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# MDDDM

Master's Degree Program in  
**Data-Driven Marketing**

**Optimize Paid Social Campaigns with Social Media Data**

Nuno Cardoso

Master Thesis

presented as partial requirement for obtaining a Master's Degree in Data-Driven Marketing

**NOVA Information Management School**  
**Instituto Superior de Estatística e Gestão de Informação**  
Universidade Nova de Lisboa

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**Optimize Paid Social Campaigns with Social Media Data**

by

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Master's Thesis presented as partial requirement for obtaining the Master's Degree in  
Data-Driven Marketing, with a specialization in Marketing Intelligence

**Supervised by**

Professor Doutor Fernando Bação

July, 2024

## **STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY**

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism, any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration. I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Rules of Conduct and Code of Honor from the NOVA Information Management School.

*Lisbon, July 2024*

## **DEDICATION**

To my family, for their support and encouragement throughout this journey.

To my friends, for their understanding and patience.

To my supervisor, for his guidance.

And to all the marketing professionals striving to make a difference in the digital landscape.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Doutor Fernando Bação, for his unwavering support and guidance throughout the development of this thesis. Without the combination of the pressure and the assistance he offered, this thesis would have undoubtedly been a more challenging endeavor. I am truly grateful for his total availability and flexibility.

I extend my appreciation to all those who answered and shared my survey to help me develop my analysis of the marketing professionals who are actively involved in implementing and optimizing paid social media campaigns. It meant a lot to me that you participated and shared the survey in order to get as many responses as possible.

Lastly, I would like to warmly thank my family, especially my parents, who made it possible for me to attend this master's degree and consequently to complete this thesis, and for supporting me every day and believing that I am always capable.

To everyone mentioned and to those who supported me throughout this academic journey, I offer my profound gratitude. Your contributions have been invaluable, and I am truly grateful for your support and guidance.

## **ABSTRACT**

In today's digital age, optimizing paid social campaigns using social media data is crucial for marketers striving for better performance and return on investment (“ROI”). The extensive data generated by social media platforms offers both opportunities and challenges for effectively managing and optimizing these campaigns. This thesis investigates the strategies, challenges, and best practices from the perspective of marketers to improve the optimization of paid social campaigns.

The thesis begins with an extensive literature review, covering key aspects such as targeting and segmentation, A/B and multivariable testing, data collection and processing, key performance indicators (“KPIs”), and emerging trends and future directions in social media marketing.

The methodology chapter outlines the survey approach adopted for this study. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that the respondents had relevant expertise in managing or analyzing paid social campaigns.

The results chapter presents detailed findings from the survey, revealing key insights into marketers' approaches to targeting, audience segmentation, ad creative optimization, budget management, lead generation, and overcoming challenges in paid social campaigns. These results are then meticulously compared with the theoretical frameworks and findings from the literature review.

This thesis highlights the importance of optimizing paid social campaigns with social media data, providing useful information and practical recommendations for marketers. By bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, this research contributes valuable insights to the field, helping marketers navigate and stand out in the ever-evolving digital marketing landscape.

## **KEYWORDS**

Optimization; Paid Social Campaigns; Social Media; Marketers; Digital Marketing

## **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG):**

Not applicable

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>ROI</b>	Return on investment
<b>KPIs</b>	Key performance indicators
<b>CTR</b>	Click-through rate
<b>CPC</b>	Cost per click
<b>CPM</b>	Cost per thousand impressions
<b>CPA</b>	Cost per acquisition
<b>APIs</b>	Application programming interfaces
<b>GDPR</b>	General data protection regulation
<b>EU</b>	European union
<b>AI</b>	Artificial intelligence
<b>CRM</b>	Customer relationship management
<b>CBO</b>	Campaign budget optimization

# 1. INTRODUCTION

In the constantly evolving digital landscape, social media has emerged as a dominant platform for marketing and advertising. Companies of all sizes are increasingly using social media to reach their target audiences, interact with customers and drive sales. However, the dynamic nature of social media platforms and the sheer volume of data they generate present significant challenges for marketers. Optimizing paid social campaigns to get the best possible performance requires in-depth knowledge of data-driven strategies, effective segmentation, and continuous improvement. This thesis is motivated by the need to explore and address these challenges, providing valuable information and practical recommendations for marketers looking to improve their paid social media campaigns.

The main aim of this thesis is to uncover the strategies, challenges, and practices used by marketers to optimize paid social campaigns using social media data. By conducting a survey for experienced marketing professionals, this research aims at: understanding the most used strategies employed by marketers when executing paid social campaigns, including segmentation, and targeting techniques; examining the use of A/B and multivariable testing to optimize campaign performance; identifying the methods and tools used for data collection and processing in social media campaigns; determining the most relevant metrics used to measure the success of paid social campaigns; and uncovering emerging trends and external factors that may impact the future of paid social campaigns.

The thesis will begin with a literature review focused on the existing research on paid social campaigns, covering key topics such as targeting and segmentation, testing and optimization methods, data collection and processing, KPIs, and emerging trends.

The research methodology adopted is presented on the basis of the literature review. It details the survey design procedure, the purposive sampling technique used to select participants, and the data collection methods.

The findings of the survey will be presented, providing quantitative data on marketers' approaches to various aspects of paid social campaigns.

The next chapter will discuss the results of the survey, comparing those results with the conclusions of the literature review.

Finally, the conclusion will summarize the key findings of the research, emphasize the importance of optimizing paid social campaigns with social media data, and provide practical recommendations for marketers. It also suggests areas for future research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review was first used to obtain an overview of what is meant by paid social media campaigns and then to analyze the importance of data optimization in social media marketing.

### **2.1. UNDERSTANDING PAID SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS**

In digital marketing, the landscape is constantly evolving, presenting companies with dynamic opportunities to approach their target audiences. One of these approaches is the use of social media platforms, which have become integral channels for building brand awareness and enhancing consumer trust.

#### **2.1.1. DEFINITION OF PAID SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS**

As noted by Hanlon (2021), on social media platforms, a brand or organization can reach its target audience through organic and paid social media campaigns.

Paid social media campaign is a type of digital marketing where businesses allocate a determine budget to advertise their content, products, or services on social media platforms (Shalabi, 2024). Businesses pay to reach social media users based on targeting parameter, such as interests, behaviors, demographics, and other. This approach is effective for achieving business objectives, such as increasing brand awareness, driving website traffic, generating leads, or boosting conversions.

As mentioned by Macready (2024), a paid approach allows brands to increase awareness and attract new followers, generate leads, promote the latest content. In addition, it can bring faster results and it allows the brand to target a specific audience and promote to new audiences. In contrast (Markov, 2022), a paid social media campaign cannot guarantee a return on investment because there is always the risk that they may not yield the desired results. Another issue is the increased cost due to competition. The limited ad space on social media platforms, coupled with high competition, often drives up the cost per click. This can make it expensive to maintain visibility and engagement.

Paid social media activities include boosting posts to reach a larger audience, running targeted ad campaigns to reach specific demographics or interests, and promoting events, products, or services through sponsored posts.

Before using paid social campaigns, it is essential to identify which platforms perform best before diving into content creation, as each site benefits from a different design style. The ideal platform may vary depending on your sector and the market price of your products or services.



Figure 2.1 – Example of a Paid Social Campaign

### 2.1.2. THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA IN CAMPAIGNS OPTIMIZATION

As stated by Fanaras (2023), data-driven marketing has emerged as a powerful tool. Data is the key to successful advertising campaigns on social media platforms. By taking advantage of data, marketers can create personalized and relevant content tailored to their target audience, thus improving user engagement, and increasing conversion rates.

The basis of data-driven social media advertising is a comprehensive understanding of the target audience. It is good that brands have access to all the information available about the audience, because it is possible to target them more effectively.

Data-driven personalization is a strategic marketing approach that relies on utilizing relevant data to deliver personalized experiences to individual consumers (Fanaras, 2023). The process of data-driven personalization begins with the collection of different types of data, such as demographics, browsing behavior, purchase history, social media interactions). By combining these different types of data, marketers can create highly personalized and targeted marketing campaigns (Chandra et al., 2021).

According to Marketers (2023), dynamic ads are tailored to each user according to their previous interactions, behaviors, and preferences. This level of personalization increases engagement and conversion rates by presenting content that is highly relevant to the individual. In addition, dynamic ads can use location-based targeting, highlighting offers or events specific to a user's geographical location, thus further increasing their relevance and effectiveness.

The landscape of social media is constantly evolving, with new platforms, features, and trends emerging regularly. A data-driven approach requires marketers to stay agile and adaptable, to regularly monitor the performance of their campaigns and to be prepared to pivot if a certain strategy is not yielding the expected results.

**2.1.3. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR EVALUATION**

Professionals in any field often immerse themselves in the specialized language and terminology prevalent in their respective communities. In the field of marketing, individuals involved in planning and executing analyses usually communicate using metrics.

According to Krasniak et al. (2021) metrics are not about determining whether a company is the best in any particular marketing or advertising channel. They are about deciding which channels offer the best value for achieving the business objectives. Metrics are simply the most objective way to optimize the marketing efforts. The most important metrics that reflect a company's goals and objectives are the KPIs.

The KPIs are the metrics that companies use to measure how they are performing, see if they are meeting their goals, and analyze whether they need to make strategic changes. As Newberry (2024) referred to, social media KPIs are the metrics used to determine if a business's social media marketing strategy is effective. Basically, they are tracked data related to a company's presence on individual platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or across all social platforms collectively.

As illustrated in the table below, the evaluation of marketing performance involves various possible KPIs (Krasniak et al., 2021). There are KPIs for reach, engagement, and conversions.

Table 2.1 - Main Key Performance Indicators by type

Type	Description	KPIs	Description
Reach	Measure the number of users who pass through a	Impressions	The number of times a post has been visible in someone's feed or timeline
		Followers	The number of followers the social channel has at any given time

Type	Description	KPIs	Description
	social media channel	Audience growth rate	It shows how followers are changing over time
		Reach	The number of unique users who have seen a post since it was published
		Potential reach	The number of people who could possibly see a post during a reporting period
Engagement	Measure the quality of interactions with the followers on social media	Likes	The number of times followers interact with a social post by clicking the like button within a given social media platform
		Comments	The number of times followers comment the posts
		Clicks	The number of times a user has clicked the link using in a post
		Share	The number of times a post has been shared from one platform to another
		Save	The number of times a post is saved
		Engagement	The number of likes, comments, clicks, shares, and saves in a post
		Engagement rate	The number of engagements (e.g., likes, comments, shares, clicks) divided by the total reach or impressions of the content
Conversion	Measure the effectiveness of a social media strategy and whether it is leading to practical results	Conversion rate	The number of users who perform the actions outlined in a social media (e.g., visit the website or landing page, make a purchase, etc.) compared to the total number of clicks on that given post
		Click-through rate ("CTR")	The number of click-throughs on the site from a given source divided by the number of visitors who reached that source
		Cost per click ("CPC")	The amount paid to social media platforms such as Facebook for each individual click on sponsored social media post

Type	Description	KPIs	Description
		Cost per thousand impressions ("CPM")	The amount paid each time 1,000 people watch a sponsored post on social media

Moreover, as claimed by Krasniak et al. (2021), the specific metrics within each category can differ significantly based on the platform used, as illustrated in Table 2.2. For instance, on social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram, engagement metrics might include likes, comments, and shares, while on a website, engagement could be measured by time spent on pages or bounce rates. Similarly, conversion metrics might be distinct for e-commerce platforms compared to lead generation websites.

Table 2.2 - Social Media by Social Genre and KPI

Social Genre	Site Examples	Useful KPIs to Check
Network	Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter	Traffic, Users, Time, Keywords, CTR
Review	Angie's List, TripAdvisor, Urbanspoon, Yelp	Traffic, CTR, User Ratings, Leads
Shopping	Fab, ThisNext	Traffic, Keywords, CTR
Community	Facebook Groups, Forums, Yahoo! Groups	Traffic, Users, Time, Keywords, CTR
Information	Blogs, Webinars, Wikis	Traffic, Users, Time, Keywords, CTR, Referrers
Media Sharing	Podcasts, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube	Traffic, Users, Time, Keywords, CTR, Number of Views, Likes, Followers

## 2.2. SOCIAL MEDIA DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

Social media data analysis techniques are fundamentally based on the processes of data collection and data processing. In this chapter, we will explore these essential components, examining the methods and tools used to gather and prepare social media data for analysis. Understanding these processes is crucial for uncovering valuable insights and patterns from social media platforms.

The exponential growth of the use of social media, as pointed out by Stieglitz et al. (2018), has led to the generation and collection of an unprecedented volume of data. This data covers platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and TikTok, encompassing

metrics such as likes, shares, comments, retweets, followers, engagement rates, impressions, and click-through rates.

According to the research made by Deubel et al. (2023), there are three main methods of getting social media data outlined. Initially, it is important that the data can be gathered directly by the researchers mostly through web scraping or application programming interfaces (“APIs”). Secondly, privileged access can be acquired by working with organizations that generate or possess this information themselves. Alternatively, data can be purchased from market research companies or data resellers.

Among the methods described above, collecting data via APIs and web scraping has become the most common for researchers who work with social media data. Many social media platforms provide access to data via APIs, which are governed by specific technical and legal guidelines. This allows researchers to collect, archive and analyze the digital footprints left by users on these platforms.

An API is a back-end interface that allows third-party developers integrate new add-ons into an existing service and allows researchers to collect data from a social media platform for empirical analysis. According to Amos (2018), when it comes to collecting data from websites using an automated process it calls web scraping.

Littman et al. (2018) believe that using APIs to collect data can have advantages. One of the biggest advantages is that it can be done easily. Although some technical and programming skills may be required, many API requests can be executed using just a few lines of code. On the other hand, web scraping requires structures that involve more advanced coding. It is a method that is not only more complex than API, but also differs from website to website due to its specific structures and characteristics.

Focusing only on APIs, API-based data collection has some drawbacks that researchers should consider. As pointed out by Littman et al. (2018), although APIs give the general public access to information, they only offer read-only access and not full access to the entire database. In addition, not all current social networks have full public APIs and, even if the data is retrieved, it may not be in a format that is easily accessible to people. Each API is unique, which in turn makes data collection difficult.

In addition, the terms of service of the platforms and their APIs can change, making continuous access to data unreliable. Some platforms impose explicit requirements and limits on the use and sharing of data collected through their APIs. The limitations imposed by the platform on the amount of data that can be collected through the API can make it difficult or impossible to collect older content (Littman et al., 2018). Due to ongoing debates about data security and user privacy, many platforms, especially Facebook and Instagram, have increasingly restricted access to their data. API closures or restrictions create significant gaps in data access for researchers and can complicate the efforts of third-party developers who create tools for data collection and processing.

As Podhoranyi (2021) referred, once data is collected, data must be processed and organized for analysis. This involves cleaning the data to remove duplicates, inconsistencies, and irrelevant information, and structuring it into formats suitable for analysis, such as tables, graphs, or dashboards. The processed data is then analyzed using various techniques, including descriptive analytics, sentiment analysis, trend analysis, network analysis, and predictive modeling. These analytical methods help uncover insights about audience demographics, preferences, sentiment, engagement levels, content performance, and campaign effectiveness, providing valuable information for research and decision-making.

### **2.3. OPTIMIZATION STRATEGIES FOR PAID SOCIAL CAMPAIGNS**

The effectiveness of paid social campaigns depends not only on persuasive content, but also on strategic optimization strategies.

In the context of organizations' efforts to achieve maximum effectiveness in spreading their messages, the overall task of accurately segmenting and targeting audiences is crucial. By using social media information, marketers can refine their segmentation strategies, ensuring that their campaigns impact the right audience segments at the right time.

Furthermore, with the use of A/B and multivariable testing, marketers can gain valuable insights into what is most effective for their target audience. They can refine their campaigns, improve performance, and get better results in the competitive digital advertising landscape.

#### **2.3.1. SEGMENTATION AND TARGETING BASED ON SOCIAL MEDIA DATA**

As Camilleri (2018) states, market segmentation is the process of identifying different segments in a market and dividing a customer base into subgroups of existing and potential customers. Marketers typically segment markets by looking for shared characteristics, such as common needs and interests and similar lifestyles and demographic profiles. By dividing the market into segments, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of customer needs and preferences that allows to meet the specific needs of each customer more effectively.

After identifying and profiling customer segments, the marketer must decide which segment to target as customers have different expectations (Camilleri, 2018). Targeting involves identifying the most profitable market segments decide which segments will be served.

According to Barker et al. (2016), there are different approaches in which marketers can use data and information to target specific audiences. One approach is based on purchasing behavior or an action that reflects buyers' intent (e.g., a search behavior or action). Another way is in the form of the relationship users have with the brand's official page, for example by targeting Facebook fans. Additionally, it can be done using self-reported interests and page-related behaviors (e.g., search). Personalized targeting is also an excellent option, since with this targeting system, marketers can upload their own list of potential customers, like an email

list. Finally, in location targeting, a user's actual position is determined based on the data available in the user's profile or geographical targeting.

Regarding these different approaches, it is important to bear in mind that not all the social media platforms offer all the types of targeting listed. Additionally, in most instances, advertisers usually get the new options of targeting before brand pages get them. The social media marketer must carefully examine the targeting options for each platform.

Once the target audience for a campaign has been identified, marketers must be informed about the nature of the target audience. As Barker et al. (2016) observe, among the various methods, the use of personas has become a popular option among digital marketers who have increasingly recognized this approach as worthwhile.

As Adlin and Pruitt (2010) stated *“personas are fictitious, specific, concrete representations of target users”*.

The use of personas can bring several advantages. It makes assumptions and knowledge about users explicit, creating a common language for discussing users in a meaningful way. By focusing on a small set of specific users, personas help you make better decisions. In addition, they foster interest and empathy with users.

There are many possible ways of creating user personas. One well-known approach is the Three-Step Persona Development Cycle, which contains three steps. The first is identifying the roles of the personas and listing them by role. This is followed by listing the needs and triggers of the situation from the personas' perspective and defining concerns, symptoms, and problems. Finally, the creation of message objectives suited to the needs of each persona that they have specialized knowledge to address.

Barker et al. (2016) show a good example of a typical segmentation, as shown in Figure 2.2. It represents airline travelers divided into four segments: business, leisure, family, and travelers with special needs. It also shows five phases of the flight, focusing on issues that arise during each phase. The research identified 26 in-flight issues (e.g., food service, entertainment, and internet access). Business travelers identified 13 of the issues as important, while special needs travelers considered only three to be significant. The family and leisure segments identified five and six important issues respectively.

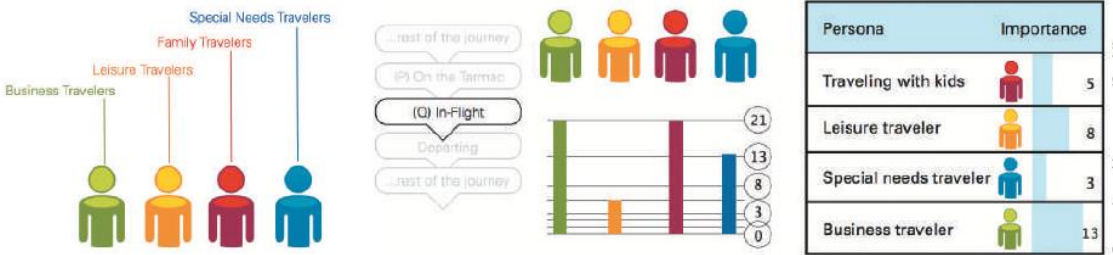


Figure 2.2 - Generic Air Traveler Personas

Understanding which issues are important to each segment represented by a persona, as stated in the second step of the Three-Step Persona Development Cycle, not only informs the marketer on how to market to the segment effectively, but also provides valuable information for other operations groups, such as flight services, to help maintain customer satisfaction.

As the third step of the Persona Development Cycle highlights it is important to set goals for the messages that are supposed to share. These goals serve as targets for the communication with different groups of people. To be effective, social media marketers must tailor their message for each group they want to reach.

In summary, once social media marketers have identified the information a buyer needs before making a purchase, they can create a social media that provides this crucial information, thereby increasing the likelihood of a purchase. As they receive feedback, they can refine these messaging objectives based on new knowledge about the personas. Therefore, just like the social media planning cycle, persona development is an ongoing process that should be constantly updated and refined.

**2.3.2. A/B AND MULTIVARIABLE TESTING**

In the last few years, a range of tools have emerged to simplify the practice of online testing and optimization, commonly referred to as A/B testing (Siroker & Koomen, 2013). A/B testing refers to presenting two different versions of content to an audience composed of actual or potential consumers who reflect the target market and assessing which version is most effective at converting them into customers.

In simpler terms, A/B testing consists of changing one variable and keeping everything else the same (Krasniak, 2021). For example, to find out which type of content results in greater engagement on Instagram, test photo content versus video content with the same caption, both published at the same time, on the same day of the week, one week apart.

Table 2.3 - Examples of A/B tests on social media

Variable	Test
Time of day	Monday at 8:00 a.m. vs. Tuesday at 8:00 a.m.
Content types	Video vs. a link
Captions	Long vs. short
Copy	Question vs. statement
Images	Illustration vs. photography

There are a few steps to follow in A/B testing:

1. **Identify what you want to test** (e.g., the caption, image, time of posting, type of content, hashtags);

2. **Create two versions** of the same post or advertisement. Usually, one is the "A" or "control" version (often the current style or format) and the other is the "B" or "variant" version (the new style or format);
3. **Post** both versions separately and **monitor** their performance;
4. **Measure and compare** how each version performs (e.g., based on likes, comments, shares, clicks);
5. **Choose the better version** based on the results of the test. Choose the version more effective (i.e., if version B performed better, you might choose to use that style or format for future posts).

According to Meert (2018), A/B testing is particularly useful in paid social campaigns. Firstly, it allows for the optimization of ad elements by testing various aspects of the ad, such as the headline, text, image, call to action and color scheme, which helps to identify the elements that resonate most with the target audience, leading to greater engagement, click-through rates, and conversions. Secondly, A/B testing is useful for segmenting the target audience, as different segments can respond differently to ads. Finally, A/B testing increases budget efficiency. By identifying the best-performing ads, it is possible to allocate a greater part of the budget to these high-performing ads, while reducing spending on poor-performing ads, which ultimately leads to a better return on investment.

As Meert (2018) recommends *“Don’t test ads with too my variables”*. A/B testing works better for single variables. As social media works at a fast pace, testing the time of day and the text at the same time can distort the results. For example, when brands are testing one strategy against another or one campaign against another, they should focus more on the variables they can control in order to be able to compare them meaningfully.

In contrast, multivariate social testing is a more sophisticated form of A/B testing (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2015), which allows multiple variables and their interactions to be analyzed simultaneously, making it a more complex and comprehensive approach than traditional A/B testing. The idea is to simultaneously test all possible combinations of multiple variables running on the same page.

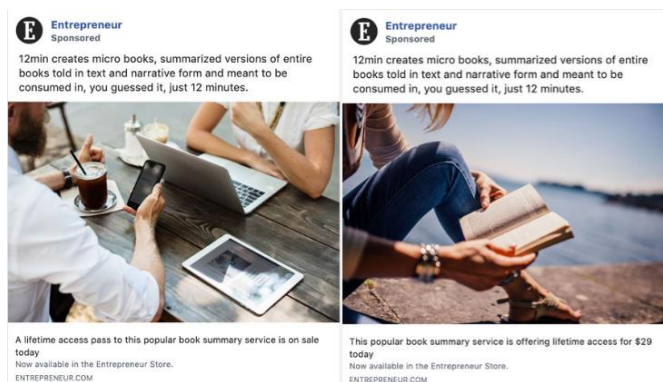


Figure 2.3 - Example of a test with two variables - the image and the title

In Figure 2.3, the marketer is testing two variables, in particular the image and the title. The other variables, such as hyperlink and subtext, remain unchanged (Goulet, 2021). This approach ensures that the focus remains on comparing the image and headline without the results being distorted by varying demographic characteristics. The main objective of this multivariable testing is to identify the combination of image and headline that generates the highest number of clicks.

Multivariable tests can have some limitations. The more variables added to a multivariate test, the larger the sample size required. In addition, it takes longer to carry out a multivariable test than simple A/B tests.

## **2.4. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media provides vast opportunities, yet it also brings various challenges and limitations, particularly concerning data privacy.

Over the past two decades, social media platforms have become vast and powerful tools for connecting, communicating, sharing content, conducting business, and disseminating news and information.

The extraordinary growth of social media has given platforms access to and influence over users' lives. Social media harvest sensitive data about individuals' activities, interests, personal characteristics, political views, purchasing habits, and online behaviors. In many cases, this data is used to algorithmically drive user engagement and to sell behavioral advertising. However, according to Di Minin et al. (2021), using social media data requires compliance with highest standards of data privacy and data protection, even when the data are publicly available.

A study by Knijnenburg et al. (2022) indicates that the GDPR is a regulation that introduces new obligations and rights in the context of information and communication technologies, along with the globalization of information flows and services. Its aim is to guarantee the security of personal data, thus protecting citizens' rights. The regulation specifies the requirements for the protection of individuals during the processing and free movement of personal data. It is mandatory for public and private organizations to process the personal data of European Union ("EU") citizens. The aim is to give EU citizens greater control over their personal data.

Social media privacy includes personal and sensitive information that people can find out from user accounts. Some of this information is shared voluntarily through posts and profile information. Additionally, according to Knijnenburg et al. (2022), information can be unwittingly released through tracking cookies, which monitor the information of a user's online activity, including webpage views, social media sharing and purchase history. All information is then aggregated and segmented by data brokers, who sell it for marketing purposes.

As explained by Di Minin et al. (2021) personal data have been legally protected since the first instances of negative impacts on individuals were identified. As a result, the processing of personal data is now regulated, and the protection of personal data has been established as a fundamental right. This can be viewed from a right-to-privacy perspective or as an independently formulated right to the protection of personal data. Thus, when personal data are processed, it infringes on a fundamental right and must be adequately safeguarded and justified.

There are various legal data protection requirements that need to be considered in the processing of personal data for research. According to Di Minin et al. (2021), the first aspect to consider is whether the information constitutes personal data, as this will ultimately determine whether data protection laws need to be applied.

According to the Council of Europe Article 2a) (1981), personal data are essentially any piece of information that relates to an identified or identifiable individual.

This implies that any data not explicitly anonymized may be considered personal data. It is classified as such because it includes directly identifiable information, like a person's name or address, or because the data could potentially identify an individual through other means.

According to Knijnenburg et al. (2022), organizations need to update/enhance their data protection policies in relation to the existing legal framework. The data protection policy generally includes the purpose and the objectives set by the management with regard to the protection of personal data, as well as the instructions, procedures, rules, roles, and responsibilities related to the protection of such data. All employees and collaborators of the organization are required to adhere to the data protection policy. This means that everyone, whether they are directly or indirectly involved in the personal data processing, must follow the established procedures and guidelines.

The vast amounts of personal data that social media platforms collect and retain are vulnerable to hacking, data harvesting and data breaches, especially if the platforms do not implement critical security measures and access restrictions. As explained by Knijnenburg et al. (2022), the organization is considered to be aware of a data breach when an event that compromises personal data is confirmed. Immediate detection and assessment of a data breach incident is extremely crucial since that data can contain location information, health information, religious identity, sexual orientation, facial recognition images, private messages, personal photographs and much more.

## 2.5. TRENDS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As technological innovation continues to accelerate, a range of emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (“AI”), are set to revolutionize the social media campaign optimization scenario. AI will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing efforts, spanning from content analysis to automated ad targeting and personalized messaging. AI-powered tools and algorithms enable marketers to unlock unprecedented levels of precision and personalization in their campaigns.

As Haleem et al. (2022) states, AI is a computer technology that analyzes, understands, and makes decisions. It is used to predict market trends and anticipate user behavior, which is commonly known as data prediction. Companies around the world use it to optimize their sales and marketing strategies, ultimately increasing their sales.

Van Esch and Stewart Black (2021) point out that AI is revolutionizing the way companies create content for campaigns, generate leads, reduce customer acquisition costs, manage customer experiences, and convert their target audience through social media. AI is also transforming the way brands and users interact, allowing marketers to respond instantly to customer needs.

Now, marketers can leverage AI to gain deeper insights into consumer behavior and more effectively guide customers along their journey, offering an optimal experience. By thoroughly analyzing consumer data, they can better understand customer desires, increasing ROI and avoiding ineffective and inconvenient advertising. AI will personalize marketing in many ways.

One of the most significant ways in which AI personalizes marketing is through personalized recommendations. In the words of Boisseau (2023), social media platforms take advantage of AI algorithms to analyze user preferences, previous purchases and browsing history. This allows AI to suggest content that matches individual interests and preferences. This personalization not only saves time, but also improves the overall consumer experience, resulting in greater customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Predictive analysis based on AI has revolutionized the way companies understand consumer behavior. By analyzing large amounts of data, as observed by Murgai (2018), AI algorithms can detect patterns and trends, allowing companies to anticipate customer needs and preferences. This valuable information helps companies make data-driven decisions, such as creating targeted marketing campaigns.

Boisseau (2023) believes that AI can analyze consumer sentiment expressed in comments and posts on social networks. This information can be used by companies when looking for relevant information on customer behavior, attitudes and purchasing trends. Consumer sentiment analysis helps companies change their marketing strategies to meet consumer demands and develop more personal and appealing advertisements. This targeted approach can influence purchasing decisions and promote customer engagement.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The success of paid social media campaigns depends significantly on the strategies and practices used by marketers, as well as on ongoing optimization efforts based on data-driven insights. This chapter describes the methodological approach adopted in this thesis to explore and understand marketers' perspectives on the strategies, challenges, and best practices in managing and optimizing paid social campaigns.

To achieve this objective, a survey was carried out and targeting marketing professionals who are actively involved in the execution and optimization of paid social media campaigns. This chapter will detail the design and implementation of the survey, the sampling technique chosen, the response rate, the rationale behind the chosen methodology, the data analysis method, and the procedures followed to ensure the reliability and validity of the collected data.

#### 3.1. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SURVEY

The research was based on a quantitative approach, using a structured survey to collect data from a wide range of marketing professionals. This approach allows for the collection of standardized information, making it possible to identify patterns and trends across a diverse set of respondents. The survey was meticulously designed to cover key areas identified in the literature review, ensuring comprehensive coverage of all aspects critical to the optimization of paid social campaigns.

The survey, which was conducted using Google Forms, is divided into six different sections, each addressing specific aspects of paid social media campaign management:

- **Introduction:** this section presents the participants to the survey's purpose and objectives. It also collects demographic information and details about the participants' experience and fields of work. Understanding the background of the respondents is crucial for contextualizing their insights and ensuring the representativeness of the sample. It consists in four questions.
- **Implementation of paid social campaigns:** this section delves into the strategies and practices marketers employ in executing paid social campaigns. This includes campaign planning, audience targeting, budget allocation, and ad placement strategies. The aim is to uncover common practices and identify potential areas for improvement. It consists in seven questions.
- **A/B and multivariable testing:** this section is mandatory only for respondents who indicated in the previous question that they use or have used A/B or multivariable testing in paid social media campaigns. It explores the utilization of A/B and multivariable testing techniques to optimize campaign performance. By

examining how marketers' experiment with different variables, the study aims to identify best practices and common challenges in campaign optimization. It consists in three questions.

- **Data collection and processing:** this section investigates the tools and methods marketers use to gather and analyze data, highlighting the importance of data quality and accuracy in optimizing campaign outcomes. It consists of two questions.
- **Key performance indicators:** this section seeks to identify the metrics that marketers prioritize and the rationale behind their selection. The insights gathered here will help delineate which metrics are most effective in guiding campaign strategy. It consists of six questions.
- **Trends and future directions:** this section addresses external variables that may impact the future of paid social campaigns (e.g., artificial intelligence). By examining trends and forecasting future directions, this section aims to provide a forward-looking perspective on the evolving landscape of social media marketing. It consists of four questions.

### 3.2. SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

To ensure that the survey gathered relevant and insightful data, participants were selected based on their experience in managing or analyzing paid social media campaigns. A purposive sampling technique was used, specifically targeting individuals who have substantial experience and practical knowledge in the field of social media marketing. This deliberate approach was chosen to gain in-depth knowledge from those who are most familiar with the nuances of paid social campaigns.

The recruitment process involved distributing invitations to participate in the survey via LinkedIn, a professional networking platform suitable for reaching marketing professionals. By using LinkedIn, the survey reached a target audience with relevant professional titles, such as Performance Marketing Specialist and Paid Media Manager, as shown in Figure 3.1. This platform allowed for an efficient and focused reach, ensuring that the survey was seen by individuals who are directly involved in implementing and optimizing paid social campaigns.

To provide rigor for statistical analysis, the questionnaire was sent to more than 150 carefully selected professionals and published and shared by several LinkedIn users – Figure 3.2. These individuals were chosen on the basis of their active roles in managing paid social campaigns, ensuring that their responses would be informed by practical experience and first-hand knowledge of the challenges and best practices.

In summary, the purposive sampling technique, combined with the strategic use of LinkedIn for participant recruitment, ensured that the survey captured high-quality data from a

knowledgeable and experienced respondent pool. This approach was critical in obtaining meaningful insights into the strategies, challenges, and best practices in optimizing paid social media campaigns.

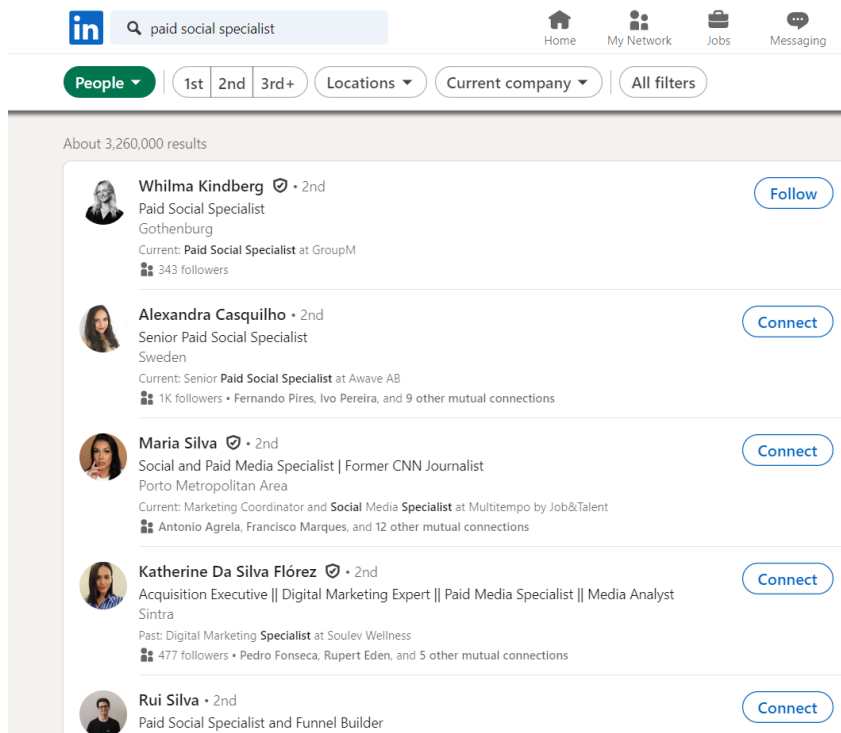


Figure 3.1 - Example of the type of research

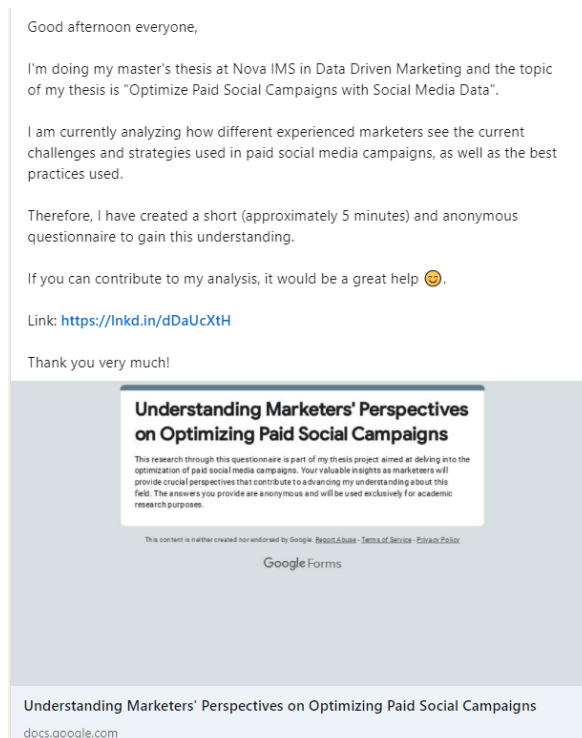


Figure 3.2 - Example of the post on LinkedIn

### **3.3. RATIONALE FOR METHODOLOGY**

The selection of a survey as the main research tool was guided by several fundamental considerations, rooted in the objectives of this thesis and the nature of the research questions.

The survey method facilitates the collection of quantitative data, which is essential for identifying patterns and trends that influence the optimization of paid social campaigns. By quantifying marketers' experiences and practices, research can provide a more objective analysis of strategies and challenges in this field.

Structured surveys offer a high degree of standardization in data collection. This consistency ensures that answers can be reliably compared between different respondents, increasing the robustness of the results. A standardized format allows for clear and concise questions that minimize ambiguity and maximize the accuracy of responses.

Surveys, especially those administered online, are an efficient way of collecting data from a large and geographically dispersed sample. The use of Google Forms allowed for quick distribution of the survey and easy collection of responses.

The online format is convenient for participants, potentially increasing the response rate and ensuring a diverse sample. The purposive sampling technique, combined with the strategic use of LinkedIn, allowed the survey to reach a specific audience of marketing professionals with relevant expertise. This targeted approach ensured that the data collected was directly applicable to the research questions, providing more in-depth information on best practices and challenges in managing paid social campaigns.

In addition, the surveys offer a level of anonymity that can encourage participants to give more honest and sincere answers. This is particularly important when gathering information on professional practices and opinions, as it helps mitigate response bias and increases the reliability of the data.

In conclusion, the use of a structured survey administered through Google Forms, targeted at marketing professionals via LinkedIn, was the most appropriate methodology for this research. It provided a means to efficiently gather quantitative data from a knowledgeable respondent pool, ensuring that the findings would be both relevant and reliable. This methodological approach supports the overall aim of the thesis to understand and optimize strategies for paid social media campaigns based on data-driven insights from experienced practitioners.

### **3.4. RESPONSE RATE**

The response rate is a critical factor in survey research, as it has an impact on the reliability and validity of the data collected. In this study, maintaining a sufficiently high response rate was essential to ensure that the results accurately reflected the perspectives of marketing professionals involved in managing and optimizing paid social media campaigns.

As mentioned earlier, the survey invitations were distributed to a target group of over 150 marketing professionals via LinkedIn.

Of the 150 invitations sent out, 50 responses were received, resulting in a response rate of approximately 33%. Although this response rate may seem modest at first glance, it is important to consider the context and targeted nature of the sampling method. Respondents were specifically chosen for their relevant experience, ensuring that the data collected was highly relevant to the research objectives.

In this research, the 33% response rate achieved can be considered robust for several reasons. The survey was distributed to a specifically selected group of professionals with substantial experience in paid social media campaigns. The specificity of the sample ensures that each response is highly valuable, contributing rich insights based on practical experience. Given the specialized nature of the subject, the quality of the responses takes priority over quantity. The 50 responses received represent a significant body of knowledge and experience, providing a solid basis for analyzing trends and best practices. Furthermore, in many marketing research and social media contexts, response rates of between 20% and 30% are common. Achieving a 33% response rate is well in line with industry standards, especially given busy schedules and the high demand for marketing professionals' attention.

In conclusion, the response rate of 33%, with 50 completed surveys out of 150 invitations, is deemed satisfactory given the targeted nature of the sampling and the expertise of the respondents. This rate provides a reliable basis for analyzing the strategies, challenges, and best practices in optimizing paid social media campaigns. The methodological rigor maintained throughout the survey process ensures that the findings are robust and reflective of the current landscape in social media marketing.

### **3.5. ENSURING RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

To ensure the reliability and validity of the survey data, several steps were taken:

1. The survey was pre-tested with a small group of marketing professionals to identify any ambiguities or issues in the questions. Feedback from the pre-test was used to refine the survey instrument;
2. Detailed instructions were provided to participants to ensure they understood the purpose of the survey and how to respond to the questions accurately.
3. Respondents were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses to encourage honest and candid participation;
4. Efforts were made to reach a diverse group of marketers across different industries and levels of experience to ensure the findings are representative of the broader marketing community.

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined the methodological framework of the research, detailing the design and implementation of the survey, the rationale for the chosen methods, and the steps taken to ensure data reliability and validity. The subsequent sections will present the findings from the survey and analyze the data to answer the research questions posed in this thesis.

## 4. SURVEY RESULTS

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected from the survey designed to gather insights from marketing professionals on optimizing paid social media campaigns. The survey, which received 50 responses, explored several aspects such as campaign implementation strategies, testing methods, data collection and processing, KPIs, and future trends. This chapter aims to present the findings and interpret their implications within the context of existing literature and industry practices.

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

As shown in two figures below, half of the participants have more than three years of experience, which ensures that the insights provided are based on substantial practical knowledge and experience. Additionally, they represent diverse sectors, including marketing agencies, who often manage multiple clients' campaigns, providing a broad view of industry practices, and industry-specific functions (e.g., retail, technology, healthcare).

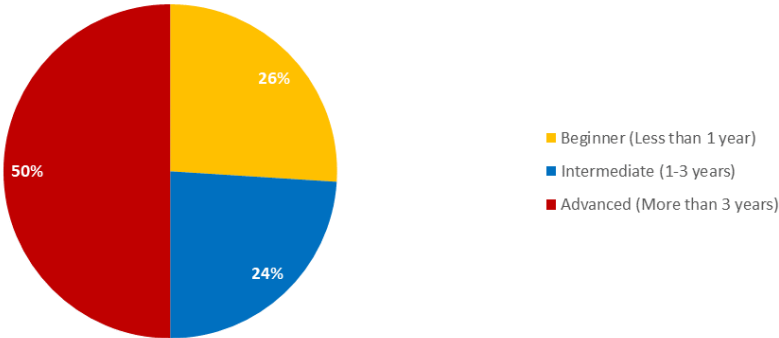


Figure 4.1 - What is your level of experience in managing paid social media campaigns?

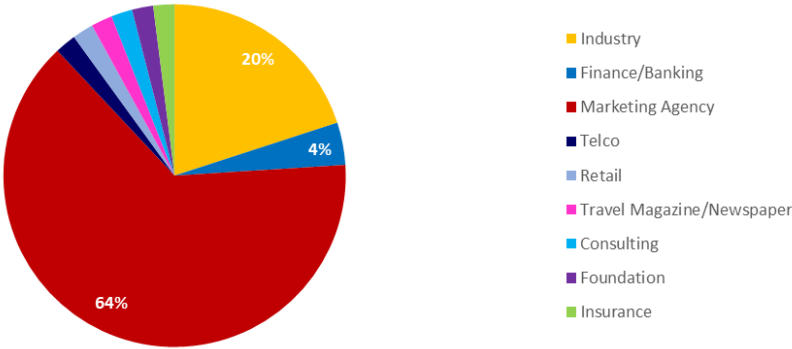


Figure 4.2 - In which sector do you primarily operate as a marketer?

As can be seen in the Figure 4.3, Facebook Ads is the most widely used platform, due to its wide targeting options and large reach. Another widely used platform, valued for its integration with search advertising and detailed analyses, is Google Ads, with 78% of respondents using it. This aligns with industry trends, where these platforms dominate paid social media marketing efforts.

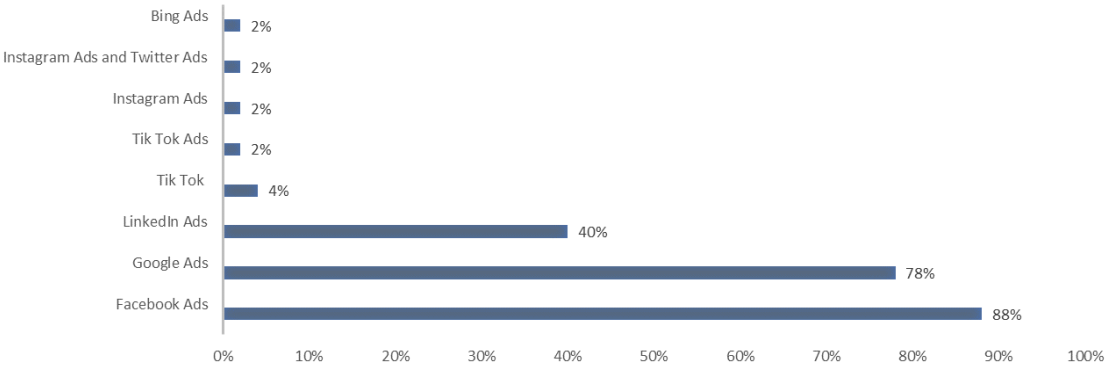


Figure 4.3 - Which platforms do you primarily use on paid social campaigns?

The Figure 4.4 demonstrates that, among the respondents with more than three years of experience, ad creative was consistently rated as one of the most critical components. This underscores the importance of compelling visuals and engaging content in capturing the audience’s attention and driving campaign success.

Also, it is possible to observe that the experienced respondents also emphasized the critical role of audience targeting. This involves precisely defining and reaching the intended audience, which is fundamental to the success of any paid social media campaign.

Finally, proper budget allocation is vital to maximizing the effectiveness of paid social campaigns. Marketers stressed the importance of strategically distributing the budget across different ad sets and platforms.

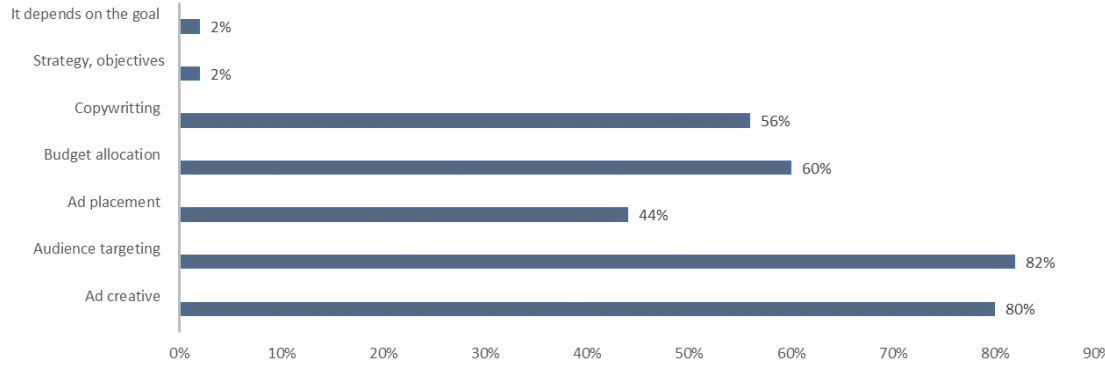


Figure 4.4 - Which components do you consider essential in a paid social media campaign?

## 4.2. IMPLEMENTATION

The Figure 4.5 analyzes how marketers approach segmentation based on social media data.

As can be seen, interest-based targeting is the most commonly used strategy, with 78% of respondents indicating that they use this approach. This involves segmenting users based on their expressed interests and hobbies, as indicated by their activities on social media platforms. Marketers can take advantage of the users' likes, shares and interactions to customize ads to their interests.

Regarding custom audience creation is also widely used, with 64% of respondents using this strategy. This strategy involves the creation of audiences using data from different sources (e.g. website visitors, email lists). Marketers upload the data to social media platforms to target specific groups of users. Marketers can improve conversion rates and promote customer loyalty by reaching users who have already interacted with the brand.

The demographic targeting, such as age and gender is used by 58% of respondents and it helps to target the right audience segments more effectively.

The strategy behavior-based targeting is used by 54% of respondents. Although it is the least used of the four strategies, behavior-based targeting still gets substantial ratings, highlighting its importance.

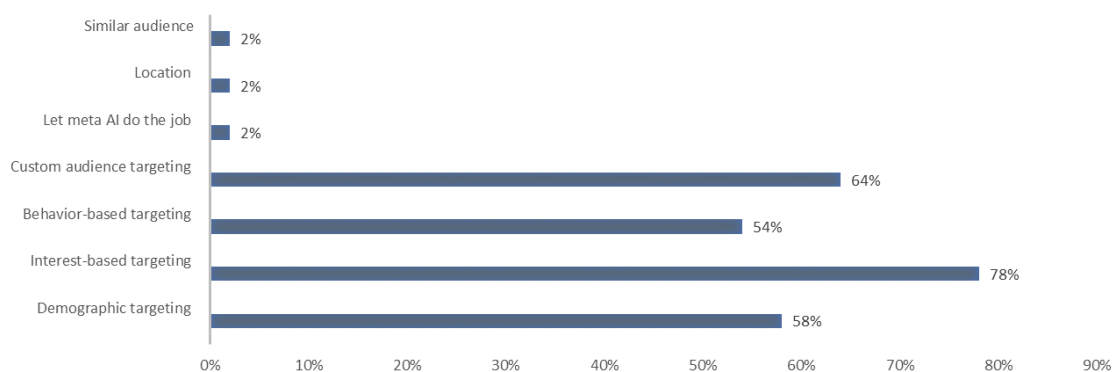


Figure 4.5 - How do you approach targeting and segmenting based on social media data?

As presented in Figure 4.6, when specifically discussing Facebook and how marketers approach segmentation and targeting in advertising campaigns, it can be seen that marketers mainly prefer to create custom audiences using data from website visitors and email subscribers. This process involves uploading customer data (e.g., email lists) to Facebook in order to target users who have already shown interest in the brand.

Another method is through Facebook's own robust segmentation tools, which allow marketers to target audiences based on various criteria. These options include targeting by age, gender, location, interests, and behaviors.

Moreover, implementing lookalike audiences to reach new users similar to existing customers is another way marketers use to segment and target when they are creating advertising campaigns by using data from existing customers to find new users with similar characteristics and behaviors. Facebook analyzes the data from the source audience to identify and target similar users.

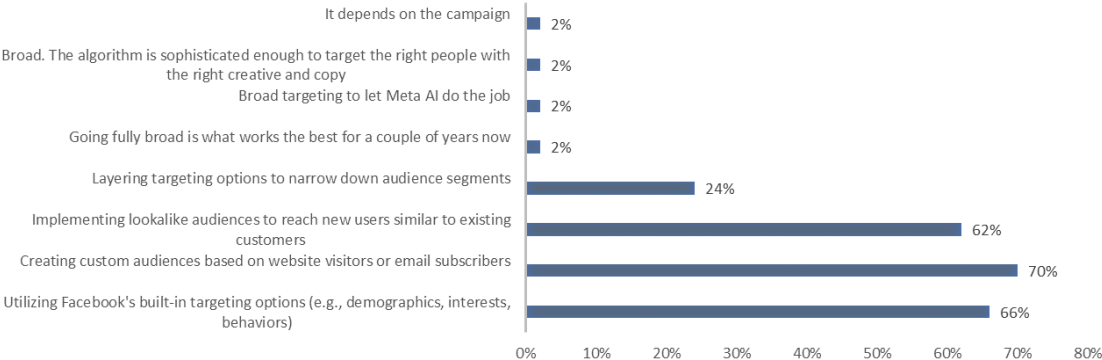


Figure 4.6 - How do you approach audience targeting/segmentation when setting up Facebook Ads campaigns?

As observed in Figure 4.7, marketers expand reach and improve segmentation on Facebook, mainly by creating personalized audiences using data from their customer relationship management (“CRM”) systems, website visitors and through user engagement with previous ads. They also use lookalike audiences to target new users who share similarities with existing customers or high-value segments. A number of respondents prefer segmenting audiences based on their behaviors and interactions with Facebook content, such as likes, shares, comments, and other forms of engagement.

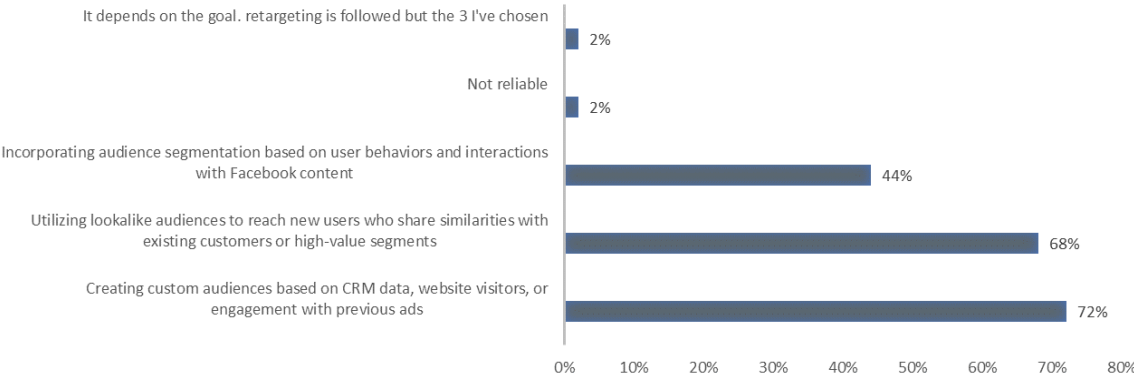


Figure 4.7 - What role do custom audiences and lookalike audiences play in your Facebook Paid Social Campaigns, and how do you leverage them to expand reach and improve

Looking at the graph represented in Figure 4.8, marketers aiming to optimize ad creatives to improve the relevance and engagement of Facebook ads prioritize testing different visual elements, such as images and videos, as the best way to do this.

The respondents also like to use dynamic ad formats because it allows marketers to present various products or features in a single ad block. For example, the carousel ads mentioned allow users to scroll through a series of images or videos, while the collection ads present a range of products in an attractive format.

Another good way to optimize ad creatives to improve the relevance and engagement of Facebook ads is to create several versions of the ad text to find the most effective message. Marketers can test different titles, descriptions, and calls to action to identify the best-performing combinations.

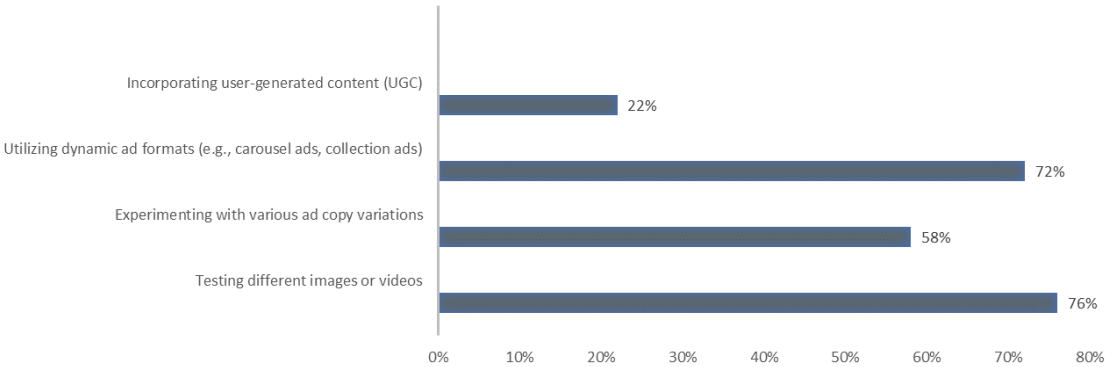


Figure 4.8 - What are your strategies for optimizing ad creative to improve ad relevance and engagement on Facebook?

When implementing paid social campaigns, particularly on platforms like Facebook, understanding effective strategies for optimizing Facebook Ads campaign budgets to achieve desired results is crucial.

As shown in Figure 4.9, nearly half of the respondents agree that using an objectives-based approach to allocate the budget to the specific objectives of each campaign (e.g., awareness, consideration, conversion) helps to focus resources on the strategic imperatives of each phase.

Also, adjusting daily or lifetime budgets based on performance metrics can be a good strategy to optimize Facebook Ads campaign budgets and obtain the desired results. This approach involves regularly reviewing campaign performance data and adjusting budgets accordingly. Marketers typically increase budgets for high-performing campaigns or reduce spending on underperforming ones.

Some of the respondents (22%) use campaign budget optimization (“CBO”) to automatically distribute budgets across ad sets. CBO allows Facebook’s algorithm to allocate budgets

dynamically across ad sets based on their performance. This automated approach optimizes the distribution of funds to achieve the best results.

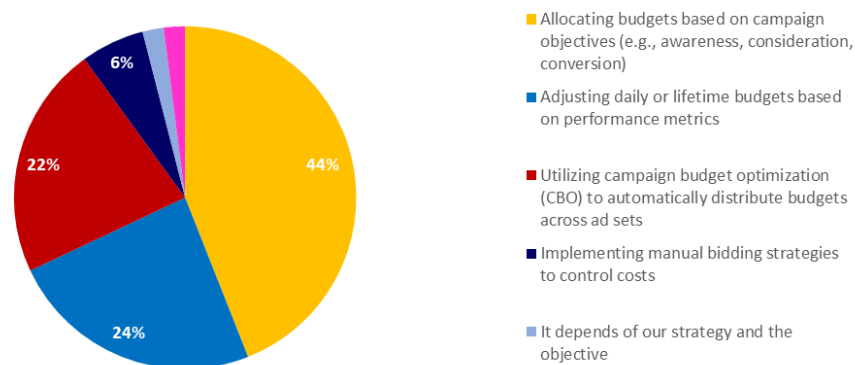


Figure 4.9 - What are your tactics for optimizing Facebook Ads campaign budgets to achieve the desired results?

It was also important for the analysis of the implementation of paid social campaigns to understand the strategies that marketers use to optimize Facebook's paid social campaigns specifically for lead generation and customer acquisition, beyond merely generating traffic or engagement on the website.

According to Figure 4.10, most marketers consider that the best strategy is to take advantage of Facebook's retargeting capabilities. This is done by targeting an ad at people who have already shown interest or engaged with the website/brand via the Facebook platform. This can include users who have visited the website, interacted with a Facebook page or ad, or performed other controlled actions.

Another strategy chosen by marketers consists of publishing lead ads directly on Facebook, which capture user information. Lead ads are designed to capture user information directly on Facebook, without users having to leave the platform. People can instantly leave their contact details (e.g., email, phone number) with an ad that will have a pre-filled form.

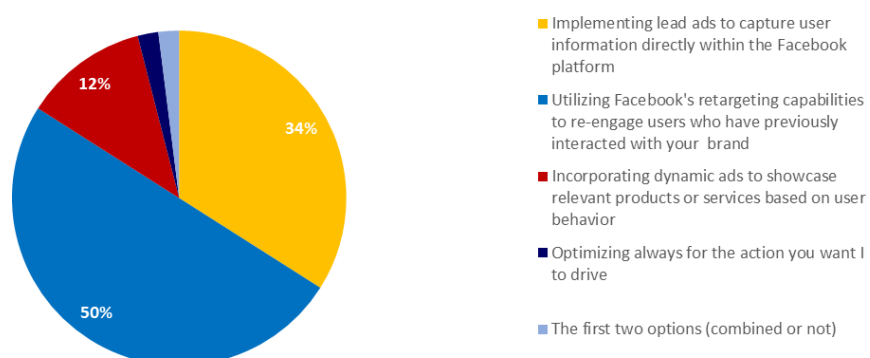


Figure 4.10 - What strategies do you employ to optimize Facebook Paid Social Campaigns for lead generation and customer acquisition, beyond simply driving website traffic or engagement?

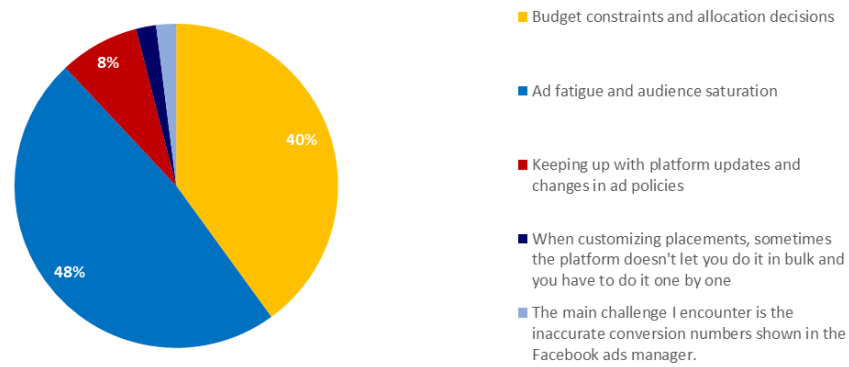


Figure 4.11 - What challenges do you encounter when managing Facebook Paid Social Campaigns, and what strategies do you employ to overcome them?

Lastly, as observed in Figure 4.11, most marketers consider that the biggest types of problems they face when managing paid social campaigns on Facebook are mainly related to ad fatigue and audience saturation and budget constraints and allocation decisions.

Ad fatigue occurs when an audience is repeatedly exposed to the same ad, leading to a decrease in engagement and effectiveness. Audience saturation happens when the target audience has seen the ads multiple times, reducing their impact.

The budget constraints and allocation decisions are a common issue for marketers. It involves balancing the available budget across different campaigns and ad sets to maximize return on investment.

### 4.3. A/B AND MULTIVARIABLE TESTING

The Figure 4.12 shows the high adoption of using A/B or multivariable testing. This shows that many marketers recognize the value of these testing methodologies in optimizing their campaigns. By systematically comparing different ad versions, marketers can optimize their campaigns for better performance.

However, there is still a significant proportion of respondents not using A/B or multivariable testing (40%). One of the reasons can be the lack of the necessary tools, time, or expertise to implement A/B or multivariable testing effectively. Providing access to user-friendly testing tools and educational resources can help overcome these barriers.

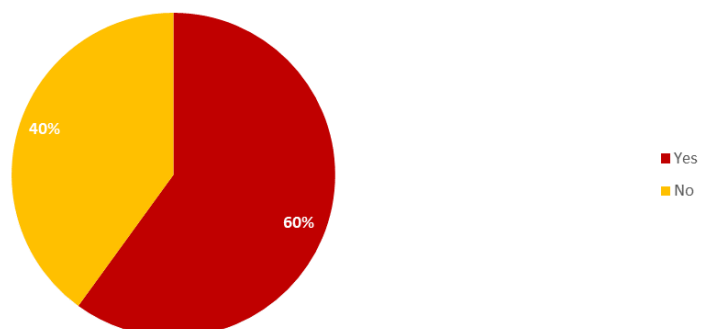


Figure 4.12 - Have you utilized A/B or multivariable testing in your paid social media

As the graph above shows, A/B and multivariable testing are widely recognized as powerful techniques for optimizing paid social media campaigns. However, implementing these testing methodologies comes with its own set of challenges. Through the survey we could see what the main obstacles are faced by marketers when utilizing A/B or multivariable testing.

As evidenced by Figure 4.13, almost 50% of respondents identified limited budget for testing as the biggest challenge. Conducting A/B or multivariable tests requires allocating a portion of the campaign budget to run multiple versions of ads. Limited budgets can restrict the scope and scale of testing.

The other half identified the difficulty in identifying statistically significant results as the biggest challenge. Achieving statistically significant results requires a sufficient sample size and proper experimental design. Small sample sizes or poorly designed tests can lead to inconclusive or misleading results.

The rest of respondents believe that conducting A/B or multivariable tests can be time-consuming, requiring careful planning, execution, and analysis. Marketers often face pressure to deliver quick results, which can limit the time available for thorough testing.

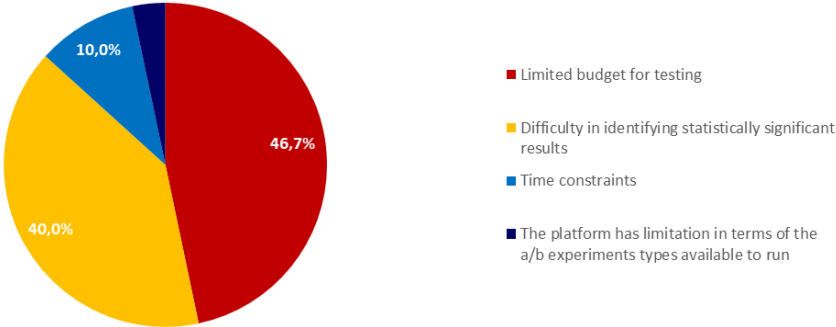


Figure 4.13 - What challenges do you face in conducting A/B or multivariable testing for paid social media campaigns?

It is also important to understand how marketers interpret and analyze the results of A/B or multivariable tests to inform campaign optimization strategies. Figure 4.14 shows that the most common response was to analyze performance metrics. Performance metrics such as CTR, conversion rate and engagement rate are analyzed for each test variant to determine which performs best. This method is widely used because it provides clear and direct information on the effectiveness of the different elements of the advert. By focusing on KPIs, marketers can make data-driven decisions to optimize their campaigns.

Another way that 16.7% of respondents think is good for interpreting and analyzing the results of A/B or multivariable tests is to identify trends and patterns in user behavior. This involves

looking for trends and patterns in the way users interact with different test variants, such as changes in engagement or behavior between test groups.

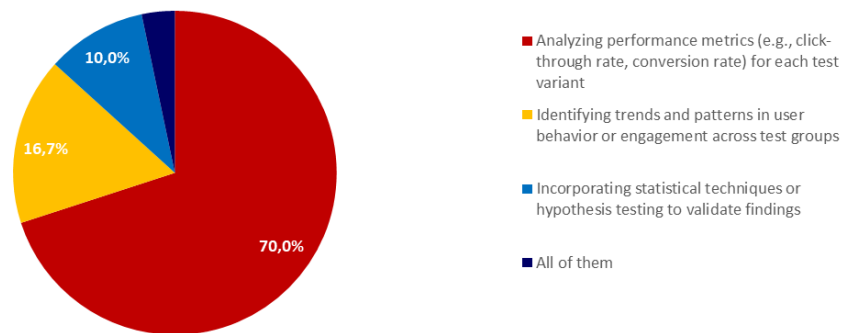


Figure 4.14 - How do you interpret and analyze the results of A/B tests or multivariable tests to inform campaign optimization strategies?

Determining the appropriate duration and sample size for A/B and multivariable tests is essential for obtaining reliable and actionable insights.

According with Figure 4.15, almost half of the respondents felt that defining test duration based on historical performance data or campaign objectives is a good approach. This method involves analyzing performance data from previous campaigns to estimate an appropriate test duration that aligns with the campaign objectives. Historical data helps to understand typical user behavior patterns and seasonal effects that can affect test results.

Another 33% consider that calculating sample sizes to obtain statistically significant results with confidence is the best way to determine the duration and sample size of these tests. This approach involves using statistical formulae to calculate the sample size needed to obtain statistically significant results. In these calculations, factors such as the desired level of confidence, the margin of error and the size of the expected effect are considered.

Automated testing platforms are used by 20% of respondents and they use algorithms to determine the ideal test duration and sample size based on real-time data and predefined parameters.

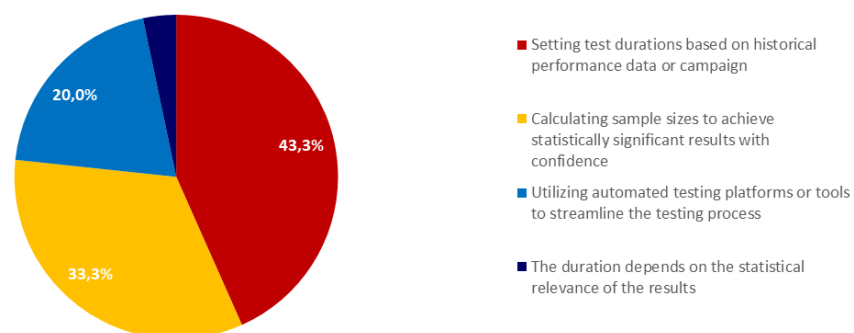


Figure 4.15 - How do you determine the duration and sample size for A/B tests or multivariable tests in your social media campaigns?

#### 4.4. DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

The role of data in optimizing paid social media campaigns cannot be underestimated. Almost all respondents (90%) consider data to be very important for optimizing paid social media campaigns. Data-driven decision-making allows marketers to adapt their strategies based on concrete information and performance metrics, leading to more effective and efficient campaigns.

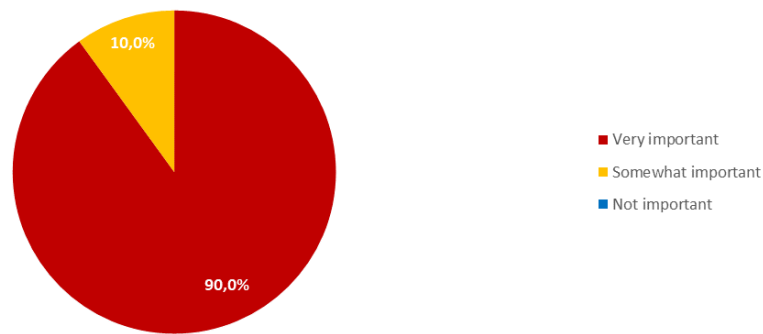


Figure 4.16 - How important is data in optimizing paid social media campaigns?

Figure 4.17 shows that most respondents use built-in analysis tools provided by social media platforms. These tools offer a direct view of platform-specific metrics, allowing marketers to monitor performance and user engagement on each platform.

Also, a significant portion use third-party analytics tools. These tools provide more comprehensive and customizable insights, integrating data from multiple sources and offering advanced analytics features.

It is important to highlight that a marketer can use different methods for data collection and processing in social media campaigns at the same time.

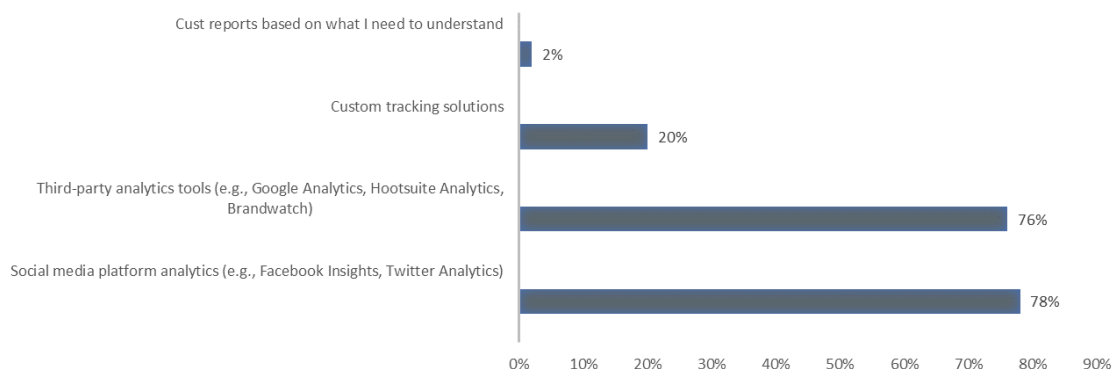


Figure 4.17 - What methods do you use for data collection and processing in social media campaigns?

## 4.5. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Understanding which KPIs marketers prioritize provides crucial insights into how the success of paid social media campaigns is measured. The survey asked the respondents to prioritize which KPIs they use when evaluating the success of a paid social media campaign.

Conversion rate, CTR, engagement metrics, and impressions are the primary KPIs prioritized by marketers as Figure 4.18 shows. Each of these metrics offers unique insights into different aspects of campaign performance. By focusing on these KPIs, marketers can effectively measure and optimize their campaigns to achieve better results. Conversion rate, as the most prioritized metric, highlights the importance of driving user actions that align with business goals. Meanwhile, CTR, engagement metrics, and impressions provide additional layers of understanding that help refine and enhance overall campaign strategies.

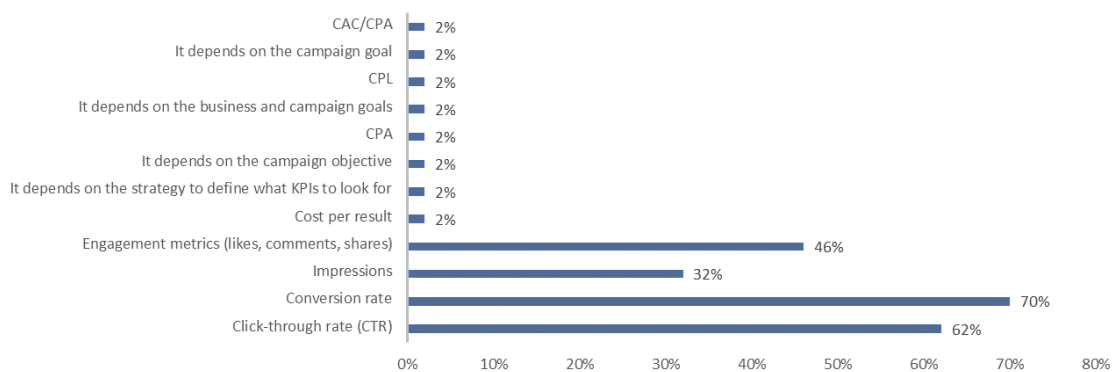


Figure 4.18 - What are the key performance indicators you prioritize when evaluating the success of a paid social media campaign?

To measure the effectiveness of Facebook ad campaigns in particular, it is necessary to go beyond basic metrics such as clicks and impressions – Figure 4.19.

Part of the respondents (34%) calculate the ROI. ROI measures the profitability of a campaign by comparing the revenue generated to the costs incurred. This metric provides a clear indication of the financial effectiveness of the campaign.

Also, a significant percentage track conversion metrics. The conversion metrics measure the number of desired actions taken by users, such as purchases, sign-ups, or downloads, resulting from the ad campaign. These metrics provide insight into how well the campaign drives user actions that align with business goals.

Furthermore, 18% of respondents analyze the CPC and 12% analyze ad engagement metrics. Engagement metrics include likes, comments, shares, and other interactions with the ad.

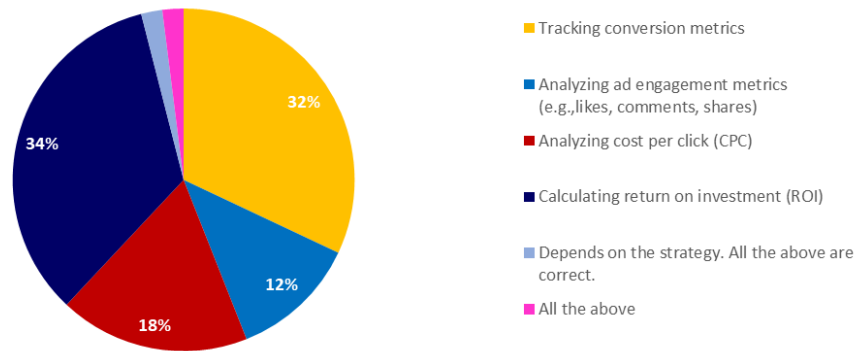


Figure 4.19 - How do you measure the effectiveness of your Facebook Ads campaigns beyond basic metrics like clicks and impressions?

Evaluating the overall effectiveness and return on investment of Facebook paid social campaigns is important for marketers to ensure their efforts yield positive financial outcomes.

As it can be seen in Figure 4.20, the analysis of KPIs, including cost per acquisition (“CPA”) is used by 50% of respondents. This method involves evaluating specific KPIs that directly reflect the cost-effectiveness and financial performance of the campaign.

A remaining 42% prefer to track conversions and attribution using Facebook's integrated tools and third-party analysis platforms, which involves using Facebook's native analysis tools as well as third-party platforms to track conversions and attribute them to specific ads or campaigns.

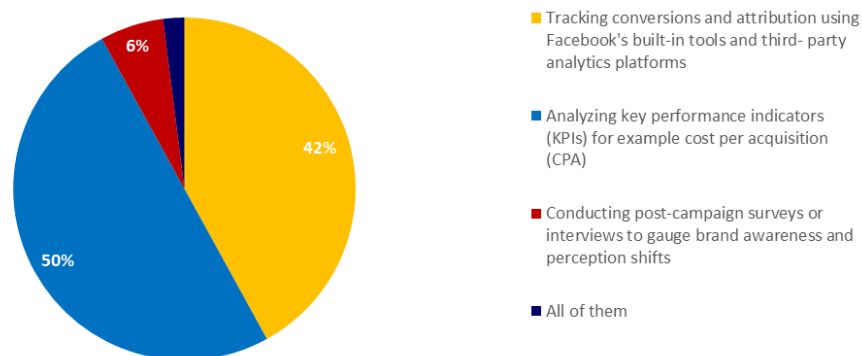


Figure 4.20 - How do you measure the overall effectiveness and ROI of your Facebook Paid Social Campaigns?

Another crucial step for marketers is to measure and optimize the success of paid social media campaigns by establishing meaningful KPIs. However, this process is fraught with challenges.

As illustrated in Figure 4.21, one of the challenges that almost half of marketers (46%) responded to was ensuring consistent and accurate data tracking and measurement across platforms. With several social media platforms, each with their own analysis tools and metrics, keeping track of consistent and accurate data is complex.

Another challenge considered by respondents (34%) was the clear definition and actionable KPIs that align with the campaign's objectives. It is essential to establish KPIs that are directly linked to the campaign's objectives. However, it can be difficult to define these KPIs in such a way that they are clear, actionable, and relevant to the specific objectives of each campaign. By standardizing data tracking methods, and collaborating to define SMART KPIs, marketers can overcome these obstacles and achieve more reliable and actionable insights from their paid social media campaigns.

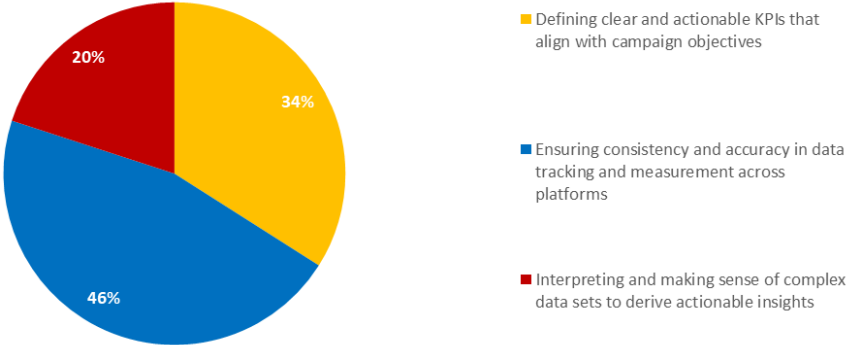


Figure 4.21 - What challenges do you encounter when establishing meaningful KPIs for your paid social media campaigns, and how do you overcome them?

The effective communication of paid social media campaign performance is crucial for ensuring that stakeholders or clients understand the impact and value of marketing efforts. With the survey responses we could understand better the methods and strategies marketers use to convey KPIs and campaign insights – as presented in Figure 4.22.

More than half of the respondents believe that developing regular reports or dashboards highlighting the KPIs and trends is a good way of communicating the performance of paid social media campaigns. These reports or dashboards compile key metrics and trends in a systematic way, providing stakeholders with an overview of campaign performance.

Incorporating data visualizations (e.g., charts, graphs, and infographics) increases the clarity and comprehension of complex data, making it easier for stakeholders to quickly grasp key information. This method helps make data-based information more accessible and understandable to a wider audience.

Beyond presenting raw data, providing context and interpretation helps stakeholders understand the significance of KPIs and how they relate to overall campaign goals and business objectives. It also helps stakeholders make informed decisions based on a clear understanding of the data's implications.

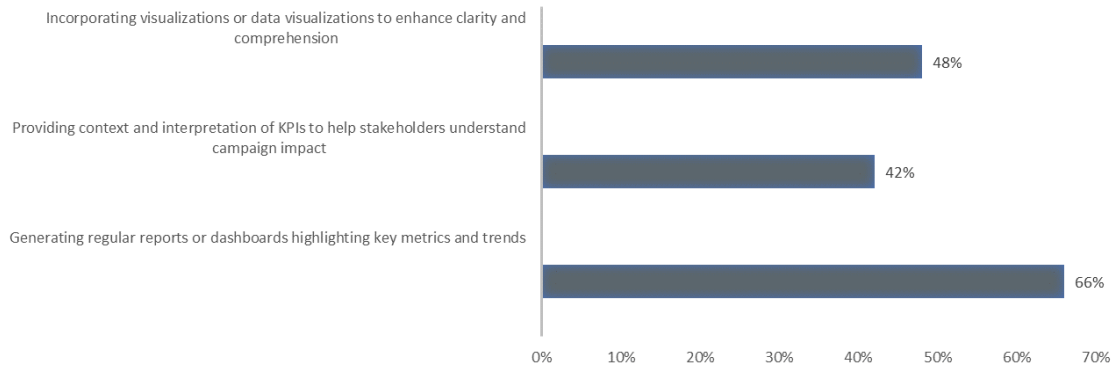


Figure 4.22 - How do you communicate the performance of your paid social media campaigns, including KPIs and insights, to stakeholders or clients?

According to Figure 4.23, achievement of campaign objectives (42%), ad performance metrics (26%), and return on investment (22%) are key criteria identified by respondents to evaluate the overall success or effectiveness of paid social media campaigns. By employing these criteria, marketers can gain comprehensive insights into their campaign performance, make informed decisions, and optimize their strategies for better outcomes and higher ROI in the competitive digital advertising landscape.

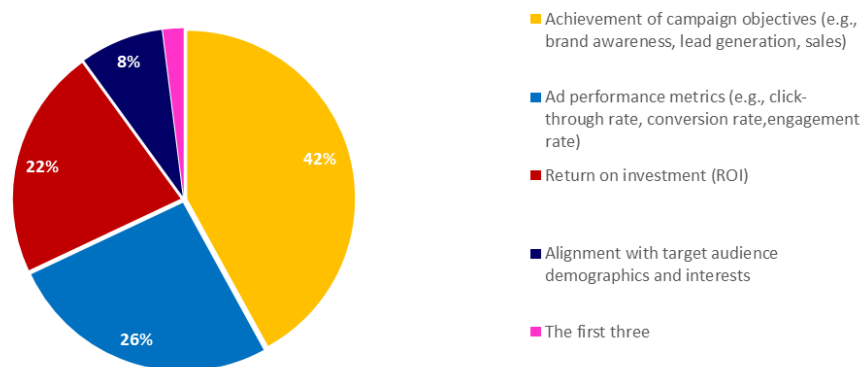


Figure 4.23 - What criteria do you use to evaluate the overall success or effectiveness of your paid social media campaigns?

#### 4.6. EXTERNAL FACTORS

External factors can significantly influence the success and management of paid social media campaigns. Among these, data privacy issues on social media platforms have emerged as a major concern for marketers. As observed in Figure 4.24, half of the respondents are very concerned about data privacy issues on social media platforms. Data privacy concerns include the handling of personal information by social media platforms, compliance with regulations, and the potential for data breaches.

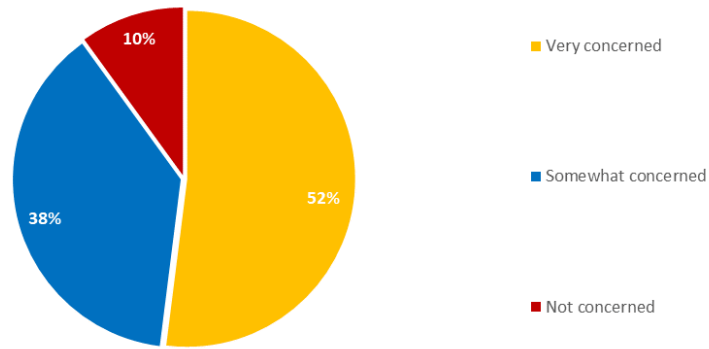


Figure 4.24 - How concerned are you about data privacy issues on social media platforms?

Compliance with data privacy regulations (e.g., GDPR), is crucial for marketers who collect and use user data for targeted advertising on social media platforms. There are a number of strategies that marketers believe are effective in ensuring this compliance.

Figure 4.25 shows that marketers believe that obtaining users' explicit consent involves clearly informing users about the data being collected, how it will be used and ensuring that they agree to these terms. Another way is by anonymizing the data before it is used. Data anonymization involves removing or encrypting personally identifiable information so that individuals cannot be identified. This method can help use the data for analysis and targeting without violating the user's privacy.

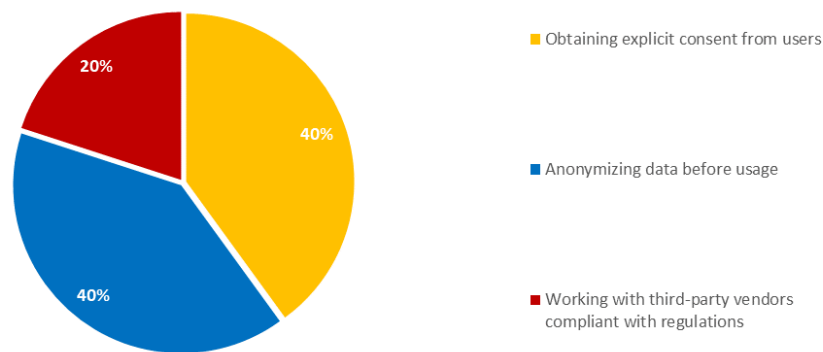


Figure 4.25 - How do you ensure compliance with data privacy regulations for example GDPR when collecting and utilizing user data for targeted advertising on social media platforms?

Emerging technologies are poised to significantly influence marketing strategies for paid social media campaigns.

As highlight in Figure 4.26, almost all respondents believe that artificial intelligence will have the greatest potential impact on marketing strategies for paid campaigns on social networks. Artificial intelligence technologies, including machine learning and predictive analytics, are transforming the way marketers analyze data, target audiences, and optimize campaigns.

Also, 14% of the respondents believe chat-bots and conversational marketing will be influential. Chat-bots and conversational marketing tools facilitate direct interaction with users, offering personalized experiences and immediate customer support. Although less prevalent than artificial intelligence, the focus on chat-bots indicates a recognition of the value of interactive and personalized communication in enhancing user engagement and satisfaction.

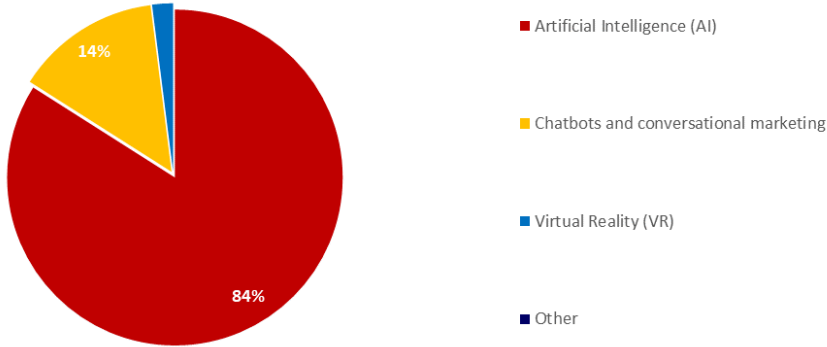


Figure 4.26 - In your opinion, what emerging technologies have the most potential to impact marketing strategies for paid social media campaigns?

As show in Figure 4.27, respondents believe that emerging technologies will have an impact on various aspects of their work in the near future. A large part believe that emerging technologies will improve audience segmentation and personalization through advanced data analysis and predictive modelling.

In addition, 70% see emerging technologies automating campaign optimization and decision-making processes to improve efficiency and performance and 52% believe that emerging technologies will facilitate the creation of interactive and immersive ad experiences to drive engagement and brand recall.

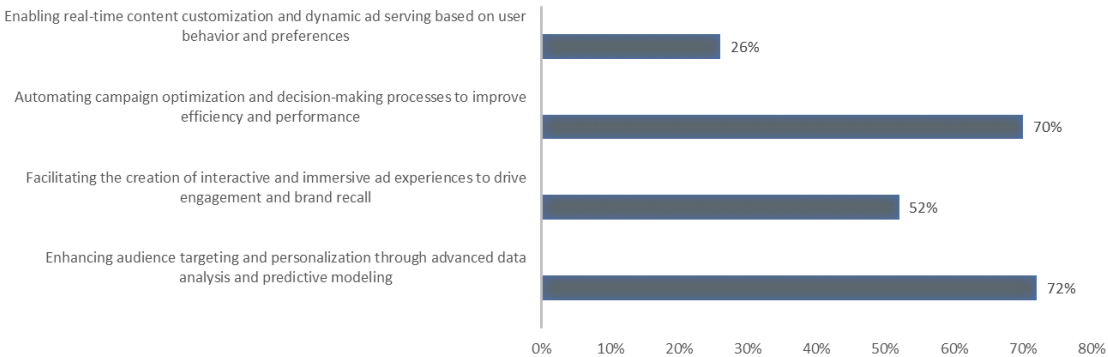


Figure 4.27 - How do you perceive emerging technologies impacting marketing strategies for paid social media campaigns in the near future?

## 5. DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of the survey are discussed in the context of the existing literature on the optimization of paid social media campaigns. By comparing and contrasting the survey results with the main themes of the literature review, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of paid social media marketing practices, challenges, and strategies.

### 5.1. IMPLEMENTATION

The literature highlights the importance of precise segmentation and targeting for the success of paid social media campaigns. Strategies such as interest-based targeting, demographic targeting and the use of personalized and lookalike audiences are often highlighted as effective methods for reaching the intended audience.

The survey results align with the literature, confirming the widespread use of interest-based targeting (78%), custom audiences (64%), and demographic targeting (54%). The high adoption rate of these strategies indicates their perceived effectiveness in optimizing campaign performance. The literature's emphasis on these techniques is validated by the practical applications reported by respondents.

### 5.2. A/B AND MULTIVARIABLE TESTING

The literature review emphasizes the crucial role of A/B and multivariable testing in optimizing social media campaigns. These testing methods are essential for making data-driven decisions to improve ad relevance, engagement, and overall campaign performance. However, the literature also highlights several challenges associated with conducting effective A/B or multivariable tests.

According to the survey, 60% of respondents have used A/B or multivariable testing in their paid social media campaigns, which indicates significant adoption among professionals. However, 40% of respondents have not used these testing methods. This highlights a gap that may be due to various challenges faced by marketers.

In terms of challenges, the survey results closely reflect the literature. The limited budget for testing is identified as the biggest challenge by 46.7% of respondents, while 40% mention the difficulty in identifying statistically significant results. In addition, 10% of respondents mention time constraints as a challenge. These challenges align with those highlighted in the literature, indicating that budget constraints, difficulty in obtaining statistical significance and time constraints are common problems faced by marketing professionals.

Regarding the duration and sample size for A/B tests, the survey results are well aligned with the literature. 43.3% of respondents define test duration based on historical performance data or campaign objectives, while 33.3% calculate sample size to obtain statistically significant results with confidence. In addition, 20% of respondents use automated testing platforms or tools to determine the testing process. This reflects the recommendation in the literature to use historical data, campaign objectives and automated tools to determine test duration and sample sizes.

For interpreting and analyzing the results of A/B tests, the survey results again show strong alignment with the literature. 70% of respondents analyze performance metrics such as click-through rate and conversion rate for each test variant. 16.7% identify trends and patterns in user behavior or engagement across test groups, while 10% incorporate statistical techniques or hypothesis testing to validate findings. Additionally, 3.3% believe in using all these methods. This multifaceted approach to interpreting and analyzing results is in line with the literature's emphasis on analyzing performance metrics, identifying trends, and using statistical techniques.

### **5.3. DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING**

The literature highlights the importance of data collection and processing for optimizing paid social media campaigns. The results of the survey are in line with the results of the literature review, in which 90% of respondents consider the date to be very important for optimizing paid social campaigns

As was mentioned on the literature, data can be collected from several social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and TikTok. The survey results reflect these as 78% and 76% of the respondents use social media platform analytics and third -party tools respectively as a method to collect data in social media campaigns.

### **5.4. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The literature highlights the importance of KPIs when evaluating paid social campaigns. According to the literature, metrics such as impressions, clicks, engagement rates and conversion rates are all fundamental to measuring campaign effectiveness. The survey results closely align with the literature review's emphasis on conversion rates and CTR as primary KPIs. The high prioritization of conversion rates (70%), CTR (62%), engagement rates (46%) and impressions (32%) by survey respondents underscores the importance of these metrics in evaluating the effectiveness of social media campaigns.

In addition, 66% of respondents indicated that they generate regular reports or dashboards highlighting key metrics and trends. Moreover, 48% of respondents use data visualizations to enhance clarity and comprehension, and 42% provide context and interpretation of KPIs. This indicates a strong alignment between literature and practice, emphasizing that

comprehensive reporting and data visualization are crucial for effective communication of campaign performance.

In the literature, the achievement of campaign objectives and the analysis of performance metrics are highlighted as key criteria for evaluating success. The survey results indicate that 42% of respondents evaluate success based on achieving campaign objectives, 26% on ad performance metrics and 22% on return on investment. This shows that professionals give priority to both strategic objectives and performance metrics, reflecting a balanced approach, as recommended in the literature.

## **5.5. EXTERNAL FACTORS**

The literature recognizes the growing concerns around data privacy issues on social media platforms, especially with regulations such as the GDPR. The survey results reflect these concerns, with 50% of respondents very concerned about data privacy issues. Only 10% consider it not important, which shows a significant focus on privacy. This concern is also reflected in the way companies ensure compliance, with 40% of respondents indicating that they obtain explicit consent from users or anonymize data, which is consistent with the best practices recommended in the literature.

Moreover, analysis of the literature indicates that artificial intelligence and machine learning are transforming social media marketing, enabling advanced data analysis and predictive modeling. The survey results corroborate this view, with 84% of respondents believing that AI has the greatest potential to impact marketing strategies. In addition, 14% believe that chatbots and conversational marketing can also be influential. This correlation indicates that professionals recognize and are preparing to take advantage of these technologies to improve their marketing strategies.

According to the literature and the survey responses, it is important to optimize paid social campaigns. The literature stresses that dynamic personalization of ads and real-time monitoring are key to the success of campaigns. The survey results show that 72% of respondents believe that emerging technologies will improve audience segmentation and personalization through advanced data analysis, while 70% think that these technologies will automate campaign optimization and decision-making processes. This shows that the theoretical understanding of optimization is being actively applied in the industry.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this thesis was to explore the optimization of paid social media campaigns through the use of social media data. The importance of this topic is underlined by the growing role of social media in marketing strategies and the wealth of data that these platforms generate. Through the literature review and survey analysis, this study provided a nuanced understanding of the current practices, challenges, and potential areas of improvement of paid social media campaigns for marketers.

The literature review mainly highlighted the importance of KPIs in evaluating campaign success, the use of data collection and processing methods, the use of A/B and multivariable testing and data privacy considerations. It became clear that while there are established best practices, marketers face ongoing challenges such as ensuring data accuracy, defining actionable KPIs and adapting to evolving data privacy regulations.

The survey results support the literature, showing that marketers prioritize conversion rates, click-through rates, engagement metrics and impressions as key indicators of campaign success. Challenges such as consistency in data control, defining clear KPIs and interpreting complex data sets were frequently mentioned. In addition, the use of A/B testing and the importance of data privacy were highlighted, with respondents indicating a reliance on the analysis of social media platforms and third-party tools for data collection and processing.

Based on the findings of the literature review and the results of the survey, a number of recommendations can be made to marketers. It is essential to develop a solid framework for KPIs that align with the specific objectives of the campaign and, with regular review and adjustment of the metrics, ensure that they remain relevant and actionable.

It is important to use a combination of analytics from social media platforms and third-party tools to collect comprehensive data. Investing in training to improve technical skills related to API usage and web scraping will ensure that data is collected efficiently and accurately.

It is also recommended to use A/B and multivariable testing to continuously optimize ad creatives and campaign strategies is also recommended. Allocating a dedicated budget for testing will ensure that experiments can run long enough to yield statistically significant results.

Be aware of data privacy regulations. Obtaining users' explicit consent for data collection and considering data anonymization to protect users' identities are key steps. Also, developing internal policies and procedures to ensure compliance and regularly auditing these practices are also necessary.

The adoption of emerging technologies, such as AI and predictive analytics, can enhance targeting, personalization, and campaign optimization. These technologies can provide

deeper insights and automate decision-making processes, leading to more effective and efficient campaigns.

Finally, staying informed about emerging trends and technologies in social media marketing is vital. For example, exploring and integrating the growing importance of interactive and immersive ad experiences into campaign strategies can drive engagement and brand recall.

Following these recommendations, marketers can optimize their paid social media campaigns more effectively, taking advantage of data to make better decisions and achieve the desired business results. The thesis highlights the key role of data in modern marketing and provides a roadmap for professionals looking to improve their social media strategies in an increasingly complex digital landscape.

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# ANNEXES

## Annex 1 - Online Survey “Understanding Marketers’ Perspectives on Optimizing Paid Social Campaigns

### Understanding Marketers' Perspectives on Optimizing Paid Social Campaigns

This research through this questionnaire is part of my thesis project aimed at delving into the optimization of paid social media campaigns. Your valuable insights as marketers will provide crucial perspectives that contribute to advancing my understanding about this field. The answers you provide are anonymous and will be used exclusively for academic research purposes.

\* Indica uma pergunta obrigatória

#### Introduction

What is your level of experience in managing paid social media campaigns? \*

Beginner (Less than 1 year)

Intermediate (1-3 years)

Advanced (More than 3 years)

In which sector do you primarily operate as a marketer? \*

Industry

Finance/Banking

Marketing Agency

Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

Which platforms do you primarily use on paid social campaigns? (Select all that apply) \*

Facebook Ads

Google Ads

LinkedIn Ads

Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

Which components do you consider essential in a paid social media campaign? \*

- Ad creative
- Audience targeting
- Ad placement
- Budget allocation
- Copywriting
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Implementation

How do you approach targeting and segmenting based on social media data? \*  
(Select all that apply)

- Demographic targeting
- Interest-based targeting
- Behavior-based targeting
- Custom audience creation
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you approach audience targeting and segmentation when setting up Facebook Ads campaigns? \*  
(Select all that apply)

- Utilizing Facebook's built-in targeting options (e.g., demographics, interests, behaviors)
- Creating custom audiences based on website visitors or email subscribers
- Implementing lookalike audiences to reach new users similar to existing customers
- Layering targeting options to narrow down audience segments
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

What role do custom audiences and lookalike audiences play in your Facebook Paid Social Campaigns, and how do you leverage them to expand reach and improve targeting? (Select all that apply) \*

- Creating custom audiences based on CRM data, website visitors, or engagement with previous ads
- Utilizing lookalike audiences to reach new users who share similarities with existing customers or high-value segments
- Incorporating audience segmentation based on user behaviors and interactions with Facebook content
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

What are your strategies for optimizing ad creative to improve ad relevance and engagement on Facebook? (Select all that apply) \*

- Testing different images or videos
- Experimenting with various ad copy variations
- Utilizing dynamic ad formats (e.g., carousel ads, collection ads)
- Incorporating user-generated content (UGC)
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

What are your tactics for optimizing Facebook Ads campaign budgets to achieve the desired results? \*

- Allocating budgets based on campaign objectives (e.g., awareness, consideration, conversion)
- Adjusting daily or lifetime budgets based on performance metrics
- Utilizing campaign budget optimization (CBO) to automatically distribute budgets across ad sets
- Implementing manual bidding strategies to control costs
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

What strategies do you employ to optimize Facebook Paid Social Campaigns for lead generation and customer acquisition, beyond simply driving website traffic or engagement? \*

- Implementing lead ads to capture user information directly within the Facebook platform
- Utilizing Facebook's retargeting capabilities to re-engage users who have previously interacted with your brand
- Incorporating dynamic ads to showcase relevant products or services based on user behavior
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

What challenges do you encounter when managing Facebook Paid Social Campaigns, and what strategies do you employ to overcome them? \*

- Budget constraints and allocation decisions
- Ad fatigue and audience saturation
- Keeping up with platform updates and changes in ad policies
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

#### A/B and Multivariable Testing

Have you utilized A/B or multivariable testing in your paid social media campaigns? \*

- Yes
- No

#### A/B and Multivariable Testing

What challenges do you face in conducting A/B or multivariable testing for paid social media campaigns? \*

- Limited budget for testing
- Difficulty in identifying statistically significant results
- Time constraints
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you determine the duration and sample size for A/B tests or multivariable tests in your social media campaigns? \*

- Setting test durations based on historical performance data or campaign objectives
- Calculating sample sizes to achieve statistically significant results with confidence
- Utilizing automated testing platforms or tools to streamline the testing process
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you interpret and analyze the results of A/B tests or multivariable tests to inform campaign optimization strategies? \*

- Analyzing performance metrics (e.g., click-through rate, conversion rate) for each test variant
- Identifying trends and patterns in user behavior or engagement across test groups
- Incorporating statistical techniques or hypothesis testing to validate findings
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Data Collection and Processing

How important is data in optimizing paid social media campaigns? \*

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

What methods do you use for data collection and processing in social media campaigns? (Select all that apply) \*

- Social media platform analytics (e.g., Facebook Insights, Twitter Analytics)
- Third-party analytics tools (e.g., Google Analytics, Hootsuite Analytics, Brandwatch)
- Custom tracking solutions
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

### Key Performance Indicators

What are the key performance indicators (KPIs) you prioritize when evaluating the success of a paid social media campaign? (Select all that apply) \*

- Click-through rate (CTR)
- Conversion rate
- Impressions
- Engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares)
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you measure the effectiveness of your Facebook Ads campaigns beyond basic metrics like clicks and impressions? \*

- Tracking conversion metrics
- Analyzing ad engagement metrics (e.g., likes, comments, shares)
- Analyzing cost per click (CPC)
- Calculating return on investment (ROI)
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you measure the overall effectiveness and ROI of your Facebook Paid Social Campaigns? \*

- Tracking conversions and attribution using Facebook's built-in tools and third-party analytics platforms
- Analyzing key performance indicators (KPIs) for example cost per acquisition (CPA)
- Conducting post-campaign surveys or interviews to gauge brand awareness and perception shifts
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

What challenges do you encounter when establishing meaningful KPIs for your paid social media campaigns, and how do you overcome them? \*

- Defining clear and actionable KPIs that align with campaign objectives
- Ensuring consistency and accuracy in data tracking and measurement across platforms
- Interpreting and making sense of complex data sets to derive actionable insights
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you communicate the performance of your paid social media campaigns, including KPIs and insights, to stakeholders or clients? (Select all that apply) \*

- Generating regular reports or dashboards highlighting key metrics and trends
- Providing context and interpretation of KPIs to help stakeholders understand campaign impact
- Incorporating visualizations or data visualizations to enhance clarity and comprehension
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

What criteria do you use to evaluate the overall success or effectiveness of your paid social media campaigns? \*

- Achievement of campaign objectives (e.g., brand awareness, lead generation, sales)
- Ad performance metrics (e.g., click-through rate, conversion rate, engagement rate)
- Return on investment (ROI)
- Alignment with target audience demographics and interests
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

#### External Factors

How concerned are you about data privacy issues on social media platforms? \*

- Very concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Not concerned

How do you ensure compliance with data privacy regulations for example General \*  
Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when collecting and utilizing user data for  
targeted advertising on social media platforms?

- Obtaining explicit consent from users
- Anonymizing data before usage
- Working with third-party vendors compliant with regulations
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

In your opinion, what emerging technologies have the most potential to impact \*  
marketing strategies for paid social media campaigns?

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Chatbots and conversational marketing
- Virtual Reality (VR)
- Other

How do you perceive emerging technologies impacting marketing strategies for \*  
paid social media campaigns in the near future? (Select all that apply)

- Enhancing audience targeting and personalization through advanced data analysis  
and predictive modeling
- Facilitating the creation of interactive and immersive ad experiences to drive  
engagement and brand recall
- Automating campaign optimization and decision-making processes to improve  
efficiency and performance
- Enabling real-time content customization and dynamic ad serving based on user  
behavior and preferences
- Outro: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for participating!

Gerar link



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