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Inbound Marketing and User Experience: A Customer Acquisition Strategy for a B2B Technology Start-Up

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Abstract

The new advances in modern technology bring about a fast-paced transformation of the business environment. Such changes come with many advantages, namely growing ways to reach customers in unprecedented manners. However, there are also challenges as adapting to such quickly shifting techniques requires a deep understanding of the managerial landscape.

One such challenge is the adaptability of academia to the fluid business and technological landscapes. The scientific literature has sought to comprehend the intricacies of the radically changing marketing sphere. Although many researchers have captured tremendous insights, there remains a large nuance in results as well as a variety in the constructs addressed. The professional sphere remains unexplored from an academic lens in a variety of contexts that have the potential to inspire research. Namely, start-ups are a subset of companies within the business milieu that have disrupted many industries with their nimbleness and innovation. However, their lack of resources has engendered difficulties in spending time and money to refine their marketing practices. On top of this, business-to-business technology start-up (B2BTS) models also have the added challenge of adapting their economic model to the economic realities that arose as a result of modern technology. It follows that an academic dive into the study of B2BTS would generate valuable insights into largely unexplored academic research areas.

Additionally, the study of the experience of communicating with the B2BTS from the point of view of the potential customer is also becoming a crucial element of the design of an optimal marketing strategy, and a comprehension of its intricacies it vital for business success. The discipline of User Experience (UX) is based on the notion that optimizing communication with a potential customer is a crucial ingredient when presenting a product or service on the market. This importance is amplified in the case of a start-up with limited resources. Consequently, the focus of this thesis is to gather the main findings relating to inbound marketing, a subset of marketing that arose from modern technological communication methods, and to espouse them with the topic of user experience, within the context of a B2BTS. In order to do this, a literature review was

conducted with the aim of extracting and integrating the results of scientific endeavors relating to this topic, and to highlight the essential elements that are crucial to a deeper comprehension of inbound marketing in the digital age.

This rigorous undertaking eventuated in the organization of knowledge regarding best practices as suggested by the scientific literature in terms of inbound marketing from a user experience perspective in a B2B technology start-up context. As such, this thesis has identified areas of opportunity and principals that are integral for business success for its professional readers, as well as topics that are useful for scientists looking to build upon the foundations of the current knowledge and develop new expanses in terms of research.

Keywords: inbound marketing, user experience, start-up, technology, business-to-business.

Research methods: Systematic Literature Review.

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List of Abbreviations

UX : User Experience

B2B : Business-to-Business

B2BTS : B2B Technology Start-Up

Preface

Start-ups have peaked my interest for several years due to their nimble nature, agility and adaptability in the business landscape. I have also worked in a B2B context in my professional career, and realized the vast expanse of business that happens between companies that most consumers are unaware of. On top of this, the technology sector has the added feature of being at the forefront of innovation. However, one common problem start-ups all face is the lack of resources. This issue becomes compounded when poor marketing causes the start-up to have less financial resources available, thus hindering growth and in many cases, sinking the company.

The inspiration for this thesis came about from an internship with a B2B technology start-up. It started with curiosity when I perceived that the team I was working with, although extremely technical and technologically competent, had spent years developing a product without attempting to market it.

In order to produce a meaningful work, this thesis aims to connect the dots between academics' knowledge of marketing in a modern context with user experience, my field of study, in order to be insightful for both academics looking to dive deeper into a multidisciplinary approach within a little explored research topic, and professionals looking to use this knowledge to leverage it in their marketing efforts.

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: Introduction

Research Motivation

In the current golden age of information, our evolution in humanity's digital transformation is awe inspiring. Innovations are sprouting in creative ventures, advancing our understanding regarding the nature of reality. Technology has fashioned remarkable opportunities, but it has also shaped tremendous difficulties with regards to our comprehension of the virtual world that we've collectively brought into existence. One of the levers for such creativity and transformation is the founding of start-ups, especially in the technological sector. They have disrupted many industries, and their nimble sizes have steered entrepreneurial endeavors where few large companies dare to explore.

The fact however, is that such accomplishment comes with a high degree of risk. According to Statistics Canada, 95 000 companies are founded each year in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023). However, only 10% of them become successful long-term businesses. Additionally, the typical start-up has less than a 1% chance of becoming a unicorn, a term used to describe the statistical rarity of a small company that becomes worth over a billion dollars (Szecsei, 2022). As this thesis focuses on the tech sector, it is worth making the distinction that a start-up in this area of business activity in specific has the added risk of being founded by individuals with a technical expertise and focus, while management expertise is lacking.

Another issue with tech start-ups is that although they are fast-moving compared to larger enterprises, they have more limited resources, which adds pressure to their business models (Dojchinovska, 2022). In fact, 75% of entrepreneurs surveyed by the Business Development Bank of Canada have dealt with financial insecurity (Business Development Bank of Canada, 2019). Besides financial issues, another common reason why these they fail is that there is no market need for their products/services (Kepka, 2020). However, other important factors, and specifically ones that can be tackled by the tech start-up itself, are poor marketing, and not having the right team running the business (Kepka, 2020). As such, a tech start-up's lack of resources spans beyond financial capital, and includes

intellectual and human capital. These claims are corroborated by a report from professional services firm PricewaterhouseCoopers, PwC (Adam, NA). The report focuses on Canadian technology companies and states that they must be more strategic and process oriented in their approach in order to be competitive on the world stage. Accordingly, the first key area of focus that is mentioned in this report relates to optimizing sales and marketing (Adam, NA), given the significant underinvestment in marketing. The report also mentions optimizing talent as a key variable in a technology enterprise's success.

Regarding marketing in specific, with an increasing reliance on digital forms of communication, the field has evolved alongside technology to connect corporations with their target audiences in new ways. As such, technology has been revolutionizing marketing drastically since digital forms of advertising came into existence. In its initial stages, digital marketing was overlooked by many successful corporations at the time. Soon after however, many realized the indispensability of online presence and reputation, and their role above and beyond traditional forms of communication (Georgiadis, 2022). Although this came with tremendous opportunities, it's namely a challenge to constantly adapt, as companies are not always attuned to the knowledge they require for marketing success. This challenge is compounded by the fact that technology start-ups have the added responsibility of constantly evolving their products and services. This is underscored in a B2B context because of the sophistication of the buyer, especially in the tech market where customers are informed, tech savvy and looking for precise applications and specific solutions. It is worth noting that there are other common reasons for start-up failures, such as technical and/or product issues, as well as product-market fit. Consequently, a technology entrepreneur, who is usually a technician, ends up spending a disproportionately low amount of time on marketing. In fact, according to Statista, a staggering 50% of start-ups spend 2 hours of time or less on marketing per week (Statista Research Department, 2023). This results in customer acquisition becoming one of the biggest challenges that tech start-ups are facing (Campaign Monitor).

In order to get an accurate picture of these challenges and what a technology entrepreneur can do about them, this thesis will look into insight in the scientific literature, where

marketing is discussed in various contexts. Furthermore, the reason for choosing a literature-based approach is because marketing as a discipline varies in its subfields and potential research areas. There is a wealth of research articles that is scattered in all these subfields and research areas. More specifically, the focus of this thesis is on inbound marketing in the context of a B2BTS, which is a novel method that has emerged with the advent of the internet.

Inbound marketing varies compared to outbound/traditional marketing because its objective is to pull specific customers towards the business, in contrast to the company reaching out to a large crowd. One of the main features of inbound marketing is the creation of original content on the internet which users can find while browsing the web. The aim of this content is to attract potential customers voluntarily, by engaging them with material that peaks their interest. Ultimately, the focus of the start-up is to understand its customers' challenges, address their problems, and position their product/service as the solution (Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021). Examples of content includes educational material shared via social media, informative content in the form of blog posts, or a sponsored ad on search engines, also called search engine marketing, which pulls customers to a business website. By sharing valuable content, businesses can build trust and credibility, while achieving noteworthy reach and impact (du Plessis), and also grow a base of engaged and loyal potential customers (Walters, 2015). The success of inbound marketing is in fostering communication and creating interactivity with engaging content. This contrasts with outbound marketing, sometimes called interruption marketing (Krugman, 1983), which is becoming increasingly obsolete (Plunkett, 2010). In the internet age, traditional marketing is becoming oversaturated, as it is becoming increasingly difficult to acquire customers, which as previously mentioned is one of the greatest challenges of start-ups. Consequently, it is getting harder to optimize their return on ad spend (ROAS) in such a competitive environment. On top of that, it is more complex to measure and determine the efficacy of outbound marketing strategies, compared to inbound marketing which is supported by an array of online analytics tools. For instance, a tech start-up can determine how a visitor arrived at its website, the landing page, their engagement via the number of clicks and pages visited, the time spent on each page as well as the final page they visited. Consequently, a B2BTS can through the use of such

tools, increase the efficiency of its advertising budget (Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021). All in all, inbound marketing is shown to be more interactive, cost-effective and adaptive than traditional methods (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019). This is compounded by the fact that in the current information age, consumers expect instant access to solutions via their online activities. Building further on this idea, the advance of search technologies, which allow internet users greater access to content and information than ever before, have enabled inbound marketing to become a key strategy to actively engage potential customers. As such, this marketing technique has developed and grown to become a unique business strategy (Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021).

In an increasingly digital world, the customer is 'always on' and more and more likely to enquire, search, interact and buy through a technological interface. Furthermore, the business customer is increasingly equipped with tools to access information that enhances their company's profitability. This is making business-to-business marketing evermore interactive, and delivering efficient, useful, personalized, relevant and engaging experiences more important. Customer needs, communication channels and technology devices are also changing rapidly. Therefore, to remain relevant, a technological B2B start-up requires a deep comprehension of the potential customer's perception and behavior, as well as their methods of connecting with the content that they would like to see (Stone and Woodcock, 2014). This requires a deep comprehension of a potential client's search pathway to the B2BTS. This is called the client journey in a user experience (UX) context. However, there is a clear gap in the scientific literature (Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016 ; Vieira *et al.*, 2019) regarding the potential practical applications of inbound marketing, and more specifically search engine marketing, in the context of B2B technological start-ups, to drive customer acquisition, with the aim of creating an optimal user experience through the design of the client journey. In order to address this gap, it is crucial to study the intersection of the two disciplines of marketing and UX, and to look for specific cross points whereby they complement each other, keeping in mind a niche business context. Specific field research on the topic is scarce, .and the objectives that this thesis will address will serve as a stepping stone towards such an endeavor. It is for this reason that a comprehensive literature review is required, in order to advance our comprehension of the intersection of

these various disciplines and to inspire practical experiments relating to B2B tech start ups' customer acquisition optimization with a UX focus.

Research Objectives

It is the aim of this research to focus on:

1- Examining inbound marketing in a systematic review of the scientific literature and understanding the rationale for its use.
2- Explore the intersection of inbound marketing and user experience, with special attention given to find methods that favor B2B technology start-ups.
3- Developing a model that B2B technology start-ups in the technology sector can leverage for their marketing efforts.

Each of these points will be elaborated on in more detail.

1- Examining inbound marketing in a systematic review of the scientific literature and understanding the rationale for its use.

Inbound marketing as a practice has evolved constantly. As companies compete in the marketplace, they seek methods of communicating with their potential customers that are more effective than their rivals. Consequently, academics have studied the various techniques that companies have employed, and have sought to understand them, validate them, challenge them and improve them.

As such, a comprehensive literature review will discuss the findings of the scientific literature as it relates to inbound marketing in specific, mainly in the context of customer acquisition, and from a client journey lens.

2- Explore the intersection of marketing and user experience, with special attention given to find methods that favor B2B technology start-ups.

The field of marketing does not only vary according to the subcategories that it contains. It also depends on the context through which it is applied. The way a large company communicates with its customers is nuanced compared to the way a B2BTS would do so.

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From a potential customer's standpoint, his/her way of finding each one of these two kinds of companies is also quite different.

Consequently, the focus of this research will be about uncovering the subtleties of the marketing and UX techniques discussed previously from the perspective of a business-to-business technology start-up.

3- Developing a framework that B2B technology start-ups in the technology sector can leverage for their marketing efforts.

Once we have connected the dots between marketing and UX and applied this knowledge in the context of a B2B tech start-up, the next step is to develop a framework. The aim of this development is to outline key areas of focus, in order to simplify a complex process into digestible components that can be easily understood and applied. As stated previously, start-ups have limited resources. The intention of this framework is to save them time by synthesizing the literature; and save them money by helping them narrow the areas in which they can invest their financial capital. It would also help guide them in optimizing their talent by allocating the proper tasks to the right people.

Structure

The structure of this research is as follows:

Chapter II will focus on the theoretical background. The main point of this section is to define the theoretical context in order to give the reader a full picture of the important aspects of marketing and UX from an academic perspective.

Chapter III will describe the method used to find the appropriate articles in the scientific literature that will be comprehensively reviewed in this thesis. It includes tables and figures outlining the method and the articles that were gathered as a result.

Chapter IV will explore the results, including a thorough analysis of the literature review. It will re-elaborate upon the research question in more intricate detail.

Chapter V will discuss the framework that is synthesized based on previous sections, as well as recommendations for an approach that professional actors outside the academic sphere can leverage.

Chater VI will be the conclusion, which will amalgamate all of the aforementioned main points into the final paragraphs of this thesis.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background

The aim of this chapter is to clarify the contextual background of this research. First, it explores inbound marketing, its relevant subcategories, its importance in the context of a business-to-business technology start-up, as well as its exact application and potential drawbacks.

This chapter also examines the intersection of marketing and user experience. More precisely, attention is given to the process of creating a unique client journey for the B2B tech start-up's potential customers. This information will later serve as the backbone for developing a model that business-to-business technology start-ups can utilize for their marketing efforts, and in elaborating an approach when going to market.

Highlighting the Shift to Inbound Marketing in the Digital Age

With the advent of modern technologies, marketers are increasingly shifting their focus from traditional methods, to incorporating new forms of digital and social marketing (de Vries, Gensler and Leeflang, 2017). One of the results of this shift is that the line between advertising and other marketing communication tools is increasingly blurred in the digital age (Stone and Woodcock, 2014). The internet in particular, is an environment where companies can market themselves via various channels (Smith and Chaffey, 2008). For instance, as the internet progressed, search engines allowed users to filter information using selected keywords. Advertising then evolved to allow businesses to promote themselves in line with keywords that users are searching for. Also, the rise of social media has allowed the big tech companies to advertise to their users using impressions of content that is paid for by businesses looking to promote themselves. Altogether, this has catapulted the field of digital marketing into uncharted territories, with new methods and techniques evolving constantly. One growing subset of online marketing is inbound marketing, a strategy whereby start-ups target potential customers by willingly drawing them to their website. The main focus is for a start-up to obtain potential leads by matching their needs and desires with specific content, in order to turn them into active customers

(Halligan, Shah and Shah, 2010). By adopting this digital strategy, B2B technology start-ups offer their products/services as a function of its potential buyers' interaction, experience, activity and persona. This leads to more accurate communication and consequently, more efficient and effective prospecting, which enhances sales and profits (Lusch and Vargo, 2009). Using this marketing technique, B2B tech start-ups can capture the attention and interest of their customers, who are already actively seeking information and advice regarding a particular product or service that meets their needs (Halligan, Shah and Shah, 2010). By discouraging overt selling messages and brand-centric approaches, inbound marketing takes on a more customer-centric approach in its propositions, and thus begets higher feelings of trust from the target audience compared with traditional approaches. This is a paradigm shift for marketing strategy from the interruptive outbound, to inbound (Halligan, Shah and Shah, 2010).

The cornerstone of inbound marketing strategy is the creation of content, and it is hence key to leverage how it is used in engaging prospects. Its usage is central to the development of successful ad campaigns. Formally defined, it is 'what the user came to read, learn, see or experience' (Halvorson, Rach and Cancilla, 2012). Marketers also use the term 'digital content marketing' which is defined as 'the creation and distribution of educational and/or compelling content in multiple formats to attracts and/or retain customers' (Pulizzi and Barrett, 2008). This refers to the same method, whereby a B2B technology start-up for instance, uses its online space to promote an engaging interaction with its target audience.

Content as mentioned, is the basis of this marketing technique, and its use falls within every company's media strategy. In order to fully comprehend its intricacies, it is important to explore the nuances that comprise its multiple facets. With the advent of the internet, the methods of sharing and consuming information have evolved, and so have the different ways that digital content is shared via various channels. In an effort to structure this evolution in a comprehensible manner, marketers have established broad categories for various types of media as follows (Stephen and Galak, 2012; Vieira *et al.*, 2019) :

- **Owned media**

  In the literature, this is mainly the website, which is primarily owned as well as managed by the B2BTS. Owned media provides a platform for potential customers to initiate contact. This type of media can influence new sales and repeat sales by adding new and updated content to increase buyer intention.

- **Paid media**

  In the marketing literature, this is defined as media which is within a B2B tech start-up's digital ecosystem that is purchased, such as sponsored ads. This includes search ads on Google, which involve a fee per click (Li and Kannan, 2014). It is considered a profitable approach for start-ups because its cost is low when the marketing manager evaluates conversions and resulting sales. The success of this type of media is dependent on the rank of the ad (Ghose and Yang, 2009).

- **Earned media**

  This type of media is one that the company does not create itself, and includes social media activity that is generated by agents outside of the company through various platforms (de Vries, Gensler and Leeflang, 2017).

With this in mind, a B2BTS has to choose how to be expending its marketing efforts by allocating its resources in order to create media that will draw its customers towards it.

Zooming in On Search Engines as a Subset of Inbound Marketing for a B2BTS

Today, search engines make up a portion of the most widely used services found on the internet. They are an integral tool that empowers users to navigate the internet (Machill, Beiler and Zenker, 2008). Consequently, this gives them a remarkable amount of influence on its users' knowledge acquisition. The search engine market is mainly dominated by Google, with a market share of 93% worldwide (StatCounter, 2023). Google's stated program of action is 'to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful' (Google, 2023). This is similar to that of its typical users, who are looking to find information as efficiently and effectively as possible. Therefore, users have high levels of trust in it, and consequently, there is evidence supporting its ranking as a criterion for the quality of the listed content (Westerwick, 2013). In fact, 93% of search engine users never make it to the third page of results (Sherman, 2022). Search engine queries are an important consideration for companies

looking to increase their presence in online search engines, as it is important for them to be cognizant of keywords that are employed to search for the types of services that they offer. By monitoring these keywords and editing their ads accordingly, these companies have the opportunity of maximizing their search engine exposure. As a result, search engine optimization (SEO) has exploded in popularity. SEO is defined as 'the practice of optimizing web pages in a way that improves their ranking in the organic search results'. SEO is a subset of marketing techniques within the broad umbrella of Search Engine Marketing (SEM). Included in SEM is also paid search marketing (PSM), referring to advertisements related to specific keywords (Schultheiß and Lewandowski, 2021). SEO is an industry worth several tens of billions of dollars in the US alone (McCue, 2018). The battle for the first 3 positions is constantly increasing, and Google is changing its parameters increasingly rapidly, making those who want to get ahead adapt quicker. There has been for instance so called Black Hat SEO methods, which involve techniques such as a white text on a white background to increase the use of a given keyword on a website, which is considered illegal by search engines and leads to lower rankings when discovered (Schultheiß and Lewandowski, 2021). As a consequence of fierce competition in SEO, there is a growing trend of content quality being used as a way of changing strategies, and replacing classic SEO techniques (Schultheiß and Lewandowski, 2021). Business-to-business tech Start-ups which have limited advertising resources, can compete in the marketplace by using paid searches that are targeted to their potential customers in a sophisticated manner in order to better position themselves where and when their clients are looking for the types of solutions that they provide. As such, paid search ads are solutions for a B2BTS looking to attract customers with the problem of having a tight marketing budget. In the case of paid ads on Google, by knowing specifically the terms that its customers are searching, a B2BTS can utilize its knowledge to post online ads that will gain attention, capture interest and generate quality traffic to its website. Given that website visitors that come from paid ads are more likely to buy than those who come from organic search (Sherman, 2022), B2B tech start-ups have an advantage in optimizing their paid search ads within Google in order to appear on the first page of the search engine's results, and becoming visible to their target audiences that are searching for their types of

products and services. This advantage is compounded by the fact that for every 1$ spent on Google ads, a business makes an average of 2$ in revenue (Sherman, 2022).

Understanding the Client Journey of a B2B Tech Start-Up Customer

In the context of a B2BTS, it is worth noting that their customers are technically savvy and quite versed in engaging comfortably through digital channels. Consequently, in order to create business building outcomes, it is important for these start-ups to position themselves by being aware of the key points in their buyer's purchase cycles, and engage them with the appropriate and relevant keywords that they are using in their information gathering processes, i.e. their client journey. This will help it build the foundation for a strong partnership with its intended customers. Evidence suggests that even though B2B buyers tend to be influenced by numerous sources of information, they frequently leverage the internet as the initial source (Holliman and Rowley, 2014). Therefore, being present at important points in the customers' online search process is particularly appropriate in a B2B context because companies tend to have long-term relations with their clients (Kaplan and Sawhney, 2000). These sorts of relationships typically have long sales cycles, which are complex and multifaceted, and they often involve many decision makers. This is why more personalized ways of targeting are optimal for B2B purchasing processes (Hutt and Speh, 2010). Thus, by maximizing its presence in its potential customers' online search process, the B2B tech start-up increases its changes of acquiring a new customer. This is especially highlighted with data suggesting that 52% of online shoppers who click a paid search ad will follow up with a phone call (Sherman, 2022). As a result, this strengthens the evidence in favor of B2B tech start-ups leveraging paid search ads with an awareness of their client's buying journeys in order to acquire new customers. However, inbound marketing does have an important drawback. With the plethora of information currently online, customers can be skeptical about information that they come across. Furthermore, in a Corporate Visions survey (Corporate Visions, 2012), it was noted that many B2B brands are missing out on creating meaningful customer interactions because they still use content marketing as a tool to broadcast selling message, instead of seeing it as a way of communicating the solution to their audience's problems. This

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highlights the need for firms to build customer engagement and trust as well as establish credibility from the first point of contact. This is important to note since B2B clients usually complete around 60% of their purchase decision before even conversing with any supplier (Adamson, Dixon and Toman, 2012).

When putting together an effective inbound marketing strategy in the case of a B2BTS, some of the literature offers suggestions. According to Aaker (Aaker, 2018), effective content contains the following 4 attributes:

1- Authentic: original and true.
2- Involving: engaging and draws customers in by addressing their needs.
3- Intriguing: attention grabbing, resonates with the audience and invites them to respond.
4- Strategic: meaningful to the potential customer, has substance and value.

Additionally, according to Peppers and Rogers (Peppers, Rogers and Rogers, 2011), there are 4 key elements of a content marketing approach that enhances trust:

1- Shared values with the customer
2- Interdependence i.e. mutual value in the association
3- Quality Communication
4- Non-opportunistic behavior

Incorporating these items together into a marketing approach is particularly useful for B2B tech start-ups, as through awareness of the audience and proper targeting, they can earn the trust of its buyers online and position itself as the expert alongside the customer.

Success with Customer Acquisition

From a client journey perspective, purchasing decisions cannot be considered to be made of just two steps, consideration and choice. Rather, it is a circular process whereby marketers must engage with potential customers throughout their buying journey (Vieira *et al.*, 2019). The process entails an understanding of the client journey that allows a B2BTS to optimize its approach from a UX perspective. It starts with the development of a persona for its buyer i.e. the company specifies the nuances of the profiles of its typical customers. By representing its target audience, the company can align its communication with the buyers' interests and increase its engagement as a result. Importantly, the profile

goes beyond basic demographics. It characterizes the potential customers' motivations, their goals, the problems they face, their values, concerns, pains and their behavioral patterns when browsing the internet (Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021). Consequently, the company looking to use inbound marketing has to deeply reflect upon the impetus that compels its target customers to seek out the solution that it provides. Once this is clear, the enterprise must implement a marketing funnel that brings the user towards it. A marketing funnel is defined by a series of steps that an eventual customer follows, taking him/her from a stranger, to a lead, to a customer. This involves communicating, through content on the internet, in an informational style that draws the potential customer to the product/service that the start-up provides (Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021).

Furthermore, in order to better measure its results, a B2B tech start-up can use its website's analytics data in driving marketing decisions. As a part of a greater marketing strategy, this involves transforming the perception of the marketing department within a company from a cost drain, into a value generating center. With rapidly improving technologies, real time analytics are opening new possibilities for interactive marketing compared to traditional methods, and improving a start-up's return on investment and areas of improvement (Stone and Woodcock, 2014). For example, clickstream data is a type of data that is collected by cataloguing the clicking behavior of visitors once they visit the company's webpage. It contains a wealth of information which includes the number of visits, page views, items viewed as well as the duration of the visit (Moe and Fader, 2004).

With the incorporation of the aforementioned approaches into a B2B tech start-up's go-to-market plan, marketing becomes partly a business intelligence strategy, i.e. a key aggregator of information which helps keep a company competitive. This involves bringing together technologies, metrics, people and processes to transform raw marketing data into useful business insights. Such knowledge has the potential to enable B2B technology start-ups to attract high quality clients via precision marketing acquisition methods, and engage them with uniquely personalized experiences to maximize their acquisition (Stone and Woodcock, 2014).

Conclusion

In summary, B2B tech start-ups can leverage inbound marketing as a key pillar in their customer acquisition strategies. The use of engaging content that attracts customers to a B2BTS website is the hallmark for its success as a marketing technique. The allure of such content is its alignment with the users' needs and desires, thus leading to more accurate communication and a sparking of their interest. It also positions the B2BTS as a trustworthy source. Moreover the use of paid search ads, as a specific application of inbound marketing, is a profitable approach to attract sophisticated business customers looking for the solutions that it provides online. This is because search engine queries are indicative of the potential buyers' intentions, and thus a B2BTS can use this knowledge to maximize its search engine exposure and showcase itself in a targeted manner.

One of the ways to fine tune the accuracy of the precision required in this marketing strategy is through an awareness of its clients' persona as well as the key touch points in customers' online search process. With this knowledge, a B2BTS can capture the interest of its future clients with personalized messages that fit their buying journey. Furthermore, digital data which is collected during this interactive process provides a plethora of information about important search trends in their markets and insights about their customers, which can be used for strategic decision making by B2B technology start-ups in order to render it more competitive in the marketplace.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

As previously stated, part of the objectives of this thesis is to examine the scientific literature to get a better understanding of inbound marketing, and to connect it to the field of UX. In order to explicate the process of achieving this, the focus of this chapter will be on discussing the research methodology used for a diligent review of scientific literature.

Review of the Scientific Literature

The reason for the choice of this methodological approach is that, with the recent advances in technology, and the simultaneous advent of digital marketing and search engines, academics have only in recent years begun to study the phenomenon of inbound marketing. It follows that literature on the topic is still quite scattered, especially since marketing practices are constantly evolving in a professional setting. As such, the reason for this literature review is to amass and explicate the recent advances of digital marketing, specifically relating to inbound marketing. It is also worth mentioning that research in the context of start-ups is also lackluster in the domain, and even more so in the case of B2B tech start-ups, which makes an understanding of current scientific endeavors in the domain useful for these types of companies in a professional setting.

The type of literature review chosen for this thesis is a narrative review, enriched with some elements of a critical review (Paré *et al.*, 2018). Essentially, a narrative review seeks to delve into the current literature on a specific topic, whereas a critical review aims to critique certain scientific findings (Paré *et al.*, 2018). Regarding this thesis, the focus as mentioned earlier is to comprehend the subfield of inbound marketing in the scientific literature. Also, in order for this research to contribute to the overall scientific literature, give more nuances to the results and to explicate the importance of the findings in a professional context, inbound marketing will also be studied through the lens of the discipline of user experience.

In terms of the narrative review, this thesis will examine specifically what has been written in the scientific literature on inbound marketing. As noted earlier there is a clear gap in the scientific literature regarding inbound marketing in the context of technological B2B

start-ups, to drive customer acquisition, with the aim of creating an optimal client journey. The aim of this comprehensive literature review is to advance the reader's comprehension of the intersection of these various disciplines by compiling them into a coherent narrative which is the basis of this thesis. As a part of the nature of this type of review, this paper does not claim a generalization of the cumulative knowledge, but rather its objective is to provide the reader with a comprehensive background on the topic at hand, as well as explore avenues for future research.

In order to construct a more comprehensive picture of the field of inbound marketing, elements of a critical review will also be incorporated into it (Paré *et al.*, 2018). In the literature on inbound marketing, especially relating to paid search ads, there are some contradictions and inconsistencies in the research. By approaching the narrative review with a component of a critical review (Paré *et al.*, 2018), this research will seek to go beyond the mere spotting of knowledge gaps and delve into challenging the assumptions of the underlying extant literature. This thesis will therefore take on a reflective account of the scientific literature in the area of inbound marketing and synthesize key points while assessing critical problems.

Altogether, this information is particularly helpful for a B2BTS and/or researchers looking for organized information which would help them save time in getting a synthesis on the scientific literature on the topic at hand.

Search

(i) Identification

In line with the theme of this thesis, multiple searches were conducted on the HEC Montréal search engine. The databases queried were Emerald, Business II, INFORMS Journal, Sage journals and BioMed Central. The goal of the search was to use keywords which closely corresponded with the topic at hand (see table 1 for a list of the terms used).

Filters were applied in order to select purely for content in the form of scientific publications. The aim of this research is to focus on purely academic literature surrounding this topic.

It is worth noting that the HEC search engine although useful, is not all encompassing. The alternative to it would have been to search the aforementioned terms on each database available at the HEC library, but this would have been extremely time-intensive. It is also not necessary as this review is a narrative review, and therefore does not seek to be exhaustive nor systematic. Nevertheless, I compared the list of results with list of assigned readings from the User Experience MSc program at HEC Montréal and the assigned readings that were not included among the results were added.

(ii) Selection

After each search, the results were first scanned by title and by abstract. The articles that were relevant to this research's objectives were selected for further reading. It is worth noting that dozens of results were filtered simply because they corresponded to travel-related themes as seen in their titles. With regards to inbound marketing and paid search ads, it appeared during this search process that a significant amount of research had been conducted on the topic, which allowed these results to be easily filtered out. Although searches resulted in topics related to inbound marketing, around 150 of the 221 and 224 articles found for the query 'Inbound Marketing' and 'Inbound Marketing User Experience' respectively, were mainly focused on the tourism industry. These publications were irrelevant to the topic of thesis. Additionally, for the 'Paid Search Ads' querry for instance there was also some research that was limited to a very small geographical area (e.g. Kosovo) which limits its generalizability and application in our context with some degree of accuracy and reliability. This reduced the sample from 293 to 14. Finally, regarding the 'Search Engine Marketing User Client Experience' search, only 7 out of 334 articles were chosen as many articles contained technological references, which were irrelevant to the topic at hand, such as Artificial Intelligence, Enterprise Resource Planning, Machine Learning and Big Data.

The following table outlines the keywords used along with the amounts of search results and the number of chosen articles:

Keywords Searched	Number of Results	Number of Articles Chosen
Inbound Marketing	221	2
Inbound Marketing User Experience	224	9
Paid Search Ads	293	14
Search Engine Marketing User Client Experience	334	7

Table 1: Compilation of the search process on the HEC library search engine

Another 6 articles were also selected based on their relation to this thesis' research objectives from relevant coursework done as a part of the User Experience M.Sc. program at HEC Montréal.

At this point the searches yielded 38 articles from 9 databases.

Furthermore, scientific articles which were not found in the aforementioned search were therefore noted, and the relevant results were also included as a component of the literature review. The reason for doing this is two-fold:

1- This allowed the addition of articles recommended by university professors, which are considered relevant to the research objectives, thus eventuating in more variety and selection.
2- This expanded the amounts of databases that were used in the literature review, thus making it more comprehensive.

Once this list was compiled, further reading showed how some of these articles were not relevant to the research objectives, and so they were eliminated from the selection.

Overall, this search process engendered a final sample of 14 articles from 5 different databases (see Appendix I), which were used as the basis of this research.

(iii) Coding and Data Analysis

In order to delve into the wealth of information contained in the final sample, and extract the contents that will compose this literature review, a coding schema was established. Its aim is to identify the necessary criteria that will aid in the research process, by providing a basis for sifting through the pages of the articles in a structured manner.

Consequently, the elements chosen as the basis for the coding schema, along with a brief description of each, are outlined in the following table:

Coding Criteria	Brief Description
Reference	Basis information about the article i.e. author, title, year of publication, journal
Database	The information aggregator where articles from various sources are stored Peer reviewed means the article was scrutinized by other experts in the field
Research Objectives	What the authors intend for the research in the article to accomplish
Area of Interest	The area of interest that the authors chose as the basis for research exploration
Methodology	The precise procedure or technique that is used to identify, select, process and analyze specific information about a given topic This includes whether the authors conduct a field study, or just review the relevant literature, quantitative or qualitative research, industry in which the studied companies are involved in, sample size
Main Findings	What the authors find when they analyze the data produced from their chosen methodology, and how the results meet the research objectives

Table 2: Chosen Coding Criteria and their Descriptions

While reading the final article sample, I was continuously drawing similarities and contrasts between background literature used, their research methodologies, and their experimental results. As I progressed from one article to the next, a conceptual schema began to take shape. Tables that categorize these articles into themes for this thesis began to emerge as recommended by Miles et al. (Miles *et al.*, 2019). These will be outlined in following chapters. There were also figures that correspond to the neural networks being created in order to visually represent the underlying processes. These representations are the cornerstone of the model which will be outlined in later chapters of this thesis.

Once the articles were read thoroughly, the conceptual schema and the logical flow between its various components and subcategories became more and more clear. Consequently, 3 main areas of interest that categorize the final sample of scientific articles appeared in the final conceptualization.

1- Inbound Marketing in General
2- 2- Paid Search Ads in Specific
3- 3- User Experience and Client Journey

In order to organize the main findings into a coherent flow, the articles were arranged in 3 tables (see tables 7 to 9 in Appendix I), corresponding to the aforementioned 3 areas of interest.

Furthermore, the articles were presented in precise rows in each of these tables in an order which pertains to the logical sequence of their main findings in terms of a narrative review. By following the string from top to bottom, the findings build upon each other. Also, some articles that had contrasting results were put one after another in order to point to the elements of the critical review that appeared as the author was building his conceptual schema.

Each of the takeaways from the selected article will be explored in further detail and connected to the research objectives in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter aims to explicate the scientific findings concerning inbound marketing from the vantage point of the articles collected. It delves into details regarding paid search ads as the subset of inbound marketing and explores its intersection with the field of user experience. Overall, this chapter addresses how these areas of interest have so far been addressed in the extant literature.

Description of the Sample

This subsection outlines an overview of relevant information regarding the results, namely the selected 14 articles (see Appendix I for a complete list of all articles chosen).

The following table outlines the journals from where the articles were sourced, as well as the number of articles from each:

Name of Journal	Number of Articles
Journal of Marketing Research	2
Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	2
Journal of Business Strategy	1
Journal of Service Management	1
Journal of Documentation	1
Market Intelligence and Planning	1
Online Information Review	1
Management Science	1
Marketing Science	1
Journal of Marketing	1
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	1
Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing	1

Table 3: Journals Corresponding to Selected Articles

As evidenced from the above table, 8 out of the 14 articles were sourced from a marketing journal, given that this is one of the main themes of this thesis. Besides this, the other 6

articles come from a variety of journals, mainly relating to business. This diversity beyond merely marketing journals touches on themes that form the multidisciplinary backdrop of this research.

The years of the publication of the articles range between 2008 and 2021. What is interesting about this timeline is that although inbound marketing, search engines ads and user experience have advanced significantly in the timeframe, the overall principles at their core which are discussed throughout this thesis remain the same, making the different studies comparable.

In line with the above findings, the selected articles were also categorized by the type of scientific article. Combined with the above dates of publication, there is a pattern that emerges from these results. Namely, there is a relatively equal amount of empirical and conceptual article types, which suggests that the topic has grown organically.

The following table illustrates this:

Article Type	Number of Articles
Empirical	7
Conceptual	5
Opinion	2

Table 4: Kinds of Articles Corresponding to Selected Articles

Of the chosen articles, the types of articles with the highest frequency were experimental, given the fact that inbound marketing and UX tend to generate different varieties of data. It is also worth noting that in order to have a grasp of the topic at hand, and given its significant evolution in the past years, articles containing literature reviews in both inbound marketing and UX also have a relatively high frequency. Nevertheless, this thesis is different from existing reviews because it combines both inbound marketing and UX together, in an effort to highlight their interconnectedness within a business development strategy. This research also specifies a focus pertaining to B2B tech start-ups, which have received little to no attention in the academic sphere.

Additionally, given the practical approach of these fields, some studies also have conducted a case study and expert interviews in order to get a more in-depth understanding as well as a professional grasp of the themes being studied.

The following table was constructed as a result:

Methodology	Number of Articles
Experiment	6
Literature Review	5
Expert Interviews	2
Case Study	1

Table 5: Methodologies Corresponding to Selected Articles

In line with the process outlined in Chapter III, the coding criteria were used. The main themes that were identified which categorized the final sample of selected articles were:

1- Inbound Marketing in General
2- Paid Search Ads in Specific
3- User Experience and Client Journey

Furthermore, while compiling the results, two other themes were identified:

4- Paid Search Ads from a UX Perspective
5- Analytics.

Each of these themes is outlined as follows:

Inbound Marketing in General

In general, inbound marketing is discussed in broad terms across the scientific literature. As it encompassed multiple strategies, without getting into specifics, the principles and ideas behind it are relevant to study because they set the stage for understanding more precise ways to apply it.

Paid Search Ads in Specific

In order to delve into this topic, the focus will be on SEO and SEM, which received a noteworthy amount of attention in the literature. Therefore a compilation of the findings of each is a theme in and of itself, as contrasting the results of the scientists involved paves the way for a thorough analysis.

User Experience and the Customer Journey

UX as a field of study is replete with findings that have their own applications, and although they can certainly be applied to inbound marketing, their scope can extend in other disciplines as well. Consequently, this makes up a theme in and of itself.

Paid Search Ads from a UX Perspective

To add more depth to the subsequent discussion and structure the findings from general to specific, a conglomeration of findings relating to the intersection of inbound marketing and UX will be presented.

Analytics

Finally, one of the points of intersection of inbound marketing and UX is the field of data analytics. Although this theme can be seen from the perspective of both disciplines, its importance as an area for business endeavor has caused it to intrinsically become an academic area of study. As a result, the findings surrounding this theme were substantial enough to standalone and inspire further discussion on the topic.

The rest of this chapter is structured in subsections that depict the main themes of this thesis, starting with general information about inbound marketing, and then getting into the specifics of search engine marketing. Following this, it delves into the intricacies of creating an optimal user experience as well as mapping the client's journey, and collecting relevant data via performance analytics.

Theme 1: Inbound Marketing General

The articles reflect the fact that firms today are confronted with accelerating media (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). This acceleration has led to an unprecedented digital transformation that impacts individuals and businesses in ever changing ways. With the development of modern search technologies, customers have increasingly more access to information and content. This has propelled inbound marketing as a strategy for those looking to actively engage and attract specific customers by fostering interaction, instead of pushing advertisements to a large group, and acquire them as clients (Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021). Throughout the articles we note that what distinguishes inbound marketing from traditional marketing is that it requires a culture shift from 'selling' to 'helping', which inherently implies different marketing objectives, strategies, data and metrics from traditional methods (Holliman and Rowley, 2014).

Furthermore, in the case of a B2B business, its customers are technically savvy and content-driven, as they are accustomed to engaging in digital channels (Vieira *et al.*, 2019). As generating recurring revenue via contractual agreements is the lifeblood of a B2B business, it is crucial for these types of companies to enable and sustain a continuous and regular flow of customers through digital channels (Vieira *et al.*, 2019). The article by Viera et al. supports the fact that there is a positive association between company outcomes and owned media. Content published on owned media, especially websites, showcases the value of the company, peaks the interest of potential clients and initiates new sales (Vieira et al., 2019). They find that digital inbound marketing and owned media are more effective than other types of media (Vieira *et al.*, 2019). In light of this idea, this next section focuses on the literature regarding Search Engine Optimization (SEO), our second theme of the narrative literature review.

Theme 2: Search Engine Optimization

The articles selected for the literature review also highlight the fact that as the World Wide Web expanded; companies realized the effectiveness of inbound marketing via search engines as a strategy in order to attract customers to their websites, by appearing in their query results (Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021). Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a common inbound marketing technique focused on attracting visitors to a company's website via search engines. Search engines help users navigate the web. They are one of the most widely used services on the web, and users have a high level of trust in their rankings as a criterion for ranking content, and this is more-so the case for Google in particular (Schultheiß and Lewandowski, 2021). The battle among websites for the top three positions in a search engine's results goes to those who react quicker as Google continuously changes its ranking parameters, and increasingly frequently. Organic rankings of a company's website are based on a complex and proprietary algorithm which is devised by the search engines. Part of its components is alleged to be the quality of the landing page, which includes a metric known as 'Relevancy'. This includes how many external links from reputable sources there are towards the website, or user-generated content about the company (Ghose and Yang, 2009). To make matters more complex, search engines like Google are constantly changing their ranking parameters (Schultheiß and Lewandowski, 2021). On top of that, SEO is a giant industry worth tens of billions of dollars in the US alone (Schultheiß and Lewandowski, 2021). As such, B2B companies continue spending vast resources in order to implement SEO strategies that allow them to rank within the top organic search results when a potential customer is looking for their products and services. . However, due to its popularity in the sphere of online marketing, SEO is now no longer expert knowledge; rather it is a standard method, so there are hardly any websites left that do not engage in it. Consequently, overall SEO is shifting towards improving the overall quality of the website, and connect with areas like website maintenance (Schultheiß and Lewandowski, 2021). Given the competitive nature of search engine optimization, it is difficult to do in the case of a B2BTS with limited means. For the companies that do not have the resources to spend on continuously optimizing their SEO, and that are just beginning to establish themselves, and therefore do not have the relevancy yet, there is another way to use search engines to rank among the top results

and attract customers. This is through paid search ads, also known as search engine marketing (SEM), which will be discussed in the next section.

Theme 3: Search Engine Marketing

From the vantage point of scientific findings from the selected articles, paid search campaigns are claimed to increase the visibility of a company's website (Moral, Gonzalez and Plaza, 2014). This is based on the idea that ensuring that a website is findable is critical to its success. Furthermore, advertising online though Google gives small and mid-size businesses in specific access to new and wider markets at a reduced cost. In fact, the benefits of using sponsored ads on Google a strategy spans beyond the fact that it increases website visibility, or gives start-ups access to new and wider markets at a reduced cost (Moral, Gonzalez and Plaza, 2014). Ads are based on queries generated by the users, and therefore are considered far less intrusive than other types of marketing techniques (Ghose and Yang, 2009). Consequently, sponsored search is considered one of the most dominant sources of customer acquisition (Gupta, Mateen and Ramendra Singh, 2014). In other words, search engine marketing has satisfied both search engine users' penchant for relevant results, and the desire by advertisers to attract high-quality traffic to their websites (Ghose and Yang, 2009).

The way that paid ads on Google function is the following: When a customer enters a search query, the search engine will display a list of results. Sponsored ads will appear at the top, above non-sponsored/regular/algorithmic/organic results which are determined according to their relevance to the query. Sponsored ads are ranked as a function of a continuous and real-time auction, whereby companies bid on select keywords. Once the users make a search, the search engine identifies closely related keywords, and advertisers that are bidding for them. The search engines then use a mix of the submitted bid and past click performance to rank the ads (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011). An advertiser only pays for the ad when the customer clicks on it. Their cost per click (CPC) is determined by a second auction whereby they pay the minimum bid needed to secure the position that is assigned, and only pay when the potential customer clicks the ad. In

essence, paid search is an auction where advertisers are selected based on their bids and relevance to the search terms (Gupta, Mateen and Ramendra Singh, 2014). After clicking on the ad, the customer is redirected to the page linked to the ad, called the landing page. This is usually the advertiser's website. If the customer then executes the action that the advertiser intended, e.g. purchasing a product or contacting the company, then this is considered as a conversion. The conversion rate is the percentage of visitors that take the intended action as a portion of all visitors. In order to measure the performance of the ads, search engines provide daily reports on campaign status including statistics on the number of impressions, clicks and average ranking. This is how advertisers can evaluate their return on ad spend (RoAS), which is a key metric to determine the profitability of each marketing campaign (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011). The continuous nature of this auction mechanism enables an advertiser to constantly change the portfolio of keywords, amounts of the bids, advertising copy and landing pages. This is how an advertiser can control their ad spending (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011).

An ongoing debate among practitioners of paid search ads is whether or not conversion rates vary with keyword position (Rutz and Trusov, 2011). In order to study conversion rates, it is crucial to first look at whether or not the ads are being clicked on. Traditionally, in order to measure the performance of ads in this regard, a measure called the click-through-rate (CTR) is used (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011; Ghose and Yang, 2009; Gupta, Mateen and Ramendra Singh, 2014). There is evidence supporting the fact that CTR decreases exponentially with ad position, as attention decays rapidly, suggesting that most search engine users conduct a limited search and tend to have small consideration sets. That means that ad position could impact the conversion rate and the likelihood of customer acquisition (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011; Ghose and Yang, 2009). Also, given the fact that clicks decay with position, it is worth noting that so do costs. This consequently implies that the position of the ad impacts also the advertiser's profits (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011; Ghose and Yang, 2009). Regarding the aforementioned points, researchers find that the higher positions have higher click through and conversion rates (Ghose and Yang, 2009; Rutz and Trusov, 2011). Some researchers' rational for this is that the top positions are associated with a

higher quality and trust perception by the consumer i.e. the search engine users associated higher positions with a higher quality product (Ghose and Yang, 2009).

However, given that the higher the position, despite a more elevated CTR, have higher costs, those higher positions not necessarily the most profitable ones (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011; Ghose and Yang, 2009). Research looking at profitability has found that profits are higher in the middle positions, compared to the top or bottom ones. This suggests that bidding purely based on rank is not optimal (Ghose and Yang, 2009). The authors defy the conventional wisdom that the value of a click for paid search ads is independent of the position of the ad (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011; Ghose and Yang, 2009).

Going a step further, researchers have also looked at heterogeneity in different kinds of keywords while the users conduct their queries. It is worth noting that the term 'keyword' is a misnomer, as it indicates a collection of words used during the user's search process. Longer keywords suggest more specific and directed search which carries more information than a shorter keyword that involves a more generic search, which implies a wider context. This means that a consideration of available results shrinks as keywords grow and the search becomes narrower in scope (Ghose and Yang, 2009). It's important to note that since shorter keywords are generic, and therefore have higher search volumes, they tend to result in a higher mismatch between the users' intent and what is displayed on the landing page. Whereas longer keywords allow search engines to better surmise the user's search intent, and thus result in an improved match between the search query and eventuating results (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011). In terms of CTR, some researchers find that longer keywords have lower CTR, with every additional word decreasing CTR by 13.9% (Ghose and Yang, 2009). Others find that longer keywords have a higher CTR at lower positions than shorter keywords, as longer keywords tend to reflect higher purchase intent, and therefore the user may evaluate more ads (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011).

Regarding conversion rates, one study found that conversion rates vary according to position and also keyword length. The authors found an inverse U shaped relationship

between ad position and sales for longer keywords. This is counter to conventional wisdom that in sequential lists, the earlier items would perform better. In other words, this conventional wisdom applies only in the case of CTR decreasing exponentially but not for conversion rates or profits (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011). Therefore, for longer keywords, the highest ad positions do not tend to be the most profitable because the cost per click decreases faster than the conversion rate as you move down the list, up to a point. The authors recommend aiming for intermediate positions as an effective way to reach the target audience without paying an excessively high premium for the top position (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011). This corroborates the results of other researchers (Ghose and Yang, 2009). They also specify that this is not an equilibrium argument as it would not work if all follow the same strategy, but as it stands it is an advantage for a company to begin engaging in avoiding bidding wars and tracking conversions (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011). Altogether, these results from the select articles for the literature review suggest that advertisers should revisit their assumptions that are driving bidding wars for the top result.

However, this thesis looks at these results regarding profitability with a critical lens. This is because the profitability of a company depends on its business model, and more precisely its profit margin. In certain situations, the incremental cost of having a higher position is negligible compared to the size of the potential revenue. Specifically, these studies use data from retailers which are business-to-consumer (B2C) business models that have tight margins. This idea is corroborated by another one of the selected articles, which finds that analysis of data from e-tailing websites is not precisely pertinent to B2B marketing (Wilson, 2010). As this thesis pertains to B2B tech start-ups, the results from these studies are inconclusive regarding the optimal bidding strategies in this situation. Although these studies go a long way, there is still more research to be done on this topic, due to the fact that research on online marketing in a B2B context is nascent and insights remain narrow (Vieira *et al.*, 2019). This will be discussed in more detail later on in the thesis. Nevertheless, another important finding is that an increase in landing page quality scores is linked to an increase in conversion rates and a decrease in advertiser costs per click (Ghose and Yang, 2009). Although rank is found to have a larger impact than landing page quality, it still speaks to the fact that the company has to be cognizant of the fact that

paid search ads must be coupled with an understanding of the users' experience. This is in line with another study that finds that multiple interrelated variables comprise the decisions regarding the optimization of paid search ad performance. These include the selection of keywords, the targeted rank on the results page, the maximal bid amount, the textual content and layout of the ad, as well as the landing page and its design (Rutz and Trusov, 2011). Some of these factors have already been discussed up to this point, and the others will be explored in more detail in proceeding paragraphs. Also, another study corroborates this finding by stating that sponsored search ads themselves only reveal limited information, and the evaluation of the option takes place once the user is on the landing page (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011).

Overall, the results indicate that conversion rates and profits in inbound marketing, specifically paid search ads, are more multi-faceted than simply whether or not the user will click on the link to the website. These require the study of a multitude of factors and their intersections, which is a multidisciplinary endeavor. Consequently, in light of these results regarding the importance of UX, the following section explores the scientific findings regarding the user's experience which are drawn from the comprehensive literature review comprising this thesis.

Theme 4: User Experience and Customer Journey

When studying UX from the point of view of the scientific literature, it is pervasive that customer needs, communication channels and technological devices are rapidly changing. This prompts an ever important need for companies to have precise insights on their customers in order to deliver personalized experiences, which improve customer acquisition and retention (Stone and Woodcock, 2014). Interactive marketing in the modern world is increasingly sophisticated, requiring a deep understanding of the targeted customer, and in turn deliver personalized experiences that are useful and engaging (Stone and Woodcock, 2014). Furthermore, B2B audiences in specific respond online to information from a source that coherently understands their needs and purchase consideration cycle (Holliman and Rowley, 2014).

In order to adapt to evolutions in global markets, the construct of customer experience (CX) has emerged. It is a multidimensional construct with various components. It involves a holistic and interconnected view of cognitive, emotional and behavioral elements that comprise a customer's interaction with a company. It is a dynamic and iterative process that incorporated many variables, some of which are outside of the firm's control, like a potential customer's past experiences for instance (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

Intrinsically tied to the construct of CX is the customer purchase journey. It is the process that a customer undergoes, though the touch points, stages, and decision making processes, which make up the customer experience (CX). It encompasses the totality of the customer's interactions from the development of their need to its ultimate satisfaction, to post-purchase interactions. While mapping out touch points it is important to consider that different touch points occur at distinct parts of each individual buyer's purchase cycle (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). In order to do so, Lemon and Verhoef recommend that firms:

1- Understand both their perspective, as well as that of the customers by identifying key aspects of each stage.
2- Identify the precise touch points that occur in the Customer Journey In order to have the most significant influence on key customer outcomes, it is crucial to ascertain these critical touch points called 'moments of truth' at various stages of the customer journey. Each one of these points should contribute to CX at various stages.
3- Distinguish specific triggers that prompt customers to either pursue or discontinue their trajectory on the purchase journey.

Once this is map is complete, it must be complemented with a deep understanding of the potential customers' challenges, and address their concerns from their perspective, thus positioning the business as a trusted expert, and ultimately provide an enticing solution (Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021). It is also noteworthy that a key facet of B2B marketing is characterized by tailored messaging that matches the buyer's position in their customer journey (Holliman and Rowley, 2014). This means that a B2BTS must tailor its ads to link a potential customer to landing pages that maximize the users' experience, to the extent that it prompts them to pursue their trajectory along the purchase journey toward becoming a client.

Purchase decisions are not a static series of steps; it is an interactive and dynamic process whereby marketers have to engage with customers throughout their buying journeys (Vieira *et al.*, 2019). For instance, knowing that search behavior is influenced by the customers' purchase intents and, consequently, their resulting search behaviors, a company can tailor its landing page accordingly, which would increase its chances of customer acquisition. An example from one of the articles comprising this comprehensive literature review is that search can vary between being goal directed and exploratory (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011). Online, there are both buying customers and information seekers. Those with high intents to purchase tend to be very focused in their search process, thus they only target a few of the products and categories. This is in contrast with those that have low purchase intent that browse through a variety of products. In other words, customer journey mapping requires customer input and data (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Altogether, these results point to the fact that understanding CX and CJ is multidisciplinary, and includes customer management, satisfaction, service quality, relationship marketing and customer experience (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Importantly, CX is tied to the emerging construct of customer engagement, defined as the extent to which a customer will initiate contact with a business. Additionally, trust and commitment from a relationship marketing perspective are inherently tied to CX (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

However, many aspects of CX are still void of scholarship and are a greenfield for research (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Consequently, this following section will link the previous section on paid search ads and combine it with a holistic view of CX and the Customer Journey. This is in an effort to compile the relevant results from the scientific literature in order to lay the foundation for the discussion in the following chapter.

Theme 5: Paid Search Ads from a UX Perspective

When combining the results and highlight of this research's literature review from a multidisciplinary outlook, it is observable that inbound marketing and user experience do not exist in isolation. The authors of one study point out that Google AdWords and

industry practitioners acknowledge the importance of design properties in playing a role in driving user responses to paid search ads. However, the scientific literature has ignored this aspect of SEM and instead zoomed in on keyword properties (Rutz and Trusov, 2011) The empirical studies mentioned in the previous theme are mainly keyword-centric. They model and forecast the performance of keywords exclusively. However, one notable limitation of a keyword-centric approach is the assumptions that search engine users are homogenous in their preferences and responses to the ads. This is an ad hoc assumption that segments users a priori (Rutz and Trusov, 2011). It is not clear whether or not results stemming from keyword centric models, e.g. the effect of ad position, are an accurate representation of users' response to position, or an artifact of the assumption of homogeneity (Rutz and Trusov, 2011). In other words, evaluating the effects of specific ad properties on ad performance varies when taking consumer heterogeneity into account. The authors argue that we must account for heterogeneity by segmenting customers for instance, because paid search ads are inherently consumer-level decisions and thus vary across individuals (Rutz and Trusov, 2011). This would offer rich insights on the distribution of individual user preferences and behaviors. This corroborates research from other scientists, who claims that customers in the case of sponsored search are heterogeneous in terms of their purchasing intents and, consequently, their resulting search behaviors (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011).

Consequently, one of the first steps in grounding an inbound marketing strategy is develop a characterization of the potential buyers, called personas. This allows the B2BTS to narrow down its target audience and highlight the specifics of its product or service. A persona includes personal and professional demographic information about the buyers, their motivations, concerns, problems, goals, how they find information and make decisions. This representation allows the B2BTS to tailor its communication style with its targeted clients, speak their language, capture their attention and convert them into new business opportunities (Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021).

Furthermore, search engine queries inform companies about the keywords that are being used by their target customers to search for the services that they offer. Monitoring them gives marketers the opportunity to change the keywords that are incorporated in their ads

and maximizes their search engine exposure (Kumar *et al.*, 2013). This is done by managing ad campaigns involving an extensive selection of keywords (Rutz, Bucklin and Sonnier, 2012). From a company's perspective, it sets a daily budget, selects its chosen keywords, designates a bid price for each keyword, and specifies a personalized ad that will be shown to the user (Ghose and Yang, 2009).

By understanding this, a B2B tech start-up can comprehend the fact that the selection of keywords is intrinsically tied to the customer journey, and thus optimize its inbound marketing campaign accordingly. Reconnecting once again with the previous subsection, some findings suggest that longer keywords suggest more specific and directed search which carries more information than a shorter keyword that involves a more generic search, which implies a wider context. In other words, a potential customer with a goal-oriented search has a narrower consideration set than one who is in surfing mode, and will likely click on more results by browsing more. This means that a consideration of available results shrinks as keywords grow and the search becomes narrower in scope (Ghose and Yang, 2009). Whether they are goal oriented or merely seeking information is inherently tied into how far along in the client journey the customer is at the time of the search query (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011). Consequently, by being cognizant of these factors and connecting them with the characterization of its buyers' personas, a B2B technology start-up can better understand the intrinsic objectives of a search engine user looking for its type of products and services. It can then maximize its targeting by deploying different landing pages depending on the type of search that the potential customers would be conducting.

However, it is worth noting that the above statements as previously stated are based on results from B2C companies, which do not take into consideration the longer B2B buying cycle. Although the aforementioned paragraph is meant to illustrate a point, it is still incumbent upon this thesis to view the findings with a critical lens. As such, it is possible that in a B2B context, a potential customer might have high purchase intent because of a serious problem, as opposed to the B2C retailers where the products are potentially superfluous. As a result of this, the potential customer might in fact do the opposite, and still take the time to look through the options comprehensively.

Reconnecting sponsored search ads with UX, one interesting finding from the academic literature which pertains to B2B technology start-ups is the use of site link extensions on sponsored search ads. In essence, these provide the advertisers the ability to have several subtitles with different links under the same ad. They are found to increase ad performance as they provide the user with more information, and more options to choose from, and thus and take the user to landing pages on relevant sections of the website (Gupta, Mateen and Ramendra Singh, 2014). Also, the increasing adoption of smartphones globally creates a need to study how their use impacts the domain of sponsored search. Special attention should be given to design search ads specifically for mobile (Gupta, Mateen and Ramendra Singh, 2014). These points indicate that there are subtle nuances to the UX optimization process when creating paid search advertising that can improve results and maximize customer engagement. Additionally, with regards to landing page and website design, the content should be both relevant and useful to the targeted customers, which relates to their pain points and problems (Holliman and Rowley, 2014). It is also important to stay up to date on trendy issues in a marketplace to communicate effectively (Holliman and Rowley, 2014). Some authors recommend integrating video content published on the company website, because it is concise yet conveys important knowledge in a time efficient manner (Vieira *et al.*, 2019). Other research suggests that long form content in text and video build the most trust according to a consensus among the interviewed marketing leaders (Holliman and Rowley, 2014). The exact format cited for creating this trust is market research and reports, whereby the company addresses a key market issue with its own research (Holliman and Rowley, 2014). To align itself with issues that are important to its potential customers, case studies and whitepapers are also mentioned (Holliman and Rowley, 2014).

Altogether, this reaffirms the point that CX management is a multidisciplinary endeavor whereby multiple functions like marketing, customer service, information technology and operations, collaborate to create and deliver the desired customer experience outcomes (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

It is important to understand the customer's journey before analytics and its associated metrics are chosen and measured. This is because accurate marketing requires continual

testing, and a thorough understanding of the customer development (Holliman and Rowley, 2014). This brings us to the final theme of this literature review, where analytics from a marketing and UX perspective are brought together.

Theme 6: Analytics

While amalgamating the results of the articles designated for this literature review, the theme of data and analytics is appeared widespread and prevalent. Indeed, marketing is in itself a key aggregator of information that is of competitive advantage to a company. Behind it lies a company's business intelligence strategy, which seeks to combine information from various sources within the company in order to transform raw data into important business insights and guide executive decision making (Stone and Woodcock, 2014). Marketing data is replete with potential in order to inform tactical and strategic decisions. Therefore developing data and analytics capabilities is of supreme importance in guiding marketing spending (Kumar *et al.*, 2013). The use of data in a calculated manner to drive business decisions transforms the marketing department from a cost center, to a value generator (Kumar *et al.*, 2013). In specific, real time high performance analytics are causing an explosion in marketing opportunities and improving marketing return on investments (Stone and Woodcock, 2014). This is becoming especially important as sophisticated data techniques and analysis tools become available to companies in already competitive industries (Stone and Woodcock, 2014).

One advantage of inbound marketing is that it collects a wide range of data. Specifying the metrics that will guide the recalibration of a given company's approach determines the success of the marketing strategy (Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021). Consequently, data-driven marketing requires continuous experimentation and learning (Kumar *et al.*, 2013). The use of models also assists marketers in their decision-making processes, and data collection/analytics enhances these models (Kumar *et al.*, 2013). For example, analytics tools are useful for measuring the quality of the traffic arriving via the search engine and to test the effectiveness of online campaigns (Moral, Gonzalez and Plaza, 2014). An application of this idea is to understand how chosen keywords perform, and

managing the data is of critical importance in creating successful paid search ad campaigns (Rutz and Trusov, 2011). Each keyword can be studied for its click-through and conversion rate to determine the cost per conversion and the value per click. This type of data supplements the keyword selection process (Ghose and Yang, 2009). From a CX standpoint customer-centricity is facilitated with the availability of individual-level customer data (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). However, data-driven marketing in this field of research is lackluster as most measurements concern customer perceptions of only specific parts of the journey, or just one measurement of the overall experience. Because of this limitation, the metrics in the scientific literature are not accurate predictors of future performance. Hence, multiple customer feedback metrics are better predictors of customer behavior than one single metric (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). From a UX research point of view, one useful tool for studying the customer journey, is clickstream data, which is obtained by keeping track of a given website visitor's mouse clicks, which provides insights into how a user is navigating online (Wilson, 2010). Clickstream data analysis using web analytics tools is useful for enhancing a B2B website by investigating the conversion and purchase process of a website visitor (Wilson, 2010). It also helps understand website navigational paths and the most relevant linkages between the website's pages from the user's vantage point (Wilson, 2010). This is useful because conversion rates can be increased by website improvements.

Clickstream data along with web analytics are also useful to see changes before and after modifications are implemented to a website. They also provide insight into campaign analysis when the company changes its marketing strategies, or runs different marketing campaigns sequentially. It is also useful for A/B testing, a method to optimize UX by implementing small changes to explore how they might affect important metrics like conversion rates. When done with a precise experimental design, it can provide important insights that can make a big difference over time (Wilson, 2010). This type of data can also be used to pre-test a website design before implementing it on a full scale basis (Wilson, 2010).

However, it is necessary but not sufficient. Analytics has the challenges of establishing causality of instance, or understanding and identifying triggers that provide the impetus

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for the customer to visit the company's webpage (Kumar *et al.*, 2013). In other words, analytics data alone is incomplete without understanding why the users visit the website in the first place, or even their experiences before and after they arrive. This usually involves qualitative user research, which complements the quantitative analytics data.

Altogether, these results, compiled from the chosen sample of articles, support the notion that combining business intelligence with customer insights turns an inbound marketing campaign into a key information aggregator which keeps a company competitive (Stone and Woodcock, 2014). Analytics data provides the opportunity to learn information that has the potential to improve the performance of a B2B website.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the findings in the scientific literature point to inbound marketing as an effective digital marketing strategy in part due to its engaging nature from a user's perspective. This is especially true for the customers of a B2B business, who are technically savvy and content-driven, as they are accustomed to engaging in digital channels. The results highlight the fact that in order to reach their target audience, start-ups have to look beyond SEO as their resources are limited, and the parameters are constantly changing. One method that stands out from this chapter for a B2BTS is paid search ads because they increase its visibility online and also since users view them as unobtrusive and helpful. In other words, SEM has satisfied both search engine users' penchant for relevant results, and the desire by advertisers to attract high-quality traffic to their websites, which makes it a dominant source of customer acquisition for a B2B tech start-up.

The results also address an ongoing debate among practitioners of paid search ads, which is whether or not conversion rates vary with keyword position. The academic findings suggest that advertisers should revisit their assumptions that are driving bidding wars for the top results. However, as this thesis pertains to B2B technology start-ups, the results from these studies are inconclusive regarding the optimal bidding strategies in this

situation as they focus on B2C companies that tend to have different business models. The intricacies of this nuance between a B2C and B2B, and how these results pertain to this thesis, will be discussed in the following chapter. Furthermore, one noteworthy limitation of the findings is that sponsored search ads themselves only reveal limited information, and the evaluation of the option takes place once the user is on the landing page. Consequently, multiple interrelated variables comprise the decisions regarding the optimization of paid search ad performance, and so SEM must be coupled with an understanding of the users' experience.

This makes the intersection of inbound marketing and user experience an interesting area of investigation for a B2BTS looking to maximize its customer acquisition efforts. In order to study this multidisciplinary field, this requires a deep understanding of the customer experience. This will also be discussed in the next chapter. – Additionally, the results find that it is important to understand the customer's journey before analytics and its associated metrics are chosen and measured. This is because accurate marketing requires continual testing, and a thorough understanding of the customer journey which turns an inbound marketing campaign into a key information aggregator. How this ties into a useful framework for a B2BTS will be a point of discussion in the following chapter.

It follows that the discussion in the next chapter seeks to inspire research to flourish in the direction of each of these themes, where there are currently still gaps in the extant literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The aim of this chapter is to build on the results contained in the previous one, by expanding the main points, and discussing the challenges of some of the findings. Each of the research objectives will be discussed while keeping in mind the significant findings that were explicated formerly. The aim of this discussion is to explain at the organizational level how the results of the literature review constrict our understanding based on assumptions that might not apply in a B2B technology start-up context. It questions how the results from the former chapter might be limiting and proposes an alternative viewpoint on them that could be more appropriate.

Research Objective #1

Examining inbound marketing in a systematic review of the scientific literature and understanding the rationale for its use.

Modern search technologies like online search engines have revolutionized access to information, which has propelled the discipline of marketing into novel territory. In fact, an initial study into the use of decision aids in an online environment suggest that they help customers reduce the size of their consideration sets, while improving their quality, and also ameliorate the quality of their purchase decisions (Häubl and Trifts, 2000). Due to the cognitive costs of evaluating alternatives, customers tend to focus on a limited number of results. This is especially true in the case of an evaluation of sequential choices where search is terminated quickly, and by overestimating the quality of the top ranked options (Bearden, Rapoport and Murphy, 2006).

In line with the results obtained in the previous chapter which find that users are said to have a high level of trust in the search engine's rankings as a criterion for ranking content (Schultheiß and Lewandowski, 2021) and associated better ranked search engine results with higher quality products (Ghose and Yang, 2009), the conventional wisdom among marketers and early academic was that the top results were the most clicked. Surveys

corroborate this by showing that 93% of online consumers do not look beyond the first two pages of the search engine results (Sherman, 2022). The assumption that the higher a website is on the list of search results, the more prominent and clicked it is, has inspired an SEO industry worth tens of billions of dollars. It has also prompted search engines to sell advertising in these areas, with ensuing bidding wars for the top positions (Steel, 2007). However, this assumption is meant to be challenged as there must be a distinction drawn between several factors before accepting such a general claim. The part supported by the results obtained in the previous chapter, is that there is an exponential decrease in the number of clicks with rank due to the users' attention decaying as they proceed down the list of search results (Ghose and Yang, 2009). However, when scanning the top results of the first page, there appears to be more nuance than this simple heuristic. Firstly, although click-through rate is shown across several studies in the results obtained in the previous chapter to fall as you move across the first page (Ghose and Yang, 2009; Rutz, Bucklin and Sonnier, 2012) the research suggests that search behavior across the list of ads is also influenced by a potential customer's purchase intents i.e. whether or not they are goal directed or exploratory (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011).

Secondly, although higher positions are associated with a higher quality and trust perception by the consumer, the question of convenience is also something to consider in this situation. It could be that higher positions are accessed more conveniently as users browsing sequentially, and then this is rationalized afterwards as due to trust. The higher quality can also come from the fact that users associate the first websites they see as higher quality because the advertisers that rank highest were willing to pay a larger bid, due to the fact that they have a higher marketing budget, which then explains the higher quality of their websites. There is also another factor which could contradict this idea, namely the role of branding which might prompt trust even if at a lower position compared to an unknown brand at higher positions.

Thirdly, the advances in technologies have also contributed to the rise of mobile devices. Thus, it is essential to understand the behaviors associated with mobile usage to design an effective marketing campaign, as 50% of total website traffic comes from mobile and 96% of mobile users search on Google (Sherman, 2022). Interestingly, the importance of the

distinction between mobile vs. desktop browsing behaviors is made by authors in an article comprising the literature review of this thesis (Gupta, Mateen and Ramendra Singh, 2014). Beyond the results obtained in the previous chapter, the ranking effect of search engine results is more prominent on mobile devices due to the smaller screens compared to personal computers. The device that the user is utilizing in order to perform a search is therefore a crucial factor that has to be accounted for in the analysis. Fourthly, such an assumption does not consider profitability, a crucial metric for measuring business success, vis-à-vis the position of the ad on the search engine's list. There has been work done on the optimal bidding strategies of advertisers with large sets of heterogeneous keywords (Borgs *et al.*, 2007; Cary *et al.*, 2007; Feldman *et al.*, 2007; Hosanagar and Cherepanov, 2008) that seek to present models to optimize bidding to maximize advertiser profits when they have tight budget constraints. This body of literature captures the notion that higher positions get more clicks and have a higher cost. However, it does not speak to the impact of ad positions on the profitability of advertisers. Other prior work is also assumes a uniform value of a click across all ranks (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011). This however, ignores the crucial connection between conversion rates and position. Therefore, the results obtained in the previous chapter are important for addressing the question of profitability. Researchers find that the higher positions have higher conversion rates (Ghose and Yang, 2009; Rutz and Trusov, 2011), potentially due to the fact that higher positions are associated with a higher quality and trust perception by the consumer. However, those higher positions not necessarily the most profitable ones (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011; Ghose and Yang, 2009). This suggests that advertisers ought to revisit their assumptions which are driving bidding wars for top positions. However, what the results obtained in the previous chapter do not address is the fact that the profitability of a company depends on its business model, and more precisely its profit margin. In certain situations, the incremental cost of having a higher position is negligible compared to the size of the potential revenue. The authors of some of the studies from the previous chapter analyze data from B2C retailers with tight margins, which is not necessarily relevant to a B2B business. In fact some of the results from the previous chapter suggest that data from e-tailing websites is not precisely pertinent to B2B marketing (Wilson, 2010). Furthermore, there is research beyond this

suggesting that business marketers tend to communicate with fewer customers than B2C and with typically larger individual transactions (Lilien, 2016). As this thesis pertains to B2B tech start-ups, the results obtained in the previous chapter are inconclusive regarding the optimal bidding strategies in this situation for several reasons. For starters the manner in which the users browse the sequential list could vary between B2C customers and B2B clients due to the nature of the purchase process. This is somewhat corroborated by the finding from the literature review that B2B customers are technically savvy and content-driven, as they are accustomed to engaging in digital channels (Vieira *et al.*, 2019). For instance, a B2B user might be more exhaustive than a B2C user because of the larger transaction size and the implications of choosing incorrectly. These points alone can create considerable nuance by adding another variable which was discussed earlier: whether or not the user is goal oriented or exploratory. To add to the possible complexity there could be other factors like multiple decision makers in a B2B context, each with their own approach when searching online depending on their role within the company that is purchasing. Moreover, the results obtained in the previous chapter suggest that a business should not be bidding for the top position and instead aim at intermediate ones (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011; Ghose and Yang, 2009) can be looked at from another perspective. It could be that appearing at the top instead of the middle of the list of ads could convey trust and authority that is crucial in being selected. This incremental cost through a higher bid might be easily offset by the expected value of a potential client, given the larger transaction size in a B2B business.

It is worth mentioning that the results obtained in the previous chapter find that sponsored search ads themselves only reveal limited information, and the evaluation of the option takes place once the user is on the landing page (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011; Ghose and Yang, 2009). Another article from the literature review also finds that that multiple interrelated variables comprise the decisions regarding the optimization of paid search ad performance. These include the selection of keywords, the targeted rank on the results page, the maximal bid amount, the textual content and layout of the ad, as well as the landing page and its design (Rutz and Trusov, 2011). Some of these factors have already been discussed up to this point in this chapter, and the others will be explored in more detail in proceeding paragraphs.

Overall, the discussion of the results obtained in the previous chapter so far indicates that inbound marketing, specifically paid search ads, is more multi-faceted than simply whether or not the user will click on the link to the website. It requires the study of a multitude of factors and their intersections, which is a multidisciplinary endeavor. This final point bring us to the next section where the discussion expands the discussion on inbound marketing by connecting paid search advertising with the field of UX in the context of improving a B2B technology start-up's customer acquisition.

Research Objective #2

Explore the intersection of marketing and user experience, with special attention given to find methods that favor B2B tech start-ups.

When studying the intersections of inbound marketing and UX from the point of view of the results obtained in the previous chapter it is salient that there is an ever important need for companies to have precise insights on their customers in order to deliver personalized experiences, which improve customer acquisition and retention (Stone and Woodcock, 2014). This is especially the case for B2B business, whereby their customers respond online to information from a source that coherently understands their needs and purchase consideration cycle (Holliman and Rowley, 2014). The former is what makes SEM as an inbound marketing technique so unique compared to other forms of online ads and traditional marketing. This due to the fact that clicks on sponsored search ads are presumed to happen close to a user's decision making on a particular purchase, while matching the user's information needs (Hosanagar and Cherepanov, 2008). This is accentuated in the case in a B2B business model, where clients usually complete around 60% of their purchase decision before even conversing with any supplier (Adamson, Dixon and Toman, 2012). Additionally, customers now have expectations that companies will invest in building a relationship with them before they purchase (Odden, 2012).

Indeed, the results obtained in the previous chapter find that an increase in a the quality of the landing page of a search ad is linked to an increase in conversion rates (Agarwal,

Hosanagar and Smith, 2011; Ghose and Yang, 2009) which speaks to the fact that the company has to be cognizant of its users' experience to position itself as a trusted expert, and ultimately provide an enticing solution (Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021). Moreover, another study from the literature review finds that a key facet of B2B marketing is that it is characterized by tailored messaging that matches the buyer's position in their customer journey (Holliman and Rowley, 2014). It is thus crucial according to the results obtained in the previous chapter for a B2BTS to tailor its processes to create a customer experience that is personalized according to the client's journey (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). This emphasizes the importance of building a CX with a holistic and interconnected view of cognitive, emotional and behavioral elements that comprise a customer's interaction with a company.

With regards to this notion, another one of the chosen articles suggests that purchase decisions are not a static series of steps; it is an interactive and dynamic process whereby marketers have to engage with customers throughout their buying journeys (Vieira *et al.*, 2019). What is interesting to note is that the results obtained in the previous chapter do not make the distinction of the aspect of CX and customer journey that might be multifaceted by the fact that there might be multiple decision makers in the case of a single B2B customer. In other words, in a B2C context a buyer tends to be a single individual as opposed to a B2B context whereby a single buyer can be a group of individuals each with their own objectives. It is well established in the UX field that participants have very specific thoughts regarding what they expect to encounter when they navigate through a website, and this influences their ultimate satisfaction (Gould and Coyle, 2002). The assumption in the results obtained in the previous chapter is that buyers are homogenous, meaning that they tend to have more or less similar expectations regarding what they expect to find on a website. As the B2C website studied for the purpose of this literature review tend to be retailers, this is understandable. However as the purpose of this research is to explore the less studied aspect of B2B transactions, which is a heterogeneous client base with varying expectations. Indeed, in a business-to-business context, each decision maker can be viewed as having their own individual CX, as they are looking at distinct criteria, features and benefits of a product or service online when making a decision. They each have their own goals, which mean that their browsing behavior might also differ.

Moreover, their methods of communication might also be different, which includes the ways in which they like to be contacted as well as the language that they use. On top of this, depending on the decision makers, their time constraints are also an important factor which influences their individual attention spans when looking for a solution. Finally, the potential size of the transaction and its potential impact on the buyers' business could be a crucial factor in determining the extent of the users' browsing.

As such, a criticism the results obtained in the previous chapter is that in a B2B context specifically, inbound marketing SEM strategies owe their success to a holistic method incorporating design properties and user segmentation; which has been thus far largely overshadowed by an academic approach focused on keyword properties and assuming homogenous user preferences (Rutz and Trusov, 2011). Indeed, customers in the case of sponsored search are heterogeneous in terms of their purchasing intents and, consequently, their resulting search behaviors (Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011). Consequently, when grounding an inbound marketing strategy, it is paramount to develop a characterization of the potential buyers, typically called personas. This allows the B2BTS to narrow down its target audience and highlight the specifics of its product or service. A persona includes personal and professional demographic information about the buyers, their motivations, concerns, problems, goals, how they find information and make decisions. This representation allows the B2BTS to tailor its communication style with its targeted clients, speak their language, capture their attention and convert them into new business opportunities (Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021). Therefore, depending on the expectations and intentions of a potential customer, as well as their position along the customer journey, a B2B website manager has to be very careful when designing their website to avoid having a one size fits all approach (Chakraborty, Srivastava and Warren, 2005). This discussion from the above paragraphs directly impacts a B2B tech start-up's UX efforts, because by considering the nuances associated with the multifaceted aspect of a potential transaction, a seller can tailor its landing page according to the buyers' journeys, which would increase its chances of customer acquisition. To add even more nuance to the discussion, this would translate into an inbound marketing campaign with several potential landing pages for the same potential client. This is the case because a single client's decision makers each have their own client journeys. Consequently they

respond distinctly to information about the same product or service. The results obtained in the previous chapter do touch on this subject. To add to the complexity, another study has shown that consumers de-emphasize the information that they use to screen the query result while they conduct their search (Chakravarti, UlkUmen and Janiszewski, 2006). These results point to the fact that a B2BTS wishing to optimize its CX strategy has to look beyond the ads themselves, and allocate attention to designing the user experience.

Moreover, the results obtained in the previous chapter do not get into detail regarding the distinction of this notion in a B2B context, and the importance of managing an ad campaign with potentially multiple customer journeys simultaneously, as is done in this discussion. To go even deeper, within the buying journey of one individual among a group of decision makers, there are multiple steps each with their own intricacies and nuances. For instance, one factor that is important to consider in each of these steps is the purchase intent, which increases as the target gets further along the customer journey. This would entail a through mapping of the journey, and consequently the deployment of the appropriate inbound marketing campaign, in order to maximize the engagement from each potential decision maker. The ultimate aim of such an approach is for the B2BTS to maximize the customer engagement, defined as the extent to which a customer will initiate contact with a business (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

In order to study the intricacies of the different UX and marketing aspects of a B2B transaction, after the potential client is directed to the landing page through the sponsored search ad, it is incumbent on the B2BTS to analyze the data it receives about the customers' journeys through its analytics, as mentioned in the results obtained in the previous chapter. However, looking at this from a critical lens, one of the main issues with this point regarding the development of analytics from the standpoint of a business is that collecting large volume of data does not necessarily equal into turning that data into actionable insights. It can be argued that this is the case because marketing practitioners have not developed their analytics capabilities enough or connected the analytics data with UX insights to create an insightful conglomeration of information. This is crucial because analytics capabilities are an essential ingredient, which form the basis for understanding and personalizing the client journey.

On top of that, organizing data into specific metrics is a start, like clickstream data for instance, as seen in the results obtained in the previous chapter, that collects information about number of page views, frequency of visits, items viewed and overall duration of the user on the website (Kumar *et al.*, 2013). With this data B2B marketing executives can study the problems the three main causes of website abandonment: the appropriateness of the content, the effectiveness of the design, and the efficiency of the website's performance (Phippen, Sheppard and Furnell, 2004). This data also makes evaluating the design of individual web pages possible to improve the overall website performance, as mistakes in website design are common (Nielsen, 2000).

However, what is lacking from the results obtained in the previous chapter is an emphasis on the notion that data collection is necessary but not sufficient. Analytics has the challenges of establishing causality of instance, or understanding and identifying triggers that provide the impetus for the customer to visit the company's webpage. In other words, analytics data alone is incomplete without understanding why the users visit the website in the first place or even their experiences before and after they arrive. This usually involves qualitative user research, which complements the quantitative analytics data. This highlights the importance of approaching an inbound marketing campaign with a user experience lens in order to maximize the customer acquisition insights in the advertising campaign of a B2BTS.

Research Objective #3

Developing a framework that B2B technology start-ups in the technology sector can leverage for their marketing efforts.

In order to connect the dots between marketing and UX and apply this knowledge in the context of a B2B tech start-up, a framework was developed. The aim of this framework is to outline key areas of focus, in order to simplify a complex process into digestible components that can be easily understood and applied. As stated previously, start-ups have limited resources. The intention of this framework is to save them time by

synthesizing the literature; and save them money by helping them narrow the areas in which they can invest their financial capital. It would also help guide them in optimizing their talent by allocating the proper tasks to the right people.

The framework relies on pillars which consist of 4 areas of interest that relate to inbound marketing (see figure 1) namely:

1- Data Collection
2- Marketing Tools
3- Marketing Tasks
4- Assigned Roles
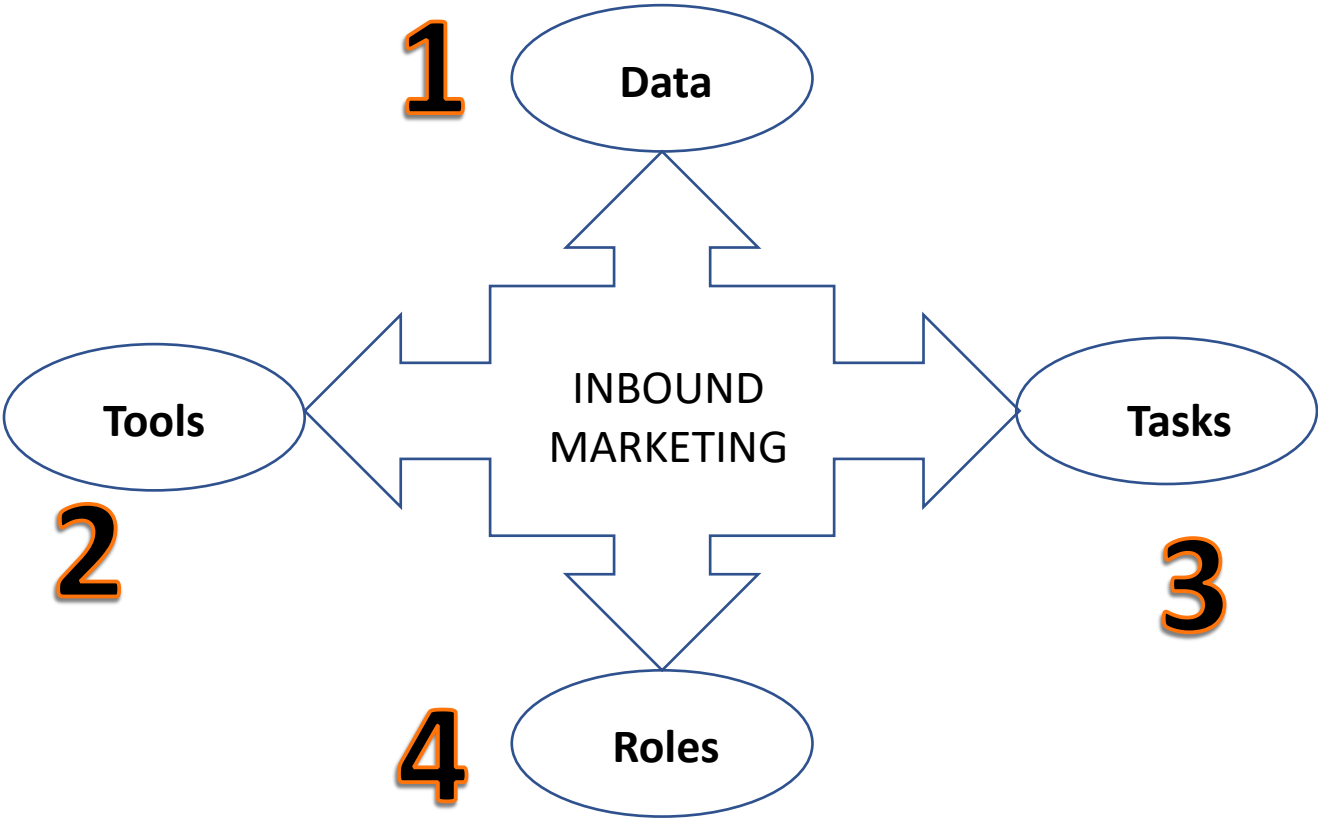
Figure 1: Preliminary Framework for Inbound Marketing

Preliminary Framework for Inbound Marketing

1- Data Collection

This pillar of the framework consists of intelligence regarding the customer journey. It incorporates the main steps along this process for each individual buyer. It also includes multiple client journeys for different types of buyers.

Regarding sponsored search ads, a crucial data point in SEM is the understanding of the language and keywords used by a potential buyer. In conjunction with the results from the previous chapter, this data can be used to create targeted landing pages for each type of potential customer.

Additionally related to the theme of SEM, knowledge about the strategies used by competitors, while bidding for certain keywords, is included in this part of the framework.

Furthermore, in line with the analytics theme, the data collected throughout the marketing campaign is also a key component of this pillar.

2 – Marketing Tools

In order to gather the necessary data, a B2BTS has to choose the analytics tools that allow it to collect the information that will give it the necessary insights about its potential customers. As SEM is typically done on Google, the Google Analytics tool is a useful place to start. However, it is common practice to compliment it with other analytics software to aid in the collection of a broader data set. The exact analytics tool to settle on is outside the scope of this thesis. It is also important to consider that different metrics are appropriate to measure different aspects of the client journey for distinct types of customers.

Moreover, leveraging analytics data into actionable insights involves the implementation of a communication strategy, which contains various tactics. These vary according to the type of product being offered. The type of keywords selected for SEM for instance is tied to a B2BTS's understanding of its customers' journeys.

Consequently, the analytics data and the communication strategy are interwoven into the creation of a UX through the design of the company's landing pages which maximizes the probability that the potential customer becomes a paying client.

3- Marketing Tasks

With the understanding of the language that a client would use to search for its specific solution, a B2BTS can optimize its selection of keywords that it would use to bid for ads.

Once this is established, a B2BTS begins by creating different landing pages, at least one for each customer persona. It is also possible to test the conversion rates of two slightly different landing pages with A/B testing.

Afterwards, the use of analytics data from the first ad campaign informs the B2BTS how to adjust its approach in order to retain its potential customers' attention through its UX design and consequently increase its conversion rates.

4- Assigned Roles

Implementing an inbound marketing campaign for a B2BTS requires the assignment of specific roles within the start-up. These roles have the potential to be assigned to completely distinct individuals if resources permit it.

The following 4 roles were identified in the case of an inbound marketing strategy:

  (a) Marketing Manager
  (b) Website Administrator
  (c) Copywriter
  (d) Google Expert

A table was constructed on the following page in order to highlight the intricacies of each role.

Marketing Manager:	Google Expert:
Implementing multiple communication strategies based on the client journey of potential customers.	Create ads based on selected keywords and evaluate their performance.
Copywriter:	Website Administrator:
Redact content that the potential client will interact with and adapt it according to each buyer's language.	Design the created content into web pages in line with a desired UX outcome.

Table 6: Assigned Roles in the Case of an Inbound Marketing Strategy

As aim of the framework is to inform a B2BTS's marketing effort, and that the design of a user experience is an integral component of such efforts, the framework was expanded in order to include a UX approach.

Enhanced Framework for Inbound Marketing

In order to expand the discussion and focus on UX and apply this knowledge in the context of a B2B tech start-up, the framework was enhanced to give a broader lens through which to view inbound marketing in a holistic manner. The new framework (see figure 2) relies on 4 new pillars which consist of 4 areas of interest that relate to inbound marketing from a UX lens, namely:

1- Richness of the Interface
2- Ease of Use
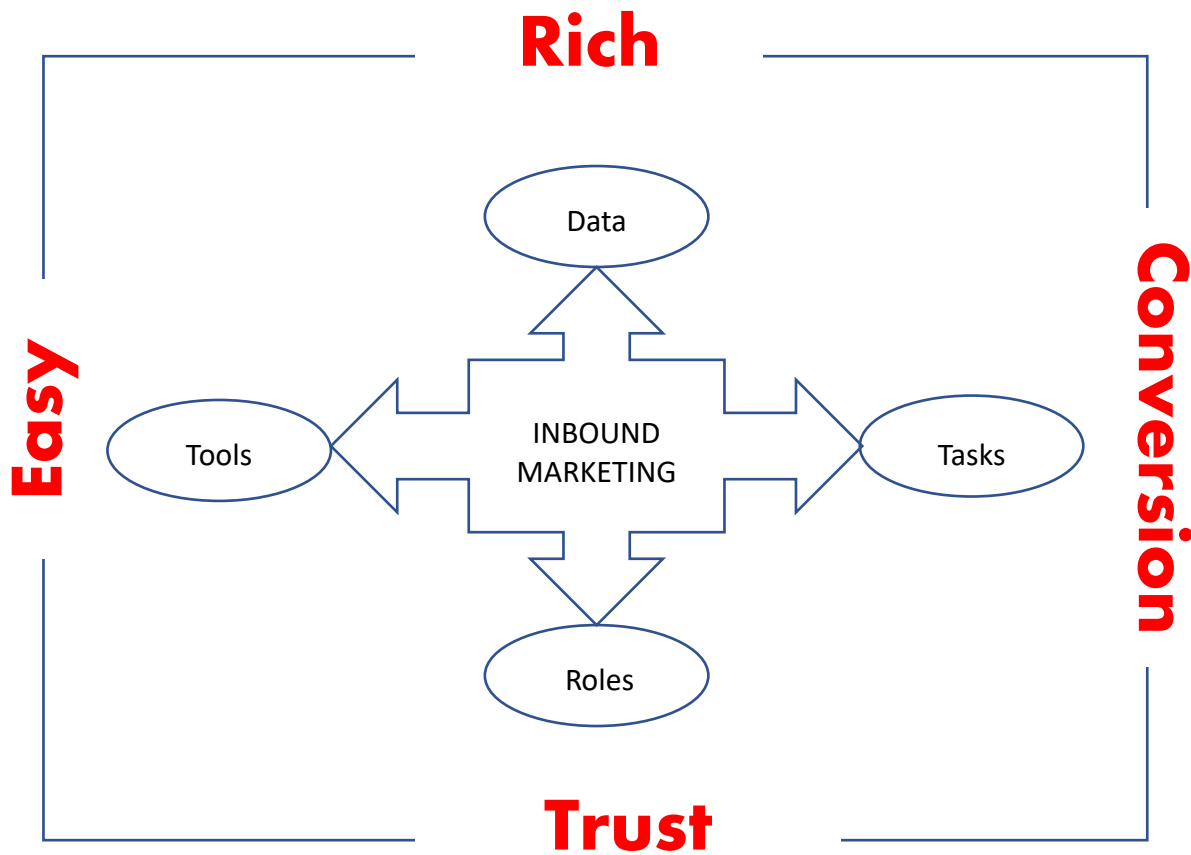3- Inspiring Trust
4- Prompting Conversion

Figure 2: Enhanced Framework for Inbound Marketing

1- Richness of the Interface

From a UX perspective, a rich interface contains content that is appealing to a potential customer. In the context of a B2BTS, the landing page that it directs the client towards once they click on the ad has to showcase content that is precisely targeted and geared toward this customer. Besides the informational component, the interface must also exhibit esthetic appeal. Depending on the specific solution that the B2BTS is presenting, this content can vary is form, and a detailed breakdown is outside the scope of this thesis.

2- Ease of Use

This refers to the ease with which a user can navigate a website. As previously mentioned, an understanding of each potential client's journey is the impetus behind the design of a sequence of steps, which culminate in the customer taking a desired action. Once the potential customer is on the landing page, ease of use is involved in the UX design as it removes friction and maintains the user on the desired trajectory towards becoming a client.

3- Inspiring Trust

In the business world, trust and competence are intricately linked. The pillar of trust is foundational in a B2B relationship, where a solution is tied to profitability which is the lifeblood of a business. In the context of a B2BTS, this links to the expertise that is communicated throughout the client journey according to the chosen communication strategy. A tailored customer experience throughout this process communicates competence to a potential customer, for instance via the chosen content that comprises the B2BTS website's interface.

4- Prompting Conversion

Finally, the aim of a rich interface that is easy to use and inspires trust is to prompt a potential customer to purchase the B2BTS's solutions. In order to acquire its leads by transforming them into clients, the B2BTS must have a clear call-to-action in its marketing campaign. Whether it is filling out a contact form, requesting a demo or downloading a file, to name a few examples, the intended result via the conversion rate is to be measured and improved.

The figure 3 on the following page illustrates the coming together of the UX elements of this enhanced framework chronologically.

Rich

Trust

Easy

Conversion

Keyword Search **Landing Page** **Browsing Website** **Initiate Contact**

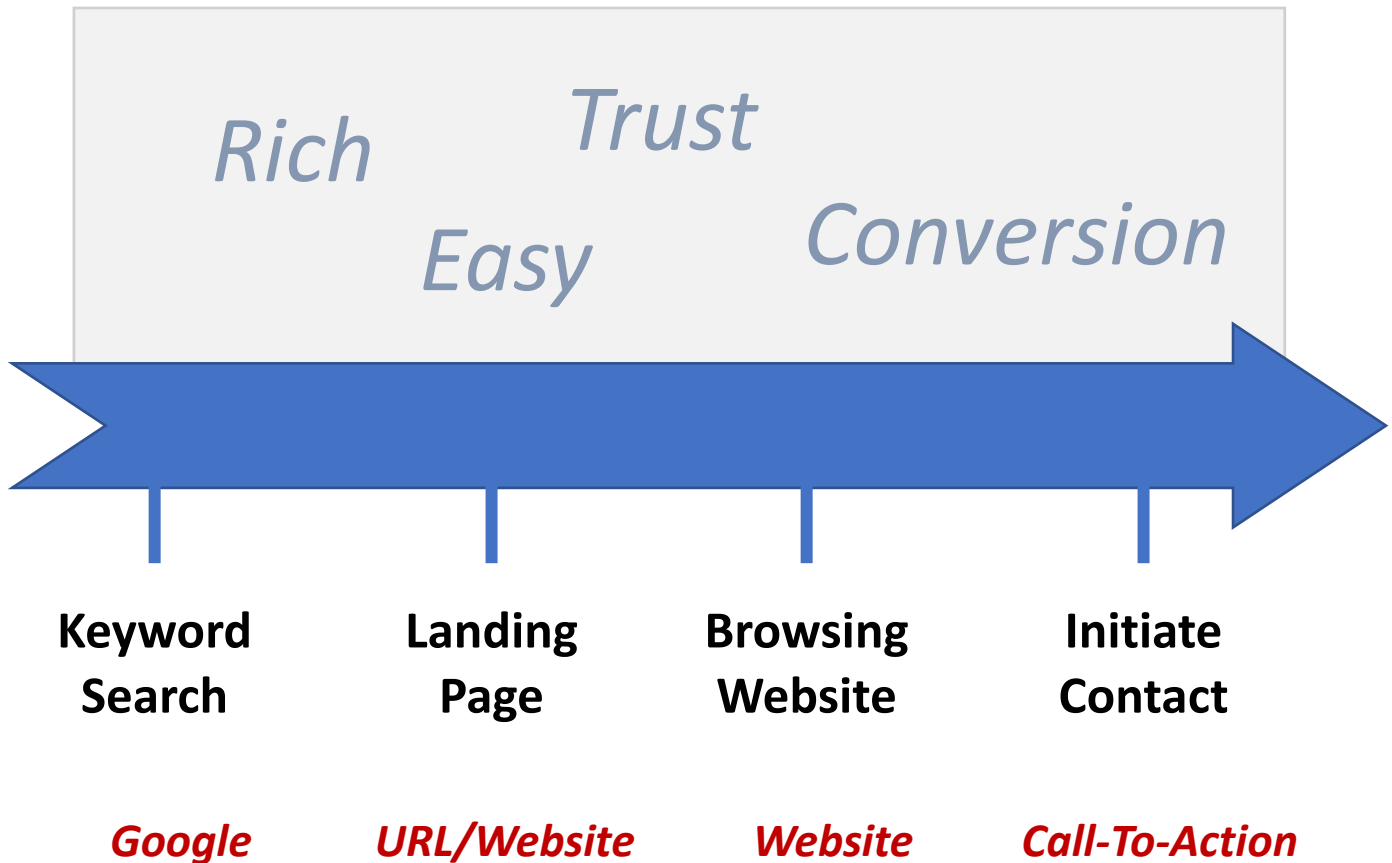*Google* *URL/Website* *Website* *Call-To-Action*

Figure 3: Chronological Progression of a Potential Customer

Altogether, the various elements of the enhanced framework are inherently linked, and the implementation surrounding a B2BTS's inbound marketing strategy ties these pillars together. The exact approach that will consequently emerge from such a process is outside the scope of this thesis.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In closing, this chapter reflects upon the research objectives that were attained in the previous chapters. Firstly, the objective of examining inbound marketing and the rationales for it within a marketing strategy in the scientific literature was reached through a systematic literature review, and more specifically a narrative review with elements of a critical review. Secondly, the intersections of marketing and UX in an inbound marketing context was explored with a focus on information that favors B2B technology start-ups, by dissecting the articles from the literature review in order to extract the main relevant findings and critique knowledge gaps. Thirdly, a framework was developed that a B2BTS can leverage in an inbound marketing context while applying its efforts towards customer acquisition. The aim of this chapter is to reiterate the main points of the discussion within the overall context of this thesis. This chapter also seeks to identify limitations and avenues for future research.

Summary of Findings

Primarily, with the advent of modern technologies, marketers are increasingly shifting their focus from traditional methods to new forms of digital and social marketing. As such, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to discuss the findings of the scientific literature as it relates to inbound marketing in specific, mainly in the context of customer acquisition, and from a user experience lens.

The success of inbound marketing is in fostering communication and creating interactivity. Start-ups which have limited advertising resources, can compete in the marketplace by using paid searches that are targeted to their potential customers in a sophisticated manner in order to better position themselves where and when their clients are looking for the types of solutions that they provide. This is a solution for start-ups looking to attract customers with the problem of having a tight marketing budget. By adopting this digital strategy, B2B technology start-ups tailor their products/services as a function of its potential buyers' persona. Using this marketing technique, they can capture

the attention and interest of their customers, who are already actively seeking information and advice regarding a particular product or service that meets their needs. This way the B2BTS can match their needs and desires with specific ads on search engines, in order to turn them into active customers. In the case of paid ads on Google, by knowing specifically the terms that its customers are searching, a B2B tech start-up can utilize its knowledge to post online ads that will gain attention, capture interest and generate quality traffic to its website. This leads to more accurate communication and consequently, more efficient and effective prospecting, which enhances sales and profits.

Moreover, this research also uncovered the subtleties of the inbound marketing and UX techniques from the perspective of a B2B technology start-up. In the context of a B2BTS, it is worth noting that their customers are technically savvy and quite versed in engaging comfortably through digital channels and frequently leverage the internet as the initial source. Consequently, in order to create business building outcomes, it is important for these B2B technology start-ups to position themselves by being aware of the key points in their buyer's purchase cycles, and engage them with the appropriate and relevant keywords on the search engine that they are using in their information gathering processes, i.e. their client journey. This will help it build the foundation for a strong partnership with its intended customers.

On top of this, a seller can tailor its landing page according to the buyers' journeys, which would increase its chances of customer acquisition. This would entail a through mapping of the journey, and consequently the deployment of the appropriate inbound marketing campaign, in order to maximize the engagement from each potential client. The ultimate aim of such an approach is for the B2BTS to maximize the customer engagement, defined as the extent to which a customer will initiate contact with a business.

Furthermore, in order to better measure its results, a B2B tech start-up can use its website's analytics data in driving marketing decisions. As a part of a greater marketing strategy, this involves transforming the perception of the marketing department within a company from a cost drain, into a value generating center.

Additionally, with rapidly improving technologies, real time analytics are opening new possibilities for interactive marketing compared to traditional methods and improving a B2B tech start-up's return on investment and areas of improvement. Such knowledge has the potential to enable B2B technology start-ups to acquire high quality clients via precision marketing acquisition methods and engage them with uniquely personalized experiences to maximize their retention.

Finally, this thesis has accomplished the feat of being a multi-disciplinary endeavor seeking to broaden our comprehension of the scientific literature and its practical application. Armed with these results, practitioners and researchers can use them to their advantage when designing a marketing campaign or seeking to push the frontiers of scientific literature respectively.

Implications for Researchers

While previous research has focused on inbound marketing in the context of large enterprises and B2C, this research narrows the focus on significant findings into the specific perspective of B2B technology start-ups. These findings are important because they lay the foundation for a holistic view of inbound marketing as a strategy and field of study in the context of modern technology within a B2BTS. As such, this paper both synthesizes and challenges existing academic findings, which furthers current understanding of novel parts of the business environment which were up until now little explored.

Moreover, this thesis sets the groundwork for comprehending inbound marketing with a UX lens, and therefore connects multiple disciplines which can be fruitful avenues for researchers to examine further. The results of this research should therefore be considered when looking at a marketing strategy that optimizes customer acquisition efforts for a B2B technology start-up with limited resources.

Overall, these findings suggest that more investigation is required into multiple subfields of inbound marketing and opens the possibility for further research.

Implications for Practitioners

As marketing practice continuously adapts to digital advancements, this paper highlights through a framework, the specific elements necessary for the implementation of a B2BTS's inbound marketing strategy. The practical importance of the ensuing recommendations that stem from this thesis are grounded in the fact that one of the main challenges of a B2BTS is in its technical overemphasis, to the detriment of its marketing efforts.

The foundation of this framework is a UX centric approach to inbound marketing, which broadens the scope of a practitioner's customer acquisition strategy by incorporating interconnected features. In order to implement a strategy that includes a prominence of the user experience, the design of the client journey is a crucial factor.

Consequently, the following 3 recommendations stem from the results and discussion of this thesis:

1- Allocating more resources towards marketing efforts. This can be achieved in various forms, such as dedicated more staff time towards marketing, hiring outside assistance, which can take the form of interns in order to avoid cost overruns.
   Once the first recommendation is implemented, the foundations of the marketing team are created.
2- Implementing systems that keep track of the marketing activities in order to create the rigour and structure necessary to perpetuate these efforts. These can take the form of daily dashboards highlighting the results of the key performance indicators necessary for customer acquisition success.
3- Create the design of the client journey by investigating each touchpoint for all potential customers. This eventuates in the creation of a customer journey map which allows the B2BTS to ideate regarding the user experience it seeks to create, and the methods to achieve the desired outcome for each respective touchpoint.

The exact areas of interest for inbound marketing as well as the UX components surrounding it are specified in order to guide marketing efforts. Although some examples

are presented in this section, the exact subtleties of each component of the framework in this thesis are to be assessed on a case by case basis. Consequently, the latter is outside the scope of this thesis.

Limitations

From an inbound marketing and paid search ads point of view, this research does not address or evaluate the individual performance of select keywords. It also does not consider non-transactional benefits for SEM, like increased product awareness and brand exposure. Additionally, the research also focused on Google because of its sheer dominance as a search engine, but other search engines could have different results.

From a UX standpoint, there is no discussion around Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools and how they can be incorporated into B2B online activities to maximize CX. There is also limited discussion around the optimal customer journey design strategies that can be used by B2B technology start-ups when brainstorming this aspect of its users' experience.

Avenues for Future Research

As this research focused purely on inbound marketing, it is worth noting that a study combining both inbound and outbound marketing, and how they complement each other would be insightful. This is especially important as many start-ups engage in both online and offline channels. Understanding the customer journey through such a multichannel approach would bring more valuable information for B2B tech start-ups looking to improve their marketing efforts.

Also, paid search data research as previously stated is mostly keyword centric. This thesis looks beyond this by also incorporating a client-centric approach. One area that merits more investigation is the study of ad designs specifically on search engines, which can provide the best practices to a B2BTS instead of it having to spend extra resources doing A/B testing for instance to optimize this aspect of its campaigns.

Furthermore, there is little empirical work directly related to customer experience and customer journey. No strong customer experience scales have been developed, which creates a void that researcher can fill. The contributions, as well as the interactions, of the numerous touch points in the customer journey to CX are also a potentially rich area of investigation. Looking at customer engagement as a method for a B2BTS to extract valuable information from its customers and help it in co-creating an improved version of their product is also a field that is open to scientific endeavor.

A further exploration of the character of content in a B2B context that customers respond to in a specific industry is also warranted, adding to previous research on information quality and how it is judged in a B2B relationship building context.

From an analytics point of view, guidelines regarding metrics and key performance indicators for B2B technology start-ups would also be useful to explore.

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Appendix I

INBOUND MARKETING

Reference	Database	Research Questions/Objectives	Main Findings
(Lehnert, Goupil and Brand, 2021)	Emerald Peer Reviewed	Addressing the broad components of inbound marketing.	By properly targeting their customers and using measurement tools, businesses can increase the efficiency of their advertising budgets.
(Kumar *et al.*, 2013)	Emerald Peer Reviewed	Provide insight into the advantages of data-driven marketing.	Data is a crucial component of business strategy and its potential resides in its ability, with the right metrics, to inform strategic marketing decisions.

Table 7: Selected articles relating to general information about inbound marketing

Reference	Database	Research Questions/Objectives	Main Findings
(Schultheiß and Lewandowski, 2021)	Emerald Peer Reviewed	Discussing Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and its role in search engine rankings.	Combining the viewpoints of search engine providers, content providers, users and search engine optimizers on SEO.
(Gupta, Mateen and Ramendra Singh, 2014)	Emerald Peer Reviewed	Conceptualize a model for paid search ads by incorporating factors that affect their performance.	Offers insight regarding the role of various factors, namely the rank of the ad, and how this factor is sensitive to the user's device.
(Rutz, Bucklin and Sonnier, 2012)	Business II Peer Reviewed	Assess the performance vis-à-vis conversions of individual keywords in search engine ads.	Higher positions increase both the click through rate and the conversion rates.
(Ghose and Yang, 2009)	INFORMS Journals Peer Reviewed	Understand the relationship between keywords, their position in the search engine ads and the landing page quality score with regards to consumer search and purchase behaviors as well as advertisers' costs.	Higher positions: - Have higher click through and conversion rates - Are not necessarily the most profitable ones. Increase in landing page quality scores is linked to an increase in conversion rates and a decrease in advertiser costs per click.

(Agarwal, Hosanagar and Smith, 2011)	SAGE Journals Peer Reviewed	Evaluate the impact of paid search ad positions on advertisers' profits.	Higher positions have higher click through rates but are not necessarily the profit-maximizing positions.
(Rutz and Trusov, 2011)	INFORMS Journals Peer Reviewed	Analyze the composition and design attributes of paid search ads from a customer-centric rather than keyword-centric perspective.	Evaluating the effects of specific ad properties on ad performance varies when taking consumer heterogeneity into account.

Table 8: Selected articles relating to inbound marketing specifically paid search ads

USER EXPERIENCE & CLIENT JOURNEY

Reference	Database	Research Questions/Objectives	Main Findings
(Lemon and Verhoef, 2016)	SAGE Journals	Provide an overview of the constructs of Customer Experience and Customer Journey	This area of interest is multidisciplinary, and includes customer management, satisfaction, service quality, relationship marketing and customer experience. Many aspects of it are still void of scholarship and are a greenfield for research.
(Vieira *et al.*, 2019)	BioMed Central Peer Reviewed	Study the effectiveness of digital communications on B2B sales and customer acquisition.	Digital inbound marketing and owned media are more effective than other types of media. Purchase decisions are not a linear series of steps, it is an interactive and dynamic process whereby marketers have to engage with customers

			throughout their buying journeys.
(Holliman and Rowley, 2014)	Emerald	Study the best practices for B2B inbound marketing	B2B audiences respond online to information from a source that coherently understands their needs and purchase consideration cycle.
(Moral, Gonzalez and Plaza, 2014)	Emerald Peer Reviewed	Analyze the visibility and performance of a website while testing the effectiveness of online marketing using Google Analytics.	Online campaigns increase traffic volume but their effectiveness on the quality of traffic is uncertain. Paid keywords do not affect volume or quality of unpaid traffic. Increases in traffic volume are not always due to the paid keywords. Lowest quality traffic comes from paid traffic.
(Wilson, 2010)	Emerald Peer Reviewed	Examine how clickstream data from a B2B website can be used to evaluate and improve website performance.	Clickstream data analysis using web analytics tools is useful for enhancing a B2B website by investigating the conversion and purchase process of a website visitor.
(Stone and Woodcock, 2014)	Emerald	Explain how companies can support their interactive marketing efforts.	Combining business intelligence with customer insights turns marketing into a key information aggregator which keeps a company competitive.

Table 9: Selected articles relating to user experience and the client journey