



Lisbon School
of Economics
& Management
Universidade de Lisboa

MASTERS IN MANAGEMENT (MIM)

MASTERS FINAL WORK

INTERNSHIP REPORT

THE ROLE OF SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING: THE CASE OF HERTZ RIDE

GUILHERME FILIPE SEGISMUNDO

MARCH - 2023



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Without the help and support of several people, this report would not exist. I would like to acknowledge and demonstrate my appreciation to Professor Joanna Santiago, who supported me during all stages and made this work possible, for her precious bits of advice and guidance. Even with a busy schedule, Professor Joanna Santiago always took some time to support the writing process of the report.

I would like to express my gratitude to all people who crossed the path with me on Hertz Ride, especially to Bruno Vilão, my mentor, who always supported me during my internship and shared his deep knowledge about digital marketing with me, infecting me with his passion. A big thanks to the rest of the team with whom I had the honor to work for the last few months for helping me fulfill my potential and become a better professional.

Finally, to my family and closest people, especially my parents, my brother, and Patrícia, for supporting me during this exhausting process, for their love, for making me see that there is always a way to win with integrity and that the underdogs can achieve great things as well.

RESUMO

Com o uso generalizado da internet, o instinto natural é o de se fazer uma pesquisa nos motores de busca sempre que queremos saber um pouco mais sobre algo. As empresas estão a par deste fenómeno e tentar tirar partido dele através do uso de *search engine marketing*, o método de internet marketing que tem como objetivo fazer com que os websites alcancem maior visibilidade nos motores de busca, quer seja através do aumento do tráfego orgânico ou do tráfego pago, para que se possam alcançar maiores audiências sempre com foco na rentabilidade que isso trará para o negócio de uma empresa.

Este relatório resulta de um estágio realizado na Hertz Ride, uma empresa internacional portuguesa, que presta serviços de aluguer de motociclos premium, bem como vende tours de motociclo, igualmente premium. O objetivo deste estágio foi suportar e auxiliar o departamento de Marketing e Vendas da empresa, tanto em tarefas de marketing, mais especificamente as relacionadas com marketing digital, como em tarefas comerciais, especialmente aquelas relacionadas com a gestão da carteira de clientes B2B para Portugal.

Através de uma revisão de literatura focada nos conceitos de *customer insights*, marketing digital, *customer relationship management*, *e-WOM*, *search engine marketing*, *search engine optimization* e *pay-per-click advertising*, seguida de uma descrição extensiva da empresa, dos seus produtos e dos seus processos, foi possível analisar a estratégia de marketing digital da Hertz Ride, e o impacto que o *search engine marketing* tem para a empresa.

Palavras-chave: Marketing Digital, Search Engine Marketing, Search Engine Optimization, Pay-Per-Click Advertising, e-WOM

ABSTRACT

With the generalized use of the internet to find something, the instinct is to do a quick search on a search engine every time someone wants to know more about something. Companies are aware of this and are trying to take advantage of this occurrence through the use of search engine marketing, the internet marketing method that aims to achieve more visibility in search engines, either by getting more organic traffic or paid traffic, to bring more users and focus on return on investment.

This report results from an internship at Hertz Ride, an international company based and founded in Portugal, which provides premium motorcycle rentals and tours. The main objective of the internship was to support the Marketing and Sales department, either on marketing tasks, especially those related to digital marketing, or on sales tasks, especially those related to the management of the B2B client's portfolio for Portugal.

Going over a literature review concerning customer insights, digital marketing, customer relationship management, e-WOM, search engine marketing, and search engine optimization and pay-per-click advertising, followed by an extensive description of the company's products and processes, it was possible to analyze the company's digital marketing strategy and the impact that search engine marketing has for the company.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Search Engine Marketing, Search Engine Optimization, Pay-Per-Click Advertising, e-WOM

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

To conclude the Master's degree in Management with a Major in Marketing, it was chosen to perform an internship to put in practice and deep the acquired knowledge during the curricular part of the degree, and during all the academic path, while contributing to the development of a company operating in a niche market. The internship was served at the department of Marketing and Sales of Hertz Ride, a Portuguese international motorcycle rental company, that operates and is located in 6 countries in Europe and in the United States of America. Hertz Ride's mission is to provide high quality and reliable motorcycle rentals to riders around the world to provide an exceptional customer experience through expertise and professionalism. Hertz Ride has been exceeding the results through the years, thanks to the articulation of deep knowledge about digital marketing and the passion, expertise and enthusiasm about motorcycles and motorcycle touring. The particularity of following the Pareto Principle, the 80/20 law that states that 80% of consequences come from 20% of the causes and believing that most of the company's revenue come from digital marketing actions, has been a success factor and point of differentiation of the company.

The objective of this report is to not only describe the internship performed and my contribution to the company during my time on Hertz Ride, but also to enlighten the relation between the success of the company and its digital marketing, through the use of search engine marketing strategies and the optimization of the company's website to generate leads, acquire and retain more customers, and how it allows Hertz Ride to create competitive advantage and get a better and more suitable brand positioning. This report aims to show how search engine marketing can impact the visibility and success of a company, and to solve three main questions: how can search engine marketing be used as a brand positioning strategy, what is the impact of search engine marketing on e-commerce, and, in the end of the report it will be discussed, how can the motorcycle rental industry become more sustainable.

Firstly, the relevant concepts for this report are established, such as Digital Marketing, Search Engine Optimization, Search Engine Marketing, e-WOM, CRM, and Customer Insights through a literature review. Secondly, a presentation of the company is made, as well of the business sector and competition, followed by the explanation of Hertz Ride's digital marketing strategy and related data and key performance indicators.

Thirdly, comes a description of the activities performed during the internship, the processes, and the tools and resources used to assist the activities performed. On the final of this report, the used methods will be explained, the main findings will be analysed, and some conclusions and limitations on the topics will be given.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Web 3.0 and Web 4.0 have brought changes into the way we organize. In a world where technology and innovations are in constant development, many companies are turning their marketing strategies to digital marketing. Having this in mind and to contextualize the relevant concepts used on the redaction of this report, this chapter, the literature review, will focus on the following topics: Customer Insights, Digital Marketing, Customer Relationship Management, Electronic Word-Of-Mouth (e-WOM), Search Engine Marketing (SEM), Search Engine Optimization (SEO), and Pay-Per-Click Advertising.

2.1 Customer Insights

According to Said et al. (2015), customer insights mean understanding customer needs, preferences, and behaviours obtained through data collection and analysis. Due to the generalized use of social media and the internet, companies have large amounts of marketing information that can be collected and analysed to gain customer insights. For this purpose, companies must adopt a customer-centric approach to succeed in today's competitive marketplace and use methods to generate customer insights, such as qualitative and quantitative research, to better understand customer behaviour and preferences (Said et al., 2015). Said et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of customer insights to drive business decisions by using it to inform product development, marketing strategies, and customer service initiatives after identifying relevant trends for the business in order to earn competitive advantage and customers loyalty through the understanding of their needs and wants that allows a company to meet them.

Price et al. (2014) defined customer insights as the deep understanding of customers' behaviours and motivations. They stated the importance of going beyond understanding what customers want to understand why they want it. Traditional market research, such as surveys and focus groups, do not provide sufficient customer insights.

Therefore, Price et al. (2014) emphasized the importance of using ethnographic research methods, such as observation and interviews, to gain deeper insights into customer behaviours and motivations. Data analytics assume an essential role in generating customer insights through the identification of customers patterns and trends that help companies gain a more comprehensive understanding of customer behaviour and preferences and helps organizations tailor their products and services to meet customer needs better (Price et al., 2014).

Kitchens et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of customer insights in driving business decisions and defined customer insights as the understanding of customer behaviour, preferences, and needs gained through data analysis. By integrating customer relationship-oriented big data, companies can create strategic value. Using advanced analytics techniques, such as machine learning and predictive modelling, to gain insights from large volumes of customer data, companies can use these insights to inform business decisions, such as product development, marketing strategies, and customer service initiatives (Kitchens et al., 2018). Kitchens et al. (2018) highlighted the importance of integrating customer data from multiple sources, such as social media and customer surveys, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of customer behaviour and preferences and stated that companies should adopt a customer-centric approach and use customer insights to drive business decisions.

2.2 Digital Marketing

According to American Marketing Association (AMA), Digital Marketing means the use of digital channels to promote a brand or reach consumers, and it can be accomplished on the internet, social media, search engines, and mobile devices, among other digital and online channels. In other words, it conceptualizes marketing on electronic platforms through any technological device (AMA, 2021). Digital marketing requires new forms of marketing to target consumers and understand the impact of their behaviour. Today, customers are using the internet to research and to purchase. In 2021, retail e-commerce sales reached \$4.9 trillion worldwide, and it is expected that by 2025 it will reach nearly double to \$7.4 trillion (Statista, 2022).

Digital marketing can be also defined as a technology-enabled process by which firms collaborate with customers and partners to jointly create, communicate, deliver, and sustain value for all stakeholders (Kannan & Li, 2016). Today, digital technologies are rapidly changing firms' environments because they significantly reduce information

asymmetries between customers and sellers. The interactions between digital technologies and the companies' environment start with how consumer behaviour is shifting, resulting from the access to various technologies in mobile and online contexts that affects customer expectations and the customer's search process. Customer-customer interactions have increased impact because of digital technologies' facilitation through online media, including online reviews, word-of-mouth, social media, and user-generated content (Kannan & Li, 2016). Kannan and Li (2016) also stated that institutions created through digital innovations that facilitate customer-customer interactions for conceptualization and creation of a new product/service, that connect customers and sellers in platform-based markets, and that leverage two-side markets for their revenue generation enable the collaboration between a firm and its market using digital technologies, and, in the same way, firms have to work with search engines as both collaborators and platforms on which they compete with other companies and in acquiring customers. Kannan and Li (2016) referred that digital marketing brought other means of communication over traditional ones. It provides new means to reach customers and promote products and services via e-mail, display advertisements, and social media. These channels are more focused on effectiveness than traditional channels, such as print, radio, or television, because of the focus on building effective brand awareness, getting customer insights, the using of useful and effective tools, like location-based-mobile and personalized promotions. Digital marketing can span across different dimensions, creating value for the company and the customers. And, of course, marketing research assumes a key role because it focuses on the acquisition and processing of the information generated through digital technologies to understand the specific elements of the environment, actions, and outcomes that inform the marketing strategies of the firm (Kannan & Li, 2016).

In accordance with Clow and Baack (2016), digital marketing combines all the components of e-commerce, internet marketing, and mobile marketing, stating that "it includes anything with a digital footprint". The internet has changed the communication between individuals and the business world, and a buyer can choose between numerous sellers offering similar or practically the same product or service at comparable prices and with similar offers at any time. Basically, the internet serves as a communication highway (Clow & Baack, 2016). To take advantage of this communication highway, Clow and Baack (2016) stated that digital strategies for a company to perform, such as content marketing, that provides useful information to potential customers, location-

based advertising, that reaches customers where they are located, e-mail marketing, online advertising, or SEO. The earlier Web 1.0, characterized by the presence of static content provided by the created, dominated by institutions and businesses, have developed into Web 4.0, characterized by customer engagement, cloud operating systems, and where web participation is a necessity, change the way potential customers and customers communicate and interact with companies (Clow & Baack, 2016). Clow and Baack (2016) stated that digital marketing strategies begin with interactive marketing, which is the development of marketing programs that create interactions among customers and a company. That development can be done using the strategies mentioned above, and Search Engine Optimization.

Digital marketing has been transforming global marketing over the past few decades through the deployment of electronic media to implement metrics-based, objective, interactive, and relational marketing (Krishen et al, 2021). Krishen et al. (2021) considered that digital marketing is an ever-evolving and multi-disciplinary domain, not just a simple application of electronic technology to marketing but also able to advance with nascent developments in information and communication technology tools.

Reassuring, digital marketing refers to using digital channels and technologies to promote products and services to customers. It includes various tactics, and the goal is to reach customers where they are, using the channels and devices they use most to improve engagement, awareness, and sales.

2.3 Customer Relationship Management

Payne and Frow (2005) defined CRM based on three foundations: a strategic approach that is concerned with creating shareholder value through the development of relationships with key customers and customer segments, the combination of relationship marketing strategies and IT to create profitable, long-term relationships with customers, and the provision of opportunities to use data and information to both understand customers and co-create value with them. CRM requires cross-functional integration of processes, people, operations, and marketing through information, technologies, and applications (Payne & Frow, 2005). The framework designed by Payne and Frow (2005) defined five steps for implementing and maintaining a successful CRM system: define customer segments, develop a customer-focused strategy, implement CRM technologies,

encourage a customer-centric culture, measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the CRM program, and continuously improve the CRM program.

For Hair et al. (2010), CRM is the systematic integration of information, technology, and human resources all combined and oriented to provide maximum value for customers and to extract the maximum value from customers. While a production-oriented salesperson focuses the sales force on selling products, a customer-orientated salesperson, typically someone with marketing knowledge, focuses the sales force on providing value by filling a customer's needs (Hair et al., 2010). Once CRM is based on the interaction between companies and customers more than one time, it is important to build customer relationships that lead to repeat business, through the regular contact with the customer that is necessary to help build the bond that represents true commitment (Hair et al., 2010), and, consequently, this leads to customer loyalty that helps a company's development and promotion through word-of-mouth, per example, - loyal customers spread good word-of-mouth about the company (Hair et al., 2010).

From a technological perspective, when searching for effectiveness and efficiency that allow companies to face digital transformation processes successfully, CRM appears as one of the business solutions with the greatest impact and relevance these days (Heavin & Power, 2018). Guerola-Navarro et al. (2021) stated that CRM is gradually expanding its scope of action and always within its strategic customer-centred management approach, toward the field of marketing and customer service and support.

2.4 e-WOM

With the widespread use of the internet these days and since the appearance of Web 2.0, WOM has evolved into e-WOM, which has emerged as a major source for consumers to share their product experiences and recommendations using digital platforms (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004). According to Ismagilova et al. (2017), e-WOM means the dynamic and ongoing information exchange process between consumers regarding a product, service, brand, or company, which is available to many people and institutions on the Internet. Thus, e-WOM provides consumers a way to voice their opinions, feedback, and experiences about products and services, and that voice is often relied upon by other consumers in their purchasing decisions (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004). In contrast with WOM, e-WOM allows customers to receive real-time and real-life information from sources that were previously unavailable (Sun et al., 2021), meaning that now customers

have more information at their disposal concerning a given product or service and companies. The better the impact of e-WOM, the better a company's performance and success. Today the word is spreading much faster than in past decades, while WOM consists of an oral, person-to-person communication about a product, service or brand, the e-WOM changed the communication environment due to the technological advances over the last few years (Sun et al., 2021), and to the generalized use of the internet worldwide. According to Statista (2023), there were 5,473.02 million internet users worldwide. Thus, at an internet search, anyone can compile a considerable number of opinions, experiences, and feedback concerning a product or service, and a company or a brand, that will have an impact on the customers purchasing decisions.

Even though e-WOM is important for companies from all sectors and industries, the importance can be even bigger and more relevant in some factors. According to Bastos and Moore (2021), consumers react more strongly to it when it comes to experiential purchases, such as travel experiences, compared to material purchases, such as consumer goods. Bastos and Moore (2021) attribute this difference to the emotional nature of experiential purchases, which leads to more impactful WOM. Having this in mind, e-WOM can be considered a win-win situation for both customers (they apply it at all three phases of the purchase process: pre-purchase, during the purchase, and post-purchase, to acquire suitable information, share ideas, and present feedback) who have the opportunity to take more informed and conscious purchasing decisions, and companies, because they use it to get customer engagement and insights, develop competitive advantage, build an online presence, and impact intentions, and, with all of that, gain revenue (Akbari et al., 2022).

Also, e-WOM allows a company to improve its website ranking on search engines through search engine reviews. Online and search engine reviews are helping customers to give their opinion about a product, a service, a brand, or a company, and it consists of text-based feedback of a business that customers leave on review platforms, like Google Maps and, today, Google has become a major player in the review platform industry (Mathayomchan & Viriya, 2020). For those platforms user is king, and so the companies with the best reviews appear on the first places of the search engine results pages when customers search for a given keyword, giving companies additional motivation to serve their customers the best way possible and to give them the best experience possible.

2.5 Search Engine Marketing

In the last decades, search engines are playing a vital role for online sellers to develop marketing strategies due to the dependence that individuals have on browsing on search engines, and these strategies consist of improving the website's visibility in the search engine results pages provided to potential buyers (Sen, 2005).

Terrence et al. (2018) defined Search Engine Marketing as the marketing process that aims to achieve more visibility in search engines, either by getting more organic traffic or paid traffic and focus on return on investment instead of relevant traffic building. To Terrence et al. (2018), Search Engine Marketing feature the integration of Search Engine Optimization with social media optimization, that is the use of social media networks to manage and increase a company's message and online presence, focus on keywords that generate high return on investment, measure the number of successful conversions, leads to direct and clean landing pages with a clear call to action designed to capture sales and it is predictable as putting enough money will produce high return on investment.

Sen (2005), in an earlier work, stated that the Search Engine Marketing strategies consist in the following actions: keyword-related banner advertisements, which consists in buying keyword-related banner advertisements on the search engine results pages, but studies showed that standard banners are not as effective as search listings, paid listing, which is when a seller pays a search engine to ensure that their website is one of the top 20 matches within a time frame, Search Engine Optimization, the optimization of the website to improve its ranking on a search engine, and paid placements where sellers pay the search engine for placement on top of a search engine results page, through pay-per-click advertisements. It is possible to implement one of the strategies or a combination of two or more of them.

Ho et al. (2010) stated that search engines became the main method for internet marketing because the users rely on them, and defined Search Engine Marketing as an internet marketing method that has the purpose of increasing the ranking of a website on a search engine and of bringing more users. Ho et al. (2010) referred that there are two types of Search Engine Marketing: Search Engine Optimization and pay-per-click advertising.

Dou et al. (2010) focused on the importance of Search Engine Marketing in e-commerce by stating that search represents a key point to internet users, being one of the most important activities for them, and an overwhelming majority of those users search

for information about goods and services on a regular basis. Dou et al. (2010) also highlighted two types of marketing activities that can be conducted through Search Engine Marketing: Search Engine Optimization and search engine advertising, the pay-per-click advertising.

According to Statista (2023), Google is the search engine market leader with a desktop market share of 84% in December 2022 and a mobile market share of 96,17% also in December 2022. Thus, companies are focusing their Search Engine Marketing efforts on Google.

In this report, we will follow the conceptualization proposed by Terrence et al. (2018), Ho et al. (2010), and Dou et al. (2010).

2.5.1 Search Engine Optimization and Pay-Per-Click Advertising

As presented previously, through the conceptualizations presented, Search Engine Optimization is a mechanism and a Search Engine Marketing strategy. It can be defined as the techniques to customize a website in order to achieve a better ranking in search engines (Ho et al., 2010).

To Sen (2005), Search Engine Optimization is the listing improvement on the search engine results pages by modifying a website to turn it more relevant and, therefore, more compatible with a search engine, and the paid placement, meaning pay-per-click advertising, is the payment from a seller to a search engine of placement in the sponsored section of the search engine results page, and stated that this is a faster way to obtain visibility. Sen (2005) stated that 60-86 percent of search engine users click on displays in the editorial section, where non-paid organic links are, showing that individuals seem to prefer to choose those organic links instead of the paid ones and that search engine optimization can generate more traffic. But, once search engines tend to vary their ranking index and algorithm frequently (in 2020 were registered 4,500 updates to Google Search (Schwartz, 2021)), Sen (2005) argued that search engine optimization cannot consistently result in high rankings and can lead to unpredictable traffic, and, as long as sellers should aim to maximize the traffic that visits their websites via search engines, they need to obtain one of the top 20 matches on search engines (Sen, 2005). Sen (2005) concluded that even if the total cost of implementing search engine optimization and pay-per-click advertising was the same, and search engine optimization always resulted in higher rankings, as individuals tend to trust more on organic links, pay-per-click advertising still

prevail as the search engine marketing strategy of most sellers because it shows results faster and it is cheaper compared to search engine optimization.

Dou et al. (2010) suggested the use of search engine marketing strategies in a brand positioning strategy. Firstly, search engine optimization is defined as a company website improvement to push its ranking higher in the organic search results through several techniques or by hiring external consultants to develop specific techniques with the objective of indexing the website in higher positions, and pay-per-click advertising is defined as the payment per click to have links to a company website in the sponsored section of a search engine results page (Dou et al., 2010). Dou et al. (2010) theorized in the study that search engine results can serve as a vehicle for creating brand positioning in e-commerce. This is particularly salient for less sophisticated internet searchers because, even though individuals may perceive that the display order of search engine results pages indicates how the search engine sorts the results according to the searched keyword, a substantial portion of Internet users believe that companies whose websites are on top of the search engine results page are the top companies in the field (Dou et al., 2010). Thus, as a brand positioning strategy, the authors conceptualized the use of search engine marketing and its strategies to achieve it because search engines can be used as a promotional tool that helps firms build their brands and have success in e-commerce.

In a paper exploring the economics of the search engine optimization process and its effects on consumers, advertisers, and search engines, Berman and Katona (2013) first stated that consumers using a search engine have two options: click an organic or a sponsored link. The first ones are ranked according to their relevance to the search engine, and the other is located to advertisers through bid and competitive auctions. Berman and Katona (2013) stated that consumers tend to trust more on organic links, in detriment of sponsored links, which is why advertisers try to increase their visibility in the organic list of a search query by using optimization techniques on their websites. Once companies have limited marketing budgets and the majority of them invest in both search engine optimization and pay-per-click advertising, they have to choose where and how to allocate their marketing investments: search engine optimization can be beneficial to consumers and to the company by the decreasing in ads costs, by giving high-quality content and websites, especially when the algorithms do not provide an accurate ranking, and this will attract more consumers, and when organic links are the only option on a search engine results page, advertisers who can afford more have the opportunity to increase their visibility faster by bidding on the keyword related to that search and earn a sponsored

spot (Berman & Katona, 2013). Berman and Katona (2013) also found that high-quality websites have an advantage as they can always use sponsored links as a backup option if their organic links do not perform well. Although an increase in organic search rankings leads to a decrease in clicks on paid search ads, it generates an increase in total search clicks so search engine optimization can positively impact both organic and paid search performance (Berman & Katona, 2013).

Terrence et al. (2018) gave a more technical contribution to this topic. Search engine optimization is defined as the process of improving the visibility and improving the ranking of a website in search engine results pages, and search engine optimization can be achieved by either organic optimization or paid optimization (Terrence et al., 2018). Generally, the best-ranked websites appear more frequently on the list and have more traffic that can be converted into customers and sales. Through organic search engine optimization, the website aims to achieve a top ranking without using any paid means, and through paid search engine optimization, the pay-per-click advertising, using Google Adwords, the company buys advertising space in the search engine results page in order to achieve a top ranking for the website on the search engine results page and not to have more traffic (Terrence et al., 2018). Terrence et al. (2018) stated that to achieve satisfactory results, both organic and paid search engine optimization practices must have shared goals and combined metrics. The keyword analysis assumes great impact and importance in search engine optimization, and it is done by identifying the keywords that match the content of the website based on their relevance and potential conversion rate, and then build and develop the website with the targeted keywords, having in mind that they should be monitored and updated frequently according to the search trends (Terrence et al., 2018).

CHAPTER 3 – FRAME OF REFERENCE

The frame of reference and conceptual framework (see Table I and Figure 1) on which the present report is based are an adaptation of the models of Dou et al. (2010), Berman and Katona (2013), and Terrence et al. (2018). The first model, by Dou et al. (2010), studied the use of search engine marketing on a company's brand positioning strategy, and it relies on the fact that search engine users tend to trust on the first results appearing on a search engine results page. Thus, the better a website ranking, the better the customers and potential customers trust the company, and the better a brand positioning works. The second model, by Berman and Katona (2018), discussed the impact of search

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engine optimization in search engine marketing, by analyzing the relationship between a website's search ranking and the number of clicks on its organic and paid search results. The third model, by Terrence et al. (2018), provided technical support and knowledge about the proceedings related to the topic of this report.

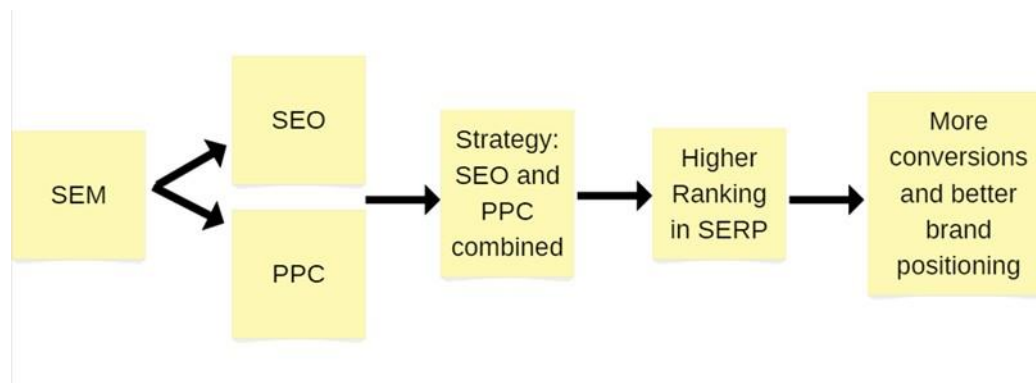


FIGURE 1 – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Source: Own elaboration based on Dou et al. (2010), Berman and Katona (2013) and Terrence et al. (2018)

TABLE I – FRAME OF REFERENCE

Dimension	Short Description	References
Search Engine Marketing (SEM)	The internet marketing method that aims to achieve more visibility in search engines, either by getting more organic traffic or paid traffic, to bring more users and focus on return on investment.	Terrence et al. (2018); Dou et al. (2010)
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	The website improvement to push its ranking higher in the organic search results to have more visibility on search engines and more website users.	Terrence et al. (2018); Dou et al. (2010)
Pay-per-click advertising (PPC)	When a company buys, and pays per click, advertising space in the sponsored section of a search engine in order to achieve a top ranking for the website on the search engine results page to have more visibility.	Terrence et al. (2018); Dou et al. (2010)
Search engine result pages ranking (SERP)	Order in which websites appear on a search engine results' page. Search engines rank websites either by relevance or through bid and competitive auctions, in case of pay-per-click advertising.	Berman & Katona, 2013
Conversions	Users of a website who eventually made a purchase and converted into customers	Terrence et al. (2018)
Brand positioning	Customers' perception of a brand that makes them prefer that brand in detriment	Dou et al. (2010)

	of others. The unique value that a brand represents to customers	
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Source: Own elaboration

CHAPTER 4 – COMPANY AND INTERNSHIP OVERVIEW

4.1 Company Overview

4.1.1 Presentation of the company

Hertz Ride is an international motorcycle rental and touring company that offers a wide range of fully equipped, top-brand motorcycles in Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Austria, Slovenia, and the United States. The company is committed to offering clients a premium rental service, even for one-way international road trips, that involves pick-up the motorcycle from one place and drop-off at a different one. Hertz Ride was born in 2011, based on an in-depth knowledge of the rent-a-car business and a passion for motorcycles and touring adventures.

Hertz Ride offers adventures through professionally guided motorcycle tours, operated by HR Adventure Tours. Hertz Ride's craftily designed routes are meant to be complete and remarkable life experiences. Besides riding brand-new motorcycles on bucket-list roads, the customer will learn history, and discover new cultures.

4.1.2 Business Sector and Competitors

Hertz Ride operates in the tourism and rental industries. It targets not only the direct customer who wants to rent a bike and enjoy a motorcycle experience but also tour operators traveling with groups in need of motorcycles to a location where Hertz Ride is, since the company provides the motorcycles and operationalizes their tour. In 2018, there were 39 million motorcycles used in Europe, equivalent to one for every eleven adults, and, in 2019 alone, 1,4 million motorcycles were registered in the European Union and the United Kingdom (Oxford Economics, 2019). It is estimated that the number of jobs supported by motorcycle related activities is around 389.000 (Oxford Economics, 2019). Hertz Ride received on November 4th, 2019, the recognition of positive investment in the US, leading to job creation and economic growth, showing considerable commitment with the society, and working in accordance with the SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).

As it concerns the competition, the analysis in this report will focus its attention on the competitors in Portugal. Thus, the main competitors are IMT Bike, Motoexplorers, LX Rent, and Europcar. While IMT Bike and Motoexplorers, operate in a way that consists in selling tours and renting motorcycles, which is the same as Hertz Ride, targeting both direct customers and tour operators, LX Rent and Europcar only work with rentals, targeting just the direct customer. Hertz Ride differentiates from the competition because the company offers premium and new motorcycles with a low mileage fleet, and the company tours are the most personalized and luxurious in the market.

4.1.3 Products and Services

Motorcycle Rentals

Hertz Ride's main source of profit and core business is motorcycle rentals. The company's segmentation for potential customers is done using a demographic, and behavioral approach, considering the potential customers' compartment, age, lifestyle, income, and nationality. The targeted customers are those aged between 40 and 60 years, with high income, motorcycle licenses, and motorcycle enthusiasts.

More than renting a vehicle, Hertz Ride focuses on selling a unique experience. While an individual who rents a car wants a vehicle to move from point A to point B, someone who wants to rent a motorcycle expects something special, not just a means of transportation but the experience of riding through the roads. The importance to a rider is not the destination but the journey, and the company canalizes its resources and strategy to improve the journey of its customers by offering a wide range of touring motorcycles. The brands of Hertz Ride bikes are BMW, Honda, Harley-Davidson, Moto Morini, MV Agusta, Ducati, and KTM. In Portugal, Hertz Ride offers just BMW, Honda, and Moto Morini, BMW being the most solicited ones (see Figure 2).

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FIGURE 2 – HERTZ RIDE EUROPEAN FLEET

Source: Hertz Ride Website (Hertz Ride, 2022)

Direct customers can make a reservation through the website, choosing the pick-up station and drop-off station, they do not need to be the same because it offers the possibility to realize the pick in a station and to leave the bike in some other station, the dates and hours of pick-up and drop-off, and the number of bikes. After that, a webpage with all motorcycles available on those dates on the pretended location will appear, well as the necessary information, such as the included mileage, price, and minimum age. When the customer selects the motorcycle, it redirects him to another webpage where he can find the available extras and what is included (figure 3).

Home / Cart / Checkout ← Back

ⓘ You have approximately 10 minutes to complete the reservation.

 Rider #1	Motorcycle: Change Motorcycle ▾	Price 1.311,67€
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Choose Extras here	Price Details
<input type="checkbox"/> Intercom Cardo 100,00€	Package Price 1 Motorcycle 1.311,67€
<input type="checkbox"/> Cross Border 60,00€	New motorcycle model ✓ Included
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drop Off 1.845,00€	Motorcycle coverage CDW & TP included - NWE Deposit 2.000,00€
<input type="checkbox"/> Helmet Size L 20,00€	Unlimited Km ✓ Included
<input type="checkbox"/> Helmet Size M 20,00€	24 H Road Assistance ✓ Included
<input type="checkbox"/> Helmet Size S 20,00€	All Taxes ✓ Included
<input type="checkbox"/> Helmet Size XL 20,00€	Complete Luggage System (3 cases) ✓ Included
<input type="checkbox"/> Helmet Size XXL 20,00€	Drop Off 1.845,00€
<input type="checkbox"/> Low seat 20,00€	TOTAL (EUR) 3156.67 €
<input type="checkbox"/> MODULAR HELMET L 30,00€	
<input type="checkbox"/> MODULAR HELMET XL 30,00€	

This is a secure form. All data is encrypted before transmission and we do not share your information with anyone.

Your Reservation

1 MOTORCYCLE - 16 DAYS





Change Dates and Location

#1 BMW R1250 GS

MOTORCYCLE PICKUP
2023-01-24 - 08:30
Lisbon - RUA CASTILHO, N72

MOTORCYCLE DROP OFF
2023-02-08 - 09:00
Paris - 27 Rue St. Ferdinand

Follow Hertz Ride

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FIGURE 3 – HERTZ RIDE RESERVATION CHECKOUT FOR DIRECT CUSTOMERS

Source: Hertz Ride Website (Hertz Ride, 2022)

The sales process for direct customers is fully automated. Once the company's website is linked to Rentway, the software used by Hertz Ride to control the fleet available and manage reservations, that sends key information to the website, such as which motorcycles are available to rent in which locations, the payment confirmation, and the rental agreement numbers, thus, when the client pays, through, a safe link for payment, he automatically receives an e-mail confirming the reservation. At this point, the customer pays 20% of the total cost of the reservation, and the rest is charged at the moment of pick-up. All reservations can be canceled without any cost until 60 days before the pick-up date.

It is possible to rent a motorcycle with Hertz Ride in 22 distinct locations, 5 in the United States of America and 17 in Europe, in Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Slovenia, and Austria. The drop-off fee extra, implemented in 2021, works as a strategy to link the locations, especially the ones that are not so far from each other, allowing the company to give an answer to the demand on locations where, at a given moment, Hertz Ride does not have enough bikes. For example, if the company right now needs bikes in Lisbon, and there are more than enough bikes in Madrid, instead of paying a considerable amount of money to transport the motorcycles to Lisbon from Madrid, it is possible to take advantage of this extra, and launch a campaign strong enough to boost the sale of this ancillary.

Hertz Ride B2B channel is the ideal option for tour operators who want to run tours in locations where they are not located, either to expand the business or to meet the demand for tours in a given country. Each B2B partner has his own rate, and the rates are always between 5% and 20% over the public rate, according to a forecast realized in function to a form answered by the partner at the beginning of the negotiations. In contrast to the sales process on the B2C channel, this one is not yet fully automated, despite being a plan for the future. Thus, the sales process works in a different way, and it will be explained later in the report.

It is important to mention that the majority of Hertz Ride rental agreements come from direct customers and from website reservations. The website improvement, the

promotion of the company's services and products online, and the customer insights assume much importance for Hertz Ride.

Motorcycle Tours

The other service provided by Hertz Ride is motorcycle tours. The service is operated by HR Adventure Tours, a company created by and inside Hertz Ride. Since then, HR Adventure Tours has been the official travel partner of Hertz Ride. Currently, the company offers 21 tours in Europe and the United States of America. The role of Hertz Ride in motorcycle tours is to promote and sell the tours, and to rent the motorcycle to operationalize the Tour. All the rest is guaranteed by HR Adventure Tours. The teamwork between these two companies is what allows the tours to differentiate themselves from the rest of the market.

Hertz Ride motorcycle tours can be divided into two types: guided and self-guided. The guided tours are the most premium and exclusive in the market, with carefully designed routes to escape from mainstream locations while still passing by idyllic places defined on the tour scouts, bookings in high-end quality standards hotels, and guided by expertise professionals that have in-depth knowledge about the routes and the locations.

The company's focus on guided tours is to give their customers the most exclusive experience on two wheels. The self-guided tours were created because of the affluence of customers contacting the sales teams asking for the possibility to design a route internally according to some places they want to visit, and booking hotels for them. So, due to this phenomenon, the idea of creating self-guided tours appeared. The self-guided tours are tours with fixed routes, where the customer can ride a motorcycle at his own pace with a GPS that contains a pre-defined route by the company's tour expertise, with accommodation guaranteed in high-end standard hotels. Thus, the client can discover a new country or location at his own pace without any additional preoccupations.

Promotion of Products and Services

To promote its products, services, and to create brand awareness, Hertz Ride takes advantage of the world's digitalization and the exponential age we are living in. The reason why technology is radically changing over a few periods of time is because the process of creating even more powerful technology implies the use of tools from the previous rounds of innovation. For most companies, this fast-paced and highly dynamic environment is eating away advantages of scale because organizational costs grow as

firms get bigger. But this is not the case for the biggest companies of this age. In fact, we see a quite different picture. By improving technology, Google is taking advantage of this reality, and now it represents 85% US searches queries market. Plus, we have 90% global online advertising if we combine Facebook and Google.

Hertz Ride's biggest ally when it comes to product promotion and advertising is Google through Google Ads. Google Ads is a Google service that allows to reach more potential clients when they search for products or services equal or similar to those of a given a company or organization. It operates under a pay-per-click model where the marketer pays every time an individual clicks on his ad, meaning the company only pays for results. When users search for a keyword on Google, they get their results, and those results include paid advertisements that targeted that keyword. Thus, the goal is to target keywords and make bids on them, always competing with other firms that are targeting the same keywords. So that, more important than target keywords and making bids on them, Hertz Ride tries to target profitable strategic keywords, where the competition is not making bids, to guarantee the presence on the top of the search list of those keywords.

Another digital way of promotion used by Hertz Ride is e-mail marketing. Through its presence at motorcycle fairs worldwide and the newsletter subscribers, Hertz Ride has many contacts of clients and potential clients. Thus, the company looks for these e-mail contacts given by the clients, with the prior consent for being contacted by Hertz Ride, as a promotion opportunity and a way of gaining leads. This direct marketing is used not only for promotion purposes but also for capturing customer insights by asking their opinion about Hertz Ride services, for example.

Out of the digital world, Hertz Ride makes a presence in several motorcycle events worldwide, where the company can promote itself directly to potential customers, partners, and motorcycle manufacturers. Another method of promotion is through Hertz Ride partners because some of them are strategic partners, and, on the deal established with them, it was defined that those partners promote and represent Hertz Ride in their countries and at events they attend.

4.1.4 Digital Marketing at Hertz Ride

Hertz Ride Digital Marketing Strategy

One of Hertz Ride's principles is the Pareto Principle, named after the economist Vilfredo Pareto. The principle, also known as the 80/20 Rule, states that 80% of consequences

come from 20% of the causes. This principle serves as a general reminder that the relationship between inputs and outputs is not balanced. Applying this to Hertz Ride reality means that 80% of business profits come from only 20% of actions. Thus, the company canalizes efforts to what really matters, and what matters the most is digital marketing. The digital marketing company's main goal is to ensure brand awareness and lead generation through the dissemination along various communication channels, such as e-mail marketing, social media, and website, and consequently increase sales.

Hertz Ride's strategy is based on two major foundations: retention and acquisition of customers. Hertz Ride is fostering customer retention by providing the most exclusive and differentiated motorcycle rental service in the market. Hertz Ride guarantees the rental of premium, fully equipped, and the latest motorcycle models from top brands, with low mileage due to buyback deals with the manufacturers the assistance and guidance of a fully dedicated motorcycle enthusiast team who knows the product in detail, due to continuous formations about it, through all reservation stages, from the beginning until the drop-off moment. This is to catch the best customer insights and promote the brand. When the client drops off the motorcycle at the station, he is asked to give his opinion on the service by reviewing his experience on Google. The best reviews, the best impressions. Regarding customer acquisition, Hertz Ride uses digital tools to reach new potential clients through Search Engine Marketing.

Search Engine Marketing

Today, search engines play a key role in e-commerce and product research by customers and potential customers. In fact, according to Statista (2022), in 2018, 82% of the US search engine users who stated that they used their smartphone to help them shop had used "near me" searches on their mobile devices. Thus, it is possible to conclude that most people use search engines to search for anything nowadays, including a given good, product, or service that a person is interested in buying. Being aware of this occurrence, Hertz Ride, through Search Engine Marketing, tries to take advantage of it to increase sales volume and as a part of the company's brand positioning strategy.

Therefore, Search Engine Marketing is a form of digital marketing that aims to gain more visibility in search engines by getting more organic traffic or paid traffic, always focusing on achieving a better return on investment (Dou et al., 2010; Terrance et al., 2018). Thus, for Hertz Ride the goal is to be on the top of a search engine results page,

and in consequence, get more traffic on the website by customers and potential customers, convert those visits into leads and purchases through the website's optimization, and then, by getting a better ranking in search engine result pages, Hertz Ride will gain more customer insights that will help the company to understand the needs and wants of the customers and will also help to meet those needs and wants, and will have an even better brand positioning through the perception and confidence that customers have on Hertz Ride when they see the company on the top of search engine results pages consistently.

Thanks to the generalized use of the internet, customers have more information available on a company than they used to have in the last decades. e-WOM has brought customers the opportunity to have that information and allows them to have that intel in real-time from real customers (Sun et al., 2021). Thus, customers now have more information concerning products and services. In Hertz Ride case, the travel industry, e-WOM has an even bigger impact because customers tend to react strongly to it when it comes to experiential purchases (Bastos & Moore, 2021). So, Hertz Ride tries to take advantage of it, trying to get the best online reviews from customers possible, to not only get customers' insights, develop competitive advantage and get more revenue, but also build a strong online review, through the collection of the maximum amount of good online reviews as possible. In this way, Hertz Ride ensures the presence on the top of a search engine result page when a customer or potential customer searches for given keywords, such as "motorcycle rental", "motorcycle to rent", or "motorcycle rentals near me" per example, since the best-reviewed companies tend to appear first on the list, even before the organic links related to the searched keyword.

As for the Search Engine Marketing process, Hertz Ride has two helpful strategies: Search Engine Optimization and pay-per-click advertising. Those strategies are better explored in the following sections.

Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimization is the process of optimizing a website to improve its ranking on search engines and increase its visibility and accessibility to potential users (Dou et al., 2010; Terrance et al., 2018). This can involve a range of tactics, including keyword optimization, content creation, and link building. Search engine optimization aims to improve the quality and relevance of a website, making it easier for search engines to understand and rank the site in search results.

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Search engine optimization is used to increase web traffic, boost leads, and optimize conversions. It consists of structuring content to achieve a higher rank in organic search results, the unpaid content on search engine results pages. Google uses bots to collect information about websites and puts them in an index. Then, Google's algorithm analyses the websites on the index, considering hundreds of factors and then ranks them. The higher a website's ranking, the higher the probability of reaching a bigger audience because the website will appear at the top of a search list. Theoretically, the best websites, according to Google, are on top of a given search, which is why individuals usually do not have to search for much time to find what they want online.

One of the hardest parts of this process for Hertz Ride marketing team is knowing where to improve because Google does not share the components and the variables of the algorithm. Despite that, through some research and external audits is possible to know some key aspects that the search engine has in account during their index and ranking process. So, Hertz Ride is canalizing the search engine optimization efforts into those known aspects. Being them, the page speed issues, one of the signals used by Google's algorithm to rank pages as it plays a crucial role in providing a good user experience on the website, that must be solved through the improvement of the website's speed in the most economical way. This improvement can and must be done through simple and affordable things, such as the reduction of the size of images and banners. Also, since Google launched its mobile-first indexing, they use the mobile version of a website for indexing and ranking. Therefore, ensuring that the mobile version of the website is fast and offers a good user experience is very important for the site's organic performance. Another important aspect is sitemap issues. A sitemap is a list of all website pages that help search engines find relevant pages for users, to crawl through the website, and also helps users to find the website. Sitemaps are extremely valuable for search engines to understand the website structure and what pages should be indexed. They should only contain pages that the company wants search engines to pay attention to, so they don't waste time crawling pages that you don't want to promote in search results pages. This is a simple issue to solve since after few research on what pages should be promoted in search engine results pages and a combined effort the developer that will take the necessary actions, this problem should be solved by taking out of the sitemap the unnecessary pages and putting new relevant pages on it. The last high-importance issue is the one related to the pages that redirect back to themselves. Even though, in the end, the content is shown, so the visitors do not get any errors, this creates unnecessary steps

for Google to find the content of the page. Thus, this is bad for search engine optimization as search engine crawlers will be unable to access the page content to index it directly.

Right after the crucial signals mentioned and explained above, there are some other search engine optimization components that are equally important to have a consistent and continuous search engine optimization strategy and good practices. For example, writing optimised blog content to help it rank for more keywords, drive additional traffic, and support other relevant pages on the site. As part of the keyword research, Hertz Ride identifies topics that can be covered as blog posts. Then, the company will plan the creation of the content using the topics/keywords found on the keyword research. Another example is the optimization of the website's meta titles, the titles that are displayed on the user's browser tab and tells him in what page he is on, and it is also important for search engines to read and rank the website page in cause. Again, keyword research plays a key role here because it is important to insert the targeted keywords on the meta titles so that Google can know that that page mentions and is related to a given keyword. And the same happens for meta descriptions, the short descriptions, with a recommended maximum of 160 characters, that appears right below the meta title on a search engine results page.

One of the best search engine optimization practices that lead customers and potential customers to Hertz Ride website is the e-WOM through Google reviews. Here, the location managers and the location staff play an important role in the Hertz Ride strategy: on the drop-off moment, the client has to be for a couple of minutes on the Hertz Ride rental location while the rental agreement is closed, and the bureaucracies are handled, so the responsible person at the station to close the client's rental agreement invites the client to review his/her experience with Hertz Ride by giving the client a flyer with a QR code that redirects directly to a Google review page where the client can submit the review. This process pushes the location staff to give a good impression, service and treatment to all clients because they know the client will rate and review the experience with the company. It is a win-win situation where the customer guaranteed receives good service and makes part of the purchasing process of a new potential customer that will see this client's review, and where the company can have the opportunity to rank higher thanks to potential helpful reviews, that have significant impact for the business brand positioning.

To be at the top of a search list involves a lot of research work and user experience improvement. As seen, on Hertz Ride, the goal is to improve the website content and user

experience, through more speed and technical health, to find the best keywords and incorporate them into the content, meta titles, and meta descriptions, and to get more Google reviews from customers.

Search engine optimization can be very time-consuming and slower to show results when compared with other search engine marketing tools (Sen, 2005; Berman & Katona, 2013), but in medium/long term, Hertz Ride has been reaching continuous results on organic leads. On Hertz Ride, it is vital to improve the website's search engine optimization to increase HertzRide.com's ranking in search engine result pages, traffic, and organic conversions, by ensuring the appearance at the top of search lists. It is essential to optimize a growing organic conversion rate strategy in the medium and long term and decrease the cost per conversion.

Pay-per-click advertising

Pay-per-click advertising is a form of digital marketing that involves placing ads on search engines to increase awareness and attract more potential customers (Terrance et al., 2018; Dou et al., 2010). It aims to drive traffic to your website and increase brand awareness and sales through targeted advertising.

Through paid advertising, search engine marketing promotes the website by increasing its visibility on search engine results pages. Hertz Ride focuses search engine marketing on Search Google Ads for targeted keywords to optimize conversions. In short, pay-per-click advertising helps companies to improve their content through search engines. By buying targeted ads, Hertz Ride is reaching positions at the top of the search engine results pages, which allows the company to bring its products and services to the attention of bigger audiences.

First, the firm identifies keywords with large search volumes. Preferentially a keyword not used by the competition to gain competitive advantage, save money, and ensure the presence at the top of the page. And then bids on them to get an ad space on the search engine results pages. As mentioned, these are pay-per-click campaigns, meaning Hertz Ride pays every time a user clicks its ad. For organizations selling products and services, the revenue generated from customers buying products they access via paid ads should outweigh the cost of pay-per-click.

The main characteristics of this digital marketing are its efficiency and its short-term impact, as it is possible to see in Table II.

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TABLE II – HERTZ RIDE'S SEM RESULTS FOR 2022

Conversions	Cost / Conversion	Cost	Sales
1010	€ 41,69	€ 42.3K	€ 365K

Source: Google Ads

According to Google Ads (2023), to get the return on ad spend we must apply the following formula: $Return\ on\ ad\ spend = \frac{Revenue - Ad\ spend}{Ad\ spend} * 100$, that leads to a return of 762,88%, meaning that every 1€ invested in ads generated around 7,63€.

To find the right keywords, Hertz Ride monitors the searches related to motorcycle rentals on Google, trying to capture the keywords that the individuals use the most, and, essentially, tries to target profitable strategic keywords where the competition is not making bids to guarantee the presence on the top of the search list of those keywords, since Hertz Ride is always competing with other firms that are targeting the same keywords. For that purpose, the company uses tools to get help, such as Keyword Planner and Google Trends. These tools provide important insights on keywords, such as if the competition is using that keyword, the average monthly searches for that keyword, the ad impression share, the minimum, and maximum amount advertisers have paid historically for that keyword, and the year-on-year change. After carefully conducting searches, Hertz Ride decided which keywords to invest (Table III).

TABLE III – KEYWORD PLANNER INSIGHTS

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Insight	Description
Average Monthly Searches	The average number of times people search for a keyword and similar terms based on the month range, the location, and the search settings.
Three Month Change	Three-month change in search trends by comparing the latest month's data, with the data from two months prior.
YoY Change	Compares the monthly search volume of the latest month with the same month of the previous year.
Competition	Shows how competitive ad placement is for a keyword, specific to the location and Search Network targeting options selected.
Ad Impression Share	Number of impressions received divided by the total number of searches for the location and network targeted that matched the keyword exactly in the last calendar month.
Top of Page Bid	Shows the higher/lower range of what advertisers have historically paid for a keyword's top-of-page bid, based on location and Search Network settings

Source: Keyword Planner

While search engine optimization is more time-consuming, slower to show results, and tend to show continuous results on organic leads in the medium/long term, pay-per-click advertising has a short-term impact on leads and conversions, is quickly efficient, and, of course, is paid.

4.1.5 Ranking in Search Engines and Brand Positioning

Hertz Ride combines search engine optimization and pay-per-click advertising in the search engine marketing strategy to rank as high as possible. Search engine optimization serves more in the medium/long term to save money for the company on that term to create sustained value and increase and boost organic leads and conversions. Pay-per-click advertising serves, as mentioned, in the short-term to promote campaigns, create conversions, and increase conversions, always paying attention to the return on investment.

Being on the top of a search engine results page for itself has no value, and get there through paid advertising but do not have an optimized website has also few or no value at all because it will bring visitors to the website but since it is not optimized, the bounce rate, which is the percentage of single-page sessions in which there was no interaction with the page, will be higher, which is not positive.

Thus, Hertz Ride motivation, incentive, and objective to rank as high as possible on Google is based on two major points. The first point is obviously to increase the number of leads and conversions, push the number of sales up, and get more revenue, which was

already mentioned in this report. The second point is to create good brand positioning and brand awareness. On Hertz Ride, search engine marketing seems to act as part of a brand positioning strategy. Search engines are, without a doubt, a helpful and useful tool for any company with an online presence. One of the many fields where it is helpful and useful is the promotion of a brand or a company so that search engines can serve as a vehicle for creating brand positioning in e-commerce, especially when it comes to industries operating with experiential purchases (Bastos & Moore, 2021), like the one where Hertz Ride is because customers and potential customers who search for that tend to trust more on the reviews and on the index list, because, despite the fact that some search engine users have an idea of how does the index and ranking works, a substantial portion of users believe that companies whose websites are on top of the search engine results pages are the top companies in the field (Dou et al., 2010). So, in the ideal scenario where a company can successfully achieve a high ranking on the 3 components of a search engine results page: 1) reviews, 2) paid, and 3) organic, to obtain a better client perception, the search engine marketing as a brand positioning strategy works perfectly. A good brand positioning and a good brand positioning strategy will ensure more customer insights that will be used to create sustained value for customers and to engage them with a better understanding of their perception of the company and their needs and wants, all to conduct business to success on a customer-centric approach and to develop a competitive advantage. Plus, with that high ranking, a company will receive more visits, more conversions, and more sales, therefore, which is Hertz Ride main objective.

Hertz Ride digital marketing strategy has been showing great quantitative and qualitative results. By using search engine marketing to achieve the top spots on search engines for certain targeted keywords, the company has been increasing the volume of rentals, and with that higher results search engine marketing has been working as part of the brand position strategy of the company, improving the perception and the idea that the customers and potential customers have on the company. Plus, with that, it is possible to collect more customer insights and better understand the behavior, needs, and wants of the customers and potential customers to meet those factors and create sustained value on a customer-centric approach. All this process allows the company to achieve better and better results, a better relationship and engagement with customers, competitive advantage, and sustained value.

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4.2 Internship Overview

In this topic, a description of the internship is done, where, in the first place, the company structure and the role of each department will be stated. Secondly, the sales process and the main tasks performed during the internship are explained.

I joined Hertz Ride as a Marketing and Sales Intern in the Marketing and Sales department. The internship lasted from the 15th of September 2022 until the 15th of March 2023.

4.2.1 Company Structure

Worldwide, Hertz Ride employs 18 people directly involved in the business and its operations. In Portugal, the company employs 8 people directly involved in the business and its operations. The company takes advantage of shared services with Hertz Portugal, such as Accounting, Human Resources, Treasury, Pricing, Customer Service, and Collections.

The company comprises 5 areas: Operations, Marketing and Sales, Business Development, Fleet, and IT (Figure 4).

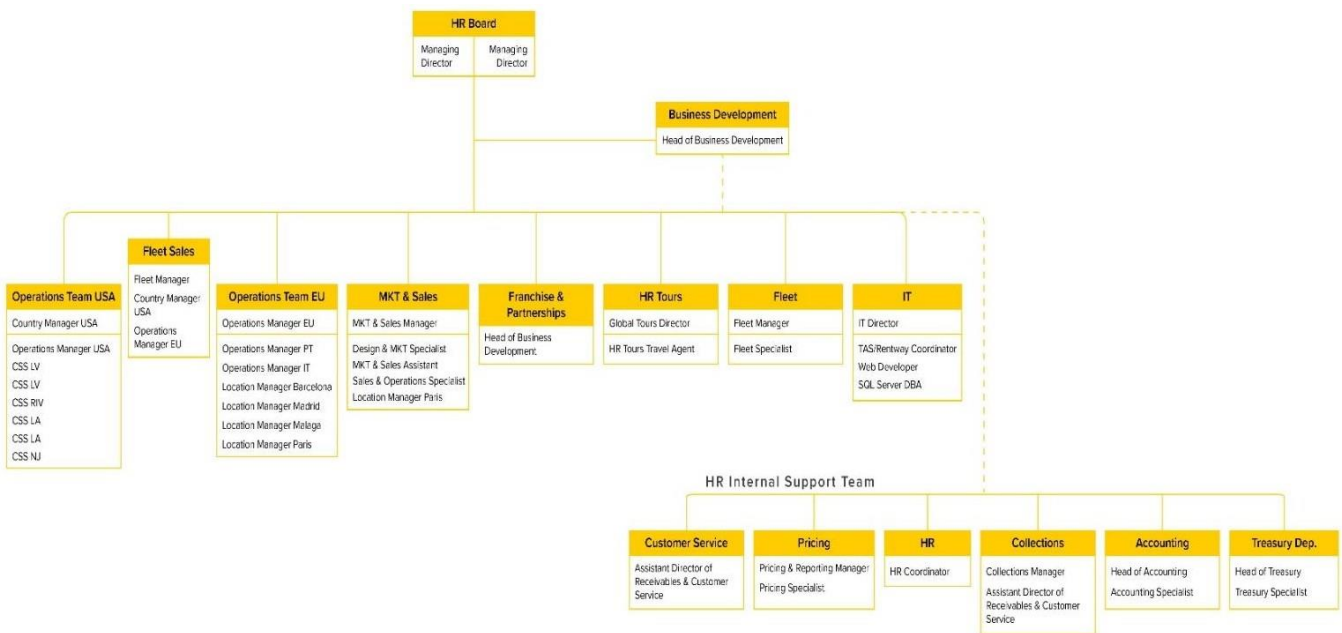


FIGURE 4 – HERTZ RIDE’S ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Source: Own elaboration

One person manages each one of the departments, the more crowded one is the Operations Team (Table IV), which counts with one European Manager and the country

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management is in charge of one person in each country, the Country Managers, to whom the Marketing and Sales teams contact the most.

TABLE IV – HEADCOUNT PROPORTION BY AREA

Area	Headcount Proportion*
Marketing and Sales	17%
Fleet	3%
IT	17%
Tours	8%
Operations	52%
Business Development / Franchises and Partnerships	3%

* Approximated values

Source: Own elaboration

The department of Operations is responsible for controlling the fleet available in the stations, dealing and negotiating with motorcycle partners, companies, or brands, creating reservations in the system, and assisting the Fleet department on issues related to the fleet. Marketing and Sales are responsible for managing the B2B portfolio and assisting clients with reservations, generating leads, the external communication of the company, collecting and managing relevant data from campaigns and from the website, improving the website, and implementing and launching campaigns. Business Development acts as an intermediary between the board and all the teams, and also searches for strategic partners and franchises to expand the business, develop studies, and market research that could be relevant to the business. Fleet controls all the motorcycles in the fleet worldwide, taking care of fines, the return of motorcycles to the brands in case of the buyback fleet, and the acquisition and sales of motorcycles. IT team assists all the other departments and works side-by-side with Marketing and Sales, helping to improve the website and the online reservations process.

4.2.2 Internship *Scope*

Marketing and Sales Department

Marketing and Sales is the area responsible for creating brand awareness, generating leads to capture new clients, and increasing the conversion and retention of existing clients. Reporting to the board, the team is composed of one functional manager, two people working in marketing and sales, and a designer. I was included in either commercial tasks, such as managing the B2B client portfolio for reservations in Portugal and promoting its growth, and strategic data analysis for business development, and also marketing tasks, such as helping manage campaigns and their data, improving the website user experience

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working on the websites' content management system, support on the implementation of the social media strategy, analyze data from Google Analytics and Google Ads to improve conversions, and monitoring and tracking different KPI's relevant to the department and to the business in itself. Sales Specialists oversee managing the B2B client portfolio and aiding those clients. As said before, tour operators have a different process for obtaining their prices (Figure 5).

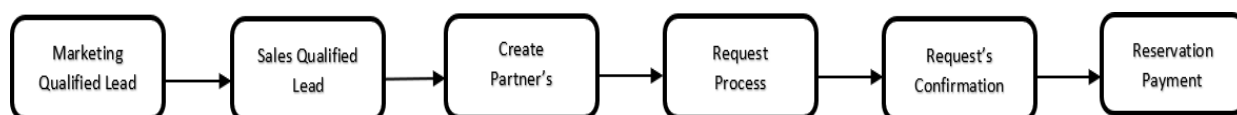


FIGURE 5 – HERTZ RIDE B2B SALES PIPELINE STAGES
Source: Own elaboration

Sales pipelines are managed on a customer relationship management software, Microsoft Dynamics 365, and the data collected related to the reservations and requests are inserted and saved on Rentway for future requests. Ideally, a prospected partner goes through all stages in the pipeline (Table V).

TABLE V – HERTZ RIDE B2B SALES PIPELINE STAGES AND DESCRIPTIONS

STAGE	DESCRIPTION
MARKETING QUALIFIED LEAD	A lead emerges through outbound scrapping or inbound marketing but has not been contacted
SALES QUALIFIED LEAD	The Sales Specialist has contacted the lead to present Hertz Ride, forecast the partnership, and define the rate.
CREATE PARTNER'S ACCOUNT	The lead is interested and wants to establish a partnership. An account is created with a given rate.
REQUEST PROCESS	The new partner sends a request. After checking the availability, the quotation is sent.
REQUEST'S CONFIRMATION	The partner confirms his intention to proceed with the reservation, the bikes are blocked in the system, and the reservation is created on <u>Rentway</u> .
RESERVATION PAYMENT	To finalize, a proforma invoice for payment of 20% of the total reservation is sent, and the partner realizes the payment. The rest is paid 30 days before the pick-up date.

Source: Own elaboration

They must contact the sales team to obtain a quotation. After that, a sales specialist will reply asking to fill out a form with some pieces of information about the tour operator company and some questions about their intentions about establishing a partnership and expectations when renting with Hertz Ride to make a forecast for future business, such as how many motorcycle tours they estimate to have per year with Hertz Ride, how many days and bikes they are planning for each tour, in which countries they want to operate

their tours, and in which months they want to run their tours. Each tour operator has a specific rate, between 5% and 20% off the public rate, according to the answers provided on the form, and a partner account is created with all this information.

After that, when the client informs the sales team saying which bikes he needs, where, and when he needs them. In the next step, the availability of the motorcycle on those dates is checked on Rentway, and the sales specialist makes and sends a quotation according to the rate defined for that tour operator. Then, the reservation is created, confirmed, and uploaded on Rentway. The sales specialist sends a proforma invoice to the client, and this last one pays 20% of the total price. The rest will be paid 30 days before the pick-up date.

When the tour operator rents again, he already knows which rate he will get. The rates are not fixed. They can vary according to the number of motorcycles, the length of the rental, the number of years of the partnership, or the number of months of advanced booking. From now on, the new partner has a sales specialist responsible for ensuring his satisfaction and loyalty.

This department is also responsible for looking at and monitoring important key performance indicators, mostly from digital marketing. The Marketing and Sales key performance indicators are crucial to ensure the website’s improvement, and through that, the company can boost conversions and reservations, and the return on investment from marketing and sales force (Table VI).

TABLE VI – MARKETING AND SALES KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

KPI	UNIT	DESCRIPTION
Bounce Rate	Percentage	Percentage of single-page website sessions
Conversion Rate	Percentage	Number of sales qualified leads that turn into clients
Average Session Duration	Time in each session / Sessions	Time spent on average per session
Pages per Session	Visited pages in each session / Sessions	Number of pages visited per session
Average Cost per Action	Cost of conversions / Conversions	

Source: Own elaboration

4.2.3 Main Activities

During my internship, I was working with both Sales and Marketing activities. The performed Sales activities focused on closing deals, monitoring, and assisting partners with their booking requests and reservations in Portugal, ensuring conversions, and also developing the sales processes and dynamics (see Table VII). The performed Marketing

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tasks were related to the company’s digital side, such as social media strategy, website user experience, and conversions improvement through Google Analytics and Google Ads data (see Table VIII). Also, Hertz Ride defined a very ambitious business plan for 2023 where the company wants to assume the role of the biggest player in the European motorcycle rental market and considerably increase its sales during 2023, I support and help the Marketing and Pricing teams with the promotion and pricing strategies for this year, with the objective of capturing the biggest customer insights possible.

TABLE VII – SALES ACTIVITIES BREAKDOWN

Task	Recurrence	Tool
Support and monitor a portfolio of clients in the B2B area and promote its growth.	Daily	E-mail / Video call
Reply to the clients in this portfolio for booking reservations.	Daily	E-mail / Video call
Responding to direct customer leads for booking Motorcycle Guided Tours.	Daily	Dynamics 365
Organize sales processes by improving their dynamics	Daily	Notion
Strategic data analysis for business development	Weekly	Rentway / Excel
Performed phone and video calls to assist clients with issues related to their reservations	Daily	Phone / Video call

Source: Own elaboration

TABLE VIII – MARKETING ACTIVITIES BREAKDOWN

Task	Recurrence	Tool
Support in the implementation of the social media strategy	Daily	Notion
Contact the agency for social media management	Monthly	E-mail / Video call
Google Ads Monitoring	Weekly	Google Ads
Follow-up of the user experience on the Website	Daily	Website’ content management system
Google Analytics data analysis to improve conversions	Weekly	Google Analytics
Participation in meetings to monitor the business with the different agents in Europe and the United States	Weekly	Video call
Monitorização e acompanhamento dos diferentes indicadores da área	Daily	Rentway / Excel

Source: Own elaboration

CHAPTER 5 – METHODS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Methods

As said before, this report proposes to not only describe the internship performed, but also establish the relation between the success of the company and digital marketing through the use of search engine marketing strategies and the best optimization of the company’s website to generate leads, acquire and retain more customers, and how it allows Hertz Ride to create competitive advantage and get a better and more suitable

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brand positioning. To identify key concepts for this report a literature review was conducted, and then, the conceptual framework was defined and established.

To better understand the reality and the developed tasks carried out inside the company an observational data collection was developed. Observation as a research method involves the visualization and the recording of people in their natural settings, and the type of observation used was participant observation, where the researcher enters the social world of those being observed and participates in their activities as a group member (Saunders et al., 2019). This method has the advantage of allowing us, as insiders, to develop a deep understanding of the meanings of informants' interactions, their activities, and how they respond to changes.

In terms of observation structure, it was an unstructured observation because the focus of it was flexible and open, without pre-determined observation instruments, with the researcher recording the flow of activities and behaviors observed (Saunders et al., 2019).

To better understand the online behavior and the digital marketing Hertz Ride, the methodology developed was Internet-mediated structured observation, that takes place online and involves the use of tools that allow researchers to systematically observe and record online behavior (Saunders et al., 2019). The tools used were Google Analytics, Googles Ads, the company's website and its content management system, Keyword Planner, Rentway, and Dynamics 365.

An observation grid (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015) with some of the observations performed is presented on Table IX.

TABLE IX – OBSERVATION GRID

Observation	Objective	Strategy Used	Level of Complexity	Notes
Keyword planning	To attract the bigger audience possible on search engine result pages and to get a better ranking on search engines.	Hertz Ride targets keywords that the competition is not targeting. The goal is to target long-tail keywords with low competition and many monthly searches	Medium	Hertz Ride uses Keyword Planner to define and target keywords.
Caption of customer insights	Better understand customers' wants and needs and have the opportunity to get a better ranking on search engine result pages	Distribution of flyers with a QR Code that redirects to a Google Reviews form when a customer proceeds the motorcycle drop-off.	Low	The strategy is not implemented for a long time, so the observation results are unclear.
Website's technical improvement	Improve the website performance and the user experience	An external audit was conducted, and results were shared with Hertz Ride	High	The combined efforts between the IT and Marketing & Sales teams and an external company show good results.
Search engine algorithm variability	Understand where improvement is needed according to the algorithm changes.	Once search engines do not usually provide information about this, the strategy is to find with research and through the help of other companies	High	The observation showed that keeping updated and informed through research is a better strategy than searching for help from other companies
The effect that a website ranking on search engines has on brand positioning	Use search engine marketing as a brand positioning strategy	Target keywords related to a premium motorcycle service and optimize the website in that way to be on top of search engines for those searches and to create that perception in customers	High	The observation confirmed that customers' perception of a company is related to and influenced by their search results.

Source: Own elaboration

5.2 Analysis

Since Hertz Ride created its website and started receiving online reservations and payments, back in 2019, the company started using search engine marketing and giving more importance to digital marketing. On a first phase, to increase company's visibility faster on the search engine results pages, Hertz Ride focused efforts on pay-per-click advertising (Berman & Katona, 2013). At today's date, Hertz Ride combines search engine optimization and pay-per-click advertising and, from what it was observed, it is the best search engine marketing strategy at this moment because search engine optimization provides sustained value for the company and decreases ads costs and pay-per-click advertising acts as a back-up option for pages where the organic links are not performing well on search engines or as a tool to promote campaigns pages and tours (Berman & Katona, 2013; Terrence et al., 2018). From the results observed, it is concluded that, for Hertz Ride, search engine marketing has a considerable positive impact as shown on Chapter 4 (see Table II).

From what it was possible to observe, search engines are changing their algorithms very frequently, and these days, the algorithms are user-centered. Thus, the reviews that users left on search engines have immense importance, and e-WOM is assuming a key role for search engines. Hertz Ride is trying to use that to achieve a better ranking in search engine result pages and to gain customer insights. Nevertheless, the company has not been aware of this occurrence for a long time, thus the impact cannot be measured already, and Hertz Ride is not on the top places of the ranking of search engine reviews, at this point.

As said in the report, search engine marketing can act as part of a brand positioning strategy. By targeting given keywords related with a premium service and concept, especially for motorcycle tours, and optimizing the website with these keywords, Hertz Ride customers and potential customers perceive that the company differentiates from the competition providing a unique premium service in the motorcycle rental industry (Dou et al., 2010).

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS

Hertz Ride operates in the motorcycle rental industry, and once the sales channel for B2C clients is fully automated, the company focuses its sales on e-commerce. To do that most profitably, Hertz Ride takes advantage of Search Engine Marketing and its strategies to

reach the largest audience possible on the company's website, generate more leads, and increase sales, through the website's visibility that comes from being on the top places of the search engine results pages. The main conclusion about search engine marketing is that, when well implemented, it assumes relevant importance regarding e-commerce. Search engines are a handy tool for companies, and they can serve as a showroom where customers can find whatever they want. Companies working with e-commerce can implement search engine marketing to impulse sales through their website's increased visibility. Although, as said before in the report, a combination of search engine optimization and pay-per-click advertising is the best strategy for search engine marketing, because pay-per-click advertising will bring more users, and the website's optimization will capture users on the website.

However, the observations show that Hertz Ride can potentially have its search engine marketing strategy constrained by the dependence on digital agencies that provides digital consultancy since the website's content management system was developed by a digital agency and, from what was observed, there is a clear dependence because the system is not user-friendly. Most of the time, asking the agency to solve problems and submit content is necessary.

Hertz Ride uses digital marketing to capture customer insights, allowing the company to create competitive advantage. Customers' perception of a company is essential to be one step ahead of the competition because it will enable understanding customers better and meeting their wants and needs. Through e-WOM, Hertz Ride is trying to gain customer insights and improve the company's performance on search engines due to the impact that customer reviews on search engines have. The observations showed that customer insights assume even greater importance because it is the cheapest and most profitable way to get relevant information about the customers because they usually provide it directly to companies. The observations made us conclude that this is a win-win situation where the customers provide essential information to the company. The company must ensure the best customer service possible to get that information and get good e-WOM to attract and acquire more customers through good e-WOM.

As studied and observed, Hertz Ride uses search engine marketing to create the pretended brand positioning. The company offers premium motorcycle rentals and tours with low-mileage motorcycles from premium brands. From the website's optimization and advertising on search engine results pages to targeting premium motorcycle rentals, the company has been developing search engine marketing as part of a brand positioning

strategy. Even though the company's motorcycle fleet is from top brands and with low mileage, due to the partnership with the manufacturers that involves buy-back contracts, which presupposes the return of the motorcycle after a negotiated number of kilometres, this brand positioning strategy does not perform well in every location. For locations that serve as a station for Hertz (rent-a-car) and Hertz Ride, this strategy is not showing the same results as the locations that serve only Hertz Ride since the flux of customers on the first is more extensive than in the second one. The perception of premium service and good customer service is not the same, starting with the time a customer must wait for his turn to pick-up the motorcycle on a station where Hertz and Hertz Ride services are divided.

6.1 Limitations and Further Research

The limitations of this report are related to sustainability issues. The motorcycle rental industry only focuses on the rental of combustion engine motorcycles, which, in addition, have massive impact on the environment due to emissions of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, hydrocarbons, and volatile organic compounds, are one of the biggest emitters of noise pollution in cities. With the appearance of new electric motorcycle manufacturers that have the ability and capacity to produce models with similar specifications to the touring motorcycles with combustion engines, which have high horsepower, high cc, luggage storage capacity, and autonomy for over 300 kilometers, Hertz Ride, and the rest of the companies in the market must establish partnerships to rent low emissions and electric motorcycles that will contribute to promote good health and well-being (SDG 3), to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation (SDG 9), and more sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11). According to the United Nations, transportation will play a vital role in achieving the Paris Agreement because close to a quarter of energy-related global greenhouse gas emissions come from transport, and these emissions are projected to grow substantially in the years to come. Hertz Ride and the motorcycle rental industry have the opportunity to construct a better future. That is why they must work to achieve a more sustainable development that will create benefits for not only this industry, but also the industry society itself.

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