

ADAPTATION OF A DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY TO ATTRACT NORTH AMERICAN CUSTOMERS

Case: LSF Montpellier



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ABSTRACT

Digital marketing has become an integral part of the language schools strategies. Consequently, the massive use of digital channels has created a need to differentiate from the online competition and target leads geographically. The current digital strategy developed by LSF Montpellier has shown a positive impact on sales performance and managers have integrated the challenge to improve the current strategy to increase traffic on the website and generate more conversions. Beyond these objectives, the purpose of this research work is to propose a development plan of the current digital strategy to attract customers located in the United-States.

The scope of the following thesis is a specific situation. The commissioning company is a French language school located in Montpellier with a high sales performance and a high customer satisfaction rate.

The theoretical data applies to digital strategy, inbound marketing and language school business. The theoretical part is based on an analytical work of the various authors who have written articles, books and e-books related to the selected thesis topic. The author has also realized a data selection through blogs and content curation platforms. The field work part is the result of a cross-sectional qualitative study administered to the strategic and digital expertise of the case company.

The analysis of the questionnaire has shown many areas of improvement related to the digital strategy. The study showed that website content is not sufficient for attracting and converting leads.

The adaptation plan proposed by the author includes a greater adoption of inbound marketing combined to a clearly defined lead nurturing strategy. Moreover, the author recommends using geo-targeted digital marketing methods including remarketing, pay-per-click advertising and website content delivering.

Keywords Digital strategy, Digital marketing, Inbound Marketing, French language school

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1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the world is connected, internet usage is intense and the use has undergone many revolutions. Indeed, interactivity between customers and companies is very strong and the buying behaviour evolves. Consequently, it has become a priority to have online presence for firms and has led to information overload. Businesses should adapt to these changes by using new channels for attracting qualified leads without using publicity. The economic potential of internet for language businesses is undeniable because it allows to reach leads at any time and with no or reduced costs.

In order to be competitive, firms should consider how internet is used by their potential customers and understand their motivation. The impact of the digital marketing is very strong on the performance of language businesses because prospects search mainly for information on schools website, blogs, review sites and comparison websites. Digital media are playing a key role in the buying process.

If we take the example of a school offering language stays with many competitive advantages and a high rate of customer satisfaction but without an optimized digital strategy that is a website with irrelevant content and a poor rank on search engines, then this organization will have difficulty maintaining its market share because the quality of the digital strategy. The online presence in this case has as much impact as the service in itself to convert strangers into customers and promoters.

Considering the highly competitive environment, organizations can not confine themselves to follow each web marketing related tendency, it is recommended to build a digital strategy in strong correlation with the firms overall objectives. There are still a lot of companies considering search engine optimization and presence on few social Media as an established digital marketing strategy. Probably because these actions generate measurable benefits nevertheless having a digital marketing strategy that will last over time requires a concrete action plan. This strategy should be an ongoing process.

The reflection of managers should not be about the presence of the company on digital media but it should be about the optimization of current actions and the establishment of investment plans for higher economic profits.

Firms should adopt new marketing tactics because consumers are increasingly demanding since there is a multitude of channels to compare prod-

ucts and services. The objective is to use digital Media to attract qualified prospects without consumption enticing. In contrast, potential customers must come to the product through digital channels.

The market of language stays in France strongly evolved during the last decade. It was affected by the crisis between 2009 and 2012 and it has tended to concentrate with many mergers in the last five years. Market actors' consider quality rather than low cost and they operate in networks.

A phenomenon of offer consumerization took place and the buying process of language stays has completely changed. Indeed, the tourism appeal has recently taken over the educational aspect. The price competitively gained in importance and buying a language stay is less and less a thoughtful purchase.

Internet has become the main referencing source for language schools and market players are increasingly implementing aggressive policies to aspire to grow. Having a well-conceived digital strategy allows to manage the budget in an efficient way and thus differentiate themselves from the competition.

The democratization of distance language learning is a threat for the French language school offering only linguistic stays. The online offer is very wide and it is henceforth possible to learn French through free online platforms with the appearing of ICT and web 2.0.

In order to face these challenges, LSF Montpellier's managers implement a qualitative approach since 2008 and some major changes took place. The current strategy of the company is to capitalize on competitive advantages and adapt its digital marketing strategy to attract North American customers for linguistic stays in France.

Through the adaptation of its digital marketing strategy, two different objectives have been identified. The first one is to increase the traffic on the website and convert qualified leads to customers by optimizing the conversion rate.

1.1 Assigning company information

The company LSF Montpellier was founded in 1996 and the objective of the company's executive was to set up as the market leader. It is one of the most famous language schools in France. The main activity of this company is to organize language courses for adults and juniors in Montpellier. These courses can be for groups or individuals and are taught by qualified teachers with a strong intercultural background. The organization is able to accommodate 150 apprentices at the same time. Many services are associated with the main offer such as accommodation, touristic tours and cooking classes.

The company boasts of a unique setting, it is located in the center of Montpellier and a family atmosphere prevails. Customers are from the entire world and according to the manager of the school, there is a global renewed attraction for learning French.

Customers can be segmented in two groups. First of all, there are individuals composed mainly of students and adults who want to improve their language skills in French. Most of them are learning French through linguistic stays that are combining language courses in group and excursions to explore the region (gastronomy, culture and tourism). The other part is composed of persons that are people who live in France and who are generally performing individual courses.

The second segment of customers is groups and is mostly composed of teenagers and students who come through agreements among high schools and travel agencies worldwide. The United Kingdom is the country with the highest customer rate since the establishment of the school.

The competition is composed of 28 other language schools and Montpellier is the city in France with the widest offer because five schools including LSF Montpellier are operating there.

In order to face the competition, some recent strategic changes took place during the last decade. These changes concern mainly the research of high quality at all levels (premises, education and accommodation). The current manager put quality as a central concern upon his arrival at the head of the organization in 2008.

The center of this qualitative approach is the obtaining of various quality labels in French language teaching. The label FLE (French as a foreign language quality label) was obtained in 2010. It is the result of a quality-assured approach approved by three French ministries: the Ministry for

Higher Education and Research, the Ministry of Culture and Communication, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These are members of the inter-ministerial certification committee, which awards the label. Another quality label was obtained in 2012 (FFL, French as a foreign language). This label is also delivered by the three French ministries. Additionally, specific internal actions are implemented such as PAP (pedagogical action plan).

The main goals, vision and values of the organization are progress, quality of teaching, pedagogy, exemplary behavior, friendliness, friendly atmosphere. These characteristics are strong components of the corporate identity of the company because it illustrates how the organization should be perceived by customers and prospects.

Competitive advantages of the company are based on the prestigious location of premises as well as a focus on ICT (Information Technology for Communication and Education) through classrooms equipped with digital blackboards, media rooms, cinema halls. A Moodle platform is set up and a social network for teachers was recently established. It is also possible to book a language stay from the website of the company.

In order to maintain the high performance of employees, workforce is motivated through compensation and conviviality. A reward system is implemented through a variable part in the form of bonuses paid at the end of the year directly linked to the performance of the company. Training periods are offered to language teachers. This reward system and well-being of employees has a strong influence on customer quality perception.

This company is firmly rooted on the market for language teaching which was estimated over 400 million euros in 2012. This market is divided into the three following segments:

1. Individuals
2. Schools, universities
3. Organizers of language stays located abroad

The market was strongly penalized by the crisis in 2009. There was a new growth period in 2012 and it gained 0.5% in value before rebounding in 2013 (+ 3%).

Most of the companies operating on this market have chosen to directly invest in operational areas such as management, marketing or communication in order to maintain their market shares. In correlation with the decline of the activity, vocational training bodies showed a drop in their re-

sults in 2009, confirmed in 2010 and 2011. The decline in margins and results was mainly due to pricing pressures since 2009.

Considering the market development of French language teaching, strategic partnership with foreign groups was established mainly through prospect data exchanges. Prospecting activities in Asia and North America were implemented because of the weak presence of customers and prospects in this part of the world. This is the reason why my thesis is oriented as such.

Taking into consideration the growing importance of a digital presence, a Facebook page was created six years ago and has now 2,000 fans. An employee was hired for managing the company reputation online. Two people from the administrative team are responsible for monitoring and measuring the results of the online presence under the supervision of the Director.

The digital strategy of the company is outsourced to a Canadian agency located in Vancouver. This organization is responsible for implementing, managing and monitoring the digital marketing effectiveness. The work of this agency mainly relies on search engine marketing, through Google AdWords campaigns and the use of Google analytics for monitoring the effectiveness. Furthermore, a few employees located at the headquarters of LSF are responsible for creating content on social media and feed a pedagogical blog.

The totality of the organizations offering language stays to learn French on the national territory have an online presence and offers are quite similar. Therefore, it means that the effectiveness of the digital marketing strategy can be a differentiation tool and the optimization of digital action plan is crucial for sustainability and to maintain a market share.

Customers mainly learn about LSF Montpellier services through the website and keywords “French language school”. Usability of the website, press releases, customer reviews are crucial in order to increase the conversion rate and generate traffic on the website.

1.2 Attraction of qualified prospects in the digital era

Through the digital revolution of the commercial approach, new sources of information are available for customers and prospects. Therefore it is easier for companies to detect changes in the purchasing behaviour. It is important to notice that even for purchases made in physical units, internet is a vector in the buying process. Indeed, according to Noemie Aguetant, a French channel consultant at Hubspot, 80% of the buying decision is made before the first contact with the seller.

The inbound marketing appeared because the traditional advertising was too intrusive and undesirable for web users. Furthermore, data bases which were the main source of prospects for outbound marketing have shown their limitations and are not very functional. The appearance of Web 2.0 allows the birth of inbound which is a process aimed at reassuring and securing the customer all along the buying process.

Inbound marketing is revolutionizing the attraction of qualified prospects because it allows saving time and reducing costs. The conversion rate is higher than when proceeding with traditional marketing methods and especially because this strategy provides the opportunity to maintain a contact with leads who are not ready to buy. Therefore, there is no waste and the prospect will be likely to generate a conversion once it matures in its decision making.

Developing the inbound marketing and integrating it in the digital strategy is a really complex process because marketers should combine the accurate targeting and carefully coordinate inbound marketing actions over time while having set measurable targets.

It is essential for businesses to integrate efficiently customer relationship management in the digital strategy. In order to have high performance in the attraction of qualified prospects through internet, firms should have a clearly defined plan. The master of information and communication technologies inside the company is a key lever for to reach the goals and generate leads.

In order to attract qualified leads, companies have focus on two different axes which are digital marketing for to generate qualified leads and commercial for to convert prospects into customers and establish a lead management plan which is a tool in providing the amount of leads needed to reach commercial objectives.

One of the main purposes of the integration of inbound marketing in the digital strategy is to convert website traffic into qualified leads. This is the aim of first of four marketing actions of the inbound methodology called “attract” which can be assimilated as a seduction process in order to attract web users to the corporate.

(Planchot, 2014)

This first marketing action must have a long duration in order to be effective. Indeed, the performance during this phase will strongly influence the success of the whole inbound marketing process. This is explained by the fact that the acquisition of a significant traffic will generate more visitors and this will influence the conversion rate. Therefore, there will be more qualified leads generation and the probability of reaching a sale will be higher.

(Planchot, 2014)

The second marketing action of the inbound marketing methodology called “convert” consists in generating qualified leads. The aim is to maximize the rate of conversion from visitors to leads. Gathering information about the potential lead is really important in this phase as well as a continuous optimization.

(Planchot, 2014)

Using only inbound marketing can prove a limit for the business. Indeed, there are still potential customers who do not use digital media to search potential suppliers. Consequently, it could be relevant to combine inbound and outbound marketing. Therefore, combining these two marketing techniques allows to maximize the potential of the market.

1.3 Research question

Research question: How can LSF Montpellier use digital marketing to attract North American customers?

LSF Montpellier is a well-established French language school that is operating in a hyper-competitive environment. The effectiveness of the digital strategy impacts directly the amount of potential customers located abroad.

This organization has to face many challenges and must implement a new strategic approach so that potential customers will perceive that this school is distinguished from the competition.

Managers are currently implementing a digital development process with the integration of high quality teaching materials such as digital blackboards. The school has many labels in order to ensure the quality of teaching.

North American customers constitute a segment with a really high potential for LSF Montpellier. Indeed, French language is the second most spoken language other than English in the United States after Spanish. This is due to the historical presence of French in the United-States.

The interest of North-Americans in learning French has varied a lot during the last thirty years. The context is now favorable again. Consequently, managers are strongly willing to adapt the current digital marketing strategy for reaching this specific target.

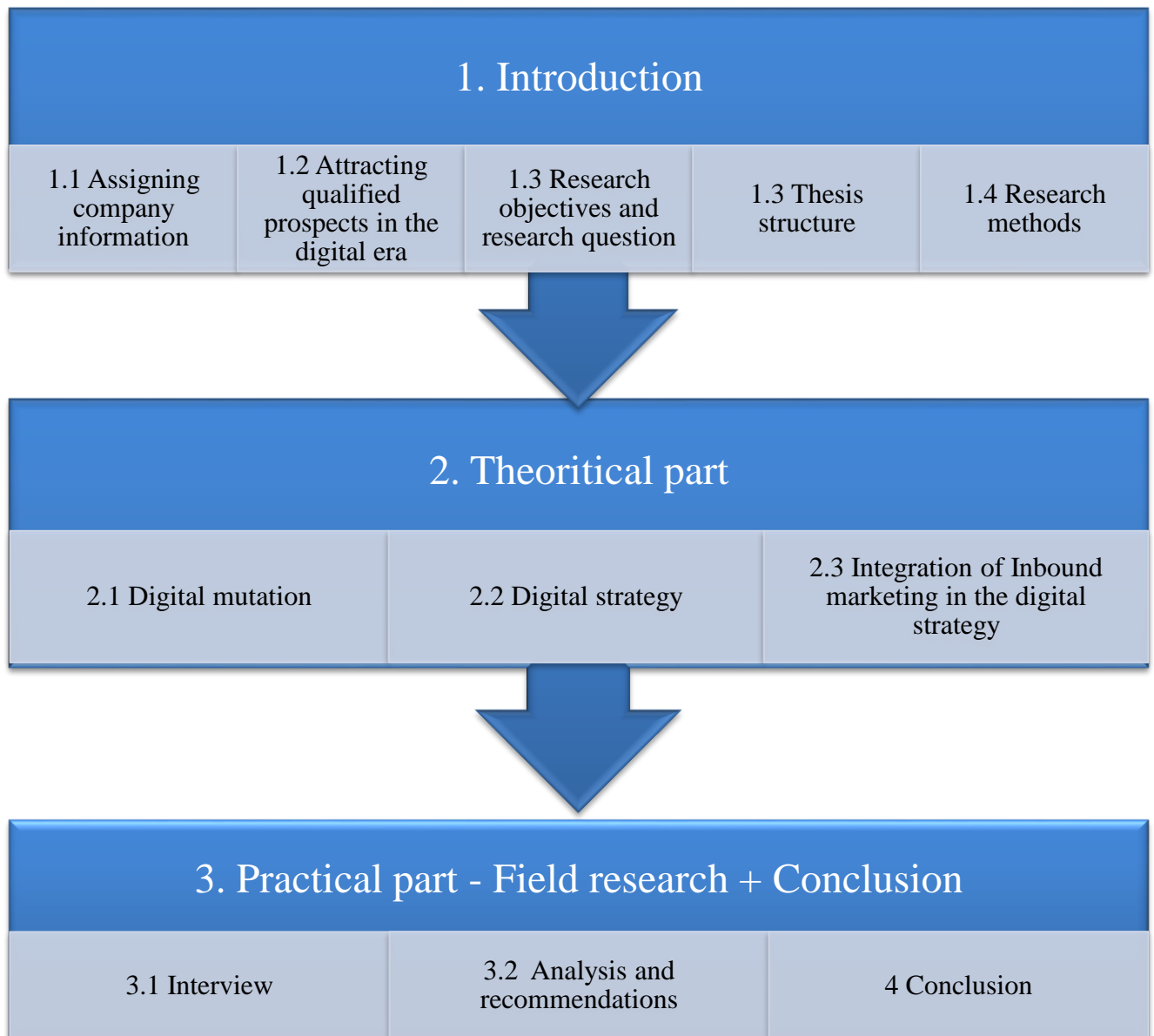
The target includes prospects located in the United-States; the research is not including other countries of North America.

In order to answer to the research question, the author defined several different research objectives. The purpose of this thesis is to elaborate a concrete digital marketing plan to attract customers located in the United States and formulate relevant recommendations that could improve the current digital strategy.

The aim of this thesis is to propose a digital marketing adaptation plan that will increase the traffic on the website of LSF Montpellier and generate conversions from customers located in the United-States.

1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis will be composed of four chapters.



1.5 Objectives and Methodologies

In order to respond to my research question and bring an added value to the company in its strategic approach for maintaining and improving performance in the digital marketing strategy for reaching American customers, the following steps will be realized.

1) *Describe and analyze the existing theory about digital marketing strategy development*

2) *Collect data on the digital marketing action plan currently developed by LSF Montpellier*

3) *Analyze the data collected from the field (LSF) and establish a connection with the theoretical data in order to determine how the current strategy can be adapted to meet the challenges and opportunities of attracting North American customers*

4) *Develop a specific digital marketing plan to attract North American customers and formulate recommendations.*

2 THEORY

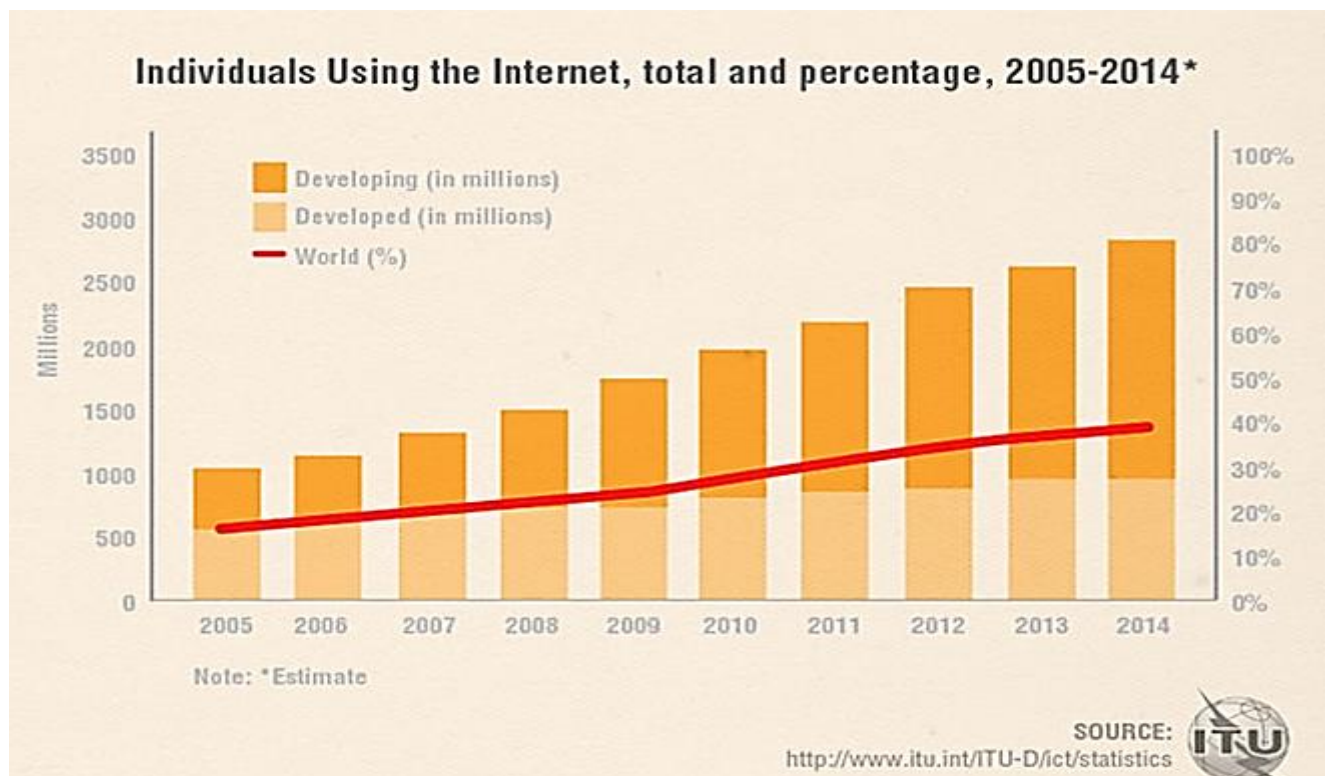
All the data shown in this section are based on analytical work of the various authors who have written articles and books and e-books related to the selected thesis topic. I also made a data selection through digital marketing related blogs and it gave me complementary perspectives applied to real business cases. By accessing content curation platforms, I had access to a huge amount of articles among the most relevant available on internet shared by digital marketing experts.

The data collection was made considering the nature of the case company and all the information needed for a company that aims at adapting its digital marketing strategy to attract North American customers by generating conversions and increase traffic on its website.

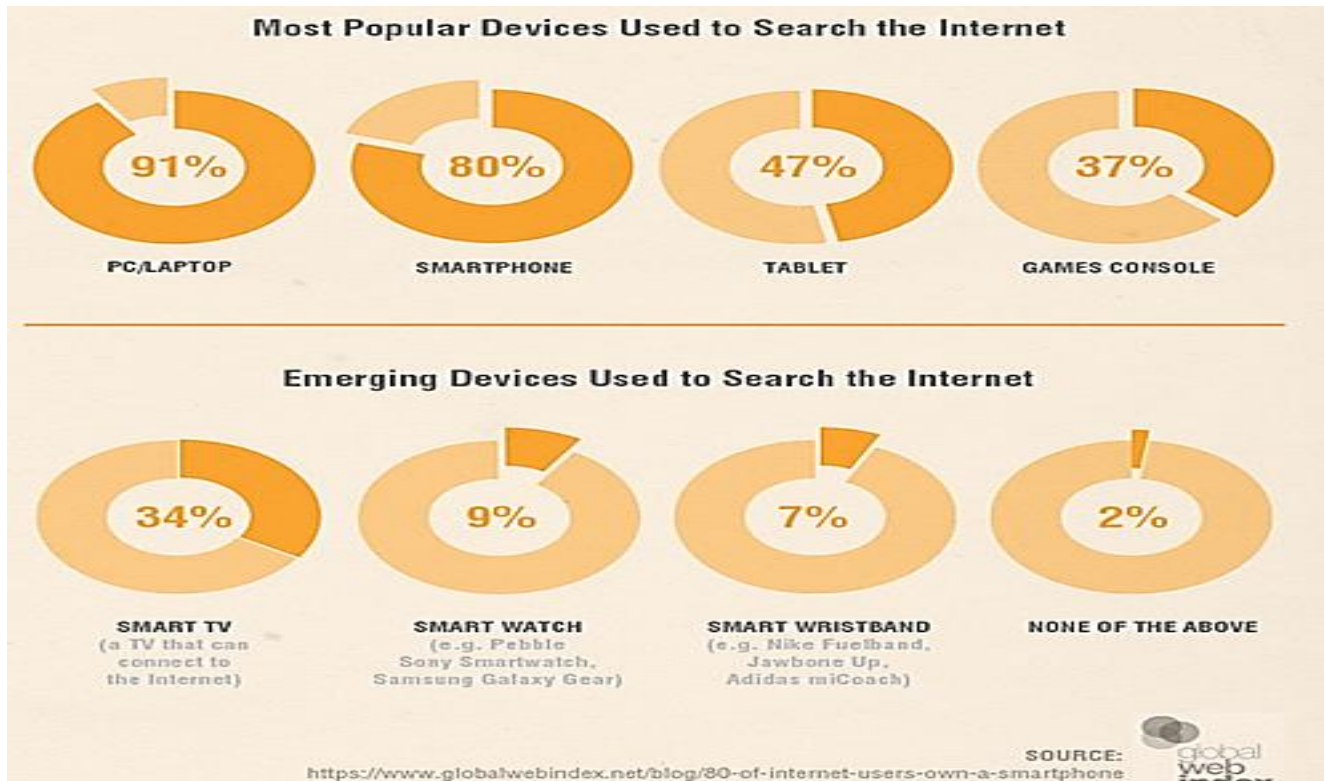
2.1 Digital mutation

2.1.1 Internet: a space of virtual places

During the last months of 2014, internet users globally reached almost 3 billion according to the International telecommunication union. Developing countries have a strong role in this impressive evolution. Indeed, the amount of internet users in these countries has doubled in five years, from 974 million in 2009 to 1.9 billion in 2014. (Chaffey, 2015)



In order to use the web, internet users should own devices. Laptop is the most popular device used to search the internet followed by smartphones, tablets and game consoles. It is important to notice that some new devices have appeared such as smart TV, smart watch and smart wristband.



The internet is the essence of the digital revolution, it can be assimilated to a communication tool and it is accessible to mass audience. Many definitions do exist on this term, the emergence of new media and diverse usage possible makes it very sophisticated and evolution is constant.

From the business point of view, it clearly appears that the emergence of the Internet has revolutionized the way organizations operate. It transforms how firms are communicating with their audience and delivers enhanced brand experiences.
(Chaffey, Smith 2008)

The product development has become accessible to modest-sized structures thanks to the emergence of the internet. This phenomenon has led to the birth of digital marketing. The exchange of information is facilitated between stakeholders and specific tools were created to measure and control the internal performance of companies departments. The customer relationship management is strongly impacted and constantly in progress.

New business methods for processing financial and business information were created by the emergence of internet. Consequently, small and medium enterprises can compete with larger companies through instant access to information to develop new products and improve existing ones.

This communication tool allows companies to sell directly their products across the world instantly. Regardless of the company nature, in business to business relations or business to consumer, internet is a tool to generate sales and economic opportunities are endless.

Indeed, internet is an undeniable growth driver for companies. It allows to exchange information quickly, to communicate in different languages, through different media and costs are very low or even inexistent. The internal communication in firms became really efficient.

The external communication has drastically changed since the internet integrated business operations. Online conferences, emails and exchange of documents allow businesses to communicate with collaborators or potential ones all over the world. Consequently, selecting developers, suppliers and establish strategic alliances is facilitated. The massive use of the Internet in business allows market players to save costs hence the competition is stronger.

Business websites were developed and these allow customers and prospects to gather data about the company and its products before making purchases of goods or services. It is possible to reach customers from abroad for low costs. This marketing resource is one of the solutions to businesses brought about by the advent of the internet that causes a significant growth in sales. The corporate identity is communicated widely which leads to the establishment of e-reputation.

In the field of customer relationship management, websites allow customers to contact directly the company. Consequently, a huge amount of prospects data is collected and it explains why business management software (Enterprise Resource Planning) is widely used.

The companies are able to control and monitor business from everywhere in the world thanks to internet. Employees and business owners are mobile and can provide feedback or exchange information instantly. Decision making is also facilitated with instant communication means.

In order to design a digital strategy, internet should be considered as a space or a set of places linked together. Indeed, web users navigate and move in this space, communicate and interact. Mobile devices should be

considered as bridges between internet space (online) and physical space (offline).

(Ovazza, 2011)

2.1.2 The contribution of web 2.0 and social media marketing

Sometimes described as a marketing term, other times as a technological term, it is still difficult nowadays to have a clear vision of which components that word includes. However, it appears that it is a widely used term (10 million citations on Google in 2007 for a year and a half period). There is still a huge amount of disagreement about the meaning. (O'Reilly, 2007)

It appears that Web 2.0 should be considered by companies because the usefulness and the popularity of these technologies are still crystallizing. The adoption of Web 2.0 accelerates at a surprising rate, especially among businesses.

(Sutter, 2009)

During a conference in October 2004, Tim O'Reilly was one of the first to use the word web 2.0. According to him, Web 2.0 is strongly linked to the publication of user information and networking. After the conference, an article was published and it had a lot of success. Since then, some academic researchers bring their own interpretation of this concept and thus there is no consensus concerning the explication of this term.

Generally, web users consider this term as a representation of the next step of internet development. This representation is very broad but it is a right ideology. Indeed, the initiator of Web 2.0 has himself defined as the turning point of the internet. He also defined this term as a procedure affecting internet development through new thinking.

(O'Reilly, 2005)

“Web 2.0 refers to the second generation of the web, wherein interoperable, user-centered web applications and services promote social connectedness, media and information sharing, user-created content and collaboration among individuals and organization”.

(Wilson, Lin, Longstreet, Sarker 2011)

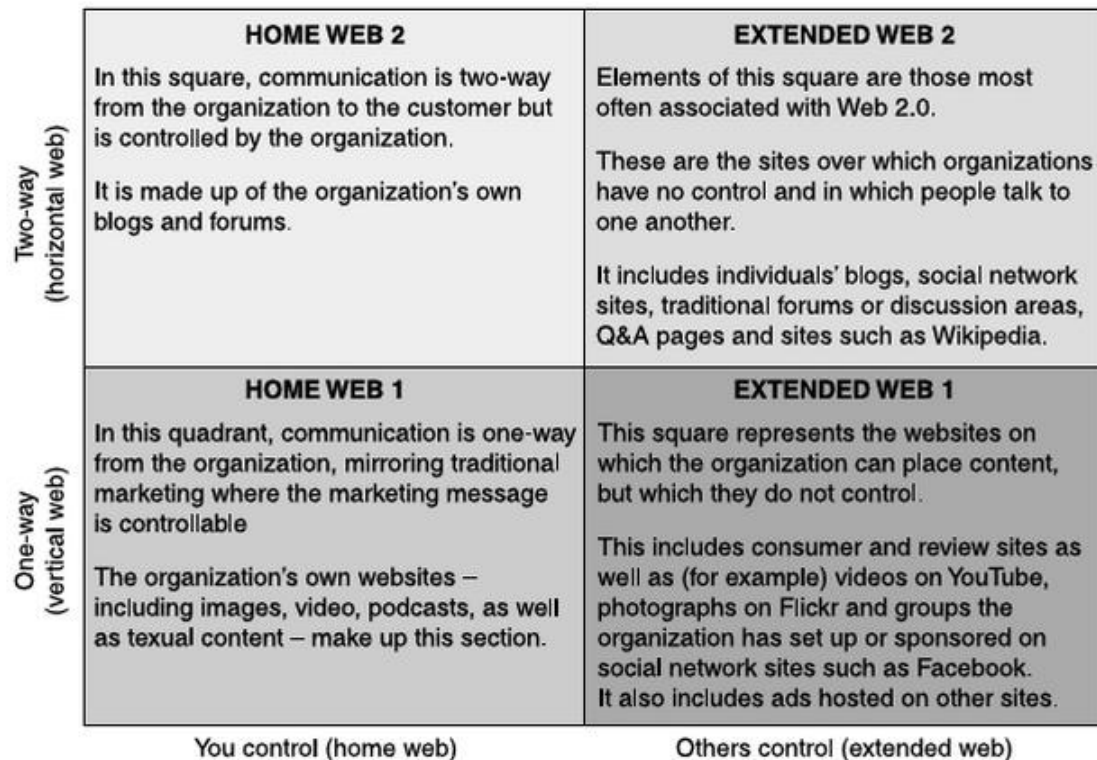


Figure 1.1 Web 2.0.

Source : Charlesworth, A. (2015). *An introduction to social media marketing*. London [England]: Routledge.

This figure allows us to perceive the link between Web 2.0 and social medias. It gives an overview of the level of interaction between brands and consumers through two different models (Vertical web and horizontal web). It is easy to see that organizations do not control web content nowadays with the extended web. It clearly illustrates that prospects do not trust adverts and advertisers anymore.

From the point of view of e-marketers, it is really important to be able to identify and understand the variants of social media to identify the most relevant type of social media considering the nature of the business and therefore implement the strategy and reduce potential failures.

According to Danny Sullivan, we distinguish five different websites which constitute the social medias.

- Social new sites (e.g., Digg, Reddit)
- Social bookmarking (e.g., Delicious, StumbleUpon)
- Social networking (e.g., Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn)
- Social knowledge (e.g., Wikipedia, Yahoo answers)
- Social sharing (e.g., Youtube, Twitter, Instagram)

The social media marketing has a huge potential for increasing sales. Indeed, according to Hubspot 80 % of marketers indicated that their social efforts increased traffic on their websites.

Although the potential benefits and economic impact of initiating a social media marketing campaign seems to be unanimous among entrepreneurs, it seems that the way to obtain results is poorly understood. Indeed, marketers have difficulties to set up coherent and complementary actions when developing their social media strategy. Brands are humanized by interacting with leads on social Medias and this can allow improving conversion rates.

As the main target for language schools is including the age class 18 to 25 years old and because this category is especially using social medias platform regularly, building technics and establishing a social media strategy represents a real challenge.

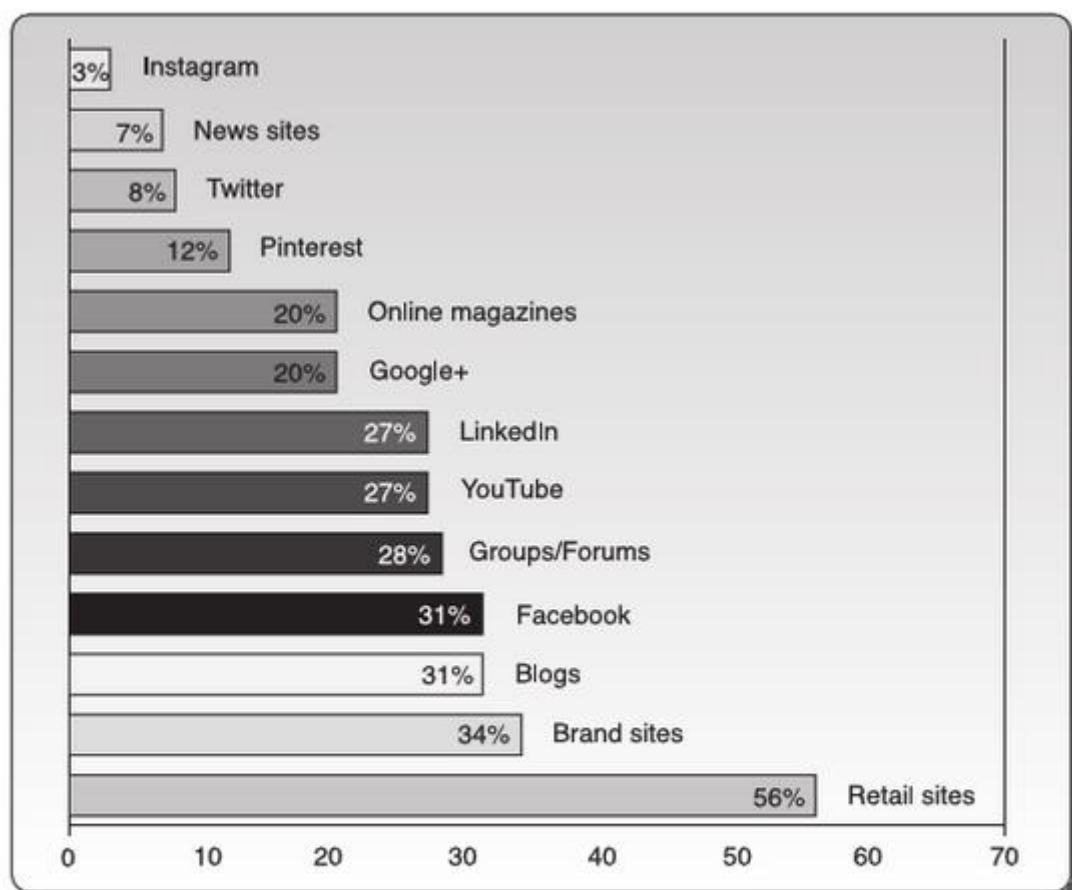


Figure 1.3 Online services most likely to influence a purchase.

Source: Charlesworth, A. (2015). *An introduction to social media marketing*. London [England]: Routledge.

Having a social media strategy should not be considered by e-marketers as the only solution to influence the buying behavior. However, it can be part of the digital marketing strategy and the combination of many elements is the only way to get real results. According to the *Digital Influence Report* published in 2013 by Technorati Media, it is relevant to focus on brand websites and retail sites in order to influence a purchase. Blogs are also a good way to change the buying behavior and convert leads into customers.

Most of the studies concerning social media strategy effectiveness are based on a sample of fast moving goods shoppers and in this case it appears that the brand presence on social medias do not help increasing the trust or influence the purchase in an efficient way.

However, it constitutes a relevant digital marketing tool considering the type of services offered by LSF Montpellier and the location of the potential clients. Indeed, using social media could bring a real added-value to the digital marketing strategy of the firm because it allows to offer to potential students an overview of what is happening at school in real time through different media. Consequently, it is an opportunity to convey the customer experience across the world without high costs.

Furthermore, using social media is a real asset to establish an ongoing communication process with past and current students. It is potentially valuable for the school because social media allows to convey personality and values the leaders want to convey.

”A social media marketing campaign can highly increase the efficiency of the inbound traffic. Using social Medias allows marketers to widen the audience and create engagement”.
(Planchot, 2014)

“Without using social Medias, inbound traffic is only composed of people already familiar to your company and individuals searching for keywords. However, the presence on social Medias is an opportunity for new visitors and more traffic on the website will generate more leads and conversions”.
(Demers, 2015)

Using social Medias allows decreasing marketing costs. Because of the massive use of social Medias by individuals, it is particularly advantageous for companies wishing to reach individuals and therefore operating on the model business to consumer to be present and active on social networks. The quality of the content published on social media is crucial and influence the effectiveness of the operations.

Social media marketing should not be assimilated to a tool to increase sales. However, it constitutes a potentially effective tool to supplement the marketing message delivered through websites, brochures and additional digital marketing operations.

The virtual identity of a language school and the content published must encourage interaction. The goal is to drive engagement from the target but because of the nature of social media websites the content must be light and playful. By having a presence on social Medias, it can also create an opportunity to show the effectiveness of the customer service.

In the case of LSF Montpellier, it is really relevant to have a social media strategy because it could help to enter new markets and target international audience without generating high costs. It is even possible to publish ads to an audience geographically targeted.

2.1.3 Digital marketing at the service of business development

The digital marketing is an advanced form of marketing, all existing methods can be used though. This new form of marketing is expanding the “promotion marketing” to include customer oriented marketing and more generally encourage commitment from customers. It includes more and more facilities to deal with customer relationships. The digital marketing refers to the promotion of a product or a brand among consumers, through the use of all digital media and contact points.

(Flores, 2013)

Through the use of digital Medias the consumers are delighted, the marketing of the good in itself and the link to it as well as the actions which are offering contact points to the product or the service are equally important. The diversification of media through the digital allows businesses to advertise to a larger and a more qualified audience. Digital marketing is an opportunity especially for businesses which intend to develop very fast. In order to develop their businesses, marketers should communicate to the appropriate target and gain customer loyalty to its customers by encouraging feedback and communication. By using a mix of pull and push, the effectiveness of digital marketing is more central and facilitated.

(Flores, 2013)

It is relevant to consider the digital improvement as a process which is bringing clear benefits for both consumers and companies. In a way that the consumer is searching for added-value and can easily find it through a facilitated communication process and the company is able to offer its products more efficiently than with traditional marketing methods.

2.2 Digital strategy

2.2.1 Digital strategy conception

“Organizations have a growing need for coordinating effectively their various actions on the internet and on mobile devices, yet these entities struggle to have a digital strategy. The reason is that there is confusion between the digital expertise and the strategic expertise. Indeed, the elaboration of the digital strategy first requires the creation of a common repository of different actions. It means that a consistent global vision which would link the different professions and stakeholders and thus would enable of all channels should be created”.

(Ovazza, 2011)

“The aim of a digital strategy is to give a directional sense to all actions in order to ensure that efforts are realized for a common goal and therefore the final result is achieved at a lower cost”.

(Ovazza, 2011)

“Some companies do not see any benefit from building a digital strategy. This is mainly due to the fact they perceive results with their few heterogeneous actions. The lack of a well-conceived digital strategy doesn't allow maximizing the organization's performance and therefore the online presence of the company is more costly and the monitoring is difficult. Therefore perspectives for improvement are missing, control logic and search for profitability that is the essence of building a digital strategy is absent”.

(Ovazza, 2011)

The following chart allows visualizing the lack of clearly defined digital marketing strategy in businesses. Most often, this concern is due to the fact companies do not make the distinction between two expertise field and decision makers are considering the digital strategy conception as a very complex process.



Source: Amoré, F. and Dabi-Schwebel, G. (2015). *Gagner de nouveaux prospects et clients grâce à l'inbound marketing*.

“Establishing a digital strategy requires two distinct competences, the first one is the strategic competence. Indeed, it is necessary to have an experience of decision-making and be able to define challenges and objectives at the level of the company leadership. The second competence is the digital competence that is needed for matching digital actions and competences to the company’s strategy. There is a major concern at this level because most of the digital experts are most of the time operational specialists due to the constant evolution of the web environment. Consequently, these experts tend to concentrate on a specific expertise and it is more and more unusual for an employee to combine these skills. Consequently, the digital strategy must be conceived through a collaborative work between at least two experts”.

(Ovazza, 2011)

“The elaboration of a digital strategy should start by establishing a common vision of internet and digital Medias. First, managers of the organization have to identify the potential benefit of having an online presence considering the field of activity of the company. The next step is to determine if the customers of the company, the targeted prospects and more generally all the stakeholders of the company have an online presence or not. Afterward, the managers should grow a reflection for assessing the respective goals, motivations and the way for using internet of their stakeholders with an online presence. The last reflection to conduct before designing its digital strategy is to identify the resources deployed by stake-

holders with a presence on the internet and their decisions to achieve their respective goals. Having a clear understanding of the customer's motivation for using internet is crucial for an organization wishing to use the web effectively". (Ovazza, 2011)

"Internet users have different motivations and it is recommended to identify the main reason pushing them to access the internet and thus satisfy their needs. The first objective of internet users is the quest of information. The second objective is the search of a relational interaction which is combining the personal sphere and also the relation between customers and brands. The third objective is the consumption which combines the traditional e-commerce and the use of free services such as video streaming, games and magazines. The fourth aim of internet users is the production, this action can be assimilated to a participation of producers of the internet. For example, individuals who create content on the internet such as bloggers, developer or active customers providing reviews on diverse products build their motivation for using internet on the production". (Ovazza, 2011)

By considering these different motivations for the use of internet, the company will be able to understand deeper the motivation of its prospects for using internet. Therefore, by confronting their expertise, the digital specialist and the strategic expert will be able to determine how the potential customer will use internet to satisfy his need and thus deploy the resources and a content strategy to transform this internet user into a customer.

2.2.2 Digital marketing action plan

When the digital strategy is established, the challenge is to translate it in a measurable action plan. In order to increase the chances of success, the people in charge of achieving digital marketing in the company should start thinking from the macro environment to the micro environment.

Before implementing the digital marketing campaign, it is necessary to define all metrics and indicators. If it is not done at the beginning, that could have a negative influence when measuring the effectiveness of digital marketing actions. Consequently, anticipating and defining these metrics and indicators is a lever for a structured digital measurement.

This exercise is more difficult for a company which already has an action plan. It is important to consider that the link between the action plan and the corporate strategy is the customer path. Indeed, it is relevant to differentiate the stages which have leaded the customer to buy. It is valuable for

LSF Montpellier to create first a generic customer path, which applies to linguistic stays in general and then decline it more accurately for each target (Individuals, schools/universities, organizers of language stays located abroad).

(Ovazza, 2011)

It is necessary to determine the type of content corresponding to each need of customer. This step should be done separately according the nature of the customer (customer or business). It is important to start thinking from the point of view of the customer in order to determine how they can use the content available. According to its maturity, the potential client will have different needs and this is why it is important to build adaptable content that can be profitable to the larger audience.

(Ovazza, 2011)

The next step consists in determining through a mapping how content and actions will be in relation with different digital media in the customer path. It is important to take into consideration the budget, objectives, resources to build the most optimal strategy. Contents and actions chosen should provide metrics related to the right key performance indicators.

(Ovazza, 2011)

When the theoretical digital marketing action plan is established, it is necessary to distinguish the essential from the optional contents. At the same time, differentiate the multi-channel contents from the contents only exploitable on one channel. The role of digital channels should be revalued in regards of the offline channels and a good balance has to be kept between push and pull action.

(Ovazza, 2011)

2.2.3 Monitoring and measuring of digital strategy effectiveness

When the digital strategy is established, companies are generally facing many challenges to monitor the effectiveness of the strategy. The role of digital marketers is to deliver an understandable report to the manager in order to show the effectiveness of the actions related to digital marketing. The issue of return on investment is a really important concern for marketing departments. Considering the economic context, all the actions which are not adding value, too expensive or difficult to measure are quite simply dropped.

(Flores, 2013)

Considering the sector in which the entity is operating and the results expected, the metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) can change but

the common aim is to investigate if the investments related to digital marketing allow a return on investment (ROI) and analyse results in order to optimize the current strategy.

The difficulty is that the amount of data with digital marketing is enormous and traceability is easy. Considering this fact, marketers should not fall into the trap of exploiting too much data which are not relevant to pilot the digital strategy by measuring the effectiveness. In order to perform well in the monitoring of digital strategy effectiveness, it is relevant to start thinking from the digital strategy objectives to define the good indicators rather than starting from the operational point of view.

(Ovazza, 2011)

The resources are often allocated without really identifying the priority of the action envisaged. Therefore, measuring the effectiveness is really difficult because marketers can't update the key performance indicators to assess the expected impact of the defined objectives.

(Flores, 2013)

The global aim of this phase is to determine if the implementation of the actions is a success or a failure. Of course it is more complicated in practice but the marketers should identify accurate criteria in order to determine which results are expected. This work should be done in close collaboration with the company's leaders.

(Ovazza, 2011)

When defining the result objectives linked to digital marketing, it is important to think that the consumer is using different canals. Therefore, digital marketing objectives must be connected to strategic objectives of the company. By measuring the contribution of digital marketing to strategic objectives and perform a cross analysis of all data obtained through marketing surveys, this will allow decision makers to have a relative and realistic perspective of the contribution of the different channels.

(Ovazza, 2011)

Monitoring and measuring are interlinked actions. Without monitoring, it is not possible to measure. You cannot manage what you can't measure.

It is important for marketers to use a common language with all stakeholders to facilitate interaction.

“Two elements should be prioritizing when the marketers are willing to measure the effectiveness of digital marketing actions. First, the validity of the measurement which refers to the capacity of correctly quantify or represent the concept or constructs being measured. The second element is

the reliability of a measurement instrument which refers to its capacity to reproduce the same result when the same phenomenon is measured several times with the same instrument”.

(Flores, 2013)

2.2.4 Perspectives for digital strategy improvements and innovation

The digital world is in constant mutation and consequently firms are willing to innovate in their practices. Often, firms are trying to innovate by following existing tendencies and consequently their quest for innovation has more chance to be a failure because the evolution of internet often creates ephemera tendencies.

(Ovazza, 2011)

Two main existing goals are the improvement of the digital strategy effectiveness or the differentiation from the competition. It is really important for businesses to keep a conducting line in their practices because following each tendency can constitute a threat for sustainability of the business. Companies with a corporate culture orientated to innovation will have a smoother running in the process.

Innovating in communication does not require a lot of financial resources but openness and curiosity. Every company can implement and develop an experimental culture. For example, it could be relevant to allocate resources to innovation and implement continuously a willingness to develop experimentation and competitive intelligence. Indeed, realizing business intelligence on tendencies and innovation processes do not constitute an uncommon task for companies. However integrating the technological intelligence as a real objective in the communication plan is a key lever for innovating. The level of information sharing and the respective skills of each member of the project team in charge of this task will influence strongly the amount of benefits generated by the process.

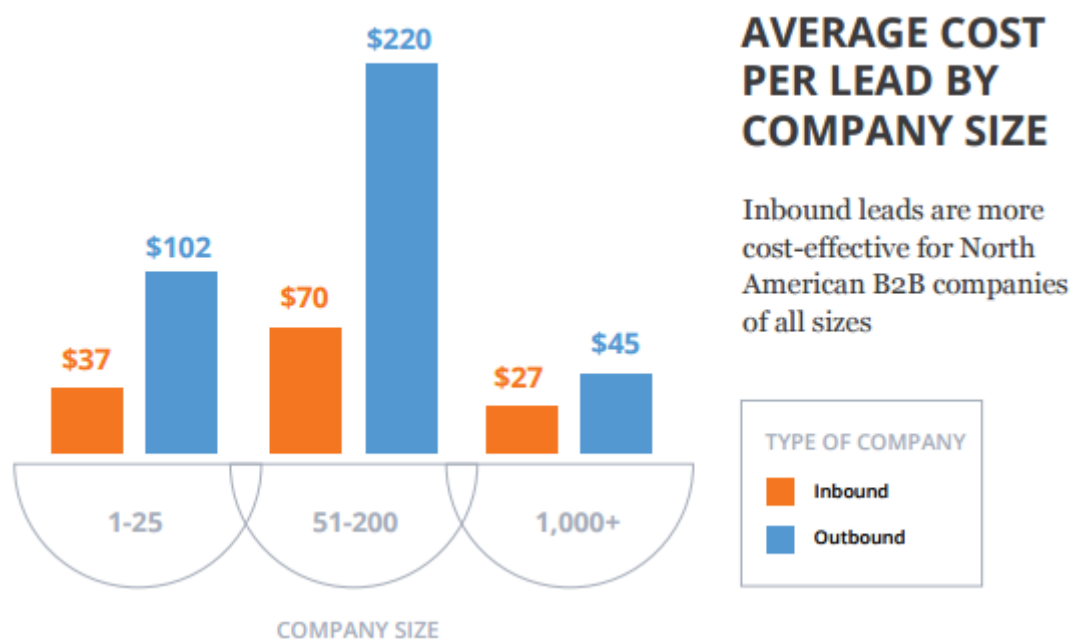
It is not possible to define results even if benchmarking and experiences feedback can allow drawing an estimation of objectives results. The process for innovating is more important than the result in itself. The corporate culture is really important during the process that can lead to successful innovation.

(Ovazza, 2011)

2.3 The integration of Inbound marketing in the digital strategy

The concept of inbound marketing appeared in 2006, it is often described by specialists as the most effective online marketing method. We can summarize this term as a new process for creating commercial opportunities through content creation on the internet. It brings together a set of actions that begins when a visitor comes into contact with the company until after the purchase action.

In contrast with the outbound whose principle was to invest in mass advertising, database purchasing and prospecting actions, the inbound marketing technical focuses on the creation of quality content in order to create a virtual path from the future customers to the business. In a way, it can be represented as a two-way dialogue between businesses and consumers.



Source: Chernov, J. (2015). Hubspot's State of Inbound 2014.

The graph located above is extracted from a conference report conducted by HubSpot agency well known in the world of digital marketing. By analysing this report, it was interesting to see the tendencies and results and learn about the impact of inbound marketing on all types of businesses located worldwide. The sample for this study was around 3500 companies, most of them located in the United States through there were twenty per cent of European firms.

We can easily see the variation of average cost per lead by company size and the digital marketing method used (outbound or inbound). It appears

that the cost per lead is lower for the entities using inbound marketing. Concerning the company size, this tendency is less visible for big companies (More than 1000 employees). Indeed, the difference of cost per lead between types of companies is much less significant for big size companies. Therefore, it is more relevant to privilege inbound marketing for small and medium companies. A combination of outbound marketing and inbound marketing could be profitable for big size companies.

It is important for marketers willing to change their marketing approach to understand that selling the product is not the main purpose of this method. It is more about sharing relevant information in order to retain the attention of the visitor. If the inbound marketing is well done, ideal customers must find the company by themselves and be attracted by the products or services. Consequently, using this method allows e-marketers to save costs, increase the conversion rate and allow to have a better return on investment (ROI).

According to the Hubspot conference report entitled *State of inbound 2014*, the return on investment is the only challenge cited more by marketers than the previous year study. This challenge is a bigger concern for the marketers than for the decision makers.

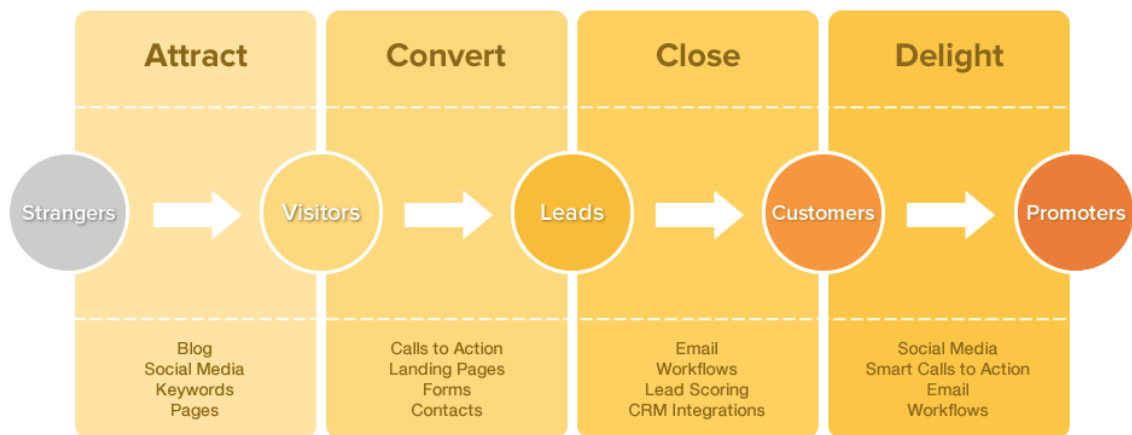
It is sure that inbound marketing has a lasting potential and most of the individuals in charge of the digital marketing for businesses have started to forsake outbound methods for inbound marketing.
(Planchot, 2014)

There are many tools whose purpose is to help marketers manage and measure each stage of their inbound marketing strategy in an automated way. Most of them are offering a tracking tool to determine the conversion rate and this is really convenient. By using this type of platforms it is possible to ensure continuity and reduce constraints on the development of inbound strategy that generates a large number of different data. The data volume is relatively large, this is why it is really important to choose a platform which allows managing all the features simultaneously. Given that the investment cost is important, it is necessary to conduct a comparative study to determine which platform will be the most useful and adapted to the company's business.

As the objective of LSF Montpellier is to generate traffic and conversions, I mostly studied the theory related to the first two steps of the inbound methodology. Namely, the generation of traffic (attract) and the transformation of visitors to lead (convert).

Inbound Marketing Methodology

The best way to turn strangers into customers and promoters of your business.



Source: Hubspot.com, (2015). *HubSpot / What is Inbound Marketing?*. [online] Available at: <http://www.hubspot.com/inbound-marketing> [Accessed 20 Aug. 2015].

The inbound marketing strategy is a really long process and even if many researches are proving its impact on the return on investment and lead generation, it requires a level of expertise and constant adjustments achievable through monitoring.

2.3.1 The definition of Buyer Personas and lead intelligence

The definition of buyer personas is an essential step when developing an inbound marketing strategy. The best moment for defining its buyer personas is at the beginning of the attraction phase. This process will influence strongly the effectiveness of content creation. This process should run smoothly and an accurate reflection should be operated. Marketers should have a clear understanding of their ideal customer's demographics, buying behaviour, needs and motivations.

"A buyer persona is a semi-fictional representation of your ideal customer based on market research and real data about your existing customers".
(Kusinitz, 2015)

"Buyer personas provide tremendous structure and insight for your company. A detailed buyer persona will help you determine where to focus your time, guide product development, and allow for alignment across the organization. As a result, you will be able to attract the most valuable visitors, leads, and customers to your business".
(Kusinitz, 2015)

Developing and refining buyer personas constitute an ongoing process which requires a lot of time and energy from online marketers.

“Marketers who incorporate lead intelligence into their marketing and sales processes have happily found that personas are just the beginning, and the online behaviour that marketing automation software can track and deliver to their sales organization takes a lead from a persona to a living, breathing person.”

(Eridon, 2015)

By defining the right buyer persona, visitors will find the content relevant. Consequently, it is most probable they engage with the company and share what they found interesting.

”Talking to customer can be the starting point for defining buyer personas. It can allow to define precisely who they are and what are their needs. Another solution can be to visit competitor’s blogs and websites in order to identify who is on their publication. Individuals who have posted comments most likely have social networks profile and by visiting them it is possible to know more about these potential ideal customers.”

(Dyrsmid, 2014)

According to Trend Dyrsmid, it is possible to learn about the audience of competitors through a free software called ”Quantcast”. It allows mainly to obtain relevant demographic data on a website. Another relevant tool is the Quicksprout software which allows to visualize the most shared pieces of content of each website. Consequently, it is possible to have an idea of the type of content published.

“Online marketers should assemble their products or services in different groups or lines. Afterward, customers should be divided in few groups with different characteristics and needs. The most suitable person to identify the different segments of customer is an internal employee in charge of customer relationship management.”

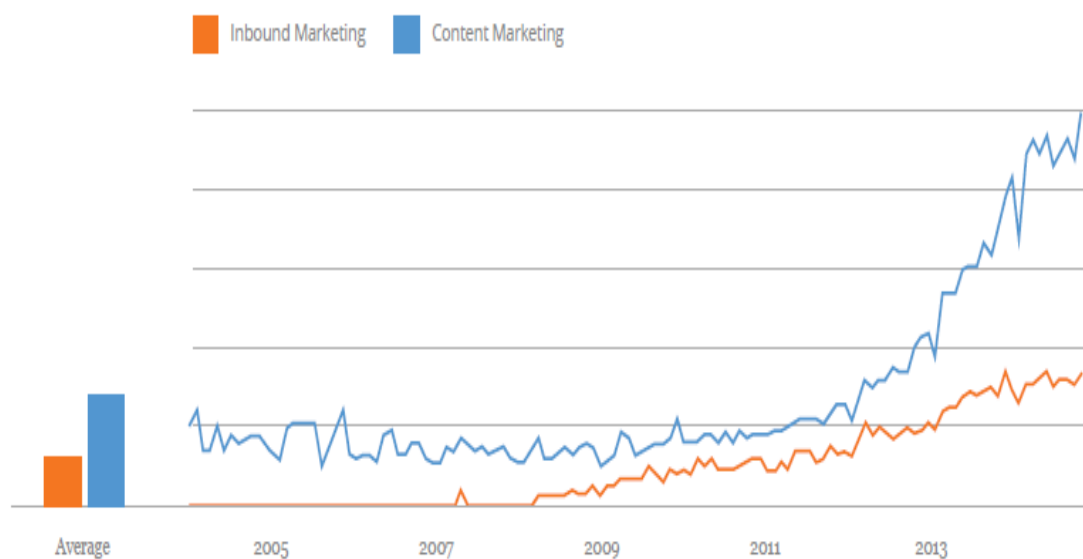
(Dabi-Schwebel, 2014)

2.3.2 The attraction of internet users to the company

2.3.2.1. Content creation

The content creation is one of the pillars of inbound marketing. It is not a coincidence that users assimilate increasingly the inbound marketing as content marketing. The graph below allows understanding better this trend and the evolution of google search for these two words.

GOOGLE SEARCH TRENDS: INBOUND MARKETING VS. CONTENT MARKETING



Source: Chernov, J. (2015). Hubspot's State of Inbound 2014.

Indeed, the content creation constitutes one of the three different subset of inbound marketing with social media and search engine optimization. The term content marketing is often perceived as a strategy in itself. In order to have the opinion of a broad panel of specialists, Hubspot put the question to more than 3,500 marketing and sales professionals.

In order to gather information for the *State of Inbound* report, they asked, “Which of the following best describes the relationship between ‘content marketing’ and ‘inbound marketing’?” and provided five options:

1. They are synonyms.
2. Content marketing is a subset of inbound marketing.
3. Inbound marketing is a subset of content marketing.
4. The two are fundamentally different.
5. Don't know.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONTENT MARKETING AND INBOUND MARKETING BY DEPARTMENT



Source: Chernov, J. (2015). Hubspot's State of Inbound 2014.

From the graph above, we can easily see that content marketing is perceived as a subset of inbound marketing for marketers and the rate of answer for this first option is nearly twice the rate as all other options combined. This tendency is particularly visible to marketing professionals but the trend is confirmed for sales and services professionals.

The sample for this question was only composed of Hubspot customers, consequently the authors decided to conduct many others with more heterogeneous samples but the results were similar. The most important thing to learn about the relation between these two terms complements each other. In order to be successful with inbound marketing, marketers should be able to identify all the relevant inbound practices to the situation of their entity.

According to Hubspot, the content creation in itself is based on the fundamental principles to publish the right content at the right moment, the right place and the right time. Each step of the inbound marketing methodology includes content creation. Marketers in charge of creating content should be known and trust by their social networks in order to promote and share the different forms of content.

According to ICEF Monitor which is responsible for Market intelligence for international student recruitment, content marketing is a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience with the objective of driving profitable customer action.

The content creation is one of the pillars of inbound marketing and consequently the effectiveness of every digital marketing practice described in the following chapters depends strongly on the content creation.

Indeed, by regularly publishing relevant content, companies increase their chances to increase ROI. Content creation allows companies to communicate their identity to prospects and clients. Consequently, it is a key lever to differentiate from the competition and create or strengthen the relationship with leads and customers.

(Amoré and Dabi-Schwebel, 2015)

It is really important to privilege visual quality when publishing content because a well-structured page encourages web users to read it. In order to captivate the attention of the audience, it could be relevant to choose a very impactful title. Indeed, by adding a relevant title to an article marketers promise to the visitor that the content will meet its expectations and answer its query. Adding citations and segmenting the content into subtitles is a good practice because it allows adding credibility to the author and keeping the visitor's attention during the reading process.

(Planchot, 2014)

The differentiation process when creating content must be created by the editorial line. Integrating quality pictures or short videos is nowadays unescapable in the content creation process. Marketers should question themselves about the usefulness, attractiveness and singularity of the content they are about to publish.

According to Planchot (2014), several types of content are available to marketers in order to maximize the impact. These are listed below. In order to maximize engagement possibilities, it is possible to maximize contact points by combining types of content and medias.

- **Blogs and articles** constitute quality content and are optimized by search engines. It requires a level of expertise to write good articles.
- **Pictures or Infographics** are easy to read, sharable and can generate more traffic in a short period.
- **Presentation and webinars** allow marketers to answer online through a powerpoint presentation to web users queries, perform a product demonstration or solve a problematic.
- **Case studies** are created in order to bring credibility to the product or service offered by the company. These case studies describe the use of the product in order to improve its performance.
- **White papers** include informational purposed documents that aim to generate a particular behavior or an action from the reader.
- **Videos and Trailers** constitute short duration videos allowing content creators to perform an interview or present the tutorial of a product. This new type of content has a strong growth potential.
- **Podcasts** are audio format files published on internet and accessible for free. It could be field expert advices on products or services.

(Planchot, 2014)

When the content is created, marketers should grow a reflection phase about the right medias to privilege for the publishment. By making a cross analysis between leads characteristics and medias impact, a strategy can be developed to increase the chances to reach the desired audience.

2.3.2.2. Search engine marketing

Nowadays, every firm has understood the need to create business websites. When the website is created, the next stage is to develop its visibility on the internet. To reach this target, websites need to be optimized through the referencing. Referencing is an essential dimension of digital marketing; it allows increasing awareness, visibility of the company on search engines. It can also create new communication for prospection and in a broader perspective, it contributes to promote goods and services online. It is really important when considering the search engine marketing to make the distinction between referencing and positioning. Digital marketing specialists use the referencing in order to make the positioning of the website better on search engines ranking.

It is also crucial to notice that it is not possible to buy its positioning in the index of search engines. In order to appear well ranked, it is necessary to work on the optimization of landing page, website content and keywords. (Planchot, 2014)

The referencing methods can be divided into two different terms, the search engine optimization or natural referencing (SEO) and the search engine advertising or paying referencing (SEA). These two terms are quite similar but are not substitutable. It is really important to make a distinction between these referencing methods because even if the overall goal is the same, the application is really different. The term search engine marketing is composed of those two different methods. (Queromedia, 2015)

These different terms should be combined for maximizing the online visibility of the website. It is relevant to manage first search engine optimization in order generate a targeted traffic and then work on search engine advertising with pay per click advertising campaigns. In order to maximize the results, these two actions must be done in that order to better target the traffic and attract buyer personas. (Di Leone, 2013)

The search engine optimization can be assimilated as a strategic optimization of the website for improving the positioning of the website in search engines.

In order to be successful and increase the visibility of the company or reach specific prospects by implementing SEO actions, it is first necessary to understand how a search engine ranks the websites. Afterward, several practices should be used such as relevant creation and publication of content, the analysis of keywords, an improvement of the design of the website in order to improve the user experience, link building on social media. (Fishkin, Høgenhaven 2013)

We can distinguish two types of search engine optimization; the first one is onsite SEO that is designing all the modifications to the website to draw attention, such as keyword density and title tags. The second type is the offsite SEO; this includes redaction of articles on other websites, presence on social media, blog comments and links from other website to the firm's. This last operation is really important because when there is a link to the website of the company seeking to improve online visibility on a trusted and highly visited website; it will probably generate a lot of traffic. (Finnegan, 2014)

The offsite SEO is the strategy with the most important impact on search engine websites rankings but these two strategies must be combined for effective results.

(Blog ipaao, 2011)

Search engine optimization requires some practice and expertise but it does not require being a specialist of digital marketing, it does not require a lot of technical skills. Indeed, managing SEO is one of the most reachable practices in digital marketing strategy. Often, SME's make decision to outsource this aspect of digital marketing mostly because they estimate the task is very complicated. Managers of small and medium enterprises also prefer to assign this task to a specialized agent in the digital area to be secured and ensure real benefits. Outsourcing can generate loss of earnings because by managing SEO themselves, the owners of companies are the best placed persons. They know their website better than anyone other, it is possible to monitor the effectiveness on the track and adapt constantly your website considering changes internal to the company or competitors' actions.

(Fishkin, Høgenhaven 2013)

Internet users generally do not go through many pages of search results because they have in mind that most relevant websites are in first position of their queries due to the competitive bidding of websites. According to the website Business2community 60% of all organic clicks go to the organic top 3 search results. Organic is designing the natural placement of websites on search engines results pages generated by algorithms. That explains why implementing search engine optimization is crucial for companies.

By implementing SEO strategy, companies will provide the means to attract customers already interested by their respective offers to their websites. The cost of this strategy is very low and the online visibility of the company does not have a limited duration in time. It is a considerable benefit in comparison to other Medias such as radio, television and press releases which are also more expensive.

The search engine advertising or paying referencing is the most effective digital marketing method to create higher exposure or increase traffic on websites. Consequently, SEA strategy is nowadays widely used by businesses. It allows increasing awareness, company website gain in visibility and it allows using a new communication channel to attract potential customers. Objectives of the method are similar to SEO but in practice it is

different because the optimization of the visibility is done through sponsored links and paid ads.

Search engine marketing importance is growing very fast and it constitutes one of the basic actions of digital marketing strategy. However, search engine marketing can be a very complex process, as several factors drive the return on investment (ROI). SEM has gained in popularity because of the targeted nature of the traffic it provides.

(Brooks, 2004)

It is even more important to implement search engine marketing through sponsored links or paid search listings for companies operating in a competitive environment. That is due to the fact that most of the competing companies are using search engine optimization techniques and in the fact that paid ads allow to have a differentiate visibility on search engines.

(Chaffey, Smith 2008)

Generally, professionals in charge of managing the online presence of a business divide their actions in SEM campaigns in order to monitor and measure the return on investment (ROI). The widely used platform for search engine marketing campaigns is Google AdWords which is a program affiliated and developed by Google Incorporated.

Search engine advertising allows paying based on the clicks of web users. It means that the company's account will be debited each time there is a click from the advertisement to the website. This type of advertising is called pay per click (PPC).

(Word stream, 2015)

The aim of search engine marketing is to minimize cost per click by maximizing the conversion cost of users. By managing effectively the search engine optimization techniques, marketers must allow visitors to find the content and product or services they are searching for.

2.3.2.3. Social media

The social presence fosters the engagement of the prospect. In order to maximize the benefits from a social media presence, marketers should focus on monitoring, animation and interaction.

By using social media, a language school will be surrounded by a relevant audience and these persons will relay relevant information to their fellows and support online presence of school while forming a community capable of formulating recommendations.

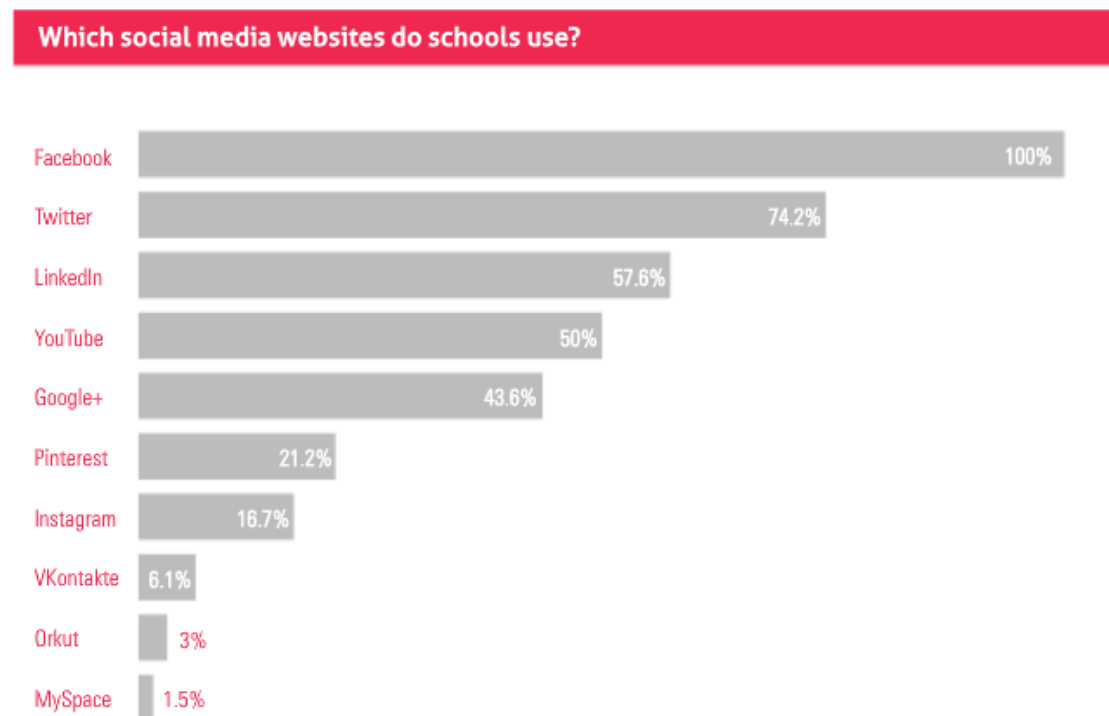
In order to be effective on social media, it is first necessary to choose two different social networks on which the target is widely present. Afterwards, marketers should identify the message that they want to convey to their audience through the use of social networks. Once the specific message is determined, the last strategic reflexion is to determine in which way it will be possible to transform the target acquired on social networks to leads.

Developing a real social media strategy is unescapable for a real effectiveness of the inbound marketing program. A relevant idea is to study each of the existing social networks one by one in order to determine in which way publishing content on it could bring results.

Visual content is a really good option for a language school. Indeed, posting videos and pictures allows the target to remember it easily. People in charge of the content publication on social networks should be careful to not to publish the same content on every social media used.

Using social networks can also constitute a tool for completing benchmarking. Indeed, it is possible by accessing competitor's social media content or audience to define its buyer persona or learn more about the content their social media marketers are publishing.

The buyer personas of language schools are massively present on social media and very selective concerning the content they want to see.



Source: Twyman, C. (2015). Special report, October 2013, Social media: a marketing tool.

As part of a study designed to determine social media usage trends for language schools worldwide, Wojtek Lapacz from Social Media & Marketing in Travel & Education (SMMITE) asked 68 language schools which social media websites they actively use. The sample is composed of independent and chain schools located in the United Kingdom, Spain, France, the United States and Latin America.

We can see from the chart above that all of the 68 language schools are using Facebook. The other social networks widely used are Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Google +. This data allows representing which social networks is prioritized by language school managers but it does not help to understand the quality and the frequency of the content published.

According to the results of this social media survey conducted by Wojtek Lapacz, language schools are overestimating their activity on social networks. During an interview aiming at describing the study results, the Polish specialist affirmed that most of the language school has inaccurate view of how effective their social media activity is. Further investigations were made on the social media activity of the respondents and most of the schools are overestimating their activities on social medias and a very few of them are exploiting the potential of these medias. “90.9% of respondents stated that they share news from the school on their Facebook fan

pages. In reality, only 48% of schools we monitored did such in a month's timeframe".

The content and social networks are key levers for generating return on investment and pillars of inbound marketing strategy.

"Allowing viral sharing of content and brand identity through social media will improve your SEO through incoming links from other websites making reference to the content related to products or services".
(Amoré, Dabi-Schwebel 2015).

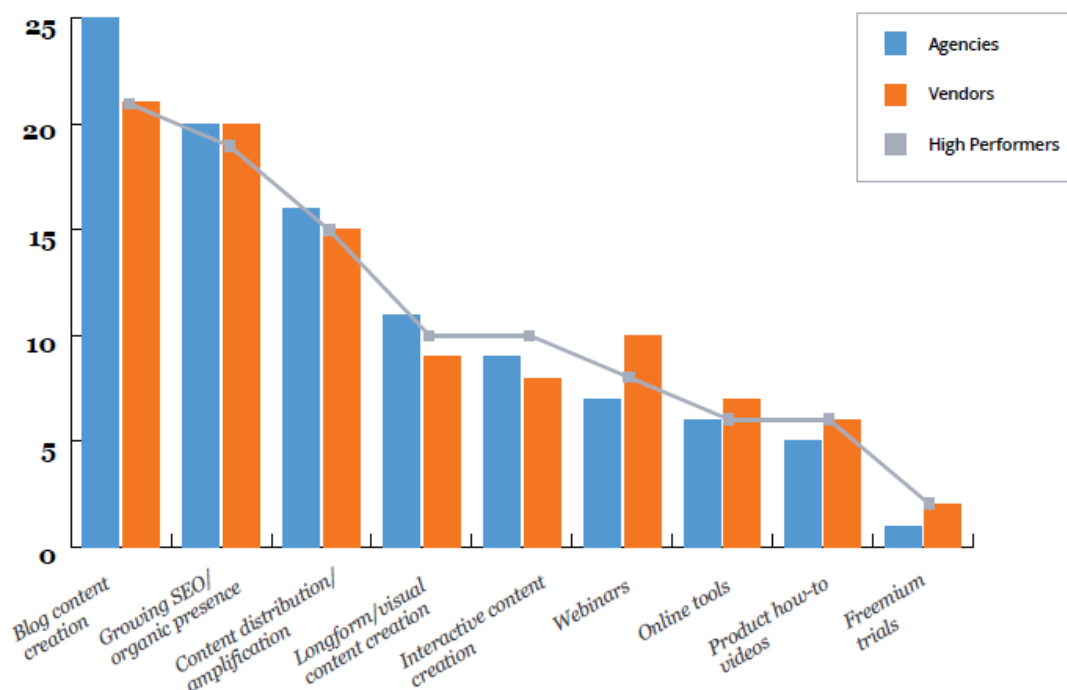
"In order to monitor, analyze, and optimize its presence on social networks businesses should extract quantifiable data in order to obtain the best strategic vision possible. The best key performance indicators fall within the size of the audience and its growth, the amount of interaction or dialogues on social networks with prospects and customers and finally the growth of the subscriber base".
(Amoré, Dabi-Schwebel 2015)

2.3.2.4. Blogging

According to Hubspot specialists, marketers who emphasize blogging are 13 times more likely to have increased their return on investment (ROI) year over year. Blogging is associated with success.

TOP INBOUND MARKETING PROJECTS

High performing agencies and vendors doubled down on projects with the greatest ROI



Source: Chernov, J. (2015). Hubspot's State of Inbound 2014.

Considering the data of the graph located above, firms should privilege content creation, search engine optimization and content distribution in order to increase chances to have a better return on investment. Those three types of marketing projects are more likely to drive good results especially for a company starting with inbound marketing.

Blogging is part of the first step of inbound marketing methodology chart presented earlier which consists in attracting and more specifically generating and increasing traffic. The main objective of this step is to generate the right traffic, it means that the aim of this step is to attract the buyer personas also (ideal customer).

Blogging is one of the key projects that must be included in an inbound marketing campaign. In order to increase its impact and contribution it is appropriate to add relevant content regularly. One of the most important

principle related to blogging is to write in adequation with the needs of the users.

(Planchot, 2014)

Blogs constitute an excellent tool to accompany and a support for the search engine optimization. Indeed, the algorithm of google is receptive to the creation of quality content. In order to appear at the top of the results when a web user formulates a query, creating articles is a relevant solution because each new article published does generate a new uniform resource locator (URL). Each new uniform resource locator increases potentially the ranking of the website in organic search results.

(Planchot, 2014)

The content available on blogs should be written in an informal and conversational style. Titles should be impactful and contain keywords. It is important for people who write on the blog of the company to be aware of duplicated content before publishing articles. If the content generated by the employee is already on another blog, that will have a negative action on the search engine robots. One solution to avoid this problem is to write on the same subject but tackle the subject from a different angle. The benefit is to target more keywords.

(Planchot, 2014)

Concerning the keywords, it is relevant to include the important keywords in the titles of articles and pages. It is not as simple as it sounds, individuals who are writing on the web should not simply add relevant keywords but create content with added value. The Google algorithm has been designed to foster the articles aligning best on topics sought by the internet user instead of keywords. It is possible to use some tools to identify the most valuable keywords that the blog must contain, the software "market samurai" is one of them which is well known by marketers for its efficiency.

(Planchot, 2014)

For a company which is offering language stays, having a blog with relevant content is easy and free. Indeed, some platforms named as content management systems (CMS) such as blogspot, wordpress do exist and allow to create a blog for free. This media of communication will allow prospects to obtain information in the purchase process. It is possible to upload interactive content on blogs as well as vital information about what the company is offering and contact informations. This platform will play a key role because it will provide all the information needed by potential clients in order to take the buying decision and compare the offer with competitors.

(Planchot, 2014)

The main benefit is that the information is available all the time and there is no need to spend time and money to answer to the potential clients questions. Blogs do constitute a communication canal between leads and businesses in a way that it is possible to publish comments. The opportunity for the team in charge of the blog to react to the comments and questions of the web user allows a process of humanization between those two parts.

Marketers do have two different solutions for blogging. First, it is possible to create a blog integrated to the corporate website and the second option is to elaborate a separate blog therefore considered as independant. It appears that the first solution allows better results concerning search engine optimization because the corporate website can enjoy the referencing of the blog. The only drawback is that the blog is directly classified as a commercial one. On the other side, creating a separate blog allows to be independant. For an entity which aim is to have quick benefits from the creation of a blog and which is very attentive to management costs, the best solution is to create an integrated blog to the corporate website.

(Boye, 2013)

In my opinion, it is relevant to add links to review sites in order to distinguish from the competition because the other schools use this media to valorize their businesses. The ideal to create a blog is to reassure the customer, entertain them and finds all the information about the school and what it offers. It is also interesting that the potential customer can imagine himself in the institution and dive into the school environment through videos, reviews, and interactive content.

It is very important for the blog to be adaptive in a way that it is possible to visit it from different devices and the content is accessible in different languages. In order to maximize the audience and the natural referencing (SEO). Search engine can also detect if the blog or website is having a fast load time and thus evaluate its accessibility. This is part of the user experience and also affects positioning and SEO.

Sharing blog content on social media is an opportunity for companies to increase the amount of visitors. Indeed, social medias are now constituting one of the key levers in the acquisition of traffic. Including sharing buttons on the blogs, web users can share the content of the blog in one click to all their social networks. When many people share the content of your blog on social media, it is a very good sign that informs search engine robots the website includes quality content that people appreciate.

Newsletters and RSS feed participate in the development of brand awareness and more specifically to the loyalty process known as the "lead

nurturing”. The lead nurturing can be defined as a procedure designed to maintain or strengthen a marketing relationship with prospects that are not yet ready for a sale action or for which the action failed because it was too early.

(Planchot, 2014)

One of the tips regarding the Google search engine to increase the positive impact of creating articles on SEO and positioning is to claim authorship of the published content. For this, marketers must connect all of their blog posts and web content to the Google+ profile of the business. The benefits of this operation are explained by the fact that the US giant is increasingly using its social network to influence the results of its search engine. This manipulation allows to develop credibility around the authors of articles.

(Planchot, 2014)

Creating a blog is a simple process but some key actions need to be performed in order to ensure the achievement of objectives. First of all, it is highly recommended to define the objectives of the blog by using the SMART model. Objectives should be in adequation with the corporate strategy and its marketing and sales goals. It is also important to identify the public targeted by the blog and consequently understand what visitors are searching for and where they are coming from before visiting the blog. The last element to take in consideration and that could help a lot is the creation of an editorial calendar in order to ensure a smooth production of content and pilot more easily the content creation.

(Planchot, 2014)

2.3.3 The transformation of visitors into leads

2.3.3.1. Calls-to-action

If digital marketers are using call to action (CTA), it is mainly to encourage the visitor to act and more generally to generate conversions. According to Hubspot, if you don't have enough calls-to-action or your calls-to-action are not enticing enough, you won't generate leads. Call to action must be used as a tool to optimize websites, blogs and emails.

It is highly recommended to make them appear visible on the website. Call to actions generates leads consequently it is wise to place them at the end of a post, in a sidebar or as a floating banner. Experts are considering that blogs are the best place to insert call-to-action. Most companies have at least one on their site because a frame containing the telephone number and mailing address of the company is a call-to-action.

Of course, some other more effective forms exist such as click to call button and contact forms allowing the web user to enter its coordinates. Another option that is chosen more and more by firms because it is an easy way to make the audience involved with the company is to add social networks sharing buttons. In order to get the maximum benefit from these sharing buttons, it is relevant to place them on blogs and landing pages. (Knowledge hubspot, 2015)

The possibility to subscribe to newsletters, social networks sharing button and RSS subscription are grouped among the less engaging methods for web users. The rate of conversion should be better by using other kinds of call-to-actions such as quotation request, qualification to an offer, online testing and invitation to book online. (Amoré, Dabi-Schwebel 2015)

CTAs aim at inducing the visitor to engage with the company. Because each company has a multiple audience (leads, partners, promoters, customers, visitors) visiting the website, the solution is to introduce effective CTAs to get each group of audience visiting the website accomplish different goals. According to Soksey (2015), in order to maximize conversions companies should design multiple types of CTAs. Eight types of call-to-actions have been identified.

- 1) **The lead generation**, this is probably the most crucial type of call-to-action to generate a maximum amount of conversion from the website. The aim of this button is to convert visitors into leads. It is effective to place them on blogs or website spots with a very high percentage of visitors. Designing them as eye-catching and communicating effectively the value for clicking on it influences strongly the effectiveness.
- 2) **The form submission** is the second type of CTA. The aim of a form is to make the visitor fill information and submit it. All the information registered will be stored in the contact data base of the company and the lead nurturing process can start. Often, it is required to fill a form in order to have access to a document or download a file. The visual of the button should be engaging and actionable.
- 3) **The “read more” CTA buttons** can be found at every places the marketer is displaying content. These are placed after few paragraphs and visitors have to click on it to have access to the full content. The aim of using this type of CTA is to make sure engaging posts will receive the stats they deserve. A distinction can be made during the traffic analysis between the post itself and the home page.

- 4) **Product or service discovery CTA** aimed at facilitating the task of visitors seeking to learn more about the company, discover the products and services offered. It is crucial to make the button distinguish from the background to increase visibility.
- 5) **Social sharing CTA** aim at making the visitor share the content published on a blog or landing pages with their friends or community. These CTA generally work well because it is a low commitment way to engage with the corporate. These buttons are really easy to customize, marketers should include them in places where the content published is engaging and shareable. For example, placing them on landing pages and blog post is relevant.
- 6) **A Lead nurturing call-to-action** should be designed to promote an offer to a lead which is not ready to buy the service or the product offered by the company. These buttons promote free trials, free quotes or product demos. Blog posts or pages describing the offer constitute the right places to include them.
- 7) **Closing the sale call-to-action** is playing a key role when the lead nurturing process is gone. The aim is to turn the leads who gained in maturity into customers. Consequently, these CTA are sales oriented and should engage the customer immediately to buy the product or service. By placing them on blog posts or product pages, marketers can get the most out of them.
- 8) **Event promotion call-to-action** should be used to raise the awareness of visitors concerning an event which is coming soon. This CTA can be used for visitors, partners, customers and the right place differs a lot concerning the nature of the target.

(Soskey, 2015)

One opportunity to use CTA in the case of LSF Montpellier could be the insertion on the website of a CTA for promoting an event such as an open day at the school. It is also interesting to use CTA to encourage online booking because it is one of the priorities of the managers. My last idea is to implement a service of live chat in order to encourage leads buying a language stay by making them feel comfortable.

After the conception of call-to-actions, it is possible to use the A/B testing method which will be described more precisely in the landing page chapter for testing the ideal emplacement, the best colours and the text which will generate the best click rate. (Marketinventive.fr, 2013)

2.3.3.2. Landing pages

Landing pages are created in order to generate actions from visitors and provide a better conversion rate. Consequently a good landing page can be characterized as attractive, reassuring, and hook the visitor.

It is important to make the difference between the homepage of the website and the landing page. Visitors of the homepage most likely already know about the business and its products/services. Consequently, the aim is to allow them to learn more about the company by navigating on the website. Often, they found the website of the company by tapping its name on search engines.

On the contrary, visitors who end up on the landing page probably found something online that linked back to this page. They did not know the company before. Consequently, the aim is to make them feel comfortable and convinced that this company is the one which is the most suitable to answer their needs. The interaction should be simple and direct without navigation because the aim is to make them identify through a form.

A concise and visible text must contend the landing page. The design of the landing page is essential. It should not be too much content in the sense that the visitor should not have to navigate to the page for information. Three to five sentences is the good weight of content.

A tool to increase the conversion rate on landing pages consists in not including the navigation bar. In this case the only option for the visitor is to complete the form.

It is really important to remember that landing pages need to be designed while keeping in mind the whole conversion strategy. Landing pages will be the first feeling of web users regarding the company. These pages should be connected to different places new visitors may come to and the content published must be convincing and reassuring but especially answer to their queries.

Marketers can use a testing method that aims at comparing marketing variables and identify which offers generate the best results in a specific context or against a given audience. This method allows saving a lot of time and the efficiency is well known by inbound marketing practitioners. It is called A/B testing and it contributes to optimize the digital strategy by testing and optimizing inbound marketing actions. Among the well-known A/B testing, it is possible to mention Google Analytics, Unbounce and Optimizely. (Marketinventive.fr, 2013)

Concerning the landing page, A/B testing method allows to test the nature of two different offers in order to see which one will generate more leads. It is also possible to evaluate how the future visitors will react to the form available on the landing page and imagine different types of landing page copy by describing the offer in different ways.

(Marketinventive.fr, 2013)

The key performance indicators most suitable to ensure a good optimization process of the landing page and follow its evolution in a realistic and measurable way can be monitored through dedicated software. These are

- The bounce rate which is the percentage of web users arrived on the landing page and gone as soon as they have not found what they were looking for.
- The duration of the visit, this is an indicator to measure the interest of the visitor regarding the content.
- The retention rate indicating how many actions have been made by visitors already customers of the business.
- The conversion rate indicates the percentage of visitors who have completed the desired action when creating the landing page.

Dabi-Schwebel, (2012)

2.3.3.3. Forms

In order to maximize conversions and gather enough information to bring visitors to the sales funnel, marketers should design landing pages forms. Forms constitute the last step for getting conversions consequently it requires a thorough work of conception to make them acceptable and encourage visitors to fill them with the right information. It is important when designing landing pages and forms to make them accessible from mobiles.

In order to make them acceptable, it is necessary to ask only necessary information and make it short as possible. “Keep your forms simple and short by asking only the most important questions such as name, e-mail address and if the person is in the market for your products or services”. (Halligan, Shah 2010)

The most important when designing a form is to keep it simple and functional. It is the only way to get the better conversion rate. One advice given by the specialists Halligan and Shah (2010) is to avoid asking sensitive information. Visitors should be able to fill the form without searching for additional information.

”To increase your credibility and trust, it’s useful to have a clear privacy policy explaining what you will and will not do with people’s information. You can link to your privacy policy right from your form”. (Halligan, Shah 2010)

When the form is completed, the visitors who have filled it should receive a confirmation e-mail sent by an auto-responder. Besides obtaining contact information the filling of a form allows thanks to tracking tools to know the different contact points between the company and the lead. It is therefore possible to know how many times this person has consulted the website or blog of the company and if some content was published such as comments. From this, it is possible to distinguish a future customer from a partner or a competitor.

According to the experts Halligan and Shah (2010), the conversion rate should be at least 15 percent if the form is acceptable. It means 15% of the people who land on the page should convert and fill out the form.

2.3.3.4. Lead nurturing

The lead nurturing is a key process in inbound marketing. It is defined as a process which consists at providing additional information to prospects on the company service in order to increase their confidence rate related to the entity. Therefore, the main goal of implementing a lead nurturing campaign is to guide leads through the buying process or sales funnel in order to make them mature and generate the purchase action.

(Amoré, Dabi-Schwebel 2015)

"21% of qualified prospects convert into sales in the private sector and 3% in the economic development sector. The remaining 79% are simply not ready to buy. That does not mean they should be quietly forgotten. Unfortunately, 65% of marketers do not make the effort to continue their unsuccessful relationships".

(Jast, 2015)

"Qualified leads can be compared to seeds. Indeed, a lead has much potential but can not convert (or sprout) if not taken care of, and in very specific conditions. A monitoring program opportunity is thus similar to watering and adding fertilizer to a plant, and allows the lead to reach its maximum potential".

(Jast, 2015)

Content creation is widely used in the lead nurturing process, often assimilated as a key lever for success it aims at answering to the need of leads by publishing the right content. In order to maximize the results, a long-term strategy should be conceived to generate lead engagement. Marketers should keep in mind that leads are massively using social networks and search engines during their decision making process in the sales funnel. Using a multichannel strategy is unescapable for effectiveness.

(Duban, Dnic 2015)

The created content should be based on three fundamentals which are the content and the type or format, keywords and relevant terms and user behaviour or research needs. The behaviour and research needs differ in each stage of the buyer's journey consequently marketers should privilege content types according to the specific stages of the buyer's journey.

According to Jast (2015), we can distinguish three different tools that can be included in the lead nurturing strategy and contribute to its success. Email marketing is the first one and probably the widely use tool for lead nurturing. It allows to increase the ROI when the content of emails is relevant. It is also possible to use marketing automation in order to improve

the effectiveness of the process by sending personalized messages at the best moment. It is possible to combine phone calls with e-mail marketing but this method is effective in the context of business to business relationships.

The second tool is social media which allows leads to perform active research of information concerning the company or services by asking questions or posting comments. Consequently it is very important to answer to all requests on social media. Publishing relevant and innovative content on social media reassure prospects on the professionalism of the entity. Including icons referring to social media accounts in your emails is a good practice to boost the audience.

(Jast, 2015)

The last relevant tool to include in lead nurturing programs is the remarketing or advertising. This method also called retargeting exists for around six years and shows a real effectiveness. Jast (2015) has considered remarketing as a more efficient method than other types of online advertising. Indeed, the conversion rate generally increases by using remarketing as well as the click through rate (CTR). Google Adwords, Facebook and Twitter are offering their own remarketing solutions. The principle is the following, marketers create different remarketing lists among the visitors of the company's website according to their actions. For example, it is relevant to distinguish leads who have visited the contact page from those who did not finalize the purchase. It is a good practice to attribute one objective for every list such as the completion of a form or a purchase. Once lists are established, remarketing programs will allow marketers to submit messages or banners to leads when they visit other websites with a content related to the firm's one.

(Jast, 2015)

In the case of Google Adwords, these lists are collected in an automatized way thanks to the program Ad Exchange which monitors cookies of the visitors and establish lists. These lists are generated through remarketing tags that correspond to a small snippet of code provided by Ad Exchange. This invisible code snippet sends the signal to the Ad Exchange program to record visitor cookies to the corresponding remarketing list.

(Google Support, 2015)

The A/B testing method described earlier can be applied to lead nurturing emails. Indeed, by using this testing method marketers can identify which sentences should be included in the e-mail to generate curiosity from the reader by changing the catchphrase in terms of length, format or use of specific words. Furthermore, it is possible to identify the best moment to

send this email to the lead and what is the best time interval between the moment he became a lead and the first email sending. The last element possible to test with this solution is e-mail sender name. Indeed, it is possible to test if it is more suitable to send the e-mail with the company's name, employee name or both.

(Markentinventive, 2013)



Source : Kilens, M. and Spatola, J. (2015). *The Buyer's Journey : The Marketing Funnel evolved*.

From the chart above, we can see how the prospect behavior and research needs evolve during the buyer journey. Marketers should adapt to each step by using specific content types to convince leads to purchase.

During the awareness phase, leads aim at solving their problems or opportunities consequently it is relevant to use white papers, e-books and more generally educational content. Afterwards, the prospect is trying to understand which solution is the most suitable to solve his problem. For the consideration stage marketers should privilege comparison white papers, expert guides and podcasts or short videos. Creating live interactions is also a good solution. Concerning the last stage which is the decision one, the content published should help them to make the right final purchase decision. Therefore, marketers should publish live demonstrations, trial download, product or vendor comparisons and case studies.

(Kilens, Spatola 2015)

The first step to create a lead nurturing campaign consists in grading the leads. Some leads will become paying customers faster than others. Generally the buyer's journey is faster in B2C than in B2B. Quantify leads is very easy with tracking softwares but it does not help to increase the performance of the lead nurturing campaign. Indeed, the best practice is to assess the quality of the leads.

(Halligan, Shah 2010)

There is no single method to rate prospects but obviously it must be based on the most accurate calculation by including relevant variables. Analyzing the different referral channels which generate the best leads for the entity is a good practice. The calculation could also take into consideration the website visits. The frequency of the visits, the last visit and the type of page visited could allow marketers to estimate in which stage of the buying process the lead is. Calls-to-action is another element which can lead to rate leads effectively. Indeed, the type of actions completed by the visitor such as downloading a brochure or requesting a quotation allow to rate the lead.

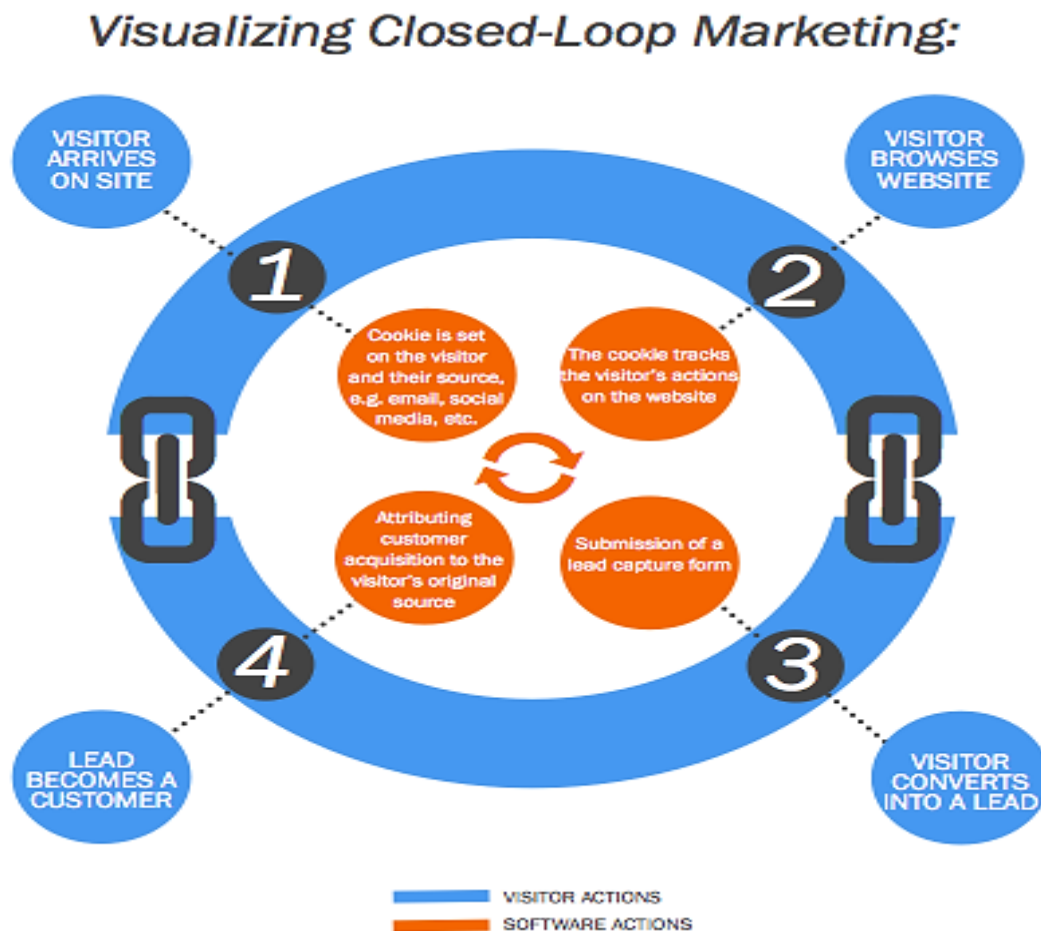
(Halligan, Shah 2010)

By designing relevant landing page forms questions to their type of business and target, marketers can make this rating process easier. However, asking too many questions is an obstacle to obtain conversions. Consequently, all the metrics previously described should be taken into consideration to assess the quality of leads.

(Halligan, Shah 2010)

One method is widely used by online marketers to attract high-quality leads constantly. This method is called closed-loop marketing. Basically, it is a method based on data and insights which allows online marketers to identify their best lead sources. This method is based on a close collaboration between sales teams and marketing departments. "Typically, this involves connecting your marketing analytics software with your customer-relationship management (CRM) software."

(Georgieva, 2015)



Source : Georgieva, M. (2015). *Why Every Marketer Needs Closed-Loop Reporting*. [online] Blog.hubspot.com. Available at: <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/32019/Why-Every-Marketer-Needs-Closed-Loop-Reporting.aspx> [Accessed 7 Sep. 2015].

This chart allows to understand the role of the software in the closed-loop reporting process. According to Georgieva, using closed-loop reporting allows to focus on the right channels and offers. "By looking at the sources and offers that traditionally brought in new customers for your organization, you will be able to identify the behavior you need to engage in to qualify leads and push them through the sales funnel". (Georgieva, 2015)

This tool is also very effective in reporting and easily demonstrates the influence of digital marketing actions consequently it is valuable for online marketers authority and credibility inside the businesses.

Using closed-loop marketing can be very useful to define buyer personas and increase the effectiveness of a lead nurturing program. Indeed, collecting realistic data about the online behavior of customers before the sale, their personal characteristics, the content they pay attention to and

insights about their motivation allows to understand needs and challenges of the targeted audience.

(Georgieva, 2015)

Closed-looped marketing can decrease the conversion time from lead to customer and more generally the sales cycle. By analyzing the trajectory of a new customer through the buying process and the used communication, it is possible to apply this to other leads with the same characteristics or needs. Online marketers can keep conversion cost lower by using closed-loop marketing. Indeed, this reporting method will allow marketers to know what content they should publish through which channels. They already know how to reach effectively the audience to convert leads into customers. Consequently, there is less waste of marketing resources and it is thus possible to perfect the form of the content, care about details and therefore differentiate from the competition.

(Georgieva, 2015)

It is really important for online marketers to communicate cleverly with leads who appear ready to buy because if the quality of the interaction with the company is poor, the lead can buy from a competitor. However, they should not neglect prospects who are not mature yet and it is the most important principle of the lead nurturing process.

”The idea behind lead nurturing is to maintain an ongoing communication and dialog with these leads so that when they’re ready to buy, your product is at the top of their mind.”

(Halligan, Shah 2010)

The content which is shared with leads during the lead nurturing program should create value. Different channels can be used such as e-mails, phone calls or postal mails. It is really important to include compelling call-to-action and not sell too hard. Segmenting leads is a good practice and it can allow to send them specific messages.

(Halligan, Shah 2010)

Lead nurturing programs and more generally inbound marketing allow to broaden the amount of leads reachable. Except for leads reachable by e-mail, postal mail and phone calls it is now possible to touch a complementary audience through social medias and blog suscriptions. Since the commercial purposed mails are often ignored by the prospects, these new ways to reach prospects are very effective to establish a two-way and continuous communication with leads in phase of maturation, but also promote new offers.

(Halligan, Shah 2010)

An effective lead nurturing program will lead to a high lead-to-customer conversion rate. Open rate of e-mails sent to prospects, the rate of leads having made a purchase are key performance indicators to evaluate and adjust the lead nurturing program.

(Halligan, Shah 2010)

2.3.3.5. Marketing automation

Marketing automation is a process which should be implemented by every firm generating a continuous flow of qualified leads. It is particularly relevant to implement marketing automation when an important percentage of leads are not ready to buy. Consequently, marketing automation is directly linked to lead nurturing, lead scoring and lead intelligence.

By using marketing automation, marketers can expect significant improvements concerning the content creation and publication. Indeed, marketing automation software allows creating dynamic content specifically adapted to the audience.

It is crucial for online marketers to consider marketing automation as an improvement tool for their digital marketing existing processes. Indeed, using marketing automation requires well-established digital marketing actions to increase efficiency. Therefore, marketing automation will not generate any benefits if online marketers start using this kind of software in order to generate leads and sales in an automated way. Marketing automation software generally allows digital marketers to see where adjustments should be performed in order to enhance the performance of their digital marketing campaigns.

Marketing automation is particularly effective when it is integrated in an inbound marketing strategy which is constantly adjusted. The main benefit from using marketing automation software is the time saving but it is also a very good tool to prove and make adjustments to the digital strategy because it provides a large number of relevant metrics to calculate the return on investment.

By using this process, it is possible to guide the leads through the sales funnel. Because marketing automation can only be done through software, a specialist of marketing automation is actually a marketer who owns a high level of expertise using these platforms.

Integrating marketing automation software into customer relationship management software is a possibility which can drastically improve the

collaboration between the marketing and sales department and therefore increase visibility and the revenue.

“Marketing automation connects multiple touch points and marketing channels including social media, email marketing and content marketing. One of the core goals of marketing automation is to nurture prospects for the long-term, which means focusing on goals beyond direct sales”.

(Patel, Puri 2015)

Marketing automation process involves a psychological dimension. Indeed, it is important for marketers to have empathy for the lead and grow a reflection about the way to pull the audience to the brand. The content which will be sent to leads should delight them and inspire them to provide feedbacks.

(Patel, Puri 2015)

3 FIELD RESEARCH

3.1 Interview

3.1.1 Methodology

In order to collect data on the current digital marketing strategy developed by LSF Montpellier, the author has conducted an interview with the financial director of the business and thesis supervisor (Hervé Griffon) and the person in charge of digital marketing who is external to the company and located in Canada (Mikael Karlsson).

The author has chosen to perform the interview with these two interlocutors because their answers represent both strategic and digital expertise. In order to answer to the research question, the author has to take into account the opinion of the CFO on the results achieved through the current digital marketing strategy and its intentions concerning strategic decisions to ensure the sustainability of its business. Performing the interview with the digital marketing expert is essential because it allows taking into account all the actions performed and key metrics in order to make a link between the theory studied and the current digital marketing practices.

The author has chosen the cross-sectional qualitative study in order to answer to the thesis question and formulate recommendations. Considering the situation and the thesis background, choosing the qualitative method is relevant because it allows understanding the current situation of LSF Montpellier regarding digital marketing and evaluating the different perceptions related to their current practices.

The different questions formulate during the interview aim to provide deep insights about the current situation of LSF Montpellier related to digital marketing and guide the author to determine how the current strategy can be adapted to meet the challenges and opportunities of attracting North American customers. All the questions available in the interview guide were designed considering the structure and content of the theoretical part of the thesis.

The interview guide was composed of 47 questions divided in four distinct parts. Questions were positioned logically from the most general aspects of digital marketing to specific questions about their practices and operational results.

The first part contains mainly questions about the strategic role of digital marketing and the main goals for using it. Questions were designed in or-

der to get accurate answers on their digital marketing objectives, the specificity of digital marketing for language schools and get insights about the decision-making process related to the digital presence of the entity. One other objective of this section is to discuss about the main challenges related to digital marketing practices and the potential future digital marketing budget variations.

The second part aims to gain insights about the digital marketing actions and assess the effectiveness and satisfaction level. In order to evaluate their practices, the author asked several questions related to the actions included in the current digital strategy. In this part questions are mainly about search engine optimization, content creation, leads tracking and optimization of landing pages and forms.

The third part of the interview guide deals with the assessment of the current digital performance. It includes specific questions related to the return on investment calculation, monitoring and reporting methods as well as the evolution of key performance indicators.

The fourth part aims to evaluate the impact of digital marketing on the company's sales performance and determine if the company is ready for marketing automation. The author includes several questions about the lead nurturing strategy and the connection between digital marketing practices and customer relationship management.

3.1.2 Interview results and problem statement

According to Mikael Karlsson and Hervé Griffon, digital marketing is unescapable for businesses offering language stays because all prospects and customers are located abroad and having a digital presence is the only way to make prospects aware of the presence of the school simultaneously across the world. On the other side, having no digital presence for a language school is a real threat for its market share and a potential loss of customers.

Indeed, around fifty percent of the customers of LSF Montpellier have established an online contact before purchase. Consequently, the digital presence allows prospects to know about the company and the quality of the services provided but it is also a very efficient two way communication tool which is facilitating interaction between companies and prospects.

The digital marketing was perceived by my interlocutors as a new form of marketing more than only a support for communication. Indeed, even if it

allows a diversification of supports to communicate, create and publish content, the most important benefit from the utilization of digital marketing was the use of new methods such as search engine marketing and re-marketing.

It appears that there is no online competitor benchmarking done at LSF Montpellier. The main reason indicated was the lack of information concerning the competitor's strategy.

According to the financial director of LSF Montpellier, the strategic objectives of the firm are transcribed into digital marketing actions. Therefore digital marketing has a strategic dimension and LSF Montpellier has a clearly defined digital marketing strategy.

The four different actions included in the digital strategy are:

- Search engine optimization (SEO) which includes website optimization and organic search
- Search engine advertising (Adwords campaigns and PPC advertising)
- Social media marketing
- Remarketing

The financial director of LSF Montpellier wants to optimize the website and the organic search in priority.

These actions are the result of a collaborative work between two experts. Both digital competence and the strategic competence play a role in the digital strategy conception and the decision-making regarding digital marketing is also a collaborative work. It is important to note that no specific buyer personas were identified during the development of the digital strategy.

The main purpose of digital presence for LSF Montpellier is to allow students to purchase language stays through the website of the company without using agencies. According to a study conducted in 2009 by the study travel magazine entitled France feedback, only 13% of the students who enrolled for language stays in France found their institution on the internet. This percentage could be due to the relatively poor effectiveness of digital marketing actions led by language schools. Leads probably need to consult agencies before purchasing a language stay.

“The sample of students mainly underlined the fact they need the opinion of educational advisors before purchasing language stays. Indeed, 53% of them used an agency to source a language programme compared with 33% last year. However the number of students who actually booked via an

agency dipped to just 33% against 49% in the previous survey conducted by study travel magazine”.

(Study Travel, 2009)

“The consumer behaviour for language stays has strongly evolved with the digital marketing. Indeed, language stays is less and less an extensive decision making purchase and 30 to 40% of customers are booking their stay within a month before their departure. Prospects want to find a complete range of services at the best price and all the information have to be mentioned on the website of language schools. The price gains in importance compared to the quality of services. Often, prospects do not hesitate to put in competition many market players in order to buy at the lowest price”.

(Saint-Michel, 2014)

“Consequently, many booking platforms emerged and supply is bloated. This trend has led to much more aggressive commercial approaches among agencies and internet became the main source for referencing”.

(Saint-Michel, 2014)

It is a strategic decision to encourage direct purchase from the website of LSF Montpellier in order to increase the profit margin and facilitate the information transfer process. Managing the whole process from the booking to the after-sale process clearly provides a competitive advantage through time-saving and cost efficiency.

By using digital marketing, the financial director wants to target specifically the 20-25 years old age class located in the United-States. These prospects tend to purchase directly from the website of the company because of their ability to collect information about the language school offers on the internet and their wish to be exempt from additional fees charged by agencies.

According to a very recent study (September 2015) published by Study Travel on its magazine, “29% percent of students had no idea about which country, city or school they wanted to study in and therefore need thorough counselling from the agent to find the best option for them”.

Consequently, the role of agencies reveals its importance through the previous statistical data. Indeed, students who do not know about the city or school they wish to study in will most likely not book online through the website of the school. As the competition is important in the south of France and there is a lot of other language schools in the city of Montpellier, the recommendation of agencies is a crucial lever for generating sales. During the interview, the financial director affirmed that relationships with

agencies are more and more difficult. Sales through agencies were the main driver for sales but the deterioration of the quality of collaboration affects the company performance. Consequently, it requires investing more in digital marketing to compensate this shortfall and generate the maximum amount of sales without any intermediates.

At the time of the interview, there was no specific investment or budget increase for digital marketing because search engine marketing campaigns allow to reach the objectives in terms of traffic generation and sales volume. However, the financial director asserted that it is probable that the budget increases during the next five years.

Google Adwords campaigns, search engine optimization and portals constitute the main digital marketing projects to increase the traffic on the website. In order to increase the conversion rate, the digital marketing expert has created an online sales platform included in the website and redesigned the website to increase the interactivity.

The digital marketing expert affirms that he concentrates his actions on the search engine advertising. Indeed, search engine optimization provides satisfactory results. The organic search is constantly growing and requires limited adjustments. The main lever of success which generates qualified leads and boosts organic traffic is a clearly the defined keyword strategy.

The onsite optimization is preferred to the offsite optimization because it allows much more control for the digital marketing expert. Offsite optimization was considered as a technique with a potentially higher impact but it requires a long term commitment and a need for building a relationship with powerful domains with high authority.

The methodology to pilot SEO and SEA campaigns is similar and it consists in monthly reporting, keyword adjustments, keyword research and conversion rate tracking. The cost per lead is not tracked by the digital marketer.

Concerning the content creation and publication, actions are established in a strong correlation with the buyer's journey. Indeed, the digital marketer looks at the conversion funnel and analyses each steps of the customer's behavior before planning content related digital marketing actions accordingly. Videos, photos and text constitute the most used type of contents. Concerning the publishment of the content, media are chosen according to their compatibility and their ability to maximize the engagement of the audience.

An educational blog which is external from the website of the company is available online. The purpose of this blog is pedagogical and it does not play a role in digital strategy. The staff of LSF Montpellier and students can access to it. The main objective is to allow students and teachers to share written information about the French culture and tips to learn the language easily.

Videos and photos are mainly used for social media posts. Social media are used by LSF Montpellier as a way of conveying customer experience rather than a method of marketing directly to users. There is no specific measuring method to monitor, analyse and optimize the presence of the firm on social networks. The number of likes, followers and comments received is counted but it does not constitute a metric for potential strategic adjustments. LSF Montpellier has an account on the following social networks:

- Facebook
- Pinterest
- Instagram
- Twitter

There is no process of optimization for forms or landing pages in the current digital marketing strategy. Several calls-to-action are available on the landing page. Forms and landing pages optimization is clearly an area which needs improvements.

Because the target of LSF Montpellier is customers located in the United-States, it is important to take into consideration the visa matter. According to Study Travel magazine, 48% of agents provided visa assistance to students in 2015. The type of visa needed for American students who wish to attend a language program in France is the short stay student visa.

Digital marketing actions have shown a real effectiveness on the amount of customers and an increase of the market share during the five past years. The organic traffic has doubled thanks to the search engine optimization action. Consequently, it is the digital marketing action that affects most significantly the return on investment. The range of service offered is not influenced by the digital marketing practices.

Increasing the amount of sales, improving the customer lifecycle and improving the profit margin were the three main objectives mentioned by my interlocutors.

Digital marketing actions continually generate a flow of new qualified leads. However, there is no lead nurturing strategy to guide prospects through the sales funnel. Consequently, leads are not rated and classified.

The reporting is done monthly and clearly shows the impact of digital marketing actions. The digital marketing expert provides a report which is showing statistical data about the traffic origin, the geographic location of visitors and the conversion rate. The volume of traffic on the website, the number of online bookings made from the website and the sales are the main key performance indicators chosen to objectively assess the quality of digital actions. The digital marketing expert uses the software Google Analytics in order to monitor and control the effectiveness of campaigns.

3.2 Analysis and recommendations

The interview allows the author to gain insights and collect very realistic data about the current situation of LSF Montpellier related to digital marketing. The data collected during the administration of the questionnaire reflect the fact that the digital strategy is a current and central concern for the managers. Indeed, the financial director underlined several times the impact of digital marketing on the sales performance and the coordination between the corporate strategy and the digital strategy. Relationships with agencies are more and more complicated consequently the budget for digital marketing will increase and objectives will change.

The current digital marketing strategy offers great opportunities for improvements and the progression margin appears to be huge. All the actions are coordinated and have a directional goal. Consequently the current digital strategy is a really good basis to consider the use of new digital marketing actions. It will be essential to incorporate future improvements in a logic of continuity in order to preserve the effectiveness of digital marketing actions currently used. The author has noticed that the inbound marketing strategy is partially adopted considering the current digital strategy. Adopting more inbound strategies is the right solution. Thinking strategically and visualizing the actions in place and those to be taken for each phase of the inbound strategy will help to adapt the current strategy to the inbound marketing model without harming the current actions.

The digital presence and all the coordinated actions have shown a real effectiveness on the sales of the company and monthly reporting allows the director to take decisions and adjust budgets. The online booking platform works on all type of devices and the interface is a high quality one. The keyword strategy is an online competitive advantage and the organic search attracts a lot of visitors on the website.

The financial director follows the effectiveness of the digital marketing actions implemented by the digital marketing expert monthly through detailed report. The digital expert uses a solution called Swydo in order to perform monitoring and reporting. This is a project management and reporting application which allows online marketers to manage PPC campaigns. This solution has integrations with AdWords, Bing ads, Google analytics and Google webmaster tools. The interview allows the author to have an idea of the degree of involvement of the strategic expertise at the level of decision making as well as its digital marketing knowledge and it appears that both experts have a comprehensive and shared vision of the digital strategy.

Online competitor benchmarking can provide new initiatives and enhance the overall competitive position. It could be particularly resourceful to perform benchmarking on the competitors digital marketing practices in the area of social media engagement, SEO and content creation.

3.2.1 Inbound marketing integration

3.2.1.1. Buyer personas identification

Adopting more inbound strategy requires developing unique buyer personas. This step is crucial and will allow the staff of the company to work more on the customer buying process. The fact that a digital strategy is already established will help to obtain data about online behaviour and customer demographics. By segmenting the whole audience into several fictional groups of ideal customers, inbound marketing actions performance will be maximized. The data base of the company can be used in order to develop unique buyer personas for the customer demographic. The digital and strategic expertise can consult each other in order to identify the motivations, needs and behaviour of the prospects. Previous digital marketing reports can constitute a tool and relevant elements to grow a relevant reflexion.

3.2.1.2. Landing pages, forms and calls-to-action optimization

The author recommends building a customized landing page for each buyer persona identified. Improving the landing pages will have a strong impact on the conversion rate. The huge amount of traffic driven by the quality of the search engine marketing is not exploited at its maximum. The digital marketing expert should improve current landing pages rather than

creating new ones because this action can be disruptive for some leads who consult the website repeatedly.

It is relevant to optimize landing pages to answer the needs and motivation of the different buyer personas previously identified. The A/B testing should be used in order to estimate those with the highest potential to generate conversions. The strategic reasoning will strongly influence the quality of the modifications on landing pages. High converting landing pages should be built according to the whole conversion strategy.

The content of the landing page should be consistent and generate a trust feeling from the visitor. The author recommends reducing as much as possible the navigation possibility and including credibility indicators such as valuable customer advices. It could also be interesting to include promotions in order to create a sense of urgency and push the visitor to become a lead. After landing pages optimization, it will be relevant to check the retention rate evolution.

Landing pages forms should be functional and very simple. It is the last step before conversion and their visual aspect has a strong influence on the conversion rate. The digital marketing expert could include a privacy line to increase trust. Because LSF Montpellier provides the opportunity for visitors to perform a skype call, it could be interesting to include it as an alternative from completing the form. Using optional form fields can encourage the visitor to fill in and submit the form. It is important to create converting buttons with relevant colours and size. The phrase “submit and get a free brochure” could be included in the forms.

There are several calls-to-action on the website and these are visible. The invitation to book online appears in red and its position is relevant. The call-to-action dedicated to the skype call should be put forward. Social networks buttons, RSS feed and newsletter sign-up CTA are not very engaging, it could be relevant to reduce their size. Specific landing pages and calls-to-action should be designed before summer which is the main period to include promotional offers.

New types of calls-to-action could provide interesting results such as event promotion, closing the sale and lead nurturing calls-to-action.

The landings pages, website content, CTA, forms and design should correspond to the type of buyer personas targeted and provide a tailored user experience. Working on this aspect will allow meeting the needs of visitors and push them to act or contact directly the company. The financial director of LSF Montpellier affirmed that 50% of the customers have real-

ized a contact through the website before purchase. Consequently the calls-to-action and forms bring interesting results which can be optimized by tailoring each call-to-action to a buyer persona.

Optimizing forms and landing pages will drive to more conversions. It is relevant to simplify the online booking landing page which is part of the remarketing campaign and delete visual distractions. The visitor needs to navigate and scroll down in order to see all the different booking options. School activities and news have the same visual weight as language stays options. Furthermore, calls-to-actions constitute distractions and it probably increases the bounce rate.

It could be relevant to modify the landing page and dedicate all the space to booking options. The skype call CTA can be preserved as visitors may need further information because of the wide range of language stays. It is necessary to reduce the amount of text and display booking options in a structured and concentrated way. Selection buttons could have different colours.

As there is no clearly defined lead nurturing strategy, the content and interactivity of the website influences strongly the amount of online booking and conversions.

3.2.1.3. Lead nurturing strategy development

The author strongly recommends developing a lead nurturing strategy because using only remarketing does not allow guiding leads through the sales funnel. In order to convert leads into customers it is necessary to build a long-term lead nurturing strategy which will maximize the engagement of leads. Remarketing will surely be a pillar of the lead nurturing strategy but the creation of a new blog and improvements at the level of the social media strategy will provide better basis and further opportunities. Indeed, the good organic search ranking combined with remarketing, social media strategy and blogging is a potentially really effective multichannel lead nurturing strategy. This strategy should generate a higher leads to customer conversion rate and minimize waste of qualified leads.

Before creating content, it is necessary to grade leads. The current digital strategy allows to generate a continuous flow of qualified leads, consequently this process will allow to adapt each action of the lead nurturing strategy to the prospect behaviour and research needs. To grade leads, the online marketer can take into consideration the statistics related to the action of the prospect when visiting the website and its answers to calls-to-

action. Therefore, specific actions can be planned for qualified leads that are close to the decision stage. Well-conceived landing pages forms can help the marketer to grade leads easily if the information requested is not too intrusive and personal. In this case the bounce rate will remain high.

The content creation should be done according the different buyer personas needs and motivations. Relevant and innovative content on blogs and social media will generate credibility. Because the buyer journey is specific, all the actions should be based on the specificity of each sales funnel step.

It could be relevant to create actions in the data base when a qualified leads answers to a CTA. Qualified leads could be divided into groups and then specific actions could be dedicated to each group. This segmentation process is called lead scoring.

Email marketing campaigns could contribute largely to the effectiveness of the lead nurturing strategy success. Indeed, leads can always be distracted and forget about the company services or move to a competitor's website to compare offers. Realizing email marketing should remind them about the relevancy of the company's offer to meet their needs. It is possible to include social media icons and get more followers. If the qualified leads targeted by emailing become followers on social media, every content creation will reach them and guide them to the sales funnel without additional actions. The social media updates will also increase engagement and maximize the audience if the content is shared. The online marketer should use A/B testing in order to identify the best sentences and catch-phrases to include in emails.

Social media and blogs are now more effective than email marketing. These new media should be privileged because they create an opportunity for interaction and a possibility to create value through content creation.

Using closed-loop reporting could decrease the leads to customer conversion time. This optimization tool is particularly recommended in the case of LSF Montpellier because there will be multiple benefits. Indeed, this process could help to define buyer personas, choose content type and publication moments or strengthen the interaction.

All the lead nurturing process will be optimized through a continuous improvement cycle. The data collected in an automated way will allow the online marketer to create a content and communication tools adapted to the needs of each qualified leads group.

3.2.1.4. Marketing automation

Marketing automation is a must to use for LSF Montpellier. This type of software will analyse real time data such as visitors' actions on the website. According to Walsh (2014), adopting marketing automation demonstrates a 21% increase year-over-year lead-to-sales conversion rate and up to 49% increase year-over-year for the annual revenue. By using marketing automation, the conversion rate will grow significantly and requires less manual adjustments. Adopting marketing automation will decrease the workload of the sales team and the digital expert by automating all repetitive processes. Consequently, marketing and sales efforts will be aligned and employees should have more time to work on content creation, digital strategy adjustments and therefore increase the customer satisfaction rate. In the case of LSF Montpellier, adopting marketing automation should stop leads losses, reengage dormant leads and maximize the efficiency of the digital strategy.

(Walsh, 2014)

The marketing automation software will classify leads into groups and each one will have a dedicated workflow. Lead scoring and lead grading are facilitated through automated prospect activity tracking. Indeed, leads are classified into groups thanks to an automated analysis of their needs, motivations and areas of interest according to their actions. Using a marketing automation solution will enable a real-time collection of data and the identification of different profiles based on the behaviour of prospects through various metrics such as:

- Website consultations
- Downloads realized
- Interventions on social networks
- Search engines requests
- Reactions following email marketing

(Koltchakian, 2014)

An adapted and personalized content for each buyer persona should encourage interaction. An automated workflow will nurture the leads with automated and tailored actions in order to make them ready for sale and maximize engagement by encouraging interaction. The mode of administration of the content will be selected by the marketing automation solution in order to support the target reaching. Broadcasting differentiator content through publications on the future company's blog or social networks could provide interesting results. This content should provide a sense of membership and emotions from leads. The quality of language

stays and the school's identity must be clearly defined in order to provide credit to the school.

(Koltchakian, 2014)

Lead nurturing is an integral part of marketing automation. Building a high amount of custom campaigns, send countless pieces of content, and contact leads at every stage of purchase funnel is time consuming and results are poor or inexistent. By using marketing automation, this process becomes much more simple and effective.

(Dyrsmid, 2014)

Adopting a marketing automation solution will also allow LSF Montpellier to benefit from a more comprehensive reporting based on real-time results relating to the conversions. The amount of data to exploit for reporting will increase because more numbers of components related to campaigns will be measurable. It will thus be easier to have a global view of the effectiveness of digital marketing activities. This is particularly interesting because the author has identified several data such as the cost per lead that was not measured by the digital expert.

(Koltchakian, 2014)

3.2.2 Search engine marketing

The search engine marketing is the digital strategy action which contributes the most to reach objectives and increase the sales performance for LSF Montpellier. The search engine optimization has experienced strong growth and evolves autonomously. The search engine advertising does not provide a high ROI for the moment.

3.2.2.1. Search engine optimization and website audience

The search engine optimization provides really interesting results and requires less and less adjustments. However, the financial director affirms that search engine optimization remains the priority for LSF concerning the digital marketing action optimization. The author noticed an area for improvements concerning the frequency of content creation on the website.

The corporate website audience is mainly composed of web users located in France, the United-Kingdom and the United States. In terms of data, the audience located in these three countries represents 47.33 % of the global audience. According to the audience statistics provided by the software Google Analytics, 11.6 % of the total audience registered on the website

of LSF Montpellier is located in the United States. Consequently, current digital marketing actions drive a high amount of traffic from the United States. At this stage of the analysis, the low conversion rate reflects a significant loss of leads.

The table below is extracted from the Google Analytics account of the company and allows to see the geographical origin of the website audience. The author has noticed that the United States have the highest bounce rate among the English-speaking countries. Because this rate reflects the ability of the advertiser to meet the needs of visitors arriving on its website, it is relevant to consider a high bounce rate as detrimental to the overall conversion rate of the site. This fact confirms the necessity to adapt the digital strategy to increase the conversion rate.

Pays ?	Sessions ?	Pages/session ?	Durée moyenne des sessions ?	% nouvelles sessions ?	Taux de rebond ?
	40 509 % du total: 100,00 % (40 509)	3,03 Valeur moy. pour la vue: 3,03 (0,00 %)	00:02:55 Valeur moy. pour la vue: 00:02:55 (0,00 %)	75,44 % Valeur moy. pour la vue: 75,31 % (0,18 %)	54,91 % Valeur moy. pour la vue: 54,91 % (0,00 %)
1. France	9 386 (23,17 %)	2,58	00:02:02	75,05 %	58,44 %
2. United Kingdom	5 027 (12,41 %)	3,62	00:03:29	72,93 %	48,50 %
3. United States	4 759 (11,75 %)	2,94	00:02:46	77,18 %	57,93 %
4. Canada	1 639 (4,06 %)	3,12	00:02:55	77,12 %	56,38 %
5. Germany	1 623 (4,01 %)	3,45	00:03:04	79,17 %	51,88 %
6. Switzerland	1 173 (2,90 %)	4,11	00:03:55	69,39 %	44,16 %
7. Australia	1 170 (2,89 %)	3,59	00:04:02	75,04 %	49,06 %
8. Spain	1 079 (2,66 %)	3,54	00:03:21	74,98 %	43,74 %
9. Ireland	862 (2,13 %)	3,42	00:03:09	72,04 %	48,38 %
10. India	772 (1,91 %)	1,93	00:01:48	88,34 %	69,17 %

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Creating content more frequently on the website, optimizing and redesigning it can lead to reduce this high bounce rate and increase the conversion rate.

The off-site search engine optimization needs to be considered by the digital marketing expert. Indeed, this method includes various actions such as link building, blog posts which have a potentially really high added-value for a language school.

3.2.2.2. Search engine advertising

Search engine advertising is constantly subject to improvements and adjustments related to the corporate strategy. The different budgets for PPC advertising campaigns are allocated by countries on Google AdWords. It allows targeting specifically one or several countries and it is particularly effective for monitoring. These geo-targeted ads constitute one of the most effective digital marketing practices for targeting specific countries. Local pay-per-click advertising allows adjusting the budget in function of amount of clicks. LSF Montpellier has a great ranking thanks to the quality of the SEO. Consequently, using PPC advertising allows maximizing the revenue. Furthermore, this type of advertising is controllable and the risk is low. It constitutes a real asset for targeting the high potential segment of customers located in the United-States.

The Search engine advertising strategy is divided into two categories which are AdWords and Bing ads. It means the digital marketing expert advertises on two different platforms. Several campaigns were created in order to evaluate the performance of each advertising strategy and make adjustments in the future. In order to make sure ads served into the intended location, a geo-targeting audit is realized at the level of each campaign. (DiLoreto, 2013)

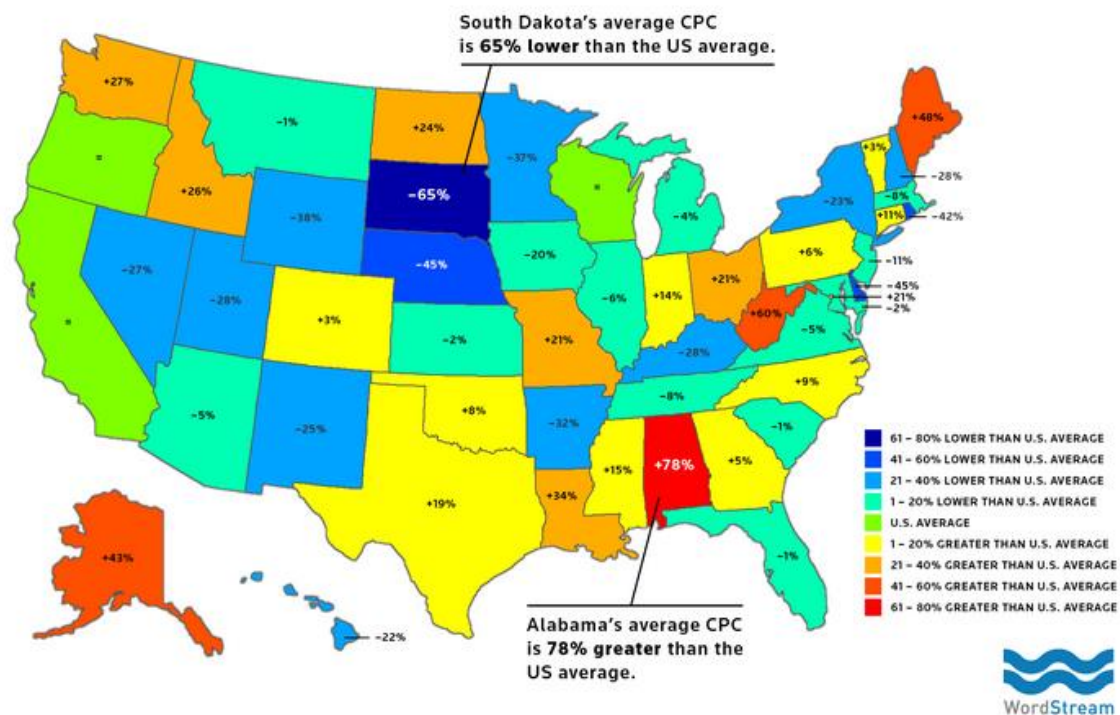
It appears that the main advantage of the Yahoo network (Bing ads) is the ability to control demographics search. Indeed, Bing Ads platform offers the ability to control which gender and age demographics see your search ads. Demographic targeting can be controlled at the campaign or ad group level. This specificity should be exploited by the digital marketing expert in order to target the age class 20-25 years old age located in the United States. According to the financial director, this segment is ready to book language stays through the online booking platform of the website recently established. It could be relevant to design state specific campaigns. All the states are not equal concerning the possibilities for learning French and the part of French language speakers can vary strongly by state as we can see on the table below. (Irvine, 2015)

Table 7.2. States with the largest French-speaking populations

	Ages 5 +	Percentage of all US French speakers
New York	141,017	10.64
Louisiana	129,910	9.80
California	129,454	9.76
Florida	103,095	7.77
Massachusetts	58,308	4.39
Texas	57,992	4.37
Maine	54,599	4.11
Maryland	46,959	3.54
Pennsylvania	42,732	3.22
New Jersey	41,243	3.11
Total in USA	1,355,805	

Source: Modern Language Association 2009, US Census Bureau 2007c.

City specific PPC campaigns do not make sense for LSF Montpellier but it could be worth considering state specific campaigns. The following map represents the most and least expensive states for Pay-per-click advertising.



Source : Irvine, M. (2015). The Most (& Least) Expensive States for PPC - New Data. [online] Wordstream.com. Available at: <http://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2015/06/09/ppc-costs> [Accessed 10 Oct. 2015].

“According to an infographic from Search Engine Journal, the average CPC is between 10% and 24% cheaper on the network Yahoo than the Google network, depending on the category. This is because there are fewer players on Bing Ads than on Google AdWords. Competition is about 56% higher on AdWords”.

(Long, 2014)

Google remains the essential search engine for search engine advertising campaigns. It is possible to use Bing in order to generate additional volume. Indeed, Bing allows to obtain additional reach through Yahoo especially since average CPC costs are relatively lower than on Google AdWords as described above. The expert in digital strategy made a relevant choice in deciding to use Bing Ads in addition to Google AdWords.

(Hubert, 2015)

The author has access to a full report including the data of all PPC campaigns for LSF Montpellier. The tables available in this section are extracted from this report. This PPC performance report shows the activity for July 2015 in a very detailed way. Some graphics allow to see the evolution from April to July 2015. The general trend of this report is the increase of the cost and a really poor amount of conversion.

Concerning the Bing Ads, only one campaign was created with three different Ad groups. We can see from the table below that the Ad group named Courses generates a very high amount of impressions compared to other Ad groups. According to Kokemuller (2015), an impression is counted every time an ad appears on a new page load. However, the Ad group Learn provides a better Click-through-rate with 11.11% against 2.88% for the Courses Ad group. According to Kokemuller (2015), the click-through rate (CTR) is a comparison of the number of click through to the number of total impressions.

Generating a high amount of impressions is valuable because it has a visual impact on the audience. Indeed, potential customers see banner ads and messages overtime and it creates a repetitive exposure phenomenon. These viral messages are absorbed subconsciously by the audience and create a cumulative effect which may lead to purchases regardless of click-through. Concerning the click-through-rate, a high CTR provides more immediate opportunities to convert a prospect into a buyer. The quality and design of the landing page have a very strong impact on sales conversion. Considering the small percentage of click-through, the digital marketing expert should use A/B testing in order to identify the most effective type of landing page for each buyer persona. This action will probably lead to a higher amount of conversions. (Kokemuller, 2015)

Ad group	Campaign	Clicks	Impr.	CTR	Avg. CPC	Cost	Avg. position	Conv.	Cost / conv.
Courses	General campaign	77	2,670	2.88%	€ 0.86	€ 66.60	1.5	0	€ 0
Learn	General campaign	4	36	11.11%	€ 0.20	€ 0.79	1.0	0	€ 0
School	General campaign	0	11	0%	€ 0	€ 0	1.0	0	€ 0
		81	2,717	2.98%	€ 0.83	€ 67.39	1.5	0	€ 0

GEOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCE LSF

Country / territory	Clicks	Impr.	CTR	Avg. CPC	Cost
United States	46	2,206	2.09%	€ 0.92	€ 42.15
Canada	18	191	9.42%	€ 0.77	€ 13.90
United Kingdom	7	94	7.45%	€ 0.77	€ 5.40
France	3	50	6%	€ 0.20	€ 0.60
Australia	2	10	20%	€ 1.13	€ 2.26
	78	2,577	3.03%	€ 0.84	€ 65.52

Concerning the geographical performance of Bing Ads, the United States is the country with the highest performance. Consequently, the audience located in the United States generates a very high amount of impressions. The digital marketing expert should work on landing pages, forms and calls-to-action in order to maximize potential conversions because the CTR is relatively low. In order to consider if a CTR is good or not, online marketers should take into consideration the Ad position. The Ad position is pretty good for these campaigns because the lowest average position is 1.5. It means that the ads generally appear in position one or two. According to Testaverde (2015), a good CTR for such a position is greater than 6%. The average position underlines once more the quality of the keyword strategy which is clearly the main strength of the search engine marketing for LSF Montpellier. In July 2015, the CTR for Bing Ads grew by 0.7% and the cost of the campaign rose sharply (+ 153%).

Three campaigns were created on the Google AdWords platform. There is one remarketing campaign and two distinct campaigns with the same groups of ads. Only one campaign called Montpellier 2015 provides interesting results with a CTA of 11.8% for a 1.3 average position of ads and two conversions. The type of conversion is contact form leads. The table below shows the evolution of PPC performance for LSF Montpellier from May to July 2015.

CAMPAIGN PERFORMANCE LSF

	Campaign	Clicks	Impr.	CTR	Avg. CPC	Cost	Avg. position	View-through conv.	Conv.	Cost / conv.
✓	France 2015	284	6,241	4.55%	€2.64	€750.89	2.1	0	0	€0
✓	Montpellier 2015	72	610	11.8%	€1.60	€115.43	1.3	0	2	€57.72
✓	Remarketing	58	38,722	0.15%	€0.68	€39.66	1.1	6	0	€0
		414	45,573	0.91%	€2.19	€905.98	1.2	6	2	€452.99
					✓ Active Paused ✗ Deleted					

HISTORICAL TABLE PAST 4 MONTHS: LSF

Month	Clicks	Impr.	CTR	Avg. CPC	Cost	Avg. position	View-through conv.	Conv.	Cost / conv.
July, 2015	414	45,573	0.91%	€2.19	€905.98	1.2	6	2	€452.99
June, 2015	321	42,078	0.76%	€2.06	€660.70	1.3	2	1	€660.70
May, 2015	256	7,748	3.3%	€2.32	€593.81	2.9	0	4	€148.45
April, 2015	171	6,882	2.48%	€1.69	€288.48	4.0	0	1	€288.48
	1,162	102,281	1.14%	€2.11	€2,448.97	1.6	8	8	€306.12

The digital marketing expert should perform actions in order to increase the CTR of its ads. It could be relevant to increase the quality score of ads. The quality score of ads is taken into consideration when Google evaluates the ads of advertisers. During this process known as ad auction, the quality score determined by the relevance of keywords, ads, URL and user experience is one of the factor used to calculate the ad rank or position. The other factor taken into consideration by Google is the CPC maximum bid specified for each keyword. It is important to increase the quality score to get a better ad rank and lower the cost per click. One of the solutions for increasing the CTR is the use of A/B testing for the ads. This process will allow the digital expert to know which type of ad will perform better and optimize them. Changing the way to write ads can also be beneficial. Indeed, writing ads that appeal to prospective customers' desire for the emotional payoff of solving a problem is another solution. In order to make the ads more compelling, the digital marketer could write eye-catching headlines, including highly specific calls-to-action and using strong verbs. (Kim, 2014)

A remarketing campaign runs on the AdWords platform. The digital marketer wishes to encourage leads to buy online through this campaign with adapted ads. The high amount of impression constitutes an indicator of the potential effectiveness of the remarketing campaign.

The digital marketing expert should make further adjustments at the level of the search engine advertising. Using sponsored links and PPC advertising is essential because it allows differentiating from the competitors with good results in search engine optimization.

3.2.3 Social media strategy development

The author has noticed a possibility for improvements at the level of social media marketing. Indeed, the current actions do not allow to widen the audience and to form a community. Social media could be used to transform the audience into leads however these media are currently used only as a tool to delight the people who bought and transform them from customers to advocates. Consequently, the social media strategy needs adjustments in order to affect positively the attraction and conversion phase of the inbound marketing process.

The content published is not encouraging interaction and there is no monitoring. The digital marketing expert needs to identify one relevant message to convey on social media and determine KPIs related to the growth of useful audience and the amount of interaction with prospects on social networks. It could be relevant to set the social media marketing objectives according to the SMART model and in a coordinated way.

The online competitor benchmarking regarding social media practices is particularly interesting in this case. Researching how competitors integrate social media into their content strategy can provide interesting insights and guide the digital marketing expert for adjustments. It is particularly relevant to identify the presence of competitors on social media as well as quantitative and qualitative data about their practices.

3.2.4 Creation of a new blog

Combining an adapted social media marketing strategy with the creation of a blog can contribute to a better organic search ranking. It is also an opportunity to diversify the type of content. White papers, trailers can be particularly valuable content for a language school. It could be relevant to include relevant calls-to-action on the blog to close the sale or bring leads to the sales funnel.

Building another blog which is not educational can also allow guiding leads through the sales funnel with educational and quality articles. This blog should be adapted to all types of devices. Creative content will drive prospects toward the services provided by LSF Montpellier. This new tool

constitutes an opportunity to strengthen the social media strategy because including sharing buttons on the blog generates higher traffic composed of a quality audience.

Creating a new blog is a priority because it will allow increasing the quality of the audience and therefore generating more qualified leads. Blogging contributes to a higher ROI. Identifying buyer personas needs and motivations will allow the online marketer to write a relevant content. Each article which combines quality content and relevant keywords will affect the ranking of the website thanks to the creation of a new uniform resource locator. Claiming authorship of the content published could also affect positively positioning.

The author strongly recommends using tools in order to identify the most valuable keywords to include in articles. Using free content management systems is the best way to create a blog. By analysing the current situation, the author recommends to create a blog integrated to the website of the company in order to maximize SEO benefits and short-term results. Link-building on review sites and agencies websites can boost effectively the amount of direct bookings. Leads will be reassured and entertained.

4 Conclusion

As a conclusion, the purpose of this research work was to elaborate an adaptation plan for the current digital strategy of the case company to attract customers located in the United States. In order to conclude this work, the author will answer the research question “How can LSF Montpellier use digital marketing to attract North American customers?” while analysing the digital strategy development plan.

The theoretical research underlined changes in consumer behaviour and mutations at the level of the language stays as a necessity to have a clearly defined digital strategy for long-term results and differentiation. Inbound marketing and digital strategy constitute the two elements the author has decided to explore in the frame of his bachelor thesis. Those notions are closely linked because the inbound marketing is simply a type of digital marketing strategy that tends to be used massively and that is acknowledged for its efficiency. It was important to explore the theory on the foundations of digital marketing and the methodology to build a digital strategy before leaning on inbound marketing strategy theory. Since its emergence in 2006, inbound marketing has generated considerable curiosity from marketers and company owners since this marketing method is simply opposed to the outbound marketing. Outbound marketing or traditional advertising consists in performing marketing actions in an interrup-

tive way to individuals who did not show any previous interest about products or services. On the contrary, inbound marketing or pull marketing principle is to use relevant content to create a virtual path from the future customers to the business. In addition, while providing a higher return on investment, inbound marketing is also cheaper.

Considering the research question and the main objectives of the Director of LSF Montpellier which are increasing the traffic on the website and generating more conversions, the author has decided to focus his theoretical research on the first two phases (attract and convert) of the inbound marketing methodology proposed by the American company Hubspot, a pioneer of digital marketing. As the finality of the digital marketing strategy of LSF Montpellier is to drive more sales, the author has explored partly the third phase (close) of the inbound marketing methodology aiming at converting leads to customers. Close attention has been brought to the theory related to lead nurturing strategy and integration of marketing automation solution. Considering the nature of the business and current Google analytics statistics related to conversions, establishing a lead nurturing strategy aiming at guiding potential clients who are not ready to buy through the sales funnel is a key lever for a higher return on investment. Marketing automation software include lead nurturing programs and allow stopping leads losses, reengaging dormant leads and maximizing the efficiency of the digital strategy by automating marketing and sales processes.

The cross analysis of field work and theoretical research demonstrates both the good impact on sales of the current digital marketing actions and the need to adapt the digital strategy to aspire achieving the strategic objectives. Attracting more customers located in the United States requires a global adaptation of the current digital marketing strategy. Indeed, adding actions to the current digital strategy specifically designed to attract leads located in the United States will not provide significant results. There is a lack of relevancy in the content creation and the necessity to build a relevant lead nurturing strategy and use social networks differently while incorporating a blog to the website. It is imperative to adapt the digital strategy in order to maximize the impact of current actions while fully adopting the inbound marketing before targeting the optimization of conversions from a particular geographic area. Maximizing the performance of the digital strategy requires performing simultaneously other marketing tactics such as outbound marketing and corporate communications strategy in order to amplify inbound marketing results.

It is necessary to incorporate inbound marketing in the current digital marketing strategy through a coordinate set of actions and build a clearly defined lead nurturing strategy. Upstream, the digital and strategic exper-

tise has to define relevant buyer personas by segmenting the whole audience into fictional groups of ideal customers. The adoption of a marketing automation solution is a strategic long-term investment. Using this type of software will allow the digital expert to free up time to develop the digital strategy and improve reporting when the actions related to the inbound marketing adoption will become continuously effective and repetitive processes.

The adaptation of the digital strategy through the adoption of more inbound practices is partly the solution to attract customers located in the United States. Once the lead nurturing strategy shows a high impact on the digital marketing performance through reporting, it will be the best moment to launch specific actions to meet the opportunity of converting leads located in the United States into customers. These geographically targeted actions will generate additional costs to the company so it is important to launch them once the previous strategic improvements demonstrate their effectiveness to maximize their potential impact on the return on investment.

In order to attract American customers, the digital expert could use geo-targeting content delivering on the website. Creating a remarketing campaign entirely dedicated to leads located in the United States is another action with a high potential. The digital marketer could also use demographic targeting through pay-per-click advertising campaigns.

The digital marketing landscape is constantly changing and the theory investigated during this research work will surely deeply evolve. This result is not surprising considering how inbound marketing methodology has revolutionized digital marketing. The targeted online display advertising has entered a new era with the massive use of social networks and mobile devices which offer more opportunities to advertisers for targeting geographically their desired audience.

There is an area for further investigations concerning the online behaviour of the potential customers located in the United States because they constitute the targeted audience of LSF Montpellier. Additional research aiming at detecting the effectiveness of geo-targeted actions should be made after their implementation. This future research could be conducted through an online questionnaire administered to customers residing in the United States.

By following the digital marketing strategy adaptation plan proposed by the author in a chronological way, the return on investment related to digital marketing should increase. Thanks to the combination of specific actions recommended by the author to target the American customer and the adoption of missing inbound marketing actions, the conversion rate should rise sharply as well as the quality of the traffic on the website and blog. From a global point of view, the actions previously described should boost the sales performance and help the language school to differentiate from the online competition.

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

THE GOALS OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND ITS ROLE IN THE STRATEGY OF THE ORGANIZATION

1. What is the purpose of your digital presence? Does your organization have a clearly defined digital strategy?
2. Does the decision-making regarding digital marketing actions fall under the strategic competence or digital competence? Is it a collaborative work?
3. Do you consider that digital marketing is a new form of marketing or an opportunity to perform traditional marketing through digital media?
4. Why the use of digital marketing differs for a company offering language stays compared to a company offering fast-moving consumer goods?
5. According to your experience, what are the main risks of having no digital presence for a language school?
6. What are the main benefits and evolutions related to the implementation of digital marketing actions?
7. Are the digital marketing goals related to strategic objectives?
8. Could you list the major digital marketing objectives?
9. What are the major challenges related to your digital marketing practices?
10. Does the fact that relationships with agency are increasingly complex have generated the emergence of new digital marketing actions?
11. What obstacles do you encounter at each stage of the sales process?
12. Are you planning to increase resources in the future towards development of digital marketing?

DIGITAL MARKETING ACTIONS

13. What are the key digital marketing projects that help to generate greater traffic?
14. What are the main actions included in your digital strategy?
15. Among these actions, which one should be optimized in priority?
16. By what processes do you adjust your digital marketing actions for targeting specifically a country?
17. Is your digital marketing budget divided by country?
18. Could you name the different types of content used to maximize the engagement of the audience?
19. How often do you create content?
20. How are the various media selected for the content publication?

21. Do you use tools to collect data on your prospects in order to analyze their buying behavior?
22. How does the referencing strategy allow to generate qualified leads?
23. When a new qualified lead answers to a call-to-action which manipulation is done? Is there a specific task created in the CRM software?
24. Could you describe separately how you pilot the search engine marketing campaign for SEO and SEA?
25. Do you privilege onsite or offsite search engine optimization?
26. Which processes do you use to optimize forms and landing pages?

ASSESSING DIGITAL PERFORMANCE

27. What are the key performance indicators to objectively assess the quality of digital actions?
28. Is reporting done in order to show the impact of digital marketing action?
29. Do you compare the effectiveness of your actions related to digital marketing with those of your major competitors?
30. Which tools and software do you use to monitor and measure the effectiveness of your digital marketing actions?
31. Which content and lead generation campaigns are producing the most qualified leads today? Which aren't working well?
32. Do you use geo-targeting or local pay-per-click advertising?
33. How has the cost per lead evolved in the past few years?
34. How is the conversion rate for leads located in the United-States trending?
35. Which are the digital marketing actions that significantly affect the return on investment?
36. Do you have an efficient content strategy planned according to your buyer's journey?

IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON THE COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE

37. Could you list the different marketing projects influencing the conversion rate?
38. What are the different components within the digital actions subject to optimization for maximizing efficiency?
39. What percentage does the work on search engine advertising represents compared to that of organic searches?
40. Which method and key performance indicators do you use to monitor, analyze, and optimize the presence of LSF Montpellier on social networks?
41. Do you have a proven lead nurturing strategy, and if so, what method do you use to rate and classify leads?
42. How could lead nurturing supplement your current processes with targeted messaging?

43. Do your digital marketing actions continually generate a flow of new qualified prospects?
44. If you are using marketing automation, how does this help to enhance the digital marketing actions and what processes are automated?
45. How do your online actions affect the development of the range of services offered?
46. You have indicated that you wish to use A / B testing in the near future, do you have other tools or actions that you want to implement?
47. If we suppose, your company starts using marketing automation which system will be the master and why? (CRM or marketing automation)