

Customer Acquisition with Digital Marketing Tools

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BACHELOR'S THESIS
October 2020

International Business

ABSTRACT

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International Business

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Customer Acquisition with Digital Marketing tools

Bachelor's thesis 92 pages, appendices 26 pages
October 2020

Digital marketing tools has become a crucial aspect for businesses both online and offline. This Bachelor thesis literature is about digital marketing, its tools and how they come together to aid in customer acquisition. This thesis focused on how digital tools can be set up strategically and it introduced the how information technologies (IT) companies can acquire customers. The commissioner of this thesis is an enterprise resource planning (ERP) and customer relationship management (CRM) IT company with many other digital solution products. The company is based in Finland and has global customers. Due to the 2020 pandemic, the company has a status change from profitable to survivability. This thesis is written to aid the commissioner and for other companies looking to acquire customers using digital marketing tools.

The theoretical framework included practicalities regarding digital tools and strategies for utilization. It consisted of concise introduction to customer acquisition, how it has been achieved historically and presently. It highlighted the significance of brand equity and how it further aids in the customer acquisition process. A survey was conducted as a primary data collection tool with relevant companies. It aimed to understand the company status for visual benchmarking. The results signify the importance of digital marketing tools in these modern times, drawing customers for inclusion. A further survey was conducted by customers in the digital realm to see how digital advertisements (ads) are perceived in order to align and increase success rate in digital marketing campaigns in the pursuit of customer acquisition. The outcome of the survey indicates that people are willing to purchase items digitally and are willing to negotiate provided there is trust and both parties are happy.

Key words: customer acquisition, marketing and digital marketing, sales, traffic and conversion, company in question

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thesis background

In this chapter we will have an introduction to the thesis and its contents followed by understanding the main objectives of the thesis and finally the research method, thesis structure and theory that supports this thesis. Understanding this chapter will form the base knowledge that fuel the vision and understanding of this thesis.

The commissioning company for this thesis is an information technology (IT) company situated across Finland. The company specializes in enterprise resource planning (ERP) and customer relationship management (CRM) systems to help fully automate all businesses. The company in question seeks to acquire new customers in the fast food industry. They have a website that gives some digital footprint yet very small impact. The commissioner before the 2020 pandemic was scaling in profit and growth. Due to being a physical business, has been negatively impacted and limited by resources such as staff, time and money.

The aim of this thesis is to seek out various ways one can acquire customers through multiple digital channels advantageously, strategically and concisely for IT companies. It is critical in a time as today to have digital presence to create a customer base and relationships all in the pursuit of customer acquisition especially in the world pandemic affecting businesses today. This document introduces digital marketing tools and how to strategically execute them for business use for maximum results. To make sure information is reliable and up to date on this subject, different theories will be compiled together, an analysis of qualitative and quantitative data will occur, and both combined to form both a theoretical and practical conclusion ready for utilization.

Customer acquisition with digital marketing tools is about acquiring customers digitally using various digital channels in the digital realm. This particular topic has significant importance because technology is part of the world and safe to say, probably the future, most companies have a digital footprint and it is

thought one does not exist if they are not on the 'internet'. Therefore, companies must begin to get online and take this power to their advantage to acquire customers, boost revenue and continue to scale up.

1.2 Thesis purpose and objective

The objective(s) and purpose or intended outcome of this report, is to act as a guide that the company in question would be able to use. How can digital marketing tools aid in a customer acquisition process? A model will be drawn that can be used practically for visualization purposes. The main objectives remain as how they can acquire customers, a usable strategy and using digital marketing tools to acquire fast food franchises and start-ups as clients. This is relevant to customer acquisition and using digital marketing tools to grow one's customer pool. To behold the power of free and affordable digital marketing, the tools introduced in this document serves the purpose of empowering the company in question to achieve profit and scale using free tools. This would be of vast help to the company in question after being negatively impacted by COVID-19 as a physical business. This will be elaborated further on.

1.3 Research Methodology

Literature surrounding the theoretical framework of this thesis sourced from TAMK library and Google scholar will be mainly used. It will be used to source relevant literature as the thesis commences. This is relevant to customer acquisition and using digital marketing tools to grow one's customer pool. The company in question will gain recommendations and suggestions to their current situation.

This document will be turned into a guide to help anyone or business who may be in similar situations. A survey will be used for the qualitative and quantitative data to support these findings and form a base for the discussion. A marketing campaign will be drawn for the commissioner in order to gain and provide more useful information. This will entail psychological advantage utilization for companies when marketing and how to attract companies using research and targeted

marketing and finally a customer journey. Understanding a typical IT status from startup to small business enterprise's (SME's) and how to get to a desired goal will be achieved. This is for IT companies targeting the food industry. All the pursuits of this is towards customer acquisition.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, having an understanding of the structure of this report followed by understanding what customer acquisition is, the theory for this thesis and the process its successful completion will be explored. The process enables one to have knowledge which builds skills and power for utilization purposes. It then goes onto explore the historical patterns or traditional ways customers have been acquired compared to modern times and then in 2020. This is significant for predicting how customer acquisition will be in the future and to be well prepared for it. It will then be finalised by understanding the impact of brand equity on customer acquisition.

2.1 Thesis Structure

Understanding the structure of the thesis allows one to have a developed, thorough and smooth understanding of this thesis.

This report starts with a literature review. The focus is to explore what customer acquisition is, its value and significance. Traditional and modern methods of customer acquisition is then explored to understand the historical patterns concerning this topic to form a basis for a deeper understanding later on in this thesis. Once this has been understood, an analysis of a customer journey plus a map will be deduced. A present insight into customer acquisition will occur to help readers form a basis with up-to-date information. Understanding the impacts of brand equity on customer acquisition and its deeper impacts plays a major role and needs exploration. The thesis then goes onto explore the digital marketing tools and the methodologies used by current IT companies as well as

the commissioning company for this thesis. A further step is taken by exploring the challenges faced by the company so one can use this thesis to benchmark.

A strategy model will be formed which will create a basis for the next chapter on what to expect once all methodologies have been applied. Finally, understanding limitations and overcoming challenges is important to ensure one's success and will to carry on when challenges occur. This report will be concluded by a discussion of what the whole document entailed and resulted in.

This process following the introduction to the thesis structure forms the fundamental expectations of the thesis.

2.2 Theory

The theory forms the basis for this thesis. Understanding the key words that come together to aid in customer acquisition and further how they interlink simultaneously is crucial for implementation after this thesis.

Customer acquisition is the act of attracting customers both online and offline strategically to becoming a returning buyer and hopefully and advocate. It consists of traffic and conversions when performing customer acquisition online and traditional marketing including its channels when conducting it offline. These terminologies will be explored further on. To understand the customer acquisition process, one must understand what customers value and what motivates them to engage to become advocates. According to Wangenheim, and Bayón (2007), it has often been argued that word-of-mouth can contribute significantly to a firm's success in a variety of ways. In order to perform this effectively for companies online, the two words that should be one's bible are traffic and conversion.

Traffic is the process, methods and channels used to drive a lot of people onto a particular website. Glommen and Barrelet (2002), also said, it is a visitor's browser path to a website. Glommen and Barrelet are experts in the field of online traffic who have invented a system that analysis online traffic to a website and scales it. Both individuals have been successful for gaining a patent for

their invention and research methods which support the theory used in this thesis.

Conversion is the part people make major mistakes on but to help with this, one needs a basic understanding in customer personas and customer journeys. Conversions need to occur to get potential customers to purchase items resulting in an increase in company revenue and with personal information gained such as the buyer's email address, one can continue to market and in hope turn the buyer into a returning customer and an advocate. This is ultimately what companies desire. Conversion in Layman's terms is simply the information and user experience and design (UXI) and proof on a website that convinces a potential customer to insert their payment information and complete a purchase. Perdikaki, Saravanan and Jayashankar (2012) all said, 'attracting shoppers to stores and converting the incoming traffic into sales profitably are vital for the financial health. Ludwig et al. (2013), also said customers increasingly rely on other consumers reviews for online purchasing decisions. This tells us proof and trust are needed evidently in order to achieve online sales and boost the customer acquisition process.

In order to achieve all this, one needs to understand what marketing is and how to conduct it digitally as there are billions of people in the digital realm and it has never been easier to reach so many people at once 'The digital realm is embedded in many people's everyday lives' says Riley et al. (2015). This generates a high customer pool, acquisition and furthermore sales. The literature and empirical part of this thesis will develop one's understanding in the journey of customer acquisition using digital marketing tools. One has to understand the utopia in order to know how to conquer it and this thesis is to build a theoretical starting point to understand and interpret the research results to then act on it.

One needs customers to survive as a business and to attract, retain and turn them into advocates. To help this a customer persona when target marketing is crucial, it is defined, specific and saves company resources. A customer journey map is also essential to keep a company on track when going through the customer acquisition process. According to Decker (2020), a Hubspot representative, customer acquisition is defined as the process of bringing new clients or

customers to your business. In other words, all activities and methods used to attract, gain and retain new customers. Zhang (2019) also says that customer purchase is an extremely important and/ or an integral target for every company, as it ties directly to the growth of a brand and an organization.

Therefore, without customers it is safe to assume that a business will surely fail. However, potential customers usually have a variety of options to choose from across various markets and niches. According to Patel (2011) one of Forbes top ten marketers, did you know that presenting customers with a lot of options leads to being overwhelmed and less sales? For the most part if it is not a necessity most people do not know their needs for something until it comes across. Therefore, the customer acquisition process can be lengthy.

Having a customer persona or a buyer persona can be defined as a semi-fictional representation of an ideal customer based on market research and real data about existing customers. Creating a buyer persona(s) involves having to think about or believe including customer information about people or combinations of different kinds of people, behaviour patterns, desires to do things or reasons to do things, and goals. Customer personas can be gained by having 'cookies. Cookies is the act of given a website consent to access personal data regarding one's self. Further along in the thesis, cookies will be further explored.

The more described or explained, the better the performance according to Kusnitz (2018). Customer persona along with target marketing are keyways to attract those who will have wants for one's product and cater to those needs. Customer persona can be defined as drawing the typical characteristics one's typical customer or consumer may have for the niche one caters to. The Cambridge dictionary defines target marketing as the group of people a company wishes to sell its products or services to.

Target marketing can also be defined as setting up a marketing campaign with a message personalised to the target market - the people who possess the characteristics of one's typical customer persona, to capture their attention, engage them and convince them enough that you understand their problems and

situations and are offering a respectable and or suitable solution. This will further lead to sales and in the midst of all that a customer has been acquired. Customer acquisition is done through marketing to a potential customer on their customer journey to then convert that into sales.

The company in question can acquire customers by presenting themselves to cater to a variety of needs concisely and not with overwhelming options and create an effective campaign on various digital channels that will be explained later in the thesis. A customer journey can be defined as the different stages a potential customer has to go through step-by-step to become a retained customer. Therefore, customer journey maps go hand-in-hand with customer acquisition. Customer journeys include attracting a potential customer to becoming a returning advocate. Understanding how this process has been done traditionally and in modern times will enable implementers of this thesis to have a good sense of direction and the ability to pivot when acquiring customers.

2.3 Traditional VS Modern Methods Of Customer Acquisition

In this part it is understood that customer acquisition goes hand in hand with marketing as one needs to market to attract customers. Therefore, the traditional methods of marketing used to acquire customers and then modern ways it is done today will be explored. Traditional marketing involves various methods of promotion such as flyers, posters and things of that nature. Posts that come through the mail with pizza or grocery advertisements. Traditional marketing is a rather big group that incorporates many forms of advertising and marketing. It is the most pre-known knowledge of marketing, including the advertisements that is seen and heard every day. Most traditional marketing methods fall under one of four categories: print, broadcast, direct mail, and telephone. In this age with technology, there is a profound, effective and concise way of marketing called digital marketing also known as modern marketing.

Knowing that technology is in our everyday lives it makes sense as to why digital marketing is effective. It provides easy reach and access to consumers.

Modern or digital marketing involves using the various digital channels a potential customer is based and/ or can be reached on. Some examples of these include social media or paid ads such as Google Adwords, Sherman (2019) said, it is important to spend marketing budgets in the right direction and make the most of it. How do you know where to spend it when it comes to digital marketing vs traditional marketing?

For many businesses, reaching the right 'marketing' decision is not easy, even though it can make a huge difference in their results. By gaining clearness on digital marketing vs traditional marketing aspect, a business can get a better idea of which marketing method is appropriate and how it should be applied. For instance, if you decide to use social media marketing to build your brand and increase your customer base, you could do it yourself or hire a digital marketing firm. However, to companies that do not wish to spend money understanding the free tools that can be utilized strategically to drive traffic is essential for lean marketing. Lean marketing is marketing in a concise form whilst spending less money yet gaining effective results.

Lean marketing is based on the book *The Lean Start-up* by Ries (2008), which helps to increase the idea of repetitive product design, development and launch. Start-ups need to identify their 'minimum viable product' (MVP), and get it out into the market as quickly as possible, in order to start gathering reactions or responses to helpful returned information from customers as quickly as possible. Marketing can and should be managed in almost the same fashion. Wherever reasonable, series of actions to reach goals should be out the door quickly, with minimum fuss.

The days of perfection are numbered, since what truly matters is not how pretty the signs are, but how good the product-market fit is if not spending huge amounts of time on perfection, one might miss the chance or opportunity for a product. Lean marketing teaches one to go from concept to prototype and to publicise the product with company secrets hidden if applicable and to get feedback on the product from its target market. In doing so one will know exactly

what their customers want and to successfully hit that mark every time. Continuing to do this whilst pivoting and catering to one's customer's needs will ensure saving resources and scaling up whilst growing one's customer pool and building rapport which will result in scaling up one's business. For example, as Dropbox did, they set up a demo video of Dropbox and sent it to many computer-related professionals who overnight, 5000 IT professionals showed interest and a high demand for the product before it was created.

Why not start with running some experimental ads, leading to the clearly connected product page on one's web site. During that period, you are working on the landing pages, one will gain extremely valuable responses to helpful information by carefully studying the changing from one form, state, or state of mind to another ad copy, and keywords. This information gained can be used in creating better converting copy for landing pages (TechCrunch, 2011). Dropbox is used as an example in this context as an IT company that has cloud services such as saving images online which are similar to the company in questions ERP and CRM systems as it automates and performs in the cloud/ digitally as most IT companies do also.

While it may seem strange to approach a marketing event like a trade show in a 'lean' approach, since everything needs to be done in advance, there are still ways to treat a marketing event in experimental modes. For example, one can use the event for gathering customers or prospects. Changes can be made during the event based on how people respond to the displays and pitch.

Lean Marketing is about being athletic, about viewing each series of actions to reach a goal or marketing activity as one step in the ever-improving progress towards customer purchase and acquisition and in the end customer happiness or satisfaction which further leads to an increased rate of customer retention as traditional marketing still is highly effective in the form of word-of-mouth and it always great to have presales. Lean marketing helps with budgets and acquiring customers by letting them tell you exactly what is desired. Figure 1 shows how much each type of marketing demands and the results it produces as well as the channels used to produce results. It is clear that digital marketing is much more impactful and affordable for customer acquisition.

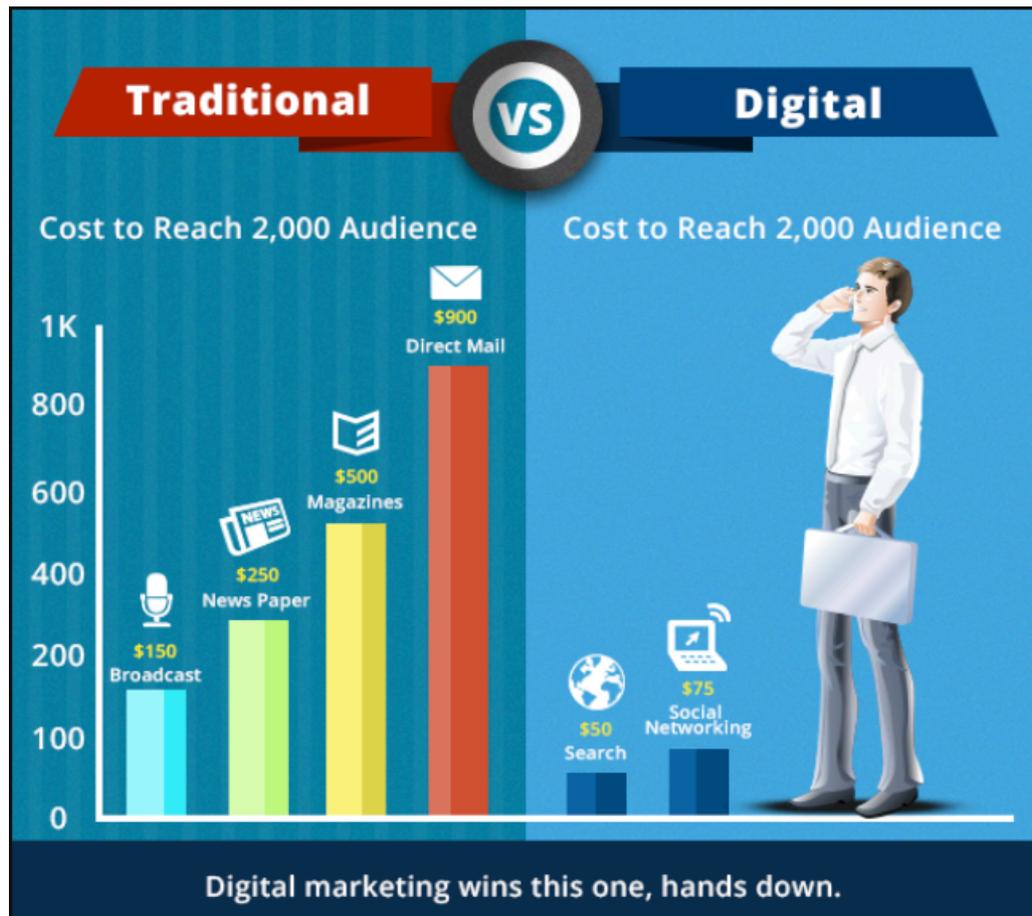


Figure 1. Visual comparison of the effectiveness, impact and reach of traditional versus digital marketing (Blaze.com, 2020)

2.3.1 Customer Acquisition In 2020

This chapter explores customer acquisition in 2020 to provide an up-to-date information and give insights to the reader thinking of how to pivot in 2020 with a world pandemic going on that clearly affects most economies and businesses.

2020 presents an unfortunate, difficult and challenging time for the mass majority; negatively affected by the COVID-19 which is a virus that has spread viciously and killed hundreds of thousands of people. The pandemic has affected

many instore businesses and furthermore those that cater to them on a business to business (B2B) basis. How can one continue to acquire customers in this age?

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the coronavirus, or COVID-19, a worldwide disease. It is an uncertain time with lots of unknowns, and while we do not have all the answers, sharing what we do know and offer some guidance for customers and other small businesses that may be experiencing moves or changes in their business. This widespread disease is affecting the health of the public, and it is also affecting the process of people making, selling, and buying things. According to Google, since the first week of February, search interest in coronavirus increased by +260% around the world. While spikes in search popular things general ways things are going are common during events of this scale, there have also been sudden rushes in traffic for related products and topics as a direct response to the global disease (WorldStream, 2020).

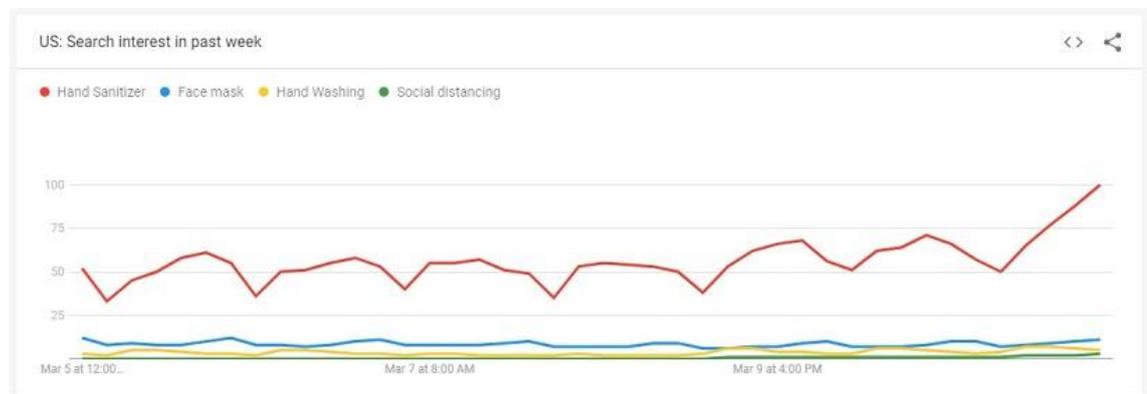


Figure 2. Google trends of what people are googling the most during the 2020 pandemic (WorldStream, 2020)

Figure 2 shows globally how people fear and are affected by the COVID-19 it makes going into shops a difficult task, keeping people in their homes and businesses losing money and failing. So how can IT firm survive during these times in the pursuit of fast food clients.

Firstly, operations must continue to run which for some IT businesses, capital is needed to fund their operations. The company in question faced having to work from home and therefore limited resources and revenue are being generated

momentarily. The company must however keep the business surviving before looking at acquiring customers. So how can this be done? One most likely is not sitting on excess cash that can fund six months' worth of operating expenses, and raising capital from outside lenders will be close to impossible as lenders will worry about their return on investment, unless they take advantage of one the government's big save or rescue packages also known as the government pandemic business funding.

So, one has to have to get the ability to create interesting new things here, which usually means cutting expenses down to the bare lowest possible value, 'keep the lights on' things do not need to be perfect, they just need to work or function. While taking advantage of whatever stimulus options become available such as government money, there are other solutions for dealing with payroll. Maybe you move your sales team from salaried to commission only. That keeps them with the business, but in a structured way that pays when income is derived from their efforts. Or pay staff with equity instead of cash. Tell them pay will stop for this month, and instead, they will get extra shares in the business to offset the difference says Deeb (2020). This will keep the company and staff afloat whilst acquiring more customers to keep the business surviving and growing.

When all is said and done and the business has survivability in this pandemic, one can then begin to look at acquiring customers. How can this be done during this pandemic? Online shopping has increased since the pandemic started. According to Mohsin (2020), it is expected to reach 2.1 trillion USD by 2021 for online shopping. Customers due to fear are stuck in-doors with little to do forcing them to shop online. This provides great opportunity for the company in question and/ or other IT companies to acquire more customers as there is an increase in the amount of people in the digital realm. The company must not be disheartened. This is a rare opportunity to mass-market using multiple digital channels to advance one's customer pool. Looking at the fact that google trends show people googling hand sanitizers, face masks, social distancing and hand-washing, it is evident that people would like to go outside yet fear keeps them locked in.

The IT company in question can modify their ERP and CRM systems to help fast food businesses that are losing customers due to the pandemic to offer an affordable plan to help run operations for them in such a time where unemployment is increasing and businesses having little staff to run internally and external processes drawing in more customers. SME's now more than ever need help with the little staff at hand. The company in question also runs a software that gives real time feedback to help many in-stores. Fast food joints can relish the opportunity to see what changes need to be made in real time to retain customers and this will both provide value for the company's clients and further the consumers or customers of the fast food joints.

IT companies can look at tools such as Endole (Figure 5.) to see SME's specifically the fast-food joints in this context to see running businesses. The tool offers a list of contacts for businesses that can be used for marketing purposes in the pursuit of customer acquisition. Being an IT firm with global customers, the Endole tool provides contacts for outside firms to know how to penetrate the UK market from the comfort of their homes. One can access over 7 million UK companies that are registered and in addition see their company address and director names plus contacts (Endole.co.uk, n.d.). The company can use their own ERP and CRM system to mass market on automation to build and gain more global customers.

2.4 The Impact Of Brand Equity On Customer Acquisition And Its Deeper Impacts

After understanding how 2020 impacts customer acquisition both online and offline it is essential to understand what role brand equity plays traditionally and in 2020.

In this section, the impact of brand equity on customer acquisition will be explored which will create a good foundation for understanding the deeper impacts it can have and has had.

Brand equity in Layman terms can be defined as what a customer believes the exchange for purchasing a branded product or service is. For example, if one

buys a Louis Vuitton product psychologically and emotionally as well to the public, it is seen as a luxurious product and projects wealth. Therefore, understanding and having a concise authentic brand will attract more customers and give a boost to one's customer acquisition process according to Stahl, Heitmann, Lehmann and Neslin (2011). Brand equity is as important to acquiring customers as customer acquisition needs to exist for brand equity to be significant. Now that brand equity and customer acquisition and the significance both play to each other, understanding the deeper impact this section presents is impeccable.

The main impacts brand equity on customer acquisition presents. This will help one in understanding the role this plays for IT companies. It is evident that Google as an IT company produces a lot of technical solutions however, anyone can replicate the same products. Brand equity is the reason their customers have trust in the service and product Google provides. Google is used as an example here as a digital company that has products and services to help people run their businesses also. Therefore, brand equity is just as essential to brand customer acquisition and can make the journey much more bearable for IT companies of all sizes to acquire clients in the food industry. Build a brand one can rely on and trust to provide brand equity and furthermore an increase in customer acquisition. The major impacts of brand equity consist of customer acquisition with a further result in financial increase. In a research conducted by Buil, Martinez and de Chernatony (2013), findings provide useful guidelines for brand equity management.

Managers can complement managing money numbers or metrics that measure things with consumer-based brand equity measures to track brand performance over time and to test against other brands. Building brand equity creates more value for corporations since a good or willing product or service response results from positive brand equity. One can continue to have brand equity in 2020 simply by following trends of the pandemic from a business perspective to cater to the people by needs and desire. In this context, the company in question can lower prices and/ or increase services available to their clients or potential customers to attract them profitably. Brand equity is just as profitable even as a niche. One can obtain one million euros from one million customers or the same

one million from a thousand customers. It is all dependant on the value, rating and brand equity of a business and/or product.

3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

In this part the results of a survey conducted for this research by the Co-Founder and chief executive officer (CEO) of the commissioning company is analysed. It is a qualitative survey from the company and a discussion for where the company is momentarily and where the desired position is. In order to understand how to shift from an undesired state to a preferred place, one must accept and admit their situation, draw a plan and back it up with actions. This chapter explores the current state of the company using qualitative research and tools that can aid in their customer acquisition journey using digital tools.

A qualitative survey was chosen for this thesis to make it relevant, current and for benchmarking purposes. The survey was also conducted so that results can be documented and shown visually. Bhat (n.d.) said, with an online survey list of questions, it becomes easier and smoother to collect with figuring out the quality of things without measuring them with numbers or data. In addition to that, online surveys have a wider reach, and the person who responded is not pressurized to answer due to someone such as the interviewer being present.

The major benefit online surveys are the flexibility it offers to the people who responded for taking the survey on their choice of devices. It included open ended questions for commissioning company to express themselves and give more useful information for the purpose of this thesis. It also included a rating scale question to give one an insight and measurability. And lastly, multiple choice questions. Multiple choice questions were used to retrieve more information the commissioning company wanted to give or express. The survey questions also had the option of 'other' in the majority relevantly to guide the responses should the person filling it need some guidance yet give the 'other' option should they want to include more should they want to.

During this empirical research, the qualitative research was conducted by the author of this document. The interviewee as the commissioner, also an IT company, openly admitted and spoke about their current situation regarding how their limitations was caused by the 2020 pandemic, negatively. This is evident in how many customers were lost and further their income stream impacted. It is clear in the empirical research the author's focus to understand if and what in particular could be impacting the organisation operations. The interviewee openly admitted that due to lack of resources such as money, staff and time, the client base and income had declined.

The common theme in the figures in appendix 4 titled Questions; this further supports chapter 6 analysed and summarised. The sample group for the research was intended to be shoppers on social media and/ or Facebook. The results regarding their age group proved to be the 18 -25 aged group which make up 75.8% of the conducted research directly from the online shoppers. The type of research method used was simple random sampling. This method was chosen to identify which aged group best relevant for the target market for the company in question when acquiring customers online. Therefore, a customer survey was used. The results show concern of people or shoppers not being able to trust online sources. If the company in question shows a face behind their product and communicate well the value and features of their product and most importantly have 'reviews' from others who have tried their products success will sure prevail.

The company in question only needs to capture the attention of their customers in the digital realm by communicating concisely in ads to the store such as having videos and a frequently asked questions (FAQ) page to communicate to the customer from why the business can be entrusted and from point A when a product is purchased all the concerns of the customer such as shipping (should a tangible product be in place) or help after purchase, terms and conditions will help the company in question vastly. Consistency in the message and advertisements and people engaging with the posts by commenting like and sharing will attract more people to the post. Therefore, having attractive headings such as 'FREE' in the title to attract customers whilst the ad itself has content marketing aspects with a video that tells the customer everything the company would

like them to now in 15-30 seconds can retain potential customers. Followed by a link to the company's website.

A customer should be able to go onto the company's website with base understanding of the product or service gained from the ad and on the website as well, see the terms and conditions and explore what is in it for them (customer personas help vastly here) and to top it off some reviews as well. The customer should easily be able to click the buy button and place a purchase hassle free and in all your website should provide analytics to help with decision making later. The customer can be looped in after sales. In the midst of all customer acquisition occurred with digital marketing tools.

3.1 Limitations of the empirical research

During the research, a survey had to take place due to the 2020 pandemic, the possibilities of in person research as well as getting hands was limited further due to social distancing. Having to work from home consisted of limited company apparatus and data. This means the information that should have been sought to further support this report was a challenge to acquire due to having to work from home. Having to also work on a partially confidential basis means not being able to include all company data in this report; only necessary and satisfactory data the commissioner felt comfortable sharing for the purpose of this document was shared. The commissioner also represented the company as a whole as the target group for the purpose of this survey as the remaining few staff were strained with workload to keep the company surviving during the challenging times 2020 presented. The second Co-founder of the commissioning company also conducted the survey with similar answers all included in the appendix.

3.1.1 Strategies, opportunities and benefits

Following the empirical research and understanding the limitations, this chapter discusses strategies, opportunities and benefits of using available digital marketing tools to get from point a to a desired goal will be explored and a visual model will be produced.

Understanding the strategies available for implementation will enable one to use it or modify and adapt the strategies and/ or tools to pave a way entrepreneurially. This is a major and crucial part of the thesis where one can explore available and affordable tools to use as a guide and pivot where necessary for customer acquisition and profitability reasons.

Firstly, understanding the important role digital marketing tools present and what they enable, the opportunities and benefits for a typical IT company in a similar situation to the company in question is essential.

Opportunities surrounding digital marketing tools involves interaction with known customers and others in the marketing channel, on a one-to-one basis, often viewable immediately, without any delay, to maintain value-filled relationships and to create a measurable response and/ or transactions using electronic network tools and technologies', says Kotler (2008). Not only can interaction with customers take place, one can build a base, build rapport and source useful and relevant information for profitably whilst providing solutions to needs. One can even hold polls where answers are sought directly from customers as another form of analytics. In other words, hear from the source exactly what your customers are looking for and take care of those needs.

Digital marketing tools also allow specification. Who, where, how and when ads are being perceived by your ideal customers is significant? One only needs to insert instructions into these digital tools, and it will be executed. However, this also presents some challenges such as being aware that there are many others advertising in the digital realm therefore, one must cut through all that noise and the best way to do is to content market. Content marketing in example form is like seeing a visual ad which is greater because people have shorter attention spans and prefer not to read, people are usually on social media to escape reality or to address it. Therefore, for example having a blender that blends any and everything is intriguing and captures one's attention. It is informative, educative, engaging and entertaining. These are the elements one should seek to include in their marketing communications to acquire customers furthermore.

A picture speaks a thousand words, a video does twice the job in a shorter amount of time. Just as Dropbox did with lean marketing, the commissioning company can have a video in the marketing campaign showing how products will take away 'pain' of running businesses, internally and externally for the fast-food businesses whilst helping with business development and operations and advancing it for start-ups to large organisations.

The main benefit of digital marketing tools is setting up a campaign with instructions and watching the artificial intelligence (AI) and platforms do all the work to get and do what one instructed it to do, whether it be traffic, conversions or information sourcing. It is like having a virtual assistant so one can focus on what matters in your business. The automation here enables one to relentlessly scale up their customer base with minimal effort. After understanding what opportunities and benefits digital marketing tools presents, it is wise to take a look at some relevant strategies concerning digital marketing tools that have been done before. This will lead to analysing the commissioning company's current situation and a strategy model to their desired position using available and free digital marketing tools.

An example of how Greggs in the United Kingdom (U.K.) food industry performed digital marketing will help form a basis for the commissioning company in understanding its clients to know how to direct each's own digital marketing to understand the needs of the target market. Greggs is a British bakery that does not spring to mind when thinking of digital marketing but here is how Greggs did it.





Figure 3. A viral twitter post for Greggs, a U.K. bakery that utilized digital marketing (E-consultancy, 2019)

Figure 3. shows a marketing campaign that went viral for Greggs. Greggs simply had their logo reflected in the windows of other shops by setting up projections everywhere and the internet absolutely loved it. It went from offline to online as everyone took pictures of it and subconsciously drove a lot of people to buy bakery from Greggs driving their sales up by 10% in a short period. The reason for this is advertising their new vegan sausage rolls alongside this which made people try it as it attracted attention. They managed to drive traffic and conversions by creativity. Customers who tried were inclined to give positive feedback following the trend which boosted even more sales. The ultimate end goal.

The commissioning company can learn to do this for themselves everywhere by just having projections displayed and overtime be built into people's minds of-line. For online, it is as simple as interacting with competitors by commenting on their posts and eventually get noticed by their customers and other with relevant and similar needs that the company provides solutions for. This will attract attention and hopefully lead to conversion. This will increase traffic and enable conversion rates to be higher provided the company in question pinpoints location of projections where the target market is geographically dominant.

3.1.2 Strategy Model

Based on the findings above a strategy model will be drawn up with visual models and a step-by-step plan in this part. The tools will be explained, defined for use and then linked simultaneously for a strategic step-by-step plan.

These tools form a basis for generating leads and free digital marketing as well as paid ads with an insight for IT companies to use by assessing themselves first. Due to the everchanging layout of the following platforms/ tools a link will be attached to each figure to get to the right platform and a basis of description for each will be made to understand the software and its use.

The company in question is currently using LinkedIn and a website as a form of communication and digital marketing and currently rates that 5 out of 10 for its effectiveness in generating sales. The company has also stated that an improved version of the software is the ultimate goal which can be found on the website (<https://tunnepiste.fi/>). First recommendation is to improve the UXI which means how the website is set up in layout and theme. After improving the website and setting conversion rates high – this means when people come, there will have a high trust boosted resulting in a payment for a product or service taking place, then it is time to draw in traffic which leads to acquiring customers.

The first tool is Optimizely. What Optimizely does is allow one to see the demand for their product by real people (Optimizely, 2020). Seeing demand for your product will help with decisions to modify or add more features to your products for profitability reasons. The company can test out their product publicly when ready and then pivot where necessary.

The second tool is Endole, a tool discussed previously in Chapter 2. Endole generates a list of relevant contact details for £39.99 per month cancel anytime (Endole.co.uk, n.d.). This is a great lead generator for businesses as it provides filtering.

The third tool is thunderclap. What thunderclap allows one to do is to send a marketing campaign to a relevant 100-200 customers dependant on your product or service (Thunderclap, 2020). Also, another great lead generator.

Fourth is Google Adwords. Google Adwords allows one to advertise across all google platforms which is huge with global access (Google Ads, 2020). Google Adwords will also help each individual/ company in improving conversion rates and UX. A google representative using AI or manually reviews each website to boost conversion rates or make sure the time from the time one gets onto a website to make a payment is reduced as it boosts trust as well. As successful as Google is, their methods can be relied upon.

Fifth is social media platforms which are Facebook Ads Manager (Facebook business, 2020) and Instagram (Instagram business, 2020). The two platforms provide a basis for where a lot of people in the digital realm are grouped. Facebook in 2019 had 2.38 billion users whilst Instagram has 1 billion using even though it was established in 2010. This means it is the fastest growing social media platform and with its ability to advertise the mass majority depending on the ad instructions, it has a great reach. This definitely helps with traffic and conversions which ultimately lead to customer acquisition. It is also known that the mass majority are online as a part of their everyday lives. Therefore, when the other tools in the figures above have generated traffic for the conversions earlier on which sets one up to succeed, the social media platform will further generate more relevant traffic to be converted into customers.

Instagram and Facebook are required for social proof which further builds and maintains one's relationships and should be done manually or a social media management outsourced company such as 'Hootsuite' for all-in-one social media scheduling, monitoring and analytics. It can deal with that to help with customer relationship management. When one sets up a campaign on Facebook it can be shared onto Instagram as Facebook owns Instagram making reach extremely wide.

Lastly, Visualping.io, a tool for spying on competitor's websites which alerts when competitors are doing something new so one can stay ahead of the game and never be left behind at all times (Visualping.io, 2020).

After traffic has been generated, conversions taken place and customers acquired, it is significant to retain them and have a growth rate in users by looping them in which the company can easily do with their ERP system to maintain their customer relationships and turn them into advocates.

Finally, it is important to show customers heaven and hell with and without one's product and service and why it is a critical need. When value is provided relevantly acquiring customers is a smooth process. A concise video will help vastly and should be the base form of communication on the company's website.

3.1.3 Strategies

This section will explore some strategies using the tools mentioned in this thesis as a suggestion and guide that one can develop upon.

Patenting a software is not allowed in most countries such as the United Kingdom (U.K.) it is possible however in United States of America (U.S.A) and most European countries. The IT company in question could attach a tangible part of the software or get copyright on their software to protect their products in order to licence it for another source of revenue to fuel the business as a whole. If the company in question wishes for not a lot of people to use their innovative products, they can choose to have a sole licence which is where only the company in question and one other company subject to terms and conditions such as the geographical and durability of their rights to the licence will be in use. The company might also choose to make the number of companies able to use their products limitless due to the simple fact that some individuals or companies will make similar products to avoid infringement.

The company in question can make it appealing to start-ups, one-man businesses, SME's in the IT area or in the fast-food industry for profitability reasons says the world intellectual property office (n.d.).

Claims can however be challenged and argued. Due to the fact that software's are in public domains, it makes patenting them a challenge. However, if it is hidden from the public and built with tangible aspects and/ or a novel, it can be patented. There has to be creativity and novelty in a claim when applying for a patent and when granted 'patent pending', one can use their products straight away, rather than waiting for 'patent granted' which can take up to 5 years approximately. 'Patent pending' shows you have taken initiative to pursue a patent, although one must be aware that patent pending does not mean 'patent granted'.

Having exclusivity to a product makes can attract more customers. For example, with Apple products that have patents on them, one knows they can only get an Apple product from the company alone that gives them power and exclusivity which give customers some form of brand equity further increasing customer pools when customers turn into advocates. The company in question must be aware that getting a patent in one country is not applicable in different countries and therefore must either sought individual patents and pivot the patents as one goes or gets an international copyright which is another form of patent.

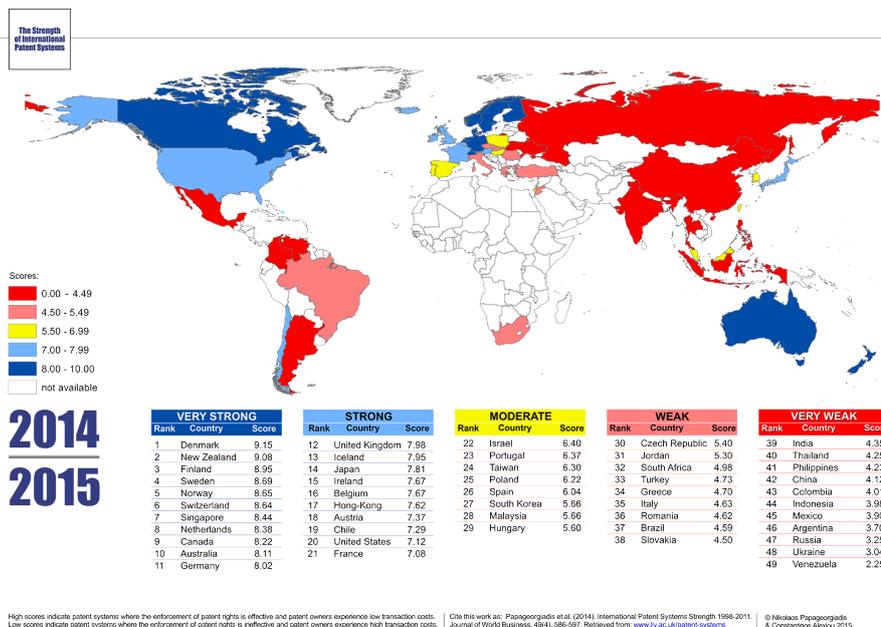


Figure 11. highlight areas in which patents are stronger and weaker. This will help the company in question with their decision making (University of Liverpool, 2014)

The company in question could improve their UX and get feedback directly from customers using a questionnaire set up on their website till it resonates well with them. It is for the customers after all. The company should then focus on throwing product(s) onto Optimizely to see demand and thunderclap to gain customers. It can also use Instagram and Facebook both are huge and free to use and one of influencer marketing can really aid the business in sales and a significant increase in their customer pool. Google ads should be used when the company enough money left over to run more ads to bring in more revenue. Visualping.io should be the company's secret weapon to keep the company ahead and never behind in order to keep giving customers exactly what they want.

3.2 Customer Journey and Maps

Customer journey is the different stages a customer goes through from not knowing a brand, product or service to becoming a retained customer and hopefully an advocate. (Salesforce U.K., 2016), a CRM and customer experience platform and company relevant to the company in question with its global success defines customer journey maps as a customer journey map is a drawing of every experience customers have with one's service and/or products. It helps to tell the story of a customer's experience with the brand from original engagement and into hopefully a long-term relationship.

At first look, a customer's journey is pretty simple. You offer something, purchase takes place. But once detail deepens, customer journeys are quite complex and come in many varieties. Customers can come into contact with one's business in a large number of ways and from many different starting points, for example, marketing, referrals, search, social media, customer service questions or requests for information and above-the-line series of actions to reach goals. Undoubtedly, one will want to make every experience a customer has as good as it can possibly be. So, to make sure no interaction slips through the cracks, you need to map out every touchpoint or experience along the customer journey.

The benefits of a customer journey map include:

- Helping one see where customers interact with one's business.
- Focusing the business on particular customer needs at different stages in the buying funnel.
- Identifying whether the customer trip is in a logical order.
- Giving an outside opinion about sales processes.
- Showing the gaps between the desired customer experience and the one actually received.
- Highlighting development areas.
- Allowing mainly study efforts and expense on what matters most to have major effectiveness.

What would a typical IT firm customer journey map look like?

Website Customer Journey Analysis For SaaS Business				
Search	Evaluate	Experiment	Purchase	Retain
How are prospects finding you? Where are they originating outside of your site	What are the details of your solution? How do they compare with other solutions?	How can prospects engage with solution before spending money?	What are the steps to payment? Do customers start with a free trial period?	How do customers get ongoing support?
Customer goals				
Locate a solution	Asses if this solution is the best option/fit for needs	Decide if this solution is worth paying for	Get access to all features and benefits according to chosen plan	Get ongoing support and customer service when needed
Touchpoints				
Google	Case studies	Trial registration	Cart page	Help pages
Twitter	FAQ page	Account creation	Checkout	Customer support contact
LinkedIn	Pricing page Blog posts	Product tour		

Cite specific URLs once you're ready to make recommendations for testing.

Figure 12. is a website customer journey analysis for SaaS business broken down in detail from a customer searching and locating your website to purchasing and retaining a customer (Salesforce UK, 2016)

For the company in question, this would be after analysing how their pre-existing customers found them to then compare to the new ones to be sourced from using the tools in this chapter so they can focus their marketing strategies in that direction to then evaluate where their competitors customers are coming

from which can be found from their social channels and simply googling them. Figure 12. will help with the experimentation and all the conversion strategies which will be addressed in chapter 6.3 of this thesis. Lastly, to retain gained customers, the company can use their ERP to manage the customers on automation and have a frequently asked questions (FAQ) page.

Food surrounds experience and culture and people love to show what they have tried and tasted. Social media platforms are where they show it off at. For example: A U.K. food freelancer and start-up has an Instagram page dedicated to the type of foods one can experience with their company. As the company in question uses Instagram business manager, targeted marketing can take place when setting up a digital marketing campaign. Figure 13. shows how you have a business account with Instagram free of charge and how you can target specific types of companies such as the one in figure 13. with its ads option. In figure 3-9 we can also see how customers engage with pages.

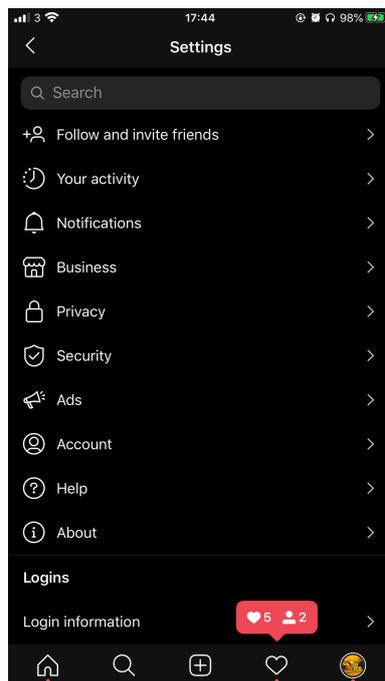


Figure 13.

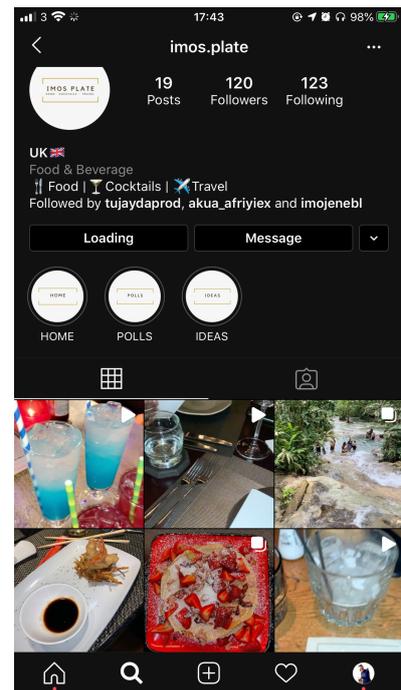


Figure 14.

4 ANALYSING EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The data collected from the qualitative research shows the company in question was running business as normal and had survivability. A website was used as a form of digital marketing and rated this method 4 out of 10 on its efficiency before the 2020 pandemic. During the pandemic the company in question has not tried paid marketing or other forms of marketing due to lack of resources (money, staff and time). However, due to the business's partial loss of clients, some clients have been maintaining as their businesses have not suffered due to this pandemic. Communicating via their website is sufficient during these times with the business's clients. The company rated this as a 5 out of 10 for impact. This rating shows although business has been impacted, marketing channel has proved to be slightly more effective for them. The company admitted to being affected by the 2020 pandemic in a negative way as there has been a decrease in revenue.

However, the company states that it resulted in a 'closure of customer facilities has led to decreased licence revenue'. The company feels limited by money, staff and time during these challenging times and desires to have an improved version of their software as a business goal. The company believes money, staff and time would help their current situation and has also never outsourced. The reliability and validity of these results are reflected in the measure of their revenue by comparing the level of revenue before and during the pandemic. The company is trusted and has many users of their products who have left reviews on their website which can be found at <https://tunnepiste.fi/>. One can depend on the company and rely on their results to benchmark and relate.

The previous and current status of the company in question reflected in the results of the survey has transferability and benchmarking capabilities as one can compare their IT firm to the company in question as well as many have face the same with business being affected during this pandemic globally and according to Neufield (2020), stocks worth \$332Bn in value have been lost. The results fit and have relevance furthering onto the workability of these recommendations to the company in question further on. Any company looking to benchmark the company in question for modifiability reasons the reviews left it comparison to

the company's current situation before and after the pandemic in correlation to the reviews can be replicated into one's own to form a scalable basis.

The second company (named Imos.plate) in question is a food start-up that commutes and delivers to customers. For this reason, the business mainly exists online. Food is cooked and promoted online via social media, customers order and get food delivered to them. The data collected for the first food start-up shows the company's business was thriving and projections looked good. Social media was the main communication channel.

As a food company this is essential to connect with the target audience, build rapport and boost trust by using pictorial and video evidence. One could easily get in touch with the company by a few clicks further building opportunity for a good customer pool through experience and word of mouth. The second company in question rated this method a 10 out of 10. This is great as an effective form of acquisition as social media (Instagram) is a platform with billions of individuals. With this reach, all the digital tools discussed in chapter 3 can be easily utilised.

With the business existing online the 2020 pandemic seem to have an no impact on them as a physical start-up. The pandemic has however impacted the start-up positively as with many people being indoors and online, the business gets a lot of traffic and acknowledgement. The start-up has however been limited by time and feels money would help their situation. Lastly, the start-up has never outsourced. The pandemic seems to have helped the second company in question to get more reach and further customer acquisition embedded with good customer relationships.

The third company (named Esi's food) in question is also a food start-up that functions online, delivers food and allows collection at a restaurant. For this reason, both social media and a website is used. The data collected shows business was running as normal before COVID-19. The third company in question rates overall both methods as 4 out of 10. The company has used social media the most during the pandemic and rates this 5 out of 10. Upon stating that the global pandemic has affected daily business negatively by loss of clients and

decrease in revenue, the company feels limitation of money and staff could possibly be the cause.

Perhaps if the company had more staff handling operations or if processes were outsourced or automated the company could be performing better. The company desires increased orders with more consistency and feels more money and staff could aid in getting to a desired position. From the data sought, it is clear there are some poor operations management. The commissioning company could be offering companies in similar situations guidance using the ERP and CRM systems which contributes to their revenue stream to further aid the customer acquisition with digital marketing tools.

Comparing the second company with the third it is evident that social media works greatly for the other and somewhat for the other. Here is where target marketing comes into play. By target marketing, traffic is increased, and conversation can take place regardless of the business type and/ or position

The company in question could adopt the methods used by the food start-ups. It should employ social media platforms knowing that it is where their target customers exist majorly further due to easier reach with its own audience. Being limited by time means it is a perfect opportunity for the company in question to not only boost its revenue stream by automating business operations such as good customer relationship management with a CRM and ERP systems affordably.

The more food start-ups continue to boom the higher the potential customer pool will increase for the company in question. With social media being mainly free, this can help tackle the issue of lack of resources for the company in question. This will further make up for the loss of clients during the pandemic as well as the decrease in revenue. In terms of resources for the company in question, lack of time – social media has algorithm working your ads for you upon instructions inserted and ads set up. With the company's ERP systems, a lot can be automated such as the CRM, marketing and social media. This will impact the money, time and staff as one or two persons can set and use social media as a tool to acquire customers.

The outline for the empirical research was to find out what tools can be used to acquire customer digitally. Within this, the empirical research consisted of understanding what motivates consumers online to follow through to complete a purchase upon seeing an online advertisement. The research also consisted of understanding the commissioning company in question's journey and/ or status to desired goal to analyse what was working and what was not. Two further companies were included in this empirical research. The sample group was a food start-up as it is the ideal target market for the commissioning company. This was somewhat relevant. The aim was to discover the digital methods used and their effectiveness.

In doing so, it would be seen how to link methods used to not only acquire customers digitally but effectively on a gradually great scale. The research found the Instagram and Facebook to be effective and free as a social media platform. This shows, that acquiring customer digitally can be a fairly easy, authentic, free and automated process. This should be utilised by the company in question. Not only will food start-ups be acquired as their target customers, but other businesses also that require ERP and CRM systems will see the power and value the commissioning company brings, reviews will boost trust, and this can impact the revenue stream and customer pool vastly.

4.1 What to expect

This chapter will be a continuation of chapter 3 and the theory in chapter 2.2. After building traffic and having conversions as well as understanding the company better, it is important to know what to expect when acquiring customers with digital marketing tools. Knowing what will come after will build the basis of how to deal with the aftermath. This will help the company in question be and stay prepared ready to tackle anything that comes their way undeterred.

When people come onto the website, it is important to have a newsletter or subscription to collect emails for later target marketing and conversions. This is simply due to the fact that people like to do further research on how others have experienced a service or product before proceeding and for this reason testimonials are important to be displayed on one's website. 45% of online shoppers

research and read reviews before proceeding with a potential purchase, says Ellett (2018). One can also expect if the FAQ page is insufficient or someone wants to know further details, that a customer will try to get in contact. Having contact details and a face of the team displayed on the website boosts trust and promotes an increase in sales.

On social medias, posts remain for people visiting the page to see information posted. The information can be the essential information needed as addressed in this sub-chapter. On a social media page, a link to one's website could be attached. A combination of a website and social media is sure to increase the possibilities and generate a wide customer pool further impacting greatly the customer acquisition process as well as a company's revenue stream.

4.1.1 Dealing With People And Customer Retention

Dealing with customers is an easy task that should be automated but never fully. That would be frustrating to customer if their questions are not answered specifically leading to a loss in clients. This is an easy task for companies with an ERP system to run relevant messages with trigger words and answers to specific questions. Building an FAQ page, helps with dealing with customers. However, having an automated AI system takes away the task of sparing time to deal with new questions that have not already been addressed.

The easiest way to retain a customer is to have visualping.io to spy on competitors in your niche to stay ahead whilst the core remains providing great value and features in your products or services. Adding a customization feature enables customers to retain and be retained. Nothing however beats experience and how you make someone feel. Small businesses have big work ethic and spirits and are successful due to the experiences they provide. Therefore, the experience one provides as a business can make or break it. The company in question although an IT company online, they can manage their clients by having client managers in their firm to manage relations and have damage controls if necessary. This authenticity builds relationships that can lead to word of mouth and furthermore more traffic and so on.

4.1.2 Convincing People To Buy From You – Psychological Marketing

The Collins dictionary (n.d.) defines convincing as making one believe that a particular thing is true, correct, real or honest. Therefore, convincing people to purchase simply means boosting a customer's faith, trust and belief in the product or service enough for a purchase to be made. Convincing people to purchase an item turns them into a customer. This chapter will explore how to achieve so.



Figure 17. is a visual model for the key factors governing convincing customers to buy (French, 2018)

French talks of social proof. This is having a social media page to prove one's existence and to learn more as well as form some sort of emotional and/ or logical connection with a brand before purchasing a product or service. Social proof builds up to persuasion when seeing other people doing the same thing leads to following the crowd in some sense. It helps with acquiring new customers and taking away any doubt that could possibly exist. French then goes on to talk about influencer marketing which in Layman's terms is defined as 'purchasing or doing a particular thing because an influencer a person follows or believe in said so and/ or is doing it as well. An influencer is defined as the power to affect the buying-related decisions of others because of his or her authority,

knowledge, position, or relationship with his or her audience. It is a group of fans in a clear or separate special place, with whom he or she actively engages.

The size of the following depends on the size of his or her topic of the special place. It is important to note that these people are not only marketing tools, but rather; a social relationship builds valuable things with which brands can work together to complete their or reach their marketing goals.

There are many influencers and 3.4 billion people actively on social media according to Influencer Marketing Hub (2020). French states that a variety of choices can be overwhelming to a customer with a range of options. French bargains that people would rather not spend money if possible, even if that means missing out on a great product. How to avoid this pit is to show them what might be lost and missed out if they do not purchase a service or product.

Again, the company in questions must paint heaven and hell with and without their product with content marketing in order to have an effective impact, acquire customers and boost sales. Last but not least, French highlights sense of urgency. Without sense of urgency people take their time. Having subtitles such as 'limited time only', 'purchase within 24 hours to get 50% off' or comparing a high price to a sale price with a deadline will rush customers to get the great offer and 9 times out of 10, a purchase takes place no questions asked.

All the above build a great foundation for psychological marketing. Psychological marketing can be defined as the subliminal messages in a campaign, product or service that communicate to the target audience to resonate with them. Psychological marketing builds customer pools when customers resonate with everything to do with a product or service; from the theme to texture and shapes and designs. In addition, the benefits of the product or service.

There is also the foot-in-the-door principle and this can be as 'donate, every penny helps' and in doing so customers are drawn to explore and conversion can take place. By coming across as better than your enemies in other words your competitors as Apple does with average android devices. Apple sends a message of 'we will see who gets the girl at the end', 'Apple has much attractive

features'. UXI is also important when dealing with customers. For example, having a buy now button further from where the average person has their thumb or index finger for which an observation of a typical customer is like is extremely important for this as it may discourage a purchase, it would be better to have it close to the home button on one's phone and possibly on a personal computer too, all these arguments were according to FE International (2020).

4.2 Customer Acquisition And Data

In this chapter we will understand how data interlinks with customer acquisition and the important role it plays. This will give the company in question a sense of direction when marketing to acquire new customers and boost sales.

Data is defined in the Cambridge dictionary (n.d.) as the information, especially facts or numbers, collected to be examined and thought about or believed and used to help decision-making or information in an electronic form that can be stored and used by a computer. Customers are people who purchase a brand's product or service. In other words, customer data is personal data. Personal data includes information such as age, gender, height, ethnicity, locations, country of origin and other details about a person. Customers however do not feel comfortable giving out data these days due to feeling like their privacy is being invaded for profitability reasons. Therefore, having a trade between the customer such as a form where one fills in their personal details in exchange of something of equal value to the individual boosts their will to give accurate personal details which both helps with acquiring customers and turning them into advocates.

For the company in question, something digital of monetary value such as coupons or discounts will increase their data acquiring rate and furthermore conversion according to Sweetwood (2016) the senior vice president of global marketing at Scandinavian airline company (SAS) airline company. In Sweetwood's argument and article she explains that acquiring data from customers was almost like negotiations or a bargain. She then goes out to say having a customer journey map, was beneficial and helped with targeting customers. However, SAS made the mistake of sending digital marketing campaigns to every customer.

Yet each individual was at different stages of their customer journey which confused customers. SAS was acquiring data and customers yet not retaining them due to confusing them by the wrong digital marketing targeted at everyone although not everyone was in the same stage on the customer journey map. For example, some were at the purchasing stage and some were at the exploration stage, yet the received marketing targeted at those who were considered already customers. So how did SAS deal with this? Their method is transferable to the company in question. SAS simply did the following;

SAS found a **need** - High-level messaging, including thought leadership success plans via articles, blog posts, etc. Content at this phase explains the problem and provides a path forward.

They then went on to do **research** - Content that validates the customer's need to solve the problem. Material here focuses on particular business issues and includes third-party useful supplies, analyst reviews, research reports and things of that nature.

Decide – A deeper content that provides more product-clearly stated/particular information. This material validates the proposed solution through customer success stories, research reports, product fact sheets, etc.

Adopt - On-boarding and self-service content. This stage focuses on introducing customers to supporting useful and relevant online communities as well as 'do-it-independently' material that introduces the customer to the solution.

Use - Adoption content, such as advanced educational information and even particular webinars. At this stage, users mature with their use of technology and turn to more technical useful things to expand their knowledge.

Recommend - Content designed only for extending the relationship with the customer. This includes speaking opportunities, focus group participation and sales references as well as involvement in cross- and up-sell opportunities.

By making experience personal and relevant SAS was able to target well and retain their clients. Cleaning data aided them vastly. All this was only possible as customers were and are willing to share their data.

A customer journey map with the correct digital marketing at the right time to the right individuals will result in acquiring accurate data and customers as well an increase in revenue.

4.2.1 Securing Data From Customers

Convincing customers, providing value, psychological marketing, sense of direction and consistency in brand message and the service perceived will help secure data. The simple key word here is building trust when a customer has trust, the customer does not mind doing things as much or going the extra mile to help one.

Securing data from customers come with assuring their privacy and what the intended use is. Having 'Cookies' in place to accept consent before the individual proceeding will ensure that the company in question gains the information being sought.

4.2.2 What is cookies?

Cookies are small files which are stored on a user's computer. They are designed to hold a modest amount of data designed only for a particular client and website and can be accessed either by the web server or the client computer. This allows the server to deliver a page custom-designed to a particular user, or the page itself can contain some script which is aware of the data in the cookie and so can carry information from one visit to the website (or related site) to the next.

After having traffic onto a site, before one proceeds a cookie's pop up can appear to accept consent to gain their data and this is a useful method. Here is where the company in question will explain policies such as one must accept to

proceed onto the website in exchange for their data which will be treated with respect, not shared with third parties, a promise of terms and conditions of their service use and this will help the company in question to know their customers in depth in hope to derive more profit whilst providing value that customers do not mind sharing according to the BBC – Webwise Team (2012).

5 RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Limitations and overcoming challenges

This chapter builds on to aid the company in question with overcoming limitations and challenges based on their current situation and where they desire to be. We will begin to understand and build awareness of what limits the IT company in question and what should be done to address that in detail. Understanding limitations and knowing how to overcome them should it occur is essential to keep going on as a business and for this reason, this chapter is vital to customer acquisition.

Creativity helps overcome any challenges that could spring up during a company's customer acquisition and customer journey process. Having entrepreneurial spirit which a skill sought by many companies in graduates today to help advance their companies, it is wise the company in question invests in educating and boosting the staff's entrepreneurial spirit. Entrepreneurial spirit can be defined as the ability to see a vision in a product and the success it can bring and how to acquire that success without limitations or the ability to pivot constantly by finding alternative solutions till one gets to a desired goal. Today, successful large businesses develop work cultures that encourage the exciting interest in vision and problem-solving skills that are very important to show the ability to create interesting new things with a business's success says Cook (2017).

Money can feel like a load and an emotionally stressful acquiring process. Starting a small business is usually an expensive suggestion possible plan of action. The average small business costs about \$30,000 to launch and operating costs

can tack onto that price tag quickly. Even small home-based businesses that come with little overhead have a significant opportunity cost. Instead of working in a steady job and earning a reasonable amount paid for working with benefits and taking on the heavy load of making money for yourself. Knowing how is very hard.

It is to start and bring in income that overwhelms you. Hitting bumps in a business can be discouraging. Carrying on involves passion, one needs passion and obsession which requires one to fall in love with the process and intended destination in order to carry on in depths with passion, mind and will. Having entrepreneurial spirit will most definitely help. The company in question, upon investing in this will boost staff spirit to seek out solutions in ways never deemed possible. This will carry the business afloat and hopefully advance it.

Kittaneh (2016) says that, slow or no movement is one of the greatest enemies of success. As a small business starter, proactiveness is highly necessary. One must and cannot wait until to have the perfect plan before taking action. Simply dive in and take a few risks. By taking action and letting go of the need to always be perfect, having the chance to swing for the fences on moon-shot ideas and possibly hit a home run. The company in question does not need to be where at a desired position to be to perform at the needed rate. Entrepreneurial spirit with a pinch of reality will bring heights one never thought possible to reach positively. Entrepreneurs find new and exciting ways to make things happen in business. An employee can be surprising with an idea that bags the biggest revenue stream. Staff are important to customer acquisition. The company in question should feed and fuel into staff. Encouraging employees to explore the digital tools available for marketing can result in huge amount of traffic with new adaptative strategies learned.

One simple way to keep on track is to collect or make a list of all the activities that need to be completed for a clearly stated particular day, week or month, and to maintain that schedule. If a person needs to bounce these ideas off somebody or look for a little guidance, search for successful small business starters known and respected. It is also important to understand that someone will also know better than you no matter how great business is. It is therefore

perfectly okay to seek guidance from mentors. Networking and mentorship are key.

The average small business starter works very long hours, which can lead to burnout and encourage unhealthy ways of living choices. Constantly on the run, one will end up over- or under-eating, and what one consumes may actually have negative results on your personal health and work performance. Also, one may not have the time to sleep or exercise as often or as long as one would like. The combination of this way of living and stress can cause serious health issues and secure that rarely in an attitude or set of opinions for success.

To avoid this, make a real effort to invest in one's self. Exercise each day and schedule time to get a full night's sleep. If problems seem to be occurring, holding one's self to these standards, see a doctor regularly. Doctors can maintain responsibility for healthy ways of living and make sure overworking into poor health is prevented. The business responsibilities that come with being a small business starter are huge and challenging, but the personal responsibilities are just as important. Managing one's mindset and work ethic keeps one sane, healthy with passion and tunnel vision which are qualities one needs to survive. Customer acquisition with no passion can lead to discouragement. Therefore, micro goals and milestones are important to make one feel progressive and to keep going hard.

5.2 Resources (Money, Team And Time)

The company in question addressed resources as a form of limitation, therefore this will be explored in this chapter as well as their significance and/ or the power of each factor and ways around those resources so the company can get to their desired goal.

To sum the company's current situation, they face limitation due to limited resources further caused by the global pandemic. According to figure 18. it is evident that the company in question are limited by money, time and staff due to everyone having to work from home per the company's instruction and wishes as well as response to the current pandemic.

Money is the capital that allows one to have access to someone's work be it product or service. Money gets traded for a product of equivalent value either deemed by the industry or the product or service owner. Capital is funds to fuel a product or service in the economy. The Cambridge dictionary (n.d.) defines money as coins or a special piece of paper used to buy things. So, how can one purchase or get access to things without money? And how can the company in question fuel operations without funds?

Being an established company with credibility. It is easy to grant internships to students or other professionals to work on a project that meets the goals of the company in question. This could be hiring a software engineering student with a business background to conduct projects. The individual seeking experience will exchange their skills and knowledge for certifications willingly to help with their job prospects. It is also wise to have a team of individuals with a variety of skills to sell the company's vision to who would not mind contributing a few hours daily or weekly to help the company's cause. To help people, one could offer shares or recognition of contribution and this can help with gaining staff. Offering flexibility could also encourage people to contribute their time or remote working.

In figure 18., evidently, staff are limited by time. During this pandemic most individuals have a hard time staying home as they are not used to it and the days seem to blend in all together. Although workers train themselves to keep up with the normal working hours. Being in the same environment can cause one to be overwhelmed resulting in less productivity and one running out of time.

Time management is critical in and out of working lives. There are 168 hours a week (rapidtables, 2020). The average hours spent in business hours are 40 (Work in Finland, 2012). During those 40 hours, one should plan daily goals that build to weekly goals which will further go on to build up to short term goals. In doing so, one could spend 2-3 hours on a task, take a break for an hour to unwind and then continue for another 2-3 hours on a different task and then repeat. Working on different tasks simultaneously removes people being tedious and overwhelmed by doing the same work or getting nowhere. When more than

one milestone is met. It gives huge morale. Doing different work or tasks promotes motivation and productivity and removes the feeling of one being stuck.

Have you been limited by anything during this pandemic?

1 response

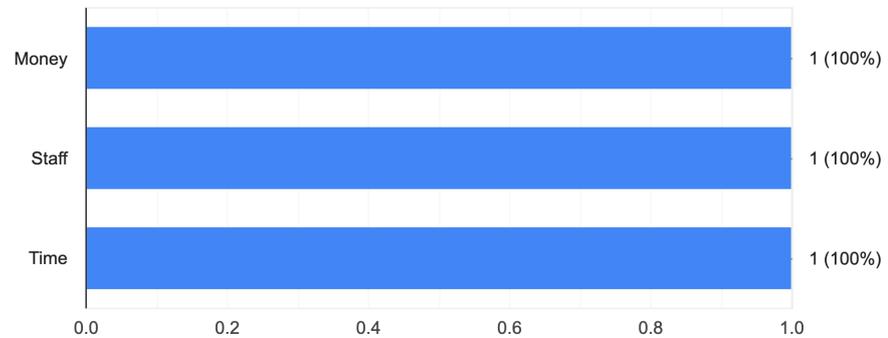


Figure 18. is a question answered by the commissioning company's CEO and Co-Founder stating that during the 2020 pandemic, the company felt limited by money, staff and time.

5.3 Lack Of Knowledge, Skills and Strategy

Very often many companies do not realise the efficiency of knowledge, skills and strategies due to the simple fact that one does not know everything and therefore think knowledge is high in the respective field. Knowledge will be explored, relevant skills the company in question needs will also be explored and a strategy to combine both knowledge and skills will be combined.

Brown, J. and Duguid, P. (1998) said, while knowledge is often thought to be the property of people, a great deal of knowledge is both produced and held all together. Therefore, imagine if a company takes their pre-knowledge and combines it with gaining new knowledge can create an in a way unlike anything else, an advantage-giving or unfair advantage. Unfair advantage can be defined as one's secret power. Such knowledge is easily created when people work together in the tightly knit groups known as communities of practice.

Having the knowledge of all critical aspects to fuel different parts of your business is important to direct your new ways of learning. Knowing and failing often is important because it highlights your areas of improvement to give optimal power. Having knowledge and not knowing how to communicate that has less impact. Communication is defined as coding a message to the recipient in an understandable way the individual can decode says Nordquist (2019). Communicating knowledge in hope of getting closer to one's target is insufficient. Having the relevant skills makes one truly unstoppable and this is critical for the company in question. Everyone is ignorant in one way or another due to the simple fact that one does not know all and that makes everyone ignorant.

Should the company in question continue to develop their knowledge and learn new things continually, the company will learn new ways to fuse and build new strategies which for a business can be its secret ingredient in its recipes; an unfair advantage. Whilst learning new things and developing new strategies can be formulated in addition to the suggested tools for use in this document in the pursuit of customer acquisition.

Heckman and Rubinstein (2001), said that skills are non-cognitive and behold the power to get things done in a way a way that may supersede many others including the market leaders. Some skills the company in question might want to look at possessing could be patenting. Patents are a legal document that protect one's intellectual property. Patent lawyers can be costly. Acquiring the knowledge on platforms such as Udemy where you learn from professionals who have been in their respective fields for years and are willing to teach for a mere cost of £19.99 for new people coming on to their platform. It is an online platform dedicated to learning and should be utilised by the company in question (Udemy, 2020). One can look internally into their business to see what skills and knowledge needs improving to keep on learning new skills every day. This is a cost-effective method.

Pursuing more skills and knowledge allows one to focus on generating more customers. The company in question can also learn new digital marketing tools and how to set them up strategically to boost traffic.



Figure 19. Udemy is an online course provider aimed at professional adults and students (Udemy, 2020)

5.4 Automating, Outsourcing And Learning

One must not feel limited or be limited by anything. There is a phrase that goes, 'it pays to pay professionals' outsource or automate but never stop learning. You learn then take the 'L' away but all in all you need passion and a clear plan. The importance and significance of automation, outsourcing and learning and tools will be explored to help the company in question do so in the pursuit of customers.

What is automation? Automation is having machines or software automatically run operations in the business whereby usually it would be done manually. As the business continues growing, we have hundreds of thousands of customers and varieties of product options. It is challenging having huge quantities of daily B2B and business to customer (B2C) transactions and the wide varying orders. As the IT company in question expands, so must the standards of the firm alongside with handling data security policy. To aid with that, combining different things together so work as a unit takes place. Systems, applications and products in data processing (SAP) Business One solutions and customized development, including full making operations simultaneous between SAP Business One and all internal to external processes.

There is illegality in dishonesty or stealing by lying. Detection systems return merchandise approval (RMA), and authoriz.net, all within one single version of SAP Business One, which can also monitor correct data flow and quality of data honesty and good human quality or wholeness. Now when proud to have fully

automated business processes, and as result, operational costs and avoid human mistakes could be avoided to increase the working well and getting a lot done and the revenue in the same way (SAP Business, 2020). Outsourcing is the power of hiring another company to take care of another company's processes.

It pays to pay a professional. The company in question should assess their ability to perform all tasks and evaluate their abilities to then make a decision on whether there is preference to learn and what they simply need to hire a professional for. Learning how to manage both key factors in this section is essential to staying ahead in the game and management of both processes. Outsourcing operations should only be parts of the business that is not deemed as the business's secrets such as their data and secret formulas to the firm's success.

When one pivots and finds alternative methods to be resourceful in addition to improving their gain of knowledge, skills and strategy as well as automate, outsource where necessary and finally continually learn, one can truly be unstoppable. Customer acquisition is within one's reach if one continues to be relentless and stubborn on vision and end goal rather than the journey taken to get there. However, a plan is always necessary.

6 COMMUNICATING YOUR BRAND

Communicating your brand is important in order to be effective if not it is like walking with no directions, one will end up anyway with wasted unrecoverable time. In this chapter understanding the importance and ways to communicate a brand is essential. We will understand being authentic and consistent in one's message and gain an insight into search engine optimization (SEO) marketing for acquiring customers in the digital realm to be finally topped off with an example campaign set up. We will understand why communicating your brand aligns with customer acquisition and its importance.

Take a page from one's personal story, which is on the cutting edge of the next generation of IT or in the food industry or better yet both. Take a personal brand

deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and bring it to life by showing off to people the stories behind the products, the people who love and use them, and how there is reinforcement with the values of the brand. Stores are fast becoming a brand showroom, changing and getting better beyond transactional points of sale. Videos and pictures communicate more than written words. The visualisation also builds trust and for the company in question, this should most definitely be implemented says the Council (2017).

In competitive markets branding on a B2B basis has an increasing interest Lynch and de Chernatony (2004). When brands associate themselves with other companies or outsource in general due to not wanting to have a bad image with their own customers, there is high care for what a business brings to the table and how as a business will compliment them. Just like if one rotten tomato is placed with another the other becomes rotten as well by contact. This is how brands engage with everything these days ever so carefully. Making it ever hard and challenging but with testimonials and impact on some customers, everyone else progressively joins a business's cause. How can one stay consistent and not lose one's authenticity and consistency towards their goals with quite a bit to do? Read on below to find out. The company in question wants people to need them and this can be done by painting heaven and hell without the company in question and its products.

6.1 Authenticity And Consistency In Brand Message

In this section, we will explore staying consistent and authentic in one's brand message as confusing customers can lead to losing them.

First things first, just as Dropbox did to gain insight and wants of their ideal customers, experimental marketing externally and internally is great to reinforce a brand, but be sure that the execution is consistent, especially during a rename or relabel. Using consistent colours and current logos will help tell the same story throughout. Do not feel like the need to cram too much into it, either. Keep it simple with contact info, if it is decided to even include that. Secondly, having

broad but clear guidelines can help your marketing team create on-brand valuable things or experiences for in-store or out-of-home series of actions to reach goals. Cover not just basics like logo treatment and set of printed letters of the same style, but also the feelings in colour that represent emotions of love, hate, fear, etc. One wants to bring out from customers and key values to be connected with a brand. Let the guidelines serve as a North Star to create a more consistent brand experience according to Council (2017).

Why confuse the company's brand logo if a circle on a square door? One must understand complimentary marketing. Complimentary marketing is everything else in the surroundings of the actual product or service being sold. For example, people attend the cinemas to watch the movies and get complimentary things such as parking availability, popcorn and other foods all just to sell a movie viewing. If a company name is long, why shrink a set of printed letters of the same style to make it fit the sign on the building? Do not get held to using a space how it has usually been in the past. Do not be like everyone else. It pays to stand out. For an IT company targeting the fast-food market, their logo could be a combination that reflects both fast food and the IT industry such as the figure below or a robot in the form of a carrot. The company could also look into building characters that can be associated with their works and brand.

Company culture matters more now than ever since people who use a product or service want realness. Find ways to show off values and beliefs of the organization and workers within your design. This can be as simple as having a picture of the last time the company participated in something helpful. Showing culture can have a strong influence on the whole feeling of your store. Personality builds bonds and a customer relationship builds loyalty and further advocates. Engage, entertain and educate customers. People act on things for three reasons which are cognitive, behavioural and emotional. Triggering these factors builds customer acquisition and customer relationships.

According to Logo My Way (2017) before Google settled on the blue colour in its logo, experimented different variations of the same colour with their custom-

ers and made them choose which shade of blue sat well with them before settling on it. Who would have known the colour tone would make such a difference? The company in question should in scalable stages experiment also.

6.2 SEO Marketing

In this section SEO marketing will prove to be effective strategically for the company in question as a digital marketing tool to acquire more customers immediately as a website is already established and in use by the company.

Sen (2005), says that buyers using search engines to look for information tend to trust and follow links displayed in the written opinion section of the search results page. For some reason, people trust the first page of a google search result than from page two going. This means getting on the first page is a must, it is also a challenge. It is easier when one setting up a campaign follows Google's guidelines in order to show up on the first page of their results or search engine. Most on-line sellers, however, do not invest in search engine optimization (SEO) to get higher search-results rankings for their listings, but instead, prefer paid placements.

It is explained that SEO which is the process of improving a website in order to be found easily is more expensive than paid placements, produces results that do not give a good reason for its cost, and does not regularly lead to high search-results rankings. This hints that sellers would invest in SEO if it were less expensive and its rankings were more consistent. However, even if SEO and paid placement cost the same, and SEO always produced high rankings, paid placement would still be the search engine marketing (SEM) (success plan(s) or way(s) of reaching goals of choice for most online sellers.

Interestingly, no best SEM success plan(s) of reaching goals includes SEO. These findings are especially significant for advertising professionals who have to give a good reason for investing in paid placements even though there is the existence of information or physical objects that clearly prove something that buyers ignore them and follow links in the written opinion section of the search

results page. The guidelines Google operate on will now be explored and understood for utilisation by the company to be able to show up across google on the first page of their results page.

Trigger words and keywords are important because knowing how your customer thinks is the best way to know how they would search you up in order to find you. Using complex jargon will only confuse and discourage customers. Relating to customers in order to attract them effortlessly, one can google 'google SEO' guide every time as their guidelines change constantly as time progresses. Google has their own guide to guide users.

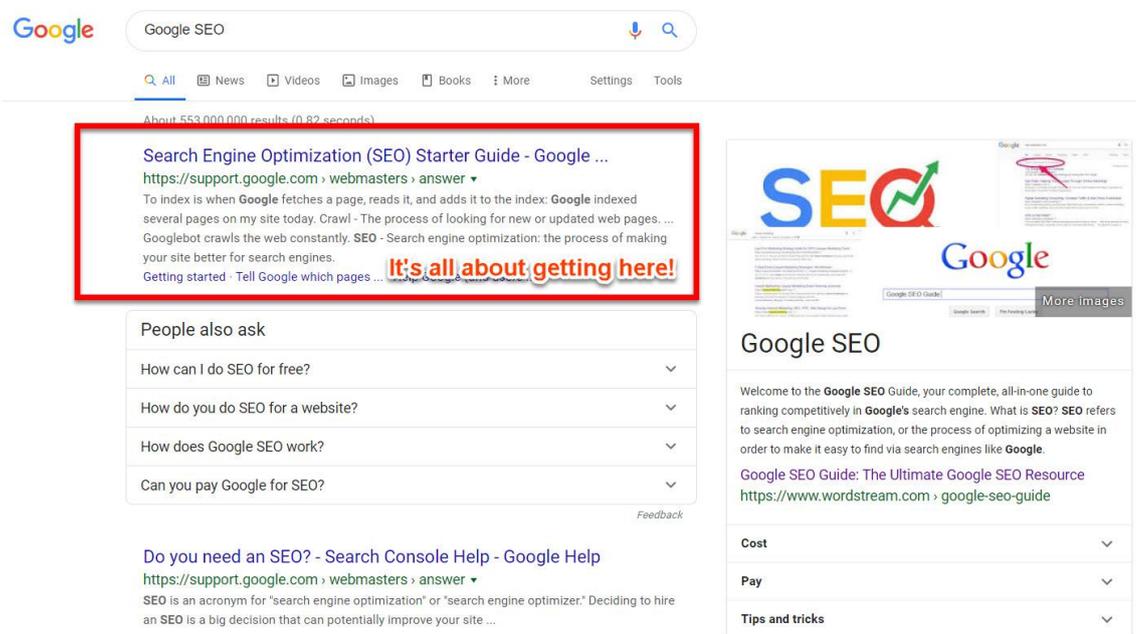


Figure 20. is a snapshot of how one would seek Google's SEO guidelines (Google SEO, 2020).

Figure 20. is what one would ultimately be searching for in the Google's search engine in order to acquire their guidelines. The main thing to consider regardless of Google's constant SEO guideline changes are as follows and important to finding your customers and vice versa.

Place the most valuable keywords in:

Body of the text: No brainer, right? Remember not to just use the same keywords over and over again. Add in modifiers for example 'best', 'top' and long-tails.

Title: Having the keyword in the title will improve identifiability and SEO. Usually, SEO-friendly titles are a concise description of the product or service. Non-provocative and respectful to Google.

Subheads: Subheadings are valuable spots for Google SEO keywords. The work is not over yet. Do not forget to add Google SEO keywords into the:

Meta title: The meta title appears in search engine results. Use some solid keyword here.

Meta description: This description appears below your link in Google. Write an engaging meta description that includes clearly connected or related keywords to boost click-through rate.

Image file names or attributes: First of all, include pictures in Google SEO content. Pictures are attractive and appealing for readers, and Google also likes them. Use the keyword in the file names (e.g., how-to-catch-fish.jpg). Also, use the ALT attribute to tell search engines and users what the picture is with a keyword.

Text: Link the new page from more than two, but not a lot of other pages on your site, using keywords as the anchor text. This makes it easy for Google crawlers to find and rank one's page.

6.3 Traffic and Conversions

Building on traffic and conversion, in this section the exploration of Facebook Ads Manager and how to set up a campaign will be explored as an example. Gaining Facebook insights which will further give a base knowledge on how to

set up digital marketing campaigns on the platforms addressed in this these as all platforms perform the same.

Facebook Ads Manager, what is it? It is a platform used to distribute advertisements across Facebook. One can choose to market or pay Facebook to customise where ads are distributed using its AI. Facebook Ads Manager can be accessed by googling 'Facebook ads manager'. One will then proceed to sign up where they will be greeted with figure 21.

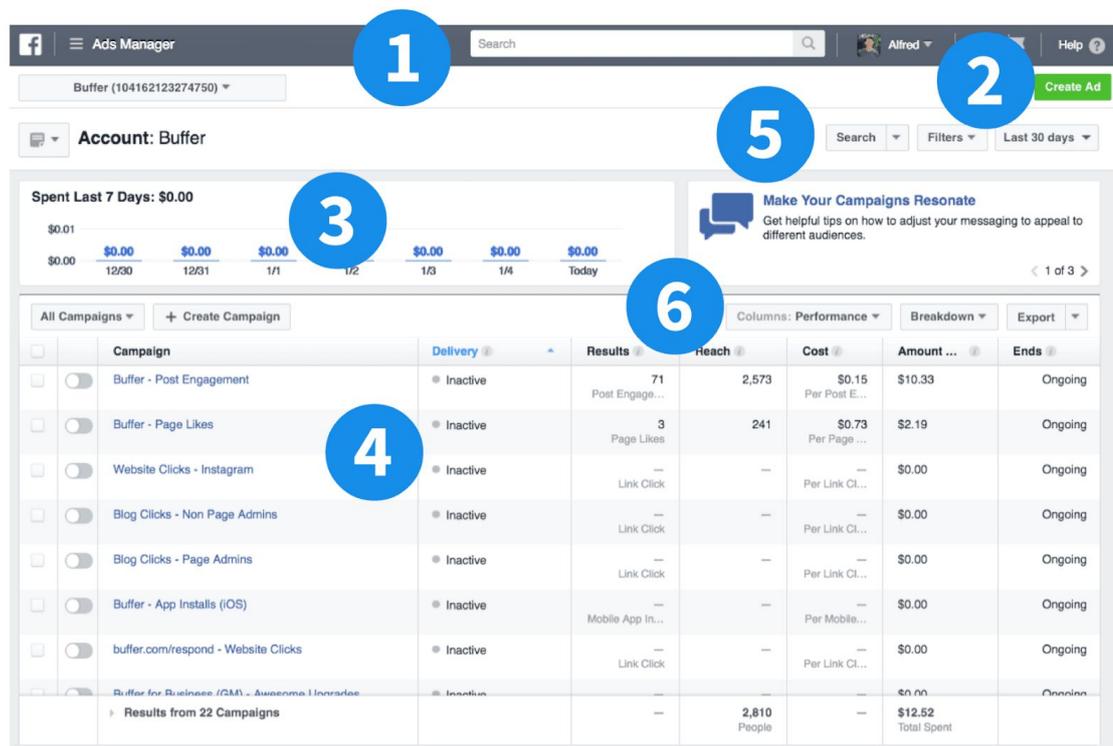


Figure 21. is an overview and navigation of a Facebook ads manager dashboard (Facebook.com, 2020)

Figure 21. is a snapshot and navigation of a Facebook Ads manager. This is what one usually sees after launching an Ad. With Facebook Ads Manager there is a lot that can be found and to do. However, specifically with the company in question, to locate conversions to increase traffic onto the company's website, here is what is done.

Conversions on Facebook tells Facebook to track the people who are clicking on the ads one has set and depending on further instructions will show them the ads again, till a purchase takes place or other instructions depending on what

the tool is commanded to do by the individual setting up the campaign. Conversions tell the platform one wishes to derive something from the ads. A series of actions is set up to reach a goal in this option and it goes a little bit like this. One can see ads across Facebook with the shop now button or learn more something like that it depends on your series of actions to reach a goal. The company in question will command their ads to build traffic based on target marketing instructions and personas set in the digital marketing campaign on Facebook and share it onto Instagram. Google AdWords is the same process.

The company in question will set up where ads are preferred to reach. This means information about people or combinations of different kinds of people. In this part, you do target marketing to drive in warm traffic. What is warm traffic? Warm traffic is people who are ready to do something specifically clearly connected with or related to one's ads specifically. However, on social media people do not go on there to shop even when they see an ad because that is not what people are on there for, so it takes a bit of convincing because of this why targeted marketing is done.

The company in question can target potential customers across the globe but it is best to start in Finland to boost trust in their customers to use them and in doing so build up testimonies to remove doubt globally as they begin to expand to other IT companies should they wish to licence and/ or in the fast food industries spread across the globe of which the market industry size is According to the analysts at Zion Market Research, (2018), says the global fast food market was capitalized at more than USD 539.63 Billion in 2016 and likely to reach 690.80 billion dollars in 2020. With Facebook for example during the campaign set up where specialisation of destination of ads, Facebook will ask you for your daily budget which could be as little as 5 Euros a day and based on that Facebook will show you that with 5 Euros your ads will reach 500 people only. Take a look at the maths behind that. 100 people at 2.5% traffic for a €1500 product is €15,000.

After ads have been displayed, some analytics are gained which will help with decision making such as how to strategically set up the next campaign to build on top of the previous.



Figure 22. is an example of the analytics gained after running ads on Facebook (Facebook.com 2020)

Figure 22. This is a snapshot of a Facebook analytics page post Ad launch. After a launch, a series of actions to reach a goal or a campaign. Facebook has to approve it usually manually if you launch at night by morning it has usually been seen by someone at Facebook and will be approved. Sometimes it takes longer. After that, the series of actions to reach a goal will do as you told it to. You will then see this image above showing where the post has been, who saw it and interacted with it. If an ad is not effective after 30 days, it will probably fail by then, so you have to reconfigure it.

When setting up such a campaign it is important for the customer persona to be engaged and to set up a few ads at different times. If John is a typical customer for the company in question as a fast food owner running till late, the best time John will probably see the ad either during John's shift in the day or after business hours when John has time to browse. For this reason, it is important to have multiple ads at different times. There is value in finding the right customers by setting up the digital campaigns according to the specifications in this section.

Now that it is known how to set up digital marketing campaigns strategically based on customer personas in the pursuit of customer acquisition, it sets the commissioner up for success. However, understanding how the customers in the digital realm perceive ads can be used advantageously. The Author of this thesis took to the digital real (Facebook) due to the description of the tool used in the traffic and conversions section. The author intended to gain insight on the other end of the stick on how customers feel and think so the commissioning company can use this as a foot in the door to support this these and mainly chapter 6. The corresponding answers are in the appendix 4.

7 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The company in question' as the commissioner of this thesis was referred to in third person due to the contract of the thesis being partially confidential. The objective of this thesis was how the company in question can acquire customers, a usable strategy and using digital marketing tools to acquire fast food franchises and start-ups as clients.

Understanding customer acquisition laid a foundation for understanding how to acquire it using digital tools. To truly acquire customers this thesis highlighted how traffic and conversion in addition to SEO optimization highly increases the attraction of customers resulting in acquiring them for profitability reasons. It is also understood that social media can be effective when target marketing and as a result customer acquisition and increased income revenue. All three companies expressed needing more money. More capital equals scalable operations further resulting in more revenue and acquired customers in a simultaneous and continual loop.

Within customer acquisition we also understood customer journey and how important it was to have a buyer persona and truly know how one's customers think in order to stay ahead to guide and attract them. The importance of psychological and content marketing going hand in hand is base for truly knowing customers. The more understanding one has of their customer base, the more one knows how to cater to their needs. The customer survey shows how the

simplest things such as aesthetics can convince and boost a potential customer's trust into purchasing a product. This knowledge was first gained by understanding the traditional methods and modern methods used to acquire customers in order to understand its impact and patterns compared the old versus the new enables one to know what touchpoints to use in digital marketing today all geared towards customer acquisition.

How can one stay ahead with a low budget? Well, we explored lean marketing to help businesses of sizes achieve all their goals using Dropbox as an example. By now it is understood that going headfirst is not always the way. Sometimes dip your toe in feel the demand and to help do this Optimizely was introduced as well as Endole to see one's potential reach in the U.K. The 2020 pandemic shows how people are currently thinking and feeling as the pandemic decreases, it is safe to what is normal would cease to be the same. Companies can use this as a base to see ahead and stay ahead and to also help with staying ahead of competition whilst increasing customer acquisition visualping.io was introduced. Thunderclap was also introduced to help give the company a running start when they feel ready after implementation. It is understood that automation, the company's ERP and CRM system give the company a strong stance in conquering a niche and target market. The company must build up in value and exclusivity by having a brand equity as a factor. Google was used as a supporting example as another IT related firm.

The thesis also highlighted a usable strategy with benefits and opportunities using both free and paid ads in understanding their use will enable the company to implement them for digital marketing use which will further help with customer acquisition in which emails can be collected for later conversions. When conducting digital marketing one must simply know an image and video is highly impactful compared to pictures. When it comes to attraction it was understood that campaigns that capture attention wins in comparison to texts only. As an IT company machine learning and/ or AI will be extremely beneficial and should be practiced from scalable customers. Treating one's customer's well in other words investing into customer experience will reflect positively in the company's customer pool and revenue. Creativity was also another highlighted factor when Greggs as a bakery was introduced as a benchmark for the IT company in

question targeting the fast food industry. The tools used in this document are accessible and for the majority free. The rest are affordable.

Understanding the company's current position gave insight and benchmarking abilities and further guidance was given for other IT companies on all together. Taking the company from survivability to generation wealth stems in the ability to learn, automate, outsource and increase credibility. The company in question has done well to maintain their current customer pool at steady growth regardless of the insight gained into the current problem which is fair due to the current pandemic. Due to unpredictability a customer journey and tools to manage one's self based on the company's current situation in addition to their desired goal whilst looking at the unpredictability of the world at the moment. Pivoting abilities were the highlight of this thesis. From retaining them to dealing with securing their personal data short term for long term generational wealth.

Adele Sweetwood the vice president in global marketing for SAS showed us the key areas to focus on that were transferable based on their experience to attract and retain customers. For the company being an IT company, 'cookies' should be their best friend. Understanding limitations and possible challenges gave the power into overcoming them with passion, dedication and will. Udemy should be utilised and patent ability should be acquired. Internships will give insight that did not come to mind. And at all times one must realise that due to the simple fact that everyone does not know what they do not know makes everyone ignorant in some way therefore, seeking new knowledge and asking or seeking for help is never a wrong decision as long as the secrets of the business are protected.

In all things, branding is important even in campaign as it attracts, retains and dismisses it is important to be authentic and consistent. Technology is the future and definitely has a place in the fast food industry. The company in question can conquer the world with their business secrets and the use of this thesis as a new base knowledge and new insights to advance. The thesis will be topped off with further research to support the thesis surrounding the topic of what attracts customers to an ad when scrolling on social media platforms or Google which can be utilised. This will be referred to in the appendix.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Concerning digital marketing , what communication channels were used before this pandemic?
1 response

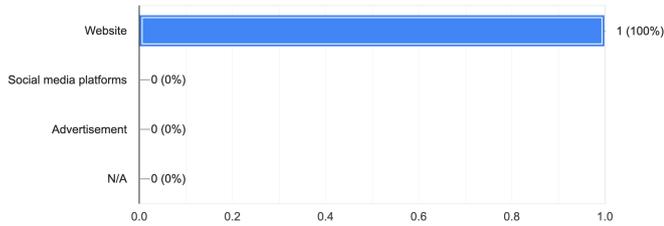


Figure 15.

On a scale of 1-10 how effective were those methods?
1 response

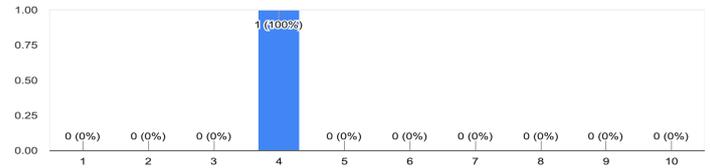


Figure 16.

Figure 15. and 16. are the corresponding survey answers from the commissioner that formed the analysis of the empirical research.

Appendix 2 – Questions

What was your situation before COVID-19? *

Business was running as normal

Business was thriving and projections looked good

Other... _____

Concerning digital marketing , what communication channels were used before this pandemic? *

Website

Social media platforms

Advertisement

N/A

Other...

On a scale of 1-10 how effective were those methods? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
LEAST	<input type="radio"/>	MOST									

Concerning digital marketing, what communication channels have you used during this pandemic? *

- Social media platforms
- N/A
- Other...

On a scale of 1-10 how effective were these methods? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
LEAST	<input type="radio"/>	MOST									

Has the current global pandemic affected your daily business? *

- Yes
- No

...

If yes , has it affected your business positively or negatively? *

- Negative
- Postive

Have you been limited by anything during this pandemic? *

- Money
- Staff
- Time
- Other...

Where do you desire your business to be? (This can be marketing position, size, the top in your field etc) *

Long answer text

What would help your current situation?

- Money
- Staff
- Time
- Other...

Have you ever or are currently outsourced? *

- Yes
- No

What have you outsourced?

Short answer text

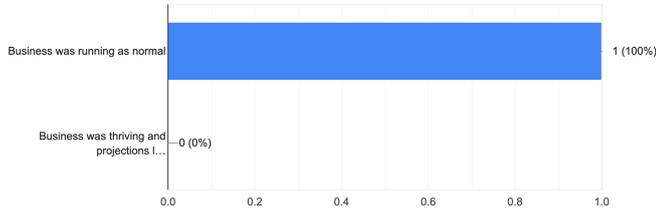
Any other information you would like to give?

Long answer text

Results (figures) of the survey with the corresponding questions being answered by the commissioner in regard to the empirical research.

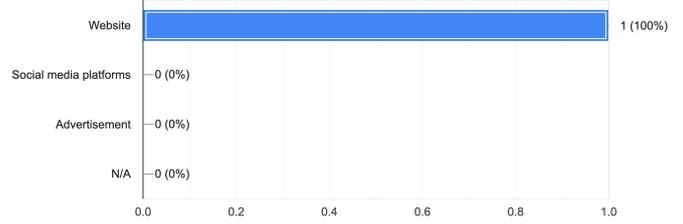
What was your situation before COVID-19?

1 response



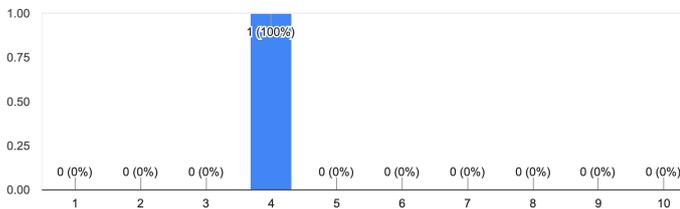
Concerning digital marketing , what communication channels were used before this pandemic?

1 response



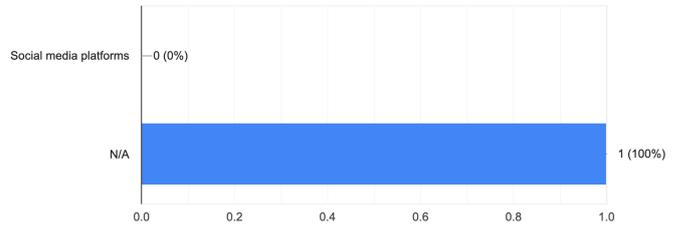
On a scale of 1-10 how effective were those methods?

1 response



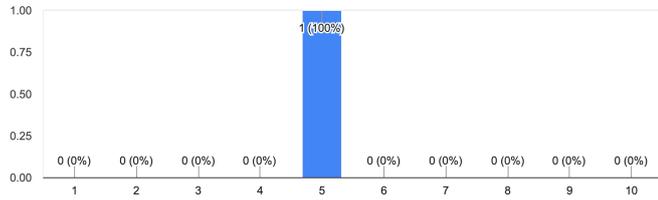
Concerning digital marketing, what communication channels have you used during this pandemic?

1 response



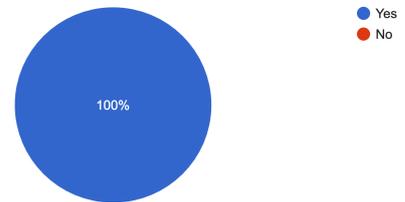
On a scale of 1-10 how effective were these methods?

1 response



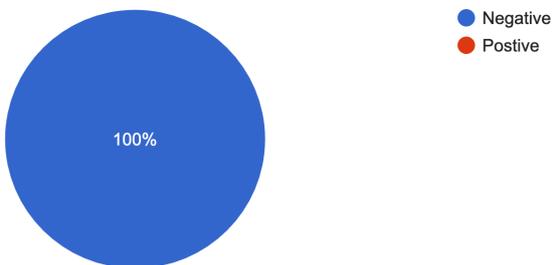
Has the current global pandemic affected your daily business?

1 response



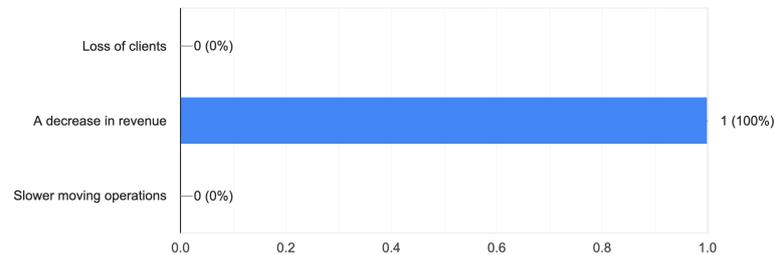
If yes , has it affected your business positively or negatively?

1 response



If negatively, which of the following?

1 response



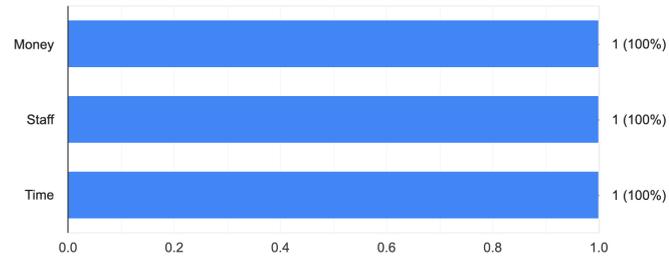
If the pandemic has impacted your business positively how so?

1 response

Closure of Customer facilities has led to decreased license revenue

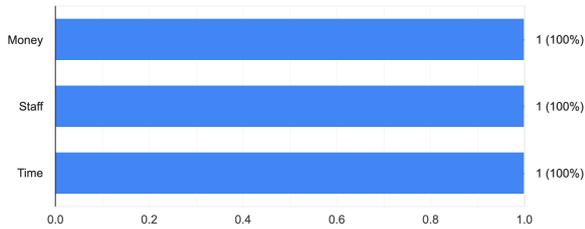
Have you been limited by anything during this pandemic?

1 response



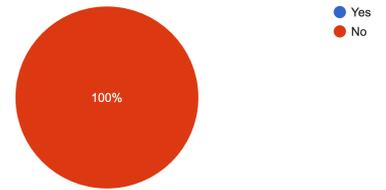
What would help your current situation?

1 response



Have you ever or are currently outsourced?

1 response



Where do you desire your business to be? (This can be marketing position, size, the top in your field etc)

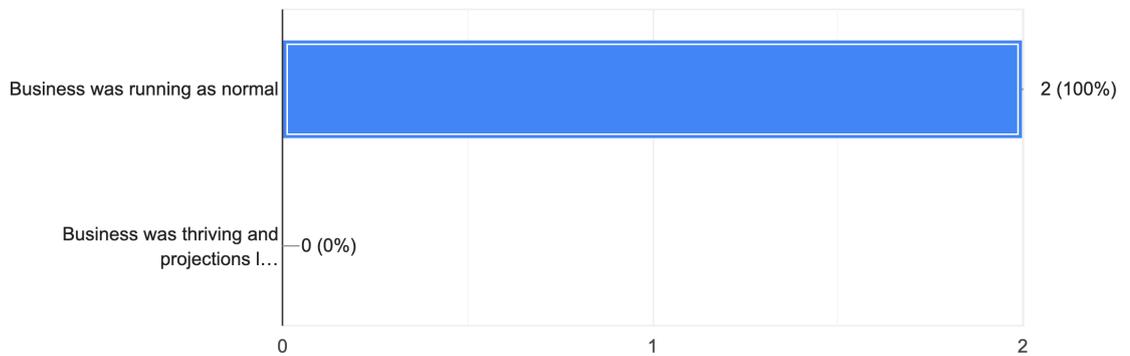
1 response

Use time well meanwhile, to develop an improved version

Second Co-Founder's corresponding answers to the empirical and qualitative research conducted for this document.

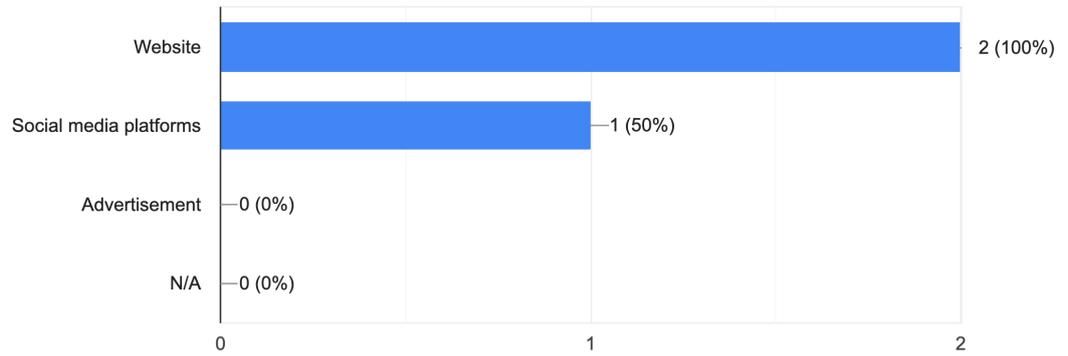
What was your situation before COVID-19?

2 responses



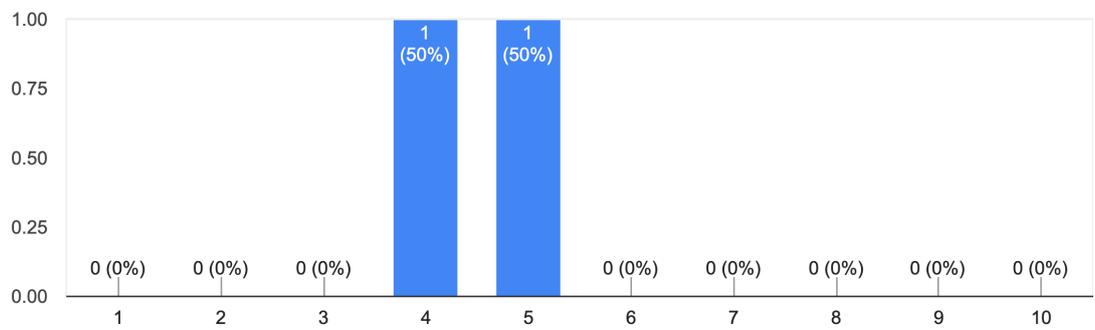
Concerning digital marketing , what communication channels were used before this pandemic?

2 responses



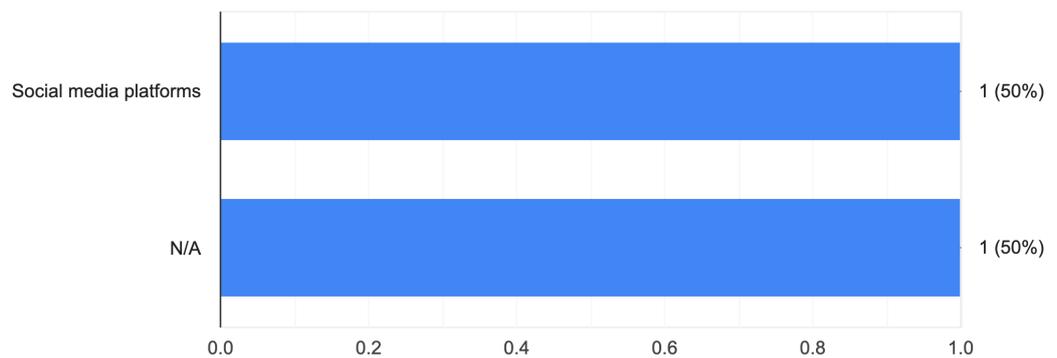
On a scale of 1-10 how effective were those methods?

2 responses



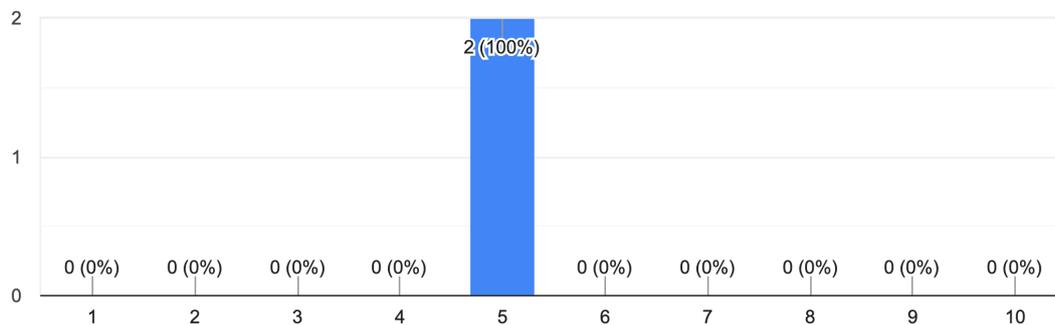
Concerning digital marketing, what communication channels have you used during this pandemic?

2 responses



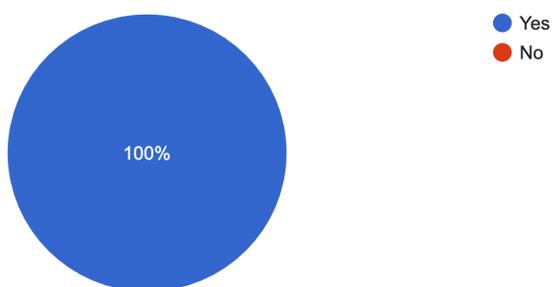
On a scale of 1-10 how effective were these methods?

2 responses



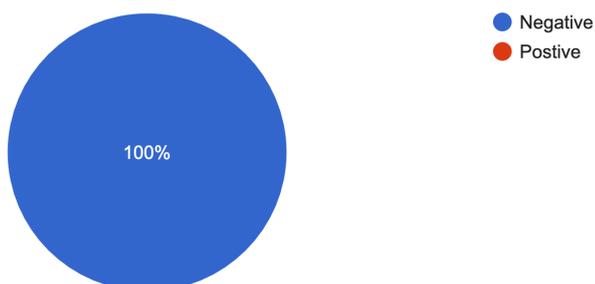
Has the current global pandemic affected your daily business?

2 responses



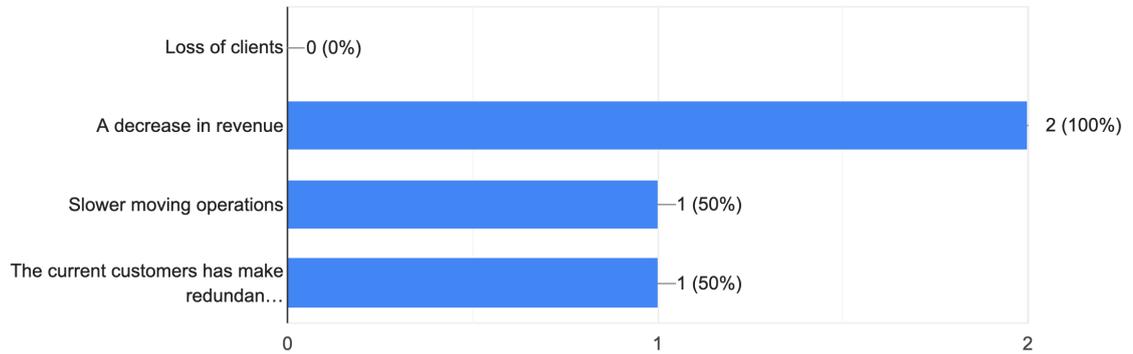
If yes, has it affected your business positively or negatively?

2 responses



If negatively, which of the following?

2 responses



If the pandemic has impacted your business positively how so?

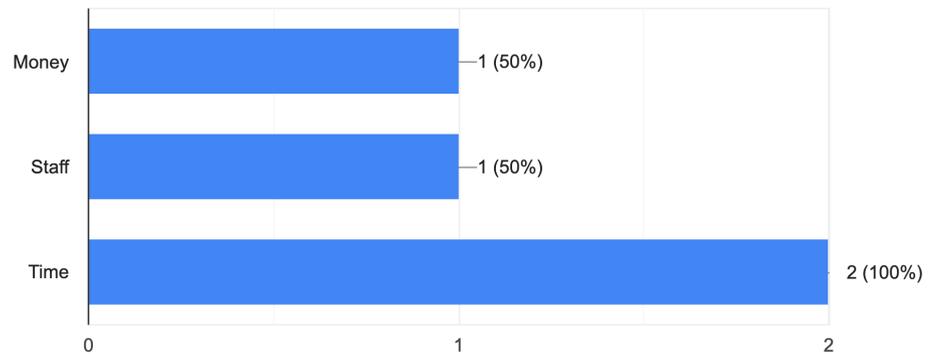
2 responses

The pandemic has of course forced companies to move stronger to digital channels and digital ways of work. It means more business to ICT-companies.

Closure of Customer facilities has led to decreased license revenue

Have you been limited by anything during this pandemic?

2 responses



Where do you desire your business to be? (This can be marketing position, size, the top in your field etc)

2 responses

Gain more clients, user cases and partners

Use time well meanwhile, to develop an improved version

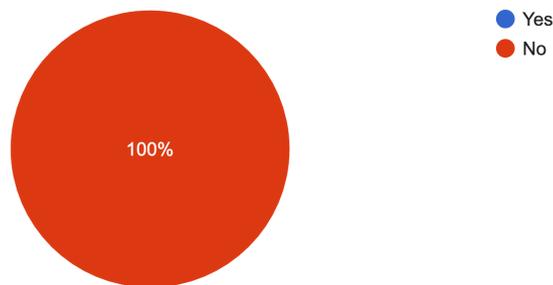
What would help your current situation?

2 responses



Have you ever or are currently outsourced?

2 responses



Results (figures) of the survey with the corresponding questions being answered by the food start-up in figure 2-13 in regard and comparison to the commissioning company for the empirical research referred to as the second company in question.

The following were the results;

Has the current global pandemic affected your daily business? *

- Yes
- No

If yes , has it affected your business positively or negatively? *

- Negative
- Positive

If negatively, which of the following? *

- Loss of clients
- A decrease in revenue
- Slower moving operations
- Other: n/a

If the pandemic has impacted your business positively how so? *

More customers, more engagement on social media pages, wider acknowledgement.

Have you been limited by anything during this pandemic? *

- Money
- Staff
- Time
- Other:

Where do you desire your business to be? (This can be marketing position, size, the top in your field etc) *

restaurant in the next 10 years

What would help your current situation?

Money

Staff

Time

Other:

Have you ever or are currently outsourced? *

Yes

No

What have you outsourced?

.....

Any other information you would like to give?

.....

Results (figures) of the survey with the corresponding questions being answered by the food start-up in figure 2-13 in regard and comparison to the commissioning company for the empirical research referred to as the second company in question.

Has the current global pandemic affected your daily business? *

Yes

No

If yes , has it affected your business positively or negatively? *

Negative

Postive

If negatively, which of the following? *

Loss of clients

A decrease in revenue

Slower moving operations

Other:

If the pandemic has impacted your business positively how so? *

N/a

Have you been limited by anything during this pandemic? *

Money

Staff

Time

Other:

Where do you desire your business to be? (This can be marketing position, size, the top in your field etc) *

Increased orders with more consistency

What would help your current situation?

Money

Staff

Time

Other:

Have you ever or are currently outsourced? *

Yes

No

What have you outsourced?

.....

Any other information you would like to give?

.....

Appendix 3 – Questions

How old are you ? *

Under 18

18-25

26-45

46+



If you saw an ad post while on your social media would you click the link ? *

Yes

No

How effective are these adverts on grabbing your attention ? *

1 2 3 4 5

NOT EFFECTIVE VERY EFFECTIVE

⋮

Does the social media platform with the ad displayed have an impact on your interest in the product? *

- Yes
- No

What stops you from clicking the link ? *

- Time
- Lack of interest
- Other...

What would motivate to check out the product in the ad post ? *

Long answer text

⋮

Would aesthetics play a part in you purchasing the product they are selling ? (Colour, theme, font etc) *

- Yes
- No

If yes , what types of things would catch your eye ? *

- Type of colours used
- Type of words
- Pictures used
- Other...

⋮

Would seeing the advert numerous times aid in purchasing the product ? *

- Yes
- No

Do you feel like you can trust the website ? *

- Yes
- No

If no, what would help you gain trust in the product that is being advertised to you ? *

Long answer text

⋮

What could help you feel more comfortable purchasing the product that they are advertising to you ? *

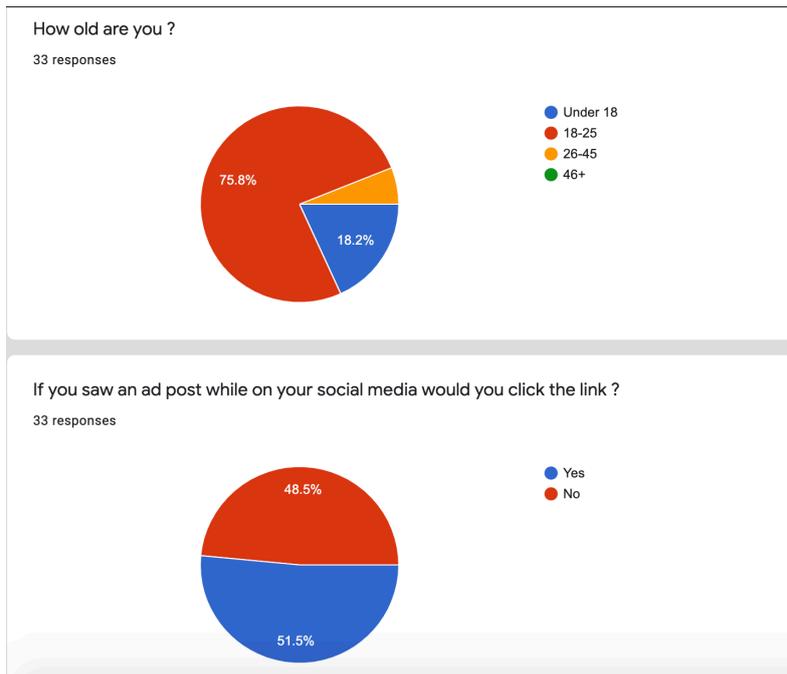
Long answer text

⋮

Anything else you would like to add?

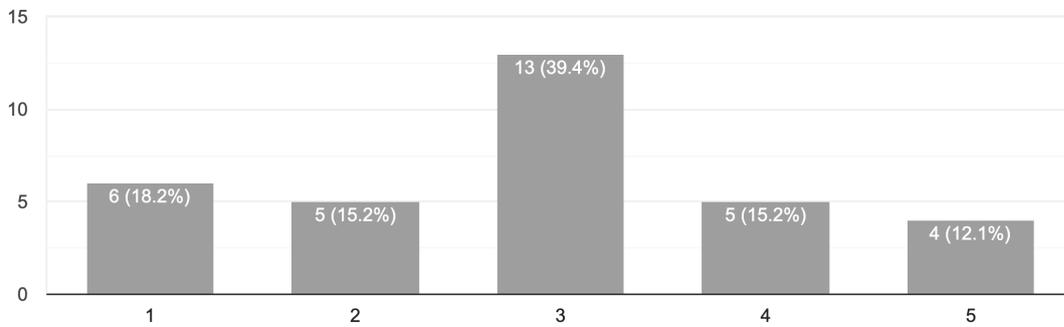
Long answer text

The following were the results;



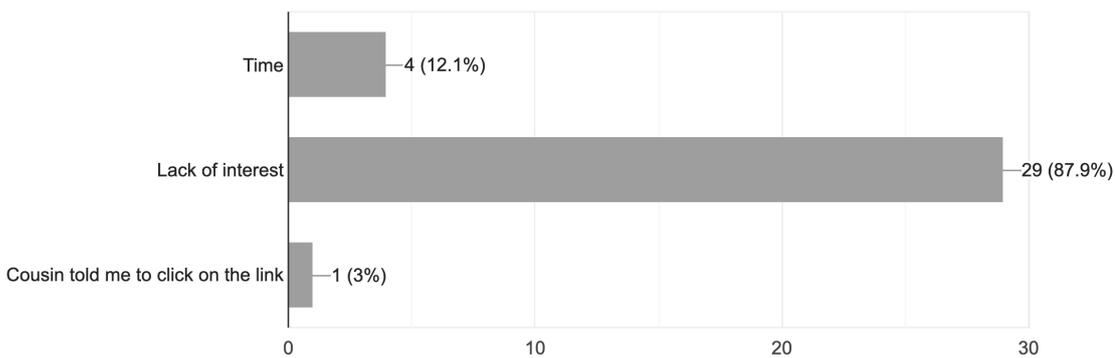
How effective are these adverts on grabbing your attention ?

33 responses



What stops you from clicking the link ?

33 responses



What would motivate to check out the product in the ad post ?

33 responses

Free samples

Visibly looks interesting

Maybe

Agric related stuffs

Words

If I am interested

Getting some sort of discount

Money

My interest in it

What would motivate to check out the product in the ad post ?

33 responses

If it interests me and is within my budget

Innovative advertising technique, not the same old boring stuff

Attraction

Funny memes and jokes

An involvement in the ad

If i want to buy it

Contents of the ad and If I it interests me and I can benefit from it in some way

Money

Something I am interested in

What would motivate to check out the product in the ad post ?

33 responses

If I saw something I liked

Yes

Option 1

Nothing

If I was interested in the product and a eye catching ad

I don't know

Money was involved SHMONEYYYY

Something that stands out

The branding

What would motivate to check out the product in the ad post ?

33 responses

Attraction

Funny memes and jokes

An involvement in the ad

If i want to buy it

Contents of the ad and If I it interests me and I can benefit from it in some way

Money

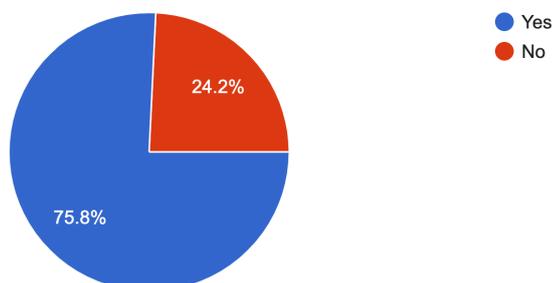
Something I am interested in

I'd check it out if it happens to be convincing or it happens to be a product I'd like to get

Price

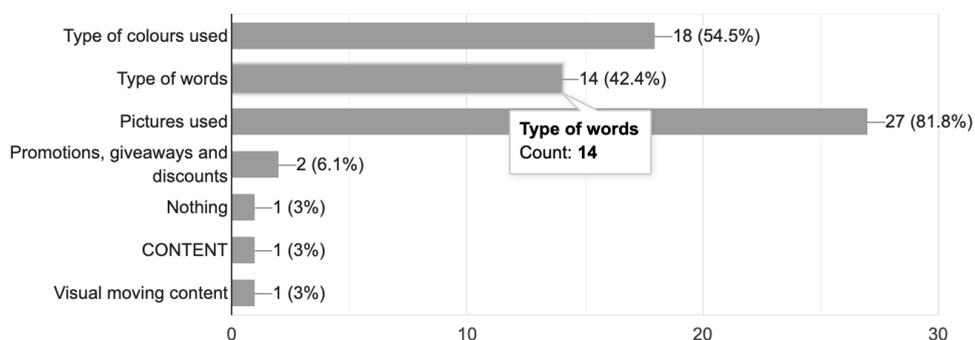
Would aesthetics play a part in you purchasing the product they are selling ? (Colour, theme, font etc)

33 responses



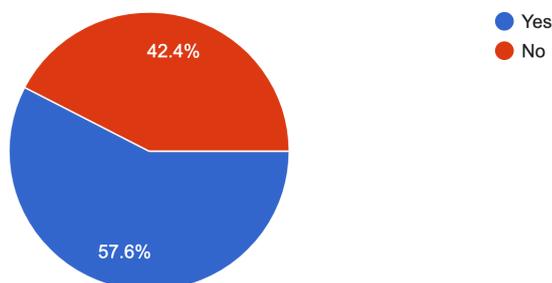
If yes , what types of things would catch your eye ?

33 responses



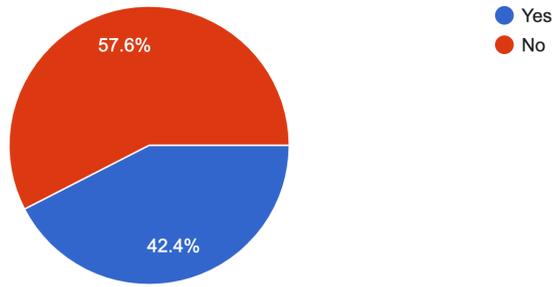
Would seeing the advert numerous times aid in purchasing the product ?

33 responses



Do you feel like you can trust the website ?

33 responses



If no, what would help you gain trust in the product that is being advertised to you ?

33 responses

If the site is well known

Yes please

.

If it's legit

Nothing

Popular site being used by multiple people and reviews

Spam

If there's proof

Reviews

If no, what would help you gain trust in the product that is being advertised to you ?

33 responses

The branding

Influencers using it

N/A

If a friend has successfully made progress before

Others

I can trust it

Being verified by google

Reviews

The security of the website

If no, what would help you gain trust in the product that is being advertised to you ?

33 responses

It having a wikipedia page or these locks in front of the website, just evidence thag it is real

The product being advertised on several platforms

If it said .co.uk

I don't buy things online but even if I do I must do my severe confirmation

My rely on the product and website

Reviews from other customers

Reviewed comments

I check their page or search online for the business name and comments/ reviews from people who have patronized their products

Nothing

If no, what would help you gain trust in the product that is being advertised to you ?

33 responses

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Nothing

Reviews and pictures from customers

What could help you feel more comfortable purchasing the product that they are advertising to you ?

33 responses

Reviews

Multiple screening processes before purchases

The quality of the product

Not sure

Testimonials and a face to the brand

I don't know

For example, if someone was selling wigs which I need for my birthday but due to rona I ain't getting my red hair!! They would have to prove that others have bought it and I will need to see pictures too and lastly this will prove that they're not a scam. M3 koda.

More reviews

What could help you feel more comfortable purchasing the product that they are advertising to you ?

33 responses

If the ad appears countless times

Reviewss

Reviews and ratings

Delivery of the things

Maybe advertising and the words

Visuals

Known people that have purchased from the site

Nothing

If the website is trustworthy

What could help you feel more comfortable purchasing the product that they are advertising to you ?

33 responses

State the advantage and disadvantage of it

Authenticity

Verified Reviews and recommendations by people

My rely on the product and website

The site needs to professional

Reviews from other customers

Authenticity

Videos of the product

Finding the good reviews online

What could help you feel more comfortable purchasing the product that they are advertising to you ?

33 responses

Verified Reviews and recommendations by people

My rely on the product and website

The site needs to professional

Reviews from other customers

Authenticity

Videos of the product

Finding the good reviews online

Nothing

Reviews and pictures from customers

Anything else you would like to add?

14 responses

Nothing

N/A

Nope

No

Nothing really

Nope

Ads are sometimes annoying

Nothing please

Stop making adds...