EMARKETING - THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO MARKETING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

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Rob Stokes
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Business



Book: eMarketing - The Essential Guide to Marketing in a Digital World (Stokes)

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Think

Introduction to Think

It seems too obvious to mention, but the foundation of consistently successful marketing communications lies in thorough planning and strategic preparation. Before you execute digital campaigns, you need to plan them. You need to research and understand your product, your communication challenge, your market, your competitors and, of course, your consumers. We call planning, strategy and research **Think**.

Think is the first step in a strategic process:

- 1. **Think**: Research, plan and strategise. Use the opportunities of digital to meet communication, market and product challenges. Plan assets and campaigns.
- 2. **Create**: Make beautiful assets, from websites and videos to banner adverts and applications.
- 3. **Engage**: Use channels to drive traffic to those assets and build relationships with customers.
- 4. **Optimise**: Track and analyse to understand how assets and campaigns are performing. Derive insight to improve and test assets and campaigns.

The first section of this book is devoted to Think.

Digital Marketing Strategy tackles how the Internet has changed and challenged the world in which we market, and how best to use digital tools and tactics for effective marketing strategies.

Market Research unpacks how to use the Internet to understand audiences and campaigns. The Internet was originally developed as an academic tool for sharing research. This is ideal for savvy marketers — this chapter addresses some considerations for online market research.

Content Marketing Strategy lays out the building blocks for effectively using content, not advertising, to reach audiences. Brands are required to think like publishers – which means a consideration of far more than just the end product. Content targeting, production, planning and distribution must be considered. This chapter lays out concepts and processes that assist in creating relevant content.



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About the Author

Rob Stokes earned his Business Science Degree at the University of Cape Town and is the 2009 Bookmarks Winner for the Best Individual Contribution to Digital award. His Marketing Honors Thesis, which focused on the topic of email marketing, led to development of the company Quirk eMarketing, which he currently is the CEO of. He is considered to be an eMarketing specialist and he lectures on Internet Marketing at the University of Cape Town, Red & Yellow School of Advertising and Cape Peninsula University of Technology. He also holds various workshops and presentations on eMarketing across the globe.



CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Think - Strategy and Context

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn:

- · How to define and distinguish business strategy and marketing strategy.
- How to think about digital audiences.
- The key building block concepts that are essential to any strategy.
- The questions that need to be asked when assembling a digital marketing strategy.
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1.1: Introduction

A strategy indicates the most advantageous direction for an organisation to take over a defined period of time. It also outlines which tactics and means should be used to execute this direction. Originating as a military term, strategy is about using your strengths, as well as the context in which you are operating, to your advantage.

In marketing, strategy starts with understanding what the business wants to achieve, or what problem it wants to solve. It then considers the context in which the business and its competitors operates, and outlines key ways in which the business and brand can gain advantage and add value.

In the early days of TV, when the medium was new and not yet entirely understood, there were separate 'TV planners' who created a 'TV strategy' for the brand. Over time, this was incorporated into the overall marketing strategy (as it should be). The same has happened with digital. Digital thinking should be incorporated into marketing strategy from day one. This chapter considers digital strategy separately in order to highlight some ways in which digital has affected our strategic approach to reaching customers and solving marketing problems.

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1.2: Key terms and concepts

Table 1.2.1

Term	Definition
Cluetrain Manifesto	A set of 95 theses organised as a call to action (CTA) for businesses operating within a newly connected marketplace.
Market share	In strategic management and marketing, the percentage or proportion of the total available market or market segment that is being serviced by a company.
Metric	A unit of measurement.
Pay per click (PPC)	Pay per click is advertising where the advertiser pays only for each click on their advert, not for the opportunity for it to be seen or displayed.
Return on investment (ROI)	The ratio of cost to profit.
Search engine optimisation (SEO)	SEO is the practice that aims to improve a website's ranking for specific keywords in the search engines.
Short Message Service (SMS)	Electronic messages sent on a cellular network.
Strategy	A set of ideas that outline how a product line or brand will achieve its objectives. This guides decisions on how to create, distribute, promote and price the product or service.
Tactic	A specific action or method that contributes to achieving a goal.

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1.3: What is marketing?

A simple definition for marketing is that it is the creation and satisfaction of demand for your product, service or ideas. If all goes well, this demand should translate into sales and, ultimately, revenue.

In 2012, Dr Philip Kotler defined marketing as "The science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit. Marketing identifies unfulfilled needs and desires. It defines, measures and quantifies the size of the identified market and the profit potential" (Kotler, 2012).

The American Marketing Association (AMA), defines marketing as "The activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (AMA, 2017).

In order to motivate people to pay for your product or service, or to consider your organisation superior to your competitors, you need to create meaningful benefits and value for the consumer. The design of the product or service itself can arguably be a function of marketing. The value that a marketer should seek to create should be equal to or even greater than the cost of the product to the consumer. Doing this often and consistently will grow trust in, and loyalty towards, the brand and create strong brand equity.

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1.4: What is digital marketing?

How does digital marketing fit into this definition? There is, in fact, no difference between 'traditional' marketing and digital marketing. They are one and the same, apart from digital being specific to a medium.

Ultimately, the aim of any type of marketing is to keep and grow a customer base and stimulate sales in the future. Digital communication tools contribute towards connecting and building long-term relationships with customers.

What is digital? Bud Caddell defines 'digital' as "A participatory layer of all media that allows users to self-select their own experiences, and affords marketers the ability to bridge media, gain feedback, iterate their message, and collect relationships" (Caddell, 2013). In other words, digital is a way of exploring content and ideas (for users) and connecting with and understanding customers (for marketers).

Digital marketing is powerful in two fundamental ways. First, the audience can be segmented very precisely, even down to factors like current location and recent brand interactions, which means that messages can (and must) be personalised and tailored specially for them.

Second, the digital sphere is almost completely measurable. Every minute and every click by a customer can be accounted for. In digital you can see exactly how various campaigns are performing, which channels bring the most benefit, and where your efforts are best focused. Cumulatively, access to data that measures the whole customer experience should lead to data driven decision making.



Learn more about this in the Data driven decision making chapter.

The complete scope of marketing is practised on the Internet. Products and services are positioned and promoted, purchased, distributed and serviced. The web provides consumers with more choice, more influence and more power. Brands constantly have new ways of selling, new products and services to sell, and new markets to which they can sell.

Digital marketing helps to create consumer demand by using the power of the interconnected, interactive web. It enables the exchange of currency but more than that, it enables the exchange of attention for value.

An exchange of value

If marketing creates and satisfies demand, digital marketing drives the creation of demand using the power of the Internet, and satisfies this demand in new and innovative ways.

A brand on the Internet can gain value in the form of time, attention and advocacy from the consumer. For the user value can be added in the form of entertainment, education and utility. Brands build loyalty among users who love their products or services and must align with users' values and aspirations. Users fall in love with products and services when their experience is tailored to their needs, and not the needs of the brand.

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1.5: Understanding marketing strategy

Business and brand strategy

Before you can delve into marketing strategy, take a step back and consider the business and brand with which you are working.

The end goal of any business is to make money in one way or another. Business strategy asks the questions, "What is the business challenge we are facing that prevents us from making more revenue?" and, "What business objective should we strive for in order to increase the money in the bank?"

The brand is the vessel of value in this equation. The brand justifies why the business matters, what the business' purpose is and what value the business adds to people's lives.

The AMA defines a brand as, "A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. The usual expression of a brand is its trademark. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller" (N.A., 2011). To quote Cheryl Burgess, a brand presents, "A reason to choose" one product or service over another.

The value of the brand is measured in terms of its brand equity i.e. how aware are people of the brand? Does it hold positive associations and perceived value? How loyal are people to the brand?

When you have the answers to these questions, you can formulate a marketing strategy to address the challenge or objective you've discovered.

Marketing strategy

The purpose of a marketing strategy is to determine what the business is about, and to then address the business or brand challenge, or objective that has been revealed. An effective strategy involves making a series of well-informed decisions about how the brand, product or service should be promoted. The brand that attempts to be all things to all people risks becoming unfocused or losing the clarity of its value proposition.

For example, a new airline would need to consider how it is going to add value to the market and differentiate itself from competitors. Whether their product is a domestic or international service; whether its target market is budget travellers or international and business travellers; and whether the channel is through primary airports or smaller, more cost-effective airports. Each of these choices will result in a vastly different strategic direction.

To make these decisions, a strategist must understand the context in which the brand operates, asking, "What are the factors that affect the business?" This means conducting a situational analysis that looks at the following four pillars:

- 1. The environment
- 2. The business
- 3. The customers
- 4. The competitors.

Here are some considerations and tools for conducting your brand's situational analysis.

Understanding the environment

The environment is the overall context or 'outside world' in which the business functions. It can involve anything from global economics (how well is the local currency performing these days?) to developments in your industry. Every brand will have a specific environment that it needs to consider, based on the type of product or service it produces.

An analysis of the business and brand environment will typically consider political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental (PESTLE) influences to identify a clear set of considerations or issues pertinent to the marketing strategy.

Understanding the business

There are several marketing models that can be used to understand the business and brand with which you are working. Since it's essential for all marketing messages to encapsulate the brand's identity and objectives, this is a very important step. A crucial consideration is the brand itself. What does it stand for? What does it mean? What associations, ideas, emotions and benefits do people associate with it? What makes it unique?







Figure 1.5.1: Understanding the business' brand *Adapted from Noesis Marketing*, 2011.

Out of this, you can determine what the brand or product's unique selling point (USP) is. A USP is the one characteristic that can make your product or service better than the competition's. Ask yourself, "What unique value does it have? Does it solve a problem that no other product does?"

Understanding customers

To understand your customers, you need to conduct market research. Try not to make assumptions about why people like and transact with your brand, you may find their values and motives are quite different from what you thought. Ongoing research and a data driven business will help you to build a picture of what particular benefit or feature your business provides to your customers allowing you to capitalise on this in your marketing content.

One important area on which to focus here is the consumer journey which is the series of steps and decisions a customer takes before buying from your business (or not). Luckily, online data analytics allow you to get a good picture of how people behave on your website before converting to customers; other forms of market research will also help you establish this for your offline channels.

On the Internet, a consumer journey is not linear. Instead, consumers may engage with your brand in a variety of ways, for example, across devices or marketing channels, before making a purchase.

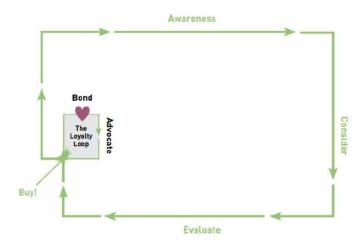


Figure 1.5.2: The customer journey is cyclical *Adapted from Brilliant Noise*, 2012.

The goal is to reach customers with the right marketing message at the right stage of their journey. For example, you may want to use aspirational messages for someone in the exploration phase, but focus on more direct features and benefits (such as a lower price) when they're almost ready to buy.

Understanding competitors

Finally, it's important to know who else is marketing to your potential customers, what they offer, and how you can challenge or learn from them. Many competitors target the same needs in a given customer, sometimes through very similar products. Positioning places your brand in a unique place in people's minds. It is impossible to create a strong value proposition or USP without knowing your competitors' positioning strategy.





On the Internet, your competitors are not just those who are aiming to earn your customers' money; they are also those who are capturing your customers' attention. With more digital content being created in a day than most people could consume in a year – for example, over 300 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute (YouTube, 2017) – the scarcest resources these days are time, focus and attention.

When considering competition it's also worthwhile looking at potential replacements for your product. The Internet is disrupting and accelerating the pace of disintermediation in a number of industries, meaning that people can now go directly to the business instead of transacting through a middleman (look at the travel industry as an example). To stay ahead, you should be looking at potential disruptors of your industry as well as the existing players.

Digital marketing strategy

Once you have a clear sense of what the business challenge or objective is, you can define how your marketing strategy will leverage digital channels to fulfil it.

As discussed in the introduction, digital should not be considered as separate from your core strategy. Digital marketing builds on and adapts the principles of traditional marketing using the opportunities and challenges offered by the digital medium.

A marketing strategy should be constantly iterating and evolving. Since the Internet allows for near-instantaneous feedback and data gathering, marketers should constantly be optimising and improving their online marketing efforts.

User-centric thinking, which involves placing the user at the core of all decisions, is vital when looking at building a successful marketing strategy. The marketing strategist of today is offered not only a plethora of tactical possibilities, but also unprecedented ways of measuring the effectiveness of chosen strategies and tactics. Digital allows greater opportunities for interaction and consumer engagement than were possible in the past, so it is important to consider the ways in which the brand can create interactive experiences for consumers, not just broadcast messages.

The fact that digital marketing is highly empirical is one of its key strengths. Almost everything can be measured: from behaviours, to actions and action paths, to results. Insight tools can even be used to track the sentiment of users towards certain elements online. This means that the digital marketing strategist should be constantly measuring and adapting to ensure the highest ROI. Built into any strategy should be a testing framework and the ability to remain flexible and dynamic in a medium that shifts and changes as user behaviours do.

If we defined strategy as 'a plan of action designed to achieve a particular outcome', the desired outcome of a digital marketing strategy would be aligned with your organisation's overall business and brand building objectives or challenges. For example, if one of the overall objectives was acquisition of new clients, a possible digital marketing objective might be building brand awareness online.

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1.6: The Building Blocks of Marketing Strategy

The following building-block techniques will help you structure a marketing strategy, both online and offline, that addresses your core business challenges. These strategy models are just starting points and ways to help you think through problems. As you grow in experience and insight, you could find yourself relying on them less or adapting them.

Porter's Five Forces analysis

Porter's Five Forces analysis is a business tool that helps determine the competitive intensity and attractiveness of a market. The Internet's low barrier to entry means that many new businesses are appearing online, providing countless choices for customers. This makes it important to consider new factors when devising a marketing strategy.



Figure 1.6.1: Porter's Five Forces

The Four Ps

The Four Ps of marketing help you structure the components that make up a brand's offering, differentiators and marketing. They have been fundamentally changed by the Internet and need to be looked at in the context offered by digitally connected media and from the perspective of the consumer. How your brand is positioned in the mind of your consumer will ultimately determine your success.

1. Products (and services)

Products and services are what a company sells. The Internet enables businesses to sell a huge range of products, from fast-moving consumer goods and digital products such as software, to services such as consultancy. In fact, the Internet has in some cases made it possible for a product or service to exist. Consider Uber and Airbnb. Online, the experience the user has in discovering and purchasing can be considered part of the product the brand provides, or be the product itself.

The Internet has enabled hyper-personalisation. For example, Nike (nikeid.nike.com) and Converse (www.converse.com) allow customers to customise their own trainers. The Internet as a distribution medium also makes it possible for products, such as software and music, to be sold digitally.

2 Price

The prevalence of search engines and of shopping comparison websites, such as www.pricerunner.co.uk, and www.nextag.com, makes it easy for customers to compare product prices across a number of retailers. This makes the Internet a market of near-perfect competition (Porter, 2008). The internet allows for personalised and flexible pricing strategies to a level that traditional retailers would find almost impossible to achieve.

With price differentiation becoming a challenge, especially for smaller players in the market, businesses need to consider differentiating on value. Value is a combination of service, perceived benefits and price, where customers may be willing to pay a higher price for a better experience or if they feel they are getting something more than just the product.

3. Placement (or distribution)

Product distribution and markets no longer have to be dictated by location. By simply making their products visible online (for example, on a website or Facebook page), brands can reach a global market. The key is to reach and engage customers on the





channels they are using. This is why choosing your digital tactics is vital. You want to engage customers on their terms, not yours.

4. Promotion

The Internet, as an information and entertainment medium, naturally lends itself to promoting products. The online promotional mix is an extension of the offline, but with some significant differences. For one, online promotion can be tracked, measured and targeted in a far more sophisticated way.

Promotion doesn't just mean advertising and talking at customers. On the Internet, it's crucial to engage, collaborate and join conversations, too. Interacting with customers helps build relationships, and the web makes this sort of communication easy. That's why a good portion of this book is devoted to engagement tactics and tools.



Many additional Ps have been suggested and debated over time. We've restricted our discussion to the four listed here, but you should do some research and join the debate with your own point of view.

SWOT analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is an ideal way to understand your business and your market.



Figure 1.6.2: SWOT analysis

Always have a purpose in mind when conducting a SWOT analysis. For example, study the external threats to your business, and see how learning from these can help you overcome internal weaknesses. This should tie back in to your business and marketing objectives and strengths should be promoted, opportunities should be sought out, while threats and weaknesses should be minimised as much as possible. A SWOT analysis is part of a situational analysis and identifies the key issues that direct the marketing strategy. Be mindful of the fact that weaknesses can be opportunities and strengths threats, especially in the world of digital disruption.

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1.8: Crafting a digital marketing strategy

Any activity with an end goal (whether it's winning a war, building a city or selling a product) should have a blueprint in place for every person in the organisation to follow. In digital marketing, however, there is no single definitive approach so each business must create its own roadmap. However, there are questions you can use to guide this process.

A strategy needs to cover the questions of who you are and who you are not. It should also include what you are offering and to whom, as well as why and how you are doing so. The steps and questions below cover what an organisation should be aware of when creating and implementing a strategy that will meet its marketing objectives and solve its challenges.

1. Context

The first step in crafting a successful strategy is to examine the context of the organisation and the various stakeholders. We covered this under marketing strategy earlier in this chapter, but it bears repeating.

- What is the context in which you are operating (PESTLE factors) and how is this likely to change in the future?
- Who are you, why does your brand matter and what makes your brand useful and valuable?
- Who are your customers, and what needs, wants and desires do they have?
- Who are your competitors? These may extend beyond organisations that compete with you on the basis of price and product and
 could also be competition in the form of abstracts such as time and mindshare. Thorough market research will reveal the
 answers to these questions.

2. Value exchange

Once you have examined the market situation, the second step is an examination of your value proposition or promise: in other words, what unique value your organisation can add to that market. It is important to identify the supporting valueadds to the brand promise that are unique to the digital landscape. What extras, beyond the basic product or service, do you offer to customers?

The Internet offers many channels for value creation. However, the definition of what is 'valuable' depends largely on the target audience, so it is crucial to research your users and gather insights into what they want and need. Gathering the right data can help you evolve this value exchange over time.

3. Objectives

When setting your digital marketing goals, there are four key aspects to consider: objectives, tactics, key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets. Let's look at each one in turn.

Objectives

Objectives are essential to any marketing endeavour, without them your strategy would have no direction and no end goal or win conditions. It's important to be able to take a step back and ask, "Why are we doing any of this? What goal, purpose or outcome are we looking for?"

- · What are you trying to achieve?
- · How will you know if you are successful?

Sometimes, words like 'objective' can be used in different situations with slightly different meanings. Remember, the objective of a website or online campaign is aligned with the strategic outcomes of the business. The objective of a campaign may be to create awareness for a new business or increase sales of a product. The objective answers the question, "What do we want to achieve with this marketing campaign?" For example, an objective might be to increase the sales of a product, grow brand awareness or increase website traffic. A business objective (something that your business will either do or not do) and a marketing objective (a change in customer behaviour that your business wants to achieve) are not the same thing!

Objectives need to be SMART:

- **Specific** the objective must be clear and detailed, rather than vague and general.
- **Measurable** the objective must be measurable so that you can gauge whether you are attaining the desired outcome.
- Attainable the objective must be something that is possible for your brand to achieve, based on available resources.
- Realistic the objective must also be sensible and based on data and trends; don't exaggerate or overestimate what can be
 achieved.





• **Time-bound** – finally, the objective must be linked to a specific timeframe.

Goals

The goal of a website or campaign in web analytics refers to an action that a user takes on a website or a type of user behaviour. This action could be making a purchase, signing up for a newsletter, or viewing a certain number of pages in a visit. A completed goal is called a conversion. Goals are derived from objectives and answer the question, "What do we need users to do in order to achieve our objective?"



Goals related to visitor behaviour, such as time spent on site or pageviews per visit, are referred to as engagement goals.

Tactics

Objectives are not the same as tactics. Tactics are the specific tools or approaches you will use to meet your objectives, for example, a retention-based email newsletter, a Facebook page, or a CRM implementation. As a strategy becomes more complex, you may have multiple tactics working together to try to achieve the same objective. Tactics may change (and often should), but the objective should remain your focus. We'll look at tactics in more detail in the next section.

Key performance indicators (KPIs)

Key performance indicators or KPIs are metrics that are used to indicate whether tactics are performing well and meeting your objectives. There are many metrics to be analysed, and determining which are important will help to focus on what really matters to a particular campaign. KPIs relate closely to goals, and answer the question, "What data do we need to look at to see if goals are being completed?" For example, if your objective is to increase website traffic, you may look at the number of website visitors, the percentage of new visitors, and how long users stay on the site.

KPIs are determined per tactic, with an eye on the overall objective. The diagram below shows how a number of KPIs can feed into one goal, and a number of goals can in turn feed into one objective. A single objective can have a number of goals, each with their own number of KPIs, to ensure it is achieved.

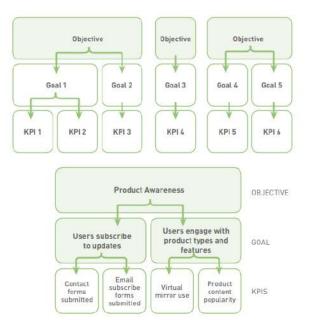


Figure 1.8.1: Objectives, goals and KPIs. Adapted from Kaushik, 2010.

Targets

Finally, targets are the specific values that are set for your KPIs to reach within a specific time period. That is, they are the actual target values that KPIs need to meet in order for the campaign to be declared a success. Sportspeople need to reach targets to advance their careers, for example, come in the top ten to qualify for the final, or run 10 km in under 27 minutes. If you meet or exceed a target, you are succeeding; if you don't reach it, you're falling behind on your objectives and you need to reconsider your





approach (or your target). If one KPI is 'newsletter subscriptions', then a target might be '100 subscriptions every month' so if one month falls short at 70, this will quickly reveal that a fix is required.

When setting objectives and targets for any campaign, remember to think about overlaps in customer behaviour that might impact how you measure your success. People might click on an ad and visit your website to buy something, but they could also browse and then go and buy something in the brick-and-mortar store. The total economic value of online activities needs to account for this so that you can get an idea of the true contribution digital is making.

✓ Example 1.8.1

Here is an example:

SMART objective:

• Increase sales through the eCommerce platform by 10% within the next six months.

Tactics:

- Search advertising
- Social media marketing using the Facebook brand page

KPIs per tactic:

- Search advertising number of search referrals, cost per click on the ads
- Facebook brand page number of comments and shares on campaignspecific posts

Targets per tactic:

- Search advertising 1 000 search referrals after the first month, with a 10% month-on-month increase after that
- Facebook brand page 50 comments and 10 shares on campaign-specific posts per week

Tactics and evaluation

Many digital tools and tactics are available once you have defined your digital marketing objectives. Each tactic has its strengths – for example, acquisition (gaining new customers) may best be driven by search advertising, while email is one of the most effective tools for selling more products to existing customers. The table below expands on some of the most popular tactics available to digital marketers and their possible outcomes. These will be covered in far more detail in the Engage section of this book.

Table 1.7.1: Marketing tactics.

Tactic	Outcome
SEO	Customer retention and acquisition
This is the practice of optimising a website to rank higher on the search engine results pages for relevant search items. SEO involves creating relevant, fresh and user-friendly content that search engines index and serve when people enter a search term that is relevant to your product or service.	SEO has a key role to play in acquisition, as it ensures your organisation's offering will appear in the search results, allowing you to reach potential customers. A site that is optimised for search engines is also a site that is clear, relevant and well designed. These elements ensure a great user experience, meaning that SEO also plays a role in retention.
Search advertising	Sales, customer retention and acquisition
In pay-per-click or search advertising, the advertiser pays only when someone clicks on their ad. The ads appear on search engine results pages.	The beauty of search advertising is that it is keyword based. This means an ad will come up in response to the search terms entered by the consumer. It therefore plays a role in sales, acquisition and retention. It allows the advertiser to reach people who are already in the buying cycle or are expressing interest in what they have to offer.
Online advertising	Branding and acquisition
Online advertising covers advertising in all areas of the Internet – ads in emails, ads on social networks and mobile devices, and display ads on normal websites.	The main objective of online advertising is to raise brand awareness online. It can be more interactive and therefore less disruptive than traditional or static online advertising, as users can choose to engage with the ad or not. Online advertising can be targeted to physical locations, subject areas, past user behaviours, and much more.



Affiliate marketing	Sales and branding
Affiliate marketing is a system of reward whereby referrers are given a 'finder's fee' for every referral they give.	Online affiliate marketing is widely used to promote eCommerce websites, with the referrers being rewarded for every visitor, subscriber or customer provided through their efforts. It is a useful tactic for brand building and acquisition.
Video marketing	Branding, customer retention and value creation
Video marketing involves creating video content. This can be wither outright video advertising, or can be valuable, useful, content marketing.	Since it is so interactive and engaging, video marketing is excellent for capturing and retaining customer attention. Done correctly, it provides tangible value – in the form of information, entertainment or inspiration – and boosts a brand's image in the eyes of the public.
Social media	Branding, value creation and participation
Social media is media in the form of text, visuals and audio, that can be shared online. It has changed the face of marketing by allowing collaboration and connection in a way that no other channel has been able to offer.	From a strategic perspective, social media, is useful for brand building, raising awareness of the brand and its story, and encouraging the customer to become involved with the brand. The shareable and accessible nature of social media platforms allows brands to communicate and engage directly with their customers. Social media also offers brands a way to interact with their customers, instead of just broadcasting to them.
Email marketing	Customer retention and value creation
Email marketing is a form of direct marketing that delivers commercial and content-based messages to an audience. It is extremely cost effective, highly targeted, customisable on a mass scale and completely measurable – all of which make it one of the most powerful digital marketing tactics.	Email marketing is a tool for building relationships with potential and existing customers through valuable content and promotional messages. It should maximise the retention and value of these customers, ultimately leading to greater profitability for the organisation a whole. A targeted, segmented email database means that a brand can direct messages at certain sectors of their customer base in order to achieve the best result.

Once the objectives and tactics have been set, these should be cross-checked and re-evaluated against the needs and resources of your organisation to make sure your strategy is on the right track and no opportunities are being overlooked.

5. Ongoing optimisation

It is increasingly important for brands to be dynamic, flexible and agile when marketing online. New tactics and platforms emerge every week, customer behaviours change over time, and people's needs and wants from brand evolve as their relationship grows.

This process of constant change should be considered in the early stages of strategy formulation, allowing tactics and strategies to be modified and optimised as you go. After all, digital marketing strategy should be iterative, innovative and open to evolution.

Understanding user experience and the user journey is vital to building successful brands. Budget should be set aside upfront for analysing user data and optimising conversion paths.

Social thinking and socially informed innovation are also valuable and uniquely suited to the online space. Socially powered insight can be used to inform strategic decisions in the organisation, from product roadmaps to service plans. Brands have moved away from being merely present in social media towards actively using it, aligning it with actionable objectives and their corresponding metrics. This is critical in demonstrating ROI and understating the opportunities and threats in the market.

Managing the learning loop (the knowledge gained from reviewing the performance of your tactics, which can then be fed back into the strategy) can be difficult. This is because brand cycles often move more slowly than the real-time results you will see online. It is therefore important to find a way to work agility into the strategy, allowing you to be quick, creative and proactive, as opposed to slow, predictable and reactive. The data collected around success of your marketing strategy should feed into a larger pool of information used to drive business decisions.

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1.9: Case study - Vets now - Taking care of the brand

One-line summary

Vets now, an industry-known UK accident and emergency veterinarian service, wanted to become the brand of choice amongst consumers and veterinarians.



Figure 1.9.1: The Vets now Logo

The challenge

Vets now provided their accident and emergency service to over 1 000 veterinary practices across the UK. But, with more and more smaller local emergency veterinary clinics opening, and day clinics starting to offer out-of-hours services, Vets now was experiencing intense competition. They decided to target pet owners directly and make themselves the brand of choice for pet owners, if and when their pet required emergency care.

However, the brand didn't deal directly with clients too often, and brand awareness of Vets now among pet owners was at about 8% (despite 1 in 4 UK vet practices using the service). The brand was also offering inconsistent sub-brands, which confused pet owners.

Vets now wanted to improve brand awareness, consolidate their offering, and offer a pet-owner led approach.

The solution

Vets now recognised that they needed to conduct a brand audit to determine their unifying core purpose. A brand workshop was held, and the key insight was that emergency and critical care was the heart of the brand. All other sub-brands and straplines were negating from this core message. The brand wanted to present a singular pet owner brand proposition and developed the single unifying strapline: Introducing Vets now – Your pet emergency service.

To appeal to customers directly, they needed to know who their potential customers were and what their feelings were towards their pets. Vets now conducted surveys, interviews and focus groups with over 1 000 pet owners. They identified 8 pet owner types, and highlighted the key drivers behind pet ownership in the UK. They then mapped out the owner types against these drivers.



Figure 1.9.2: Vets now's map of pet ownership

The key insight was that pet owners expect others to treat their pets as they would other human beings. This means that the care and professionalism offered to pets is paramount. Pet-owners are dedicated to keeping their pet happy and healthy, and want the best care possible if an emergency were to occur. Pet owners needed emotional support and reassurance when dealing with an emergency involving their pet.

Vets now also identified three touchpoints of customers with the brand.





- Search and online finding an emergency vet
- Clinical referred to Vets now by another veterinary clinician
- Social space engaging with other pet owners and online content.

Using these insights, the brand consolidated itself as one single brand offering. The brand also identified its essential brand principles and used these to inform all its branding and marketing communication. Vets now created new branding and imagery and chose a reassuring and expert but friendly and straightforward tone of voice to use across all communications. This unified and consolidated look and feel conveyed the core purpose of the brand and offered consumers brand recognition.

This new look and feel was rolled out across the website, Vets now hospitals and clinics, internal branding, and in print and digital marketing campaigns. These were chosen to ensure the new branding reached consumers at all three touchpoints.

The marketing campaign included various platforms and a mixture of traditional and digital tactics. There were print and digital ads, as well as content delivered across the website, social media, printed flyers and in-clinic posters. Content included emergency plans for if a pet becomes ill or has an accident, dangers that are present in the home over the Christmas holiday period, and how to ensure a pet stays happy and healthy over the festive season. This content was specifically created to resonate with the audience and used the insights gained from the in-depth research conducted by the brand to inform content development and creation.

The results

The research and ensuing strategy ensured the brand's awareness among customers increased. After the campaigns and rebranding, 59% of respondents had an unprompted recall of Vets now, up 20% from before the campaign. Within the sample of respondents, propensity to use Vets now after the campaign was up 138% from before. These were strong indicators of positive performance. The new website also saw a 23% drop in bounce rate within 5 days of going live, showing that the brand was now more in line with what users were searching for.

The importance of relooking at your brand and really investigating your customers is clearly demonstrated in this case study. It shows how a B2B brand can reposition itself as B2C with the right analysis and strategy. Clearly laying down your objectives, doing the necessary research and identifying how to address your customer across all touchpoints is essential to marketing strategy (Marketing Society, 2017).

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1.10: The bigger picture

All of the chapters in this book are linked to digital marketing strategy in one way or another.

A solid business and brand strategy should be the starting point of any marketing venture, and you should always keep one eye on it as you develop specific campaigns, platforms and approaches. After all, you should always remember that you are trying to reach your chosen audience by communicating to them in the most effective way, to build rewarding and lucrative long-term relationships.

While strategy helps you understand the questions you should ask, data collected across your business, including market research, provides the information you need to answer them.

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1.E: Digital Marketing Strategy(Exercises)

Case Study Questions

- 1. What was Vets now's new brand strategy?
- 2. Why was it necessary for Vets now to do such extensive customer research?
- 3. Could it be argued that this case study covers a business strategy rather than a marketing strategy?

Chapter Questions

- 1. Why is it important to consider the business context when planning your marketing strategy?
- 2. How has the Internet affected marketing and the models we use to understand it?
- 3. Do you agree with the idea that customers are more empowered than they were before digital communications were so prevalent? Justify your answer.

Further reading

www.sethgodin.typepad.com – Seth Godin's popular blog provides regular insight and food for thought.

smithery.co – A marketing and innovation blog that teaches marketers to 'Make Things People Want, rather than spend all their energy and resources trying to Make People Want Things'.

www.gigaom.com - GigaOM's community of writers covers a wide range of technological copies.

Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind – This book by Ries & Trout published in 2002 offers excellent advice claiming space in the minds of consumers.

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1.S: Digital Marketing Strategy(Summary)

Strategy is the essential first step in positioning your brand within the market and creating a roadmap for achieving your business goals. While there are many different paths one can take, there is a clear process for understanding where you are, where you need to be, and how you will get there.

It all starts with understanding the business challenges that your brand faces. From here, an effective marketing strategy looks at the market context, weighs the available options and makes important choices, based on solid research and data. Digital marketing strategy adds a layer of technology, engagement and iterative optimisation into the mix. The wide variety of tools and tactics offered by the digital medium should inform your strategic choices.

Digital marketing strategy is highly empirical and your strategic thinking should be mindful of ROI and how it can be measured. This will allow you to optimise your tactics and performance in order to create a valuable brand story, an excellent user experience, the most optimised conversion funnels, and the highest ROI.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Think - Understanding Customer Behaviour

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn:

- Conceptual tools for understanding your customer.
- Key concepts for thinking about your target audience.
- Some Behavioural economic theories.
- How digital has affected customer behaviour
- 2.1: Introduction
- 2.2: Key terms and concepts
- 2.3: Understanding customer behaviour
- 2.4: Key digital concepts influencing customer behaviour
- 2.5: Tools for understanding your customer
- 2.6: Measuring success
- 2.7: Case study Argos
- 2.8: The bigger picture
- 2.9: References
- 2.E: Understanding Customer Behaviour (Exercises)
- 2.S: Understanding customer behaviour(Summary)

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2.1: Introduction

Although marketing is a business function, it is primarily an exercise in applied human psychology. The role of marketing is to address customer needs and provide value. In either case, success requires a nuanced understanding of how people think, process and choose within their environment.

To achieve this, one must strike a balance between awareness of global shifts and impacts on people's behaviour and the fiercely intimate motivations that determine where individuals spend their time and money. This chapter outlines an approach for understanding customer behaviour and introduces some conceptual tools used to frame and focus how you apply that understanding to your marketing efforts.

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2.2: Key terms and concepts

Table 2.2.1

Term	Definition
Attention economy	The idea that human attention is a scarce commodity i.e. seeing attention as a limited resource.
Customer experience map	A visual representation of the customers' flow from beginning to end of the purchase experience, including their needs, wants, expectations, and overall experience.
Customer persona	A detailed description of a fictional person to help a brand visualise a segment of its target market.
Global citizen	A person who identifies as part of a world community and works toward building the values and practices of that community.
Tribe	A social group linked by a shared belief or interest.
Product	An item sold by a brand.
Story	A narrative that incorporates the feelings and facts created by your brand, intended to inspire an emotional reaction.

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2.3: Understanding customer behaviour

The study of consumer behaviour draws on many different disciplines, from psychology and economics to anthropology, sociology and marketing. Understanding why people make the decisions they do forms part of a complex ongoing investigation.

Marketing and product design efforts are increasingly focusing on a customercentric view. Rather than making people want stuff, successful organisations are focused on making stuff people want. Given the plethora of options, product or service attributes, pricing options and payment choices available to the connected consumer today, competition is fierce, and only the considered brand will succeed. Understanding the consumers' behaviour lies at the heart of offering them value.

Consider that no point of engagement with your brand occurs in isolation for your customer. Their life events, social pressures and motivations impact on their experience with your brand. Something happened before and after they bought that box of cereal, and their experience with it does not start or end at the point of sale.

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2.4: Key digital concepts influencing customer behaviour

The impact of digital

Digital disruption, which is discussed throughout this book, can appear in many small and large ways. If there's one thing the past 10 years has taught us, it's that there is constant disruption and upheaval in the digital world. How we communicate with one another, how we shop, how we consume entertainment, and ultimately how we see ourselves in the world, has all changed because of digital. And these changes are continuing, even accelerating.

One of the results of digital tools and media is a destabilising of the status quo. All industries are vulnerable to change when a product or service comes along that meets user needs in an unprecedented way. Netflix has disrupted the media industry, Airbnb has changed travel, and Uber has dramatically impacted what individuals can expect from transport options.

Consider that people born after 1985, more than half the world's population, have no idea what a world without the Internet is like. They only know a rapid pace of advancement and some tools that serve them better than others.

The Internet seeks no middlemen. Established industries or organisations can be bypassed completely when people are placed in control. Your customers can find another option with one click, and are increasingly impatient. They are not concerned with the complexity of the back end. If Uber can offer them personalised cash-free transportation, why can't your product offer something comparable? People will use the service that best serves them, not what best serves an industry or existing regulations.

The global citizens and their tribe

Coupled with these empowered digital consumers, who are changing digital and driving disruption as much as digital is changing them, is the contradiction evident in the relationship between a global citizen and increasingly fragmented and differentiated tribes built around interests. National identity, given global migration and connectivity, has shifted as the world has gotten smaller. On the other hand, the Internet has created space for people to create, form, support and evolve their own niche communities. This duality forces marketers to keep cognisant of global shifts while tracking and focusing on niche communities and specific segments within their market.

The attention economy

The attention economy is a term used to describe the large number of things competing for customer attention. Media forms and the mediums through which they can be consumed have exploded over the last decade, and it's increasingly difficult to get the attention of those you are trying to reach. Your customer is distracted and has many different things vying for their attention.

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2.5: Tools for understanding your customer

Despite the complexity of the customer landscape, various tools and frameworks are available to consider your customer. The goal with many of these is to inform your decision making and help you think from the perspective of your customer.

Developing user personas

To understand all your customers, you must have an idea of who they are. While it's impossible to know everyone who engages with your brand, you can develop representative personas that help you focus on motivations rather than stereotypes.

A user persona is a description of a brand-specific cluster of users who exhibit similar behavioural patterns in, for example, their purchasing decisions, use technology or products, customer service preferences and lifestyle choices. We revisit the user persona at multiple points during this course, as it shouldn't be seen as an end in itself.

A user persona is a consensus-driving tool and a catalyst that can be applied when you try to understand your entire customer experience, or when you decide on the implementation of specific tactics. Every organisation should have four to five user personas to help strategists target their efforts.

To create a user persona and inform decisions with your customers point of one must prioritise real information over your team's assumptions and gut feelings.

Desktop research, drawn from sources such as existing reports and benchmarking studies, help you to frame the questions you need to ask when delving deeper into the data available to you elsewhere through online platforms like your website or social media presence. The Internet provides an increasing number of viable alternatives to offline primary research.

∓ Note

Market research methodologies are explored in more detail in the Market research chapter.

A combination of habits and specific needs are combined into a usable overall picture A key feature of the user persona below is how it accounts for customer motivation Summer is driven by emotion rich storytelling and social belonging. This knowledge should drive how the brand communicates how the brand experience is tailored to make her feel tike part of a community.

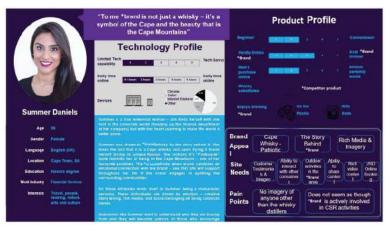


Figure 2.5.1: User personas are a consensus-driving tool *Permission from Mirum*

To build a robust user persona, you should consider the demographics, psychographics, and motivators for your customers.

Demographics and psychographics

Understanding customers can involve two facets:

- 1. Understanding the physical facts, context and income of their 'outer world" i.e. their demographics. These include their culture, sub cultures, class and the class structures in which they operate, among other factors.
- 2. Understanding the motives, desires, fears and other intangible characteristics of their 'inner world' i.e. their psychographics. Here we can consider their motives, how they learn and their attitudes.





Both facets above are important, though some factors may be more or less prominent depending on the product or service in question. For example, a women's clothing retailer needs to consider gender and income as well as feelings about fashion and trends equally, while a B2B company typically focuses on psychographic factors, as their customers are linked by a job function rather than shared demographics.

Demographics can be laborious to acquire but are generally objective and unambiguous data points that change within well-understood and measurable parameters, for example, people get older, incomes increase or decrease, people get married or have children. Data sources like censuses, surveys, customer registration forms and social media accounts are just a few places where demographic data can be gathered either in aggregate or individually.

Psychographics, on the other hand, are fluid, complex and deeply personal because, after all, they relate to the human mind. This information is very hard to define, but when complementary fields work together, it's possible for marketers to uncover a goldmine of insight.

Understanding motivation

People make hundreds of decisions every day, and are rarely aware of all of the factors that they subconsciously consider in this process. That's because these factors are a complex web of personal motivating factors that can be intrinsic or extrinsic, and positive or negative.



Figure 2.5.2: Extrinsic and intrinsic motivators

Extrinsic motivators

Extrinsic factors are external, often tangible, pressures, rewards, threats or incentives that motivate us to take action even if we don't necessarily want to. For example, a worker in a boring or stressful job may be motivated to keep going by their pay check, and drivers are motivated to obey traffic rules by the threat of getting a fine or hurting someone.

Marketing often uses extrinsic motivators to provide a tangible reward for taking a desired action. Some examples include:

- **Limited-time specials and discounts**, where the customer is motivated by a perceived cost saving and the urgency of acting before the offer is revoked.
- Scarcity, where the limited availability of a product or service is used to encourage immediate action.
- Loyalty programmes, which typically offer extrinsic rewards like coupons, exclusive access or free gifts in exchange for
 people performing desired behaviours.
- Ancillary benefits, such as free parking at the shopping centre if you spend over a certain amount at a specific store.
- Free content or downloads in exchange for contact details, often used for subsequent marketing activities.

For example, Booking.com uses a range of extrinsic motivators to encourage customers to book quickly, including a price discount exclusive to their site and urgency through the use of the words "High demand", "Only three rooms left" and, "There are two other people looking at this hotel". All of these factors nudge the customer to book quickly to avoid missing out on what is framed as a limited-time opportunity.







Figure 2.5.3: A screenshot of Booking.com using extrinsic motivators Screenshot, Bookings.com 2016

The problem with extrinsic motivation is that a customer can often perform the desired action to get the reward or avoid the threat without fully internalising the meaning or marketing message behind the gesture. Or worse, the required action becomes 'work' which diminishes the enjoyment of the task and the reward.

For example, some people will swipe in at the gym with their membership card to avoid losing their access, but won't actually exercise. Some might log in to a website every day to accumulate points without actually looking at the specials on offer.

Kohn (1993) summarised the three risks of extrinsic rewards as:

- 1. "First, rewards encourage people to focus narrowly on a task, to do it as quickly as possible and to take few risks.
- 2. Second, people come to see themselves as being controlled by the reward. They feel less autonomous, and this may interfere with performance.
- 3. Finally, extrinsic rewards can erode intrinsic interest. People who see themselves as working for money, approval or competitive success find their tasks less pleasurable, and therefore do not do them as well."

Intrinsic motivators

Somebody who is intrinsically motivated performs an action for an intangible benefit simply because they want to, or for the pleasure, fun or happiness of it. Intrinsic motivators are much subtler and more difficult to quantify, but are also more powerful and longer-lasting drivers of human behaviour.

Some common forms of intrinsic motivation include:

- **Love** not just romantic love, but also the love of an activity or outcome.
- **Enjoyment and fun** few intrinsic motivators are as powerful as the desire to have a good time.
- **Self-expression** some people act in a certain way because of what they feel the action says about them.
- Personal values values instilled through cultural, religious, social or other means can be powerful motivators.
- **Achievement or competence** when people challenge themselves, take a meaningful personal risk, or attain a long-desired goal, they are acting because of an intrinsic motivation.
- **Negative intrinsic motivators** fear, embarrassment and inertia are some powerful drivers that rely on negative emotions.

Finding the right motivators

Many brands develop elaborate marketing campaigns with gimmicks and rewards, but find that these fall flat. Often this is because of a misunderstanding of the motivators that drive customers to take action in the first place. Marketers tend to overvalue how much people like, understand and care about brands, which can lead to a disconnection from the audience.

The most important factor to consider in choosing a customer motivator is relevance to the customer, to the brand and to the campaign. Ask yourself, "Is the incentive you are offering truly relevant and useful?"

Most complex human actions involve a combination of factors. For example, we work because of the external pressure to earn money, and some also get an intrinsic reward in the form of achievement, self-expression or making a difference in the world. Both factors are important, and if one is missing, the other needs to compensate strongly for this. For example, interns working for free to get ahead quickly in their careers; people being paid more to stay in a difficult or unfulfilling job.

The success of your customer persona will depend on how carefully you interrogate assumptions about your customer, how carefully you draw on research, and how you prioritise understanding their motivations and the way decisions are made.





Decision making and behavioural economics

One significant shift in understanding customers over the past few years has come from the fields of psychology and economics. This area of inquiry, behavioural economics, looks at what assumptions or behaviours drive decision making. An understanding of individual motivations and interactions between customers and your brand can help you cater to what your market really wants or needs.

As an example, industrial designer Yogita Agrawal designed an innovative and much-needed human-powered light for people in rural India. Although the product ingeniously took advantage of the locals' mobile lifestyle – the battery is charged through the action of walking – and the idea was well received, initially no one actually used the product. Agrawal eventually discovered the simple reason for this, the device had a plain, ugly casing that did not match at all with the vibrant and colourful local dress. When she added a colourful and personalisable covering to the device, usage shot up dramatically. Although she had found the big insight, that walking can generate energy to power lights in areas not served by the electrical grid, it took a further understanding of regional customs to truly make the device appealing.

If marketers can apply this insight to their strategies and campaigns, it means that they may be able to get more customers to take desired actions more often, for less cost and effort. This is the ideal scenario for any business.

Biases

Cognitive biases

Cognitive biases are our own personal prejudices and preferences, as well as common ways of thinking that are inherently flawed. A classic example is confirmation bias, where we take note of information that confirms our beliefs or world view, but discount or ignore information that doesn't.

Try it for yourself! The next time you are driving or commuting, pay attention to all the red cars on the road. Does it begin to seem like there are more red cars than usual?

Below are some of the most important biases that marketers should be aware of taken from Psychology Today (2013).

Table 2.5.1

Category:	Bias:	Elaboration:	
Information	Knee-jerk bias	Making a quick decision in a circumstance where slower, more precise decision-making is needed.	
	Occam's razor	Assuming that an obvious choice is the best choice.	
	Silo effect	Using a narrow approach to form a decision.	
	Confirmation bias	Only focusing on the information that confirms your beliefs (and ignoring disconfirming information).	
	Inertia bias	Thinking and acting in a way that is familiar or comfortable.	
	Myopia bias	Interpreting the world around you in a way that is purely based on your own experiences and beliefs	
Ego	Loss aversion bias	Tending to favour choices that avoid losses, at the risk of potential gains.	
	Shock-and-awe bias	Believing that our own intelligence is all we need to make a difficult decision.	
	Overconfidence effect	Having too much confidence in our own beliefs, knowledge and abilities.	
	Optimism bias	Being overly optimistic and underestimating negative outcomes.	



Force field bias	Making decisions that will aid in reducing perceived fear or threats.
Planning fallacy	Incorrectly judging the time and costs involved in completing a task.

Pricing bias

There is also a lot of bias around the price of an item. Generally, we perceive more expensive to be better, and we can actually derive more psychological pleasure from them, even if the cheaper alternative is objectively just as good.

A classic example of this is wine-tasting, where in repeated experiments participants agree that the more expensive wine tastes better where, in fact, all the wines were identical. Taken even further, however, researchers discovered that people tasting the more expensive wines actually had a heightened pleasure response in their brains, showing that researchers could generate more enjoyment simply by telling them they were drinking an expensive wine (Ward, 2015).

Loss aversion

One of the most powerful psychological effects is the feeling of loss, when something we possess is diminished or taken away. The negative feeling associated with loss is far stronger than the positive feeling of gaining the equivalent thing. In other words, we feel the pain of losing \$200 more acutely that the joy of gaining \$200.

Marketers can use loss aversion very effectively in the way they frame and execute marketing campaigns. Here is an example: Giving a customer a free trial version of a service for long enough that it becomes useful or important to them at which point they would be happy to pay to avoid losing it. On-demand TV service Netflix uses this to great effect with its 30-day free trial, especially since they ask for credit card details upfront so that shifting over to the paid version is seamless.

Heuristics

A heuristic is essentially a decision-making shortcut or mental model that helps us to make sense of a difficult decision-making process or to estimate an answer to a complex problem.

Some classic examples include:

- **The availability heuristic** we overemphasise the likelihood or frequency of things that have occurred recently because they come to mind more easily.
- The representativeness heuristic we consider a sample to represent the whole for example, in cultural stereotypes.
- The price-quality heuristic more expensive things are considered to be better quality. A higher price leads to a higher expectation, so this can work both to the advantage and disadvantage of marketers. For products where quality is measurable and linear, the price needs to correlate, and a higher price needs to be justified tangibly. For products or services where quality is less tangible or more subjective such as food, drinks, experiences and education, in many ways the price can heighten the perceived quality and experience even on a neurological level.
- **Anchoring and adjustment heuristic** we make decisions based on relative and recent information rather than broad, objective fact. In marketing, this can be used to steer customers to the package or offer that the brand most wants them to take.

Choice

How do people choose? This is a difficult question to answer because people decide based on irrational, personal factors and motivators, objective needs and their immediate circumstances.

Word of mouth or peer suggestions

We are very susceptible to the opinions of other people, and tend to trust the opinions of friends, family, trusted experts and 'people like us' over companies or brands. We are also much more likely to join in on an activity like buying a specific product if we see others like us doing it first. This is the notion of social proof. Human beings generally rely on early adopters to lead the way, with the vast majority waiting for a new product or service to be tested before jumping on board.

This is why many brands use spokespeople or testimonials. They act as a reassurance to the potential customer that other normal people actually experienced the benefits that were promised. This also highlights the importance of positive online word of mouth. As you will learn when we discuss the Zero Moment of Truth, people do extensive research online before important purchases and can have their minds swayed by the reviews, experiences and opinions of others who are often strangers.





Personal preferences and history

Some of our decisions are based on very personal factors, such as a favourite colour, a positive past experience or a historical or familial association. For example, some people may choose to buy the same brand of breakfast cereal that they remembered eating as a child, regardless of the price or nutritional benefits. For them the total experience and good feelings form part of the overall value they derive. This is why many brands place emphasis on their long and prestigious histories.

Habits

In other cases, we buy the same thing because we've always bought it, and it's simply the easiest option.

Habits are typically triggered by an outside or environmental factor (the cue), which then causes us to act out our habit (the action) after which we receive a positive boost (the reward). This sequence is referred to as the habit loop.

In marketing, the goal is to get a customer to form a habit loop around purchasing or using the brand's offering. For example, many snack brands try to associate the environmental cues of hunger or boredom with their products such as Kit Kat's "Have a break" or Snickers' "You're not you when you're hungry" campaigns.

Loyalty programmes can play a key role in helping customers solidify a habit. For example, given the choice of two similar coffee shops on the morning commute to work, a person may be more inclined to visit the one offering a free coffee once they've collected a card full of stamps (even if that means going out of their way or paying a bit more for what is essentially a small discount). Eventually, the routine becomes set and it becomes easier to stick to the safe, familiar option.

Here are some examples from brands that encourage habit formation.

Table 2.5.2

Brand	Cue	Routine	Reward		
Starbucks	Walking to work in the morning	Get my regular coffee order	A caffeine hit and a friendly interaction with the barista		
Nike	Mobile app reminder to go for a run	Put on Nike shoes, go to the gym	Endorphins, satisfaction at living a healthy aspirational lifestyle		
Movie theatre	Smell of popcorn	Buy a snack set from the counter	Tasty snack, experiencing the 'full' movie-going experience		

How do habits form? To create a habit, you need to perform a repeated action many times in a row. The harder the action such as going for a jog each morning, the longer and more consistently you need to practice the behaviour. Once the habit sets, it becomes a mental 'shortcut' that will take conscious effort to override in future.

Decision load

Making decisions is hard even if the decision is a low-stakes, low-impact one. Generally, psychologists agree that we have a certain quota of decisions that we can make every day, after which subsequent decisions become harder and more taxing, and often result in poorer outcomes called 'decision fatigue'. This is why leading thinkers try to cut out as many trivial decisions as possible. Steve Jobs of Apple famously wore the same blue-jeans-and-turtleneck outfit every day to save himself making that one extra decision every morning.

This is also why we tend to subconsciously eliminate unnecessary decisions and stick to reliable, tested habits. This is especially true for the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. Consider your habits when buying toothpaste. Typically, you will purchase the same brand you always do without really thinking about it. Unless you had a terrible experience with the product, one toothpaste seems as good as the other and there's no incentive to switch. You certainly won't pause for five minutes in front of the shelf each time to carefully study each option before making your decision. It doesn't matter enough to get the best one.

Now imagine that your usual brand is out of stock. Suddenly, instead of relying on the existing habit, you are forced to make the decision from scratch at which point marketing factors and price can play an important role. But, crucially, it is the experience that the new product delivers that will be the deciding factor. If the new toothpaste is similar or inferior to the usual brand, there's no incentive to change the buying habit.

Defaults

Providing a 'default option' can be a powerful decision-making shortcut, because it removes the need to make an active decision. Defaults work for a number of reasons.





- **They offer a path of least resistance.** The default setting is perceived to be the one that is good enough for most people, and requires the least amount of thought and customisation. This is ideal for reducing effort.
- **They serve as a social signal.** The default is seen as the socially approved option, as the presumption is that the majority will choose this and there is safety in aligning with the majority.
- **They offer assurance.** Similarly, we also presume that the default choice has been selected by an expert because of its merit to the end user.
- They take advantage of loss aversion. When it comes to sales and marketing, effective default packages typically include more products or services that are strictly needed to increase the value and therefore the price. This is done simply because opting for a more basic version involves the customer taking elements away, and therefore suffering a loss. Once the default price has been anchored in the customer's mind, there is less incentive to remove unwanted elements, even if the price gets reduced. For example, when buying a new laptop, the customer may be offered a package deal that includes antivirus software, a laptop bag, a wireless mouse and other related accessories.

Choice architecture

You can simplify your customers' decision-making processes by cleverly designing the choices you offer. This is called choice architecture.

While the following are guidelines only, and should be tested thoroughly based on your own individual context, brand and customers, generally speaking a good choice architecture has the following characteristics:

- **A small number of choices, usually not more than five, though ideally three.** The smaller the number of options to choose from, the easier it is for the customer to distinguish the differences between the options, and to avoid a feeling of missing out.
- **A recommended or default option.** Because people consider expert advice and social preferences when choosing, highlighting one option as 'the most popular choice' or 'our top-selling package' can direct people to the option you most want them to take.
- A visual design hierarchy, typically using colour and size. To make your preferred option stand out, one easy trick is to make it bigger and brighter than the options around it.

Mixpanel strongly emphasises its Business plan as the ideal choice, not only is it highly emphasised compared to the surrounding options, it includes a 'best value' assurance.



Figure 2.5.4: Mixpanel highlighting their Business option as the ideal choice Screenshot, Mixpanel 2017

Customer experience mapping

Once you have carefully crafted personas to guide you around who your customer groups are, you need to understand how and where they are engaging with your brand. This is where customer experience mapping comes into play.

A Customer Experience map visually identifies and organises every encounter a customer has (or could have) with your company and brand. These interactions are commonly referred to as "touchpoints". (Kramp 2011)

You can use it as a tool to map your entire customer experience, or to drill down into detail for particular parts of that experience. Examples include in-store purchasing or someone trying to buy something on your website.

The map should detail how customers are feeling at various points in their interaction with you, and also highlight any pain points that they may be experiencing. Identifying these problems or dips in their experience presents opportunities for engagement, and also helps to explain your customer behaviour in context.





Towards creating your map



Figure 2.5.5: An experience map highlights opportunities for improving your customer experience Permission from Mirum

Customer experience maps should vary from business to business, so one shouldn't just follow a blueprint. Consider the customer journey introduced in Strategy and context, taking someone from consideration through to purchase and hopefully loyalty. The experience map looks at the progression from consideration through to post purchase in great detail and visually synthesises your customer's behaviour and motivations at every point of contact with your brand. Look at the example above, which includes some key sections:

- **Phase** Where is your customer in their interaction with your brand?
- **Doing, thinking, feeling** How does what they are feeling and doing vary from stage to stage?
- **Channels** What channels or contact points are involved in facilitating this stage of their journey?
- **Opportunities** What opportunities exist to solve pain points for your brand?

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2.6: Measuring success

The ultimate test of how well you understand your customers is evident in the success of your product or service. Targeted and relevant communications can only drive the sales of a relevant and well-positioned product.

Data on the success of your campaigns, from social media analytics through to site visits and customer service feedback, should both act as measures of success and feed into course correcting your marketing efforts or, where relevant, the nature of your actual product or service.

Every measure and data source discussed throughout the rest of this book should feed into your evolving picture of your customer. Personas and user experience maps should be living documents and tools

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2.7: Case study - Argos

One-line summary

Leading UK retailer Argos uses data analysis to deliver an overall year-on-year net margin increase of 170%.

The challenge

Argos wanted to increase the effectiveness of their budget and spending and increase revenue from paid search by 30%, without increasing the cost of sales.

The solution

Argos' marketing agency came up with a six part strategy to achieve this goal.

- 1. It used predictive analytics models to forecast optimised budget spend and expected revenue for each day, week, and month.
- 2. It aligned creative messages with stock and price changes to make sure the right ads were shown to the right people on the right device and at the right time.
- 3. It used a bespoke attribution model to measure the contribution that each click and keyword made to a sale.
- 4. It ran models to see how weather, location, seasonality, and other factors caused changes in customer buying behaviour, then synchronised campaigns to those changes.
- 5. It adapted the messaging, scheduling, and positioning of paid search ads to take advantage of expected traffic increases after the airing of a TV ad.
- 6. It changed the focus from revenue as a measure of success to profit as a measure of success, so instead of looking only at cost of sale, they examined net margin contribution to product sales.

By reviewing Google data, ROI targets, conversion rates, and transactional data, they were able to build predictions for keywords related to over 50 000 Argos products. Argos also used software to analyse data from customer buying triggers like location, weather, and TV ads.

Using this data, Argos and their marketing team was able to map season trends across all Argos products, including events like back to school, Argos catalogue launches, Easter, Christmas, and more. Using this data, they could anticipate customer demand and predict changes in impressions, clickthrough rate, cost per click, and conversion rate.

They used the same software to map weather-dependent products to weather-related digital campaigns for Argos, identifying the effects of temperature on each product all through the year. These seasonal and weather triggers were used in conjunction with daily weather forecasts for each region and store area to automate campaign adjustments and propose bid changes.

Finally, Argos aligned online marketing with TV ad broadcasts for both Argos and competitors, making changes in Google within seconds of an ad being broadcast. This enabled them to take advantage of people who use dual screens while watching TV.

Daily diagnostic reports were provided to identify and correct any underperforming campaigns.

Results

The marketing agency delivered a 170% increase year-on-year net margin increase across all product categories. The increase was over 100% in all categories, and in some categories as much as 900%. Other results included:

- Total annual revenue from search increased by 52% compared to the previous year
- PPC delivered a 46% increase on the previous year over Christmas
- Web traffic from PPC and Shopping increased by 33% on the previous year
- Cost of sales outperformed their target
- They lifted conversion rates and average order value
- The total number of orders via PPC increased by 31%. (Forecaster, n.d)

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2.8: The bigger picture

An understanding of your customer ties to absolutely everything you do in the marketing process. It should inform and drive strategy, and aid in matching tactics to outcomes.

Feedback on how well you've understood your customer can come from various digital channels, social media, conversion optimisation, CRM, data and analytics. While there are many sources of data, only when they are combined into a holistic picture can they help you get to the 'why' about your customers.

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2.E: Understanding Customer Behaviour (Exercises)

Case study question

- 1. Why did Argos need to use software for this campaign?
- 2. What kind of data was important for this campaign, and how was it collected?
- 3. What can you learn from the campaign's use of big data?

Chapter questions

- 1. What is behavioural economics?
- 2. What traps should you avoid when developing a consumer persona?
- 3. What is the relationship between a consumer experience map that maps your customers' entire journey, and an experience map used in the user experience design discipline?

Further reading

This presentation offers a good summary of the key topics and ideas within behavioural economics: www.slideshare.net/philipdemeulemeester/behavioural-economics-in

Eisenberg, B. and Eisenberg, J., 2006. Waiting for Your Cat to Bark Persuading Customers When They Ignore Marketing

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2.S: Understanding customer behaviour(Summary)

People have come to depend on and shape the digital channels that enable connection, individual interest and the disruption of industries. Your consumers are connected, impatient, fickle and driven by a number of motivations and contextual realities. Only through targeting and understanding specifically can you reach them and ensure the success of your brand.

Some tools can help you to paint a picture of your customers and their experience of your brand by depicting complex motivations, both external and internal. This enables real customer data and research, and considering the complex and sometimes irrational influences on how people make decisions. Customer personas, customer experience maps and the field of behavioural economics can all help to shape your thinking and drive your approach.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Think - Data driven decision making

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn:

- The importance of data in our data-driven world.
- What data you should be collecting.
- How data is used to improve the user experience and increase conversions.
- How knowing your customers is integral to improving their experience with your brand.
- 3.1: References
- 3.2: Introduction
- 3.3: Key terms and concepts
- 3.4: Understanding data
- 3.5: Approaching data
- 3.6: Working with data
- 3.7: Becoming a data led organisation
- 3.8: Advantages and challenges
- 3.9: Measuring success
- 3.10: Tools of the trade
- 3.11: Case study Royal Canin Russia
- 3.12: The bigger picture
- 3.E: Data driven decision making(Exercises)
- 3.S: Data driven decision making(Summary)

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3.2: Introduction

The strength of the decisions you make depends on the quality and completeness of the information that informs these decisions. This chapter will examine the role of data in delivering meaningful insights into connected, evolving consumers. Data can be used to change and adapt marketing strategies to better meet changing consumer needs. A dynamic view of data is necessary to create an extremely detailed, regularly updated picture of your consumers. This means that you need to be collecting data all the time, at every stage of the marketing process, to ensure that your view of the customer does not become obsolete.

'The evolving consumer' refers to the fact that people are constantly changing. People change on an individual level and are influenced by technology, the macroeconomic climate, financial stability, and a host of other factors that are always in flux.

A current, accurate view of the customer is essential for marketers because consumers expect to be addressed as individuals. You want to deliver targeted communication that reaches the right audience, at the right time, when they are displaying the right intent, to lead them to purchase your product. Data helps make this happen by providing an individual view of each consumer and helping with segmentation and targeting. Data will also show how well your campaigns are performing, enabling you to improve them and make them more effective. In short, data is used to make logical decisions based on real information to create a customer-driven, data-led business. It must be considered not only at the beginning of your engagement with marketing and digital, but throughout.

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3.3: Key terms and concepts

Table 3.2.1

Term	e 3.2.1 Definition	
Business intelligence/ insights	Data that can help businesses understand the factors influencing their success and how these can be used to benefit them.	
Connected customer	Consumers are increasingly connected, using ever-growing numbers of Internet-enabled devices. These offer opportunities for data collection.	
Current indicators	Information from the present time that can help businesses to understand their customer and themselves.	
Customer intelligence	The process of gathering and analysing information about customers to improve customer relationships and allow for more strategic business decisions.	
Data intelligence	The process of gathering and analysing data from all available sources to improve customer relationships and make more strategic business decisions.	
Disruption	When a disruptive innovation changes the market and displaces established players.	
Dynamic data	Data that is constantly updated and evaluated to provide a dynamic, changing view of the customer	
uture/leading indicators	Information that can help a brand to make decisions about the future.	
Goals	Specific actions taken by a user, or specific user behaviour	
nternet of things	The interconnection of everyday objects to the Internet via embedded computing devices, giving them the ability to send and receive data.	
Key performance indicators (KPI)	The metrics that are examined to determine the success of a campaign. Lagging indicators Older data that gives information on how a brand performed in the past.	
Иetric	A quantifiable measure used to track the performance of a campaign. The most important metrics are called KPIs. Net promoter score (NPS) The KPI used to measure customer loyalty.	
Segmentation	The process of breaking an overall audience or target market into smaller groups based on specific commonalities for more accurate targeting. Single view of customer Single view of customer is achieved when all customer information is available in a single central location.	
SMART objectives	A marketing objective that is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant,	
minit objectives	and time bound.	

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3.4: Understanding data

Consumers, technology and data

To understand data and its role in a business, you need to understand consumers and their relationship to technology. Many people believe that technology changes and consumers adapt in response. Really, consumers are leading the change themselves through the technological choices they make. They decide which technology to embrace, usually favouring whatever facilitates speed and ownership of their own experience. This is particularly true on mobile.

Brands need to meet consumers in the technological spaces they have chosen. The consumer relationship with technology is about accessibility, theirs to brands and products, and brands' to theirs. This has shifted a large deal of power to the consumer.

This connection to technology offers many opportunities for marketers. Every new technology embraced by a consumer offers brands new ways to collect information about them. This leads to more granular segmentation and more targeted marketing messages.

The Internet of me

Consider the Internet of Things, which is the idea that more and more everyday objects are technologically enabled to send and receive data via the Internet. The information these objects transmit is, for the most part, related to the consumer using the objects rather than about the objects themselves. Consumers use this connected technology to communicate, create content such as social media posts, and consume and share products.

More than an Internet of Things, you can think of this as an Internet of 'Me'. 'Me' is the consumer, and the technology-enabled connection between objects and the consumer allows brands to access reams of data about consumers that they could never have considered a few years ago.

What is data?

Put simply, data is all the available information about your business. It includes information about your consumers, your products and their performance, your owned digital properties, and any other information that exists that might affect your business. The mountains of data that your business has access to is good for one thing: it helps you create a strong, data-driven business strategy that lets you connect with consumers and, ultimately, sell more products.

Remember the difference between owned, earned, and paid coverage in the digital sphere? Your owned properties cover your websites, social media profiles, and anything else your brand controls. Read more about this in the Social media and strategy chapter.

The intention behind the collection and careful use of data is to create more value for your customers. Value can be defined as any means through which the brand delivers on its purpose. Whatever that value is, it needs to be something that customers actually want and that is relevant to them. Data can help you identify what is relevant and useful and what really works.

Forms of data

There are four main forms of data relevant to brands:

- 1. **Algorithmic intelligence** the algorithmic methods used by companies such as Google and Netflix to help drive revenue. In the case of Google, to assess what people want to read, and in the case of Netflix, to assess what they want to watch.
- 2. **BI:** Business intelligence the technology-driven process for analysing an organisation's raw data, about profits and performance, and presenting that information to help brands make better informed business decisions.
- 3. **CI: Customer intelligence** information derived from customer data, that comes from internal and external sources, to build better customer relationships and make stronger strategic decisions.
- 4. **SI: Software intelligence** software tools and techniques used to mine data for useful and meaningful information, the result of which is similar to BI.

By combining all four forms of data, you could say that you are using data intelligence (DI), and this can easily make you the most powerful brand in your field.





Sources of data

Data can come from any number of sources, particularly thanks to the Internet of Things. You don't need to restrict yourself to website-based analytics. To get a full picture of audience insights, try to gather as wide a variety of information as you can. Some places to look:

∓ Note

Take a look at this video on the Internet of Things , how it works, and what we can do with the data: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSIPNhOiMoE.

- Online data everywhere your audience interacts with you online, such as social media, email, forums and more. Most of
 these will have their own datagathering tools. For example, look at Facebook Insights or your email service provider's send
 logs.
- **Databases** look at any databases that store relevant customer information, like your contact database, CRM information or loyalty programs. These can often supplement anonymous data with some tangible demographic insights.
- **Software data** data might also be gathered by certain kinds of software, for example, some web browsers gather information on user habits, crashes and problems. If you produce software, consider adding a data-gathering feature (with the user's permission, of course) that captures usage information that you can use for future updates.
- **App store data** app store analytics allows companies to monitor and analyse the way customers download, pay for and use their apps. Marketplaces like the Google Play and Apple App stores should provide some useful data here.
- Offline data in-store experience data, customer service logs, in-person surveys, in-store foot traffic, and much more.

You should consider looking for data in unusual places or consuming data in an unconventional way.

✓ Example 3.4.1

Amazon Dash is an excellent example. Amazon Dash is a Wi-Fi-connected service that reorders products with the press of a button. It consists of three components.

- 1. A scanning device used to inventory consumer goods in a house.
- 2. The Amazon Dash Button, which can be placed anywhere in a house and programmed to order products of the consumer's choosing.
- 3. The Amazon Dash Replenishment Service, which allows manufacturers to add a button or auto-detection capability to their devices.



Figure 3.4.1: Amazon Dash Adapted From Wnep, 2015.

Consumers see this as a brilliant innovation that gets them the product they want, when they want it. They see it as being about convenience, and it is! As an example of incremental innovation, it stands out, and convenience will drive the use of the product. It is also an excellent data collection tool that helps to gather data for granular segmentation. This is good for both the customer and the brand.

Lagging, current, and leading indicators

Your data-driven, customer-first strategy should be built around three data indicators.

Lagging indicators are past data such as financial results, sales history and past campaign results. Profits can be seen as a result
of your marketing efforts and how you responded to the competition. These indicators are important because they show your
past performance, but they are only one part of the whole.





- 2. **Current indicators** are pieces of information from right now. For example, you can use website analytics to see what customers are doing on your site and which pages they visit. You can use this data to segment around that. The immediate environment is also a current indicator, for example, the #deleteuber hashtag was a huge current indicator for the Uber group about how their customers were reacting to their political actions. Current indicators can encourage you to think about what you can do to be agile in response to them.
- 3. **Leading** or **future indicators** help you think about where the company might be headed. Your brand can make a strategic decision about where you're going to be in the future. Look at other brands that are already established in that area, and examine what people search for in that space. What words do they use in their searches? What ideas are they looking for? What kind of innovations are coming out now that may affect the way your brand does business in the future? Is there any economic or environmental data that could affect how your brand performs? Future indicators help you define your strategy for moving the business forward.

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3.5: Approaching data

Enabling dynamic data

Consumers today expect increasingly personalised communication from brands. Personalisation is all about relevance. You can only successfully communicate with and add value to a customer if you understand who they really are. The only way you can do this is through dynamic data.

Many businesses make the mistake of not collecting and storing their data in a single place that can be accessed by everyone. For example, the sales department might have a list of qualified leads, the marketing department might have customer reactions to marketing material, and the CRM department might have access to customer complaints. Multiple data sets within a business pose a risk to customer communication, especially where they lead to irrelevant or outdated information being shared with customers.

Businesses should aim for a single view of customer (SVOC). This is when businesses have one view of customer data, which is all collected in one place and can be accessed by different departments. However, SVOC on its own is insufficient in today's data-rich environment. A SVOC is important as a starting point for storing clean data, but because it is collected at a single point in time, it doesn't account for customer change.



Read more about the importance of database hygiene (keeping data fresh) in the Customer relationship management and Direct marketing: Email and mobile chapters.

Because customers are evolving in the way that they use technology and how they consume products, businesses need to evolve their approach to data to keep up. What is relevant to a customer today might be completely different to what was relevant yesterday. For example, customers listed on the database as married may now be divorced, and customers listed with certain political or product preferences may well change these preferences over time. Businesses need to move away from master data focused on a SVOC and toward dynamic data that keeps this evolution in mind.



Figure 3.5.1: Customer experience and data work hand in hand Adapted From Unknown, n.d.

As an example, consider a student living away from home, who is provided with a credit card by her father. A SVOC would result in sending marketing material to the father who signed up for the card, when a more dynamic view would take into account who is actually doing the shopping and send the material to her instead.

Data and customer strategy

A data-driven view of the customer allows a business to move from organisation centric to customer-centric thinking.





Figure 3.5.2: The difference between thinking like a shareholder and thinking like a consumer

A customer-centric brand will use these five principles in their customer strategy:

- 1. **You are not the customer.** No members of staff should presume to know what customers will like or want. No one person's hunches or intuition will be as accurate as a large data set. Use research and data to understand what your customers will like and how they will act accordingly.
- 2. **Your brand does not know the customers as well as they know themselves.** The brand should understand their customers, realise that the customers are changing, and be willing and able to use data to track and respond to that change.
- 3. **Customers are all different:** broad segmentation is the same as generalisation. With the amount of data available, brands are capable of very granular segmentation so instead of talking about "All women between 18 and 30 who use makeup", they can narrow it down to "Women between 18 and 30 who use makeup, are interested in X and Y, who like to consume Z, and who are friends with A and B."
- 4. **Customers are constantly changing.** Dynamic data is essential to ensuring your view of your customer is accurate and relevant.
- 5. **Data drives the customer-centric view.** You cannot give your customers what they want unless you know what that is and who they are.

When thinking about different customers using the same type of product, consider makeup brands like MAC and Rimmel. Both brands would target women aged 18–30 years old who wear makeup. However, these brands differ in what their respective customers want from their makeup, what they are willing to pay, what skincare benefits they expect, where they socialise, and what jobs they may have. The more detail you have about your customers, the more you are able to set your brand apart and create marketing messages that speak to individuals.

In a customer-first strategy, dynamic data means creating that never-ending feedback loop we've looked at, of experience out and data in. Everything you do should push out an experience for the customer, and your customer expects that experience to be relevant, personalised, and built for them but in a way that's not too obvious. Larger, established companies may find it difficult to carry out this major shift in thinking to a customer-first approach, which puts new businesses at an advantage.

Data and trust

Consumers are increasingly concerned about privacy. To comfortably share with you the data you need, consumers must believe you will treat that data responsibly and respectfully. Any brand collecting data about its consumers, which should be every brand, needs to work on establishing and maintaining this trust. Trust has three components:

- 1. **Security:** You need to make sure that you can protect customer data from being hacked or stolen.
- 2. **Privacy:** You need to ensure that your brand is compliant with legal requirements regarding what data it is and is not allowed to be collected and what it is allowed to do with that data. You should have a privacy policy outline that is easily accessible to the consumer.
- 3. **Transparency:** Give consumers insight into how their data is being used. Demonstrate how providing access to their data is contributing towards improving their experience.





Once you establish trust with a consumer, that trust can become a bond that leads to a relationship. The more trust you have, the better the relationship will be. However, if you break the trust by overstepping your bounds in personalisation, spamming the customer, or not keeping their data safe, they will go elsewhere

Different countries will have different legislation around what brands need to do to protect consumer information, such as the European Union Data Protection Directives of 1995, South Africa's POPI (Protection of Personal Information Act) of 2013, or Canada's Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). Make sure you are compliant with the laws of the country in which you operate.

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3.6: Working with data

Reporting

The process of becoming a customer-centric organisation does not end with gathering data. You need to report on that data to the people who will act on it, in a format that will actually be consumed. For example, if you give everyone a 27-page financial report filled with spreadsheets and nothing else, very few people will read or try to interpret it.

You need to consider your audience: who is going to receive your data, and what format works best for them? The marketing team would receive different data to the managerial team, who would receive different data to the sales team, and so on. Make the data available, but communicate only what is relevant to that audience to facilitate their path to taking action.



Figure 3.6.1: The reporting pyramid. Examples of who needs to see what aspect of website analytics data

Ideally, and while acting within the bounds of legal requirements, your organisation should place no restrictions on who can or cannot see existing data. Everyone in the company should have access in order to facilitate improvements. Make the data available to customer-facing staff as well as product designers, for example.

Why is this so important? Why does every part of the organisation need access to the data you are giving them? Data takes the emotion out of decisions, moving the organisation toward a customer-centric viewpoint. Managers can no longer say, "I'm experienced in this field, so I know what to expect" because opinion no longer matters. Instead, look at what the data is saying to drive your personalisation strategy and deliver relevant customer experiences.

Analysing data

The data feedback loop should never stop after a report. If you want to be agile, you need to consume, interpret, and understand data and turn it into an effect that will result in an immediate reaction.

You can read more about analysing data in the Data analytics chapter. For now, remember that the goal of analysing your data is to look for patterns such as similarities, trends, deviations, and any other relationship, and thinking about what those mean. This process can help you solve problems both on a small scale, at the level of websites and campaigns, and on a larger business-wide scale that you may not have realised you had.

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3.7: Becoming a data led organisation

The journey to becoming a data-led organisation is not an easy one, particularly for an already established business. Where would this change happen in how data, and its impact on the customer, is viewed?

A data-driven business needs to involve people who obsess about data and cultivate an organisational culture that puts data and the customer first. The organisational design that enables this data-first approach would look something like this:



Figure 3.7.1: A variation of the organisational design required to combine a focus on data and customer to build a relevant customer experience

The journey should follow certain steps. These steps don't all have to happen in the same order, but they do tend to focus on three different areas.

Internal preparation

First, you will need to internally prepare your organisation for a data-first, customerdriven view. The very first thing your organisation needs to do is understand and **validate the financial and emotional investment** the company must make to deliver this new approach (investment in technology, hardware, people, and change management). Then, you will have to:

- **Gather and analyse collective data** to discover how and where your customers are connected (what channels and with what devices).
- Appoint a cross-functional team to champion the Customer Experience strategy. This requires customer officers to evaluate
 customer experience and data officers who can assess your current back-end architecture and data storage. Remember, you need
 the right infrastructure to support dynamic data storage and use.
- **Architect the best toolset** that supports your existing platforms to drive and support the changing customer experience. Remember to consider the kind of reporting you'll need to do.
- Consider the three **components of trust** security, privacy, and transparency and put people and processes in place to monitor this.

Customer focus

Second, your organisation will need to start moving toward actually analysing the customer and making their experience with your brand a better one. This means you need to:

- Identify **granular segments** within your user base.
- Update your **consumer engagement processes** and governance strategy accordingly.
- Shift toward a world where every customer has a unique view of your product.
- Start mapping relevant user journeys that leverage new channels of access to the consumer.
- Use the collective data to map the journey.
- Consider customer touchpoints and feedback loops.
- Use the data in part of the feedback loop to **map the change** in the customer journey.





External evaluation

Finally, you need to keep an eye on what is happening outside your business that could have an impact on it. This means you should:

- **Evaluate competitors** for their use of data influencing their personalisation strategies.
- Identify **emerging technologies** that could drive your incremental/disruptive innovation strategy.

A focus on data will impact and improve every aspect of your organisation, not only your marketing efforts, so start your journey now.

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3.8: Advantages and challenges

The advantages of a data-driven organisation are enormous. It:

- Drives a customer-centric focus
- Enables innovation in highly competitive markets
- Improves ROI on campaigns and other marketing efforts
- · Allows for tactical decisions
- Means no opinions are involved as it is evidence-based decision making.

However, one cannot simply decide to be data-driven and have everything work out immediately. To be data-driven you:

- Have to be data-driven in **everything**, no picking and choosing.
- Have to persuade the entire organisation to adopt this mindset.
- Need to set up an organisational structure that will enable data to flow easily.
- Have to invest in the cycle and you need to invest in data to apply the insights that will help you get more data.
- Need to keep in mind that the huge amount of data available can make finding meaningful patterns tricky.

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3.9: Measuring success

Success should primarily be measured against your objectives. Gathering an idea of the total economic value of your online efforts can be difficult, but you can do it by examining the following, among others:

Site measures

- Audience behaviour statistics (measuring new against returning customers)
- Audience (unique users, page impressions, bounce rates, and visit duration)
- · Frequency and engagement
- · Conversions across all channels.

Sales

- Net sales
- Average order value
- Gross or median order value
- Customer acquisition rate
- Customer retention rate (remember, a retained customer is worth three to five times more than a once-off customer, and it is cheaper to retain existing customers than to acquire new ones)
- Offline sales as a result of online drivers (if someone visits the website or sees an ad online and then walks into the physical store, think about how you can measure this).

Services

- Retention
- · Acquisitions.

Technical performance

Measuring your technical performance is important to ensure that your customer has a good experience on your online properties and will return. You should always have goals for how you want the user to experience the website, considering elements such as:

- Site maintenance, speed and performance
 - Time per page load (average should be 3 seconds)
- · Capacity and reach
- IT services support
- SEO.

Remember, your user will give you three to four seconds of engagement time on a landing page and seven seconds on a homepage before they leave if you haven't answered their question, so make sure you know what the user wants and how to give it to them.

Operations

- Order processing time (an improvement on this based on digital technology is a contribution of online to the business, and it should be counted as a success)
- Fulfilment rates
- Substitution (if a product isn't available, how successful are you at substituting a different one?).

Marketing

- Campaign results against set objectives
- · Customer loyalty NPS.
- · Channel optimisation
- Customer surveys.

The idea of benchmarking can cause some confusion for brands wanting to measure their success. While industry benchmarks for things like marketing campaigns can be useful for seeing your standing in your industry, you should really be benchmarking against your own previous performance to ensure that you are always improving as a brand.





On the other hand, harder, more technical aspects of your digital performance should absolutely be measured against universal standards. Page load times have a measurable effect on SEO and customer engagement, so although decreasing your time from twelve to eight seconds is a good effort, you would still be well above the expected three seconds, and this will impact your site's overall performance in multiple areas (Hobo, 2017).

∓ Note

Uncertain how to measure customer loyalty? Take a look at this article on the net promoter score (NPS), which is the KPI used to measure this: blog. emolytics.com/kpi/ net-promoter-scorecustomer-loyalty.



Figure 3.9.1: Longer load times increase page abandonment Adapted from Hobo, 2017.

The time you take to respond to consumers or to make a sale should be measured against universal benchmarks for similar reasons. That is, consumers have come to expect a certain standard in some areas, and anything not meeting this standard will result in a negative customer experience.

Each chapter in this book will give you an indication of the kind of metrics you should look at to determine success in particular areas.

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3.10: Tools of the trade

Many tools exist to help you make the most of your data!

Customer insight tools can help you find out more about your customers and what they think of you. These are tools that help you with online reputation management (ORM). For example:

- Google Alerts: www.google.com/alerts
- Hootsuite: hootsuite.com
- BrandsEye: www.brandseye.com

Data gathering tools:

- Google Analytics: analytics.google.com/analytics/web
- Quantum Leap Buzz: www.quantumleapbuzz.com
- Wolfram Alpha: www.wolframalpha.com

Data visualisation tools:

- ClickView: www.clickview.com
- · Plotly: plot.ly
- Tableau: public.tableau.com/s
- Open Refine: openrefine.org
- Fusion Tables: support.google.com/fusiontables/answer/2571232

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3.11: Case study - Royal Canin Russia

One-line summary

Royal Canin used existing data to create personalised email coupons and local offers tailored to individual subscribers, tapping into the love pet owners have for their unique animals.

The challenge

Royal Canin's customer database was very outdated, and most people still bought their products in stores rather than online, a more efficient channel. Loyalty programmes for pets were usually seen as retailer initiatives rather than giving the brand recognition for these.

They wanted to create a loyalty programme that would encourage an image of Royal Canin as an expert in the field of pet food, across different breeds and it wanted to establish a relationship with consumers that would cause them to buy their pet food directly from the brand rather than at stores.

The solution

Royal Canin targeted dog and cat owners in the top six Russian cities, regardless of breed. They ran an algorithmic analysis of their CRM platform so that they could segment their audience and send offers according to:

- · Type of pet
- Size of pet
- Upcoming 'events' such as a birthday or growth stage
- Medical records and any other data they had on the pet owner.

They could then send personalised email coupons to owners with deadlines for redemption. The unique link in the coupon would send the owner to a page already populated with a list of products chosen specifically for their pet, where they could place an order without leaving the platform. The online orders also facilitated brand communication by connecting pet owners to special events and programmes in various cities.



Figure 3.11.1: Royal Canin Russia's homepage Adapted from Screenshot, Royal Canin Russia 2016

Customers could choose whether they wanted the food delivered to their home or whether they wanted to pick up their merchandise at a store near them.

Data from the mailed coupons was loaded into the CRM database, including whether the recipient used the coupons they were sent. The regular database updates helped the team assess a customer's level of involvement with the platform.

It also affected the everyday aspects of the business. Based on coupon redemption and other information gleaned from the campaign, the brand could adjust the availability of items in online and offline retail platforms according to demand. It also gave them the data needed to understand how much inventory they needed for different products based on their popularity.



The results

The campaign was a resounding success. Because of the data-focused approach, Royal Canin:

- Reduced logistics costs
- · Minimised waiting time for orders
- Improved the customer experience
- Showed the customer that the order was implemented by the brand and not a retail store
- Created an adaptive platform for mobile orders after finding that 80% of recipients opened the initial offer on mobile.

The campaign also worked very well for consumers.

- Push SMS messages sent using geolocation helped monitor special offers at retail stores. Subscribers in the area could then
 receive unique promotional codes to redeem at those stores
- 65% of respondents opened the campaign messages
- 74% of those who opened the message went to the online ordering platform
- 46% of orders implemented coupons
- 75% of customers participating in the programme said they used Royal Canin food for their pets.

(Digital Training Academy, 2017)

You can view the video for this campaign here: www.digitaltrainingacademy.com/casestudies/2017/02/mobile_case_study_royal_canin_runs_offers_ factory_for_pets_in_russia.php

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3.12: The bigger picture

Data driven innovation

The view of data and its place in a business is evolving, but it is still lagging behind where it needs to be. Data tends to be focused on customer intelligence (CI), which includes customer profiling, or business intelligence (BI), which includes transactional behaviour. Businesses use these to decide what to do next. Some businesses are forward thinking and combine the two so that they have two different indicators of what the consumer might need.

CI and BI are the bare minimum of what businesses should be doing with data. Consider the notorious example of Target, a U.S. retailer that used data about customer shopping habits to send relevant marketing material to their customer. One father of a teenage girl complained to the store about sending his daughter coupons aimed at pregnant women. A short while later he apologised after discovering that his daughter was indeed pregnant (Business Insider, 2012).

That Target knew the teenage girl was pregnant is impressive. If they had combined CI and BI, they would have realised that they were about to market pregnancy-related products to a teenager. They could have avoided a great deal of embarrassment!

Both BI and CI are lagging indicators, data that the brand has collected about the past behaviour of consumers and the past performance of products. Many businesses only look at data with this traditional view, but it can tell us much more. A business that focuses on how to collect and analyse data can predict future customer behaviour, work on forward-path product development and improve personalisation.

Technology-enabled innovation is all about the customer experience. If the customer enjoys their experience with your brand, no matter what the product, they will keep using it. If your product is connected to the Internet, you can gather customer data that will further inform your product development. This creates a feedback loop in which you gather data, improve the customer experience, and gather more data, and so on.

Withings, a brand connected to Nokia, has created a weight scale that connects to a database, tracks your weight on a graph, and feeds it back to you in an app. The app can also connect to Withings' other lifestyle devices such as smartwatches and blood pressure monitors. This gives the user a lot of useful data, but it's also a great way for the company to collect data about its customers.

Any object that is both connected and information-intensive has the capability to do things in new and different ways, in other words, to disrupt.

Technology-enabled innovation should focus on the customer experience and should be data-led. It comes in two forms:

- **Incremental innovation** doing things better in your everyday business practice to improve your customer's experience.
- **Disruptive innovation** positioning your business for future customers.

Both are equally important. Incremental innovation is sometimes downplayed, but changing one small thing might have a big impact on how your customers perceive your brand. People often associate 'innovation' in a business context with innovation labs, or assume that it belongs to an innovation team and is someone else's problem. However, when you have a data-driven customer experience, because you have such a thorough understanding of where your customer is and who they are, a tiny incremental innovation plan can fundamentally change your customer experience.

Disruptive innovation is about positioning your business for the future customer. It refers to big changes that will change how customers interact with your business (and possibly your whole industry), and it generally ends up displacing whatever technology preceded it. For example, cell phones have almost replaced landline phones. For innovation to be relevant to your consumer, you need the right data.



Figure 3.12.1: The data feedback loop



An obvious example of a brand that did this, and in turn completely disrupted an industry, is Uber. They saw people struggling to find taxis and a lot of people who owned cars not driving them (Belarbi, n.d.). They then thought about how to add technology to bring the two together, took a map (information), added a layer of connection (person to person), and invented an app that has almost toppled traditional taxi brands. Uber used already existing GPS technology to solve a problem in a way no one had considered before.

Uber also uses incremental innovation by regularly rolling out updates to its app and services that will positively affect customer experience. For example, Uber noticed that many potential customers in their South African locations did not have access to a credit card, so they piloted experiments with cash payments in that country.

Think about how Uber gathers the data it needs to make these incremental improvements. They receive a huge amount of data every time someone uses their app. Updates of where people are going, their most frequently visited locations, times of day during which travel takes place, and more. This kind of data-first thinking allows them to provide more value to customers, track their improvements and thus establish a powerful data feedback loop.

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3.E: Data driven decision making(Exercises)

Case study questions

- 1. What role did data play in the planning and execution of the Royal Canin campaign?
- 2. Why was it so important for Royal Canin to continuously monitor the campaign results and update their CRM database?
- 3. What beneficial effects did the data generated by the Royal Canin campaign have on the running of the business overall?

Chapter questions

- 1. Why should a business try to be data-driven?
- 2. What should be done with data once it has been collected?
- 3. What are some of the most important sources of data?
- 4. What are some up-and-coming data collection tools/sources that you foresee being useful in the near future?

Further reading

Personalisation is important for great customer experiences, but read about how this might be a problem for small businesses here: adage.com/article/digitalnext/personalization-a-problem-brands/305554

Check out the Kissmetrics blog for articles about analytics and testing: blog.kissmetrics.com

The Analytics Vidhya blog has some more complex data information: www.analyticsvidhya.com/blog

Take a look at the Freakonomics blog: freakonomics.com

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3.S: Data driven decision making(Summary)

The more data you collect, the more relevant you can make your customer experience. Relevance leads to a better customer experience, which leads to more opportunities to collect data. A customer-focused, data-driven organisation needs to embrace this cycle, which enables both incremental and disruptive innovation.

Businesses need to embrace dynamic data that enables them to keep a clear view of their evolving customer. This data strategy should be built around lagging, current, and leading or future indicators, each of which can give you a different piece of the data puzzle. If this happens, the business will have a clear view of past and current performance as well as where they can go in the future.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Think - Market Research

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn:

- Key concepts in conducting market research.
- Several methods for conducting online research, including surveys, online focus groups and data sentiment analysis.
- Possible problems and pitfalls to look out for when researching online.
- 4.1: Introduction
- 4.2: Key terms and concepts
- 4.3: The importance of market research
- 4.4: Key concepts in market research
- 4.5: Online research methodologies
- 4.6: Justifying the cost of research
- 4.7: References
- 4.8: Tools of the trade
- 4.9: Adantages and challenges
- 4.10: Case study Sentiment data mining predicts political outcomes
- 4.11: The bigger picture
- 4.E: Market Research(Exercises)
- 4.S: Market Research(Summary)

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4.1: Introduction

The Internet is built for research. Whether it's a consumer shopping around for prices, a researcher exploring a topic or a fan looking up their favourite band, the Internet has provided new ways for gathering and analysing data.

Customers are able to research companies and products easily, gathering information to compare prices and services with a few clicks. Customers are also able to share likes and dislikes easily, whether that information is shared with companies or with friends.

As a result, brands can study who their customers are, what they are interested in, how they feel about the brand, and the best times and places to engage with them. Insights can be gathered from ongoing market research, making it possible to course correct and apply data driven decision making. This chapter will focus on tools and methodologies for gathering useful data.

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4.2: Key terms and concepts

Table 4.2.1

Table 4.2.1				
Term	Definition			
Bounce rate	The number of people who view one page and then leave a website without viewing any other pages. Data statistics and facts collected for analysis.			
Data sentiment analysis	The systematic analysis of subjective materials, such as survey responses or social media posts, in order to determine the attitude and intended emotional communication of the customer			
Focus group	A form of qualitative research where people are asked questions in an interactive group setting. From a marketing perspective, it is an important tool for acquiring feedback on new products and various topics.			
Hypothesis	A supposition that is tested in relation to known facts; a proposition based on reason but not necessarily assumed to be true.			
Listening lab	A testing environment where the researcher observes how a customer uses a website or product.			
Observation/online ethnography	When a researcher immerses themselves in a particular environment in order to gather insights.			
Primary research	The collection of data to present a new set of findings from original research.			
Qualitative data	Data that can be observed but not measured. Deals with descriptions.			
Quantitative data	Data that can be measured or defined. Deals with numbers.			
Research community	A community set up with the intention of being a source for research.			
Research methodology	Methods employed in research for reaching results			
Sample size	The number of respondents in a sample of the population.			
Secondary research	The collection of existing research data.			
Sentiment	The emotion attached to a particular mention which is positive, negative or neutral.			
Statistically significant	A sample that is big enough to represent valid conclusions.			

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4.3: The importance of market research

The modern world can feel unpredictable. It is increasingly difficult to keep up with trends, customer needs, popular opinions and competitors. So, how can you keep your brand and products relevant to ensure you are meeting your customers' needs?

The answer is to conduct market research. Market research helps you make informed business decisions. It involves systematically gathering, recording and analysing data about customers, competitors and the market, and turning this data into insight that can drive marketing strategies, product design and positioning and communications strategies.

Online market research is the process of using digital tools, data and connections to glean valuable insights about a brand's target audience. In other words, it's the process of learning about your audience by engaging and observing them online. Technology plays a key role in gathering data and connecting with research participants, and can make the whole process quicker and easier to manage than traditional offline research methods.

Traditional and online market research have the same goals and underlying principles, but online market research has the benefit of using digital technology, which provides a range of benefits.

- The Internet is always on, meaning that data is readily available at any time.
- Many of the processes for finding, gathering and storing data can be automated. For example, you can get an automatic email alert if someone mentions your brand, or you can set up self-administered digital surveys.
- You have access to a large number of participants around the world at the click of a button. A lot of the information you will use is already being automatically collected such as web analytics and social media data all you need to do is access it.



Remember that comments made on social networks cannot represent the views of your entire target market. The validity of any data must be considered in light of your research design.

People are often happy to share their own research, insights and methodologies online, so you can access this trove of resources to inform your own research.

Online market research can be much more cost effective and quick to set up than traditional research techniques.

There are many reasons why you should conduct regular market research:

- To gain insights into your consumers, this can include:
 - What customers want and need from your brand
 - What customers like and dislike about the brand
 - Why customers buy the brand's products or services
 - Why potential customers might choose your brand over another
 - Why (or why not) customers make repeat purchases
- Understand the changes in your industry and business
- · Discover new market trends on which you can capitalise
- Find new potential sales avenues, customers, products and more
- Find and engage new audiences
- Allow customers to help steer your business.

If you are able to understand your customers and the greater business context, you will be able to market more effectively, meet their needs better, and drive more positive sentiment around your brand. All of this adds up to happier customers and, ultimately, a healthier bottom line.

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4.4: Key concepts in market research

While the research field can be full of complex terminology, there are four key concepts to understand before conducting your own research:

- 1. Research methodology
- 2. Qualitative and quantitative data
- 3. Primary and secondary research
- 4. Sampling.

Research methodology

Research methodology refers to the process followed in order to conduct accurate and valuable research. The research process should involve certain steps.

- 1. Establish the goals of the project
- 2. Determine your sample
- 3. Choose a data collection method
- 4. Collect data
- 5. Analyse the results
- 6. Formulate conclusions and actionable insights (for example, producing reports)



Figure 4.4.1: The steps in research methodology process

Most often, market research is focused around specific issues unique to a business or brand. It is therefore not always possible to freely obtain comparable information to aid decision making. This is why it can be useful to start from a specific research problem or hypothesis when kicking off a research project. Your research question should guide your entire process, and will determine your choice of data collection method. We will discuss more on those later.

Another approach involves ongoing data collection. As discussed in the Data driven decision making chapter, unbiased decision making is far more accurately driven when aided by market insight. Many have argued that less expensive, ongoing data collection is increasingly a route proven to be useful to organisations.

Primary and secondary research

Research can be based on primary data or secondary data. Primary research is conducted when new data is gathered for a particular product or hypothesis. This is where information does not exist already or is not accessible, and therefore needs to be specifically collected from consumers or businesses. Surveys, focus groups, research panels and research communities can all be used when conducting primary market research.

Secondary research uses existing, published data as a source of information. It can be more cost-effective than conducting primary research. The Internet opens up a wealth of resources for conducting this research. The data could have originally been collected for solving problems other than the one at hand, so they may not be sufficiently specific. Secondary research can be useful for identifying problems to be investigated through primary research.

The Internet is a useful tool when conducting both primary and secondary research. Not only are there a number of free tools available when it comes to calculating things such as sample size and confidence levels (see section 4.7 on Tools of the trade for some examples), but it is also an ideal medium to reach large numbers of people at a relatively low cost.





The Internet and secondary research

Research based on secondary data should precede primary data research. It can be used in establishing the context and parameters for primary research.

Secondary data can:

- provide enough information to solve the problem at hand, thereby negating the need for further research.
- provide sources for hypotheses that can be explored through primary research.
- provide information to inform primary research, such as sample sizes and audience.
- used as a reference base to measure the accuracy of primary research.

Companies with online properties have access to an abundance of web analytics data that are recorded digitally. These data can then be mined for insights. It's worth remembering, though, that it's usually impossible for you to access the web analytics data of competitors so this method will give you information only about your own customers.

Customer communications are also a source of data that can be used, particularly communications with the customer service department. Committed customers who complain, comment or compliment are providing information that can form the foundation for researching customer satisfaction.

Social networks, blogs and other forms of social media have emerged as forums where consumers discuss their likes and dislikes. Customers can be particularly vocal about companies and products. This data can, and should, be tracked and monitored to establish consumer sentiment. If a community is established for research purposes, the resulting feedback is considered primary data, but using social media to research existing sentiments is considered secondary research. The Internet is an ideal starting point for conducting secondary research based on published data and findings. With so much information out there, it can be a daunting task to find reliable resources.

The first point of call for research online is usually a search engine, such as www.google.com or www.yahoo.com. Search engines usually have an array of advanced features, which can aid online research. For example, Google offers:

- Advanced search: (http://www.google.co.za/advanced_search?hl=en)
- Google Scholar: (http://scholar.google.co.za/schhp?hl=en)
- Google Book Search: (http://www.google.co.za/books?hl=en)
- Google News Archive: (http://news.google.com/newspapers)

Many research publications are available online, some for free and some at a cost. Many of the top research companies feature analyst blogs, which provide some industry data and analysis free of charge.

Some notable resources are:

www.experian.com/hitwise

www.pewinternet.org (US data)

www.nielsen.com

The Internet and primary research

Primary research involves gathering data for a specific research task. It is based on data that has not been gathered beforehand. Primary research can be either qualitative or quantitative.

Primary research can be used to explore a market and can help to develop the hypotheses or research questions that must be answered by further research.

Generally, qualitative data is gathered at this stage. For example, online research communities can be used to identify consumer needs that are not being met and to brainstorm possible solutions. Further quantitative research can investigate what proportion of consumers share these problems and which potential solutions best meet those needs.

Quantitative and qualitative data







With larger sample sizes, qualitative data can be analysed quantitatively.

Data can be classified as **qualitative** or **quantitative**. Qualitative research is exploratory and seeks to find out what potential consumers think and feel about a given subject. Qualitative research aids in identifying potential hypotheses, whereas quantitative research puts hard numbers behind these hypotheses. Quantitative research relies on numerical data to demonstrate statistically significant outcomes.

The Internet can be used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. In fact, the communities on the web can be viewed as large focus groups, regularly and willingly sharing their opinions about products, markets and companies.

In robust research studies, both qualitative and quantitative research can be applied at different stages of the study.

The main differences between quantitative and qualitative research are represented in Table 2 below.

Table 4.4.1

2407. 11112					
	Quantitative	Qualitative			
Data gathered	Numbers, figures, statistics objective data Opinions, feelings, motivations, subjective data				
Question answered	What? Why?				
Group size	Large Small				
Data sources	Surveys, web analytics data Focus groups, social media				
Purpose	Tests known issues or hypotheses. Seeks consensus, the norm Generalises data	Generates ideas and concepts – leads to issues or hypotheses to be tested. Seeks complexity Puts data in context			
Advantages	Statistically reliable results to determine if one option is better than the alternatives. Looks at the context of issues and aims understand perspectives.				
Challenges	Issues can be measured only if they are known prior to starting. Sample size must be sufficient for predicting the population	Shouldn't be used to evaluate pre-existing ideas. Results are not predictors of the population.			

Both quantitative and qualitative research can be conducted online.

Web analytics packages are a prime source of data. Using data such as search terms, referral URLs and internal search data can lead to qualitative information about the consumers visiting a website. However, when data is measurable and specific, such as impressions and clickthrough rates, it leads to quantitative research.



Read more about this in the Data analytics chapter.

Sampling

Qualitative research is usually conducted with a small number of respondents in order to explore and generate ideas and concepts. Quantitative research is conducted with far larger numbers, enough to be able to predict how the total population would respond.

You should ensure the sample is representative of the population you are targeting as a whole. If your business transacts both online and offline, be aware that using only online channels for market research might not represent your true target market. However, if your business transacts only online, offline channels for your market research are less necessary.

Because quantitative research aims to produce predictors for the total population, sample size is very important. The sample size needs to be sufficient in order to make statistically accurate observations about the population.

For example, if you have 4 000 registered users of your website, you don't need to survey all of them in order to understand how the entire population behaves. You need to survey only 351 users to get a sample size that gives you a 95% confidence level with a





±5% confidence interval. This means that you can be 95% sure your results are accurate within ±5%.

There are several sample size calculators mentioned in section 4.7 on Tools of the trade.

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4.5: Online research methodologies

There are many online market research methodologies. This chapter touches on three of the most popular and useful ones: surveys, online focus groups and social media monitoring.

Which methodology should you choose?

That all depends on a variety of factors, from your research question and purpose to your budget and time. Here are some general pointers:

- **Surveys:** Ideal for collecting large amounts of quantitative data, and some qualitative data. They are quick and easy to set up, and can run automatically.
- **Online focus groups:** Ideal for engaging consumers and collecting qualitative data such as opinions, ideas and feelings about the brand. They require a larger time investment and a willing group of participants.
- **Online monitoring:** Ideal for collecting qualitative data on brand sentiment, and can also provide some quantitative data around volume of interest in the brand. This data can be collected passively, and there are several tools that can automate this.

Surveys

Surveys are questionnaires that contain a series of questions around a specific topic. Their purpose is to gather large volumes of quantitative data easily, though they can also collect some qualitative data.

Conducting surveys online allows for data to be captured immediately, and data analysis can be performed easily and quickly. By using email or the Internet for conducting surveys, geographical limitations for collecting data can be overcome cost effectively.

Technology allows you to compile sophisticated and user-friendly surveys. For example, as opposed to indicating impressions on a sliding scale, respondents can indicate emotional response. Or the survey can be tailored depending on previous answers, such as questions being skipped if they are not relevant to the respondent.

You can run ongoing online surveys at minimal cost. Simple polls can be used in forums and on blogs to generate regular feedback. Website satisfaction surveys are also an easy way to determine the effectiveness of a website or marketing campaign.

One application of surveys is allows for instant feedback on questions or ideas from an existing community, such as a trusted group of thought leaders, your brand's social media fans, or a pre-created research community. Examples include Facebook polling apps and real-time mobile survey platforms.

Designing surveys

How you design a survey and its questions will directly impact on your success. A survey can include any number and type of questions, and more complicated questions should appear only once users are comfortable with the survey. Be careful that you do not introduce bias when creating questions by asking leading questions.

✓ Example 4.5.1

Incorrect: We have recently introduced new features on the website to become a first class web destination. What are your thoughts on the new site?

Solution

Replace with: What are your thoughts on the changes to the website? In general, you will also find that you get more accurate answers when phrasing questions in the past tense than in the continuous tense.

\checkmark Example 4.5.2

Incorrect: How many times a week do you buy take-away food?

Solution

Replace with: In the past month, how many times did you buy take-away food? Questions in the survey should be brief, easy to understand, unambiguous and easy to answer.







Figure 4.5.1: An example of an online survey with different question types. Adapted From Screenshot

Types of survey questions

1. Open-ended

Open-ended questions allow respondents to answer in their own words. This usually results in qualitative data.

\checkmark Example 4.5.3

What features would you like to see on the website for the digital marketing textbook (https://www.redandyellow.co.za/cours...tbook-digital/)?

2. Closed

Closed questions give respondents specific responses from which to choose. These are typically multiple-choice questions with either one or multiple possible answers. This results in quantitative data.

\checkmark Example 4.5.4

Do you use the digital marketing textbook website?

- a. Yes
- b. No

or:

What features of the digital marketing textbook website do you use? Tick all that apply.

- a. Blog
- b. Case studies
- c. Free downloads
- d. Additional resources

3. Ranked or ordinal

These questions ask respondents to rank items in order of preference or relevance. Respondents are given a numeric scale to indicate order. This results in quantitative data.

\checkmark Example 4.5.5

Rate the features of the digital marketing textbook website, where 1 is the most useful and 4 is the least useful.

- Blog
- Case studies





- · Free downloads
- · Additional resources

4. Matrix and rating

These types of questions can be used to quantify qualitative data. Respondents are asked to rank behaviour or attitude.

\checkmark Example 4.5.6

Rate the features of the digital marketing textbook website according to the following scale:

1 = love it, 2 = like it, 3 = no opinion, 4 = dislike it.

- Blog
- Case studies
- Free downloads
- · Additional resources

Focus groups

Online focus groups involve respondents gathering online and reacting to a particular topic. Respondents can be sourced from all over the world and react in real time, arguably being freer with their responses since they can be anonymous in an electronic environment.

Online focus groups are ideal for having frank, detailed conversations with people who have an interest in your brand. This means they result in primary, qualitative data. This information can then be used to create quantitative research questions.

Online focus groups can be conducted using a range of technologies. The simplest is to use a text-based messaging program or online forum and there are many options available. More sophisticated tools allow for voice or video conferencing, and can make it easier for the researcher to pick up clues from the respondent's voice and facial expressions. Some tools allow the researcher to share their desktop screen with respondents in order to illustrate a concept or question.

Good options for conducting online focus groups include:

Google Hangouts: www.google.com/+/learnmore/hangouts

Skype: www.skype.com/en

GoToMeeting: www.gotomeeting.com/fec



Figure 4.5.2: An example of a Google Hangout in progress. *Adapted From Cnet*, 2017.

Focus groups are less formal than surveys meaning the researcher will have specific questions to ask, but the conversation usually grows and develops organically as participants discuss their impressions. Usually running for between one and two hours, focus groups are used to get consumer views on:

- New products or marketing campaigns
- Existing products and campaigns, and how they can be improved
- Sentiment around the brand
- · Views on a brand's new direction or visual style





• Ideas for how the brand could improve its position or branding.

Online focus groups are excellent for collecting a lot of qualitative data quickly. When setting up the group, try to include enough participants to keep the conversation alive, but not too many so that some get drowned out by others, eight to ten is a good range. Also consider that you may run into technical troubles if people are connecting from different locations and Internet connections so be prepared to do some basic troubleshooting if this happens.

There are a number of different ways that you can recruit participants for an online focus group. This could include inviting people from your existing customer database, going through a traditional market research recruiting agent, or putting a call out on your website or social media communities. It is common practice to offer a small incentive to people who participate in a focus group, as it is a fairly time-intensive activity.

Sentiment analysis

Finding out if people are talking about you is quite difficult in the offline world, but almost effortless online. Rather than having to conduct real-world surveys and interviews, in the digital world you can simply 'listen' to the conversation happening about you.

Keywords – the foundation to categorising and indexing the web – make it simple to track conversations taking place online. Customers don't always use channels designated by a company to talk about that organisation, but the good news is that the Internet makes it easy for a company to identify and use the channels that customers have selected.

Online tools allow a company to track mentions of itself, its staff, its products, its industry and its competitors or anything else that is relevant. This is called online monitoring, online listening, or data sentiment analysis. It involves using digital tools to find and tap in to existing conversations. The tool then gathers and collates all the mentions it finds, so that you can analyse the data for insights.



Figure 4.5.3: A sentiment analysis report Adapted From Manufacturing control tower, 2017.

Typically, searches include the following main focus areas:

- Company
- Brand name
- Key products
- Key personnel (names, job titles, etc.)
- Key campaigns and activities
- Industry
- Conferences
- Patents
- News
- Competitors
- Brand names
- Product launches
- Website updates
- · Job vacancies
- · Key people.



There are four different types of searches you can perform to track relevant brand keywords. Each modifies the specific type of data collected and aims to improve the quality and depth of the data you gather.

The four operators are:

- 1. **Broad match** for example, Apple Computers. This is when any of or all words must be found in the mention.
- 2. **Direct match** for example, "Apple Computers". This is denoted by quotation marks and dictates that the tool should find mentions only where the phrase appears complete and in order in the content.
- 3. **Inclusive match** for example, Apple +computers. This is denoted by a plus sign directly before a word or phrase. This will direct the tool to search for any mention that contains both Apple AND computers, although not necessarily in that order.
- 4. **Exclusive match** for example, Apple –fruit. This is denoted by a minus sign directly before a word or phrase. This will instruct the tool to include only mentions that contain the first word or phrase but not when the second word is also in the same mention.

Combinations of these four types of searches (operators) can be used to improve accuracy.

✓ Example 4.5.7

"Apple Computers" +"steve jobs" –fruit.

Applying this theory to the groupings above, some keywords used for Apple might be:

Company

- · "Apple computers"
- · "www.apple.com"
- Apple +Macbook, "iPod Nano", "Macbook Air", "iTunes" +music -radio
- · "Steve Jobs"

Industry

- "Consumer Electronics Show" +"Las Vegas"
- "CEBIT"

Competitors

- Microsoft
- www.microsoft.com

It is also important to track common misspellings and typos, all related companies and all related websites.

Tracking the names of people key to a company can highlight potential brand attacks, or can demonstrate new areas of outreach for a company.

Brand names, employee names, product names and even competitor names are not unique. To save yourself from monitoring too much, identify keywords that will indicate that a post has nothing to do with your company, and exclude those in your searches.

For example, "apple" could refer to a consumer electronics company, or it could appear in a post about the health benefits of fruit. Finding keywords that will indicate context can help to save time. So, you could exclusive-match words such as "fruit", "tasty" and "granny smith".

Tools for data sentiment analysis

Thankfully, online listening does not entail hourly searches on your favourite search engine to see what conversations are taking place online. There are many different tools that monitor the web, and supply the results via email alerts or a web dashboard.



The ideal gas law is easy to remember and apply in solving problems, as long as you get the proper values a

Google has several bespoke search services, and periodically adds more to the list.





- Google Alerts: www.google.com/alerts. Google Alerts will send an email when the keyword is used in either a credible news item or a blog post.
- Google News: news.google.com. Google News searches all news items for mentions of a keyword.
- **Google Patent Search**: https://www.google.com/advanced_patent_search. Google Patent Search allows you to keep track of all filings related to an industry, and searches can be done to see if there are patent filings which might infringe on other patents.
- **Google Video Search**: https://www.google.com/videohp?hl=En. Video Search relies on the data that have been added to describe a video, and will return results based on keyword matches.

In addition to these mostly free tools, there are also a number of premium paid tools available to make the process easier and more robust. See section 4.7 on Tools of the trade for more suggestions.

Other avenues for online research

Personal interviews

There are various tools available to the online researcher for conducting personal interviews, such as private chat rooms or video calling. The Internet can connect a researcher with many people around the world and make it possible to conduct interviews with more anonymity, should respondents require it.

Observation/Online ethnography

Taking its cue from offline ethnography, online ethnography requires researchers to immerse themselves in a particular environment. In this way insights can be gathered that might not have been attainable from a direct interview. However, they do depend more heavily on the ethnographer's interpretation, and are therefore subjective.

Online research communities

Although online communities are a valuable resource for secondary research, communities can also provide primary data. BeautyTalk is an example of an online research community that helps gather research data. The community platform can be used as a means to elicit feedback about products and can generate ideas for new products. This is qualitative data that can aid the company in exploring their research problem further. In many cases, social media can be used to gather insight about a brand or customer experience. It is important to remember, however, that a representative sample is necessary for making solid conclusions.



Figure 4.5.4: The BeautyTalk online community Adpated From Ecoconsultancy, 2017.

Listening labs

When developing websites and online applications, usability testing is a vital process that will ensure the website or application is able to meet consumers' needs. Listening labs involve setting up a testing environment where a consumer is observed using a website or application.





Conversion optimisation

Conversion optimisation aims to determine the factors of an advert, website or web page that can be improved in order to convert customers more effectively. From search adverts to email subject lines and shopping cart design, tests can be set up to determine what variables are affecting the conversion rate.

The Conversion optimisation chapter covers tools for running tests, such as A/B split testing and multivariate testing.

How to get responses: Incentives and assurances

As the researcher, you know what's in it for you when sending out a survey. You will receive valuable insights that will aid in making business decisions. But what is in it for the respondents?

Response rates can be improved by offering respondents incentives for participating in the research, such as a chance to win a grand prize, a discount or special offer for every respondent, or even the knowledge that they are improving a product or service that they care about.

Some researchers feel that monetary incentives are not always a good thing. Some respondents may feel that they need to give 'good' or 'correct' answers that may bias results. Alternatively, you may attract respondents who are in it just for the reward. One approach could be to run the survey with no incentive, with the option of offering one if responses are limited.

Designing the survey to assure respondents that a minimal time commitment is required and their privacy is assured can also help to increase responses.

Room for error

With all research there is a given amount of error to deal with. Bias may arise during surveys and focus groups, for example, interviewers leading the respondents. Or bias may be present in the design and wording of the questions themselves. There could be sample errors or respondent errors. Using the Internet to administer surveys removes the bias that may arise from an interviewer. However, with no interviewer to explain questions, there is potential for greater respondent error. This is why survey design is so important, and why it is crucial to test and run pilots of surveys before going live.

Respondent errors also arise when respondents become too familiar with the survey process. The general industry standard is to limit respondents to being interviewed once every six months.

Sample error is a fact of market research. Some people are just not interested, nor will they ever be interested, in taking part in research. Are these people fundamentally different from those who do? Is there a way of finding out? To some extent, web analytics, which track the behaviour of all visitors to your website, can be useful in determining this.

When conducting online research, it is crucial to understand who is in the target market, and what the best way to reach that target market is. Web surveys can exclude groups of people due to access or ability. It is vital to determine if is this is acceptable to the survey, and to use other means of capturing data if not.

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4.6: Justifying the cost of research

Regular research is an important part of any business' growth strategy, but it can be tough to justify the budget necessary for research without knowing the benefit. Conducting research can cost little more than an employee's work hours, depending on his or her skills, or it can be an expensive exercise involving external experts. Deciding where your business needs are on the investment scale depends on the depth of the research required, and what the expected growth will be for the business. When embarking on a research initiative, the cost to benefit ratio should be determined.

Testing should be an ongoing feature of any digital marketing activity. Tracking is a characteristic of most digital marketing, which allows for constant testing of the most basic hypothesis: Is this campaign successful in reaching the goals of the business?

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Manufacturing control Tower (2017). Testbed Areas/Customer Sentiment Analysis. [Online] Available at: https://www.a-star.edu.sg/Portals/69...sentiment.html [Accessed 30 October 2017]

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4.8: Tools of the trade

Creating and managing online surveys:

- SurveyMonkey: www.surveymonkey.com
- Google Forms: accessed through Google Drive drive.google.com
- Split test calculator: www.usereffect.com/split-test-calculator
- Sample size calculator: www.rogerwimmer.com/mmr/samplesizecalculator.htm
- Internet Usage World Stats: www.internetworldstats.com
- Google Think: www.google.com/think
- Silverback usability testing software: www.silverbackapp.com
- Mobile-based survey tools: www.ponderingpanda.com (focused on the African continent), Survey Swipe www.surveyswipe.com/mobile-surveys.html
- Ideo Method Cards app (ideas for qualitative research): www.ideo.com/work/ideo-method-card-app
- Premium online monitoring tools: BrandsEye: http://www.brandseye.com/, SalesForce Marketing Cloud: http://www.salesforcemarketingcloud.com/

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4.9: Adantages and challenges

Market researchers are increasingly turning to online tools in their research processes. The Internet allows for research at a far lower cost; it can also more easily cross geographic boundaries and can speed up the research process.

This is not to say there are not downsides. While the Internet makes it possible to reach a far larger group of people without the cost of facilitators, this does come with some challenges. For example, you cannot control the environments in which information is being gathered. For an online sample, it's important to focus on getting the correct number of people to make your study statistically viable. If your questions are not carefully drafted, confusing questions could lead to answers that are flawed or not relevant. Additionally, online incentives could lead to answers that are not truthful, meaning that the value of the data could be questionable. Certain target groups are not accessible via the Internet, and so it's important that you carefully consider who you are trying to reach.

The value of Internet research should by no means be discounted, but it is important to consider the nature of the study carefully, and interrogate the validity and legitimacy of the data as a valid representation. Data is meaningful only if it is representative, so be sure to establish goals and realistic expectations for your research.

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4.10: Case study - Sentiment data mining predicts political outcomes

One-line summary

BrandsEye, is an opinion mining company based in South Africa, who accurately predicted two significant political outcomes in 2016, outperforming traditional polling methods and showcasing the value of analysing social media analysis at scale.

The problem

The controversial referendum resulting in Britain leaving the European Union, and the election victory for Republican nominee Donald Trump in the US presidential race in 2016, arguably came as surprises to the global community. This is largely due to the fact that the traditional polling methods used to predict the results of these separate national votes indicated that neither of these things would happen.

The Pew Research Centre listed a number of reasons for traditional polling methods falling short:

- Non-response bias: The sample population who took part in these polls were not representative of those who actually turned
 out to vote.
- Shy Trumper: Choosing to vote for Trump was not seen as socially desirable, and so many would not admit to this in the poll.
- Failed voter turnout: Many people who planned to vote, and stated their intentions in polls, did not in fact do so (Press 2016).

The solution

BrandsEye's methodology, in both cases, accurately predicted the outcomes of these votes because it relied on real time organic conversations happening on multiple online platforms, and used machine learning and a crowd sourcing approach to analyse the sentiment of the general conversation. Those who may have been reticent to take part in a poll, or to declare their political affiliations in official channels, did feel comfortable doing so on their own social media channels.

As explained on the BrandsEye website,

"...the traditional approach to social media analysis has been algorithmically driven, even though it is well known that machines fail to understand sarcasm and nuance, particularly in the social media context. With our unique crowd-sourcing approach to sentiment analysis, BrandsEye used people to understand the referendum commentary. Every online comment was independently analysed by several trained contributors to create a 95% confidence level with a 2.5% margin of error, an unheard of amount of precision in social media analysis. (N.A. 2016)"



Figure 4.10.1: BrandsEye accuracy outperforms polls in the 2016 US presidential election Adapted From Brandseye, 2016



The results

The results speak for themselves. In contrast to traditional polling, BrandsEye's weighted average approach, matched the outcome of 9 of the 11 key swing states. As with Brexit, accurate social media analysis had once again proven to be the best way to understand the voice of the people. That voice is a human voice and BrandsEye's use of trained humans to efficiently and effectively understand the sentiment of millions of citizens was the key to unlocking how they truly felt.

As the world becomes more connected, differences between decision makers and their stakeholders are becoming more visible and volatile than ever. Traditional methods of understanding a broad group of people are breaking down because they can neither measure the intensity nor the commitment of the emotions. Sophisticated analysis of social media, however, offers a more reliable understanding of what is happening in today's world by combining world class tech and human understanding to provide a window into how people really feel and the factors driving that emotion.

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4.11: The bigger picture

Understanding your market is the foundation of every marketing activity, online or off. If you don't know who you're speaking to, or what your audience cares about, it's unlikely that your message will resonate with them.

Market research will define the content you create across channels like email marketing, digital copywriting, SEO and online advertising. It helps you find your audiences on social channels by indicating where they spend most of their time, and how they like interacting with your brand. It also helps you meet their needs by defining the touchpoints they expect from your brand, especially when it comes to creating web and mobile channels.

The more data you can gather about your audience, the better you will be able to optimise and improve your marketing efforts. Market research is an excellent supplement to the quantitative data you can gather through data analytics.

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4.E: Market Research(Exercises)

Case study questions

- 1. What is sentiment data?
- 2. How could a tool like BrandsEye be used to gather information about your customers? Suggest some ideas.
- 3. Why was BrandsEye able to correctly predict the results of the national referendum on Brexit and the US Presidential Elections?

Chapter questions

- 1. Discuss the relationship between the ideas discussed in the Data chapter and this one.
- 2. What is primary research?
- 3. What role does online research play in the overall market research toolkit?

Further reading

http://s3.amazonaws.com/SurveyMonkey...martSurvey.pdf – The Smart Survey Design is a useful white paper that will help you master drawing up relevant web surveys.

Learn about probability sampling: https://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/sampprob.php

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4.S: Market Research(Summary)

Market research means gathering and analysing data in order to gain insight to consumers, understand a market and make business decisions. Information can be gathered about customers, competitors and the market.

Research can be conducted based on secondary data, which refers to information or data that is already published, or based on primary data, which is data gathered specifically for a particular research problem.

Research can also be qualitative or quantitative. The Internet provides the tools for gathering qualitative data, while online tools such as surveys and web analytics packages are ideal for gathering quantitative data.

Surveys, online focus groups and online monitoring are three excellent ways to conduct research online.

Analytics and online report tools play a big role in providing data. While these are digital marketing tactics in themselves and are covered later in this book, keep in mind that they also provide information that can feed into research conducted for a particular purpose.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Create - User Experience Design

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn:

- To think about web projects with a UX mindset.
- To recognise and create usable and enjoyable experiences for desktop and mobile users.
- The nuts and bolts of implementing UX strategy step by step.
- About a variety of awesome UX tools.
- 5.1: Introduction
- 5.2: Key terms and concepts
- 5.3: Understanding UX design
- 5.4: Core principles of UX design
- 5.5: Implementing UX design
- 5.6: Advantages and disadvantages of UX design
- 5.7: References
- 5.8: Conduct Testing
- 5.9: Tools of the trade
- 5.10: Case study AO Becomes customer centred
- 5.11: The bigger picture
- 5.E: User Experience Design(Exercises)
- 5.S: User Experience Design(Summary)

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5.1: Introduction

Have you ever visited a website that was confusing, with broken links and long, rambling text? Or, conversely, have you had a web experience that just worked, where everything was clear, easy and enjoyable to use? If so, you've encountered the extremes of user experience design. Excellent UX can delight and convert customers. Bad UX can lead to lost revenue and less chance of repeat visitors.

In practice, great UX can differ based on the audience and context. The principle remains the same, make it easy for your users to find what they need and to convert to your desired goal. UX is the first, foundational step of an effective digital asset.

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5.2: Key terms and concepts

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Term	Definition
Above the fold	The content that appears on a screen without a user having to scroll.
Accessibility	The degree to which a website is available to users with physical challenges or technical limitations.
Breadcrumbs	Links, usually on the top of the page, that indicate where a page is in the hierarchy of the website.
Call to action (CTA)	A phrase written to motivate the reader to take action such as sign up for our newsletter or book car hire today.
Content audit	An examination and evaluation of existing content on a website.
Content strategy	In this context, a plan that outlines what content is needed for a web project and when and how it will be created.
Convention	A common rule or tried-and-tested way in which something is done.
Conversion	Completing an action or actions that the website wants the user to take. Usually a conversion results in revenue for the brand in some way. Conversions include signing up to a newsletter or purchasing a product.
Credibility	In this context, how trustworthy, safe and legitimate a website looks
Fidelity	An interface design. A low-fidelity prototype will be basic, incomplete and used to test broad concepts. A high fidelity prototype will be quite close to the final product, with detail and functionality and can be used to test functionality and usability.
Information architecture	The way data and content are organised, structured and labelled to support usability.
Navigation	How a web user interacts with the user interface to navigate through a website, the elements that assist in maximising usability and visual signposting so users never feel lost.
Prototype	Interactive wireframes, usually of a higher fidelity, that have been linked together like a website, so that they can be navigated through by clicking and scrolling.
Responsive design	A design approach that enables a website display to change depending on the size of the viewport or screen, regardless of the device on which it is displayed.
Search engine optimisation (SEO)	The process of improving website rankings on search engine results pages.
Sitemap	On a website, a page that links to every other page in the website, and displays these links organised according to the information hierarchy. In UX terminology, this is the visualised structural plan for how the website's pages will be laid out and organised.
Usability	A measure of how easy a system is to use. Sites with excellent usability fare far better than those that are difficult to use.
User-centred design (UCD)	The design philosophy where designers identify how a product is likely to be used, taking user behaviour into consideration and prioritising user wants and needs. UCD places the user at the centre of the entire experience.
User experience design (UXD)	The process of applying proven principles, techniques and features to create and optimise how a system behaves, mapping out all the touchpoints a user experiences to create consistency in the interaction with the brand.



User interface (UI)	The user-facing part of the tool or platform i.e. the actual website, application, hardware or tool with which the user interacts.
Wireframe	The skeletal outline of the layout of a web page. This can be rough and general, or very detailed.

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5.3: Understanding UX design

User experience (UX) can be defined as all the experiences for example, physical, sensory, emotional and mental, that a person has when interacting with a digital tool. The field of UX is full of similar sounding jargon, so here's a quick guide to the terms you should know.

User experience (UX) is the overall satisfaction a user gets from interacting with a product or digital tool.

User experience design (UXD, sometimes UED) is the process of applying proven principles, techniques and features to a digital tool to create and optimise the user experience.

User-centred design (UCD) is the design philosophy that prioritises the user's needs and wants above all else, and places the user at the centre of the entire experience. This often entails research and testing with real users of the site or product.

User interface (UI) is the user-facing part of the tool or platform and is the part of the actual website, application or tool that the user interacts with.

Usability refers to how user friendly and efficient a digital product is.

Online UX can be divided into two broad categories.

- **Functional UX.** This covers the elements of the user experience that relate to actually using the tool such as working technical elements, navigation, search and links.
- **Creative UX.** This is the bigger, harder to define impression created by the tool. The so-called 'wow' factor that covers visual and creative elements.

∓ Note

User experience design roles differ in the skills needed and the functions performed.

There are six qualities that make up good UX:

- **Findability** Can I find it easily? Does it appear high up in the search results? How long does it take me to find something on the site? Does the three click rule work on this site?
- **Accessibility** Can I use it when I need it? Does it work on my mobile phone, or on a slow Internet connection? Can I use it as a disabled person?
- **Desirability** Do I want to use it? Is it a pleasant experience, or do I dread logging in? Usability Is it easy to use? Are the tools I need intuitive and easy to find?
- **Credibility** Do I trust it? Is this website legitimate?
- Usefulness Does it add value to me? Will I get something out of the time I spend interacting with it?

The benefits of UX

∓ Note

The three click rule suggests that a user should be able to access what they need from your site with no more than three mouse clicks.

There are some real, tangible benefits to applying UX design to digital marketing strategies.

Good UX is an excellent way to differentiate your brand in the market and give yourself a competitive advantage. If your online touchpoints are easy, intuitive and awesome to use, your customers won't have any reason to look elsewhere.

Good UX research and design allows you to find the best solution for your needs.

Every business, website and online service is unique in some way, which means that the way it is constructed must be unique too.



✓ Example 5.3.1

Amazon's US \$300 million button is perhaps the most dramatic example of how a simple UX fix can impact the business. Amazon managed to gain an extra US \$300 million worth of sales simply by changing their 'Register' button to one that read 'Continue' instead. The number of customers increased by 45% because they no longer felt they needed to go through an onerous registration process simply to fulfil a basic shopping action. In fact, nothing else about the purchase process had been changed! (Spool, 2009).

Every marketer knows that the ideal customer is a happy customer. Customers who love the experience you give them will become loyal clients, and possibly even brand evangelists.

Applying UX principles allows you to get your digital tools working earlier, with much better functionality, at a lower cost. You can cut out features and elements that you simply don't need, and focus on the core user experience. This optimised development process in turn leads to sites that are easier and cheaper to maintain, upgrade and support across multiple platforms.

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5.4: Core principles of UX design

User-centric design

While this may seem like the most obvious point, it's surprising how often the user is forgotten in the user experience. Business owners, marketers and web developers frequently focus on creating the web platforms they want and think are best, instead of really interrogating what the user needs. Often, the performance of web assets is compromised when the design process is driven only by internal business needs, for instance, ensuring that each department in the company has a space that it controls on the home page at the expense of what the user needs. When designing for the user, you need to ask the following questions:

- Who is the user?
- What are the user's wants and needs from your platform?
- Why is the user really coming to your website?



The customer journey is introduced in the chapter on Strategy and context. It refers to the steps your customer takes when engaging with your brand.

- Where is the user most likely to be in their customer journey when they visit your site?
- What are the user's capabilities, web skills and available technology?
- How can the site facilitate the customer journey to conversion and purchase?
- What features would make the user's experience easier and better?

The answers to these questions will come out of user research, as discussed in the Market research chapter earlier in this book.

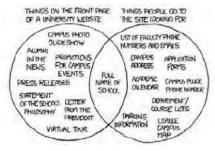


Figure 5.4.1: It's essential to give users exactly what they need Adapted From XKCD, 2015.

Of course, many users may not know exactly what their wants and needs are. It is the UX practitioner's job to discover these through research and interpret them in the best way possible. Keep Henry Ford's famous quote in mind here: "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses."

(www.goodreads.com)

Mobile users When discussing user-centric design, whatever you have gleaned about the user context must be considered. Today more than half of web traffic originates from a mobile device, with users accessing the Internet through either a smartphone or tablet (think with Google, 2016). This number is increasing every year and is expected to be over 70% by 2019 (Internet Society, 2015). Therefore, designing for mobile must be a priority. The context of mobile users affects the way in which they use their devices. Mobile users are:

- **Goal orientated.** Mobile users turn to their mobile devices to answer a question, quickly check email, find information or get directions. They often have a distinct purpose in mind when using their phone.
- **Time conscious.** There are two aspects to this. On the one hand, mobile users are often looking for urgent or time-sensitive information such as the address of the restaurant they are looking for, so answers should be available as quickly as possible. On the other hand, the mobile device is also frequently used to kill time or as a source of entertainment such as reading articles on the couch, or playing games while waiting in a queue, so content is also crucial. User research will tell you which of these groups your users fall into and how you need to structure your site accordingly.





∓ Note

Some mobile users use their phones for browsing in a similar way one would use a desktop computer. How does your audience use their devices?

- **Search dominant.** Even users who know what they are looking for tend to navigate there via search, for example, typing the brand name into Google, rather than accessing the page from a bookmark or typing the URL directly into the browser bar.
- Locally focused. According to Google search data 30% of all mobile searches are for location (think with Google, 2016). Since
 mobile phones are always carried, users turn to them to find information on things in their surroundings from local businesses to
 more detail on a product they have just seen.

Usability is especially challenging with mobile. One of the biggest challenges is the sheer number of different device categories and models available. The OpenSignal report from 2014 identified 18 796 distinct android mobile devices, running a myriad of operating systems (The Next Web, 2014).

The limitations of mobile create additional considerations for the UX designer to address to ensure that visitors have a pleasant user experience while visiting the site. These limitations include:

- **Small screens.** Even the largest smartphones are screens many times smaller than a standard laptop and tablets fall somewhere between the two. This means that the user has a much smaller window through which to perceive and understand the website, so it may be difficult to get an overall impression of where things are or what's important.
- **Difficult inputs.** Mobile phones don't come with full-sized keyboards and mice, so they are usually a lot more difficult to operate fluidly and accurately than desktop computers. Touchscreens may be the exception here, although they also have their own pitfalls.
- **Slow connection speeds.** Many mobile phone users, especially in developing countries, are on slow Internet connections. Even fast options such as 3G can often be more sluggish than a desktop equivalent. This makes loading large websites or images slow and frustrating and can be expensive in terms of data costs.

∓ Note

One design approach places 'content first'. This means that you should decide which content to provide on your site depending on whether users are viewing it from a mobile or a desktop computer, and then adapt the layout and material to that device.

• **Slow hardware.** Sometimes the slowness comes from the hardware itself. The more basic the phone, the slower its processing components are likely to be making the simple act of opening the browser and loading a page time consuming.

There are three main approaches to creating mobile-accessible content.

- 1. Mobile websites (called mobi sites)
- 2. Native and web applications (called apps)
- 3. Responsive websites (websites that adapt to the device).

Usability and conventions

∓ Note

Read more about this in the Web development and design chapter.

Usability is about making the digital assets we build easy and intuitive to use. To paraphrase Steve Krug, don't make your users think: they should just do (Krug, 1997–2013).

One of the most important aspects of usability involves sticking to conventions, which are simply common rules or ways of displaying or structuring things on the web. Popular conventions include:

- · Links that are blue and underlined
- Navigation menus at the top or left of the web page
- The logo in the top left hand corner which is linked to take the user back to the home page
- Search boxes placed at the top of the page, using standard wording such as 'search', or a magnifying glass icon.







Can you think of any other web conventions? How have these evolved over time, and how important is it to stick to the rules?

Ensure that all website elements such as menus, logos, colours and layout are distinct, easy to find and kept consistent throughout the site. There are some key 'dont's' when it comes to building a user-friendly and usable website:

- Never resize windows or launch the site in a pop-up.
- Do not use entry or splash pages i.e. a page that site visitors encounter first before reaching the home page.
- Flash is no longer used to design websites. Unaided, most search engine spiders cannot effectively crawl Flash sites, and Flash usually doesn't work on many mobile devices.
- Don't distract users with 'Christmas trees' such as blinking images, flashing lights, automatic sound, scrolling text and unusual fonts

And finally, while the following principles apply to desktop as well, they are especially valid for mobile:

- **Reduce loading time.** Try to keep content and actions on the same page as this ensures better performance as there are fewer page loads. Encourage exploration especially on touchscreens, users like to browse elements and explore. This makes them feel in control.
- **Give feedback.** Ensure that it is clear when the user performs an action. This can be achieved through animations and other visual cues.



Figure 5.4.2: Animations providing feedback to the user of the action they have requested Adapted From Dribble, 2013.



Some note the increasing presence of one page websites, especially for sites with limited content and large images, which enables the site to load quicker. Check out this article that provides guidance on what types of sites should opt for one page sites: www.webinsation. com/should-i-havea-one-page-website. This approach is less effective in countries where data costs are prohibitive.

- **Communicate consistently.** Ensure that you deliver the same message across all your touchpoints, for example, using the same icons on the website as you would on the mobile app prevents users from having to relearn how you communicate.
- **Predict what your user wants.** Include functionality such as autocomplete or predictive text. Remove as much manual input as possible to streamline user experience.

It's useful to consider usability guidelines to ensure that your website is on track. Stay In Tech provides a usability checklist online at https://stayintech.com/info/UX.



Mobile users prefer to scroll in one direction.

Simplicity

In UX projects, the simpler option is almost always the more user-friendly one. Even if your service or product is complex your customer-facing web portals need not be. In fact, it's important to remember that most customers want the most basic information from you, such as "What is this?" and "How does it work?" Simplicity can mean several things:





- **Lots of empty space.** In design terms, this is referred to as negative or white space. Though, of course, it need not specifically be white. Dark text on a light background is easiest to read. In general, the more effectively 'breathing room' is placed between various page elements, lines of text, and zones of the page, the easier it is for the user to grasp where everything is.
- **Fewer options.** Studies have found that people faced with fewer choices generally choose more quickly and confidently, and are more satisfied with their decision afterwards (Roller, 2010).
- **Plain language.** Unless your website is aimed at a highly specialised technical field, there's usually no need to get fancy with the words you use. Clear, simple, well-structured language is the best option when creating a great user experience.



Read more about this is in the Digital copywriting chapter

• **Sticking to conventions.** As we've said before, conventions are excellent shortcuts for keeping things simple for users. There's no need to reinvent the wheel and try to teach your users a whole new way of navigating a website.



Figure 5.4.3:The Fresh Books homepage is clean, simple, inviting and easy to use Adapted From Screenshot, FreshBooks 2016

When it comes to mobile, it's even more important to simplify. Show information only when it's needed. While you should ensure that the mobile asset provides all the same information as the desktop equivalent, this doesn't need to be presented in the same format or volume.

Credibility

Credibility refers to how trustworthy and legitimate something looks, and is a big consideration for web users when deciding to use your website or not. Here are some of the cues that visitors use to determine the credibility of a website:

- **Looks** does it look professional and beautiful?
- **Prominent phone numbers and addresses are easy to locate** this assures the visitor that there are real people behind the website, and that they are easily reachable.
- **Informative and personal 'About us'** some customers want to see the inner workings of a company and are interested in the head honchos. Consider including employee pictures and profiles to add personality to the site.
- **Genuine testimonials** testimonials are a great way to show potential customers what your current customers have to say about your organisation. Trust is vital, and this is one way to encourage it. Video testimonials can be particularly effective, assuming your audience does not face data restrictions.





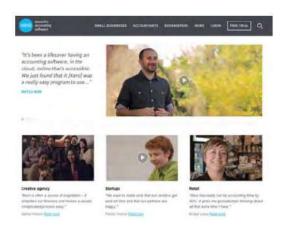


Figure 5.4.4: Genuine user testimonials can create a sense of credibility, like this example from Xero which includes text and video testimonials *Adapted From Screenshot*, *Xero*, *2016*.

- **eCommerce** using a reputable sales channel helps your websites credibility.
- **Social media** having a social media presence often goes further towards establishing credibility than testimonials, which could have been faked.
- **Logos of associations and awards** if you belong to any relevant industry associations or have won any awards feature them. Not only does this go a long way towards establishing your credibility, but it will show that you're at the top of your game, a notch above the competition.
- Links to credible third-party references or endorsements this is a way to assert your credibility without tooting your own horn.
- **Fresh, up-to-date content** a news section that was last updated a year ago implies that nothing has happened since or that no one cares enough to update it.
- **No errors** spelling and grammar mistakes are unprofessional, and while the large majority of readers may not pick them up, the one or two who do will question your credibility. This extends to broken links, malfunctioning tools, and interactive elements that don't work as advertised.

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5.5: Implementing UX design

The UX design process happens before, during and after the website is being built. It ties in very closely with strategy and research, web development and design, SEO, content strategy and creation, and later conversion optimisation.

As discussed in section 5.4, Core principles of UX design, mobile should not be an afterthought, in UX or any other digital endeavour. It should be prioritised in strategy, design and implementation. The 'mobile first' movement supports this notion, and aims to create mobile user experiences first, and then adapt these for the web (instead of the other way around). Designing this way has many advantages, since the principles of good mobile UX works just as well on full sites using simple designs, linear interfaces and clear buttons and features.

Conduct research and discovery

Step one involves conducting detailed research on the business, the users, and the technology involved. This is covered fully in the Data driven decision making chapter, which includes user research. Doing this lets UX practitioners know exactly what they need to do to address the needs of the business and audience. This will generate a lot of data that needs to be filtered and organised.

Create the site's basic structure

Information architecture (IA) is about managing information, taking a lot of raw data and applying tools and techniques to it to make it manageable and usable. Categories and pages should flow from broad to narrow. An intuitively designed structure will guide the user to the site's goals.

IA operates on both the micro and the macro level covering everything from the way individual pages are laid out, for example where the navigation and headings are, to the way entire websites are put together.

Most websites have a hierarchical structure, which means there are broad, important pages at the top, and narrower, more specific and less important pages further down. Hierarchical structures can be very broad and shallow having many main sections with few lower pages or very narrow and deep with few main sections and many pages below. It's up to the UX practitioner to find the right balance of breadth and depth.

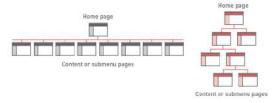


Figure 5.5.1: A broad, shallow hierarchy on the left, and a narrow, deep hierarchy on the right Adapted From WebStyleGuide, 2011.

Analyse content

If you're working on a website that already exists, it will be populated with a wide variety of content. In this case, you need to perform a content audit, which is an examination and evaluation of the existing material.

If the website is new or if you plan to add new content to an existing website you need to put together a content strategy. This is a plan that outlines what content is needed and when and how it will be created. There's no single template or model for this so every content strategy will be unique.

The content strategy is largely the responsibility of the strategy, copy and concept teams, but the UX practitioner needs to get involved in a few key roles. The points that UX needs to address are:



Read more about this in the Content marketing strategy chapter.

- What the site should achieve. Naturally, the content should work towards achieving the site's and business' objectives.
- What the user wants and needs. By conducting thorough user research you should be able to answer this question. Provide only content that will add real value to the user.





- What makes the content unique, valuable or different. Content needs to provide value to the user. A content strategy will help ensure content is updated regularly and will include up to date information.
- The tone and language used. You need to consider the tone, whether it's fun, light or serious, the register, whether it's formal or informal and the style you will use across your content. Make sure tone, style and register are consistent across text, images, videos and other content types. Correct grammar and spelling are important considerations as they speak to the credibility of the site.

Principles of creating content

There are three key points you should consider here.

1. Structure

Content needs to be written so that users can find the information they need as quickly as possible. The chapter on Digital copywriting will cover this in more detail. Copy can be made more easily readable by:



Don't forget SEO. There are lots of ways in which a website can be optimised during the UX planning process. Have a look at the SEO chapter for some guidelines on what to include.

- · Highlighting or bolding key phrases and words
- · Using bulleted lists
- Using paragraphs to break up information
- Using descriptive and distinct headings.

2. Hierarchy

On the page, use an inverted pyramid style or F structure for your copy. The important information should be at the top of the page, to make for easy visual scanning. The heading comes first and is the largest and boldest type on the page. The subheading or blurb follows this, and then the content is presented in a descending scale of importance. Sentences should be short and important words should appear early in the sentence, especially in bullet points. Eye-tracking research has shown that the F structure is the still the most user friendly structure, as this is the natural flow of the eye (Hanes, 2016).



Figure 5.5.2: Users read websites in an F structure, and your site should enable this Adapted From AdpushupBlog, 2015

3. Relevance

Above all, the content on the page must be relevant to the user and the purpose of the page itself. If a user clicks to read about a product but ends up on a page with content about the company, their experience is going to be tarnished.

Create a sitemap

In UX terminology, a sitemap is the visualised structural plan for how the website's pages will be laid out and organised.







Figure 5.5.3: An example of a sitemap *Adapted From Stokes*, 2013.

To create the visuals for your sitemap, you can follow this process:

- 1. Start by **defining your home page**. This should be the top item in the hierarchy.
- 2. Place the main navigation items below this.
- 3. **Arrange your pages of content** below the main navigational items, according to the results of your user testing and insight, and your information architecture structure.
- 4. **Add pages** below this until you have placed all your content. Make sure that every page is accessible from at least one other page. It may seem obvious, but you'd be surprised how often this is overlooked!
- 5. **Define any other static navigation elements** i.e. the footer, sidebar, header navigation, search tools. Place these in your diagram in a logical place possibly branching off directly from the home page, or as separate blocks.

Which sitemap is which

The term 'sitemap' can have two meanings. One is the way it's defined above – the structural plan of the website. The other is a page on your website that lists all the pages available in a logical and accessible way. An example is the Apple website's sitemap: www.apple.com/sitemap. This sitemap should be available from every page. Dynamic sitemaps can be employed so that the sitemap is updated automatically as information is added to the website. Different sitemaps exist for different purposes, so investigate what your users would find most useful.

Build the navigation

The navigation should guide users easily through all the pages of a website; it is not just about menus. Successful navigation should help a user to answer four basic questions:

1.Where am I?

Navigation should let the users know where they are in the site. Breadcrumb links, clear page titles, URLs and menu changes all help to show the user where he or she is. The larger your site is and the more levels it has, the more important it becomes to give your users an indicator of where they are in relation to everything else on the site. This helps the users to understand the content of the page that they are on, and makes them feel more confident in navigating further through the site.



Figure 5.5.4: Google's search results have clear navigation options Adapted From Google, 2016

2. How did I get here?

Breadcrumb navigation often indicates the general path a user may have taken. In the case of site search, the keyword used should be indicated on the results page.

3. Where can I go next?

Navigation clues let a user know where to go to next such as 'add to cart' on an eCommerce site, or a contextual link that indicates 'read more'. The key is making the options clear to the user.







There is a tendency, when thinking about navigation, to plan in only one direction, from the home page down the chain of pages in the hierarchy. But very often, users arrive at the site from a link or search result that drops them deep in the website. This makes it equally important to look at reverse navigation getting from the bottom level pages back to the top.

4. How do I get home?

It has become convention that the logo of the website takes the user back to the home page, but many users still look in the main menu for the word 'home'. Make sure that they can get back to the beginning quickly and easily.

Create the layout

A web page can be broken down roughly into four zones:



Figure 5.5.5: The four main zones of a website Adapted From Stokes, 2013

Each of these typically contains certain types of elements and content, such as:

- 1. **The header** (at the top of the page) used to identify the site and provide basic tools: Logo or identifying mark (possibly including the brand's tagline) Main navigation Login feature Search bar
- 2. **The central content area** used to present the main content The actual content specific to the page such as text, images, videos and more (this can be broken into several columns) CTAs of various kinds such as "Sign up"; "Get started"; "Claim your free trial"

∓ Note

Users consider information in side bars to be less important, so don't put your key message here.

3. **The sidebar** (either on the left or the right, or sometimes on both sides) – used to present secondary content and tools Secondary navigation bar, or other navigation features (for example, blog article archive by date)

CTAs, including buttons and signup forms

Additional content, like links or snippets.

4. **The footer** (at the bottom of the page) – used for important but non prominent content and resources

Legal information, privacy policy and disclaimers

Additional navigation elements.

The most important consideration for any page layout is the content i.e. what needs to be included, what is the most important action or piece of information, and how can this be structured to meet the user's needs? After all, web pages are created to support a user's journey. All pages on your site should not necessarily look identical.

Creating sketches, wireframes and prototypes

Wireframes are the skeletal outlines of the layout of a web page. Their purpose is to map out the placement of various elements on the page as a guide for the designer to create the visual design, and the web developer to create the code and interactivity required. Wireframes can be low fidelity (very rough and basic sketches, barely resembling the final output) or high fidelity (very detailed, complex layouts including creative elements). Any website project will have several wireframes, at least one for each template page. Capture your first ideas on paper; it's the fastest and best way to capture good ideas.







Figure 5.5.6: Low-fidelity and high-fidelity wireframes Adapted From UI Wireframes, 2017

Prototypes are a step up from wireframes, in that they are interactive. Prototypes are essentially sets of wireframes that have been linked together like a website, so that they can be navigated through by clicking and scrolling.

Prototypes are excellent tools for testing the flow and function of a proposed website before diving into the costly and lengthy design and development phases. They can save a lot of time, money and effort by helping to identify problems and improvements upfront. Again, paper prototyping is the best method for fast, iterative UX design.

Assemble the other elements

Once you've defined your content and mapped out the basic layout of each page, you need to add all the extra elements that your website will need. Remember that the page should only ever contain the elements a user might need to support them in their task. These can include:



Paper prototypes make testing quick and easy. They're portable, easy to use, and don't require complex tools, Internet connections or user skills. Mobile Apps like Pop (popapp.in) easily turn paper prototypes into clickable demos. See section 5.8, Tools of the trade for more information on the Pop App

Calls to action. CTAs can take a variety of shapes and forms, from in text links to large buttons.

Forms. These are interactive fields where users can enter their contact details or other information, for example, to sign up for a newsletter or enter a competition.

Search. Many sites can benefit from having a search function, both to help users navigate and to make finding specific information easier.

Calls to Action

Successful CTAs are simple, quick, clear actions that don't require the user to do anything scary or to make a commitment. They should always do exactly what they state in order to instil confidence and clarity. It's all about managing user expectations, do they actually go where they think they will, or perform the action users expect?

Positioning

The primary CTA should usually appear above the fold to capture the attention focused here. Other CTAs can appear below the fold, and the main CTA can also be repeated lower down.

Prioritisation

A single web page can be built around one CTA, or could incorporate a wide range of possible desirable actions. This all comes down to what the page and website overall is seeking to achieve, based on the business requirements.





When multiple CTAs are used, there should be one primary one that stands out strongly and the others should be more muted, playing a supporting role. CTAs can be differentiated through colour, shape, placement and size; the fewer choices, the better.



Figure 5.5.7: The Dropbox website has a clear primary CTA in blue for 'Sign up', and a secondary 'Try Dropbox Business' in the top right *Adapted From Dropbox*, 2016

Clickability

Any CTAs that can be clicked must look tactile or touchable. This means they must stand out somehow from the background and from static elements. One approach is to make the button look like a real button, standing out from its environment. Another train of thought advocates for the flat design approach as a more elegant and modern expression of this.



Figure 5.5.8: Clickable CTA buttons Adapted From Stokes, 2013



Figure 5.5.9: Buttons with a flat design Adapted From Stokes, 2013

Quantity

Finally, be sure not to overwhelm users with too many choices. Stick to one central CTA per page, making it obvious to users what the main goal, action or outcome of the page is.

Forms

Forms are extremely useful tools for gathering user information and encouraging interaction on the site. Users are generally familiar with them and have some experience filling them out, and there are lots of web conventions that govern how these should be set up. As a general rule, the shorter you make your form, the better. The fewer fields users have to fill out, the more likely they are to complete the process.

Steps and sections

Simple forms with only a few fields can be assembled as a series of boxes. For forms that are longer, for example, those in eCommerce checkouts or complex registration processes, it makes sense to split them up into manageable portions. Manage users' expectations by clearly indicating what the next step is.

Relevance

Simplicity is a key consideration, forms should be as short and clear as possible. The effort must be equal to the reward gained. All of the fields included must be clearly relevant to the purpose of the form, otherwise users may get confused or suspect that you are harvesting their information.

It is important that users are notified about which fields are required and which are optional. If all the fields are required, then the form should indicate this clearly.



Be aware of local laws that define what information you're allowed to collect, and how you can use it.





Assistance

It is a good idea to include help for users filling out forms. This is especially the case where a specific field requires inputs to be entered in a certain way and doubly so for password fields with special rules. Users will not instinctively know the rules associated with specific fields, so you must provide plenty of guidance along the way.

A form should be well designed and intuitive rather than provide tips and text to users on how to complete it. Ideally, users shouldn't need any help at all.



Figure 5.5.10: A newer interactive form that provides assistance to users by moving the label text from being a placeholder to hovering above the field *Adapted From UX Booth*, *2016*.

Validation

Validation means giving the user feedback on the inputs they have submitted whether correct or incorrect. Validation can happen at two points, after the user has submitted the form, which is submission validation, or during the process of filling out the form which is live inline validation. Submission validation is essential for protecting the database, but will also assist in catching user errors. Live inline validation usually results in much better user experiences as the users then know that their information is correct before submitting the form.



Figure 5.5.11: A simple, intuitive sign-up form that provides clear guidance Adapted From Econsultancy, 2014

Error messages are an important part of validation that is shown to users. Error messages are often ignored in UX development and are a huge source of frustration for users.

Some best practice to consider:

- These messages should be easy to understand meaning the user should not struggle to understand the error or how to fix it.
- The error message should stay visible until the error has been corrected.
- The tone of the message should match the rest of the site.
- It is important to remember that a form is a conversation with users. It's an interactive dialogue even though you are not present.

reCAPTCHA

reCAPTCHA is a free service offered by Google that requires users to answer questions to prove they are not bots. It helps to protect websites from spam and abuse, but does reduce conversions and in certain instances can render the site unusable for users. Despite these accessibility issues, reCAPTCHA is still an important factor when developing forms in order to protect your website.



Figure 5.5.12: An example of reCAPTCHA included in a form Adapted From 9Lessons info, 2014.





Search

Search has three useful functions on a website. Not only does it help users to find specific things, it also serves as an essential navigation aid for larger sites, and collects valuable data from keyword research about what the user is looking for. From the UX practitioner's perspective, there are some important non-technical principles to bear in mind.

For large sites, it can be useful to allow users to search within categories. On Amazon, for example, you can search just within the category 'books'.



Figure 5.5.13: The advanced search within 'Books' on Amazon.com Adapted From Amazon, 2017

Positioning

Search will either be the primary starting point for your site, or it will be a useful additional tool. In the former case, for example, on a large eCommerce site such as Amazon, the search tool should be positioned centrally and visibly to encourage the user to use this as the main navigational tool. In the latter case, best practice dictates that it should be in the top right corner, or easily accessible in the sidebar.

Accuracy

The better you can interpret what your user is searching for, the more relevant and accurate the search results can be. Google works very hard to fine-tune its search algorithm to ensure that users don't just get what they searched for, but what they actually wanted in the first place.

User research can suggest why users would search your site in the first place, and what they would typically be looking for. Popularity and recentness of content are other key considerations.

Results

When it comes to displaying search results, there are a few key questions to ask:

How many results should be displayed per page?

Ten to 20 results per page is generally a good benchmark.

What order should results be in? Most popular first? Cheapest? Newest? Closest match?

This will depend on the nature of the site.

Can results be filtered?

Some websites allow users to do a second search constrained to the results of the first one.

What happens if there are no results?

If no search results are found, the search function should provide hints and tips to the user on how to search better on the site. The fact that there are no results should be stated clearly, followed by a list of the closest match of content to the search query. It's quite possible the searcher didn't know the exact term from what they are looking for or made a typo, though the site should be forgiving of these. Hints could include wildcards or breaking up the terms into smaller pieces. The message shown to users should be helpful and relevant, and not simply copied from Google's advice.





Define the visual design

Before users interact with your carefully considered content, your excellent navigation structure and slick search bar, their first impression comes from the look of the website such as the colours, graphics, and overall design elements. As people are spending more and more time on the web, they are less tolerant of websites that don't look good or credible. While a website is not an art installation, it is a design project, and the fundamentals of good design apply.



Read more about this in the Web development and design chapter

While much of the visual design expertise will come from the graphic designer, it's valuable for the UX practitioner to know the following principles of visual design:

Colour

Colour has an incredible psychological effect on people. Based on our culture, preferences and learned cues, people interpret colours in very specific ways and this can be used to inform and steer user experience. When choosing the colour palette for your website, be aware of legibility and accessibility concerns. Using a lot of open or white space often makes sites appear simple and easy to read.

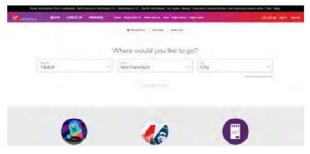


Figure 5.5.14: The Virgin America website places the most important information upfront and uses colour to draw the eye to the important buttons/forms *Adapted From Screenshot*. *Virgin America*, 2017.

Imagery

The choice of images used on the website can have a massive effect on how users behave and interact on the page. You can never be quite certain which images will have the best results, so this is one area where you will need to do a lot of testing (more on that below). Humans tend to gravitate towards and identify with pictures of other humans. Content strategy should include an image strategy, especially if the site is rich in images. Camera angles, content, brand strategy and the tone of the visuals all need to be considered. Images must always be relevant and not used as fillers or pure decoration.

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5.6: Advantages and disadvantages of UX design

Ensuring you adhere to all the principles of UX design can be costly and time consuming. Testing each development or aspect of the site can be very drawn out. However, the advantages that UX provides far outweigh the costs.

Good UX means users will have a pleasurable experience on your site, are more likely to return and recommend your site, both of which lead to sales and help you to meet your business objectives. Poor UX means users have negative and disappointing experiences; they may not return and may relate their negative feedback to others, which in turn loses any potential sales.

Including UX from the beginning helps to keep costs low and on budget. It is estimated that for every US \$1 spent in the initial phases to improve UX, it would cost US \$10 to fix during development, and upwards of US \$100 to fix after the product is released (Gray, 2016).

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5.8: Conduct Testing

Measuring how successful your UX has been cannot be left until the final website is complete and ready for launch. The key to an effective user friendly site is testing each step of the way during the design, development and implementation process. User testing is crucial to UX.

User testing means giving one or more users access to a website or prototype and observing how they behave when using it. The purpose of this is to discover problems and gain insights that can be used to improve the final product.

The goal of user testing is not to eliminate every potential problem on a website; that's simply not possible, especially if you consider how subjective this can be. The goal is to work towards creating the best possible experience for users by constantly improving and optimising.

The two biggest questions around testing tend to be "What do I test?" and, "When do I test it?" The answers are simple: **Test as much as possible, as often as possible, and as early as possible.**



Of course, in the real world, time and budget limitations will certainly have an impact on how much you can test but our goal should always be to maximise testing, in whichever way you can. Learn more in the Conversion optimisation chapter.



Figure 5.8.1: Iterative UX testing process *Adapted From Stokes*, 2013.

User testing follows a set process:

- 1. Formulate a question to test
- 2. Choose a test and prepare
- 3. Find subjects
- 4. Test
- 5. Analyse
- 6. Report
- 7. Implement
- 8. Start again

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5.9: Tools of the trade

UX tools range from rudimentary (pen and paper) to highly sophisticated (web applications and tech tools). Here is a brief roundup of popular options.

Balsamiq (https://balsamiq.com) bills itself as a 'rapid wireframing tool' and is great for creating fun, low-fidelity wireframes and simple prototypes.

Axure (www.axure.com) is an all-purpose prototyping tool that allows you to create fully interactive wireframed websites without needing to code anything. A useful feature is that it also generates technical specifications for developers to work from based on the interactions and links created in the prototyping process.

Gliffy (www.gliffy.com) is a web-based tool that allows you to create a wide range of diagrams, everything from wireframes to sitemaps to charts.

Invision (www.invisionapp.com) is a web based tool that allows you design prototypes across web and mobile.

Morae (www.techsmith.com/morae.html) is a good place to start if you're looking for a web-based replacement for user labs.

Pop (https://marvelapp.com/pop/) or Prototyping on Paper, is a free app for prototyping apps on mobile.

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5.10: Case study - AO Becomes customer centred

One-liner

UX testing increased sales at ao.com, a UK based online large kitchen appliances (white goods) store, by 9.5%,



Figure 5.10.1: ao.com logo Adapted From Insightdiy, 2015

The challenge

ao.com was using its senior management's hunches to inform its development roadmap and was not considering customers' needs. The conversion manager knew that to become a market challenger in the online white goods market, the company needed to become customer centred.

The solution

To become properly customer centred, the brand needed to work on identifying true customer needs and tailoring the website to provide the best possible user experience. But how did ao.com go about doing this?

The first step was research. Complex research was carried out by WhatUsersDo.com, an expert in UX testing. Users were asked to purchase white goods online from either ao.com, a competitor, or via Google search. Users were observed via their screens and asked to speak their thoughts as they proceeded.

Those who bought directly form ao.com were monitored to observe friction points in the buying process. Those who bought from competitors were monitored to identify the strengths and weaknesses of competitors, and lastly those using Google were watched so see how users would naturally search to buy white goods.

Next, the videos, over 250 hours of footage, were assessed and shown to senior managers who could now clearly see where customers were having problems with the site. Senior managers now started to look at their business from the customer's point of view and the roadmap was re-prioritised to focus on customer needs.

The results showed that the product pages needed the most improvement. There needed to be clearer product descriptions, more compelling videos and much stronger calls to action. The sizes of images and buttons placement were also adjusted according to the feedback.



Figure 5.10.2: A product page for ao.com Adapted From Whatusersdo, 2014

The results

Improved user experience definitely yielded great results for ao.com:

- Online sales increased by 9.5%
- The number of calls to the customer support team was reduced by 33%
- Customer reviews increased by 110% demonstrating increased customer engagement.

The changes made may have seemed obvious, but were not recognised by senior managers. Exposure to real clients and their needs is essential in determining a good user experience. To ensure ao.com maintains their customer centred approach, they run weekly





sessions where employees watch how users use their website. Any changes can be made as required in order to continue providing customers with the best user experience possible.

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5.11: The bigger picture

UX touches on so many aspects of digital marketing that it's hard to list them all. It's involved right up front at the strategy and research phase, and then touches on all the create disciplines such as web development, design, copywriting and SEO.

For example, when it comes to SEO, Google's algorithm assesses the UX design on a website as part of the overall decision on where to rank it.

Social media, email marketing, display advertising, video marketing and other fields can also benefit from solid UX thinking such as, "What do users want, need and expect from you on these channels?" Finally, UX goes hand in hand with web analytics data as both disciplines aim to understand users and create real, actionable insights from the data gathered about them.

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5.E: User Experience Design(Exercises)

Case study questions

- 1. What do you think about the methods ao.com used to test their UX? What other methods could they have used?
- 2. What elements would you have included in the new improved UX design of ao.com?
- 3. Why do you think UX research helped increase sales and improve customer engagement for ao.com?

Chapter questions

- 1. What are the six qualities that make up a good user experience?
- 2. Are there any mobile specific issues that UX designers should keep in mind? What growing trend should UX designers keep in mind when designing any user experience?
- 3. Explain why testing is so important with UX?

Further reading

www.smashingmagazine.com – Smashing Magazine posts regular, in-depth articles and research focused on UX, technology and web design.

http://www.lukew.com - The blog of Luke Wroblewski, one of the world's foremost UX experts. It's filled with research and practical advice for working UX practitioners. [Accessed 30 October 2017]

http://www.sitepoint.com/11-free-ux-e...h-reading-2016 - a list of books on UX that are free and well worth reading. [Accessed 30 October 2017]

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5.S: User Experience Design(Summary)

Users come first when creating any web-based marketing channels. Core UX principles such as user-centric design, web conventions, simplicity and credibility are essential for creating web experiences that are seamless, memorable and valuable to users.

Mobile UX is a special subset of the discipline that takes the unique context and characteristics of mobile users into account — whether for designing a mobi site, an app or a responsive website. When it comes to implementing a UX process, the following steps should be followed:

- 1. Identify business requirements what does the business need to get out of the site?
- 2. Conduct user research who are you building the site for, and why? What information do they need? How will they move through the site? Does the user need this?
- 3. Create the basic structure what goes into solid information architecture?
- 4. Analyse and plan content how should content be put together here?
- 5. Design the sitemap how will the overall website be structured?
- 6. Build and develop the navigation how will users get to where they need to go?
- 7. Create the layout what will each page look like, from top to bottom? Does the layout support the functional purpose of the website? What content is needed for this page to achieve its business goals?
- 8. Add other useful elements how will CTAs, search tools and forms behave? Where will they be best placed to achieve the business goals?
- 9. Conceptualise the visual design how will the visual layer add to the overall UX impact?
- 10. Conduct user testing are there any errors on the site, and is it easy to use? Testing should be done at each step in the UX process. The earlier errors or difficulties in the UX are picked up the more cost effective it is to correct and change.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Create - Web Development and Design

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn:

- How the web development process works, from planning through to design and launch.
- Development and design best practices and the principles of designing for persuasion.
- How to assess the quality and effectiveness of web development and design implemented by suppliers or agencies.
- How to evaluate the need for either a static or CMS website.
- 6.1: Introduction
- 6.2: Key terms and concepts
- 6.3: Web design
- 6.4: Web development
- 6.5: The web development process
- 6.6: Development methodologies
- 6.7: References
- 6.8: Quality assurance
- 6.9: Case study Offspring
- 6.10: The bigger picture
- 6.E: Web Development and Design(Exercises)
- 6.S: Web Development and Design(Summary)

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6.1: Introduction

Websites are, in many ways, at the heart of successful digital marketing. They are your home on the web, a shop window over which you have full control, and often the first place people stop to find out more about you.

Web development and design applies to more than just websites, the principles can be used for any digital assets you create, from mobile platforms to social media profiles.

Creating online assets involves three key processes: planning and design, which create the appearance, layout and style that users see; and development, which brings this imagery to life as a functioning web tool.



Unlike social media properties, your website is not subject to changes in policy, and content remains easily accessible regardless of its age.

The fundamental principle of good development and design is to understand your users, they are the people who will actually be using and interacting with your website. What are they looking for? What are their objectives? Your offering must have user experience central to the process.

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6.2: Key terms and concepts

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Term	Definition
Accessibility	The degree to which a website is available to users with disabilities, such as the visually or hearing impaired, and those technically disadvantaged by not having the necessary device, software or browser
Adaptive web design	Websites that respond to a user's screen size by loading predefined layouts.
Alt text	Alt text means alternative text. The 'alt' attribute is used in HTML to attribute a text field to an image on a web page. It normally has a descriptive function, telling a search engine or user what an image is about and displaying the text in instances where the image is unable to load. Also called Alt tag.
Anchor text	A text link, or backlink, that refers visitors to your site from another with SEO benefits, passing relevance and authority from the referring site.
Bounce	When users leave a site before navigating from their landing page to another.
Branding (or visual identity or corporate identity)	These terms refer to the look and feel of your brand. In this context it is used when discussing how your logo, colours and styling elements are translated from traditional print-based assets to digital.
Breadcrumbs	Links, usually on the top of each page, indicating where a page is in the hierarchy of the website. Breadcrumbs can be used to help users navigate through the website, as well as act as a page index for search engines.
Cache	Files stored locally on a user's browser to limit the amount of data called from the server on a return visit.
Call to Action	A phrase written to motivate the reader to take action (sign up for our newsletter, book car hire today etc.). Calls to action are usually styled differently from other copy on a page so that they stand out and draw attention.
Content Management System (CMS)	A software system that allows an administrator to update the content of a website, so that a developer is not required.
Common page elements	Items that appear on every page of a website.
Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)	A programming language that defines the styles such as fonts and colours, used to display text and content. Web pages are one of the places that this language is used.
Client-side	Scripts that run in a user's browser, rather than on a web server.
dpi	Dots per inch (in an image). On the web, the screen resolution is 72dpi
Graceful degradation	The use of both modern and antiquated web techniques and code to provide a safety net, or fallback, for users with older browsers and technologies.
HTML5	HTML5 is the most current iteration of the HTML (HyperText Markup Language) standard. It is a broad range of technologies that allow for rich media content and interaction on websites that do not require additional third-party plugins. It allows rich multimedia content to be displayed and easily viewed by users, computers and devices.
Information architecture	The way in which data and content are organised, structured and labelled to support usability.



	1
JavaScript	A high-level, dynamic programming language commonly used to create interactive effects within web browsers.
Landing page	The page a user reaches when clicking on a paid or organic search engine listing. The pages that have the most success are those that match up as closely as possible with the user's search query.
Landing page	The website page that a user is sent to after clicking on any link or CTA, for example, in an email or affiliated site, in a display ad, or a paid or organic search engine listing. The landing pages that have the most success are those that match up as closely as possible with the user's search query or intention.
Meta data	Information that can be entered about a web page and the elements on it to provide context and relevant information to search engines. Metadata includes meta and title tags.
Native mobile application	A mobile application designed to run as a program on a specific device or mobile operating system.
Navigation	How a web user moves through a website, and the elements that assist the user in doing so.
Open source	Unlike proprietary software, open source software makes the source code available so that other developers can improve on or build applications for the software.
Plug-in	Often referred to as a module or extension, a piece of third-party code that extends the functionality of a website.
Progressive enhancement	The development of web technologies in a layered fashion, prioritising basic content and functionality for all web browsers, while allowing users with higher bandwidth or browsers access to an enhanced version of the page.
Proprietary software	Any software that one or more intellectual property holders own and licence to others in exchange for compensation, subject to certain restrictions. Licensees may not be able to change, share, sell or reverse engineer the software.
Responsive web design	Websites that fluidly respond to a user's device or screen resolution based on media queries sent between the site and the device regarding the specs of the device.
Search engine results page (SERP)	The actual results returned to the user based on their search query
Server-side	Scripts that run on a server, as opposed to a user's browser
Sitemap	On a website, a page that links to every other page in the website and displays these links organised according to the information hierarchy. While this is often physically available on a website (HTML sitemap), it should also be created as an XML file and included within the Robots.txt.
Universal Resource Locator (URL)	A web address that is unique to every page on the Internet.
Usability	A measure of how easy a system is to use. Sites with excellent usability fare far better than those that are difficult to use.
Web application framework	Software used to help create dynamic web properties more quickly. This is done through access to libraries of code for a specific language or languages and other automated or simplified processes that do not then need to be coded from scratch.
W3C standards	A common approach to development that focuses on accessibility and standardisation, overseen by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)
Web server	A computer or program that delivers web content to be viewed on the Internet.



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6.3: Web design

Web design is the process of creating all the visual aspects of the interface. This covers the layout, colour scheme, images, logos, type, design elements (such as buttons and links), and anything else that you can see.

The web is a visual medium, so design is an important part of creating assets that are both engaging and effective. Designers need to keep in mind the technical aspects of design, while prioritising the human factor. Digital properties shouldn't just be beautiful. They need to create a good experience for the visitor and meet business objectives, such as increasing sales, creating brand ambassadors, as well as encouraging signups and, ultimately, conversions.

Visual identity and designing for persuasion

The visual interface or, the design of a website, is what user see and interact with. It's the visual representation of all the hard work that goes into developing a website. It's what the site will first be judged by and is the initial step in creating a delightful user experience. It matters a lot.

There is a close relationship between UX and visual design. Ideally the visual designer will use the documents created by the UX designer and add the visual skin, but often the designer has to manage both UX design and visual design. Design is not just about aesthetics, although looks are very important.

Design is about the visual clues we give users so that they know what to do next. It assures web visitors of our credibility and turns them into customers.

Good interface design involves many things, but here are a few basic considerations. These are closely linked to UX, and the visual designer plays a key role in defining them.

- Navigation: the signage of the site, indicating to users where they are and where they can go.
- Layout: how content is structured and displayed.
- **Headers:** the element with a fixed position at the top of every page. It usually includes all primary navigation items which need to be presented on every page such as main menu, login and search.
- **Footers:** the usually consistent bottom part of the page.
- Credibility: telling users that you are who you say you are.

Visual identity

The visual identity answers the question, "How do users know it's us?" Certain design elements should be carried through on all web assets created for a brand, as well as print and traditional communication media. Often, the visual identity guidelines for the web are codified into a digital style guide document to ensure consistency across different agencies, designers and teams. This document can include guidelines for creating all manner of web assets, including banners, social media content, and website design elements.

The logo is the most prominent way to reinforce your brand identity on the website. The logo is part of a brand's corporate identity (CI).

The primary font is typically used for prominent headings on the site, while body copy is often set in a standard web font that closely matches the primary font.

Menu and button style, as well as icons, are also part of a site's visual identity. Even when a user is viewing a small part of a site or page, it should look as if it belongs to the site as whole.







Figure 6.3.1: An example of a brand's visual identity *Adapted From Designspiration*, 2012.

Design theory

Design can be a pretty precise science and there is a lot of research on what makes for effective design. A lot is also common sense and practice based on accepted web standards. Design theory is discussed in the <u>User experience design</u> chapter.

Collecting and collating design assets

Elements such as your logo and brand colours represent your brand and form part of your brand expression. The latest versions of these brand assets need to be available to the designer or marketing agency designing your website.

Getting the right brand assets to designers in a good quality format that they can easily access saves time and avoids expensive mistakes. Here is a list of brand assets that a designer requires to start working on a site. The quality, format (or file type) and file size are all important considerations. You need to provide:



The brand guidelines or style guide would be created in Illustrator, PS or Sketch, but saved for the client as a PDF doc.

- Brand guidelines or style guide. In Adobe Reader (PDF) format.
- **Logo and other key brand elements.** These could be in Illustrator format (ai) or Photoshop format (psd). Best practice is to have your logo designed using vector graphics. If your logo or other brand assets are created in this format, they can be enlarged without losing quality. If you do not have a vector version of your logo available, then you should make sure that your image is at least 1 000 pixels wide.
- **Image libraries.** Photographs and images can be hosted online, where the designer can access them with a login. They can also be sent via Cloud file sharing services. Make sure the images are of sufficient quality. It is best practice to provide images that are 300dpi. Although all images on the web are displayed at 72dpi, a higher quality image will give your designer room to optimise and resize and crop or cut images where needed. It may also be necessary to consider different images for mobile vs. desktop because the viewpoint on mobile is so much smaller. You may need to consider using much fewer images for mobile or even none at all.

If you do not own the image and its copyright, it is illegal to use the image on your site without permission from the owner. If you require these images, they can be purchased from stock libraries online such as iStock or Shutterstock. Avoid using images from Google Image Search on your pages.

- **Fonts folder**. You will need to provide both Apple Mac and PC versions of the fonts that are listed in your Style Guide. Many designers work on Macs, which use different font versions from those read by PCs.
- **Brand colours** need to be given to digital designers in RGB format. RGB stands for red, green and blue and is the standard for colours online.
- Any **existing creative** assets that have been created for your brand over time, such as:
 - Print designs





o TV ads

Website copy should be made available before the final design is required. This prevents delays caused by designers waiting for material. This applies to any additional assets your designer may need that can be downloaded or sent, such as your price guides or product descriptions.

Fonts

Copy conveys your brand message to your client or customer and should be easy to read and search engine friendly. The CI is expressed through fonts, also known as typefaces.

Typographic layout can draw attention to the content users should see first. Indicate which pieces of information take precedence. Importance can be signified by text size, colour, weight, capitalisation and italics. Placement also contributes to how important text appears.

Some fonts are common to all computer users. These fonts are known as web safe fonts. Anyone accessing websites that use these fonts will be able to view them as the designer intended and search engines will be able to search these websites easily.



Some web safe fonts are: Times New Roman, Arial, Helvetica, Courier New, and Lucida Console. See the full list here: www.w3schools.com/cssref/ css_websafe_fonts.asp.



Figure 6.3.2: Examples of web safe fonts Adapted From Stokes, 2013.

To drive impact, designers typically prefer not to be limited to using only web safe fonts, and brand guidelines in most instances don't take web safe fonts into account. This means that fonts must be embedded by a developer using tools such as Typekit, or loaded dynamically from tools such as Google Fonts.



You can also use Google Fonts as an alternative, which are more stylish than standard fonts but which are still viewable by most people. The developer will need to implement these. See www.google.com/fonts.



Figure 6.3.3: Example of Google Fonts Adapted From Stokes, 2013

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6.4: Web development

Web development is the process of taking finished web designs and transforming them into fully functioning, interactive websites. Development is what gives life and movement to static designs, and enables users to access the website through their web browsers. This is done by translating the designs into web coding languages that can be interpreted and displayed by web browsers.

Learning to code your own website is not in the scope of this textbook and requires years of practice and some considerable technical know-how. But we can teach you to understand the aspects that go into creating a website, the process that should be followed, and how to help in making key choices about your website.

Assessing your development needs

It is important to identify what your development needs are as these fundamentally impact the options that are most appropriate to your site's development. Will you use a CMS? Will you need complex content management? Is it for eCommerce, or is it simply a brochure site? For instance, if you're building a small brochure site, you don't need someone to come up with a bespoke development solution.

Content management

The majority of websites today are built using a content management system, or CMS. Content management simply means a system for managing any forms of content. A web CMS is a software application that assists in managing your digital assets and content for your website. It needs to facilitate the creating, collecting, managing and publishing of any material for your site.

Managing a website is collaborative and involves various people, in various roles, working on the material, such as creators, editors, publishers, administrators and even visitors to your site. A CMS provides tools to allow users with little knowledge of web programming languages or markup languages to create and manage website content. A CMS enables a business to manage and update their own website without needing a web developer (Johnston, 2015).

Ideally, the CMS becomes a set of automated processes that facilitate the functioning, updating and management of your site. Using a CMS means it is cheaper and easier to update, manage and create new content as web developers are not required for each change. A CMS also allows for the content of websites to be updated from any location in the world by means of signing in to the system.

eCommerce

eCommerce, or electronic commerce, refers to any trading of products or services on the Internet. eCommerce sites are necessary across a range of businesses, from consumer based retail, through auction, music and video subscription sites, to intercorporate trading.

Learn more in our eCommerce chapter.

Brochure site

A brochure site is a static site. It provides content that does not need to be updated regularly, and there is very little interaction with the visitor. A brochure site is essentially a brochure of a company's offering, providing relevant information and contact details to prospective customers. The site does not 'do' anything. The user cannot interact with the site in any way; they are unable to place orders, make payments or engage with the site.







Figure 6.4.1: Static brochure site Adapted From HFM Columbus, 2017

Brochure sites are a means of getting your business an online presence quickly and relatively cheaply, and if it meets all your business requirements then such a simple site may be sufficient. Consider the limitations of a brochure site before making a choice, as they can be difficult or impossible to build on later.

Development options

When selecting how to proceed with your website development, you have a few options at your disposal. The choice between an off-the-shelf solution and bespoke development comes down to how flexible the off-the-shelf solution is. If too much customisation is required, or it does not support the business' requirements, it may be better and cheaper to develop a bespoke solution.

Off-the-shelf solution

The CMS you choose can be pre-built by an external company or developer. This can be bought like any other software on the market. While this option may provide fewer custom features, it's potentially a more cost-effective option than a bespoke CMS. It is certainly quicker if little customisation is required.

Bespoke development

This involves a CMS that is built specifically for a certain website. This option is highly tailored and customised to your website, and can be more expensive than other options. It is possibly less future proof, as finding alternative agencies to support custombuilt code is challenging.

Advantages and disadvantages of off-the-shelf and bespoke development

Table 6.4.1 (Cooper, 2015)

Table 0.4.1 (Coopel, 2013)				
Off-the-shelf		Bespoke		
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages	
Cheaper	Overly complex with large sections you will never use	Created specifically for the business' needs	More expensive	
Sophisticated software due to wide range of resources input for development	Compromise of features	Tailored and unique	Requires experienced developers to maintain	
Easy to find support and literature widely available	Long time to learn and in-house training required	Customised to interface with software you already use	Less future proof as tied to specific agency to maintain	
Easy to share files as software widely used and available	Workflow may have to change to meet software design	More intuitive to your business' way of working	Large investment of time for development, testing	
No company time needed for specs and testing	Features you need may not be available	More flexible, can be modified and changed as required	Takes much longer to implement	





Available sooner	Individual requests to overall developers will not carry weight	Receive better support	Difficult to get support if developer does not provide it
	Long time to have things fixed if through the corporation that developed the software	Provide significant business advantage	Difficult to choose appropriate developer that will provide reliable and stable software.
	Difficult to gain competitor advantage	Option to sell application to others (if you own rights)	

Open source vs. proprietary

There are many open source, pre-built CMS options available, some of which are free. Open source means that anyone can see the code that the CMS is built with, and can manipulate or improve it and share this with everyone else using the CMS. An open source CMS can be more rudimentary than paid options, but is also easy to tailor to your needs, and there is often a community that can create the solutions you need.

Some widely used open source CMS solutions include:

WordPress (www.wordpress.com)

Drupal (www.drupal.com)

Blogger (www.blogger.com)

Joomla (www.joomla.org)

Table 6.4.2 (Robbins, 2015)

	1able 6.4.2 (1	Roddins, 2015)	
Proprietary		Open source	
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages
Predictability	Less current so large investments in legacy systems	Customisation	Upfront cost can be high if you want highly customised product
Plenty of options	Licensing fees	Flexibility	Less 'Out of the box' features and features you need may be expensive to create
Robust and filled with features	Supported only by the company that sells it or its agents	Supported by an online community and not a company	Less predictable support which only happens as needed and not regularly
Relatively cost effective to implement	Lack of customisation	Existing frameworks to work from	Less predictable
	Lack of flexibility	New technology helps to stay up to date with bugs and fixes	
		You own the customised versions	

A CMS should be selected with the goals and functions of the website in mind. A CMS needs to be able to scale along with the website and business that it supports, and not the other way around. Many content management systems have become famous for certain needs.

Examples include:

- WordPress for personal blogs or brochure type sites
- · Drupal for more complex community and publishing sites
- · Magento for eCommerce sites.

Development frameworks

The back-end of a website refers to the server-side layer. This layer is hidden from the user's view. The interaction between the user and the back-end is handled via a presentation layer known as the front-end or client-side layer. A website is a marriage between these layers (Ferguson, 2016).





Back-end/server-side languages and frameworks

Server-side languages are the hidden web coding languages that determine how your website works and communicates with the web server and your computer.

When choosing a server-side language, you need to consider:

Cost: The cost varies depending on the language you choose for your web development project, as some are more intricate than others, the developer may charge more. So the language chosen may directly influence the salary of the developer. If information is processed where your website is housed, as opposed to on the client's computer, it increases the costs. Some languages also require ongoing website management and maintenance, which is an additional cost to consider.

Scalability: When planning a project where scalability is a factor, consider whether there are developers readily available to develop in this language. Also find out if there are supporting libraries and frameworks available that may suit possible changes to your project.

Some of the most common and popular server-side languages include PHP, Java, Ruby, .NET and Python. Ask your web developer to advise you on the best language for your specific project (Ferguson, 2016).



Figure 6.4.2: Logos for some popular back-end developing languages Adapted From Lotusnotus, n.d.

Some common back-end frameworks are Django, Zend Framework and Ruby on Rails.

Front end/client side development languages and frameworks



There are many free resources online that teach you how to code. One is Codeacademy: www.codeacademy.com

Web users have come to expect rich, interactive experiences online, and interactive website interfaces are a part of that. Front-end languages, or client-side languages, are languages that are interpreted and executed in users' browser rather than on the web server.

These experiences range from simple animations through to highly responsive interfaces that require input from the user. There are several technologies available to create such experiences, each with its own opportunities and challenges.

As with server-side languages, you need to consider a few properties of the front-end language you want to use. Bear in mind that server-side languages and front-end languages are often used together, as all web projects require front-end languages for development.

Cost: Front-end language development costs are comparatively lower than backend costs; although rich interface developers often demand premium rates.

Features: HTML, CSS and JavaScript open source languages are often used together and are compatible with most hardware and software. Content developed in these is also more search engine friendly. Today, Flash is rarely used despite its interactive multimedia capabilities. In many cases, richer experiences can be achieved with HTML, CSS and JavaScript. What your end users will be able to view should always be the most important consideration.

Scalability: Depending on the capabilities of the device executing the language, certain features may not be available or certain code may run too slowly to create a good user experience. The development of front-end code needs to take all the considered devices into account.

Browser and OS support: With front-end languages, you have to cater for browser and operating system support. A website will look different on each browser and operating system, and this needs to be factored in. If a feature cannot be displayed under certain





conditions, workarounds have to be implemented. This is typically the case for older versions of Internet Explorer.

Open source or proprietary software: Any developer can create add-ons for or improve on open source software, while proprietary software is owned and its use is restricted. It can be cheaper to develop in an open source front-end language such as HTML, but as HTML is needed to host all web pages, combinations of open source and proprietary software are sometimes used. However, in most cases and for the languages we cover this is not a major consideration.

There are several front-end language options to choose from although the most popular by far is HTML coupled with CSS and JavaScript.

HTML5

HTML is the language for creating websites, and HTML5 is the fifth iteration of the language. It is also the name for a range of technologies that enable modern web browsing features. It's a specification published by the web standards body, W3C, describing what features are available and how to use them. HTML5 is different from proprietary web software such as Adobe Flash in that the specification is the result of contributions from many organisations and can be implemented by anyone without having to pay for royalties or licensing fees. You do, however, pay for the development tools provided by the companies.



Figure 6.4.3: The HTML5, JavaScript and CSS logos Adapted From Codecondo, 2016.

HTML5 simplifies many common tasks when building a web page, such as including multimedia content, validating forms, caching information and capturing user input data such as date and time.

HTML5 allows browsers to play multimedia content without the use of Flash or a similar plug-in. There is also a technology called Canvas, which allows developers to create rich, interactive experiences without the constraints that came with previous versions of HTML. For example, a 3D animated video can now be played, something that used to require the use of Flash or Silverlight.

The goal is a website that just works, without the need for particular browsers or plug-ins to enable certain functionality. Having a standardised way of implementing common features means that the web is open and accessible to all, regardless of competency.

CSS

CSS stands for Cascading Style Sheets and is a style sheet language used to instruct the browser how to render the HTML code. For example, the plain text on a web page is included in the HTML code, and CSS defines how it will appear. CSS can set many properties including the size, colour and spacing around the text, as well as the placement of images and other design-related items. CSS pre-processors such as LESS, SASS and Stylus are also available to make CSS more easily maintainable and scalable. They allow for more functional CSS compilation. The latest standard of CSS is CSS3. It is backwards compatible with all versions of CSS and provides many more useful features such as text effects, 2D/3D transformations and animations to name a few (w3schools, n.d).

JavaScript

This is the most common client-side language used to create rich, dynamic web properties. Because it is an open source language, many developers have added functionality that can be more quickly implemented. For example, there are over 1 000 different gallery systems created by JavaScript developers for JavaScript developers.

Flash

Adobe Flash is a language for creating rich, interactive experiences. It supports video and is often used to create game-like web experiences. Although widely supported by desktop browsers, it has limited (and lessening) support on mobile devices and is not usable on Apple devices such as the iPhone and iPad. It has a history of being problematic for SEO, although there are ways to work around much of this.

Flash usage has been on the decline since some security holes were exposed, and many believe that it is on its way out. In February 2016, Google announced that its advertising networks, AdWords and DoubleClick, would no longer be supporting Flash. The ads would have to be updated to HTML5 (Google AdWords, 2016). YouTube announced that it would not be using the Flash player by default anymore. It switched to HTML5 for all the latest browsers. Adobe discontinued Adobe Professional CC and released Adobe





Animate CC which is now Adobe's premier tool to support HTML5 content. There are still a few traces of Flash left as it is still used as a video player and for the creation of online games.

Frameworks

Frameworks are packages that are made up of a structure of files and folders of standardized code (HTML, CSS, and JavaScript for example) which can be used as the basis for developing websites. Essentially, frameworks are templates to provide the common structure for websites so that developers don't need to start from scratch each time. Frameworks save a lot of time and money.

Some examples include Backbone.js, AngularJS, EmberJS, React.js and the very popular jQuery libraries. Bootstrap is also increasing in popularity as a front-end framework.

Development best practice

Meta and title tag customisation

The CMS you have either selected or created should allow you to enter your own meta tags for each page, as well as allow full customisation of title tags for each page. It is important to note that Google does not use keyword meta tags for ranking anymore (Lincoln, 2015).

URLs

Instead of using dynamic parameters, the CMS should allow for clean URLs by using server-side rewriting. Clean URLs consist only of the path to a webpage without extra code. A clean URL could look like this: example.com/cats, while an unclean URL could look like this: example.com/index.php?page=cats. It should allow for the creation of URLs that are:

- static
- rewritable
- keyword rich.

Be careful when building clean, descriptive and dynamic URLs from CMS content. Should you use a news heading, for example, 'Storm', as part of your URL (www.site.com/cape/storm) and someone changes the heading to 'Tornado' (www.site.com/cape/tornado), this will alter the URL and the search engines will index this as a new page, but with the same content as the URL which had the old heading. Bear this in mind before adding dynamic parameters to your URLs.

Customisable navigation

A good CMS will allow for flexibility when creating the information architecture for a website. For the purposes of adding additional content for search engines, a CMS should not require that all content pages be linked to from the home page navigation. Responsive considerations also need to be in place for mobile devices.

The CMS needs to have good support for managing SEO considerations such as URL rewriting and avoiding duplicate content issues.

Customisable image naming and alt tags for images: A good CMS will allow you to create custom alt tags and title attributes.

robots.txt management: robot.txt files are .txt files that restrict search engines from indexing certain pages of information Ensure that you are able to customise the robots.txt to your needs, or that this can at least be managed using the meta tags.

Finally, using a CMS that supports standards compliant HTML and CSS is very important, as without it, inconsistencies may be rendered across various browsers. It also ensures faster loading time and reduced bandwidth, makes markup easier to maintain, supports SEO efforts and ensures that every visitor to a website, no matter what browser they are using, will be able to see everything on the site.

Developing for multiple screens



Read more about this in the User experience design chapter.

Accessing the Internet has changed drastically over the last few years. Desktop is no longer the only or even primary means of accessing the web. Mobile Internet usage surpassed desktop in 2014 and continues to grow year on year, while desktop usage is declining (Chaffey, 2016).





Because of this, it's important for all brands to be accessible on mobile devices. As you learnt in the User experience design chapter, mobile devices can fall into a range of categories, and not all mobile devices have the same features and screen size. This means that websites need to be designed to be accessible and are optimised for a variety of screen sizes and devices.

Developing for a variety of screens and mobile requires an understanding of the opportunities and challenges presented by mobile technology. Challenges include the obvious, such as a smaller screen and navigation limitations, different operating systems as well as more complex issues such as file formats and bandwidth restrictions.

Mobile devices

A mobile device is a small device with computer-like functionality. It allows for an Internet connection and various features such as Bluetooth, NFC, Wi-Fi and GPS. These include smartphones and PDAs (MDN, 2016). Remember, mobile goes beyond just the mobile phone, also consider tablets, game consoles, netbooks, wearables and a range of other web-enabled devices.

The constraints with developing for a range of devices [c head]

Due to the size constraints of mobile device screens, various considerations must be taken into account to allow your website to render correctly.

Fluid CSS layouts will allow the site to manipulate its contents based on screen size. Additionally, CSS media queries can use target styles for a specific screen width, height and pixel density.

Working with touchscreen means that no hover effects will work. Adequate space must be allowed around inputs due to the toucharea of some user's fingers being larger than a mouse cursor.

Images must be optimised for mobile screens and bandwidth restrictions.



A great online JPEG/ PNG compression tool is tinyPNG.org. Simply upload your images and let them compress it for you (MDN, 2016).

Development approaches

Specialised mobile development

Mobile devices allow users to access information about your brand on the move. Because mobile penetration is so heavy and many users worldwide will access the Internet first and primarily through mobile (Chaffey, 2016), every website needs to be designed with the mobile device in mind. Mobile website interfaces demand a simpler approach and a consideration of screen size and input method. A specific design for various mobile screen sizes in the form of an adaptive design may be an option. However, Google prefers responsive to adaptive sites, so creating an adaptive site may not be within the best interest of your business in terms of SEO.

A native mobile app is software designed to help users perform particular tasks. Examples include a tool for checking the weather, a fuel calculator, or an airlines app to check-in or to track flight progress.

Mobile apps can be sold or made available for free. Many developers create apps to derive an income, while free apps that offer users value are often sponsored by brands or advertising. An app can be an excellent tool for connecting with your customer.

The key difference between native applications and mobile-optimised websites is that native applications are designed for particular handsets and operating systems and have to be downloaded to the mobile device. Whereas mobile-optimised websites can be accessed using any Internet-enabled mobile device. That said, mobile apps can allow for more integration with the device and hence a better user experience, depending on the complexity of the functionality.







Figure 6.4.4: An example of a branded app from the iTunes App Store Adapted From Screenshot, Kellogs branded app in itunes store, 2016

It is a good idea to focus on mobile-optimised sites when targeting a broader group and building an application when wanting to reach a niche or targeted audience.

Some brands still create a separate mobi site just for their mobile users, but this is falling out of fashion as Internet access via mobile increases. Google recommends responsive sites as best practice.



Read more about mobile-optimisation in the Mobile channels and apps chapter.

A responsive site

A responsive website is a website that changes its layout depending on the device it is displayed on so it looks one way on a desktop computer, but then adapts to the smaller screen size and layout on a tablet or mobile phone. In this way, a single development project can cater for multiple device form factors.



Figure 6.4.5: Responsive web design across a range of devices Adapted From Interaction design foundation, 2017

A responsive website is not the same as an adaptive website. A responsive site uses the browser's screen space to determine how to reflow the original design content that was probably optimised for desktop, while an adaptive site provides a specifically tailored design for the device you are using. Designing an adaptive site requires multiple fixed layout sizes, usually the six most common screen widths, and the relevant one is deployed depending on the screen size of the device.

Many users prefer responsive design as it provides familiarity, uniformity and seamlessness, which are important considerations in user experience (Soegaard, 2016). Responsive design should be mobile friendly. This helps to maintain usability when reflowed for a mobile device's screen.

Adaptive designs are more labour intensive and more expensive. As an approach it's being used less and less. Although industry professionals often prefer adaptive sites, industry preference won't translate into higher listings on SERPs while Google's ranking methodology favours responsive design.



Try visiting http://roxik.com/cat/ and resize your browser to see the cat change shape based on the screen width. This is a great illustrative example of a fluid responsive layout.



Creating a responsive website means you only need to build one website for the full range of devices, from desktop to mobile. This can be a technically challenging exercise and will require a lot of planning upfront to make sure that the site displays correctly on each device.

Here is a table that compares the relative strengths and weaknesses of each option. There's no right or wrong answer on which one to pick. Choose the option that best suits your brand, target audience and digital objectives.

Table 6.4.3

	Table 6.4.3 Strengths	Weaknesses
Mobile-specific adaptive sites	 Design best suited to screen size More aesthetically pleasing and provide better UX Fully optimised for mobile 	 Google prefers responsive sites Need at least 6 different specific screen-size designs Expensive Labour intensive
Native app	 Versatile and creative tools can be created Interactive and fun Can create real added value through innovative approaches not possible via a web browser Ideal for frequently repeated or routine tasks Promote brand loyalty Enables access to core phone functions such as GPS, camera, etc. Could generate income as a 'paid application' Performance benefit in some cases 	 Doesn't work on feature phones Different versions needed for different phone makes and models Entirely different and complex development process User needs to choose to download them Users without additional phone storage may not have enough space to install the app All apps must go through formal app stores, and need to be approved in some instances Changes need to be released through version updates
Responsive site	 Device is an'agnostic' solution One consistent site accessible across many devices One data set to work from Future-proof option that will work on most devices Preferred by Google and scores highly in algorithms for SEO Users prefer the uniformity and consistency from responsive sites used across devices 	 Could be complex to develop Site needs a lowest common denominator approach to cater for all devices May not work correctly on all sizes and shapes of devices No agreed standard way yet to develop responsive sites

Designing for multiple screen sizes

Designing a site that will display consistently across multiple devices and screen sizes is difficult, but understanding and sticking to web standards will bring you closer to this goal.

Design your site so that the information your users want is not only on display, but also easy to get to. The limited screen space is valuable, so you can't necessarily have the full site navigation on every page. Well thought-out information architecture is essential to ensuring you make the most logical use of navigation in line with what your site visitors need.

Standards

There are few standards currently in place to ensure your design will be optimised across multiple screens. Creating content including images, text and beyond that can be correctly formatted on most mobile devices, or at least legible on phones where formatting is flawed, is still not entirely possible. There is therefore a certain amount of trial and error involved in designing a site optimised across a variety of devices. The process is certainly worth it, though, considering that there are 4.7 billion unique mobile subscribers, and the majority of these are accessing the mobile web (GSMA Intelligence, 2016).





Web standards are managed by the **W3C**. The standards were created to promote consensus, fairness, public accountability and quality. Complying with web standards means the site uses valid code and adheres to stipulations from the W3C. Read more about web standards at https://www.w3.org/standards/ about.html.

Mobile handset emulators allow you to see how your work-in-progress website will be formatted, depending on which device you are emulating. It has been suggested that nothing can replace testing on actual mobile devices, so if you are doing the testing, recruit contacts with different handsets to show you the difference in display. Some emulators:

- BrowserStack www.browserstack.com
- TestiPhone www.testiphone.com
- Mobile phone emulator for Samsung, iPhone, BlackBerry and other www.mobilephoneemulator.com

Safari on the iPhone can be tested with IOS simulator.

Responsive design

Responsive websites are designed for a range of screen widths. When deciding whether to create a responsive site or adapt desktop sites, consider your customer first:

- How much of your website traffic comes from specific mobile devices? If this is a large percentage, consider building a responsive site designed for optimal viewing on mobile screen sizes.
- Do your desktop users have the same goals as your mobile users? Here you need to keep in mind your CTAs, drop down menus and the like and ensure they can be accessed correctly by the relevant device.
- What is your budget and how quickly do you need your website to be built? Responsive websites take a while to build and can be expensive. You could save money long term by going this route, but there is a sizeable upfront investment.
- Do you have an existing site, and can it be converted into a responsive website, or will it need to be rebuilt (Du Plessis, 2012)?
- Responsive design comes with a fair bit of terminology, but you should be familiar with three key concepts.

Flexible grid

Typical websites are designed as large, centred, fixed-width blocks. With responsive design, the page elements such as the heading, the text or copy, the main image, and other blocks of information are arranged in a grid of columns that have predefined spacing. Each element relates proportionally to the other elements. This allows elements to rearrange or resize in relation to each other whether the screen is tiny or huge and the screen quality is high or low. Although this system allows for flexibility, an extremely narrow screen can cause the design to break down. In this case we can make use of media queries.



Figure 6.4.6: Flexible grid used in responsive design. Adapted From igentics, 2017

Media queries

Media queries are bits of code that allow websites to ask devices for information about themselves. The website style that will suit the device best is then selected from a list of styles defined in a CSS. Media queries ask for information about the device's browser window size, orientation (landscape or portrait) and screen display quality.



Is responsive design right for your company or client? See how some companies tackled this question here: www.zdnet.com/does-yourcompanys-websiteneed-responsivedesign-7000021417



Flexible images

Images are designed to move and scale with the flexible grid. How fast the website loads is an important consideration, so high-quality images are made available for larger screens and lower-resolution images are made available for smaller screens. Parts of images can also be displayed for smaller screens to maintain image quality. Images can even be hidden completely. Image optimisation is done in CSS, which queries the screen height, width and pixel ratio of the device and then adjusts the images accordingly (MDN, 2016).

For more information about responsive websites watch Methods for mobile (Responsive vs. Adaptive) from Brian Wood Training: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgojC1D3QpU [Accessed 30 October 2017]

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6.5: The web development process

This section discusses the process of building a website from the client's perspective.



Figure 6.5.1: The web development process

Step 1: Discovery and planning

Planning a website starts with research of your market, your users, your competitors and your business. If you already have a website, you can use existing web analytics data to understand how well you are meeting your users' needs. It's also worth running some user labs to watch how users interact with your existing site. Have a look at the Market research chapter for a detailed discussion of this.



Read more about this in the Market research chapter.

Key questions you need to ask.

Business: What are your business objectives? How should this digital property help you to achieve those objectives? (For example, should it generate leads for you to follow up on? Is it an eCommerce store?)

Users: Who are your users, your potential customers? What problem does your website need to help them solve? For example, to collate travel information in one place, such as with www.tripit.com. [Accessed 30 October 2017]



Read more on users in the User experience design chapter.

This research helps you to plan your website strategically, ensuring that it is aligned with both user needs and business objectives.

In research and planning, you should also reach an understanding of what tasks or actions users need to do on your website. These are usually in line with your business objectives. Some tasks a user may need to do include checking the availability of a hotel, signing up to a newsletter, or printing information.

Before any web design project starts, decide what browsers, operating system and devices you will develop for. Usually for browsers you use the latest, plus one before. For devices, iOS and Android are quite different so if you are optimising for both this can be quite expensive. Technology moves so fast, you cannot keep up with all the latest OS and devices.

Choosing a domain name

Domain names are important. They are part of the URL of a website. A domain name looks something like this: www.mycompany.com

A lot more information can be included in this. Domain names can carry the following information: subdomain.domain.tld/directory

Domain – the registered domain name of the website

Subdomain – a domain that is part of a larger domain

TLD – the top level domain, uppermost in the hierarchy of domain names

directory - a folder to organise content

The TLD can indicate the country in which a domain is registered and can also give information about the nature of the domain.

com - the most common TLD





co.za, .co.uk, .com.au - these TLDs give country information

.org – used by non-profit organisations

.gov - used by governments

.ac – used by academic institutions

Domain names must be registered, and in most cases there is a fee for doing so. Many hosting providers will register domain names on your behalf, but you can also do it yourself.

Domain names should be easy to remember, and if possible, include important search keywords for your business. For example, if you were building a website for your restaurant named Omega, www.omegarestaurant.com could be a better choice than www.omega.com as it contains the important keyword 'restaurant'.

UX and content strategy

You also need to gather, analyse and map out what content is needed on the website. This content is then structured in a process called information architecture. A sitemap should reflect the hierarchy of content on the website and the navigation (how users make their way through a website).



Read more about this in the User experience design chapter.



Figure 6.5.2: A sketched wireframe of what the webpages will look like and how they will link to one another *Adapted From Onextrapixel*, 2010

∓ Note

See this link (designmodo. com/wireframingprototypingmockuping/) for a good explanation about the differences between wireframing, prototyping and mocking up.



Figure 6.5.3: An example of a wireframe against what the final website looks like Adapted From Wirify, 2017

At the same time, consider what content you want to include on your site. Will it be a relatively static site that doesn't change often, or will you need an editable CMS to regularly add and update content, such as blog posts, images and products?





Have a look at the discussion on choosing a static versus a CMS website earlier in this chapter

Should the website be large enough to require it, a functional specification document should be created, using all the information compiled so far. This document should detail the development requirements for the website and can be used to communicate any specific design constraints.

It's now time to move on from planning to building.

Search engine visibility

Search engine traffic is vital to a website; without it, the chances are that the site will never fulfil its marketing functions. It is essential that the search engines can see the entire publicly visible website, index it fully, and consider its relevance for its chosen keywords.

Search engine optimisation (SEO) has its own chapter in this textbook, but here are the key considerations for web development and design.



Read more about this in the Digital copywriting and Search engine optimisation chapters.

In web development, the copy that is shown on the web page needs to be kept separate from the code that tells the browser how to display the web page. This means that the search engine spider will be able to discern easily what content is to be read and therefore scanned by the spider and what text is an instruction to the browser. Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) can take care of that.

If the search engine cannot see the text on the page, it means that it cannot crawl and index that page.

Step 2: Design

Design usually happens before development. According to the steps explained earlier in this chapter, the designer will transform the wireframes and basic planning materials into beautifully designed layouts. These are static images that show how the website will look once it's coded.

Step 3: Development

The development phase usually kicks in once the design is finished. Developers will sometimes start their involvement as early as the wireframe stage by creating low-fidelity prototypes to support the user-testing process. Normally, the developer uses the design templates to code the actual website, using the front-end language that you have chosen. Server-side development and CMS considerations may also be part of this phase.

Step 4: Testing and launch

Once you have planned an amazing site, designed it beautifully, built it skilfully and filled it with fantastic copy, it's time to test it fully and then take it live!

Testing is an important part of website development and design, and it should take place throughout the process of planning, designing and building, leaving just final quality assurance (QA) testing before the site goes live. Test subjects should be real potential users of the website, not just members of the development team. The site needs to be tested in all common browsers and devices to make sure that it looks and works as it should across all of them. All links should be tested to make sure that they work correctly, and it's always a good idea to get a final check of all of the copy before it goes live.

Tools such as W3C's HTML validator, validator.w3.org should be used to validate your HTML. See more about testing in Section 6.7 Quality assurance.

Make sure your web analytics tracking tags are in place, after which it will be time to take your site live. Now, you need to move on to driving traffic to your newly launched site, that's where all the Engage tactics in this textbook come in handy.

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request.





6.6: Development methodologies



Read more about this in the Data analytics chapter.

There are different approaches to building a website. The one described above is the waterfall process, where one step follows the other. This is in contrast with other methods such as the agile methodology, which involves faster iteration and greater collaboration, but doesn't afford clients as much control and upfront clarity on the deliverables and timelines.



Figure 6.6.1: The waterfall method Adapted From Adapted Evatotuts+, 2015

The Agile method is a series of sprints, and involves working through iterative, incremental cycles. Agile methodology is more collaborative, less rigid and requires incremental investments. It often results in being able to release the final product to the market faster. The collaborative approach means that instead of handing over the project to the next person in the chain, you work together catching any issues and working on each iteration as you move through each process. The agile method often involves scrum methodology and requires (or at least tries for) each sprint to produce something that has an increment of product functionality (Joel, 2015).

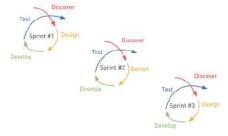


Figure 6.6.2: The Agile method Adapted From Adapted Evatotuts+, 2015

∓ Note

Read more about scrum methodology here: www.scrumalliance.org/whyscrum

Careful consideration of the specific project, the goals and ultimately the client's needs will inform the decision on which of these method is appropriate for a specific project. The method chosen should be the one that will best fit the required project goals.

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6.8: Quality assurance

The software development cycle has one final step before the website goes live, quality assurance. This is often referred to as QA. It is a crucial step to ensure that website delivery is of the highest standard and that the client expectation is in line with the agreed Statement of Work. This step is independent of the design and development phases and involves various end-user test cases. Test cases ensure that the graphical user interface (GUI) promotes a great user experience (UX). QA involves two steps: functional and user-interface testing (Thompson, 2015).

Functional testing

This involves testing the features of a website to ensure that they are functioning correctly. Functional testing should be done early in the development cycle as it speeds up development, increases quality and reduces the risk of errors towards the end of the project. Testing can take place either manually by a tester or be completely automated using an application (AppPerfect, 2016).

User interface testing

This is the process of testing whether users can engage with the site as envisioned during development. It also includes testing all features such as screens with controls, like menus, dropdowns, buttons, icons, toolbars, dialogue boxes, forms, and all other user interface features on the site.

User interface testing is crucial as it is the users' experience of the site that will determine if they will use the site or application in future or not. If an interface is not intuitive and is difficult to understand users are unlikely to use that product again. Testing is essential.

The following should be checked during GUI testing:

- Can users input the necessary information into the user fields?
- Does the feature execute the desired function when activated?
- Are error messages displayed correctly and for the correct function?
- Is the font appropriate?
- Is the text aligned?
- Are the colours and fonts, and even error messages, visually appealing?
- Are the images clear and displaying correctly?
- Are the images correctly aligned, and do they appear where they are supposed to?



You can read more about GUI testing at www.guru99.com/guitesting.html.

Are the GUI elements positioned correctly for different screen sizes and resolutions?

(Guru99, n.d.)

Cross browser and device testing

With the myriad of browsers and devices available, developers need to ensure that their websites render acceptably across all of them. Perfection is extremely difficult as each browser and device renders a website slightly differently. To ensure compatibility, developers write cross-browser code. If a feature is not supported, a fallback must be in place to ensure that it degrades gracefully.

If you are deploying your site across a range of devices, each version needs to be checked. And if the site is designed to be responsive, check the GUI across a range of devices to test the responsiveness of the design and that all the elements work across the various devices and possible views.

Test websites on different browsers and operating systems, for example Google Chrome on IOS and Google Chrome on Android devices. Various tools are available to assist in this process, one being BrowserStack (/www.browserstack.com). BrowserStack allows you to test various operating systems and devices from within your browser (MDN, 2016).

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6.9: Case study - Offspring

One-line summary

How moving to a responsive design website helped a UK-based online sneaker store called Offspring to increase mobile conversion rate and mobile revenue.

The problem

Offspring (http://www.offspring.co.uk) had no mobile website, and mobile users were having a poor user experience when accessing the site on their devices. This caused poor conversion rates and low revenue for mobile.

Mobile users are the largest growing online market and Offspring witnessed a consistent increase in mobile traffic to their website. Their current site was not mobile-friendly, and was not providing a good user experience. This was also impacting on their SEO score. Offspring knew they needed to ensure mobile users had a good user experience to improve conversions, revenue and SEO.

The solution

Offspring considered a mobile-friendly site, but decided to opt for a fully responsive site to provide an optimised viewing experience irrespective of the device used to access the site. Offspring wanted to ensure that tablet users were also catered for in the design.

The brand also wanted to ensure that they provided existing customers with a familiar look and feel so that they could still easily access and navigate the site.

Certain key design features were included to improve user experience. A new sticky header was included that followed users down the page as they scrolled, providing easy navigation without having to scroll back to the top each time.

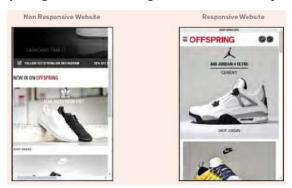


Figure 6.9.1: Offspring's responsive vs. non responsive site Adapted From imgur, 2016



Figure 6.9.2: Mobile friendly elements of Offspring's new responsive design Adapted From imgur, 2016

A new search bar was included with predictive search. This allowed users to search for their product more quickly.







Figure 6.9.3: Search bar with predictive search on new responsive site Adapted From imqur, 2016

Other design features included:

- A new product listing page that was three columns wide on a desktop that could automatically scale down to two or one
 depending on the size of any different device used.
- New image view and selection process was included on the product detail pages.
- A 'Don't forget' section was included on the basket page so that users could automatically add items to their basket.
- An improved checkout process was created with new delivery options.

The intuitive navigation process was crucial to ensuring that users on any device would be able to find the information they needed quickly and easily.

The results

Users spent more time on the site, which lead to an increase in conversions and sales. The SEO visibility of the site showed dramatic improvement after moving over to the responsive site mainly due to the mobile site usability score on Google rocketing from 60/100 to 100/100. This saw organic traffic to the site increasing by over 25%.



Figure 6.9.4: Offspring's growing SEO visibility score Adapted From Moz, 2016

Revenue increased as well, with:

- A 15.19% increase in mobile/tablet conversion rate
- A 102.95% uplift in mobile/tablet revenue year on year
- A 20.25% increase in the e-commerce conversion rate from tablet users alone.

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6.10: The bigger picture

Web development and design can be seen as the thread that holds digital marketing together. After all, websites are the first thing we think of when talking about the Internet.

With the crucial role that search engines play in the way people explore the Internet, web development and design go hand in hand with SEO. And of course, online advertising campaigns, social media channels, email marketing newsletters and even affiliate programs lead people to click through to your website and sometimes to a customised landing page. That's web design jumping into the mix again.

Setting up analytics correctly on your website is also essential to managing and monitoring your marketing success.

Successful website development and design is all about the right preparation, and the resulting website usually forms the foundation of any digital marketing to follow. Make sure you understand your users' needs, and that you're building on a strong base.

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6.E: Web Development and Design(Exercises)

Case study questions

- 1. When deciding on which type of site to choose, why did Offspring opt for a responsive site?
- 2. Which two elements of the responsive design were most important in optimising the user experience across a variety of devices?
- 3. Would you have made the same design decisions? Are there any further considerations you would have designed for?

Chapter questions

- 1. What are some key design elements you would ensure were included when designing a website?
- 2. Why is it so important to realistically assess the needs of your site before development?
- 3. What do you think are the biggest challenges for optimising your design across multiple devices?
- 4. What, to you, is the most important step in web development?
- 5. What role does a website play in an overall digital marketing strategy?

Further reading

www.alistapart.com – a website for people who make websites, A List Apart has regular articles from web designers and developers on building user-friendly, standards-compliant websites.

www.html5weekly.com - a weekly newsletter filled with the latest must-know HTML5 tips and trends.

https://www.smashingmagazine.com/ - a website for web designers and developers

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6.S: Web Development and Design(Summary)

Successful websites come from strong planning with a focus on user needs. Websites should be built to be accessible and usable, search engine optimised, and shareable.

Key considerations include:

- Designing your website according to best practices, following the process of developing a website from start to finish.
- Developing a strong, stable and usable website.
- Creating a suitable mobile web experience for your users.
- Enhancing user experience through design and guiding a visitor seamlessly through a website, as opposed to distracting visitors from their goals.
- Ensuring consistency in visual messaging across all properties.
- Supporting a wide range of web browsers and mobile devices.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Create - Mobile channels and apps

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn:

- The important principles that govern mobile-specific channels.
- To recognise the importance of location in marketing via mobile.
- To identify the mobile channels available to marketers.
- What to consider when creating an app.
- To describe first steps for implementing marketing via certain mobile channels.
- 7.1: Introduction
- 7.2: Key terms and concepts
- 7.3: Core principles
- 7.4: Defining mobile channels
- 7.5: Creating an app
- 7.6: Implementation
- 7.7: The Internet of Things/The Quantified Self
- 7.8: Advantages and challenges
- 7.9: Measuring success
- 7.10: Tools of the trade
- 7.11: Case study ASB digital piggybank
- 7.12: The bigger picture
- 7.13: References
- 7.E: Mobile channels and apps(Exercises)
- 7.S: Mobile channels and apps(Summary)

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7.1: Introduction

A few years ago, considering mobile as part of your digital marketing strategy was optional, this is no longer the case. In 2015 the number of mobile-only internet users in the US exceeded the number of desktop-only users for the first time (ComScore, 2015). The idea of a mobile device being someone's first, and often only, access point to the Internet is nothing new in developing nations where desktop devices and fixed internet connections are too expensive for much of the population.

This means that mobile is not a marketing strategy that can be considered separately. It's a necessary part of every digital marketing endeavour because chances are good that at least some of your audience will see that marketing on a mobile device.

In this chapter we will discuss some mobile-specific channels and apps. Remember, digital marketing is about looking at where your audience is and working to reach them, and your audience is almost certainly on mobile.

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7.2: Key terms and concepts

Table 7.2.1

Term	Definition
Арр	Short for 'application', which in a mobile context, means software developed specifically for smartphones and other mobile devices. These come in two types, web apps and native apps.
Augmented reality (AR)	A form of virtual reality in which computer graphics are superimposed onto the physical space around the user by way of a mobile device. These graphics can be 3D images or information tags.
Bluetooth	A short-distance wireless transfer protocol for connecting devices.
LTE	'Long term evolution'. A fourth-generation mobile communications standard and a name given to technology used in pursuit of faster data communication.
NFC	'Near-field communication'. A set of communication protocols that enable two devices, one of which is usually a mobile device, to communicate when they are within 4 cm of each other.
Push messaging	A notification from an app that displays on a smartphone while the app is not actively in use. This is triggered by an external event within the context of a connected device.
QR code	Quick response code. A machine-readable code, like a barcode, that can be used to store information like URLs and can be read by an app through the camera of a smartphone.
SMS	Short message service, a text message of up to 160 characters that can be sent from one mobile phone to another. MMS, Multimedia Messaging Service, is similar, but can include multimedia content and longer messages. This works on a regular cell phone connection, so it does not require a data connection or smartphone.
Virtual reality (VR)	Computer-generated simulations of a 3D image or environment. Using the right equipment, a person can interact with that environment in a seemingly real way
Wi-Fi	The transfer of information from one device to another over a distance without using wires.

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7.3: Core principles

Nine principles

Certain features are specific to certain mobile phones, and don't apply to desktop or notebook computers or any other mobile devices. These features highlight the importance of mobile to marketers as a whole and affect the way both consumers and marketers create and share content.

Personal

Mobile phones are very personal devices. People don't usually share their phones, so data attributed to a specific device can be attributed to a specific user. People also tend to keep their devices nearby, so they can offer valuable information about their location and great opportunities for location-based target marketing.

The implication for marketers: Since mobile phones are so personal, respect for privacy and permission is extremely important. Attributing data to a single user allows marketers to offer personalised interactions, communications, and experiences.

Always carried

Everyone is reluctant to leave their phone behind. Consider your own behaviour, what do you take with you when you leave your house? Your wallet, keys, and mobile phone? Various research has shown that smartphone owners in particular check their phone anywhere from every few minutes to at least once an hour and that people can spend up to 2.5 hours typing texts, swiping through apps or scrolling through Facebook (Gallup, 2015; Dscout, 2016).

The implication for marketers: The mobile device is present at every single step of the consumer journey, arguably the only channel that is. Messages sent to mobile phones are usually accessed within minutes of being received. Location services can also allow you to send contextual messages depending on the user's real-time location.



Figure 7.3.1: An example of a marketing message tied to a geographic location. Users receive promotions when they enter the area *Adapted From STM Custom studios*, *n.d.*

Always on

The mobile phone is used to send and receive messages and phone calls. Messages and services can be sent and responded to at all times of the day.

The implication for marketers: This feature changes the services and messages that you can develop. Marketers need to be sensitive with their marketing communications; few people would enjoy a 4 a.m. SMS with a promotional offer. The flip side of this is that you can send time-sensitive offers, such as dinner messages just before work ends or a weekend coupon on a Friday afternoon.

Built-in payment system

This is one of the key features of the mobile phone, and a major source of mobile revenue. Every mobile phone has a built-in payment mechanism, the SIM card. Billing is easily handled through the user's mobile network. NFC and QR codes allow other payment options.

A number of services, like Android Pay, Google Wallet, Snapscan or Zapper can turn the mobile into a virtual wallet or bank card, bringing banking and payment services to people globally. Apps like Uber have their own built-in payment services to make payment for users as easy as possible.





Figure 7.3.2: Uber offers its customers a variety of payment options through their mobile phone, including credit card, Android Pay, cash and even Uber credits. *Adapted From Uber*, 2017

The implication for marketers: Consumers will pay for services and content on their mobile, which is enabled to make payments. This means that advertising is not the only way to generate revenue on mobile.

Available at the point of creative inspiration

Because the mobile phone is always close at hand, and many phones today offer tools such as cameras, videos, or note pads for jotting down ideas, it has become a permanent creative tool. It also makes access to social media very easy.

The implication for marketers: Users can be encouraged to interact with brands through campaigns created for mobile devices. Mobile is a useful tool in viral campaigns based on consumer-generated content. Because the amount of effort required to criticise or praise a brand on social is minimal, the social aspect of a mobile can be helpful or harmful or can be used to encourage social engagement or consumer feedback.

Accurate audience measurement

Every transaction made on a mobile phone can be uniquely tracked to that mobile phone number including voice calls, SMS, or Internet access. Mobile phones also allow for real-time tracking allowing you to edit campaigns as they are run. Google's Universal Analytics also allows you to track user experience across devices.



Figure 7.3.3: Universal Analytics can now track individual users across devices and touchpoints Adapted From Treefish, n.d.

The implication for marketers: The extra data gathered by mobile phones offers marketers profiling and segmenting opportunities for targeting the right audience. Because mobile phones are personal, measurement is improved overall. Campaigns can also be accurately measured and tracked for their return on investment (ROI) and the mobile phone offers many more ways to collect data, including location, web analytics, SMS response rates and Bluetooth.

Even with mobiles that are on a prepaid or pay-as-you-go contract, meaning that network operators do not have a name or demographic details to accompany the mobile number, you can still track and measure every transaction made by the user of a particular phone. This information is limited by networks, which determine the data they are willing to share with marketing companies.

Social context

Mobile can capture 'the social context of our consumption', which means capturing who we are sharing with. If you are using a product like an eBook, for instance, your mobile phone holds information on who you talked to while reading it, whom you shared





it with, and whether you recommended it to a connection who then purchased the item (Ahonen, 2008).

The implication for marketers: Marketers can get insight from the way that mobile users share their products and socialise while using them and use this information to increase sales.

Augmented reality

The mobile phone makes it possible to add a layer of information to the real world through augmented reality (AR). For example, Layar, an augmented reality mobile browser, allows users to see embedded digital content in a number of sources such as posters, magazines, advertisements, or QR codes. This can lead to extra content such as movie trailers, discount codes and videos (Layar, 2016).

The implication for marketers: Cost and accessibility for this technology can sometimes be a concern, but adding a layer of interaction to the real world can be a powerful tool in a marketing campaign.

Digital interface

Various mobile technologies can enrich a user's life by adding a digital layer to a real-world experience as with augmented reality. A mobile phone can also be used to control things in the real world, like switching on a light or opening a door.

The implication for marketers: Marketers can create memorable and emotive experiences that users will want to share and therefore broaden marketers' reach. It also broadens the potential user interface options for a brand or product.

Location and mobile

Two of the most important contributions of mobile to the marketing world are location and convenience. If services and useful information can be shared based on a user's location, the possibility for conversions naturally increase. The more contextually relevant your marketing message is to the user, the more likely they are to engage.

Research by Social Media Today showed that 88% of consumers who search for a local business on a mobile device call or visit that business within 24 hours, and seven out of 10 interact with their device while shopping in-store (Impact, 2016). Businesses should absolutely take advantage of the location-specific possibilities of mobile, making themselves easily findable online and ensuring a good mobile experience on their site.



Figure 7.3.4: Location-specific results for a local search – note the distance indicator Adapted From Screenshot, Google locator

Geolocation

Providing customers with what they really need becomes easier when combining marketing techniques with geolocation. For example, someone searching for a local business would find it very useful to see the closest one along with a map to its location. Google is well aware of this and will give users location-specific results, so it's essential for a local business to list itself on Google Business.

Local news results can also offer a better user experience for people conducting news searches, and combining QR codes or short codes with print advertising is one way to provide consumers with geo-relevant information. A QR code on a poster could offer a discount voucher to someone coming to the local retail outlet, for example.

A business can also find new options to reach users by providing free wireless to users visiting its location, as Starbucks does.





To reach customers in areas of the world where data is scarce and more expensive, some online services turn to a 'zero rating' system, which means that users don't pay for data when accessing that particular service. While this is somewhat controversial, examples include Facebook Zero, and a carrier in the United States announced in 2016 that YouTube would be zero rated for its users, so video content for YouTube would not be counted against data caps (Brookings, 2016).

Some apps have stripped down user interfaces to use less data and work better with poor data connections and low-end phones. Examples here are Facebook Lite and YouTube Lite. These apps demonstrate an important lesson, that marketers need to tailor the mobile experience to their audience.

Mobile search combined with location awareness offers a targeted user experience. If a website can detect what device someone is using and where they are (which they can), they can deliver content customised to user location, either automatically or after user input.

Mobile social networks

Several social networks, like Instagram and Snapchat, have been created specifically for mobile phones, and the others focus heavily on a mobile-friendly user experience, since most people access social networks via mobile. For example, more than half of Facebook's monthly active users access it only on mobile (VentureBeat, 2016).

Many social networks also encourage geotagging when users make or comment on posts so if you upload a photo to Facebook it will ask if you want to add a location. Networks like Foursquare encourage check ins at various locations by offering incentives like discounts or vouchers.

Consider the potential of social search as well. Product or brand searches based on social networks and location can be a powerful tool. Personal referrals are now combined with location-specific information.



Learn more about this in the Search engine optimisation chapter.

There is a strong strategic incentive to provide free Wi-Fi to customers at physical outlets like Starbucks mentioned above, as this not only provides a great selling point but also gives the marketer a channel to communicate with and gain information from customers. It lets you track their mobile behaviour and location (with permission, of course), send coupons and offers, engage in CRM-related questionnaires and provide helpful information and support.

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7.4: Defining mobile channels

While mobile is increasingly and inextricably interwoven with all aspects of marketing and as such shouldn't be considered in isolation, there are some methods of communication that are only accessible via a mobile device.



Read more about these in the Direct marketing - email and mobile chapter.

SMS/MMS

SMS (short message service) and MMS (multimedia messaging service) are standard text messages sent via mobile phone over a cellular network. An MMS can also include various types of media such as images, audio, or a short video.

These are push methods for messaging, where the brand sends out the message to the customer. They also offer the opportunity to receive messages from consumers, for example, as feedback or in a competition. Google has released a click-tomessage ad extension that allows users to directly SMS a company from the search engine results pages, without having to look for a number on a web page.



Figure 7.4.1: An example of a click to text ad from Google Adapted From Venture beat, 2017

∓ Note

Read more about ad extensions in the Search advertising chapter

Despite the ever-increasing popularity of smartphones and the associated instant messaging programs, SMS and MMS can still have their place in a good marketing strategy, particularly for relaying information, reminders, and automated confirmation.

USSD

USSD is a pull method of reaching your customer in that they need to come to you. The caller dials a number, usually starting with a * and ending with a #, and is sent a menu with various options. They can then enter the number that corresponds to their request.

USSD is a good way of collecting data from your user. Some brands use it to capture competition entries and survey answers. It can also be used for mobile commerce like when you buy more data for your phone by using airtime and can be used with location-based technology.

Bluetooth beacons

A beacon is a small low-energy Bluetooth device. It can transmit small packets of information across short distances. If a smartphone with the brand's app installed comes into range, it can receive a notification of a discount, reward, suggestion, or anything else you want to send. This is still permission marketing, as the app has to be installed for it to work.

Also known as proximity marketing, this takes location-specific marketing from a general area to an exact location inside a store. It can be used to send targeted discount coupons, demonstration videos for products or directions to a nearby product.

AR/VR

Augmented reality superimposes computer graphics into the physical space around the person using an AR device (usually a smartphone or tablet). Virtual reality takes this a step further using products like Google Cardboard and 360-degree videos in an





attempt to create an even more immersive interaction.



Figure 7.4.2: Google Cardboard Adapted From Wikimedia, n.d.

AR can use image recognition to turn images without markers, without a barcode, QR code, or other visible stamp, into triggers that launch an AR or VR experience. It can launch a link, open an app, dial a number and give directions. This can also be location-based, so a user in a store could start an app and see more information about the products in front of them.

AR and VR are not about direct marketing, but engagement, creating an exciting experience for their consumers that makes them want to engage with the brand.



Check out some good uses of augmented reality here: https://www.lifewire.com/applicationsof-augmentedreality-2495561

Apps

An app is a software program designed to run on a mobile device like a smartphone or tablet. 'App' can also refer to a web app or online app, which is software that you use while online via a browser. Most apps perform a very specific, narrow purpose, though some do not. The best apps take user needs into account, become a strong touchpoint for the brand, enable the sales of products, and importantly solve user problems. They can extend the reach of your business and, assuming you understand the needs of your audience and create an app that meets those needs, can also help build a relationship with your customers.

Apps vs. websites

Should your brand even have an app or can it afford to live without one? Every company seems to be releasing its own app these days, which is understandable, given that consumers spend 90% of their time on mobile in apps rather than a browser. These include social media apps, entertainment apps, games and news (Smart Insights, 2016).

Until about 2015, mobile browsers weren't very good and even as they improved, websites became more bloated, hindering performance. Apps enable people to do something or access something quickly and easily on mobile. This means that many apps are essentially browsers designed for a specific purpose. SurveyMonkey lists the top five most popular apps in the USA for January to June of 2016 as:

- Facebook
- YouTube
- Messenger
- Google Maps
- Play Store.

The popularity of these apps demonstrates user interest in social networks, entertaining content and practical utility.



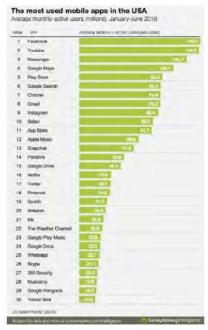


Figure 7.4.3: The most-used mobile apps in the USA Adapted From Techcrunch, 2016

Despite arguably being glorified browsers, the advantages of apps are numerous.

- The easy access button on a home screen.
- Integration with the device's operating system and the speed that comes with that and being locally installed.
- · Access to native functions.

However, if your website isn't already getting traffic, an app will not solve that problem.

In the USA, the number of app downloads is decreasing. Globally, because the mobile phone market is still increasing, app downloads are increasing too but, with a few exceptions, not by very much. Of course, once the apps are downloaded, they are of no use unless the smartphone user actually uses them. A survey from the Pew Research Center found that 46% of respondents use six to ten apps per week, and 35% use six to 10; AppsFlyer found that most apps aren't even kept for a full day, with only 3.3% of Android apps and 3.2% of iOS apps still boasting active users after 30 days (eMarketer, 2015).

With more than 2.5 million available apps and users averaging 17–20 apps per device, the app market is saturated, which means that to stand out, you need to offer users something they really want.

Does this mean that you shouldn't bother with an app, should you just stick to a website and make sure that it offers the user an excellent browsing experience? Not necessarily. If you do decide to make an app, make sure there is a need for it, for instance:

- If the user needs to do something location-specific.
- If you need to do push messaging (see below).
- If you need to do something graphics-heavy that can't be done with videos on YouTube or Facebook.
- If your service requires the storing of sensitive user information like credit card information on the users' phone.

Look at your connected consumer and ask how an app will make a large, continuous improvement to the service you offer. Creating an app simply for its own sake will lose you time and money.

One example of a brand having great success with its app is Starbucks. The app does very well because:

- It is location-specific: The app makes finding the nearest Starbucks very easy. It also uses GPS to determine which store a user is at and then shares music information for that location. Users can then save songs they hear in the store to a playlist within the app and access and keep listening to the music after they leave.
- It uses gamification: The loyalty programme is tiered, with extra freebies and benefits for people higher up.
- It uses functions that are specific to the mobile phone, like GPS.
- It allows people to order and pay in advance by mobile before picking up the drink.
- It engages customers using special incentives and bonuses to encourage continued app use.





- It encourages a social aspect, the rewards offered by the loyalty programme make customers feel exclusive, and they are then more likely to share updates on social media.
- It makes access to user data very easy. It also uses in-app messages to encourage users to fill out surveys in exchange for more stars for the loyalty programme.
- · It offers a lot of opportunity for branding.
- It plans to expand the app to make personalised recommendations, which will increase in-app purchases.

(Digital Turbine, 2016).

Starbucks has used its app to expand on its existing offering and to differentiate its loyalty programme from those of similar brands by catering to the needs of its mobile audience.

Push notifications

Push notifications let your app send messages to the user even when your app is not active. The app's icon and a message appear in the status bar, for example when you receive a message on Facebook or WhatsApp or when Memrise sends you a daily reminder to study.

Push notifications, like anything else on mobile, rely on permission marketing; people have to opt in to receive these notifications. The notifications do need to be optimised to ensure that the user pays attention (the majority of users are annoyed by them).

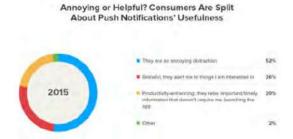


Figure 7.4.4: How people really feel about push notifications Adapted From Localytics, 2016

People want personalised push messages that are relevant to their needs, arrive at the right time, and don't come too often.

Other

Other mobile-specific channels exist, such as QR codes and near-field communications (NFC). For the most part, these will fall into other areas of digital marketing. NFC can be used for payment or ticketing, QR codes for launching AR experiences or for payment, so we will not go into detail on those here.

Wearables such as smartwatches and fitness monitors are a rapidly expanding market, though apart from gathering data, marketers are still struggling to determine their impact on our behaviour, expectations, and marketing strategies.

Their biggest strength is their ability to reduce the time between a user developing intent and taking action. On the other hand, people don't check their phones as often if they have a wearable to alert them when something happens, which will reduce the number of impressions your marketing messages receive.

For now, the best advice we can give for approaching wearables is to consider what kind of information people want and need to see and how you can use that to encourage engagement. Wearables are something that marketers need to experiment with.

Take a look at Emirates NBD bank's use of wearables synched to mobile devices to promote its savings accounts by giving better interest rates to customers who kept fit: www.digitaltrainingacademy.co...udies/2016/10/gamification_case_study_emirates_bank_rewards_exercise_with_better_savings_via_fitness_app.php

It's important to remember that mobile is a layer on top of all of your other marketing activities. As a marketer, you should never start by deciding what mobile channel you're going to use and then plan a campaign. Instead, find out where your audience is and what kind of devices they use to access the Internet, and use that to inform what kind of channels and campaign you will plan. For example, if they are more likely to access your campaign at work, desktop channels might be the best way to go.





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7.5: Creating an app

Do you REALLY need one?

We've already looked at why you might not want to use an app and what kind of value you need to be able to offer your consumer. Before you decide to make one, ignore all the people telling you that an app is a basic necessity. Think about the following:

- Can you define in one sentence what you want your app to accomplish?
- What problem does your app solve? How can your app make things better for your user?
- What can you give your consumer that they can't get from another app?
- Does your target market download and use apps? Will they use your app?
- Do you have enough engaging content to keep them coming back?



Read more about responsive websites in the Web development and design chapter.

- Will it help you sell a lot more products/services?
- How much are you willing to invest? Remember, apps are expensive. Could you get by with just a responsive website?

Planning

Once you've decided that you really do need an app, it's time to get into the process of planning it.

Choosing a platform

Before you even choose an app developer, you need to know what operating system you'll be developing for. Developing for multiple operating systems (OS) at a time can get expensive; so many companies start with one and then expand if the app is a success. Generally, this involves doing market research to find out what kind of OS your users are most likely to use. The most common, of course, are Android and iOS.

This research is important, if you build your app for the wrong OS, you're failing before you even start. For example, the iPhone is very common in developed markets like the USA, but Android is far more popular in developing markets and is in fact gaining market share from Apple.

These days, Android has the largest market share, but there is an argument to be made for developing for iOS first. Take a look at these pros and cons (Savvy Apps Blog, 2016).

Table 7.5.1

	Android	iOS
Audience demographics	Large platform share, common in developing nations and areas with lower income	Tend to have a higher income and spend more per app. Can show more engagement
Revenue	More ad-supported apps	More paid-for apps
OS version U	Users don't adopt new OS releases quickly	Users adopt new versions quickly
Features	Similar to iOS, but can involve more features	Similar, but fewer features

Start by finding out which platform your target users are most likely to be on. After that, consider the other elements.

User stories

Before you hire an app developer, you should have a one-sentence description of what you want your app to accomplish. From that, you will consider what kind of features your app will include. However, that alone is not enough to let your developers know what you want the end product to look like. The solution: User stories. A user story is a brief, simple description of one of the features of your app. This should be told by the point of view of your user, the person who wants to use that feature. They look like this:

As a [user type/customer persona], I want to [goal/objective – what they want to do] so that [reason/benefit/value].

This will cover who you are building the feature for, what the feature is, and why you're building it. For example:

As a food lover, I want to pull up restaurant reviews so that I can choose the best place to eat.





As a hungry person, I want to find directions to the nearest restaurant so that I can eat right now.



For mobile, you may also want to consider where and when your users are using the app. Your user story would then include a where/ when element.

As someone who loves cooking, I want to find recipes for my favourite restaurant food so I can make it myself at home.

Write as many user stories for your app as you can and give them to your app developer. This will help them create exactly the app you want.

Timing

Developing an app can take at least three tosix months, depending on the complexities involved. The back end tends to take longer than the front end to develop (see below). Timing can be impacted by, among other things:

- budget
- intention (is this a long-term or a small campaign-specific app?)
- number of features
- size of the team.

Android apps can take longer to develop than iOS apps. Make sure you keep this in mind when you decide on a desired completion date for your app.

Front-and back-end

Think about the UX process and what the app (front-end) will look like before development starts. After you have working prototypes, you can think about what kind of information you need from your users (back-end).

Front-end development involves:

- Mock ups and wireframing
- · Prototyping
- Designing and developing the user interface
- Remote data access
- Data caching (storing data locally)
- App data synchronisation so that the app can be accessed offline
- Testing
- · Deployment.

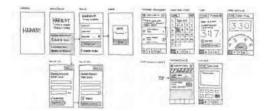


Figure 7.5.1: A low fidelity wireframe for an iPhone App for Harvest Adapted From Design Reviver, 2010





Figure 7.5.2: The actual Harvest App Adapted From Anthony Armendariz, n.d.

Back-end development involves:

- Secure data access over network.
- Database management (including user data and other types of data), user accounts and authentication.
- Scaling your database to handle increasing numbers of users and avoid crashing from overload.
- Customising the user experience and how the user goes through the application (relevant to UX design).
- Data integration, how users share information to third-party websites.
- Sending data to front-end devices (push notifications).

Front- and back-end developers need to collaborate because they need to interface with the servers to send and receive data to and from the servers, which happens when they begin implementing the app's functionality.

Testing

App creation should be an iterative process. As the app is being developed, each element should be evaluated and improved as far as possible meaning you prototype something, test it, get feedback, and send it back to the developers to implement improvements. Even after the app is released, the process continues as feedback from users comes in. Remember, your app is a product or at the very least a consumer touchpoint that needs to be managed.



Figure 7.5.3: The iterative app development process

Before launch, you will need to run usability tests, quality assurance testing, and beta testing when a sample of your intended audience tries out the app.

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7.6: Implementation

Before implementing any kind of marketing via mobile, you need the permission of your customers via an opt-in mechanism. This means that they either need to sign up or grant an app permission to show them marketing materials. Always be honest about what kind of messages users can expect, and don't try to hide an opt-in acknowledgement, for example deep in the terms and conditions of a competition.

For something like SMS/MMS, you will need to build up a database of phone numbers from willing customers. For push messaging, your app will need to ask permission to send push notifications to users' home screens. For AR and VR, the users need to download an app and deliberately scan an image, code, or other trigger to launch the experience, so you don't need to actively ask permission for this.

SMS/MMS

For an SMS marketing campaign, you need to use shortcodes and keywords. A shortcode is a simple, short number to which a customer can send an SMS and opt in to the campaign. The keyword is the word they place in the SMS itself.



Figure 7.6.1: A shortcode and keyword to send a donation to an animal rescue organisation Adapted From Screenshot, SMS code

They can also opt in online or by checking a box on an order form, among other methods. Once the customer has opted in, you can send them an automated response or add them to your database to receive more texts over time. These can include, among others:

- Coupons
- Very short surveys/votes
- Contests/competitions
- Photos/videos via MMS (such as a flyer or menu).

You don't need special permission to contact a customer about a transaction you have already agreed on, for example, as a notification that a product is on its way.

Push messaging

Push notifications need to involve a lot of security so that no one else can send these notifications to your users. You will need to register your app for push notifications and obtain the user's permission before you can start. If you are interested in the more technical side of this, beyond just asking your app developer to do it, you can read about it in this Push Notifications Tutorial: www.raywenderlich. com/123862/push-notifications-tutorial.

AR/VR

For AR, the user needs to download an app, and then scan an image, code, or other trigger to view the experience you have created. These extra steps can make people reluctant to engage with your campaign, so you need to make sure that the instructions are clear and the procedure is both easy and worthwhile. Make sure there's something in it for the user, whether that's real entertainment or something more tangible.







Figure 7.6.2: Be sure to include instructions for downloading and using AR apps and ensure the app is worth the effort for the user. *Adapted From Playme*, *n.d.*

Apps

A branded app is not complete once all the programming is done and you can view the final product on your phone. There are still a few steps to be followed before people will start downloading the app.

The App/Play Store

First, you need to optimise your app's page on the App Store or the Google Play store. Search is responsible for most organic downloads, so you want to make sure people can find your app. This involves some SEO tactics. For Google Play:

- Put your main keyword in the app title.
- Use the keyword repeatedly in the app description.
- Make sure your design and screenshots are eye-catching and engaging.
- Include a demo video.
- Do what you can to ensure good reviews.
- Try to make sure your app will be used often.

For the App Store:

- Again, use your main keyword in the title, the keyword that is searched most often.
- Track your keywords and update them.

∓ Note

Read more about keywords in the SEO chapter.

- Good ratings and reviews are important.
- A high number of downloads will move you up the rankings in the App Store

Discoverability

Next, you want to make people aware that your app exists otherwise they won't know what to search for. You can do this using:

- Your other digital marketing channels
 - Email
 - Your website
 - o our social media pages
 - Online advertising
- Print ads
- · In-store signs
- Your existing customers (they can share the app)
- · Event-based promotions
- Search optimisation (discussed above).

Once they're aware of your app, you still need to convince them to download it.



Acquisition

How can you convince people to download your app once they realise it exists? You have a few options.

- One of Facebook's ad options is specifically aimed at convincing people to download your app. You'll want to make sure that you understand your audience well so that you can customise campaigns to different segments of your target audience. Remember to follow social media advertising best practice.
- Referral rewards work well for certain apps. For example, Uber offers discounts to both the referrer and the referee if the app is downloaded. Word of mouth is always a powerful tool.
- Find influencers in your industry, or popular bloggers, and ask them to preview your app. You can also submit the app to app review sites.
- If your app is location-specific, make sure you advertise in the relevant locations.

Of course, there are other ways to market your app; these are just a few to get you started. Now that your users have downloaded it, the onus is on your app to prove that it's actually worth using.

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7.7: The Internet of Things/The Quantified Self

The Internet of Things (IoT) stems from the idea that any device can be connected to the Internet or to another device. The IoT itself is a massive network of connected 'things', people, coffee makers, cars, front doors, and almost anything else that can be given a connection to the Internet. Think about the concept of a 'smart house' that can read your calendar, see your meetings for the day, set an appropriate time for your alarm to go off, have coffee ready and waiting and send the fastest route to work straight to your car. According to some estimates, there were 10 billion connected devices in 2015, expected to increase to 75 billion by 2020. (The Marketing Journal, 2016)

For some interesting takes on the security problems surrounding the Internet of Things, check out Bruce Schneier's blog: https://www.schneier.com/blog/archives/2017/02/security_and_pr.html.

The quantified self is related to this, it's all about using technology to measure every aspect of our lives. Fitness wearables like Fitbits are worn every day and can track elements such as your steps, sleeping patterns and eating habits.

The biggest impact on marketing for the quantified self is data, the sheer amount of it being created every day gives marketers incredible opportunities to mine that data for insights to help target their marketing opportunities.

Increased data access is also inevitable with the IoT online devices can be connected to social data. The marketer will have to be something of a data scientist, using this new data to gain insight into the customer journey, but it goes a little further, the IoT means that brands can connect to customers and encourage interactivity much more easily by sending the right message to the right device and at the right time.

The amount of data available because of IoT allows real-time interaction and targeted, contextual ads.

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7.8: Advantages and challenges

The benefits of mobile are numerous.

- Most mobile marketing mediums don't require you to educate the audience.
- Mobile is location-specific, offering opportunities to localise marketing and sharpen targeting efforts.
- · Mobiles are very immediate devices, with messages delivered instantly and very often acted on quickly.
- Campaigns delivered via mobile can be very cost-effective.
- Mobiles give you the opportunity to reach a target audience that may not have access to desktop computers.
- · Mobiles are ideal devices for well-optimised content delivery.

Of course, it also comes with its own unique challenges.

- Privacy is paramount because the mobile phone is personal, so campaigns need to ask users' permission and assure them of privacy.
- Mobiles vary widely in screen size, operating systems and browsers, so standardising websites and campaigns can be a challenge.
- The small screen size associated with mobile limits options for browsing and inputting information.
- Ensuring that brands provide value to users over mobile can take some careful thought.
- Smartphone penetration is far from 100% in developing areas, and data costs can impact user access as well.

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7.9: Measuring success

Mobile analytics are important for improving cross-channel marketing campaigns as well as optimising your mobile channels. Analytics for how your website and ads perform on mobile devices can be found in Google Analytics. SMS reporting can show you open rates, which messages were successful, and who received your message, among other things. Your mobile metrics should be measured across websites, apps, and any other aspect of mobile campaigns to help you measure ROI. Important metrics to measure include:

- · Mobile device type
- · Operating system
- · Screen size
- How mobile visitors came to your site/app
- On-site engagement metrics like number of page views, time on site, and bounce rates.

With apps in particular, it's easy to focus on the wrong metrics as important. Most people's instinct is to look at number of downloads and installations, but that's not enough to show success. Many users download an app, open it once, and never look at it again.

Important app metrics, then, can include:

- Number of active users
- Lifetime value/revenue per user
- Retention rate
- · Session length
- Exit screen (to see if one screen is causing people to leave your app in frustration)
- Number of user sessions per day (users who engage more with an app are more likely to become loyal users)
- Crash analytics (tracking your app's crashes per user to identify technical barriers).

Always remember that you need to focus on metrics that show whether the user is using and enjoying your mobile properties.

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7.10: Tools of the trade

POP app is an app prototyping application that helps you create a working prototype quickly and easily: https://marvelapp.com/pop

Flurry (recently acquired by Yahoo) is an app analytics platform that can also give you metrics on ad performance and detailed user acquisition reports: developer. yahoo.com/analytics/

Vuforia is an augmented reality app creation tool: www.vuforia.com/

TestFairy is an app testing tool for android and iOS: http://testfairy.com/

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7.11: Case study - ASB digital piggybank

One-line summary

ASB, a leading Australian bank, developed a digital piggybank to help children save and learn about money in a world where money is increasingly digital rather than tangible.

The challenge

ASB wanted to build a base of future customers and simultaneously help children save money. They found that because money is increasingly abstract in a cashless society, it can be difficult to teach children the value of money, which can make it harder to encourage them to save.

The solution

ASB, with Saatchi and Saatchi, created Clever Kash, a toy elephant with a digital screen that connects to an app via a secure, encrypted Bluetooth connection. It can be recharged every two weeks or so using a micro USB.

The device connects to an app and allows parents to swipe virtual money from the app into the Clever Kash elephant, which is actually the child's savings account at ASB. It makes use of gamification with sounds being triggered and badges awarded when a child sends money to the piggybank, reaches a milestone, or completes a savings goal.

The invention also keeps privacy and security in mind as the connection between app and elephant is encrypted, communication is one-way from the app to the piggybank, and data sent from the app is controlled by the parent. The child has no transactional ability, and the piggybank stores no account information.

The results

The campaign won a Cannes Lion Gold award in 2016, and by this time 38 000 people had signed up for the app. More than this, the brand gave customers something they valued and helped build strong relationships starting with the children who were using the piggybanks. It was also the beginning of the bank moving into an innovative tech space, thus expanding its options for the future.

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7.12: The bigger picture

Mobile communications should always be considered in context with your other marketing communications. Rather than being a separate channel, mobile is a way to access and integrate with many other forms of communication. It is inextricably intertwined with every aspect of digital and must be considered in that way.

One of mobile's powerful characteristics is its ability to stitch media together, especially as a way to bridge online and offline marketing activities, because it is located in the real-world space and can simultaneously access the digital world. Apps such as those that scan triggers to access media can play a major role in this stitching, as can other mobile-focused channels such as Bluetooth.

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7.E: Mobile channels and apps(Exercises)

Case study questions

- 1. Describe how this campaign combined real-world experience with digital options.
- 2. Why was an app the right way to go for this brand?
- 3. Would you have included any other digital or mobile-specific channels in this campaign? Which ones/why?

Chapter questions

- 1. What makes mobile such a powerful medium for marketing?
- 2. What are the biggest concerns for mobile-focused marketing?
- 3. When is it a good idea to create an app for your brand?
- 4. How would you go about deciding which engagement method is the best to use for your target market?

Further reading

www.mmaglobal.com - The Mobile Marketing Association contains research and insights, case studies, and educational material for mobile.

www.mobilemarketer.com – Mobile Marketer covers different forms of mobile marketing, offering news and developments in the industry.

mobilemarketingwatch.com – Mobile Marketing Watch is a blog covering all things related to mobile marketing and advertising. www.apptamin.com/blog - The Apptamin blog focuses specifically on apps and app marketing.

savvyapps.com/blog – A great, informative resource focusing on app development.

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7.S: Mobile channels and apps(Summary)

Mobile has several factors which make it ideal for communicating with your customers at their moment of need, provided you respect the need for privacy and permission. It also allows for hyper-local and interactive marketing, which can greatly increase engagement.

People spend more time online than with any other media. Much of that time on mobile, and most time on mobile is spent in apps, which makes apps a dominant form of digital interaction (Convince & Convert n.d.). Consider carefully whether your business really needs an app.

If you do decide to run a mobile-focused campaign or create an app, you need to make sure that you implement it carefully and, as always, measure and optimise as you go along.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Create - Search engine optimization (SEO)

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn:

- How search engines work and how they deliver results.
- How to plan, research and implement an effective keyword strategy across text and other content.
- Techniques for link building, an essential aspect of SEO.
- How specialised search, such as mobile, social and local search, can affect your rankings and how to optimise for these.
- 8.1: References
- 8.2: Introduction
- 8.3: Key terms and concepts
- 8.4: Core principles
- 8.5: Implementation
- 8.6: What not to do
- 8.7: Advantages and challenges
- 8.8: Tools of the trade
- 8.9: Case study Lloyds Pharmacy Online Doctor
- 8.10: The bigger picture
- 8.E: Search engine optimisation (SEO)(Exercises)
- 8.S: Search engine optimisation (SEO)(Summary)

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8.2: Introduction

With millions of people performing billions of searches each day to find content on the Internet, Google alone processes over 40 000 searches per second (Internet Live Stats, 2017). It makes sense that marketers want their products to be findable online. Search engines, the channels through which these searches happen, use closely guarded algorithms to determine the results displayed.

Determining what factors these algorithms take into account has led to a growing practice known as search engine optimisation (SEO).

SEO is the practice of optimising a website to achieve the highest possible ranking on the search engine results pages (SERPs). Someone who practices SEO professionally is known as an SEO (search engine optimiser).

Google uses about 200 different factors in its algorithm to determine relevance and ranking (Dean, 2016). None of the major search engines disclose the elements they use to rank pages, but there are many SEO practitioners who spend time analysing patent applications to try to determine what these are.



Take a look at this speculative list of Google's 200 algorithm factors from BackLink: http://backlinko.com/ google-ranking-factors.

Other types of websites that rely on search, like YouTube and Facebook, have their own algorithms. Facebook's News Feed algorithm, for example, uses around 100 000 factors to rank and sort content that appears in users' news feeds.

SEO can be split into two distinct camps, white hat SEO and black hat SEO, with some grey hat wearers in between. Black hat SEO refers to trying to game the search engines. These SEOs use dubious means to achieve high rankings and their websites are occasionally blacklisted by the search engines. White hat SEO, on the other hand, refers to working within the parameters set by search engines to optimise a website for better user experience. Search engines want to send users to the website that is best suited to their needs, so white hat SEO should ensure that users can find what they are looking for.

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8.3: Key terms and concepts

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Term	Definition
Alt text	The 'alt' attribute for the IMG HTML tag. It is used in HTML to attribute a text field to an image on a web page, normally with a descriptive function, telling a search engine or user what an image is about and displaying the text in instances where the image is unable to load. Also called alt tag. Anchor text is the visible, clickable text in a link.
App store optimisation (ASO)	The process of optimising mobile and web applications for the specific web stores in which they are distributed.
Backlink	All the links from pages on external domains pointing to pages on your own domain. Each link from an external domain to a specific page is known as an inbound/backlink. The number of backlinks influences your ranking, so the more backlinks the better, get linking!
Canonical	In SEO, canonical refers to a definitive URL. The canonical version is the definitive version. Domain name**The easy-to-read name used to identify an IP address of a server that distinguishes it from other systems on the World Wide Web: our domain name is redandyellow.co.za.
Flash	A technology used to show video and animation on a website. It can be bandwidth heavy and unfriendly to search engine spiders.
Heading tags	Heading tags (H1, H2, H3, etc.) are standard elements used to define headings and subheadings on a web page. The number indicates the importance so H1 tags are viewed by spiders as being more important than H3 tags. Using target keyword s in your H tags is essential for effective SEO.
Home page	The first page of any website. The home page gives users a glimpse into what your site is about very much like the index in a book, or contents page in a magazine.
HyperText Markup Language (HTML)	Certain HTML tags are used to structure the information and features within a web page.
Hyperlink	A link in an electronic document that allows you, once you click on it, to follow the link to the relevant web page.
Internal link	A hyperlink on a website that points from one page to another on the same website / domain.
Internet Protocol (IP) address	The Internet Protocol (IP) address is an unique number that is used to represent every single computer in a network.
Keyword frequency	The number of times a keyword or key phrase appears on a website.
Key phrase	Two or more words that are combined to form a search query are often referred to as keywords. It is usually better to optimise for a phrase rather than for a single word.
Keyword rankings	Where the keywords or phrases targeted by SEO rank in the search engine results. If your targeted terms do not appear on the first three pages, start worrying.
Landing page	The page a user reaches when clicking on a paid or organic search engine listing. The pages that have the most success are those that match up as closely as possible with users' search queries.
Link	A URL embedded on a web page. If you click on the link you will be taken to that page.



Link bait	A technique for creating content that is specifically designed to attract links from other web pages.
Meta tags	Tags that tell search engine spiders exactly what a web page is about. It's important that your meta tags are optimised for the targeted keywords. Meta tags are made up of meta titles, descriptions and keywords.
Referrer	When a user clicks on a link from one site to another, the site the user has left is the referrer. Most browsers log the referrer's URL in referrer strings. This information is vital in determining which queries are being used to find specific sites.
Robots.txt	A file written and stored in the root directory of a website that restricts the search engine spiders from indexing certain pages of the website.
Search engine spiders	Programs that travel the web, following links and building up the indexes of search engines.
Universal Resource Locator (URL)	A web address that is unique to every page on the Internet.
Usability	A measure of how easy it is for a user to complete a desired task. Sites with excellent usability fare far better than those that are difficult to use.
XML sitemap	A guide that search engines use to help them index a website, which indicates how many pages there are, how often they are updated and how important they are.

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8.4: Core principles

Understanding SEO

Search engines need to help users find what they're looking for. To make sure, they list the best results first, looking for signals of:



Want to see how search works? Check out this resource from Google: www.google.com/insidesearch/howsearchworks/thestory

- Popularity
- Authority
- Relevance
- Trust
- Importance.

SEO, also called organic or natural optimisation, involves optimising websites to achieve high rankings on search engines for certain selected keywords. Generally, techniques used for optimising on one search engine will also help efforts across others.

SEO can be divided into two main strategies:

1. **On-page optimisation**, achieved by making changes to the HTML code, content and structure of a website, making it more accessible to search engines and by extension, easier for users to find.

∓ Note

A good place to keep track of Google search algorithm updates is this handy resource from Moz: moz.com/google-algorithmchange.

2. **Off-page optimisation**, generally focused on building links to the website and covers activities like social media and digital PR.

SEO is an extremely effective way of generating new business to a site. It is a continuous process and a way of thinking about how search engines see your website and how users use search engines to find your website. It's search psychology.

Search engine optimisation is a fairly technical practice but it can easily be broken down into five main areas:

- 1. A search engine friendly website structure
- 2. A well-researched list of keywords
- 3. Content optimised to target those keywords
- 4. Link popularity
- 5. User insights.

Search engine friendly website structure

Search engines encounter two kinds of obstacles:

1. Technical challenges that prevent the search engine spider from accessing content.



Read more about this in the Web development and design chapter.

2. A competitive marketing environment where everyone wants to rank highly.

To ensure that search engines can access your content, you must remove technical barriers. Those who want to achieve the best results must follow best practices.



The key is to make sure that there are direct HTML links to each page you want the search engines to index. The most important pages should be accessible directly from the home page of your website.

The information architecture or, how content is planned and laid out, has important usability and SEO implications. Users want to find what they are looking for quickly and easily, while website owners want search engine spiders to be able to access and index all applicable pages. Google consistently points out that it wants users to have a good user experience. Content relevance, user engagement and user experience are all crucial to SEO (Martin, 2016).

∓ Note

Read more about this in the User experience design chapter.

There are times when user experience and SEO can be at odds with each other, but usually if you focus on building usable, accessible websites, then you have made them search engine friendly as well.

Another technical challenge to search engines is Flash. For the most part, search engines struggle to crawl and index Flash sites. There are some workarounds, but the best approach from an SEO perspective is to avoid building sites or delivering key content in Flash. Instead, use HTML5, which provides similar interactivity and visuals while remaining easily crawlable.

The chapter on web development and design delves more deeply into building a search engine friendly website.

Voice search

As digital marketers, we must evolve with the times to stay effective. The 'no interface trend' refers to the way people want new, natural forms of interaction with technology. onsider Stephen Sandmann's (2016) observation that, "Speech, gesture, touch and sight: truly intuitive technologies are set to transform your customer interactions forever".

When people think of SEO, they usually think of only the traditional type of SEO, based on desktop and mobile Google search. SEO has evolved to be mobile-centric, which now includes voice search.

Many consumers use Google search on their mobile phones to find answers to their everyday questions. This means you can encourage your consumers to engage with your brand via voice search-accessed mobile search. The Google app allows a person's voice to access mobile Google search results on their smartphones. Google voice search is a default app in all of the latest Android smartphones.

Other voice search tools include Apple's Siri, Microsoft's Cortana and Amazon's Alexa.

Voice searches are usually made through mobile devices because of their on-the-go convenience factor which means that the mobile context will generally apply. This means:

- The user behaviour relating to voice search differs from traditional mobile search. This may seem obvious, but you have make a conscious effort to accommodate voice search in your Mobile SEO strategy.
- In most cases, voice searches appear in the form of questions, such as, "What movies are showing at Brooklyn Mall?"
- Voice-derived search queries are also usually longer than the average traditional search query.

These differences should be factored into your content by adding local keywords that are geographically relevant and by writing content that answers common questions that your intended audience may ask.

The future

Google's revamped Google Now, called Google Now on Tap, is incredibly intuitive. Now on Tap is a Google voice search that has contextual awareness. When you do a search via Now on Tap, it scans your phone's screen and recent activities to help give it context for your search, thereby better answering your query to fill in the gaps of a vague search query. Google also makes use of a personal index of what you do on your Android phone as a means of learning more about you.

Siri and other voice search platforms are also making major headway in terms of technological advancements and additional predictive features. Voice search is here to stay and will become more widely used going forward.

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8.5: Implementation

SEO and keywords

How do you start building your keyword list? It requires a little thought and a fair amount of research and insight, using tools that are readily available to help you grow and refine your list of keywords.



Keyword or key phrase? These are usually used interchangeably to refer to single or multiple words used for optimising websites. We largely use 'keyword' in this book, but they are essentially the same.

Keywords are the very foundation of search. When users enter a query on a search engine, they use the words they think are relevant to the search. The search engine then returns those pages it has calculated to be most relevant to the words the searchers used and, increasingly, the implied meaning of the search.

Developers of search engines have built a sophisticated understanding of semantics and the way in which we use language. So, if a user searches for 'car rental', the search engine will look for pages that are relevant to 'car rental' as well assynonyms like 'car hire', 'vehicle hire' and so forth. Search engines have also built up knowledge around common misspellings, typos, synonyms and related searches.

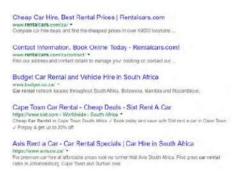


Figure 8.5.1: Google delivers search results for logical synonyms Adapted From Screenshot, Google search 2017

It is crucial that you implement keywords that are likely to be used by target audiences. Websites need to appear when potential customers are searching for them. A large part of keyword research is understanding search psychology. When we build our keyword lists, we are tapping into the mental process of searchers and putting together the right mix of keywords to target.

There are four things to consider when choosing a keyword.

1. Search volume

How many searchers are using that phrase to find what they want? For example, there is an estimated monthly search volume of over 338 million for the keyword 'hotel', but an estimated 6 600 searches per month for a keyword such as 'Cape Town Waterfront hotel'.

If you're researching keywords using the Google AdWords Keyword Planner, note that it reports only on paid search volume, not on total volume and Google has made access more difficult for free accounts.

2. Competition

How many other websites out there are targeting that same phrase? For example, Google finds over 2 900 000 000 results for 'hotel', but only 640 000 for 'Cape Town Waterfront Hotel'.

3. Propensity to convert

What is the likelihood that the searcher using that keyword is going to convert on your site? A conversion is a desired action taken by the visitor to your website. Related to propensity to convert is the relevance of the selected term to what you are offering. If you are selling rooms at a hotel at the V&A Waterfront, which of the two terms, 'hotel' or 'Cape Town Waterfront hotel', do you think will lead to a higher rate of conversions?





4. Value per lead

What is the average value per prospect attracted by the keyword? Depending on the nature of your website, the average value per lead varies. Using the hotel example again, consider these two terms:

'Luxury Cape Town hotel' and 'budget Cape Town hotel'. Both are terms used by someone wanting to book a hotel in Cape Town, but it is expected that someone looking for a luxury hotel is intending to spend more. That means that this particular lead has a higher value, particularly if you have a hotel booking website that offers a range of accommodation.

Step-by-step keyword research

Step 1: Brainstorm

Think about the words you would use to describe your business and about the questions or needs of your customers that it fulfils. How would someone ask for what you are offering? Consider synonyms and misspellings as well.

Bear in mind that people may not ask for your services using the same words as you to describe them. You may sell 'herbal infusions', whereas people may ask for 'herbal teas' and some might even request a 'tisane'.

Even common words are often misspelt and you may need to consider common misspellings and typos, for example, 'jewelry' or 'morgage'.



Figure 8.5.2: Google returns relevant results even for common misspellings Adapted From Screenshot, Google search 2017

Misspellings are important, but consider what these tell you about the traffic you're getting and analyse this traffic to ensure that you're getting quality visitors.

Step 2: Gather data

Two ways in which to gather accurate keyword data are to survey customers and to look at your website referral logs.

Look at what terms customers are already using to find you and add those to your list. If they are already sending you some traffic, it is worth trying to increase that traffic.

Step 3: Use keyword research tools

There are several tools available for keyword discovery and some of them are free. Some tools will scan your website and suggest keywords based on your current content. Most will let you enter keywords and will then return suggestions based on past research data, along with: *

- Similar keywords
- · Common keywords used with that keyword
- Common misspellings
- Frequency of the keywords in search queries
- · Industry-related keywords
- Keywords that are sending traffic to your competitors
- How many sites are targeting your keywords?







Try it now: Pick one of the tools listed at the end of the chapter and try a little of your own keyword research. Can you discover any useful keywords that your favourite brand should be using?

See section 8.7 Tools of the trade for some tools that you can use.

Bearing in mind the factors that make a good keyword, you need to aim for the right mix of keywords. Low-volume terms with low levels of competition may be a good way to get traffic in the short term, but don't be scared off by bigger competition in the high-value, high-volume areas. It may take longer to get there, but once you do, the revenue can make it worthwhile.

It is a good idea to create a spreadsheet of the list of keywords, along with additional information about each one.

Keyword or phrase	Search volume	Competition	Propensity to Convert	Value of Lead
Hotel	3,870	90%	2%	\$18
Luxury hotels	345	86%	35%	\$35

Figure 8.5.3: Keep a spreadsheet of targeted keywords for reference Adapted From Stokes, 2013

This will help you to choose the right keywords to target. These lists should be created for the whole website and can then be broken down for each page you want to optimise.

Optimising content for keywords

Once keywords and phrases are selected, we need to ensure the site contains content to target them. You must ensure that the content is properly structured and that it sends relevance signals. Content is the most important part of your website so create relevant, targeted content aimed at your selected keywords. Remember, search engines can recognise context and implied meaning, so synonyms are important.

Content has several roles to play on your site.

- It must provide information to visitors.
- It must engage with them.
- It must persuade them to do what you want. *

Now it must also send signals of relevance to search engines. You need to use the keywords on the content page in a way that search engines will pick up and users will understand.

Each web page used to be optimised for a set number of keywords. With the increasing sophistication of search engines and their semantic awareness, however, pages are now optimised for themes instead – search engines have moved from keywords to concept and context. For example, one page might be optimised for car insurance, with relevant keywords used as required, while another page would be optimised for health insurance, or household insurance.

Search engines consider context in three ways:

- 1. **User intention** Google tries to match your query to what you are asking rather than the individual words used. "Song about evil ducks" gives you "March of the Sinister Ducks" as a result, rather than a page with those specific keywords.
- 2. **Your content** Google reads your pages' keywords to find out what they are about, conceptually.
- 3. **Relating concepts** Google relates concepts to each other, like showing Alan Moore as author of March of the Sinister Ducks and offering related results for his work.

While keywords are still useful, then, focus has shifted from repeatedly using keywords to ensuring that each page is about something specific. Even though you should be thinking customer first rather than exact keywords, keywords are still useful. Here are some guidelines.

- 1. **Title tag:** Use the keyword in the title and as close to the beginning as possible.
- 2. **H1 header tag:** Use the keyword in the header tag and as much as possible in the other H tags.
- 3. **Body content:** Use keywords as it makes sense in context. Remember to use synonyms rather than focusing on one specific version of a keyword. You should aim for about 350 words of content. But don't overdo it or it could look like spam to the search engines.
- 4. **Bold:** Use tags around the keyword at least once.
- 5. URL: Try to use the keyword in your page URL.





- 6. **Meta description:** Use it at least once in the meta description of the page, which should entice users to clickthrough to your site from the SERP.
- 7. **Link anchor text:** Try to ensure that the keyword is used in the anchor text of the pages linking to you.

Optimising media

Images, video and other digital assets should also be optimised with the relevant keywords. Search engines cannot decipher multimedia content as well as text, so they rely on the way that media is described to determine what it is about. Screen readers also read out these descriptions, which can help visually impaired users make sense of a website. In addition, media such as images and video are often also shown on the SERPs. Proper optimisation can give a brand more ownership of the SERP real estate and can also be used effectively to target competitive terms.



Read more about this in the Video marketing chapter.

Just as rich media can help emphasise the content on a page to a visitor, they can also help search engines to rank pages, provided they are labelled correctly.

Here are some ways to optimise images with keywords for SEO.

- Use descriptive, keyword-filled filenames.
- Use specific alt tags and title attributes.
- Add meta information to the image. Make sure this information is relevant.
- Use descriptive captions and keep relevant copy close to the corresponding media. For example, an image caption and neighbouring text will help to describe content of the image.
- Make sure that the header tags and images are relevant to each other.
- Think about what other digital assets you have and whether these can be optimised in line with your keyword strategy. For
 example, consider using app store optimisation (ASO) which is the process of optimising your mobile and web apps for the
 specific web stores in which they are distributed.



Find out how to optimise your apps in the Mobile channels and apps chapter.



Figure 8.5.4: An example of a page targeting the theme 'handmade bags *Adapted From Stokes*, 2013

∓ Note

As search engines become ever more sophisticated and user focused, creating entertaining and readable copy will be much more important than simply including keywords in your text.

The best way to ensure results is to focus on writing quality content while sticking to a few guidelines on tags and URLs. Remember, you want search engines to rank you highly for your content, but you also want to ensure that the content is a pleasure to read.

Regularly adding fresh, valuable content will also encourage the search engines to crawl your site more frequently.





Use your website and its pages to establish and reinforce themes. Information can always be arranged in some kind of hierarchical structure. Just as a single page can have a heading and then be broken down into sub-headings, a large website can have main themes that are broken down into sub-themes. Search engines will see these themes and recognise your website as one with rich content.

Link popularity

Links are a vital part of how the Internet works. The purpose of a link is to allow a user to go from one web page to another. Search engines, mimicking the behaviour of humans, also follow links.

Besides allowing search engine spiders to find websites, links are a way of validating relevance and indicating importance. When one page links to another, it is as if that page is voting or vouching for the destination page. Generally, the more votes a website receives, the more trusted it becomes, the more important it is deemed, and the better it will rank on search engines.

Links help send signals of trust. Signals of trust can come only from a third-party source. Few people will trust someone who says, "Don't worry, you can trust me!" unless someone else, who is already trusted, says, "Don't worry, I know him well. You can trust him." It is the same with links and search engines. Trusted sites can transfer trust to unknown sites via links.

Links help to validate relevance. Text links, by their very nature, contain text (thank you, Captain Obvious). The text that makes up the link can help validate relevance. A link such as 'Cape Town hotel' sends the message that, "You can trust that the destination site is relevant to the term 'Cape Town hotel'." If the destination web page has already used content to send a signal of relevance, the link simply validates that signal.

The parts of a link

Here is an example of the HTML code for a link:

Anchor Text

<a href> and are HTML tags that show where the link starts and ends.

www.targeturl.com/targetpage.htm is the page that the link leads to. You should make sure that you are linking to a relevant page in your site, and not just to the home page.

Anchor Text is the visible text that forms the link. This is the text that should contain the keyword you are targeting.

The link sends a signal that the target URL is important for the subject used in the anchor text.

There can be a lot more information included in this anatomy, such as instructions telling the search engine not to follow the link, or instructions to the browser on whether the link should open in a new window or not.

Anchor Text

rel="nofollow" can be included in links when you don't want to vouch for the target URL. Search engines do not count nofollow links for ranking purposes. This was introduced by Google to try to combat comment spam.

Not all links are created equal

Of course, not all links are equal. While link volume is the number of links coming to a specific page of your site, link authority looks at the value of the links. Some sites are more trusted than others. Since they are more trusted links from those sites are worth more. Likewise, some sites are more relevant than others to specific terms. The more relevant a site, the more value is transferred by the link.

Well-known and established news sites, government sites (.gov) and university domains (.ac) are examples of sites from which links can carry more weighting.

Sites with higher authority carry more link weight.



Figure 8.5.5: Links from universities and government bodies carry more weight Adapted From Screenshot, Google search bar, 2017







Discussion: Why are government and university websites considered to have more authority? What sorts of websites would they be likely to link to?

Search algorithms also consider relationships between linked sites. By analysing various elements, search engines try to determine if the links are natural links, or if they are manipulative, artificial links created solely for ranking purposes.

Manipulated links are worth very little compared to natural links and may even lead to a drop in search engine rankings. The Google algorithm update focused on reducing spammy links, called Penguin, was released in 2012.

The search engine algorithm will also determine the relevancy of the referring website to the site being linked to. The more relevant the sites are to each other, the better.

Also keep in mind that linking to valuable, relevant external resources can help to improve the visibility of your own site.

How does a website get more links?

With links playing such a vital role in search engine rankings and traffic for a website, everyone wants more of them. There are certainly dubious means of generating links, most of which can result in penalties from the search engines. However, here are some ways for ethical and honest website owners and marketers (that's what you are) to go about increasing links to their websites.

Create excellent, valuable content that others want to read

If people find your site useful, they are more likely to link to it. It is not necessary (or possible) to try to write content that will appeal to the whole of the Internet population. Focus on being the best in your industry and in providing value to the members of that community. Make sure that valuable content is themed around your keywords.



Figure 8.5.6: Ensure that you create remarkable, valuable content that people want to link to Adapted From Stokes, 2013

Infographics are visual and graphic representations of data, and are a popular type of content that is useful to users, and can encourage lots of traffic and inbound links.

Create tools and documents that others want to use

Interview experts in your field, and host those interviews on your website. Create useful PDF guides for your industry that people can download from your site. Think outside the box for quirky, relevant items that people will link to. Calculators are popular tools, and we don't just mean the ones that add two and two together. If you have a website selling diet books, for example, create a tool which helps users to calculate their body mass index (BMI) and target weight. Importantly, be unique!



Figure 8.5.7: The BBC website has several interactive elements, such as this BMI calculator Adapted From BBC, 2014



Create games

Creating a game that people want to play is a great way to generate links. Make sure that the theme of the game is based on the keywords for your website so that when others talk about and link to the game they are using your keywords.

Capitalise on software and widgets

Widgets, browser extensions and other software that users love to use all help to generate links for a website. For example, the TripAdvisor widget enables hotels, attractions, restaurants, destination marketers, and bloggers to add TripAdvisor content such as reviews, awards, and local area attractions to their website.

Be creative! The best link-building strategies are those that provide value and automate the linking process as much as possible. The easier it is for someone to share your link, the more likely they are to do it.

Competitor analysis

You can find out who is linking to your competitors, and which non-competing sites are ranking highly for your keywords. Use this information to identify sites to target for link requests.

Until January of 2017, using Google search along with the 'link:' command could be used to find these links and websites. Now, however, a better alternative is to use the data in your Google Search Console account, formerly known as Webmaster tools. Learn more here: www.google.com/webmasters

You can also use paid tools that provide link index data, such as:

- · majestic.com
- · www.linkresearchtools.com
- ahrefs.com
- · www.opensiteexplorer.org.

With all link-building tactics, make sure to use your keywords when communicating. You will be telling people how to link to you, and ensuring that search engines notice your authority.

User insights

Search engines want their results to be highly relevant to web users, to make sure that web users keep returning to the search engine for future searches. And the best way to establish what is relevant to users? By looking at how they use websites, of course!

User data is the most effective way of judging the true relevance and value of a website. For example, if users arrive on a website and leave immediately, chances are it wasn't relevant to their query in the first place. However, if a user repeatedly visits a website and spends a long time there, it is probably extremely relevant. When it comes to search engines, relevant, valuable sites are promoted, and irrelevant sites are demoted.

How do search engines access this data?

Search engines use cookies to maintain a history of a user's search activity. This will include keywords used, and websites visited from the search engine. Search engines gather data on the clickthrough and bounce rates of results.

Site speed, that is, the performance of your website, is one of the contributing factors to ranking in Google (Dean, 2016). In fact, this is becoming increasingly important. Check out Google's PageSpeed tool to help analyse your site's performance. It will recommend ways to improve your site's speed and mobile-friendliness: https:// developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/

Google's AMP project also underlines the importance of site speed for users and thus to Google themselves (and thus, of course, to your SEO). Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) essentially simplifies HTML, CSS, and JavaScript elements to serve stripped-down pages containing only the most essential elements to mobile users. This leads to anything from a 15% to an 85% improvement in site speed (Chung, 2015).

So, what does this mean for SEO? When it comes to a website, it must: *

- Be valuable enough to attract both visitors and links naturally.
- Retain visitors and make sure they return to the website.
- · Convert visitors.





Social and search

Social information is playing an ever-increasing role in search. Social content, such as Twitter messages or YouTube videos, can appear in the SERPs and there is a growing indication of social influence on search rankings.

There are several social factors to consider for social and search.

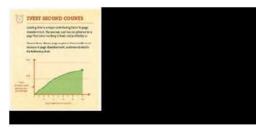


Figure 8.5.8: A Google search for Coca-Cola turns up several social media profiles Adapted From Screenshot Google search, 2017

1. Use social media properties to dominate brand SERPs.

When someone searches for your brand name, you can use your social media properties to 'own' more of the results on that page, reducing the likelihood that a user will end up on a competitor's website instead. Use your brand name when naming Twitter and Flickr profiles and Facebook and YouTube pages.

2. Social links are used as signals of relevance.

Links from social sites such as Twitter include 'rel=nofollow'. However, there is a strong indication that these links are in fact followed by search engines, and are used to determine relevance. If you focus on creating great content on your site and making sure that it is easy to share socially, you should see a result in your SEO efforts.

3. Personalised results are influenced by your online social network.

If you are logged in to a social network while searching such as Facebook for Bing, or your Gmail account for Google, you could see results from or influenced by your social circle. In Bing, for instance, results can include indications of what your friends have previously liked or shared via Facebook. On Google, you may be more likely to see a friend's blog for relevant searches.

4. Optimise for social search engines.

Google is the biggest search engine worldwide, YouTube is the second biggest and Facebook is growing. Even within social properties, users still use search to find the content they are looking for. Content that is housed on these properties should be optimised for the relevant social search engine as well.



Figure 8.5.9: A YouTube search for 'Chrysler' turns up official branded videos in the top positions *Adapted From Screenshot*, *YouTube*. 2017

Mobile search

As web-enabled mobile devices continue to grow in the market, and become easier to use, mobile search remains a key growth area. Mobile searches tend to be different to desktop searches. They are more navigational in nature as users tend to know where they want to end up, and users are often looking for concise, actionable answers.

The need for a website that performs well on mobile became crystal clear in 2015, when Google made what is called the mobilegeddon update, that is, sites that perform well on mobile are given higher rankings, while sites that do not perform well on mobile are penalised.





You can find a good overview of mobile SEO and how to create a website easily accessible via mobile here, note that responsive design is Google's recommendation: https://developers.google.com/webmas...es/mobile-seo/

Mobile search input can also be different from desktop search. As well as typing in search keywords, mobile users can search by voice, or by using images or scanning barcodes.

As with mobile web development, mobile SEO is a little different from desktop SEO, although the fundamental principles remain the same. Build usable and accessible sites with great content, and you've already come a long way.



Read more about this in the Web development and design chapter.

Differences in approach for mobile SEO are largely because:

- Search engines have the ability to deliver precise location-based results to mobile users.
- Usability is critical in sites for mobile devices.
- Search engines have less data to work with compared to traditional web in terms of site history, traffic, and inbound links.



Why is usability so important for mobile SEO?

The fundamentals of mobile SEO are not so different to those of desktop SEO.

1. A usable, crawlable site is very important.

Build mobile versions of your website that cater for mobile users having simple navigation and content stripped down to only what is required.

2. Content is important, and should be formatted for mobile usage.

Text and images should be optimised for the mobile experience, so no large file sizes! The meta data still matters and titles and descriptions are what users see in the SERPs.

3. Links are important.

You should link to your mobile site from your desktop site and vice versa. Submit your mobile site to relevant mobile directories.

4. Submit a mobile XML sitemap.

Mobile-specific sitemaps use the same protocols as standard XML sitemaps with the addition of a mobile tag.

5. Use the word 'mobile' on the mobile website, or use mobile top-level domains.

Make it explicit to search engines that this is the mobile version of your website and they are more likely to prioritise it as such.

Local search

Local search refers to search behaviour and results where location matters. Either results returned are local in nature, or results returned can be map based.

With blended SERPs, map-based results can be returned together with other types of results, depending on the type of search. As search engines become more sophisticated, location can be inferred and influence the types of results.





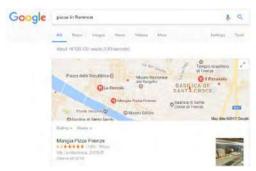


Figure 8.5.10: A Google search for 'pizza in Florence' turns up a range of location-based results, displayed on a map *Adapted From Screenshot*, *Google search*, 2017

A user may search for 'plumber london', for example, and the search will know to return results for London plumbers. These may even be returned on a map.

However, a user in London may search just for 'plumber'. The search can infer from the user's IP address that the user is in London, and still return results for London plumbers, since someone searching for this term is likely to be looking for a nearby service.

For search engines to return location-relevant results, they need to know the location of elements being searched. This is often determined from sites that include the name and address of a business. Note that this site may not be yours. Location results are often determined from various review sites, and the results can include some of those reviews.

∓ Note

Find the Small Business Guide to Google My Business here: www. simplybusiness.co.uk/ microsites/google-mybusiness-guide/

Search engines also allow businesses to 'claim' their locations. For example, Google's Google My Business function allows small businesses to enter their information, which will then populate into all Google services. A business can set up a local or a brand page on Google which, once completed, will give them access to various page management and optimisation tools as well as making them more visible on SERPs.

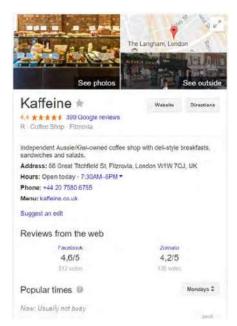


Figure 8.5.11: A Google search for a specific business reveals its Local page in the SERP Adapted From Screenshot, Google search, 2017

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8.6: What not to do

Black hat SEO refers to practices that attempt to game the search engines. If a search engine uncovers a website using unethical practices to achieve search engine rankings, it is likely to remove that website from its index.

Google publishes guidelines for webmasters, available through Google's Webmaster Central (www.google.com/webmasters). As well as outlining best practice principles, Google has supplied the following list of don'ts:

- Avoid hidden text or hidden links.
- Don't use cloaking or sneaky redirects.
- Don't send automated queries to Google.
- Don't load pages with irrelevant keywords.
- Don't create multiple pages, subdomains, or domains with substantially duplicated content.
- Don't create pages that include malicious behaviours such as phishing or installing viruses, trojans, or other malware.
- Avoid 'doorway' pages created just for search engines or other 'cookie cutter' approaches, such as affiliate programmes with
 little or no original content. If your site participates in an affiliate programme, make sure that your site adds value. Provide
 unique and relevant content that gives users a reason to visit your site first.
- Avoid link farms and focus on attracting quality, valuable links.

The bottom line: design websites for users first and foremost, and don't try to trick the search engines. It will only be a matter of time before they uncover the black hat techniques.

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8.7: Advantages and challenges

Optimising a website for search engines should entail optimising the website for users. Done properly, it should result in a better user experience, while ensuring that search engines index and rank the website well.

It can be tempting to focus on the technicalities of SEO while forgetting that both robots and humans need to read the same website. One should not be sacrificed for the other.

Search engines update their algorithms regularly. Each update is an attempt to improve search results, but can result in loss of rankings for some websites, depending on the update. A contingency plan, such as a pre-prepared search advertising campaign, needs to be in place to cope with a sudden drop in rankings.

As with any digital marketing practice, SEO should not be the only focus of digital marketing efforts. It works best when part of a holistic online marketing strategy The SEO community is constantly sharing insights about search algorithms, whenever a new one is released, do some research on the best ways to avoid being penalised.

The SEO community is constantly sharing insights about search algorithms, whenever a new one is released, do some research on the best ways to avoid being penalised.

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8.8: Tools of the trade

There are a number of tools available to assist with SEO. Some are made available by search engines, and some are developed by agencies and individuals who specialise in SEO. Most are available for free.

Google Search Console

www.google.com/webmasters

Google provides guidelines to webmasters and tools to help ensure your website is being indexed.

Open Site Explorer

moz.com/researchtools/ose

Moz provides a useful tool called Open Site Explorer, which can help you determine the value of links from particular sites.

Tools from SEOBook

tools.seobook.com

SEObook provides a number of tools that assist any SEO. For example, Rank Checker is a Firefox extension that allows you to save a number of keywords and to perform regular searches on them, giving you the ranking of your chosen URL for each keyword in the search engines selected. They also have tools to help with keyword discovery.

Keyword discovery tools

There are a number of tools available, some free and some paid for, to assist with keyword discovery. Some include:

Google AdWords Keyword Planner

adwords.google.com/keywordplanner

Trellian's KeywordDiscovery tool

www.keyworddiscovery.com

Wordtracker

www.wordtracker.com

Bing Ads Intelligence

advertise.bingads.microsoft.com/en-us/bing-ads-intelligence

SEO PowerSuite Rank Tracker (the trial version has limited functionality)

www.seopowersuite.com/rank-tracker

Link-Assistant .Com

link-assistant.com

Online forums

Webmaster World (www.webmasterworld.com) is frequented by SEOs and webmasters aiming to stay current with latest trends and search engine updates.

Google Merchant Center

www.google.com/merchants

The Google Merchant Center allows you to mark up any products you sell through eCommerce, ensuring that they also rank for relevant search results.

MozBAr

The Moz SEO toolbar (moz.com/products/pro/seo-toolbar) gives instant metrics while viewing SERPs or web pages.

Screaming Frog

Screaming Frog (www.screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider) allows you to crawl website URLs and analyse the onsite SEO.





AWR

AWR (www.awrcloud.com/login.php) gives you access to rankings for desktop, mobile, and local searches.

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8.9: Case study - Lloyds Pharmacy Online Doctor

One-line summary

A strong search strategy led to a 144% increase in organic sessions and a large increase in organic revenue for Lloyds Pharmacy Online Doctor (Digital Training Academy, 2016).

The challenge

Lloyds Pharmacy Online Doctor provides an extra channel for providing healthcare to patients with health problems that they may find embarrassing or inconvenient to treat using face-toface care. They needed to increase search visibility and thus organic traffic results to replace the heavy spending they were doing on PPC advertising to drive online traffic.

The solution

The brand's agency, Click Consult, identified gaps in the Online Doctor website's backlink profile and decided to enhance it. They invested in blogger, social, and PR outreach, identifying and creating relationships with industry influencers that would be willing to showcase innovative content to their audience.

They created the "Let's Type About Sex" campaign, creating an app and animations, carefully placing their content, which led to strong blogger engagement.



Figure~8.9.1: One article~in~the~Let's~Type~About~Sex~campaign~Adapted~From~Screenshot,~Google~search,~2017~Adapted~From~Screenshot,~Google~search,~2017~Adapted~From~Screenshot,~Google~search,~2017~Adapted~From~Screenshot,~Google~search,~2017~Adapted~From~Screenshot,~

The results

The campaign led to an increase in the authority of the site, as well as:

- An increase in the number of page 1 terms to 36
- A 144% increase in organic sessions
- A 43% increase in overall sessions
- A 77.59% increase in organic revenue
- A 17% increase in online revenue.



Figure 8.9.2: The Lloyds Pharmacy Online Doctor website Adapted From Screenshot, Lloyds pharmacy, 2017

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8.10: The bigger picture

Search engine optimisation can be influenced and enhanced by most other digital marketing campaigns and they should all be approached with this in mind.

SEO and content marketing go hand in hand, since SEO relies on fresh, relevant and popular content and content marketing can be informed by SEO keywords and insights.

For example, search advertising campaigns can provide valuable keyword research, which can then be fed into the SEO strategy. Social media marketing can generate an enormous amount of links to a website. Digital PR aims to generate links too, and these can be optimised for search engines.

User research and web analytics can generate insights into how users find the website, which can inform SEO strategy, and effective SEO techniques can provide insights into user behaviour.

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8.E: Search engine optimisation (SEO)(Exercises)

Case study questions

- 1. Why did Click Consult decide to focus on improving Online Doctor's backlink strategy?
- 2. Why did improving the site's authority also improve their SEO results?
- 3. Why did Online Doctor want to focus on SEO rather than PPC?
- 4. Do you think search engine algorithms can help businesses become better at what they do?

Chapter questions

- 1. Why do links send signals of trust to search engines?
- 2. Why is it better to have more niche pages of content than fewer pages that cover a lot of content?
- 3. How can analysing the links to a competitor's website help aid your own link building strategy?
- 4. Why is it important for search engines to keep updating their algorithms?
- 5. If metadata are no longer used for ranking purposes, why do they still have an important role in SEO?

Further reading

www.moz.com – Moz provides regular articles, guides and blog posts covering all things SEO. As well as sharing insights from their own SEO efforts, there are also vibrant forums where you can learn from others.

www.seobook.com – Aaron Wall's SEObook.com provides training and tools for SEO, as well as regular articles and posts.

www.webmasterworld.com – a forum for webmasters, from beginners to those who've been around. A great resource for a budding SEO.

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8.S: Search engine optimisation (SEO)(Summary)

The average website receives a significant proportion of its traffic from search engines, highlighting the importance of SEO.

There are two types of search results:

- 1. Organic or natural results
- 2. Paid results.

SEO aims to improve a website's ranking in the organic results. Search engine optimisation is a fairly technical practice but it can easily be broken down into five main areas:

- 1. A search engine friendly website structure
- 2. A well-researched list of keywords
- 3. Content optimised to target those keywords
- 4. Link popularity
- 5. User insights.

Growing trends in SEO include the influence of social content on search results, mobile SEO and local search. Google is placing more and more emphasis on a mobile-first approach.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Create - Digital Copywriting

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn:

- The principles of writing for your web audience.
- Which types of web copy are available to you.
- The basics of HTML for formatting online text.
- How to write for search engine optimisation (SEO), focusing specifically on keywords.
- The best practices for successful online copywriting.
- 9.1: Introduction to Digital Copywriting
- 9.2: Key terms and concepts
- 9.3: Core principles
- 9.4: Implementing writing for digital
- 9.5: Advantages and challenges
- 9.6: Measuring Success
- 9.7: References
- 9.8: Tools of the trade
- 9.9: Case study Yelp
- 9.10: The bigger picture
- 9.E: Digital copywriting(Exercises)
- 9.S: Writing for Digital(Summary)

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9.1: Introduction to Digital Copywriting

Online copy is a hardworking multi-tasker. It must provide information to visitors, engage with them, convince them to take a desired action and, all the while, convey brand ethos. It also has to provide context and relevance to search engines. It needs to achieve all this without seeming as if the author is trying too hard to ensure a particular outcome.

You will see in this chapter that writing for digital is different from writing for more traditional media. Because of the sheer volume of information on the Internet, quality content is king. Many people argue that content is one of the most significant determinants of the success of your online campaigns. Considering it is one of the most direct lines of communication with your consumers, this is not surprising. Therefore, you will see many links between this chapter and the chapter on Content marketing strategy.

∓ Note

Read more about this in the Content marketing strategy chapter.

Online copywriting involves everything from the text on a website to the subject line of an email and all things in between. From PR articles of 800 words to four-line search adverts, if it's being read on a screen, no matter what the size of that screen, from desktop computer to mobile phone, it's online copy. Writing for digital does not mean the traditional rules of writing need to be abandoned. By and large, the foundations remain.

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9.2: Key terms and concepts

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Term	Definition
Above the fold	The content that appears on a screen without a user having to scroll.
Active verb	A word that conveys action or behaviour, and in a call to action, tells a reader what to do.
Audience	The group of people at which a marketing communication is targeted.
Benefit	The positive outcome for a user that a feature provides.
Call to Action (CTA)	A phrase written to motivate the reader to take action such as sign up for our newsletter or book car hire today
Dynamic keyword insertion	In paid search advertising, this allows keywords used in searches to be inserted automatically into advert copy.
Feature	A prominent aspect of a product that is beneficial to users.
HyperText Markup Language (HTML)	Code used to structure the information and features within a web page.
Keyword stuffing	The process of intentionally putting too many keywords into the metadata of the website or using many irrelevant keywords. Search engines can penalise websites using this practice.
Mass customisation	Tailoring content for many individuals. Metadata information that can be entered about a web page and the elements on it in order to provide context and relevant information to search engines.
Persona	A character created to define a group of readers in order to speak to them as though they were a unique reader, creating the feeling of a one- on-one conversation.
Paid search advertising	Usually refers to advertising on search engines, sometimes called PPC advertising. The advertiser pays only for each click of the advert.
Sender alias	The name that is chosen to appear in the sender or 'from' field of an email.
Search engine optimisation (SEO)	The process of improving website rankings on search engine results pages.
Search engine results page (SERP)	The actual results returned to the user based on their search query.
Tone of voice	The register, formality and personality that comes through in the text.
Unique selling point (USP)	The aspect that makes your offering different from your competitors'.

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9.3: Core principles

Writing for an audience

In marketing and advertising, knowing your audience is vital. It will guide you in developing your content strategy, determining the topics they are interested in, and help you organise information in a way that makes sense to them. It will direct how you express your copy for your audience.

Step one of writing for digital is to ensure you have researched your audience and understand what they want. Once you have a clear idea about this, you can figure out how to fulfil those needs using your copy. Smashing Magazine (2015) recommends answering the following questions:

- 1. Who are you writing for?
- 2. What is the main message you want to get across?
- 3. Where does the action take place (where will it be read)?
- 4. When is it relevant?
- 5. Why is it important (what's the goal)?

For example, your answers might look like this:

- 1. Who: First-time moms
- 2. Message: Our baby kit can help you
- 3. Where: Parenting forums/magazines/social media
- 4. When: Immediately before and after the birth of a child
- 5. Why: Because first-time moms need help (and because we want them to buy our product).

When you are researching your audience, there are two useful concepts to bear in mind, the audience of one, and personas.

The audience of one

According to Price and Price, audiences were traditionally thought of as a vast and vaguely defined crowd (Price & Price, 2002). Because the web provides a voice to individuals and niche groups, the concept of this mass audience is disintegrating.

Price and Price go on to argue that the Internet has led to an audience of one (Price & Price, 2002). What does this mean? While your audience is not literally one person (and if it is, thank your mum for reading your copy, but spend some time growing your readership), it is not a vast, vaguely defined crowd either. Instead, the web has many niche audiences who are used to being addressed as individuals. Indeed, The Economist Group (2015) confirms that personalised marketing is becoming more granular, helping to create specialised customer experiences that will keep them coming back.

The individual that you have in mind when you are writing could also be called a persona.

Take the time to think about **how** web and mobile content is consumed in the physical world. It's usually an exclusive action, so write your copy this way.

Personas

A persona is a profile that a writer creates to embody the characteristics of the target audience for whom he or she is writing.

Personas are based on the profile of readers of your copy. Creating a profile is all about considering the characteristics of your readers and their needs and desires. When you are building this profilethere are a number of things that you should consider about your audience:

- Are they primarily male, female or a mixture?
- How old are they?
- What are their other demographics and psychographics?

Once you understand these simple characteristics, you can ask yourself some more in-depth questions. If you are selling something, questions could include:

- How do they make purchasing decisions?
- Do they compare many service providers before selecting one?





• Do they make lists of questions and call in for assistance with decision making, or do they make purchase decisions spontaneously based on a special offer?



Figure 9.3.1: A sample persona *Adapted From UXMaq*, n.d.

Understanding the reader profiles of your readers is an important process and the best copy usually results from extensive time spent figuring out your audience.

Tailoring your copy to your audience does not necessarily limit you to one persona.

Digital copy can be structured so that it caters for several personas. Consider that your various marketing channels may have different audiences, so ensure that you have a persona for each main platform you use. However, you need to spend time understanding their needs before you are able to write copy that addresses these personas.

Types of web copy

Whether it is long or short, the purpose of content is to communicate a message. Communication implies that the message has been both received and understood. The considerations covered here are aimed at ensuring that when you distribute a message, it is communicated effectively to the people whom you want to receive it.

To communicate the intended message effectively, content needs to be:

- · Clear and concise
- Easy to read
- Well-written
- Well-structured.

Content written for the web can be divided into two broad categories, short copy and long copy. The division is by no means scientific.

Short copy

On the web, writers often have very little time and space to get a message across to a visitor, and to entice them to take action. This is especially true of banner and search adverts but is also important across all digital marketing disciplines. Probably the most important short copy anywhere is the call to action.

Call to action

Users scan web pages and look for clues on what to do. Tell them. A call to action is a short, descriptive instruction that explicitly tells a reader what to do, for example, 'Click here' or, 'Buy this now'. Any time there is an action you want a reader to take, a call to action should instruct them on what to do. This means using active verbs when you write, and crafting hyperlinks to be clear instructions that resonate with your visitors at each step in the conversion process.

Also, know where to place your call to action so that it makes sense to a reader's eye. For example, depending on the structure of your page, it might be better to start with your call to action and then to qualify it. In other cases, ending the page with your call to action may have a stronger impact on the reader as they may be more likely to act once they have the information they need to do so. This depends on your product and the action you want your audience to take.





Banner advertising involves clear calls to action, and they can also be used in social media posts, search adverts, content marketing and more. Call to action copy is not limited to short copy. Email newsletters and promotions should also make use of calls to action and we even see them all over web pages. Each piece of online copy should be written with a CTA or at least with the question, "What's next?" in mind.



Figure 9.3.2: CTAs should be clear and enticing Adapted From Screenshot, Lynda.com, 2016

A good call to action resonates with the action the users need to take, as opposed to the technical function that is performed. For example, if a user has entered an email address to sign up to your email newsletter, the action button should say 'Sign up' and not 'Submit'. Make sure you write your instructions for humans. Think about what real people prefer to read!

Also consider what actions mean offline. For an email newsletter, 'Sign up' can have very different connotations from 'Subscribe'. Furthermore, 'Subscribe' is very different from 'Subscribe for free'.

Whereas subscriptions have connotations of costs, 'Sign up' does not carry the same burden. However, 'Subscribe for free' could imply greater value as something that would normally carry a cost is available to you for free.



Since the call to action is key to converting customers, this is an important element to test. What iterations of your main call to action could you try?



Figure 9.3.3: A Coursera CTA. Good CTAs are short and to the point Adapted From Screenshot, Coursera, 2016

Titles and subject lines



The Huffington Post is well known for publishing articles with compelling headlines. Visit www. huffingtonpost.com to have a look at how they grab the reader's attention.

Titles and subject lines often form part of a body of long copy. However, they are important enough to be discussed as stand-alone short copy. Titles and subject lines are there for a very important reason, they tell a reader whether or not they should read further. They are the gateway to your content.

Consider the following titles:

- · Guide to online copywriting
- Ten steps to online copywriting that sells.

The second title conveys more information and excitement to the reader, which helps the reader to make a decision to read further.

Subject lines are like headlines for emails, and can make the difference between an email being deleted instantly and being opened and read. As with a headline, which should be carefully crafted like the headline of a newspaper, use the subject line to make it clear what the email is about. For example, if there is a promotion in the email, consider putting it in the subject line as well.







An email subject line is the first cue your audience receives to help them decide whether to open an email or not. How can you make it count?

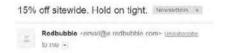


Figure 9.3.4: A direct, enticing email subject line Adapted From Screenshot, email

Titles, headlines and subject lines need to be both persuasive and enticing. Consider what need your copy is meeting for your readers, and express that first. Highlighting a benefit to your readers upfront means they are more likely to engage, even if they don't necessarily need your product or service at the time.

Search adverts

Search adverts have very limited space and time to get a message across and there is plenty of competition for a reader's attention. These few lines of copy need to work hard to ensure a top return on investment. Search adverts typically follow the same basic structure and have strict character limits for each line. The new Google expanded ads are as follows:

Heading 1 – Heading 2 (max. 30 characters each) One description field (max. 80 characters) www.DisplayURL.com (uses your final URL's domain with two optional "path" fields max. 15 characters each).



Read more about this in the Search advertising chapter.

With a limited character count, it can seem daunting to communicate information that entices the right people to click through and also differentiates you from your competition. Testing variations of copy is the best way to determine what works best for your campaign. While copywriters are not generally responsible for writing paid search ads, they are often brand custodians and should review all copy representing a brand.

Social copy

Social media allows brands to have conversations with their customers and fans. This gives consumers a powerful voice and the ability to tell brands what they want. There are a few considerations to keep in mind when creating content for social media.

• Research is vital. Understand what type of content community members want. Meaningful and relevant content is more likely to be shared. Hashtags are fairly important for many platforms so research any hashtags you use to avoid making costly mistakes, like DiGiorno did with its use of the #WhyIStayed hashtag. This hashtag was part of an awareness campaign for domestic abuse and was used in tweets explaining why users had chosen to stay in abusive relationships.



Figure 9.3.5: DiGiorno research fail From Adapted From PoMoFo, n.d.

- **Remember that it's a conversation.** Your content must be personable and appealing. Use personality and convey the humanity of your brand in order to generate conversation and encourage comments.
- **Write shareable content.** Offer value and be insightful. Ultimately you should aim to create an overall perception that your brand is the thought leader in its industry. Shareable content is credible content.
- **Avoid overly promotional content.** Community members are likely to see right through a sales pitch. Instead, think about how your content can be useful to your reader. Remember, with content, value to the reader should come first, with value to the





brand as a secondary consideration.

• **Have a solid communication protocol.** These can be internal guidelines for organisations to follow on how they use and communicate on social media platforms. This also ensures consistency, which is very important for creating a brand personality for readers to engage with.



Figure 9.3.6: Relevant and on-brand social media copy Adapted From Claire's Digital Marketing Blog, 2016



All of these points are covered in more detail in the chapters on Social media platforms and Social media strategies.

Long copy

Online copywriting is not just about short, sharp calls to action and attentiongrabbing headlines and adverts. It also covers longer pieces of content.

Longer copy has advantages. Primarily, it allows you to provide more information and encourage the reader to convert. You can foster a relationship with a reader, whether it is on a blog, through email communications, or through articles and news releases. With more words and space available, you are able to build a voice and a personality into your writing.

The expression 'long copy' is somewhat misleading. As online readers behave slightly differently from offline readers, it is unlikely that a skilled copywriter will be called on to create copy for the web that is longer than 800 or 1 000 words per page although, of course, there are exceptions to this.

Long copy needs to be structured and formatted so that it's easy for attentionstarved web readers to digest. Web users tend to scan pages quickly to determine whether or not they will read further. Specifically in longer copy, you need to take this into consideration.

There are many types of long online copy including website copy! Here, we will focus on a few that are useful for marketing:

- News releases
- · Articles for online syndication
- Emails
- Blog posts
- Advertorials
- · Website.

Bear in mind that this is by no means an exhaustive list.

News releases

News releases are a staple of public relations. As the Internet grows, so does the overlap between PR and marketing. As a result, many copywriters are called upon to write news releases for online distribution as this is a standardised format for releasing information. Originally intended to provide information for journalists, news releases are increasingly being read by users bypassing the journalists. This means that they should be written in the brand tone, be accessible to the general public, and be optimised and formatted according to the principles of good web writing (more on those later). Also remember to focus on a compelling headline to win over your reader.







Figure 9.3.7: An online press release from Apple Adapted From Apple, 2016

Emails



Read more about this in the Direct marketing email and mobile chapter.

Email as a channel is an integral part of many online marketing strategies. Of course, content is a huge part of this; it comprises the words in an email with which a user engages.

By nature, emails are the ideal medium for communicating and building relationships with your consumers. This customer relationship marketing helps to increase retention. Successful email campaigns provide value to their readers. This value may vary from campaign to campaign. Newsletters can offer:

- Humour and entertainment
- Research and insight
- · Information and advice
- Promotions and special offers.



Figure 9.3.8: The Litmus updates newsletter Adapted From Screenshot, DueSouth Escapes newsletter, October 2017

Blogging

Blogs can be very successful marketing tools. They're an excellent way to communicate with staff, investors, industry members, journalists and prospective customers. Blogging also helps to foster a community around a brand and provides an opportunity to garner immediate feedback. This is an audience made up of players vital to the success of a company which is why it is important to get blogging right. A key consideration is the quality of your headlines. You have to convince your reader to grant you their attention.







Figure 9.3.9: A blog post on the Fast Company blog Adapted From Screenshot, Fast Company Blog, 2016

There is plenty to be gained from the process of blogging and obviously, the value, as with email marketing, lies in the content. This communication channel provides an opportunity for you to foster an online identity for your brand as well as giving your company a voice and a personality. This happens through the content you distribute as well as the tone you use to converse with your readers. There is more information on blogging in the chapter on Social media platforms.

Website copy

Website copy is a type of long copy, and the principles that apply to long copy in general also hold true for websites. Digital copywriters need to structure content effectively so that users want to engage with the site and read on. This is especially important when people access a site from their mobile phone, where the small screen size drastically reduces the content users will see before they scroll. Some ways to create digital copy that is usable and appropriate for an online audience include:

- Writing text that can be easily scanned
- Using meaningful headings and sub-headings
- · Highlighting or bolding key phrases and words
- · Using bulleted lists
- Having a well-organised site.
- **Limiting each paragraph to one main idea or topic.** The leading sentence should give a clear indication of what the paragraph is about. Readers can scan each paragraph without missing any essential information.
- Cutting the fluff. Get rid of meaningless turns of phrase and words that unnecessarily bulk up copy.
- **Removing redundancies.** These often creep into writing by accident, but you should work to eliminate them in order to get to the point.
- **Including multimedia wherever relevant.** Some readers may be more partial to video than reading, for example, see http://www.nytimes.com/ projects/2012/snow-fall/#/?part=tunnel-creek.

Writing in the mobile age

Because of the number of people who use the internet via mobile phones, content is usually written for mobile first these days. Here are some points on creating digital copy for all screen sizes that encourages interaction and achieves marketing and business goals.



Read more about this in the Mobile channels and apps chapter.

- **Get to the point**. With limited screen space, there really is no room for wordy text. You need to determine exactly what your message is and get to the point quickly! This is particularly true for content above the fold.
- **Put the important bits up front**. This includes contact information and navigation links. Word these clearly so that people know what action to take.
- Condense information to its simplest form. Ensure that it still makes sense and is grammatically sound.







Once users have decided to navigate further into your mobile website, you can increase the amount of copy on the pages.

- **Use a call to action upfront**. Mobile web users are goal-orientated so provide them with the next step early on.
- Use headings and subheadings for scanning.



Figure 9.3.10: Mobile-optimised copy vs. traditional web copy Adapted From Mis, 2017

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9.4: Implementing writing for digital

Apart from the information already covered, writing good copy involves a number of points and best practices that you should keep in mind.

HTML for formatting

HTML stands for HyperText Markup Language and it's the foundation of documents on the web. HTML tags tell browsers how to present content. HTML tags are written in brackets that look like arrows < >.

A good digital copywriter will also be able to use basic HTML to lay out copy knowing that the appearance of the page will get his or her words read. It should be easy for users to skip and skim the copy and it should be easy for them to find the parts that are most relevant to them.

When writing online copy you can use an HTML editor where you insert the tags yourself or, a 'What You See Is What You Get' (WYSIWYG) editor, which works in a similar way to a word processor.

Basic HTML is not difficult to use, and will help you format your content. Here are some basic HTML tags:

To bold: phrase you want to bold

To italicise: <i>phrase you want to italicise</i>

To underline: <u>phrase you want to underline</u>

To list: lines you want to list

To create a paragraph:

paragraph text

To inert a line break: <br

To insert a link: phrase you want to link

To insert a heading: <h1>Level one heading</h1>

To insert a sub-heading: <h2>Level two heading</h2>

The tags also help search engines to identify how the content has been laid out on the page.

The best way to get to grips with HTML is to start using it online, where you can see first-hand how the tags work.



Right click on any web page and click 'view source'. Can you find the paragraph tab

SEO copywriting

A good online copywriter will have a thorough understanding of SEO and how this can be integrated into his or her writing. Key phrases can be used in long and short copy alike, to great effect.

Optimising for human and machine users

One of the most notable differences between writing for print and writing for digital is that when it comes to the latter, you are writing not only for an audience, but also for the search engines. While your human audience should always be your first priority, your copy also needs to speak to the search engines in a language they can understand. This digital tactic has been covered in greater depth in the chapter on Search engine optimisation. Optimising your copy for search engines is important because your target audience is most likely to be using a search engine to find the products or services you are offering. If the search engine is not aware that your content can give users the answers they are looking for on a particular subject, it won't send traffic to your website.







Read more about this in the Search engine optimisation chapter

Optimising your content for search is the process of telling search engines what content you are publishing. Keywords, key phrases, and themed pages are an integral part of this. Google is becoming increasingly semantically aware and can recognise synonyms, so repeatedly using specific keywords is no longer important; instead, good SEO copy focuses a page around particular themes, using keywords relevant to those themes.

SEO copywriters need to know how to blend keywords into their content and how to use them in conjunction with text formatting and metadata. In addition to assisting you with structuring your content, these tags indicate relevance and context to search engines. Some of the tags are used by screen readers, and so they assist visitors with technical limitations to access your content. The meta description can also be used by search engines on the search engine results pages (SERPs).

Key phrase

A keyword refers to a single word used in a search query, while a key phrase refers to more than one word used in the search query.

Key phrase research is an important element of digital copywriting, and is covered in detail in the chapter on SEO. Having identified the themes of your web pages, keyword research should be used to identify what phrases your target audience use when searching for you. It is important to know what people are searching for, so that you can provide what they need.



Read more about this in the Search engine optimisation chapter

Once you have a good idea of the words people are using to find information online (online tools exist that will guide you in this), you can create pages themed around the use of these phrases and their synonyms. A good copywriter is able to create these themed pages and use keywords/synonyms seamlessly, so that the reader cannot detect that they have been included.

Key phrases can be integrated into nearly every type of content that you write for the web. Below are a few places where Red & Yellow tend to include key phrases and synonyms on our website.

Page title

The page title appears at the top of a user's browser and should be able to tell the user (and the search engine spiders, of course) what the main theme of the page is. The page title is usually limited to under 60 characters, including spaces. The key phrase should be used as close to the beginning of the title as possible, followed by the name of the company or website.

Page URL

The main key phrase for the page should be used whenever possible in the URL for the page. If you are using a blogging tool or content management system (CMS), the URL is generated from the page title, so using the key phrase in the page title should ensure that it is in the URL as well.



Figure 9.4.1: The Red & Yellow School home page URL Adapted From Screenshot, Google search, 2017

Meta description

The meta description is a short paragraph describing the page content. This summary is usually shown on the SERPs if it contains the search term, which means that it needs to entice users to click through with a strong CTA. The spiders use the meta description to deduce the topic of the page, so using targeted key phrases is important here. Copy should generally be between 150 and 160 characters, including spaces.



Every page on a website must have a unique URL, page title and meta description.





Primrose Bakery co.ukr = www.primrose-bakery.co.ukr = control bakery offering bespoke frandmade capcaken, layer cakins, loaves and skoles, just like you would make at home. Deliving 7 days a week.

Figure 9.4.2: Example of a meta description Adapted From Screenshot, Google search, 2017

Meta keywords

Meta keywords are the list of the words and phrases that are important on a web page. Using targeted key phrases is important, but remember, no keyword stuffing! The meta keywords are limited to 200 characters, including spaces. This is, however, no longer a major source of information used by search engines though it certainly doesn't hurt to include these.

Headings and sub-headings

Spiders assign more relevance to the text used in headings, so it is important to use your key phrases in the headings on your page. It also helps you to structure your content. Headings are created with HTML tags. Heading structures are set out like this:

<h1> Main page headings
<h2> Sub-headings
<h3> Information under the sub-headings

Figure 9.4.3: Heading structures Adapted From Stokes, 2013

Having a good heading hierarchy is important as spiders use it to move through your page and understand its relevance to the search query; it also helps human readers to scan your page.

On-page copy

For on-page copy, remember that you will be optimising for a theme rather than for a set key phrase. This means you want to use relevant synonyms as well as your keywords without being overt about it meaning they should not stand out too much.

For SEO effectiveness, a page of web copy should be at least 250 words long. On this page, use keywords and synonyms that fit the theme as and when required.

The page should not be so long that the user needs to scroll continuously to get to the end of it. If you find the page is getting exceptionally long, consider breaking it into different web pages for different sections. In this way, you could add several pages of optimised copy focused on one theme instead of one very long page. This will benefit your reader if they are looking for something that is particular to the shorter page.

Links to your optimised page

The text used to link from one page to another is considered important by search engine spiders, so try to ensure that your key phrase is used when linking to the optimised page. The anchor text of links should include the key phrase of the page being linked to, and not the page being linked from.



When submitting promotional copy to other sites that includes links back to your own website, which phrases would be most important to include in this link text?



Figure 9.4.4: Links on a Google Support page dealing with Google Quality Adapted From Score Screenshot, Google support for Adwords, 2017

Images: Alt text and title tags

Alt text refers to the 'alt' attribute for the HTML tag: this is the text that appears in the caption. It is used in HTML to attribute text to an image on a web page, normally to describe what an image is about and display text in instances where the image is unable to load. While this is handy for humans and aids accessibility, it is also used for another reason, namely, search engine spiders can't read images, but they can read the alt text. The image title tag shows when you hover with your mouse over an image, depending on your browser, and can also be read by the search engine spider. This will also help users find your images on Google's Image Search, which can also be helpful in driving traffic to your page.





Best practices for online copywriting

Now that we have covered the basic theoretical principles of writing for digital, we need to look at the best practices to apply whenever you are writing copy for publication on the web. There are several things that you need to consider.

- 1. Does your copy convey a creative idea?
- 2. Does the layout of your copy make it easier to read?
- 3. Is your meaning clear and direct?
- 4. Does the copy convey the features and benefits necessary to make your point (if applicable)?
- 5. Will your readers clearly understand the content of your writing?
- 6. Is the content of your message structured in a logical manner for desktop and/or mobile reading?

The rest of this chapter will be dedicated to ensuring that you have the knowledge and tools to answer these questions.

Conceptual copywriting

Most of the points in this chapter have focused on the practicalities of writing online copy such as getting information across and encouraging user actions and engagement.

Copy should also be creative, beautiful and thought provoking.

Your copy should express an idea that grips readers. Conceptual copywriting is about making an idea memorable merely by using words to express it. The idea is central, and the words are the vehicles that convey it. Clever wording, smart ideas and thoughtful copy should make the reader pause, think, and want to engage more deeply with your idea.

While images are often used to express powerful ideas, words can be just as effective. Consider this famous example, which demonstrates how a small change in the copy can radically affect one's perception of an idea:

A woman without her man is nothing.

A woman: without her, man is nothing.

Writing conceptually means conveying a brand message in a creative way to make an emotive connection with a specific audience. It's all about bringing a big idea or concept to life.

Layout and legibility

As we have mentioned already, readers process content differently online from the way that they read offline. On the web, readers tend to scan text rather than read every word.

As a result, online copy is judged at a glance, not just on content, but first and foremost by its layout. It needs to look as if it's easy to read before a user will choose to read it. Digital copy should be easy to scan. This means using:

- Clear and concise headings
- Bulleted and numbered lists
- · Short paragraphs
- Bold and italics
- · Descriptive links.

It's easy to see this in practice.

Before	After
Tea has been drunk for thousands of years, and as people are growing more health conscious, tea sales are increasing. Personal preference plays an important role in making the perfect cup of tea. However, using fresh water ensures maximum oxygen in the tea, and warming the teapot first is standard practice. Tradition dictates one teabag per person, and one for the pot. Tea is served with milk, lemon, honey or sugar, according to taste.	Worldwide, tea sales are increasing as people are becoming more health conscious. Here are some tips on making the perfect cup of tea: • Use fresh water (for maximum oxygen) • Warm the teapot first • Use one teabag per person, and one for the pot The perfect cup of tea is based on personal preference and taste. Tea can be served with: Milk or lemon Honey or sugar





Language

The basic principles of good writing apply online, but because your audience's attention is limited and often divided, it is best to keep it simple and tailor your language to your audience.

Tone: The tone of your content should be consistent with the brand for which you are writing. Brands will often have full tone-of-voice documentation. If they don't, read some of the brand material to get a feel for the company's style of communication. Compare the difference in tone in the examples below.

\checkmark Example 9.4.1 of Tone A: Invested

We provide a diverse range of financial products and services to a niche client base in three principal markets, the United Kingdom, South Africa and Australia, as well as certain other geographies.

Investec's strategic goals are motivated by the desire to develop an efficient and integrated business on an international scale through the active pursuit of clearly established core competencies in the group's principal business areas (Investec, 2016).

\checkmark Example 9.4.2 of Tone B: Nando's

The story of Nando's starts hundreds of years ago with the first Portuguese explorers who set sail for the East in search of the legendary spice route.

Lured by the promises of our beautiful continent, they came ashore and there, under our famous sun, they discovered the African Bird's Eye Chilli or as we know it (and love it), PERi-PERi. Unique in its properties, they used it to create a one-of-a-kind sauce that ignited the fires of passion inside them.

A few centuries later, in 1987, it was the same PERi-PERi sauce that inspired Fernando Duarte to invite his buddy Robbie Brozin to a small Portuguese eatery in Rosettenville, South Africa, to try some PERi-PERi marinated chicken. In his own words, "I knew nothing about the food business, I just knew that it was the best chicken I had ever tasted." (Nando's, 2016).

Active voice: Grammatically speaking, people expect characters to execute actions that have an impact on objects or other characters.

For example: The girl ate a chocolate.

- The girl is the subject.
- Eating is the action
- The chocolate is the object that is affected by the action

This is known as the active voice. Unfortunately, writers often use the passive voice. This turns the object into the subject forcing the reader to think more carefully about the sentence. For example: The chocolate was eaten by the girl. The human brain automatically translates this into the format that it expects. According to Price and Price, this adds 25% to the time required to understand a sentence (Price & Price, 2002).

When writing for the web, it is better to use the active voice.

Neologisms and buzzwords: Sometimes the World Wide Web is referred to as the Wild Wild Web as it is an environment where anything goes. The ever-growing numbers of social media participants, for example, habitually play fast and loose with grammar.

With new services and products being developed daily, it can feel as if the list of new words, and their uses, is growing faster than you can keep up with. Dictionaries and reference guides celebrate this regularly with a 'word of the year', usually one that has been in heavy use on the Internet for the three years preceding its entry into a dictionary.

For example, in 2015, the laughing emoji was voted word of the year by the editors of the New Oxford American dictionary to reflect the worldwide increase in popularity of the emoji (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015).



Figure 9.4.5: The Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year, 2015 Adapted From Telegraph UK, 2015





Online services can quickly become verbs in everyday language, so we say 'Googling something' instead of 'searching on Google', and of 'Facebooking someone'. Bing is still trying desperately to work its way into everyday conversation in this way.

Always remember you are writing for your users so talk in the same way that they talk. If your content is aimed at cutting-edge early adopters, then pepper it with the latest buzzwords. If your audience does not know the difference between Chrome, Safari, and Microsoft Edge, then be cautious when using a word that did not exist the day before.

Features and benefits: Writing compelling copy means conveying to readers why they should perform an action. While features may seem all-important, you need to communicate the benefits of the features to the user.

You also need to communicate the benefits in a way that makes the user think about the product's role in their life. Write so that they imagine actually owning the product.

- **Feature:** a prominent aspect of a product or service that can provide benefit to users. It describes what the product does.
- **Benefit:** the positive outcome for a user that a feature provides. It can be the emotional component of what the user gets out of the product.

Why would your audience want to buy your product or service? Put aside the features for a moment; what will compel your audience to buy on an emotional level? How does it address their wants and needs?

For example, consider a home entertainment system. Features could include surround sound and a large flat-screen television. The benefit is a cinema-quality experience in your own home.

Features and benefits are very different. Features are important to the company that provides the product or service. Benefits are important to those who decide to use the product or service.

Persuasive writing makes use of features, benefits and active verbs to create appealing messages for your personas:

Enjoy cinema-quality movie nights in your own home with a surround-sound home entertainment system.

Logic

The structure of online copy can be compared closely to the structure of a newspaper article. The headline, usually containing the most important bit of information in a story, comes first. Online, visitors decide quickly whether or not to read a page. As a result of this, the most important information needs to be at the top.

Start with the summary or conclusion which is the main idea of the article.

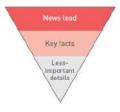


Figure 9.4.6: Information hierarchy Adapted From Stokes, 2013

While clever word play in headings can attract some attention, these need to be written in line with the objective you want to achieve. The copy is multitasking, not only is it informing visitors of what to expect; it is also telling search engine spiders what the page is about.

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9.5: Advantages and challenges

The advantages of good digital copywriting are simple, your content will work better, your SEO will benefit, and your customers will find it easier to absorb your material. Clear call to actions can also help to increase response rates.

However, some challenges do exist. The primary challenge is learning what, exactly, good copy is. This is important because bad copy can really turn off your customer! Meeting SEO requirements without being spammy can be tricky, and you need a clear set of writing guidelines for your organisation to follow.

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9.6: Measuring Success

Measuring copywriting performance is important. How will you know what's working and what isn't unless you do so?

Often, brands use conversions as the primary way to measure success. If your copy doesn't convert, what's the point? The goals that you measure will depend on the goals of your copy. If you want to boost subscribers to your newsletter or blog, then the number of subscribers will be your measure of success. If you want to increase sales, then the number of sales will be your measure. Because digital copywriting applies to almost every aspect of digital marketing, you can only measure its success if you have a clear idea of your goals.

However, copy isn't always just about converting. You can also use impressions, time on page, and bounce rate to see whether your copy is keeping people interested and on-site.

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9.8: Tools of the trade

The Simple Measure of Gobbledygook (SMOG) formula from Harry McLaughlin can be used to calculate the reading level of copy that you have written. A SMOG calculator, and instructions for use, can be found on here: www.readabilityformulas. com/free-readability-formula-tests.php

Alternatively, www.flesh.sourceforge.net offers a Java application that produces the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level and the Flesch Reading Ease Score of a document.

For an online dictionary and an online thesaurus, you can visit www.dictionary.com and www.thesaurus.com.



Read more about this in the Search engine optimisation chapter.

When it comes to keyword research there are a host of tools available. Have a look at the tools suggested in the chapter on SEO. Grammarly is a good one - www. grammarly.com.

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9.9: Case study - Yelp

One-line summary

A Yelp salesperson tripled her B2B email marketing response rate by personalising and humanising email copy.

The challenge

Yelp's sales email templates were dry and unengaging, not considering the audience to whom they were writing and included no consideration of features vs. benefits. This caused a disconnect between the brand and its audience. The emails made the salesforce sound, "Like a bunch of robots... with no personality" (Medhora, 2015)

The solution

One Yelp salesperson tested a number of more personalised emails and came up with a formula that increased response rates considerably. She focused on showing that she was a real person and on building a sense of urgency, and her formula looked like this:

Feature + Benefit + Value + Human Factor = Email more likely to earn a response

So, for example, for the feature, she would link to a business's Yelp pages. The benefit would be a description of how the business can grow through Yelp. The value would be indicating how many leads the business had found through Yelp, and the human factor involved casual subject lines and use of emojis. The subject line for the email below was "Re: Yelp Email Per Your Request -A Response Would Be Appreciated \odot .



Figure 9.9.1: A personalised Yelp email and its response Adapted From Kopywriting Kourse, 2015

The salesperson ran a few experiments to measure the success rates of personalised emails against Yelp template emails, added some important factors to consider – how the copy attracted attention, ignited interest and desire, and encouraged action – and then made sure that the email was interesting as well. She also tested a number of headlines, or subject lines, to see which had the best response rates.

The results

- Her response rate rose from 3.33% to 11.43% (even if some of the responses were negative!)
- She learned some important lessons about how personalising your copy, thinking about features vs. benefits, and writing for an audience of one can improve responses!

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9.10: The bigger picture

It should be pretty clear by now that online copy touches every other digital marketing tactic. After all, they all need to communicate messages in text format, whether that's a CTA button on a website, a video description, or a long-form press release written for digital PR purposes. While content marketing strategy may tell you what content to create, knowing how to create it comes down to great web writing skills.

Writing for digital overlaps strongly with SEO, since copy is the basis of all web optimisation as search engines can't read images, videos or other rich media content, and with UX, since making a website easy to navigate involves ensuring that your copy matches user needs.

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9.E: Digital copywriting(Exercises)

Case study questions

- 1. Why would bad copy in emails prevent users from signing up with Yelp, which aims to help businesses grow?
- 2. Why do you think the more targeted copy performed better than the more generic copy?
- 3. Identify the writing for digital principles (including audience considerations) that improved the response rate for the Yelp emails.

Chapter questions

- 1. Why is important to write for an 'audience of one'?
- 2. Why should users dictate your content? List some ways that users' needs determine content.
- 3. What are some ways to make web copy easy to read and why is it important to do so?
- 4. For some real online copywriting practice, choose an article in a magazine or newspaper and rewrite it for an Internet audience.

Further reading

To get started on writing for digital, Hot Text: Web Writing That Works is an easy-to-read and thorough resource. The website for the book is www.webwritingthatworks.com. Another excellent resource is The Idea Writers: Copywriting in a New Media and Marketing Era (www.palgrave.com/gp/ book/9780230613881) www.copyblogger.com has regular articles and case studies on writing online copy that converts.

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9.S: Writing for Digital(Summary)

Online copy is the foundation of a website. It is constantly in view and is usually the focal point of a page. Good online copy can also make the difference between a site attracting regular traffic and becoming stagnant.

Your writing needs first and foremost to have the reader in mind. The copy should be strong, clear and easily readable (remember the principles of scannability, including bullet points, bolding, short paragraphs and headings), while still making maximum use of key phrases.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Create - eCommerce

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn:

- the various types of eCommerce.
- eCommerce on specific channels like mobile and social.
- eCommerce across multiple channels.
- the various considerations in setting up an eCommerce site.
- 10.1: Introduction
- 10.2: Key terms and concepts
- 10.3: Types of eCommerce
- 10.4: eCommerce on specific channels
- 10.5: Multi-channel commerce to total retail
- 10.6: Setting up an eCommerce site
- 10.7: The bigger picture
- 10.8: References
- 10.9: Tools of the trade
- 10.10: Advantages and challenges
- 10.11: Case study Pixie Faire
- 10.E: eCommerce(Exercises)
- 10.S: eCommerce(Summary)

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10.1: Introduction

While credit cards and online shopping (shoes anyone?) are often associated with the term eCommerce, the field encapsulates all digital transactions. This includes the buying and selling of goods and services and the transfer of funds and data.

Due to the global recession, the retail industry as a whole has seen slow growth over the last few years. That there is any growth at all is largely due to eCommerce, with many US retailers recording flat or declining sales without their online channels (PwC, 2017). eCommerce is a trillion dollar growing industry. It is recorded as the only trillion dollar industry that continues to grow by double digit percentages each year, rising 24% in 2016 and such growth is expected to continue to 2020 (eMarketer, 2016).

The explosive growth of eCommerce in recent years can be attributed to the ever increasing reach of the Internet, the development of faster internet speeds and the convenience afforded by ordering things online. Hunting and comparing prices from the comfort of your chair is often more enticing than going from store to store.

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10.2: Key terms and concepts

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Term	Definition
eCommerce	The buying and selling of products and services, including funds and data, electronically.
B2C	Business to consumer, where a business sells products or services directly to the consumer.
B2B	Business to business, where a business sells products or services to another business, such as the relationship between manufacturers and distributors or retailers.
C2C	Consumer to consumer, where consumers sell products directly to other consumers.
C2B	Consumer to business, where consumers sell products to business, such as freelance services.
Cross channel commerce	Strategic maximization of customer relationships beyond the initial engagement channel.
m-commerce	Mobile commerce, the use of wireless devices to conduct commercial transaction online.
Multi-channel commerce	An online purchase experience that involves multiple channels, such as social media, company website, user reviews, in-store, traditional media and apps.
Omnichannel	Retailing strategy that delivers a seamless customer experience through all available shopping channels.
Payment gateway	eCommerce service that processes online payment for purchases through online stores.
Social commerce	Subset of eCommerce that involves social media and online media that supports social interaction, where user contributions assist in online trade of products.

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10.3: Types of eCommerce

Electronic Commerce, or eCommerce, is defined as the buying and selling of products and services, including funds and data, electronically. eCommerce can be divided into 4 main types.

Business to consumer B2C

The most common type of eCommerce is **business to consumer (B2C)**, in which a business sells products or services directly to consumers over the Internet. All retail sites are essentially B2C, with amazon.com as the prime example, due to it being the world's largest online retailer.



Figure 10.3.1: The amazon.com homepage is an example of B2C eCommerce Adapted From Screenshot, Amazon, 2017

The benefits of eCommerce include the ability for retailers to have a wide variety of products available without needing the physical retail space to hold and display items. The procurement and distribution processes are also streamlined as products are shipped directly to consumers, and not via distributors or retail outlets in between. The process has fewer overheads, and is more efficient in terms of time and money, reducing inventory management costs, and ultimately being able to deliver products to the customer at less cost than retail in-store outlets.

Business to business

B2B Another type of eCommerce is **business to business (B2B)**, which describes online transactions between businesses, such as between a manufacturer and a wholesaler, or between a wholesaler and a retailer. It can also include business related services, such as letting of commercial spaces, printing services, outsourced marketing, hiring and selling of office equipment, and so on.

Like B2C, the same benefits of lowered inventory management costs and a more streamlined procurement and distribution process, make eCommerce an efficient and attractive model for companies selling to other businesses.

Consumer to consumer C2C

Consumer to consumer (C2C) eCommerce is where consumers sell products to other consumers. Generally, a C2C business provides the platform for various users to use it to interact with each other for mutual benefit. A recent large-scale C2C eCommerce example is Uber. The business simply provides a transactional platform where consumers offer other consumers a lifting service based on location and cost preference. eBay is another globally recognised C2C online business. Sellers can list their products on eBay and interested buyers auction for it. Similar sites such as Airbnb, Gumtree and Craigslist are all C2C eCommerce platforms.

In C2C eCommerce, consumers either pay a fee to use the platform or the platform takes a percentage of all transactions processed through the site. If the platform is free to all consumers to buy and sell, then the site often generates its revenue through advertising.



Figure 10.3.2: Airbnb is a platform that facilitates C2C services *Adapted From Screenshot*, *Airbnb*, 2017

Consumer to business C2B

Consumer to business (C2B) eCommerce involves consumers selling products or services to businesses and the business pays the consumer. Examples of this include Guru.com, a freelancer hiring website and websites that pay individuals for completing online



surveys.

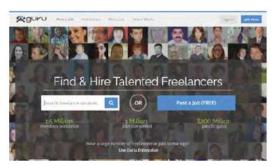


Figure 10.3.3: The guru.com homepage Adapted From Screenshot, The guru.com, 2017

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10.4: eCommerce on specific channels

eCommerce refers to electronic business transactions across the entire Internet. There are some specific channels on which eCommerce is gaining popularity, namely mobile and social commerce.

With mobile becoming the channel of choice for accessing the web and with Facebook, along with other social media platforms, continuing to dominate the time users spend online, businesses need to ensure they operate in these spaces if they want to continue to appeal to, and retain, their users.

In short, having eCommerce that operates across mobile and social is an online business necessity. Failure to move into these spaces means users may simply look for alternatives that do facilitate eCommerce through these channels.

Mobile commerce (m-commerce)

Mobile commerce (m-commerce) is the use of wireless handheld devices such as cellular/mobile phones to conduct commercial transactions online. While the growth of desktop eCommerce has slowed down, mobile continues to thrive, with dramatic year on year increases. Over a third of all eCommerce transactions now take place on mobile devices, and this is expected to grow by another 30% in 2017 to overtake desktop transactions. While in China, mobile shoppers already account for 68% of online purchases (SmartInsights, 2017). The importance of m-commerce is undeniable and should be included in every business' eCommerce strategy.

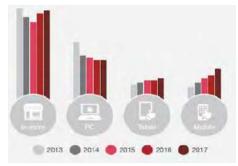


Figure 10.4.1: Usage of shopping channels over time Adapted From PWC, 2017

Reasons for growth in m-commerce

M-commerce transactions continue to grow as a result of the following:

- The **number of global mobile users is steadily increasing** every year, resulting in an increased demand for mobile websites and applications.
- The **rapid adoption of eCommerce** means that evolving customers are looking for more options across more devices.
- **Improved technology** has given mobile devices advanced capabilities and faster internet access enabling m-commerce to be available on even the most affordable devices.
- **Broadband technology** and **lowering data costs** mean more consumers have access to m-commerce even on affordable devices and data plans.
- Mobile users are looking for **instant gratification** online; this includes their online shopping needs. Increase in m-commerce for fast food, fresh produce and basic household items such as toilet paper, nappies, bread and eggs have been driven by this need for customers to get what they need when and where they want it.

Benefits of m-commerce

M-commerce has a range of benefits over traditional eCommerce. These include:

Access

Gaining access to the Internet through mobile is easier and more affordable than desktop options. The Ifalling costs of data and improved Internet access on mobile mean more and more users have access to the Internet via mobile than any other device.

Convenience

Mobile phones are always with us and being constantly connected enhances the benefits of anytime, anywhere use with no need to plug in to or log in to computers wherever they are situated. Mobile is an appropriate name as these devices are with us wherever





we go, making it easy and convenient to transact online at any time convenient to the consumer.

Costs

Mobile devices are more affordable than computers and offer multiple uses reducing the need for an additional computer. Calls, messaging services, social media and news content are just a few of the reasons consumers would prefer to use a single device making mobile phones the obvious choice.

· Ease of use

Mobile phones are relatively easy and simple to use, and there is no need for a particularly digitally skilled consumer. They allow consumers to make instant purchases with little technical skill.

• Mobile payments

Security around online payments remains the biggest barrier to eCommerce. Mobile payments allow alternative options for transactions via mobile currencies, mobile wallets and alternative mobile only payment methods. Such easy and secure payment options make mobile the preferred choice for many users.

Rich content

The advances in mobile processing power and cheaper data rates mean GIFs and videos can be easily used on mobile web and mobile applications (apps). Such rich media allows brands to better demonstrate a product's key features, to share testimonials of happy consumers, and to showcase the use/look of the product or service.

Mobile web vs. Mobile applications for m-commerce

Google is the largest search engine used by mobile consumers globally, and thus access to m-commerce sites is mostly via Google search. Email marketing, and social media are the next largest drivers to m-commerce platforms, also via mobile browsers. As a result, traffic and transactions on mobile browsers outperform traffic and transactions on apps.

However, this does not mean that mobile apps are not important. Just because most traffic is through mobile browsers, doesn't mean that your business cannot operate mainly through the app. Mobile applications should be considered, and if applicable for your business, used in conjunction with mobile websites to enhance consumers' overall shopping experience. If most of your mobile traffic is through apps, then you will need to consider using the app as your primary m-commerce platform.



If you want to learn more about whether a mobile app or mobile website is better for your business go to Human Service Solution at www. hswsolutions.com/ services/mobile-webdevelopment/mobilewebsite-vs-apps/

Social commerce (s-commerce)

Social commerce is a subset of eCommerce that involves social media, or other online media that supports social interaction, and user contributions, to assist users with the online buying and selling of products and services. S-commerce uses social networks to facilitate eCommerce transactions — it brings eCommerce functionality directly into social media platforms. And with users increasingly spending their online time in these social media spaces, bringing eCommerce to where users are spending most of their time makes good business sense.

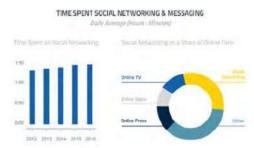


Figure 10.4.2: Social media captures 30% of online time Adapted From Global Web index, 2016

When customers are satisfied with your business, social media makes it easy for them to share and recommend your brand. Because of this shareable nature, social media is a place where content goes viral. This is known as social influence. Social media





channels play a very important role in driving conversions if you have happy customers, but such channels can also cause brand degradation if a customer is unhappy.

Social media enables conversations to spread at lightning speed so how you will harness these conversations to drive sales needs to be considered as part of any eCommerce strategy. Enabling users to purchase the products and services that are being talked about and shared on social media is the most effective of way of using the platform to drive conversions. Various platforms now enable users to buy products directly and instantly through the platform.

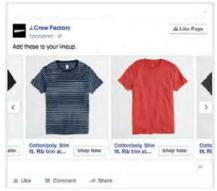


Figure 10.4.3: Shopping on Facebook using the 'Shop Now' button Adapted From Social media examiner, 2017



Figure 10.4.4: Shopping on Instagram. Users can purchase highlighted items directly Adapted From Getsidecar, 2017



Figure 10.4.5: Buyable Pins on Pinterest Adapted From Demandware, 2017

To find out more on using Facebook for s-commerce go here:

https://www.facebook.com/business/in...-and-eCommerce and about Buyable Pins on Pinterest go here. www.demandware.com/pages/pinterest

Benefits of s-commerce

Just like m-commerce, there are certain benefits that s-commerce has over traditional eCommerce. These include:

· Audience growth



As of January 2017, over 2.7 billion people were on social media. This is more than a third of the global population. This number is also up over 20% from 2016. A tremendous growth, with little sign of slowing down (Chaffey, 2017). One of the most important considerations for any eCommerce business is how to reach and sell to its target customer audience, and from these statistics it is safe to say that a large proportion of any brand's market is on social media.

· Higher search engine ranking

Using social media for s-commerce increases traffic to your website which will influence your ranking on search engine results. Sharing links to products and content on your website through social media is an excellent way to drive traffic using social media users. It also allows your audience to engage with a product, like or share it, and to reach an even larger audience.

• Authentic engagement and traffic

The most significant benefit of using social media for s-commerce is the engagement and reach that businesses can get whenever they share content. By appearing in followers' updates or feeds on a regular basis, you're participating in a powerful branding opportunity. Users who have regular positive contact with a company are more likely to recommend that company.

Operating on social media encourages users to connect with a business through two-way communication. This allows customers to not only engage with your business on a commercial level, but it also gives them the opportunity to use social media as an efficient customer service channel where it's possible to solve problems. Social media word-of-mouth (sharing/ reposting) helps with audience building, as well as increased engagement and website traffic.

Customer loyalty

S-commerce is not purely focused on selling but uses the social platforms to help the business build relationships with potential and existing customers. Such relationships can deepen trust and loyalty between consumers and the brand. This in turn creates happy, satisfied customers, who will likely be customers who make repeat purchases, i.e. a loyal customer.

Analytics

Social media platforms make it easy to track, measure and evaluate conversions that happen through s-commerce. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and LinkedIn all offer built-in analytics tools for measuring traffic, clickthrough, fans/followers, likes, sentiment and actual conversions coming via the social platform. This is a huge benefit for monitoring your ROI.

Learn more about social media as a digital marketing tactic in the Social media platforms and Social media advertising chapters.

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10.5: Multi-channel commerce to total retail

In addition to being available on specific channels, eCommerce also forms part of other retail approaches. It is important to understand what these approaches are and where eCommerce fits into the broader strategy of your business.

Multi-channel commerce

When your business operates across multiple sales and media channels, you are considered to be engaging in multi-channel commerce. For instance, you might sell your products on your website, a mobile app, via a call centre, in stores, on Amazon and on eBay, all while communicating with customers via many types of devices and social media channels. You utilize a variety of multiple sales and marketing channels to sell your products to different types of users and, therefore, you're a multi-channel vendor.

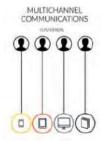


Figure 10.5.1: Multi-channel means operating across multiple channels to reach different customers $Adapted\ From\ Liquid-state,\ 2016$

Cross-channel commerce

When your business encourages its customers to interact with your business on more than one channel, you are engaging in cross-channel commerce. Essentially cross-channel commerce is the strategic maximization of customer relationships via the introduction of new channels beyond the one that originally engaged the user.

A customer would have approached a brand via a specific channel to browse and initiate purchase, and cross-channel retailers would encourage that customer to then make use of other available shopping channels, such as the website, app or social media platforms, to engage further with the brand. Cross-channel retailers encourage interactions on their terms. Such interaction across channels increases the likeliness of additional conversions and future sales.

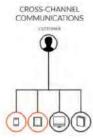


Figure 10.5.2: Cross-channel commerce is directing the same customer to engage with your business on more than one channel *Adapted From Liquid-state*, 2016

Omnichannel commerce

An omnichannel commerce strategy can be defined as a retailing strategy that delivers a seamless customer experience through all available shopping channels. What distinguishes the omnichannel customer experience from the multi-channel customer experience is that with the latter there is true integration between channels on the back end including customer data (single view of customer), inventory management, stock movement, supply-chain, fulfilment information and customer relationship management.

The customer's interaction with the brand is integrated across all channels. Customers can seamlessly migrate from channel to channel with no interruption or loss of data, and can pick up wherever in their customer journey they may be irrespective of which channel they choose to engage the brand.



Customers are becoming increasingly digitally savvy, and expect to be able to engage with the brand across a variety of channels, depending on what is most convenient to them. They expect these interactions to be seamless, backed by an integrated system across all channels. In short, customers expect an omnichannel commerce experience, and are frustrated by what they see as inferior brands, that fail to provide this.

OMNICHANNEL COMMUNICATIONS



Figure 10.5.3: Omnichannel commerce means providing a seamless customer experience by integrating interaction across all available channels *Adapted From Liquid-state*, 2016

∓ Note

Further Reading: 7 Inspiring Examples of Omnichannel User Experiences by Aaron Agius: blog.hubspot. com/marketing/omni-channel-userexperience-examples#s m.00001gxdf8f6orey1z5 ftxme7hlbh

Total retail

A seamless experience across all channels should arguably be a point of parity, rather than a differentiator. With thousands of brands competing for business, there is a need to go one better than omnichannel and offer their customers an enhanced and personalised online shopping experience if they want to satisfy and retain their customers. In 2014, PwC termed this approach of providing a seamless, enhanced and personal retail experience as going, "Total retail" (PwC, 2014).

Total retail means two things:

- 1. A unified brand story across all channels that promises a consistently superior customer experience.
- 2. An integrated back office operating model with agile and innovative technology.



Figure 10.5.4: Total retail offers a customer-centred retail experience, delivered seamlessly across all channels *Adapted From Liquid-state*, 2016

Total retail is a more customer centric approach than omni-channel. It still offers a seamless experience to the user across channels, but it places the individual customer's experience at the heart of all its business operations. The focus is on the customer, rather than the various channels that can be used to reach the customer.



According to PwC (2014) it is consumer expectations that are driving this new retail business model. Customers are quick to take their business elsewhere if they are not satisfied with their online shopping experience. Brands need to respond by doing what they can to make their eCommerce offering enjoyable, seamless and as convenient as possible. To enable this, brands need to invest in customer-focused technologies that can track customers across the various channels and aim to achieve a single view of customer.

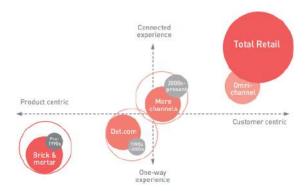


Figure 10.5.5: Transforming the channel experience to a total retail experience with more focus on the consumer Adapted from PWC, 2014

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10.6: Setting up an eCommerce site

When deciding to set up an eCommerce website there are 5 main considerations:

- 1. Which industry will you operate in and what products will you sell?
- 2. How will you build your website?
- 3. How will you physically ship your product and fulfil orders?
- 4. How will you drive traffic to your site?
- 5. What metrics will you measure to determine success, and which tools will you use?

Each of these considerations is important to having a successful eCommerce business. From choosing your product through to analysing your performance, decisions you make here will have a long-term impact on your business. So, carefully examine your options and make informed decisions to ensure future success.

Choosing an industry and product

To make your eCommerce business a success you need to be selling a product that consumers will want and are prepared to buy online. You also need to ensure that you are making a reasonable margin on your products to sustain your business' longevity, and that you will be able to manage physically storing and delivering the product you choose to sell.

Here are some key factors to consider when choosing an industry and product.

Price

If the product cost is too low, it will be challenging to reach a positive return on investment (ROI). If it's too high, there is a good chance that some customers will want to speak with someone, or see, touch and feel the product prior to making the purchase.

• Margin

Many products sold online have a gross margin around 30–35% however this can change drastically depending on the industry. For example, electronics and toys typically have smaller margins while clothing and apparel are often marked up by 150% to 200%.

Competition

Generally speaking, it is easier to drive sales online when the product can't be bought in local stores or in a wide variety of online stores.

• Shipping costs

Larger products tend to have higher shipping costs which can negatively affect sales. Most customers not only want free shipping, they expect it. As a result, it can be difficult to sell a product with a hefty shipping fee. Many online retailers include the shipping cost in the cost of the product while raising the total price and offering 'free shipping'. However, these increases in price can decrease sales.

Passion

Love the product or service you wish to sell. Starting and growing an eCommerce website typically comes with a series of obstacles and frustrations. Passion for your industry can be a great source of motivation to push through any challenges that may arise.

Setting up the website

There are five important steps to follow when setting up your eCommerce website.

- Step 1. Choosing your domain name
- **Step 2.** Obtaining a secure (SSL) certificate
- Step 3. Choosing the right hosting package
- Step 4. Choosing an eCommerce platform
- **Step 5.** Selecting your payment gateway.





Step 1. Choose your domain name

To get started you will need a domain name for your website. Domain names can be purchased through hosting companies or domain registrars. When choosing a domain name remember your target market, will you be targeting just your local market or an international one? If you are targeting the local market, you can register a local domain, like .co.za or co.uk, but if you are targeting a global market then it would be preferable to go with an international domain like .com

You can purchase domain names from companies like godaddy.com or www.networksolutions.com.

Here are some tips for choosing a good domain name.

Make it easy to type

Remember you want users to be able to find you easily, and slang, complicated names or those with different spellings can make your site difficult to find. So choose words that are simple, easy to spell and type in your domain name.

Keep it short

The longer and more complex your name, the more risk you run of users misspelling it or mistyping it. Keep it simple.

Use keywords

Carefully think about words that describe your product or the keywords that users will type into search engines when searching for your brand or product. Using keywords will make your site rank higher on SERPs, which will drive traffic to your site.

· Target your area

If you are running a local business, try including your location in your domain name, as this will make it easier for local users to find you and may rank you higher on search engines. For example, users looking for electricians in Chicago are more likely to find Chicago Electrical.co.us than ElectricianForU.com

Avoid numbers and hyphens

Although using numbers or hyphens appear clever and make sense to you, they can confuse users who often type out the number or forget the hyphen. If you need to use characters, try to register the different variations to ensure users will still be driven to your site and not to a competitor.

• Be memorable

There are already millions of registered domain names. Users are inundated with regular ordinary names, so coming up with a domain that's catchy and memorable will definitely help to drive traffic to your site.

· Research it

Before you decide on a name do your due diligence and research the name for any trademarks or copyrights. You also want to check that it is not too similar to any competitors. Failure to ignore trademarks and copyrights can result in costly legal battles and having to rebrand later on.

• Use an appropriate domain name extension

When registering your domain you will need to choose the extension. Extensions are the suffix at the end of your domain name, such as .com, .net and .org. Local options like .za or .uk are also popular. The .com or .net options are the most popular however, because these have been around so long, it is often problematic to get a unique and relevant name with that extension. Extensions have specific uses, so be sure that you choose the right one for your business.

Here are some of the most popular extensions, and what they mean.

.co - an abbreviation for company, commerce, and community

.info - informational sites

.net - technical, Internet infrastructure sites

.org - non-commercial organizations and non-profits

.ac - academic institutions like universities and colleges

.biz - business or commercial use, like e-commerce sites



.me - blogs, resumes or personal sites.

· Protect and build your brand

When choosing your domain name, it is worth purchasing other domain extensions and spelling variations to prevent competitors or trolls registering other versions that will then direct traffic to these alternate sites. By owning all the domains you ensure that customers are directed to your site, even if they use the wrong extension or misspell it.

Act fast

Once you have decided on a name, you need to act quickly. Domain names sell fast, but they are affordable, so register your chosen domain name as soon as you have decided on it. If your desired name is already in use, most of the registrars will suggest alternate names to help you (Godaddy.com, 2015).

Step 2. Obtain a secure (SSL) certificate

If you are not using a pre-packaged eCommerce service, then alongside the domain name you will also need to obtain an SSL certificate to protect and secure your website content. SSL prevents malicious users from accessing your website to steal passwords, credit card information, and sensitive data. There are many providers of SSL certificates, such as Thawte or Symantec.

A list of SSL certificate reviews can be found on the following link: https://www.sslshopper.com/thawte-ce...y-reviews.html

Step 3. Choose the right hosting package

All websites have to be hosted on a server somewhere. It is important to choose the right hosting package regarding website speed, uptime, and cloud hosting.

Website speed

Hosting your website in the same country that you are selling to, can have an impact on how quickly the website loads. If you are selling to a global market, then consider the use of a content delivery network (CDN) to help localize your site to different target countries. Google has hinted that site speed is a ranking factor in its algorithms so there are SEO benefits to having a good host, as well as the obvious user benefits.

• Uptime and performance

The reliability of the host to keep the website up and running is vital. At certain points of the year, such as peak-trading periods, the demand on your website will increase significantly. It's important to understand how the extra traffic will increase the load on your webserver and the impact that can have on the site's performance. Too much traffic may even cause the server to trip over and crash, taking your site offline.

Cloud hosting:

Cloud hosting is hosting services that are provided via multiple connected servers. These servers make up a network cloud. Cloud hosting is seen as preferable to a single server or virtual server, for the follow reasons:

o Reliability and accessibility

The content is more easily accessible, and there is less chance of server failure.

Stability and security

The servers will interact to sustain the site, offering more stability and more security in terms of not losing any data.

Seamless scalability

With cloud hosting you are not limited by the size and capacity of your particular physical server. The sky is the limit, unlike physical servers where you will need to expand, or move to a larger server, once you maximise that specific server's capacity.

Cost efficiency

The cloud removes a lot of the costs of maintaining physical servers.

Ensure that when choosing your host server, you consider the user needs as well as back-end applications that need to operate in the background to facilitate orders and other processes. Think about your business objectives, and if the hosting service you are opting for will be able to meet and facilitate your objectives.





Step 4. Selecting an eCommerce platform

When setting up your site, you need to use an eCommerce platform to assist you in building and hosting a digital storefront from which to actually sell your products and services. An eCommerce platform is the series of software technologies that enable this build and selling of products.

There is a vast range of eCommerce platforms that you can use. These various options can be classified under four main types of platforms. These are:

1. Software as a service (SaaS) storefronts

- Third-party providers host applications and make these available to customers online.
- Examples include Shopify.com and BigCommerce.

2. Open source

• Open source platforms provide a more affordable option for online businesses, and offer more control. However, you need to manage the hosting and some expertise is needed. Popular examples include Magento, WooCommerce and X Cart.

3. Licensed and hosted by the retailer

The provider will manage the site, and offer reliable support. However, site builds are often tied to the specific provider and
moving your site requires a complete rebuild. Large companies can also stagnate and not keep up to date, so ensure the provider
you opt for is dedicated to development. Some popular examples include Oracle Commerce, IBM Websphere, Hybris, and the
paid version of Magento.

4. Platform as a service (PaaS)

PaaS is usually used for B2B where businesses are looking to link their eCommerce to other systems that their customers
already have such as SAP or Ariba. Such integration of systems allows clients to link their purchasing systems directly to their
online sales processes enabling automated purchase orders and stock management. PaaS is ideal for large corporates with
complex procurement and distributions systems. Apache Stratos, Windows Azure, Force.com are all examples of PaaS
eCommerce platforms.

∓ Note

Read here about how more and more eCommerce store owners are turning to open source eCommerce platforms. selfstartr. com/open-sourceeCommerce/

For a more comprehensive discussion about the eCommerce options available and how to choose the right one for you, see ShivarWeb's Essential Guide to Choosing an eCommerce Platform. https://www.shivarweb.com/1386/essen...erce-platform/

Step 5. eCommerce payment gateways

A payment gateway is a service that processes credit card payments for online and brick-and-mortar stores. The gateway transfers key information between eCommerce sites and the bank, and authorises such payments. There are three steps the payment gateway performs to finalise the transaction:

1. Encryption

The data to be sent is encrypted by the web browser. This transaction data is then sent by the gateway to the payment processor that the vendor's acquiring bank uses.

2. Authorization request

The bank's payment processor sends the transaction data to the relevant credit card association. The bank that issued the credit card will view the request, and either approve or deny the transaction.

3. Filling the order

Once the processor has received authorization, it forwards this to the payment gateway. The payment gateway then sends it on to the website to proceed with processing payment if approved, or to deny the sale if denied. The website interprets the data and creates the appropriate response for the user. If approved, the merchant will proceed with filling the order.





This process takes only a few seconds, and is almost instant for the user. Gateways can also be used to prevent fraud and many have inbuilt fraud detection tools, such as delivery address verification, computer finger print technology and geolocation among others (BigCommerce, n.d).

If you're concerned about online fraud see this helpful article by Chargebee on types of online fraud and how you can protect your site. https://www.chargebee.com/blog/ protect-startup-online-fraud/

When considering payment gateways for your eCommerce site, you have two main options. You can either go for an onsite or offsite gateway.

Definition: onsite payment gateway

An **onsite payment gateway** (also known as a non-hosted payment gateway) means the gateway is integrated into your site, and users do not need to leave your site to complete their transaction. Iveri and Stripe are examples. Note that to receive online payments you will need an SSL certificate and a merchant account.

Definition: offsite payment gateway

An **offsite payment gateway** means the potential buyer is transferred over to the payment gateway's website. The user completes the payment and then is returned to the online store. PayFast and PayGate are examples. It is important to note that sending users away from your site can impact on whether customers comple their payment, especially if the payment process is slowed down by the redirection, and/or the user has any security concerns regarding the redirection (GoCardless.com, n.d.)

To fully decide which payment gateway is right for you visit GoCardless's guide on the 10 questions to find the right one for you. (https://gocardless.com/guides/posts/ payment-gateways/)

Shipping fulfilment

Fulfilment is a big part of running a successful eCommerce store, and can have a huge impact on your customer experience. The fulfilment process starts when the order is placed and ends when the customer receives the product successfully. There are six stages to the fulfilment process.

The fulfilment process

- 1. **Inventory management:** Ensure your stock-level information is accurate and up-to-date. Accurately forecast customer demands to manage your inventory stock-levels and plan order appropriately. Shopify has a great blog post on eight inventory management techniques to help your business. www.shopify.com/blog/7060301...ent-techniques
- 2. Warehouse management: Ideally integrate your warehouse and stock management with a warehouse management system. This is a software application that supports the day-to-day operations in a warehouse. It will monitor stock arrivals, warehouse-store transfers and departure points. The correct and precise allocation of stock within the warehouse is critical for fast and accurate fulfilment. Some popular examples of warehouse management software include EZOfficeInventory and Zoho Inventory.
- 3. **Order management:** Ensure you know the order status throughout the fulfilment process and integrate notifications of delays/disruptions in the order management process.
- 4. **Destination:** To offer customers a successful, fast and accurate delivery it is important to understand the destination
 - **Home delivery:** Delivery to an individual's house, apartment, place of work.
 - **In-Store collection (also known as click and collect):** Online orders are delivered to a physical store, in the customer's chosen area, for later collection by the customer
 - **Inter-Branch Transfers:** Stock is transferred from one store to another and purchased via an online order or point-of-sale.
- 5. **Returns:** To ensure a seamless customer experience, a returns policy, should be available and well communicated to potential customers. Any returns process should be easy and convenient for online shoppers.
- 6. **Order tracking:** All orders should be tracked and their progress frequently communicated to the customer. Communication should include the status and expected delivery date and time of the order. Any changes to estimated delivery dates or times need to be communicated as soon as possible.





Driving traffic to your site

To make sales, you need users to visit your online store. Driving traffic to your store is a prominent marketing and advertising specific objective. Many of the techniques discussed in the section below to drive traffic to your site, will be covered in greater detail in the rest of the course.

You can drive traffic to your store by using the following techniques:

1. **Content marketing strategy:** Highly targeted and quality content can result in a positive social influence and ultimately drive traffic to your website. It is important to create meaningful content with your customer as the main subject in your storyline. Positive customer feedback can influence other customers and drive them to your online store.

∓ Note

Read more about the power of content marketing in the Content marketing strategy chapter.

2. **Product videos:** Include videos/ 360 degree views of your product. Visually experiencing the product closes the gap between the 'touch and feel' benefits of in-store shopping and the online experience. Customers enjoy and appreciate seeing the detail of the product and are then inspired to go to purchase the product.

∓ Note

Read more about using video in the chapter on Video marketing.

- 3. **Alias domains:** To grow the traffic to your site, it is necessary to capture all potential customers trying to reach you. Whether that have misspelt the brand name or entered the wrong/similar name directly into a search engine rather than the address bar, it is important that they still reach the destination and that this does not become lost traffic. There are two strategies to owning alias domains:
 - 1. Purchase any misspelt domain names for your brand.
 - 2. Own the alias search terms for your brand.
- 4. **Social Media Campaigns:** There are so many channels to choose from when opting for social media, but it is important to use the right social media platform for the right type of advertising,
 - Use images or videos to demonstrate the benefits and details of your product. Good platforms for this include Facebook display ads, Instagram, Pinterest and Snapchat

∓ Note

Read more about advertising on social media in the Social media advertising chapter

- If your product or service targets a professional customer, use professional networks such as LinkedIn or Twitter to drive thought leadership or content marketing strategy
- For products or services that rely heavily on social influence, understand the audience then re-target to the happy customer's network.
- 5. **Customer Reviews:** Research indicates that customers like to read reviews of a product or service prior to making a purchase. Encourage customers to leave reviews about their experience or the product itself. Customer reviews also provide meaningful feedback to the retailer indicating the response to new and changing product lines, which products to promote and potentially, which product to remove from the offering.
- 6. **Product merchandising and SEO:** All elements of online merchandising affect your search optimisation as well as directly influence the sale. Product names must be short, searchable and descriptive. Product Images must be inspiring, detailed and include specifics. Product descriptions need to be engaging and original. Text descriptions with well-chosen keywords will be picked up by search engines. Unique descriptions will prevent you being filtered out as spam by search engines.





You can learn more about optimising your website for search engines in the Search engine optimisation chapter.

7. **Landing Pages:** Direct paid media such as search, email marketing and display media, should lead users directly to the relevant product pages and not to the homepage. These pages are called landing pages. Matching product or category landing pages to users' intent will improve drop-off rates and increase conversion rates.

∓ Note

Learn more about landing pages in the User experience design and Web development and design chapters.

- 8. Search: Besides optimizing the site for search engines and buying paid search media (Search Engine Marketing SEM), it is critical to include sitewide search on your page. To ensure the user finds the product, service, or information that they are looking for include an easy-to-find and easy-to-use search function. Users expect this to be at the very top or top right of your site, across most pages.
- 9. Site speed and performance: To avoid page-abandonment ensure that the site loads quickly with the most important elements loading first. Fast engagement time and performance is essential to keeping the user engaged and if not considered during development and monitored on an ongoing basis, could result in a poor user experience or lost customers.
- 10. Registration and checkout: The registration process needs to be quick and relatively painless for the user. It should only request essential information. Sites that ask for too much or unnecessarily personal information will lose traffic and result in increased drop-off rates. Checkout needs to be slick, simple, secure and informative. Checkout needs be supported with transactional emails that confirm the user's order ID, order details (product and price paid), as well as delivery and tracking information.

eCommerce analytics

As with all digital interaction, eCommerce activities can be easily tracked. There are certain key pieces of information that you need to be aware of and should be tracking. These include:

• Supply-chain management

Information about the products, and the process from the warehouse through to delivery to the customer.

• Product analytics

Details around how many times a product is viewed, positive or negative reviews, social sharing, loading of detailed information on a product and actual conversion rates.

Online marketing analytics

Success or, conversion rates, of your marketing initiatives that enables optimization of spend for paid campaigns and strategy optimizations for earned and owned campaigns.

• Tracking the eCommerce funnel

Can customers find the products they are looking for? Can customers add products to cart and check out successfully? Analysing this data highlights site speed and performance as well as detailed information about traffic sources, high-traffic times of the day, and related conversion rates.

The most popular eCommerce analytics tool is Google Analytics analytics.google.com. Google Analytics is a powerful and detailed analytics tool. These are just some of the benefits of the platform:

- Provides a vast amount of data from conversion rates to revenue by product.
- Provides insight into customer behaviour and analyses cart-abandonment.
- Integrates digital marketing initiatives including remarketing.
- Offers detailed metrics to understand the total economic value of the online store in relation to the overall business.





∓ Note

Read more on Google analytics in the Data Analytics and Conversion optimisation Chapters.

- Has promotion tracking, tracking internal (such as vouchers) and external promotional efforts (such as affiliate marketing).
- Tracks revenue by currency including online refunds for accuracy in revenue and reporting.

Try out Google Analytics and learn about this powerful analytics platform by using Google's demo account. Google also offers some great guidance. https://support.google.com/analytics.../6367342?hl=en

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10.7: The bigger picture

eCommerce is an important part of operating a business in the 21st century. Not having an online store can be detrimental to your business. Your eCommerce store needs to operate alongside your website and online presence.

Directing potential shoppers to your online store to ultimately convert is the aim of almost all your digital marketing tactics. You online store needs to be consistent with your other online messages, and should provide a seamless experience for the user. The overall user experience with your eCommerce platform needs to be sound, simple and efficient.

It is also important to note that if your eCommerce platform falls short, and does not provide a pleasant user experience, it means all your other marketing efforts have been in vain. Directing traffic to your online store is not the ultimate goal, the ultimate goal is conversion. A sloppy online store can put potential shoppers off your brand, not just in this instance and online, but as a whole.

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10.9: Tools of the trade

There are a variety of tools relevant for working with eCommerce. We have discussed many tools during the course of this chapter, and mentioned Google Analytics as an essential analytics tool in the last section. But there are many other paid and free online tools that you could opt for.

Here are of the best tools for starting an eCommerce business, according to Inc. (Haden, 2017):

Storenvy www.storenvy.com/

Free tool for building an online store. It's a marketplace platform, but does enable you to build your own store, with your own design and branding.

Shopify https://www.shopify.com/

Possibly the most preferred tool for new online stores. Affordable with many features for your store.

Gumroad https://gumroad.com/

Considered one of the simplest ways to start an online store.

WooCommerce https://woocommerce.com/

Platform that enables you to add a store to your WordPress site or blog, providing an impressive store and business.

PayPal http://www.paypal.com/

One of the largest online payment gateways, but it can be complicated and confusing to implement.

Stripe http://www.stripe.com/

Popular payment gateway that you can integrate into your store. It works with Shopify, WooCommerce and other popular platforms.

Amazon payments https://pay.amazon.com/us/

One of the simpler payment gateways available, and run by Amazon.

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10.10: Advantages and challenges

Throughout this chapter we have discussed some of the benefits of using eCommerce. In short, with online retail already a trillion dollar industry and growing each year, to stay in business, businesses need to be operating online. It is no longer simply a nice to have, but is an essential part of business in the 21st century.

The beauty of eCommerce is that it is easily tracked and monitored. Analytics tools provide incredible data that can be monitored in real time, and changes implemented quickly. It makes this space dynamic but also incredibly competitive. Online shoppers have more variety and options than any shopper has ever had before, and catching their attention is more and more difficult. But, once you have caught potential customers' attention, your eCommerce platform has to be good enough to keep their attention and guide them through to completing their conversion.

Besides stiff competition, and being an incredibly dynamic and fast changing environment, eCommerce has other challenges. There are many factors operated by other service providers, or that are simply beyond your control. Issues such as crashing servers, slow data, errors on external payment gateways or faulty links in display ads, all impact negatively on your brand, even though you have little to no control over such issues. If a user is trying to access your online store, and these issues impact negatively on their experience, it is your store they associate this experience with.

Choosing appropriate service providers who can meet the needs and future demands of your site is key, so take time to carefully consider and review your options when setting up your site.

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10.11: Case study - Pixie Faire

One-line summary

How one couple is making US \$600 000 per year selling digital products.



Figure 10.11.1: The Pixie Faire home page Adapted From Screenshot, Pixie Faire, 2017

The challenge

Cinnamon and Jason Miles started making and selling dolls' clothes online. Cinnamon was an excellent seamstress who made unique and beautiful clothes for her daughter to use with her dolls. After being inundated with queries on where they got these clothes, Cinnamon and Jason started Liberty Jane Clothing selling dolls' clothes online, initially through eBay and then through their own eCommerce website on WordPress.

Unfortunately, their business model was not very scalable and they struggled to meet demand and break through earning US \$1 000 a month. Cinnamon was maxed-out creating all the clothing herself, and having local seamstresses assist, also did not work on any scalable level. They declined the offer of getting their products made in China, as they wanted to retain manufacturing control and guarantee the integrity of their product.

The solution

Selling the physical products alone simply wasn't scalable, so Cinnamon and Jason looked at what digital products they could sell. They hit on selling their doll patterns as downloadable PDFs, which users could purchase and use to create their own doll clothes. This model scaled well, and to date have had over 700 000 pattern downloads.



Figure 10.11.2: Pixie Faire kept the Liberty Jane brand for some of its own patterns Adapted From Pixie Faire, 2017

They also noticed a gap in tuition of how to actually create the clothes, so they started online classes and videos to train users on how to make the clothes with the patterns. The online training courses grew to include design, pattern-making and how to start and manage your own craft business.

They also broadened their business model to become the Internet's largest marketplace for dolls' clothing patterns, and feature other indie designers. Designers have to be approved by Cinnamon and Jason to sell through the site. They renamed their site Pixie Faire, but kept the Liberty Jane Clothing brand for their own doll clothing and patterns. They use a store-level pricing strategy that all designers have to comply with, similar to that of iTunes and Kindle, to keep prices at acceptable levels.

With increased demand, visits and purchases, the WordPress site struggled. Even with the shopping cart functionality the platform was simply ill-prepared to manage the volume that Pixie Faire was now dealing with. Opting for platforms that were designed to manage eCommerce specifically, such as Shopify and SendOwl, really helped to remove much of the frustration the company had experienced with its online sales. The peace of mind and ease that was provided by going the route was invaluable.



Results

Pixie Faire now generates over US \$600 000 a year, with an average monthly return of US \$50 000. This is only possible due to their move into digital products and using a platform designed to cope with the demands of larger volumes of traffic.

A physical tangible product that required so much hands-on attention simply was not scalable. Cinnamon and Jason needed an alternate digital product to provide the scale for their revenue to totally explode beyond their expectations. Careful consideration of your product and offering is necessary when determining your eCommerce needs and capabilities. (Schreiber, 2015)

This study also demonstrates the need to choose an eCommerce platform that will be able to manage with the demands of your business, should it take off. Problems with check out and crashing lead to a poor user experience that may put off potential customers. Planning your product strategy and selecting appropriate platforms are essential to eCommerce success.

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10.E: eCommerce(Exercises)

Case study questions

- 1. Why did Pixie Faire have to consider digital products?
- 2. What made Pixie Faire opt for a market site as opposed to a more traditional eCommerce site?
- 3. What lesson can be learnt from Pixie Faire and choosing appropriate platforms?

Chapter questions

- 1. What are the steps involved in setting up an eCommerce platform?
- 2. Why is analytics so important, and which metrics in particular would be of interest to online retailers?
- 3. List some of the ways you can drive traffic to your eCommerce site.
- 4. Explain how important eCommerce is in any digital marketing campaign.

Further reading

Here are some blogs to read up more on eCommerce,

Internet Retailer https://www.internetretailer.com/

ECommerce Training Academy blog https://ecommercetrainingacademy.com/blog/

Get Elastic http://www.getelastic.com/

Shopify blog eCommerce Business Blueprint: How to build, launch and grow a profitable online store.

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10.S: eCommerce(Summary)

In this chapter, you have learnt about the different types of eCommerce. You have also learnt the steps and been referred to the tools, for setting up a site to do business online. Key considerations and questions to ask when planning your eCommerce strategy were provided, as well as the importance of thinking about the possible future demands of your business.

You now have a sound understanding of the processes involved behind the scenes of eCommerce, and how eCommerce fits into your digital marketing strategy. Lastly you were shown how to go about tracking and monitoring your eCommerce activities, and why such analytics is important.

Although designing and creating your own complex and commercial eCommerce store is beyond the scope of this book, we hope you now have insight into its development, and know what to consider when commissioning and using eCommerce platforms.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Engage - Search advertising

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn:

- How to put together a search advert.
- How to target your search ad at relevant users.
- The process of bidding on key phrases and how this affects your ranking.
- How to plan, set up and run your own search advertising campaign.
- 11.1: Introduction
- 11.2: Key terms and concepts
- 11.3: Defining search advertising
- 11.4: The elements of a search ad
- 11.5: Targeting options
- 11.6: Bidding and ranking for search ads
- 11.7: Measuring success
- 11.8: Tools of the trade
- 11.9: Case study Frooition
- 11.10: The bigger picture
- 11.11: References
- 11.12: Tracking
- 11.13: Implementing a search advertising campaign
- 11.14: Advantages and challenges
- 11.E: Search advertising(Exercises)
- 11.S: Search advertising(Summary)

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11.1: Introduction

Search advertising, also called pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, is a way to advertise your business or product directly on search engine results pages, where the advertiser pays only for each click on their advert.

Online advertising continues to evolve, and available formats range from simple text search adverts through to rich media banners and even video adverts Search ads account for 48% of online ads. And more than 75% of those search ads are through Google. Google earned nearly US\$ 25 billion in search ad revenue alone for 2016. Their market share is expected to hit over 80% by 2019, with an expected revenue of over US\$ 35 billion (Townsend, 2017).

Adverts on search engines are easy to spot as they're clearly labelled as advertising and are separated from organic search results. They can appear on the top of the results page, usually in a box, or at the bottom of the results page.

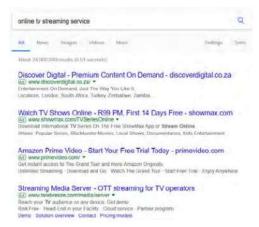


Figure 11.1.1: Search adverts appearing in a search for digital marketing Adapted From Screenshot, Google, 2017

Search advertising on search engines is keyword based. This means that it is triggered by the search term that a user enters into a search engine. Advertisers target the keywords for which they want their site to appear.

For the advertiser, the beauty of search advertising is that adverts are displayed when potential customers are already expressing intent meaning customers are searching for a product or service. It allows advertisers to present their offering to a potential customer who is already in the buying cycle.

Google is, by a wide margin, the leader in the search advertising field; because of this, the chapter is very Google-centric, though the same principle should apply to any other search advertising platforms. Other platforms to be aware of are Bing, Yahoo! and Baidu.

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11.2: Key terms and concepts

Definition
A click on a text ad link that leads to a website.

Term	Definition
Clickthrough	A click on a text ad link that leads to a website.
Clickthrough rate (CTR)	The total clicks on a link divided by the number of times that ad link has been shown, expressed as a percentage.
Conversion rate	The number of conversions divided by the number of visitors, expressed as a percentage.
Cost per action (CPA)	The amount paid when a certain action is performed by a user.
Cost per click (CPC)	The amount paid when a link is clicked on.
Google AdWords	Google's search advertising program, which allows advertisers to display their adverts on relevant search results and across Google's content network.
Impression	Each time an advert is shown.
Key phrase	Two or more words that are combined to form a search query, often referred to as keywords.
Keyword	A word found in a search query. For example, a search for 'blue widgets' includes the keywords 'blue' and 'widgets'.
Organic results	Also known as natural results. Search results served by the search engine's algorithm. The search engine does not charge website owners to list these results.
Paid search advertising	Usually refers to advertising on search engines, sometimes called pay- per-click or PPC advertising. The advertiser pays only for each click on the ad.
Quality score (QS)	A measure used by Google AdWords to indicate how relevant a keyword is to an ad text and to a user's search query.
Return on investment (ROI)	The ratio of profit to cost.
Search term	The keywords a user enters when searching on a search engine.
Search engine results page (SERP)	The actual results returned to the user based on the search query. Sponsored results are search engine results that are paid for by the advertiser.

Table 11.2.1

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11.3: Defining search advertising

As discussed, search advertising involves placing online advertisements on search engine results pages to connect your product with consumers who are likely to be in the buying phase of the customer lifecycle.

Search engines display results to search queries based on proprietary algorithms. Each major search engine uses its own formula to determine what results to display for any term. The vast majority of searchers don't click through to the second page of results (less than 10% of people do), which means they are likely to find what they're looking for on the first page (Sharp, 2014). With search engines getting so much traffic, and delivering so much value, they need to find a way of generating revenue.

With so many search engines out there, which platform should you choose?

There are some small differences from platform to platform in terms of editorial policy, and each system has a different user interface. There is some theory that different platforms are better for different industries, for example, that Yahoo! fares better than Google on travel advertising. However, this is subjective, and most large advertisers will run PPC campaigns on a number of platforms. As with most things in digital marketing, it is all about testing.

Google AdWords is the best known and is considered the industry standard; it allows users to transact in the currency of their choice, is tied to a comprehensive analytics tool, and offers training programmes and certifications. Google AdWords also currently has the best contextual and geographical targeting worldwide, although geo-targeting is also offered by Bing Ads, Facebook Ads, LinkedIn Ads and YouTube video ads (which is closely linked to AdWords).

Structuring your search advertising campaign

When you start running search advertising, you shouldn't just create a whole stream of ads, you need to have a plan.

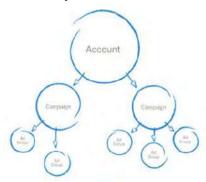


Figure 11.3.1: The main constituents of an AdWords campaign Adapted From Stokes, 2013

Your AdWords account is your home for all the ads you are currently running, and it should be structured to reflect your business and marketing strategy. Within your account, organise your search adverts in groupings, called campaigns, according to your strategy and the ads you are running. Within each campaign, you should have ad groups; these are sets of ads that have a common characteristic or focus. For example, if you are selling books online, you may have ad groups focused around a specific genre, author, event and special offer, as well as some ad groups around general themes such as promoting local stores, or making online sales.

∓ Note

Many search advertisers create ad groups for branded terms, competitor terms and generic key phrases related to the industry.

Structuring your account in this way will help you to easily oversee your advertising spend, determine the effectiveness of your ads, manage your ads and bids, and switch off any ads that aren't working effectively.

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11.4: The elements of a search ad

As of October 2016, Google phased out their basic text ads and replaced them with expanded text ads to reflect their more mobile friendly approach. These ads have the following format:

Heading 1 – Heading 2

- One expanded line of descriptive advert copy, sometimes breaking over two lines depending on device size.
- · www.DisplayURL.com
- · Ad extension.

As you can see, these ads consist of several elements; the key is to make these work together harmoniously to get searchers to click through to your website. The three main components are:

- · Keyword optimised ad text
- The link to your owned property (website, social media platform, content)
- Ad extensions.

Ad text

The ad text is the main component of a search ad. Search engines limit the characters in each line, though expanded text ads double that character limit in most cases. Google can sometimes show the headline and the first line of ad text in the same line, followed by the display URL and then the second line of ad text. There are also restrictions on what you are allowed to write in an advert. Here are some of the editorial guidelines from Google AdWords:

Expanded text ad character limits:

- **Headline part 1:** maximum of 30 characters
- **Headline part 2:** maximum of 30 characters (This will be shown after the first headline, usually separated by a hyphen, and may wrap around to the second line for mobile)
- Single description line: maximum of 80 characters
- **Display URL:** domain name automatically extracted from your final URL (URL path can be customised using two field options with a 15 character limit each).

General guidelines:

• No repeated exclamation marks.



These character limits and guidelines are very strict. If you fail to adhere to them, Google simply won't publish the ad.

- · No word may be written in capitals only.
- No nonsense words may be used.
- No claims of 'best', 'number one' or superlatives may be used unless they can be verified by a reliable third-party source.
- Product numbers may be used.
- No phone numbers allowed in the copy.

Writing effective copy

or most PPC ads, the ad copy is the only tool available to attract attention, convey a message and entice action. This is why writing effective ad copy is such an important skill for search advertising.

Users who are searching for something usually have a specific intent; they are looking for information, guidance, comparisons, tools, or solutions to their problems. It's important to understand why users would look for your brand or product and what keywords they would use to find it when crafting your search ads. Look at the considerations for choosing keywords that are covered in the Search engine optimisation chapter as these often overlap.







Read more about this in the Search engine optimisation chapter.

Use compelling and well-crafted calls to action so that users know what to do and what to expect: 'try now', 'sign up now', 'buy now'.



Read more about this in the Digital copywriting chapter.

Many advertisers test offers in the advert copy, such as a discount or limited time voucher. Product or service benefits make for good advert copy, such as free shipping, secure shopping or fast delivery.

If you are running many ads at once, it can be quite a lot of work to create unique copy for each one. Dynamic keyword insertion (inserting the search keyword dynamically into the advert copy that appears) or using the keyword in the advert copy can help. Dynamic keyword insertion takes the keyword in your campaign that matches with the user search query and inserts it into the ad automatically. This way, your ad looks more relevant to the user than a generic ad. The search engine will mark words that match the search term in bold, making the advert stand out a little bit more.

The downside of using dynamic keyword insertion is that you have less control over when an ad is shown to a user, and the results may not be as good as with a standard SEM campaign. The goal is to generate as many clicks as possible, but sometimes the advertiser is better off with fewer, high-quality clicks that are more likely to generate actual sales.

The long tail

Internet Live Stats asserts that 16–20% of search queries on the web have never been asked before (Internet Live Stats, 2016). This means that the sum of searches that are unique is higher than the sum of non-unique searches. Looking a little more closely at search terms will show a small number of high-volume searches, and then a large number of lower volume searches stretching out to those unique searches.

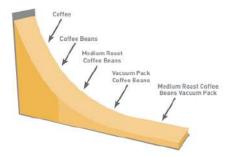


Figure 11.4.1: An example of long tail keywords *Adapted From Stokes*, 2013

∓ Note

What's more important to your brand, a high volume of traffic, or a smaller number of qualified leads? Consider your strategy when deciding whether to use short- or long-tail keywords.

This is sometimes referred to as the long tail of search. Discovering these lowvolume, niche search terms can do wonders for a search advertising campaign.

Generally there is not much competition for these search terms, and the search term itself is very much targeted, so it will likely be cheaper to bid on and may yield a high conversion rate. While long-tail phrases are generally cheaper and lead to a higher rate of conversions, you will need to use a much larger number of them to make up for the lower traffic volume that they generate.

Also consider that search engine users may be at various stages of the buying cycle, and it could be worthwhile to craft a long-tail keyword strategy targeting those who are at the end of the buying cycle and know specifically what they are looking for.



For example, if you sell cameras, targeting the term 'camera' may not bring in much targeted traffic (since users searching for 'camera' may be looking for information, pictures, price comparisons, or even something completely unrelated). But users looking for 'buy Canon DSLR camera in London' has a clear intention in mind and could be a great target for advertising.

Display URL

Search ads allow you to include a display URL. The URL shown is not necessarily the URL that the user will click through to; the display URL (what is shown on the advert) actually directs to the destination URL (what the actual URL of the page is). The display URL is sometimes also called a vanity URL.



The display URL should be short, clear and meaningful to the viewer. It should indicate what type of page the user will be taken to when they click.



Figure 11.4.2: A Google search advert with a clear display URL Adapted From Screenshot, Google, 2017

The display URL must be the same domain as the destination URL and Google pulls this out automatically. Google will show only one advert per domain.

The page that the user is taken to is called the landing page, which can be any page on your website, not necessarily the home page. The aim should be to send users to a web page that is as specific to their search, and the PPC advert, as possible. This is known as deep-linking.

Landing pages

Search advertising is not just about creating adverts and bidding for keywords. The process continues once a user has clicked on your advert. The page that the user reaches by clicking on an advert is called a landing page and is either an existing page on your website, or a new custom-built page for the campaign at hand (useful if you are running a competition or special offer).



Figure 11.4.3: The Shopify landing page Adapted From Screenshot, Shopify, 2017

Landing pages can make or break an advertising campaign. Poorly executed PPC campaigns will send all users to the home page of a website. Campaigns that convert will make sure that users land on a page that is relevant to their search with a very visible call to action. The aim is to keep the user as focused on the goal, conversion, as possible. Sending users to the home page gives them too many other options to choose from.





For example, if users searched for 'Canon EOS 1300D', a poorly run campaign would send them to www.canon.co.uk. A better campaign would have the user clicking through to www.canon.co.uk/for_home/product_finder/cameras/digital_slr/eos_1300d/.

Landing pages also indicate relevance to the search engine, which can increase the Quality Score of the advert, and in turn lower the cost per click (CPC) of the keyword. Adding keyword-rich pages to the website can also have SEO benefits. PPC campaigns often have thousands of keywords, which can mean that you will have a lot of landing pages to build. Creating dynamic landing pages means that with a simple script, unique keyword-rich landing pages can be created for every search. The script will take the keyword that the searcher has used, and insert it in predefined places on the landing page. The user will then be landing on a page that is highly relevant to their search.



Read more about this in the Search engine optimisation chapter.

Ad extensions



Google is constantly testing and adding new ad extensions so check in often to see what's new.

Google offers several ways to add value or information to search adverts. These are referred to as ad extensions. For a search advertiser, the ad extensions offer a way to get additional information into a search advert without affecting standard advert copy limits.

AdWords currently offers six manual extensions and four automated extensions, for a total of ten. Some of these will be more useful for mobile, such as the locationspecific ones. The manual extensions are as follows:

1. Location extensions

Location extensions allow you to add location information and maps to your advert (you can add map pins, navigation assistance, and a call option). To use the extensions, you can either insert your address manually or link your AdWords account to your Google+ Local (www.google.com/local) account.



Figure 11.4.4: A location extension Adapted From Screenshot, Google, 2017

2. Call extensions

The call extension allows you to display a local phone number in a line below the standard text advert. This is particularly effective in mobile ads, where the user can click and call directly from their phone.



Figure 11.4.5: A call extension Adapted From Screenshot, Google, 2017

3. App extensions

The app extension adds a link below your ad that sends users to the app store or begins a download of your app.



Figure 11.4.6: An app extension Adapted From Screenshot, Google, 2017





4. Review Extensions

This shows positive third party reviews, generally from trustworthy sources.

```
Mushroom Foraging Tours

"5" www.example.com
Find chariterelle, porcini, oyster mushrooms with a fungi guide!

"So impressed. Brought home a pound of ceps." - exampleblog.com
```

Figure 11.4.7: A review extension Adapted From Screenshot, Google, 2017

5. Sitelink extensions

Sitelinks add up to six extra links to pages on your site that might help users find what they're looking for. Sitelinks are limited to 25 characters for most languages. Sitelinks allow you to direct users to more relevant areas of your website, all from one advert. They are suitable for advertising on more general or branded keywords.



Figure 11.4.8: Sitelink extensions Adapted From Screenshot, Google, 2017

6. Callout extensions

These allow you to include additional text with your search ads, such as more information about your business, products, and services.

```
English Online Classes - Study Various English Courses

(2) www.mytopdog.co.za/English-Colline *
For Grade 4 To Grade 12. Errol Now!
Enhance Your Exam Recults - Top Education Resources - Online Test Results - Instant Access
```

Figure 11.4.9: Callout extensions Adapted From Screenshot, Google, 2017

The automated extensions are as follows:

7. Consumer ratings

This shows your best ratings below your search ads, with a link to more ratings; this is useful if you have very high ratings!



Figure 11.4.10: A consumer rating Adapted From Screenshot, Google, 2017

8. Previous visits

These let users know whether they've visited your site before, and when. These are useful if users are trying to find their way back to your website or to encourage one-time customers to return.



Figure 11.4.11: A previous visit extension Adapted From Screenshot, Google, 2017

Dynamic structured snippets

Dynamic structured snippets automatically show additional landing page details, which helps searchers to determine whether your site contains the kind of information they're looking for. This information comes from content on your site.



Figure 11.4.12: A dynamic structured snippet Adapted From Screenshot, Google, 2017



10. Seller ratings

These show online business ratings with your ad, showing what kind of reputation you have for good service. The seller ratings come from reputable sources that compile a number of business reviews to help users make more informed decisions and to help your ad perform better.

Sarah's Designer Shoe Store
www.sarah-shoes.com
www.sarah-shoes.com
Free Shipping, Free Returns on Large Selection of Discount Shoes

Figure 11.4.13: Seller ratings Adapted From Screenshot, Google, 2017

Message extensions

At the end of October 2016, Google announced message extensions, which give users the change to click to text a business straight from the search engine results page. Advertisers can include a pre-written text message to make things easier for mobile users. Tests on these extensions have shown that they significantly improve mobile clickthrough rates but they cannot currently be tracked as conversions in AdWords.

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11.5: Targeting options

Search adverts are targeted in a variety of ways, depending on how you want to reach your intended audience. Targeting your adverts means you know that the traffic you are getting is relevant to your product.

Keywords and match types

It's not enough to simply pick the right keywords; you need to know about the different ways in which the search engine interprets and matches the search term to your chosen keyword.

Most search engines require the advertiser to provide the search keywords for which their advert should appear. Considering the massive volume of searches conducted every day, it would be impossible to determine all the possible terms potential customers might use to find you. That is why there are different keyword match types for search advertising.

Google AdWords using the following match types:

- · Broad match
- · Broad match modifier
- Phrase match
- · Exact match
- · Negative match.

Broad match means that your advert will appear for the keywords you have entered, as well as search terms that contain your keywords and any other words in any order, as well as some variations of your keywords such as misspellings and synonyms.

The broad match modifier is an additional targeting option that gives you tighter control than broad match by excluding synonyms but including other versions of the word, such as plurals. It's implemented with a + before the keyword.

Phrase match, which is denoted with quotation marks around the keywords; 'phrase match' means that your advert will appear only for search terms that have your keywords in them, in the same order, though other words may also be in the search term.

Exact match, denoted by square brackets [exact match] means that the advert will appear for search terms only exactly the same as the keywords selected.

Negative match, denoted by using a dash in front of the keywords; —negative means that your advert will not appear in searches using that word, no matter what other words are used.

Advertisers can assign as many keywords as they want to an advert, but only one advert for each URL will be shown. If two advertisers are bidding to show adverts for the same domain, only one will be shown. Which advert will be shown is based on the bids being placed and on the quality of the adverts (more on that later).

Language and location targeting

Search engines have versions customised for specific regions and languages, based on the user's settings and where in the world they are searching from. As a search marketer, you can choose the language and the location of the search engine to target. This is known as geo-targeting.

For example, you may want your advert to show only to English searches in Asia, or to French searches in Johannesburg. Targeting your advert means that your ads won't be seen by users outside your target area, and you won't pay for traffic that you cannot convert into customers.

Behavioural and demographic targeting

Search advertising can also be targeted based on personal behaviour. Using AdWords, you can re-target visitors who came to your site via an AdWords advert based on actions that they took. This means that if users came to your site, but did not complete a purchase, you can target adverts to them in the SERPs or through other online advertising channels, such as the Google Display Network. This is called re-marketing or re-targeting, and can be very effective for remaining top of mind until the user is ready to convert. It is usually advisable to cap the number of times a re-marketing ad is shown to an individual to avoid annoying them.

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11.6: Bidding and ranking for search ads

As you know, search adverts are charged on a per-click basis. The cost that you pay for every click is determined by a variety of factors, and is based on a bidding system.

The different advertising platforms offer advanced bidding options, all aimed at helping you to run your advertising campaign better. You can bid for placement on the SERP, or you can bid based on how much you are willing to pay per click. You are also able to tailor your approach to, for example, bidding for adverts during certain times of the day only.

Search advertising is usually run as a Vickrey auction model, so advertisers place bids to appear based on certain criteria. The advertising platform determines when adverts are eligible to appear and serves them as is appropriate. The advertiser then pays the advertising platform when their advert is clicked on.

Advertiser		CPC
A2	\$3.00	\$2.51
A1.	\$2.50	\$2.36
A3	\$2.35	\$2.06

Figure 11.6.1: Three advertisers bidding on the same key phrase Adapted From Stokes, 2013

With search advertising, the advertiser:

- · Creates the copy for an advertisement.
- Determines the landing page for the advert.
- Selects the keywords or criteria for which that advertisement should appear.
- Chooses the maximum amount, the cost per click (CPC), that they are willing to pay for a click on the advert.

The advertising platform:

- Checks the advert for compliance with editorial guidelines.
- Displays the advert for relevant search queries or other criteria.
- Determines the rank of the advert based on the advertiser's maximum bid and the relevance of the advert (which includes factors such as clickthrough rate, ad copy, keyword and landing page relevance).

In Google AdWords, as well as deciding on your CPC bids for your keywords, you are able to set budgets for your campaign. You can set daily budgets, monthly budgets, or no budget. Once your total is reached, your adverts no longer run, so you can be sure that you never overspend. If you are concerned about overspending, you can set a daily budget. However, this can mean that your adverts do not run as often as you may like them to.

Conversion and clickthrough rates

Search engines look at factors such as relevancy to try to ensure that it is not just advertisers with deep pockets that can land the top ad listing. Search engines need to ensure that users find the adverts relevant, otherwise they'll be less likely to click on them, and no click means no revenue for the search engine.

Studies repeatedly show that those adverts nearer the top of the page attract the highest clickthrough rates (CTRs) (Smart Insights, 2016). Competition for these top spots can be fierce and the cost per click can be very high.

Ads at the top of a page generally have the following qualities:

- They are very relevant to a user's search query.
- They consistently perform well, with high CTRs over time.
- The CPC bid is competitive and outbids other ads of the same quality. (Google AdWords, n.d.)





Figure 11.6.2: An image illustrating clickthrough and conversion rates Adapted From Stokes, 2013

The bidding process

Advertisers need to determine the maximum they are willing to pay for a click on their advert, and they need to decide this for each keyword they enter for an advert.

This bid is the maximum cost per click (max CPC).

However, this will not necessarily be the CPC that the advertiser must pay for a click. Every time a search query is entered, the search engine runs an auction to determine the placement of the adverts where advertisers have bid on that search term. This auction is known as a generalised second price (GSP) auction, which is a variation on the Vickrey auction.

In the GSP auction, each advertiser will pay the bid of the advertiser below him, plus a standard increment (typically US \$0.01), for a click on their advert.

Say three advertisers, A1, A2 and A3, bid US \$2.50, US \$3.00 and US \$2.35 respectively on the same keyword. The search engine has set a minimum price of US \$2.05 on that same keyword. Here is how the adverts would be positioned, and what they would each pay for a click:

Advertiser		CPC
A2	\$3.00	\$2.51
3A1	\$2.50	\$2.36
A3	\$2.35	\$2.06

Figure 11.6.3: GSP payments per click Adapted From Stokes, 2013

AdWords Quality Score

When it comes to ranking, of course, it's not quite as simple as that (it rarely is!).

As well as the bid an advertiser places on a keyword, the search engine will take a number of other factors into account. In the case of Google AdWords, this is known as Quality Score. Quality Score is applied on keyword, ad group and account level. It is important that your entire account has a good Quality Score, as it affects ranking and the cost per click.

The Quality Score is determined by, among other factors:

- The relevance of the keyword to the search term
- The relevance of the advert copy to the search term
- The relevance of the landing page to the search term
- The historic CTR of that advert.

Quality Score is ranked as follows:

Great (8, 9, 10): Keyword is very relevant and QS needs no improvement.

OK (5, 6, 7): Keyword is relevant, but can still benefit from a higher QS.

Poor (1, 2, 3, 4): This keyword isn't very relevant and QS needs improvement.

Another way to think of the Quality Score is as a discount that is applied to your campaign. For instance, an advert with a great Quality Score can achieve a top position at a lower bid than a competing ad with a poor Quality Score. For example, an advertiser with a Quality Score of 5 will have to pay twice as much for a certain position as an advertiser with a Quality Score of 10.

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request.





11.7: Measuring success

How do you know if a campaign is performing well? You may think that more clicks are better, but is this necessarily the case? Being in the top position means that you may pay more per click. When your advertising budget is limited, it is often more cost effective not to bid too much for your keywords and to occupy the lower ad positions. Because you'll pay less per click, you can achieve more clicks, and potential customers, for your limited search advertising budget.

Advertisers need to consider what users do after clicking through to the advertiser's website from the search engine. When planning a search advertising campaign, it is crucial to set the goals of the campaign upfront, and make sure that these are attainable. With a goal set up, the advertiser can track how many of the users that clickthrough to the website follow through to that goal. This is called a conversion.

Goals could be:

- · Buying a product
- · Filling in a form or quote
- · Downloading a white paper
- Sending an enquiry
- · Booking a flight.

We know that the CTR of an advert is the number of clicks out of the total impressions. The conversion rate of an advert is conversions divided by clicks. The cost per action, or the cost per each conversion, is the total cost of the campaign, divided by the number of conversions. The average cost per click is the total cost of the campaign divided by the number of clicks.

As the advertiser, you also need to know the value of each conversion. If the value of a conversion is less than the cost of achieving it, you effectively lose money with every conversion. Knowing the value to your business of a conversion will enable you to run search advertising campaigns profitably.

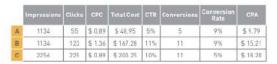


Figure 11.7.1: Adjusting bidding strategies based on business principles Adapted From Stokes, 2013

You also want to look at your share of voice, which is your brand's share of the total advertising exposures for that sector or product type. This helps you measure how visible you are during your campaign.

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11.8: Tools of the trade

The foundation of search marketing is keyword research, and there are a number of tools that will help you grow your keyword list, and also to determine keyword volumes. Some are free and some require payment. All these tools should be used as guidelines only. They usually provide trends and estimates rather than specific values. Test the data with your own campaigns to determine what works best for you.

Ad management tools

• Google AdWords Editor: https://www.google.com/intl/en/adwordseditor/

Keyword volume tools

· tools.seobook.com/general/keyword

Keyword suggestion tools

- adwords.google.com/keywordplanner (free account required)
- · www.keyworddiscovery.com/search.html
- · tools.seobook.com/keyword-tools/seobook/

Google AdWords has an Ad Preview Tool, which allows you to see whether your advert is appearing on the page without using the search engine and thereby skewing quality score data. This can be accessed at adwords.google.com/select/AdTargetingPreviewTool.

Some paid services that aid with keyword research are: www.wordtracker.com

- · www.advancedwebranking.com
- Also consider other ways to research your industry and brand, for example, Google Trends (http://google.com/trends) can show keyword search volume over time.

Spreadsheets, such as Microsoft's Excel, are useful to aid you in building your keyword lists. Getting to grips with functions such as Concatenate and Vlookup will be useful.

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11.9: Case study - Frooition

One-line summary

Frooition, a web design firm, increased conversions and cut costs by optimising its PPC and SEO campaigns.

The challenge

Frooition proves creative services and apps for more than a quarter of a million customers around the world. They wanted to overhaul their SEO and PPC efforts so that they could maintain their current levels of sales conversions while simultaneously reducing their marketing budget.

The solution

They partnered with Vertical Leap to change their SEO and PPC campaigns. Their solution operated on several levels:

- They found that eBay was limiting exposure of Frooition ads and requested removal of the restriction placed on the ads.
- They restructured the entire account using historical data so that they could better focus budget. Keywords that didn't work well were removed, and keyword match types were refined to better targeted search terms.
- They wrote new ad copy to match the new structure of the account and improve the keyword quality score.
- They adjusted the ad schedule so that high-performing hours of the day were targeted.
- They created new ad extensions to highlight USPs and improve clickthrough rates.

Results

Because of the removal of poorly performing keywords and refining of targeting, they decreased the number of impressions by 33% and reduced overall spend by 65%. The quality score improved dramatically, and cost per click was reduced by 52%. The changes to ad copy and ad extensions, along with the targeting, increased the clickthrough rate and conversions were up as well.

In summary:

- Cost per conversion dropped by 70%
- Total conversions increased by 21%
- Conversion rate went up by 65%
- Overall costs dropped by 65%
- Clickthrough rate increased by 69% (Digital Training Academy, 2016).

By using data and actionable insights carefully, this Frooition and Vertical Leap radically improved the PPC campaign.

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11.10: The bigger picture

Search advertising and search engine optimisation (SEO) should go hand in hand to create an effective search engine marketing strategy. The greater the part of the search results page that you own, the better.

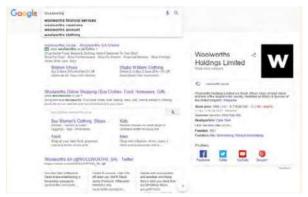


Figure 11.10.1: Brand search ads and organic results appearing together Adapted From Screenshot, Google, 2017

Search advertising is an excellent source of keywords and conversions. This insight can be used to improve the SEO of a site, as you will already know the relevance of these keywords to your intended audience. In turn, improved SEO rankings and social media interactions can help to reduce the CPC of your search advertising campaign, improve your Quality Score and raise your CTRs throughout.

Search advertising can also help to give your brand immediate search engine presence for your offline campaigns, when these might not yet be highly ranked in the natural search results. Search advertising can also be used together with online crisis management. If a company is unable to combat negative search results through the natural rankings, they are always able to bid for search adverts that can present their view.

Having a firm grasp of search advertising on search engines will provide a good foundation for running digital advertising campaigns across other networks and ad types.

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11.12: Tracking

In order to report on campaigns all the way through to conversion, you need to use appropriate conversion tracking. Conversion tracking is usually accomplished with a small tracking pixel that is placed on the conversion confirmation page of the website.

Google AdWords offers conversion tracking tags, which will allow you to report on AdWords campaigns from impression through to conversion. The AdWords interface provides a wide range of useful reports.

In order to track many other networks, however, third-party tracking needs to be used. Most ad serving technology will also enable pay-per-click tracking, usually at a nominal additional cost per click. If you are running display campaigns through these networks as well, this has the benefit of reporting on how the campaigns might influence each other.

If you are sending traffic to a website that uses Google Analytics, you can use campaign tracking to track and report on campaigns that are driving traffic to the site. You can link your AdWords and Analytics accounts to share information across these platforms, such as the cost paid per click in Google Analytics and some basic analytics information in AdWords.

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11.13: Implementing a search advertising campaign

Do your homework

For a successful campaign, you need a full online and offline analysis of the business, customer demographics, industry and competitors. While it is relatively quick to set up a campaign, pre-planning will show dividends later. You need a brand, an identity and a clear, unique selling point. You get only three lines to advertise, so you need to make sure you know what must be included and how to make the most impact.

Define your goals

You need to know what you want to achieve with your search advertising campaign.

Branding campaigns, for example, are very different from campaigns to increase sales. What do you want users to do once they click on your advert?

Budget, cost per action (CPA) and targets

Determine how much you are willing to spend to achieve your goal, your target CPA. Decide how much budget you are going to allocate to your search advertising campaign. If your goal is to increase revenue, your budget may be unlimited as long as revenue is increasing and you are within your target CPA.

Keyword research

You need to determine what keywords potential customers are likely to use when searching for the service that you offer. Along with that, you need to know:

- What common misspellings or typos a customer might use.
- What words would show that they are not likely to purchase from you, such as 'free' and 'cheap'.
- As part of your keyword research, you need to look at expected volumes for your keywords, so that you know how to bid.
 There are also tools that will show you similar or related keywords, so you can expand your keyword list even further. See the Tools of the trade section (below) for some suggestions.

Write the adverts

Using your keyword research, write compelling adverts to promote your products. Adverts can be unique to one keyword, or you can group them and have a number of keywords for one advert.

Make sure you use an appropriate display URL, and that you target the landing page for each advert.

Place your bids

Based on your goals and keyword research, set the maximum bids for your keywords. Don't set these too high at this stage as you'll tweak the bids as you test your campaign. That being said, don't make them too low either, or you won't get much traffic, and it could affect your Quality Score. Test your ad to find the right balance in line with your goals. AdWords also provides tools that can help to guide your decisions.

Tracking

Get your tracking tags in place, especially any conversion tracking tags.

Measure, analyse, test, optimise!

With tracking in place, you can analyse your ROI down to a keyword level, and then focus your campaign and budget on the keywords that are converting best.

Consider how changing the text, image or video of your advert could increase the CTR, or your conversion rate. Test different landing pages to see what converts better.

Test the networks too. Your Bing campaign may perform better than Google, or your Facebook account may drive cheaper traffic. Always keep your goals in mind and work, work to achieve them.





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11.14: Advantages and challenges

There are many reasons why search advertising can be an excellent addition to any digital marketing strategy.

• No to low cost barrier

You pay only for traffic, there are usually no setup fees involved, and all the tools you need to start out with can be accessed for free.

· Tracking every cent

Search advertising allows you to track your advertising spend down to a keyword level, so you can learn what works and what doesn't on a micro scale.

• Targeted advert placement

You can make your advertising relevant by using filters, targeting your ads to specific users, or even in the way you use keywords and match types.

· You're giving your customers what they want

Search advertising lets you put your advert in front of users who are searching for your product. It lets you provide a solution, as opposed to creating an interruption.

Search advertising campaigns are quick to set up, can provide high volumes of traffic, and are highly trackable. But there are some pitfalls that you should be aware of.

Click fraud

Click fraud occurs when your advert is clicked on by users who are not legitimate potential customers. Because an advertiser has to pay for every click, sometimes unscrupulous competitors can click on the advert to force the payment. There are even automated bots that can click on adverts, costing advertisers millions.

Search engines have taken measures to combat this and click fraud is no longer widely prevalent. Advertisers can report suspected click fraud, and the search engines will refund invalid or fraudulent clicks after investigation.

What can you do? Keep an eye on your campaign. Any sudden leap in CTR should be investigated, and you should pay particular attention to see if the conversion rate drops, which would indicate potential fraud. Pause the campaign if you suspect fraud, and alert the search engine.

Bidding wars and climbing CPCs

High-traffic keywords are expensive, and the battle to stay on top means that the CPC of these keywords is escalating. Convincing yourself that it's number one or nothing can result in burning through your campaign budget quickly with nothing to show for it.

Keep focused on your campaign goals and ROI, and keep investigating to find less expensive niche keywords that work for you.

Keeping an eye on things

Search advertising campaigns require a lot of monitoring and the bigger your campaign gets the more time this takes. Search advertising can provide a fantastic ROI, but you need to check in and tweak regularly to make sure that it continues to perform for you.

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11.E: Search advertising(Exercises)

Case study questions

- 1. Why was this campaign trying to reduce the number of impressions?
- 2. Which aspects of best practice worked together here to achieve the desired effect?

Chapter questions

- 1. Why would competitors commit click fraud?
- 2. When should you use certain search types for AdWords, and why would this matter? How does it affect the number of conversions?
- 3. Why should one use relevant landing pages when running a search advertising campaign, and how does this affect the number of conversions?

Further reading

www.ppchero.com – This website contains practical step-by-step guides to improving your search campaigns and provides regular posts on all things search marketing.

www.searchengineland.com – This blog covers not only search advertising, but the entire spectrum of search engine marketing, providing useful insights for all your search activities.

support.google.com/adwords/?hl=en - This is where you can find information related to Google AdWords and other search advertising concepts.

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11.S: Search advertising(Summary)

Search advertising is advertising on the results pages of search engines where an advertiser typically pays for each click on an advert. These adverts consist of text, links and Ad Extensions. They are listed above and alongside the organic search results, and are marked as adverts so that users are aware that these are paid-for listings.

Search advertising is targeted according to keywords, demographics, behaviour or interest. On search engines, the CPC is determined by an auction.

The success of an advert may be determined by its CTR, but the success of a campaign will be determined by its conversion rate and its ability to achieve a target CPA. After all, it's not enough for users just to click on your adverts, you want them to take specific actions on your site once they get there.

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