necessary to put the proposed strategies into action, including timelines, resource allocation, and performance metrics. The plan was created as simply as possible so that the case study start-up could later refine and improve it to meet its future needs. By keeping the initial implementation straightforward, the case study start-up can focus on executing the core strategies effectively while remaining flexible to adapt and optimise over time.

The upcoming section will evaluate the initial proposal through a validation process to ensure its alignment with the case study start-up's objectives and growth needs.

The validation process will involve assessing the feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed strategies, gathering feedback from stakeholders, and making necessary adjustments. This evaluation is crucial to ensure that the proposal is practical, aligns with the start-up's goals, and sets the stage for successful implementation and sustained growth.

6 Validation of the Proposal

The validation phase represents the ultimate step in the creation of a proposal. This section will comprehensively explore the evolution of the proposal, beginning with its initial draft and concluding in the ultimate version. Additionally, this segment may encompass a concise summary of suggested improvements and potential recommendations for future endeavours.

6.1 Review of the Validation Process.

The aim of this section is to progress through the validation phase of the proposed customer acquisition plan draft and address the case study start-up representatives' suggestions in relation to it.

Since there are only three members of the case start-up management and sales team, the validation phase was brief and did not require many procedures. In-person meetings were able to be arranged for validation.

In the proposal draft building phase, the case start-up immediately began putting some of the original plan's ideas into practice. To guarantee its connection with the website update project, they integrated Odoo CRM into their system, started learning more about how to use their CRM tool later in email campaigns to generate leads, developed a basic customer journey, then began with a preliminary buyer persona profile, and learned how to improve a lead generation and lead scoring process. They were optimistic that the strategy and its related costs might be implemented into the case study start-up's operations.

However, it was determined that the case start-up would concentrate its efforts specifically on the website, the content, and landing pages due to the heavy workload associated with their lengthy projects with some clients. In addition to managing marketing, the CEO collaborated with a few team members to assist with new website design, content creation, and search engine optimisation. To manage all strategy leads and initiatives that needed to be evaluated, the primary technology utilised was Odoo CRM.

6.1.1 Updated Website

It was crucial for the case start-up to take action even when the case study website was quicker and looked more interesting than the websites of its rivals. The problems with the website were thoroughly. In the early stages of the strategy development process, the case study start-up decided to invest in a new website to incorporate AI-based chatbots once they determined how to synergize everything with Odoo CRM. This was of particular significance given the AI revolution and its features. Figure 20 below shows the updated homepage until all desired features are integrated.

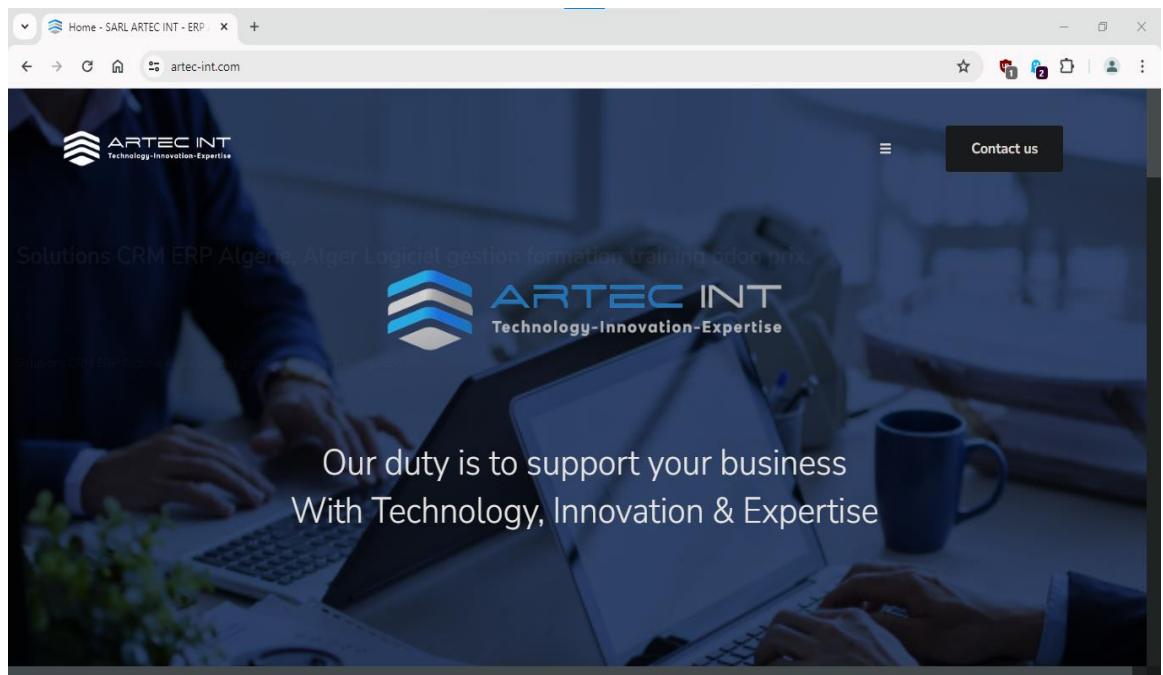


Figure 20 Case study Sarl Artec Int Website New Look, 2024.

The website's incompatibility with SEO was another problem. It is feasible because the new website's code and design have been modified. A new website was designed with accessibility in mind, with every part easily accessible. The start-up clients, partners, and references each have their own area on the home page. This thesis content was not due for submission until after the new website went live. Google SEO results and website SEO results for 2024 are shown in Figures 19 and 20.

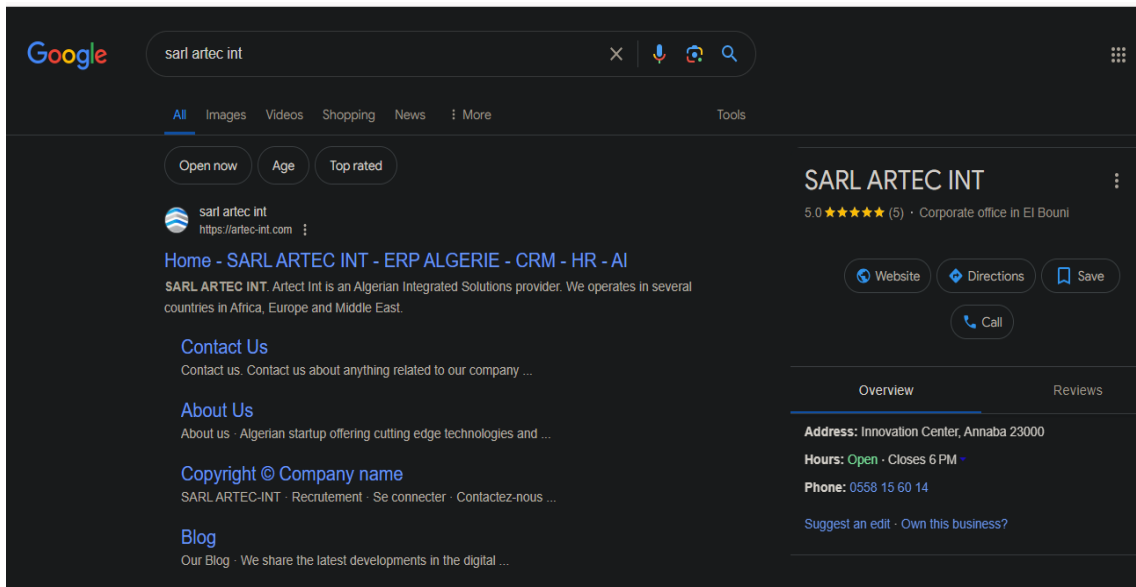


Figure 21 Case study Sarl Artec Int Website SEO results, 2024.

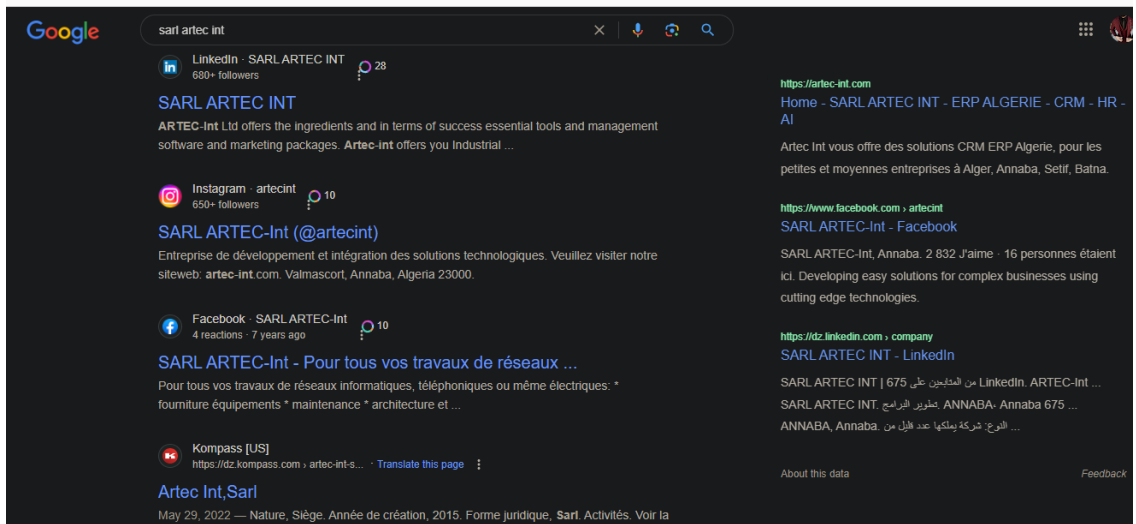


Figure 22 Case study Sarl Artec Int Website Google SEO results, 2024

6.1.2 Email Content production

Previously, emails would have been generated by hand. However, the process was changed so that emails were created in Odoo CRM and the messages were still prepared by marketing experts using templates. Odoo was able to extract a summary in a matter of seconds by entering specific data. The link tracker option integrated with the email helped monitor higher open rates, and recipients spent more time reading them. The integration of email campaigns with Odoo CRM is seen in Figure 23. The Odoo Link Tracker is displayed in Figure 24. Additionally, Figure 25 shows the mass-mail summary for Odoo.

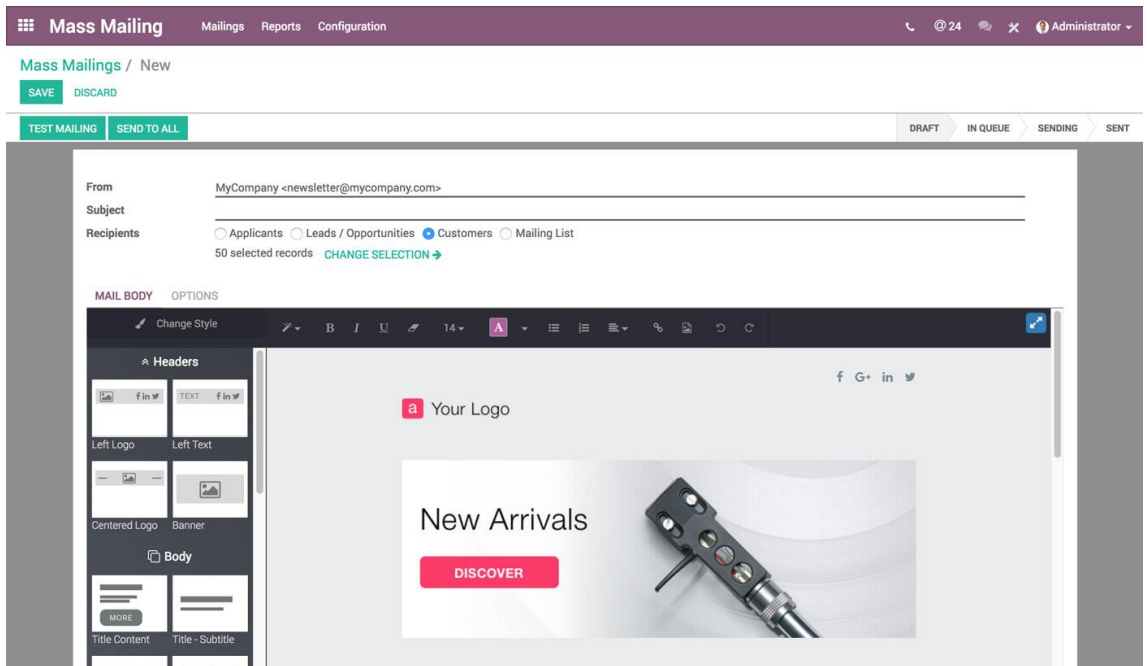


Figure 23 Odoo Email marketing.

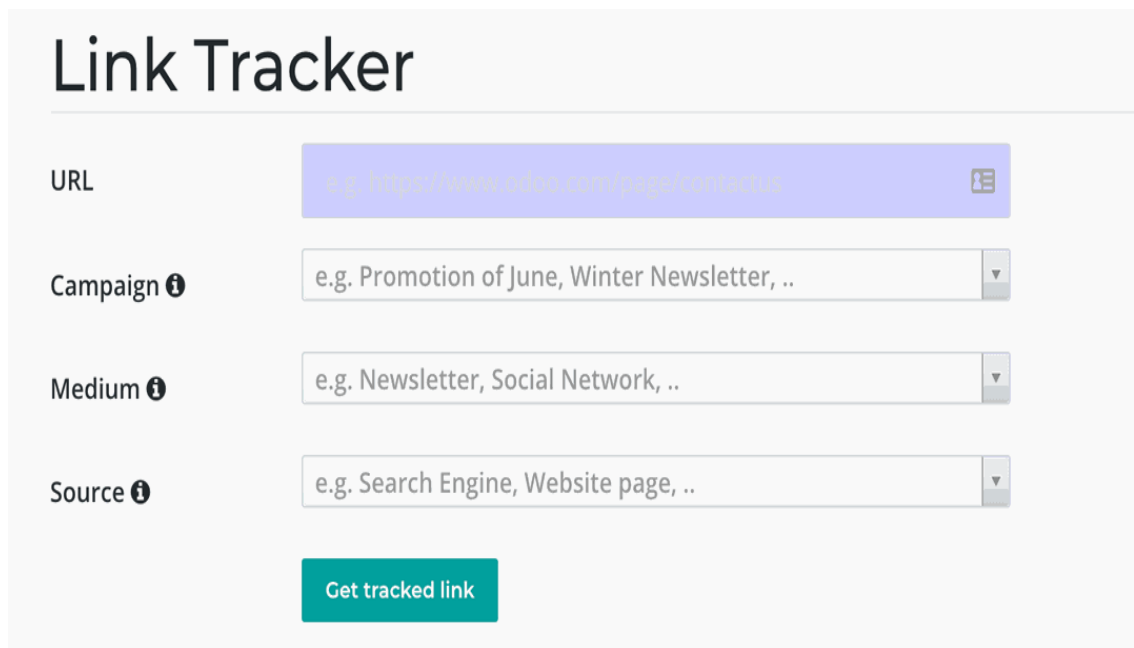


Figure 24 Odoo Link-tracker



Figure 25 Odoo Mass-Mail-Summary

Therefore, for the next months, a marketing freelancer may be considered to produce content for the new website and case study start-up social media channels social media channels.

6.1.3 Landing Pages and Lead Manager

Landing pages were also worked on by the case study start-up. With the exception of the contact us page on the website and the business account on WhatsApp, they are still in the development stage as of right now. Upgrading the website was an essential component needed to take the implementation strategy to the next level. The content will point visitors to the website of the case study start-up, to the homepage, reference section, or the current clients page depending on the message. A section like this still has to be included. which will take you to the Odoo CRM leads manager's lead page. The lead manager pages are displayed in Figures 25 and 26.

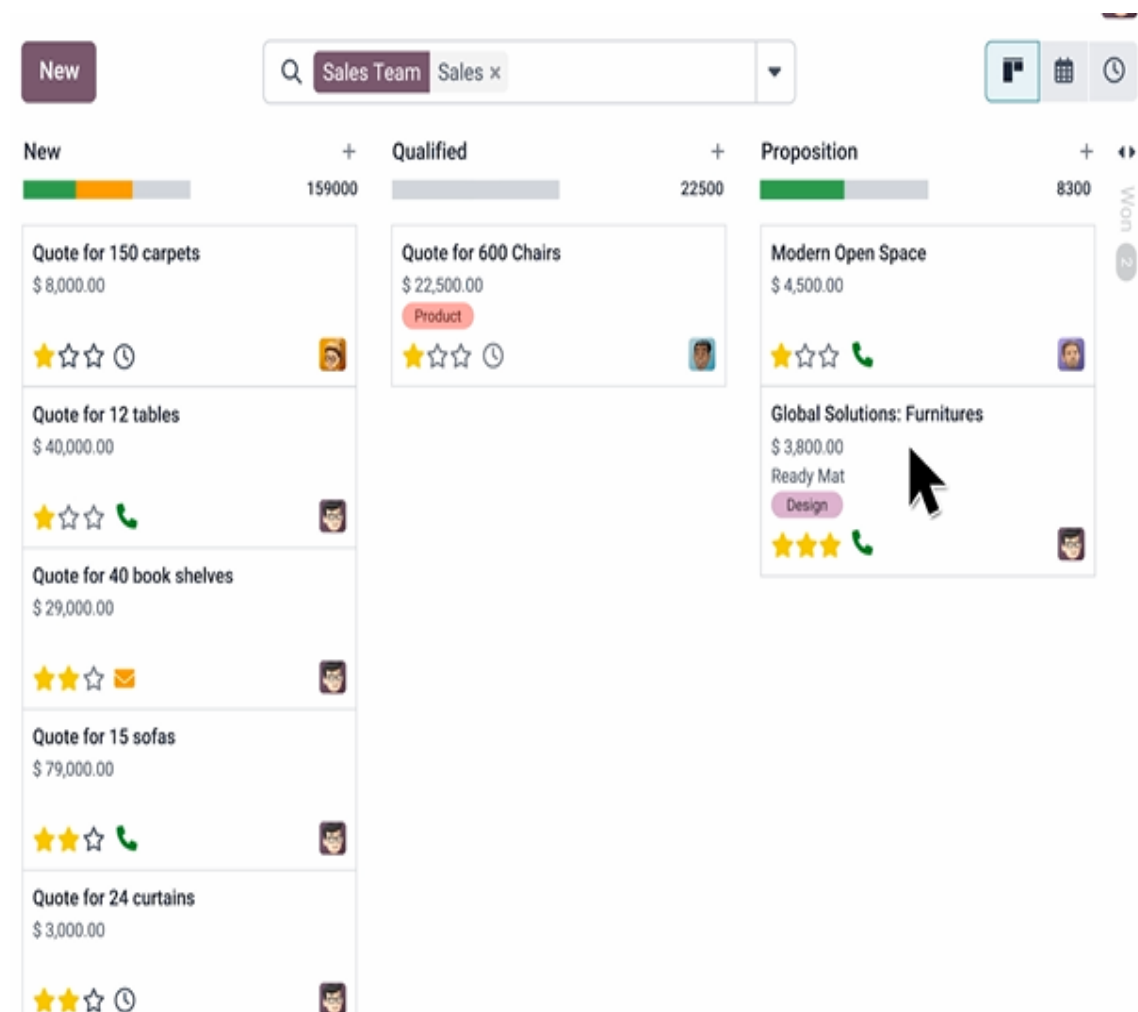


Figure 26 Odoo Lead list Process

New Pipeline Info about services

No Meeting 0 Quotations 0 Rentals 0 Similar Leads 4

1/1 < >

New Quotation New Rental Won Lost Enrich

New Qualified 2d Proposition Won

Send message Log note Activities

Info about services

Expected Revenue **\$25,000.00** Probability **2.40 %**
 at **30.00 %**

Customer [?] Deco Addict - US12345673 Salesperson [?] Mitchell Admin

Email info@agrolait.com Expected Closing [?] 11/30/2023

Phone +32 10 588 558

Tags [?] Product

Internal Notes Extra Information Assigned Partner

Customer is interested in SaaS options. They require:

- weekly backups
- redundancy
- 2TB capacity

Planned Activities

Tomorrow: "Call to get system requirements" for Mitchell Admin
 +32 10 588 558
 ✓ Mark Done ✎ Edit ✕ Cancel

October 31, 2023

Marc Demo - 1 day ago
 Subject: Re: Plan to buy Redhat servers
 Hello
 After our discussion with our technical experts, here is the offer of YourCompany. We believe it will meet every requirement you had in mind. Please feel free to contact me for any detail or technical detail that is not clear enough for you.
 Notice that as agreed on phone, we offer you a **10% discount on the hardware!**
 Best regards,
















Deco Addict - 1 day ago
 Subject: Re: Plan to buy Redhat servers
 Thanks for the information!

Figure 27 Odoo Lead Scoring and messaging

6.2 Final Proposal

The first suggestion was approved as reasonable and attainable. However, due to time constraints and the size of the staff within the start-up, it was ultimately decided to concentrate on the three previously listed items. The others, such as LinkedIn advertisements, blog posts, and sequences, were decided to be carried out later. We can conclude that the case study start-up was better served by the author's analysis and insights about the role of developing a customer acquisition strategy based on the inbound marketing approach in the growth of the case study start-up.

Table 6 The customer acquisition strategy elements of the final proposal

Objective		Create a Customer Acquisition Strategy for Growth	
Elements of Initial Proposal		Final Proposal (Implemented)	Will be Implemented
Define Objectives and Metrics			
Create a buyer persona			
Create a journey map			
Create lead generation process			
Define channels and tools			
Create implementation plan	Redesign Website		
	Improve SEO/SEM		
	Design Chatbot		
	Email Campaigns		
	LinkedIn Ads		
	Create Content (blogs, Videos...etc.)		
	Create landing pages		

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the final section presents a concise summary of the thesis at hand, highlighting the key findings and outcomes achieved throughout the research journey. Furthermore, it offers insightful recommendations based on the acquired knowledge, accompanied by a comprehensive assessment of the outcomes vis-à-vis the project's initial objectives.

7.1 Executive Summary

The author's aim of this thesis was to assist the case study start-up in developing a sustainable growth strategy. It became evident that the key to achieving this growth lay in marketing strategies. However, the challenge arose when they struggled to pinpoint the root cause of the issue and determine the best approach to finding a solution. The importance of data tracking and analysis was highlighted as a crucial element in ensuring the effectiveness of marketing efforts and improving customer engagement. Through this thesis, the start-up was encouraged to re-evaluate their marketing tactics and adopt a more data-driven approach to achieve their growth objectives.

The research conducted objective in this thesis aimed to provide a comprehensive growth solution that would address the company's need to scale its operations and attract more customers. By leveraging inbound marketing strategies and online resources, the company could enhance its visibility and attract a larger customer base. The valuable discussions with the CEO of the start-up underscored the importance of focusing on customer acquisition as a core element of the business growth strategy. Moving forward, the proposed solution would serve as a roadmap for the company to achieve its objectives and expand its market presence effectively.

In order to conduct the thesis, the research approach chosen was applied action research, which was deemed suitable for addressing the business challenge and achieving the study's objectives. This thesis employed the combination of applied action research and qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and detailed analysis which played a crucial role in gathering relevant data. The initial phase of the thesis involved the emphasis on exploring both literature and real-world practices, it helped in developing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Overall, the thesis aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of customer acquisition through a rigorous and methodical research approach.

The findings from the analysis highlighted the importance of ensuring that the website is not only visually appealing but also functional and user-friendly. By incorporating SEO strategies, the website can improve its visibility and ranking on search engines, ultimately driving more traffic to the site. Additionally, the integration of AI-chatbots can enhance the overall user experience by providing instant assistance and personalized interactions.

Following this, it was discovered that the sales team within the case study start-up possessed contrasting understandings regarding the ideal customer they served and the position this individual held within client organisations across diverse industries.

The case start-up's struggle to provide meaningful content to its website visitors has become evident, along with the infrequent updates on its social media channels. Furthermore, the absence of a lead capture and management system has resulted in the start-up being unaware of the prospects who visit their website and when they do so.

The decision to centre the data collection efforts around proposal building was a strategic one, guided by the understanding gleaned from existing literature and practical experience. Given the predominant nature of the challenges in online and digital platforms, an inbound marketing approach was employed to shape the strategy. The systematic approach to creating a proposal involved a comprehensive sequence of six distinct steps.

The initial step involved establishing clear objectives and qualitative success metrics for the comprehensive customer acquisition strategy. In this regard, it was agreed upon that the strategy's success would be determined by its ability to be successfully executed by the case study start-up.

Second step, the case start-up proceeded to establish the buyer persona. This crucial step allowed them to gain a deeper understanding of their ideal customer and the factors that influence their purchasing decisions. By creating a detailed persona, the start-up was able to identify key characteristics and traits that define their target audience.

Third step, the case start-up has successfully developed a customer journey map, which outlines the necessary actions to be taken based on the specific phase of their potential customers. This comprehensive tool provides valuable insights into the

customer's experience, enabling the start-up to effectively navigate each stage of the journey.

Fourth step, the inception of the lead generation process marked a momentous milestone. This pivotal step established a well-defined roadmap for generating leads effectively. As the primary objective of the study revolved around acquiring new customers, a lead serves as the initial stepping stone, which, when properly nurtured, has the potential to transform into a loyal customer.

Fifth step, the strategy presented a range of tools and channels that the case start-up can employ in order to captivate prospective customers. and last step, a detailed implementation plan has been created to establish specific deadlines and timelines for the project, ensuring all tasks are completed efficiently and on time.

The validation stages of the proposal were efficiently completed by the case start-up, which operates as a small organisation. The team of the case start-up expressed their full support for the initial proposal. Nevertheless, due to time constraints and the start-up's resources, it was determined that only three of the suggested actions – website development, content production, and landing page creation – would be pursued initially. The remaining actions are scheduled for implementation in the year 2024.

To summarise the thesis outcomes, the strategy has effectively guided the case study start-up in determining the desired direction for its growth aspiration. The successful launch of their brand-new website signifies a major achievement, prompting the consideration of hiring a marketing freelancer to strengthen their team. With promising initial results, the company is excited to witness the complete execution of the strategy and its overall effectiveness.

7.2 Thesis Evaluation

The effectiveness of this dissertation can be assessed by examining how closely the objective aligned with the intended results. The main aim of this research was to develop a customer acquisition plan that would serve as the fundamental solution for business growth and brand expansion. This plan was designed to assist the start-up in growing its customer base by implementing a clear and structured strategy. Given that the start-up team lacked familiarity with executing inbound marketing strategies, the plan was crafted to provide them with valuable insights and knowledge to facilitate a quick learning curve. By following the outlined steps, the company could effectively

leverage inbound marketing techniques to achieve its growth objectives.

While inbound marketing may only be a fraction of the larger marketing landscape this strategy is crucial in jumpstarting the process and ensuring that the promised results are delivered to the case start-up. Overall, the thesis primarily focuses on developing a customer acquisition strategy that can be readily integrated into the daily operations of the case start-up.

7.3 Closing Words

The process of writing a thesis has proven to be highly fulfilling for the me, despite being quite time-consuming. The time and effort invested in this endeavour have been entirely justified by the outcomes. I feel that as a professional, I have expanded my knowledge base significantly and am eager to further enhance the skills I have acquired.

After extensive research on inbound marketing, I am confident in stating that it can be advantageous for not only small businesses such as start-ups but also large corporations. In my view, this particular marketing approach, as opposed to Outbound, is likely to remain relevant for a considerable period of time.

References

Agius, A. (2023). How to Create an Effective Customer Journey Map [Examples + Template]. [online] Hubspot.com. Available at: <https://blog.hubspot.com/service/customer-journey-map> [Accessed 15 May 2024].

Blichfeldt, B. S., & Andersen, J. R. (2005). Creating a Wider Audience for Action Research: Learning from Case-Study Research. *Journal of Research Practice*, 2(1), D2. <https://doaj.org/article/74a2eb6fbb64b30bacbfc0cb6760bfb>

Bourner, T., & Brook, C. (2019). Comparing and Contrasting Action Research and Action Learning. 185-205. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119399490.ch9>

Brennan, R. (2014). Business-to-Business Marketing. In: Alhaji, R., Rokne, J. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Social Network Analysis and Mining*. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-6170-8_270

Brennan, R., Canning, L. & McDowell, R. 2011. *Business-to-business marketing*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE.

Brenner, M. (2020). The Importance of Customer Journey Mapping in Content Marketing. [online] Marketing Insider Group. Available at: <https://marketinginsidergroup.com/content-marketing/why-customer-journey-mapping/> [Accessed 15 May 2024].

Chaffey, D. and Chadwick, F.E. (2019). *Digital Marketing*. 7th ed. Pearson UK.

Chaffey, D. and Smith, P. (2013). *Emarketing Excellence*. Routledge. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203082812>.

Cooke, R. (2024). Outbound Marketing Case Studies: Insider Strategies for Startups. [online] www.linkedin.com. Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/outbound-marketing-case-studies-insider-strategies-startups-cooke-x5cwe> [Accessed 14 May 2024].

Customer Journey Map Template Example. (2021). Available at: <https://www.danaconnect.com/4-real-examples-of-customer-journey-mapping-as-the-key-to-a-successful-digital-transformation/> [Accessed 15 May 2024].

D'Ambra, S. (2018). What is the Purpose of a Website? [online] ClearTech Interactive. Available at: <https://www.clearart.com/what-is-the-purpose-of-a-website.html> [Accessed 26 May 2024].

Décadas, Fabiana Arroyo Poleo Con una carrera que abarca más de dos, et al. 4 Ejemplos Reales de Customer Journey Mapping. 25 Apr. 2023, es.danaconnect.com/4-ejemplos-reales-de-customer-journey-mapping-como-clave-para-una-transformacion-digital-exitosa/. Accessed 26 May 2024.

Ettenson, Richard & Conrado, E. & Knowles, Jonathan. (2013). Rethinking the 4 P's. 91.

- Fan, X., Yang, X., & Yu, Z. (2021). Effect of basic research and applied research on the universities' innovation capabilities: the moderating role of private research funding. *Scientometrics*, 126(7), 5387–5411. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-021-03998-9>
- Fishkin, R & Høgenhaven, T (eds) 2013, *Inbound Marketing and SEO: Insights from the Moz Blog*. Wiley, Chichester.
- Fishkin, R & Høgenhaven, T. 2013. *Inbound Marketing and SEO: Insights from the Moz Blog*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Funnel vs. Flywheel: What's the Difference? (n.d.). Available at: <https://blog.velocity23.com/blog/funnel-vs-flywheel-whats-difference-a1> [Accessed 15 May 2024].
- Gates, B. (1996, January) Content is King. Microsoft website.
- Gosnay, R. & Richardson, N. 2008. *Develop your marketing skills*. London: Kogan Page.
- Grubor, A. and Jaksa, O. (2018). Internet Marketing as a Business Necessity. *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems*, 16(2), pp.265–274. doi:<https://doi.org/10.7906/indecs.16.2.6>.
- Gunelius, S. (2011). *Content Marketing For Dummies*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Halligan, B. (2021). *Inbound Marketing vs. Outbound Marketing*. [online] Hubspot.com. Available at: <https://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/2989/inbound-marketing-vs-outbound-marketing.aspx>. [Accessed 14 May 2024].
- Halligan, B. and Dharmesh Shah (2014). *Inbound marketing : attract, engage, and delight customers online*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.
- Harwood, M. and Harwood, M. (2009). *Landing Page Optimization For Dummies*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Holliman, G. and Rowley, J. (2014). Business to business digital content marketing: marketers' perceptions of best practice. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 8(4), pp.269–293.
- HubSpot (2021). *The In-Depth Guide To Creating Effective Inbound Marketing Campaigns 2 The In-Depth Guide to Building Effective Inbound Marketing Campaigns*. [online] Available at: https://www.hubspot.com/hubfs/HSCM%20Hopin/The_In-Depth_Guide.pdf [Accessed 16 May 2024].
- HubSpot (2023). *The In-Depth Guide To Creating Effective Inbound Marketing Campaigns 2 The In-Depth Guide to Building Effective Inbound Marketing Campaigns*. [online] Available at: https://www.hubspot.com/hubfs/HSCM%20Hopin/The_In-Depth_Guide.pdf [Accessed 16 May 2024].
- Kiselova, H., 2019. *Effective email marketing: an empirical study of the impact of personalized communication on customer engagement and purchase decisions* (Master's thesis, Handelshøyskolen BI).

Klepek, M. (2019). BUYER PERSONAS: ITS USE AND LIMITATIONS IN ONLINE MARKETING. [online] MARKETING IDENTITY Offline Is the New Online. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359016095_BUYER_PERSONAS_ITS_USE_AND_LIMITATIONS_IN_ONLINE_MARKETING [Accessed 15 May 2024].

Kotler, P. (2000). Marketing Management. [online] Prentice Hall. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Philip-Kotler-2/publication/235362523_Marketing_Management_The_Millennium_Edition/links/5509bd440cf20ed529e1eef3/Marketing-Management-The-Millennium-Edition.pdf.

Kotler, Philip, and Gary Armstrong. Principles of Marketing. 17th ed., Hoboken, Pearson Higher Education, 2018.

Lucid Content Team (2017). How to Create a Customer Journey Map | Lucidchart. [online] Lucidchart.com. Available at: <https://www.lucidchart.com/blog/how-to-build-customer-journey-maps> [Accessed 26 May 2024].

Monat, J.P. 2011. Industrial sales lead conversion modeling. Marketing Intelligence & Planning. Vol 29, Issue 2, pp. 178-194.

Morgan, N.A., Whitley, K.A., Feng, H. and Chari, S. (2019). Research in marketing strategy. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 47(1), pp.4–29. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-018-0598-1>.

Neck, H.M., Neck, C.P. and Murray, E.L. (2021). Entrepreneurship : the Practice and Mindset. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Ltd.

Palmer, A. (2012). Introduction to marketing : theory and practice. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Patel, N. (2020) Social proof: Your key to more magnetic marketing, Neil Patel. Available at: <https://neilpatel.com/blog/the-social-email/> (Accessed: 16 May 2024).

Raimova, M. and Erkin, G. (2022) 'MODERN MARKETING CONCEPT', Web of Scientist: International Scientific Research Journal, 3(1), pp. 60–65: <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/286GM>.

Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (2008). The SAGE Handbook of Action Research : Participative Inquiry and Practice. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications.

Saheb, T., Amini, B. and Kiaei Alamdari, F. (2021). Quantitative analysis of the development of digital marketing field: Bibliometric analysis and network mapping. International Journal of Information Management Data Insights, 1(2), p.100018. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijime.2021.100018>.

Sánchez-Teba, E.M., García-Mestanza, J. and Rodríguez-Fernández, M. (2020). The Application of the Inbound Marketing Strategy on Costa del Sol Planning & Tourism Board. Lessons for Post-COVID-19 Revival. Sustainability, 12(23), p.9926. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3390/su12239926>.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2019) in Research methods for business

students. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson, pp. 45–46.

Sciandra, Paul. "Salesforce Leads 101: How It Works." OMI, 15 Feb. 2023, www.omi.co/crm-configuration/salesforce-leads/#:~:text=Salesforce%20Leads%20is%20a%20category. Accessed 26 May 2024.

Shani, A. B. (Rami), & Coghlan, D. (2019). Action research in business and management: A reflective review. *Action Research*, 19(3), 518–541. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750319852147>

Stahl, S. (2023). 2024 B2B Content Marketing Trends [Research]. [online] Content Marketing Institute. Available at: <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/articles/b2b-content-marketing-trends-research/> [Accessed 15 May 2024].

Taylor, H. (2018) "Chapter 4," in *B2B marketing strategy: Differentiate, develop and deliver lasting customer engagement*. London: Kogan Page Limited, pp. 59–65.

Wood, M.B. (2017). *Essential guide to marketing planning*. 4th ed. Harlow, England ; New York: Pearson.

Wright, A. (2017). What Is a Buyer Persona and Why Is It Important? [online] Amy Wright - Content Marketing. Available at: <https://amywright.me/what-is-a-buyer-persona/> [Accessed 15 May 2024].

www.linkedin.com. (2024). What are the best practices for creating a customer journey map? [online] Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/advice/0/what-best-practices-creating-customer-journey-1c> [Accessed 16 May 2024].

Yaneva, D. (2020). STRATEGIC MARKETING PLANNING IN THE PRESENT-DAY ORGANIZATION. Volume 8, Issue 2, v8(2), pp.197–205. doi:<https://doi.org/10.37708/ep.swu.v8i2.16>.

Interview questions for the case company team

Customer acquisition:

1. What are the biggest challenges in your eyes in terms of growth?
2. Are there any strategies in place for future growth? If there are, what are they?
3. What makes your company unique compared to competitors?
4. Do you employ any customer approaches that differentiate you from your competitors?
5. What is the current method used to acquire customers?
6. What is the company's track record in attracting new customers in previous years?
7. How do we communicate with potential customers using various channels?

Customer questionnaire

1. What makes you hesitant about working with start-ups that offer integrated solutions?

Buyer Persona questionnaire

Buyer persona questions to help create a specific target audience profile:

Demographics:

- Age range: _____
- Industry: _____ (e.g., manufacturing, construction, energy, etc.)
- Company size: _____ (Number of employees)
- Location: _____ (Region, city, country)
- Job Title:

- CEO/Managing Director/Owner: _____
- IT Manager/Head of IT: _____
- Operations Manager/Facilities Manager: _____
- Maintenance Manager/Site Manager: _____
- Marketing Manager/Team Lead: _____
- Role and Responsibilities:

- What are your primary responsibilities and goals?
- Who do you report to?
- What are the biggest challenges you face in your role?
- Pain Points:

- What are the most significant pain points or problems you're trying to solve in your organization?
- How are these pain points impacting your business?
- What are the consequences if these pain points are not addressed?
- Goals and Objectives:

- What are your short-term and long-term goals for your organization?
- How do you envision improving your operations, maintenance, and IT infrastructure?
- What metrics do you use to measure success?
- Technology and IT Infrastructure:

- What type of software and systems do you currently use?
- Are you satisfied with your current IT setup?
- Are there specific technologies or tools you're interested in adopting?
- Marketing and Business Development:
 - How do you promote your business and services?
 - What marketing channels do you use most effectively?
 - Are you interested in exploring new marketing strategies?
- Training and Development:
 - What type of training or workshops has your company invested in recently?
 - Are there specific skills or knowledge gaps within your team that you're trying to address?
 - Are you open to customized training or workshops?
- Budgeting and Prioritization:
 - What is your typical budget for technology, IT, and maintenance solutions?
 - How do you prioritize spending within your budget?
 - Are you willing to invest in new solutions or technologies to drive growth and improvement?
- Miscellaneous:
 - What do you value most in a partnership or supplier?
 - Are there any specific certifications, regulations, or compliance requirements that impact your purchasing decisions?
 - Are there any other factors that influence your buying decisions?