



# Customer Retention and Acquisition from German Market

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Globalization has increased the popularity of online shopping. Consumers have more opportunities to fulfill their needs by using foreign websites. The commissioner for this thesis was Backstage Rock Shop Oy. The company is primarily selling band merchandise by using their own website. Their online store is an official webstore for many bands and is available all around the world.

The main reason for this study was to investigate how the commissioner could attract more customers from Germany. As it is their third biggest market after Finland and the US, the company was interested to grow their revenue. Thus, there was a need for information about how local consumers behave before, during, and after a purchase. After gaining more information about digital marketing, customer journey and prospecting, the author determined the appropriate data collection methods.

The research utilized primary data which was collected by the author. The data was gathered by using two different surveys and semi-constructed interviews. The target group for them was 25- to 44-year-old German consumers or individuals who have lived in Germany for many years. The surveys had also a separate targeting factor, depending on if respondents had made a purchase from the commissioner's online store. Overall, surveys and interviews gathered 73 responses: 39 from current customers, 26 from possible future customers and 8 people were interviewed.

After analyzing received data, the author made four different recommendations for the commissioner. Still, the author points out there is a need for further studies. The findings indicate that some respondents do not feel comfortable purchasing from Finnish online stores. Unfortunately, there was no further explanation why these individuals feel this way. Thus, the author recommends this issue should be further investigated.

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Key words: customer journey, online marketing, prospecting, b2c, Germany

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**ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS**

B2B	Business-to-business
B2C	Business-to-consumer
BSRS	Backstage Rock Shop
CRM	Customer relationship management
EMP	Exclusive merchandise products, a company
eWOM	Electronical word-of-mouth
MEC	Means-end chain
NPS	Net promoter score
PWC	PricewaterhouseCoopers, a company
WOM	Word-of-mouth

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

This section will introduce the background information of this thesis. Background will include an introduction of the commissioner company following with the reason for this thesis. After discussing above mentioned topics, research objectives will be presented together with the research questions with additional sub questions. Finally, research methods will be introduced together with thesis structure as well as theory. Theoretical focus is mainly on business to consumer point-of-view as commissioner webstore is essentially used by private individuals.

### **1.1 Background**

After the creation of the Internet, users have been able to access almost any information along with websites from all around the globe. They can use, for example, search engines to see pictures of pyramids or Eiffel tower. Information searching has become more and more easier due to data sharing via multiple channels. Some researchers say nowadays globalization has become faster due to different elements, for instance, foreign investments and usage of communication channels including social media platforms. Following this rapid globalization spree, marketing via online channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have become a new norm. While users can read news online about different countries, they also have access to satisfy their needs of consumption. (Alden et al., 2006.) The internet enables companies and brands to move their stores online to reach more customers. These actions towards online presence have led to accelerated growth of e-commerce. Nowadays, customers have more options to choose from while making their purchase decisions. (Blázquez, 2014.)

Globalization affects societies as well as individuals in their work and private lives. These effects can be positive but also negative. As pointed out above, companies can reach out to more customers than before, but it also means there is more competition. Attaining a customer is not enough anymore and organizations should focus on building strong customer relationships. (Ponisciakova & Kicova, 2021.) Chiu et al. (2014) introduces a study in their article which was made by Mainspring and Bain & Company in 2000. According to this study, customers need to make at least four purchases from an online store to become profitable to a company. Therefore, it is crucial for companies to understand customer behavior and the journey behind every purchase. (Chiu et al., 2014.)

Customer behavior is ultimately goal oriented. Need has awakened and ambition is to fulfill it in the best possible way. The process of satisfying the need could be seen as hierarchical. Consumers tend to discover which actions they should take, and which one should be avoided. Gutman (1997) examined this behavior under the means-end chain (MEC). This theory categorizes goals in different levels as how important they are to a customer. As expected, the highest goal usually has the highest motivation to be achieved. Therefore, there is movement towards the most desired outcome. (Gutman, 1997.)

## **1.2 Thesis content**

This thesis has been divided into six bigger sections, together with smaller sub chapters. Section 1 is presenting the thesis' background information. As discussed earlier, the commissioner company will be briefly introduced. This section will also give insight about the reason for this thesis and its objectives. Last part of chapter 1 is about research methods which will also be re-introduced again in section 3. Section 2 is for theoretical framework. It has been divided into three bigger sub chapters which are digital marketing, customer journey and touch-points as well as prospecting. Section 3 is about research methodology. In this

section the case study will be presented again. The reason why the case study is important to the company will also be analyzed. This section will also delve into how the research study was conducted and its possibilities and limitations.

Section 4 is about data analysis. The data will be presented in detail and analyzed. It will compare the results to each other as well as the thesis theory. In section 5, the author gives recommendations for the commissioner which are based on theoretical framework as well as collected data. Finally, section 6 is about discussion of the thesis. It will summarize the whole thesis from theory to recommendations. Limitations will be discussed as well. Suggestions for further studies will be presented as well.

### **1.3 Case company – Backstage Rock Shop Oy**

Backstage Rock Shop Oy is a Finnish limited liability company which specializes in selling as well as marketing official band merchandise via their online store. The company was established in 2011 and has an office as well as a warehouse in Pirkkala, Finland. For now, the web store is open all around the world and is available in Finnish and English. Their three biggest markets are Finland, the US and Germany. In 2020, despite COVID-19 pandemic, the company's revenue was 1 785 000 euros which was 185 000 euros higher compared to the year 2019. The estimated revenue for the year 2021 is about 1 800 000 euros. As Germany is the third largest market, approximately 9 percent of the revenue comes from there.

As Backstage Rock Shop is selling fan merchandise for bands, their vision is to become the biggest company in Finland which manufactures and sells fan goods. They also want to become a significant operator in international markets as well.

The company's mission is to produce reliable and high-quality fan goods for different varieties of bands. The commissioner's values have been aligned to support their vision and mission.

#### **1.4 Reason for study**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Backstage Rock Shop Oy is mainly operating online by using their own webstore. Most of their marketing activities are done by using multiple social media platforms as well as with an electronic newsletter. The bands, whose goods the commissioner company is selling, are also doing their own marketing activities in their own social media channels. Due to the narrow target group, the company needs to have a well-thought marketing strategy to attract more customers globally. However, this study mainly focuses on German markets as it is one of the biggest target groups the commissioner has.

Like many companies, the commissioner is keen to know how they can make their online store more profitable abroad and in this case in German markets. Thus, it is important to gain an understanding where customers come from and if they end up making a purchase. Finding more data about customer journey and behavior would help to gain more knowledge on how to make a webstore even more attractive to them. By doing this, it will be easier to figure out a marketing strategy on how and by using what methods more customers, specifically from Germany, can be attracted to the webstore. With this method, the probability of sales is expected to increase by localizing the webstore and its services.

## 1.5 Research objectives

The commissioner has an online store which sells band related fan merchandise all around the world. Germany is one of their largest markets which makes the commissioner want to focus on gaining more customers within that market. The company has also received a lot of enquiries in German which made them consider opening a webstore as well as customer service in German. At this moment, their website offers support only in Finnish and English. Thus, the commissioner would like to know if having a webstore in German would attract more buying customers from there and possibly elsewhere.

One purpose of this thesis is to examine how customers find their webstore. The commissioner is interested to learn how their customers behave and what influences them to make a purchase. After gaining an insight into their journey the company could modify their marketing strategy to meet customer needs.

Objectives of this thesis are:

- To study customer journey to commissioner's website
- To gain an understanding of customer behavior
- To examine how many customers are returning after first purchase
- To find out if there is a need for webstore in German

Research question: *How to enhance the sales of an online store by attracting customers from Germany?*

The research question was made because the commissioner wants to gain more purchasing customers from Germany. Thus, they need to know how to boost their

sales in Germany via online store. Therefore, it is important to understand how local customers behave and what affects their purchase decision. Finding an answer to this question will hopefully lead to higher sales as well as customer retention rates.

## **1.6 Research methods**

The author decided to utilize both qualitative as well as quantitative research methods to gain more information about needed data. Two different surveys will be sent to a narrowed target group which contains customers from Germany or to individuals who have lived in Germany for multiple years. Selected target group's age varies between 25 and 44-years-old. This age group was selected as it contains about 50 percent of commissioners' customers in Germany. At this point, gender was not selected as a targeting feature while narrowing down the correct audience. As per commissioner, 65 percent of customers are identified as males and the rest 35 percent are females. While trying to gain new customers it is important to receive feedback from potential customers without too many restrictions. Research methodology and its limitations will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

Focus of these surveys is to gain more knowledge on how customers arrive at the website, what they research about and what affects their purchase intention. Survey questions have been chosen in order that they could give more understanding for customer behavior in Germany. It is also important to point out that survey questions will support research objectives, theory and ultimately should give hypotheses for recommendations.

In addition to surveys, the author also chose to organize semi-constructed interviews with individuals to gain more insight on their own consumer behavior. The

target group for the interview was new customers who have not used the commissioner's webstore before. They all are from Germany with different geographical, gender and age structures. However, these respondents are also between ages 25 and 44 which was the same in surveys.

## **2 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR ON AN ONLINE SETTING**

The following segment will introduce the theoretical framework which is crucial for this thesis. Theoretical framework has been based on related literature such as articles and peer-reviewed academic journals. In the beginning, digital marketing will be discussed and presented. Writer will also focus on social media marketing including the importance of customer avatars in marketing perspective. Second part of this segment will focus on the customer journey. All different stages and touchpoints will be discussed thoroughly. Finally, the writer will be introducing theories behind prospecting and customer acquisition.

### **2.1 Digital marketing**

Digitalization has changed customer behavior concerning consumption and working habits. All these above-mentioned actions reflect business operations, especially marketing along with sales. (Komulainen 2018, 15.) The principle of marketing has always been to create beneficial exchanges between two or more parties. Throughout the years, marketing has been evolving and has gone through at least three big phases. Nowadays, there are ever changing global trends which need to be followed if a company wants to keep up with the competition. (Enrile & Saren 2017, 4.) Sellers are required to contribute clear marketing throughout every channel their company uses to attract customers. They also need to do needed organizational changes to keep up with the changing marketing environment. (Cao & Li, 2018.)

Digitalization does not only mean new technological innovations or ways to make sales. It also revolutionizes business trade models which create customer value. (Komulainen 2018, 15.) For example, personal service is one of the most efficient ways to sell something. However, it is expensive and time consuming as it cannot be automated. With digitalization tools, marketing and selling can be personalized

even though it is not done face to face. (Charlesworth 2018, 59.) As a result of creating more value to customers, marketing has become more service-centered compared to before. It focuses more on intangible goods to enhance customer satisfaction. Creating more value to clients will be beneficial to the organization because if they do not satisfy their customers, they will not have any profit. (Enrile & Saren 2017, 22.)

If a company wants to utilize digitalization effectively, marketing is in a key role. The marketer needs to decide which fundamental elements are the most appropriate to advertise goods and / or services. If this is done correctly some customers will return but also recommend others to try it as well. (Charlesworth 2018, 54.) Marketing team works in a customer interface, and they can recognize hidden dreams as well as needs. In an ever-changing world, it is important to exploit marketing strategies as it will get tools to understand the change. After using the tools correctly, a company should be able to cope in a changing environment as well as thrive in it. (Komulainen 2018, 15.) As explained earlier, organizational structures need to be changed to cope in a new environment. This could mean both back- and front-end operations as well as their supply chain. Companies should create a “roadmap” which shows future improvements as well to keep up with needed changes. (Cao & Li, 2018.)

Because one of the main missions in marketing is to understand customer dreams and needs, it should be seen as a strategic business activity. If a company recognizes it only as a supporting act for sales or public relations, they might miss a possibility to evolve and reach new markets. (Komulainen 2018, 15.) With new online touch points such as websites and web engines, companies can interact with customers from all over the world. Collecting data about visitors will help the marketing team to target their advertisements to customer's needs. (Charlesworth 2018, 59.) Digital marketing activities are important as they will reach customers globally in a matter of seconds. Thus, it is crucial for the marketing team to be able to recognize new opportunities and ways to reach more

customers. (Komulainen 2018, 15.) This makes cross-channel integration important as it will keep up with brand image as well as customer satisfaction (Cao & Li, 2015).

When an organization starts to develop their digital services, it will increase their value and financial performance (Komulainen 2018, 21). As digital marketing enhances interaction with new and existing customers, it is easy to improve customer commitment to the brand. Even if the customer does not feel the need to buy a product or service again, they can follow the company's social media. This will help the marketing team to keep any possible "purchase window" open. With an interesting marketing campaign, an uncertain customer might make a purchase again. (Komulainen 2018, 23.) Therefore, companies can increase customer loyalty, trust as well as higher conversion rates (Cao & Li, 2015). This clearly shows how digital marketing can create profit quickly with an online marketing activity (Komulainen 2018, 21).

So called forerunners are nowadays focusing on growing their sales via digital channels. They are focusing on attracting existing customers as well as new ones. Other companies might still be debating if they should digitize their marketing activities or not. Some organizations follow their competitors' marketing strategies and adjust their own according to them. When customers are doing their own research about the desired product or service, they tend to visit different websites along with other channels. They might have received a recommendation from a friend or family member. (Komulainen 2018, 23.) While building a trust with customers, organizations should recognize possible problems and limitations one channel might have. If they have these funnels integrated, it will help them to reduce possible defects of each channel to maintain a positive shopping experience as well as customer satisfaction. (Cao & Li, 2015.) Thus, companies should know it is important to show customers where they can find them in social media. If they do not find this information easily, then a customer will satisfy their needs elsewhere. (Komulainen 2018, 23.)

As digitalization is growing, it is normal for customers to change platforms while searching information. This phenomenon can be called a cross-over effect (Blázquez, 2014). It makes multichannel marketing even more important. Marketing

activities should be accommodated for different channels to keep up their brand. (Komulainen 2018, 23.) Visiting a store or webstore is flexible so searching information is easy for customers. If, for instance, pictures and information is clearly available, customers can make their choice immediately while visiting the store. (Cao & Li, 2015.) Nowadays customers can do their purchases via smartphone, therefore online stores should focus on effortless accessibility with different devices. Customers are more willing to make a purchase if the mobile purchase options are quick to use. Some applications use targeted location information which can improve purchase rate. (Komulainen 2018, 23.)

Digitalization also increases competition. As the needed information is available quicker than ever before, customers can make their decisions rapidly. If a company does not utilize their multichannel marketing activities well enough, customers can fulfill needs elsewhere. Dissatisfied customers will not buy products or services from a company if the need or service can be satisfied elsewhere. Wrong pricing without reasonable explanation can drive away potential customers. These are some of the reasons why businesses should focus and invest in their digital marketing. (Komulainen 2018, 23.)

As was mentioned in previous chapters, nowadays it is important to focus on digital marketing. Customers usually want to learn more information about the product before they do the actual purchase. This behavior is part of the customer journey which will be discussed later in chapter 2.2. As companies might face problems to reach their target group without any online activities, it is also important to know how these activities should be produced. It is essential to make buying as easy as possible as it will affect consumer's willingness to make a purchase. If an organization has a physical store, an online store should support it. And it should go the other way as well. Some customers might search information first online and then visit the store to see the actual product or service they want to obtain. Marketing activities should endorse these actions. (Komulainen 2018, 27.)

Buying via digital channels and online stores are becoming even more important in consumer markets. Companies should focus on their branding as well as multiple marketing channels. Marketing team should focus on utilizing the brand and

promoting its uniqueness. These activities could help with competition. For instance, producing sustainable and recycled products is a growing trend which attracts customers. This allows organizations to have more opportunities to promote their brands as well as corporate responsibility in social media. However, not all companies decide to follow this path. (Komulainen 2018, 27.) Even if online shopping is gaining more popularity, some customers still prefer to buy their goods and services from an actual store. First, they browse possible alternatives from the internet and go to a store to buy it. This activity could be called webrooming. The opposite of webrooming is showrooming where customers browse products at the store and buy it later from a webstore. (Wilson-Nash et al., 2020.)

Some studies have shown how customers learn to purchase from online. It might be done via different channels such as social media or an online store. When it is easier to reach customers, the value of a shopping basket will increase. If purchasing is made effortless, consumers tend to return to using the same services and channels. (Komulainen 2018, 28.) It is important to invest in mobile sites instead of applications. Some consumers are willingly downloading membership applications which are made for buying as well as for exclusive rewards. However, it is far more beneficial to make mobile sites easy to use as many consumers are trying to find information through websites. (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2017, 8.)

Customer behavior is easy to follow with different digital platforms. When companies start to utilize these analytics, they could create more specific content to attract their customers. The importance of service design has grown a lot in recent years as it focuses mainly on customer interaction. (Komulainen 2018, 28.) It seems online shopping via computer has become less popular due to increased usage of smartphone shopping. Easy and quick access to websites is increasing willingness to buy. If shopping, buying, and paying are convenient, it is more likely to happen. (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2017, 10.)

One convenient software for marketing as well as to a sales team is a cart abandon program. The main idea of this software is it monitors if a buyer places an item to the shopping cart but does not acquire it. Commonly it has three steps,

which can be customized, to remind the customer to complete their purchase. These reminders could be sent out for example after an hour or two days or after a week. (Walters & Nussey 2015, 8.)

### 2.1.1 Customer avatar

Customer avatar, also referred to as customer profile, is a fictional as well as hypothesized character made by the marketing team to portray the model customer (Reiss & Henneberry, 2020). Without accurate analytics as well as data collecting, it is hard to understand who the right customer is and what their needs are (Komulainen 2020, 42). There are various stereotypes about customer avatars. Most companies have typical internet users portrayed as approximately 30 years old male as they usually tend to have more money to spend. These users also have higher chances to access the internet and buy products online. (Chaffey & Smith 2013, 195.)

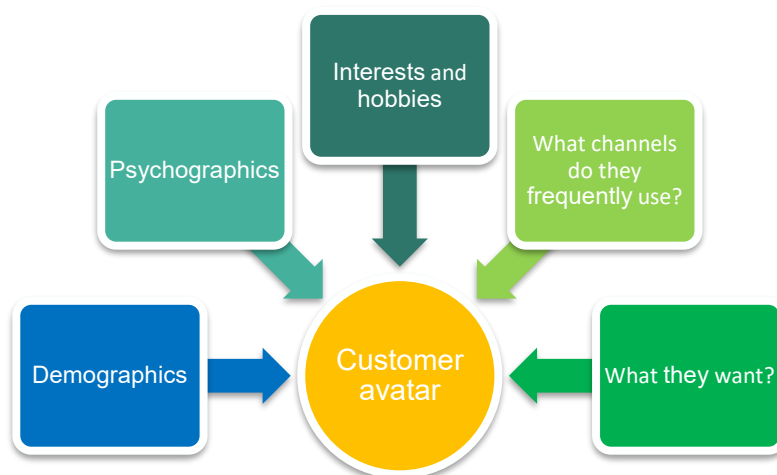


Figure 1. Customer avatar illustration

The reason why companies create customer profiles and avatars is simple: they want to know their clients. They need to know the demographic location, needs, and wants. Without these, marketing activities would be challenging. Companies should focus on what their clients need before, during and after online purchase

activities. This will help their marketing team to understand what kind of content buyers want and what affects their purchasing behavior. (Chaffey & Smith 2013, 198.)

Usually there are numerous avatars for different campaigns to represent different consumers. It needs to be as definite as possible, thus companies could draft personalized offers et cetera. Organizations need to make sure they have their information up to date every time a new campaign will be launched. Customer avatar affects every marketing action a company can make. This includes for example social media and email marketing activities. (Reiss & Henneberry, 2020.) When companies are planning their marketing tasks, they need to address their different customer profiles with distinct content. If consumers are not relating to the content, they will not buy goods or services. (Komulainen 2020, 44.)

### **2.1.2 Social media marketing**

When talking about social media it is important to know what this term contains. It generally means a channel which can be accessed via the internet or a mobile application where users can share content along with comments. These channels are used to build up networks as well as communities which encourage users to engage and participate with each other. As these are social media channels, it is important to have audience participation. Not only from an organization. (Chaffey & Smith 2013, 214.)

As mentioned above, social media presence can affect consumer buying behavior. Even though a brand has good reviews from customers or influencers, it does not matter if the company is not devoted to their social media channels. (Komulainen 2018, 228.) Social media can be used as a platform to attract new customers along with the existing ones. If an organization wants to succeed in their marketing strategy, they should try to transform to become more customer centric. These actions can help to minimize possible negative feedback content is rousing

from consumers. (Chaffey & Smith 2013, 220.) However, possible negative feedback should not be avoided. Without regular updates about products or services which create customer value, it will not make information seekers turn into followers and clients. (Komulainen 2018, 228.)

Individuals follow influencers, bloggers, specialists, politicians as well as celebrities in social media. Companies tend to reach out to them to get them to reference their goods and / or services. These actions will open new pipelines for targeting the marketing activities. Consumers will not focus on why bloggers or influencers are recommending products as their focus is on their message. Having someone to recommend products for a user will affect the decision to buy it. (Komulainen 2018, 229.) These collaborations between creators and companies can be beneficial for both parties. Sales should get higher as consumers become more interested about the service or a product. An influencer could also gain more followers as companies tend to share their content and feedback in their own channels. (Chaffey & Smith 2013, 224.)

Komulainen (2018) mentions a global retail study which was made in 2017 by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) which indicates how consumers see Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram as an inspiration to acquire a product. Their survey had over 24 000 respondents from six continents and 29 countries. (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2017, 3.) For example, the study shows 28 percent of global respondents shop less in actual stores due to online shopping on Amazon. In the United States this figure was 37 percent and in Germany 34 percent. (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2017, 4.) 39 percent of respondents read reviews, comments and feedback from these platforms while searching information to buy goods as well as services online (Komulainen 2018, 229).

Before creating a social media account and posting new content, there are a few things which need to be taken into consideration. Companies should first see how customers use their accounts with competitors. They should listen to the conversations and see how the brand is seen in the eyes of a consumer. (Chaffey & Smith 2013, 225.) Oatly is a good example of listening to customers in social

media. Oatly is a company which sells plant-based food products, mainly oat based, and has been gaining a lot of visibility. Their social media and marketing teams constantly follow online discussion about themselves as well as competitors. The company interacts with other users regularly even if the comments are not seen as important by other companies. (Hughes, 2021.)

Another good example of memorable social media presence comes from Innocent drinks. It is a company which specializes in healthy drinks such as smoothies et cetera. The brand has been differentiated from its competitors and it is easily recognizable. Like Oatly, Innocent drinks constantly follows social media discussions and participates in conversations. Their marketing team replies in real time on comments and tries to maintain personal conversations with other users. These actions help followers to feel appreciated, thus improving customer experience. It can make consumers buy their products more likely after receiving an answer to one of their comments. (Samoilenko, 2020.)

After deciding to open a social media account, the company should focus on channels where most users are. This could be measured nationally or globally. However, it is important to focus on the correct target group and or dream customers if the goal is to gain more popularity. Customer avatar becomes even more important in these situations. (Komulainen 2018, 232.) Companies also should determine why they want to establish a social media presence. Is it to serve existing customers or to gain new one? If it is to encourage existing customers to buy again, then marketing should promote interactions and participation. (Chaffey & Smith 2013, 229.)

Companies utilize algorithms in social media channels to attract new and existing followers. User behavior will dictate what they are seeing in their feed. For example, in Facebook and Instagram, the most popular content is shown first. The more users interact with pictures, videos, and advertisements, the more they will see this type of content. This makes companies use social media channels for

branding to attract more interactive followers. It is not uncommon to see competitions or other events which promote interaction. Users are encouraged to like, comment, share, follow and tag others to gain something in return. Thus, companies can gain more followers and be more visible. (Komulainen 2018, 232.)

While creating new content to social media channels a few things should be considered. The first thing is to focus on one channel at a time. All marketing activities should be modified and adjusted to a certain funnel. For instance, advertising on Instagram is quite different compared to YouTube advertisements. After focusing on one outlet, a company can start expanding other platforms. It is important to post regularly on social media to keep up with the popularity and interaction. However, there needs to be a balance. If there is too much content, followers might get bored and unfollow. Too little content and customers might choose to purchase from a competitor due to inactiveness. The most important aspect is to create quality content which will attract more attention. (Komulainen 2018, 236.) Content should also be unified to all channels even if it needs to be fitted to one platform. If companies follow their brand and keep content similar, it is easier for customers to remember them. This will help consumers to create an expectation for the organization. (Gao et al., 2020.)

### **2.1.3 Omnichannel marketing**

Nowadays marketing teams must develop multiple strategies to maintain their different channels. With a well-thought plan, companies can then support their activities even in times when there are significant changes. Organizations should try to anticipate, minimize as well as address possible conflicts and / or changes which might occur. An example for a possible change is how new innovations and technologies have faded the differences between communication as well as distribution channels. It is due to a need to satisfy customers' need for knowledge and assistance compared to purely selling products. (Ailawadi & Farris, 2020.)

Neslin et al. (2006) describes multichannel as a coordination, design, and evaluation of distinct channels which via companies obtain, keep, and develop customers. Focus is administering along with developing the efficiency of every channel. On the other hand, omnichannel acknowledges the need for multiple channels and focuses on integrating activities inside as well as beyond channels. Consumer shopping activities are in a key role as distribution and communication channels are corresponding to it. Another example of omnichannel can be all the channels it enfolds. These include supplier's product distribution channels as well as company's own social media funnels where they interact with customers. (Ailawadi & Farris, 2017.)

Demand to become omnichannel is now pressuring companies. Consumers can first visit a store to discover new goods and then search reviews online. Purchase might be done from an online store or a mobile application. Customers could choose to collect it from the store they first visited and / or eventually return it if they are not satisfied. (Ailawadi & Farris, 2020.) Blázquez (2018) highlights in their research how consumers do not separate the channels they use while shopping. Private individuals do not have a strategy on how to utilize different channels. They tend to focus on the potential of every channel so they can fulfill their needs of consumption. Thus, customer satisfaction is in a key role as consumers expect consistent experiences throughout every channel. (Blázquez, 2018.) If customers buy goods and services from another channel than the seller intended, it can be referred to as "leakage". Thus, companies should not focus on one channel but to support all the needed ones, such as online, mobile, and physical. (Ailawadi & Farris, 2020.)

By contrast, it is not easy to become omnichannel for retailers. Deciding what products and / or brands should be available in different channels needs a lot of planning. If a company is using resellers, they need to adjust advertising activities to become similar with each other. If customers visit other channels to view products and make their purchase from another channel, reward should be given to the "web room" channel as well. (Ailawadi & Farris, 2020.) Thus, suppliers should pay attention to their partners and their behavior as it will affect brand image and

customer experience. If a partner keeps giving discounts or other promotions which have not been agreed beforehand, it will move customers from one channel to another. One example could be when a consumer visits a store but purchases the product online with a lower price. (Ailawadi & Farris, 2017.)

#### **2.1.4 Email marketing**

Electronic mail (email) was first made as a way of communication between private individuals as well as companies and their personnel. In the late 2000's organizations started to develop software and programs which could enable the use of emails as a marketing tool. (Gunelius 2018, 16.) Now Mullen and Daniels (2008) suggest email is the most popular method of communication. It has eased global communication between corporations and private persons as it can be used in working life and between close communities. Emails enable a conversation between a buyer and seller. For example, consumers contact sellers more willingly via email as they can save all the discussions. If there are any problems in future, they can refer to the email chain and forward it if needed. (Mullen & Daniels, 2008.)

As discussed above, there are a lot of different software and programs to create emails for marketing purposes. For instance, an automated procedure is a program which is made once, however it can be used multiple times. It can send an email to users once or numerous times. The program sends out messages after a certain behavior or other premeditated measurement. (Walters & Nussey 2015, 8.) Usually, software companies make these kinds of programs available online rather than allowing them to be downloaded to, for example, a computer. Easy access together with multiple functions keep companies from using these software's while creating their own marketing content. (Gunelius 2018, 16-17.)

### 2.1.5 Different types of email

Mullen and Daniels (2008) argue consumers do not divide received emails to personal and marketing categories. They tend to browse them in terms of value as well as relevancy. Due to the rising popularity of smartphones, receivers tend to access their email accounts via mobile application. Thus, marketing emails are reaching a higher number of users as they can read them everywhere. (Hanna et al. 2016, 2.)

Generally, marketing teams mainly generate five different types of emails. These types include conversion, product usage, retention and loyalty, awareness, and consideration. Conversion type emails are the most common ones. It usually contains an advertisement about a discount or an offer. These types of emails usually try to create a certain mood to buy. Product usage emails contain recommendations for other products which were bought together with one a customer just bought. These emails can also contain a request to fulfill a survey to give feedback about the product or service. Retention and loyalty emails are meant to keep customers engaged with the company. It will be sent after a purchase and remind a customer about the existence of the seller. Awareness emails are meant for giving information about the brand or a product. Customers are usually encouraged to visit the company's website or other location for more information. Lastly, consideration emails are meant to push possible customers to try or buy the product. These emails usually have a lot of information about the products which should make the receiver more curious about what they are advertising. (Mullen & Daniels, 2008.)

Blount and Weinberg (2015) introduce three rules of email prospecting which are presented below this chapter, in the figure 2. They suggest every email should be delivered, opened, and then converted. Otherwise, it will not be effective to try to contact possible customers. If companies want their emails to be delivered to receivers, they need to make sure it will not be stopped by built-in filters which scan all incoming emails. Companies should not send too many emails at once,

avoid pictures and certain words. Sometimes adding links can cause emails to be directed to junk mail. (Blount & Weinberg 2015, 172-175.)

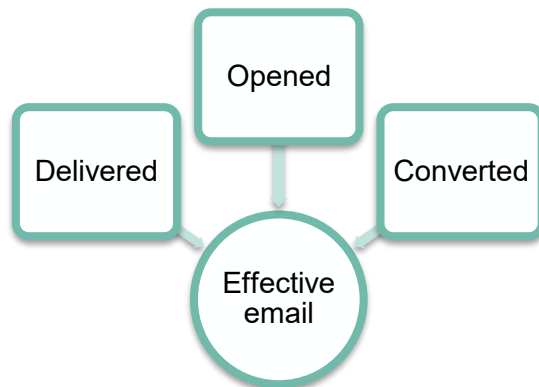


Figure 2. Effective email. (Blount & Weinberg 2015)

Then, how can organizations get receivers to open their emails? Usually, individuals tend to open emails if they know who has sent it or why it has been sent. Headings should be kept as short as possible but also interesting. Therefore, before sending promotional emails, the content should be tested with a selected group. This will build up brand awareness and higher opening rates. Nevertheless, producing, testing, and sending emails can be time consuming. Not many companies want to invest their time just to get a higher conversion rate. Blount and Weinberg (2015) stress it is important to make the investment because after a suitable prospecting email has been made, it will generate a wanted response with the desired outcome of conversion. (Blount & Weinberg 2015, 176-178.)

#### **2.1.6 Advantages and disadvantages of emails**

Gunelius (2018) highlights there are usually more advantages for email marketing than disadvantages. Sending multiple emails to dozens of users is quite inexpensive if the marketing team member learns how to use the software. Usually, monthly fees are low and can be adjusted to depend, for example, on the number of subscribers. Emails are also effective as they can be measured with statistics. Companies can follow which users opened the email and how many of them

clicked the link inside. This data will then help to follow customer behavior as well as purchase rates. (Gunelius, 2018.)

Email marketing tools make it easy to personalize and customize the content. As discussed in above chapters, it is important to have a consistent brand and communication to customers. Thus, it is important that emails match the branding. Also, when content is personalized, customers are more likely to open it and visit the website. These customized emails can be sent to different locations and target groups. Consumers are usually more interested in local sales and promotions so companies should send them information about them. These activities help to build a relationship with users and create loyalty. For example, well-communicated seasonal sales can encourage customers to visit websites more often. (Gunelius, 2018.)

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, email marketing also has negative aspects. Marketing emails could be marked as spam and will immediately be moved to junk mail. Users do not receive any additional update about spam emails so it is likely they will not see the advertisement before it will be automatically deleted. There are also differences between marketing tools. For instance, some programs have lower delivery rates than others. Few higher quality operators manage their email delivery rates constantly so these emails are less likely to be flagged as spam. (Gunelius, 2018.)

As using emails is one of the most popular marketing tools, users tend to receive a lot of advertisement emails daily. This will create clutter in the inbox and the company's message might end up lost in the mass. Some users get annoyed due to many emails which are not valuable for them and end up unsubscribing from the email list. This behavior makes customization and personalization important as companies should strive to create content which is valuable for customers. If the marketing team staff is not skillful enough to manage email campaigns, they might lose customers due to it. Making emails is not always easy especially if the

maker is inept. Marketing teams might miss their advertisement window if creating content takes too much time, thus missing more sales. (Gunelius, 2018.)

## 2.2 Customer journey

Customer journey is usually described as customers' different encounters with an organization across numerous touch points in several platforms and media throughout all the purchase stages (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Customer journey could be identified as a service method or process which is constantly analyzed, managed, and modified to enhance customer experience. Even though customer journey is a universally used term and it has been studied a lot, there is no general comprehension how different journeys affect for example service management. (Følstad & Kvale, 2018.) Whittle and Foster (1989) discuss in their paper how some scholars approach the customer journey process as operational steps in which customers are handled and processed. This method dehumanizes customers and promotes mechanical thinking. Customers are only passive participants with a clear goal in mind. This theory focuses only on a process with a distinguished beginning and ending. (Whittle & Foster, 1989.)

To the contrary, Nichita et al. (2013) presents the customer journey as a ladder or a staircase. These are more open-ended, and customers can always re-start their journey. They propose it is important to assess the customer relationship management (CRM) as the value to customer changes in every step or a ladder. (Nichita et al., 2013.) This argument is also supported by Perkins (2015) as customers do not decide to interact with just one brand. They usually tend to gather all the brands they are interested in and re-visit their "interest pool" every time a new need for a purchase has emerged. (Perkins, 2015.)

Følstad & Kvale (2018) discuss in their article about different views of customer journey. They recognize how other researchers see touchpoints as important parts to focus on while analyzing the journey. Some other research shows how

there can be multiple different contacts within the same channel. (Følstad & Kvale, 2018.) Usually, customers tend to be more active in their contacts after purchase has been made. This could be such as leaving a comment in a social media channel or giving feedback via webstore. Typically, they will start following a company's social media channels to gain more information about for instance promotions, new products et cetera. (Perkins, 2015.)

Customer journey can also concern multiple channels as well as touchpoints. It is important to understand how multilevel service design can help to enhance customer value. For instance, Patrício et al. (2011) discuss how offering different services in a website can alter customer journey. They present how customers search information about mortgages mostly online but usually need personal advice or recommendation before purchasing one. Banks have then added functions which help to find advice or links to gain further information. (Patrício et al., 2011.)

As discussed previously, it should be noted how customer journey literature is not always consistent, thus the terminology might vary depending on the researcher. There are various types of literature which address the customer journey and how it should be approached. These can differ from each other quite a lot. As the literature is quite vast, there should be a basic understanding what customer journey is and how it should be analyzed. (Følstad & Kvale, 2018.)

Analyzing the customer journey in various channels provides useful insights for comprehending how customers in different markets interact with numerous touch points in every step of their journey. It is important to find out how motivation, which is seen as a first step, sparks the interest to search information about desired product or service. After fulfilling the thirst of knowledge, customers are buying the wanted product from a suitable channel. Final step is about after sales as the customer continues to interact with the company as well as with other customers. This could be for example giving feedback for the product as a customer review. (Nam & Kannan, 2020.)

Organizations have started to understand how more than one channel can be responsible for a sale, they still are not able to find a convenient method to analyze the relationship. This will result in missing the thorough image of the online customer journey. There can be a few obstacles which prevent the marketing team from understanding it. For example, multiple data sources which do not communicate with each other. Companies might need an analytic reporting program which collects this data and combines it. Another barrier could also be the data accuracy. For instance, cookie deletion might create over reporting. By overcoming these issues, companies should be focusing on analyzing the full customer journey as it has been proven to be financially favorable. (Lee, 2010.)

### **2.2.1 Customer journey stages**

As mentioned before, customer journeys can be highly diverse. Customer awareness can be obtained from a single touch point such as social media, internet browsing, or from a store display. When awareness is awakened, customers usually start searching for more information from another touch point. Finally, they want to know how to buy a product or service. They usually choose the channel which suits them the best. Some might go to a store or an online store. Others might buy it from social media channels such as Pinterest. This could be done from a third touch point. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 66.)

Companies need to do research if they want to understand the customer journey. They should interview and observe the staff which works in customer interface together with their customers. Focus should be on customer experience about various touch points and other additional data (for example shopping cart abandonment). The goal is to comprehend what customers are aiming for and what should be improved if something is not working properly. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 66.)

Customer journey is generally portrayed as different processes which have stages, activities, touchpoints and / or steps. These are then divided to different sections or levels. Therefore, customer service maps discuss how service processes are implemented and data gathered. This map is usually shown as a part of the service design process while research is done. It mainly focuses on customer experience and shows how customer journey is seen from a customer point-of-view. (Følstad & Kvale, 2018.) It is essential to focus on the customer's needs, expectations and wants at every stage. They should also view every interaction from awareness to leave the stage to find key processes as well as methods to keep customers returning. (Pennington, 2016.)

Different authors and researchers portray customer journeys with various stages. As above, Følstad and Kvale (2018) states there are usually multiple steps taken before a customer has gone through the whole organization while buying the product. Komulainen (2018) also supports this claim as she divides customer journeys into seven different steps and discusses how they all vary from each other. However, she stresses the importance of the company's smooth internal processes which forward customers to purchase. These should be done mainly without any information to the customers. (Komulainen 2020, 57.)

As it was stated above, there are a lot of different opinions about customer journey levels and stages. However, most authors conclude there are the same behavioral traits as well as possible risks in every customer journey theory. Most of them have the same ideas which are presented in different ways. (Wilson-Nash et al., 2020.) Compared to Følstad and Kvale (2018) as well as Komulainen (2018), Nam and Kannan (2020) on the other hand introduces only three steps: pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase. These steps are simplified as well as clearly stated with their own characteristics. (Nam & Kannan, 2020.) Often, customer journey has been presented to be a linear line with a clear start and

finish, like in figure 3. However, companies should also try to think of it as a circle as customers can always re-enter the customer journey process.

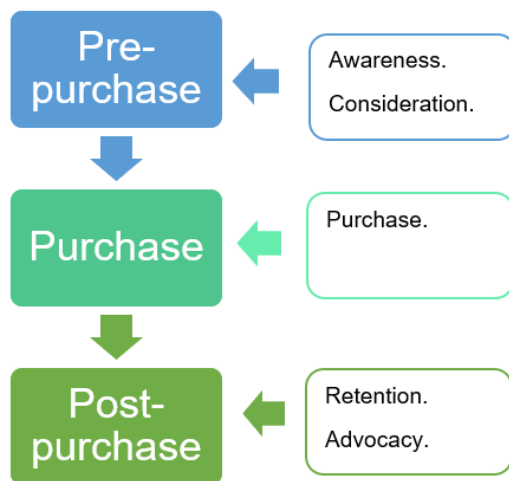


Figure 3. Three stages of customer journey. (Nam & Kannan 2020.)

The first stage includes customer interaction with site navigation as well as becoming aware of their needs to buy a certain product or a service. They evaluate possible candidates and consider all the options. (Nam & Kannan, 2020.) It is also important to keep in mind how usually attitudes do not influence actions. On the other hand, faster responses come when actions dominate attitudes. Thus, customers tend to move from awareness to action and then build up interest as well as desire to purchase. (Ferrier & Flemming, 2020.)

The second stage, which was identified as the purchase stage, is when a customer interacts with the platform. As customers are making purchases, they might have different feelings and thoughts about the process. Because this stage involves different processes to order and pay, customers can feel overwhelmed. They might have too many choices which can make them feel uncertain about their choices. These feelings can lead to dissatisfaction after a purchase as well. Companies should focus on this stage as it can affect the overall customer experience. The final step is monitoring customer behavior on the webpage. It focuses on after purchase behavior which includes writing reviews and giving feedback. (Nam & Kannan, 2020.)

### 2.2.2 Stage one – Pre-purchase

The first stage is usually referred to as the pre-purchase phase as it contains all crucial activities before making a purchase. In some theories it could contain customers' whole experience before the purchase. To put it simply, the first step contains all the events before an actual need or goal emerges and before an individual is trying to fulfill them. (Lee & Verhoef, 2016.) In other words, these actions can be done digitally or physically. Customers can visit a store before making their decision to purchase and eventually do it online. Most consumers might do it the other way around: first search online and then visit a store. (Mucz & Gareu-Brennan, 2019.) To summarize, this stage involves all activities which are done before buying. For instance, gathering information, seeking alternatives, and identifying the problem are included in the pre-purchase stage. In this stage, companies can measure their existing customer base as well as earn new growth. (Gao et al., 2020.)

Brand awareness and pre-experiences can have an impact if customers are willing to buy products and / or services from a certain company. Even their own environment might affect customer buying intention. (Lee & Verhoef, 2016.) Lack of needed information about a product or brand can make consumers experience uncertainty about which company or brand they should choose. As customers want to know all related information about brand and promotions, it is important to have converging marketing activities throughout all channels. This will increase needed brand awareness and recognition as consumers tend to use multiple touchpoints to gain information. Unified marketing activities also elevate positive brand image across channels. (Gao et al., 2020.) Companies should also make sure their reputation will be positive as it is an important factor which affects buying behavior (Zhang et al., 2011).

The pre-purchase phase can vary between countries along with cultures. There is a big difference between, for example, Chinese and Western cultures. The

role of social media on influencing customer journey differs among these two examples. Nam and Kannan (2020) introduce a study where 68 percent of Chinese and 45 percent of Japanese customers rely on social media influencers while making decisions to buy. By contrast, 33 percent of Germans and 38 percent of Americans give the same results. This study shows how socioeconomic and cultural differences can influence customer journeys in general. (Nam & Kannan, 2020.)

### **2.2.3 Stage two – Purchase**

Second stage is the purchase stage. It usually contains following consumer behaviors: choosing a product or service, making an order, and paying for it. This stage transforms hypothetical intentions to actual objectives. (Gao et al., 2020.) Many organizations are focusing on this stage with, for example, enhanced shopping experience since companies want customers to choose their products over competitors. Additionally, multiple authors have also been researching this stage even though it is the most compact stage out of three stages. (Lee & Verhoef, 2016.)

In the pre-purchase stage, customers were browsing alternatives and casually checking companies. Nonetheless, now it is different as a choice needs to be made. Consumers focus on pricing, varieties, and promotions. Thus, they want to maximize their profits by lowering costs. This makes pricing and possible promotions to be highly important factors which can be communicated to customers. If it is done inconsistently, it makes information seeking and processing harder for consumers. Minimizing or eliminating possible confusion about prices, et cetera, helps consumers to have a positive brand image. Companies should focus on these issues as customers might feel discriminated against if others have bought the same product from another channel with a lower price. (Gao et al., 2020.)

When products are presented clearly it is easier for customers to make their purchase easily, effortless, and comfortable. This will make a positive buying experience and thus customers are more likely to return. Compared to a comfortable buying process, confused customers take longer to make the purchase decision. Hence well planned and communicated product selection improves consumer's image of items and enhances the objective to buy. (Gao et al., 2020.)

#### **2.2.4 Stage three – Post-purchase**

Last stage is referred to as the post-purchase stage. This stage plays an important role if companies want customers to return to their website. Lee and Verhoef (2016) argue in their article how the post-purchase stage could even last to the end of a customer's life. In other words, buyers can become loyal to a certain brand through a positive experience or re-enter customer journey process when they start to compare all the alternatives. (Lee & Verhoef, 2016.)

As it was pointed out in the previous chapter, companies should focus on customer experience as positive feelings will affect future buying. Post-purchase stage includes behaviors for example using the goods or services, service requests et cetera. The stage illustrates the truth about a product or service as there might be some concern about how it will perform. If there are any problems buyers are usually ready to cope with possible psychological discomfort. To avoid these kinds of situations, customers tend to search through information in the pre-purchase stage. It is mainly done so they could reassure them they have made the right choice. This behavior occurs especially when purchase cannot be canceled. (Gao et al., 2020.)

When customers have done their purchase, they usually start sharing their own experiences across multiple social media platforms. This will help them to get connected with brands on a deeper level. If branding information is clear throughout all channels, customers will get the needed reassurance in the last stage.

After confirmation of correct purchase has been received, customers usually have higher positive brand image and experience. In the post-purchase stage customers are more conscious about other feedback from multiple channels. As mentioned above, they might feel unfair if another person has received a discount, which they did not get. This might lead to possible returns due to unhappy customers. Thus, promotions should be communicated in every possible channel to avoid these situations. If companies manage to do this correctly, customer satisfaction will increase. (Gao et al., 2020.)

However, it needs to be pointed out there has been only a few studies about B2C customer retention after the post-purchase stage. Even though customer relationships are important and giving good experience to them is crucial, order fulfillment is in key role. Assuming that there have been some problems with, for instance, deliveries or a product itself, a good online relationship with customers cannot always make everything better. Many customers will not re-purchase if they are afraid of having the same kind of problems as the first time. (Zhang et al., 2011.) This issue highlights the importance of touchpoints even if they are indirect. Indirect touchpoints will be briefly discussed in chapter 2.2.5.

### **2.2.5 Customer journey touchpoints**

As it has already been stated above, customer journey usually includes multiple touchpoints where they interact with a company as well as with other customers. These include their own experiences as well as responses to them. Touchpoints can consist of for example social media, website, emails, and customer service. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 66.) It is important to have many different touch points as they build up brand awareness and loyalty. When customers have more opportunities to interact with a brand, companies might gain more new followers and grow their revenue. (Perkins, 2015.)

Consumers can also categorize these touchpoints as satisfying, dissatisfying or neutral based on how these contacts have been performed. How companies perform with their touchpoints, is tightly linked to customer experience and satisfaction. (Kranzbühler et al., 2018.) While interacting with organizations, customers make their decision when to purchase or if they do not want to buy at all. This makes touchpoints to be an important part of business activities if companies want to affect buying behavior. As customers also interact with each other, such as experts and friends, they are usually open to other opinions. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 66.)

Organizations should want to modify their dissatisfying touchpoints to become satisfying ones as it will increase positive customer experience. However, it is usually financially costly, and it can take a long time. Some companies decide to outsource some of their touchpoints to transfer responsibility to a partner company. For example, payment services could be seen as an outsourced touchpoint. Outsourcing could also be branded or unbranded, depending on which strategy is used. If a touchpoint has been outsourced with a branded strategy, the partner's name as well as logo will be visible to consumers. By using this method, it will increase transparency and it could help to gain trust of customers. If it is un-branded, then it will not be shown to customers. (Kranzbühler et al., 2018.)

It is essential to take note how each touchpoint allows companies and customers to collaborate with each other. This can become a true value exchange. For instance, consumer's time in exchange for a discount. Customer feedback can also help companies to make new modifications to their goods or services. It will help them to personalize their products for future consumption. Organizations should also try to focus on customer point-of-view as it can lead to new ways of value creation as well as exchange. (Wind & Hays 2016, 35.)

Companies want to understand what role multiple touchpoints play in the customer journey, so they use different models to determine them. As an illustration,

interactions with social touchpoints can influence usage of other touchpoints as well. Using all these multiple interactions throughout the customer journey, consumers make their decisions about purchase. By having a clear model of these touchpoints, companies can assess how many times it does lead to purchase conversion. (Nam & Kannan, 2020.)

Nam and Kannan (2020) propose touchpoints could be categorized at least in three groups: firm-owned, social touchpoints and partner-owned. These categories will be presented in the table 1 below. At first, companies usually focus mainly on firm-owned touchpoints, as it is easy to analyze customer experience as well as satisfaction through them. (Kranzbühler et al., 2018.)

Table 1. Touchpoint categories by Nam and Kannan. (Nam & Kannan 2020.)

TOUHCPOINTS			
Firm-owned	Partner owned	Social touch-points	Other touch-points
Can use own control while maintaining touchpoint.	Advertising and collaborating with a partner.	Customers interact with one another via social media channels.	Could be used from anywhere with a smartphone, watch, et cetera.
Websites, social media channels, loyalty programs, et cetera.	Referral sites, search engines, et cetera.	Social media channels, online stores, et cetera.	Seeing a branded good bought by another individual, technological innovation, et cetera.

While Nam and Kannan (2020) had only described three different categories for touchpoints, other researchers, such as Baxendal et al. (2015), argue there might be even more of them. The six different types of touchpoints are presented in the figure 5 below. All these touchpoints can be used frequently by consumers as well as the brand. Positive communication experiences through these points can form an impact for customer satisfaction and thus increase customer retention. However, it should be noted how brands cannot control all these touchpoints by themselves. (Baxendale et al., 2015.)

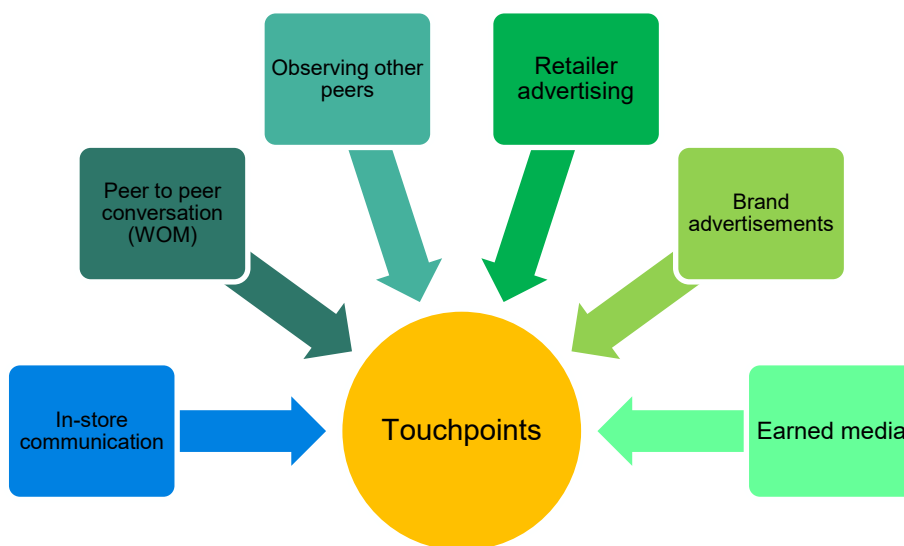


Figure 5. Touchpoints by Baxendale et al. (Baxendale et al. 2015.)

Touchpoints can be affected directly or indirectly. For example, marketing, sales, and customer service are usually communicating personally with the customers. Their behavior with clients affects how these touchpoints are seen by a customer. If it is dissatisfying, then companies might receive more negative feedback. Companies are always aiming to create value to their customers and these interactions are an easy way to enhance “customer first” policies. (Perkins, 2015.) It should be noted how an individual's personal feelings and values affect how communication via touchpoints are seen by customers. For instance, some customers might feel like communication with customer service is dissatisfying if they do not get the answer they want. On the other hand, another customer could be happy with the same answer and feel satisfied with it.

Compared to customer service, logistics along with IT-support are rarely directly in contact with customers. However, their behavior and working habits are affecting them anyway. If there are delays in sorting processes and outbound shipments in the logistics team, then goods or services will be received later. On the other hand, engineers who create a webstore, mobile application et cetera, do not personally communicate outside of their company. Nevertheless, customers tend to choose where to make a purchase after using the website or application. Without these indirect contacts, companies might not receive needed revenue. (Perkins, 2015.)

### **2.2.6 Communication through touchpoints**

Wind and Hays (2016) examine two different communication models in their book. In the past, companies used so-called old model while interacting with customers. Typically, companies contacted clients first. This includes all marketing publications as well as advertisements which were intended to increase customer awareness. (Wind & Hays 2016, 35.) Nowadays, due to digitalization, brands can usually be contacted in real time and without concern of customers location (Larke et al., 2000). Thus, a need for a new communication model which suits better for ongoing situations arose. Compared to the old model, the new model promotes discussion to and from a customer. When customers can contact brands first, it should increase awareness together with dedication. The easier a company is to be contacted; the more customers are willing to use their services. (Wind & Hays 2016, 35.)

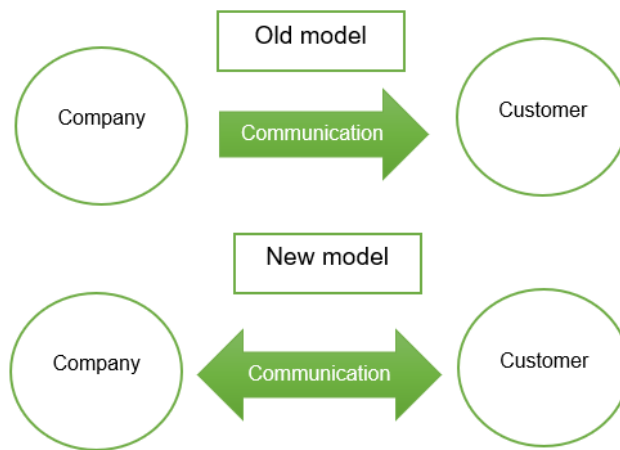


Figure 6. Old and new communication models. (Wind & Hays 2016.)

Companies should keep in mind even if touchpoints are used for building relationships, they could also easily break them. Because they have various possibilities, organizations should consider how to use them. (Conant & Norgaad, 2011.) This makes it important to have the same communication style throughout the whole brand. As an illustration, visiting a local shop and discussing with a salesperson could lead to a purchase even if the customer has intended only to browse new items. (Baxendale et al., 2015.) Neslin et al. (2014) points out how nowadays touchpoint research focuses mainly on word-of-mouth, brand advertising and in-store communicating. They do agree these are important issues to study, however, marketing managers would need an understanding of all different types of touchpoints to make their marketing plan. By understanding how multiple touchpoints work in the customer journey process, managers could make them even more appealing to customers and thus increase sales. (Neslin et al., 2014.)

As it was highlighted in Wind and Hays' (2016) theory about how in old and new models of communication, touchpoints are interactive. This also means data as well as information is flowing in two different ways. It could also be noted how this data should be captured, influenced as well as guarded. While companies are trying to learn from touchpoint journeys, they should be able to handle received information and accommodate their activities accordingly. (Wind & Hays 2016,

46.) Nowadays customer journey and behavior are quite easy to track if companies follow for example website analysis. They can see where the customers come from and what they click. Generally, websites are the first touchpoint customers interact with while trying to search information about a brand and product. This makes website usability important because customers usually want to find the needed knowledge as easy as possible. If they need to click multiple times before achieving wanted information, they might not want to move to the purchase stage later. (Heine & Berghaus, 2000.)

### **2.2.7 Word-of-mouth marketing**

In this chapter word-of-mouth (WOM) will be discussed in more detail. There are two different kinds of WOM: eWOM, which is electronic and performed online, and WOM. eWOM is usually written by anonymous individuals in text format and can be accessed via internet. WOM is mainly received orally from friends, family, co-workers, et cetera. Its source is easier to find as well as validate compared to eWOM. (Wu & Wang 2015, 4.) From now on the author has decided to combine eWOM as well as WOM and discuss them by using WOM.

Wu and Wang (2015) describe WOM as an information exchange between customers which is nowadays also done online. Digitalization as well as innovation has helped customers to have more opportunities to give feedback and reach out to others easily. As it affects customer loyalty as well as company value, consumers are usually encouraged to give their feedback about brands and products. It should be noted, WOM is different from produced advertisements as it is generated by the customers and not by the company itself. (Wu & Wang 2015, 2.) Even if eWOM has become a more important and popular way to give feedback, it is still said most of word-of-the-mouth activities are done offline (Phillips et al. 2013, 29).

While trying to attract new customers, leads and prospects, companies could choose to have different kinds of promotions. These include discounts, coupons as well as free trials. (Baxendale et al., 2015.) A study made by Choi et al. (2017) indicated how customers are more willing to share and promote brand discounts with individuals who have close relationships with them. The willingness to share is even higher if purchase is intended to be made soon. (Choi et al., 2017.) Thus, marketing teams should focus on creating positive customer experiences to have a higher rate of WOM advertising. As it has been discussed above, consumers usually rely on other individual feedback before buying new products. Discounts and promotions will be shared more willingly if they are appealing to customers. It could be said, WOM can be seen as an earned touchpoint. (Baxendale et al., 2015.)

Nowadays, customers tend to trust peer-evaluation a lot more than company's advertisements, as they should be giving honest opinions about products. In other words, these messages are more convincing to consumers when they are pondering if they should make a purchase or not. (Wu & Wang 2015, 2.) However, Phillips et al. (2013) suggests WOM marketing should be operationally hidden from consumers. This is because in their opinion, too many organizations are trying to govern and lead WOM in the direction they want. On the other hand, it should be treated as a star of conversation which will lead to higher brand awareness rates. (Phillips et al. 2013, 31.)

After confiding in others, receivers can have different opinions, emotions, and insights about a product. As indicated above, most individuals see WOM as trustworthy information and can change their mind about buying a product if there is too much negative feedback. Some big brands, such as Amazon and YouTube, have had more customers after the influence of word-of-mouth done by consumers. These companies have relied on bloggers and other influencers to create more noticeable feedback. This activity could also be called buzz marketing as companies want to have many people talk about their products. Their marketing teams want to create catchy phrases as well as advertisements which will seize the attention of many customers. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 81.)

While doing research on products and reading all feedback from online platforms, consumers are also trying to investigate if given feedback is trustworthy. As eWOM is mainly anonymous and could be written by anyone, it might not always be the truth. For example, feedback could be altered by authors if they want to receive something additional from companies. They could give better reviews if they could receive something which might benefit them, such as discounts or free samples. These unethical actions have been making consumers do more research and visiting numerous sites as well as communities to make sure it is valid. However, in Reimer and Benkenstein's (2016) study about effects of WOM, they found out how untrustworthy negative feedback can increase purchase rates more than untrustworthy positive feedback. In other words, if positive feedback cannot be validated, it could have an unfavorable effect on the intention to buy. (Reimer & Benkenstein, 2016.)

### **2.3 Prospecting**

After globalization companies have been able to do business without limitations of national borders. They do have higher opportunities to make profit but also have a higher number of competitors. While they might be industry leaders in their birth country, it might not be the same in global markets. The aspects mentioned above have made prospecting even more important than before. Some companies have approached this issue by seeing every human being as a prospect. However, this is not an efficient way to make business as it might become expensive if advertisements are meant to attract everyone. Still, customers do not always need to have an intent to buy if a company sees an investing potential in them. (Lilyquist, 2020.) Thus, organizations are creating customer profiles and avatars which have already been discussed in chapter 2.1.1.

Identifying prospects is important as it affects all the marketing and sales activities. Choosing the correct target group needs to be well-thought as sales and marketing teams will contact them in future. If targeting has been done incorrectly, branding a concept will get hard as companies will not get needed feedback as

well as results. (Andersen & Stein, 2016.) Rosen (2016) identifies a prospect as any individual who could be distinguished as a potential customer. These targets are the ones who will benefit from a product or service, and they have the capability to make the decision about purchase. Companies should verify if this relationship between them and a prospect is worth pursuing. (Rosen, 2016.)

As discussed above, organizations need to specify who they are trying to reach out and why they should be the perfect customer. After finding out who is a key customer, organizations can compare them to prospects. Key prospects might become highly profitable and can even replace old, lost customers. (Kruger 2016, 122.) On the other hand, it might be expensive to turn desired prospects to customers. If targeting has gone wrong, companies might attract unprofitable prospects which can become costly. In addition to possible financial risk, firms might end up losing their present customers if new ones are not suitable with the company's value proposition. Thus, some companies are only focusing on attracting new customers and do not focus on existing ones. This strategy might save money but does not build up customer loyalty. (Bolton 2016, 89.)

Marketing and sales teams are usually responsible for making potential customers transform into prospects. These strategies might have multiple objectives which can include activities such as selecting keywords to Google search as well as making advertisements to social media platforms. Many companies will invest in search engine optimization as it is an easy way to gain new prospects. On the other hand, if a company has a prospecting driven marketing strategy, all the needed essential activities need to be done properly. (Vieria & Claro 2020, 5.) These activities are usually supported by different sales processes which companies decide to adopt. Sales activities with prospecting will be further discussed from chapter 2.3.2.

Rosen (2004) identifies seven different types of prospectors. All these types have distinct communication styles as well as how they do “cold calling”. Cold calling

is a method where a salesperson contacts an individual prior to any contact towards the company they are calling from. One of the main reasons behind this type of activity is to map out possible prospects and if possible, influence them to make a purchase. (Goldner 2006, 13.) Despite the style of prospecting, the most important part is to make prospects feel at ease. In case a salesperson has succeeded, a prospect is willing to listen to their call and possibly do business with them. However, the advisor type of prospecting has been highlighted as the most positive way to approach future customers. (Rosen, 2004.) These prospecting types have been listed in annex 1.

Even though Rosen (2004) has presented above-mentioned communication types it does not mean these cannot be mixed. As it was shown with advisor type, some prospectors might utilize multiple different characteristics from other types. However, it is important to find the communication style which makes a prospect the most comfortable while doing their sales pitch. Some pitfalls should be avoided as otherwise a prospect would not want to listen. (Rosen, 2004.) If customers do not want to listen, it is hard to present reasons why they should make a purchase. Communication should be going two-ways rather than pushing the idea until another person agrees or disagrees. Martin (2013) suggests these discussions should be open and honest as they should be more supportive, informative, and helpful rather than selling. (Martin, 2013.)

### **2.3.1 Attracting new customers with advertising**

Buttle and Maklan (2019) argue how advertising for attracting new prospects is most of the time insufficient if it is used alone. It does not produce needed behavioral consequences which could lead to trial buying. However, it can influence consumers to generate an intention to buy. Still, companies should focus on how they make customers feel and think about their brand, product and / or services. Marketing team is usually facing three big issues while reaching new customers with their advertisements. These are: media, timing as well as the message. They should choose what media outlet is the most cost effective, what is the best time

for the biggest exposition and what kind of messages should be used. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 77.)

Advertising could be divided into two different categories: cognitive and affective. Cognitive advertising aims to create awareness as well as knowledge about the brand. This is a good way to attract new customers as they will get to know the brand and products before buying them. After creating understanding and awareness, customers are more willing to make a purchase. The purpose of effective advertising is to produce fondness and preference. If a service or good has a high involvement context, prospects have their own process before making the purchase. This means they usually do expanded research about prices, alternatives as well as study how to use the product. In other words, consumers like to create preference for a certain brand and intention to buy before their first purchase. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 77.)

### **2.3.2 Prospecting as a part of sales activities**

As discussed in chapter 2.1.1, marketing teams will create customer avatars for their assumed customers. It will help to further process and formulate a marketing plan. Sales teams are also making their own prospecting personas with similar information as customer avatars. In B2C context these contain more personal data, such as level of education, marital status as well as number of underage children in the household. On the other hand, knowing the prospects job title is more important while working in B2B sales. (Tyler & Donovan, 2016.)

After creating prospecting personas, marketing and sales teams should decide which new customers should be targeted or how they should be interacted with. They should also determine what kind of offers should be made to attract these new prospects and convert them to customers. It should be noted how there can

be a couple of ways to differentiate between new customers. For example, customers can be new to the product category. This means they have recognized a new category or a need for it. For instance, a new product which has been made after receiving customer feedback and requests could count as a new product. Customers can also be new to the organization. It can be for example to be won from a competitor. Nowadays, there are a lot of companies offering the same products and services. It is easy for customers to browse between companies and choose the one which provides better services which give more value to the customer. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 67-68.)

In B2C, the effort of acquiring new customers differs from B2B context. As consumers are more likely to ask recommendations from their peers, emphasis needs to lean in other activities compared to working with companies. Thus, advertising, promotions, and social media should be heavily utilized. As presented in chapter 2.2.7, word-of-mouth (WOM) can have a great effect on buying behavior and companies should try to unify their brand and keep it consistent throughout channels while trying to create new customers. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 76.)

Chiu et al. (2014) highlights the importance of prospecting theory in their article. The theory that they are referring to, was introduced by Kahneman and Tversky (1979). Consumers usually behave according to their own beliefs and impressions of the alternatives. As purchasing is characterized as uncertainty filled risk-taking, they have tried to understand the thought process behind it. Typically purchases are made after a customer has evaluated all these aspects. Some individuals might take more risks than others. Results are seen as wins and losses with mental notes. Prospect theory emphasizes how consumers make varied choices depending how a problem is presented. Naturally individuals want to avoid losses and gain more value. These aspects should be used while trying to understand consumer behavior. When customers see a higher possibility to gain something and a lower chance of losing something (money, time etc.) the customer is more likely to make a purchase. (Chiu et al., 2014.)

As mentioned above, not all aspects of customer behavior can always be predicted due to personal beliefs as well as feelings, companies should get used to the fluctuations in their sales flows. Prospecting then takes a higher role while creating relationships between individuals and organizations. (Miller, 2006.) It is important to gain an understanding of behavior patterns which could be observed as well as measured. Fishbein and Ajzen (2009) introduces four elements which are producing observable behavior patterns. This theory has been simplified in figure 7. A plain example of this could be purchasing a shirt from a shopping mall last Friday. However, there are multiple ways to define criteria for behavior. Usually, it is done by the company who is keen to know how customers behave. It should also be noted how defining characteristics are defining the behavior itself. (Fishbein & Ajzen 2009, 30.)



Figure 7. Four elements making a behavior. (Fishbein & Ajzen 2009.)

Understanding the need behind behavior is important to sales personnel. While listening to their customers, they tend to follow movements as well as non-verbal communication. While investigating prospects needs, values and insights, questions are asked to find previously mentioned behavioral patterns. To achieve better results, it would be better to let prospects freely guide a conversation and reveal important matters to them. If a salesperson is dominating the discussion, then it does not give prospects the value which is needed to find out what would make them purchase products. Finding the motivation behind purchase intention needs both listening skills as well as asking the right questions. (Martini & James 2012, 161.)

### 2.3.3 Sales funnel

After creating customer avatar and adjusting marketing strategies, companies should focus on having smooth sales processes. These activities should be aligned together with the organization's brand as it will increase customer awareness and loyalty. Martin (2013) and Goldner (2006) discuss different kinds of sales processes which include prospecting as a part of them.

Sales funnel is a sales theory where possible prospects will be entered. Each step will be gone through before an actual purchase would be made. (Miller, 2006.) Prospecting has been listed as a first step because companies need to find out who could be an achievable customer. After mapping all targeted customers, a salesperson makes the initial contact. Third stage is assessing the prospect's needs and possibility to make the sale. Fourth step is where a service, solution or product will be introduced to a prospect. Fifth step is about hearing possible complaints and arguments against the purchase. Salespeople should listen closely to what prospects are saying to reduce their concerns. If a customer does not see the potential behind a possible risk, they will not make the purchase. Finally, is the step where a contract is signed, and purchase has been agreed on. (Martin, 2013.)

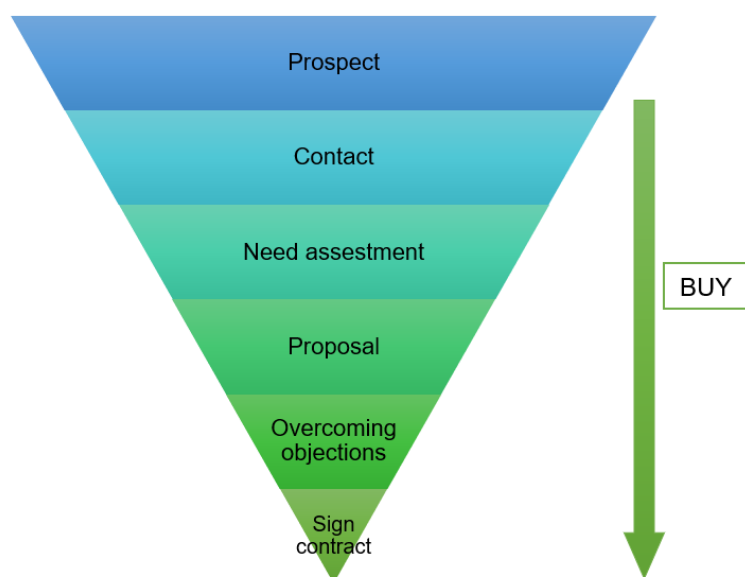


Figure 8. Sales funnel.

Miller (2006) suggests a sales funnel should be divided into three different sections which all of them have different functions as well as activities. At the top part of the funnel, salespeople should investigate all the leads and contact possible prospects. While contacting these desirable customers, companies should be able to assess if there should be a connection between customer needs and their products. Contacting along with need assessment are quite similar and could be done at the same time. When they have found a good match, it is time to advance to the middle part of the funnel. This part should be about doing the background work for selling the goods or services. If the prospecting part has not been done correctly, companies will not be able to get past the proposal stage. Narrowest part of this funnel is about closing the deal. Sales personnel should be able to get past any remaining barriers customers might have against purchase. (Miller, 2006.)

There is a reason why this funnel should be followed from up to down direction. Few companies might think it is more important to close the sales and focus mainly on the bottom part of the funnel. It might work for a while but in the long term it is not a sustainable way to conduct sales activities. After a while, their sales funnel might dry up due to missing prospects. As mentioned earlier, prospecting can be a slow and costly process so if an organization has run out of possible future customers, it might take even longer to gain new ones. (Miller, 2006.)

#### **2.3.4 Sales cycle**

Goldner (2006) introduces a sales cycle which also has six different steps to follow. Because selling activities are shown as a circle, these steps can be used with desired as well as present customers. However, if companies focus too much on current customers, they will not get new ones to enter the cycle. After a while, existing prospects might stop using the products or services and profits are gone. This makes prospecting important. (Goldner 2006, 15.) It is also important

for companies to listen to their customers and try to reach out to them. In social media marketing chapter (2.1.2.), there was a discussion about the importance of social media presence. Thus, organizations should recognize its importance in their sales cycle and strategy. (Andzulis et al, 2012.)

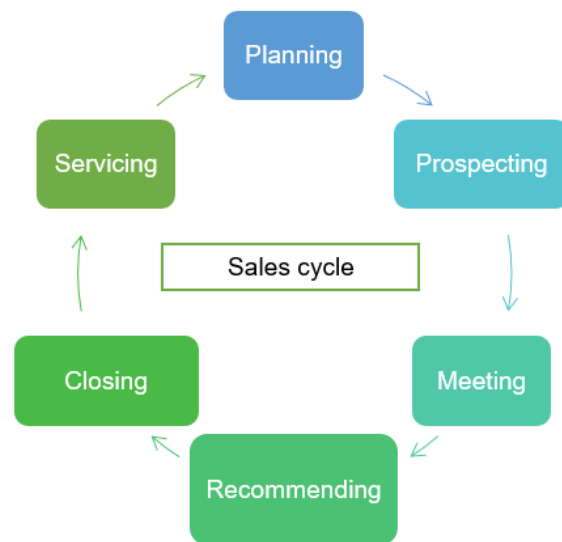


Figure 9. Sales cycle.

As it is mentioned above and shown in figure 9, a sales cycle has six different steps: plan, prospect, meet, recommend, close and service. As per Goldner's (2006) research, sales personnel can start their cycle straight from step two. However, he stresses the importance of planning. If prospecting has not been done efficiently, other steps will not give the desired results. Without correct groundwork, customer's needs will not be satisfied, and sales will not be done. This is the main reason why the second step, prospecting, cannot be skipped. (Goldner 2006, 15.)

Because prospecting takes a long time, sales cycles are usually quite long before the closing stage has been achieved (Martin, 2013). This is because customers are mainly interested in getting maximum profit with a low level of risk. Too many options might make prospects feel uncertain which option would be the best to

choose. These reasons make listening to a customer become even more important. (Hughes, 2018.) Martin (2013) also highlights the importance of listening to customers in his theory. When sales personnel are offering actual solutions to problems, prospects feel more at ease. If good or service fulfills customers' needs with most aspects, they are more likely to purchase again. While closing sales are important for companies, they should focus on prospecting more. While a sales cycle is ongoing, it should be important to build up lasting relationships as prospecting them again would get easier and cheaper in future. (Martin, 2013.)

### **2.3.5 High- and low involvement products**

As mentioned above, there are some differences between high- and low involvement products and how they should be presented to customers. Low involvement products are usually bought regularly, and they do not have much influence on peers. An example of a low involvement product could be bread or milk. In comparison, high involvement products could help to express a customer's status and personality. For example, clothes are usually seen as high-involvement products as it can increase a person's image. (Radder & Huang, 2008.)

Buttle and Maklan (2019) discusses how, before buying high-involvement products, consumers generally go through the learn – feel – do – process before making a purchase. On the other hand, low-involvement products only generate a learn – do – process. Customers do not commonly leave any feedback about low-involvement products until a product itself does not fulfill its purpose. Thus, advertising these low-involvement products is to create and preserve brand image. Companies should keep their advertisements as short as possible because too long text does not interest customers. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 77.)

Creating meaningful and interesting messages is crucial if an organization wants to gain new prospects. These can be accomplished in multiple ways. Companies can use different approaches, such as moving or rational, entertaining or serious along with imaginative or factual. They can compare other products or create a desire for a certain lifestyle. All these methods should be thought about before creating an advertisement. However, a marketing team should not forget how a product has been branded and how it should be presented to customers to improve brand image. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 78.) While exposing potential customers to advertisements, brand awareness will grow, thus motivation for purchase will arise (Radder & Huang, 2008).

After message creation, a marketing team should choose the correct media channel to publish it. As they want to reach out to more low-involvement prospects to create more profit, they should investigate where they can have the highest response rates. Companies could for example utilize paper- or digital coupons and examine how many were given back. Click-through email campaigns are also a good way to follow response rates. These above-mentioned actions are usually seen as first-level barometers. The second-level barometers usually include activities with conversion rates. Companies could for example track how many items have been sold with the coupons. They should also follow how many customers bought the product after an email campaign. Thanks to digitalization, these activities have become automated, and it is easier for the marketing team to trail these. It usually utilizes artificial intelligence (AI) to map and produce reports. Marketing team, together with AI, can also follow how the timing of an advertisement affects purchase behavior. These messages will help to improve brand awareness and attract new buyers. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 79.)

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

The following part of this thesis will introduce the methodology behind research and data collection. The main reason for this chapter is to present what has been studied and why. It is also important to underline how this case study has been conducted based on a theoretical framework. As already mentioned in chapter 1.4, the author decided to use a mixed-methods approach. Each of these methods will be explained in more detail together with their possibilities as well as limitations.

#### **3.1 Case study – Attracting more customers from Germany**

Hammond and Wellington (2020) describe case study as an example of an object or a problem. It could be about for instance a political system or a management type. Nowadays, case studies are portrayed as in-depth analyses of distinct circumstances. The main idea is not giving a wide perspective about the whole field of study but more detailed reasons behind one case. Researchers are trying to clarify why and how a phenomenon happens. Even though these case studies are mainly done individually, they can be compared to similar studies in the same field. (Hammond & Wellington 2020, 17.) There are many factors which affect case studies. For instance, there are multiple methods as well as traditions which influence what scientific approach a researcher is going to make. This clearly shows how chosen concepts can affect data collection as well as analysis. (O’Gorman & MacIntosh 2014, 81.)

As already discussed in chapter 1.4, Backstage Rock Shop Oy is mainly focused on selling band merchandise by utilizing their online store. The company also acts as an official webstore for multiple bands around the world. The commissioner is responsible for manufacturing as well as marketing the products they are selling. Most of their marketing is made by using various channels such as

Twitter, Facebook, Instagram. They also regularly send an electronic newsletter to their customers. As mentioned above, bands are also doing their own marketing by using their own social media platforms. Occasionally personnel from Backstage Rock Shop have attended concerts or other events to promote their web-store as well as to sell merchandise. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 pandemic, live events in addition to concerts have been canceled since the beginning of 2020. This made face to face marketing impossible, and focus had to be shifted mainly to online.

For this study, Germany was selected as a target market due to its large customer base. As stated in chapter 1.4 about nine percent of sales come from Germany which indicates a massive potential in growth. In January 2021, Germany's population was about 83,2 million (Europa, 2021). Thus, the main reason is to find out how German customer journey functions as well as how local customers behave. With one of the biggest populations in Europe, Germany has a great purchasing power due to high quality of life levels. Consumers are more willing to purchase luxury goods in addition to all necessities. Due to the market size, it is important to point out there is also a lot of competition in German markets. For example, Exclusive Merchandise Products (EMP) and Amazon were the most mentioned companies while collecting data from surveys and interviews.

Because Backstage Rock Shop wants to make their online store even more profitable in Germany, they should gain in-depth understanding about consumer behavior. When the company understands where customers come from and what influences them to make a purchase it is easier to adjust marketing activities to follow collected data. However, this also means data collection should be precise as well as successful to support desired findings. Without a large enough sample size, data could be more biased and will not give the general illustration of the situation in Germany. Limitations about data collection will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.4 and its subchapters.

### 3.2 Quantitative method – surveys

When researchers want to know how many individuals do, think, and behave similarly from a certain target group, they usually make a survey. It is a good way to collect quantitative data as it gives a general example about population insights. Surveys can be utilized by corporations as well as individuals such as the author of this thesis. The collected data can also be cross-referenced with similar studies along with research to gain more knowledge about a certain situation. Some researchers depend on secondary data analysis for their investigation. This data has been collected by another organization or individual. (Hammond & Wellington 2020, 139.)

In this thesis, the survey data has been collected by the author. In other words, this thesis utilizes primary data which has been generated purposefully to support the case study mentioned in chapter 3.1. It should be noted how data can be presented visually, textually, numerically or combining all these methods. How these will be introduced can depend on what kind of approach the researcher is aiming for. For example, if the study is about social problems and how to understand them, a researcher might want to collect qualitative primary data to get a more in-depth understanding of the situation. Still, if a broad approach has been adopted, then researchers turn to quantitative data. (O’Gorman & MacIntosh 2014, 77-78.)

While conducting data collection, the author decided to generate two different surveys depending on who will answer it. Because the commissioner wants to attract more prospects from Germany, it was important to gain insight from current customers. In addition, the author needed more information about purchase behavior and if customers would potentially be interested in Backstage Rock Shop’s offers.

As indicated previously, using questionnaires and other quantitative collection methods, researchers can obtain a huge amount of data about consensus of a certain issue. The target group was narrowed down to 25–44-year-old German customers or individuals who have been living in Germany for several years, thus they have adopted similar shopping behavior.

Because commissioner is interested in gaining more customers in Germany, first it is important to collect opinions from their existing customers. The survey for present customers can be found at appendix 2. Both questionnaires contain few similar questions thus the author can compare them more easily while doing the analysis. However, it was also important to find out why these customers decided to buy band merchandise from Backstage Rock Shop rather than their competitors. Respondents were asked to list out what influenced their decision as well as would they like to recommend BSRS to others.

The second survey has been intended to be filled out by German consumers who have not yet bought band merchandise from the BSRS online store. This survey can be found at appendix 3. It was constructed to find out how customers make decisions where to buy products and how their journey moves from pre-purchase to post-purchase stages. It was also essential to find out their attitudes towards shopping at the commissioner's webstore.

These above-mentioned surveys were distributed only online. The commissioner sent an email to their German customer base and shared surveys on their social media platforms. The author used different social media channels, such as Facebook and Reddit, to reach out possible respondents. Some individuals were reached out via email and in some cases responded to share survey links to their friends and families to help to get more replies.

### 3.3 Qualitative method – Semi-constructed interview

Hammond and Willington (2020) characterize interviews as arranged conversations between interviewers and interviewees. These discussions are usually regulated and have set rules which dominate where the conversation is going. Researchers usually determine how long they are going to interview the participants and what is being discussed. The reason for these meetings is to gain more knowledge about an individual's values, insight, behavior as well as feelings. Compared to surveys, interviews are usually more in-depth and give more personal point-of-view rather than broad viewpoint. (Hammond & Willington 2020, 91.)

According to O’Gorman & MacIntosh (2014), there are three different types of interviews: structured, semi-constructed and unconstructed. The biggest difference between these types is how questions have been generated. For example, in structured interviews all questions are pre-designated, and all of them are simple enough to be done in a short time. Sample size is usually large; only answers to the question will be considered. On the other hand, unconstructed interviews might give more insight about important topics to interviewees as it usually investigates themes and issues which rise during discussion. Usually, this type of research is mainly exploratory and received data can be biased. (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2014.) Above mentioned interview styles have been presented at figure 10.

Structured	Semi-constructed	Unconstructed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependable and logical data</li> <li>• Minimal risk for prejudice</li> <li>• Large sample group</li> <li>• Small opportunity for feedback</li> <li>• Responses are limited and restricted</li> <li>• Can't make any changes during interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions cover needed points</li> <li>• Respondents are free to give own opinions</li> <li>• Reliable data with large scope</li> <li>• Takes a long time</li> <li>• Interview skilled needed</li> <li>• Questions may be affected by the researcher</li> <li>• interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lot of information gathered</li> <li>• Creates relationships which could provide more data</li> <li>• Takes even longer than semi-constructed interview</li> <li>• May lead to unusable information</li> <li>• Highly possible to get affected by the</li> </ul>

Figure 10. Different interview styles. (O’Gorman & MacIntosh 2014.)

After considering different interview styles shown in figure 10, the author decided to collect additional, more detailed information about individual customer behavior via semi-constructed interviews. Target group was the same as in surveys: customers living or who have lived in Germany whose age will range from 25 years old to 44 years old. Even though interviews are typically made face-to-face, due to different geographical location, different time zones and COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted online. Most of these interviews are done in written form via email. This was due to time limitations as some of the respondents did not have time to have face-to-face discussion online. Couple of them were conducted with a Skype call and the rest of them were received in text form. Interview questions have been listed in the table presented in appendix 4.

Most of the interview questions are concerning the first step of the customer journey: Pre-purchase phase. As it was discussed in chapter 2.2.2, this step includes all the activities which will eventually lead to purchase. These include brand awareness and research, comparing alternatives as well as risk aversion. Especially in B2C setup, customers are more concerned about risks as it affects them personally. This makes understanding the pre-purchase stage even more important as it could help companies to attract new customers.

These ten questions presented in appendix 4 were asked from 15 individuals, who are German citizens or have lived there for a long time. Thus, all of them should have had the opportunity to shop online. Unfortunately, the author received replies from only 8 respondents. All these respondents belong to the previously mentioned target age of 25 to 44 years old. As discussed in chapter 1.6, gender does not play a key role in this study even though 65 percent from current customers have been identified as male. However, the author decided to ask opinions from both assumed gender groups to see if there are many differences between these two. More about interview limitations can be found from chapter 3.5.

### 3.4 Survey limitations

As always, there have been some limitations and barriers while conducting data collection. It has been pointed out how surveys and questionnaires can have their own problems. For example, questions might be too leading and trying to fish out desired responses from individuals. These could be avoided by using neutral, open-ended questions however generating them could be complicated. Collected data should be able to serve its purpose so it can answer the research question. (Lewis et al. 2019, 504.)

Lewis et al. (2019) argues it is important to collect reliable and validate data via survey. Sometimes there could be problems with how respondents understand the interview questions. Thus, the above-mentioned issues have identified three different types of wrong interpretations: lexical, instructional and sentinel. In lexical type some words are apprehended other way than researcher has intended. Sometimes respondents do not follow given guidelines and answer incorrectly on purpose. This type is called instructional. The last type, the respondent changes words as they please and assumes the researcher will know it means the same thing as intended. If researchers want to avoid these problems, they should think about questions carefully. (Lewis et al. 2019, 517.)

Misinterpretation of words might be one of the biggest problems of these surveys. As the target market is in Germany it would have been wise to conduct these surveys in German. For example, an older generation might not be comfortable to communicate in English or their language skills are not good enough to use it. Possible language barrier could be a reason why a potential prospect does not want to take part in surveys. However, the author made a conscious decision not to make them in German as they do not speak German. Because of this, translating these surveys would have been almost impossible without giving up the quality. Analysis might also have been difficult if respondents wanted to leave their own comments.

Low response rates are also a problem for data collecting. Large response rates are important to quantitative collection as the main idea is to gain general information about a topic. If there are only a few responses, it can be difficult to see what the problem is. Normally, researchers try to make surveys and questionnaires to look more appealing. They might consider giving a small prize for respondents after they have given their answers. (Hammond & Wellington 2020, 139.) In this case the commissioner agreed to give a discount code to everyone who completed one of these surveys. It might have had a positive impact for some customers, but it cannot be said for how many. Another reason for low response rates could be the small size of connections. In addition, the author does not have a large network with individuals from Germany which could also indicate why some persons did not want to answer the surveys.

Hammond and Wellington (2020) point out a discussion about the ethicality of questionnaires. Because we live in a world where information can be easily accessed via the internet, confidentiality and data collection can raise questions. Some respondents might not want to answer surveys which seem untrustworthy and sloppy as they are afraid of personal information. Researchers should also consider who they will approach and how while collecting the data. (Hammond & Wellington 2020, 139.) These previously mentioned reasons could also be a cause why less people are willing to give their replies as well as opinions.

### **3.5 Interview limitations**

Compared to well-structured surveys, interviews can have more limitations as well as difficulties. While conducting an interview, the researcher might affect responses with a bias. It could be done with for instance using non-verbal communication or with a certain comment. This bias can also affect how responses are analyzed. Respondents might have their own bias as well and it could have formed due to the interviewer. Third form of possible bias could be participation

bias. It usually depends on the personalities of the interviewee group. (Lewis et al. 2019, 447-448.)

These above-mentioned biases could lead to lack of reliability as interviewees could try to please researchers with their replies. They might try to think how the interviewer would like them to answer. Especially concerning this thesis' data collection where most of the interview questions were sent out in a written form. Respondents had more time to think about their answers. This will also lead to lack of spontaneity which could occur at face-to-face interviews. However, lack of spontaneity could also be due to technical problems while conducting face-to-face interviews online. When respondents are asked to repeat what they said as the interviewer did not hear them, they had time to re-phrase responses.

Language barrier, which was discussed in chapter 3.4, can also have affected responses from interviewees. In some cases, interviewees might be hesitant to answer in writing. It could be because they are not so familiar with using the internet or computer keyboard. (Hammond & Wellington 2020, 92.) In addition, some words might have been misunderstood. For example, when the author asked about communication channels, respondents might have only thought about email and telephone. Additionally, there could have been more pretext for band merchandise as some respondents might only think about apparel and nothing more. If the pretext had been given, responses might have been different.

Cultural differences might also become limitations while conducting an interview or survey. Lewis et al. (2019) discusses cultural differences and what is acceptable to ask and what is not. For instance, some questions are more welcome in individualistic cultures compared to collective cultures. Sometimes cultural background could be affecting how interviewees are responding to questions. For instance, they might give more positive replies rather than honest opinions. (Lewis et al. 2019, 448.) These previously mentioned motives could lead to modified responses. Although, Finnish and German cultures are quite similar, they still have some differences. If respondents do not want to give honest opinions due

to politeness, it could lead to improper replies. On the other hand, an author's own cultural background could also affect how responses are understood and analyzed.

Because responses to interviews are giving more personal opinions and feelings, it might be hard to generalize the data. Typically, sample groups for interviews are generally smaller than those in questionnaires. Received data is mainly from a few individuals with different insights and it cannot be adapted to include the entire society or target group. (Lewis et al. 2019, 451.) This means other researchers might not be able to get the same answers while conducting a similar data collection method. However, it would not be possible even with standardized interviews as interviews only represent the current situation. For example, if questions presented in annex 4 would be asked from the same respondents next month, their answers might be different. Issues about generality and reliability should be considered while doing data analysis and giving recommendations.

## 4 DATA ANALYZATION

This part of the thesis will delve into analyzing the data collected by the author. The data has been collected through various means, as discussed in chapter 3. The collected data will focus on the ages and shopping preferences of people who answered the questionnaire. In addition, there will be a comparison between people who are new to Backstage Rock Shop and individuals who are already customers of theirs. The collected data will be compared to theoretical findings of chapter 2. From here on out a survey for existing customers can also be referred as survey number 1 or just number 1. Thus, a survey for possible customers can also be referred as survey number 2 or number 2.

### 4.1 Survey data

Analyzing collected data can sometimes be complicated. In most cases, while writing scientific articles, researchers do not have enough room to give full analysis of their findings. This might lead to challenges in understanding how presented conclusions were drawn. As mentioned in chapter 3, used methodology and researchers own opinions can affect analysis. Usually, qualitative, and quantitative data analysis can be divided into inductive and deductive concepts. As quantitative data is usually heavily presented in numerical form, it can be analyzed more readily. Qualitative data usually must be processed with three different steps: data verification, presentation as well as verification and conclusion. (O’Gorman & MacIntosh 2014, 88.)

Before any data can be analyzed, it needs to be correctly prepared. Lewis et al. (2019) proposes how there are normally two different types of data: categorical and numerical. The main difference between these two is only numerical data can be expressed with numerical values. As mentioned above, numerical data is normally used while analyzing quantitative data. On the other hand, categorical

data can be divided into different categories as well as subcategories with similar values as well as characteristics. (Lewis et al. 2019, 567.) As categories do not have any numerical value, Dawson (2017) suggests it should be given to ease the analysis. This re-coding will help the comparison between categorical as well as numerical data. However, it should be noted how individuals might choose not to answer certain questions which can make the data incomplete. Thus, researchers should know why an answer might be missing and what kind of data is missing. This leads to giving codes for missing data and describing why the code has been utilized. (Dawson 2017, 27.)

As discussed in the chapter above, some information can be missing from collected data. This could be due to a filter question which is not compulsory to be answered. Another reason could also be that a respondent did not know the answer or just refused to answer. These reasons make it important to find out the reason why the answer is missing. Missing data can affect the overall results of a survey and thus the whole data analysis. On the other hand, if data is missing irregularly and do not follow a certain pattern, it is likely it will not affect final data analysis. (Lewis et al. 2019, 576.) Because every reply has its own code, it can also help research to validate received answers. For instance, if they use a scale from 1 to 5 and receive an answer which is higher than five or lower than one, then something must be wrong. (Dawson 2017, 29.)

#### **4.1.1 Insight from current customers**

As discussed in chapter 3, both surveys were distributed online by author and the commissioner. Survey 1 was sent to customers via email newsletter, and it was opened 77 times. Eventually, the author received 39 responses from Backstage Rock Shop's present customers. Thus, the response rate was about 51 percent. Even though the survey got multiple clicks, it was not attractive enough for customers to reply. Some individuals might feel it to be too demanding to answer multiple questions if there is not sufficient compensation for their time. The author

and commissioner tried to make both surveys to be more appealing by offering a discount code after completion. However, for instance, the time limit might have also restricted the number of replies as some consumers might not have had time to reply when they first opened the link.

Out of 39 participants, seventeen identified themselves as female and twenty-one as male. One person did not want to give information about their gender, thus they chose to “prefer not to say”. Age distribution varied from 19-years-old to 60-years-old. Three individuals did not want to disclose their age and gave a date when they were answering the survey. These responses have been coded as “incorrect date”. Figure 11 demonstrates the age distribution. Respondents’ precise ages with date of birth can be found from appendix 5. Target group of this thesis was set to be German customers from 25-years-old to 44-years-old. Thus, it would mean dismissing 17 responses due to age. However, due to the low number of participants, these answers cannot be rejected. Otherwise, there would not be enough data to analyze.

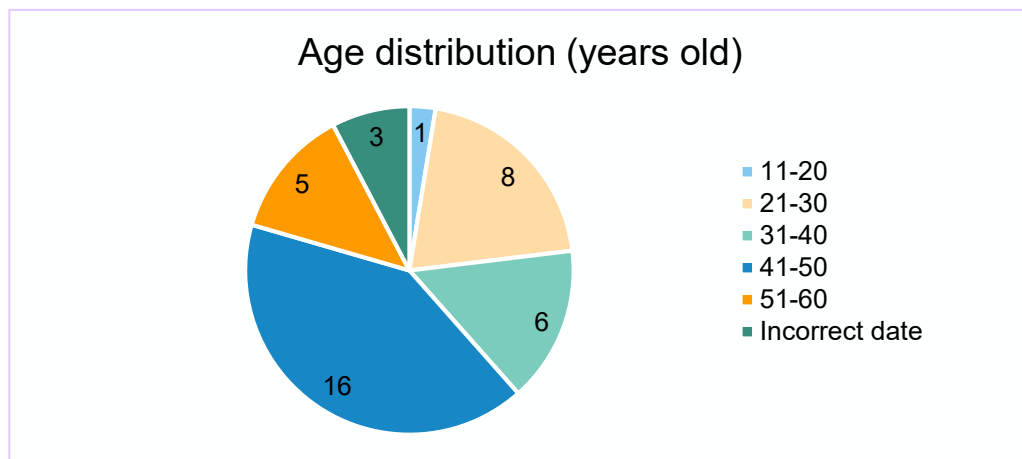


Figure 11. Respondent age distribution.

After mapping basic information about age, gender and location, shopping channel preferences were asked from respondents. In the next page, figure 12 shows answer division between three different possibilities. Majority of answers were directed towards online shopping. This indicates how most individuals prefer to purchase online and are ready to use webstores. On the other hand, 16 respondents would prefer to shop online as well as offline. In chapter 2.2.2, pre-purchase

stage of customer journey, it was mentioned how some consumers prefer to do their initial research online before visiting a physical store. This could also be the case with these individuals who do not mind purchasing goods physically.

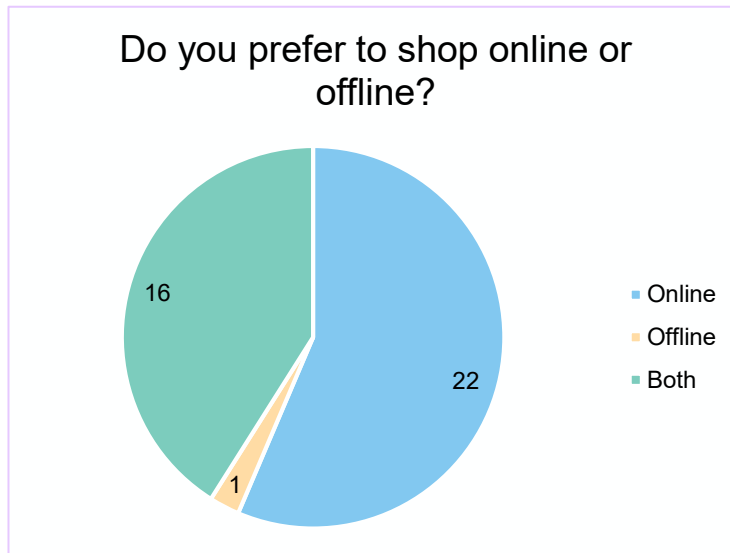


Figure 12. Purchase channel preference.

The next question was about how frequently customers purchase products online. Question produced more variation between different answers as shown in figure 13. Majority of respondents usually buy products online about once or twice in a month. However, there are also individuals who make purchases once or even several times a week. This means they might be constantly following advertisements as well as companies to enter customer journey cycle.

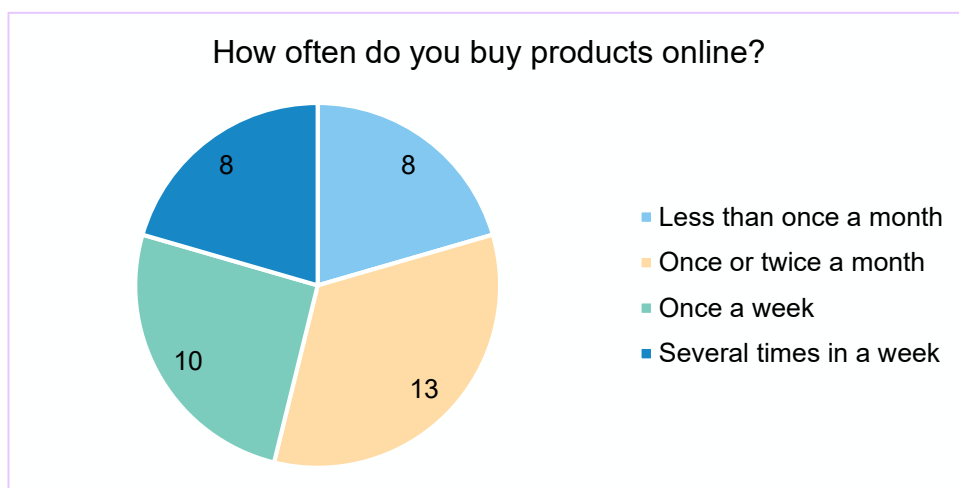


Figure 13. Number of online purchases in one month.

Still, it should be noted how there is no specification if products are high- and low-involvement. Some consumers might purchase, for instance, groceries from an online store once a week, and clothes once a month. In other words, data might differ if there was an explanation of what the author meant when they used the word “products”. Nonetheless, consumers tend to see involvement levels differently compared to their own values as well as beliefs. Depending on the habit of consumption some customers could purchase clothes on a weekly basis.

Sixth question was designed to find out where customers do their pre-purchase stage research. Like it has been shown in figure 14, most respondents rely on internet searches, especially search engines. Thus, search engine optimization is important to companies. If it is efficient enough, it will help to build up customer awareness. With correct keywords, possible customers are directed to visit a company website or other social media channel. Couple of respondents also said they like to do their research at artist’s own webpage in addition to competitors’ webpage. Amazon seems to be a popular webstore where customers first do their research. As consumers have found their webstore to be trustworthy, they return it every time they have a need for a purchase.

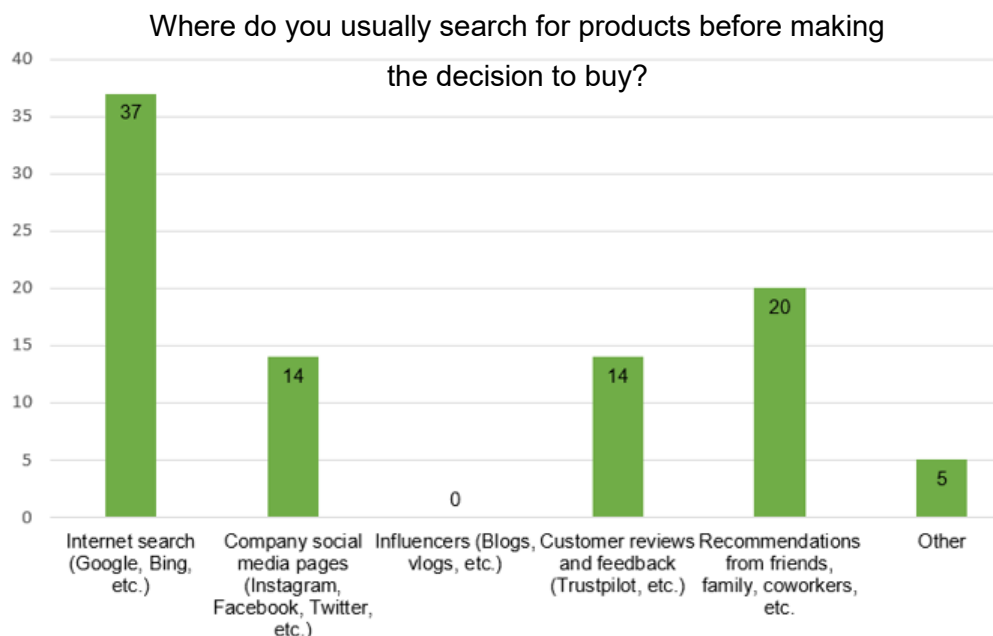


Figure 14. Preferred research channels.

WOM is also in a key role while considering these research channels. 20 people out of 39 replied they rely on recommendations from others. Especially from people they do know. WOM seems to have a higher impact on purchase behavior than feedback from anonymous individuals. However, 14 customers chose to depend on customer feedback from anonymous individuals.

Seventh question investigated what factors influence respondents' purchase decisions (figure 15). Almost everyone thought price is the most important aspect which affects the purchase options. In addition, the majority also felt delivery cost is more important compared to delivery time. In other words, customers prefer cheaper freight costs and do not mind if they need to wait a longer time for their products to arrive. As discussed above, reading along with checking customer reviews is important to customers. This makes interaction between customers and a company important as it will increase customer engagement. There could be a higher chance to shift satisfied customers to become advocates and give positive feedback. Some respondents gave their own reasons for factors what affect their decision. For example, one person prefers to have a PayPal payment method as it makes the process go easier. Also, a couple of respondents were interested in different types of goods. Especially limited-edition goods were mentioned as these usually are more valuable for fans.



Figure 15. Elements affecting store decisions.

It has been discussed previously, how respondents are relying on feedback from their peers as well as from anonymous persons. Thus, it could be said their decision to purchase might be influenced by others' opinions. However, some respondents are not ready to give feedback by themselves. As 25 out of 39 said they give reviews depending on a product, thus it could mean they need a specific reason to give feedback. A probable reason could be negative impressions of a product or unsatisfactory user experiences, as sometimes customers tend to voice out their unfavorable feelings louder than positive ones. On the other hand, most respondents said that they give feedback directly to the store and if they want to help others to make their decision.

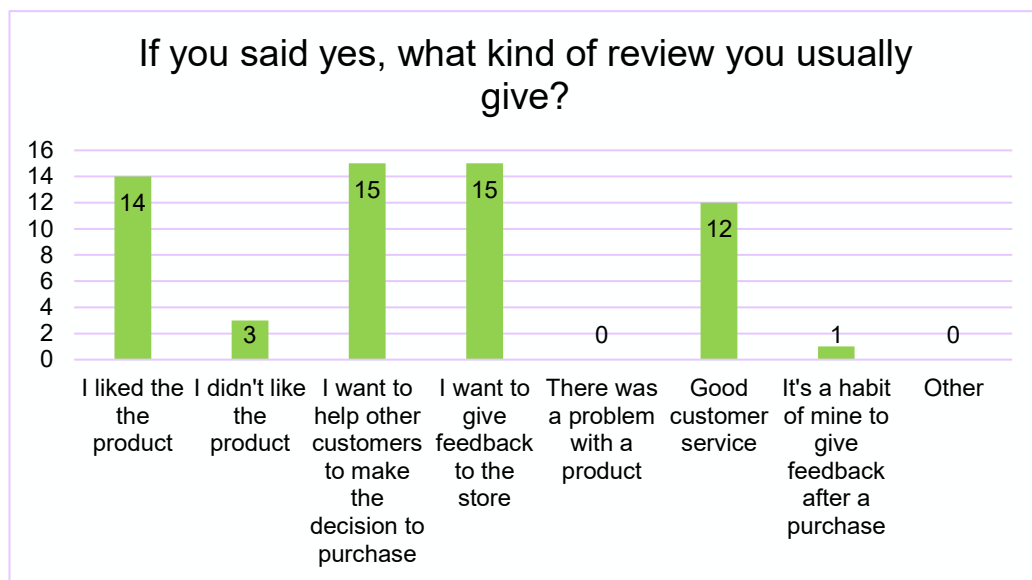


Figure 16. Types of feedback customers leave to companies.

When respondents were asked where they heard about the commissioner, Backstage Rock Shop, the most popular answer was from a band's social media channels. In chapter 1.3, it was noted how the company is an official online store for various bands and all visitors are eventually directed to their website. Most of the present customers informed they have made a purchase from Backstage Rock Shop's online store at least once and 13 respondents had made it at least six times. Thus, some respondents are re-entering the customer journey multiple times. As discussed in the post-purchase stage of customer journey, chapter 2.2.4, customer retention in B2C context has not been studied as much as compared to B2B. Because of being the official band webstore, Backstage Rock Shop

has been able to gain a competitive advantage and thus higher retention rates for some customers. It could also be due to satisfaction of product variety. Majority of respondents are happy about different products which are available on the webstore.

When asked, most respondents were satisfied with the purchase process. In the purchase stage, chapter 2.2.3, it was highlighted how it is important to make payment activities as easy as possible. When many possible factors, which could lead to confusion, have been removed, customer satisfaction could get higher. Also, after making a purchase and receiving an order, customers will typically start sharing their experiences. It could include, for instance, how they like customer service along with other operational activities. As it has already been established, WOM is important to most respondents and good reviews build their trust. However, it should be noted there were two respondents who said to be very unsatisfied with the current payment process. Unfortunately, there were no further questions to clarify these responses thus their feelings cannot be analyzed more thoroughly.

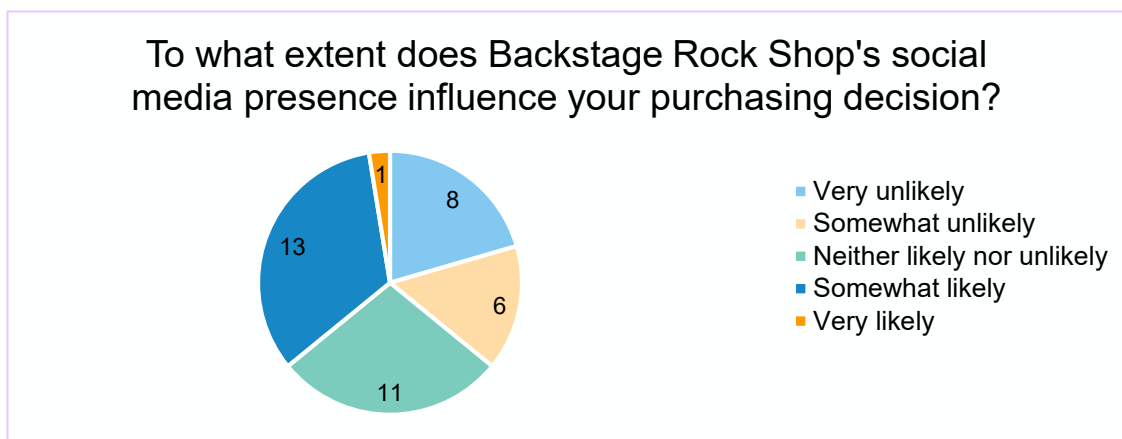


Figure 17. Influence of social media presence.

Fifteenth question was mapping if commissioner's social media presence has any influence on purchase decisions. 13 respondents feel like it has a somewhat likely impact on their buying behavior. It could be deduced that seeing BSRS advertisement, could lead to a purchase. Respondents identified three most important

touchpoints for them: Facebook, electric newsletter, and band social media channels. Having convergent marketing plans throughout these channels could influence more consumers to buy. As these three channels are the most popular, communication should focus on these funnels.

Second last question revolved around customer satisfaction. The main idea behind net promoter score (NPS) is to investigate if a respondent would be willing to recommend a company to their friends, family, and peers. This question has been identified as one of the most important questions while trying to analyze customer loyalty together with growth prediction. (Reiccheld, 2003.) Generally, respondents are divided into three different groups depending on the given score. These are promoters with scores 9 and 10, passive respondents (7 and 8) as well as critics with scores from 0 to 6. It should be noted a person can only be one of these three types while giving their scores. For example, some customers can be both critics as well as promoters. However, it usually depends on a product or a service if an individual is willing to be both. (Stahlkopf, 2019.)

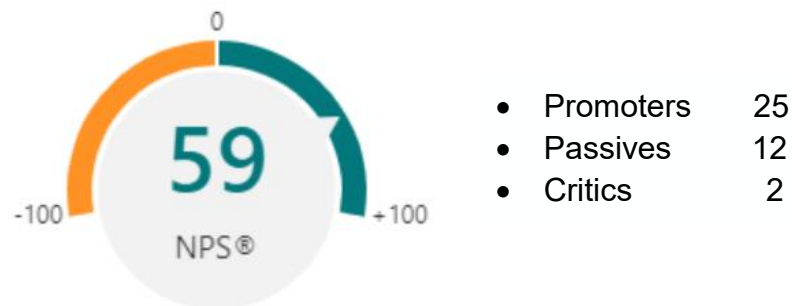


Figure 18. NPS score for Backstage Rock Shop.

As it could be seen in figure 18, Backstage Rock Shop's NPS score was 59. Majority of respondents would be willing to promote them to their friends, family et cetera. Figure 19 in the next page illustrates how 88 percent out of those 25 respondents were very satisfied with the commissioner's purchase process. This could lead to an assumption that they have made more than one purchase from the commissioner's online store. All in all, this means most of the respondents are loyal customers and could help to attract new customers. On the other hand, there are some customers who have a more critical impression of Backstage

Rock Shop. It could be due to a negative image after the first purchase. However, their scores were 5 and 6 which means their opinions could be influenced towards passive as well as promoter scores after receiving a positive impression. Many of the passive scores were 8 which could later be changed to 9 or 10.

65 % of respondents gave promoters response to question if they would like to recommend Backstage Rock Shop to others.



Figure 19. Marketers share of respondents.

Majority (88%) answered “very satisfied” to question 12.

Five respondents gave their own comments after answering the survey. These varied from positive feedback such as good product quality and quick delivery. Variety of products were commented on and praised. On the other hand, a customer commented about high freight cost and suggested the company should have a warehouse closer to Germany to overcome these high costs. These above-mentioned issues could be reasons why some respondents gave lower scores than 9 and 10 thus lowering the NPS score.

#### 4.1.2 Insights from possible customers

Survey number two which was meant for possible customers, had a little less clicks compared to survey number one. It was opened 49 times and received 26 responses. Thus, the response rate for the second survey was about 53 percent. Compared to the survey for present customers, the age distribution was younger, as it can be seen in figure 21. As this survey was also distributed via social media

and to the author's connections, it has reached a younger audience. Like in survey 1, this survey also had some difficulties to gain enough responses. Target group was the same as in survey 1 and the interviews but there were similar problems as with the other survey. In this survey, 11 respondents were outside the target group but as there were not enough answers, the author has decided to include all of these in the analysis. Otherwise, there would not be enough data to analyze and thus problems to give accurate recommendations would be challenging.

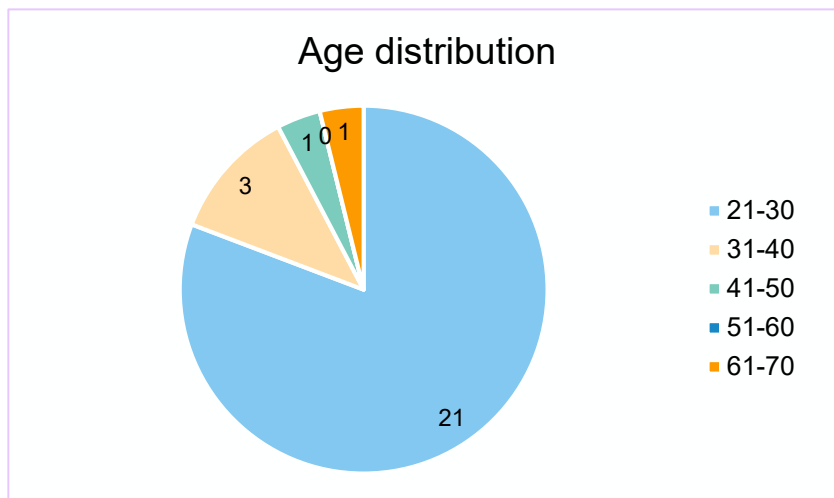


Figure 20. Age distribution of possible customers.

54 percent of respondents were identified as male. It should be noted the situation was the same with survey 1. It is probable, band merchandise will generate higher interest in male population. This could also be the reason why the majority of the commissioner's customers have been identified as male. Most of these respondents said they usually listen to pop and rock music. Which could make them potential customers of Backstage Rock Shop now that their awareness has been awakened.

In survey 2, respondents were also asked if they prefer to shop online or offline. Majority informed they favor both purchase methods. It could be while doing their research in the pre-purchase stage, customers tend to search information online before visiting a physical store. On the other hand, customers could also visit stores before making their decision to purchase and try to locate it cheaper in online stores. This flexibility can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Potential customers were also asked how many times they prefer to shop online. Usually, they tend to buy products online once or twice a month. Second most popular answer was once a week. Basically, these individuals are comfortable with using online platforms for shopping. Unfortunately, like in survey 1, there was no distinction what the author meant with products as high- or low-involvement products were not separated. Most respondents were comfortable purchasing from foreign websites, in this case from a Finnish one. However, it should also be noted that 31 percent of respondents did not feel comfortable buying products from Finland. This could indicate how they would mainly rely on bigger companies such as Amazon and EMP who operate online as well.

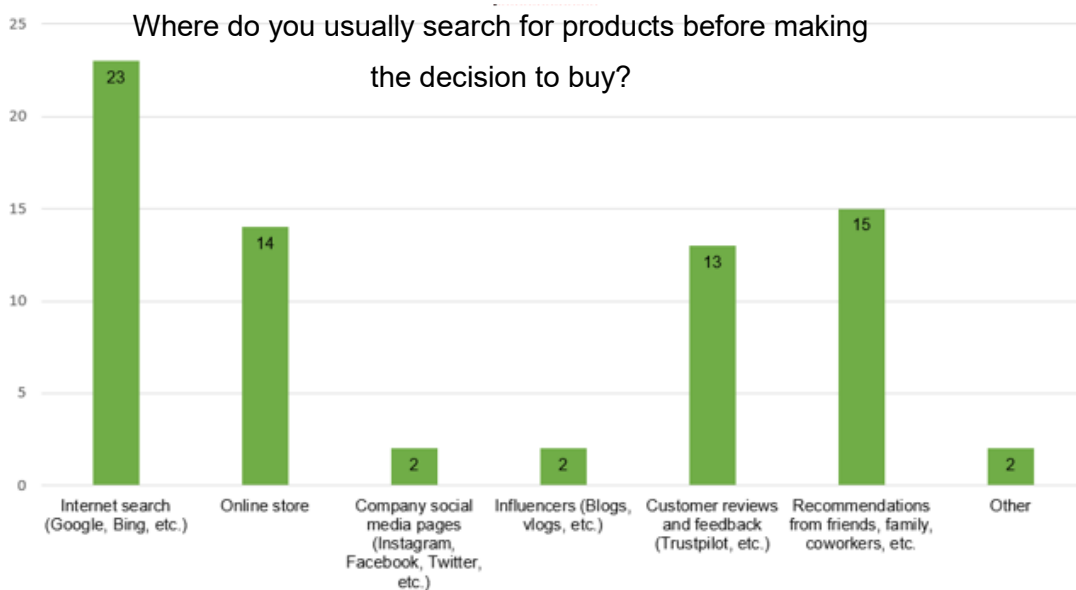


Figure 21. Insight on touchpoints.

Figure 21 illustrates various touchpoints which potential customers use while making their purchase decision. As it can be seen, most people use internet searches when they want to gain more knowledge about them. This situation is almost the same as with existing customers. Consumers want to find possible alternatives before making their purchase. Therefore, search engine optimization is important for companies to gain more visitors in their webstores. As it could be seen from responses, also possible customers are interested in customer feedback. Still, they tend to listen to individuals they know more than anonymously given reviews.

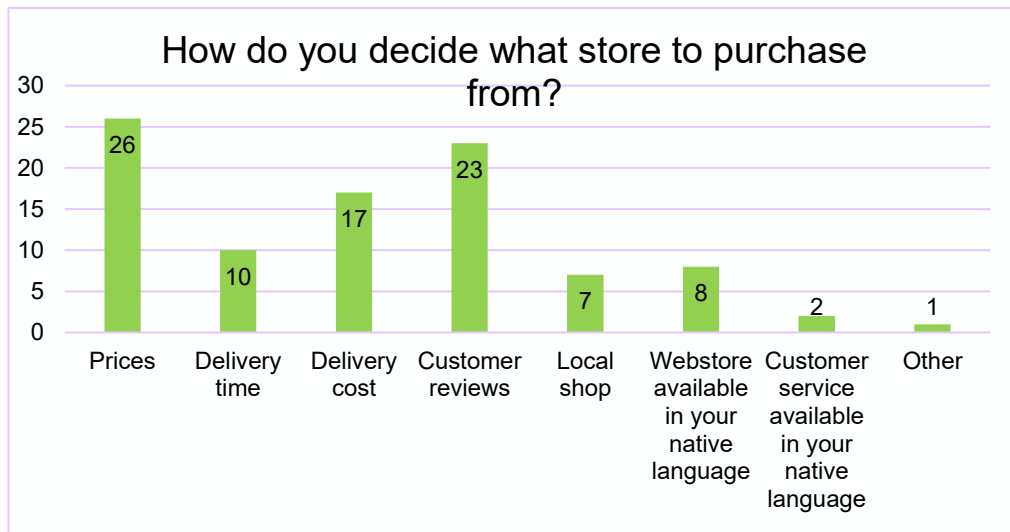


Figure 22. Insights on purchase decision making.

Prices and customer reviews were important aspects while making purchase decisions (figure 22). As it has been discussed before, these factors were also essential to current customers. One of them even left a comment on how delivery costs have been preventing them from purchasing from Backstage Rock Shop's online store. Delivery cost issues could also be one of the reasons why some respondents were not comfortable to use Finnish webstores. Some would also prefer to have customer service in their native language. It could be due to insecurity about possible issues which might arise while purchasing from foreign webstore. They might not feel comfortable enough to handle communication in English. Language barriers can also be one of the reasons why some companies are ruled out while making initial pre-purchase searches.

Even if these respondents are focusing on WOM along with other recommendations, most of them do not want to give feedback by themselves. When they were asked if they give a review about purchased products, 58 percent said they do not give feedback. Only two persons told they will always give feedback and nine informed it depends on the product. Nevertheless, these individuals rely on comments as well as feedback but do not want to give it themselves. If these individuals give feedback, it is usually because they like the product. On the other hand,

many respondents picked more negative reasons for their reviews. These include problems with quality and how the product itself did not meet their expectations.

Because the second survey was meant for individuals who have not purchased anything from Backstage Rock Shop's webstore, it should be noted how most respondents have not bought any band merchandise. Only 31 percent informed they have purchased a hoodie and / or t-shirt before. Majority of respondents have made their purchase while attending a concert. Second most popular answer was how a purchase is made from an online store which was other than the band's official webstore. This could mean they have bought it from competitors' websites such as Amazon and EMP. Because 92 percent of respondents informed that they did not know about Backstage Rock Shop before answering the survey they might be skeptical about making their first purchase. The ones who knew about the company, had found out about them from the band website and / or social media. Reason for lack of awareness could be due to loss of interest in band merchandise. Some users tend to dismiss any advertisements which do not raise any interest in them and thus they do not gain needed knowledge about companies.

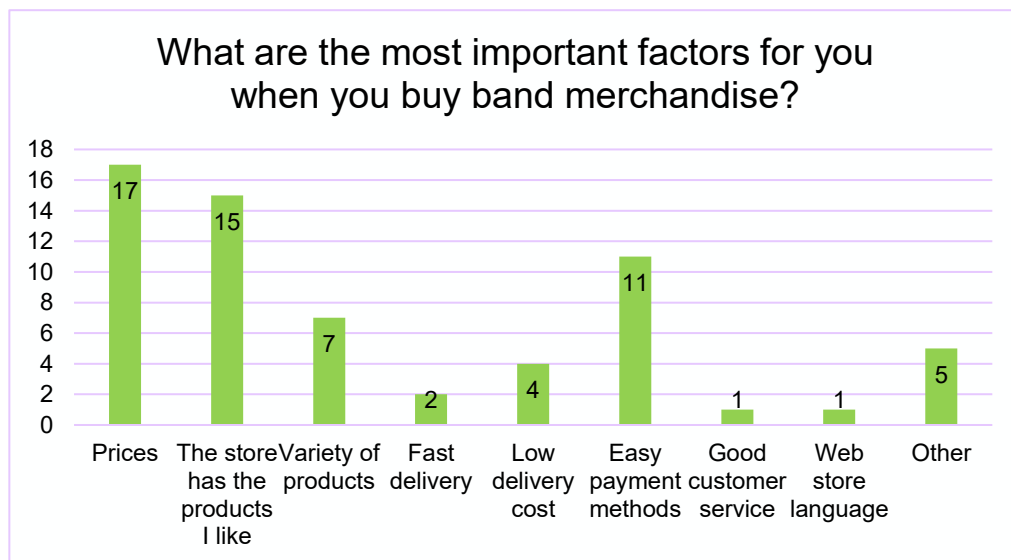


Figure 23. The most important factors for band merchandise.

Figure 23 represents the most important factors for choosing to buy band merchandise and how answers were distributed. As it has been seen throughout this

analysis, prices have been the most important element for respondents. In general, people do not want to purchase expensive products, however they want good quality. Taking this into consideration, if a store can offer decent prices and good quality, it is likely to garner more customers. It is also important to note how product variety was important to these respondents. When it is broad enough, it could attract more purchasing customers and increase customer loyalty. However, many current customers are satisfied with Backstage Rock Shop's product selection. Thus, after visiting the company website it could be possible these respondents could find products they want to purchase.

One person answered survey number two even though they have already been a customer of Backstage Rock Shop. This individual informed that they have made a purchase at least once. In other words, they might have responded to the wrong survey by accident. Additionally, as both surveys do not collect any identification from respondents, it is not certain if some individuals have answered to both surveys.

## **4.2 Insights from interviews**

As it has already been discussed in chapter 3.3, interview questions were sent to 15 individuals. The target group was the same as with both surveys. Even though interview questions were sent to several individuals, only eight replies were received. There was one respondent who did not belong to the target group but like with surveys, the author decided to use all answers due to low response rates. As the sample size with interviews is quite small, findings might not give a precise picture of the situation. All answers from respondents can be found in annex 7.

Thanks to digitalization, customers can do more thorough research while trying to find new products. Like it was seen in survey responses, private individuals are mostly using social media and search engines while doing their research. After

finding an interesting product, they will visit different websites to gain more information about alternatives. Some of the interviewees also rely on reviews along with recommendations from their friends and family. It seems like most individuals will visit Amazon's web page regularly while trying to find more options for purchase.

As with both surveys, quality along with prices are important for these eight respondents. All of them informed they generally search for prices to get the cheapest option before making their purchase. Thus, they will visit multiple different platforms to ensure the best offer. This finding suggests that also interviewees want to have the best quality with a low price. Hence, it could explain why the majority want to check alternatives from Amazon as their goods are seen as trustworthy. However, it should be noted how few respondents were also interested in second-hand options as they want to have more sustainable options. Generally, recycled products are generally sold cheaper than unused goods which could indicate why some choose to buy them.

All respondents agreed they usually tend to research high-involvement goods the most. The higher the price, the longer they will gather information and consider their options. Interviewees said they usually research electronic goods the most as these products are quite expensive. Thus, it makes them an important investment for most customers. Clothes were also one of the examples which are thoroughly researched before making a purchase. Good quality and price ratio are important for many. Some respondents were also interested in how and where these items are made as sustainability has become a popular topic among consumers.

Respondents choose to shop online because it is convenient for them. Most of them like it if they already have an account with a webstore because it makes the order process a lot easier. If the order along with the return process could be done without too much work, customers tend to return. Also, online stores aim to attract customers with different promotions and discounts. Delivery costs were

also important for interviewees as many of them chose web stores where they could get it for free or at a low price. On the other hand, even with low delivery costs, respondents were cautious about making a purchase from an unknown online store. If, for example, customer service contact information is not easily found, they would want to avoid using that company. In addition, possible delivery problems together with negative feedback from other customers can affect willingness to buy. Thus, respondents would also search information about the company itself and not only about their products.

Majority of interviewees informed they have bought band goods. Usually, they bought them after a concert which makes the purchase decision to be more spontaneous compared to buying online. It might be due to wanting to have a physical memory of a band in addition to videos and photographs. Buying band merchandise is also one way to support them. However, sometimes respondents wanted to do more research, they would visit for example EMP's webstore and make a purchase from there.

When interviewees were asked about the differences between German customers compared to other EU nationals, there were a few converging factors. For example, many informed consumers seem to be quality oriented. This could be deducted from the previous replies because many of the interviewees have informed it is one of the aspects they research of products. It seems like short delivery times are important as well, although some informed that they can wait longer for their products if delivery cost is cheaper. Good customer service is also highly valued by German customers. They usually prefer to handle enquiries in their native language to reduce any misunderstandings. Replies should be done promptly, without forgetting politeness. If there has been an agreement about for example schedules, these should be complied with to keep up with customer's trust.

### 4.3 Concluding collected data

Taken together, these results give more insight about customer behavior in Germany. Consumers seem to have awareness of different price categories where products should belong to. However, it is important to bear in mind, there might be a possible bias in these responses due to small sample sizes. However, it seems like when price gets higher, consumers tend to consider different options a lot longer. This could be seen, for instance, with high-involvement products which are typically portraying an individual's personality as well as values.

Respondents were also heavily influenced by customer reviews made by other individuals. Usually, they wanted to get feedback from peers they trust. These include family members, friends, and co-workers. This aspect is important to WOM's reliability, as no one would usually give false information to people they are close with. Some also search customer feedback online to gain more information about products as well as the company itself. Even though these individuals asked opinions from others, they are not keen on giving their own reviews. However, it should be noted there were no distinction between anonymous feedback or giving feedback to a friend. They could be more comfortable to spread WOM to individuals they know rather than giving it anonymously online.

In conclusion, collected data gave a somewhat clearer picture about how customer journey operates in Germany. Depending on products, the pre-purchase stage can take a longer time as customers want to be sure about their decisions. With different alternatives, which can be found from online and other social media platforms, they want to choose the best option. This involves especially expensive products which could be used for a long time. After moving from pre-purchase to purchase stage, respondents value effortless order and payment process. They prefer it to be within a platform where they can register and have their own account. Easy payment methods, such as PayPal, are popular. Last customer journey stage, the post-purchase, can last an entire lifetime. After using products or services, customers should give their own feedback about them.

However, it seems like making post-purchase stage customers to become advocates is not easy especially within this sample group.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

After the analysis of chapter 4, the data and findings will be combined into recommendations. The purpose of this chapter is to give concrete suggestions for the commissioner on how to better reach potential customers in Germany. It will also work as a base for further similar research issues in future. The chapter will combine the findings from previous chapters and based on the findings, will present resolutions.

As it has been discussed in chapters 3 and 4, the sample size for thesis research has been relatively small compared to some commercial research. Thus, these findings might not apply to the majority as there can be other factors influencing shopping behavior. Still, the author chose to give a few different recommendations after receiving feedback from respondents.

### 5.1 Increase customer feedback visibility

As it has been seen from collected data, respondents are heavily relying on WOM information together with customer feedback received anonymously. If all respondents are calculated together, there were 73 respondents. While doing their pre-purchase research on products, 35 respondents informed they always check customer reviews along with other feedback before making their decision. Also, when these customers are making their decision which store they should choose to buy from, 52 persons informed they rely on anonymous customer feedback.

In chapter 2.2.7, there was a discussion about how customers tend to trust peer-evaluation or WOM more than professionally made advertisements. This could be one of the reasons why respondents feel it is necessary to base their purchase decisions on other buyers' opinions. Thus, these opinions as well as feelings can

alternate the initial intentions which a possible customer had about a product before doing their research. It means that a customer can change their mind in the pre-purchase stage after reading comments. On the other hand, Reimer and Benkenstein (2016) argue how unreliable positive feedback should be avoided as it might lower purchase rates compared to false negative reviews. Thus, companies should not try to force customers to give false reviews.

After visiting Backstage Rock Shop's online platforms to verify if customers leave any feedback, the author noticed how most of them were only found from Facebook and Google. As WOM is important to most customers, it could increase purchase rates if reviews would be implemented to a webstore. Even though digitalization has expanded the use of social media, there are still consumers who do not want to use social media. This means they might not have access to all reviews while doing their research. Additionally, receiving feedback on certain products would help the company to ensure intended quality as well as customer satisfaction. It can also increase trust of customers when reviews are visible.

Having customer feedback visible in a web page can increase interaction between a customer and company. If reviews are commented and addressed regularly, there can be a conversation between these entities. When customers feel like they are valued and listened to, they are more willing to create a lasting relationship with an organization. Customer loyalty can turn to advocacy and increase the number of promoters if it has been built correctly. Receiving reviews is also important to a company as it will give them an insight of the ongoing situation with their operations. If there is no feedback, then it would be challenging to make any improvements.

Product reviews can be helpful to reduce uncertainty among customers while doing their purchase decision. Adding received customer reviews to every product could be done in different ways. For instance, it is possible to add reviews written in Google and Facebook to the website. However, these are usually general reviews about the company along with customer experience during purchase- and

post-purchase stages. Though, it does not help with product specific reviews. After a customer has made a purchase, there could be an automated email which will be sent to them. It could ask them to review purchased products and it will be added to the website. In addition, “leave a review” button could be added to the website. The commissioner could then choose if they want to check received reviews before posting it to ensure content is proper to be published. Customers could also be encouraged to leave feedback by giving them discount codes for future purchases. By giving this code, it could ensure customer retention as well as loyalty.

## **5.2 Reduce delivery costs**

Costs were one of the biggest elements which have a direct effect on consumer behavior. About 64 respondent informed prices are important and they research those before making a purchase. Consumers generally try to find promotions or discounts to get the best value for their money. They tend to decide on a webstore based on expenses which can also include products as well as delivery. Tan (1999) discusses in their article about risk aversion and how it affects purchase decisions. For instance, it seems like customers correlate online shopping with a higher risk compared to in-store purchases. (Tan, 1999.) This behavior could be seen with some respondents as they do not usually want to buy from companies they are not familiar with.

Delivery costs were the second most popular factor which affects purchase intentions. 53 respondents told they research freight costs while searching for options. Some interviewees informed they could purchase products with the same price offered by a competitor if delivery cost is lower or free. Also, one open comment to survey 1 was about high freight costs and how it was a barrier to the customer to make a purchase.

There are a few different ways to reduce delivery costs. Decreasing delivery distance can be one effective way to reduce costs. Due to Finland's remote location, freight costs can get quite high depending on the destination country. Having a warehouse located in Germany or in other Central European countries may help to lower delivery costs. Even though delivery time was not that important compared to freight costs, some respondents said they do not want to wait for their products for too long. If there was a warehouse in Germany, many customers could have the next day delivery if there was enough staff to process orders. By lowering delivery time and costs it could lead to increase in sales as there one barrier for purchase gets lower.

Another way to reduce shipping costs can be done by reducing package dimensions. Usually there are regulated weight as well as outer dimension rules which carriers follow. If even one of the measurements gets higher, it can increase delivery costs. Some freight companies offer their own packages which may be used while sending shipments. These can be ordered online and mostly for free. When shipments are packed in a correct way, it can reduce possibilities for additional surcharges. Selecting right-size packaging for products may help bring down freight costs. Also, selecting correct materials can lead to lower costs. For instance, lightweight packaging will reduce the overall weight of the shipment. Compared to a regular cardboard box, a corrugated box can be lighter. On the other hand, this material is generally stronger than normal cardboard.

It should also be noted how choosing one or more operators can help bring down shipping costs. When volumes are high enough with one freight company, they usually tend to give lower shipping rates for companies. For instance, if a company has suppliers, they could also be asked to use the same account number to increase volumes. However, it is important to be able to negotiate good rates with freight companies. As customers tend to associate delivery together with the company they bought products from, it is important to have a trustworthy logistics partner. Any possible delays could increase the negative image of a company even if deliveries are outsourced.

### 5.3 Customer service in German language

After globalization, learning new languages has become even more popular than before. Companies are heading to international markets to gain more customers and they need a common language to communicate with. In the beginning of 2021, there were about 1.35 billion people around the globe who spoke English as their second language or as a native (Szmigiera, 2021). Even though English is one of the most widely spoken languages of the world, it does not mean everyone knows how to use it. As mentioned in chapter 5.2, consumers perceive online shopping to be riskier than visiting stores. This could lead some customers to use online stores which have customer service as well as webpage in their native language.

A few respondents informed they decide where to purchase if the webstore is in their native language. This makes a need for German customer service and website. Customer satisfaction may increase if consumers feel comfortable while communicating with the store. Incoming questions and messages could be forwarded to one person or a small team which will handle them. They could also make sure there are no mistranslations in marketing materials and websites.

The author recommends these future customer service personnel should be native German or individuals who have lived in Germany a few years. Reason behind this recommendation is a possible cultural difference between Finnish and German citizens. In the interviews there were discussions about politeness as well as punctuality of German customers. Supposedly they expect polite and punctual responses to their enquiries. It is also common to address customers formally. On the other hand, in Finland, customers are generally addressed by their given name and the hierarchy between people is minimal. Without considering cultural differences, the customer satisfaction might decrease unintentionally.

As discussed in chapter 5.2, if the commissioner is willing to establish a warehouse in Germany, they could combine it together with customer service. In addition to their customer service work assignments, personnel could also handle packing and sending shipments along with customer returns. It could be an efficient way to cut down costs as they would not need to hire additional personnel to handle shipments.

#### **5.4 Build trust with customers**

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, online shopping has become a popular way to purchase products. Of course, one of the reasons for it was because physical stores had to close their doors to prevent spreading the virus. However, there are many consumers who still feel uncomfortable to use services from companies who are not established in their home countries. As digitalization has enabled consumers to order stores all around the world, it has increased the number of online scams. Typically, customers place an order and pay for it but will never receive ordered goods. In these cases, a fraudulent company usually might not reply to any messages and payment will not be returned. Consumers are afraid of these types of situations which makes them do more research.

As it could be seen in chapter 4.1.2, there were some individuals who do not feel comfortable using Finnish online stores. Unfortunately, there was no further elaboration why these individuals feel that way. It could be due to lack of initial research along with information about the commissioner. As discussed in chapter 5.3, German customers are also used to handle possible enquiries and issues by using German language. This could be one factor why ordering abroad feels uncomfortable for some consumers. In addition, not many online stores in Finland are available in German and customer service operates typically by using English.

The commissioner could prove their trustworthiness by showing different certificates in their webstore. For instance, there are various badges to indicate safe checkout procedures. Generally, customers need to add their personal information to conclude an order process. While making a payment, they might need to give card information or account number as well. This increases uncertainty as there is always a risk for information leakage to a third party. Due to digitalization, cyber-crimes have been accelerating and identity thefts have become possible. While adding a badge to inform about safe check out, it could heighten customer's trust towards the webstore. These badges should be visible in the web page along with in the checkout page.

Another good example for an important badge is an accepted payment. These include for instance Visa, Mobile pay, PayPal et cetera. When all possible payment methods are visible visually, customers might feel more comfortable to use a webstore. It also gives them more possibilities to decide which payment method they want to utilize for paying. As the commissioner is already accepting above mentioned payment methods, they should be clearly visible for customers. These badges could be added for instance to the bottom of the page as well as to the checkout page.

Other useful badges could be, for instance Google trusted store badge. While having a third-party endorsement, companies can give a more trustworthy image to customers. An equivalent Finnish certificate is for example from Suomen Varmakauppa Oy. This certification ensures Finnish online stores are operating by following laws and regulations while doing business with consumers. It also guarantees any possible claims will be handled by the seller's customer service. The trust certificate could be added to the bottom of the page as well to increase its visibility to customers.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

The following section is the last part of this thesis. In this chapter, the author will summarize the whole thesis process. First background information will be re-presented, and the research question will be discussed. Second topic is about the chosen theoretical framework and its possible limitations to this thesis. It will also give the reason why these theories were selected by the author. Third part summarizes the methodology used for data collection. This part includes possibilities and limitations which emerged during the thesis process. Fourth part is about collecting data and analyzing it while comparing it to the theoretical background. Fifth topic is a recaption of recommendations. The author will go through key findings and give suggestions what the commissioner should consider in their future actions. Final part of this chapter is about future suggestions as well as possible limitations which should be acknowledged in upcoming research.

### **6.1 Assessing the research case study**

The purpose of this thesis was to examine how the commissioner, Backstage Rock Shop Oy, could increase the number of their customers in Germany. The company was established in 2011 and is operating from Pirkkala. As mentioned in chapter 1.4, the company is mainly selling band merchandise by using an online store. All the marketing activities are generally made online such as social media and electronic newsletter. Likewise, bands are also doing their own marketing activities on their platforms. Backstage Rock Shop's three biggest markets are Finland, the US and Germany. As Germany is also located in the EU and their shopping behavior seemed to be like Finland, it was chosen as a target market.

The research question was: *How to enhance the sales of an online store by attracting customers from Germany?* This question was selected because the commissioner would like to increase their revenue in German markets. Because Germany is the third biggest market for them, they want to focus on growing it even bigger to gain a firm stance. The research question guided the author to investigate customer journey stages as well as prospecting in the sales process. As it was important to know how decisions were made before the purchase as well as if there were customer retention.

There were four main objectives for this thesis. The first two were to study customer journeys to the commissioner's website and how customers behave. It was important to understand what affects a German customer's purchase decision. For example, prices as well as delivery costs were the most mentioned factors while data collection. These will be further discussed in section 6.4. Third objective was to find out how many customers returned after their first purchase. Final objective was to find out if there was a need for a German webstore. For instance, consumers might not be comfortable using other languages to navigate as well as communicate with companies compared to their native language.

As it was important to acquire more knowledge about customer behavior, the author decided to make two different surveys which were distributed to respondents. Target group was German consumers from age 25 to 44. This age group was selected because it includes about half of the company's German customers. In addition, these individuals usually have the power to make a purchase decision. Generally, most customers are identified as male, but the author did not add any gender restrictions for respondents. The author also decided to include consumers from other countries who had lived in Germany for many years. This could lead to more detailed analysis on the difference in customer behavior between EU countries.

First survey was meant for individuals who already had made a purchase from Backstage Rock Shop's webstore. Thus, the second survey was meant for possible customers who had not yet made a purchase from their webstore. Both surveys had mostly different questions which were trying to map out various behavioral patterns. On the other hand, there were a couple of similar questions, to make comparison easier. The reason why two different surveys were made was to gain more insight why present customers decided to purchase from BSRS. Secondly, it was important to find out if possible prospects would want to make a purchase from the commissioner's online store. The author also wanted to gain more personal insights from local consumers, thus semi-constructed interviews were held with individuals. Methodology, response rates as well as its limitations will be further re-introduced in chapter 6.3.

## **6.2 Building the case concept**

For this thesis, the author decided to have three bigger theoretical compartments. These were digital marketing, customer journey and prospecting. All these chapters had their own subchapters with detailed information about different theories. Theoretical framework was built by using different publications such as books, scientific journals, and articles. For the most part, these publications were released during the 2010s but there were a few sources which were older than that. Due to globalization these subjects have become even more popular, there are a lot of new releases about the above-mentioned publications.

### **6.2.1 Basics of online marketing**

Digitalization has been a key role for changing consumer behavior which includes working routines as well as expenditure (Komulainen 2018, 15). Usage of the

internet has been increasing and most of pre-purchase research is now done by using online channels. This makes marketing strategies even more important than before as communication through every platform needs to be similar. This will increase brand awareness as consumers will recognize them while seeing advertisements in different channels. (Cao & Li, 2018.) This has made companies become service-oriented compared to the past. While creating value to customers, a company's profits could increase as well. (Enrile & Saren 2017, 22.)

Digital marketing sector had seven subchapters. First section was about customer avatars. Reiss and Henneberry (2020) described it as an imaginary impersonation of a customer made by the marketing team. This character includes, for instance, demographics, needs and psychographics. These avatars are affecting all marketing activities as companies are basing them on these profiles. (Reiss & Henneberry, 2020.) It is also important for companies to focus on customer needs in pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages. It would help marketing teams to understand how purchase decisions are made. (Chaffey & Smith 2013, 198.)

Second subchapter was about social media marketing. Thanks to digitalization, different social media platforms have emerged and gained popularity. These applications can be accessed with a computer and most importantly, via mobile device (Chaffey & Smith 2013, 214). Nowadays, it is common for organizations to have their own social media accounts which can be used for advertising and communication. Komulainen (2018) argues how social media presence can affect customer behavior and purchase intentions. If companies do not devote themselves to their different platforms, customers might see it as a negative sign. (Komulainen 2018, 228.)

After theories about social media marketing, omnichannel marketing was discussed. As there are various channels which can be used for marketing activities, all of them need to have their own strategy. Companies are trying to predict potential changes as well as disagreements which could arise. (Ailawadi & Farris,

2020.) Due to pressure from customers as well as competitors, companies are focusing on becoming omnichannel. However, it should be noted how consumers usually do not have any strategy on how to use all these various channels. Therefore, it is important to have consistent marketing activities throughout various channels to increase customer satisfaction. (Blázquez, 2018.)

Subchapters from 2.1.4 to 2.1.6 were about email marketing. After the invention of emails, communication between corporations and consumers have become easier. Nowadays it has been used in working life as well as in private discussions. It has become one of the most popular ways to contact sellers because email chains can be saved. (Mullen & Daniels, 2008.) Companies are also using emails for marketing purposes. For email prospecting, there are three rules which need to be considered. Emails need to be delivered, opened, and converted. Without fulfilling these steps, it might not be beneficial to send them. (Blount & Weinberg 2015, 172-175.) Like in any marketing advertisement, emails have their own advantages and disadvantages. For example, sending emails could be automated and opening rates can be analyzed. This makes handling them a lot easier compared to manual sending. On the other hand, sending emails in bulk might cause filters to see them as spam and they will automatically be added to junk mail. (Gunelius, 2018.)

## **6.2.2 Driving forces behind purchasing intentions**

Second compartment of the theoretical framework was about customer journey and its touchpoints. The author discusses how the customer journeys can be followed and what it consists of. Even though there are multiple different theories about customer journey stages and how to divide them, it was now simplified to Nam and Kannan's (2020) three steps: pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase. After presenting these stages, customer journey touchpoints were dis-

cussed. How companies use these touchpoints to communicate with their customers as well as other stakeholders was also mentioned. Final part of this compartment was about word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing which has become an important part of the purchase decision process.

There are multiple different ways to portray customer journeys. It usually starts with awareness which will typically lead to information search. When a product or service meets customer needs, a purchase decision will be made. After these actions, it is time for the usage stage. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 66.) As these processes might vary, companies need to make clear customer journey maps which will portray the most important steps for them. (Følstad & Kvale, 2018.) Although, above-mentioned authors and researchers have different opinions about customer journey and its stages, most of them agree customers can re-enter the process. Nam and Kannan (2020) simplified customer journey into three steps which were mentioned above. All of them have their own characteristics which makes them differ from one another. For instance, in the pre-purchase stage, customers do all their research before making the decision. This includes finding alternatives and comparing prices. In the purchase stage, customers have made the decision and the actual purchase. The post-purchase stage is about using the good or service and giving feedback to the company. (Nam & Kannan, 2020.)

Customer journey touchpoints are used in communication between companies and customers. When consumers have more chances to communicate with a brand, their loyalty will increase. (Perkins, 2015.) These touchpoints can be categorized as neutral, dissatisfying, and satisfying. These above-mentioned categories depend on customer experience and how they feel about communication with companies. (Kranzbühler et al., 2018.) Wind and Hays (2016) presented two different versions of communication styles. The old model focuses only from company to customer contact. However, with the new model, customers are also able to contact companies when they want to. Touchpoints have also enabled word-of-mouth marketing. After making a purchase, customers can leave reviews about products or a company itself if they feel the need to do it. Feedback can be positive or negative in nature. WOM is usually given because customers want

others to know their own experiences and base their own decisions on it. Thus, it makes it important for companies to aim for higher customer satisfaction so they can receive better feedback and revenue. (Baxendale et al., 2015.)

### **6.2.3 Moving potential customers towards purchase**

Final compartment of theory was about prospecting. According to Rosen (2016), a prospect is an individual who might become a customer. These targets have been identified in customer avatars which were made by marketing teams as well as prospecting personas made by sales teams. These individuals should have the power to make a purchase decision. (Rosen, 2016.) It should be noted how these new prospects could possibly outpace lost customers as they could be highly profitable (Kruger 2016, 122). This makes targeting even more important as useless prospects might become costly to companies. However, trying to attract new customers might result in losing existing customers due to lack of customer loyalty. (Bolton 2016, 89.)

However, attracting new customers should not be done alone. Generally, it does not generate needed behavioral patterns for making a purchase. On the other hand, it could still lead to intention to buy. Thus, marketing teams normally generate two different types of advertisements. Affective advertising aims to create devotion as well as desire. Cognitive advertisements are mainly used to create awareness and familiarity towards a brand. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 77.) These advertisements are made to increase leads to sales teams. However, new customers should be filtered as some customers might only be new to the product category. (Buttle & Maklan 2019, 68.) Possible customers are typically quite wary while researching new products as making a purchase can be seen as a risk. Thus, it is important how the problem and its solution will be presented to customers as they want to avoid possible losses. (Chiu et al., 2014.)

Two different theories about the sales process which includes prospecting were presented. Sales funnel is a theory where prospecting is done in the beginning. Without the first step, customers cannot be entered into a funnel and the sales process will not proceed. During these six steps the sales team will contact and assess possible customer needs before giving a proposal. It is important to overcome possible objections from prospects which then could lead to signing a contract or a purchase. However, it should be kept in mind how the sales funnel needs to be worked from up till down. Otherwise, companies end up losing prospects and the whole process will collapse. (Miller, 2006.)

Sales cycle also has six steps which typically start with planning. However, it is possible to start with prospecting right away. Still, without a solid base and plan, the sales process might not be successful. (Goldner 2006, 15.) Because customers are typically trying to receive maximum profit with a low level of losses, it affects prospecting time as uncertainty grows together with possible options. Thus, it is important to listen to what prospects are saying. (Hughes, 2018.) The involvement levels are affecting prospecting and customer decision times. For instance, choosing which clothes should be bought can take a longer time compared to buying a cup of coffee. Therefore, selling high-involvement products needs more thorough prospecting activities to reduce uncertainty among possible customers. (Radder & Huang, 2008.)

### **6.3 Limitations**

Third section of this thesis presented used research methodologies together with case study. Both surveys and interview questions were discussed together with justifications. However, as with any research there were limitations and problems

while collecting needed data. The author presented all of these with possible reasoning why these factors were affecting research and how it could have been avoided.

According to Hammond and Wellington (2020), case studies are usually portrayed as problems of circumstances. These could be, for instance, about accounting practices or management styles. These studies are typically quite narrow as giving a broad picture of the whole field is not the main idea. Thus, it is important to clarify why some phenomena happen. (Hammond & Wellington 2020, 17.) This case study was focusing on how to attain more customers from Germany. Therefore, it was important to gain a better understanding of customer journey behavior. However, to obtain needed information, sample size is desired to be large enough.

### **6.3.1 Quantitative research limitations**

Both surveys were distributed by the author and commissioner. These surveys also received more exposure with the help of some respondents along with through author's connections. Surveys were also shared in social media channels, such as Facebook and Reddit. Backstage Rock Shop distributed surveys to their German customers via email and shared them in their social media channels. Target group was 25-44 years old German consumers and individuals who have lived there for a long time.

Surveys were made in English as the author does not speak German. The author has considered a possibility how survey language might influence response rates. Still, there could have been some errors while analyzing data if it would have been translated from German to English due to language barrier. Eventually

these surveys received altogether 73 responses. 39 responses from present customers and 26 from potential customers. Unfortunately, due to low response rates the author needed to include every response even if it did not fit the original target group due to, for instance, incorrect age. Because of the small number of replies, the author was not able to get a broad picture about the status quo. Thus, the data analysis might not be able to consider all possible factors.

As surveys are made to receive quantitative data, low response rates are a problem. If there are not enough replies, it might not be easy to find the root cause of a problem. Thus, companies are giving small prizes for respondents to encourage them to reply. (Hammond & Wellington 2020, 139.) Even though Backstage Rock Shop agreed to give discounts to respondents, it was not enough to inspire customers to reply. It could have been due to a language barrier as surveys were made in English. It could also have been due to lack of interest together with time. Some customers might not want to respond to surveys if they do not see the benefit for themselves. Also, lack of interest might be due to low customer loyalty levels from some individuals.

### **6.3.2 Qualitative research limitations**

In addition to surveys, the author decided to arrange semi-constructed interviews with German individuals. Interviews are scheduled discussions between interviewees and interviewers. As these dialogues are regulated, there is a clear goal which direction it is going. Main goal is to gain more personal information about interviewees' values, goals as well as feelings. (Hammond & Wellington 2020, 91.) Having the end goal in mind, researchers decide which interview styles they want to approach. Structured style collects mainly dependable and logical data, but responses are limited and restricted. Semi-constructed style collects data from needed points, but it takes a long time. Unconstructed style gathers a lot of

information; however, it might lead to unusable information. (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2014.)

Like in surveys, the target group for interviews was the same. All of them were handled online due to different geographical locations. Data collection was made mainly by using Skype and email. The author had made 10 questions which all were based on the theoretical framework presented in section 2. Because it was important to understand where customers come from and what affects their purchase decisions, most of those 10 questions were concerning the pre-purchase stage of customer journey. These questions were sent to fifteen individuals, but the author received 8 responses. Like with surveys, there were some respondents who did not belong to the target group, but they were not disregarded.

There were some limitations with the interviews as well. For instance, with semi-constructive interviews, researchers might affect answers with prejudice. These can be unintentional or intentional as well as verbal or non-verbal. Respondents could also affect their own responses due to various reasons. (Lewis et al. 2019, 447-448.) As most of the interviews were done in text form, respondents had more time to think about their answers. This could have decreased spontaneity of responses and led interviewees to reply how they think the author wanted them to reply. Language barrier could have been another reason why not all respondents did not reply. Cultural differences can also become a restraint for interviewees to reply. Some individuals might have seen interview questions too direct and personal.

#### **6.4 Critical assessment of data**

Fourth compartment of this thesis was about data analysis. All received replies were discussed together with illustrative figures. First section was about insights

from existing customers. Answers gave some understanding about the current situation with customer journey as well as if customers have been satisfied with Backstage Rock Shop. Second section analyzed responses from customers who have not yet purchased from the commissioner's webstore. Third part of this chapter was about analyzing interview responses before wrapping up the whole section in conclusion.

#### **6.4.1 Survey observations**

Altogether, both surveys received 65 responses. Age distribution was from 19-years-old to 66-years-old. This means 28 respondents should have been disregarded because they did not belong to the target group. As already discussed before, the author decided to include all answers to increase the amount of data. Otherwise, it would have been challenging to map the current situation of respondents.

The author asked respondents what the preferred shopping channels are. Out of all replies, 28 people informed they prefer to shop online. In addition, 31 respondents informed they use both offline and online channels while purchasing goods. Majority of respondents informed they shop online about once or twice a month. Second most popular options were once a week which could indicate some of these individuals could order for instance groceries online as well. Unfortunately, there were no questions about what these respondents usually purchase from webstores.

Majority respondents start their research by using different internet search engines. This will help them to gather more information about the wanted product and a company itself. Second most popular reply is recommendations from peers. As it has been seen earlier, consumers will consult others before making their

purchase decisions. Most of them prefer to ask them from individuals they know as then it will be seen as more trustworthy compared to anonymous feedback. One of the reasons could be, they might not get any benefits while giving their opinions. On the other hand, companies might give discount codes to individuals who give feedback through their website. Nevertheless, it is obvious how customer reviews and feedback was the third most popular answer while doing initial research before a purchase.

Prices and delivery costs were important to respondents while they were making their purchase decisions. It seems like these individuals do not care if they need to wait for their products a little longer if expenses are low. As risk-aversion in a B2C context is important, customers want to have the best value from their money. This is one of the reasons why consumers tend to do a lot more research when needed products are expensive. Thus, high-involvement products need longer decision times than low-involvement products which could be bought daily without too much preparation.

Even though consumers have informed they search customer feedback and reviews, responding individuals informed they do not typically give feedback themselves. However, if they do give feedback, it is for the company itself and to other customers to help them to make their purchase decision. When current customers were asked if they would recommend Backstage Rock Shop to others, the majority would be promoting them. Their NPS score was 59 out of 100. However, there were only two individuals who were not satisfied with the commissioner. Thus, the company's score could be elevated with small changes which could be based on the author's recommendations.

#### 6.4.2 Interview observations

Eight individuals out of fifteen replied to interview questions. Target group was the same as with surveys but in the end, the author could not disregard any respondents due to low response rate. Majority of interviewees responded in text and a couple of them agreed to have a Skype meeting. There were some variations on how detailed written replies were. Some of them gave a lot of different examples, others replied with one or two words.

Like with survey respondents, prices were important to them. Majority informed they tend to do research online especially with technological goods. When the price gets higher, they feel more uncertain and want to find more alternatives. Amazon was the most popular channel where respondents try to find products as well as discounts. Also, it seems like customers like to use companies they know well, and the purchase process is simple. Using Amazon is convenient for them as they tend to do online shopping due to its usefulness. Majority interviewees liked web stores where they can create an account which will automatically remember delivery addresses and other preferences while ordering. Still, when asked, many respondents informed they tend to buy band merchandise from a concert as a spontaneous purchase rather than using time for research.

Interviewees gave some insight into how German customers differ from other European consumers. It seems like they are quality oriented which is an important part of research. German customers also value good customer service with a data driven atmosphere. Facts need to be clear, and the schedule should be followed as promised. They also value politeness and try not to be rude towards customer service agents. Customers prefer to use German while communicating with companies as it feels most comfortable to them.

## 6.5 Proposal for future actions

After analyzing received data and answers, the author made a few recommendations to the commissioner. These were made so the company can adjust their marketing activities to gain more customers from Germany. All these recommendations were made to fulfill thesis objectives and ultimately to answer research questions. The conclusion and response to the research question will be further discussed in chapter 6.6.1.

First recommendation was about giving more visibility to customer feedback. For now, customer reviews for BSRS are available in Google as well as Facebook. However, there is no product specific feedback on the website. As it has been seen throughout this thesis, consumers are massively relying on WOM marketing before making a purchase decision. Majority checks feedback and reviews online and discusses their purchase intentions with their peers. Others' opinions are highly valued, and it could affect the outcome. Still, customers tend to believe false negative feedback rather than incorrect positive reviews.

Because word-of-mouth is important to consumers, companies should add feedback visibility in their website. For instance, there are individuals who do not use any social media platforms. Thus, it would make it hard for them to gain access to some reviews if they are only shown in social media channels. In addition, it would help customers to make quicker decisions while browsing options if they could readily see feedback. This could also increase customer loyalty if consumers see their feedback will be seen and read by companies as well as other individuals. The commissioner could add a "leave a review" button on their website or collect them via email.

Second recommendation was about reducing delivery costs. As almost all respondents chose freight cost to be a key factor affecting their purchase intentions,

it should be revised. There even were some individuals who did not make a purchase from the commissioner due to high delivery costs. The author presented a few ideas how these costs could be reduced. For example, one way to reduce freight costs could be done by decreasing delivery distance. If the commissioner would have a warehouse located in Germany or another Central-European country, it could help bring down delivery costs. Furthermore, it could also help to shorten delivery times.

Another suggestion was about packaging. While reducing dimensions, freight costs could be lower. Some shipping companies have standard package sizes and if any of the measurements goes over the limit, it would cost additional. If goods are sent in right-sized packages, delivery costs could go down. So, another idea would be to change cardboard boxes to corrugated boxes. These are usually lighter but stronger than normal boxes. Also, finding the correct freight company is also a good idea. Typically, shipping companies will give discounts on their rates if organizations have high volumes. Thus, subcontractors should also use the same account number as the contractor, so they can bring shipping volumes higher.

Third recommendation was about having customer service and a webstore in German language. Even though English is the most spoken language in the world, not every individual feels comfortable using it. Especially in situations, where there might be some sort of risk involved. Some respondents informed they would like to purchase only from companies and websites which are available in their native languages. As consumers are wary of purchasing from new companies, they tend to return to well-known websites such as Amazon and EMP. Therefore, if a company wants to gain customer's trust and loyalty, it could be done by offering services in their native language.

Besides, the commissioner could combine second and third recommendations together. If they would get a warehouse in Germany, they could hire customer service personnel to work in the same location. These individuals could handle

customer service tasks along with the warehouse at the same time. They could handle all outgoing and incoming shipments which could reduce costs. If some products were sent from Finland, customer service would be able to inform customers about longer delivery time.

The fourth and final recommendation was about increasing consumer trust. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the popularity of e-commerce has grown significantly. However, it does not mean consumers have become more trustworthy towards online stores. Many individuals are wary about new companies they would be interested to make a purchase from. They usually tend to do more research before reaching their decision. Thus, companies should try to reduce possible uncertainties customers might have towards their products.

Nowadays there are different types of certificates and badges companies can add to their website to show their trustworthiness to customers. For instance, there are different types of trust certificates which show companies are following set rules and laws while conducting business. Some countries and territories have their own certificates which binds companies to follow mutual guidelines. With well-known certificates, websites could attract more visitors and revenue might get higher.

Other good additions could be badges about safe checkout procedures. The commissioner has informed about safe check out in their website but having it presented visually could increase purchasing customers. Having a well-known badge could give encouragement for uncertain customers and it could decrease risk levels. Accepted payment badges should also be added to the webstore. For example, BSRS accepts PayPal as a payment method, but it has not been visually shown. Some customers might not be able to find payment information from the webstore with their limited language skills. These before-mentioned badges and certificates should be added to the end of the page where they are clearly visible. By increasing authenticity, sales could also increase.

## 6.6 Final discussion for the future studies

For this thesis, the research question was: *How to enhance the sales of an online store by attracting customers from Germany?* To answer this question, the author designed two different surveys along with an interview. After analyzing received data, the author drew conclusions and gave four different recommendations to the commissioner. First recommendation was to add customer reviews to their website. This could help customers while they are collecting information to back up their purchase decision. Second recommendation was to reduce delivery costs. There were a few different examples how these costs could be reduced. It might help to draw more customers from Germany if their freight costs were lower.

Third recommendation was to have German customer service. Because many consumers do not feel comfortable to use English while communicating with companies, they would rather use their native language. Customer service could be integrated together with a warehouse which was part of the second recommendation to lower delivery costs. In addition to customer service responsibilities, employees could also handle shipments and orders. Final recommendation was to add certificates and badges to the webstore. This could help increase trustworthiness of online stores and attract more customers. As the commissioner is already accepting most payment methods, they could add their badges on the website. Thus, customers with lower levels of language skills would be able to perceive them clearly.

As mentioned above, this thesis had four different objectives to fulfil on top of answering the research question. First objective was about customer journey to commissioner's website. After making their initial research, customers could come to website from a simple internet search or by a recommendation from a friend. Majority of respondents informed they used BSRS's online store because it is the official band webstore. Thus, it could be seen as one of the biggest fun-

nels which will guide customers to commissioner's webstore. Which is why objective one has been met. Second objective was to gain understanding of customer behavior. Author has presented data and analysis how customers make their purchase decisions. The factors which affect this decision have also been identified and listed. Thus, second objective has also been met.

Third objective was to investigate how many customers are returning to the company's online store. When asked from existing customers, 24 respondents informed they have bought merchandise from the commissioner's online store one to five times. Furthermore, thirteen customers informed they have made a purchase at least six to ten times. There were also two individuals who had purchased goods eleven to fifteen times from BSRs's online store. Thus, most of customers are returning commissioner's online store quite regularly. Unfortunately, there were only 39 respondents which make it hard to draw any solid conclusion for third objective. Also, there were no additional information about how many times those 24 respondents have bought from the company's webstore. Thus, author cannot give solid proof they have made a purchase more than once.

Final objective was to find out if there is a need for a webstore in the German language. There were a few respondents who preferred to use websites which are available in their native language. Thus, it would be beneficial for the commissioner if they had an online store in German. This would also include customer service which would help consumers if they had any problems or enquiries. It would be safe to say, having German customer service and a web store would be beneficial for the commissioner. Hence, the final objective of this thesis was also met.

With these four different recommendations as well as objectives, the author assumes there was an answer to the research question. Still, there were a few limitations which have been discussed above. Unfortunately, due to low response rates there were some issues which did not give broad understanding about the situation. Thus, there are some recommendations for future studies. For instance,

there were some individuals who did not feel comfortable using a Finnish online store. There should be further research about why these consumers are feeling this way. If it is due to long delivery times or high delivery costs, there should be additional research about how long customers are willing to wait for their shipments even if the delivery is cheap. Lastly, researchers should try to find out how companies would be able to encourage customers to leave feedback. As most customers are monitoring WOM, they should be willing to give reviews themselves. If more consumers will give open feedback to companies and their products, operations will become more transparent. Thus, customers would be able to trust online stores even more than now.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Prospecting types

The type of prospecting	Additional information
<b>Advisor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has every good quality of all prospecting types</li> <li>• asks and listens</li> <li>• trying to find the perfect solution for prospect's needs</li> <li>• encounters very little objections and resistance</li> </ul>
<b>Sprinter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quantity over quality</li> <li>• talks fast and does not listen prospects</li> <li>• focuses only giving the pitch, not the resolution</li> <li>• more objections and resistance</li> </ul>
<b>Educator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• widespread industry knowledge</li> <li>• tells every little detail on product/service</li> <li>• focus on educating, not selling</li> <li>• too much information to process -&gt; longer sales cycle and more objections</li> </ul>
<b>Pleaser</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wants to make customer happy</li> <li>• easily intimidated by prospects</li> <li>• no questions, only listens</li> <li>• sees only objections, not possibilities</li> </ul>
<b>Pusher</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focus on sales, not making lasting relationships</li> <li>• individual needs are more important than customers</li> <li>• more cancellations than other prospector types</li> <li>• feels like there is only one shot with every prospect</li> </ul>
<b>Copier</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focuses on getting the perfect pitch</li> <li>• does not trust their own communication style</li> <li>• do not focus enough on prospecting</li> <li>• does not want to face objections</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2. Survey for current customers.

1(5)

## Backstage Rock Shop online shopping survey

Dear respondent,

I'm Nina Sjöroos, currently studying Master of Business Administration in Tampere University of Applied Sciences. I'm writing a thesis on German customer journey and behavior to gain a better understanding of a purchase process. This thesis is done for Backstage Rock Shop Oy, a company that sells and markets fan goods for bands. The data received from this survey will be used for a master's thesis analysis and will be presented without personal information, such as email address, phone number etc. Personal data won't be forwarded to other parties or used in any marketing purposes by the thesis writer.

Check out the company's website here: <https://www.backstagerockshop.com/>  
(<https://www.backstagerockshop.com/>).

Thank you for your help.

\* Pakollinen

1. What gender do you identify as? \*

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. Please give the postal code of the city you live in Germany? \*

If you've moved to abroad, you can write down the last city you lived in before moving.

2(5)

3. What is your date of birth? \*

Muoto: kk/p/vvvv

4. Do you prefer to shop online or offline? \*

- ☐ Online
- ☐ Offline
- ☐ Both

5. How often do you buy products online? \*

- ☐ Less than once a month
- ☐ Once or twice a month
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Several times in a week

6. Where do you usually search for products before making the decision to purchase? \*

You can choose multiple options.

- ☐ Internet search (Google, Bing, etc.)
- ☐ Company social media pages (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- ☐ Influencers (Blogs, vlogs, etc.)
- ☐ Customer reviews and feedback (Trustpilot, etc.)
- ☐ Recommendations from friends, family, coworkers, etc.
- ☐

## 7. How do you decide what store to purchase from? \*

You can choose multiple options.

- ☐ Prices
- ☐ Delivery time
- ☐ Delivery cost
- ☐ Customer reviews
- ☐ Local shop
- ☐ Web store available in your native language
- ☐ Customer service available in your native language
- ☐

Muu

## 8. Do you usually give a review on a product you've bought? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Depends on a product

## 9. If you said yes, what kind of review you usually give?

You can choose multiple options.

- ☐ I liked the the product
- ☐ I didn't like the product
- ☐ I want to help other customers to make the decision to purchase
- ☐ I want to give feedback to the store
- ☐ There was a problem with a product
- ☐ Good customer service
- ☐ It's a habit of mine to give feedback after a purchase
- ☐

Muu

## 10. How did you find out about Backstage Rock Shop? \*

You can choose multiple options.

- ☐ Backstage Rock Shop's social media channels
- ☐ Band social media channels and/or website
- ☐ Heard it from a friend, family, coworker, etc.
- ☐ Internet search (Google, Bing, etc.)
- ☐ Saw an advertisement online
- ☐

11. Approximately how many times have you purchased band goods from Backstage Rock Shop online store? \*

- ☐ 1-5 time
- ☐ 6-10 times
- ☐ 11-15 times
- ☐ More than 15 times

12. How satisfied are you with Backstage Rock Shop's purchase process? \*

- ☐ Very unsatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat unsatisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Very satisfied

13. Are you satisfied with the variety of products in Backstage Rock Shop webstore? \*

- ☐ Very unsatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat unsatisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Very satisfied

14. What affected your decision to buy band goods from Backstage Rock Shop compared to other companies? \*

You can choose multiple options.

- ☐ Prices
- ☐ Official web store for a band
- ☐ Delivery time
- ☐ Delivery cost
- ☐ Variety of different products
- ☐ Quality of products
- ☐ Customer reviews
- ☐ Promotions
- ☐

Muu

15. To what extent does Backstage Rock Shop's social media presence influence your purchasing decision? \*

- ☐ Very unlikely
- ☐ Somewhat unlikely
- ☐ Neither likely nor unlikely
- ☐ Somewhat likely
- ☐ Very likely

16. Where do you usually see Backstage Rock Shop's advertisements? \*

You can choose multiple options.

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Email newsletter
- ☐ Internet search
- ☐ Band social media platforms
- ☐

Music

17. Would you recommend others to buy fan products from Backstage Rock Shop? \*

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Very unlikely

Very likely

18. Comments.

## Appendix 3. Survey for possible customers

1(5)

# Online shopping behavior survey

Dear respondent,

I'm Nina Sjöroos, currently studying Master of Business Administration in Tampere University of Applied Sciences. I'm writing a thesis on German customer journey and behavior to gain a better understanding of a purchase process. This thesis is done for Backstage Rock Shop Oy, a company that sells and markets fan goods for bands. The data received from this survey will be used for a master's thesis analysis and will be presented without personal information, such as email address, phone number etc. Personal data won't be forwarded to other parties or used in any marketing purposes by the thesis writer.

Check out the company's website here: <https://www.backstagerockshop.com/>  
(<https://www.backstagerockshop.com/>).

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1. What gender do you identify as? \*

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. Please give the postal code of the city you live in Germany? \*

If you've moved to abroad, you can write down the last city you lived in before moving.

3. What is your date of birth? \*

Muoto: kk/p/vvvv

4. What genre of music do you listen to? \*

☐ Pop

☐ Rock

☐ Country

☐ Punk

☐ Jazz

☐ Classical

☐ Rap

☐

Muu

5. Do you prefer to shop online or offline? \*

☐ Online

☐ Offline

☐ Both

6. How often do you buy products online? \*

☐ I never buy products online

☐ Less than once a month

☐ Once or twice a month

☐ Once a week

☐ Several times in a week

7. Are you comfortable to buy products from a Finnish online store? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. Where do you usually search for products before making the decision to purchase? \*

You can choose multiple options.

- ☐ Internet search (Google, Bing, etc.)
- ☐ Online store
- ☐ Company social media pages (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- ☐ Influencers (Blogs, vlogs, etc.)
- ☐ Customer reviews and feedback (Trustpilot, etc.)
- ☐ Recommendations from friends, family, coworkers, etc.
- ☐

9. What affects your decision to buy? \*

You can choose multiple options.

- ☐ Prices
- ☐ Estimated delivery time
- ☐ Delivery cost
- ☐ Customer reviews
- ☐ Local shop
- ☐ Web store available in your native language
- ☐ Customer service available in your native language
- ☐

Muu

10. Do you usually give a review on a product you've bought? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Depends on a product

11. If you said yes, what kind of review you usually give?

You can choose multiple options

- ☐ I liked the the product
- ☐ I didn't like the product
- ☐ The quality was good
- ☐ The quality was bad
- ☐ I want to help other customers to make the decision to purchase
- ☐ I want to give feedback to the store
- ☐ There was a problem with a product
- ☐ Good customer service
- ☐ It's a habit of mine to give feedback after a purchase
- ☐

Muu

12. Do you usually buy band merchandise such as t-shirts and hoodies? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. Where do you usually buy band products?

You can choose multiple options.

- ☐ Band social media (Instagram, Twitter, etc.)
- ☐ Concert
- ☐ Second hand store platforms
- ☐ Online (other than band site)
- ☐ Offline (local store, etc.)
- ☐

Muu

14. Have you heard about Backstage Rock Shop before? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16. Have you ever made a purchase in Backstage Rock Shop online store? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

17. If you said yes, approximately how many times have you purchased band goods from Backstage Rock Shop's online store?

☐ 1-5 times

☐ 6-10 times

☐ More than 10 times

18. What are the most important factors for you when you buy band merchandise? \*

You can choose multiple options.

☐ Prices

☐ The store has the products I like

☐ Variety of products

☐ Fast delivery

☐ Low delivery cost

☐ Easy payment methods

☐ Good customer service

☐ Web store language

☐

Muu

19. Comments.

## Appendix 4. Interview questions

1(2)

Interview question	Connection to theory
What channels do you use to discover new products?	Chapter 2.2.2 Customer journey, pre-purchase stage Chapter 2.2.5 Customer journey touchpoints
What do you research about a product before purchasing it?	Chapter 2.2.2 Customer journey, pre-purchase stage Chapter 2.2.5 Customer journey touchpoints
What type of product do you research the most before purchase?	Chapter 2.2.2 Customer journey, pre-purchase stage Chapter 2.3.5 Prospecting, high- and low-involvement products
What influences you to purchase a product online?	Chapter 2.1.2 Digital marketing, social media marketing Chapter 2.1.3 Digital marketing, omnichannel marketing Chapter 2.2.2 Customer journey, pre-purchase stage Chapter 2.2.5 Customer journey, touchpoints
What makes you not want to buy a product online?	Chapter 2.2.2 Customer journey, pre-purchase stage
What makes you purchase again from the same company?	Chapter 2.2.4 Customer journey, post-purchase stage Chapter 2.3 Prospecting

Have you purchased band merchandise before?	Chapter 2.2.3 Customer journey, purchase stage  Chapter 2.3 Prospecting
How did you make the decision where to buy them?	Chapter 2.2.2 Customer journey, pre-purchase stage  Chapter 2.2.5 Customer journey touchpoints  Chapter 2.3 Prospecting
What communication channels would you prefer companies to use?	Chapter 2.1.2 Digital marketing, social media marketing  Chapter 2.1.3 Digital marketing, omnichannel marketing  Chapter 2.2.5 Customer journey, touchpoints
How would you compare German customer behavior to other European countries?	Chapter 2.3 Prospecting

## Appendix 5. Responses from current customers

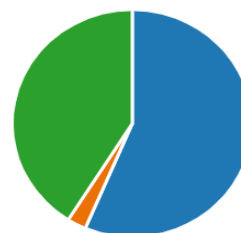
1(4)

Gender	Postal code	Date of birth	Age
Female	89075	6.1.1993	28
Male	13156	30.7.1976	45
Female	83059	1.10.1983	38
Female	47589	25.10.1971	50
Male	08468	22.12.2021	Incorrect
Male	79291	8.6.1971	50
Female	55218	16.6.1978	43
Male	04318	17.10.1985	36
Female	10247	13.12.1980	40
Male	50937	6.5.1966	55
Female	56566	10.8.1983	38
Female	37696	23.6.1970	51
Male	87742	19.10.1994	27
Female	90556	10.2.1992	29
Male	04347	10.2.1994	27
Male	91341	5.3.1992	29
Female	53359	19.11.1997	23
Female	99734	11.10.2021	Incorrect
Male	04357	10.8.1978	43
Male	97199	28.11.2001	19
Female	75015	8.9.1994	27
Female	91249	19.10.1982	39
Male	21683	28.10.1972	49
Male	56821	15.1.1971	50
Male	50735	15.12.1978	42
Prefer not to say	96050	14.12.1992	28
Female	38108	8.7.1980	41
Male	73760	3.10.1977	44
Male	59174	15.6.1977	44
Male	75417	24.2.1982	39
Female	38678	11.1.1970	51
Male	66693	14.12.1960	60
Male	04827	26.2.1979	42
Female	Munich 80995	17.3.1974	47
Male	63303	7.6.1977	44
Male	71126	26.5.1968	53
Male	50937	17.8.1976	45
Female	91058	17.11.1970	50
Female	41379	26.7.1982	39

## 4. Do you prefer to shop online or offline?

[Lisätietoja](#)

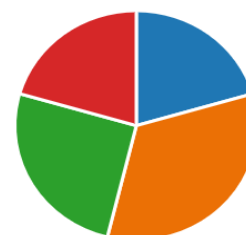
Online	22
Offline	1
Both	16



## 5. How often do you buy products online?

[Lisätietoja](#)

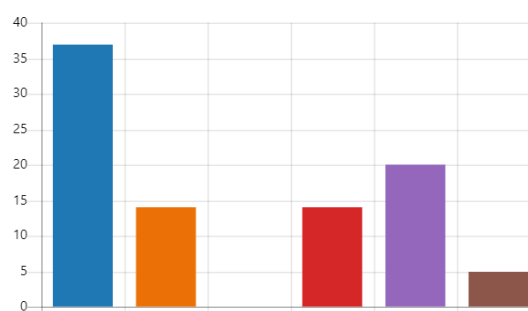
Less than once a month	8
Once or twice a month	13
Once a week	10
Several times in a week	8



## 6. Where do you usually search for products before making the decision to purchase?

[Lisätietoja](#)

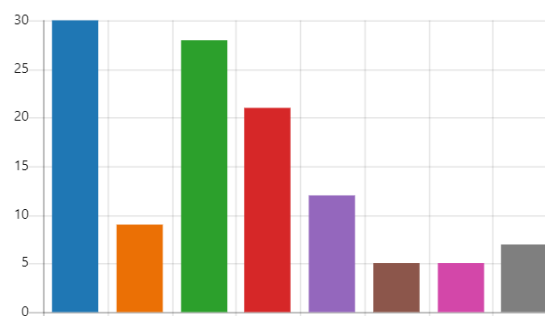
Internet search (Google, Bing, ...)	37
Company social media pages (...)	14
Influencers (Blogs, vlogs, etc.)	0
Customer reviews and feedback	14
Recommendations from friends	20
Muu	5



## 7. How do you decide what store to purchase from?

[Lisätietoja](#)

Prices	30
Delivery time	9
Delivery cost	28
Customer reviews	21
Local shop	12
Web store available in your neighborhood	5
Customer service available in your neighborhood	5
Muu	7



## 8. Do you usually give a review on a product you've bought?

[Lisätietoja](#)

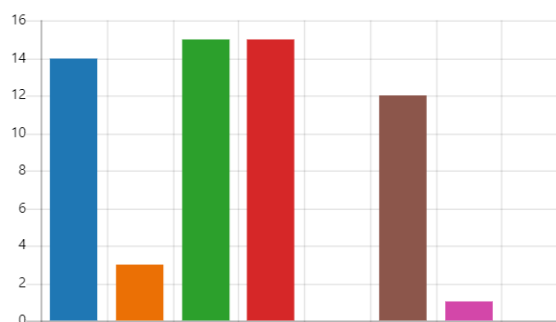
Yes	4
No	10
Depends on a product	25



## 9. If you said yes, what kind of review you usually give?

[Lisätietoja](#)

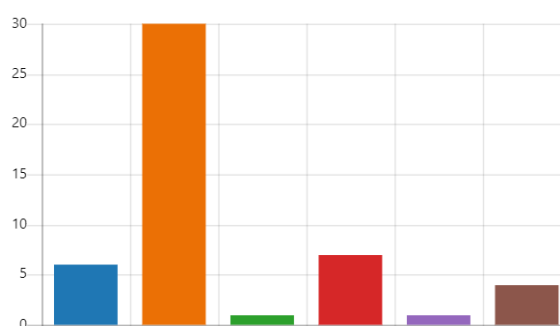
I liked the the product	14
I didn't like the product	3
I want to help other customer...	15
I want to give feedback to the...	15
There was a problem with a pr...	0
Good customer service	12
It's a habit of mine to give fee...	1
Muu	0



## 10. How did you find out about Backstage Rock Shop?

[Lisätietoja](#)

Backstage Rock Shop's social ...	6
Band social media channels a...	30
Heard it from a friend, family, ...	1
Internet search (Google, Bing, ...	7
Saw an advertisement online	1
Muu	4



## 11. Approximately how many times have you purchased band goods from Backstage Rock Shop online store?

[Lisätietoja](#)

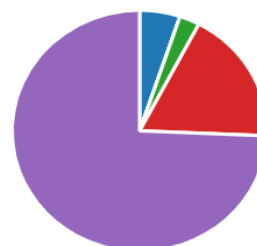
1-5 time	24
6-10 times	13
11-15 times	2
More than 15 times	0



## 12. How satisfied are you with Backstage Rock Shop's purchase process?

[Lisätietoja](#)

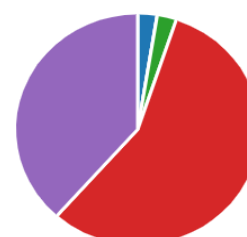
Very unsatisfied	2
Somewhat unsatisfied	0
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	1
Somewhat satisfied	7
Very satisfied	29



## 13. Are you satisfied with the variety of products in Backstage Rock Shop webstore?

[Lisätietoja](#)

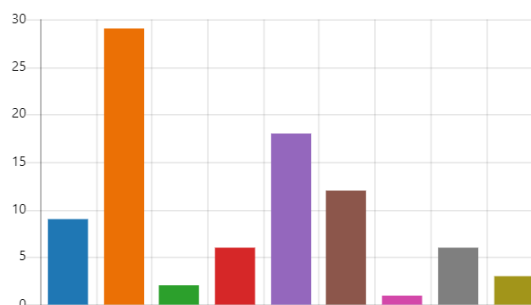
Very unsatisfied	1
Somewhat unsatisfied	0
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	1
Somewhat satisfied	22
Very satisfied	15



14. What affected your decision to buy band goods from Backstage Rock Shop compared to other companies?

[Lisätietoja](#)

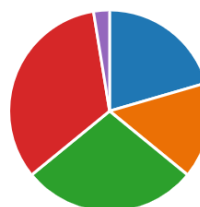
Prices	9
Official web store for a band	29
Delivery time	2
Delivery cost	6
Variety of different products	18
Quality of products	12
Customer reviews	1
Promotions	6
Muu	3



15. To what extent does Backstage Rock Shop's social media presence influence your purchasing decision?

[Lisätietoja](#)

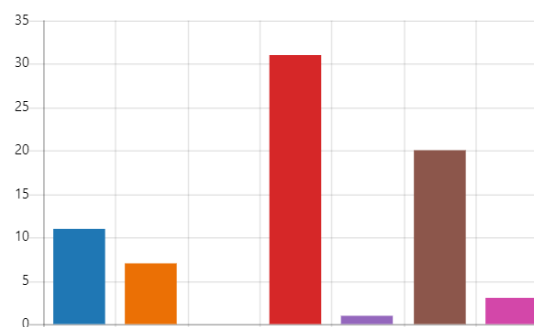
Very unlikely	8
Somewhat unlikely	6
Neither likely nor unlikely	11
Somewhat likely	13
Very likely	1



16. Where do you usually see Backstage Rock Shop's advertisements?

[Lisätietoja](#)

Facebook	11
Instagram	7
Twitter	0
Email newsletter	31
Internet search	1
Band social media platforms	20
Muu	3

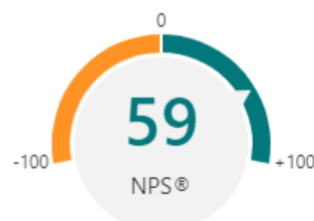


17. Would you recommend others to buy fan products from Backstage Rock Shop?

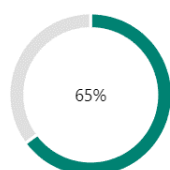
[Lisätietoja](#)

[Insights](#)

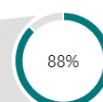
Markkinoijat	25
Passiiviset	12
Kritisoijat	2



65 % vastaajista on **Markkinoijan vastaus** tähän kysymykseen, ja enemmistö vastasi "**Very satisfied**" kysymykseen 12.



65 % vastaajista vastasi Markkinoijan vastaus kysymykseen kysymys 17



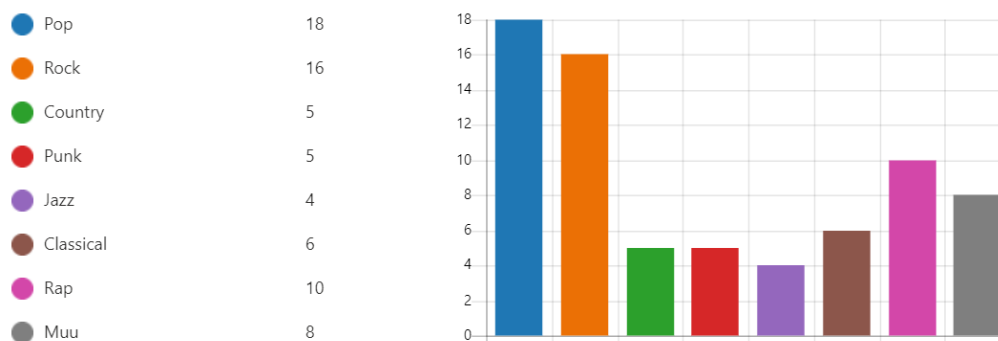
88 % heistä vastasi Very satisfied kysymykseen kysymys 12

## Appendix 6. Responses from possible customers

1(4)

Gender	Postal code	Date of birth	Age
Female	69483	16.5.1991	30
Female	97688	19.1.1997	24
Female	97688	11.12.1997	23
Female	97688	22.3.1997	24
Female	89075	6.1.1993	28
Female	89075	5.1.1955	66
Female	73489	7.11.1996	24
Male	97082	29.6.1997	24
Female	55545	21.2.1989	32
Male	87435	30.8.1991	30
Female	44147	13.12.1995	25
Male	85757	31.3.1993	28
Male	81735	22.1.1997	24
Male	81373	2.8.1996	25
Male	85221	7.5.1988	33
Male	81379	18.4.1997	24
Male	10715	23.12.1996	24
Male	98574	19.3.1996	25
Female	98593	20.5.1997	24
Female	38122	15.7.1996	25
Male	86156	20.4.1994	27
Male	81735	29.6.1997	24
Male	81373	30.3.1991	30
Male	56350	16.11.1984	36
Female	87639	25.8.1993	28
Male	80331	22.8.1979	42

## 4. What genre of music do you listen to?

[Lisätietoja](#)

## 5. Do you prefer to shop online or offline?

[Lisätietoja](#)[Insights](#)

Online	7
Offline	4
Both	15



## 6. How often do you buy products online?

[Lisätietoja](#)[Insights](#)

I never buy products online	0
Less than once a month	5
Once or twice a month	12
Once a week	9
Several times in a week	0



## 7. Are you comfortable to buy products from a Finnish online store?

[Lisätietoja](#)[Insights](#)

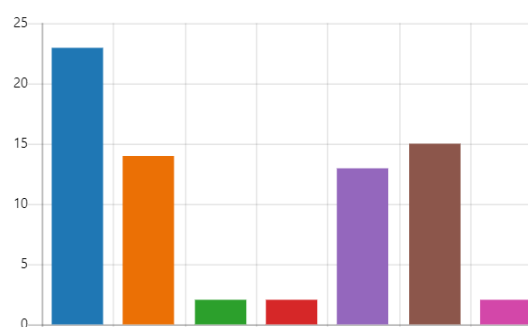
Yes	18
No	8



## 8. Where do you usually search for products before making the decision to purchase?

[Lisätietoja](#)

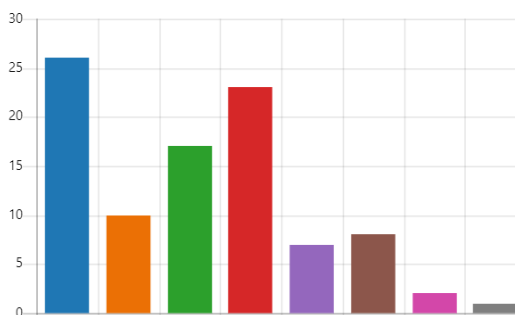
Internet search (Google, Bing, ...)	23
Online store	14
Company social media pages (...)	2
Influencers (Blogs, vlogs, etc.)	2
Customer reviews and feedba...	13
Recommendations from frien...	15
Muu	2



## 9. What affects your decision to buy?

[Lisätietoja](#)

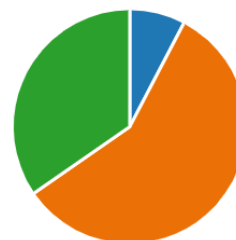
Prices	26
Estimated delivery time	10
Delivery cost	17
Customer reviews	23
Local shop	7
Web store available in your na...	8
Customer service available in ...	2
Muu	1



## 10. Do you usually give a review on a product you've bought?

[Lisätietoja](#) Insights

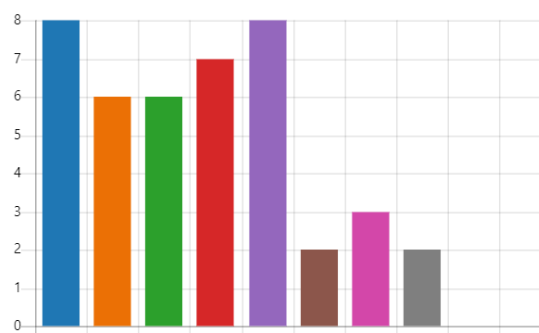
Yes	2
No	15
Depends on a product	9



## 11. If you said yes, what kind of review you usually give?

[Lisätietoja](#)

I liked the the product	8
I didn't like the product	6
The quality was good	6
The quality was bad	7
I want to help other customer...	8
I want to give feedback to the...	2
There was a problem with a pr...	3
Good customer service	2
It's a habit of mine to give fee...	0
Muu	0



## 12. Do you usually buy band merchandise such as t-shirts and hoodies?

[Lisätietoja](#) Insights

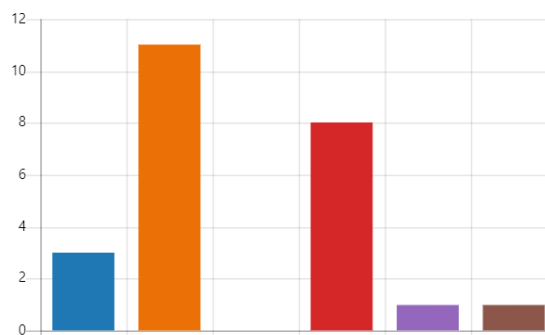
Yes	8
No	18



## 13. Where do you usually buy band products?

[Lisätietoja](#)

Band social media (Instagram,...	3
Concert	11
Second hand store platforms	0
Online (other than band site)	8
Offline (local store, etc.)	1
Muu	1



## 14. Have you heard about Backstage Rock Shop before?






[Lisätietoja](#) Insights

 Yes	2
 No	24



## 15. If you said yes, where did you hear about Backstage Rock Shop?


[Lisätietoja](#)

 Internet search	0
 Social media	2
 Heard from a friend, family, etc.	1
 Band website	3
 Muu	0



## 16. Have you ever made a purchase in Backstage Rock Shop online store?



[Lisätietoja](#)

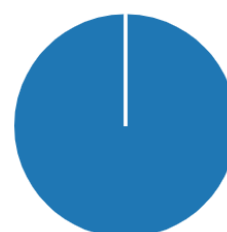
 Yes	1
 No	25



## 17. If you said yes, approximately how many times have you purchased band goods from Backstage Rock Shop's online store?










[Lisätietoja](#)

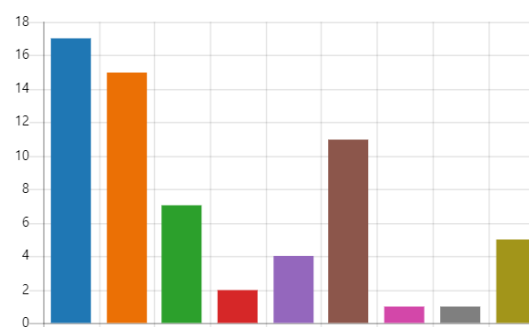
 1-5 times	1
 6-10 times	0
 More than 10 times	0



## 18. What are the most important factors for you when you buy band merchandise?

[Lisätietoja](#)

 Prices	17
 The store has the products I like	15
 Variety of products	7
 Fast delivery	2
 Low delivery cost	4
 Easy payment methods	11
 Good customer service	1
 Web store language	1
 Muu	5



## Appendix 7. Interview answers

1(6)

Respondent	Answers
<b>Male, 27 years old</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amazon.</li> <li>2. Quality, alternatives, reviews.</li> <li>3. Products which will be used long.</li> <li>4. Needn't leave the house - good price/value.</li> <li>5. When I'm not sure if it's the right product - when I want to support locals.</li> <li>6. Good quality.</li> <li>7. No.</li> <li>8. If I did, I'd prefer a site where I already have an account.</li> <li>9. Twitter.</li> <li>10. Quality oriented - environment friendly oriented.</li> </ol>
<b>Female, 25 years old</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mostly recommendations from friends or I search in online stores.</li> <li>2. I research the price, and whether I can buy it Second hand or not (books, household items). If possible, I prefer to get secondhand stuff. Depends on the product but sometimes I read the reviews on Amazon or the online store website.</li> <li>3. Electronic devices, I guess.</li> <li>4. I buy stuff online when I can't buy it offline, so availability, I guess. Also, when stuff is second hand and environmentally friendly.</li> <li>5. Regarding clothes, I don't like that I can't try it on before and I don't like to send stuff back a lot. Also, I don't want to buy it online when I can buy it in a shop nearby. And I feel bad when I purchase something from the other side of the globe because I guess that's bad for the environment (even though that's how it's done anywhere I guess).</li> <li>6. When I like the product quality and they have other stuff to offer that I like. Also, when the delivery is without Problems (doesn't necessarily mean it has to be fast).</li> <li>7. Yes, I have, but mostly on concerts and before that as a teenager I purchased stuff from a catalogue called EMP. They are online as well now, but I didn't buy band merch for quite a while now.</li> <li>8. On concerts it depends on how much I like the music, the Design, the length of the queue and whether I carry enough cash.</li> <li>9. Online stores as information pools are fine, I guess. I don't need commercials on social media, but I just don't use social media that much, so I guess I'm Not the target group.</li> <li>10. I don't know about other countries in Europe. Germany is still very cash based and there are maybe</li> </ol>

	<p>still often real-life shops with online shops instead of just online shops. But during the pandemic many shops had to close, so it's changing, I guess. There Are some trends of ecologically and environmentally friendly products, but also often cheapest is best, depends on the target group.</p>
<b>Female, 32 years old</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social media, web search and web shops.</li> <li>2. Product itself, customer reviews, if there are any alternatives in Amazon and quality. And maybe what other products I could be interested in same website.</li> <li>3. Clothes, because I don't buy them often. Compare prices between companies. I spend a lot of time to think about if I want it or not.</li> <li>4. How much does the product cost, if there's a free delivery, good return policy, sizing matches the description, customer service contact information should be easily visible, company location and information as increases the trust.</li> <li>5. If the company address is in a country where I don't know how the rules are. In EU, I know we have the EU laws but outside EU I'm not sure how it's going to work. I'm also checking how does the website looks like. If it looks weird, I don't feel comfortable to use it. I usually search for companies and websites to check if they're real or not. I don't want to buy from anywhere I'm not sure about.</li> <li>6. If the product looks like in the pictures. Because we know how they're lit up and colors are nice, so it makes me happy to receive a product which looks just like in the pictures. Also, the quality is important.</li> <li>7. Yes. I've bought too much of them actually. I bought them from a concert and EMP. Also, I bought from a band website as it's a quite small named one.</li> <li>8. When you're in a concert it's like a spontaneous choice to buy them. When you order online you've more time to research and think if you really want it. The price needs to be correct, and the shop needs to be trustworthy. For example, I already know EMP and I know I'll get the stuff I ordered from them.</li> <li>9. Social media is the best. I don't like those pop-up ads which come from some pages. I think email should be mostly used for communicating if I've actually bought a product from a store and I've some questions about it. Social media could be used for fun images and so on.</li> <li>10. Many customers prefer to use German while communicating with customer service. Many use a translator while writing English which can make the sentences look weird. Also, customers are very fact and time based. If we get instructions or schedules, we want to strictly follow them. However, we tend to be quite polite and patient while communicating. Some</li> </ol>

	customers might be pushy if you don't contact them quickly enough after their message.
<b>Male, 23 years old</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When it comes to products within one category (e.g., clothes) I mainly use online shopping apps and see what they have to offer/ what's new/ is there a special deal on an item? When looking for new product categories I use social media apps and ads on them for new products (e.g., from start-ups) that might interest me and then I do further research on their homepage. I am also (heavily) influenced by word of mouth (e.g., if friends tell me about a new product, they bought I ask them further questions about) then I do more research also on the company's homepage.</li> <li>2. Competitors that might offer a similar product then weighing price-quality differences and think about on which of the both factors I set my focus. Features (e.g., for functional clothing – are they water resistant, what material are they made of, amount of pockets). Discounts on other online platforms/ from influencers/ end-of-season-sales/ special days like Amazon prime day or black Friday when it is a rather expensive item.</li> <li>3. Technology (features, discounts from other distributors). Cars (haven't bought a car yet myself but since I am interested in them and it is about safety &amp; a long-term commitment). Generally, the higher the price the more research I do on the product's features/alternatives/discounts/etc.</li> <li>4. The convenience. Since most/probably all research I do on products is online (unless I am already deep in the purchase funnel of a very expensive product like a car or technology like a phone or new computer I usually additionally consult an expert of the shop). I also then buy it online since the platform I get my information from about the product usually offers a shop right away – very convenient &amp; I have assurance the product will be the same as in my research.</li> <li>5. Lack of reliable and respectable information. Complexity of that information when I would feel safer consulting an expert on the matter to give me advice and explain the product to me.</li> <li>6. If they hold their promises regarding prices/ quality/ delivery time/ warranty/ exchange. User-friendliness/ easy to use/ sometimes but less so discounts or other rewards for being loyal and buying more often. Knowledge about the possibility to contact the company easily in case of problems (things like only being available via e.g., ChatBot or customer-request form usually "turns me off").</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Yes, but at a stall at a festival in Germany (I do not even listen to that very band, but I wanted a souvenir).</li> <li>8. It was more or less an impulse purchase, so I did not do any research. I just went to the nearest stall (also to my knowledge, prices at the different stalls across a festival do not differ much so did not consider possible savings from buying it somewhere else).</li> <li>9. Social media because there is the quickest/ almost immediate access to the online shop. Ads do not really work for me since I am using an Ad-Blocker and anything else then online (social media) never caught me in an extend that actually made me buy a product (e.g., posters in the city centre). Emails-marketing usually annoys me but I still subscribed to newsletter (not necessarily to get the newest products but only for potential discounts &amp; to see quickly what kind of products they are offering right now).</li> <li>10. Having lived with a German and a French roommate I can say that we Germans usually go for quantity and low prices when it comes to groceries (mainly food), the French roommate however valued high quality food a lot more was willing, even insisting to pay more to have a certain quality (e.g., he insisted on buying Dijon mustard because anything else is not mustard to him)</li> </ol> <p>o He is also willing to pay for wine in a restaurant for a casual dinner when I would go for a water, I would probably on pay for alcohol (beer/wine) in restaurant when it is a special occasion</p> <p>I also guess that we Germans think generally more about a purchase when it exceeds a certain amount of money or is of lesser relevance whereas e.g., Italians (by the way same as the French roommate when it comes to food) are more easily convinced (but also only until a certain price or level of relevance to them). We are probably also less into fashion when compared especially with Italians and French people, however we are more into fashion than people from Scandinavian countries (but this is highly subjective because I can only judge by the look of the people in the streets from the time spent half a year in Tampere, Finland) which is not to be meant unfashionable or ugly but I feel in Finland people were buying clothes because of functionality, because they were part of a group (e.g., students of a university wearing university merchandise or punks), or because it probably was cheap.</p>
<b>Male, 31 years old</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Google search, ask recommendations from friends and I follow Twitter regularly.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Where it has been made and what is the best price to buy.</li> <li>3. Electronical products, home appliances and anything which costs more than 100 €.</li> <li>4. Price and delivery time. I usually want to have the delivery for free.</li> <li>5. Negative recommendations and if the delivery take too long.</li> <li>6. If the company is trustworthy and quality is good. Also some companies have their own products which are not available in other online stores.</li> <li>7. Yes, multiple times.</li> <li>8. I wanted to have band t-shirt after attending to their concert.</li> <li>9. Facebook, Twitter and maybe Instagram. I don't usually sign up for any email groups or so on because I hate getting too much email.</li> <li>10. We are used to having customer service in our own native language. Also, I think we like short delivery times especially if we order something expensive.</li> </ol>
<b>Female, 33 years old</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Instagram, amazon, friend requests, I also like to go to actual stores.</li> <li>2. Material (is it sustainable), price, user reviews.</li> <li>3. Tech products, like a new phone, laptop, etc.</li> <li>4. Price, delivery time and cost of delivery.</li> <li>5. Long delivery times and bad reviews.</li> <li>6. Great customer service, like fast delivery, neat packaging, gift for first time buyer and price reduction for return customer.</li> <li>7. Yes.</li> <li>8. It was a snapshot decision because I bought at the concert.</li> <li>9. Social Media. I am really annoyed by e-mail marketing.</li> <li>10. Germans are used to short delivery times, because many people use amazon prime and other German online stores also offer quick delivery for free because of that. We don't like to wait and are not used to it. Also, Germans are super surprised by great customer service, we usually expect 0, because we are used to complicated procedures at Deutsche Post, German banks, etc. Germans like to show off, be it with cars, clothes, tech products etc. - so for many it is important that a product looks pricy or is unique. Especially younger German customers start to pay attention to how sustainable products are - in terms of material, packaging, energy use, etc.</li> </ol>
<b>Female, 29 years old</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amazon, online stores, social media, I follow a few influencers and sometimes I see them recommending interesting products.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. I usually want to know about quality and if it's worth the price. If it's a thing I want to use a long time, I want to read a lot of reviews from others.</li> <li>3. Mostly clothes, electronics and maybe furniture.</li> <li>4. If the order process is easy to complete and shipping is not too expensive.</li> <li>5. I don't order online if I'm not sure I want to keep it and if it fits me.</li> <li>6. If the quality is good and order process is easy.</li> <li>7. Yes, I bought from EMP a few years ago. I also like to buy t-shirts from concerts but due to pandemic it's not possible now.</li> <li>8. I liked the bands and wanted to support them. Maybe it could also be a statement that I like them while wearing shirts.</li> <li>9. Maybe Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. I don't really like pop-up ads while scrolling through social media.</li> <li>10. I'm not so sure. Maybe we are punctual and want our items when it has been promised. I really hate late deliveries. Also, I think quality is important most of the time.</li> </ol>
<b>Male, 25 years old</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Internet search, social media, and celebrities.</li> <li>2. Price and quality. I also read feedback and recommendation from internet. I also like those Youtube videos if someone has posted it for the products, I'm interested in.</li> <li>3. Electrical products like phones and computers.</li> <li>4. Promotions and if it's easy. Sometimes some products are not available at the store, so you have to order them online.</li> <li>5. If I'm not sure about the products. Usually if it's expensive I want to see it physically before I can make my decision.</li> <li>6. If they have the products I like, and the process is easy. I like those companies where you can have your own user account and don't have to fill up your information every time you make a purchase.</li> <li>7. Yes.</li> <li>8. Usually, I buy them after a concert. It's easier to order them online as you don't have to wait in a line and use cash.</li> <li>9. Social media like Facebook and Instagram.</li> <li>10. Maybe they want to have good customer service if something goes wrong. And usually, products ordered online came fast so maybe short delivery times.</li> </ol>