



‘Increasing customer loyalty with the strategic use of integrated marketing communications to stimulate repeat purchases’

Author Kristin Katharina Wilms

Client NigelMacDonald Clinics

First reader Nienke Smit

Second reader Trienke Drijfhout- Roeters

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Executive Summary

NigelMacDonald Clinics is a company operating in the beauty and aesthetic industry in the city of Groningen. The main goals of the company are to establish themselves as Groningen's leading business in their sector, to communicate their exclusivity and to maintain cost effectiveness.

Benefits of customer loyalty for NigelMacDonald Clinics

The report entitled 'Increasing customer loyalty with the strategic use of integrated marketing communications to stimulate repeat purchases' is designed to aid NigelMacDonald Clinics in building customer loyalty among existing customers by designing a targeted approach towards customers and adjusting marketing and communication efforts in order to reach their maximum potential.

The following steps were required by the company in order to solve the existent marketing and communication issue:

- An in- depth analysis of the target group
- A set of guidelines in the form of theoretical concepts on how customer loyalty is established throughout the interaction with the customer
- A set of guideline characteristics of the desired target group, the group that the current target group should be transformed into
- A description of the areas of improvement and recommendations and advice on how to improve those in order to ease the way for a transformation of the target group
- A plan of action in the form of a one year Marketing and Communication Plan

After reviewing relevant theoretical concepts in order to form a basis on how to carry out research into the target group, their demographics, general and communication specifics and preferences, as well as their buying and purchasing behaviour, their overall satisfaction with the company and therefore the resulting degree of customer loyalty were determined.

Three main outcomes were detected:

- The level of customer loyalty is low
- The company does have some knowledge about their target group, however this needs to be extended and specified
- The company's foundation of their marketing and communication efforts is good, however they need to be more targeted, centralised and effectualised in order to reach their full potential

The outcomes were then analysed in great detail and translated into efficient recommendation concepts and an efficient advice for the client.

These four recommendation concepts include:

- ***Adjusting to customer general and communication preferences***

Taking the analysed general and communication preferences of the target group into consideration and adjusting the communication strategy, the content and channels accordingly.

- ***Developing a push strategy***

Developing a push strategy when approaching and informing customers, meaning that information is given to the customer, rather than just provided and that stimuli are created for the customer as a motivation to access this information.

- ***Internationalisation and targeting of specific groups***

Taking into consideration the degree of internationalisation of the setting and the target group and adjusting accordingly. Taking into consideration the main demographic groups of the setting and targeting those.

- ***Making use of Integrated Marketing Communications and a one year Marketing and Communications Plan***

Translating the results of the research and the recommendations into a one year Marketing and Communications Plan on the basis of Integrated Marketing Communications.

These concepts will be evaluated further in this report and will be presented with specific examples and suggestions. The overall outcome of the research and the advice and recommendations will be translated into a plan of action in the form of a one year Marketing and Communication Plan. This plan will operationalise the given concepts in order to form a targeted approach towards the target group and increase the bond with customers and therefore the level of customer loyalty within the course of one year.

1. Project Context

NigelMacDonald Clinics is a dutch company based in Groningen, operating in the beauty, aesthetic and health industry, providing a wide range of products and treatments. The clinic has been successful in generating a large number of sales and has managed to become one of the city's most popular establishments in its operating sector. The company was founded in 2013 and reached its break- even point only a year later, in 2014.

The company's target market consists mainly of women between the ages of 20 and 55, however the company does have some younger and a few older customers. Clients come from various cultural backgrounds. Nigel MacDonald states that approximately 80% of the company's clients are from the Netherlands, however the remaining 20% come from various, mainly European countries. However, he states that he also has a few clients from the US. European clients, according to Mr. MacDonald come mainly from Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom and Eastern European countries.

The main issue NigelMacDonald Clinics is facing is a low level of customer loyalty. Customers return to the clinic for a short period of time, as they often purchase package deals, e.g. five treatments for a reduced price, however do not return after they have finished the last treatment contained in the package. The package deals are mainly sold by the platform Groupon, a platform with the intention of finding the best value for money deals for customers. Nigel MacDonald states that purchases have increased by approximately 40% since the company started using Groupon.

NigelMacDonald Clinics has not been able to clearly define factors causing the lack of customer loyalty, however state that the marketing and communication efforts of the company have not reached their full potential and that overall marketing operations have to be improved. The company desires aid in developing a one year external Marketing and Communication Plan in order to engage clients and build customer loyalty. Customer loyalty guarantees a returning customer as he favours the company and their products over those of competitors, advertises the company to others and is more likely to purchase other products of the company in favour.

2. Organisational Context

NigelMacDonald Clinics was founded on the 1st of February 2013 in Groningen by Nigel MacDonald and Daan Zethoven. The owner, Nigel MacDonald, owned a salon called 'NigelMacDonald Beauty Salon' located at the fishmarket in Groningen before. He had therefore already been able to get an insight into the beauty business, establish his name in the Groningen beauty industry and maintain a few customers, who were satisfied with the business. The salon was opened in 2011 and the Salon and Clinic coexisted for approximately one year, selling different treatments, before the equipment and services of the Salon were moved into the Clinic.

The company can be categorised as a small company, with ten employees and five interns currently employed. The company is located in a very convenient location in the city centre of Groningen, in close proximity to the shopping streets and the university library. Exposure is therefore at a maximum level as many people and especially people belonging to the company's target group pass the clinic every day.

2.1 The brand 'NigelMacDonald' and its products

NigelMacDonald Clinics has a strong brand identity and is one of the most popular companies of its kind in the Groningen area with a large and continuously growing customer base. NigelMacDonald Clinics can be classified as a luxurious beauty brand offering excellent and personalised experiences to its customers. The company's logo as well as its overall visual presence on its website and other online platforms reflect the company's image accurately. In addition, one of the main focus areas of the company is to keep prices low in order to maintain competitive advantages. NigelMacDonald Clinics are both proactive and reactive, taking into consideration ever changing market trends and customer preferences and continuously offering the newest treatments available on the market. Current treatments include IPL Laser Hair Removal, Teeth Whitening, Microdermabrasion and Massages.

2.2 Vision and mission

The company's vision is to, within the next years, become Groningen's leading beauty specialist which best understands and reacts to its customers continuously changing demands and needs. Their mission is to offer the highest quality, most innovative and best value- effective products and treatments, by continuously carrying out research on those, as well as their target group.

2.3 Current marketing and communication operations

The company does not have a clearly formulated marketing or communication strategy. Their main focus lies in informing their target audience about new services and products available and communicating the company's main advantages over their competitors, such as their exclusivity, personal contact with the customer and cost- effectiveness. NigelMacDonald Clinics mainly communicate and present themselves through their website. Most customers book their appointments online, which informs them indirectly about what is on offer. Customers can furthermore subscribe to a newsletter which is regularly sent out via email, providing information about new deals, packages, treatments and events. Clients of NigelMacDonald Clinics are automatically registered to receive the newsletter, however can unsubscribe at any time. Currently, approximately 3000 individuals are subscribed to the newsletter, however, there are no records of how many people read it.

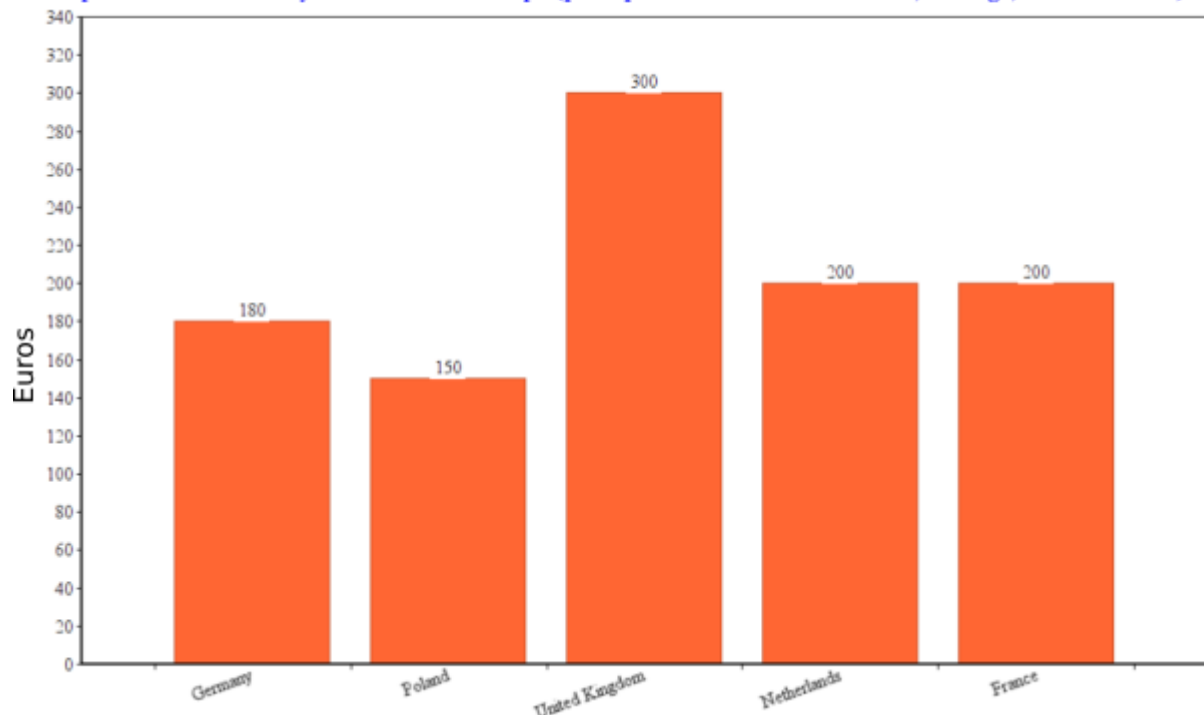
NigelMacDonald Clinics is present on Facebook and currently has about 240 friends. They post regular updates and visuals about treatments and events, thus providing valuable conversation to the customer. However, the profile cannot be liked, but only added as a friend. This could impose restrictions, as some people might not feel eligible to add the business as a friend. NigelMacDonald Clinics is currently not present on LinkedIn, Twitter or Instagram.

In summary, the current communication efforts are extensive, however a clear marketing and communication strategy has to be formulated.

2.4 The international setting of the company

Nigel MacDonald Clinics is operating in a very international setting as the city of Groningen is home to a large number of students from various cultural backgrounds. However, the company has not fully adjusted to this international diversity yet. Both their website and newsletter are currently only available in Dutch, making it difficult for foreign customers to understand the content. This is unfortunate, as the conditions for success in the beauty and health industry are excellent due to similar trends in most European countries. Thus, international customers can purchase most of the treatments they have been used to at home in Dutch beauty centres, such as NigelMacDonald Clinics (D.J. Goldberg, 2012). Prices vary between the European countries, however are low in the Netherlands, thus facilitating business (see graph)(WhatClinic, 2016).

Graphic 1- Cost of beauty treatments in Europe (price per IPL Laser hair removal, full legs, one treatment)



Graphic 2- Company specific deficits

Three deficits of the company can be determined:

- 1** The company seeks to build customer awareness by defining the profile of the loyal customer (Beard, 2014) and comparing it with their current customer base in order to highlight areas for improvement.
- 2** The company seeks to get an insight into how customer loyalty is being created through interaction with the customer with regards to the 'buying-decision- process model' (Engel, Blackwell, Kollat, 1968).
- 3** Further, as the company's marketing and communication processes have been of an insufficient standard, the company seeks to receive recommendations on how to improve in this area by implementing the concept of 'Integrated Marketing Communications' into a one- year external marketing and communication plan.

Those specific deficits determine three communication fields/ areas in which the company seeks improvement:

Graphic 3- Communication deficit areas

Three communication fields/ areas in which the company has a deficit:	
1	External Communication, Public Relations - informing and engaging customers
2	Research - on characteristics and preferences of current target group and desired target group
3	Advertising and Communications- effective advertising and communication efforts in order to build customer loyalty

2.5 Practical problem, Knowledge problem and Communication Problem

The practical problem of the company can be described as the lack of returning customers or customers only returning for the amount of treatments and services contained in their package deals. This impacts the company on many levels, but mainly the company's financial success. Treatment packages are often sold for a lower price, thus the company is still making profit, however not as much as if customers would return and buy regular priced treatments. Also returning, loyal customers would favour the company over their competition and therefore mainly buy from them. They would further be likely to inform friends and acquaintances about the services or be engaged in online and social media conversations and would thus solicit new customers for the company.

The knowledge problem of NigelMacDonald's Clinics is that they are unaware what exactly is causing this lack of customer loyalty and they do not know how to solve it. They state that marketing and communication efforts have not reached their full potential and have realised that there is a link to the problem, however they have not specifically been able to determine details.

As stated previously, marketing and communication efforts are closely interrelated with customer loyalty and the company have realised this and have recognised the need to improve their

marketing and communication operations and therefore require an in- depth analysis of those, as well as an implementation in form of a one year Marketing and Communication Plan. Thus, the marketing and communication problem of the company is that their efforts have not reached full potential and have not been efficient enough to create customer loyalty. Another communication problem would be that the company has failed to fully adapt to their international environment and have failed to fully integrate international clients, by for instance providing their communication and marketing material in English.

2.6 The phase of the intervention cycle

This research project follows a practice- oriented approach and will follow the intervention cycle of Verschuuren& Doorewaard (2010).

This project will commence at the current stage of the company, the ‘Diagnosis’ stage, the second stage of the cycle, and will reach into the ‘Design’ stage. The company currently find themselves in the ‘Diagnosis’ stage. ‘ The problem has been identified and acknowledged by all stakeholders’ (Verschuuren& Doorewaard, 2010) as a lack of customer loyalty due to the insufficient marketing and communication efforts of the company. In this stage ‘the background and the causes for the problem can be examined’, which will be done in form of more in- depth research into the target group, their characteristics and preferences and NigelMacDonald Clinics communication and marketing efforts in order to highlight consistencies and inconsistencies and determine the root, the underlying factors and the details of the problem. This report then aims at completing this stage and making a transition into the ‘Design’ stage. However, this transition can only be made if ‘the reason for the problem’ is understood fully. The ‘Design’ stage is the stage in which the results from the previous two stages, the ‘Problem Analysis’ stage and the ‘Diagnosis’ stage are used in order to create an intervention plan. The intervention plan in this project will be a, desired by the company, one year marketing and communications plan.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework and research perspective have been designed on the basis of a predefined set of research questions (see appendix). The theoretical framework will serve as a foundation for the following empirical field research and will be a guideline for designing the questionnaires used in the field research. It will then further be used to analyse the results of the empirical research. There are three relevant theories and concepts mentioned in the theoretical framework; the profile of the loyal customer, the buying- decision process and the concept of Integrated Marketing Communications. Those are correlated to the client's practical, knowledge and communication and marketing problem and to the research objective. The profile of the loyal customer needs to be designed in order to present the result of the desired transformation of the current target group and represents therefore the desired target group. Customer loyalty however can only be achieved if good and relevant customer service is provided throughout all interaction stages with the customer. Those stages of interaction are described in more detail in the buying-decision process model. The last theoretical concept mentioned, Integrated Marketing Communications, is mainly relevant for the advice section and therefore the design of the 1- year Marketing and Communication Plan as required by the client.

3.1 The importance of customer loyalty

According to Beard (2014), achieving customer loyalty is one of the key points to success. Customer loyalty is achieved, when a customer continues repurchasing products or services from the company and favours the company over others. Benefits of customer loyalty include guaranteed sales and a positive association with the brand, which is communicated to others (Kotler et al., 1999). Thus customer loyalty functions as an indirect form of advertising by using word-of- mouth. This can be seen as one of the most effective forms of advertising as individuals highly rely on the opinion of others in pre- purchasing processes (Kotler et al., 1999) . However, efficient and continuous marketing efforts need to be retained in order to maintain customer loyalty.

According to an Accenture Global Customer satisfaction report (Beard 2014), a common reason preventing customers from purchasing or repurchasing a product or service is an overall poor

quality of customer service, which can occur in any stage of the purchasing cycle. Further, loyal customers are more likely to be influenced by the marketing efforts of the company as they have positive brand associations. (J. Novo, N.D.)

It has been identified clearly that NigelMacDonald Clinics demonstrate a lack of customer loyalty. Researching the profile of the loyal customer helps in drawing a comparison between NigelMacDonald's current customer base and their desired customer base and helps in highlighting areas for improvement. Only when good customer service in relation to one's needs and wants is perceived throughout the whole interaction with the company, the resulting loyalty is seen as a motivation in favour of the company. (Basu, Dick, 1994)

3.2 A profile of the loyal customer

The profile of the loyal customer serves as a guideline for NigelMacDonald on how they would like the transformation of their current target group to their desired target group to proceed.

Graphic 4- Characteristics of a loyal customer

<p>Characteristics of a loyal customer According to Beard (2013)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - makes repeated purchases from the company he is loyal to - refuses to buy competitors products - is less price sensitive than others - will go out of his way to purchase products or services from the company he is loyal to - will highly and continuously recommend the company he is loyal to to others, either directly or indirectly - is likely to purchase other products from the same company

3.3 The buying- decision process

NigelMacDonald Clinics would like to increase customer loyalty, however does not know how this can be achieved. An effective model for structuring efforts in doing so into different stages of the interaction process with the customer is the hereunder explained 'buying- decision process model'. Only through an effective creation and maintaining of customer satisfaction throughout this whole process the profile of the loyal customer as described by Beard (2013) can be achieved.

The 'buying- decision process model' (Engel, Blackwell, Kollat, 1968) describes the different stages a customer goes through when purchasing a product or service.

Graphic 5- Stages buying- decision process



The 'buying- decision process model' consists of five stages. In the 'problem/ need recognition' stage the individual recognises that he has a certain need, which can be evoked either by 'internal stimuli', such as hunger or 'external stimuli', such as any type of advertising (Jha, Keller, Kotler& Koshy, 2009). It is essential for companies, such as NigelMacDonald Clinics, to carry out different types of advertising in order to reach people with different communication preferences at any given time. In the 'information search' stage the individual proceeds to research any information he can find about the product or service he desires. A company should have enough information available for the individual in order to acquire more knowledge about products and services. Information should be easily accessible and formulated clearly. In the 'evaluation of alternatives' stage, the individual compares products from different companies and evaluates their benefits. It is essential for a company to clearly communicate the unique selling point of both their product or service as well as the company itself. In the 'purchase decision' stage the actual purchase of the product takes place. However, a purchase can be hindered by two factors; negative feedback from others or difficulties in purchasing the product (Jha, Keller, Kotler& Koshy, 2009). Companies should continuously steer their efforts into building a favourable brand image and positive

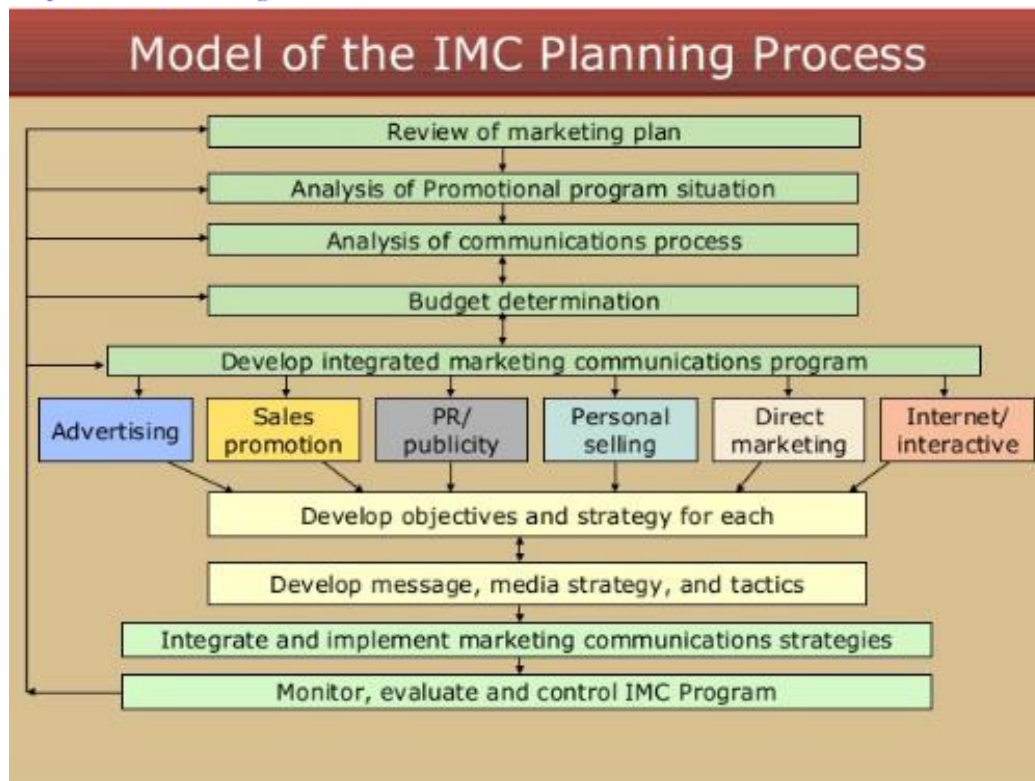
associations with the brand. The last stage entitled 'post- purchase behaviour' is the most crucial one in regards to building brand loyalty. If a customer is satisfied with the product or service, as well as any other aspects crucial in the process, such as efficient advertising, a sufficient amount of easily available information as well as good customer service and aftercare he is more likely to repurchase the same or another product by the company and less likely to purchase from competitors. Further, he is likely to recommend the services of the company to friends and acquaintances, thus customer loyalty has been created. The buying- decision process model serves as a guideline for using strategic marketing and communication efforts in order to transform the current, disloyal customer base of NigelMacDonald Clinics into the desired, loyal customer group by increasing customer satisfaction through the whole interaction process and therefore changing the customer's buying and purchasing behaviour. The buying- decision process is an ongoing process. An individual will go through all stages of the process again when purchasing a product or service, thus attention to good customer service and care in every stage, even if it is a repeated process is crucial. (Sheth, Venkatesan, 1968)

3.4 IMC Plan

As previously stated NigelMacDonald Clinics wishes to create customer loyalty and therefore stimulate repeat purchases. An effective plan has to be drawn up in order to put theories and concepts researched into action.

One of the most efficient tools is the 'Integrated Marketing Communications Plan'. IMC is 'an approach to achieving the objectives of a marketing campaign, through a well coordinated use of different promotional methods that are intended to reinforce each other'. (Business Dictionary, N.D.).

Graphic 6- IMC Planning Process



An effective IMC plan is a key component in both using customer loyalty for a successful implementation as well as creating customer loyalty through a successful implementation. The presented model of the 'IMC Planning Process' demonstrates the different steps of the IMC plan.

Firstly, the existing marketing plan of the company needs to be reviewed. Both the company's promotional programme situation, as well as the communications operations and processes need to be analysed, before determining a budget for IMC. The IMC program is integrated in the next step.

A clear objective and strategy need to be developed for each component of the IMC plan. Further, an effective, well chosen message needs to be formulated for each component along with a clear tactical plan and a well considered media strategy. Those strategies then need to be integrated and implemented within a planned period of time. Operations need to be closely monitored, evaluated and adjusted if necessary (Vaniyawala, 2014).

In conclusion one can say that customer loyalty is a definite factor of success to the company and creates a solid base for implementing an efficient Marketing and Communication Plan. An IMC

plan is an efficient tool for engaging the customer and building customer loyalty as well as stimulating repeat purchases. The buying- decision process helps in structuring communication and marketing efforts by demonstrating areas of emphasis and focus throughout the interaction process with the customer. (P. Bowden, 1998)

Graphic 7- IMC program components

Components of the IMC program include:

- advertising (traditional advertising, digital advertising, social media advertising)
- sales promotion (promotional offers)
- PR, publicity (corporate & brand PR)
- personal selling (direct selling, telephone selling, face-to-face selling)
- direct marketing (face-to-face marketing)
- events
- customer service activities

Thus one can say that all concepts mentioned influence each other both directly and indirectly and the solving of the client's goal as well as the fulfillment of the ideal situation and the client's mission can only be achieved by a consistent consideration and use of those. The profile of the loyal customer (Beard, 2013) represents the overall goal and the main guideline. However, this achievement of customer loyalty needs to be implemented step by step and individually for each customer. The buying- decision process model therefore represents the more detailed and structured every day guidelines for this implementation. It is important to note that the creating and maintaining of customer loyalty and therefore all of the concepts mentioned are ongoing processes. Customer loyalty needs to be continuously nurtured and fed into for as long as customer loyalty of a certain customer is desired. Thus, one should never take customer loyalty for granted (Swinscoe, 2012). The Integrated Marketing Communications plan helps in structuring processes even further and in more detail and serves as an implementation of the valuable information provided by the other two concepts.. Plans should be tested frequently and should be replaced if necessary. (Mavondo, Luxton, Reid, 2005). This is mainly due to the ever developing characteristics and preferences of the target group and the market or the change of desired target groups and target markets. (Chalasani, Shani, 1992)

The herunder presented table shows how the deficit areas of the company relate to the theoretical concepts.

Graphic 8- Deficit areas of the company related to the theoretical concepts

<p>Deficit 1 The company seeks to build customer awareness by defining the profile of the loyal customer (Beard, 2014) and comparing it with their current customer base in order to highlight areas for improvement.</p>	_____	Profile of loyal customer
<p>Deficit 2 The company seeks to get an insight into how customer loyalty is being created through interaction with the customer with regards to the 'buying-decision- process model' (Engel, Blackwell, Kollat, 1968).</p>	_____	Buying- decision process
<p>Deficit 3 Further, as the company's marketing and communication processes have been of an insufficient standard, the company seeks to receive recommendations on how to improve in this area by implementing the concept of 'Integrated Marketing Communications' into a one- year external marketing and communication plan.</p>	_____	IMC

The herunder presented table shows how the communication deficits of the company relate to the theoretical concepts.

Graphic 9- Communication deficits of the company related to the theoretical concepts

<p>Communication Deficit 1 External Communication, Public Relations - informing and engaging customers</p>	_____	IMC Buying- decision process
<p>Communication Deficit 2 Research - on characteristics and preferences of current target group and desired target group</p>	_____	Profile of loyal customer
<p>Communication Deficit 3 Advertising and Communications- effective advertising and communication efforts in order to build customer loyalty</p>	_____	IMC

4. Research objective

The following research objective resulted out of the analysis of the project and organisational context. The objective of this project is therefore to:

Give recommendations to NigelMacDonald Clinics on how to improve marketing and communication efforts in order to increase customer loyalty among existing clients

by

researching the opinions, preferences and demands of the current client base through questionnaires in regards to the company's current communication and marketing operations, defining the profile of the loyal customer and comparing it to the current customer base of NigelMacDonald Clinics, as well as reviewing theories on customer satisfaction and integrated marketing communications to further develop an efficient one-year marketing plan.

This research objective has the intention to primarily tackle the clients marketing and communication problem and their knowledge problem and therefore solving the client's practical problem. The first problems can hereby be seen as the underlying problems which need to be solved in order to solve the visible surface problem, which has been identified as the practical problem.

NigelMacDonald Clinics has stated that marketing and communication efforts have to be improved in order to increase customer loyalty among existing clients. The current target group should be transformed into a desired, loyal target group. In order to do so the current target group in terms of their opinions, preferences and demands has to be researched with regards to the company's communication and marketing efforts in order to highlight differences and similarities. A profile of a loyal customer has to be determined in order to serve as a guideline and clearly present what is desired to be achieved and what exactly the result of the transformation of the current target group should look like. This profile has to be compared to the current target group in order to highlight areas for improvement. Further, theories on customer satisfaction and integrated marketing communications have to be reviewed in order to translate the results of the analysis into a one year Marketing and Communication Plan.

This research objective is linked to the clients marketing and communication objectives, which

are mainly to overcome the deficits as stated previously; building customer awareness by defining the profile of the loyal customer and comparing it to the company's current target group, getting an insight into how customer loyalty is created with the help of relevant theories and improving marketing and communication efforts with the practical help of a one year marketing and communications plan.

4.1. External and internal goals

A few external and internal goals and aspects, which are closely interrelated and not to be seen as individual processes results are presented. The internal goals help the company understand their current target base and the effectiveness of their communication and marketing efforts better and help to solve the external goal. The external goals hereby are seen as the improved marketing and communication efforts, as well as customer loyalty. Those goals impact both the company, in their financial situation, their reputation and prestige, as well as the clients, as they benefit from better, more targeted services and a company that they feel satisfied with and can rely on. The internal goals are used to achieve the external goals and include a research of the opinions, preferences and demands of the client base, an evaluation of the company's current communication and marketing operations in regards to those, as well as defining the profile of the loyal customer as a guideline, reviewing theories on customer satisfaction and a planning of Integrated Marketing Communications.

5. Research framework

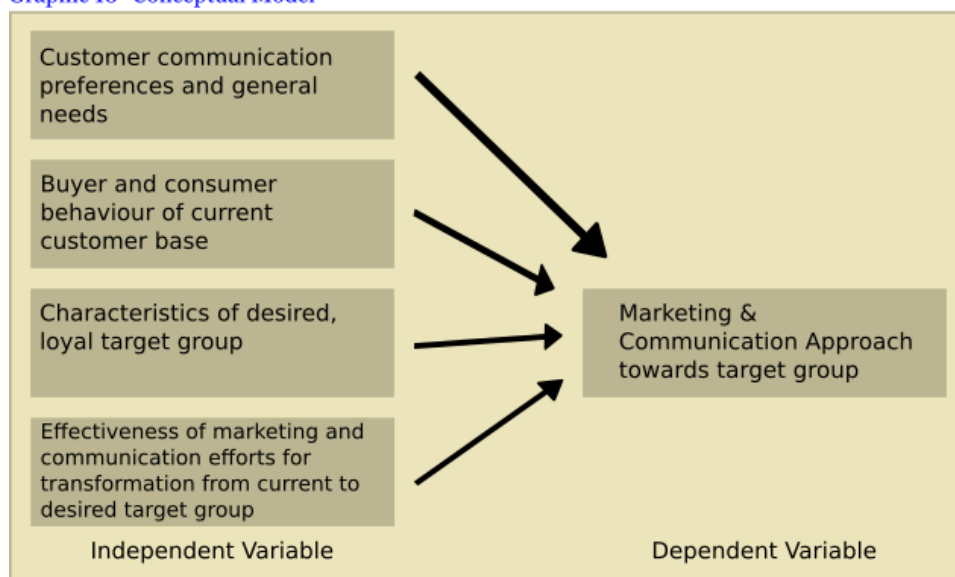
5.1 The conceptual model

The research perspective is a direct result of the theoretical concepts with regards to the client's problems. The research perspective is the theoretical framework in form of the conceptual model, which has derived from 'different theories that need to be adjusted in order to fit the research project.' (Verschuren& Doorewaard, 2010) The conceptual model consists 'of a set of assumed relationships between the core concepts of the research project'. (Verschuren& Doorewaard, 2010).

The conceptual model visualises the concepts that influence the current marketing and communication processes of NigelMacDonald Clinics, taking into consideration theories from the

reviewed literature. Several independent variables and one dependent variable have been determined in order to answer the research objective. (Verschuren& Doorewaard, 2010). The independent variables are presented on the left and include customer communication preferences and general needs, buyer and consumer behaviour of current customer base, characteristics of the desired and loyal target group and the effectiveness of marketing and communication efforts for a transformation from the current to the desired target group. The dependant variable is the marketing and communication approach towards the target group. The independent variables in this conceptual model are the core concepts relevant for the project and all have a direct impact on the dependent variable. Thus, all concepts impact NigelMacDonald Clinics Marketing and Communication approach towards their customers and it is essential that the company realises this in order to use the concepts effectively for their benefit.

Graphic 10- Conceptual Model



The hereunder presented illustration shows the relation between the independent variables of the Conceptual Model with the theoretical concepts:

Graphic 11- Relationship between the independent variables of the Conceptual Model with the theoretical concepts

Conceptual Model	Theoretical Concept
Customer communication preferences and general needs	Buying- decision process IMC + empirical research
Buyer and consumer behaviour of current customer base	Buying- decision process + empirical research
Characteristics of desired, loyal target group	Profile of loyal customer
Effectiveness of marketing and communication efforts for transformation from current to desired target group	IMC Profile of loyal customer + empirical research

All independent variables as presented in the conceptual model will be further investigated in the empirical research in form of questionnaires and will be analysed on the basis of the theoretical concepts.

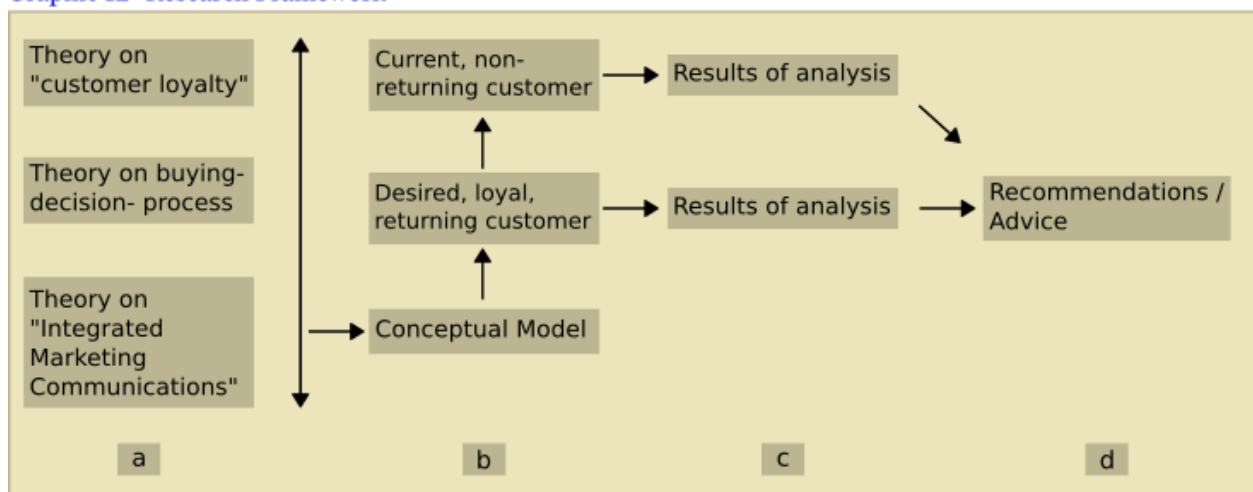
5.2 The research framework

In order to get a better overview of the structure of the research project, a research framework was designed. The research framework demonstrates the steps necessary in order to give advice and recommendations to the client (Verschuren& Doorewaard, 2010).

The hereunder presented ‘Research Framework’ is divided into categories entitled ‘a’, ‘b’, ‘c’ and ‘d’. The ‘d’ part describes the outcome of the research objective; the advice and recommendations

given to the company. In order to reach the objective, steps 'a'; reviewing relevant literature, 'b'; evaluating the literature on a given basis, in this case the current and desired target group and 'c'; analysing the results obtained, need to be undertaken. The desired target group in this case presents the loyal and returning customer as mentioned in the theoretical concept of Beard (2013).

Graphic 12- Research Framework



The direct link of influence between the theoretical concepts and the conceptual model and the further influence of the conceptual model on the two target groups becomes clear and shows the course of the research report. Relevant theories had been reviewed, of which the conceptual model representing the most relevant key concepts resulted. The conceptual model impacts both the current and the desired target group. The effect on the desired target group will be researched in form of empirical research. The impacts on the desired, loyal target group will be assumed. The results from both will be analysed and will be used in order to give recommendations and advice to the client.

6. Research Questions

The following set of research questions has derived from the research framework and is in relation to the in the research framework formulated theoretical concepts with the intention of using further empirical and analytical research in order to solve the clients practical, communication and knowledge problem:

Graphic 13- Research questions empirical area

Research questions empirical area	
Central empirical research question:	How can customer general and communication preferences be used effectively in order to improve and adjust communication and marketing operations with the intention of building customer loyalty and retention?
Empirical research sub- question 1:	What are the target groups communication preferences concerning the timing, content and communication channels?
Empirical research sub- question 2:	What are the characteristics of NigelMacDonald's current client base with regards to purchasing and consumer behaviour?
Empirical research sub- question 3:	Which explicit characteristics define a loyal, returning customer?

Graphic 14- Research questions analytical area

Research questions analytical area	
Central analytical research question:	How can NigelMacDonald Clinics use the results obtained from theoretical and empirical research in order to build customer loyalty?
Analytical research sub- question 1:	How can marketing and communication efforts be improved throughout the buying decision process with regards to customer preferences?
Analytical research sub- question 2:	How can research results obtained from theories and empirical research be translated into a one- year marketing and communication plan?

As the theoretical area has already been covered by reviewing relevant literature, no additional questions in this area are needed for the further course of this research project. The empirical part of the research is the most crucial one for the further course of this research project as the results from the theoretical research applied to the target group in order to solve the client's problem. Therefore it is also the biggest area with one central question and three sub- questions. The aim

of the central question is to investigate how customer general and communication preferences can be used in order to improve the communication and marketing efforts by the company and therefore building customer retention and loyalty. This question relates to the client's practical problem of a lack of customer loyalty, the problem of insufficient communication and marketing efforts and the knowledge problem of which factors cause the other problems and aims at answering those. The three sub- questions name areas which have to be investigated in order to answer the central- question. Firstly, the exact communication preferences of the target group have to be determined in terms of timing, content and communication channels. This question is relevant as the client needs to know how coherent his current marketing efforts are with the desired marketing efforts and how he can adjust those. Further, the buying and purchasing behaviour of the client's customer base needs to be evaluated in order to determine the degree of customer loyalty and the gap between the desired loyal target group and the current actual target group. Lastly, the characteristics of a loyal customer have to be defined in order to give a clear picture of the desired result of the transformation of the current target group.

The analytical set of questions consists of one central question and two sub- questions. The analytical questions intend to combine the results of the theoretical research and the empirical research through an analysis of both in terms of how those can be of further use for the client. Therefore the central question is concerned with how the results of the theoretical and empirical research can be used in order to build customer loyalty. The first sub- question is concerned with how marketing and communication efforts can be improved through the buying- decision process with regards to customer preferences. Hereby a theoretical concept of the theoretical research, the buying- decision process model and the key aspects of this will be combined with the results regarding customer preferences obtained from the empirical research in terms of questionnaires. The second analytical sub- question is concerned with how the results obtained from theoretical research and the results obtained from analytical research could be translated into a one- year Marketing and Communication Plan. The first sub- question will be mainly helpful in constructing a conclusion in the last section of this report in order to present a conclusion of the problem to the client, but also for the advice and recommendation section as it helps to structure communication and marketing efforts throughout the whole interaction process with the customer. The results of the second analytical sub- question will mainly be used for the advice and recommendation section in the form of translating a whole of all results obtained into a practical one year Marketing and Communication Plan.

7. Research Strategy and methodology

7.1 Research strategy

The goal of this research is to give advice and recommendations on how to overcome the problem of a lack of customer loyalty and the underlying communication and marketing issues of the company by adjusting the company's marketing and communication strategy and engaging customers on a long- term basis. The type of research can be identified as 'diagnostic research', which focuses on diagnosing causes for a certain problem in order to give advice on how to solve the problem. (Verschuren& Doorewaard, 2010) and will reach from the 'Diagnosis Stage', where the problem and all factors causing this problem will be researched in great detail into the 'Design' stage in terms of giving practical recommendations for interventions in the form of a one year Marketing and Communication Plan.

The design of the research is practice- oriented. A combination of both theoretical research in the form of gathering secondary data by reviewing relevant literature and theoretical concepts, as well as empirical research in the form of collecting primary data through online questionnaires will be applied.

7.2 Research approach

The research will be practice- oriented, combining both desk and field research. The data collected will be a combination of quantitative and qualitative data in order to define the main problem and underlying problems and issues as perceived by the target group, defining general characteristics and preferences of the target group, as well as preferences and characteristics in relation to communication, marketing and customer satisfaction. The intention is to then compare those to the actual efforts of NigelMacDonald Clinics with regards to customer service and customer satisfaction, as well as the current marketing and communication efforts of the company and to determine similarities, as well as differences. (Lewis, Saunders & Thornhill, 2009). The similarities will then serve as areas to be maintained and further strengthened; the differences are weak areas and need to be changed and transformed in order to meet the client's needs, demands and requirements. The foundation for this transformation lies in the outcome of the empirical research results on the background of the theoretical research results, the actual guidelines and suggested instructions for the transformation are formulated as advice and recommendations for

the client and are further translated into a one- year Marketing and Communication Plan. The approach is partly based on quantity as a sufficient amount of results need to be gathered from individuals in order to form an accurate picture of the situation. However, the bigger emphasis lies on quality in order to obtain as much detailed information as possible.

7.3 Research object

The first object has been defined as the current target group, the non- loyal customers of NigelMacDonald Clinics, which are mainly women between the ages of 20 and 55 of European background and only purchase very few products from the company, mainly contained in a package deal, purchased from platforms, such as Groupon. The level of customer loyalty towards the company is either non- existent or very low. This is reflected in the target group's buying and purchasing behaviour. The second object is the company's desired target group; loyal customers who are open to all sorts of communication efforts and repurchase treatments from the company. This type of customer would not only improve the financial situation of the company, but would also improve the reputation of NigelMacDonald Clinics and create awareness in the form of indirect advertising through word of mouth or through an active engagement in online and social media discussions. The current target group's characteristics and preferences in terms of communication and products will be studied further in order to determine why the degree of loyalty towards the company is low. The desired target group will be researched to define areas which could be improved to shift attitudes of the current customer in the direction of those of the desired, loyal customer.

7.4 Desk research

Desk research will be carried out in the preliminary research phase by collecting secondary data in the form of reviewing appropriate literature and theories in order to get a greater insight into the thematic area by acquiring a greater amount of background information. Desk research helps to both determine the scope and course of the report as well as playing a key role in designing tools used for field research and analysing results obtained through field research. Theories on customer loyalty, the buying- decision process and Integrated Marketing Communications will be researched . (Verschuren& Doorewaard, 2010)

7.5 Field research

Field research will be used to answer the empirical research questions. It will be carried out in the

form of primary data collection by sending out online questionnaires to 50 current customers of NigelMacDonald Clinics in order to get a better, in-depth understanding of the target group by determining their characteristics and preferences in relation to the predefined research objective.

7.6 Questionnaire design and intention

The questionnaires will firstly determine the nationality, age and date of subscription at NigelMacDonald Clinics of each client. This is essential for the company in order to review if their perception of their current target group, which determines for example their approach towards them or specialised treatments, is in line with the actual target group in terms of those factors. The nationality based question also helps in determining the degree of internationalisation. It is important to determine how long the interviewed customer has been a client of NigelMacDonalds as this is one of the main indicators for customer loyalty.

The questionnaire consists of 25 questions and is therefore a rather extensive questionnaire, however, as the report and approach is mainly quality based, this amount of questions was needed in order to get a detailed insight into the client base and obtain not only quantitative information about their characteristics, preferences and opinions, but rather detailed ones. Also a variety of areas within the company had to be researched, therefore a certain number of questions was needed in order to cover every area needed to give sufficient and efficient advice to the client. As stated before the focus lies mainly on the quality, however quantity is also relevant as a suitable approach has to be defined for the client base as a whole. It therefore has to be compared if answers given by the clients are coherent and can be used to form a uniform approach or if answers differ widely and either more research has to be carried out or if multiple, different approaches towards the client base have to be determined and applied. The time to answer the questionnaire is estimated at approximately 10 minutes. Test rounds have been carried out prior to sending out the link of the questionnaire to individuals in order to review the coherence of the questions and the layout and in order to measure the average time needed to answer the questionnaire. The language of the questionnaire is English, even though most of NigelMacDonald Clinic's clients are Dutch. However, it was also important to not hinder anyone, for instance international clients, to be able to answer the questionnaire and it was seen as very relevant to obtain information from especially foreign clients in order to determine the degree of internationalisation, which has an impact on the company's operations and approach.

The questions contained in the questionnaire have been based on the research questions and the

research perspective in form of the conceptual model. A detailed overview of the questions contained in the questionnaire, as well as the link of the questions to the research questions and the conceptual model can be found in the appendix. This link has been created in order to make sure that all aspects necessary for the research as described in the conceptual model and research questions had been fully and sufficiently covered and to make sure that no unnecessary questions were contained in the questionnaire and would therefore provide irrelevant results, take an unnecessary amount of the client's valuable time and in the worst case confuse the client.

The questionnaire consists of both open and closed questions. Eighteen closed questions are contained in the questionnaire and can be answered according to predefined answers, thus in most cases five predefined answers are provided and the individual can either choose one answer or in some cases up to two answers. For some questions only one answer and for some questions two answers could be selected. The one- answer questions aim at obtaining a specific answer and evaluation by the client and are logically constructed in a way, which only allows one answer. However, there are also four questions, where the client could select two answers and one question where the client could select as many answers as he chose to. This is mainly the case with questions related to product preferences, customer service and customer satisfaction preferences. It has been realised that a customer could have several preferences in those fields and should not be limited to only one answer as valuable information might therefore be missed. However, the answer range, apart from one question, is limited to two answers as the information obtained should be specified and targeted to an extent. Too much and too broad information could make it difficult to formulate advice and give recommendations. As mentioned before, one question has the possibility of giving as many answers as the client prefers. This question is concerned with what type of events (only applicable if the client said that he would be interested in attending events) organised by the company he would be interested to attend. This matter had been discussed with the company beforehand and they chose to give the option of selecting multiple answers. This is due to the fact, as they stated, that they have the possibility to organise all of the mentioned events and would be happy to do if all of them were to be selected.

Some questions are semi- closed questions. They provide the client with the opportunity of adding an individual answer in case the most applicable for him has not been mentioned. This is however only the case for two questions, where it had been assumed that this matter could arise. One is concerned with the events a client would be interested in and one is concerned with what customer service areas the company could improve. In these cases it was regarded as important to obtain any valuable information, which might be added by the customer.

The questionnaire consists of five open questions. Open questions are important to get an individual and unbiased answer from a customer and therefore get the maximum amount of information regarding his opinion of certain matters. The open questions are mainly concerned with any recommendations that could be given to NigelMacDonald Clinics, the opinion of the customer regarding his purchasing and buying behaviour and the client's nationality or are follow up questions of closed questions.

Most questions in the questionnaire are mandatory for the individual to answer. This is to get as much valuable information from the customer as possible. If he does really not want to answer a question, he can still fill in 'no answer' or an equivalent. However, it is assumed that this is a greater motivation for the customer to think about his reply and motivate him to provide information.

The thematic areas covered in the questionnaire are in relation to the clients practical, communication and knowledge problem and are further coherent with the conceptual model and the research questions. Questions belonging to the same thematic area are grouped, which means that they follow after each other and are thus in the same sequence.

The thematic areas covered in the questionnaire are:

Personal information about the customer: His age, nationality and the time he has been a client of NigelMacDonald Clinics. This information is important to get to know more about the individual customer, the target group, the loyalty status and therefore also the background behind his answers to certain questions.

The level of customer satisfaction: with a specialisation in which areas the company performs well in, which areas lack perfection and what could be improved: This information is essential to determine the degree of customer satisfaction and the efficiency of customer service provided as perceived by the client.

The customer's buying and purchasing behaviour with regards to preferences, frequency, motivational factors and the manner in which products are purchased: This information is essential in order to further determine the level of customer loyalty as this is greatly related to the buying and purchasing behaviour of the client and also to form an accurate approach towards the customer.

Communication and marketing mediums in general and provided by the company, regarding

the frequency of use and the effectiveness of mediums provided by the company and general communication preferences of the customer: This information is important as the client can compare if his communication efforts are coherent to those of the customer and to then use the information to adjust its communication and marketing efforts. These questions help to determine which mediums should be strengthened, which could be neglected, to improve the effectiveness of provided mediums and to see how often the customer would like to receive information in order to avoid information under or information overload. (Leighton, 1990)

Events, with regards to whether the customer would be interested in attending events, how often he would attend such events and what kind of events he would be interested in: This information is especially important to the client as conversations with the client made clear that he would be interested in organising events if desired by customers. He therefore specifically asked to transform this into a main area in the questionnaire. It is important to determine if customers would be interested in events, how often they would be interested in events to avoid having too many unattended events or too little events to meet the exact needs of customers and organise events specifically in regards to customers demands and wishes and therefore also possibly stimulate sales.

Other, including suggestions for NigelMacDonald Clinics in general and the effectiveness of questionnaires and if clients would be willing to answer questionnaires in the future: The first part is essential to make sure that no valuable information which could help the client in any way to solve his problem is left out. The second and third part have two intentions. The first one is to, by using a strategic formulation of the question and creating a link between the filling out of questionnaires and customer satisfaction targeted at the customer (Would you be interested in receiving questionnaires about satisfaction and recommendations for improvements in the future? How important do you think it is to ask for customer satisfaction in the form of questionnaires?) demonstrating to the customer why questionnaires are important, how his information will be used in his favour and show him that his participation is of immense use both for him and the company. The second intention is to see if clients would be happy to fill out questionnaires in the future.

7.7 Questionnaire approach and method

The questionnaires were distributed through Google Forms via an online link. 50 randomly selected email addresses had been provided by the company. An email had been sent out to each

customer explaining to them the aim of this questionnaire, assuring them that all information, including their personal addresses such as email addresses, names etc would be treated in a confidential manner and not passed onto third parties. The email sample can be found in the appendix. The aim was to receive around 25 responses and therefore have a 50% response rate. Any lower rate would result in sending out the questionnaire to even more people or sending a reminder to people who had received the link, any higher number would be greatly appreciated. The number of fifty participants maximum and twenty five participants minimum was chosen as it seemed the best fit with the aim of the report and the balance of quantity and quality.

7.8 Sampling

Participants were selected randomly by an employee of NigelMacDonald clinics who is new and does not know a lot of clients yet. Therefore any biases which could falsify results were avoided. Also the results of the questionnaires were not steered in a certain direction. It was hoped to ideally receive answers from customers which are not loyal customers (yet) to see why there is a lack of loyalty and highlight areas for improvement. However, it was also desired to receive some answers from clients that have been clients for longer and are (possibly) loyal clients to receive feedback on what is going well and suggestions on which areas could be strengthened. The intention was to receive unbiased and diverse feedback and not steer the results and therefore the aim and course of the research report in a certain direction.

7.9 Reliability of questionnaires

It has been assured that the questionnaires and the related results are highly reliable. One method was, as explained before, to use a random sampling technique and not determine the course and aim of the research project. A second method was to assure clients that their information was treated with high confidentiality and that the responses of the questionnaires were given anonymously and that results would not be communicated in detail to the company. In detail meaning, that of course the overview of results would be shown to the client and teachers of the Hanzehogeschool, however no exact, detailed, individual questionnaire form would be shown to either the client or other third parties.. This was clearly communicated to clients in the email and was done with the intention of getting honest and unbiased answers. If questionnaires are not filled out anonymously or if customers do not trust in the confidentiality of a questionnaire, this could lead to them being scared of negative consequences with the company and would most likely lead to more positive answers in favour of the company, which would falsify results and would not

reflect the accurate and honest opinions of the customers. This would not be beneficial for the company as they are aware that there is a problem regarding customer loyalty and their communication and marketing efforts and would like to get to the root of this and therefore require honest and unbiased answers.

Measurement and construct validity

As stated before construct validity is determined by several factors. First of all, the relevance is guaranteed by a comparison between the questions of the questionnaires with the research questions and the conceptual model to make sure that the results of the questionnaires are relevant in providing a solution to the client's problem. Questions are answered anonymously and high confidentiality is provided to assure unbiased answers. Further, questions are formulated in a neutral manner to avoid a steering of the customer in a certain direction and to therefore ensure unbiased results. The results of the questionnaires are shown in Google Sheets in a structured way, facilitating the obtaining of information. A screenshot demonstrating the system is shown in the appendix. Results are also saved in Google Sheets and can be accessed and reviewed at any given time. Online questionnaires are an effective tool of structuring information obtained in an efficient manner and assuring that results are saved for further use, cannot be changed by any third parties and cannot be reviewed by any third parties as the account used for this questionnaire is private and can only be accessed with a password which has not been distributed to any other parties, including the company. Results will be presented in the form of graphs as well as in a written form in this report and will then be concluded in a final part. The visualisation serves as a structuring of the results and facilitates a processing of the results for the reader. A written description is however needed in order to provide further information as well as an interpretation and concluding of the results to analyse what the results mean exactly, how they are relevant for the client, how they relate to the theoretical concepts, as well as to the clients practical, communication and knowledge problem and how they can be of further use for the client in the future.

The further course after the questionnaires

The results of the questionnaires will be presented in the following chapter and will further be interpreted according to the previously discussed concepts. All the information will hereby be

structured and results of individual answers of the questionnaires will be grouped and combined in order to create a logical construct and give an overall picture of the situation. They need to be put in relation with each other as the individual answers are not of great use for the client as he does not know how to logically process this information and use it further if it has not been constructed logically. This interpreted information will then be used in order to give advice and recommendations to the client on how to solve his problems, create customer loyalty, improve his marketing and communication efforts and therefore improve his situation as a whole. Results will be interpreted in an unbiased manner and on the background of the information obtained from the theoretical research. The theoretical research results did not only determine the further course of the research report and build a foundation for designing the questionnaires, but also aid in analysing the questionnaires and structuring the results obtained from the questionnaires.

8. Research results

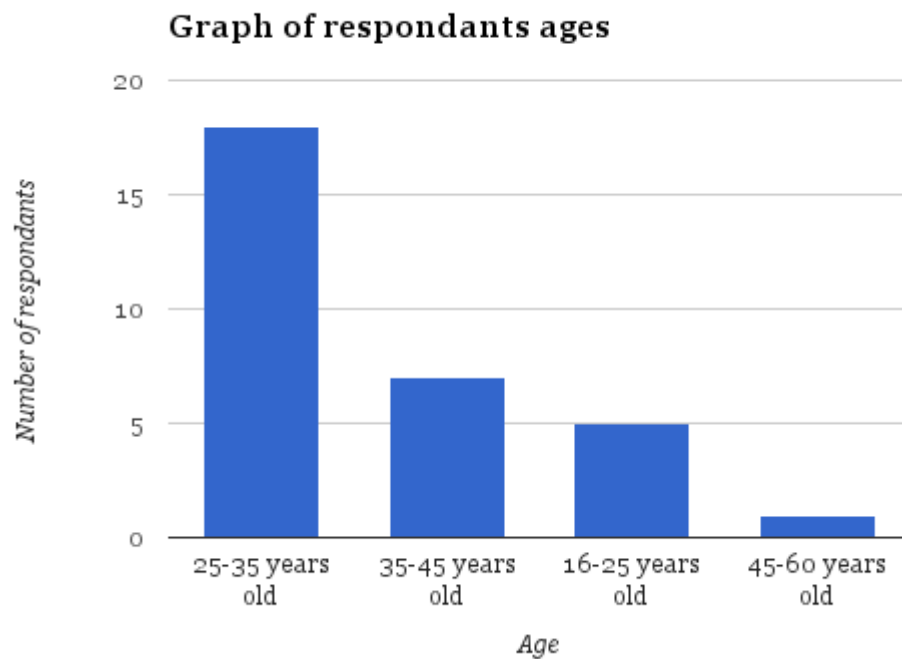
All questions are considered a mandatory question if not indicated otherwise in the description of the question and results.

8.1 In- depth presentation and discussion of results

Question 1:

This question was a closed, multiple choice question, where only one answer was possible. Results have shown that 58% of the participants were between the ages of 25 and 35, 23% of the participants were between the ages of 35 and 45, only 3% of participants were between the ages of 16 and 25 years old and 3% between the ages of 45 and 60 years old. None of the participants were older than 60 years of age.

Graphic 15

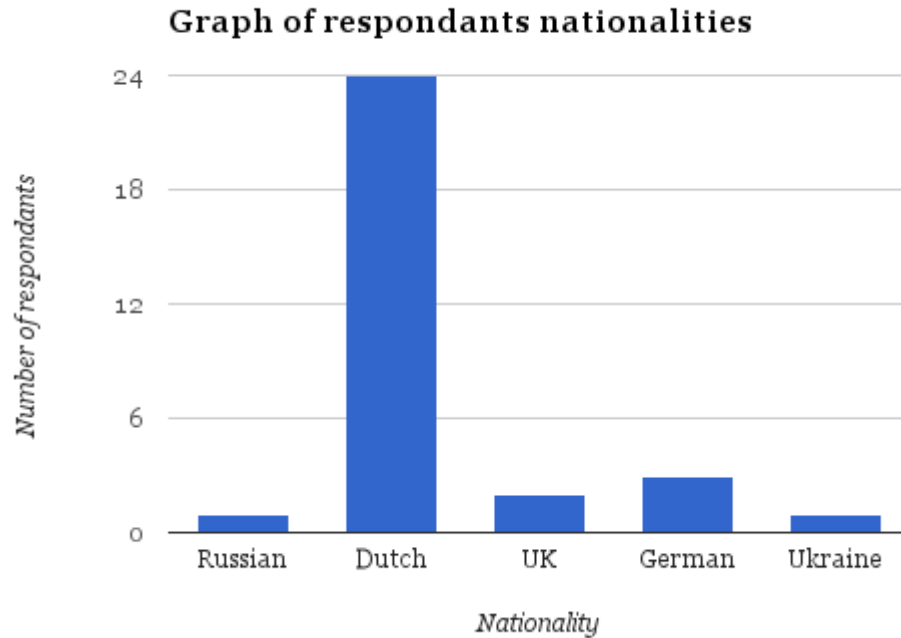


Question 2.

This question was an open question. Participants could state their nationality.

The majority of participants with 77% were of Dutch nationality, 10% were German, 6% were from the United Kingdom and 3% each of the participants were from Russia and the Ukraine.

Graphic 16

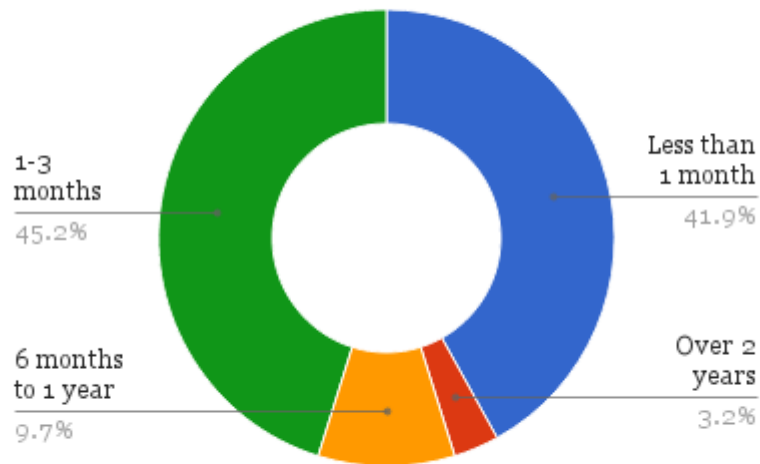


Question 3: This question was a closed, multiple choice question, where only one answer was possible. Participants could pick the duration they had been a customer at NigelMacDonald clinics.

45% of participants had been visiting NigelMacDonald Clinics for one to three months, 42% of customers for less than one month, 10% had been visiting the company for three to six months and 3% for more than two years. No one had been visiting the company for three to six months or one to two years.

Graphic 17

How long have you been a customer at NigelMacDonald Clinics?

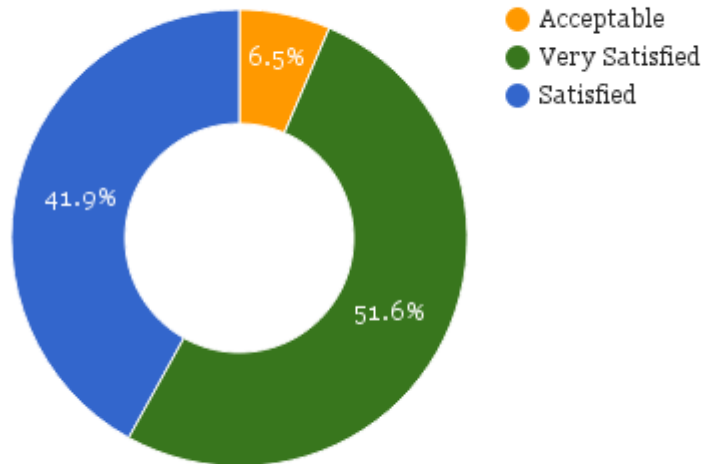


Question 4:

This question was a closed, multiple choice question, where only one answer was possible. Customers were asked how satisfied they were with overall level of customer service at NigelMacDonald Clinics. 52% of customers stated that they were very satisfied with the level of customer service provided, 42% were satisfied and 6% regarded the customer service level as acceptable. None of the participants stated that they were not satisfied or not satisfied at all with the level of customer service provided.

Graphic 18

How satisfied are you with the overall level of customer service at NigelMacDonald Clinics?



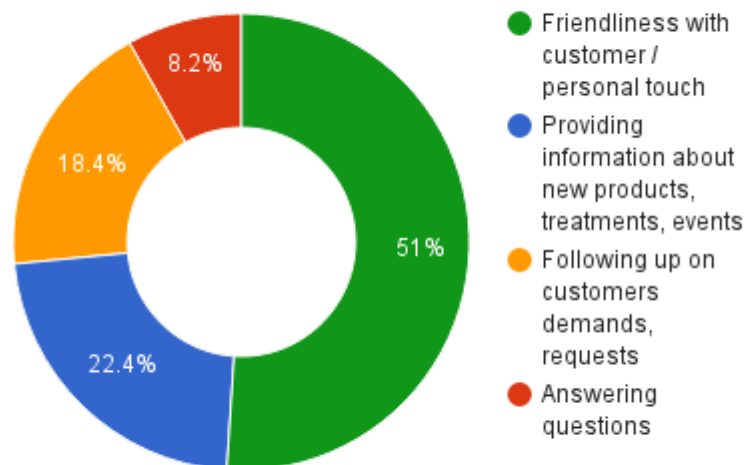
Question 5:

The fifth question was a closed, multiple choice question, where participants could select up to two answers. All participants selected two answers. Customers were asked in which customer service areas they believe the company performs best in. A majority of 81% of participants stated that the strong area of the company regarding customer service matters was the friendliness when interacting with the customer and the personal touch, 65% stated that another strong area was the providing of information about new products, treatments and events. 36% believe that the

company performed well in following up on demands, 19% of participants considered the answering of questions a strong area and none of the participants thought the company did best in organising gatherings or events.

Graphic 19

Which customer service areas do you believe the company performs best in?



Question 6:

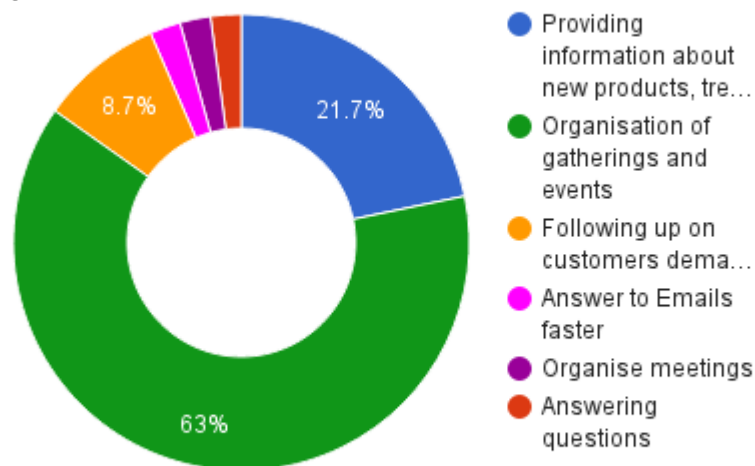
This question was a semi- closed, multiple choice question, where up to two answers were possible and can be seen as a follow up question to question number five. All participants selected at least one answer as this was a mandatory question, however only 42% of participants gave two answers. Participants were asked which areas the company could improve in regarding the level of customer service. The answer choices were the same as for question number five with the addition

of the response possibility 'other', were participants could provide other aspects they believed had not been covered by the answer possibilities.

No participants believed that the area of friendliness and the personal touch could be improved, 94% of participants believed that the organising of social gatherings and events could be improved, 32% believed the provision of information could be improved, 13% believed the follow up on demands was an area for improvement and 3% believed that the answering of questions should be improved. Only two people used the option to give individual feedback. One person stated that she would like the company to emails faster and one person stated that meetings should be organised. However, in this case it can be assumed that the person was referring to events and gatherings, but interpreted the word differently.

Graphic 20

Please name areas of improvement for the company regarding its customer service performance?



Question 7:

Question number seven was an open question, where participants could provide individual answers. This was not a mandatory question and only 29% of participants answered this question. For this question participants could specify why and how the areas stated in question six could be improved. Three people stated that they would be interested in events, event nights and gatherings, two participants stated that they would like the newsletter and website to be in English

so that they could understand the content, one person stated that she would like the website to contain more information, one participant wishes that the company would reply to emails faster, one participant would like the company to be open on Sundays and one participant would be interested in trial and info packs for products or would like it if they could be tested at the clinic.

Question 8:

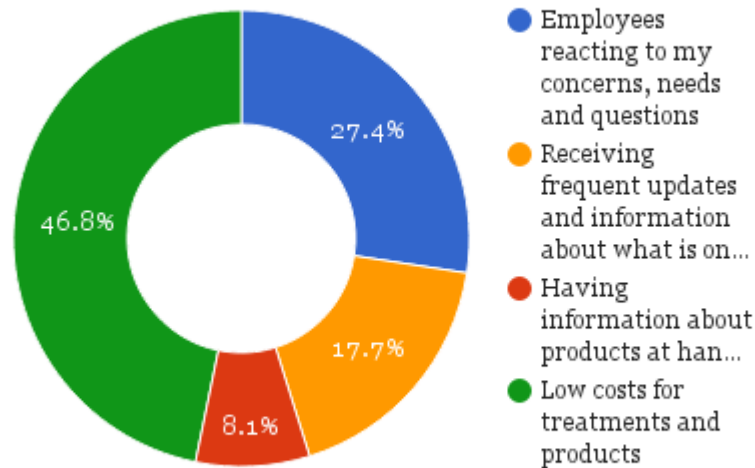
Question eight was a closed, multiple choice question, where participants could provide two answers. The question asked customers which aspect was relevant to them. All participants provided two answers for this question.

94% of all participants stated that low costs for treatments and products were most relevant to them, 55% of participants consider it most important that employees react to their concerns, needs and questions, 35% find it most important to receive frequent updates and information

about what is on offer and 16% find it most important that they have information about products at hand at all times.

Graphic 21

Which of the following is most important to you personally?



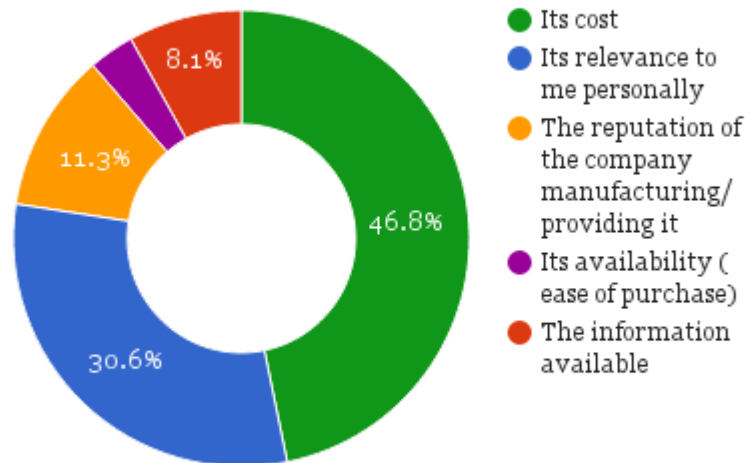
Question 9:

This question was a closed, multiple choice question, where participants could select up to two answers. All participants provided two answers. Participants were asked which aspects they pay most attention to when purchasing a treatment and could choose between five predefined answers. 94% of the people asked answered that they pay most attention to the cost of a product or service, 61% pay most attention to the relevance to them personally, 23% pay most attention to the reputation of the company providing a service or manufacturing a product, to 16% the

information available is most important to them and 6% state that the availability and ease in purchasing the product or service is most relevant to them.

Graphic 22

When purchasing a treatment/products I pay most attention to...



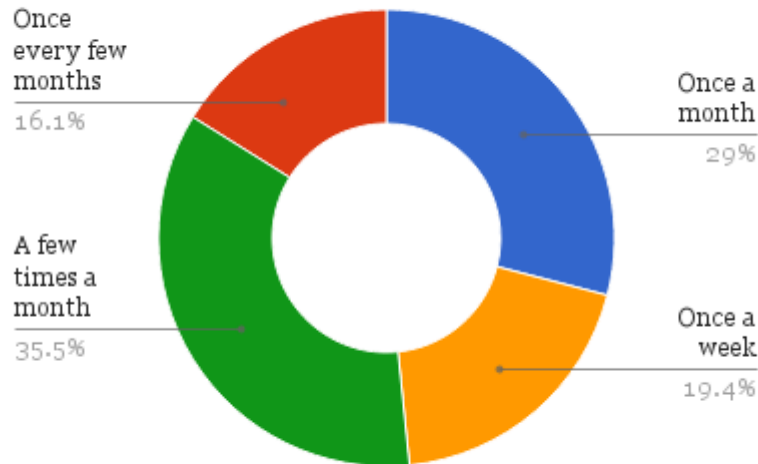
Question 10:

This question was a closed, multiple choice question, where participants could provide one answer. Customers were asked how often they went for treatments at NigelMacDonald Clinics and could select from six answer possibilities.

35% of the customers asked visit the clinic a few times per month, 29% visit the clinic once a month, 19% pay a visit once a week, 16% go once every few months and none of the participants asked only visit the clinic once a year or have only ever visited the clinic once.

Graphic 23

How often do you go for treatments at NigelMacDonald Clinics?



Question 11:

Question eleven was an open question, where participants could provide individual answers on what would motivate them to visit the clinic more often.

Only 35% of participants answered this question. 55% of participants stated that they would visit the clinic more often if treatments were cheaper, 28% of participants stated that they were happy with the company and nothing could motivate them to go more often, one participant (9%) stated that she would prefer more suitable opening times for her and another person (9%) added that it would be more convenient for her if NigelMacDonald Clinics was open on Sundays.

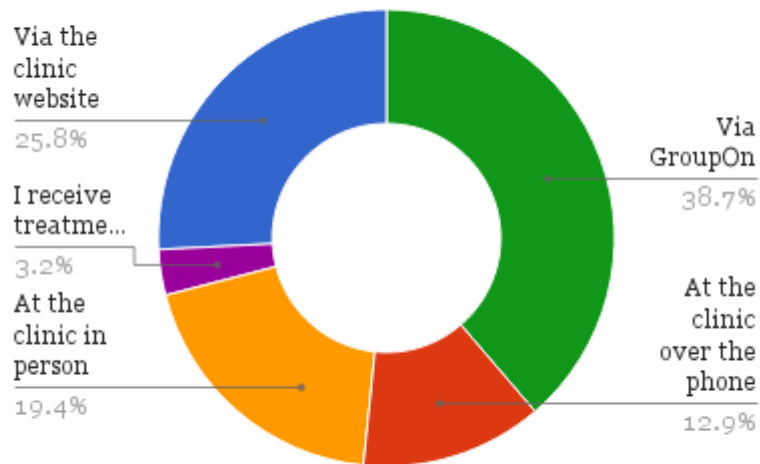
Question 12:

This question was a closed, multiple choice question. Only one answer was possible. Clients were asked how they booked their treatments at the company.

39% of customers book their appointments through groupon, 26% book them through the website, 19% book them at the clinic directly, 13% book treatments over the phone and 3% received their treatments as presents.

Graphic 24

Where do you mainly book/purchase treatments?



Questions 13- 14:

The following questions were closed, multiple choice question, where customers could select one answer. They were concerned with how often clients use the mediums provided by the company; the website, Facebook and the monthly newsletter and how effective they would rate them.

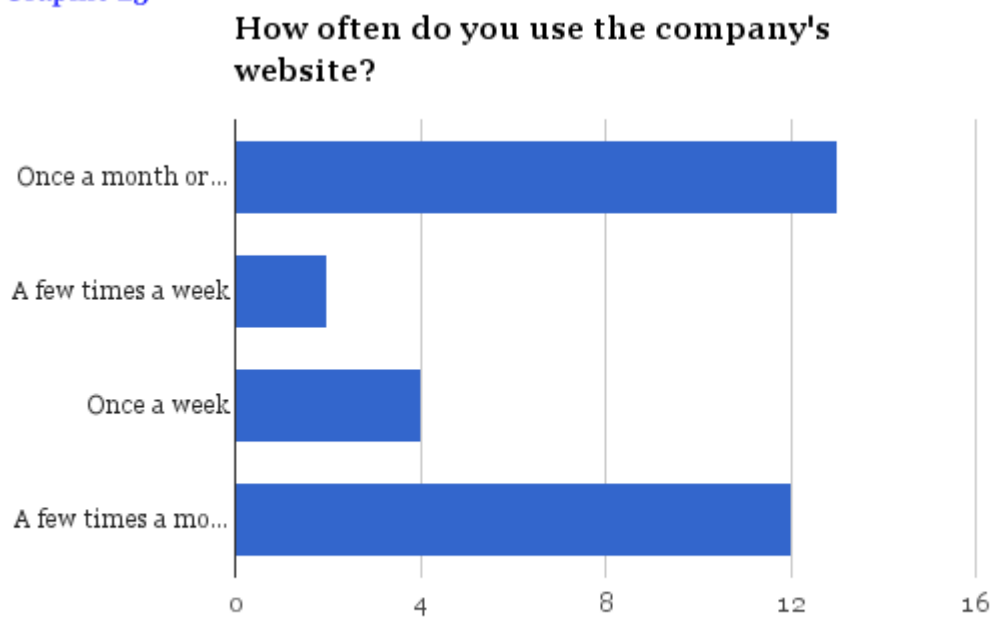
Website:

42% of the asked customers use the website once a month or less, 39% use it a few times per month, 13% use it once a week, 6% use it a few times a week and none of the participants uses the website on a daily level.

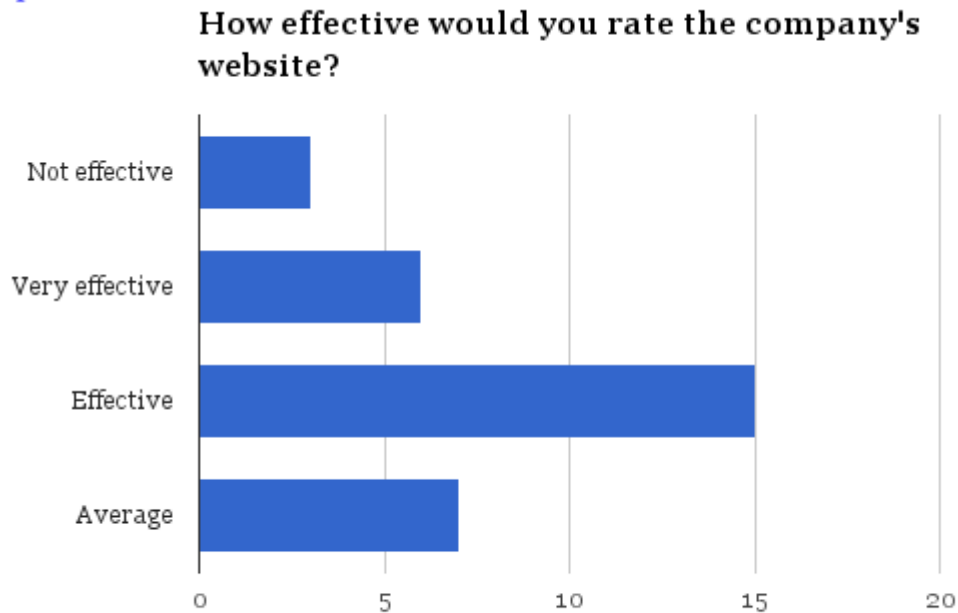
Effectiveness:

48% of participants think the website is effective, 23% believe it is of average effectiveness, 19% think it is very effective and 10% think it is not effective.

Graphic 25



Graphic 26



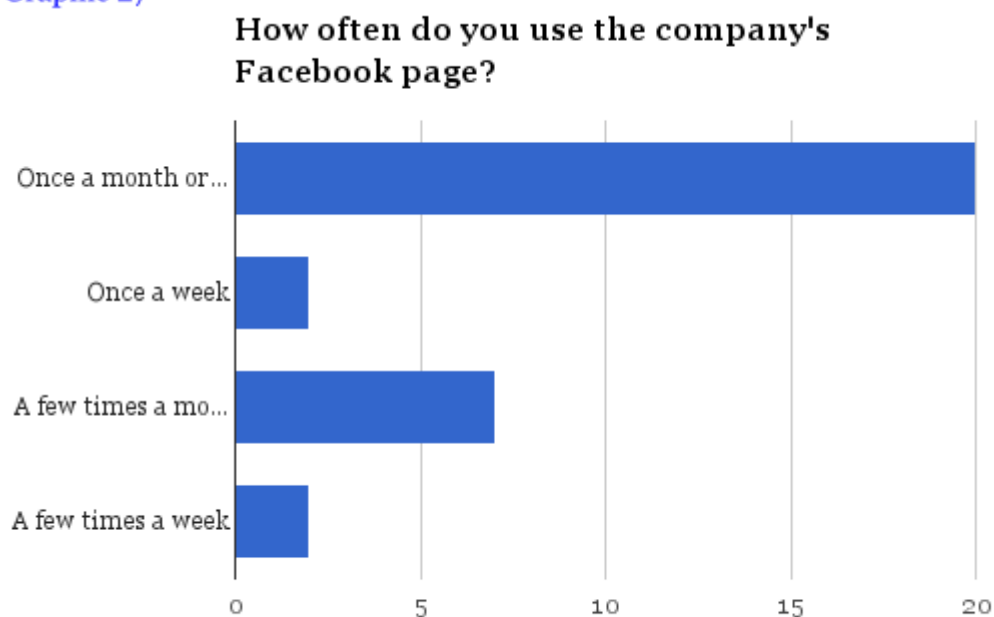
Facebook:

65% of participants make use of the Facebook page once a month or less, 23% use the Facebook page a few times per month, 6% each either visit the page a few times per week or weekly and none of the participants visits the Facebook page daily.

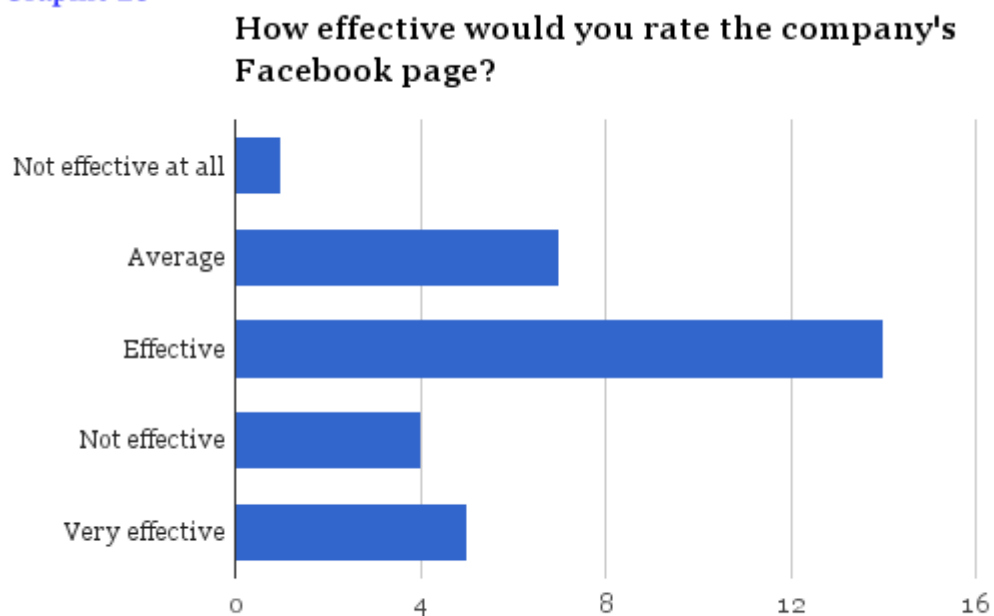
Effectiveness:

45% of participants think the facebook page is effective, 23% believe it is of average effectiveness, 16% think it is very effective, 13% think it is not effective and 3% think it is not effective at all.

Graphic 27



Graphic 28



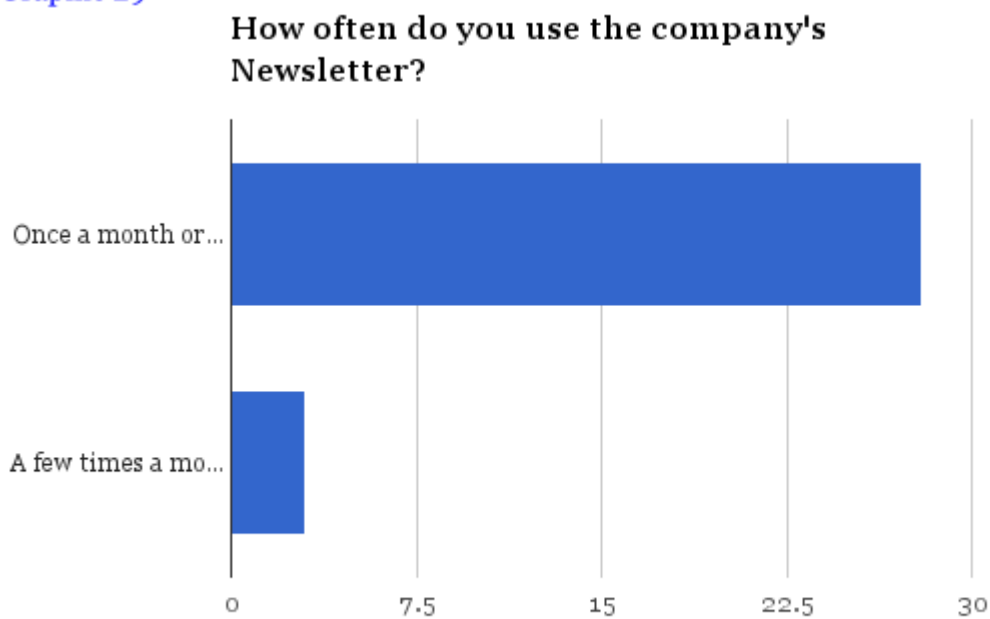
Newsletter:

90% of participants use the newsletter once a month or less and 7% use the newsletter a few times a month. None of the participants uses the newsletter several times per week, weekly or daily.

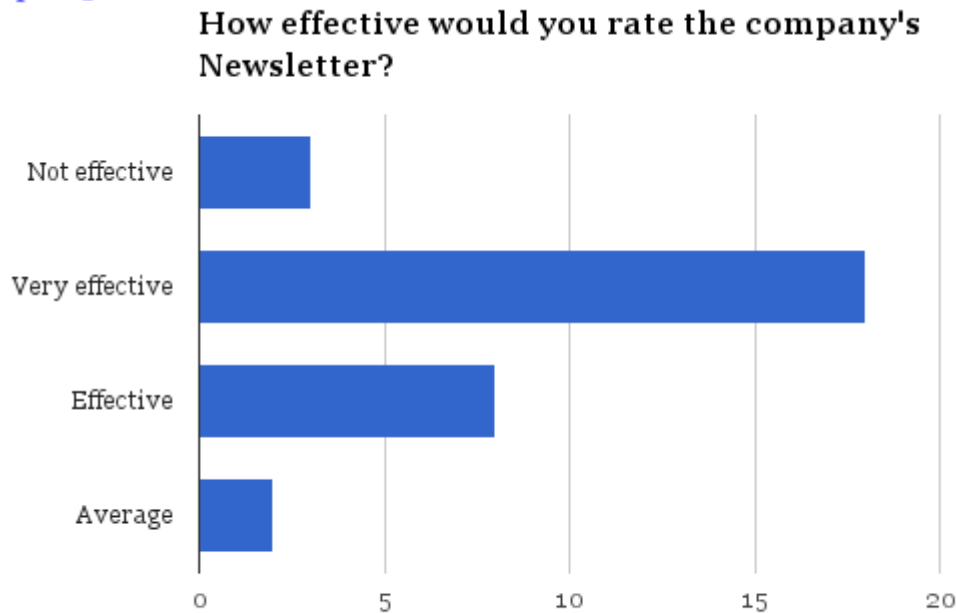
Effectiveness:

58% of participants think the newsletter is very effective, 26% believe it is effective, 10% think it is not effective and 6% think it is of average effectiveness.

Graphic 29



Graphic 30



Question 15:

The following question was a non- mandatory, open question, asking participants to give recommendations for each medium, if applicable.

Website:

Only five participants (16%) gave recommendations for the website. Three participants (9%) stated that they would prefer an english version of the website, two participants (6%) would like to see more information on the website.

Facebook:

Six participants (19%) gave advice on how to improve the Facebook page. Three participants (9%) would like to have an English version of the Facebook page, two people (6%) stated that they have not used the page and one participant (3%) would like more information on the page.

Newsletter:

Five participants (16%) have stated their opinion on this matter. Three participants (9%) would like to receive an English version of the newsletter, one person (3%) would like to receive the newsletter more often and one person (3%) would like a print version of the newsletter.

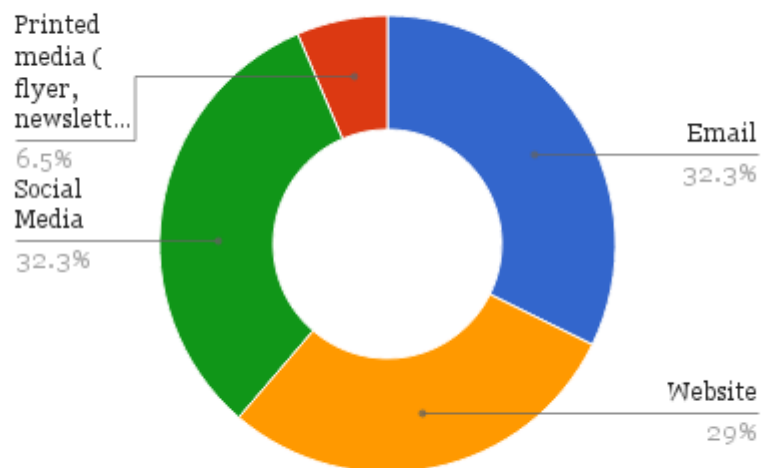
Question 16:

This was a closed, multiple choice question, where only one answer is possible concerned with the preferred information mediums used by customers.

32% of respondents preferred Email, 32% preferred Social Media, 29% preferred to visit the company's website and 7% would prefer printed media.

Graphic 31

What is your preferred medium for receiving updates and information?



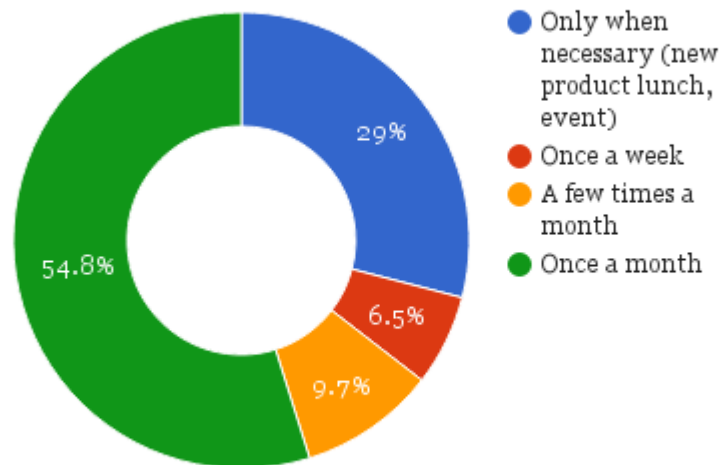
Question 17:

This question was a closed, multiple choice question asking customers how often they would like to be contacted and informed about news by the company. Only one answer can be given by participants.

55% would like to receive updates once a month, 29% only when necessary, 10% a few times a month and 6% once a week.

Graphic 32

How often would you like to receive information/updates?



Question 18:

This question was a closed, yes/no question asking customers whether they would like to attend events organised by the company. Only one answer could be provided.

90% would be interested in events organised by the company and 10% would not.

Graphic 33

Would you be interested in events organised by the company?



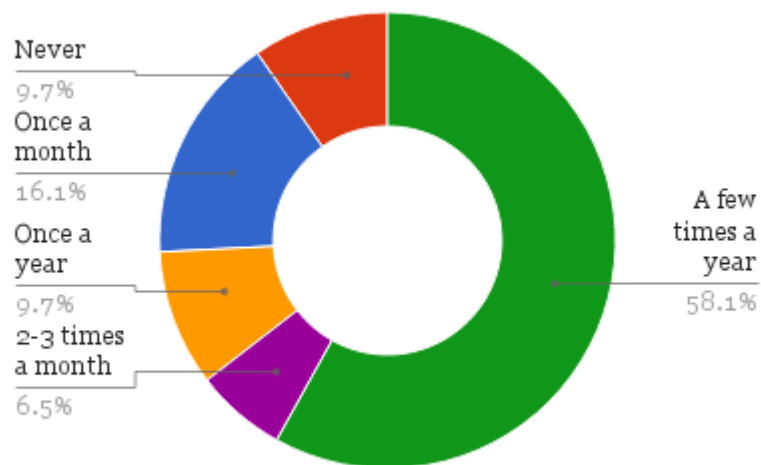
Question 19:

This question was a follow up, closed, multiple choice question asking customers how often, if applicable, they would attend such events. One answer could be selected by participants.

58% would like to attend events a few times a year, 16% a few times a month, 10% once a year, 10% would never like to attend an event and 6% would like to attend 2-3 times a month.

Graphic 34

How often would you like to attend such an event?

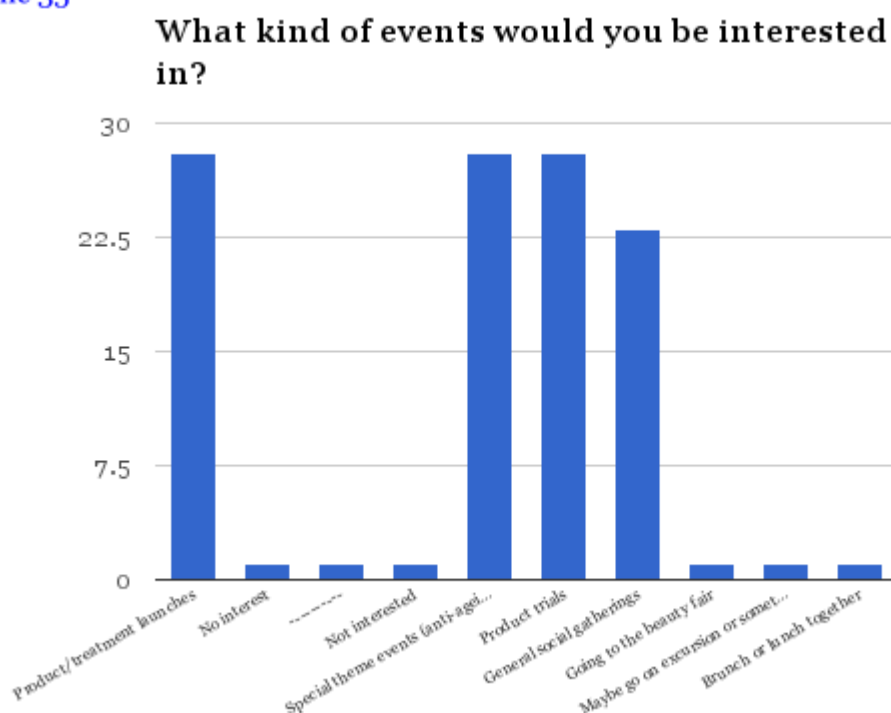


Question 20:

This question was a closed, multiple choice, follow up question of questions eighteen and nineteen asking customers, if applicable, what kind of events they would like to attend. Participants could select as many answers as they liked and add additional answers. Three people stated that they would not like to attend events of any kinds. One individual would be interested in attending the beauty fair as a group, one person would be interested in going for lunch or dinner and one participant stated she would be interested in going on an excursion.

Product/ treatment launches, Product trials and Special theme events all scored 25%, General Social events received 20%, Other social suggestions received 3% and those not interested in events totaled 3%.

Graphic 35



Question 21:

This questions was a non mandatory, open question asking participants if they had any additional advice for NigelMacDonald Clinics. Six participants answered this question. Three participants (10%) stated they were happy with the services provided, two (6%) stated that they would like to receive information in English and one (3%) would prefer if the company replied to emails faster.

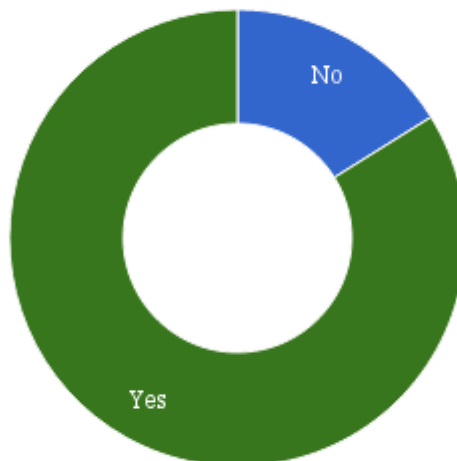
Question 22:

This question was a closed, yes/no question, asking participants whether they would be willing to fill out questionnaires of this kind in the future.

84% would be willing to fill out questionnaires in the future and 16% would not.

Graphic 36

Would you be interested in receiving questionnaires about satisfaction and recommendations for improvements in the...

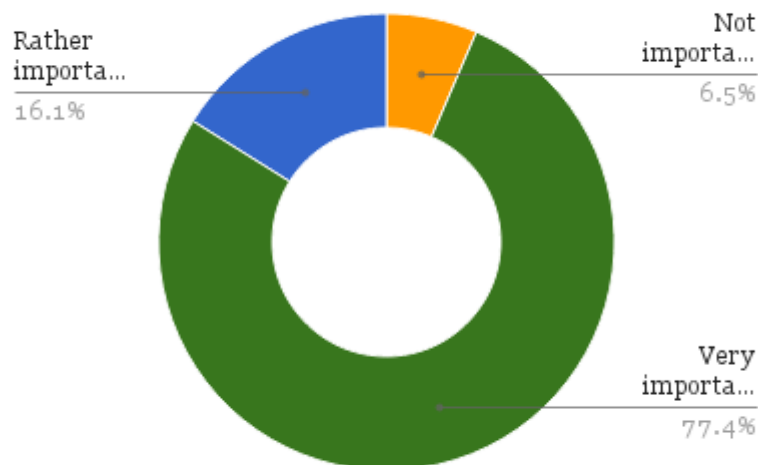


This question was a follow up question to question twenty-two asking participants about the perception of effectiveness of questionnaires of this kind. One answer could be selected.

77% said Very Important, 16% said Rather Important and 7% said Not Important.

Graphic 37

How important do you think it is to ask for customer satisfaction in the form of questionnaires?



8.2 Results in combination with the research questions

The results obtained helped to answer the predefined set of empirical research questions. The target group prefers to stay informed via Social Media, the Website and Email, however rarely makes use of the mediums provided by the company. Those have on average been only rated as effective by approximately half of the participants, mainly as they state that those lack information or are not available in English. The target group shows a general interest in staying informed about new products and treatments and interacting with the company overall, for example in the form of events and gatherings organised by the company. The preferred frequency of the majority of the target group for receiving updates is either once a month or when there is relevant information to be communicated. The buying and purchasing behaviour of the target group shows that the level of customer loyalty is rather low, as the majority have not been a customer at the clinic for long, a large number of participants purchase deals through third parties, thus do not have a bond with the company yet and are price sensitive, an indicator for low customer loyalty. (Beard, 2014) However, a foundation is laid as most customers visit the clinic on a regular basis.

Looking at the results of the theoretical results, one can say that the transformation into a loyal customer according to Beard (2014) has not happened yet. The level of customer service throughout the buying- purchasing process is effective in the first stages, however does not create enough motivation and stimuli for customers to return in the post purchasing stage in order to start a new cycle of the buying- purchasing process. Customers have to be approached with a targeted and effective Integrated Marketing Communications Plan.

9. Conclusion

The conclusion part of the report intends to analyse the results obtained from the empirical research on the basis of the results from the theoretical research and further aims to answer the analytical research questions and build a foundation for the 'a' part of the research objective; giving recommendations to NigelMacDonald Clinics on how to increase customer loyalty.

The first noticeable aspect is that the company has succeeded in determining the general demographics of the target group accurately. The target group has been defined by the company as 'mainly women between the ages of 20 and 55'. Most participants in the survey were indeed women between the ages of 25 and 45, with some being slightly younger and some being slightly older.

The second important aspect is that the level of internationalisation is high and seven participants came from various European countries. This was to be expected due to the international setting of the company in the student city of Groningen, however it is a critical component as the company has not yet fully adapted to this international setting and thus to their international customers. English is spoken at the clinic, however the company's provided media products, such as their website, newsletter and their Facebook page are only available in Dutch. This has been criticised in the questionnaire by the international customers as they desire an English version. Otherwise it will be impossible to reach, inform and engage international customers, who do not speak Dutch and will hinder the process and possibilities of developing customer loyalty.

According to Beard (2013) a loyal customer is an individual 'who makes repeated purchases from the company he is loyal to'. Many customers, who took part in the questionnaire have not been a customer of NigelMacDonald clinics for a long- time, the majority have been visiting the company for less than one year, which shows that the level of loyalty is, with most participants, rather low at this stage. Many customers come to the Clinic for treatments very often, some as often as every

week, however this might be due to the package deals they have purchased on Groupon as those need to be used up within a certain time frame, encouraging frequent visits. As seen from the questionnaire results most clients do purchase products and services through Groupon and therefore attend the clinic regularly. This can be seen as a positive aspect as customers who visit the clinic frequently can be triggered by 'external stimuli' (Engel, Blackwell, Kollat, 1968) at the clinic and can be informed and motivated to acquire more information or even purchase new treatments or products. However, stimuli and information have to be available.

According to Beard (2014) the reason preventing customers from purchasing or repurchasing a product or service is an overall poor quality of customer service, which can occur in any stage of the purchasing cycle, thus at any stage of the buying- decision process a customer goes through (Engel, Blackwell, Kollat, 1968). Good customer service and customer satisfaction therefore build an essential foundation for developing customer loyalty. As seen in the questionnaire this foundation is existent. The customer satisfaction with the overall services is high, participants were in most cases even very satisfied with the services. The results demonstrate that the company performs well throughout 'need recognition and problem awareness', 'information search', 'evaluation stage' and 'purchase stage', as most participants were satisfied with their friendliness, the providing of information, the answering of questions and the follow up on demands. This leads to the conclusion that the problem lies in the 'post purchase evaluation stage', a crucial stage for transforming the customer into a loyal customer and thus the company has failed to engage their customers on a long- term basis and has neglected the aftercare stage. Both, the engaging of the customer and the aftercare service, are desired by customers, as can be seen from the wish of the great majority for an organising of events and gatherings.

This problem is further demonstrated by the frequency of use of the mediums by the company and the rated effectiveness. NigelMacDonald Clinics demonstrates that they do have extensive knowledge of their client base, as the mediums provided, email, Facebook and the website are the preferred mediums of the customer base in terms of the providing of information. However, very few customers do use the provided mediums and most have rated them as rather ineffective, showing that a foundation is there, however the mediums and content do not react to customers exact needs and wants and are thus not targeted enough. Customer loyalty cannot be built and repurchases cannot be stimulated if information is not targeted and applicable to the customer. The main concerns of customers were a lack of targeted information and the lack of adjustment to the international setting in terms of language. The desired frequency of the customer base in

terms of receiving information needs to be taken into consideration in order to avoid and prevent an underload or overload of information.

Two aspects are crucial to customers of NigelMacDonald Clinics; a reacting of the employees to their needs and concerns and frequent updates and information. Their needs and desires need to be taken into consideration, such as their desire to frequently attend events and product launches of all kinds, which are currently not being organised by the company on a continuous level. Also, an interest for the company and their products is there, as customers would like to be updated and receive information, thus a foundation for customer loyalty according to Beard (2014) and restarting the buying- decision process is laid. However, this needs to be fed into, stimuli and information need to be present and accessible at all times, for example through the mediums provided by the company, which belong to the main tools for delivering targeted information to the customer.

Both the engagement through events and the information about available products belong to the aftercare process, play an equally important role as a good review of the customer service provided in the 'post purchase evaluation stage' of the buying- decision process model and are crucial in motivating the customer to repurchase, thus to start the buying- decision process all over again. As stated previously, customer loyalty is an ongoing process, which needs to be stimulated and encouraged frequently, in this case best through an engagement of the customer long- term and a continuous feed of information and stimuli.

The cost and the relevance to one personally are of great importance for the majority of customers as well. This indicates two things. The desired level of customer loyalty has not been achieved yet, as according to Beard (2013), loyal customers are less price sensitive and NigelMacDonald Clinics is at least partly on the right track of fulfilling the customer's individual needs and wants as they provide many products targeted at different age groups and different conditions, e.g. skin conditions, facilitating it for each customer to find a product, which is relevant to him personally.

The great majority of participants would be happy to answer questionnaires in the future and do see the importance in the process, which is beneficial to the company as this makes it easy for them to gather information, but also shows a certain degree of commitment to the company through the willingness of participation.

In conclusion one can say that NigelMacDonald Clinics do know their customer base rather well, however have failed to adjust their marketing and communication strategy, messages and mediums to this target base. They have further failed to adjust to the existent level of internationalisation. Mediums used are coherent with target base, yet the content needs to be targeted more and improved in order to be effective. The foundation of customer loyalty and a great interest were perceived and the interaction with the customer throughout the buying-decision process cycle is effective, however the aftercare and the engaging of the customer need to be improved in order to close the buying- decision process cycle, meaning that once one is finished, the next one will commence, making it a closed cycle. Also, stimuli and information have to be present and easily accessible at all times. Current customers are likely to be transformed into loyal customers if attention is being paid by NigelMacDonald Clinics to the specific factors mentioned.

The information obtained from both the theoretical and empirical research and the outcome of this conclusion will be used in order to give advice and recommendations to the company on how to create customer loyalty and will be translated into a one year marketing and communications plan.

As a result of the analysis of the empirical and theoretical research results and as a direct result of this conclusion, the following recommendations can be given to the company:

1) Adjusting to customer general and communication preferences

Taking the analysed general and communication preferences of the target group into consideration and adjusting the communication strategy, the content and channels accordingly.

2) Developing a push strategy

Developing a push strategy when approaching and informing customers, meaning that information is given to the customer, rather than just provided and that stimuli are created for the customer as a motivation to access this information.

3) Internationalisation and targeting of specific groups

Taking into consideration the degree of internationalisation of the setting and the target group and adjusting accordingly. Taking into consideration the main demographic groups of the setting and targeting those.

4) Making use of Integrated Marketing Communications and a one- year Marketing and Communications Plan

Translating the results of the research and the recommendations into a one year Marketing and Communications Plan on the basis of Integrated Marketing Communications.

10. Advice

The advice section aims at helping the company in solving their communication problem; a lack of customer loyalty, by engaging the customer on a long- term basis and finding an approach which is targeted at the customer regarding their opinions and their general and communication preferences. The marketing and communication efforts of NigelMacDonald Clinics had been evaluated on the basis of relevant literature and theories concerning customer loyalty, the

interaction with the customer throughout the buying- decision process and the use of integrated marketing communications. The opinions and preferences of NigelMacDonald Clinic's customers have been studied in order to get a further insight into the target group and determine the right approach for the company towards the target group. The aim of NigelMacDonald Clinics is to adjust their marketing and communication efforts in a way that will create customer loyalty and engage customers on a long term basis. This will eventually lead to a favorable positioning and representation of the company and will result in financial profits. (Beard, 2014)

Advice will be given by defining a general approach and strategy and detailed suggestions, making use of the buying- decision process model, using the guidelines of the loyal customer as defined by Beard (2014) and translating the in-depth advice into a one- year marketing plan on the basis of integrated marketing communications (IMC). A further aspect, which needs to be considered by the company is to eliminate barriers, which hinder the process of developing customer loyalty, such a non- adjustment to the international setting, making it difficult for the company to form a bond with international clients.

10.1 The foundation of the Marketing and Communication Plan

Research results have shown that the current customer base of NigelMacDonald Clinics can be described as a disloyal customer, who only returns to the company for a short period of time and has no affinities or special relation with the company. Thus, the by the company perceived lack of customer loyalty is existent. Empirical research has shown that the company has some knowledge about their customer base and that the general approaches in reaching them are coherent with the customers preferences, however the company seeks in- depth advice on how to implement and strengthen these concepts further, making them even more targeted and therefore more effective, with the end goal of creating customer loyalty on an ongoing basis and therefore stimulating sales.

10.2 Advice 1: Adjust to customer general and communication preferences

Empirical research of the target group in form of questionnaires has shown that the company has identified some of their customer's preferences rather well, but have neglected or were unaware of others or have not fulfilled their full potential in order to react to the needs and preferences of their customer base. It is crucial to base a marketing and communication strategy on the

preferences of the target group, especially in terms of communication channels, timing and the content of the information. Otherwise, marketing and communication efforts could be completely ineffective and result in a loss of time and money by the company.

Communication channel preferences and adjusting the content and design of media products

NigelMacDonald Clinics has a good foundation in terms of the communication channels used. The company does currently mainly communicate information through their website, their Facebook account and their newsletter, which is being sent out monthly. Most customers of NigelMacDonald Clinics stated that they prefer to receive information via email, the website or Social Media. NigelMacDonald Clinics makes use of all these mediums and customers are aware of their existence, however they do not make use of them and only half of the customers have rated the effectiveness of the mediums as high. The main concern was a lack of detailed information. The foundation of reaching customers via these mediums is there, however they have to be adjusted accordingly and a clear strategy needs to be designed.

Website

The website can serve as a strong communication tool. The design of the website is well thought through and represents the image well, however only one out of three of the USP of the company is presented. The only USP included on the website is the exclusivity represented in a classy layout and design of the website. However, the two other USP of the company, the diversity of products and the cost effective prices are not communicated in an efficient manner. There is no price list on the website and not all treatments are mentioned. NigelMacDonald Clinics should maximise their potential by showing transparency regarding the prices for treatments and products and should further communicate the diversity in their range. Products should be categorised on the website in order to give it structure. The company has many specific product lines for certain characteristics, such as anti- ageing products, products for acne patients or treatments against cellulitis. Products could be categorised according to the specific conditions. As stated in the concept of the buying- decision process, targeted and structured information should be available at all times and the process of finding the exact information needed should be simple (Jha, Keller, Kotler& Koshy, 2009). A test tool could be added to the website, where people can determine the special needs of their skin and the related results they would like to achieve with treatments. This

would be done in the form of an automatic questionnaire, which would evaluate the answers within seconds and present the user products suitable for her or his condition. This would add a personal touch and would present specific, targeted products to the customer. It would present new products to the customer and therefore provide him with an external stimuli to return (Jha, Keller, Kotler & Koshy, 2009), but also show a certain degree of care and even recognition in the form of adjustment to the customer's condition, creating a bond and affinities to the company. These affinities have a great chance to develop into customer loyalty over time.

Social Media

Only half of the participants of the questionnaires rated the Facebook page as effective, however most customers do make use of Social Media, with Facebook being one of the biggest Social Media platforms. Further, only approximately 10% of NigelMacDonalds registered customers make use of the Facebook page, even though most customers are aware of it and are users of Facebook. The profile of NigelMacDonald Clinics can at the present time, only be added as a friend and not liked on Facebook. One reason, for people not connecting with the business online, could be that they do not feel eligible enough to add the business as a friend. NigelMacDonald Clinics should give the option of liking the profile, also because it gives the customer a sense of security and anonymity as very little information is displayed to the company if the profile is liked rather than added as a friend. The company posts regularly on Facebook and shares in-depth information about treatments and products in the form of pictures and videos. However, a lack of information and the communication of the unique selling points can be found in this area as well, the same recommendations as for the improvement of the website apply. All products should be presented with costs and specifications. A test tool, as suggested for the website, could be installed on the Facebook page as well in order to add a personal touch and communicate targeted and therefore valuable information to the customer. Further, as seen from the results of the empirical research, most clients of NigelMacDonald Clinics make use of various forms of Social Media. The company could create accounts and make use of other Social Media platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram in order to maximise their presence. A test run should be carried out in order to prove the effectiveness and not use time and efforts on inefficient platforms.

Newsletter

All customers of NigelMacDonald Clinics are automatically subscribed to the newsletter, however there are no actual records on how many people do read the newsletter. An efficient solution to motivate people to read the newsletter would be to include vouchers, such as discounts or free claims for trial products. This does not only motivate people to frequent the company to claim their vouchers, but also motivates people to read through the newsletter and get informed in an automatic, indirect way. It is very likely that some articles catch their attention, motivating them to read those and acquire information.

10.3 Advice 2: Developing a push strategy

At the present time, the company is making use of a pull strategy, instead of a push strategy. Information is available for customers on a variety of platforms and customers are aware of this, however they are not motivated to make use of this information. The company should provide stimuli and motivation to their customers to access the information provided by them and therefore increase use of the provided mediums on a long- term basis. Most customers of NigelMacDonald Clinics purchase their products through Groupon. This platform is a good start to attract customers by special prices and special offers, such as package deals, however in order to create customer loyalty, the transition from a third party platform, to using the means provided by the company should be made at a point in time. However, the company could take over some of the aspects that make their marketing on groupon successful and evaluate those concepts further, as well as combining them with the means provided by the company. The following concepts could be applied in order to stimulate an increase in use of the tools provided and promote long- term engagement:

Rewards for liking the business on Facebook

Not many of NigelMacDonald Clinics customers are connected with the company on Facebook, however they do make use of Facebook. The company could provide certain rewards for connecting with the profile on Facebook, such as a 10% discount on the next treatment or a free trial product. This would not only encourage people to visit the company, but also guarantee an effective way to expose information to the individual on a continuous basis. However, the individual should be encouraged to maintain connected with the company on Facebook. Customer loyalty and satisfaction is an ongoing process, which needs to be nurtured and stimulated continuously. (Sheth, Venkatesan, 1968) Once one buying- decision process is terminated, the

transition to the next buying- decision process needs to be facilitated. NigelMacDonald Clinics could organise regular contests or quizzes on Facebook. This would keep customers entertained, stimulate conversation about the company and would provide customers with a motivation to remain connected with the business.

Contests and quizzes

The previously mentioned competitions could also be applied to the website and the newsletter. This could be combined with a search for information to assure that customers do not only read about the competition or contest, but, in order to participate, would have to research relevant information in the medium. Thus, the answers to the question of the contests and quizzes would be mentioned at certain parts in the medium, requiring the customer to automatically read information. This does not only market products and treatments and therefore provide stimuli, but also creates a community feeling and a sense of belonging to the company in a fun way.

Engaging the customer through events

Almost all participants of the questionnaire would like to attend events of different kinds organised by the company on a regular basis. This should definitely be realised by the company as it is not only an effective way of introducing and promoting (new) products, but is one of the strongest and most effective tools of creating customer loyalty. A sense of belonging to the community surrounding the company is created, the company is given a face through personal interaction, the customer gets the feeling that he matters and the relationship with the company is being nurtured. This builds the foundation of customer loyalty and creates a strong favourability of the company, bringing a range of positive attributes with it, such as favourable advertising by customers, a favourability of the company's products over others and a decrease in price sensitivity. (Beard, 2013).

10.4 Advice 3: Internationalisation and targeting of specific groups

Internationalisation

NigelMacDonalds Clinics is located in a very international setting in the student city of Groningen. 23% of participants of the questionnaire were foreigners. The majority of those remarked in a negative way that media products were only available in Dutch and they could not understand most of the information provided. The company has realised that they operate in an international setting, however have not yet fully adjusted to it. The provided media products should be send out

or provided in a Dutch and English version. Otherwise this does not only cause limitations to attracting new international customers, but also makes a long- term and favourable relationship with international customers impossible.

Targeting of students

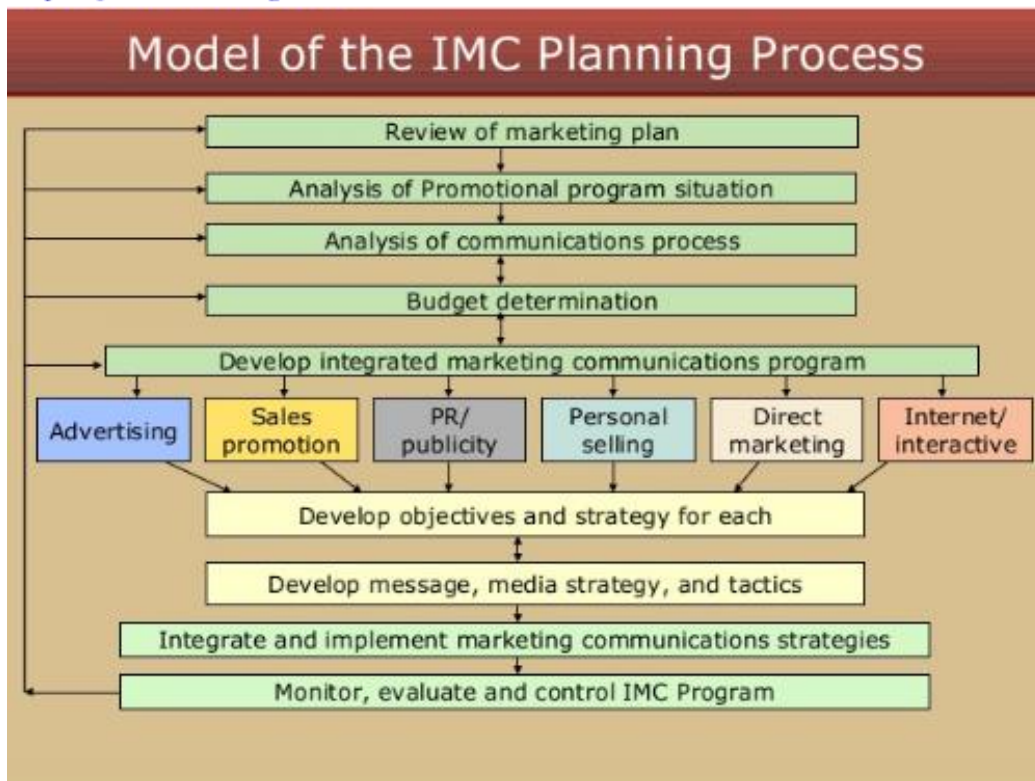
Groningen is one of the biggest student cities of the Netherlands, comprising of a variety of student organisations and organising a large number of students events. NigelMacDonald Clinics should participate at such events, such as for example the Kei Week or international student nights, to not only emphasise an openness for internationalisation, but also to give a favourable face to the company from the beginning on and therefore create a more emphasised and personal type of relationship. Most customers that purchase treatments and products on Groupon are attracted by the low prices and are primarily led by this factor. Giving a favourable image and a face to the company from the beginning on, will evoke positive connotations related to the company and not just a certain package or price of a product in the future and will therefore provide a quicker route to achieving customer loyalty.

10.5 Advice 4: Making use of Integrated Marketing Communications and a one year Marketing and Communications plan

The results of the empirical research in terms of the general and communication preferences of the target group will be translated into a one year Marketing and Communication Plan, with the aim of engaging the customer on a long- term basis, strengthening the relationship between the company and the customer and therefore giving value to the relationship. The end result of this Marketing and Communication Plan is to create customer loyalty and transform the current target group into the desired target group with the intention of enhancing the brand image and increasing repeat purchases, therefore stimulating sales (Beard, 2013).

The one year communication and marketing plan will make use of the model of Integrated Marketing Communications as it is one of the most effective and well structured models to reach the target audience and achieve one's goals in the fields of marketing and communications. (Vaniyawala, 2014). A model of the planning process of IMC, which served as guidelines for the design of the Marketing and Communication Plan for NigelMacDonald Clinics is presented hereunder.

Graphic 38- IMC Planning Process



The first stages of the IMC plan have already been carried out in this report and have been approved and evaluated as detailed and efficient by the company. A review of the current marketing efforts had been carried out. The company does currently not have a clearly formulated marketing plan, thus all efforts of the past had been taken into consideration and had been rated as a good foundation, but as not targeted and efficient enough. The promotional program and possibilities of the company had been evaluated, room for improvement and a wide range of possibilities could be detected. The company has set their budget for the one year Marketing and Communication Plan and all related efforts and operations at 25,000 Euros. The intervention stage in the IMC plan for this advice and recommendations section will take place at the step of developing an integrated marketing and communications program. The necessary preconditions and factors to consider, such as the improvement of the mediums provided by the company and the channels used to target the audience have to be taken into consideration. These need to be considered for all actions carried out by the company and need to be implemented in the IMC Plan.

The hereunder presented marketing and communications plan will give suggestions to the company on how to effectively translate the results from the empirical and theoretical research

and the previously formulated suggestions into an effective plan of action. The strategies and objectives for the different actions contained in this marketing and communications plan have been discussed in the four structured advices at the beginning of this report. To structure the plan further and show the coherence with the concept of the IMC plan the category of the IMC program, to which a certain action belongs, such as 'advertising, sales promotion, PR and publicity, personal selling, direct marketing and internet/interactive', have been stated behind the action in brackets. As all operations do somehow relate to all of the categories, as they are very closely interrelated, only the most applicable categories have been named after the action. In some cases however, several actions were most applicable. The plan commences in June 2016 and reaches until June 2017. The feasibility of actions has been evaluated, as well as the costs in order to stay within the given budget.

Graphic 39- Marketing and Communication Plan

<p>June 2016</p> <p>Improvement of media products (Advertising, Internet/ Interactive)</p> <p>Creation of English version of media products (Advertising, Internet/ Interactive)</p>	<p>July 2016</p> <p>Planning and implementation of Facebook contest (Advertising, Sales Promotion, PR/ Publicity, Internet/ Interactive)</p> <p>Creation and trial of Instagram and Twitter accounts (Internet/ Interactive, PR/ Publicity)</p>	<p>August 2016</p> <p>Planning and participation in Kei Week</p> <p>Event product trial planning and implementation (Personal Selling, Direct Marketing, PR/ Publicity)</p>
<p>September 2016</p> <p>Participation in Kei Week (Sales Promotion, Advertising, PR/ Publicity, Personal Selling, Direct Marketing)</p>	<p>October 2016</p> <p>Evaluation and adjustment of trial period of Twitter and Instagram accounts</p> <p>Event anti- aging planning and implementation (Personal Selling, Direct Marketing, PR/ Publicity)</p>	<p>November 2016</p> <p>Evaluation and adjustment of Social Media</p> <p>Contest newsletter planning and implementation (Advertising, Sales Promotion, PR/ Publicity, Internet/ Interactive)</p>
<p>December 2016</p> <p>Event Acne (Personal Selling, Direct Marketing, PR/ Publicity)</p>	<p>January 2017</p> <p>Contest Instagram (Advertising, Sales Promotion, PR/ Publicity, Internet/ Interactive)</p> <p>Organise posters to install in Groningen (Advertising, PR/ Publicity)</p>	<p>February 2017</p> <p>Open day at the clinic (Personal Selling, Direct Marketing, PR/ Publicity)</p>
<p>March 2017</p> <p>Evaluation of IMC program</p>	<p>April 2017</p> <p>Evaluation of IMC program</p>	<p>May 2017</p> <p>Adjustment of IMC program, design of new IMC plan</p>

10.6 Description Marketing and Communications Plan

The Marketing and Communications plan will commence in June 2016 with an improvement of the existing media products, i.e. the website, the newsletter and the Facebook page. More information will be added to the mediums, the content will be enriched, structured and targeted according to the results of the empirical research. NigelMacDonald Clinics has selected both employees and interns, which will help carrying out this plan. A test tool, as previously described, to show the user targeted and specific products will be included. Further, an english version of the website will be created and put online. In July 2016, a planning and implementation of a Facebook contest will take place. Suggestions for this contest include a quiz concerning the company and its products or a photo contest concerned with sending in your best result from your favourite treatment. This needs to be decided upon at a later point in time with the company. Further, in July 2016 a creation of an Instagram and Twitter account will be made and from then on content will be posted regularly (daily). One employee of NigelMacDonald Clinics will be solely responsible for managing all Social Media accounts regularly. The Twitter and Instagram accounts will undergo a trial period, the success will be evaluated at a later stage.

In August 2016 the first event will take place in the form of a product trial for NigelMacDonald Clinic's products which have been introduced last year. Products and treatments can be tested for free. The products are already available, drinks and snacks will be provided by a buffet service. The event will be advertised on Social Media, on the website, in the newsletter and at the clinic itself. Also, in August the planning for the participation during the KEI Week will take place. This event will be advertised on all of NigelMacDonald Clinics mediums, as well as through posters and flyers in the city of Groningen and especially at the Hanzehogeschool and the RUG. Promotional material will be printed in a local copy shop, an acquaintance of the owner, NigelMacDonald will design the material. In September NigelMacDonald Clinics will participate in the KEI Week. The company will have a stand at Grote Markt, hand out brochures and flyers and will provide selected treatments for a discount price. In October 2016, the trial period of the Twitter and Instagram accounts will be evaluated and the accounts will be improved or deleted if necessary. The target for both accounts is to get 300 followers within the trial period. An anti-ageing event will be planned and implemented in the same structure as the product launch, just with more specialised products. In November an evaluation and adjustment of the Social Media accounts and a contest or quiz, in a similar form to the one on Facebook will take place. In

December an event specialised on acne treatments and products will be held in the clinic. Should the Instagram trial period be successful, an Instagram contest will be carried out in January 2017. Also, the company will create new posters, have them printed at a local copy shop and install them at various places in Groningen. In February an open day will be held at the clinic, where treatments and products will be introduced and new customers, which sign up on that day will get further deals and discounts. In March and April the IMC program will be evaluated according to it's success. Factors, which will be considered hereby are the number of returning customers, the frequency of returning, the subscribers to Social Media and participants in the contest. To evaluate this the company will use analytical tools and distribute anonymous online questionnaires. In May 2017, the last month of the Marketing and Communications plan, adjustments will be made to the IMC program if necessary and a new plan for the following year will be drawn up.

10.7 Budget

The company set the budget at 25,000 Euros. The company is aware that in order to have a higher reach and greater success, especially in the field of outdoor and print advertising, a higher sum should be invested, however is not able to do so at this point. An acquaintance of NigelMacDonald Clinics will design the advertising and promotional material for free, the printing costs for the promotional material for the Kei Week and the posters, which will be installed throughout Groningen are estimated at 10,000 Euros. Additional costs for the Kei Week will be 2,000 Euros for some snacks and drinks. The products for the product launches are already available, thus the only extra costs that apply are 13,000 Euros in form of snacks and drinks for all events. The Social Media activities will evoke no additional costs.

Graphic 40- Budget

Events			
Food & Drinks		–	13,000 Euros
Products		–	0 Euros
Kei Week	Advertising	–	5,000 Euros
	Products	–	0 Euros
	Food & Drinks	–	2,000 Euros
Posters city		–	5,000 Euros
Social Media Actions		–	0 Euros

10.8 Limitations

Limitations of any nature may be encountered, also some that the company might have no control over. The most likeable limitations may be that the operations fail, are not well visited or not liked by customers. It then has to be evaluated if a second or third chance should be given to those operations and actions or if they are not worth it and should be neglected. Also, certain aspects or multiple aspects of the actions might be proven as not efficient, the company has to therefore plan enough time in to readjust strategies, concepts and operations. Operations and their success or failures should be monitored and evaluated closely at all times, only then the company can learn and intervene on time, if necessary. The desired outcome of the Marketing and Communications plan, is to increase customer loyalty, attract new customers and stimulate sales.

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Appendix

Interview with Nigel MacDonald

This interview has been conducted with the owner of Nigel MacDonald clinics prior to the research phase in order to get an insight into the business and find a suitable topic for the report.

Interviewer: Hello Mr MacDonald. I would like to ask you a few questions about the company in order to get a better insight for my research purposes. Can I ask you firstly when you started the business?

Nigel MacDonald: I have founded the clinic in 2013, however have had a salon in the centre before. I had the salon since 2011 and then had both for 2 years before I moved the salon fully into the clinic.

Interviewer: What was the main reason for that?

Nigel MacDonald: It was easier for me to supervise both and we have enough space in the clinic.

Interviewer: How many employees do currently work at the clinic?

Nigel MacDonald: There are currently 10 employees and 5 interns working here.

Interviewer: What treatments do you offer and what are the most popular ones?

Nigel MacDonald: We offer Laser Hair Removal, Teeth Whitening, Microdermabrasion, Massages, Waxing and a variety of slimming and anti- cellulite treatments. We also offer exercise and nutrition advice. Most popular are the slimming and anti- cellulite treatments, laser hair removal, microdermabrasion and teeth whitening.

Interviewer: How many customers do you currently have?

Nigel MacDonald: It is hard to say and I would have to check. Currently we have about 3000 customers in our mailing list I would guess.

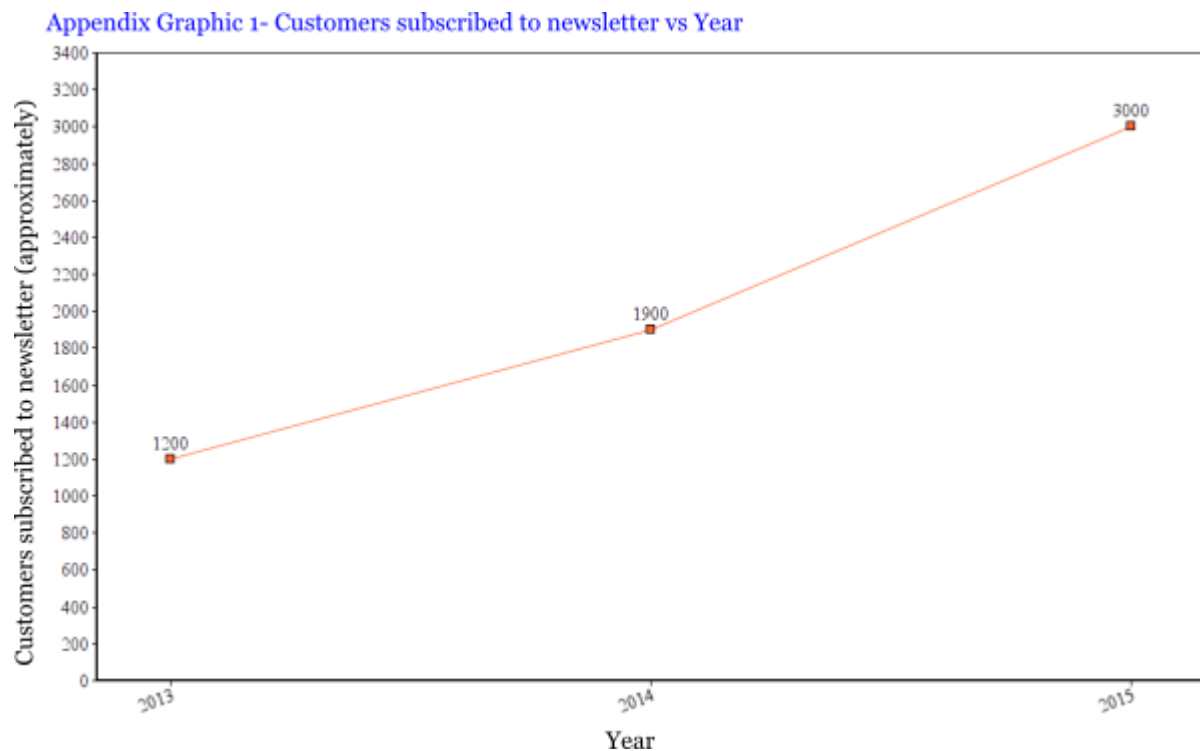
Interviewer: Are there currently any communication issues you are facing?

Nigel MacDonald: We have a lot of customers that buy packages for treatments for the laser for example or buy 2 teeth whitening sessions when they're on offer. But they don't come back afterwards to buy other treatments, which I would like. And I would like to attract more customers.

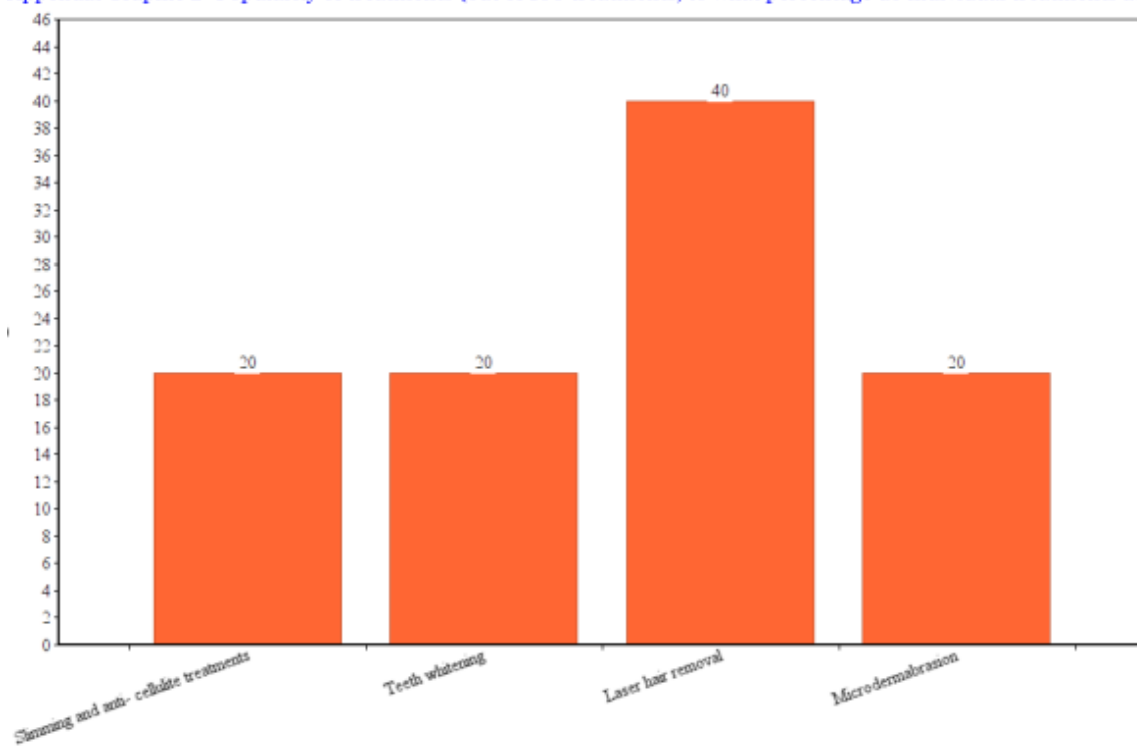
Interviewer: Do you have any idea what is causing this?

Nigel MacDonald: Not really. Maybe we have to improve our newsletter and website or advertise more. We do not have anyone specialised only in marketing working at the clinic, so I think we have to improve marketing. Also I don't know how satisfied our customers are. They seem happy, but maybe we can do more to make them happier and offer exactly what they want.

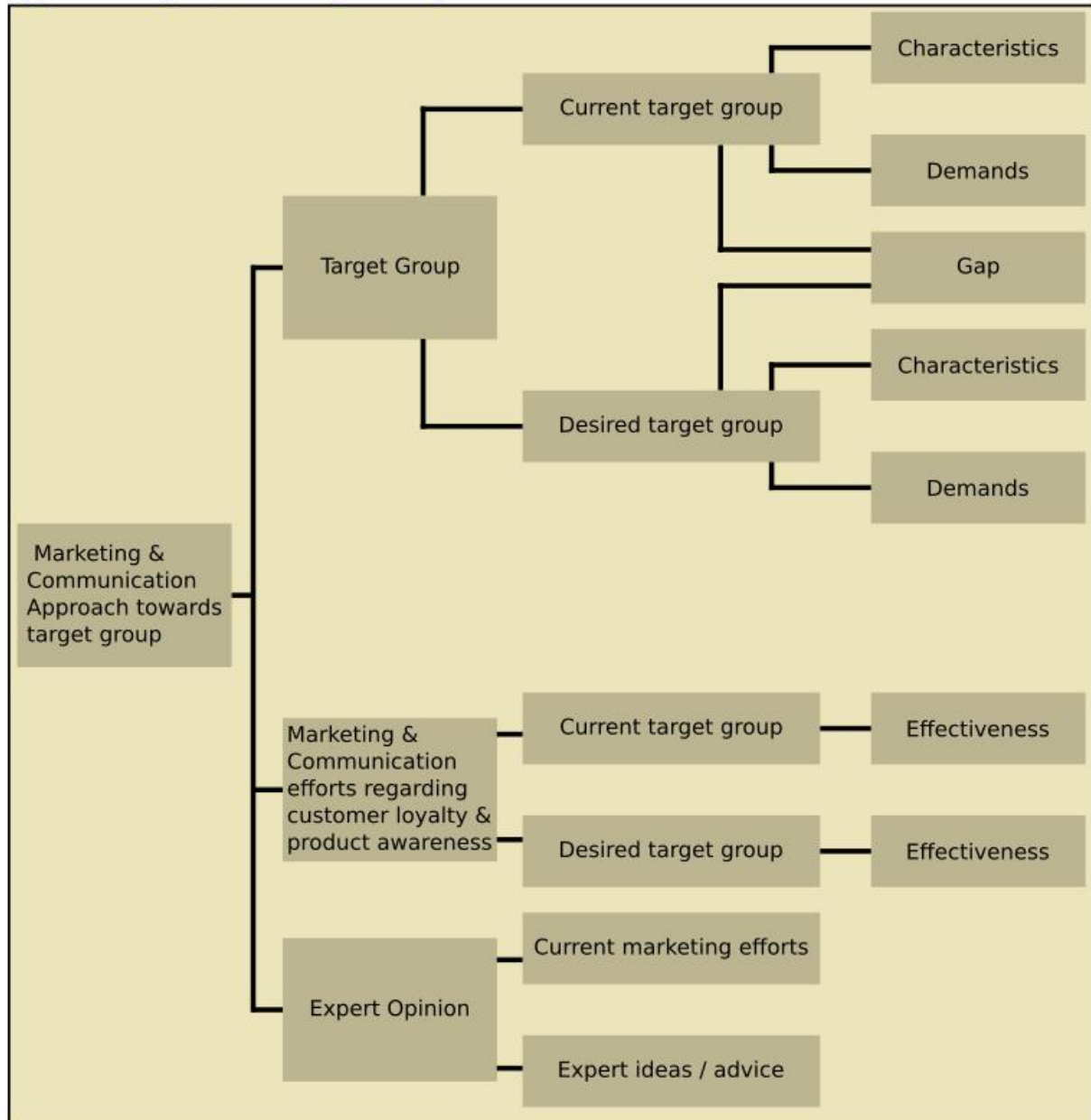
Interviewer: Thank you for the interview Mr MacDonald. I will think of ways that I can help you with the problem and will present possible research topics to you by next week.



Appendix Graphic 2- Popularity of treatments (out of 100 treatments, to what percentage do individual treatments account)



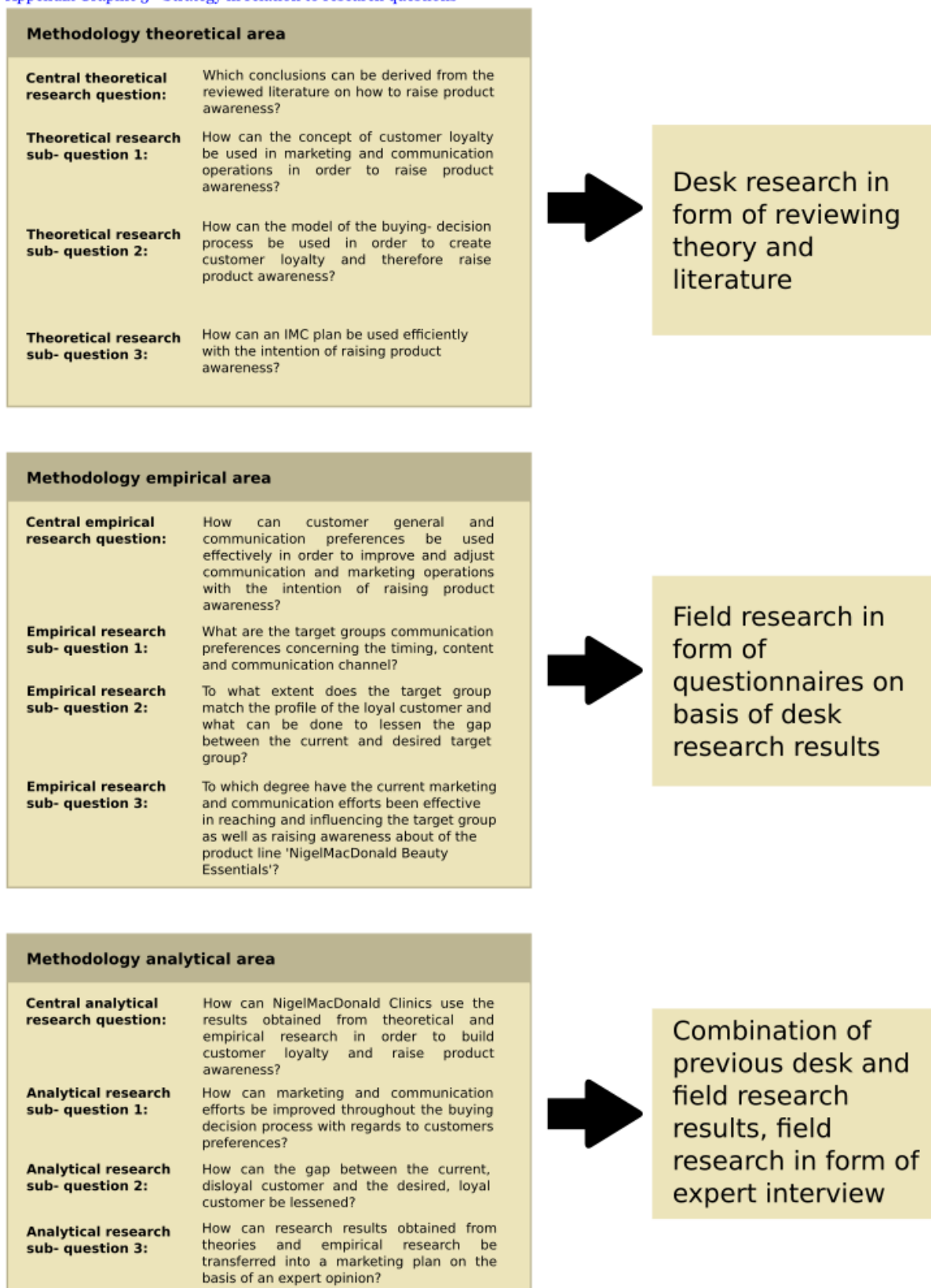
Appendix Graphic 3- Pre- Stage Conceptual Model



Appendix Graphic 4- Research questions theoretical area

Research questions theoretical area	
Central theoretical research question:	Which conclusions can be derived from the reviewed literature on how to build customer loyalty?
Theoretical research sub- question 1:	How can the concept of customer loyalty be used in marketing and communication operations in order to build customer loyalty?
Theoretical research sub- question 2:	How can the model of the buying- decision process be used in order to build customer loyalty?
Theoretical research sub- question 3:	How can an IMC plan be used efficiently with the intention of building customer loyalty?

Appendix Graphic 5- Strategy in relation to research questions



Appendix Graphic 6a- Questionnaire in relation to conceptual model and research questions

Conceptual Model	Theoretical Concept
Your age?	General
Your nationality?	General
How long have you been a customer at NigelMacDonald Clinics?	General
How satisfied are you with the overall level of customer service at NigelMacDonald Clinics?	General, CM:customer communication preferences and general needs, RQ: none
Please name areas of improvement for the company regarding its customer service performance?	CM: Customer communication preferences and general needs, Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Efforts for transformation from current to desired target group RQ: Central empirical research question, empirical research question 1
Which customer service areas do you believe the company performs best in?	CM: Customer communication preferences and general needs, Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Efforts for transformation from current to desired target group RQ: Central empirical research question, empirical research question 1
Please specify why/how these areas should be improved:	CM: Customer communication preferences and general needs, Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Efforts for transformation from current to desired target group RQ: Central empirical research question, empirical research question 1
Which of the following is most important to you personally?	CM: Customer communication preferences and general needs, Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Efforts for transformation from current to desired target group RQ: Central empirical research question, empirical research question 1
When purchasing a treatment/products I pay most attention to...	CM: Buyer and Consumer behaviour of current customer base, RQ: Empirical research question 2
How often do you go for treatments at NigelMacDonald Clinics?	CM: Buyer and Consumer behaviour of current customer base, RQ: Empirical research question 2
What would motivate you to go more often?	CM: Buyer and Consumer behaviour of current customer base, customer communication preferences and general needs, RQ: Analytical research sub- question 1 and 2
Where do you mainly book/purchase treatments?	CM: Buyer and Consumer behaviour of current customer base, customer communication preferences and general needs,, RQ: Analytical research sub- question 1 and 2
How often do you use the following mediums provided by the company?	CM: Customer communication preferences and general needs, Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Efforts for transformation from current to desired target group RQ: Central empirical research question, empirical research question 1
How effective would you rate the mediums provided by the company?	Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Efforts for transformation from current to desired target group RQ: Central empirical research question, empirical research question 1

Appendix Graphic 6b- Questionnaire in relation to conceptual model and research questions

Conceptual Model	Theoretical Concept
Please give recommendations for improvements for each medium, if applicable	CM: Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Efforts for transformation from current to desired target group RQ: Central empirical research question, empirical research question 1
What is your preferred medium for receiving updates and information?	CM: Customer communication preferences and general needs, Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Efforts for transformation from current to desired target group RQ: Central empirical research question, empirical research question 1
How often would you like to receive information/updates?	CM: Customer communication preferences and general needs, Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Efforts for transformation from current to desired target group RQ: Central empirical research question, empirical research question 1
Would you be interested in events organised by the company?	CM: Customer communication preferences and general needs, Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Efforts for transformation from current to desired target group, all analytical research questions
How often would you like to attend such an event?	CM: Customer communication preferences and general needs, Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Efforts for transformation from current to desired target group, all analytical research questions
What kind of events would you be interested in?	CM: Customer communication preferences and general needs, Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Efforts for transformation from current to desired target group, all analytical research questions
Please describe in your own words what motivates you to repeat purchase from a company:	CM: Buyer and consumer behaviour of current customer base, characteristics of desired, loyal target group, RQ: Central empirical research question, empirical research sub- question 2, Central analytical research question, analytical research sub- question 2
Please describe in your own words what you believe is good customer service:	CM: Buyer and consumer behaviour of current customer base, characteristics of desired, loyal target group, RQ: Central empirical research question, empirical research sub- question 2, Central analytical research question, analytical research sub- question 2
Please describe in your own words what makes NigelMacDonald Clinics unique for you:	General evaluation
Do you have any other suggestions for NigelMacDonald Clinics?	CM: Customer communication preferences and general needs, Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Efforts for transformation from current to desired target group, all analytical research questions
Would you be interested in receiving questionnaires about satisfaction and recommendations for improvements in the future?	General
How important do you think it is to ask for customer satisfaction in the form of questionnaires?	General

Appendix Graphic 7a- Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire

NigelMacDonald Clinics Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire

*Required

Your Age? *

- ☐ 16-25 years old
- ☐ 25-35 years old
- ☐ 35-45 years old
- ☐ 45-60 years old
- ☐ 60+ years old

Your Nationality? *

Your answer

How long have you been a customer at NigelMacDonald Clinics? *

- ☐ Less than 1 month
- ☐ 1-3 months
- ☐ 3-6 months
- ☐ 6 months to 1 year
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ Over 2 years

How satisfied are you with the overall level of customer service at NigelMacDonald Clinics? *

- ☐ Very Satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Acceptable
- ☐ Not satisfied
- ☐ Not satisfied at all

Which customer service areas do you believe the company performs best in? (Choose up to two) *

- ☐ Friendliness with customer / personal touch
- ☐ Providing information about new products, treatments, events
- ☐ Organisation of gatherings and events
- ☐ Answering questions
- ☐ Following up on customers demands, requests

Please name areas of improvement for the company regarding its customer service performance? (Choose up to two) *

- ☐ Friendliness with customer / personal touch
- ☐ Providing information about new products, treatments, events
- ☐ Organisation of gatherings and events
- ☐ Answering questions
- ☐ Following up on customers demands, requests
- ☐ Other: _____

Please specify why/how these areas should be improved

Your answer

Which of the following is most important to you personally? (Choose up to two) *

- ☐ Employees reacting to my concerns, needs and questions
- ☐ Receiving frequent updates and information about what is on offer
- ☐ Having information about products at hand at all times
- ☐ Low costs for treatments and products

When purchasing a treatment/products I pay most attention to... (Choose up to two) *

- ☐ Its cost
- ☐ Its relevance to me personally
- ☐ The reputation of the company manufacturing/providing it
- ☐ Its availability (ease of purchase)
- ☐ The information available

How often do you go for treatments at NigelMacDonald Clinics? *

- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ A few times a month
- ☐ Once every few months
- ☐ Once a year
- ☐ I have only ever been once

What would motivate you to go more often?

Your answer

Where do you mainly book/purchase treatments? *

- ☐ At the clinic in person
- ☐ At the clinic over the phone
- ☐ Via the clinic website
- ☐ Via GroupOn
- ☐ I receive treatments as presents

How often do you use the following mediums provided by the company? *

	Daily	A few times a week	Once a week	A few times a month	Once a month or less
Website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Newsletter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How effective would you rate the mediums provided by the company? *

	Very effective	Effective	Average	Not effective	Not effective at all
Website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Newsletter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix Graphic 7b- Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire

Please give recommendations for improvements for each medium, if applicable

Website
Your answer

Facebook
Your answer

Newsletter
Your answer

What is your preferred medium for receiving updates and information? *

☐ Website
☐ Social Media
☐ Email
☐ Printed media (flyer, newsletter)
☐ Mobile/Telephone

How often would you like to receive information/updates? *

☐ Once a day
☐ Once a week
☐ A few times a week
☐ Once a month
☐ A few times a month
☐ Only when necessary (new product launch, event)

Would you be interested in events organised by the company? *

☐ Yes
☐ No

How often would you like to attend such an event? *

☐ 2-3 times a month
☐ Once a month
☐ A few times a year
☐ Once a year
☐ Never

What kind of events would you be interested in? *

☐ Product/treatment launches
☐ General social gatherings
☐ Product trials
☐ Special theme events (anti-ageing, acne etc)
☐ Other:

Do you have any other suggestions for NigelMacDonald Clinics?
Your answer

Would you be interested in receiving questionnaires about satisfaction and recommendations for improvements in the future? *

☐ Yes
☐ No

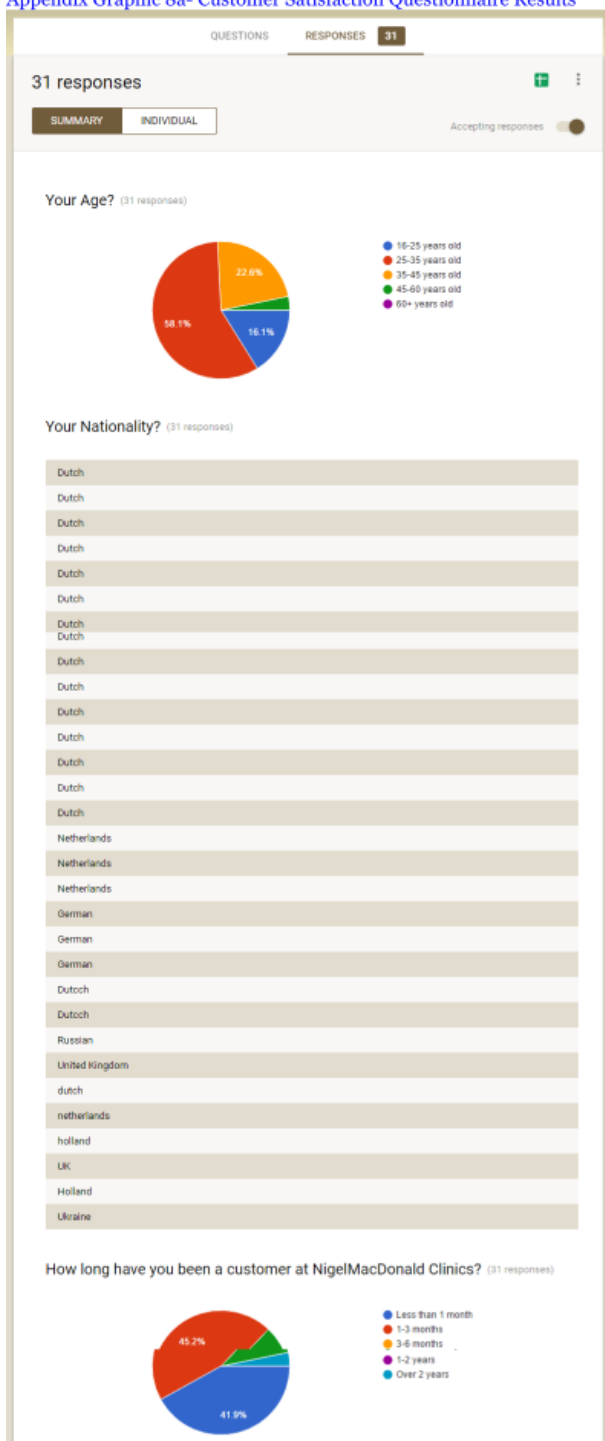
How important do you think it is to ask for customer satisfaction in the form of questionnaires? *

☐ Very important
☐ Rather important
☐ Not important
☐ Not important at all

SUBMIT

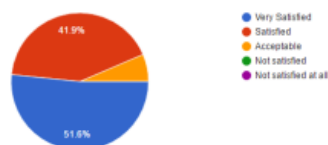
Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Appendix Graphic 8a- Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire Results



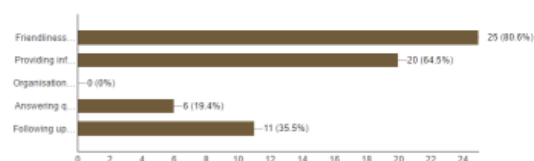
How satisfied are you with the overall level of customer service at NigelMacDonald Clinics?

(31 responses)



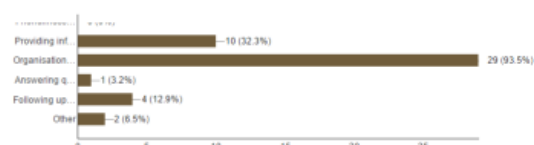
Which customer service areas do you believe the company performs best in? (Choose up to two)

(31 responses)



Please name areas of improvement for the company regarding its customer service performance? (Choose up to two)

(31 responses)



Please specify why/how these areas should be improved

(9 responses)

I would like to have a few event nights and the newsletter should be in English so I can understand :)

Info and try out packs for products would be nice. Or if you can try them in the shop or at gatherings.

Events and gatherings

More info on the website please

The website should contain more information.

It would be great if the clinics could open sunday. I work in the week and saturday.

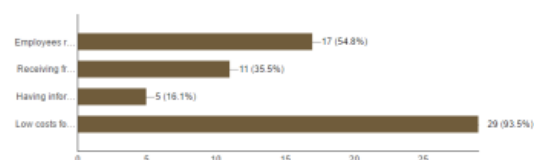
Make the website and newsletter in English

Replying fast to Emails

Some meetings would be nice

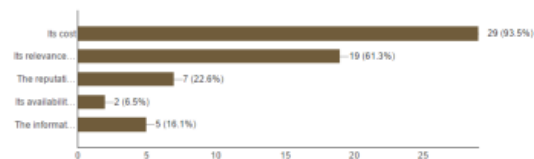
Which of the following is most important to you personally? (Choose up to two)

(31 responses)



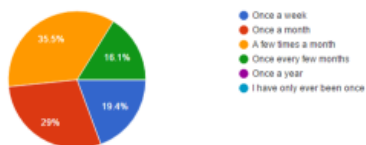
When purchasing a treatment product I pay most attention to... (Choose up to two)

(31 responses)



Appendix Graphic 8b- Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire Results

How often do you go for treatments at NigelMacDonald Clinics? (31 responses)



What would motivate you to go more often? (11 responses)

Nothing.
I do go very often!
If the clinics is open on sunday
Lower costs
Better opening times.
Nothing, all good.
If the prices were cheaper.
Prices are a bit expensive.
It is more expensive coming in more often than when I was young
Cheaper treatments
Better prices

Where do you mainly book/purchase treatments? (31 responses)



How often do you use the following mediums provided by the company?



How effective would you rate the mediums provided by the company?



Please give recommendations for improvements for each medium, if applicable

Website (5 responses)

English version
More information
The website should contain more information.
Content should also be in English or German so that I can understand.)
Is not in English

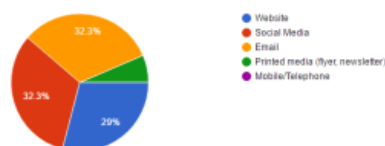
Facebook (6 responses)

I dont use Facebook
English
More information
Is not in English
Same as for website, English version
I have not used the Facebook page

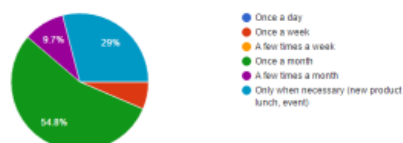
Newsletter (5 responses)

Please an English version
Is not in English
Should send out more often
Should be able to have the newsletter on email
Again, English :)

What is your preferred medium for receiving updates and information? (31 responses)



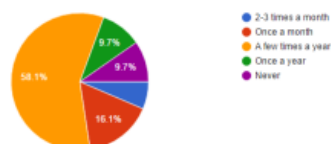
How often would you like to receive information/updates? (31 responses)



Would you be interested in events organised by the company? (31 responses)

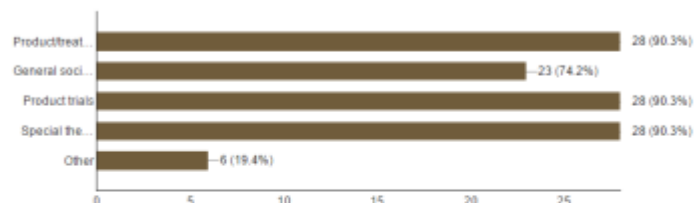


How often would you like to attend such an event? (31 responses)



Appendix Graphic 8c- Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire Results

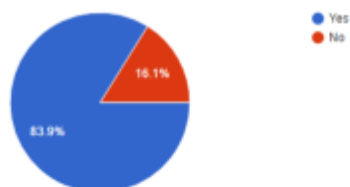
What kind of events would you be interested in? (31 responses)



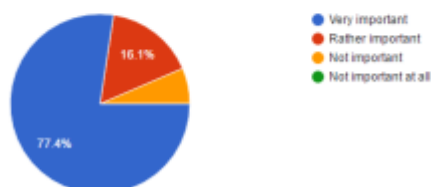
Do you have any other suggestions for NigelMacDonald Clinics? (6 responses)

Information in English please
No
Nothing
Newsletter, website and Facebook in english
Answer to Emails faster
All good!

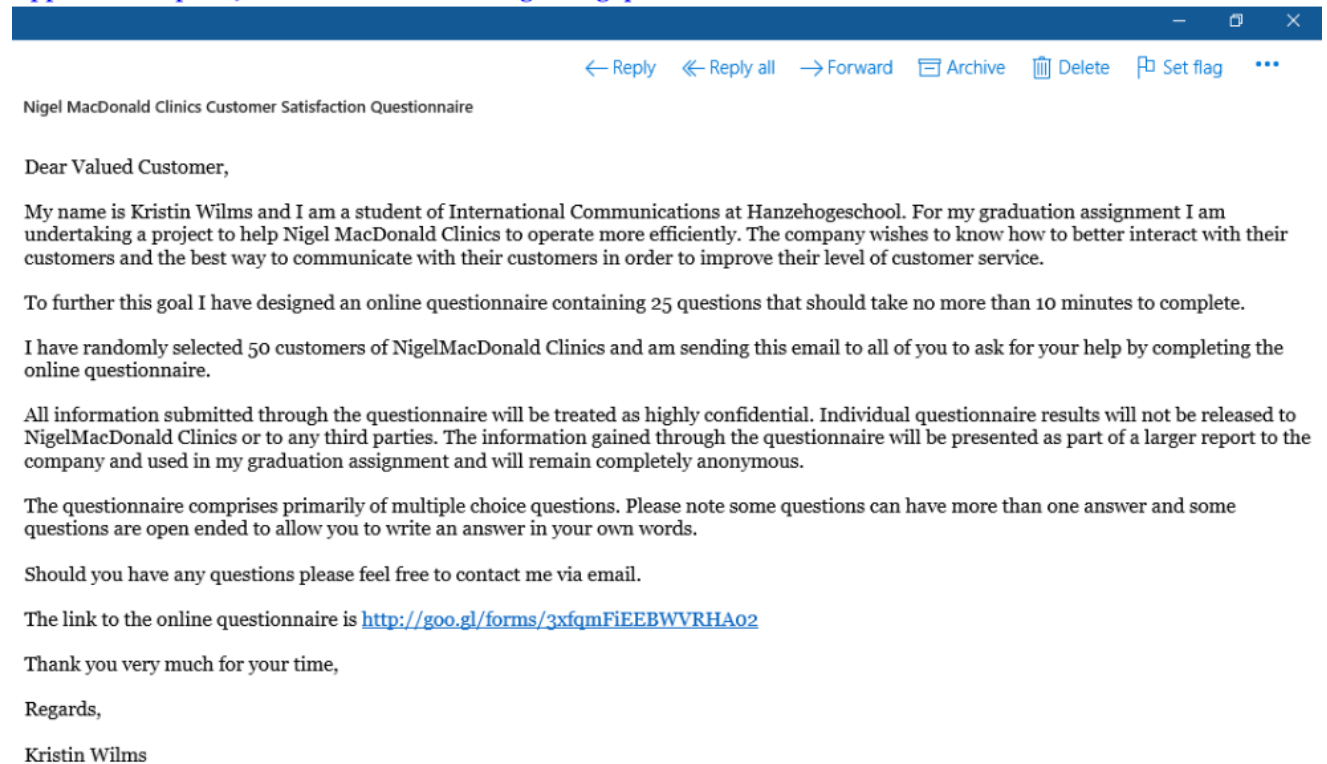
Would you be interested in receiving questionnaires about satisfaction and (31 responses)



How important do you think it is to ask for customer satisfaction in the form of questionnaires? (31 responses)



Appendix Graphic 9- Email to customers regarding questionnaire



Appendix Graphic 10- Planning

January 25th- Start of Graduation Assignment Period
February 7th- Handing in first draft of GA proposal
February 9th - First meeting with graduation supervisor
February 29th- Handing in final GA proposal
March 14th- Receiving feedback GA proposal
March 24th- Hand in second proposal
March 25th- Analysing literature to determine further course of GA
March 27th- Designing questionnaires- and send to supervisor for feedback
March 30th- Change questionnaires according to feedback from supervisor
March 30th- Sending out 50 questionnaires to current clients of NigelMacDonald Clinics
April 15th- Analysing surveys
April 18th- Reviewing literature
April 20th- Presenting results to NigelMacDonald Clinics
April 25th- Presenting report to supervisor for feedback
April 30th- Writing conclusion section
May 3rd- Writing Advice section
May 5th- Handing in report for final feedback from supervisor
May 6th- Make changes according to feedback from supervisor
May 8th- Writing conclusion section
May 12th- Meeting with supervisor
May 15th- Improvements to report if necessary
May 16th- Create marketing and communication plan
May 17th- Send marketing and communication plan to supervisor and Nigel MacDonald
May 20th- Change marketing and communication plan according to feedback
May 22nd- Final skype interview with supervisor
May 23rd- Make last necessary changes to report if necessary

Appendix Graphic 11- SWOT

SWOT	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clearly defined brand image - large customer base - well- known, well- respected brand - extensive communication efforts - existing online presence - quick reaction to market trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - online channels are only marketing tool - no clearly defined marketing and communication strategies - regardless of international customer base, solely communication efforts in Dutch - no clearly defined social media strategy
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - continuously growing business - continuous introduction of new products to the market - growing interest of the public in beauty, aesthetic and health industry - growing partnerships with online platforms, such as groupon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - growing competition - difficult to keep up with all market trends and innovations - changing customer preferences, which at times may be hard to define and research