Research Justification

Per Secad SRL

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Brand Identity	The way in which a company presents itself to the public.
Brand Reputation	The way in which a company is perceived by the public.
Consumer Behaviour	How consumers' emotions, feelings, ideas, perception influence their buying behaviour.
Content Optimization	The process of continuously edit and improve generated content.
Customer Journey	The customer journey from awareness of a brand, product, or service to purchase.
Digital Behaviour	How a user behaves online.
Digital Presence	Any type of content owned and generated by an entity in the online world.
Lead Generation	The process of attracting and creating a relationship with new potential customers
Pain Points	Specific problems that customers or potential customers are experiencing in the workplace and drives the need for a product or service.
ROI	Return on Investment
Sales Pipeline	A visual representation of where your prospects are in the sales process
User Experience	How a user interacts with and experiences a brand, product, service, or system.

Management Summary

The following research justification report shows how Secad can implement a Digital marketing plan to gain new customers, nurture the relationship with the existing customers, increase brand awareness and brand reputation.

Building and nurturing brand awareness and brand reputation is vital for the thriving of a business. To generate new lead and acquire new customer, it is necessary that the company adapts to this digital revolution. Three information gaps were identified for the research:

(I)What are the digital behaviours of our target customers?

(II)What are the best channels to implement a digital marketing plan?

(II)How can the organization align its goals to develop a digital marketing plan?

To answer these questions, literature research and desk research were performed. The desk research consisted of collecting distinct types of data such as study cases, articles, white papers, and industry reports.

The data collected showed coherent results on how to best implement a basic digital marketing plan for a SME. The results were limited by the relatively small number of cases analyzed and by the industries covered. The niche market Secad operates in has limited information available regarding developments in the digital world. Results show that Secad should focus on email marketing and lead generation through Linkedin.

To create brand awareness and brand reputation Secad should address the main pain points or its ideal customers and build reputation as well as expertise over these pain points. To optimize the content on its website Secad should create a better User Experience, order the content in a way that serves the customer journey and continuously publish news over the same ideal customers' pain points.

Detailed recommendations on how to create a digital image and generate new leads can be found more thoroughly in the end of this research paper and are as follows:

(1) Optimize the company website.
(2) Create a Linkedin Company profile.
(3) Create an email newsletter.
(4) Monitor and analyse the results for content optimization.

All recommendations can be implemented within a time span of three to six months, depending on their easiness of implementation and impact.
Taking these recommendations into account, Secad will build a digital presence and increase its possibility to generate leads through new channels, email newsletters and Linkedin.

1. PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

1.1 Company analysis & developments

Secad is a family-owned company founded in 1983, offering B2B adhesive coating services. The company is based in Cernusco Sul Naviglio, in the province of Milan and can offer five types of coating services that find applications in more than eight sectors. Thanks to the number and quality of the types of machinery at its disposal, the company can perform hot-melt, solvent-based, water-based, UV-curing, and IR coating services, which is coating performed through the application of infrared rays.

Secad offers cutting services through die-cutting machines and Corona treatment-used to increase a material's surface tension effectively. By treating the material with a high-frequency corona discharge, its surface becomes much more receptive to adhesives, inks, and coatings" (ATAG,2021). In 2017, the company added to its service portfolio the SSA (Soft skin adhesives) technology- an adhesive technology *"securing wound dressings while providing gentle adhesion upon removal" (Schalau et al., 2017)*.
Besides the mentioned services that represent the backbone of the product/ services portfolio, the company systematically develops new tailor-made solutions created for the newly acquired customers.

This is made possible by a state of the earth laboratory and deep knowledge of the complex chemical formulas needed to develop new adhesive coating solutions. Similarly, the revamping of the machinery in the plant where the coating services are performed enhances the company's ability to customize their adhesive coatings. Here is where all of the R&D activities of the company are undertaken. By purchasing new and diverse types of machinery and using those with knowledge, paired with research in the field of chemistry applied to adhesives solutions, the organisation learns new properties and potential applications of its technology. This enables the company to grow financially and strategically in the market.

As said before, the company partners with organisations active in eleven industries. Namely, automotive, medical, cosmetic, construction, clothing, food packaging, boating, paper, graphics, and electrical industry. However, the first 5 listed here are the ones from which the vast majority of the customers are acquired. And, for the last 4 industries, at the moment there are no active customers served by Secad.

The main end-products resulting from Secad manufacturing activities are adhesive tapes, single as double-sided, zinc and aluminium tape, masking films, Tyvek tapes, medical plasters and nonwoven-fabric products employed in construction projects by market-leading companies, such as Mapei.

The latter also represents 50% of the sales. Then, 25% of the sales are made are represented by medical and cosmetic materials, while the remaining 25% of the sales consist of adhesive tapes and similar.

The board of directors is structured as follows:

● Andrea Serdi, founder, and Chief Executive Officer
● Maria Rosa Borlotti, Chief Financial Officer
● Andrea Mariani, Chief Operating Officer
● Salvatore Orlando, Chief Production officer

Besides the mentioned personnel, the company counts nine employees working in the production plant, making it thirteen employees.

Being a privately held company, the financial figures for the year are not available. However, we can affirm that the company reached around 4mil euros in total sales for 2021.

1.2 Problem analysis

Over the last years, technological advancements have reshaped the business world: from leaner, more automated supply chains to seamless marketing software managing our customer base. Technology is now a key component at every organizational level.

Regarding marketing and lead generation, "digital marketing," has become necessary for every company, regardless of the industry or sector in which it operates. A company needs to actively undertake marketing campaigns in the physical world as much as in the digital one.

What fuelled this transition, as most times is the case with the implementation of recent technologies in the business world, is a shift in consumer behaviour. The latest research shows that we spend more than three hours per day on average on technological devices, be it our phones, tablet, or computer (R. Zalani, 2021). It has a significant impact also on our professional lives, as our business decisions are influenced and sometimes dictated by the content we are exposed to online (Stringfield, 2021).

Being a second-generation family-owned business active in an extremely niche B2B market, Secad did not develop and nurture a digital presence except for a website. This professional product corresponds to the Working management and Tools "Marketing & Sales."

- **What's the problem that needs to be solved?**

The problem that this report will research and solve is the absence of a digital marketing presence.

- **Why is it a problem?**

The complete absence of a digital presence affects and damages brand image, awareness, reputation, customer engagement, relationship management, lead, and potential lead (Simplilearn,2022).

It translates to:

- a limited brand reputation
- lack of brand awareness
- lack of digital marketing strategies and campaigns.

- **Who's impacted by this?**

As a result, it impacts the organization in at least six dimensions: brand image, awareness, reputation, customer engagement, relationship management, lead generation, and potential lead.

- **When was the problem first observed?**

The problem has become apparent thanks to the growth of the digital marketing industry. The company has tried to nurture its digital image for two years by updating the website and creating a newsletter, but with no success.

- **Where is the problem observed?**

The problem is the impossibility of being found by potential customers not knowing about the organization.

- **How is the problem observed?**

The problem is observed in the missed opportunity of exploiting the internet and the digital world in general.

- **How is this problem going to be solved?**

In conclusion, the problem will be solved by creating and developing a digital identity/ image. The professional product resulting from this will consist of website renovation, implementing a newsletter, LinkedIn profile, and digital marketing campaigns.

1.3 Information gaps

We will have to fill information gaps and answer the main questions through desk research or internal consultation to understand how Secad can implement a functional digital marketing strategy in the adhesive coating sector,

Firstly, we need to understand the digital behaviour of potential customers (I).

Secondly, we need to understand the best channels to implement a digital marketing strategy (II).

Thirdly, the organisation's alignment with the goals for the digital marketing strategy has to be defined (III).

The mentioned components will represent the focus of the research question as well as sub-questions to be answered by this research.

1.4 Research questions

As a result of defining the information gaps, the research question becomes apparent and is as follows: "How will Secad implement a Digital Marketing strategy?"

From this question, two sub-questions are formulated.

Firstly, "What are the optimal channels to implement a digital marketing strategy?"
And secondly, "How can the digital marketing strategy be developed and implemented in alignment with the organisation's objectives?" These questions will be the backbone of the research, on which the research justification will be structured.

1.5 Project aim

This research aims to prove the importance of having a digital image with subsequent marketing strategy. As more people shift their digital behaviour in a way that leads them to spend more time on their devices, organisations have to find a way to raise brand awareness and lead the potential customer throughout their journey that should culminate in a sale. Below we can see the SMART method applied to the project aim.

- **Specific**

Generating new leads by:

- increasing the engagement of newsletter subscribers.
- creating a LinkedIn company profile.
- optimizing the company website.

- **Measurable**

Firstly, achieve at least a 20% opening rate for the newsletter. Secondly, gain 300 followers or more for the LinkedIn page with an average engagement rate of 3% or more. Finally, increase traffic to the website by 50% compared to the previous year. And rank in the first 2 pages of Google SERP on selected keywords.

- **Achievable**

Increasing the number of leads by optimizing the digital channels and raising brand awareness and reputation via Linkedin and newsletters.

- **Relevant**

By generating valuable content and positioning itself as a knowledge authority in the adhesive coating business, Secad will ultimately generate new leads and acquire new customers.

- **Time Bound**

The newsletters will be sent from February 2022 on a weekly basis and the Linkedin profile will be created in the same months where focus articles will be shared on a weekly basis. Optimizing the website will also start in February 2022 and will be finished by July 2022.

2. RESEARCH APPROACH

In the following paragraph, we can find the research approach per information gap. Here, three main points have been developed. One for each of the three information gaps. One for the main research question and two more for each sub-question. Here, the approach, units of analysis, data collection, data analysis, operationalization, and validity & reliability for each information gap have been developed.

2.1 Approach per information gap

The three information gaps will be filled by answering each question in an analytical fashion: through desk research. The main reference for the entire research is the book "Understanding Digital Marketing" by Damian Ryan. The student is already familiar with this book and the frameworks contained in it since it was the theoretical foundation for the course "Digital Marketing-CU34572V20", attended by the student in Y4. Gianluca successfully passed the course with a grade of 8.2.

The student will pair the knowledge and data contained in the book with extensive desk research for each point specified in the Operationalisation section following in this document (Section 2.4).

After developing and finalizing the operationalization component, the student has collected data for each key component that plays a role in developing a digital marketing strategy. The data comes from various sources to guarantee the impartiality and completeness of the data used as a base for this research assignment.

Since digital marketing is a relatively new discipline, it is still in the initial phase of adaptation in this niche industry. Nonetheless, we can affirm that consumers increasingly use innovative technologies to connect and communicate with companies (Mandal,2016).

2.2 Data collection

As mentioned above, the data has been collected from a variety of sources in the form of research, essays, case studies, books, and annual statements from different companies. For each piece of information to which the student refers in the results, and recommendations proper APA formatting has been implemented. In this way, the grading teachers have the possibility to prove the reliability and trustworthiness of the result. Similarly, in the appendix, where the student has included the desk research, APA formatting has also been chosen.

Lacking interviews or surveys, the student has made leverage only on desk research. For this reason, clarity, transparency, and trustworthiness are key backbones for the successful completion of the research assignment.

2.3 Data analysis

The student has cross analyzed the data gathered to arrive at a conclusion. In practice, this means that for every point specified in the operationalization, the student has gathered at least two research, essays, case studies, books, and annual statements from different companies. The student has chosen this approach to ensure that every hypothesis and idea would be confirmed by the data at his disposal. More focus was put on case studies and data from companies operating in the same industry and from B2B companies since Secad fulfils these parameters.

2.4 Operationalization

Since the student collected data via desk research, therefore undertaking qualitative research, operationalization should not be specified. However, in the next page we can see a tab outlining the main concepts of a digital marketing strategy. Each concept is divided into dimensions. The dimensions have been identified by completing desk research and comparing a total of fifty case studies. This will reduce the subjectivity and increase the reliability of this study. Every point in the operationalization has been studied and recommendations for each will be formulated in the recommendations section of this document.

Figure 1 Operationalization table

Concept	Dimensions	Indicators
Market Research	- Trends - Opportunities - Threats - Driving factors - Restraining factors	- Main Trends - Main takeaways from SWAT analysis - Main driving factors - Main restraining factors
Target Markets	- Medical - Cosmetic - Automotive - Building - Clothing	Main target from each sector active in the Italian market
Organizational goals	- Short-term - Long-term	- Brand Awareness - Brand Engagement - Number of leads generated

		● Customer acquisition
Strategic goals	● Website ● Newsletter ● Linkedin	● Website's Traffic ● Website's Session duration ● Website's Bounce rate ● Newsletter opening rate ● Linkedin engagement rate ● Linkedin Click-through rate

2.5 Reliability and validity

To ensure reliability and validity for this qualitative research the student used a framework defining four primary criteria (Whittemore et al., 2001):

1. Credibility (Are the results an accurate interpretation of the participants' meaning?)
2. Authenticity (Are different voices heard?)
3. Criticality (Is there a critical appraisal of all aspects of the research?)
4. Integrity (Are the investigators self-critical?)

The data collected from desk research has been retrieved from reliable sources and scientific organizations. The student has attached an appendix containing all the cited sources and those not cited but relevant to the conclusions drawn by this study. The validity of the data collected is guaranteed by the fact that all mentioned sources studied already implemented marketing strategies. The identification of factors presents in several case studies, that in all cases have conducted to a successful implementation and achievement of set goals.

An important limitation of the research is that no quantitative data has been collected by the student. The impossibility of finding professionals active in marketing willing to interview has led to undertaking exclusively qualitative research. The main limitations of this approach are two. Firstly, the impossibility to investigate the causality behind a certain phenomenon. Secondly, qualitative research is not statistically representative. Meaning that while the fifty pieces of data analysed maybe have similarities that lead to meaningful conclusions, the set of data is too small to prove unconditional validity (Radu, 2022).

The second limitation is represented by the type of data collected. In fact, the digital marketing strategies and knowledge used as a reference in this research come from different industries. We cannot affirm that said strategies will have the same impact leading to successful outcomes also for companies active in the adhesive coating sector. This is a very niche market with extremely limited exposure to the digital world. Therefore, asserting the validity of certain data is practically impossible.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Market research

In the next pages we can find the research results from the market research performed. The main trends, as well as key threats and opportunities of the market, are presented. Lastly, factors driving and restraining the adhesive coating sector are also presented.

3.1.1 Market trends

- **Changes in material consumption patterns**

Traditionally, the layer of adhesive coating was applied on materials such as aluminium, plastics, paper, zinc, or metal. With the advent of innovative technologies such as UV-curing (Swanson,2017), manufacturers now are putting increased emphasis on the employment of durable materials. This trend is expected to increase the demand in the packaging sector. (Grand View Research, 2022)

- **The medical devices sector is increasing its use of adhesives solutions**

This is one of the key market trends contributing to the growing use of adhesives and sealants (Mittal et al.,2022). In fact, the development of medical films such as breathable adhesives contribute to the demand for growth for adhesive solutions (Wong,2019).

3.1.2 Market opportunities

- **The building & construction segment and is anticipated to grow at a CAGR of 5.0% until 2030**

One of the reasons for this growth is the rapid urbanization and growing population in the APAC region. This drives significant demand for the adhesive industry since they are applied to seal joints and fill openings as well as cracks. (Matias,2021)

- **The packaging segment dominated the market, and it is likely to grow further**

The growth of this segment is to be attributed to the food and beverage sector being put under pressure to supply sustainable and durable alternatives. Similarly, the growth of the e-retail market, underlined during the pandemic, is a key driving factor (Fortune Business insights, 2021).

- **The use of hot melt adhesive products in the dashboard of automotive vehicles increasingly becoming popular across the globe**

Hot melt adhesives are thermoplastic, 100% solid and contain no solvents or water. They are made of three components: resins, polymers, and plasticizers (Bostik,2022). These adhesives are being increasingly used in the automotive sector since they guarantee reduced vibrations and offer soundproofing features (Allied Market Research,2021).

3.1.3 Market threats

- **The invasion of Ukraine by Russia led to a shortage of raw materials**

As almost half of the world's chemicals are imported from China, most companies operating in the adhesive coating industry are impacted to a degree. The limitations imposed on local supply have forced manufacturers to increase supply from offshore production sites. This led

to "incrementally higher transportation costs, longer lead times, and unreliable delivery dates" (Sutton,2022)

- **Lack of awareness of bio-based adhesives is hindering market growth**

Most adhesives are produced by employing unsustainable chemical solutions. A small portion of organizations is starting to use bio-based adhesive solutions. This could hinder the market growth. Nonetheless, the vast majority of the market is ignoring the long-term benefits of these resources for short-term monetary gains (Technavio,2022).

3.1.4 Driving factors

- **The growing use of adhesives in medical devices**

The adhesive solution is used to assemble and join distinct parts of a medical device. Most of this growing demand is due to the caution that the COVID-19 pandemic has dictated. Medical protective wear and sanitary masks are among the items that require an adhesive solution (BioSpace,2021).

- **Paper & packaging was the largest segment in the adhesives industry and accounted revenue share of over 29% in 2021**

As mentioned earlier, the food and beverage packaging industry is growing its demand for adhesives and sealants. This is due to the need for more durable and reliable packaging solutions. As the food and beverage market is expected to grow further, this will drive growth in the adhesive market (Grand View Research, 2022).

- **The rising demand for lightweight vehicles is expected to drive the adoption of products**

Adhesives are used in the automotive sector both to joint distinct parts of bodywork and to protect the latter from corrosion and extreme temperatures. With the advent of lighter vehicles, producers are replacing metal and steel parts with adhesive products (Allied Market Research,2022).

3.1.5 Restraining factors

- **Stringent Environmental Regulations Regarding VOC Emissions**

VOC refers to Volatile Organic Compounds. Being exposed to these particles results in breathing fatigue and leads to chronic diseases. Most of the adhesives employed to develop adhesive solutions are saturated with VOC. "The increasing regulatory pressure and growing public awareness regarding health issues and adverse environmental effects have lowered the demand for VOC- containing products." (Fortune Business Insights, 2021)

3.2 SWOT analysis

Following a SWOT analysis exploring the strengths, and weaknesses of the organization as well as opportunities and threats from the external environment.

Figure 2 SWOT analysis per SECAD SRL

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Market leading organizations partnerships • Wide range of coating technologies • Specialized R&D capabilities	• Lack of international partners • Limited professional network
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Food packaging market growth • Building market growth • Development of coating technologies	• Rising price of raw materials • Major market player reporting heavy losses in 2021 • Stringent regulations on emissions

3.3 Target Markets

The market considered is that of adhesive coating services. Since this market, serves several industries, the student has evaluated five different industries: medical devices, cosmetics, building, automotive, and clothing.

3.3.1 Medical device

Secad already serves this market by supplying medical plasters to Kosmeo (kosmeosolutions.com). The company is also ISO13485 certified (iso.org).
The Global Healthcare Adhesive Tapes Market is forecasted to value over US$ 35 Billion by 2027 end and record a CAGR of over 6.1% during the forecast period of 2020 to 2027 (Future Wise Research,2020).
The market growth for the medical device sector is also triggered by a health-related trend as "the prevalence of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and ischemic heart disease rises" (Transparency Market Research, 2022).

3.3.2 Cosmetic

Secad has been manufacturing a wide range of active principal plasters for Plastod (plastod.com). These are called transdermal plasters.
"The Global Transdermal Skin Patches market is expected to reach 89.5Mn, with a CAGR of 4.69% between 2022 and 2031" (National Library of Medicine, 2015).
Thanks to the development of coating technologies, "customized adhesives help advance drug delivery devices." This is because adhesive coaters are able to apply the layer of adhesive in a way that "covers" the active principle and once applied, it allows for the release of the substance through the skin. (Briefs,2013)

3.3.3 Automotive

The application of adhesives on auto bodywork reduces the weight of a vehicle, reduces stiffness, enhances performance in case of a crash, and minimizes NVH- noise, vibration, and harshness (Grand View Research, 2022).
The market is expected to grow exponentially in the coming years with the advent of lightweight vehicles, and low pollution causing vehicles is yet another factor driving the growth of the market. (Persistence Market Research,2021). The market size was valued at $4.7 billion in 2020 and is projected to reach $8.4 billion by 2030, with a CAGR of 5.9% from 2021 to 2030. (Allied Market Research,2022)

3.3.4 Building

Secad manufactures insulating mats for the global market-leading company, Mapei (mapei.com). The revenue generated for Mapei accounts for 50% of Secad's yearly revenue. Insulating mats and other flooring solutions require a layer of adhesive and are known by the name "global construction adhesive tapes."
The global construction adhesive market size was estimated at USD 9.65 billion in 2021 and is expected to reach USD 10.15 billion in 2022 (Research and markets, 2021). Moreover, adhesives are also applied in wallpapering and laminating countertops. The use of adhesives helps weatherproof the houses (Mordor Intelligence, 2021)

3.3.5 Clothing

Secad is active in this market by manufacturing adhesive-applied fabrics for Framis (framis. it). The fabric glue market is poised to expand at a CAGR of over 5% during the forecast period between 2020 and 2030. (Fabric Glue Market, 2022). The most common technology used for this adhesive application is the HOT MELT, also known as hot glue. This technology strengthens the fabric bonding and bonds well with a plethora of materials. Including the woven non-woven commonly used to apply adhesive on clothing (Fact MR,2022).

3.4 Organizational goals

The following information includes both the data retrieved by desk research and couples it with the organisation's objectives.
First, key data for the industry such as brand awareness metrics are listed. In each subparagraph, the goals set by the company are specified and deepened.

3.4.1 Short-term goals

The main goal of the organization was to generate brand awareness and brand engagement. Since Secad was not active on any social media, but only has a website that was last updated in 2019. Similarly, the company purchased a yearly subscription to an email newsletter software, Mailup (go.mailup.com). However, the last email newsletter was sent in December of 2020. For these reasons, the company's goal was to increase brand awareness and get exposure also to foreign potential partners. According to desk research, B2B organizations have different possibilities to increase brand awareness. First, let us clarify that brand awareness is "how readily customers recall or recognize your brand under various conditions" (Dolan,2022). Brand awareness is of vital importance to any organization because it is the first step in the sales process (Overskies, 2022). In order to create brand awareness, the most effective way would be to undertake consistent messaging and the

creation of brand visuals. Brand storytelling, via the company "about us" page and the social media platforms, are also proven ways to increase brand awareness (Nuss, 2020)

To measure brand awareness, we need to measure different metrics. The most major step is to analyse organic website traffic because "direct traffic comprises visitors who typed your URL into the navigation bar to arrive at your website. If a user goes directly to your website, you know they have previously been made aware of your brand" (Dolan,2022)

On the other side, brand engagement is the degree to which users engage with your brand on social media platforms, the company website, and any touchpoint that a potential customer has with an organization (Ye, Enger, 2021). That is, if and how they react, and "engage" with your messaging and content. To measure engagement a company should track "KPIs around followers, likes, retweets, comments, and other engagement elements" (Overskies,2022).

3.4.2 Long-term goals

The long-term objective for Secad is to generate leads.
Lead generation is crucial for companies, as it makes a brand more discoverable with the goal of building a long-lasting relationship and then sell through this built relationship.
"In terms of lead generation, only LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube have real value for B2B companies" (Matias, 2021). There are crucial differences to be underlined when it comes to B2B companies. In fact, the sales cycle is longer for B2B companies, you need a more detailed content strategy and a specific audience (Kovalenko,2021). The primary goal of lead generation is to create a sales pipeline by capturing and stimulating the interest of buyers in a certain product or service. It can be done online, offline, or a combination of both. It also must be pointed out that "a solid lead generation process does not only focus on acquiring leads but also puts into consideration the nurturing and customer retention strategies. In other words, it should be a holistic strategy" (Matias,2021). Lead generation nowadays is mostly done digitally (Cucu,2020).

The other long-term goal for Secad is customer acquisition. Customer acquisition is the consequence of generating leads and building brand awareness and engagement. The difference is that "While marketing aims to build awareness, acquisition looks to drive action."(Decker, 2021) On this matter, social media platforms can be a powerful tool for companies because they can generate leads at very low expenses (Ye, Enger, 2021) In order to acquire new customers is important to prioritize the segments you are targeting and evaluate the continuous feedback you gain through the different channels (Decker, 2021). The starting point to generate leads and convert them into customers, the most effective tools are content marketing, social media activity and email marketing (Nuss,2020). Content marketing is "a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action" (Content Marketing Institute, 2021). Whereas email marketing is "a form of marketing that can make the customers on your email list aware of new products, discounts, and other services" (Mailchimp,2022).

3.5 Strategic goals

Here, the specific channels to reach the specific objectives mentioned under 3.3 are listed. These channels have been aligned with the sector's averages for customer acquisition and lead generation. Being a niche market that serves specific purposes, the companies operating in this niche have a limited number of partners, each of which generates substantial revenue for the business.

3.5.1 Website

Based on desk research and internal consultation, one of the main goals for Secad is to optimize and improve the company website- www.secad.it-. and its page loading speed. Your website is the digital hub of your organization and is the only piece of property on the internet over which you have full control (Ryan, 2021). By driving traffic to the website, Secad can increase its chance of generating leads and acquiring new customers - its long-term goals. This happens because "The number of visitors to your website becomes the number of opportunities your business has at giving an impression, generating qualified leads, sharing your brand and building relationships" (Hooked Marketing, 2022). An optimal strategy to increase traffic to your website is keyword optimization. This consist of populating your website with words or phrases that your potential customer inserts in the search query. "Visitors that reach your site using very specific keywords in their search queries are likely to be more educated about their problem and needs, and further along in the buyer journey" (Nuss, 2020).

The second is to optimize for session duration. The longer a user stays on your website, the more likely she or he is to have found relevant information that he or she will value. It is proven that to increase session duration, Secad can add internal links, as well as backlinks and optimize for all devices (Fitzgerald,2021). Another goal for the organization is to reduce the bounce rate. Bounce rate is "the percentage of people who land on a page on your website, then leave. They do not click on anything else or visit a second page on the site" (Zantal-wiener, 2022). To reduce bounce rate Secad can optimize the age loading peed and set up A/B tests to understand which solution works better for an Interface (Tielemann, 2021). Reasons that could trigger a high bounce rate, which is higher than 50% (Tielemann, 2021), Secad can "avoid disruptions that might hurt the user experience and determine which keywords this page ranks for — and if your content sufficiently covers those topics" (Cheng,2021)

3.5.2 Email newsletter

Email marketing in the form of newsletters is still a crucial part of the customer acquisition journey. Today, "40 per cent of B2B marketers say email newsletters are most critical to their content marketing success, and 73% of millennials prefer communications from businesses to come via email" (Riserbato, 2022). There is more, as 31% of B2B marketers say that email newsletters are the most effective tool to nurture leads (Chaffey,2022). Email marketing also yields the highest return on investment (ROI) among all marketing tools as "email generates $42 for every $1 spent, which is an astounding 4,200% ROI, making it one of the most effective options available" (Kirsch,2022). An important metric for email marketing is the open rate. That is what portion of the users that received the newsletter went on and read said email. The average email open rate for all industries is 21.33% (Mailchimp,2022). If your open rate falls way below this number, there are proven ways to improve. Firstly, an organization can assess diverse types of headlines and see which one

works best. (Kirsch,2022). Secondly, to increase the open rate an organization should segment its users' list as much as possible. By dividing the users into distinct groups by location, age, and ethnicity, an organization can create more targeted and relevant content as well as adjust the tone of voice and vocabulary used (Kirsch,2022).

3.5.3 Linkedin

Linkedin is a social media platform that allows its user to network and connect with different professionals from all around the world. Linkedin is ideal for companies operating in manufacturing niche markets as it enables a company to highly target the target of its paid advertising and content (Fehr,2021). The company is growing exponentially with the rise of personal branding and Linkedin it is now the number one choice for companies operating in B2B markets, like Secad (Henderson,2019). What is important to measure on Linkedin is both engagement rate and click-through rate. Engagement rate is the number of users that have seen your content and have either reacted, commented, or shared said content (Newberry,2022). The average engagement rate for sponsored posts on Linkedin is between 0,5% and 1%. (Shaun,2022). Most organizations struggle to raise the percentage above 1 %. However, there are several proven techniques to achieve this. Using more images and including a clear call-to-action (CTA) have proven to boost engagement for small and medium accounts (Cucu,2022). Also, companies that post at least twice a week on Linkedin have seen a 100% increase in engagement rate (Design Wizards, 2021). Similarly, click-through rate (CTR) is the number of users that click on your content, be it a video, an article, or a short-form post. The average CTR on Linkedin across all industries is 4,95% (Social status, 2021).

4. CONCLUSION

Secad is a B2B organization offering adhesive coating services. In order to diversify its lead generation channels and increase brand awareness, the company aims to develop and implement a digital marketing strategy.

In order to do so, the trends, opportunities, threats, and main factors influencing the market have been identified. Target markets to approach as well as optimal digital channels and key metrics to monitor have been identified.

To answer the first sub-question, "What are the optimal channels to implement a digital marketing strategy?" Different channels have been analysed. Obtaining coherent results from desk research.

Firstly, the website is the company's hub and most important channel when it comes to digital marketing. specific website metrics and techniques to increase website traffic will help generate brand awareness. In fact, by optimizing the website through keyword implementation and device optimization, the company will gain exposure, therefore building awareness.

Secondly, Linkedin has been identified as the ideal digital channel to generate leads. Research showed that Linkedin yields the best return on investments and generates more leads for B2B niche organizations when compared to Youtube and Twitter.

Finally, email marketing has been identified as the most effective channel. However, without a polished and efficient website that serves its purpose of guiding users, an email newsletter is almost pointless. By integrating this channel into its digital marketing strategy, the company will be able to take advantage of the email database at its disposal. In its database, Secad has both existing clients and potential customers. By creating a weekly newsletter, the company will both be able to manage its relationship with existing clients. In this way, remaining top of mind and nurturing brand reputation. On the other hand, for potential clients, a weekly newsletter will increase and nurture brand awareness, the first step of the customer funnel.

The second sub-question was "How can the digital marketing strategy be developed and implemented in alignment with the organisation's objectives?"

By defining the company's objective, backed by desk research, we are able to define the steps to be taken in terms of money and time available to spend.

The company's primary objective is to generate brand awareness and brand engagement. The company aims to do so by generating value content and setting a brand identity. Brand visuals, colours, palette, and tone of voice have been identified through desk research as the main factors defining brand identity.
The long-term goals for the organization are to generate leads and acquire new customers. It aims to do so by creating LinkedIn campaigns and relevant email marketing campaigns.

Since desk research data shows that email marketing is the channel with the highest ROI, a company with a limited budget, like SECAD, should focus on this channel.
Similarly, research shows that LinkedIn is the highest lead generation platform for niche organizations.
Lastly, thanks to desk research and literature research we are able to answer the main question of this research: "How will Secad implement a Digital Marketing strategy?"

The company will do so by optimizing both the content and structure of the website, creating a company profile on LinkedIn to generate new leads, and creating weekly newsletters. Desk research showed how these factors raise the chance of generating leads and acquiring new customers. In conclusion, thanks to this research the current state of the adhesive coating market has been investigated. As well as the target markets for which Secad will generate content, and the best channel to use to implement a successful digital marketing strategy. Furthermore, the key metrics to be monitored for each channel have been identified. Finally, data over the industry average for the selected metrics and developed strategies on how improve these metrics if needed have been gathered.
The information gathered will be presented in the professional product. This will consist of a digital marketing plan. Here, suggestions on how optimize the website, create a LinkedIn company profile, and create newsletter campaigns can be found.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are four measures that can be taken by the organization to successfully create a digital presence and generate leads to acquire new customers. All of this recommendation are formulated to achieve the company's objective: raising brand awareness.

1. Optimizing the website

Your website is the digital hub of our organization. Every piece of content regardless of the channel chosen will redirect users to our website. For this reason, it is important to optimize the website for SERP - Search Engine Result Pages - ranking that for your users. To do this, Secad will need to restructure its content and target specific keywords on different pages of its website. The company also needs to audit the content present at the moment and how it is structured in order to improve it and provide useful and relevant information. Since the company operates in a knowledge-intensive market, it needs to offer timely and relevant content covering distinct aspects of its customer's needs and desires. At the moment, the website is available in English, Italian, Spanish, French, and Russian. The optimized website will be available in these languages, except for Russian.

2. Creating a LinkedIn company profile

Besides optimizing the website, Secad should create a company page on the social platform LinkedIn. The reason the company should do so is to be found in the high concentration of B2B companies operating on this platform. LinkedIn allows users to effectively target specific markets, such as the medical device market or the cosmetics market. The recommendation is to create a content creation calendar before creating the page with the content for at least the first two months. During this period, the company can try out several types of content such as video, carousel, presentations, white paper, articles, and photos. Then it will have to "listen" to the platform. This means analysing and spotting trends in how each type of content performs and repurposing more of the content that performs better. Another recommendation is to include also social proof on the LinkedIn page. Since the company manufactures goods for market-leading companies with a strong earned credibility, Secad should make leverage this credibility and ask for references to the main companies it serves such as Mapei or Plastod. The LinkedIn company profile and its content will be in English with the sporadic creation of content in both Italian and English.

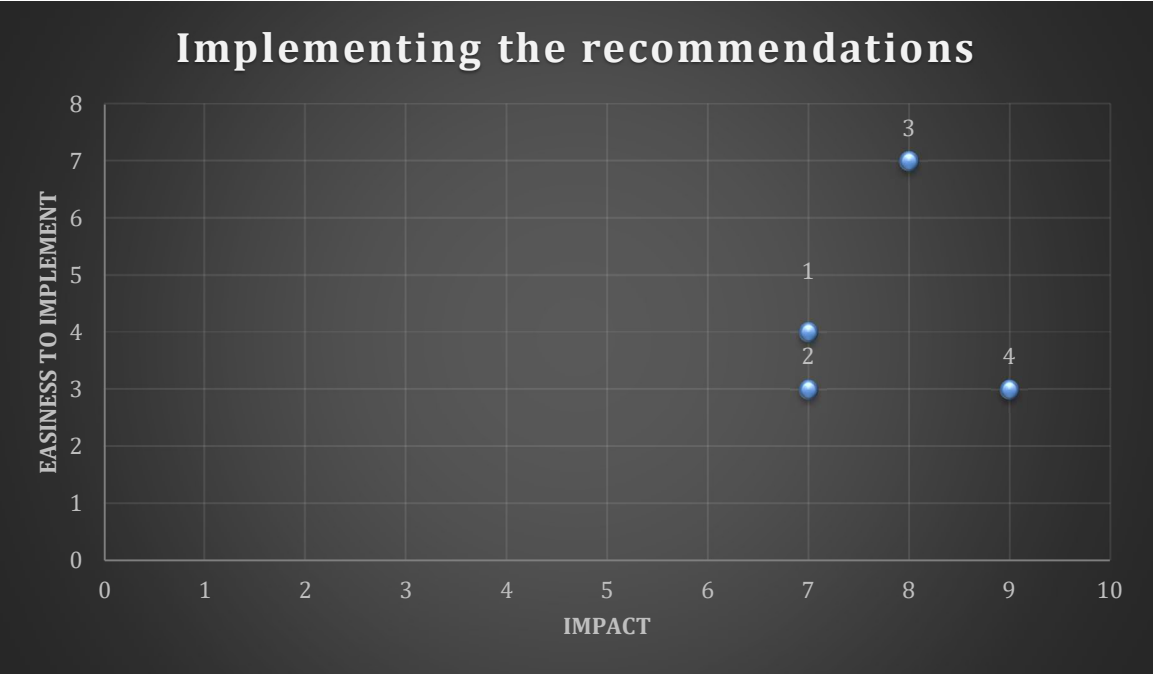## 3. Creating an email newsletter

The third recommendation is to implement a weekly newsletter that will be sent on the same weekday and time over a prolonged period of time. For this newsletter, a content creation schedule should be developed as well. To create and nurture brand awareness the company should identify customer needs. The company can send useful, applicable information on how to fulfil these needs. Secad should also build expertise, trust, and authority before the eyes of its users through the content purposed in its newsletters. Since the B2B sales funnel takes on average 180 days, the company should be able to nurture the relationship for this

period of time. The company has already purchased a software, Mailup. And, has at its disposal an email database with over two thousand foreign business contacts and over two hundred contacts for the Italian market, made of high-intent leads. Making leverage on these lists can help the company acquire new customers. The newsletters will be customized based on the industry the users are active in. For instance, certain content will only be sent to companies active in a certain industry. For example, an article on the uniqueness of silicone tapes for auto bodywork will only be sent to companies active in the automotive industry. In no case, the email addresses in the national database and the addresses in the international emails database will receive the same content. This will be customized and differentiated. The newsletters for the national company email addresses will be written Italian. Logically, the newsletters for foreign companies will be written in English.

4. Monitoring and analysing results for content optimization

It is crucial that during the first 8 weeks, at least, the company monitors and analyses the results of its campaign. Trust is built over time, especially for B2B organizations that undertake costly projects. Secad operates in a relatively expensive business. This means that before approaching a company, a potential buyer weighs in all of the factors influencing its choice. Exposure and visibility online do not happen overnight, even more so for small and medium enterprises. It is important to listen to the feedback and test as much as possible at the beginning of this strategy. Continuously optimizing is what can have influence between failing in the online world by wasting money and succeeding by offering valuable content to the right audience.

Figure 2. Impact and easiness to implement per recommendation

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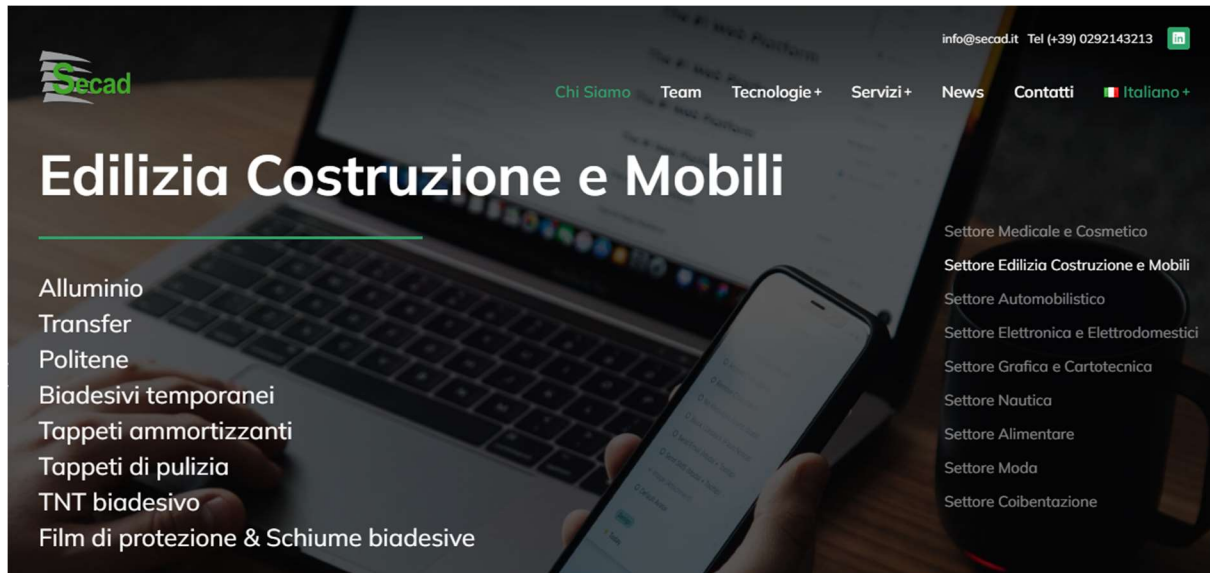- Shaun, S. (2022b, mei 11). *B2B Brand Awareness: The Complete Guide
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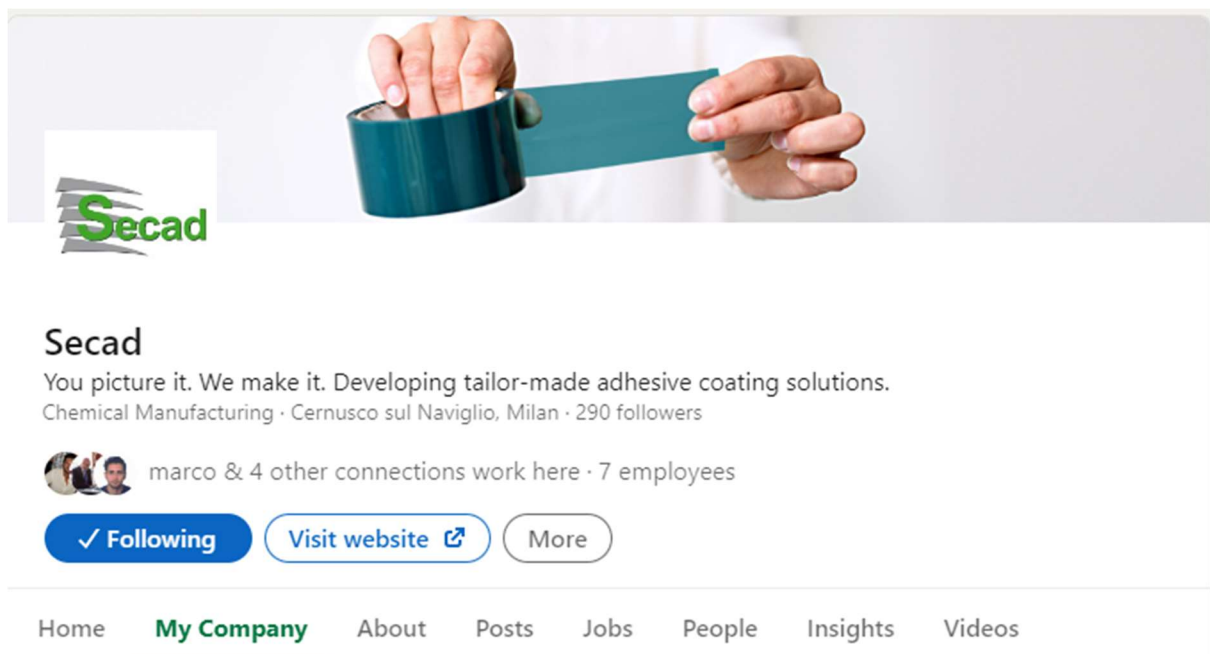
APPENDICES

In this section the visuals of the home page, social media posts, budget and content schedule can be found.

Appendix 1: Secad's new website

Appendix 2: Secad's Linkedin profile

Appendix 3: Secad's Linkedin about section

| Home | My Company | **About** | Posts | Jobs | People | Insights | Videos |

Overview

Taking pride in developing tailor-made coating solutions for organizations operating in a plethora of industries.

By combining our long experience with dedicated R&D, we help companies of every size make their ideas a reality.

We like to think of partners rather than customers.

Building a network of trusted, committed organizations to help increase the value, use, and applications of their adhesive solutions.

Reaching synergy is our ultimate goal by collaborating with organizations that give us the possibility to strengthen our knowledge of the world of adhesive solutions.

You picture it. We make it.

Manufacturers of advanced customer-specific single and double-sided adhesive tapes solutions with applications in the industrial, medical, cosmetic, and several more fields.

What we offer:
1. Research and development of customer needs for adhesive services on a wide range of materials.
2. UV-curable-based solutions.
3. Solvent-based solutions.
4. Deep knowledge and understanding of the adhesive services industry.
5. A state of earth laboratory to develop try and error processes for your needs.

...And who knows, maybe the solution you need!

Appendix 4: Secad's Linkedin sample article

Secad
290 followers
2w • Edited • 🌐

Selecting the right adhesive solution for your business can be a long, hard process.

But it doesn't have to be.   ...see more

A 7 steps guide to finding the adhesive solution you need

Secad on LinkedIn • 4 min read

1. On what material will you apply the adhesive solution? With the term adhesive coating, we indic...

Applicazioni della spalmatura adesiva nell'industria tessile

Al servizio del settore tessile un capo d'abbigliamento per volta

L'industria tessile fa ampio uso di servizi di spalmatura e laminazione. Ciò è possibile anche grazie al crescente utilizzo di resine sintetiche negli indumenti.

Appendix 6: Secad's newsletter statistics

venerdì 2022-05-27 17:00 2 invii	7 caratteristiche dei nastri adesivi in alluminio e come possono aiutarti ne... ID 81 Tag -	**238** 97,9% ⬇ Destinatari	**66** 28,33% ⬇ Report invio	**5** 2,15%
venerdì 2022-05-27 17:00 1 invii	7 features of aluminium tapes and how it can help you in your projects ID 79 Tag -	**2.103** 82,98%	**363** 20,8%	**26** 1,49%
venerdì 2022-05-20 17:00 2 invii	Una guida su come facilitare lo sviluppo di una soluzione adesiva ID 78 Tag -	**235** 99,57%	**73** 31,2%	**2** 0,85%
giovedì 2022-05-19 17:01 2 invii	Guide: How to make the process of developing a tailor-made adhesive sol... ID 77 Tag -	**2.309** 84,19%	**416** 21,4%	**19** 0,98%
giovedì 2022-05-12 17:00 2 invii	Adhesive coating applications in the textile industry ID 75 Tag -	**1.177** 98,98%	**306** 26,27%	**12** 1,03%
giovedì 2022-05-12 17:00 2 invii	Applicazioni della spalmatura adesiva nell'industria tessile ID 76 Tag -	**239** 99,58%	**68** 28,57%	**2** 0,84%

Appendix 7: Secad's Linkedin ad campaign

Accounts 1 selected ✕	Campaign Groups 6 total campaign groups	Campaigns 1 selected ✕	Ads 1 total ad

Create ▾ 🗑   Performance Chart | Demographics | Flowchart | Export

Search by name or ID   Filters (1) ▾   Columns: Performance ▾   Breakdown ▾   Time range: 4/1/2022 - 6/4/2022 ▾

Ad Name ⇅	Impressions ⇅	Clicks ⇅	Average CTR ⇅	Bid ⇅	Average CPM ⇅	Average CPC
1 ad	7,325	157	2.14%	-	$14.83	$0.69
Secad is now the sole third-party manufacturer of SSA - Soft Skin adhesives in Italy and one of very few in Europe! But what are SSA? Soft Skin adhesives are ••• Creative name: 170545854 Campaign: Boost_Post_Website Visits_Apr 21, 2022, 12:24:55 Creative ID: 170545854 · Sponsored Content · Single Image	7,325	157	2.14%	-	$14.83	$0.69

Appendix 8: Secad's Google ads campaign