

The Application of Inbound Marketing to Improve Business Performance: Systematic Literature Review

L'application de l'Inbound Marketing pour la promotion de la performance commerciale : Revue de Littérature Systématique

Jihad JABBOURI, (Doctoral student in management sciences)

*Management and Development Research Laboratory (LRMD)
Faculty of Economics and Management
Hassan First University, Settat, Morocco*

Khadija IDRISSE, (Professor of Higher Education)

*Management and Development Research Laboratory (LRMD)
Faculty of Economics and Management
Hassan First University, Settat, Morocco*

Correspondence address :	Management and Development Research Laboratory (LRMD) Faculty of Economics and Management Hassan First University, Settat Tel: +2125.23.72.12.75 / 76
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Abstract:

In an ever-changing context characterised by a digital shift, companies are obliged to follow this evolution and accompany the digital transition, that customers contact entails now, this digital transition should affect all the strategies implemented in the company, in particular, by introducing new techniques into their marketing strategies, in particular the Inbound Marketing approach. This methodology allows companies that adopt it the creation of relevant and attractive content, which is distributed on the digital media owned by the brand, with the aim of encouraging their voluntary commitment to the company and the initiation and maintenance of a social, close and shared relationship that can guarantee their loyalty in the long term. This new concept has certainly aroused the interest of practitioners in the field, however, academic research on inbound marketing does not study the effect of its use on companies' business performance.

In this article we propose a systematic literature review based on the PRISMA (Preferred Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) method, through which we conscientiously study the concept of Inbound Marketing and propose a synthetic definition of it, as well as Key Performance Indicators to measure it, then we examine all the intrinsic facets of companies Business Performance and finally we analyse the relationship between these two variables. The result of our work can serve as an initial and fruitful basis for future research in this field, offering scientists a considerable synthesis for the proposal of a conceptual model studying the relationship between Inbound Marketing and companies Business Performance.

Keywords: Inbound Marketing, Outbound Marketing, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), Digitalization, Business Performance.

JEL Classification: M 31

Type of Paper: Theoretical article

Résumé :

Dans un contexte en perpétuelle mutation caractérisé par un virage digital, les entreprises sont amenées à suivre cette évolution et accompagner la transition numérique que revêt désormais le contact avec la clientèle, cette transition digitale devrait toucher à l'ensemble des stratégies mises en œuvre dans l'entreprise, notamment, en instaurant de nouvelles techniques dans leurs stratégies marketing, en particulier l'approche de l'Inbound Marketing. Cette méthodologie permet aux entreprises qui l'adoptent la création d'un contenu pertinent et attrayant, diffusé sur les supports numériques détenus par la marque dans l'objectif principal étant de favoriser leur engagement volontaire envers l'entreprise et l'initiation ainsi que le maintien d'une relation sociale, de proximité et de partage pouvant garantir leur fidélité sur le long terme. Ce nouveau concept a, certes, suscité l'intérêt des praticiens du domaine, en revanche la recherche académique sur l'Inbound Marketing ne traite pas l'effet de son utilisation sur la performance des entreprises. Dans cet article nous proposons une revue de littérature systématique basée sur la méthode PRISMA (Preferred Items for Systematic Reviews and Méta-Analyses), à travers laquelle nous étudions consciencieusement le concept de l'Inbound Marketing et proposons une définition synthétique de celui-ci, ainsi que des Indicateurs Clés de Performance pour le mesurer, puis nous examinons toutes les facettes intrinsèques de la performance commerciale des entreprises et enfin nous analysons la relation entre ces deux variables. Le résultat de notre travail peut servir comme socle initial et soubassement fructueux pour de futures recherches dans ce domaine, offrant aux scientifiques, une synthèse considérable pour la proposition d'un modèle conceptuel étudiant la relation entre l'Inbound Marketing et la Performance commerciale des entreprises.

Mots-clés: Inbound Marketing, Outbound Marketing, Référencement naturel (SEO), Digitalisation, Performance commerciale.

Classification JEL: M 31

Type d'article: Recherche théorique

1. Introduction:

Nowadays, in the era of digitalization, the discipline of Marketing is constantly changing with the advent of new information and communication technologies, which favours the use of social networks. Consequently, connected companies must follow this permanent evolution, integrating new techniques into their marketing strategies allowing them to be at the forefront of the latest innovations in this field (Dakouan et al., 2019).

Furthermore, delocalisation, the opening of borders for goods, services and people, and the automation of transactions are having a profound impact on the attitude of the consumer, who is becoming more and more fussy in his decisions, customs and purchasing operations. The latter is now freer in the choice of messages he receives, which let us observe an intense modification of the model in the relationship between the company and the customer.

Before the emergence of social networks, the buyer was still easily influenced, but now, he has become an actor capable of dictating his choices, judgments, and attitudes to brands. Indeed, the information openly accessible on the net affects his trajectory and his buying behaviour (Sánchez-Teba et al., 2020).

We all know that one of the marketing foundations is the attention paid to the consumer, since its purpose has always been to inform the customer about company's products or services, then to accompany him in his purchasing journey and finally to build his loyalty (Patruti-Baltes, 2016).

As a result, in today's digitalized environment, traditional marketing practices have become less credible as they focus on the product or service rather than the customer experience (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

Indeed, according to (Vinerean, 2017) as digital technology advances, marketing incorporates the interactivity provided by innovative processes to create two-way communication channels with customers, encouraging active consumer participation (Vinerean, 2017).

Thus, Inbound Marketing brings a fundamental revolution and carefully directs its gaze towards the company's clientele to reshape the shortcomings of traditional marketing by offering brands the possibility of optimising their visibility on the web through the production of objective, interesting and quality content that can guarantee the attraction of a targeted community of Internet users, and create a digital proximity relationship and experience sharing for a better companies E-reputation (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015; Patruti-Baltes, 2016; Vinerean, 2017).

In this context, this paper presents a synthesis of the art state spread over the 2015-2021 study period. This review focuses on the contribution of Inbound Marketing tools in improving the business performance of companies, with the aim of providing an answer to the following question : *how does the application of Inbound Marketing contribute to promoting the companies business performance ?*

In order to achieve this objective, we will first present an explanation of the Inbound Marketing approach. Secondly, we will review the concept of companies Business Performance, and then present the relationship between these two variables. Finally, we will propose future perspectives, which main purpose is to find a balance between the conceptual and practical aspects of the Inbound Marketing application, taking into account the specificities of the Moroccan environment, its benefits and drawbacks.

2. The emergence of Inbound Marketing in companies

The term Inbound Marketing was first introduced in 2006 in the United States by Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah, co-founders of HubSpot, the world's leading provider of Inbound Marketing software (Dakouan et al., 2019).

Indeed, these two business men (Brian Halligan, Dharmesh Shah, 2009) were inspired by the book "Permission Marketing" written by the author Seth Godin in 1995, and in which, he explains that on the web, the Internet user takes back control, so it is better to ask his permission to distribute him a commercial offer. After a decade, the two MIT students, Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah, theorize and modelize a new methodology they called **Inbound Marketing** and create the company HobSpot accordingly. This is how Inbound Marketing first appeared as a concept and methodology in the book *Inbound Marketing: Get Found, Using Google, Social Media and Blog* (Brian Halligan, Dharmesh Shah, 2009).

2.1 Definition of Inbound Marketing :

This marketing technique is about creating memorable content using a multi-channel approach of content sharing, and focuses on blog content development and social media interactions (Bleoju et al., 2016; Brian Halligan, Dharmesh Shah, 2009; Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

The main objective of this new concept is to make the customer come to you instead of going to get them, by communicating openly and cleverly with customers who have focused on the company's products or services. This creates a personal relationship with them through the promotion of attractive content that meets their specific needs (Patruti-Baltes, 2016).

Inbound marketing has its origins in the service-dominant logic paradigm, in which the enterprise and the client co-create value (Vargo and Lusch, 2016; Lusch and Vargo, 2006). When a company gives value to a customer, the consumer co-creates value for the company and the customer (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). This is the essence of inbound marketing, which focuses on attracting customers with fresh content rather than broadcasting commercials to a huge audience. Let's compare "inbound marketing" to its antithesis, "outbound marketing" or interruption marketing (Krugman, 1983). Outbound marketing refers to any kind of marketing that is thrust onto the customer, such as television commercials or billboards.

The objective of this form of "interruptive marketing" is to make it difficult for the customer to ignore. The client cannot reply to or engage with the advertisement. The objective is not to promote contact or discussion, but rather to overwhelm customers until they yield. Another disadvantage of interruption marketing is the saturation of the market with advertisements.

Hundreds of companies compete for client attention via traditional advertising. It is difficult to stand out from the crowd, which drastically reduces the likelihood of generating revenue from marketing expenditures. It is difficult to detect and quantify the efficacy of interruption marketing due to oversaturation. In contrast, inbound marketing may be monitored and adjusted to the particular requirements and concerns of the customer persona. Relatively speaking, one person discovered by mass marketing is less efficient and more expensive than a smaller group of highly engaged individuals won through inbound. When correctly executed, inbound marketing is aware of the target audience, since its foundation is a focus on the network where the company may be the expert alongside its consumers. A solid inbound marketing strategy focuses on the issues and requirements of the customer.

2.2 Inbound Marketing VS Traditional Marketing:

Faced with Traditional Marketing which is an "**Outbound Marketing**" focused on products and services (Patruti-Baltes, 2016) and which pushes an offer towards the consumer, by applying interruptive techniques such as telephone prospecting, mass E-mailing, advertisements...etc (Bechir Mokline, 2019), Inbound Marketing is a customer-centric and a customer experience focal point. It presents a revolutionary approach reversing the model by making the customer come to the company. This approach is based on the creation of optimised, high value-added marketing

content to attract prospects via Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), which represents natural referencing in search engines such as Google and promotion on Social Networks.

Inbound and outbound digital marketing techniques seem similar but inseparable. These two strategies can be complementary for the success and the viability of any marketing campaign (Dakouan et al., 2019). In fact, each of the two strategies is characterised by advantages and disadvantages, in fact, the Outbound techniques allow to have results in a short term but by deploying more important financial means " Selling before providing value ", the Inbound techniques on the other hand, reach their objectives in a long term with lower costs " Pitching value before sales ". (Sauvage, 2018).

In conclusion, we can see that these two techniques are compatible and complementary to the extent that they give better results when combined in a same strategy, allowing a maximum number of users to be reached and transformed through the broadcasting of quality content on both traditional and digital channels.

3. The Inbound Marketing Strategy

3.1. Presentation of Inbound Marketing Strategy:

The methodology of Inbound Marketing is divided into three main stages by the founders of this concept (Halligan & Dharmesh, 2018) namely: an attraction phase, an interaction phase and a retention phase.

On their part, (Sánchez-Teba et al., 2020) choose, also, to divide the Inbound Marketing methodology into three phases. An attraction phase, which consists of building a relationship of empathy with the firm's potential customers in order to better understand their needs and precipitate their purchasing decisions, a conversion phase, which allows the personalisation of promotional content with the aim of arousing the customer's confidence, and finally, a closing and loyalty phase, during which the act of purchasing is made concrete, followed by maintaining contact and information with the brand's customers in order to make them its ambassadors in their networks.

According to (Gedik, 2020), Inbound Marketing is similar to a symbiotic relationship, with mutually beneficial results for both parties. This method can be used mainly by small businesses as it is affordable in terms of investment and allows business owners to approach customers in a more personalised way (Gedik, 2020).

Inbound Marketing is also subdivided into four phases according to other authors who believe that this technique uses a methodological model of four stages : Attract, Convert, Close, Retain and Convert the customer. (Bezhovski, 2015).

We, therefore, believe that in order to succeed in this strategy, it is essential to respect its methodology, which is composed of four fundamental steps as presented by (Bechir Mokline, 2019). It is a cyclical methodology, during which the stages are repeated and follow one another (Troillard, 2021).

According to these two authors (Bechir Mokline, 2019; Troillard, 2021), the Inbound Marketing methodology consists of four essential steps:

Step 1: Attract qualified traffic to the site and/or blog, via social networks and search engines;

Step 2: Convert visitors into leads by offering content fitted to their specific requests through forms to be filled in return for attractive content (webinar, white paper, etc.)

Step 3: Engage and nurture the relationship to support the prospect in their buying journey and convert them into a customer (closing sales);

Step 4: Build customer's loyalty to transform them into brand ambassadors by nurturing and reviving the company-customer relationship.

Indeed, an inbound marketing strategy consists of attracting qualified prospects, being, at first, anonymous visitors to company's website, then, engaging them gradually according to their maturity and interest level in order to transform them, finally, into brand ambassador customers in a digital context (Dakouan et al., 2019; Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

3.2. The Components of Inbound Marketing:

Inbound marketing uses a combination of several digital marketing actions, such as organic search engine positioning (SEO), content marketing, social media presence and web analytics (Araceli, 2013). By following all the phases of the Inbound methodology, the latter uses best practices and techniques to obtain convincing results in terms of generating traffic, converting visitors into "Leads", who means the status of visitors initiated by the company, and finally increasing the company's turnover.

In the first stage of the process, it is a question of capturing the attention of unknown Internet users in order to transform them into visitors to the company's blog or website through the production and dissemination of attractive, quality content deemed relevant and expected by prospects. These can be summarised in three main components:

Content Marketing: Consists of providing attractive and quality content in different forms (Text, Video, Image, E-book, Slideshow, Blog) as explained by (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

SEO: Natural referencing makes this content easily accessible and optimises its organic positioning on search engines.

Social media marketing: This consists of identifying in advance the social networks where the company's target audience is located and knowing their habits on these media. It is then essential to maximise the presence on these social media and to personalise the content provided to each target.

Thus, all companies must rely on these three components combination during the first phase of their Inbound methodology in order to create *the right content for the right person at the right time*.

The second step is to convert visitors into leads, using specific methods designed to collect personal information about visitors in return for an offer of useful information. A variety of techniques are used to achieve this:

The Call To Action (CTA): Represents the concretisation of the content strategy in the form of a fairly visible and attractive image or button. It consists of offering a service to the Internet user in exchange for a registration.

The Landing page: Is created with the intention of converting those who visit the page into prospects, and then from prospects to qualified leads, after clicking on the CTA.

Forms: serve to differentiate between simple visitors and qualified visitors (Leads) who fill in the forms proposed on a Landing Page and leave their personal data.

The third stage of the Inbound methodology is the sales concluding, which requires the company to move its leads through the sales cycle by offering them content adapted to their specific needs to accompany them until they maturation and closing purchase phase.

This stage, known as "**Lead Nurturing**", is achieved by using computer tools that allow for personalised follow-up of the visitor who has been promoted to prospect, using "**Marketing Automation**" software designed to send automatic and personalised e-mails or Sms, then a "**CRM**" customer relationship management tool that centralises all this data, and finally, "**Lead Scoring**", which is nothing more than a method of rating prospects. Regularly scheduled customer follow-ups constitute the core of **lead nurturing**.

The last step of the Inbound process, consists in satisfying the customers in order to keep them loyal, this ultimate step concerns the use of numerous tools allowing to nourish and perpetuate the relationship with the customers:

Newsletters: Is an email sent to a list of subscribers usually customers of the company allowing to maintain a strong relationship with them and to position the company as an expert in its sector for activity. Their content must provide information that consumers will use to achieve their personal and professional goals in order to ensure an optimal level of engagement. (Kotler et al., 2017).

Feedbacks: A technique intending to continue serving customers after the purchase, "**Sell after sell**", it consists in collecting customer feedbacks after the delivery of their product or service by a satisfaction survey for example, this allows the company to be able to bring a real added value to its customers by helping them to take full advantage of the service sold and to know exactly what they expect as new offer (Bechir Mokline, 2019).

Smart Content: Ensures that the relationship with customers is uninterrupted by informing them about new or unusual products and services that they might like. This kind of behaviour enhances the customer experience and contributes to a positive brand image and brand ambassadorship (Halligan & Dharmesh, 2018).

Social monitoring: This involves listening to its community of Internet users by taking advantage of social networks benefits. The company must, therefore, take part in the various discussion forums, listen to the comments of its customers and prospects and respond appropriately, in order to have a better E-reputation that facilitates customer satisfaction and in return, encourages them to promote the company. (Bezhovski, 2015).

In conclusion, we can say that Inbound Marketing is based on five main pillars:

Traffic attraction: the action of bringing visitors to the brand's website is necessary for starting the process. For this, the company can use either SEO (Search Engine Optimization), SEM (Search Engine Marketing), Content Marketing or Social Networks.

Lead conversion: during this stage, the firm will seek to attract users with attractive content, offers, interests, in exchange for their digital data.

Marketing automation: using lead scoring and lead nurturing techniques, the firm filters leads into various workflows and converts them into consumers.

Loyalty: encourages consumers to remain loyal to the brand and to make ongoing purchases over time.

Analysis: This is the measurement and analysis of the results obtained on the basis of the key performance indicators that the company has previously defined in order to adjust the strategy if necessary.

3.3. Inbound Marketing Indicators :

In order to accurately assess and delimit the efficiency of the Inbound Marketing implemented strategy performance, it is essential to use analysis tools and methods commonly known as "Key Performance Indicators" (KPIs). These indicators are used to assess the benefits of the Inbound strategy and to adjust its actions and objectives.

There are several KPIs that can measure the success of an Inbound strategy, **Table 3** presents a summary of the main indicators considered relevant to determine the performance of the Inbound strategy according to each phase of it:

Table 1: Summary of the main Key Performance Indicators of the Inbound strategy

Phase	KPIS	Explanation	Authors	
Attraction	Volume of Visitors	The number of visitors to a company's website or blog. This KPI calculates the sum of unqualified prospects and evaluates the percentage of visibility and awareness of the website or blog.	(Levesque, 2016)	
	Duration of visits	Allows you to define the time spent on each visit and determine the content and pages that bring the most visits with a high conversion potential in order to distinguish the acquisition channels to be optimised.	(Fustier, 2019)	
	Bounce rate	Identifies unattractive content that is characterised by page abandonment. This indicator allows companies to adapt their pages content according to the expectations of Internet users.	(Mod, 2021)	
	Lead volume	Represents the number of MQLs* and measures the proportion of leads that have provided their personal information or have taken an action on the landing page.	(Levesque, 2016)	
	Conversion rate of visitors to leads	Determines the quality of leads, their origins and the purpose of their visits.	(Krähenbüchel, 2019)	
	Traffic Generating Keywords	Analysis keywords performance through tools such as (Moz Keyword Explorer, Google Adwords Keyword Planner, Hubspot keyword...)	(Remby & Varas, 2017)	
	Cost Per Lead (CPL)	The CPL is the cost of acquiring a lead in order to anticipate the profitability of lead generation campaigns and to make a precise adjustment before their deployment	(Truphème, 2016)	
	Conversion rate per landing page	It is the division of the visitors number received by the number of registrations on a landing page multiplied by 100. It calculates the percentage of visitors who took an action on a landing page.	(Levesque, 2016)	
	Conversion	MQL to SQL conversion rate*	Determines the percentage of qualified leads that are converted into committed, ready-to-buy leads	(Krähenbüchel, 2019)
		Lead to Customer Conversion Rate	It calculates the percentage of customer acquisition among qualified leads	(Faress, 2016)
Customer acquisition cost (CAC)		Measures the amount spent per customer over a given period.	(Folliot, 2017)	
Cost Per Sale CPL		The CPS designates the cost necessary to acquire a customer and permits to anticipate the benefits of the Inbound actions undertaken to generate sales contracts	(Medioni & Benmoyal Bouzaglo, 2018)	
Commitment	Return on Investment ROI	The Inbound Marketing ROI formula helps the company to make the right decisions in its Inbound Marketing action plan and to optimise the related actions	(Plassard, 2019)	

*: MQL (Marketing Qualified Leads) represents qualified prospects for the marketing department who have manifested their commitment to the company and may become its customers. **: SQL (Sales Qualified Leads) is the number of sales qualified leads. An MQL becomes an SQL once he becomes ready to talk to the sales team.

Source : Author's production

4. Companies Business Performance

A review of the literature reveals multiple definitions of the concept of performance. According to (Mohammed, 2020), the performance of a firm means to be able to achieve organisational and strategic objectives while distinguishing itself from its competitors. It therefore represents the fusion of efficiency and effectiveness (Mohammed, 2020). Performance is a concept characterised by its polysemy and multi-dimensionality (Babaali & Achour, 2021; Sane, 2020) This makes it a complex notion that is difficult to define by common agreement.

In fact, in line of works dealing with the concept of performance, it is clear that performance is made up of several intertwined elements, including the economic and financial aspect, the social aspect, the organisational aspect and the commercial aspect. Thus, the business performance of companies is one of the main components of the performance notion. In this paper, the focus is done on this dimension and its link with the above-mentioned Inbound Marketing strategy.

4.1. The Company's Business Performance

The business performance of a company is linked to the satisfaction of its customers (Babaali & Achour, 2021; Gafa, 2020). The latter is the constant concern of managers as it contributes to the company financial sustainability (Gafa, 2020). The author defines Business performance by its quantitative and qualitative variables and proposes the following approach to companies for ensuring their business performance sustainability.

The close link between the concept of business performance and marketing performance is also mentioned by (Ii, 2021) who is based on the fact that these two types of performance share a common and ultimate goal of customer satisfaction with the aim of generating profit and financial survival of the company in a market where rivalry is increasing.

4.2. Evaluating the company's business performance

An organisation can be described as commercially successful when it manages to optimise the resources deployed (material, human, financial and technological) to achieve its objectives at the lowest cost (Mohammed, 2020). Its business performance can also be measured by the satisfaction of the company's customers through the production of quality products or services that meet their expectations (Ii, 2021).

It is worth mentioning that many authors use a series of indicators to estimate the evolution of business performance.

In his approach (Morgan, 2012) uses two aspects to assess business performance by differentiating between product-market performance indicators and financial performance indicators. For the first category, the author lists indicators reflecting orders of magnitude such as highest sales volume, highest customer satisfaction and growth in the company's market share. In the second category, he classifies accounting indicators such as cash-flow and profit as well as financial market indicators for investors (Morgan, 2012).

(Babaali & Achour, 2021) refer to three dimensions in their methodology for measuring business performance: effectiveness, efficiency and relevance. Their approach is based on purely pre-identified commercial indicators such as loyalty, turnover and market share. They then present a ranking of these indicators according to three dimensions: the extent and sustainability of competitive advantage, the level of customer satisfaction and loyalty development and the performance of sales teams.

(Ii, 2021) draws on the quantitative and qualitative indicators proposed by (Gafa, 2020) but combines them in its approach for measuring business performance by classifying them on the basis of the three dimensions suggested by (Babaali & Achour, 2021).

On the other hand, (Ii, 2021) considers that the company's business performance is equivalent to building up a real guarantee of company's financial health (Ii, 2021).

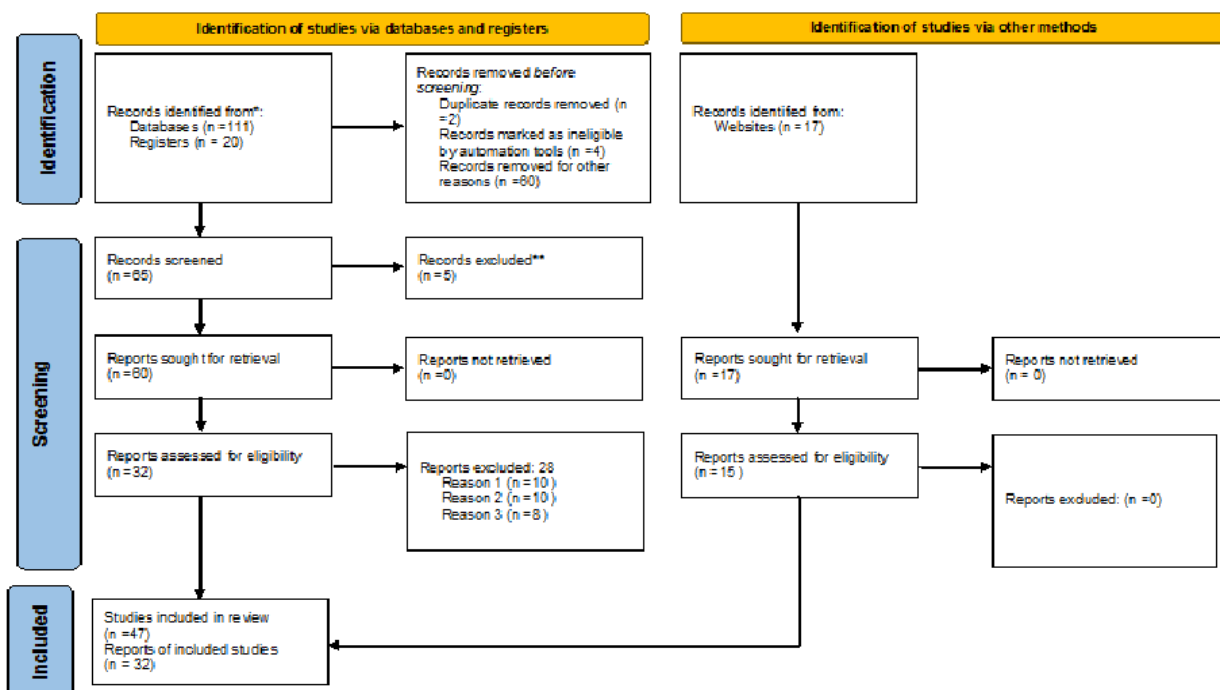
5. Methodology of the Literature Review:

We searched the literature in English, French, Spanish, German and Ukrainian on the topics of digital marketing, inbound marketing, companies' performance and business performance.

Keywords such as "Inbound Marketing", "Digital Marketing", "Business performance", "Performance of companies" are entered into online scientific databases such as MDPI, Elsevier, Sciences Direct, Cairn, IEEE Xplore, Google Scholar, Thèses.fr, Springer and Web of science, and then a search of web pages and blogs specialised in Inbound Marketing such as Hubspot, Winbound and Comexplorer is initiated.

A systematic review of the references cited in the resulting articles, reports and theses is also undertaken. A total of 140 references were recorded, 131 from the databases and 17 from the web pages. After removing duplicates, a smaller selection of 82 references was exported to the automated reference management software Mendeley. Taking into account the inclusion factors for articles explicitly dealing with the concept of Inbound Marketing or business performance and the exclusion factors for articles dealing with distant topics, we retained 65 reports and 17 web records, and finally, 32 reports from the databases and 15 web references are fully examined for their eligibility. All of these references are included in our systematic literature review as detailed in the PRISMA diagram **Figure 1**:

Figure 1: The PRISMA Diagram



Source: Author's production

The articles included and analysed on the two variables that we develop in this paper, namely "Inbound Marketing" and "Business Performance", are relevant for the synthesis, identification and

proposal of definitions, components, approaches and measurement indicators of the latter and the conceptualisation of their relationship.

6. Results of the Literature Review: Inbound marketing and its contribution on companies' business performance

For a long time, companies have been confronted with the problem of adversity between their marketing and sales teams (Menin-Urien, 2019). Often each of these two entities claims the importance and effectiveness of their missions in achieving sales and therefore contributing to the company's business performance (Menin-Urien, 2019). This situation often creates a dysfunctional relationship to the detriment of the general interest and the common objectives to be achieved. Several research studies such as the study of (Arnett et al., 2021) deal with this problem and underline the important role of inter-functional communication's quality and the development of a mutual relationship between the sales and marketing functions.

It is therefore desirable to achieve an effective alignment of these two departments through the establishment of a joint and cross-functional approach for mutual collaboration, better operationality and optimal performance. Moreover, marketing performance is an essential key to business performance (Ii, 2021). It is, then, necessary to use digital tools based on new technologies in order to develop the marketing performance of companies and improve their business performance as a result.

Using these digital tools and modernising company's marketing strategies enables it to adhere to new sales mechanisms and to target a connected public searching for attractive content that meets its specific needs. Inbound marketing is one of the most but effective marketing techniques in today's ever-changing environment, known by the acceleration of the digital transition which has become essential for companies aiming to differentiate themselves from their rivals and to perpetuate their activity.

The main objective of Inbound Marketing as defined by (Patruti-Baltes, 2016) is to make the customer come to you rather than looking for him. It allows the company to address with agility and acuity the customers who are polarized by its products or services, and leads to a personal relationship with them through the provision of attractive content meeting their specific needs (Patruti-Baltes, 2016).

This technique also allows companies to monitor their business performance by determining the degree of objectives achievement through the use of set a of key performance indicators listed in Table 3.

These KPIs serve to measure the effectiveness of the actions carried out by each of the two marketing and sales functions with a caring eye, insofar as Inbound Marketing is a methodology that has proved its worth in terms of aligning the sales and marketing departments, making the sales process more fluid and increasing sales efficiency (Doe, 2022).

This new doctrine is based on four main pillars, combining the two functions of marketing and sales:

Attracting a qualified audience to the company's website through a targeted content strategy by creating buyers' personas (imaginary profiles of ideal customers)

Converting users into leads (via CTA and landing pages)

Lead-nurturing by providing leads with useful information and cutting-edge content tailored to their specific needs and expectations.

Lead-Scoring via the introduction of an online rating system with the profile of the ideal customer (Buyer Persona), making it possible to prioritise the high value-added leads on which sales staff should focus their attention.

Thus, based on this new approach of inbound marketing, the human resources of the sales and marketing departments are obliged to work together seamlessly on a continuous way to achieve their respective objectives (Davin, 2021).

Technically, the marketing teams develop relevant and differentiated content that they disseminate on the company's owned media to attract a targeted audience for whom the actions of converting potential contacts into customers of the company (MQL in SQL) are intended, through the establishment of a quality relationship with the future customer by providing content tailored to his expectations. The role of the sales team is to prioritise their work on the most qualified leads (SQL) and therefore succeed in optimising their efforts and maximising sales.

This being said, the Inbound technique leverages the skills of both sales and marketing teams, while ensuring their alliance in a common process to achieve the company's objectives. As a result, they achieve excellent effectiveness and efficiency of results over time, which reflected into actions optimised profitability and therefore better business performance. (Shockey, 2019).

Our assessment of the literature revealed that prior research on Inbound Marketing strategy lacks an examination of its link to company success. The primary objective of this article is thus to examine the notion that there is a correlation between the implementation of the Inbound Marketing approach and the improvement of organizations' commercial performance.

So, future research may perform an exploratory field study based on in-depth investigations that can empirically support or contradict the suggested theory.

A survey aimed at a particular sector of companies in the Moroccan context could lead to the proposal of a conceptual model examining the effect of the application of Inbound Marketing on the improvement of commercial performance in companies operating in a particular sector or multiple sectors of activity.

7. Conclusion

Previous research on Inbound Marketing strategy has some limitations knowing that it does not address its relationship with business performance. The main purpose of this paper is therefore to fill the gaps in previous research and to address the hypothesis that there is a link between the use of Inbound Marketing methodology and the improvement of companies business performance. We conclude, finally, through this review of art state, that this new approach strengthens the sales process by better targeting prospects through the production of attractive, relevant content that is perfectly consistent with their expectations. This approach also increases the rate of qualified leads attraction, those interested in the company's products or services and consequently provoke an alliance and mutual collaboration between the marketing and sales departments, which leads to an increase in turnover and a better return on investment. The business performance of companies, being linked to the satisfaction of their customers (Babaali & Achour, 2021; Gafa, 2020) and calculated by both quantitative and qualitative indicators, can be based on efficient evaluation tools such as those used in the Inbound Marketing technique. Inbound practices should therefore be applied throughout the sales process to enable the firm to achieve its objectives with the least amount of resources and ensure that its business performance is maximised.

In this article, we study in depth all the attributes of Inbound Marketing concept as well as that of business performance and the relationship between these two variables, aiming to propose a synthetic literature review that can serve as a basic document for future researchers in this field.

In the current context of the economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, all the countries of the world are experiencing a difficult situation which requires companies to make a great deal of commitment and innovation in their management models, especially their marketing strategies. They are forced to adapt to the new, unstable, mainly digital environment in order to meet the different and unusual demands of consumers, who have been influenced by this unprecedented atmosphere and have become intransigent and difficult to satisfy. Companies are forced to pay special attention to their potential customers through the use of new approaches to digital Inbound Marketing, which allows them to better understand their customers' expectations, increase their return on investment and improve their business performance, while having precise and representative control through key performance indicators calculated by automated tools under the Inbound technique. Inbound methodology also offers companies the opportunity to align their marketing and sales teams, and to achieve resource optimisation, cost minimisation and revenue growth. Nevertheless, the adoption of this technique requires upstream investment costs in terms of installing dedicated software and recruiting or training employees to master these tools.

In this paper, we conceptualise Inbound Marketing, to highlight its relationship with the notion of business performance. Despite its contributions, this research also has a number of limitations. Firstly, this study focuses on the theoretical aspect of Inbound Marketing and business performance for the companies sphere in their general context without taking into account the specificities of a well-defined context. Secondly, it's purely theoretical nature imposes the need to move on to a more advanced stage of field investigations for the empirical validation of the proposed hypothesis. Having said this, this study can be extended to future research with an empirical dimension, in order to find a balance between the conceptual and practical aspects of the subject, taking into account the specificities, strengths and weaknesses of a particular environment.

Finally, in view of this systematic review, we could be able to propose a conceptual model studying the contribution of Inbound Marketing application on the improvement of business performance within companies of the sector we are working on it.

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