![Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences logo]

The Use Of Personalized Marketing Content

Eeva Kavenius

Abstract

20.10.2020

Author	
Eeva Kavenius	
Degree programme	
Degree programme in International Business	
Report/thesis title The Use of Personalized Marketing content	**Number of pages and appendix pages** 35+5

This Bachelor's thesis study examines the way companies use and create personalized marketing content. The primary goal of the study was to determine the different uses of personalized marketing content, as well as the different personalization methods used by companies.

The thesis consists of a theory section, followed by an empirical section. The theory section discusses marketing personalization, content creation, data collection, and customer experiences. The empirical section includes a desktop study to determine consumer and company perspectives on marketing personalization, as well as a survey conducted for companies practicing personalized marketing.

The study was based on both quantitative and qualitative methods. First, a desktop study was conducted to determine consumer perspectives. Studies and surveys including both qualitative and quantitative data were included. Second, a survey including both qualitative and quantitative questions was presented to companies operating internationally. The results of this survey were analysed utilizing SPSS statistics software.

The study showed that both companies and consumers have quite contradicting views on the level of content in marketing personalization. While consumers require more personalization, it was also found that they are very reluctant on giving their information for data collection. Data collection was found to be one of the most important personalization methods, but consumers show to be very uncomfortable with companies utilizing their data. Trust and transparency are some of the methods companies can utilize to increase trust in consumers.

Personalized marketing content is mostly used by companies in a way that consumers perceive it as a positive and useful tool that creates value for them. When overdone, it can be perceived as annoying, intrusive, and disruptive by consumers. However, when done correctly personalized marketing does exactly what it is supposed to, which is to deliver the right message, to the right person, in the right channel, at the right time. As the number of companies surveyed was quite low, the results cannot necessarily be applied to all companies.

| **Keywords** |
| Personalized marketing content, Data collection, Customer experience, Marketing content |

Table of contents

1   Introduction

This chapter presents the background behind the study of personalized marketing content, the Research Question as well as the Investigative Questions. Finally, the demarcation of the study is discussed.

The relevance and topicality of the study is discussed, as well as the importance to today's business, and to the commissioning company. The purpose of this chapter is to justify the thesis topic and present the focus of the study.

1.1   Background

As the world of smart devices, digital marketing, and Internet of Things (IOT) grows and develops exponentially, consumers' expectations from companies increase as well. When creating data while using social media and new smart technology, consumers expect more personal and smarter experiences in return. (Nesamoney 2015,173.) A shift from product focused marketing to a customer-oriented experience creation is happening. As consumers' attention span shortens, they become less loyal and create higher standards for companies. (Aquaia Lift 2019a.) Tackling the challenge of engaging and re-engaging customers is something that many companies struggle with.

Being able to generate, process, and use customer data is becoming essential to the survival of companies. The smart and timely use of data to produce relative content, information, and communication is the difference between engagement and avoidance. (Nesamoney 2015, 174-175.) In a study made by Aquaia Lift (2019a), it was found that 66% of consumers did not remember the last time a brand exceeded their expectations. Consumers are not happy with the (lack of) effort made by companies. This leads to dissatisfaction and lack of loyalty and trust from consumers, eventually causing loss of revenue for companies.

1.2   Research question

This thesis aims to educate and inform the commissioning company and the retail industry of the different ways personalized marketing content is currently being utilized by companies. The outcome of the thesis is a comprehensive study of both the industry side and customer experiences regarding personalized marketing content. The results of this study can be used to justify the use of personalization methods in marketing and to help in the creation of effective content, by understanding the concepts and processes surrounding it more profoundly.

The research question for the study is: How is personalized marketing content used by companies?

IQ 1. What kind of content personalization methods are used by companies?

IQ 2. How do cultural aspects affect personalized marketing content?

IQ 3. In which way is personalized marketing content used by companies?

IQ 4. How do consumers view personalized marketing content?

Table 1 below presents the theoretical framework, research methods and results chapters for each investigative question.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Investigative question	Theoretical Framework	Research Methods	Results
IQ 1. What kind of content personalization methods are used by companies?	Content marketing, data collection, personalization methods	Statistical survey with a qualitative analysis of open questions	Comprehensive picture of content personalization methods
IQ 2. How do cultural aspects affect personalized marketing content?	Content marketing, data collection, international data	Statistical survey with a qualitative analysis of open questions	Inclusion of culture in content creation
IQ 3. In which ways is personalized marketing content used by companies?	Content marketing, marketing platforms	Statistical survey with a qualitative analysis of open questions	Content personalization types used by companies
IQ 4. How do consumers view personalized marketing content?	Customer relationships, data collection	Literature review and qualitative analysis	Consumer perceptions, viewed safety and customer experience

1.3 Demarcation

Table 2 below presents the demarcation criteria created for this study and what aspects will be focused on further on in the study, and which will be excluded.

Table 2. Demarcation table

Include	Exclude
Business to Customer point of view	Business to Business point of view
Customers and prospects of the commissioning company Triggerbee AB	Other companies
International and multicultural approach	No geographical or cultural demarcation
Digital marketing	Traditional marketing

The study is conducted focusing on marketing content targeted towards consumers. The Business to Customer (B2C) marketing model was selected as it is the approach most of the case company's customers utilize. No Business to Business (B2B) marketing content is looked at, as that would double the size of the study and make it too large for the time given. The survey was presented to the existing and prospecting customers of Triggerbee AB. These companies are interested in the results of the study and are willing to participate in the data collection. No other companies are surveyed. Due to the nature of the authors' studies, an international and multicultural approach is taken in the data collection and analysis phase of the study. The companies surveyed are international companies, and the desktop study made to determine consumer perspectives consists of international resources and studies. Due to the nature of the study, only digital marketing content will be studied.

1.4 International aspect

The international aspect of this thesis comes from the observation of data in an international context. Companies and the marketing content investigated are from all over the world, with many different backgrounds and markets. The mixed methods survey for the chosen companies also investigates the cultural aspects that influence the marketing content created by these companies. The desktop study of consumer perspectives consists of various studies conducted on consumers in different cultural environments, and it is aimed to create a comprehensive picture of the opinions and experiences of consumers.

1.5 Benefits

The study provides important information about how Triggerbee Abs' customers utilize the collected data and what consumers would like companies to do more. It also presents a good picture of the state of personalization amongst their clients, and the perceptions and experiences of the consumers on data collection and personalization. The results of this study can be used as promotional and informational material for new and existing customers, and generally in the field of marketing.

To the customers of the commissioning company, the study provides important insight to the industry, as well as different content marketing methods. Understanding how the customers use the case company's product helps develop more relevant products. It also shows the different ways their current products can be utilized in the creation of content. The studied consumer perspectives show experiences, concerns, and feelings about data collection and personalized marketing. This helps the case company, and its customers create ways to make the data collection phase more efficient.

For the field of marketing, and especially customer relationship management and communication, this study provides new insight into the area of marketing personalization, digital marketing, and content marketing. By combining these, the study shows emerging trends and patterns, and exposes the areas that need improvement. As personalized marketing is a fairly new trend in the field of marketing, it has not been studied much and this study provides more much needed information on the phenomenon.

As the authors' own interests lay heavily on customer relationship management, content creation, and communication, the topic of the study is an amazing opportunity to learn more about the future of marketing and customer relationships. This study provides a deeper dive into the world of content creation and as an additional opportunity to work with companies and learn from professionals working in the field. Additionally, the study allows the author to network and work with marketing professionals.

1.6 Key concepts

Big Data is large sets of data produced by people by using the internet. It can only be stored, understood, and used by utilizing special tools and methods. (Cambridge Dictionary 2020.)

Content Marketing is a strategic marketing approach that is focused on creating and distributing content that is valuable, relevant, and consistent. The goal of content marketing is to attract and retain defined customer segments and to drive profitable customer actions. (Content Marketing Institute 2019.)

Data collection is the process of collecting and measuring information on different variables of interest in a way that it allows for the answering of research questions, testing of hypotheses, and evaluation of outcomes (Content Marketing Institute 2019).

Personalization of marketing or one-to-one marketing is a strategy through which companies deliver individualized marketing content to consumers through data collection, analysis, and automated technology. Its goal is to engage consumers or prospects by communicating with them as an individual. (Murray 2017.)

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is the primary law that regulates how companies in the European Union (EU) protect EU citizens' personal data. The GDPR mandates a baseline set of standards for companies that handle EU citizens' data to better safeguard the processing and movement of citizens' personal data. (De Groot 2019.)

Zero party Data is data that consumers are intentionally giving to companies to use for marketing personalization purposes. Zero party data is often collected through a value exchange between the consumer and the company. These data collection methods include questionnaires, polls, and interactive ad units. (CMO.com Team 2019.)

1.7 Case company

The commissioning company for this thesis is Triggerbee AB. Triggerbee AB is a fast-growing start-up company from Sweden. It specializes in big data analytics, automations, and integrations (Triggerbee 2019a). Founded in 2014, Triggerbee provides companies with software to collect and use customer data to get a deeper knowledge of their customer journey and behaviour. The data is collected to create more personalized and specific marketing content. (Triggerbee 2019b.) With their headquarters in Stockholm, Sweden, Triggerbee employs 11 people. Their products include website activity tracking, analytics, visitor history, contact database, and data driven widgets. (Triggerbee 2019a.)

The study provides Triggerbee with comprehensive results on what their customers use their products for, and how the data collected is being utilized in the creation of personalized content. A desktop study on consumer perceptions shows how consumers view personalized marketing content and what concerns they have regarding safety and data collection. Triggerbee also wishes to use the results of the study as a part of their marketing content in the form of a whitepaper and possibly an event targeted to existing and possible clients.

2   The Keys of Personalization

In this chapter the theory behind marketing personalization is studied generally, followed by the 3 key elements of marketing personalization, which are identified and studied independently. This introduces the model, built based on data collection, content marketing, and customer experience.

2.1 Marketing personalization

As the world of smart devices, digital marketing, and Internet of Things (IOT) grows and develops exponentially, consumers' expectations from companies are also increasing. As consumers create more data when using social media and new smart technology, highly personal experiences are expected in return. (Nesamoney 2015, 173.) A shift from a product focused marketing to creating a customer experience is happening. While consumers attention span shortens, they become less loyal and create higher standards for marketing content. (Aquaia Lift 2019a.)

Marketing personalization can be briefly described as delivering the right message, at the right time, for the right person, on the right platform, with the right channel (King 2019, 18). The goal of personalization is to provide targeted messages to a user when the user is making a purchasing decision. Relevance of the message in that exact point in time is essential. The goal of personalization is to make sure that a user sees a message that is of high relevance to them, guiding them to engage with the brand and eventually to make a purchase. (Nesamoney 2015.)

Kingsnorth (2016, 204-207) separates 2 key methods of personalization. User defined – and behavioral personalization. The user defined method relies on the consumer to express their needs by providing the data voluntarily. This method eliminates the risk of making assumptions about the user based on trends and patterns when analyzing that data. The user defined method also trusts that the data provided by the consumer is accurate and precise. The behavioral personalization method, on the other hand, relies on data collected from different data collection points. These data collection points include for example website visits, opening an email, social media data, loyalty programs, third- and second-party data, and engaging with different types of content. The consumers' behavior is tracked, and marketing decisions are made based on that data. This usually leads to consumers receiving content that is only relevant to them. Challenges in this method include analyzing the data and the sensitive issue of privacy. The reason why behavioral personalization is exciting for most marketing professionals, is that it produces highly

precise data. The quality of data used is a key for the success of the personalization process.

The biggest factor fueling personalization is data. Without it, a marketing professional would not be able to get to know their customer, thus target them with relevant content. Data, and especially big data collected from consumers through multiple different data collection points allows companies to create a comprehensive profile of the individual customer, enabling the company to effectively personalize marketing for them. (Nesamoney 2015.)

The data used in the personalization process can also be utilized in the creation of content. For personalization to be successful, the content used in the process must be highly relevant, represent the brand, and lead to customer engagement. (Nesamoney 2015.) Mathewson & Moran (2015) state that quality content utilizes data to back up claims that justify its relevance. More importantly, they assure that content needs to create value for the customer, and data provides the resources and feedback to determine what is relevant to the customer. If value is not created for the user, engagement with the brand does not happen, leading to the loss of the sale or customer (Berndt & Brink 2008, 126).

The biggest change personized marketing offers to the marketing world, is that its deeply customer centered. Customer experience and the building of deeper and long-lasting relationships is in the very heart of personalization. (Walters 2015.) As personalization of marketing shifts the focus the consumer and the building of strong customer relationships, it is simultaneously forcing marketers to consider the relevance and usefulness of their marketing content and methods.

2.2 Data collection

Duffey (2019, 45) describes data according to the dictionary as "individual facts, statistics, or items of information". A collection of data is simply referred to as data and it is collected from different data collection points. It can then be used by companies to create a comprehensive profile of the customer to personalize marketing, products, and services. (Nesamoney 2015.) Data is divided into two categories: structured or unstructured. Structured data is highly organized and very easy to process. Unstructured data is all other information that is gathered. Unstructured data is gathered by using data collection tools that help with the categorizing and organizing of the data as it has no structure or order. (Khan & Sponder 2018, 2.)

Unstructured data is only useful when it is interpreted and translated into actionable insights, and it can be collected from everywhere (Villaini 2018). The most common data collection points for companies include website visits, session duration, new visitors and returning visitors, language, location, demographics, device information, browser, traffic source, and keyword analysis (Kingsnorth 2016, 265-266). This data is also known as 1st party data, as it is collected by the company itself by using data collection tools such as CRM systems or google analytics (Khan & Sponder 2018, 12). 2nd party data refers to data collected and/or bought from other direct sources, such as marketing partners and other organizations. 3rd party data is bought by data aggregators. Data aggregators collect behavioral data from multiple different online publishers providing insight for behavioral targeting. (Khan & Sponder 2018, 71-76.) Using data from multiple collection points helps create a more comprehensive profile of the consumer, making it easier to target the right message. Cookies are used in websites to allow different data collection tools to communicate, allowing the website to remember a customer without using any personally identifiable information. This information can be then used to tailor content to that specific customer. (Nesamoney 2015.)

The term Big Data is used to describe very large sets of data. This data is usually gathered outside of traditional data collection points, such as social media and smart devices. Big data is highly personal, extremely accurate, and captured in real time. That is what makes it so highly useful. (Nesamoney 2015.) Due to the vast size and complexity of the data in big data, it allows decisions to be made through the interpretation of the full data set, rather than the separate and individual parts of the data (Kingsnorth 2016, 206). Big data also provides feedback on the actions taken by the company and informs if they are successful or not (Mathewson & Moran 2015). In order for companies to understand and utilize data, they must analyze it. By conducting data analysis, companies can use data to measure success and to learn about digital marketing strategies. With insights into customer behavior, competition, and desired outcomes, companies can constantly improve and develop their digital marketing strategy. Data analysis is most commonly conducted by using Web Analytics databases which are structured by vendors for companies. It allows business owners and data analysts to understand the data and the company itself. (Khan & Sponder 2018, 84.) Without web analytics, a company is essentially blind to the activity on their website (Kingsnorth 2016, 267).

Due to the great amount of data being collected continuously, some challenges are bound to follow. There are few key challenges and issues with data collection, one of them being the storing of data. Data is usually stored in data silos, where the retrieval of information can be challenging or even impossible between departments. The most accessible way to

store data is in data warehouses or data marts. There the data is aggregated and organized so that it is easily understandable and accessible throughout the entire organization. However, when considering the personalization of marketing content, even these data warehouses have some issues with the relevance, anonymity, and integration throughout the customer touchpoints. In order to alleviate some of the issues a "Personalization Data Store (PDS)" can be created. A PDS only contains data that is useful in the personalization of marketing and content without having any identifiable information about their clients. (Nesamoney 2015.) The lack of access from companies to PDSs' introduces the second largest challenge of data collection -- trust. Mathewson & Moran (2015) state that a company needs to build trust by providing customers with the information they need, whenever they need it. Developing trust online can be challenging to a company. A company needs to continuously prove to the customer that it will not violate their trust by forcing them into doing business on the company's terms. Customers' level of trust is based on their perceived risk from the company. Some methods to increase and strengthen the trust between a company and their customers are creating a brand, posting product referrals from past customers, using third party payment systems, and providing online tracking systems. (Godson 2009, 190-191.) New legislations are created to protect the privacy of customers while online. The GDPR law that came into effect in the EU in 2019 is just one of many trying to provide security for both customers and companies. (Palmer 2019.)

While data collection might seem time-, and especially money-consuming, there are valid reasons for companies to pursue collecting even larger amounts of data. Khan & Sponder (2018, 148) describe data as the most valuable thing a company can own. While many companies struggle with the analysis and the use of all the data they have, once it is mastered, revenues are to increase as an outcome. Data is a strategic asset. It adds to the customers experience, creates value, and increases engagement by being relevant and delivered in the right time. (Nesamoney 2015.)

2.3 Content marketing

Buche (2017) defines content as a set of messages that are exchanged in order to communicate things that are important or matter. In marketing, content is used by companies and brands in storytelling. The ultimate goal of content marketing is to create connections between companies and their customers.

Mathewson & Moran (2015) have identified the 4 key elements of good content marketing.

9

1. Content marketing must be credible: creating a base of trust between the company and the customer is essential when building a relationship.
2. Content marketing is usually more targeted than other traditional marketing techniques. By considering the motivations and psychographics of the customer, the stages of the customer journey, and the resonance of the message, content marketing helps in the targeting of the message to the right customer.
3. Content marketing is differentiated: identifying the unique characteristics of the product or service creates value to the target customer.
4. Content marketing must be measurable. When using data collection tools and especially when analyzing and utilizing data, the marketing efforts can be measured.

In order for a company to communicate with consumers in a highly personalized manner, the content developed and published has to represent the unique values and goals of the company (Nesamoney 2015).

There are a few different types of content that can be created for marketing purposes. Educational marketing content provides additional information like "nice to know" facts related to the field of the product or service. Useful content, on the other hand, provides more information and details about the service or product, and can easily be personalized based on a customer's user profile. Entertaining content focuses on the engagement of customers. The content is generally less serious in tone and can contain things like memes or challenges. Creating engaging content leads consumer engagement with the company itself. (Nesamoney 2015.) Some of the most common content types include articles, case studies and whitepapers, blogs, videos, apps, e-books and podcasts, infographics, images, presentations, quizzes and polls, newsletters, and limited time "stories" such as Instagram and snapchat stories (Buche 2017; Kingsnorth 2016, 235).

Distribution is crucially important when making marketing content. If the content never reaches its targeted customer, it has no use. There are 3 distribution channels, and a mix of all of them is typically used. Owned channels are company's own channels that are fully owned and controlled by the company itself. These include the company's own website, e-mail list, blogs, and social media profiles. Earned channels are channels where a company can grow influence and exposure organically. A company cannot buy exposure but it can earn it by bringing value to consumers. These channels include referrals, reviews, ratings, forums, and PR-opportunities. Paid channels involve media or partner spend in return for exposure through paid advertising, paid search, paid sponsorships, and brand placements. (Buche 2017.) Social media fits into both owned and paid channels. While a company does not need to pay for the use of their profile or for posting content, paid

advertising has proven to be extremely effective in the engagement of consumers. (Kingsnorth 2016, 250-251.)

The personalization of marketing content essentially ensures that the right content reaches the right consumers at the right time. Data collected to drive personalization helps in ensuring the relevance and timeliness of the content when it is presented to the consumer. (Nesamoney 2015.) Mathewson & Moran (2015) describe data-driven content marketing as the most powerful content marketing type. Also described as inbound-marketing, data-driven content marketing focuses on the engagement and attraction of consumers through content. Personalized marketing enables companies to understand individual customers well enough to be able to create the content they need, whenever they need it. The challenge with this is that many companies do not have the environment or resources for data-driven content marketing.

When doing business in an international environment, companies must consider cultural aspects in their marketing as well. While the process for creating marketing content is the same everywhere, the content itself must be tailored according to the culture, language, and location of the target customer. Some things to consider when creating international content or content to customers in a different country or region are marketing platforms, cultural differences, legal aspects, payment channels, seasonal and cultural events, as well as localization and language. (Kingsnorth 2016, 35, 255-256.)

2.4 Customer relationships

Customer experience as a concept is the overall experience a consumer has when purchasing a product or a service. It covers all aspects and functions of the customer journey, from awareness of the product/service to final use and durability of the product/service. (Goodman 2014.) Creating and managing positive customer experiences is one of the greatest sources of company differentiation, making it a massive competitive advantage (Pennington 2016).

Goodman (2014) has identified 4 key aspects of a good customer experience.

1. It is end-to-end, and covers all functions of the company from marketing to product design
2. Technology is used to offer services through multiple channels, to conduct market research, and to analyze consumer data
3. Service is aggressive, and consumers are encouraged to give feedback and to give complaints or ask questions
4. It is measurable and profitable for the company

When combining positive customer experiences with building consumer relationships, long-time value is created. A company wants a consumer to create value for them. A consumer, on the other hand, creates the most value to a company when they are receiving the most value from the purchase. The only way for a consumer to get the most value out of a purchase is when they can trust the company they are purchasing from. In order for a company to understand what a customer values, it has to understand the critical consumer interactions that drive their behaviors and actions. (Pennington 2016.)

Creating relationships with consumers is called relationship marketing. A successful relationship between a consumer and a company develops when mutual trust is created, and the goals of both parties are met. (Berndt & Brink 2008, 7.) Godson (2009, 42) lists three ways B2C relationship adds value to both parties. First, by ensuring the product/service meets the consumers expectations and requirements, second by creating trust between the company and the consumer, and finally, by ensuring a personalized "human" experience. It should be acknowledged that in a B2C relationship the customer always holds the power (Berndt & Brink 2008, 6). If trust is not established between a company and a consumer, no value is created, and the consumer is lost (Pennington 2016). Companies can create and enforce consumers' trust by being transparent, and by offering accurate and up-to-date information about their products/services (Villaini 2018).

Generally, consumer expectations are reasonable. Most consumers expect easy access to service on their own terms, quick first-time resolution to requests for assistance, and proof that the company cares. Consumers expect what is promised and what they purchased, without complications. (Goodman 2014.) With the rapidly growing amount of purchases made online, the online presence of a company is becoming extremely important. Consumers are becoming more informed, and much more difficult to retain. This is leading to consumers demanding more personalized, easier, consistent, timely and empathetic customer experiences. (Villaini 2018.) However, "truly great experiences are about consistency over time" (Pennington 2016).

It is crucially important to set the consumers expectations realistically. If expectations are set up unrealistically high and are not met, consumers trust, and loyalty can be lost very easily. When these unmet expectations are not fixed, all a company can do is show empathy. (Goodman 2014.) It is important for companies to recognize that failures will sometimes happen and preparations for bad experiences should be done (Pennington 2016).

When collecting data to improve consumer experiences, it can be done based on two objectives: knowing who the consumer is and what the consumer does. Knowing who the consumer is, and identifying them, is important so that they can be approached directly,

and that a relationship between the company and the consumer can be stablished. This can be done by reviewing information that the company already has, or by asking the consumer to identify themselves. After the consumer is identified, their behavior with the company can be tracked. (Godson 2009.) Xu and Walton (in Godson 2009, 148-155) suggests 5 behavioral types that can be tracked: purchasing-, contact-, response-, retention-, and migration behavior.

Data collected from customer interactions helps companies to understand and optimize the consumer experience. Relevant information delivered to the consumer at the right time can be extremely powerful, as "people will never forget how you made them feel". (Pennington 2016.) If used correctly, data collection can reduce unpleasant surprises, increase effective response, provide first-time resolution of service problems, and show that a company cares by providing a personalized customer experience (Goodman 2014). When interacting with a company, a consumer expects a personalized customer experience that is tailored just for them based on the data collected from that consumer (Villaini 2018). However, when tailoring an experience to a specific consumer, a company must have information about the consumers history and personal circumstances. This requires data collection and analysis from the company. (Goodman 2014.) The goal of personalization should be building a strong relationship which is highly personalized to the consumers' needs and responsive to their requests (Villaini 2018).

2.5 The Keys of Personalization model

Figure 1. The Keys of Personalization-model

When building the framework for this thesis, three main concepts and building blocks of personalization were chosen. While data collection and analysis have been the basis for modern personalization, content marketing and customer experience are the areas affecting consumers directly.
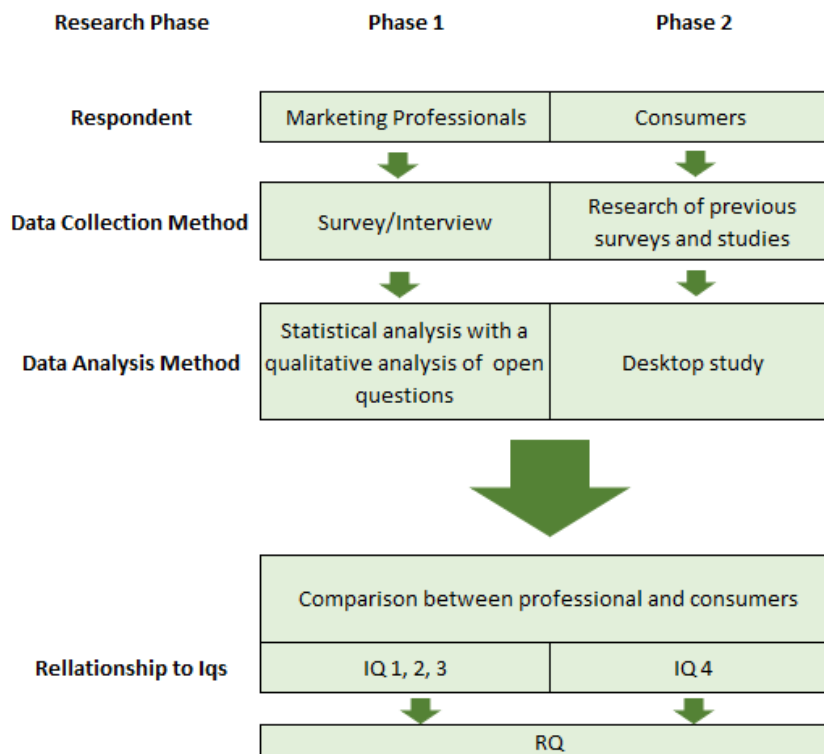
With information provided from data collection, companies have been able to track their customers and study their behavior and interactions with the company. Based on this information a more comprehensive picture of the customers has been created. As a result, content can be targeted and personalized towards a single customer, improving their customer experience, and building a stronger relationship.

3 Research methods

In this chapter the different steps taken in the research are explained. The design of the research and the sampling of the surveyed companies is justified. The survey design is introduced, and the data collection is explained and presented. In the end, an evaluation of the reliability of the study and the different risks that were faced are discussed.

3.1 Research design

Table 3. Research Design

Research Phase	Phase 1	Phase 2
Respondent	Marketing Professionals	Consumers
Data Collection Method	Survey/Interview	Research of previous surveys and studies
Data Analysis Method	Statistical analysis with a qualitative analysis of open questions	Desktop study

Comparison between professional and consumers

Rellationship to Iqs	IQ 1, 2, 3	IQ 4

RQ

Above in table 3 the design of the research is presented. Phase 1 presents the different steps taken in the research phase. Marketing professionals are surveyed, and a statistical analysis is conducted together with a qualitative analysis of open questions. This phase answers IQs 1, 2, and 3. In Phase 2 the views and opinions of consumers are examined through a desktop study. Already existing studies and surveys of the topic are reviewed to create a comprehensive understanding of the consumers point of view. This phase answers IQ 4. A comparison of the collected data and the desktop study is made to explore differences in opinion and viewpoints between the marketing professionals and consumers. A decision to study IQ4 with a desktop study was made due to time restraints and the large amount of existing data and studies available about consumer perspectives. It was decided that a study of previously existing surveys and studies would be sufficient in

determining the attitudes of consumers. Together with the analysed data and the desktop study, the Research Question is answered.

3.2 Sampling

The companies chosen to answer the survey were selected from their existing customers and prospects of the commissioning company Triggerbee AB. These companies' CRM managers were targeted due to their expertise in creating customer experiences and knowledge of customer needs and wants. The selected companies were contacted through email and LinkedIn by the commissioning company's marketing manager.

3.3 Data collection

Data collection for the survey conducted for companies was executed by the commissioning company during the summer of 2020. Due to the timing of the data collection, as well as the lack of motivation of the companies contacted, a limited amount of data was collected. To answer IQ4 on consumer perceptions of personalized marketing, a small desktop study was conducted to broaden the data collected, and to create a better overall picture of marketing personalization globally.

Data collection for the desktop study was done by utilizing, examining, and comparing secondary data sources, such as multiple articles, studies, and previous thesis studies in order to form a complete and comprehensive picture of consumer perspectives. The data collected included both qualitative and quantitative data and is analysed as a mixed method research.

Analysis of qualitative data was made on the data analysis tool SPSS, and the results are presented in graphs based on the analysis results.

3.4 Reliability and risks

A small pool of answers makes the study somewhat unreliable. While the quality of replies received was excellent, a small pool of answers leaves room for variation and does not form a clear picture of the industry of marketing personalization. A small answer pool can also give quite a homogenous picture of the personalization methods used by companies.

The risks concerning secondary data utilized in the desktop study relate to the nature of the data. Since the studies and surveys have been conducted by an external source, the sampling, quality, and collection methods are unknown, thus weakening the reliability of the data. (Bajpai 2018.) Another risk regarding the study is the rapidly evolving nature of the topic, which can make the information and studies used irrelevant and unreliable quite quickly. In order to ensure the relevance of the information in this study, all sources in the

desktop study are not published before 2017. Data protection and the protection of consumer privacy is a relevant topic worldwide, and many organizations and countries are fighting for more strict data protection laws. This can distort the relevance of this study, and the data presented might not be usable in a few years' time.

4 Consumer perception

The consumer perceptions discussed in IQ 4 are studied by using a desktop study. A collection of five different sources, and both qualitative and quantitative data was used to determine consumer perceptions towards personalized marketing content, data collection, and their effect on the customer experience.

4.1 Personalized marketing content and value creation

According to Fridh & Dahl (2019), personalized marketing has an ability to create value for the consumer by identifying their individual needs and customizing offers. Personalized marketing is viewed as a positive and a welcomed addition if consumers feel like the company acts in their interest. Some of the things creating value for consumers are relevant and new product suggestions, which can portray personalized marketing as an additional service. Perceived personal relevance and the promise of entertainment of future marketing content is also positively related to consumers giving companies permission to use their personal data for marketing purposes. (Arden, Krafft & Verhoef 2017.) However, 61% of consumers feel that companies do not use their personal data correctly to predict their needs or deliver relevance. Additionally 82% of consumers hope for a higher level of personalization and relevance that is being offered currently, and 72% of consumers report to only engaging with marketing content that is personalized according to their needs. (Aquaia Lift 2019b; SmarterHQ 2019.)

Consumers expect personalized marketing content and communication to match their interests and needs at the right time. If these needs and expectations are not met, negative feelings towards the company and its marketing content can arise. (Fridh & Dahl 2019.) According to a study made by SmarterHQ (2019), close to 40% of consumers disliked personalized marketing content when the wrong assumptions were made about their needs or interests. In order for personalized marketing to add value to a consumer, it has to be highly relevant and correspond to the needs of the consumer. When the content does not match the consumers' needs, lacks perceived genuineness, or is an obvious attempt for a sale, consumers tend to have negative feelings towards the marketing content and the company. Most importantly, the lack of genuineness in the message sent to the consumer can be viewed as annoying and disruptive. (Fridh & Dahl 2019.)

When compared to traditional marketing, consumers perceptions towards personalized content were more positive as it was felt to be more interesting, helpful, and appealing, and it created greater value for the consumer. Traditional marketing on the other hand was perceived as an inconvenience and an annoyance. (Fridh & Dahl 2019.)

The way personalized marketing content is presented makes a big difference. Especially push notifications are considered to interfere with daily activity, and 74% of consumers consider them "creepier" than any other channel. 51% of consumers reported that email is the best way for companies to communicate with them, with 25% reporting social media being the second-best option. Consumers most appreciated and valued personalized marketing content such as special discounts, new product suggestions, suggested products based on purchase history, remarketing content for products that need replacing, and reminders of items left in the cart. In return for a cheaper and easier purchase experience, 90% of consumers are willing to give companies their behavioral data for marketing purposes. (SmarterHQ 2019.) However, a study conducted by Aquaia Lift (2019b) reports that 79% of consumers think companies should not use their personal data for marketing purposes.

4.2 Data collection and privacy

Most respondents in Fridh & Dahls (2019) study report feeling uncomfortable knowing how much companies know about their personal lives and purchasing behaviour. A large part of consumers is concerned about data collection, with 86% of consumers being concerned about the privacy of their personal data, and only 11% of consumers feeling very comfortable with sharing their data with companies. Knowledge of data collection seems to also have an impact as 47% of consumers feel uncomfortable with companies knowing things about them when they were not aware of the company possessing that data. 79% of consumers also reported thinking companies know too much about them and their personal data. (Aquaia Lift 2019b; SmarterHQ 2019.) The data consumers reported being the least comfortable with companies collecting without their knowledge, were highly personal information such as name, phone number and a physical home address (SmarterHQ 2019).

Consumers are more likely to perceive personalized marketing as negative if they feel concern about the collection of their personal information. According to the study conducted by Fridh & Dahl (2019), the problem behind data collection and giving companies behavioural and personal data is the lack of control and uncertainty on how the data is managed. This also negatively affects the way consumers view personalized marketing content and communication. Consumers also reported to be more likely to be concerned about personal data collection if the company is previously unknown to the consumer.

However, the comfort and value created by personalized marketing content seems to take over from the concern on personal data collection by companies. If a consumer feels that the advantages of giving a company access to their data are greater than the

disadvantages, they are more likely to grant companies access to their personal data. (Fridh & Dahl 2019.) As consumers see granting personal data to companies a tradeoff between losing control and a level of privacy, not granting permission is also seen as losing some value with non-personalization and general marketing content (Chen, Feng, Liu, & Tian 2019). Other cost-related factors regarding granting permission to personal data are the registration cost, the expectancy of intrusive and nonrelevant marketing content, as well as privacy concerns on how the data is handled (Arden & al. 2017). Arden & al (2017) also report that the concern for privacy is the strongest negative factor regarding granting permission for data collection. It was also reported that companies often incentivize customers when requesting permissions for marketing purposes. This incentivizing can lead to consumers feeling annoyed and disrupted, and eventually not granting permission for data collection.

4.3 Customer experiences

As the choice and control for sharing personal information online decreases, both positive and negative experiences and perceptions affect how open the consumer is to the personalized marketing content presented to them. Especially positive past experiences and consumer satisfaction are reported to have a big impact on the level of concern and trust experienced by consumers. Recommendations from other consumers can increase the trust felt by a consumer if they trust their opinion. (Fridh & Dahl 2019.) When a personalized marketing strategy has been planned and designed well, it has the opportunity to strengthen the customer experience, trust, and the relationship between the consumer and the company (Fridh & Dahl 2019). Additionally, consumers are more willing to trust companies if they provide personalized marketing content and experiences that makes their shopping experience easier and more productive (SmarterHQ 2019). According to Aquaia Lift (2019b) 76% of consumers report to being more loyal to a company that understands their needs and wants on a personal level. By matching the consumers online behaviour and needs with the right personalized marketing content, companies have the possibility of creating customer value, and creating positive experiences. This in turn creates consumer loyalty with existing customers and attracts new customers. (Fridh & Dahl 2019.)

When done in the wrong scale, personalized marketing can feel too intrusive and sales oriented. This in turn can create a negative perception of the company, and a feeling that the company is working in their own interest and that there is a lack of genuineness toward the consumer. This lack of genuineness can turn into the feeling of intrusiveness, even if the personalized content is accurate. (Fridh & Dahl 2019.) Giving permission for a company to use personal consumer data is seen as a trade-off between giving access to

personal data to receive personalized content, or not sharing information and receiving general and standardized content. The negative feelings associated with giving access to personal data can be compensated by providing highly relevant and interactive marketing content. (Arden & al. 2017.) However, over 60% of consumers feel that companies do not utilize the data they are provided accurately enough to predict their needs. Additionally, over half of consumers, 55%, feel that companies are behind the times and do not know how to interact with consumers. Because of this, 61% of consumers feel that companies do not know the customer, including past purchase histories or personal preferences. This has a negative impact on customer experience and loyalty. (Aquaia Lift 2019b.)

Consumers like to have control over their relationships. Arden & al (2017) emphasize the benefits of the use of zero-party data and permission-based data collection, as it makes consumers feel like they are in charge of the information that is provided. This also makes the consumer aware that their data is being used and provides an option to stop sharing their data, reducing the "creepiness" factor of personalized marketing content (SmarterHQ 2019). In the end, consumers want companies to understand their needs better, including when to respect their personal space and leave them alone. As consumers guard their personal data and at the same time expect companies to know them, creating and establishing trust is the only way to achieve both. This can be achieved by transparency, empathy, and genuineness, as well as listening to consumers wishes on how to collect and utilize their personal data. (Aquaia Lift 2019b; SmarterHQ 2019.)

5 Survey Results

In this chapter the results of the survey are inspected and presented. The questions in the survey (see appendix 1) and the data will be presented with their corresponding IQs. The respondents of this surveys were CRM managers and other marketing professionals of internationally and globally operating companies. The focus of this survey was to explore the content personalization methods companies use when creating personalized marketing content to consumers.

5.1 Survey respondents

The survey was sent to a group of the commissioning company's business partners and leads that work in the e-commerce industry. The respondents of the survey are the CRM managers of these companies, and they were surveyed during the summer of 2020.

Below in figure 2 the operating areas of the companies that responded to the survey can be seen. 57.1% of the companies operate in international markets, and 28.6% operate globally. Only 14.3% companies operated nationally.
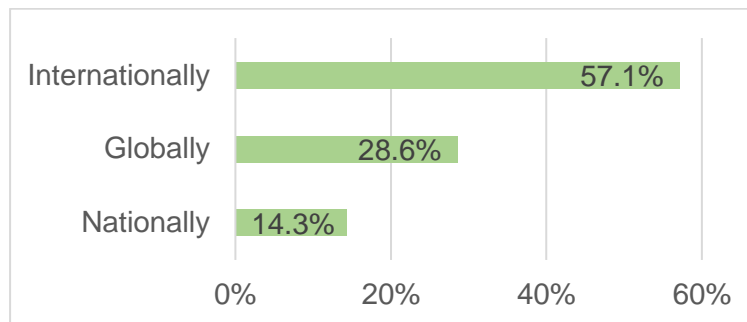

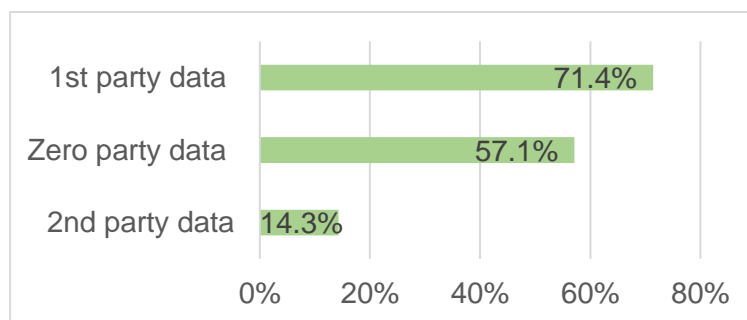Figure 2. The areas the respondent companies operate in

Figure 3. Data sources used in the marketing personalization process

Above in figure 3 the data sources used in the creation of personalized marketing content can be seen. First party data was reported being the most used data source with 71.4% of the respondents using the data collection method. Zero party data was the second most used data source, with 57.1% of the respondents reporting using this data collection

method in their personalization process. Second party data was the least used data collection method with only 14.3% of the respondents reporting to using it. Third party data was not used by the companies in the creation of their personalized marketing content.

When asked about the number of audiences the respondents' market for, the range of segmentation varied between 100 and 3 segments, with 40% of the respondents reporting that they are marketing to approximately 10 different audiences. (See appendix 1.)

5.2 Personalized marketing content

The different types of personalized marketing content produced by the companies were videos, photos/photographs, emails, ads, and blog posts. From these, 100% of the respondents reported producing personalized emails, and 71.4% reported producing personalized ads. Other personalized content produced by companies were pictures/photographs with 43%, videos with 29%, and blog posts with 14%. No other content was reported to be produced by companies. (Figure 4.)
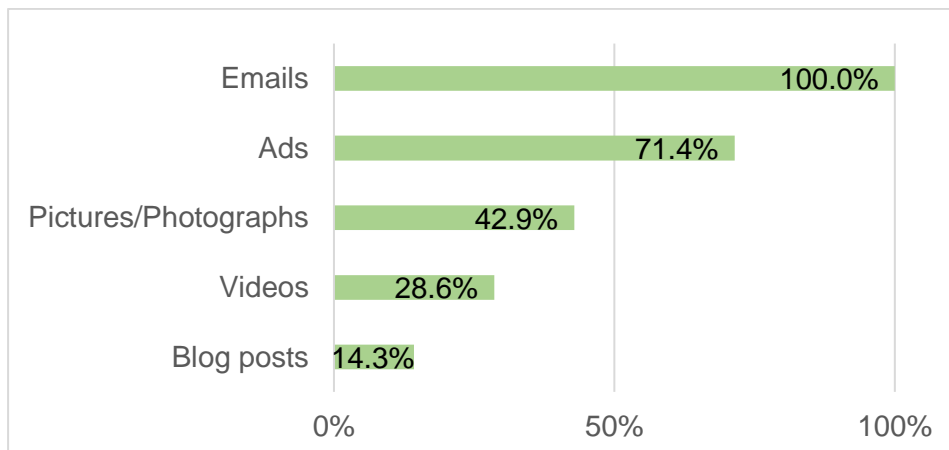

Figure 4. Personalized marketing content currently produced by companies

Figure 5 below represents the personalized content types that have been proven to be the most successful. Email was reported being the most successful content type by 100% of the participants. Personalized ads were the second most successful content type with 57.1%, and videos and photos were reported to be the least successful with 14.3% each.
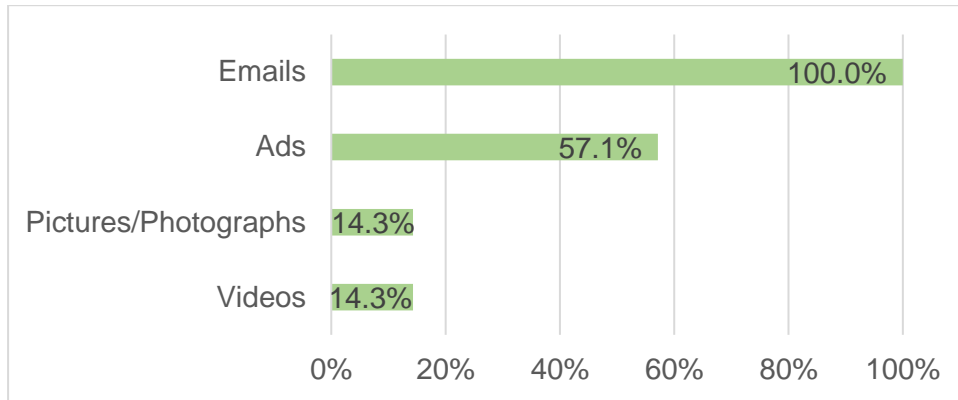
Figure 5. The most successful personalized content types

The respondents reported using the following personalization methods when creating personalized marketing content: demographic, geographic and behavioural segmentation, tracking the customer journey, website visits and behaviour, previous purchase and transaction information, as well as remarketing tools like google. (See appendix 1.)
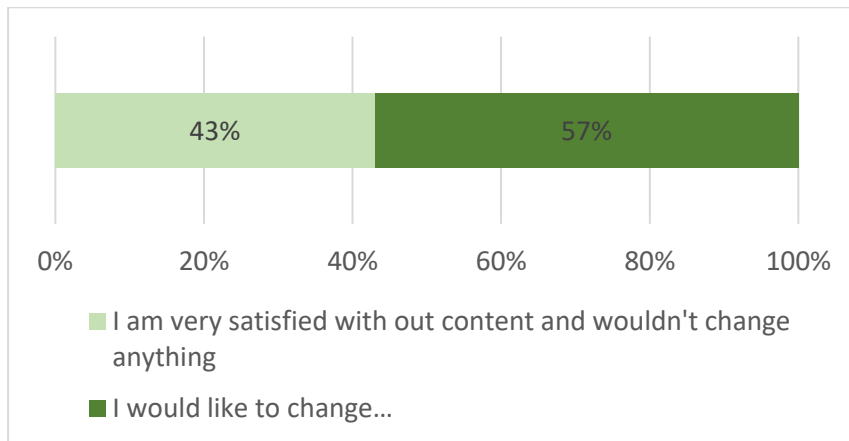

Figure 6. Satisfaction with current personalized marketing content

When asked how satisfied the respondents were with their current personalization methods 43% responded being very satisfied and that they would not change anything. However, as seen in figure 6 above, 57% of the respondents reported wanting to change some aspect of their personalization methods. The marketing automation system, personalization tools, web page, micro-segmentation, as well as implementing AI to the personalization methods were reported as things the respondents would like to implement or change in their marketing strategy.
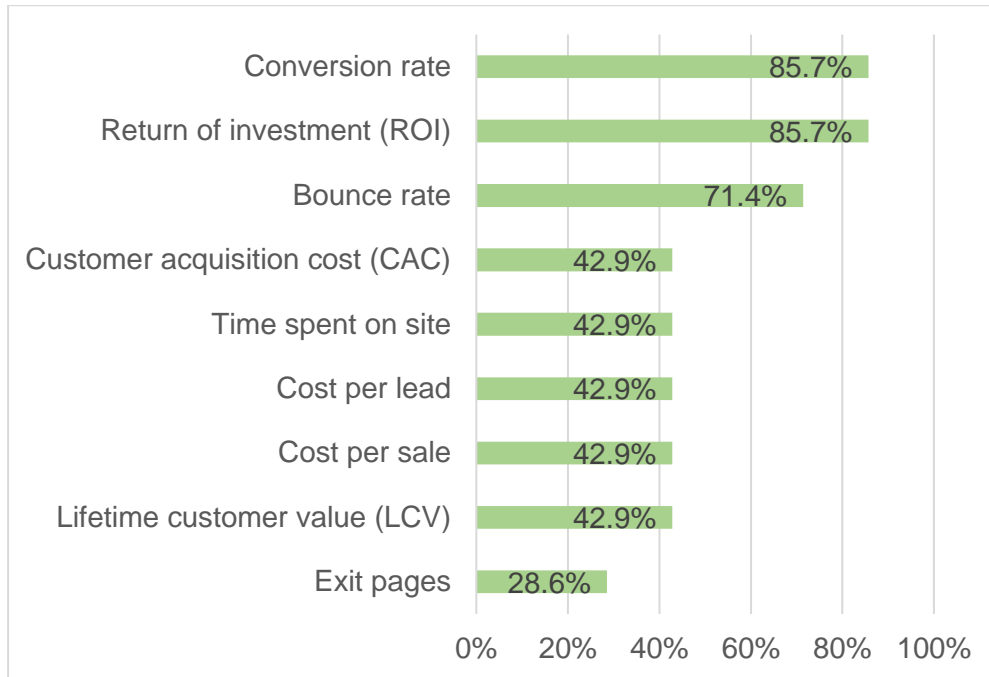
Figure 7. Metrics tracked to determine the success of personalization methods

Above in figure 7 the different metrics tracked by the respondents can be seen. The most tracked metrics with 85.7% were conversion rate and the return of investment (ROI). Bounce rate was tracked by 71.4% of the respondents. Nearly half (42.9%) of the respondents reported tracking the time spent on the website, cost per lead and cost per sale, as well as lifetime customer value (LCV) and customer acquisition cost (CAC). Around one third of the respondents (28.6%) responded to tracking the exit pages of the website as well.
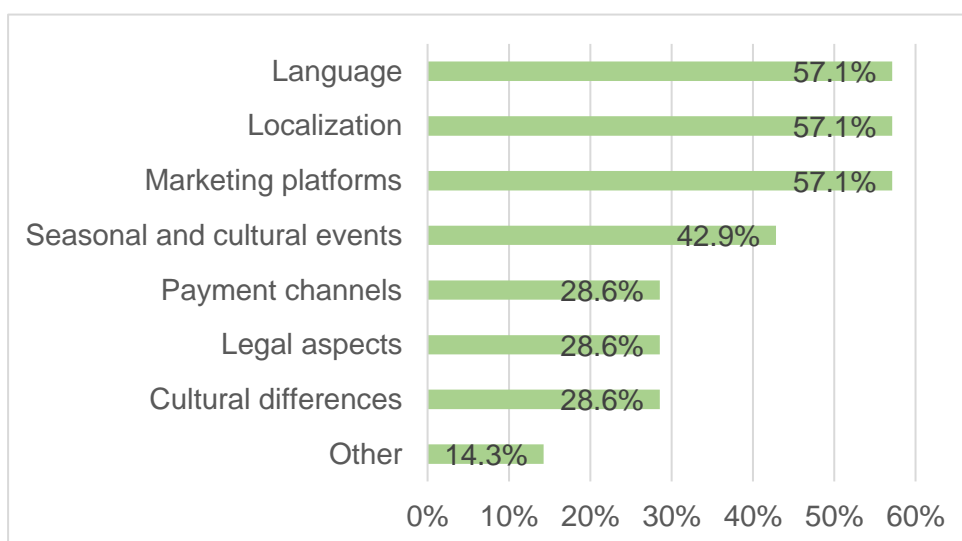
5.3 Cultural aspects of content

Figure 8. Aspects considered when creating personalized content for international and culturally diverse audiences and customer segments

Nearly two thirds (57.1%) of the respondents reported to considering the language, marketing platforms, and localization when creating personalized content. Slightly fewer respondents, 42.9%, considered seasonal and cultural events. Around one third (28.6%) of the respondents considered payment channels, legal aspects, and the cultural differences in their personalized content. "Other" answers included the company's other brands and their marketing content. (Figure 8.)
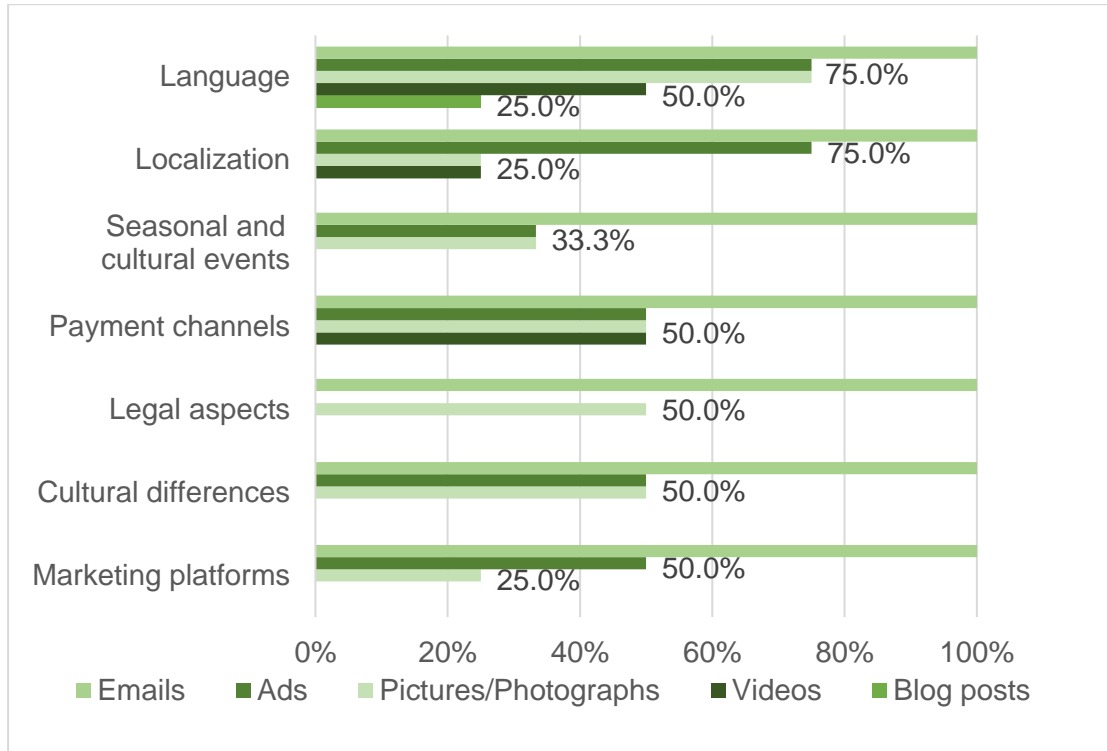

Figure 9. The cultural aspects considered when creating different content types

Above in figure 9 the different cultural aspects of content creation which are considered when creating different types of personalized content can be seen. All the respondents (100%) reported considering all of the provided cultural aspects, including language, legal aspects, and seasonal and cultural events when creating emails. When creating ads 75% of respondents considered language and localization, and 50% considered cultural differences, marketing platforms, and payment channels. Only 25% reported considering language when creating blog posts, and no other cultural aspect was considered. From the cultural aspects, language is the most considered one, with all of the companies considering it when creating different content types.
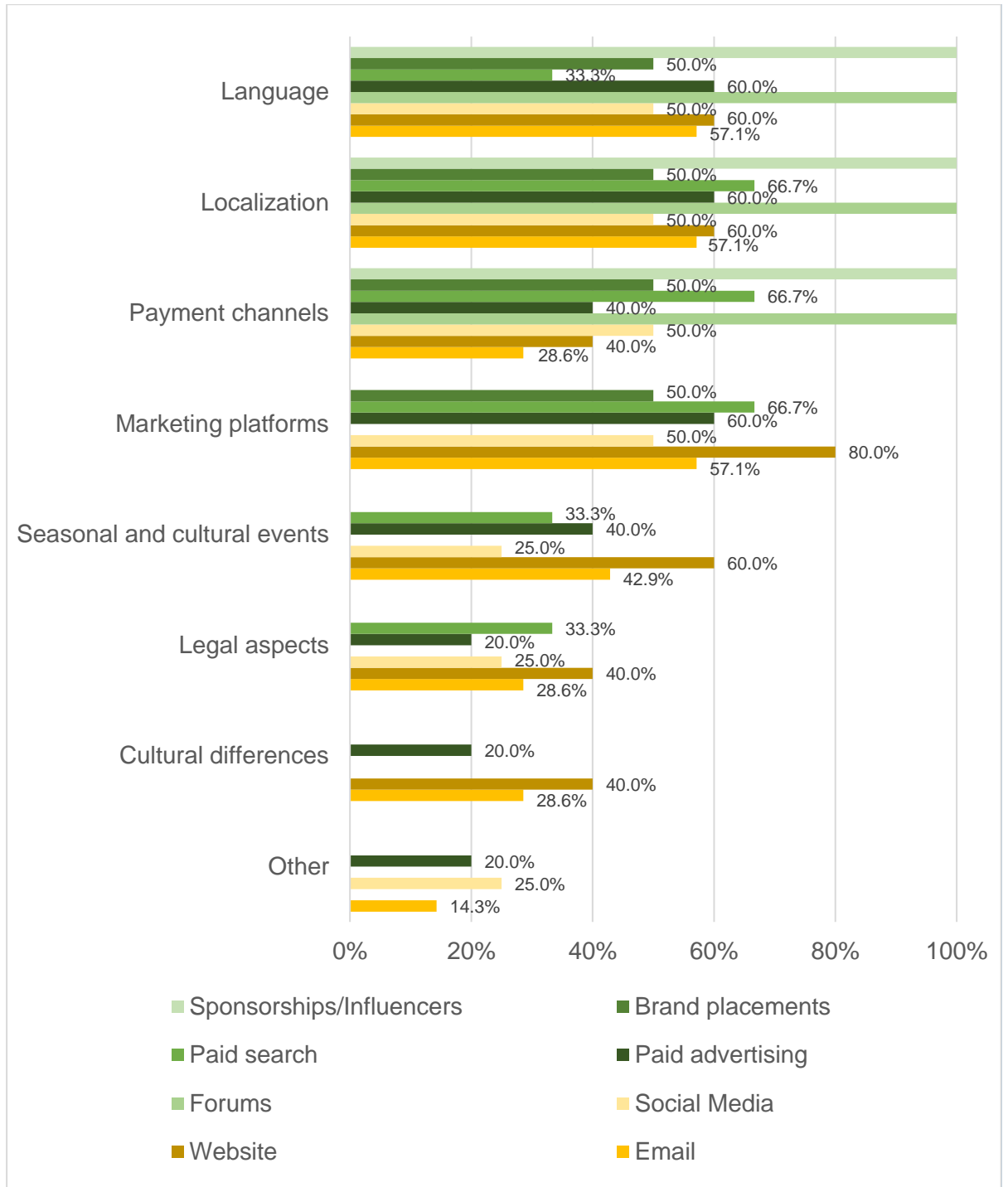
Figure 10. Cultural aspects considered when choosing content distribution platforms

Above in figure 10 the cultural aspects that are considered when choosing and publishing personalized content on different platforms can be seen. Language, localization, and payment channels were all considered when creating content to any distribution platform. All the respondents (100%) also reported considering language, localization, and payment channels when creating content for forums and when utilizing sponsorships and influencers. When creating content for social media 50% of the respondents reported considering language, localization, payment channels, and marketing platforms. 25% also

reported considering seasonal and cultural events, the legal aspects, and other cultural aspects when creating personalized content. All cultural aspects provided were also considered when creating email and paid advertising content. Other cultural aspects considered included brand positioning in international environments.

5.4 How personalized marketing content is used

In figure 11 below the distribution platforms used for personalized marketing content can be seen. Email is the most popular platform used by all (100%) of the respondents. The second most used platform used by the respondents was paid advertising and the companies own websites with 71.4%. Social media as a distribution channel was reported being used by 57.1% of the respondents, and 42.9% of the respondents reported using paid search to distribute personalized marketing content. The least popular distribution channels were different forums and sponsorships or influencers with 14.3%.
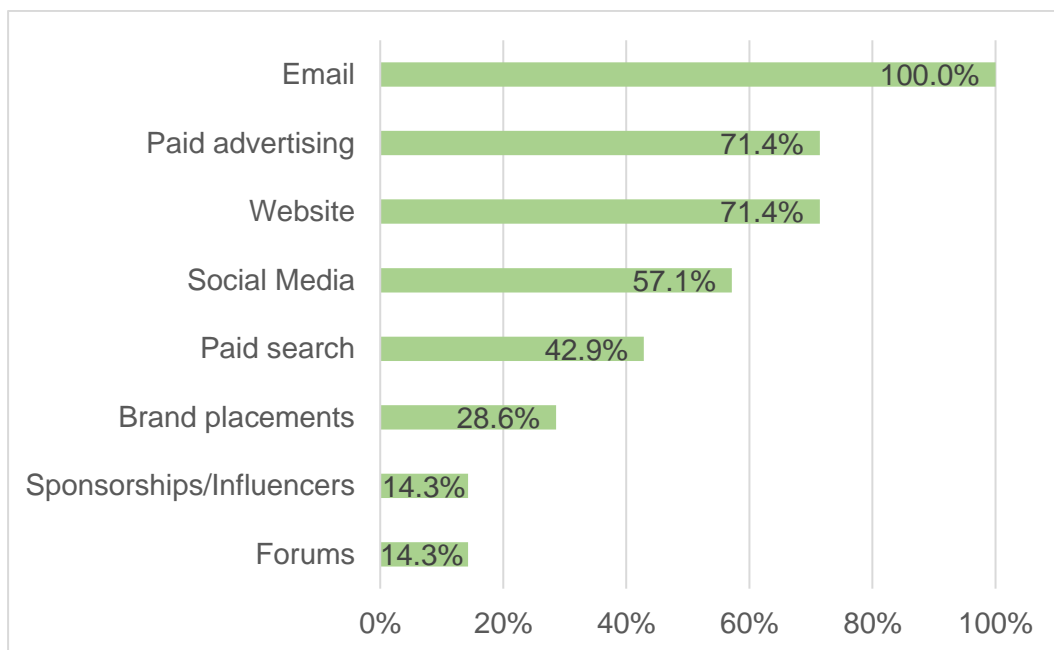
Figure 11. Platforms used in the distribution of personalized content

Below in the figure 12 the metrics tracked by companies in order to meet their goals for their personalized marketing strategy can be seen. All the respondents reported tracking at least one of the provided metrics when trying to meet their set goal. Exit pages, time spent on site, cost per lead, cost per sale, and lifetime customer value (LCV) were tracked by 100% of the respondents with the goal of increase in revenue. Cost per sale metric was tracked by all respondents whose goal was developing trust with customers, increase in revenue, and creating a better customer experience. Other goals set for the personalized marketing strategy included the increase in relevance of content.

Figure 12. Metrics tracked by companies to meet their goals for their personalized marketing strategy

The companies goals for future content personalization as reported by the respondents were: implementing full automation, creating a better and more unique customer experience, increasing the net promoter score (NPS), as well as creating the right message to the right person, at the right time, through the right channel. (See appendix 1.)
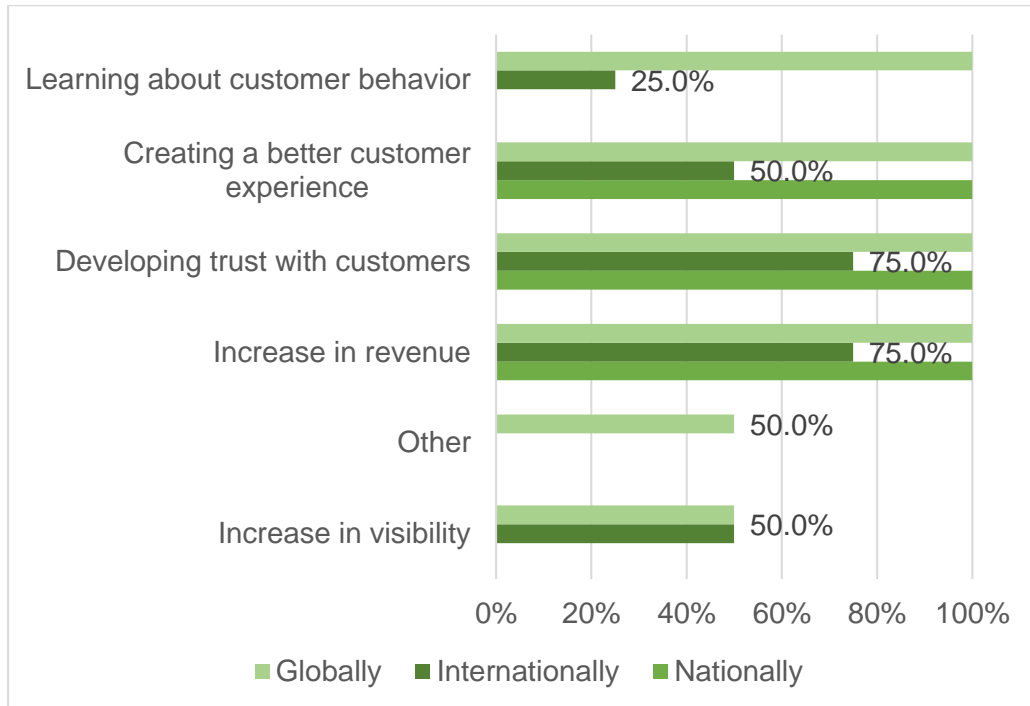
Figure 13. Companies goals for their personalized marketing strategy based on their operating markets

All (100%) of the companies operating both nationally and globally report their goals for their personalized marketing strategy to be creating a better customer experience, developing trust with customers, as well as increasing revenue. 100% of the companies working globally also report that learning about customer behaviour is one of their goals. Half (50%) of the companies operating globally report one of their goals to be "other" which was specified as increase in relevance. (Figure 13.)

Below in figure 14 the different content distribution channels are compared to the respondents operating markets. Email is reported to be the most popular distribution channel with 100% of the respondents utilizing it. Companies operating globally also report utilizing all of the distribution channels provided. Half (50%) of the globally operating respondents report using channels such as paid advertising, social media, paid search, brand placements, sponsorships, and influencers, as well as forums. Nationally operating companies only report using email as their only personalized marketing platform.

Figure 14. The content distribution channels used by companies based on their operating markets
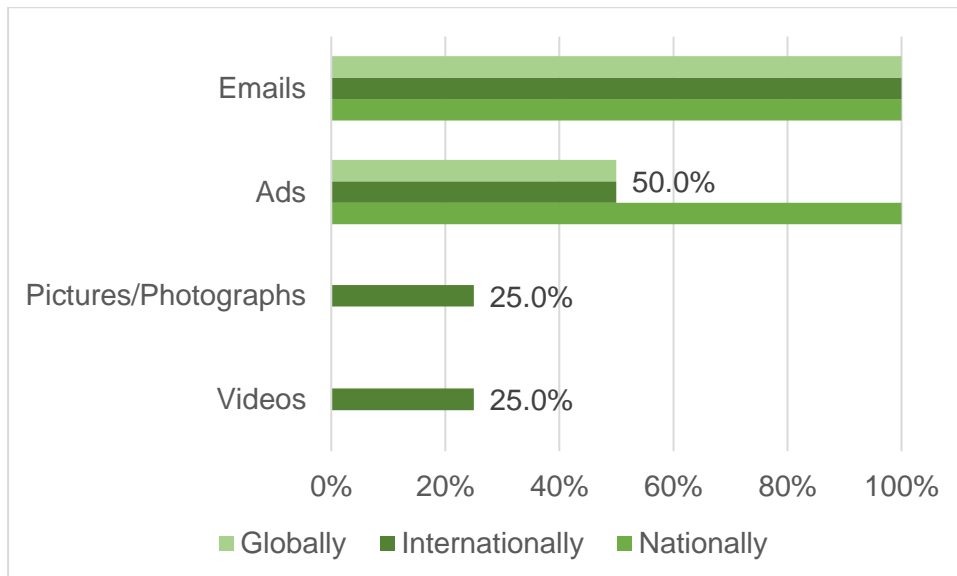
Figure 15. The personalized marketing content produced by companies based on their operating markets

All respondents report using email content in their personalized marketing. 50% of companies operating internationally report producing ads, and 25% report producing pictures and photographs, as well as video content. Companies operating both globally and nationally report to producing only personalized emails and ad content. (Figure 15.)

6 Analysis and key outcomes

Here both the theory studied, and data collected is analysed to determine the results of the study, and to make informed recommendations regarding personalized marketing. The key outcomes of the study are presented, and suggestions for future research are made. An evaluation of the process and the author's own learning is also included.

6.1 Analysis

The research and study have proved that in order for marketing personalization to be successful, its content has to be highly relevant and targeted, as well as credible and measurable. Simultaneously it must represent the brand, and lead to customer engagement. (Nesamoney 2015; Mathewson & Moran 2015.) Creating customer engagement and positive customer experiences is seen as a massive competitive advantage (Pennington 2016). Almost half (43%) of the companies that responded to the survey reported being completely happy with their content personalization methods. However, 82% of consumers hope for a higher level of personalization and relevance in the content they are currently being provided by companies (Aquia Lift 2019b). This indicates that some companies do not know the actual level of personalization that their customers want.

6.1.1 IQ1 What kind of content personalization methods are used by companies?

The most important and useful content personalization method is data collection. Data is a huge asset, as it helps companies to understand their customers values and needs, as well as the critical consumer interactions behind their behaviour and actions. (Pennington 2016.) Data also helps create value and increase engagement, helping to create a better customer experience (Nesamoney 2015). As consumers prefer having control over their own data, the benefits of using zero party data are clear (Arden & al. 2017). Zero party data was in fact the second-most used source of data for companies, with over half (51.7%) of the companies utilizing it in their personalization process. First party data was the most common type of data collected by companies with 71.4%. Third party data was not collected by any of the companies. As consumers are generally very uncomfortable with companies using their data, the use of zero- and first party data is beneficial for both parties. The data collected by companies differ on the company's specific goals regarding their personalized marketing strategy. The customer journey, website visits and behaviour, previous purchase and transaction information were the most common metrics reported by companies. The most tracked metrics were conversion rate and the return of investment (ROI) with 85.7% of the companies reporting to tracking them. Both metrics are very useful in measuring the success of a marketing campaign. Companies with the goal of increase

in revenue reported to tracking exit pages, time spent on site, cost per lead, cost per sale, and lifetime customer value (LCV). All of these metrics measure consumer behaviour on the company website and provide useful information on the success of the campaign, and for content personalization.

Another popular personalization method reported by the companies surveyed was segmentation. Demographic, geographic, and behavioural segmentation were reported as the main segmentation tools used by companies. The number of segments reported by companies varied between 100 and 3. The companies in the survey varied largely in size, operating environment, and the resources they have for marketing to multiple different segments. The variation in the number of segments is most likely due to the fact that lager companies tend to market to more defined segments, as they can afford spending time creating multiple different content types.

6.1.2   IQ 2 How do cultural aspects affect personalized marketing content?

Cultural aspects are one of the most important things to consider when creating content to culturally diverse target markets. The content has to match the recipients' culture, language, and location. (Kingsnorth 2016, 35, 255-256.) This was agreed upon by the companies that responded to the survey, as over half (57.1%) of the respondents reported considering language, marketing platforms, and localization in their personalized marketing content. These cultural aspects were also considered by all respondents when creating content for any publishing platform. Almost half (42.9%) of the respondents also reported considering seasonal and cultural events in their content. When creating different content types, language was considered by all respondents. Many companies assume consumers know English, however, content will never be completely personalized if it does not match the respondent's language. In fact, it will be completely useless if the respondent does not understand the content at all. In order for the content to be personalized, it has to match not just the consumers interests, but also their language and fit their cultural identity.

6.1.3   IQ 3 In which way is personalized marketing content used by companies?

When considering how personalized marketing content is used, first it must be clear why and for whom it is created. Personalized content is created to increase relevance, engagement, and value for the consumer, so that it eventually leads to a purchase and customer retention (Nesamoney 2015.) In order for the company to create value for its customers, trust has to be established. A consumer that does not trust a company will not give it permission to use their data for personalization, nor will it make a purchase if they do not think the company is trustworthy. (Mathewson & Moran 2015.) Companies can

create trust by being transparent and providing up-to-date information about its products and services (Villaini 2018). Positive past experiences and positive customer reviews also increase the level of trust felt by consumers (Fridh & Dahl 2019.)

Personalized marketing content can be used in multiple different ways. Choosing between educational, useful, and entertaining content depends on the intended purpose, delivery, and distribution channel (Nesamoney 2015). The most successful personalized content type and distribution channel used by companies was reported to be email, which 100% of the companies in the survey reported utilizing. Email was also reported being the consumers' preferred way of receiving personalized marketing content, with 51% of consumers reporting so. Considering the undisruptive nature of emails, the consumers clear preference of the channel, and the importance of finding the right distribution channel, the use of emails in personalized marketing is extremely beneficial.

6.1.4 IQ 4 How do consumers view personalized marketing content?

Consumer perceptions regarding personalized marketing can be quite mixed. While 72% of consumers report to only engaging with marketing content that is personalized according to their needs, 79% of consumers think companies should not use their personal data for marketing purposes (Aquaia Lift 2019b; SmarterHQ 2019). Some of the factors affecting consumers perception of personalized marketing, are the wrong assumptions made about them, the message lacking genuineness, and the lack of concern for their privacy. In order for personalized marketing content to add value and be perceived as positive and helpful for consumers it has to be highly relevant, genuine, and the company needs to seem trustworthy. (Arden & al. 2017; Fridh & Dahl 2019; SmarterHQ 2019.) As 76% of consumers report being more loyal to a company that understands their needs and wants on a personal level, it is becoming extremely important for companies to create content that matches their customers desires (Aquaia Lift 2019b).

6.2 Key outcomes

Personalized marketing content is mostly used by companies in a way that consumers perceive it as a positive, and useful tool that creates value for them. However, when applied in the wrong scale it can be perceived as annoying, intrusive, and disruptive. When applied correctly, personalized marketing does exactly what it is supposed to: deliver the right message, to the right person, in the right channel, at the right time. The most important content personalization method is data collection. Collecting democratic, geographic, and behavioural data through zero- and first party data collection methods provides important information needed to make the personalization efforts as successful as possible, all while trust with the consumers is strengthened. Content creation is another

important aspect of marketing personalization. Choosing the right content type, making it targeted towards the right customer segment, and distributing it through the right channel is crucial. Content that does not match its targeted audience will not be received well. The same goes for the content that is seen at the wrong time or at the wrong channel. Email has clearly proved to be the most successful marketing platform by both consumers and companies. While data collection and content creation are the way for successful personalization, creating a unique customer experience, strengthening customer relationships, and retention are the result. As consumers expect higher levels of marketing personalization by companies, the expectations for the content are growing as well. This is a challenge companies need to overcome, otherwise they risk disappointing and losing their customers.

6.3 Suggestions for further research

As the topic of personalized marketing is something that evolves quite quickly, further research could be done with more recent resources, or the same study could be repeated in a few years' time to see how companies and consumers attitudes have changed. The same study could also be repeated with a larger sample size of companies surveyed, including a survey to research consumer perceptions. Another topic for further research could be zero party data. As it is a relatively new term, the way companies utilize it, and consumers view it could be an interesting topic to study. The different content types and the ways they are utilized could be studied in more depth to determine the content types that suit marketing personalization the best.

6.4 Evaluation of the process and author's learning

The thesis writing process took longer than expected. Initially the thesis process was supposed to take no longer than 8 months, however, the global pandemic and the lack of answers to the survey postponed the finalization of the study by approximately 4 months. Despite the delay in the process, the author is content that the study was finished with all its intended content, and no part of the study was excluded from the initial plan.

When it comes to the authors learning, they feel like the thesis was highly beneficial for their own career development and it provided a lot of information about a subject that had not been covered in their degree program. The study also tied together some subjects and aspects of marketing that they had only previously studied separately. The author believes that the study and the topics included will provide insight and a better understanding of personalized marketing content, as well as the topics of content creation, data collection, and the customer experience. Overall, the author is content with the results of the study, and the additional information it has provided them.

References

Aquaia Lift 2019a. State of Personalization (and What Are We Doing to Fix It). URL: https://www.acquia.com/resources/ebooks/state-personalization-today-and-what-we-are-doing-fix-it. Accessed: 6 December 2019.

Aquaia Lift 2019b. Closing the CX Gap: Customer Experience Trends Report. URL: https://www.acquia.com/resources/ebooks/deliver-cx-they-expect-customer-experience-trends-report. Accessed: 16 September 2020.

Arden, C. M., Krafft, M. & Verhoef, P. 2017. Permission Marketing and Privacy Concerns - Why Do Customers (Not) Grant Permissions?. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 39, pp. 39-54. URL: https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.haaga-helia.fi/science/article/pii/S1094996817300191?via%3Dihub#s0010. Accessed: 14 September 2020.

Bajpai, N. 2018. Business Research Methods. Pearson Education. India.

Berndt, A. & Brink, A. 2008. Relationship Marketing & Customer Relationship Management. Juta and Co Ltd. Lansdowne.

Buche, L. 2017. Powering Content. Building a Nonstop Content Marketing Machine. O'Reilly Media Inc. Sebastopol.

Cambridge Dictionary 2020. Big Data. URL: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/big-data. Accessed: 12 May 2020.

Chen, Q., Feng, Y., Liu, L. & Tian, X. 2019. Understanding consumers' reactance of online personalized advertising: A new scheme of rational choice from a perspective of negative effects. International Journal of Information Management, 44, pp. 53-64. URL: https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Understanding-consumers%27-reactance-of-online-A-new-Chen-Feng/bfd8293472ae238f238ba6e6ce5f7dd6af4d6126. Accessed: 19 September 2020.

CMO.com Team 2019. Zero-Party Data: Can Personalization And Privacy Coexist?. Adobe. URL: https://cmo.adobe.com/articles/2019/1/zeroparty-data-can-personalization-and-privacy-coexist-wayin.html#gs.efbohd. Accessed: 25 August 2020.

Content Marketing Institute 2019. What is Content Marketing?. URL:
https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/what-is-content-marketing/. Accessed: 17 November
2019.

De Groot, J. 2019. What is the General Data Protection Regulation? Understanding &
Complying with GDPR Requirements in 2019. Data Insider. URL:
https://digitalguardian.com/blog/what-gdpr-general-data-protection-regulation-
understanding-and-complying-gdpr-data-protection. Accessed 17 December 2019.

Duffey, C. 2019. Superhuman Innovation. Transforming Business with Artificial
Intelligence. Kogan Page Limited. London.

Fridh, D. & Dahl, T. 2019. A consumer perspective of personalized marketing. Batchelor's
Thesis. Högskolan Kristianstad. URL: http://hkr.diva-
portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1333116/FULLTEXT01.pdf. Accessed: 14 September 2020.

Godson, M. 2009. Relationship Marketing. Oxford University Press Inc. New York.

Goodman, J. 2014. Customer Experience 3.0. High Profit Strategies in The Age of Techno
Service. Amacom. New York.

Khan, G. & Sponder, M. 2018. Digital Analytics for Marketing. Routledge. New York.

King, K. 2019. Using artificial intelligence in marketing: How to harness AI and maintain
the competitive edge. Kogan Page Limited. London.

Kingsnorth, S. 2016. Digital Marketing Strategy. An Integrated approach to Online
Marketing. Kodan Page Limited. London.

Mathewson, J. & Moran, M. 2015. Outside-In Marketing: Using Big Data to Guide your
Content Marketing. IMB Press. Crawfordsville.

Murray, J. 2017. What is Personalized Marketing?. Emarsys. URL:
https://www.emarsys.com/resources/blog/what-is-personalized-marketing/. Accessed: 17
November 2019.

Nesamoney, D. 2015. Personalized Digital Advertising. 1st ed. Pearson Education. New Jersey.

Palmer, D. 2019. What is GDPR? Everything you need to know about the new general data protection regulations. ZDnet. URL: https://www.zdnet.com/article/gdpr-an-executive-guide-to-what-you-need-to-know/. Accessed: 25 August 2020.

Pennington, A. 2016. The Customer Experience Book. How to Design, Measure, and Improve Customer Experience in your Business. Pearson Publishing. Upper Saddle River.

SmarterHQ 2019. Privacy & Personalization: Consumers share how to win them over without crossing the line. URL: https://smarterhq.com/privacy-report Accessed: 22 September 2020.

Triggerbee 2019a. About Us. URL: https://triggerbee.com/about-us. Accessed: 4 December 2019.

Triggerbee 2019b. LinkedIn. URL: https://www.linkedin.com/company/triggerbee/about/. Accessed: 4 December 2019.

Villaini, I. 2018. Transform Customer experience. How to Achieve Customer Success and Create Exceptional CX. John Wiley & Sons. Brisbane.

Walters, D. 2015. Behavioral Marketing: Delivering Personalized Experiences at Scale. John Wiley & Sons. Hoboken.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Survey Questions for Companies

The Personalization of Marketing Content

The data collected with this survey will be used in the creation of a bachelor's thesis for Haaga-Helia UAS regarding marketing personalization and personalized content. The thesis is commissioned by Triggerbee AB and done to determine the current situation of personalized marketing and marketing content. The finalized thesis will be published in the thesis database Theseus.

The respondents will remain anonymous, and the responses will be analyzed as a whole for the purpose of the thesis. Company names will be collected at the end of the survey (if the respondent agrees to identify themselves) for the purposes of the commissioning company Triggerbee AB.

1.

What kind of personalized marketing content is currently produced by your company?
*

- [ ] Videos
- [ ] Pictures/Photographs
- [ ] Emails
- [ ] Ads
- [ ] Blog posts
- [ ] Infographics
- [ ] Whitepapers
- [ ] Memes
- [ ] Quizzes and polls
- [ ] Podcasts
- [ ] Other _____

2.

Which of the personalized content types have proved to be the most successful?
*

☐ Videos

☐ Pictures/Photographs

☐ Emails

☐ Ads

☐ Blog posts

☐ Infographics

☐ Whitepapers

☐ Memes

☐ Quizzes and polls

☐ Podcasts

☐ Other [   ]

3. What personalization methods are most commonly used in your personalized marketing content? *

[   ]
[   ]
[   ]
[   ]
[   ]
[   ]

4.

When creating personalized content for international and culturally diverse audiences and customer segments, which of the following aspects are considered?
*

☐ Marketing platforms

☐ Cultural differences

☐ Legal aspects

☐ Payment channels

☐ Seasonal and cultural events

☐ Localization

☐ Language

☐ Political situations

☐ Religion

☐ Historical events

☐ Other [   ]

5.

How many different audience segments are you currently creating personalized marketing content for?

*

6. What platforms are used to distribute the personalized content created by your company? *

☐ Email

☐ Website

☐ Social Media

☐ Forums

☐ Paid advertising

☐ Paid search

☐ Brand placements

☐ Sponsorships/Influencers

☐ Other [   ]

7.

Are you satisfied with the current pesonalization methods used by your company?
If not, what would change in the personalized content your company creates?

*

○ I am very satisfied with our current content and wouldn't change anything.

○ I would like to change ... [   ]

8.

What is the goal of personalized marketing for your company?

*

☐ Increase in visibility

☐ Increase in revenue

☐ Developing trust with customers

☐ Creating a better customer experience

☐ Learning about customer behavior

☐ Other [   ]

9.

What are the company's future goals regarding marketing personalization and personalized content creation? (Optional)

[   ]

10. What data collection methods/sources are currently being used for the purpose of marketing personalization? *

☐ Zero party data (user owned data)

☐ 1st party data (data collected from website visits, session duration, new visitors and returning visitors, language, location, demographics, device information, browser, traffic source, and keyword analysis).

☐ 2nd party data (data collected and/or bought from other direct sources, such as marketing partners and other organizations).

☐ 3rd party data (data bought by data aggregators).

☐ Other [   ]

11.

Which metrics are tracked to determine the success of the personalization efforts?

*

☐ Return of investment (ROI)

☐ Conversion rate

☐ Lifetime customer value (LCV)

☐ Cost per sale

☐ Cost per lead

☐ Time spent on site

☐ Bounce rate

☐ Exit pages

☐ Customer acquisition cost (CAC)

☐ Other [   ]

12. Name of the company (Optional)

[   ]

13.

The company operates:

*

☐ Nationally

☐ Internationally

☐ Globally

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the survey, please contact the author of this survey via email at eeva.kavenius@myy.haaga-helia.fi