Measuring Inbound Marketing

Luukas Raatikainen

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Advisor(s) Tarja Autio	

Inbound Marketing has proven to be one of the most efficient ways to operate marketing, especially in a nieche market. The effiency of Inbound marketing has its roots deep down in analytics and marketing metrics.

The objective of this thesis is to give in-depth analysis how Inbound Marketing works and what makes it so effective, and what kind of metrics and analytics should be followed in order to recognize success in marketing conducted. Key performance indicators that reflect how successful marketing has been in acqruiring contacts, leads and eventually customers will be explained.

Metrics and key performance indicators explored in this thesis follow established customs layed out by industry leaders over the years and explain how to use them in this everchanging world. Marketers never had this variety of analytic tools at their disposal and this thesis addresses which tools are the most suitable for inbound marketing especially.

It will be also analyzed how all data gathered with these tools should be used to make inbound marketing even more succesful, and what to keep in mind when creating content for your audiences.

Key words
Inbound Marketing, Analytics, Digital Marketing, Content Marketing

Sisällys

1   Introduction

Inbound Marketing as a term originated from one of co-founders and CEO of Hubspot, Brian Halligan. Brian, Drarmesh Shah and David Meerman Scott threw in some existing marketing theories and newly adopted internet marketing trends and they noticed how internet was changing how marketing was exercised. This is how they came to thought about new ways to execute marketing, and this is how Inbound Marketing was created (Our Story, Hubspot 2018).

This report is an inspection of Inbound Marketing, how it has become the most viable tool in attracting audiences in modern marketing and what metrics in inbound marketing should be followed. Inbound Marketing has not been integral part of marketing mix prior to this decade, but it has now taken its part in all marketing conducted. Television, - newspaper-, radio- and internet advertisement isn't meant to advise audiences anymore. Their mission is to engage and peek interest nowadays in inbound marketing.

In this thesis, Inbound Marketing will be reflected in some cases as a part of marketing in a small software startup firm. How inbound marketing works in a small nieche audience and what are the means to gain the interest of the audience. What actions can be considered key elements and what part are to strengthen those core elements? Separating inbound marketing into phases and key factors lets us examine what are the most essential and influential part in the marketing conducted.

Why Inbound Marketing has become more relevant than ever? The change that has been in the making in the world of marketing is still moving through different organisations. When all content is meant to raise interest, organisations must be able to stand out throught all the noice. Creating content that intrigues and educates is the key. Your target audience must be able get value from your content. If your content does not provide that, they will get it from somewhere else (They Ask You Answer 2017).

Following the guidelines layed out by succesfull Inbound marketing organization, like Hubspot, any group can create content that peak the interest of your key demografics. Once this interest is created and audience is reached, there are certain metric and analytics that must be measured.

Hubspot is the leading provides for inbound marketing software, and it was founded in 2006. It's CEO Brian Halligan and co-founder Dharmesh Shah were the ones to call the marketing strategy they come up with as Inbound marketing. Currently they have over 41 000 customers in over 90 countries and are still industry leaders in inbound marketing software (Hubspot 2018)

Data and analytics are central part of inbound marketing. In the age of information technology, every organization have the necessary tools to measure their marketing. Tools like Hubspot and Google Analytics give immensive advantage to those organisations compared to those who don't use them. A/B testing, user analytics and leadflows are core elements of inbound marketing. To know what has been done correctly, one must measure actions taken.

1.1 Background

Inbound marketing has evolved from thoughts of couple of MIT graduates in to highly executable marketing strategy. Thousands of business owners find inbound marketing to fit their business and have adopted ideas that Halligan and his partners created (Hubspot 2017).

As adopting to digital age was a problem for some business' that wanted to keep doing what they had been doing for decades, those who were willing to adopt and evolve into digitalism were rising to the top. Looking into most profitable and highly valued companies nowadays, we can see trend that those organisations that have access and can evaluate data are the forerunners of digital world. These data-driven companies are a huge part of inbound marketing; Google and Facebook at the top.

Leveraging data and using it to target even the most nieche audience became a thing when big data companies became mainstream. Their services enable inbound marketing as we know it. Data-driven marketing can almost solely be based on usage of platforms that are most popular within your audience, and as Google for example is the most used search engine in all demografics you can rely on them having the most fresh and accurate data for your marketing.

We can only wonder what would inbound marketing be, if these big companies weren't the ones to embrace information technology as they now have. Would there be a universal search engine without google or would there be dozens of smallers search engines? It is crucial to see that having major platforms is one key element that made inbound marketing possible.

1.2   Why inbound marketing

Inbound marketing selected as the topic of this thesis, as the writer of this thesis is occupied in a company that utilizes inbound marketing as intergral part of business. As marketing coordinator of Spatineo the writer of this thesis has witnessed how inbound marketing works and the full potential of this way of marketing when executed precisely.

Spatineo is a Finnish based company, that offers variety of spatial data related services and applications: from monitoring of spatial data to expertice consultancy on developing spatial data solutions.

Spatial Data is digital information, which has place or location information stored into it and this information can be respresented with numerical value. Spatial data if also often called geospatial data of geographic information (Esri 2016)

Spatineo's customers base consists of organisations from fields of environmental to transportation, from international organisations to local municipalities. All of these organisations have seen the benefits of Spatineo's solutions, and that has been the cutting edge our Spatineo's marketing for couple of years: our added value. Providing information of the benefits of our solutions, not so much of details about the services and products themselves.

Spatineo's audiences have been decently narrow though out the years: only those who provide spatial web services, are be potential customers. Reaching these groups with inbound marketing methods has proven to be effective. Even the narrowest segments can be reached with right kinds of communicatios, nieche keywords and informative content.

As the writer of this thesis is occupied as the marketing coordinator of Spatineo, he has had the advantage to closely follow how Spatineo's

marketing has evolved more into direction of inbound marketing, and what results those actions have brought with them. Some of those experiences will be reflect in this thesis.

1.3 Objectives

The objective of this thesis is to give in-depth analysis how Inbound Marketing works and what makes it so effective. Key metrics will be presented and explained why those metrics are held in high value in inbound marketing. Some of example of these metrics will be reflected on how they could be used as an advantage at Spatineo.

1.3.1 Focus of the thesis

Inbound Marketing can se separated into four different stages (Figure 1):
- Attraction
- Conversion
- Closing
- Delighting

Figure 1, Hubspot Inbound Marketing Terms

All four stages are equally important to overall marketing success, but in this thesis, the two first steps will be focused more.

From perspective of small startup firm, the last two steps: Closing and Delighting are more responsibility of sales expert, who handle personal communications with customers. Spatineo's sales personel have taken responsibilities away from marketing for one sole reason: they have created more personal connections with our customers. This makes it more delighting experience for the customers to have closing phase and after communications with people who they are already close with.

Gaining information on what kind of content attracts audiences and what creates the conversions are essential to inbound marketing. These two factors should absolutely be measured and evaluated as efficiently as possible.

Finding out the successful elements and analyzing what makes them effective is objective of any organization that thrives towards successful inbound marketing, and it is also objective of this thesis; what makes inbond marketing successful and what are the key metrics to follow in this success? It will be also explained what the metrics must be analyzed and why, in order to conduct successful marketing.

As this thesis focuses on two first components the overall effect is harder to evaluate, since Closing and delighting are just as important the first two component. One side canno't be evaluated neutraly, without thinking how the other half affects the outcome.

Reason for this separation, is that attraction and conversion are usually viewed as part of marketing. Closing and delighting are more part of the sales process. Their part varies from firm to firm, and different industries and segments have different customer paths, where size of the sales portion varies compared to marketing. In most cases, there is only a thin line between sales and marketing.

2   From outbound to inbound

> "*Inbound marketing is focused on attracting customers through relevant and helpful content and adding value at every stage in your customer's buying journey. With inbound marketing, potential customers find you through channels like blogs, search engines, and social media.*
>
> *Unlike outbound marketing, inbound marketing does not need to fight for potential customers attention. By creating content designed to address the problems and needs of your ideal customers, you attract qualified prospects and build trust and credibility for your business.*" – Hubspot

At the core, inbound marketing is a way of marketing where you don't compete for your audience's time, but rather give them what they want: information and content. You have to think what the audience wants, and support that need with your content. Otherwise you're just competiting from your audience's time.

Simplified: outbound marketing can be viewed as a megaphone and inbound marketing as magnet. The difference is in how your message is conveyed to your audiences. (Hubspot, 2010)

Inbound marketing which shares almost identical values and practices with content marketing has been rising steadily to the top of selected marketing activities with importance within marketers. Research within Canadien marketers displayed that importance of content marketing is now at the top of all marketing activities (Chart 1).
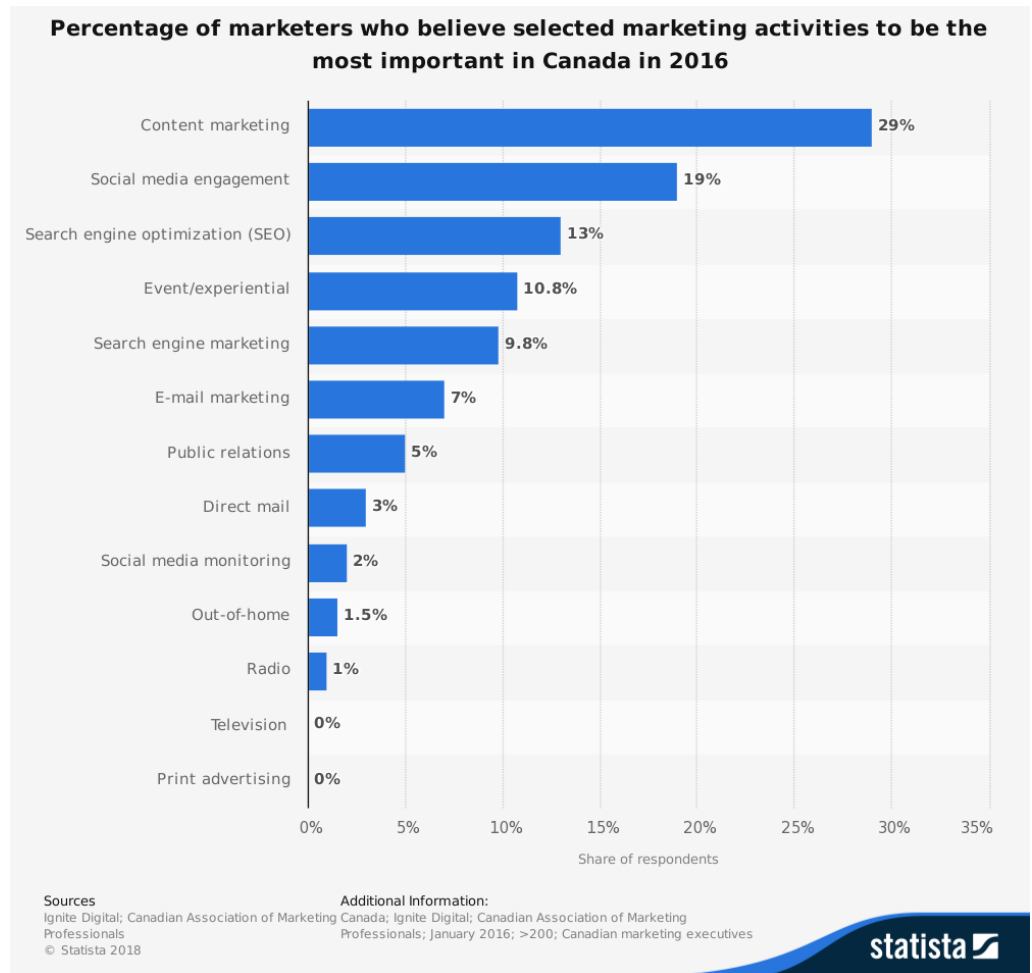
Percentage of marketers who believe selected marketing activities to be the most important in Canada in 2016

Activity	Share
Content marketing	29%
Social media engagement	19%
Search engine optimization (SEO)	13%
Event/experiential	10.8%
Search engine marketing	9.8%
E-mail marketing	7%
Public relations	5%
Direct mail	3%
Social media monitoring	2%
Out-of-home	1.5%
Radio	1%
Television	0%
Print advertising	0%

Share of respondents

Chart 1 Percentage of marketers who believe selected marketing activities to be the most important in Canada 2016 (Statista)

2.1 Marketer sentric to customer sentric

Before inbound marketing got popular, marketing used to be more marketer centric: getting your message out there outweighted the importance of drawing audiences. Marketing was focused more on the product; the company and what marketer thought was the core of their offering. The message was plastered to as many place marketer thought was necessary. Billboards, commercials and adds were aimed to reach more general population and wider spread.

Example of this can be witnessed in the marketing of any large IT-company. IBM and Microsoft used to market their products in mass campaigns, with the goals to reach as many consumers as possible. After moving more to inbound's direction, they publish educative articles and blogs on current hot topics.

Inbound marketing focuses on bringing the audience to your material rather than the other way around. Inbound marketing requires marketer to think where their audiences go and how they search things. Offering content where it is needed makes the content more valid in a sense: you don't want to be informed how to use product x to solve problem y when you're enjoying a television show, and you would rather have that info available to you when you need it. This is customer centric way of thinking.

When compairing the result in inbound marketing and outbound marketing, the end result might not differ that much after all, except possibly in lead quality and chapter 3 will explore that more. The separating factor are the resources spent and how they were utilized.

Loss contacts are something that inbound marketing barely create. Loss contact are those contacts that didn't want you to reach out to them at all, and deem it intruding or totally unneccesary. This in inherent because you already filter out non-relevant contacts *with* your content. Non-relevant contacts will most likely never reach your content. In some context this might sound like a terrible thing, but why would your content need to reach audiences that might not even understand or value it at all?

Outbound marketing, or traditional marketing, does exactly this. Outbound marketing spreads it message as far and wide as it can (Hubspot 2010). Inbound does the same but limiting the share within it's targeted demografic.

Newspapers are a good example of outbound marketing: you publish your advertisement at the frontpage of national newspaper and reach high volume of people. But in those high volumes of people, how many gained any value from your add? Let's assume that 1% of the readers were your key demografic, and they gained useful information from your add, but the rest 99% were only interrupted by your message. This gives you huge amount of loss contacts, while inbound marketing strategy has the advantage of targeting only relevant audiences.

2.2 Inbound Marketing as an integral part of Marketing

Inbound marketing is a wholesome strategy to marketing: it occupies all aspects on how marketing is conducted and what kind of marketing is even done. Marketing used to be more disrupting, as commercials between television shows or leaflets handed out at fairs i.e. (Saleshub 2015) These methods can still be applied in inbound marketing, but the strategy revolves around making the audience come to you, rather than you reaching out to them (Smartinsights 2017)

Platform selection is crucial factor in being customer centric: you must reach you audience where they spend their time already, not make them artificially come to your platform unnecessary. The lines of media have blurred in the recent years and what we used to concider as "personal media" are used more and more in professional use. So, the gap between b2b and b2c marketing has thinned in result. (State of Inbound 2017, Hubspot)

Business blogs, social media, emails, webinars and videos we consume each day become more and more integrated to each another. Emails give you webinar invitations and blogs are becoming more video based (Smartinsights 2017), so using all the possible ways of marketing and combining these to create a comprehensive approach to your customers is vital.

Knowing what mix works with what audience is important. Customizing the content so that it is easily approached and available on that specific platform what is was ment to be viewed is important. Short and compact videos to social media differ from webinars and your youtube content. You might have the same basics in each video content, but the way of presentation that material is the key (Jani Aaltonen 2016)

3   Quality of your contacts and leads

If you have followed inbound marketing strategy, one thing emerges as a result: because your message has reached those that were searching for it have already passed the line of having interest towards you. This is one of the major factors that make inbound marketing so effective. When creating content that holds value to your potential buyer personas, you only "invite" those that qualify as pontential customers (They ask you answer 2017)

This process was displayed when Spatineo started to narrow our keywords strategy and make content with more specific keywords targeted towards our nieche audience. "Spatial data analytics" and "spatial data infrastructure analytics" were used in several articles and blog published by us at the start of 2018. These keywords worked as a filter and a net to lure only people interested in those specific topics.

From Hubspot and Google analytics we were able to identify that leads that we were gathering had entered our webpage after searching for those keywords. Our posts had good rankings in search engines and they were able to peak the interest of those desired potential customers.

3.1   Buildind network for your messages

First step in trying to reach right people, is to enter platforms and communities whereyour audience spend their time. Being in the right place makes the message more reachable to your audiences.

Social media communities can be entered by taking part in the discussions there. Obtaining followers can be a tough spot but with professional attitude and informative content, especially later on, you can build a followerbase that is interested about same topics as you. Contacting industry leaders via open social media can be a quick way to get publicity and gain awareness. Guestblogging has turned out be a very viable option, as most large organisations offer this opportunity to generate content for themselves.

One key factor in creating your network is to be regularly active. This raises you in the search engine results, as in example Google values punctual and regular schedule of publifications. The fresher the better.

Being regular with you content also creates some anticipation within your network: if they know you publish once a week, they are likely to expect it. This can also be a double-edged sword, as breaking your schedule can leave your audience hanging.

3.2 Pre-emptive selection of leads

Putting your content out there works as a filter, lure and net. Making content well targeted via keywords enable it to reach those desired audiences.

Content you publish is a lure to attract you audiences towards you. As you publish material online with the right keywords, it is more likely that people interested in those keywords are the ones to find your content. This is the reason why when thinking of your key demografic, it is crucial to know what the keywords are your audiences are searching for. You must chooce the right lure, for the right audience to get attracted (They ask you answer p. 17-25. 2017).

After attracting the right kind of audiences to your site, they still technically to throught another round of "qualification": will they be engaged by your content? Clickrates, engagement percentages and bouncerates give you a good view on how your content was fairing among those that actually saw it. Did they continue deeper into your content, entered their contact information or did the just bounce after reading the header?

Option to handout your contact information for additional content, daily updates or something else enganging is a solid way to hook people into your sphere of influence. One huge part of inbound marketing is to effectively converse potential customers into leads and prospects.

Spatineos success with articles mentioned at the beginning of this chapter was good example of this lead conversion. Those posts were so well targeted with the right keywords, that they managed to raise engagements from social media as well as clickrates within the articles in themselves. At the end of each posts there was a change to request a trial of our primary products, and the clickrates in that link were abnormally high compares to earlier posts.

3.3 Lead nurturing

Once a contact has turned into a lead, after you have given them content that they wanted it is much easier approach them more. Giving your audiences informative and trustworthy content creates a relationship with them from the start, where you are then one tending to the customers needs. You can use this dynamic to your advantage during the whole lifetime of the lead.

Lead nurturing requires lots of information for you to be a top of the lead the whole time; what would they want next, what they view as relevant content and how should I adapt to their needs? You might even want to rank the most potential cases with some sort of scoring system. This all requires data gathering during the whole inbound process. This is why measuring in inbound marketing is so crucial.

4   Data-driven decision making and metrics

Inbound marketing solely relies on data and how it is used. Leveraging data to your advantage is crucial, because you need to be aware of what kind of content works, who views that content as valuable information and how can you effectively support your leads towards mutually prospectful outcome (Hubspot 2017).

Effectiveness of marketing can be also measured in resources spent like money and time, and how much did it bring new revenue compared to used resources which is referred as Return On Invest. Different marketing methods have variance in their ROI as some are more potential in creating revenue with lesser resources.

Metrcics and numbers chosen in this chapter reflect established customs layed out by industry leaders over the years. These metrics are seen as good indicators, as organisations that conducts successful inbound marketing have good readings in these metrics (Demand Generation Benchmark, Hubspot 2016). When someone is effectively conversing leads into customers and creating value that way, it can be seen in these metrics clearly.

4.1   Marketing and sales funnel numbers

Marketing and sales funnel is a path created for your leads. The funnel narrows down the closer the lead is into becaming a customer, as some leads turn cold or they disgualify in becoming a customer. Some leads might even go to other than your normal funnel, in example when you prospect those cases as potential partners and not as buyers. Funnel presented in figure 2 shows the most common funnelization for potential customer and steps they go thought on they journey to becoming a customer.
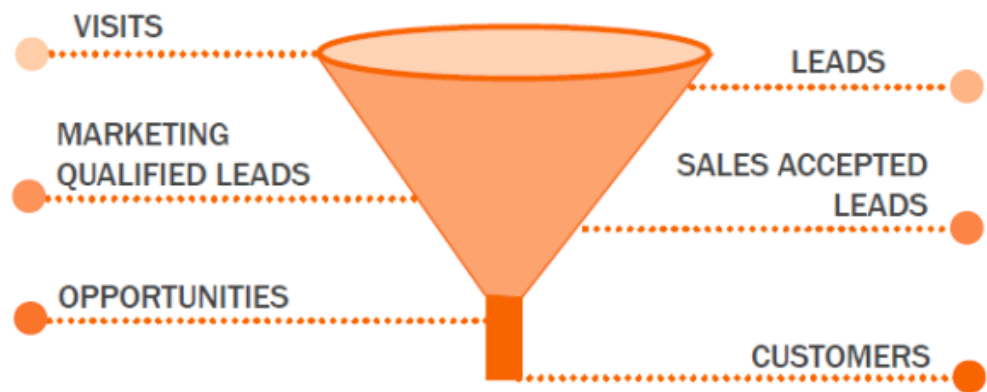
Figure 2 Hubspot Sales & Marketing Funnel

Marketing & Sales Funnel used by Hubspot (Figure 2) displays couple of the most important key numbers. This funnel shows roughly how when going downwards in the funnel, the number of potential customers lessens. As mentioned earlier this happen because every step eliminates some individuals or organisations. The core philosophy of Hubspot regarding sales and marketing funnels, when talking about inbound marketing, is that your aim is not to make the funnel wider from the top, but make the bottom half wider and the final percentage of customerization higher (Hubspot 2017)

First you must know how your campaign and marketing is doing. Are they being viewed and is anyone engaging into them? Getting visitors to jump into the funnel you have crafted for them is the first step.

4.1.1   Reachability and Visitors

The metric of how many people your message reaches varies in different platforms and types of marketing conducted. Impressions (Twitter), Reach (Facebook) and pageviews (webpages) tell you how many people saw your message. Reachability and views give you the first important metric so follow. How many people are within your marketings reach. This is important to know so that you can adjust and make plans for further steps in the funnel. Knowing what the entry level of the funnel was gives you perpective to your marketing in total.

Traditionally outbound marketing has aimed for as high as possible numbers with reachability, but with inbound marketing things have changed. Inbound marketing doesn't blindly aim to get as high view-count as possible, even if

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higher reachability would lead most likely to higher number of leads. Qualifying visitors to those that hold interest or value to the message sent, means that they are "higher quality" but not so many in numbers. This effects engagement rate drastically.

4.1.2 Engagement

In inbound marketing your goal is to engage your audiences as much as possible in a meaningful way. How many people click your message (Clickrate) or open your emails (Opening rate) is crucial. According to mailchimp the average opening rate for sent emails in software and web app-industry is 2.29% (Mailchimp 2017). Some marketers have in the past done the mistake to overvalue the importance of engagement rate, and this has led into clickbaits (Wolfgang 2017 E-commerce KPI Benchmarks Study).

Therefore, creating meaningful marketing is important. Getting clicks is not worth it, if you're betraying the trust of your audience. In inbound marketing the trust between audiences and marketer is important, because you try to maximise conversion within your demographics.

Marketers have struggled for a while on how to engage audiences. As mentioned, the problem has even forced some organisations to clickbaiting. One possible reason for the struggle, at least during 21st century, is that the market is already so saturated with messages aimed at the consumers and decision makers. Standing out on your own has proven to be a very difficult task, and that is why inbound marketing has taken it's more informative approach. Nowadays it is not just enough to get out there and hope that someone gets engaged by your content: you must provide something in return for that engagement.

4.1.3 Conversion

After reaching your audiences, it is important to convert them into leads and paying customers in the end. Without conversion, the whole marketing has not played its most integral part: creating paying customers eventually. This part of the sales and marketing funnel is sometimes referred as MoFu (Middle of the funnel) and BoFu (Bottom of the funnel).

How many people filled out your contact forms, asked for a trial or quota, or requested a meeting? These signals are a sign that a visitor as turned into a lead. At this point, a well-organized marketing funnel has automatically collected the contact information of the lead, and you can now identify them more specifically.

Converting visitors into leads require something for the audiences to grab into at the webpage. Methods to gather information mentioned above have proven to be efficient way for converting visitors. Some sort of a "hook", in this context where something useful for the visitor has been offered for them, in order for them to convert as give contact information, has been effective in inbound marketing lately.

Spatineo's webpage has been built so that all paths lead into visitors our "get free trial" or "contact us" pages. These pages offer valuable proposal to the visitor, to convert them into giving their contact information and turn them into leads. Pagestructure and CTA's (call-to-action) have been placed to that it optimizes the funnelization percentages.

4.2   Economic key performance indicators

Some might say that inbound marketing is all about making marketing more cost beneficial, and that is true. It is studied that inbound marketing ROI is way higher that traditional marketing (Hubspot Marketing Statistics). Making sure that the ROI stays high marketers must pay attention to economic indicators of inbound marketing. These metrics combine data from different indicators usually as per seen belov.

4.2.1   Lead acquisition cost (LAC)

Leads acqruired compared to the money spent on those leads gives you a good indicator on how effective you were with your resources to get new leads. In inbound marketing this number tends to be low, as you don't spend extra resources to spread your message to unwanted audiences. Costeffetiveness of lead gathering is important, because often inbound marketing might be executed with minimalistic resources. This happens often in small companies. Getting most out of the resources poured into marketing is important, as it has holds usually essential part in the organisations revenue.

Cost-per-lead can be calculated by summing all the costs from marketing during certain time perioid and dividing that with amount of leads gathered. Costs of inbound marketings include such things as labour, software and general costs. Getting allocation of the costs as precise as possible gives you a more reliable answer.

Cost-per-lead on average might be something from $11 to $110, depending greatly of the effectiveness of lead generation and organizational differences. Some variance has been proven to exist in different industries as well (Demand Generation Benchmarks, Hubspot 2016).

4.2.2 Customer acquisition cost (CAC)

CAC can be calculated similary to cost-per-lead but changing number of leads to number of customers acqruired. This number reflects also how effective your sales is, but also considering the efforts of marketing. Turning leads into paying customers falls into domain of sales, so CAC is often used at management level decision making, rather than cost-per-lead. It reflects more the entire process of customer acquisition than cost-per-lead (Kissmetrics 2018).

CAC is a metric that is often paired up with customer lifetime value (CLV). CTV indicates how much revenue the customer will bring to the organization during the whole customership. Compairing CAC to CTV tells if acqruiring a customer if profitable or not. If CAC > CTV then the acqruiring of the customer has not been profitable.

4.2.3 Marketing return on invest (ROI)

In high-level decision making it is important to know how well resources allocated in marketing are fairing. Is marketing yielding more than for example research and development? To make right decisions, organisations must be able to compare different processes together and ROI is one of more universal ratio that can be calculated to almost all business activities.

Marketing ROI can be calculated with couple of different methods. One is to calculate how many new customers was acqruired during certain period and

multiplying that with average customer value. Customer value can be calculated by counting average sum one customers pays during customership.

Other method is more precise, but it requires well maintained customer relationship management system, also known as CRM, that has customer payments in it. This method also requires rigorous allocation of marketing costs to that system. CRM can calculate ROI within certain period with this datas, by simply dividing profits from marketing activities with costs of marketing. (Prove Inbound ROI by Reporting Result, Hubspot)

4.3   Most commonly used metrics

Most organisations only use the top of the funnel metrics to measure the effectiveness of their content marketing. These metrics are obtained with more ease than indicators further down the marketing funnel, as they are more concretic. You can represent numerical value to website visitors, but you can't put exact numerical value to quality of your leads.

Metrics for content marketing success according to marketers in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2016

Metric	Share of respondents
Sales lead quantity	44%
Sales	63%
Website traffic	70%
Social media sharing	63%
SEO ranking	60%
Sales lead quality	57%
Higher conversion rates	51%
Inbound links	50%
Time spent on website	43%

Sources
Content Marketing Institute; DMA
© Statista 2018

Additional Information:
United Kingdom; Content Marketing Institute; 2016; 87 respondents; for-profit marketers (B2B and B2C)*
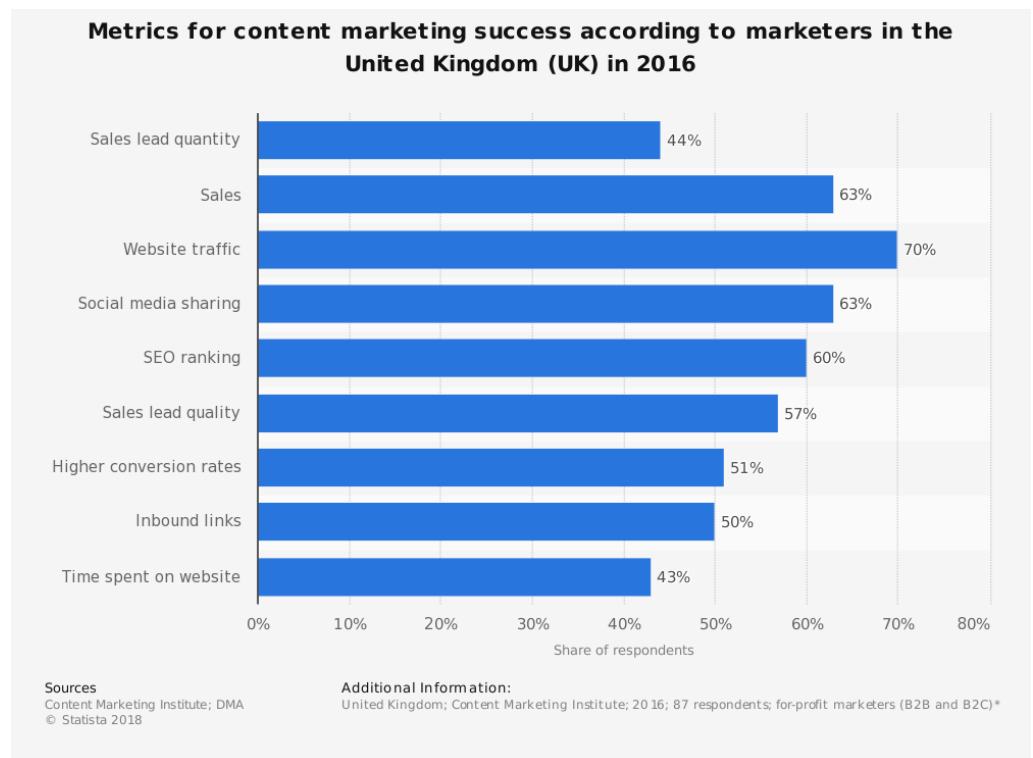
Figure 3 Content Marketing Institute. n.d. Metrics for content marketing success according to marketers in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2016. Statista

In 2016 the most esteemed metric was website traffic above all else (Figure 3). As a little controversy, according to Hubspot State of Inbound 2017 most

marketers are planning to most efforts to social media channels and website didn't appear in top 8 answers. So, website traffic is hold as most important metric, but it isn't being hold in high esteem as a content distribution channel, or atleast organisations won't be applying more resources to it in the upcoming future.

Why isn't webpage viewed as distribution channel as much as social media then? Blogposts and news are commonly published on companies own pages first and foremost, and later shared to social media channels. Companys homepage should be viewed just as much as a platform as social media. In some regards homepages are way more flexible (customizable) than social media, and this gives advantage in data gathering. Data gathered from companys own webpage can have more depth than strict data analysis social media platforms yield. Social media gives you reach and engagement numbers, and homepages give you that and time spent during engagement and where the users were within your published content.

5 Leveraging data to your advantage

All this data must be used, to succeed in inbound marketing. Goals must be set, testing must be conducted, and results must be evaluated. Data is no good, if it is not used in meaningful way.

Using data in decision making, requires that individuals who make te decisions understand from where the data is derived from and what factors into it. Testing, setting up goals and forecasting are tasks marketers keep challengeful from year to year [State of Inbound]. This shouldn't be the case as organisations are gathering more data that ever so support their decision making.

Data is also becoming more and more in-depth and accurate. Applications can track behavioural patterns on individual level, and analysis of larger dataset is becoming more viable with AI and machine learning.

5.1 A/B testing

A/B testing gives clear metrics and results on how two or more variant compare to each another. In A/B testing, audiences are presented different variants. Different random groups are offered different variants, and then the behavior is compared to the other groups.

The standard A/B test present two control groups two unique choices. Pages, emails, and smaller components can be easily tested this way, and competed against each another for optimal results.

A/B testing is cost effective way to make your marketing more efficient. It doesn't cost anything, except the manual labour put into it. A/B testing is integrated to almost all marketing platforms and it is standard in all analytics toolsets.

The true strenght of A/B testing originates from natural selection. As a marketer you should be able to identify the most prevailent trends, but with changing demographics and everchanging world, it is hard to pinpoint what is the most optimal material for you audience. A/B testing gives you a numerical

value from soft data for you to use in your work. Soft data is information that is hard to measure, such as people's opinions or feelings. (Cambrigde Dictionary 2018).

5.2 Benchmarking and setting goals

A/B testing and analytics are just a part of your data driven decision making. Keeping an eye for those numbers gives you an estimate how you are fairing now but factoring out further than current moment gives you a competitive edge.

5.2.1 From statistics to forecasts

Analytics result of your marketing activities yield feedback on was the marketing conducted successful when comparing to previous benchmarks or campaigns. If your campaign reached same number of people and collected same amount of leads as last years campaign, but failed to reach goals you had setup was the campaign successful?

Setting future goals to a realistics levels, by studying past and taking future trends and changes into concideration should give you a realistic forecast on how you should be doing. Diviating from this forecast too much is an indication that something has been done well or something isn't right. Adjusting to these diviations gives you opportunities to make the data driven decisions your analytics enable.

With all data gathered marketers should by now know their key demographics and based on that knowledge to support forecasting. Once you know how people usually behave it becomes easier to guess what they will be doing in the future. Of course, this knowledge about your audiences must be reflected to ever changing world around us, to make predictions as accurate as possible.

5.2.2 Forecasting goals

Organisations can't rely solely on their forecasts about the future, when setting goals. Actions that happen outside of organisations sphere of influence may affect general trends and outcomes. Sudden lost of confidence to the current economical situation, will affect sales eventually. This kind of lost of

confidence occurred during 2008 financial crisis, and marketing budgets had to be adjusted to reflect that.

While setting goals, some margin must be left so adjustments can be made closer to goals expiry date. Extra actions should be planned, as a reserve in case set goals are not going to be met. If you aren't getting enough leads or visitors at your page, a campaign to boost those numbers should be executed to reach intended numbers. Margin of errors is acceptable but setting unrealistics goals usually leads into wrongful actions.

5.3   Big Data and AI to support decision making

Analyzing great amount of data with artificial intelligence can give you information that was not available just few years ago. Big data and machine learning has enabled us to recognize behavioural patterns and regurlarly occurring phenomenons. AI can calculate more accurately forecasts of the future than human naturally can.

Artificial intelligence and algoriths can also be used to gather metadata about leads. Tools like Hubspot, Vainu and Leadroids are able to find relevant information on people and organisations once have been fed basic data about the leads. Algoriths then run this info throught their system and compare what has been relevant info in same kind of cases prior to current search. These kind of metasearches give the most relevant info. As information is crucial in inbound marketing to understand and know your contacts and leads as thoroughly as possible, AI gives a great advantage compared to those that don't use.

Rise of artificial intelligence, big data and marketing automation can be seen in the study conducted by Smartinsighits "Most effective digital marketing techniques according to marketers worldwide in 2018" (Figure 4). AI and automation can handle, calculate and create deeper layers to marketing indicators faster and better than humans.
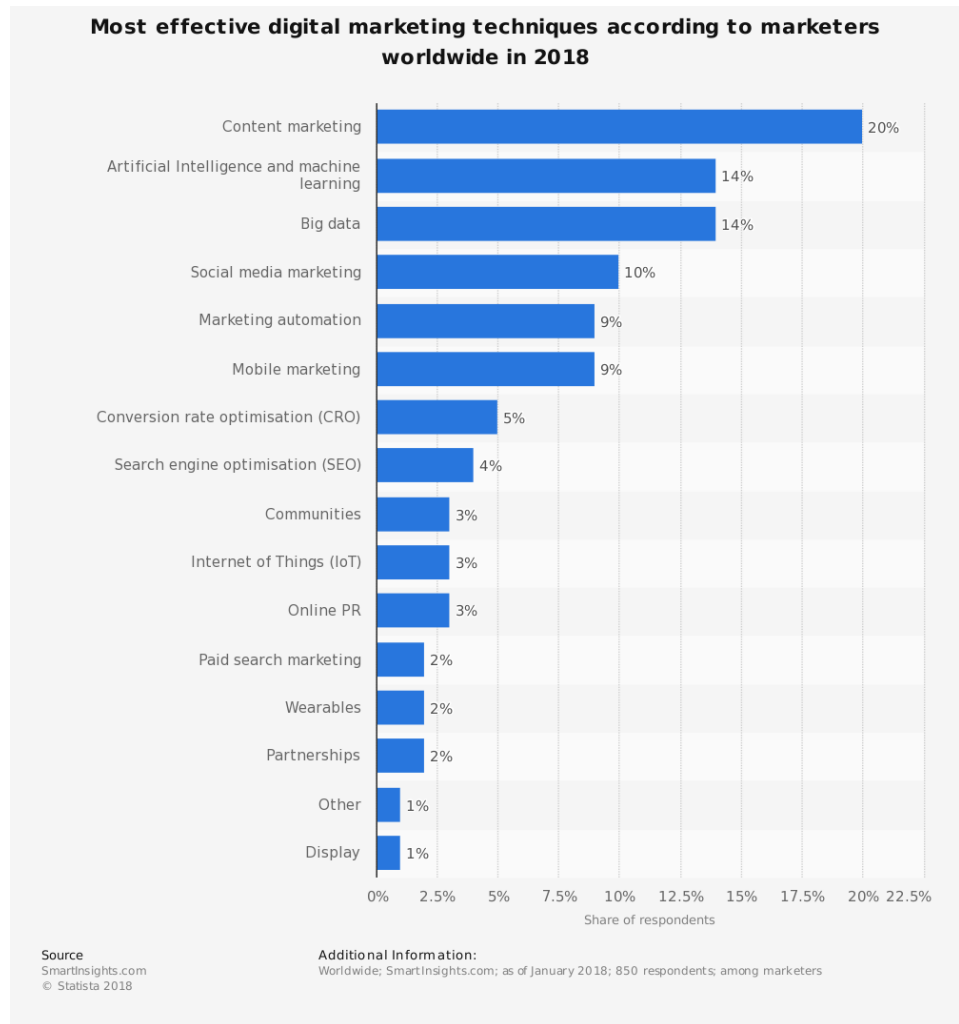
Most effective digital marketing techniques according to marketers worldwide in 2018

Technique	Share
Content marketing	20%
Artificial Intelligence and machine learning	14%
Big data	14%
Social media marketing	10%
Marketing automation	9%
Mobile marketing	9%
Conversion rate optimisation (CRO)	5%
Search engine optimisation (SEO)	4%
Communities	3%
Internet of Things (IoT)	3%
Online PR	3%
Paid search marketing	2%
Wearables	2%
Partnerships	2%
Other	1%
Display	1%

Share of respondents

Source
SmartInsights.com
© Statista 2018

Additional Information:
Worldwide; SmartInsights.com; as of January 2018; 850 respondents; among marketers

Figure 4 SmartInsights - Most effective digital marketing techniques according to marketers worldwide in 2018. Statista.

5.4 Keywords

Now that you have setup different metrics to follow and you gain even more data via analyzing those metrics, you can use that data to recognize and ranks succesfull keywords for you. How does keywords compare to each another and which keywords drive more engagement over others?

Keywords are topics or subjects you write you content around to make it specially tempting and more easily reachable to people. Search engines use these keywords in their ranking lists to index which pages and content are most relevant in relation to which keyword.

Different people search for different keywords, even while looking for the same outcome. Someone might google phrase "spatial data analysis" and someone else "SDI [Spatial data infrastructure] monitoring", but they both are looking for

something to gain more in-depth monitoring and analytics for their spatial web services. With your marketing metrics you can identify how certain topic or keywords yield very different outcomes.

Finding those keywords that are most optimized for your business can be a tricky thing to do, as most profitable and accesible keywords are already heavily occupied. With right analytics and keywords research, identifying the most valuable keywords for your business is still extremely important and prominent marketing strategy. Inbound marketing underlines the importance of keyword marketing strategy, because naturally pulling audiences to your content is core part of the whole inbound process. That natural pull is possible only with search engine and keyword optimatization.

The strength of keywords starts to shine when the most prominent keywords for you have been discovered. Those exact keywords, as mentioned earlier in chapter 3.2, start to attract the best possible leads your way. Attraction works best with keywords that are most close to your business, so creating content just for the sake of "hot keywords" do not work. The trust of the audience must be acqruired from the moment they choose your webpage from search engines with the keywords they have selected.

Using metrics to recognize best keywords for you is data-drive decision making at its finest. Using numerical values accordingly to represent success, you can attach these success indicators to keywords. How does one blog with certain keywords compare to another blog in terms of engagement or bouncerate? What keywords push the absolute most out of your content?

This keywords analysis must be left to the content producers themselves. Keywords are extremely case sensitive and there aren't any common keywords that work out for every situation. But by following metrics you have set up and analyzing what works and what does will eventually yield the best keywords for every purpose.

Keywords analysis is a topic that could be expanded into a whole book, and if the topic has raised any extra questions I refer the reader to seek out book "*Marketing through search optimization: how people search and how to be found on the Web*" by Alex Michaels and Ben Salter (2008). They write

comprehensively on what people search on the web and how to make yourself found and explore how it all relates to marketing eventually.

5.5 Soft Data

As mentioned in chapter 5.2 Soft data is information about things that are hard to measure normally. Feelings and preferences are excellent example of this. Inbound marketing relies on knowing your potential customers and getting smart analytics out of them, so technically inbound is based on soft data.

All metrics and key performance indicators tell how certain things that is being measured is doing. This performance is usually derived on how people reacted to it and did they like it. So, one could say that inbound key performance indicators give you soft data, even if they are hard numbers. Translating feelings and preferences into data must be interped as a method of reading the responses if you demographic.

One proof that inbound metrics are just soft data translated into hard data is the difference that emerges when comparing emotionally charged content into more static content. Nike's "Just Do It" campaign or Dove's "Real Beaty" campaign are excellent examples of marketing that has a certain emotional charge in them. These kinds of campaigns fare almost twice as well when compairing into campaigns that are more rational based (Hamish Pringe, Brand Immortality. 2009)

Using data and metric to determine what drives emotional response, via looking at how well your content is performing, enables you to reach those decision driving feelings of your potential customers. In example, if you create a warm-hearted blog post about how your staff focuses on helping your customers in their daily objectives, this might create a more humane image of you company and drive more contacts in the long run with your demographic. This is later reflected in your metrics as some of those contacts end up in your marketing and sales funnels, and possibly convert into customers.

Engagements are one of the best indicators to what kind of emotions your content is driving. Facebook has done a great service to marketers by implementing actual emotion-based engagement buttons to their feed. Now people can react by giving basic "like" or chooce from five different reactions,

which are "love", "haha", "wow", "sad", and "angry". This gives even clearer signal what kind of emotional response your content drives in you audience. Facebook algoriths, atleast at the time of writing this thesis, value the five reactions more than basic like when they rank posts in people's feed. This indicates that Facebook knows the value of emotional expression and want to emphasize that by showing reacted posts more thank liked.

So, creating content that drives emotional response creates more engange usually than other types of content. This engagement can be witnesses in the metrics established in chapter 4 and factoring the most engaging content gives you indication which content is more emotional. Using metrics as a tool to indentify the best type of content furthers your cause to eventually create more leads and customers.

5.6   Visualizing data

Data gathering, analysing and performing actions based on this data requires that the data is in a format that in can be displayed to decision makers. Decision makers don't always follow the latest marketing terms, especially in higher level of decision making, and might not understand the importance of engagement, LAC or CTR. This is why data must be presentable in a way that everyone can read it with ease.

Budgets are often decided not be the executing branch of the marketing, but management. This is the exact reason marketing numbers, indicators and analysis should be in a format that they can be used to support decision making among those that are not that familiar with marketing.

So data must in a presented in a format that it is easily understood. Visualization can be used as one solution to make data easier to read for people outside of marketing. Dashboards and visual raports represent a way to show information in a clear and simple form. Dashboards also have advantage of usually fetching live data and display latest possible information available.

One tool that has been implemented to use at Spatineo, that offers data visualization and dashboards is databox.com platform. It offers integrations with all major marketing-, CRM- and other platforms. Combining statistics from

different platform into a sinlge dashboard or raport sheet helps to create a more comprehensive picture about the state of marketing and sales.

5.7   Summary

Inbound Marketing relies on data gathered from several platforms, testing conducted by marketers, analysis made by specialists and combining these elemts to create meaningful marketing. Metrics can and should be used to indentify what work and what doesn't.

Combining the efforts of all different elements of inbound marketing to create that awesome content your audiences lust for can be a tough process, but as metrics have proven: it pays off. Effiency of inbound marketing can be witnessed is several studies, and by even compairing marketing budgets and how well fairing companies organize their marketing efforts.

Even to this day, no one has found out what is the most efficient way to do marketing, but inbound marketing has proven itself as one of the most effiecient methods. Inbound marketing is also still evolving, and new tools and marketing platforms are integrated to inbound marketing operations when ever possible. New technologies and tools might sharpen the edges of inbound, but the essence of offering something informative and useful to your audiences will not change.

Following success is the key to more success in any type of marketing, and in order to find that success metrics must be implemented. Otherwise recognizing the original success if nearly impossible. Analysis of what has been done is almost as critical as making the efforst to create marketing. Inbound marketing specializes in this analysis in a sense and that is the core streght of inbound marketing.

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