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Inbound marketing from a B2B-perspective

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Abstract

There has been a lot of research and studies done about the positive effects of inbound marketing and previous research clearly states that engaging customers is crucial when developing a successful inbound marketing strategy. However, a gap in connecting inbound marketing to a B2B-perspective is evident. Little information can be found about this specific field of practice when using inbound marketing strategy. Therefore, the aim of this study is to increase the understanding of in what way business to business companies use inbound marketing and the reasons they have for applying this strategy. This study was constructed by a qualitative method with an abductive approach where six companies were interviewed. The interviews were then compared with each other and the collected data from the Frame of Reference in order to gain a deeper understanding of the companies work with inbound marketing. The result of the study gives an insight into how companies can implement inbound marketing in their marketing strategy and the benefits it will lead to if executed correctly. Furthermore, a model has been created to help companies implement inbound marketing and shows which inbound marketing tools that can be used in the different stages of the sales and marketing process.

This bachelor thesis was examined by Dr. Navid Ghannad.

Keywords: Inbound marketing, content marketing, search engine optimization, social media marketing, B2B-selling process and B2B-buying process
Preface

As a part of our final year of The International Marketing Programme at Halmstad University, this bachelor thesis was written. We have observed the digitizations profound effects on marketing and realized the value of having a successful digital marketing strategy. Therefore, we found this area of research interesting and wanted to gain better knowledge of this emerging digital marketing strategy called inbound marketing.

We would like to thank all the precipitating companies in this study for their time, commitment and valuable information. We would also like to thank our supervisor Prof. Svante Andersson for his guidance and useful feedback.

We hope this thesis will create a better understanding of inbound marketing and its benefits.

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# Table of Contents

1. **Introduction** .......................................................................................................................... 1
2. **Frame of Reference** .............................................................................................................. 6
3. **Methodology** ...................................................................................................................... 16
4. **Empirical Study** .................................................................................................................. 25
4.2.1 How Migaloo implements inbound marketing .......................................................... 27
4.2.2 Why Migaloo implements inbound marketing .......................................................... 27

4.3 Synlighet ......................................................................................................................... 28
4.3.1 How Synlighet implements inbound marketing ......................................................... 28
4.3.2 Why Synlighet implements inbound marketing ........................................................ 29

4.4 Alinder Design ............................................................................................................... 29
4.4.1 How Alinder Design implements inbound marketing ................................................. 29
4.4.2 Why Alinder Design implements inbound marketing ................................................. 30

4.5 Kennedy-Andersson ..................................................................................................... 30
4.5.1 How Kennedy-Andersson implements inbound marketing ......................................... 31
4.5.2 Why Kennedy-Andersson implements inbound marketing ......................................... 32

4.6 Dazy ............................................................................................................................... 32
4.6.1 How Dazy implements inbound marketing ............................................................... 32
4.6.2 Why Dazy implements inbound marketing ............................................................... 33

5. Analysis ............................................................................................................................ 34

5.1 Theoretical Analysis .................................................................................................... 34
5.1.1 Zooma ..................................................................................................................... 34
5.1.2 Migaloo ................................................................................................................... 35
5.1.3 Synlighet ................................................................................................................ 37
5.1.4 Alinder Design ........................................................................................................ 39
5.1.5 Kennedy-Andersson ............................................................................................... 40
5.1.6 Dazy ....................................................................................................................... 42

5.2 Empirical Analysis ....................................................................................................... 44
5.2.1 Identified Contacts - Attract .................................................................................... 44
5.2.2 Leads - Engage ......................................................................................................... 45
5.2.3 Deals - Delight ......................................................................................................... 46
5.2.4 Reasons for implementing inbound marketing ......................................................... 46

5.3 Summary ....................................................................................................................... 48
Table 3.0 The inbound marketing process, similarities and differences .............................. 48

6. Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 49
Figure 6.0 Summarized inbound marketing implementation ................................................ 50

6.1 Contribution and Implications ...................................................................................... 51

6.2 Suggestions for Further Research ................................................................................ 51

List of References ............................................................................................................... 52

Appendix 1 ........................................................................................................................... 59

Interview Guide .................................................................................................................. 59
1. Introduction

In this chapter we will present and discuss the gap regarding the digital marketing strategy known as inbound marketing. We explain what inbound marketing is, how it has become what it is today and the benefits it generates for the company. We then argue for the problem, explain the purpose and the research questions of the thesis. The chapter is concluded by explaining central definitions and delimitations.

The aim and basic foundation of marketing strategy has, since the very beginning, been to attract customers by gaining their interest and informing them about a product or the company. The reason for these efforts being to induce decision-making and loyalty to the company brand. (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016) However today, traditional marketing is more often than not perceived as invasive due to the fact that it pushes products onto potential customers, which is becoming unsustainable in our digitalizing society (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). This way of marketing puts the product in the spotlight and has a brand-centric approach (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Digital inbound marketing, on the other hand, corrects this shortcoming by focusing on and identifying the real needs of the customer instead. The need of the customer is the most central part of all communication with potential targets. (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016) Therefore, companies are encouraged to implement a customer-centric approach (Holliman & Rowley, 2014).

In the middle of the 1990s, companies started to monitor the consumer behavior online and it was during this time that the first Internet bubble began to grow (HubSpot, 2017), peaking in the year 2000 (Corr, 2007). As the IT-bubble burst a year later, marketers realized that applying the same marketing- and communication strategies did not successfully reach the targeted segments as it had in an offline setting (HubSpot, 2017). One factor being the dramatic increase in the number of websites around the world that had gone from 23,000 in 1995 to more than 644 million in 2012 (Pomirleanu, Schibrowsky, Peltier & Nill, 2013). Consumers now used search engines instead of starting their purchasing process on mass media sites, where the companies until then had been advertising (HubSpot, 2017). Globalization has made a limitless flow of information possible (London & Hart, 2004) which has led to that traditional marketing channels are becoming outdated and replaceable (Pomirleanu et al., 2013). This became the start of a new Internet growth called Web 2.0, which has formed a whole new way to use the web (HubSpot, 2017).

As the competition increases and demand becomes more uncertain, markets have become more complex (Blocker, Flint, Myers & Slater, 2011). Today anyone can use the Internet to search for information about a product or service they are in the market for. This means that finding and choosing a product is no longer necessarily based on which company has the biggest marketing budget, but on who has the best web content. (Halligan & Shah, 2014) This change has led to the transformation of marketing where focus has shifted from the traditional outbound marketing to a more inbound focused structure (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).
Table 1.0 Differences between traditional and digital inbound marketing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basis</th>
<th>Traditional Marketing</th>
<th>Digital Inbound Marketing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Finding customers</td>
<td>Getting found by potential, existing and aspirational consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aim</td>
<td>Increased sales</td>
<td>Creating long lasting relationships by reaching and converting qualified consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Large audiences</td>
<td>Interested prospects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactics</td>
<td>Print advertisements, TV advertisements, Outdoors advertising, Cold calling, Trade shows, Email lists</td>
<td>Blogs, Ebooks, Whitepapers Videos on YouTube, Vimeo, etc. Search engine optimization tactics Infographics Webinars Feeds Social media marketing tactics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Opreana & Vinerean, 2015.*

In table 1.0 the main characteristics and differences between traditional and digital inbound marketing are presented.

With the transformation from outbound to inbound marketers have to understand how they can help, support and build personal relationships with customers by providing them with content customized to their needs. Relevant content in an appropriate area is valuable to the customer and will increase their confidence and loyalty toward the company. (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016) According to Dutot and Bergeron (2016) social media has become a place for businesses to interact with consumers and therefore a place where the customer's perception of the company is shaped. They further state that more than half of social media users follow one or more companies and 83 percent of them use social media on a daily basis (Dutot and Bergeron, 2016).

“Unlike outbound marketing, with inbound marketing, you don’t need to fight for your potential customers’ attention. By creating content designed to address the problems and needs of your ideal customers, you attract qualified prospects and build trust and credibility for your business.” (HubSpot, 2019: [https://www.hubspot.com/inbound-marketing](https://www.hubspot.com/inbound-marketing))

Content marketing, search engine marketing and social media marketing are all part of the core that form the concept digital inbound marketing (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). The main focus for inbound marketing is to draw interested prospects to websites and blogs etc. through organic search results where valuable experiences are created when potential customers are met with relevant and helpful content. (HubSpot, 2019) In contrast traditional marketing involves a more intrusive method to attract customers by pushing the message toward the receiver through cold calling, unsought e-mail or mail offers, telemarketing or advertisement in different forms of media such as magazines, newspapers and commercials on television and radio etc. It requires disturbing the consumer in order to interact with them and the message is easily lost in the buzz of hundreds of marketing interruptions a person is faced with every day.
People have learned how to block this unsolicited information out. (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015)

On the contrary, inbound marketing helps companies locate customers who have actively shown interest to learn more about the product, before interaction with a potential customer is initiated. Studies show that inbound leads generate a 14.6 percent sales rate, while outbound leads only generate a sales rate of 1.7 percent. (Search Engine Journal, 2016) The Internet and digitalization have forced the traditional way of communicating with customers to change because the customer behavior itself is different from what it has been in the past (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015; Forbes, 2018). This means that companies not only face a fast-changing market, but also a change in the needs of the customers (London & Hart, 2004). This outcome has formed a whole new buying and selling process. In other words, inbound marketing is a reaction to the transformation of the buyer and increasing digital communication. (Forbes, 2018)

Digital content and social media in conjunction with recent progress in information technology (IT) and interactions are simultaneously changing the foundation of how individuals and businesses search for information and communicate with one and other (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). In a time where competition is high and the players are many a company that does not get digital and understand the importance of doing so will simply not survive (Gilan & Hammarberg, 2016).

1.1 Problem

Globalization, technology and the constantly changing business environment are all simultaneously transforming the traditional marketing strategy that has become inefficient in today's society. Understanding this changing environment and context is crucial for business survival and a lucrative business performance. (Khankaew, Ussawawanitchakit & Raksong, 2015) Even though the use of inbound marketing has become an increasingly more popular strategy there are still corporations that ignore it due to lack of knowledge or understanding of its benefits (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). There are a lot of different platforms and it can be difficult to know which one to use. Some platforms require knowledge and resources that the companies do not have. (Kolowich, 2016) The consequence for these companies will be ultimately failing their marketing efforts because they will not reach their targeted segments successfully (Hubspot, 2017).

Previous research claims that B2B-buyers are greatly influenced by many different sources of information, the Internet being the most frequent (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016; McMaster, 2010). The influence of digital channels has increased due to great changes in the B2B-sector when it comes to influencing the customers decision-making regarding the purchasing process (Lingqvist, Plotkin, & Stanley, 2015; Wiersema, 2013). Approximately 60 percent of a business to business customers decision-making process has already taken place before the first interaction with a possible supplier (Adamson, Dixon & Toman, 2012). This is confirmed by a Corporate Executive Board study, including 1,400 B2B-customers, where it is concluded that the buyers strongly depend on online information sources in the early decision-making process. This has motivated B2B-sellers to create digital content that will help the company to interact with the potential buyers. (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016) Furthermore, inbound marketing is a cost-effective investment for anyone who implements it (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). According to Fishkin and Høgenhaven (2013) inbound marketing is a more cost-effective marketing strategy than paid marketing. They argue that even though it does take
time and resources to create good content, it is at a fraction of the cost of outbound channels. For every dollar spent on inbound channels, eight dollars are spent on outbound channels (Fishkin & Høgenhaven, 2013).

As already mentioned, the Internet revolution has completely changed the foundation of marketing (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). This has had a big impact on the buying- and selling process, which has changed the purchase process entirely (Forbes, 2018). The reason why traditional marketing is unsuccessful is because it lacks personalization, the message easily gets lost in the buzz and it requires interrupting the consumer in order to interact with them. The customers are no longer susceptible to these marketing efforts. In contrast inbound marketing creates valuable content that naturally attracts people to the company and product on the customers own initiative. (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015) Therefore, inbound marketing helps support and build personal relationships with customers in this new digital society by providing them with content customized to their needs. Relevant content in an appropriate area is valuable to the customer and will increase their confidence and loyalty toward the company. (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016)

Inbound marketing is a growing concept that has proven to be a method that is very effective, powerful and long-lasting when it comes to creating demand and collecting leads (Singh, 2017). Content marketing is the main element of inbound marketing (Holliman & Rowley, 2014) and its key indicator is value (Repovienė, 2017). Therefore, an organization has to create valuable content and constantly optimize it in order to become successful (Singh, 2017). Even so, the knowledge platform of inbound marketing in the business to business sector is in the early phases of development, essentially limited to and dominated by practitioners and consultants in the field (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). There have been a lot of research and studies done about the positive effects of inbound marketing (Caragher, 2013) and previous research clearly states that engaging customers is crucial when developing a successful inbound marketing strategy (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Nonetheless, a gap in connecting inbound marketing to a B2B-perspective is evident. Little information can be found about this specific field of practice when using inbound marketing strategy. Current studies tend to focus more on a customer perspective where terms such as customer attitude and online customer opinions are discussed to a greater extent. (Eagleman, 2013; Wang & Chang, 2013; Wolny & Mueller, 2013) Few studies in existing literature are therefore from a business level context (Chanthinok, Ussahawanitichakit & Jhundra-indra, 2015), which leads us to the purpose of this study.

1.2 Purpose

This study will focus on gaining a better understanding of in what way business to business companies use inbound marketing and the reasons for applying this strategy.

1.3 Research questions

- How do business to business companies apply inbound marketing?
- Why do business to business companies apply this strategy?
1.4 Delimitations

The delimitations of this study are that it is limited to online B2B-companies operating in Sweden and the study is based on a business perspective, not on a customer perspective. Furthermore, we have chosen to only interview certified HubSpot agencies. The reason for this is because HubSpot was one of the first to introduce the concept of inbound marketing. The study will not take laws such as GDPR concerning personal integrity into account, due to the studies purpose.

1.5 Definitions

*Digital inbound marketing:* The main focus for inbound marketing is to draw interested prospects to websites and blogs etc. through organic search results where valuable experiences are created when potential customers are met with relevant and helpful content (Hubspot, 2019).

*Traditional outbound marketing:* Traditional marketing attracts customers through cold calling, e-mail or mail offers, telemarketing or advertisement in different forms of media such as magazines, newspapers and commercials on television and radio etc. (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

*Content marketing:* Content marketing is the main element of inbound marketing (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Its purpose is to create valuable and interesting content that attracts customers through the buying process (Todor, 2016).

*Gated content and Un-gated content:* Content marketing can be divided into two groups. Gated content focuses on a continuous relationship between the company and customers based on approval. The customer specifies its e-mail to access more content. Un-gated content generates attention to the company, its products and solving problems. The purpose of this content is to educate the companies customers. (Singh, 2017)

*Search Engine Optimization (SEO):* Technical procedures and methods which brings traffic to web pages and is the key to optimize the content exposure to the end customer (Lee, Jang, Lee & Oh, 2016). SEO helps web pages to get as high ranking as possible on the search engine to be displayed at the top of browsers (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016).

*Social Media Marketing (SMM):* Social media can be viewed as the tool needed to form pre-purchase decision-making (Wang & Chang, 2013). It intensifies the effect on the company's content and consist of networks that help to distribute and assimilate information throughout the web (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

*Return on Investment (ROI):* ROI involves the direct costs and revenues that indicate the return on investment of each transaction that is made (Nuria, 2011).
2. Frame of Reference

In this chapter we lay the foundation for our essay and compile essential knowledge from selected scientific articles together with appropriate theories. First the inbound marketing strategy is presented to gain a broader insight and sense of the subject. Then we immerse into the inbound marketing benefits and model to get a better understanding. We continue the chapter by outlining the strategy structure which consists of content marketing, search engine optimization and social media marketing. We conclude the chapter with the B2B-selling process and B2B-buying process to understand how the sector works.

2.1 Inbound Marketing

According to Opreana and Vinerean (2015) “Digital inbound marketing represents the process of reaching and converting qualified consumers by creating and pursuing organic tactics in online settings” (p. 30). Patrutiu-Baltes (2016) argues that “Digital marketing primarily involves the creation of a relationship of trust and loyalty with the customer and inbound marketing becomes the main aspect of the digital marketing” (p. 62). Trigg (2003) claims that “Inbound marketing revolves around managing inbound interactions whether they occur through a call center, website or retail branch. For marketers, inbound channels represent key advantages” (p. 23). Lusch and Vargo (2009) imply that “Inbound marketing is made more effective, efficient and whole when your customers are viewed as a partner to be “marketing with” or “co-creators of value” (p. 6). Holliman and Rowley (2014) finally indicate that “In pull marketing, companies are seeking to capture the interest of customers who are already seeking information, advice, a product or a service” (p. 269).

Inbound marketing is a marketing strategy that companies use to advertise both their brand and products with the intention to gain more potential customers (Hawlk, 2018). It is an online-based marketing strategy that was first truly implemented in 2005. The strategy has gone from being a buzzword to an established technique that creates content, using social media and search engine optimization with the intention to influence customers decision-making process when it comes to purchases (Singh, 2017). Inbound marketing is pull marketing which means that it catches prospects attention who are already looking for something by providing helpful and beneficial content that will satisfy their needs (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). The strategy includes different marketing activities with the intention to attract people, earn customers attention, making it easier to institute the business and attract potential and existing customers to the web page through valuable content (Todor, 2016).

The purpose with this strategy is to create and distribute valuable content to customers online (Caragher, 2013). Creating and sustaining value are the most important areas in inbound marketing (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). Interactivity and engagement are also two essential fundamentals in the strategy (Todor, 2016). The strategy is based on content marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing (SMM) and it also includes PR, events, involvement in the community, public speaking, word-of-mouth etc. to earn the attention from anyone that comes in contact with the content (Hawlk, 2018). Inbound marketing includes using different marketing tools of content marketing such as blogs and whitepapers to spread the word about the company and its products. It can create customized and personalized content built on customers online profiles, actions or choices (Todor, 2016). By creating good content through inbound marketing, a company can gain valuable customers (Halligan & Shah, 2014). It is also important that the content is created by a strong writer in the marketing department to be successful (Caragher, 2013).
2.1.1 Benefits of Inbound Marketing

Because inbound marketing is online, the market reach is wider which improves the efficiency of smaller and medium sized companies (Todor, 2016). Therefore, a well-developed and maintained inbound marketing can result in more business opportunities and retain more potential customers (Johanson, 2013). It is also easier to adapt the content based on the feedback from the customers (Todor, 2016).

Inbound marketing makes it possible to create valuable relations that go beyond traditional marketing and permit a continuous conversation with existing and potential customers (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). Additionally, it is a great strategy when you want customers to find you, instead of finding the customers. This requires qualified content online on social media and a top ranking on search engines. (Caragher, 2013) Inbound channels allow customers to freely express their own view and opinion concerning the companies and their products. The customers can on their own conditions decide when and for how long they want to obtain contact with the companies. (Todor, 2016) At the same time, it is possible for the companies to form, control and retain lucrative prospects by creating customized and valuable content (Caragher, 2013).

Inbound marketing helps to create visibility, retain qualified customers and saves time (Johanson, 2013). The strategy is easy to apply, very effective when it comes to handling big data and it is also cost-effective (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). It can reduce companies marketing costs and some marketing activities can even attract customers for free (Todor, 2016). Instead of relying on spending money on ads, inbound marketing relies on the message, content and communication. This means that communication with prospects can attract customers with low or no costs, thanks to the possibilities of the Internet. (Hawlk, 2018) Furthermore, inbound marketing makes it possible to measure marketing efforts such as return of investment, ROI (Caragher, 2013).

2.1.2 Inbound Marketing Methodology Model

Figure 1.0 Inbound Marketing Methodology

Source: (HubSpot Inc., 2019).
This model is created by HubSpot and explains the methodology of inbound marketing and its tools. This involves attracting, engaging and delighting to create value and trust for the company. The purpose of the model is to add value in every step of the customer's journey to create long-lasting and satisfying customers relationships with the company. By using this model, it will make the business expand, retain more buying and fulfilled customers and create a positive word-of-mouth. This method will make the business grow from satisfied customers, either from repurchasing or promoting the company which will create new customers. Every step of the inbound marketing methodology can also be analyzed in order to know what is effective and what needs to be changed. (HubSpot, 2019)

**Attract:** Companies want to attract people that can be turned into leads and later become satisfied customers. This is achieved by creating valuable content at the perfect time, when the customers want it. This can be done by creating valuable content to get a higher ranking and a better search accuracy in the area that is relevant to the target group. It allows the company to be active on social media by creating blog posts and video content. The company is also able to increase the brand awareness by making ads that will target potential customers. (HubSpot, 2019)

**Engage:** By creating e-mails, bots, live chats, messaging apps etc. on digital channels that the target group prefers, will result in long-term relationships with the customers. In order to take part of a prospect’s information, that have entered the company’s website, it is helpful to use call-to-action, forms and lead flows. The information in the CRM can be used to customize the content on the website and improve the buyer’s journey through e-mail and workflows. By creating customized content and ads for the target group on social media will result in brand loyalty. (HubSpot, 2019)

**Delight:** In order to always distribute relevant content to the accurate person at the perfect time, e-mail and marketing automation tools can be used. By combining conversations tools with the sales and service team it will result in the best business discussions with the customers. It is possible to use a variation of different content forms that the target group prefers, such as videos, to publish valuable content that they want to share. (HubSpot, 2019)

### 2.2 Content Marketing

Due to the fast-paced Internet revolution, marketing had to change and adapt with it. Consumers are more guarded and sceptical toward marketing messages that they obtain today and are no longer as persuaded by traditional advertisements as they once were. (Repovienė, 2017) Now businesses are using content marketing to convert customers into supporters by creating different and valuable content that customers will use to enter the company’s web page to gain more information or get in touch with the company (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). Access to an unlimited amount of information, which is often marketing communication, allows consumers to create and share content that is valuable to them at their own initiative (Repovienė, 2017).

Content marketing is the main element of inbound marketing (Holliman & Rowley, 2014) and its key indicator is value (Repovienė, 2017). It is a digital marketing strategy that is frequently creating and sharing profound content to captivate customers. The content must be reliable, up to date, interesting, valuable, helpful etc. (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015) Content marketing is nowadays one of the most noteworthy methods when it comes to marketing processes and its value has increased over time, due to the digitalization which has created new communication
Content marketing can be divided into two groups, lead generation content “Gated content” and demand generation content “Un-gated content”. They are used to explain prospects of income, but they differ from each other. Gated content focuses on a continuous relationship between the company and customers based on approval. The customer specifies its e-mail to access more content, usually through a landing page with a form. The company can then use the e-mail to get in touch with the customer. This category includes most of the e-books. Ungated content generates attention to the company, its products and solving problems. It also brings awareness to the company’s part in finding solutions to business problems. The purpose of this content is to educate the companies customers. This category includes most of the blogs. (Singh, 2017)

Content marketing does not send out disturbing promotions about the company or its products. Instead it distributes valuable content to help customers to understand problems, to make complicated concepts easier or provide value through helpful information. (Repovienė, 2017) Valuable content on social media creates demand when things like the company’s products are posted about (Singh, 2017). This will lead to recurring customers with the intention to buy more (Caragher, 2013). It is vital that the marketing strategies regarding content creation considers the customers first and not the company (Repovienė, 2017). It is up to the company to design the content after the customers’ needs. By tying the content strategy to important buying triggers, the inbound marketing will be the most profitable for the company. This will promote an issue that people want to find a solution to. (Johanson, 2013)

Inbound marketing without content marketing is not complete and it is important to create your own content (Johanson, 2013). The content can be distributed in different ways, such as in text, blogs, social media, videos and so on (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). Blogging is an important part of inbound marketing and the more it gets updated the better chance it will have to retain new customers. It is also important with premium offers and web pages to transform curious prospects into buyers via the sales funnel. Blogs should be public and available to everyone, but premium offers require information from the visitor on the web page to excess more content or register. This creates leads, which are very useful and gives a clear view of the prospects needs and demands. (Caragher, 2013) The content also needs to be heightened and purposely positioned at places where the buyers will discover it, it is not enough to only place the content on the web page (Singh, 2017). It needs to be customized and personalized to reach the target audience and it is important to constantly provide new content and offers to maintain the prospects interest (Caragher, 2013).

2.3 Search Engine Optimization, SEO

Today the massive flow of information on the Internet is overwhelming which makes it difficult to find what you are looking for. It takes a lot of time and effort to comprehend, filter and find the right information. (Lee et al., 2016) Because of this it is important with an effective search engine optimization, so that the visitor can easily find the company’s content through search engines (Singh, 2017). Search engine optimization (SEO) makes it easier for
potential and existing customers to find and discover valuable content online (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

SEO is a digital promotion strategy (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016) and a goal-oriented technique (Lee et al., 2016) which has an important part in affecting the company’s digital channels positioning in search engines (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016). It is technical procedures and methods which bring traffic to web pages and is the key to optimizing the content exposure to the end customer (Lee et al., 2016). SEO helps web pages to get as high ranking as possible on the search engine to be displayed at the top of browsers. It is necessary to be displayed on the search engines first page because 80 percent of the Google users, Google is the world's most used search engine, enter search results on Google's first page. The search result will attract more users if it is displayed more times on the first page. It is valuable to include keywords in SEO that are most used by users and can be found by the tool Google Analytics. (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016) The goal of SEO is visibility and a good visibility on search engines result in a higher site-traffic (Killoran, 2013). Google, Microsoft and Yahoo are three major search engines that have developed SEO’s. Search engines offer SEO in order to create a higher visibility, it helps companies through technical processes and tasks to reach a high ranking on the search engine. (Lee et al., 2016)

The customer's buying process generally starts online today through search engines to find what they are looking for. Because of this it is very important for companies to have a high ranking on the search engine by for example creating keywords, valuable content and links in order to be discovered. (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015) SEO uses well-known and often used keywords to increase and optimize visibility on search engines. It must be wording that prospects normally use, which means business words or other difficult words should be avoided. Furthermore, sharing the content on social media will increase its power. (Caragher, 2013) Good information does not always result in high site traffic, it requires a new method for creating content (Lewandowski, 2015). It is important to target and optimize the organic keywords in search engines in order to convert prospects into leads or deals, rather than optimizing to generate higher volumes of lower quality traffic (Eisenberg, 2005).

2.4 Social Media Marketing, SMM

Social Media has become increasingly popular around the world since the 1990s (Campbell, Anitsal & Anitsal, 2013). This is a result of the Internet technology transformation which has become the foundation of today’s digital communication and has affected the basic way people communicate. The online community allows real time communication and interactions. (Chanthinok et al., 2015)

Via social media the company can create and distribute content through for example Instagram, which is linked to the company’s web page (Singh, 2017). Companies can easily identify potential and existing customers through social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and blogs etc. to personalize the communication between them depending on which social network they are using (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016; Ristova, 2014). Thus, social media makes it possible for companies to connect with the customer to offer and obtain information from each other (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). The user can search, evaluate, select, rate and review products and services through social media which plays an important part in a creating a lucrative online business. It helps to attract customers and establishes trust between company and customer. (Moscato & Moscato, 2009) The content which is promoted is vital because the quality of it determines the marketing strategies end results. 79 percent of social
network users like or/and follow brands in order to receive more information about them. (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016)

Social media can be viewed as the tools needed to form pre-purchase decision-making. An Internet user will make a decision based on products reviews, service ratings and product information searching etc. (Wang & Chang, 2013). Social networks make it extremely simple to distribute and assimilate information through the web and this has truly changed the spreading of information. Social media intensifies the effect on the company's content. (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015) There can be different reasons why social media is implemented by a company. Advertising, branding, promotion, information search and customer relationship building being some of them. (Parveen, Jaafar & Aimin, 2015) By using social media companies can spread valuable content through different channels and create a business page on social networks to unify the brand. The content seems more trustworthy if it is distributed on social media and the content has a bigger chance to be found if a business page is combined with a channel. (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015)

Moreover, marketing through social media is a very cost-effective alternative where marketers can communicate with customers and see what they like and do not like. Social networks contain plenty of information that can be used in marketing campaigns both online and offline. It also makes it possible to do collaborations and co-creations with consumers. If the online marketing reaches dedicated consumers, companies can increase their profit, gain higher income and gain customer loyalty from those who may want to support the brand. (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015) A company can therefore engage the customer which will contribute to building the company brand and shape the company image by implementing brand communication through social media as the selected marketing channel (Chanthinok et al., 2015).

2.5 The B2B-Selling Process

A company must acquire customers in order to earn revenue. Customer acquisition becomes especially important when starting a new business, when entering a new market and when introducing new products or services. (Ang & Buttle, 2006) The customer acquisition process can be described as a sales funnel divided into four different stages (Ang & Buttle, 2006; Coe, 2004; Patterson, 2007; Yu & Cai, 2007). D’Haen and Van den Poel (2013) describe the acquisition process by dividing the sales funnel into four categories, which are demonstrated in figure 2.0.
The four stages that are taken into account in the figure are: suspects, prospects, leads and customers. The first step, suspects, consists of all potential customers the company has. In theory this includes a very large group of potential new customers. The suspects are all other companies in the B2B-sector, only the existing customer base is excluded. (D’Haen & Van den Poel, 2013) In practice this potential customer pool can be narrowed down by, for example, purchasing a list of companies from specialized vendors (Buttle, 2009; Rygielski, Wang & Yen, 2002; Wilson, 2006). These lists tend to contain a massive amount of information that may be overwhelming for B2B-marketers (Wilson, 2003), which can often result in a selection based on arbitrary criteria. As a result of the selection process a list of prospects is formed that meet predefined features that the company has, this is the second step in the sales funnel. (D’Haen & Van den Poel, 2013)

The prospects that are to be contacted by sales representatives are called leads. Thus, the third step after selecting prospects, is to distinguish leads. The leads are considered the most probable to respond to a sales effort (D’Haen & Van den Poel, 2013) and are expected to result in the most profitable sales (Long, Tellefsen & Lichtenhal, 2007). The sales efficiency can only increase when the sales team is focusing on these potential customers (D’Haen & Van den Poel, 2013). It is very difficult to determine which potential customers that are the most lucrative. This is often established through intuition and self-appointed competence (Jolson, 1988), educated guesses and rules of thumb may also occur (D’Haen & Van den Poel, 2013). Mistakes when it comes to the lead qualifications will result in incorrect prioritization by the sales team when it comes to choosing prospects to turn into deals. This will waste resources and will damage the sales revenue. (Monat, 2011) Finally the fourth step in the sales funnel, leads that are transformed into clients become customers (D’Haen & Van den Poel, 2013). Information technology tools provide high-quality prospects that will ultimately become easier to convert (Ahearn, Hughes, & Schillevaert, 2007; Eggert & Serdaroglu, 2011). The goal being to improve the quality of each call to the list of prospects e.g. the leads, which these algorithms aim to do (D’Haen & Van den Poel, 2013).

The framework below (figure 3.0) is adapted from Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) and is an extension of the framework above (figure 2.0). This framework consists of both existing and potential customers with a big potential for repurchasing, upselling and cross-selling. Therefore, the framework contains a loop where customers can return after becoming a customer. This is why the last stage is called “Deals” instead of “Customers” (Patterson,
This framework of the sales and marketing funnel shows the company's customers, from potential customers that may have an interest in the company to customers who buy products from the company (Cooper & Budd, 2007; Dalrymple, Cron, & DeCarlo, 2004). The layout of this framework may vary depending on the study and company. The framework combines both sales and marketing in the funnel and is based on a case study. The company worked with content marketing and marketing automation. This marketing and sales funnel includes five stages, these are: identified contacts, marketing leads, sales leads, opportunities and deals. These stages work closely together with content creation and content delivery channels. (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016)

**Figure 3.0** The sales and marketing funnel

![Image of the sales and marketing funnel]

*Source: Adapted from Järvinen and Taiminen (2016)*

The first stage in this funnel is identified contacts (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). These are potential customers that the company has identified (D’Haen & Van den Poel, 2013). The selection of potential customers is the most difficult part of the selling process and it needs plenty of human resources (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005; Trailer & Dickie, 2006). The B2B-companies will benefit if they focus on quality instead of quantity when it comes to suspects. This can be done by the use of content marketing, which is an effective tool because Internet is often used in the beginning of the buying process to find information. (Wiersema, 2013) The company discovers the potential customers when they visit the company’s web page and hand out their contact information. This can be done through different forms on the web page, in order to download content or when making a purchase request. Existing customers on the other hand are identified through their login, cookies, IP address or e-mail address by the marketing automation. This collected data is then gathered in a database and the customers will be divided in either marketing leads or sales leads by the marketing automation. (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016)

The second stage is marketing leads. These are potential customers that have not shown any intention of making a purchase, but the company has detected some behavioral patterns. The
The company needs to nurture and try to get the potential customer closer to a deal, by learning more about them and creating customized content to convert them into sales leads. The marketing automation has a scoring system for leads that shows which marketing leads that are worth the most in order to give this information to the sales team. (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016)

The third stage is sales leads. These are potential customers that have shown a purchase intention through sending a purchase request and have been very active on the web page. These leads will be transferred to the CRM-system and a salesperson will attempt to convert the potential customer into opportunities. Thus, the fourth stage is opportunities. The company will contact the potential customer in order to negotiate which will result in a purchase, if the negotiation was successful. The last stage is deal. It is when the potential customer has converted into a customer and gone through with a purchase. (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016)

The sales and marketing funnel does not always work exactly like this, the customer can go back and forth between the stages and the company has to make other marketing efforts depending on the customer. (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016)

In this thesis, an altered version of the funnel framework will be used of the marketing and sales funnel by Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) and the inbound marketing methodology by HubSpot (2019). The framework includes identifying contacts, leads and deals from Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) which are combined with attract, engage and delight from HubSpot (2019). The funnel is illustrated in figure 4.0.

Identified contacts is combined with attract where the company tries to identify suspects by attracting them with marketing tools such as content marketing, forms, blogs and social media in order to turn them into leads. Marketing leads and sales leads are put together into leads and combined with engage. These are customers that the company has identified. They need to be nurtured and engaged by creating customized content. The company needs to learn more about them in order to get them closer to a deal. This can be done by creating e-mails, bots, live chats, messaging apps etc. Call-to-action, forms, lead flows, and scoring systems are automation system that can be used here. Opportunities and deals are put together into deals and combined with delight. The company contacts the lead in order to negotiate and evoke a deal by delighting them through different conversation tools. The customer can go back and forth between the stages and re-enter the loop.
2.6 The B2B-Buying Process

The buying process for B2B-companies is a mix of decision-making processes that are both individual and organizational (Webster & Keller, 2004). The process is complicated and involves a lot of stages (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). The market for B2B differs from the market for B2C. The market for B2B is defined by the buyers and not always by the products, it also has another budget and motivation for profit. Other differences are the purchase size, the relationship to the suppliers and power of buying. (Webster & Keller, 2004) The marketer’s goal is to take prospects through the pre-purchase stage, the purchase stage and finally the post-purchase stage (Harrison-Walker & Neeley, 2004). The final stage is very important, because if both the organizational and personal needs are fulfilled it will result in a good relationship with the suppliers (Tellefsen, 2002).

The B2B-buying process is not totally objective and rational, impulse buying can occur. Personal decisions and seduction have an impact and economic reasons are not always taken into account. B2B-companies can make a purchase out of pride and so on, not always because they need to purchase it. The most common reason why a purchase is carried out is to solve a problem or in order to satisfy a need, because the buyer has budgets to take into consideration and needs to think about the profit as well. (Webster, 1965) B2B-companies are affected by many different sources when it comes to finding information before purchasing, but the Internet is the most common one (McMaster, 2010). B2B-companies complete about 60 percent of the purchase decision before talking to the suppliers (Adamson et al., 2012).
3. Methodology

In this chapter, we present the thesis course of action. We begin the chapter by explaining the overall research design and approach, in order to get a deeper understanding of our approach. Then we explain in detail the literature review, data collection and the method of analysis. The chapter is completed by explaining and justifying the quality criteria for the research and we conclude the chapter with a methodology summary.

3.1 Research Design

A thesis can have a deductive or an inductive approach, they are different strategies within the process of research (Hyde, 2000). We have chosen to combine a deductive and an inductive approach in this thesis, which is called an abductive approach. A deductive approach is a top-down approach where hypotheses forms based on theories, laws, rules etc. (Soiferman, 2010). Deductive approach is used when you want to compare the results and try a hypothesis (David & Sutton, 2011). We used this approach to a limited degree because our research is still quite unexplored. Because of this we also used an inductive approach. Inductive approach is a bottom-up approach where experience and observations are the foundation of the theory (Soiferman, 2010). According to Jacobsen (2002), an inductive approach originates from an open approach. It arises from data collection and tries to create explanations of reality (David & Sutton, 2016). An inductive approach explores an area and it results in a greater understanding for the subject (David & Sutton, 2011). We compared the interviews we have done where we observed how companies work with inbound marketing with the information in the Frame of Reference. We originated from existing theory, then we conducted open interviews and we did not get fixed on the theory. This means that we will gain a deeper understanding of the companies' work with inbound marketing.

A thesis can either be a qualitatively or quantitative method, they are different methods when it comes to collecting data (Jacobsen, 2002). We have used a qualitative method in this thesis in order to collect information in the Empirical Study. According to Hanson and Grimmer (2007) the primary data is collected in terms of non-numerical values, such as pictures. Qualitative method should be used when the subject is not clear and creating awareness about this subject is the intention of the thesis in order to deeply understand the subject (Jacobsen, 2002). We chose this method due to the lack of research that has been done in this area and to gain a deeper understanding of the subject. We have conducted visits as well as telephone interviews with six B2B-companies who actively work with inbound marketing.

According to Eriksson-Zetterquist (2009), the interpretive approach will help the researchers to gain a better understanding about the subject. We have chosen an interpretive approach where the purpose is to increase the understanding of how and why B2B-companies work with inbound marketing. Interpretive is a describing approach with a focal point of understanding (Söderblom & Ulvenblad, 2016). Our purpose with this thesis is to gain a better understanding and we will get this by describing and interpreting information we gather from interviews in the Empirical Study and the data from Frame of Reference.

3.2 Research Approach

B2B-digital content marketing is in a relatively early stage of development, and the knowledge base is dominated by advice from practitioners and consultants. Therefore, an
abductive approach, informed by an interpretive stance and executed using a qualitative methodology, has been adopted for this study as previously mentioned. In addition, Daymon and Holloway (2011) suggest that qualitative research techniques are useful when gathering data from professionals such as marketing communications practitioners. More specifically, the method of data collection was semi-structured interviews. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest the interview is a “conversation”; interviews are useful, in the context of this in-depth, exploratory study, to illustrate what is.

3.2.1 Case Study

The main goal of a case study is to investigate a particular subject in order to create an overall understanding and can be explained as a study of a specific phenomenon (Gerring, 2004; Grünbaum, 2007). Case studies are in-depth studies that examine a specific unit which can be organizations, individuals, groups or events etc. (David & Sutton, 2011). This type of study is the ideal research method when the questions to be answered are how and why, when the studied subjects’ behavior cannot be controlled by the examiner and when the subject is a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Our research questions contain these two questions and are connected to a modern-day subject of research, which makes this an appropriate approach for this thesis. Inbound marketing is a relatively new marketing strategy and we will examine how and why business to business companies apply inbound marketing strategy today in our modernizing society. Implementing a case study in this field has allowed inbound marketing professionals to describe how they work and why they choose to implement this specific strategy, which has enabled a deeper understanding of the inbound marketing strategy as a whole. Furthermore, case studies are suitable when applying a qualitative research method (Grünbaum, 2007) because it will provide the researcher with detailed information (Njie & Asimiran, 2014). The main focus should therefore be to find subjects that will have the ability to do so (Njie & Asimiran, 2014). Thus, our data collection will consist of in-depth interviews with companies that use this marketing strategy in their daily operations which will provide us with a detailed base of information in our area of research.

3.3 Literature Review

In the early stages of the research process, the topic inbound marketing was identified. This was done by reviewing existing literature and scientific articles previously written on the subject inbound marketing in Halmstad University's database. The findings were later discussed in order to formulate and decide upon the problem, research questions, purpose and methodology of the thesis. This has mainly remained the same throughout the project, though slight changes were made as we proceeded to ensure a satisfactory result. A literary study was made in order to create a better understanding of the area of research as a whole and form a basis for the Empirical Study and Analysis. It focused largely on the theory behind inbound marketing where the inbound methodology model was presented with its three main phases of conversion. Furthermore, the main components of the strategy were introduced i.e. content marketing, SEO and SMM as well inbound benefits and the inbound marketing methodology model are explained in detail. The B2B-selling process and B2B-buying process are also included in the theory together with our own model. Little evidence of critical views of the strategy were identified and any negative outcome was mainly connected to failings in executing the strategy in the right way. Moreover, a gap in connecting inbound marketing to a B2B-perspective was evident. Therefore, our focus became to gain a better understanding of in what way business to business companies use inbound marketing and the reasons they have
for applying this strategy. The process of reviewing literature continued throughout the Empirical Study. As a result, the Frame of Reference was developed.

3.4 Data Collection

The data collected for our thesis is both primary and secondary. The difference between the two is that the former is collected by the researchers for the purpose of the study itself while the latter is data previously collected by other authors with a different purpose. In order to ensure the validity of such material it is important to critically assess and review it thoroughly. (Höst, Regnell & Runeson, 2006) It can become problematic if only one type of data is used. Therefore, both primary and secondary data should be applied simultaneously. Combining them will lead to the result being reinforced because the two types of data collection methods support each other. (Jacobsen, 2002) Our purpose with this thesis is descriptive and has understanding as a focus. Therefore, we have chosen to collect primary data through in-depth interviews with six B2B-companies that actively work with inbound marketing in Sweden. Secondary data has been collected through a literature review and from the organizational websites of the participating companies.

3.4.1 Primary Data

When the researcher collects data directly from the source of information by himself and adjust his method of collection according to the study's purpose, then it is called primary data (Jacobsen, 2002). We have chosen to do in-depth interviews, because of its high-quality and that there is less risk of distortion (Sharp, Peters & Howard, 2002). Interviews are also a good choice for this thesis because it helps us understand how the companies think and their opinions (Jacobsen, 2002).

3.4.1.1 Case Selection

When we choose which companies and participants we were going to interview, we had five criteria that they needed to fulfill in order to be qualified for our thesis. This method is called the criteria selection method approach and it is when the participants get chosen based on specific criteria (Dalen, 2015).

1. The company has to work actively with inbound marketing as a marketing strategy. If the company does not do that, it will not match our purpose.
2. The company needs to be a certified HubSpot-agency.
3. Inbound marketing is a strategy online, so the company needs to work online to be qualified for our thesis.
4. The company needs to be a B2B-company and not a B2C-company.
5. The company needs to be operating in Sweden, because this thesis is limited to this area.

When we were looking for suitable companies to do an in-depth interview with and who met our requirements, we proceeded from HubSpot's customer list. HubSpot is a company that first developed the inbound marketing concept and they help other companies to apply this strategy to their own businesses (HubSpot, 2019). Because HubSpot is a leader in this area, we felt that these companies can best answer our questions as they are very knowledgeable
and substantially familiar with the subject. We contacted 42 companies in total by e-mail and had interviews with six companies.

**Table 2.0 Participating respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zooma</td>
<td>Anders Björklund</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>21/1-2019 12:00-12:30</td>
<td>Interview at the Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migaloo</td>
<td>Stefan Jakobsson</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>21/1-2019 14:00-14:30</td>
<td>Interview at the Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synlighet</td>
<td>Daniel Wiklund</td>
<td>Country Manager</td>
<td>22/1-2019 08:30-09:00</td>
<td>Interview by phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alinder Design</td>
<td>Sara Alinder</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>22/1-2019 11:45-12:15</td>
<td>Interview by phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy Andersson</td>
<td>John Kennedy</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>22/1-2019 13:00-13:30</td>
<td>Interview by phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAZY</td>
<td>Fredrik Hjort</td>
<td>Head of Inbound</td>
<td>22/1-2019 14:45-15:15</td>
<td>Interview by phone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Anders Björklund** founded **Zooma** and is the CEO. He works actively with the customer and creates content. He is also involved in all the steps of the whole customer journey. They have only one administration role when it comes to finances, everyone else at the company work with the customers.

**Stefan Jakobsson** is the CEO of BRV Agency and **Migaloo**. He is the link between the customer and the team. He works as a digital strategist with a focus on what is strategically long-term important for the customer. He is also customer manager, project manager and works with business development.

**Daniel Wiklund** took **Synlighet** to Sweden and established the company in Malmö. His role is quite broad. He is responsible for the office and the employees, but he also works with sales, marketing and on-site with the customers. He works both strategically and operatively around the digital investments.

**Sara Alinder** is the CEO of the company **Alinder Design** and runs the company with her husband. Her special areas are design, photo and project management. Sara also takes care of the economy and her husband takes care of the digital part, but they work as a team. Both write content and they make strategies together.

**John Kennedy** is partner in **Kennedy-Andersson AB** and the CEO. He is responsible for about 98 percent of the revenue of the company. He is both the sales person and the person that develops the strategy of how they approach customers, but also how they try to keep them happy as well.

**Fredrik Hjort** is Head of Inbound at the digital marketing agency **Dazy**. He works with building both their own and customers' inbound marketing. He is a project manager, works with various internal processes, has an expert role towards the customer and is involved in in-sales.
3.4.1.2 Interview Design

Since we have chosen a qualitative method for this thesis, interviews have an important role in collecting data and these must be carried out extensively to be able to generate valuable information for the thesis (Dumay & Qu, 2011). We have chosen to conduct open interviews, as these generate a more detailed description of the subject from the participants (Jacobsen, 2002). The collection of data is based on words and descriptions from the participants, although this may limit the data collection, Jacobsen (2002) claims that with a structure like that, the analysis work can be facilitated.

We have chosen to make qualitative interviews by phone and face to face. We decided to do structured interviews and according to David and Sutton (2011) as it increases the reliability and repeatability. We wanted to ask the same questions to all participants and then compare the answers with each other to find similarities and differences. We also chose to do more unstandardized questions, as it results in more open and deeper answers according to David and Sutton (2011), but still within certain limits.

According to Rowley (2012), it is important that the questions asked during the interview come naturally and that they are relevant to the subject. We have therefore taken this into consideration when we conducted our interviews. Our interview guide consists of 10 carefully planned questions to receive in-depth and detailed answers (see Appendix 1). We have designed the interview guide to begin with broad questions around the subject and then the questions gradually get more specific, this is called the region principal (Dalen 2015). We wrote our interview guide in English, as our essay is written in this language. However, we translated this guide for respondents who were more comfortable speaking and reading in Swedish. Each interview lasted for 30 minutes, giving them plenty of time to answer the questions in detail and in-depth. We both participated at all our interviews to increase credibility and gain a better understanding. Two of the interviews were made through visits at the company's offices, which gave us a good insight into their work. The remaining interviews were held by telephone, as the respondents preferred this approach due to the geographical distance. By conducting telephone interviews, we had the opportunity to reach a larger geographical area in Sweden. The interview effect diminishes during a telephone interview and we also thought a lot about our tone during the interviews in order to not create an interview bias. (David & Sutton, 2011).

According to Jepsen et al. (2008), collected data from interviews should be based on respondents who are competent in the investigation area. All of our participants work actively with inbound marketing and are all qualified and experienced in this area. We chose to record the interviews instead of taking notes in order to not miss any information that the respondents gave and to be more involved in the interview. According to Rowley (2012) it is very important that the participants give their consent to be recorded, which all the participants did. Every word is important and by recording the interviews we could listen to them again. When all the interviews were completed, we started to transcribe the recorded material to make it easier to process the text and do a better analysis. According to Jacobsen (2002), this helps to discover details and create a clearer perspective of the subject.

Before doing the interviews, David and Sutton (2011) emphasizes the importance of clearly communicating that the participants have the right to end their participation, they have the right to informed consent and to be confidential and anonymous. We have taken this very seriously and all participants have received this information from us.
3.4.2 Secondary Data

At the beginning of a research project it is important to outline what is previously known about the subject. Once items that have already been researched are defined, the researcher can find gaps and areas of discussion in existing literature. This will indicate where further research is necessary. (Walliman, 2010) In order to find the secondary data for this study we have used the databases provided by Halmstad University to locate previous literature in our area of research. The two databases that have mainly been used to find this information are Emerald and ABI Inform. The search words we used most frequently when collecting our data have included: "Inbound Marketing", "Content Marketing", "Search Engine Optimization", "Social Media Marketing", "B2B-Selling Process" and "B2B-Buying Process". Additionally, we used the company websites which allowed us to gain a broader understanding of the companies. The university library was also used to find paperback literature and information about the traditional marketing field. Inbound marketing literature has increased in the last few years but is still rather unexplored from an academic point of view. Based on the literary investigation that was completed in the relevant areas in the early stages of this research project, a gap was located in previous literature. As this became the foundation of our study the Frame of Reference was built around the gap in order to implement our study and answer our research questions how and why business to business companies apply an inbound marketing strategy.

We have chosen to work with two models in our theory in order to explain the B2B-selling process and one model to explain the methodology of inbound marketing and its tools. The first two models are from scientific articles, but the last one is from HubSpot’s web page. We have chosen to work with this model because according to Steenburgh, Avery and Dahod (2009) HubSpot is one of the first who introduced the concept of inbound marketing. Because of HubSpot’s strong connection to inbound marketing, we have also chosen to only interview companies that work with HubSpot. HubSpot educates and offers inbound tools to companies in order for them to expand their business and optimize their marketing. Inbound was first an idea that today has become a global movement, inbound is everywhere. The founders of HubSpot had noticed a change regarding the customers receptions of marketing message, they are now blocking them. The marketing tactics with e-mails and cold calls had stopped being effective. They realized that people want to get help and not to get disturbed or harassed by marketers and salespeople. It was time to make a change and it was then HubSpot tied together different strategies into one, inbound marketing. Today inbound is a global movement with 56,500 customers in over 100 countries. They have over 150 HubSpot user groups and 24,000 inbound attendants 2018. (HubSpot, 2019)

3.5 Method of Analysis

When all the data from the interviews had been collected, we started the transcription process of the material. This is very time-consuming, but makes the analysis process much easier (Rowley, 2012). According to Dalen (2015) transcription allows the interviewer to know the collected data deeper and creates a closer relationship to the knowledge, which can make the analysis process stronger. When the transcription process was done, we began to code the data in order to get a better overview and be able to analyze the data easier. We began with an open coding, where we highlighted similarities and differences between the interviews and highlighted connections to the theories presented in the Frame of Reference. We also did an axial coding, where we looked at different actions that lead to specific end results, such as why companies use inbound marketing.
When the coding was completed, we started to interpret and analyze everything, in order to take the information to the next level and narrow it down to be more specific about the subject (Dalen, 2015). The result is presented in the Analysis and we did this in two steps. The first step was that we compared the Empirical Study with our Frame of Reference to understand how and why the B2B-companies work with inbound marketing. The other step was that we did a cross-case analysis where the interviews were analyzed to find similarities and differences between the companies. This method makes it easier to find what is important in the data, to find patterns, connections and to simplify the analysis process (David & Sutton, 2016). We formulated a table containing specific information from the interviews of how the companies work with inbound marketing. The table is based on our own framework (figure 4.0) from the Frame of Reference and then connected to the interviews with the companies. In the table, we have highlighted the most important inbound marketing tools they use in each step of the sales and marketing process to explain how companies use inbound marketing.

3.6 Quality Criteria for Research

Reliability is how reliable the study really is and if new measurements are done, they need to have the same result as the old measurements (Paulsson, 1999). Reliability is also about credibility, the study needs to be believable and have no incorrect measurements (Jacobsen, 2002). Both of us were present during all the interviews to make sure that the questions were asked in the same way, that we interpreted the answers the same way and to minimize the risk of mistakes. An important issue to mention is that five out of six interviews were held in Swedish, which may have affected the translation. Another important issue to mention is that we are not experienced interviewers, which may have effect the quality of the interview. With more experience we could have dug deeper during the interviews and received more valuable information. After transcribing the collected data from the interviews, we sent the finished texts to all respondents in order to be reviewed. This was done to make sure that the information we received and interpreted was correct and that we had not missed anything.

Validity is connected to how well the study measures what it is meant to measure, and that the data is relevant (Paulsson, 1999). Validity can be divided into internal and external validity. Internal validity is about the study being valid in itself and external validity if the result can also be applied in a larger context. In other words that what is measured does not only apply to a measured unit, but to others as well. (Jacobsen, 2002)

The internal validity is based on whether the collected data represents the reality of the case (Walliman, 2010). Questions about if the organizations really work in the way that the interviewees are describing it, should be taken into consideration. Qualitative interviews can create a better base for internal validity which increases with fewer more in-depth cases and interviews (David & Sutton, 2011). Another factor that strengthens a research project according to Jacobsen (2002), is to record the interviews. Therefore, all interviews were recorded and transcribed to strengthen the internal validity of this study. Later the answers given by the respondents were compared to the Frame of Reference. In order to further ensure internal validity, it is important that the information comes from knowledgeable sources which will allow the respondents answers to come more spontaneously (Jacobsen, 2002). We have interviewed people who have extensive knowledge in the inbound marketing field as well as the marketing area as a whole. This has given us great insight in the usage of the inbound marketing strategy in modern organizations, which strengthens the internal validity of the thesis.
Misrepresentations of reality can arise, for example, during a telephone interview because the respondents avoid telling the truth. This tends to happen with this type of interview because it can become impersonal. (Jacobsen, 2002) Some interviews in this study have not been conducted through a personal meeting due to distance. This is an aspect the authors of this study are aware of and that this may distort the truth. However, the interviews that were made in person have been closely compared to the interviews made by telephone in order to reduce the risk of distortions.

Generalization, or external validity, measure how accurate the study represents the outside world (Walliman, 2010). Is it possible to apply the results from the study to similar companies in reality? Generalization decreases when the study involves few in-depth interviews and cases (David & Sutton, 2011). Case studies can expand and generalize theories and if one case differs from the sample, it will not deduct possibilities (Yin, 2014). The companies we have chosen to interview can of course not represent all companies that use inbound marketing. However, this study will be helpful and result in a greater understanding of why and how business to business companies use inbound marketing. Furthermore, companies that do not have inbound marketing as a strategy can gain a better understanding of the inbound marketing values and benefits.

3.7 Methodology Summary

Figure 5.0 A summary of our methodology

We have done a descriptive thesis with a qualitative research approach where the purpose of the research is to understand how and why B2B-companies work with inbound marketing. Our research strategy is case studies on six B2B-companies that are working actively with inbound marketing. We have collected data by conducting interviews, both by phone and face
to face depending on the company’s geographic location. Our general analytical strategy is relying on conceptual framework which we have adapted and made to our own (figure 4.0). Our method of analysis is both within-case analysis where we analyze the companies and cross-case analysis where we did a comparative analysis between the companies.
4. Empirical Study

In this chapter we will introduce the six companies we interviewed and explain in detail how and why they work with inbound marketing.

4.1 Zooma

Zooma is a consultancy firm located in Gothenburg, Sweden. The company was founded in 2001. As a B2B-company they guide other corporations in their journey and help them modify their way of working in order to adapt to people's expectations in the digitalizing society. Zooma wants to drive companies to use online and digital platforms as a natural part of their business processes. The mission being to educate, enlighten and guide companies in using inbound as a methodology to help their clients achieve tangible results. Zooma helps their clients with setting their overall business, brand and communication strategy by providing and delivering four types of services; foundation, creation, production and progression of online and digital. This includes consultancy services in marketing and communication strategy, ideation, conceptualizing and design, content and technical development, as well as optimization, enhancement and analytic services. Primarily Zooma helps brands that wish to transition from a traditional business model to modern sales, marketing and communication using the inbound methodology.

4.1.1 How Zooma implements inbound marketing

In order to attract potential customers Zooma mainly uses LinkedIn for sharing blog publications and articles. Sometimes Facebook is used as a platform as well. However, the company believes that LinkedIn is the main place for knowledge in the daily flow of information when working with B2B-companies internationally. They also use organic search results to attract contacts where they aim to get subscriptions and downloads. Furthermore, they focus on making it very easy to get in contact with them by making conversion buttons and forms accessible on the website. When creating content to attract and identify contacts the key for Zooma is to create “personas” that represent a typical user with a concrete solution to their problem. It is very important to take in consideration what the specific target is looking for. By establishing these guidelines of who a typical user is and what their challenges and objectives are, while at the same time presenting a solution, makes creating relevant content easier. Zooma also stretches the importance of having a credible sender because they are a crucial part for reliable content. Zooma uses Google as their main search engine. They believe that keywords are significant, but that the entire phrasing is extremely important and needs to be connected to issues a real potential customer has. They do not use AdWords because Zooma believes that someone who has searched and found the company organically, usually gives much better conversion than someone who has clicked on an ad and then entered. At least when talking about the B2B-sector.

Zooma aims to always have relevant conversion buttons on their website, such as “do you want to book a meeting” or “would you like to download… ” etc. It is about constantly moving the potential customer forward in their journey, by creating relevant customized content and relevant offers to get them one step further. They do this by using cookies, lead scoring and create different workflows based on the activities of the visitor on the website. It can be a pdf-file, an article, a PowerPoint, a whitepaper, a check-list, a seminar or webinar. There is also a chatbot on the website, to make communication as easy as possible for a website visitor. It is important to consistently have a continuation of each offer and an
ongoing conversation. If a lead is interested in a webinar and later does not attend, Zooma tries to accommodate this by offering something else. It can be a PowerPoint, a link or a video of what the missed webinar covered. This means that communication is continuous and what is offered is customized to that specific lead. The communication with a lead can be via chat, e-mail, a call or a meeting, depending on the preference of the potential customer and where they are in the customer journey.

When a lead has become a customer it is important for Zooma to keep them satisfied. They always focus on the needs of customers first and work continuously with customer care and building long-term relationships. In order to make sure that the customer satisfaction is high, a survey is carried out twice a year with the existing customer base and four times per year internally with the employees. This is also a good way to measure the brands value over time and make sure customers are happy with the service provided.

4.1.2 Why Zooma implements inbound marketing

Zooma noticed a shift in people's behavior and their habits as the Internet and digitization started to grow. They saw that businesses had to adapt to this fast-changing environment and started the company with an aim to help traditional enterprises to readjust and deliver their products and services based on people's new expectations. Since the start, Zooma has implemented the inbound marketing way of doing things. Companies are aware that they need to adapt but they lack knowledge of how and what to prioritize. However, it was not until the book *Inbound Marketing* by Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah, the founders of HubSpot, was released that Zooma found a specific description and packaging for the way they were already working. The reason why Zooma applies this strategy to their business, is because they believe and see it provides great results. The automatic functions in the HubSpot-system simplify the whole process and provides Zooma with a modern way of doing business with customized and relevant offers based on a visitor’s previous activities. The biggest advantage with the inbound strategy, for Zooma’s customer base, is that it allows them to show management financial growth. Additionally, clients notice that their content and interactions make the customer more satisfied emotionally as well.

4.2 Migaloo

Migaloo was founded by a team of digital creators in Gothenburg called BRV Agency. BRV, founded in 2016, is an agency that delivers design solutions and develops user experience to their clients in their digital channels, websites and apps. As the agency progressed, they continued their work with the customers beyond websites, apps and social media by also delivering content to drive traffic in order to increase sales and build brand awareness. In other words, Migaloo is a department of BRV Agency that offers their customers guidance with their content marketing and offers tools that help clients reach the end user. The company creates and produces relevant content to provide better results for their clients’ businesses. They manage the entire process from creating content to constructing all digital channels and believe content marketing is the way to work with long-term goals. The services are subscription based which provides the clients with flexibility and the possibility to cancel when desired. As a certified HubSpot partner Migaloo delivers a full service around inbound marketing and inbound sales.
4.2.1 How Migaloo implements inbound marketing

Migaloo creates weekly blog articles regarding content marketing which they post on their website and on social media. The primary channels are LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram and occasionally Twitter. When Migaloo creates content they usually decide what position they want, investigate the target group and then develop personas. They try to understand the customers problems and what Migaloo can help them with. It might result in trends or guides etc. They look at the entire customer journey and how they can help in each part of it. They also investigate which channels the target group is most active in, based on the personas. The channels may vary depending on the target group. When it comes to search engines, Migaloo only uses Google, as most Swedes use this search engine. SEO and keywords are areas they work with continuously and they are looking for keywords that generate the most search volume. An example of a keyword is "Content agency Gothenburg". Every blog article is based on the keywords and the article should strengthen these keywords. If, for example, content marketing is the keyword, then Migaloo always aims to create sub-articles for content marketing that can be linked back to the main page.

Migaloo has different ways of trying to get visitors to give their information to turn them into a lead by giving them something in exchange. If they do not approve cookies, Migaloo tries to continue pushing articles to find target groups in social media. If a lead does approve cookies, Migaloo can get a Facebook pixel that allows them to advertise their blog posts specifically towards the lead with customized content. When a customer has seen a few articles, Migaloo will push a content offer to them. This will hopefully lead to them entering Migaloo’s website where they give out their e-mail address through filling out a form, downloading an article, signing up for a newsletter or subscribing to the blog etc. This means they have become a known lead. This is a typical approach, but it may vary.

When Migaloo tries to convert leads into customers they work with lead scoring and create different workflows based on the activities of the visitor on the website. HubSpot calls it smart lists or dynamic lists. A dynamic list adds leads based on what they have done for activities on the website. If they have been very active on the website, Migaloo moves them to a prioritized list. It is that list they use and then they try to have different types of calls with the leads to investigate how they work and give them some suggestions of solutions. They also have conversation bots and conversion buttons on their website. Migaloo has almost daily contact with most of the customers via e-mail, projects and such. If the customers subscribe to the newsletter, they receive continuous information from Migaloo. This will give Migaloo information about the customers activities on the website. If an old customer is active on the website, Migaloo can call them to have a dialogue and ask if they want more information or book a meeting etc. Migaloo always has a meeting after finishing a project to receive feedback and to make sure that the customer is satisfied. Normally, Migaloo never stops working with a customer, instead they have a lot of retainers with an ongoing agreement and projects.

4.2.2 Why Migaloo implements inbound marketing

Migaloo applies the inbound marketing strategy because they believe it is the best way to build long-term relationships with customers. Since they apply the strategy to their own business as well, they can see positive aspects in being able to show clients how it can work successfully. If a customer finds Migaloo, they do so because they have seen something they are interested in which, in turn, becomes a verification that the strategy works. This is a
powerful way to convince a client rather than just talking about inbound marketing and the value of it. Another reason why Migaloo chooses to implement inbound marketing, is because of the marketing automation that the HubSpot-system provides. For Migaloo this has made a big difference when it comes to lead nurturing and lead scoring, that was formerly done manually. The system also allows the user to have both inbound marketing and inbound sales on the same platform. Migaloo had these tools separately before which meant that the measurability between the systems was difficult. Now they can see which specific post on social media gave a new customer, which is very valuable.

4.3 Synlighet

Synlighet was established in Norway in 2003, as the founder came in contact with Google AdWords. This made them one of the first advertising agencies in Norway to work with this online advertising platform. Since the foundation they are now active at four different locations and have offices in Bergen, Oslo, Trondheim and Malmö. The customer base is wide containing both medium-sized as well as large enterprises. Services include not only digital marketing development but also helping clients grow out of a business perspective as a whole. As a B2B-company, Synlighet offers assistance throughout the entire customer journey and intend to work closely with the customer on a deeper level in order to gain a more profound understanding of how different aspects are integrated and connected to one another inside the company. Today companies seek guidance in areas such as increasing sales, gaining better brand recognition, brand awareness and long-term goals for growth etc. Synlighet helps other corporations navigate this field by using a variety of digital marketing tools to reach the clients desired business objectives.

4.3.1 How Synlighet implements inbound marketing

In order to attract the target group, Synlighet ordinary implements their marketing efforts based on a marketing funnel, starting broad and becoming more specific as the funnel narrows. Depending on the customer journey, the goal is often to create awareness at the attract stage, which is later measured through metrics such as site views, banner views or engagement leads etc. Synlighet has a blog connected to their website where they publish relevant content. The company is also active on social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. The content published is usually based on a data analysis regarding what type of content there is a need for in a specific area, who the target audience is and the identified personas. For Synlighet, the most important part is to focus on creating valuable content for the user e.g. the reader, not the company itself. However, there should be a clear objective as to what the content aims to lead to and what the next step in the customer journey is. It can be integration of call-to-action (CTA), remarketing lists or related articles etc. On the company website forms, downloads, conversational bots, subscription to newsletters and conversion buttons can be found. The goal is to create some kind of action in different parts of the customer journey. When it comes to SEO, it is primarily about creating content that is valuable to the reader, but that also at the same time, fulfills the search engine requirements.

When transforming visitors into leads, it is about customizing the content and what is offered. Synlighet has different sequences in their CRM-system in HubSpot that are automatically activated when a potential customer has become a lead. There are various steps that are implemented based on the specific leads previous activities. Thus, the actions taken are different depending on if the visitor came in through for example a specific source, a specific
whitepaper, article or if they have visited some special page on the website etc. This is automatically handled, through marketing automation and sales automation when a visitor is converted and has become a lead. When a lead has become a customer, Synlighet has a very close dialogue with them and send weekly reports. Customer resource management is viewed as very important because it helps maintain good customer relationships which is something that Synlighet values very high. This means the company spends a lot of time on customer care and stay in contact with their clients continuously through calls, meetings and visits.

4.3.2 Why Synlighet implements inbound marketing

Coming from the digital world, inbound marketing has always been a natural part of the company and its foundation since the start. The reason why Synlighet applies the inbound marketing strategy is because it is a way for them to reach their target customers with their services. Inbound marketing means an opportunity for them to sell and market themselves by being trustworthy and knowledgeable. By producing relevant content Synlighet is able to spread their knowledge, which in turn, makes it possible for them to be interesting in their industry and for those who are looking for the services that they provide. Thus, helping them attract their target group. They have observed that inbound marketing has evolved a lot during the last few years, where different activities and strategies have been packaged together in one system that makes it easier to manage this type of marketing and campaigns. It has also become cheaper to integrate the Hubspot-system with other marketing automation and sales automation systems that can easily be combined on websites etc. which gives a more comprehensive view over the company.

4.4 Alinder Design

Alinder Design is a consultancy firm that has been active since 2004. It is a small agency run by two people. They started out working with mostly print, brochures and books but have transformed and today Alinder Design primarily focuses on the digital business aspects. They help develop strategies in order to help their clients increase lead generation, sales and business opportunities. Their view is that corporations in the market today continuously have to create content that is based on the users and their interests. They see the inbound methodology as a way of working to understand the customer and what their interests are. It is about offering value in what is communicated. As specialists, the agency's role varies depending on the needs of the customer. They offer services such as strategic design solutions and creating a digital presence with content that aims to lead to a client’s stated goals. With business-efficient solutions in combination with design and content, their ambition is to create interest and build trust in the customers brand by long-term thinking when it comes to communication and marketing in all channels.

4.4.1 How Alinder Design implements inbound marketing

Alinder Design captures visitors through social media by leading them to the blog and their website. They primarily use LinkedIn, Facebook and blog posts, but also Instagram. When Alinder Design creates content, they start by forming the personas and the buying process, so they know who they are talking to, what they are interested in and in what part of the buying process they are in. The search engine they use is Google and search engine optimization is very important and needs to appeal and attract people. Alinder Design always makes a SEO audit, where they check which keywords are relevant. From this they get the topics to write about. It is important to stick to what people are looking for, what they want to read about and
what they want to listen to. Alinder Design also looks at the competitors’ content to get inspired and use different tools in HubSpot, like topic generators, to get ideas. When Alinder Design creates content, they first decide the goal of the blog article, what the customers want to buy and what Alinder Design wants them to buy. The core topics that Alinder Design has are strategic design, inbound marketing, strategic communication, content, web and SEO. By clicking on them, the visitor will get to a "pillar page". This expanded page includes a detailed description about the subject, how it works and so on. It is possible to link both in and out from this page to different blog articles, like a spider web.

At Alinder Design's website, "Book a consult" is available. This is linked to a landing page where the visitor can fill in personal information and book a consultation. However, most people call them directly if they are interested. They also have a seller who calls to customers. They also have conversational bots and "Guides" on the website. In order to download the guides or articles for free the visitor can click on it to get to a landing page and then hand out their e-mail and personal information. When this is done, the visitor becomes a lead in their contact list. Then an automatic e-mail is generated to the lead and with the intention to take the customer to the next step. Alinder Design will then research about the leads, call them, ask if they want to meet, see what they are interested in and so on. Alternatively, they continue to give them more customized content and information about what they are doing, eg. give more ideas on blog articles they can read. Finally, they hope to hear from the leads when they are ready. Many of Alinder Design`s existing customers are retainers which they have contact on LinkedIn and Facebook, so they continuously publish articles and hope they remember them. Alinder Design strives to work more continuously, to promote even to their old customers how they work now, show the transformation and explain what benefits it would give them.

4.4.2 Why Alinder Design implements inbound marketing

The inbound methodology gave Alinder Design a new way of working and communicating with their clients. The strategy allows them to gain a better understanding of the customer. The main focus is always to originate from understanding what kind of problems clients have and what challenges they face. Alinder Design is now experiencing that they are able to solve clients’ problems in a better way and can therefore offer more value to the client’s business. This has also led to better customer relationships where they, as a company, are seen as more trustworthy and have become a partner to their clients, rather than just a supplier. Another reason for applying the inbound marketing strategy is because it enables ways to measure various efforts and make sure that what the company is doing, leads to the desired results. This was previously not possible for Alinder Design. The HubSpot-system also allows the company to learn more about visitors and potential customers based on previous activities on the website. Additionally, Alinder Design has found that the inbound methodology solves problems with irregular projects and lack of continuity by working with long-term retainers.

4.5 Kennedy-Andersson

Kennedy-Andersson AB was founded in 2016 and is located in Örebro and Stockholm. They are an inbound marketing agency that help customers who have a complex B2B-sales process mainly within IT, telecommunications, manufacturing and the service sector in Sweden and internationally. They are specialists in inbound marketing and a certified HubSpot-agency. Kennedy-Andersson helps their clients formulate a strategy to adapt to the modern way of doing business in order to meet the future customer-centric communication. They support implementation and introduce inbound marketing as a method for creating efficient sales,
stronger awareness, clearer messages with modern tools adapted to a new type of purchase decision-making in the digital era. Because the majority of people start their customer journey online today, Kennedy-Andersson helps their clients adapt their communication and what is offered in order to be a part of the customers' buying processes at an early stage. The consultants use the inbound methodology to help their customers solve a problem and use HubSpot as a tool to how they then communicate with the end consumer.

4.5.1 How Kennedy-Andersson implements inbound marketing

The primary focus for the company lies on creating blogs. Kennedy-Andersson believes this is the beating heart of the company that makes it possible to build authority in what they do. They also create pillar pages about a relevant subjects and link blog posts and whitepapers etc. back to the pillar page. With a marketing strategy for social media, they aim to increase the chance of communicating with the right target group, finding prospects at the right time, and communicating the right message to the targeted customers. They use social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook & Twitter. When it comes to creating content the foremost important aspect for Kennedy-Andersson is to consider who the ideal customers are and what problems they may have. They do this by identifying a buyer persona and the customer journey. Then depending on what the target audience prefers, content is published as blog posts, articles, infographics, whitepapers, e-books or videos etc. The company also takes the sales funnel into consideration when creating content. The message that will appeal most to a potential customer is very different at the top of the sales funnel where they just found out about the company, compared to the very bottom of the funnel where a purchase is about to be made. When it comes to search engines Kennedy-Andersson mainly uses Google and apply long tail keywords. A long tail keyword is a keyword phrase that contains at least three words. This leads to less traffic, but the conversion rate is a lot higher.

Customized content is used to get a visitor to convert more efficiently. Kennedy-Andersson uses tools such as call-to-action buttons and links to landing pages to get a visitor to fill out a form, subscribe to a newsletter and put their e-mail in etc. They use cookies, lead scoring and create different workflows based on the activities of the visitor on the website. Cookies help navigate a visitor’s movement on the website to give the company a score on whether they are a hot prospect or not. A workflow sequence is created in HubSpot that for example may trigger an e-mail based on a visitor’s behavior. This stage in the sales funnel tends to be locating prospects in the CRM-system that have done something that makes them stand out and attempting to close the sale by giving them a call, sending an e-mail or booking a meeting.

When it comes to maintaining relationships, the balance between prioritizing new and existing customers is difficult. For Kennedy-Andersson it is about building personal relationships with customers continuously where extra value is added to everything the company does. For example, they can use the HubSpot-system to give customers insights they previously did not think about. It can be coming up with a workflow sequence and then adding more value by offering to teach the customer how to do it or doing it for them. HubSpot's tools help consolidate all the activities in one place which makes it easier to accommodate clients and build a long-term relationship. The aim for Kennedy-Andersson is to always keep the customer happy and satisfied with what they get.
4.5.2 Why Kennedy-Andersson implements inbound marketing

For Kennedy-Andersson, the inbound marketing methodology is a way to differentiate from competitors. Today, companies are trying to change and adapt to the modern way of doing business and they see digital and inbound as a way to help them do so. Kennedy-Andersson believes it helps cut through the noise in the advertising world and attracts targeted customers that the company has a solution for. It also helps the user to really understand their target customer, what problems they have and how they as a company can solve this. By doing so, it not only improves how potential customers perceive the company, but it will also make the company itself think different internally about how they sell. The HubSpot-system can also integrate with a lot of the analytics that are available from Google. This allows Kennedy-Andersson to actually show a client that inbound efforts and content creation lead to visitor retention and increased site traffic. They are also able to present to the client which specific pages that are the most visited and so on. Furthermore, inbound marketing helps the company to retain customers.

4.6 Dazy

Dazy is a digital marketing agency, founded in 2001. They offer consultancy services in marketing communication and are certified HubSpot partners located in Stockholm. The company offers services in digital strategy, branding, content production, web design, search engine optimization, web- and app development, digital marketing, support and management and WordPress. Dazy believes it is crucial to connect the different parts of the company strategy, in order to build a strong brand and achieve company development. According to Dazy, the inbound strategy goal is to create an infrastructure that leads to effective marketing and strong, long-term growth.

4.6.1 How Dazy implements inbound marketing

Dazy always starts from their identified personas and try to place themselves in that context based on the information. It is important to do many in-depth interviews and continuously work on creating the persona. Dazy produces small kits where they create short informative videos attached to each blog post. This makes it easier for the viewer to comment, absorb, share and act on it. It is a simpler and more concrete way to show what Dazy solves. This combination will attract visitors to follow them and give them more information about themselves. When Dazy creates content, it is important to find relevance in what they write. It is about publishing content that actually appeals to the lead and Dazy works a lot with image setting. They sometimes make clickbait articles to create attraction. Dazy uses Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, but not Twitter as it is not entirely in line with what they do. The social channels may differ depending on the target audience. Dazy makes some SEO-efforts but pointed out that the extent depends on the situation. The search engine they mainly use is Google, but also Bing. Keywords they use are digital agency, the digital, digital changes. They work a lot with the classic words.

When turning visitors into leads, it is about creating good conversion material and relevant content. Some forms are direct SQL-forms, where the visitors fill in that they want to be contacted and are ready to talk business. On their website they also have content and guides to download. Dazy also investigates manually what kind of visitors they have by identifying the most interesting leads and giving them customized content. They investigate the leads needs, that the lead is within the scope of the identified persona and that the lead is interesting to
work with. Dazy also uses life cycle stages and lead scoring. Depending on what efforts the leads make, they get upgraded. A lot is about building long-term relationships and creating relevant offers. Dazy's previous cases speak for their experience and knowledge. Everyone at Dazy has an individual and personal responsibility to take care of their customers and to always try to keep in touch with the customer by e-mail, calls or meetings. They also try to connect the customer to various service agreements and support agreements.

4.6.2 Why Dazy implements inbound marketing

As the inbound methodology became increasingly popular, Dazy discovered that it was very similar to the way they were already working. The difference now was that they had a specific strategy to follow. Dazy believes that if a company cannot communicate which problem they actually solve and in what way this helps the customers, it becomes almost impossible to get through the buzz today. A company will quickly disappear, if they cannot publish content that creates interest and solves these problems. For this reason, inbound marketing is very important because the strategy helps understand the target group, what problem they have and their situation. It also helps attract the target audience to visit the website and then convert and process leads. Another reason Dazy applies the inbound marketing methodology is that it helps them with branding and to create sales and knowledge within the company. It can also be viewed as a cheaper option than other marketing strategies due to the fact that the costs are lower compared to the relevant and valuable traffic it brings in for the company. As a shift in people's behavior has followed the technological development, Dazy believes companies must follow and adapt become it is a part of today's reality. Additionally, with inbound marketing, Dazy has noticed a big difference from traditional marketing where a product or service is forced on someone. Instead they can observe that a customer that has read about their service and understood the problem that it solves will contact them instead to learn more about it, without having to force it.
5. Analysis

In this chapter, we will first present a theoretical analysis of each company where theory and empirical data are linked together. This is followed by an empirical analysis where the companies are compared to each other in order to find patterns and understand similarities and differences. We conclude this chapter with a summary of the inbound marketing process where similarities and differences are presented.

5.1 Theoretical Analysis

5.1.1 Zooma

The first stage in the sales and marketing funnel is identified contacts (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). When Zooma works to attract customers at this stage they create “personas” that represent a typical user in order to create relevant content. It is important for them to establish the typical user, to understand what they are looking for and what their problems are, while at the same time presenting a solution. Todor (2016) claims that the purpose of content marketing is to create valuable and interesting content that attracts customers through the buying process. Zooma believes that it is about constantly moving the potential customer forward in their journey, by creating relevant content and relevant offers. According to Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) the steps in the sales and marketing funnel work closely together with content creation and content delivery channels. Therefore, developing a typical user will make creating relevant content easier for Zooma and will allow them to show the target audience a concrete solution to their problems.

According Todor (2016) the inbound marketing strategy includes different marketing activities with the intention to attract potential and existing customers to the web page through valuable content. This is done by creating blog posts and other content that is shared at the perfect time on different social media platforms (HubSpot, 2019). Zooma explained during the interview that they attract potential customers by using social media to share blog posts and articles. Caragher (2013) claims that sharing the content on social media will increase its power. Zooma also uses organic search results to attract contacts where they aim to get subscriptions and downloads. They believe that someone who has searched and found the company organically, usually gives much better conversion than someone who has clicked on an ad and then entered. Eisenberg (2005) reinforce this by stating that it is important to target and optimize the organic keywords in search engines in order to convert prospects into leads or deals, rather than optimizing to generate higher volumes of lower quality traffic. Additionally, Zooma believes that keywords are significant, but that the entire phrasing is extremely important and needs to be connected to issues a real potential customer has. Caragher (2013) further argue that SEO use well-known and often used keywords to increase and optimize visibility on search engines. Furthermore, Todor (2016) claims that inbound marketing tools are used to spread the word about the company and its products. The tools can help create customized and personalized content built on customers online profiles, actions or choices. Zooma does this by using cookies, lead scoring and create different workflows based on the activities of the visitor on the website to create different types of content. Zooma also stretches the importance of having a credible sender because they are a crucial part for reliable content. Caragher (2013) reinforce this by saying that it is important that the content is created by a strong writer in the marketing department to be successful.
The Internet and digitalization have forced the traditional way of communicating with customers to change because the customer behavior itself is different from what it has been in the past (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). London and Hart (2004) further state that this means that companies not only face a fast-changing market, but also a change in the needs of the customers. Zooma explained that they noticed this shift in people’s behavior and their habits as the Internet and digitization started to grow. They saw that businesses had to adapt to this fast-changing environment and wanted to help traditional enterprises to readjust and deliver their products and services based on people’s new expectations. Khankaew et al. (2015) claims that understanding this changing environment and context is crucial for business survival and a lucrative business performance. Even so, Kietzmann (2011) claims that corporations ignore the inbound marketing strategy due to lack of knowledge or understanding of its benefits. Zooma has noticed that companies are aware that they need to adapt but they lack knowledge of how and what to prioritize. This is why Zooma primarily helps clients that wish to transition from a traditional business model to modern sales, marketing and communication using the inbound methodology. This change has led to the transformation of marketing where focus has shifted from the traditional outbound marketing to a more inbound focused structure (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

Another reason why Zooma applies the inbound strategy to their business, is because it provides great results. Todor (2016) claims that because inbound marketing is online, the market reach is wider which improves the efficiency of smaller and medium sized companies. Furthermore, Jahnson (2013) points out that a well-developed and maintained inbound marketing can result in more business opportunities and retain more potential customers. The biggest advantage with the inbound strategy, for Zooma’s customer base, is that it allows them to show management financial growth. This is supported by Caragher (2013) that claims inbound marketing makes it possible to measure marketing efforts such as return of investment. Moreover, the strategy is also very cost-effective (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015) because it can reduce companies marketing costs and some marketing activities can even attract customers for free (Todor, 2016). Furthermore, the use of automatic functions in the HubSpot-system simplifies the whole process and provides Zooma with a modern way of doing business with customized and relevant offers based on a visitor’s previous activities. Holliman and Rowley (2014) support this by saying that inbound marketing provides helpful and beneficial content that will satisfy the customers’ needs. Zooma can see that their customers notice that their content and interactions are improved which results in that they are more satisfied emotionally as well. Opreana and Vinerean (2015) claim that inbound marketing makes it possible to create valuable relations that go beyond traditional marketing and permit a continuous conversation with existing and potential customers. Zooma does this by for example having a chatbot on the website, to make communication easy for a website visitor. They also think it is important to have an ongoing conversation where offers are customized to the specific lead. Zooma focuses on the customers’ needs, work continuously with customer care and building long-term relationships.

5.1.2 Migaloo

Migaloo tries to understand the customers problems and what solution they as a company can provide. According to Webster (1965) this is the most common reason why a purchase is carried out i.e. to solve a problem or to satisfy a need. In order to do this Migaloo investigates the target group and then develops personas that help create relevant content to attract them. Todor (2016) claims the purpose of content marketing is to create valuable and interesting content that attracts customers through the buying process. This will appeal to potential
customers and retain existing customers, which will lead to a lucrative outcome for the business (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). Migaloo believes content marketing is the way to work with long-term goals. They do this by looking at the entire customer journey and how they can help in each part of it. They offer their customers guidance with their content marketing and offer tools that help clients reach the end user.

Migaloo investigates which channels the target group is most active in, based on the personas. Via social media the company can create and distribute content which is linked to the company’s web page (Singh, 2017). Migaloo distributes weekly blog articles regarding content marketing through their website and on social media, which according to Moscato and Moscato (2009) helps to attract customers and establishes trust between company and customer. Furthermore, social media allows a company to intensify the effect the published content has (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). SEO and keywords are areas Migaloo works with continuously to find keywords that generate the most search volume. Lee et al. (2016) further state, search engines create a higher visibility, help companies through technical processes and tasks to reach a high ranking on the search engine. In order to get a high ranking Opreana and Vinerean (2015) claim that it is very important to create keywords, valuable content and links in order to be discovered. For this reason, every blog article Migaloo publishes is based on the keywords and the article aims to strengthen these keywords. Patrutiu-Baltes (2016) further states that it is valuable to include keywords in SEO that are most used.

Migaloo tries to get visitors to share their contact information to turn them into a lead by giving them valuable content in exchange. This is something Repovicén (2017) agrees with by stating that the company can expect a lucrative exchange with customers when offering them valuable content. In the next step when converting these leads into customers, Migaloo works with lead scoring and creates different workflows based on the activities of the visitor on the website. According to Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) the marketing automation has a scoring system for leads that shows which marketing leads that are worth the most in order to give this information to the sales team. This results in a dynamic list for Migaloo based on the visitor’s previous activities on the website. In order to always distribute relevant content to the accurate person at the perfect time, marketing automation tools can be used (HubSpot, 2019). This has made a big difference for Migaloo when it comes to lead nurturing and lead scoring, that was formerly done manually. Migaloo further explained that the HubSpot-system also allows the user to have both inbound marketing and inbound sales on the same platform, which make the measurability between the systems easier. HubSpot (2019) argues that by combining conversations tools with the sales and service team it will result in the best business discussions with the customers and Caragher (2013) states that inbound marketing makes it possible to measure marketing efforts. Now Migaloo can see which specific post on social media gave a new customer, which is very valuable.

The purpose of the inbound marketing methodology is that value is added in every step in the customer’s journey to create long-lasting relationships with the customers (HubSpot, 2019). Migaloo reinforces this by explaining that they apply the inbound marketing strategy because they believe it is the best way to build long-term relationships with customers. This is something that Patrutiu-Baltes (2016) confirms by stating that inbound marketing helps support and build personal relationships with customers in this new digital society by providing them with content customized to their needs. Relevant content in an appropriate area is valuable to the customer and will increase their confidence and loyalty toward the company. (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016) Migaloo never stops working with a customer, instead they have a lot of retainers with an ongoing agreement and projects. Järvinen and Taiminen (2016)
claim that the customer can go back and forth between the stages in the marketing and sales funnel and Patterson (2007) further states that the framework has a re-entering loop where customers can return after a purchase. Migaloo has almost daily contact with most of their customers and always has a meeting after finishing a project to receive feedback and to make sure that the customer is satisfied. According to Opreana and Vinerean (2015) inbound marketing permits a continuous conversation with the customers and Patrutiu-Baltes (2016) further states that the needs of the customer is the most central part of all communication. Todor (2016) claims that it is also easier to adapt the content based on the feedback from the customers. Migaloo also has conversation bots on their website to make communication faster and easier. According to Chanthinok et al. (2015) the online community allows real time communication and interactions. Inbound channels also allow customers to freely express their own view and opinion concerning the companies and their products (Chanthinok et al., 2015). The customers can on their own conditions decide when and for how long they want to obtain contact with the companies (Todor, 2016). Migaloo has applied this by providing services that are subscription based which provides the clients with flexibility and the possibility to cancel when desired.

5.1.3 Synlighet

According to Kolowich (2016) there are a lot of different online platforms and it can be difficult to know which one to use. Some platforms require knowledge and resources that the companies do not have (Kolowich, 2016). Synlighet noticed this difficulty and that companies today seek guidance in areas such as increasing sales, gaining better brand recognition, brand awareness and long-term goals for growth etc. online. Moreover, in order to attract the target group and the identified personas, Synlighet ordinary implements their marketing efforts based on a marketing funnel, starting broad and becoming more specific as the funnel narrows. This way of working is very similar to the sales and marketing funnel (figure 3.0). This framework of the sales and marketing funnel shows the company's customers, from potential customers that may have an interest in the company to customers who buy products from the company (Cooper & Budd, 2007; Dalrymple et al., 2004). In the beginning of the customer journey, the goal for Synlighet is to create awareness. This is supported by the inbound marketing strategy that includes different marketing activities with the intention to attract visitors and potential customers to the web page through valuable content (Todor, 2016). Synlighet aims to create some kind of action in different parts of the customer journey. They stated during the interview that they do this by customizing the content and what is offered to their customers throughout the customer journey. By adding value in every step of the customer's journey using the inbound marketing methodology will create long-lasting customer relationships (HubSpot, 2019).

Synlighet produces relevant content in order to spread their knowledge, which makes it possible for them to be interesting in their industry and for those who are looking for the services that they provide. By creating good content through inbound marketing, a company can gain valuable customers (Halligan & Shah, 2014). Synlighet explained that it is important to them that the content is valuable to the reader. According to Johanson (2013) the content should promote an issue that people want to find a solution to. The content Synlighet creates is therefore based on what there is a need for in a specific area, who the target audience is and the identified personas stated problem. Furthermore, the content can be distributed in different ways, such as in text, blogs, social media, videos and so on (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). Synlighet publishes relevant content on their blog that is connected to their website. This is beneficial according to Singh (2017) because un-gated content such as blogs generates
attention to the company, its products and solving problems. Inbound marketing is also a great strategy when you want customers to find you. This requires qualified content online on social media and a top ranking on search engines. (Caragher, 2013) For Synlighet, SEO is primarily about creating content that is valuable to the reader, but that also at the same time, fulfills the search engine requirements. Because of this it is important with an effective search engine optimization, so that the buyers can easily find the company’s content through search engines (Singh, 2017). Search engine optimization makes it easier for potential and existing customers to find and discover valuable content online (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

When a potential customer has entered the company’s website, it is helpful to use call-to-action, forms and lead flows in order to take part of the prospect’s information (Hubspot, 2019). Therefore, Synlighet has forms, downloads, conversational bots, subscription to newsletters and conversion buttons on their website to turn visitors into leads. They also have call-to-action, remarketing lists or related articles etc. A company needs to nurture and try to get the potential customer closer to a deal, by learning more about them and creating customized content to convert them into sales leads (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). Synlighet has different sequences in their CRM-system in HubSpot that are automatically activated when a potential customer has become a lead. Various steps are then implemented based on the specific leads previous activities. This is automatically handled, through marketing- and sales automations. Hubspot (2019) states that the information in the CRM-system can be used to customize the content on the website and improve the buyer's journey through e-mail and workflows. When a lead has become a customer, Synlighet has a very close dialogue with them and send weekly reports. Relevant content in an appropriate area is valuable to the customer and will increase their confidence and loyalty toward the company (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016). Therefore, Synlighet spends a lot of time on customer care and stay in contact with their clients continuously through calls, meetings and visits.

Synlighet explained that they have observed how inbound marketing has evolved a lot during the last few years where different activities and strategies have been packaged together in one system. This has made it easier for Synlighet to manage this type of marketing and campaigns, which is a reason why they implement inbound marketing. Due to the fast-paced Internet revolution, marketing had to change and adapt with it (Repovienė, 2017). According to Opreana and Vinerean (2015) this change has led to the transformation of marketing where focus has shifted from the traditional outbound marketing to a more inbound focused structure. Another reason why Synlighet applies the inbound marketing strategy is because it is a way for them to reach their target customers with their services. Similarly, Johanson (2013) claims that a well-developed and maintained inbound marketing can result in more business opportunities and retain more potential customers. Inbound marketing also means an opportunity for Synlighet to sell and market themselves by being trustworthy and knowledgeable. Furthermore, Synlighet expressed during the interview that it has become cheaper to integrate the Hubspot-system with other automation systems that can easily be combined on websites etc. which gives a more comprehensive view over the company. Opreana and Vinerean (2015) reinforce this by saying that the strategy is easy to apply, very effective when it comes to handling big data and it is also cost-effective. Todor (2016) further states that it can reduce companies marketing costs and some marketing activities can even attract customers for free.
5.1.4 Alinder Design

The purpose of content marketing is to create valuable and interesting content that attracts customers through the buying process (Todor, 2016). Therefore, when Alinder Design creates content, they start by forming the personas and their buying process. They see the inbound methodology as a way of working to gain a better understanding of the customer, what their interests are, what problems they have and what challenges they face. According to Repovienė (2017) content marketing distributes valuable content to help customers to understand problems, to make complicated concepts easier or provide value through helpful information. This method will make the business grow from satisfied customers, either from repurchasing or promoting the company which will create new customers. (HubSpot, 2019)

Inbound is a great strategy when you want customers to find you, instead of finding the customers. This requires qualified content online on social media and a top ranking on search engines. (Caragher, 2013) Singh (2017) further states that the content also needs to be heightened and purposely positioned at places where the buyers will discover it. It is not enough to only place the content on the web page (Singh, 2017). Therefore, Alinder Design publishes content through social media in order to capture visitors and lead them to the blog and their website, that they continuously keep up to date. Alinder Design continues to give the customers more customized content and information about what they are doing. According to Caragher (2013) the content needs to be customized and personalized to reach the target audience and it is important to constantly provide new content and offers to maintain the prospects interests. In order to appeal to and attract people, Alinder Design claims that search engine optimization is very important. According to Patrutiu-Baltes (2016) the search result on the SEO will attract more users if it is displayed more times on the first page. For this reason, Alinder Design always makes an SEO audit, where they check which keywords are relevant. From this they get the topics to write about. Caragher (2013) claims that SEO uses well-known and often used keywords to increase and optimize visibility on search engine and it must be wording that prospects normally use.

The HubSpot-system allows Alinder Design to learn more about visitors and potential customers based on previous activities on the website. Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) claim that this is possible because the marketing automation has a scoring system that shows which marketing leads that are worth the most and present this information to the sales team. They further state that the company needs to nurture and try to get the potential customer closer to a deal, by learning more about them and creating customized content to convert them into sales leads. (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016) HubSpot (2019) claims that in order to receive prospects information, that have entered the company’s website, it is helpful to use call-to-action, forms and chat bots. Alinder Design explained that they have conversion buttons that are linked to a landing page where the visitor can fill in their personal information to book a consultation, download a guide or an article.

During the interview Alinder Design stated that the inbound methodology has given the company a new way of working and communicating with their clients. According to Opreana and Vinerean (2015) the inbound strategy helps structure and create valuable content that naturally attracts people to the company and product on the customers own initiative. For Alinder Design it is about offering value in what is communicated, and it is important to stick to what the customers are looking for and what they want to read about. Therefore, the company's ambition is to create interest and build trust in their client's brand by long-term thinking when it comes to communication and marketing in all channels. Inbound marketing
helps support and build personal relationships with customers by providing them with content customized to their needs. Relevant content in an appropriate area is valuable to the customer and will increase their confidence and loyalty toward the company. (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016) Alinder Design states that for them, inbound marketing has led to better customer relationships where they, as a company, are seen as more trustworthy.

Another reason for applying the inbound marketing strategy Alinder Design explained is because it enables ways for them to measure various efforts and make sure that what the company is doing, leads to the desired results. This is supported by Caragher (2013) that states that inbound marketing makes it possible to measure marketing efforts. Moreover, Johanson (2013) claims that a well-developed and maintained inbound marketing can result in more business opportunities and retain more potential customers. Alinder Design has found that the inbound methodology solves problems with irregular projects and lack of continuity by working with long-term retainers. At the same time Caragher (2013) further states that it is possible for the companies to form, control and retain lucrative prospects by creating customized and valuable content and according to Opreana and Vinerean (2015) this will appeal to potential customers and retain existing customers, which will lead to a lucrative outcome for the business. Alinder Design has also experience after implementing inbound marketing, that they are able to solve clients' problems in a better way and can therefore offer more value to the client’s business. HubSpot (2019) claims that the purpose of the inbound marketing methodology model is that value is added in every step in the customer's journey to create long-lasting and satisfying customers relationships with the company.

5.1.5 Kennedy-Andersson

Kennedy-Andersson uses the inbound methodology to help their customers solve a problem by identifying a buyer persona and the customer journey. This helps them to understand the target customer, what problems they have and how they as a company can solve this. According Singh (2017), finding solutions to business problems will bring awareness to the company. Additionally, Hubspot (2019) states that by creating content that solves the problems and needs of the ideal customers this will attract visitors and build trust and credibility for the company. Therefore, when it comes to creating content the foremost important aspect for Kennedy-Andersson is to consider who the ideal customer is and what problems they may have. This is an important step because according to Webster (1965), the most common reason why a purchase is carried out is to solve a problem or in order to satisfy a need.

Because the majority of people start their customer journey online today, Kennedy-Andersson helps their clients adapt their communication and what is offered in order to be a part of the customers' buying processes at an early stage. Wiersema (2013) reinforces this by saying that content marketing is an effective tool as the beginning of the buying process often starts on the Internet in order to find information. Caragher (2013) claims that it is also important with premium offers on web pages to transform curious prospects into buyers via the sales funnel. When creating content, the sales funnel is also something Kennedy-Andersson takes into consideration. They explain that the message that will appeal most to a potential customer is very different at the top of the sales funnel where they just found out about the company, compared to the very bottom of the funnel where a purchase is about to be made. Caragher (2013) states that the content needs to be customized and relevant in order to reach the target audience. Therefore, Kennedy-Andersson uses customized content to get visitors to convert more efficiently and depending on what the target audience prefers, Kennedy-Andersson
publishes content in appropriate channels.

With a marketing strategy for social media, Kennedy-Andersson aims to increase the chance of communicating with the right target group, finding prospects at the right time and communicating the right message to the targeted customers. Companies can easily identify potential and existing customers through social networks and blogs to personalize the communication between them depending on which social network they are using (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016; Ristova, 2014). Chanthinok et al. (2015) further states that the online community allows real time communication and interactions. Furthermore, Caragher (2013) argues that blogging is an important part of inbound marketing and the more it gets updated the better chance it will have to retain new customers. The primary focus for Kennedy-Andersson therefore lies on creating blogs. They believe this is the beating heart of the company that makes it possible to build authority. Moreover, Lee et al. (2016) state that the massive flow of information on the Internet makes it difficult to comprehend, filter and find the right information. Because of this it is important with an effective search engine optimization, so that the buyers can easily find the company’s content through search engines (Singh, 2017). During the interview Kennedy-Andersson explained that when it comes to search engines, long tail keywords are applied. They expressed that for them this leads to less traffic, but a higher conversion rate. This is validated by D’Haen and Van den Poel (2013) that suggest SEO improves the quality of each prospect. This will ultimately make the conversion process of each prospect easier and more effective (Ahearne et al., 2007; Eggert & Serdaroglu, 2011).

According to Caragher (2013) premium offers require information from the visitor on the web page to excess more content. This creates leads which give a clear view of the prospects needs and demands. (Caragher, 2013) HubSpot (2019) claims that in order to take part of a prospect’s information, that have entered the company’s website, it is helpful to use call-to-action, forms and lead flows. Kennedy-Andersson uses these tools to get a visitor to subscribe and share their e-mail, thus turning them into a lead. Singh (2017) claims this gated content forms a continuous relationship between the company and customers based on approval, as the customer specifies its e-mail to access more content. Moreover, Kennedy-Andersson uses cookies, lead scoring and create different workflows based on the activities of the visitor on the website. According to Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) the marketing automation has a scoring system that shows which marketing leads that are worth the most and present this information to the sales team. HubSpot (2019) further states that the information in the CRM can be used to customize the content on the website and improve the buyer's journey through e-mail and workflows. Kennedy-Andersson claims that this stage in the sales funnel tends to be locating prospects in the CRM-system that have done something that makes them stand out and attempting to close the sale by giving them a call, sending an e-mail or booking a meeting.

During the interview Kennedy-Andersson stated that inbound marketing for them is about building personal relationships with customers continuously where extra value is added to everything the company does. HubSpot's tools help consolidate all the activities in one place which makes it easier to accommodate clients and build a long-term relationship. HubSpot (2019) reinforces this by stating that the purpose of the inbound marketing methodology model is that value is added in every step in the customer's journey to create long-lasting and satisfying customers relationships with the company. The aim for Kennedy-Andersson is to always keep the customer happy and satisfied with what they get. Furthermore, inbound marketing helps Kennedy-Andersson to retain customers. Caragher (2013) claims that
valuable content will lead to recurring customers with the intention to buy more. Moreover, Kennedy-Andersson has noticed that companies today see digital and inbound as a way to adapt to the modern way of doing business. The inbound marketing strategy helps their clients meet this change and adapt to the digital era. Kennedy-Andersson also believes that the inbound marketing methodology is a way to differentiate from competitors. This is further emphasized by Gilan and Hammarberg (2016) that state that in a time where competition is high and the players are many, a company that does not get digital and understand the importance of doing so will simply not survive. Additionally, Kennedy-Andersson believes inbound marketing really helps cutting through this noise in advertising and to attract targeted customers that the company has a solution for. Traditional marketing messages are easily lost in the buzz of hundreds of marketing interruptions a person is faced with every day (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

5.1.6 Dazy

Inbound marketing focuses on identifying the real needs of the customer which is the most central part of all communication with potential targets (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016). Dazy identifies personas in order to understand the target group needs, what problem they have and their situation. This helps them structure and distribute valuable content and provide value through helpful information (Repoviené, 2017). Dazy believes that if a company cannot communicate which problem they actually solve and in what way this helps the customers, it becomes almost impossible to get through the buzz today. Opreana and Vinerean (2015) reinforce this by arguing that traditional marketing leads to the message easily getting lost in the buzz of hundreds of marketing interruptions that a consumer is faced with every day. Dazy further stated that if a company cannot publish content that creates interest and solves these problems, they will quickly disappear. When Dazy creates content, it is important to find relevance in what they write and publish content that actually appeals to the visitors. Caragher (2013) further states that it needs to be customized and personalized to reach the target audience and it is important to constantly provide new content and offers to maintain the prospects interests. According to Opreana and Vinerean (2015) the content can be distributed in different ways depending on what the receiver prefers. Dazy produces small kits where they create short informative videos attached to each blog post. This makes it easier for the viewer to comment, absorb, share and act on it. This also allows Dazy to show the problem they solve. They state that this combination will attract visitors to follow them and give them more information about themselves. Furthermore, Dazy implements SEO-efforts to some extent and works a lot with the classic keywords. When working with SEO Caragher (2013) claims that well-known and often used keywords increase and optimize visibility on search engines. It must be keywords that prospects normally use.

According to Dazy, inbound marketing helps to attract the target audience to visit the website and then convert and process leads. When Dazy turn visitors into leads, it is about creating good conversion material and relevant content. HubSpot (2019) claims that in order to take part of a prospect’s information, that have entered the company’s website, it is helpful to use call-to-action, forms and lead flows. Dazy manually identifies the most interesting leads that are within the scope of the identified persona and investigates their needs. Dazy also uses life cycle stages and lead scoring. Depending on what efforts the leads make, they get upgraded. According to Järvinen and Taamän (2016) the marketing automation has a scoring system that shows which marketing leads that are worth the most and present this information to the sales team.
Dazy has noticed a shift in people's behavior that followed the technological development and believes companies must follow and adapt. Opreana and Vinerean (2015) and Forbes (2018) support this and claim that the Internet and digitalization have forced the traditional way of communicating with customers to change because the customer behavior itself is different from what it has been in the past. According to Holliman and Rowley (2014) inbound marketing is pull marketing which means that it catches prospects attention who are already looking for something by providing helpful and beneficial content that will satisfy their needs. Dazy noticed a big difference from traditional marketing where a product or service is forced on someone. Instead they can observe that a customer that has read about their service and understood the problem that it solves will contact them instead to learn more about it, without having to force it. Caragher (2013) agrees with this by saying that it is a great strategy when you want customers to find you, instead of finding the customers. Todor (2016) argues that the strategy includes different marketing activities with the intention to attract people, earn customers attention, making it easier to institute the business and attract potential and existing customers to the web page through valuable content. Furthermore, Dazy stated that inbound marketing is about building long-term relationships and creating relevant content and offers.

According to Patrutiu-Baltes (2016) marketers have to understand how they can help, support and build personal relationships with customers by providing them with customized content, that will increase the customers confidence and loyalty toward the company. Dazy’s employees all have a responsibility to take care of the customers and to keep in touch with them. They also try to connect the customer to various service agreements and support agreements in order to make sure the customer satisfaction is high. This final stage in the B2B-buying process is very important when it comes to fulfilling organizational and personal needs that result in good relationships (Tellefsen, 2002).

According to Dazy, the inbound strategy goal is to create an infrastructure that leads to effective marketing and strong, long-term growth. Singh (2017) claims that inbound marketing is a growing concept that has proven to be a method that is very effective, powerful and long-lasting when it comes to creating demand and collecting leads. HubSpot (2019) further states that this method will make the business grow from satisfied customers. Inbound is a marketing strategy that companies use to advertise both their brand and products (Hawlk, 2018). Dazy believes it is crucial to connect the different parts of the company strategy, in order to build a strong brand and achieve company development. They claim it helps them with branding and to create sales and knowledge within the company. This is something Opreana and Vinerean (2015) also state. They claim companies can spread valuable content through different channels and create a business page on social networks to unify the brand. The content seems more trustworthy if it is distributed on social media and has a bigger chance to be found if a business page is combined with a channel. (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015) By implementing brand communication through different social media channels a company can engage the customer which will contribute to building the company brand and shape the company image according to Chanthinok et al. (2015). Another benefit with the inbound strategy, according to Todor (2016) is that it can reduce companies marketing costs and some marketing activities can even attract customers for free. Dazy sees inbound marketing as a cheaper option than other marketing strategies due to the fact that the costs are lower compared to the relevant and valuable traffic it brings in for the company. Hawlk (2018) further states that instead of relying on spending money on ads, inbound marketing relies on the message, content and communication. This means that communication with prospects can attract customers with low or no costs, thanks to the possibilities of the Internet (Hawlk, 2018).
5.2 Empirical Analysis

5.2.1 Identified Contacts - Attract

All the participants we interviewed work actively with identifying personas in their content strategy and they base their content on their personas. Zooma, Kennedy-Andersson and Synlighet emphasize the importance of creating personas in the beginning of the marketing process. Migaloo, Kennedy-Andersson and Dazy expressed that they closely investigate the target group. We can see from the Empirical Study that all the companies work actively to create personas in order to understand their targets interests, problems and how they can solve them. Migaloo, Kennedy-Andersson, Zooma and Synlighet explained that they work with the entire customer journey in their content strategy. They identify the customer journey and investigate how they can help the customer in every part of it. Alinder Design on the other hand looks at the buying process instead and what part of the buying process the customer is in. We can see for the interviews with the participating companies that they all emphasize the importance of developing content based on the identified persona to make the inbound marketing strategy successful. Furthermore, they all believe it is crucial to determine where a specific target is in the customer journey or buying process in order to create relevant content at the right time.

When it comes to search engines a clear similarity between the respondents was that Google was the main search engine used by all the participants in this study. Only Dazy said that they also use Bing to some extent, however Google stands for the majority of the incoming traffic for them as well. The participating companies all consider search engine optimization as a very important tool in order to attract visitors and to obtain a successful inbound marketing. From the interviews we have gathered that the respondents believe that what content is written needs to appeal to the target audience and also has to contain relevant keywords in order to generate traffic. Synlighet stretched the significance of this. For them SEO is primarily about creating content that is valuable to the reader which fulfills the search engine requirements. Alinder Design always makes a SEO audit, where they check which keywords are relevant and shape content topics based on this. Zooma agreed that keywords are important but also stated that, for them, the entire phrasing is crucial and needs to be connected to real customer issues. They believe that someone who has searched and found the company organically, usually gives much better conversion. Similarly, Kennedy-Andersson applies long tail keywords, that lead to less traffic, but a higher conversion rate. Dazy makes some SEO-efforts but pointed out that the extent depends on the situation. Additionally, Migaloo works continuously with finding keywords that generate the most search volume. From the interviews we can see that all the companies emphasize SEO and its crucial part in attracting customers when working with inbound marketing. Moreover, they all use Google as their main search engine in order to increase the market reach. Based on the answers the respondents gave, we can see that the connection between the search engine keywords and the published content is very strong and in order for the inbound strategy to be successful, the content needs to strengthen the selected keywords.

All the participants use Facebook and LinkedIn as their main social media platform to share content. Based on the interviews we can see that all of the companies choose their social media channels based on their target group and their needs. Zooma believes that LinkedIn is the main place for knowledge in the daily flow of information when working with B2B-companies. Kennedy-Andersson aims to increase the chance of communicating with the right target group by finding prospects at the right time and communicating the right message to
them on their social media platforms. Synlighet usually publishes content based on a data analysis regarding what type of content there is a need for in a specific area and who the target audience is. Migaloo investigates which channels the target group is most active in, based on the identified personas. Furthermore, Migaloo, Synlighet, Alinder Design and Dazy use Instagram as a social channel too and Synlighet is the only one that uses YouTube. Migaloo and Kennedy-Andersson also use Twitter to some extent, but Dazy claims that Twitter is not entirely in line with what they do. In order to attract potential customers, the participating companies use social media as a tool to direct the visitors to their blog. From the Empirical Study we can see that all of the companies have their own blog where they continuously publish blog posts to stay updated and relevant. We can see clear similarities in how the respondents use blogs and social media to create attraction. They all explained how they try to lead the visitor to the website via various digital channels. Though all the companies use social media, the difference lies in what specific channels they apply. However, regardless of the selected platforms, there is a clear pattern in how the respondents’ reason when choosing a social media channel. What they all have in common is that the identified customer is what determines the social media strategy and where the content will be published. This is decided depending on where and when the targeted audience is active.

5.2.2 Leads - Engage

During the interviews we could identify similarities in the way the companies attempt to convert visitors into leads. We can see that the main goal for all of the participating companies is to get visitors to give their contact information in order to become a lead. They attempt to do this by giving them something of value in exchange. Then, the next step is to learn more about a lead and engage them in order to move them closer to a deal. Conversion tools that all the companies stated that they use are conversational bots, subscriptions, downloads, forms and conversion buttons. Other conversion tools that were mentioned, but not used by all, were call-to-action that Kennedy-Andersson and Synlighet use and core topics, pillar pages and landing pages that both Kennedy-Andersson and Alinder Design use. Applying these tools allow companies to create relevant content and get visitors to convert more efficiently by sharing their contact information to access more content. In terms of content, articles is something that all the companies offer. Alinder Design and Dazy also create guides. Kennedy-Andersson, Synlighet and Migaloo stated they have newsletters that people can subscribe to. Zooma and Kennedy-Andersson both publish whitepapers and Kennedy-Andersson offers e-books as well. Zooma was the only company that mentioned using pdf-files, PowerPoints, checklists, seminars and webinars during the interview.

A resemblance we can see is that all the companies use marketing automation tools to monitor a visitor’s activities on the website, in order to create customized content. Most common among the companies was marketing automation tools such as cookies, lead scoring and workflows. Zooma, Migaloo and Kennedy-Andersson work with cookies to keep track of the visitors. Zooma, Migaloo, Kennedy-Andersson. Dazy and Synlighet mentioned that they work with lead scoring to know which leads to focus on and Alinder Design said that they work with lead research. Zooma, Migaloo, Kennedy-Andersson and Synlighet work with workflow sequences that may trigger an action based on a visitor’s behavior. Synlighet said that this can be remarketing lists and related articles. For Migaloo it can result in dynamic- and prioritized lists. When a visitor has become a lead, these tools are also used to observe the lead to make sure the right content is presented at the right time. This is something that Kennedy-Andersson specifically mentioned during the interview, saying that a marketing strategy for social media, may increase the chance of communicating with the right target group at the
right time. We observed that a pattern is evident as all six companies use the same basic approach when it comes to converting visitors into leads. They all engage the visitors by creating customized content based on marketing automation tools, in exchange for contact information. However, they do differentiate from each other in some respects. For example, in what specific tools, marketing automation and type of content they apply. Nonetheless the overall process to engage leads was almost identical among the participating companies.

5.2.3 Deals - Delight

All the companies that we interviewed use the same type of conversation tools in order to get in touch with the customer and negotiate a deal. These are e-mail, meetings and calls. During the interviews all the respondents emphasized that customer care is something they value very high because it helps them build long-term relationships with their customer base. However, they work in different ways to achieve this. Zooma, Migaloo, Synlighet, Alinder Design and Dazy expressed that they have continuous contact with the customers. In order to make the customers satisfied, Migaloo always has a meeting after finishing a project to receive feedback. Zooma carries out surveys and Synlighet makes customer visits and sends weekly reports. Dazy explained that the employees have an individual responsibility to take care of the customers. Both Migaloo and Dazy have different ongoing agreements in order to keep the customer within the company. Finally, Migaloo and Alinder Design continue to send customers information about what they are doing and suggestions of content. We can see that all the participating companies work actively with customer care, but in different ways. They expressed that they believe good customer relationships are the key to future successful collaborations with satisfied customers, which is the base for the re-entering loop in the sales and marketing funnel.

5.2.4 Reasons for implementing inbound marketing

When it comes to the question why the participating companies apply the inbound marketing strategy, we can see that all the companies think it leads to various benefits. Zooma, Kennedy-Andersson and Dazy all emphasize how digitalization has influenced people's behavior and their habits. They believe businesses have to adapt to this fast-changing environment to be successful and efficient. Zooma and Dazy express that they see great results with improved sales. Zooma additionally, says that the content and interactions make the customer more satisfied emotionally as well. Alinder Design further states that the strategy offers more value to the customers. Kennedy-Andersson, Synlighet and Dazy experience that inbound marketing helps attract, understand and reach the target customer. Furthermore, Migaloo, Alinder Design and Kennedy-Andersson all said during the interview that inbound marketing helps them build long-term relationships with customers. Kennedy-Andersson also stretches the fact that it helps to retain customers. Moreover, Kennedy-Andersson and Dazy believe the strategy helps cut through the buzz in the advertising world.

Automatic features in the HubSpot-system is something that Zooma, Migaloo, Synlighet and Alinder Design state as one of the reasons for implementing inbound marketing. Kennedy-Andersson also expresses that the HubSpot-system makes it possible to integrate analytics that are available from Google. Migaloo and Synlighet further state that because the systems have been packaged together into the same platform, managing them has become a lot easier. When it comes to the financial aspects of inbound marketing, Zooma explains the biggest advantage, for their customer base, is that it allows them to show management financial growth. Dazy views inbound as a cheaper option than other marketing strategies and for
Alinder Design inbound enables ways to measure various marketing efforts.

Synlighet, Alinder Design and Dazy emphasize that the inbound strategy means an opportunity to sell and market themselves by being trustworthy and knowledgeable, by producing relevant content. Moreover, Dazy says that it helps them with branding. For Kennedy-Andersson, the inbound marketing methodology is a way to differentiate from competitors. We can see that the inbound marketing strategy has led to various benefits that are customer related, financially related and work related. The customer related benefits are more value, higher customer satisfaction and better customer relationships. The financially related benefits are monetary results through improved sales, financial growth and lower costs. The work related benefits are measurability, well-functioning automated systems, competitive advantages, wider market reach, customer retention, stronger brand value, being perceived as trustworthy and knowledgeable and cutting through the buzz. Moreover, the digitization was a big reason for the companies to implement inbound marketing. We can see that all six participating companies apply the strategy based on similar reasons but express them in different ways.
### 5.3 Summary

**Table 3.0 The inbound marketing process, similarities and differences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Identified contacts - Attract</th>
<th>Leads - Engage</th>
<th>Deals - Delight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zooma</td>
<td><strong>Content strategy:</strong> Identify personas &amp; customer journey&lt;br&gt;SEO: Google &amp; Keywords&lt;br&gt;<strong>Social media:</strong> LinkedIn &amp; Facebook Blogging</td>
<td><strong>Conversion tools:</strong> Conversational bots, Subscriptions, Downloads, Forms &amp; Conversion buttons&lt;br&gt;<strong>Marketing automation:</strong> Cookies, Lead scoring &amp; Workflows&lt;br&gt;<strong>Customized content:</strong> Pdf-files, PowerPoints, Whitepapers, Articles, Checklists, Seminars &amp; Webinars</td>
<td><strong>Conversation tools:</strong> E-mail, Meetings &amp; Calls&lt;br&gt;<strong>Customer care:</strong> Surveys, Build long-term relationships &amp; Continues contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migaloo</td>
<td><strong>Content strategy:</strong> Identify personas &amp; customer journey&lt;br&gt;SEO: Google &amp; Keywords&lt;br&gt;<strong>Social media:</strong> LinkedIn, Facebook &amp; Instagram Blogging</td>
<td><strong>Conversion tools:</strong> Subscriptions, Downloads, Forms, Conversion buttons &amp; Conversational bots&lt;br&gt;<strong>Marketing automation:</strong> Cookies, Lead scoring, Workflows, Dynamic lists &amp; Prioritized lists&lt;br&gt;<strong>Customized content:</strong> Newsletters &amp; Articles</td>
<td><strong>Conversation tools:</strong> E-mail, Meetings &amp; Calls&lt;br&gt;<strong>Customer care:</strong> Continues contact &amp; Continuous information&lt;br&gt;<strong>Ongoing agreements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synlignet</td>
<td><strong>Content strategy:</strong> Identify personas &amp; customer journey&lt;br&gt;SEO: Google&lt;br&gt;<strong>Social media:</strong> LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram &amp; YouTube Blogging</td>
<td><strong>Conversion tools:</strong> Subscriptions, Downloads, Forms, Call-to-action, Conversational bots &amp; Conversion buttons&lt;br&gt;<strong>Marketing automation:</strong> Lead scoring, Workflows, Remarketing lists &amp; Related articles&lt;br&gt;<strong>Customized content:</strong> Whitepapers, Newsletters &amp; Articles</td>
<td><strong>Conversation tools:</strong> E-mail, Meetings &amp; Calls&lt;br&gt;<strong>Customer care:</strong> Continuous contact &amp; Customer visits&lt;br&gt;<strong>Weekly reports</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allinder Design</td>
<td><strong>Content strategy:</strong> Identify personas &amp; buying process&lt;br&gt;SEO: Google &amp; Keywords&lt;br&gt;<strong>Social media:</strong> LinkedIn, Facebook &amp; Instagram Blogging</td>
<td><strong>Conversion tools:</strong> Subscriptions, Downloads, Forms, Landing pages, Core topics, Conversational bots &amp; Pillar page&lt;br&gt;<strong>Marketing automation:</strong> E-mail marketing, Lead research &amp; Lists&lt;br&gt;<strong>Customized content:</strong> Guides &amp; Articles</td>
<td><strong>Conversation tools:</strong> E-mail, Meetings &amp; Calls&lt;br&gt;<strong>Customer care:</strong> Continuous contact &amp; Continuous information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy Anderson</td>
<td><strong>Content strategy:</strong> Identify personas &amp; Long tail keywords&lt;br&gt;<strong>Social media:</strong> LinkedIn, Facebook &amp; Twitter Blogging</td>
<td><strong>Conversion tools:</strong> Subscriptions, Downloads, Call-to-action, Forms, Landing pages &amp; Pillar page&lt;br&gt;<strong>Marketing automation:</strong> Cookies, Lead scoring &amp; Workflows&lt;br&gt;<strong>Customized content:</strong> Newsletters, Articles, Whitepapers &amp; E-books</td>
<td><strong>Conversation tools:</strong> E-mail, Meetings &amp; Calls&lt;br&gt;<strong>Customer care:</strong> Build long-term relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAZY</td>
<td><strong>Content strategy:</strong> Identify personas&lt;br&gt;SEO: Google, Bing &amp; Keywords&lt;br&gt;<strong>Social media:</strong> Instagram, Facebook &amp; LinkedIn Blogging &amp; Video &amp; clips &amp; Clickbait articles</td>
<td><strong>Conversion tools:</strong> Downloads &amp; Forms&lt;br&gt;<strong>Marketing automation:</strong> Life cycle stages of leads &amp; Lead scoring&lt;br&gt;<strong>Customized content:</strong> Guides &amp; Articles</td>
<td><strong>Conversation tools:</strong> E-mail, Meetings &amp; Calls&lt;br&gt;<strong>Customer care:</strong> Building long-term relationships &amp; Continuous contact&lt;br&gt;<strong>Ongoing agreements</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This table is based on our model, figure 4.0. The table highlights similarities and differences and the most important inbound marketing tools the participating companies use in each step of the B2B-selling process.*
6. Conclusion

In this chapter, the final result is presented. We discuss our findings and answer our study's research questions. The chapter is concluded by presenting the contributions and implications of the study followed by suggestions for further research.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of in what way business to business companies use inbound marketing and the reasons for applying this strategy. The motivation behind the selected purpose is that the knowledge platform of inbound marketing in the B2B-sector is in the early phases of development, essentially limited to and dominated by practitioners and consultants in the field. This led us to investigate this area further. The results from the six interviews showed a great resemblance with the studies Frame of Reference. For instance, we can see patterns where the inbound strategy has made the companies’ marketing more systematic and organized which leads to better end results for both the companies and their customers. Furthermore, even though the companies work with clients from different industries they largely work with the inbound marketing strategy in the same way. Below we answer our research questions and discuss our findings.

- How do business to business companies apply inbound marketing?

In order for inbound marketing to be successful it is essential to combine content marketing, search engine optimization and social media marketing, because they are dependent on each other to work in the most effective and beneficial way. In the beginning of the inbound marketing process all the participating companies develop their content based on the identified persona. When investigating and establishing the needs and interests of the persona, the companies aim to understand their problems and how they as a company can solve them. When this is done it is crucial to determine where a specific target is in the customer journey or buying process in order to know how they can help the customer in every part of it. This knowledge allows the companies to create relevant content that is published at the right time.

Search engine optimization is considered a very important tool in order to attract visitors. The content should appeal to the target audience and contain relevant keywords in order to generate the desired traffic. It is important to implement keywords that have a strong connection to the created content in order to be found. These keywords are an essential part of the SEO to attract customers because it will extend the market reach and increase visibility. When it comes to search engines, Google is the main search engine used by all the participants and stands for the majority of the incoming traffic to the website.

Another way for the companies to attract the target group to their website is by the use of both blogs and social media marketing. Though all the companies use social media, the difference lies in what specific channels they apply. However, regardless of the selected platforms, there is a clear pattern in how the respondents’ reason when choosing a social media channel. What determines the social media strategy and where the content will be published is based on the identified persona. This is decided depending on where and when the targeted audience is active. The main social media platforms to share content are Facebook and LinkedIn. Other platforms that the companies use occasionally are Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. All the participants have their own blog where they continuously publish blog posts, in order to stay updated and relevant.

All six companies use the same basic approach when it comes to converting visitors into leads. In order to do this the main goal is to get a visitor to share their contact information in
exchange for value. Common tools for collecting this information are conversational bots, subscriptions, downloads, forms and conversion buttons. Other conversion tools that were mentioned, but not used by all, were call-to-action, core topics, pillar pages and landing pages. Applying these tools allows companies to get visitors to convert more efficiently. When a visitor has become a lead, marketing automation tools are used to observe the lead to make sure the right content is presented at the right time. The companies choose what type of content to apply depending on their target group. It can be articles, guides, newsletters, whitepapers, e-books, pdf-files, PowerPoints, checklists, seminars and webinars. The companies engage the visitors by creating valuable content that the marketing automation helps make more customized based on previous activities on the website. The most common tools among the participants are cookies, lead scoring and workflows which can result in for example remarketing lists, related articles, dynamic- and prioritized lists.

All the companies use the same type of conversation tools in order to get in touch with the customer and negotiate a deal. These are e-mail, meetings and calls. They believe good customer relationships is the key to future successful collaborations with satisfied customers. The participating companies work actively with customer care and value it very high because it helps them build long-term relationships with their customer base. However, this can be done in different ways depending on the customer. For example, through continuous contact, having meetings after finishing a project to receive feedback, surveys, customer visits, weekly reports, different ongoing agreements and continuous content suggestions. By constantly working on customer care and offering value will result in building long-term relationships and retaining customers.

In order to demonstrate how the participating companies generally implement inbound marketing a summarized model has been created below, figure 6.0.

**Figure 6.0 Summarized inbound marketing implementation**

![Identified Contacts - Attract](#)
- Content based on identified personas & customer journey
- SEO, SMM & Blogs

![Leads - Engage](#)
- Conversion tools
- Marketing automation
- Customized content

![Deals - Delight](#)
- Conversational tools
- Customer care

- **Why do business to business companies apply this strategy?**

The reason why the companies apply the inbound marketing strategy is because it leads to various benefits that are customer related, financially related and work related. The customer related benefits are added value, higher customer satisfaction and better customer relationships. The financially related benefits are monetary results through improved sales, financial growth and lower costs. The work related benefits are measurability, well-functioning automated systems, competitive advantages, wider market reach, customer retention, stronger brand value, being perceived as trustworthy and knowledgeable and cutting through the buzz. Another reason for implementing inbound marketing is because traditional marketing has proven to be inefficient and outdated. Customers are no longer susceptible to these kinds of marketing efforts.
6.1 Contribution and Implications

In this study, we can see how and why the six participating business to business companies in the Swedish market work with inbound marketing, which is an important strategy in order to successfully reach customers in a digitizing society. The study gives a general insight into how companies can implement inbound marketing in their marketing strategy and the benefits it will lead to if executed correctly. Previous research explains what inbound marketing is, but the knowledge platform of inbound marketing in the B2B-sector is still in the early phases of development essentially limited to and dominated by practitioners and consultants in the field. This is the basis for conducting this research. Marketing practitioners and management can use this study as a guide in how to implement inbound marketing and understand its benefits in order to navigate the shift in consumer behavioral patterns caused by the digitalization. A model has been created to help companies implement inbound marketing and shows which inbound marketing tools that can be used in the different stages of the sales and marketing process. This study contributes to implications for marketing practitioners and management to further gain insight into the importance of adjusting the marketing efforts in a time where digitalization plays a crucial part in our society. Furthermore, companies that do not have inbound marketing as a strategy can gain a better understanding of the inbound marketing values and benefits.

6.2 Suggestions for Further Research

Because this study only focuses on a B2B-context, the B2C-context has deliberately been excluded. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct a comparative study between the B2B- and B2C-sector to investigate whether there are any differences or similarities in how and why inbound marketing is implemented, defined and applied. Another suggestion for further research could be to examine the subject of this study from a consumer perspective in order to explore how customers perceive the strategy and whether they confirm the advantages that the companies state. Since the study is only based on six companies located in Sweden, a similar study in a larger scale could provide a greater reliability. Furthermore, it could also give more perspectives to different inbound marketing approaches. A study across different markets out of a global perspective could be very interesting as the results may vary depending on the geographical location, the digital development and local customer behavior.
List of References


Appendix 1

Interview Guide

1. Could you briefly describe the company? Background etc.?

2. Could you briefly describe your position and what you do at the company?

3. What does inbound marketing mean to your company?
   - How long has the company worked with inbound marketing?

4. Why did the company choose to start working with inbound marketing?

5. Has the company noticed any changes since the implementation of inbound marketing?
   - What specific advantages and disadvantages has inbound marketing had?

6. Have inbound channels had any effect on customer relations when it comes to creating value? If so, how?

7. Which communication channels does the company use to attract the ideal customers?
   a. How do you create valuable content? What is important to consider?
   b. What specific social media channels do you use and why?
   c. How do you work with SEO? Which search engines do you use? Which keywords do you use?

8. How does the company work in order to convert visitors into leads? Which specific tools do you use?

9. How does the company work in order to transform leads into deals?

10. How does the company work with customer relations and how do you maintain the relationships with your existing customers?
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Amelia Andreasson is an international marketing graduate from Halmstad University.