Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts

Master of Science in Business Administration

Major Online Business and Marketing

Data Collection and Usage: How Zero-Party Data Could Change Swiss Business-to-Consumer (B2C) Companies' Marketing Practices and Strategies

Authors: Hikaru Hanaoka
Nisha Duara
Eszter Németh
Meiqi Soh
Corina Werder

Supervisor: Thomas Wozniak

Contractor: Profila GmbH, Luke Bragg

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Authors:

Hikaru Hanaoka
Luzernerstrasse 43
6010 Kriens
hikaru.hanaoka@stud.hslu.ch
+41 76 406 87 32

Eszter Németh
Rankhofstrasse 21
6006 Luzern
eszter.nemeth@stud.hslu.ch
+41 76 626 37 08

Mei Qi Soh
Schaffhauserstrasse 280
8057 Zürich
meiqi.soh@stud.hslu.ch
+41 78 817 58 68

Nisha Duara
Muristrasse 17A
3006 Bern
nisha.duara@stud.hslu.ch
+41 78 915 15 05

Corina Werder
Bleicheweg 25
5630 Muri
corina.werder@stud.hslu.ch
+41 79 783 52 49

Supervisor:

Dr. Thomas Wozniak
Lucerne School of Business
Zentralstrasse 9
6002 Luzern
thomas.wozniak@hslu.ch
+41 41 228 22 40

Contractor: Profila GmbH, Luke Bragg, Weggis

Modul: Applied Research Project

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List of Abbreviations

B2C = Business to Customer

B2B = Business to Business

CLV = Customer Lifetime Value

GDPR = General Data Protection Regulations

SME = Small and Medium Enterprises

ZPD = Zero-Party Data

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Management Summary

This applied research project is in collaboration with Profila GmbH, a Swiss start-up that is focused on providing a one-on-one connection between people and their favorite brands. They are looking into creating a marketing, consumer insights and communication platform. Profila GmbH's aim is capitalized on customers' desire for data privacy and transparency from companies on how their data is being used. Profila focuses on the promotion and use of zero-party data, which is self-reported data that customers have voluntarily given to companies. Profila also highlights the benefits of customers "owning" their data and having the right to withdraw access to their data by companies.

The research project utilizes a qualitative research methodology, as there is no pre-existing theory applied in this paper. Expert interviews were chosen to investigate and understand Swiss Business-to-Consumer (B2C) companies current and possible future approaches towards using zero-party data in their marketing activities.

The project follows the guide of one main research question: "How could the integration of zero-party- data change Swiss B2C companies' approach to marketing and customer targeting and under which conditions?" This research question is complemented by sub-questions focusing on the status quo and the future approach. The purpose of the discussion of this paper is to find relevant answers to these questions and propose recommendations for Profila GmbH on developing a useful product for the market, which is a mobile app platform, also referred to as zero-party data platform within the paper.

The paper provides a thorough introduction to the theoretical foundation of the researched topic such as the definition of consumer data and attitudes towards data collection to allow readers to have the same understanding when reading the project.

This theoretical introduction is followed by the methodological approach explaining the reasoning the research team has chosen to support their findings with qualitative data sourced from expert interviews. In this case, the subjects of the interviews are communication and marketing experts at local consumer-facing companies. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the originally planned sample of 30 interview partners has been reduced to 14 interview partners due to barriers such as the temporary closure of businesses. These partners have been selected to give a representative answer for Swiss B2C companies by fitting into the four categories defined by the research team. These categories have been presented as quadrants describing the size and fields of the chosen companies.

The findings from these interviews are reviewed and explained in the Results Chapter. Interviewed companies value the importance of data. However, the emphasis on its use usually varies depending on the size and lifetime of the companies. Subjects primarily source first-party data and use it most commonly for better segmentation, advertisements and a better overall understanding of their customers. These insights allow companies to make strategic decisions and create personalized and more effective

campaigns for their customers. The paper also explains the existing gaps in sourcing additional data that companies would like to collect or interesting data they are yet able to source. This will give a great insight for Profila Gmbh of what companies want.

The second part of the interviews centred the introduction of zero-party data (ZPD) and the potential of its use. Interview questions aimed to recognize companies' approach to ZPD: whether they would use it and how they would utilize the new information. It provides a great opportunity for brands to further understand their customers and create a better experience for them. Interview partners agreed that it could be a tool which is a win-win situation in a customer relationship. However, there are always conditions that need to be considered for zero-party data to be successful. For example, it needs to be a sufficient value proposition for both parties, and, most importantly, data transparency and security need to be ensured.

These conditions are discussed in detail in the paper, followed by specific recommendations on how zero-party data could be successful in the Swiss market. These suggestions are based on the analysis of all collected data previously discussed covering customer data. Overall, the majority of the companies interviewed were open to the idea of incorporating ZPD into their marketing activities. However, selecting suitable partner companies to collaborate with is of high importance for the success of the platform. The research team recommends targeting product-based companies rather than service-based companies as their focus is greater on customer data in order to upgrade their offerings. Ideally, it is advised to prioritize working with small-and-medium-sized enterprises that are more open to change and new ideas. Creating a satisfied user group from these companies will allow the platform to attract bigger companies in the future. This works hand-in-hand with another recommendation which is to build credibility. Based on findings reviewed in the research all suggestions are essential to consider when launching a ZPD platform.

Finally, in the last chapter, the paper concludes all previously explained results and topics justifying the purpose of the applied research project. The team had worked during the Covid-19 Pandemic which has caused difficulties in the collection of primary-source data, therefore the findings are limited but still relevant. Furthermore, it has to be noted that ZPD is a rather new concept that needs a proper introduction to the public as well as to business representatives in order to be understood.

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Topic

This applied research paper focuses on a new way of collecting and gathering data in a time where data has become a main driver of businesses. The project was carried out in collaboration with the Swiss start-up Profila GmbH, a company that sees itself on a mission to "solve personal data privacy challenges for people so they can confidently share data".

Profila GmbH is reimagining the brand experience for users since 2018 with the use of zero-party data, enabling customers to share their data with companies safely and ethically. Data is an integral part of the business landscape and is key to making major decisions for companies on a domestic and global level. The enhanced use of mobile devices has transformed data from being pure information to a powerful tool, that can be seen as almost a "currency". Today, majority of companies rely heavily on customer data to plan their marketing strategies more than ever before (Savitz, 2012), using customer segmentation and insights to adapt existing products and develop new ones. 91% of Fortune 1000 organizations are putting resources towards big data analytics projects, which is an 85% increase from the preceding year (Kiron, Kirk Prentice, & Boucher Ferguson, 2014)

Although the Internet has benefitted companies and individuals alike in data collection, it has also endangered the privacy and protection of customers data by analyzing & collecting it without consent. Consumers are being constantly tracked by companies via cookies & location-based targeting, just to name a few methods of data collection. In addition to data collection, the rampant use of consumer data for remarketing, targeting and advertising purposes is a deterrent for consumers. This highlights the ethical aspect of collecting and using personal data and the sensitivity of this topic. Zero-party data is considered as one viable way to cope with this challenge.

Due to the nature of the concept of zero-party data, this research paper targets only domestic consumer-facing businesses. The research team investigated Swiss B2C companies and their approach to collecting and using consumer data for marketing purposes and how the integration of zero-party data could change their current data collection practices.

Furthermore, the research paper will discuss in greater detail, the current apprehension many consumers are feeling when sharing their data with companies. Data privacy is a particularly sensitive topic for Swiss citizens. According to Wyman (2019), 64% fear the loss of privacy through data collection. The importance of data privacy lies in the correct handling of information, especially during the transmission of customer data to an external or third party.

Hence, the scope of this study centers on one side around the preservation of data privacy in society and raising awareness about data privacy to potential consumers. On the other side, this research paper's focus is to investigate the possibility of incorporating new types of customers data such as zero-party

data into the future marketing strategies of Swiss B2C companies. One way to do so is by understanding the companies' current sources for data and their use of customer data for marketing purposes.

1.2 Research Questions and Aims

This project aims to understand how this new way of sourcing data could be incorporated into Swiss B2C companies' marketing strategy and whether they are open to such transition to collect information with a different approach.

The study consists of one main research question followed by a collection of sub-questions that aim to help answer that main question. These subcategories have been defined to gather new insights about topics related to decision making and the effect of data at companies. Such as how is the existing state of affairs of companies, how they incorporate information into their dynamic, what are some data that are desired to a successful campaign or communication and how are they utilizing that data.

Main Research Question

How could the integration of zero-party data change Swiss B2C companies' approach for marketing and customer targeting and under which conditions?

Sub question on Status quo:

- What are B2C companies' current sources of consumer data?
- How do they use this data for targeting and marketing purposes?

Sub question on future approach:

- What are B2C companies desired information additionally to the one they already have?
- How can B2C companies integrate zero-party data into their business?
- In which type of B2C companies could zero-party data be most likely used?

To answer these research questions, the research team defined three broader topics which would need to be addressed. The first one sought to understand the companies' current approaches and sources for data collection. The second crucial point was about consumer data usage for marketing purposes. Additionally, the perceived gap between data that the company is actually able to source and the one they would like to source was examined. Lastly, the researchers tried to understand the reception of the possible use of Zero-party data for marketing and making a prediction on which types of companies would be most likely to engage with and use Zero-party data.

All the research questions will be answered by conducting expert interviews with brand and marketing specialists from Swiss B2C companies. The methodology will be discussed in detail in chapter 3.

2 Theoretical Foundation

2.1 Definition of Business-to-Consumer (B2C)

Business-to-Consumer (B2C) refers to "the process of selling products and services directly between a business and consumers who are the end-users of its products and services" (Kenton, 2019). Since the rise of the "dotcom" business in the 1990s, the term is frequently used to describe "transactions between online retailers and their customers" (Markus, 2019). In a traditional context, B2C refers to direct sales between businesses and consumers, such as in-store purchases or patronizing restaurants (Markus, 2019). The counter piece to B2C would be a B2B business model, which is aiming at doing business from one company to another.

2.2 Definition of Consumer Data

Consumer data is defined as information that is collected and utilized by marketers of business organizations to "better understand customer demographics and psychographics" (Khatibloo, 2017, p. 1). Consumer data can be categorized into three types of data: inferred data, observed data, and self-reported data. Inferred data includes "a wide range of behavioral data and make assumptions based on what we know about other individuals with similar properties" (Khatibloo, 2017). Observed data is defined as "data about an individual that we can know for certain" (Khatibloo, 2017). The following types of data can be considered "observed data"; KPIs on websites, such as clicks and views on a page, history of purchase with a loyalty card and public records of various facts (Khatibloo, 2017). Lastly, self-reported data is defined as "data a consumer voluntarily provides". Self-reported data can be collected when a consumer completes his/her profile on a company's website or an app and opts in to receive advertisements, filling out surveys and through various other options (Khatibloo, 2017).

Consumer data, inclusive of inferred, observed data and self-reported data, can be further classified into four categories: namely third-party, second-party, first-party, and zero-party data (Khatibloo, 2017). Third-party data refers to "data a company pays for from an outside vendor or platform" such as inferred household income or Mobile device ID (Khatibloo, 2017). It is usually collected by aggregators who pay different sources for their first-party data, compile it into a data set which is based on data categories, and then sold to organizations. There are some advantages in this type of data for marketers, such as that purchase of data can easily be made and a large amount of data is available at a time. On the other hand, the data lacks the "quality, accuracy and precision" and does not fulfill the rising need for consumer privacy (Vision Critical , 2019). Second-party data refers to "data a company receives directly from a partner vendor or platform" (Khatibloo, 2017). The data includes product/category preferences or data collected on a company's website and stored in cookies. This type of data gives a greater sense of transparency, accuracy, and reliability in data sold, however, interaction with customers is still not enabled and it does not reflect richer customers information such as beliefs and desires (Vision Critical , 2019). First-party data refers to "data that consumers provide directly via actions" (Khatibloo, 2017).

The data consists of behavioral data that is linked to the term in the business world and transactional data. Examples of behavioral data are illustrated through on-page behaviors like clicks, in-depth behavior like scrolling, active time on websites/webpages and other information that shows the customer's engagement with personalized experiences (Card, 2020). Transactional data includes purchases and downloads of materials on the website (Card, 2020). The limitation of first-party data is that data is often behavioral and declared or consent data are not included. This means that brands will know details about customers' activities and behaviors on the website/app, but they do not necessarily understand "why" customers acted in a certain way (Vision Critical , 2019). Zero-party data, which forms the focus of this applied research project, refers to "data a customer intentionally and proactively shares with your brand." (Khatibloo, 2017). Unlike the other three types of consumer data mentioned earlier, zero-party data cannot be sold or shared without explicit permission given by consumers. The zero-party data includes declared and consent data, which other three types of consumer data do not comprise. With declared data, brands are able to further investigate the motivation and reasons for customers' activities and behavior by asking follow-up questions. Consent data goes beyond the declared data and contains "an on-going, iterative conversation" that indicates customer's beliefs, values, and opinions (Vision Critical , 2019). Moreover, with zero-party data, both customers and brands are "fully aware of the use and benefits of that data" (Vision Critical , 2019). The below Figure 1 showcases the details of each of the four consumer data categories as well as the three types of data.

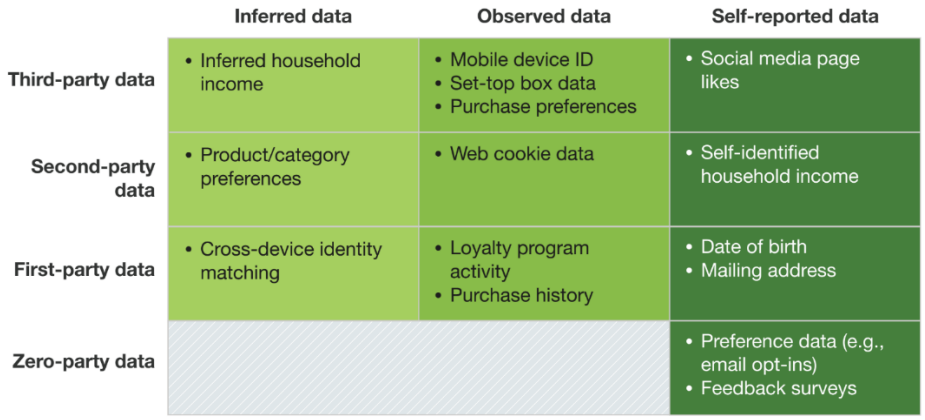

Figure 1 The Four Types of Consumer Data, retrieved from Consumer Data: Beyond First And Third Party, by Fatemeh Khatibloo, July 3 2017, Copyright 2017 by Forrester Research, Inc.

2.3 Attitude Towards Data Collection and its Current Usage

The intersection between the internet and business has led to a plethora of new opportunities and threats for consumers personal data. Consumers privacy is consistently violated through the collection of new types of personal data that companies are compiling. Due to the internet's global reach, there are a host of opportunities for commercial use of data, free data analysis and regulation challenges (Mendel, Puddephatt, Wagner, Hawtin, & Torres, 2012). These constant

privacy violations have led to rising concerns and skepticism from especially younger generations on the marketers' data gathering practices, such as non-consensual identification and retargeting strategies by social media sites (Zarouali, Ponnet, Walrave, & Poels, 2017).

Since the implementation of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) in May 2018, businesses that operate in Europe are obliged to adhere to the GDPR regulations and alter their traditional customer data collection method to serve the need for consumer consent (Boudet, Huang, K, & Sorel, 2019). GDPR requires businesses not only to ensure a high degree of privacy protection but also to provide users with various options to control the degree of personal privacy (European Commision, n.d.). If a company acts against the requirements, it can not only result in significant penalties but also endangers their brand reputation (Boudet, Huang, K, & Sorel, 2019). Companies are acknowledging the need for transparency and the need to provide fair compensation or exchange for customer data. This attitude shift is in line with the Social Theory Exchange, which describes a two-sided transaction where consumers rationally weigh the benefits, costs and alternatives and reveal personal data, should the perceived benefits outweigh the costs (Martin & Murphy, 2016). Companies have capitalized on new opportunities to monetize highly personalized marketing messages to individual customers (Li & Unger, 2017). Utilizing this data increases marketing effectiveness of brands by reducing information overload while adding value for customers (Li & Unger, 2017).

Accordingly it is no surprise, that consumers are becoming increasingly aware and cautious about the way they share their personal data (Rüeger, Gehring, Ackermann, & Miesler, 2018). Based on the Oliver Wyman 2019 survey study, 64% of Swiss citizens fear the loss of privacy through data collection, with 62% wanting more regulations for new technologies and the Internet and 67% are reluctant to pass on personal data to third-parties (Wyman, 2019). Conversely, Customers are also more willing to allow organizations to use their data if it seems they implement fair just practices (Li & Unger, 2017). Key results of a PwC survey conducted in 2012 highlight that 73% of the survey respondents are willing to share their personal data with companies, depending on the returns they can expect (Bothun, Lieberman, & Tipton, 2012). A study conducted by WP Engine and the Center for Generational Kinetics in 2017 indicates that Generation Z comprises roughly 40% of the entire global population. The study indicates that 38% of them are willing to give up their personal information to gain increasingly personalized digital purchase experiences. The study further attests that 40% answered that they no longer visit a website in case it fails to anticipate their personal preferences.

As mentioned previously, retail brands have been combining first - and third-party data to increase sales due to the digitization of the industry (Lineate, 2019b). However, based on the prediction of trends in 2020 by Forrester, aggregated third-party data used to target consumers will soon be no longer available due to increasing concerns raised by consumers and external controls of privacy protection (Forrester, 2019). The website "Future of Customer Engagement and Experience", predicts that basic personal data, such as names and locations, will become rather a competitive liability and more brands

recognize that the importance of frictionless customer experience will require new technical solutions based on more detailed digital identity in 2020 and beyond (Jackson, 2020).

2.4 Zero-Party Data Platform as a Solution

According to Shah (2020), in the future, third-party risk management authorities who are responsible for protecting consumers' data might also be necessary. Ringman (2019) predicts retailers to move away from unreliable third-party data towards zero-party data to create meaningful relationships with consumers. Furthermore, forecasts saying that 15% of marketers will use zero-party data by 2020 (Scott, 2020) are around. These statements are supported by the 2012 PwC survey and the 2017 study conducted by WP Engine and The Center for Generational Kinetics mentioned earlier. Moreover, Vision Critical (2019) states that the goal of data collection, when it comes to marketing, no longer lies in quantity, but rather in "quality, accuracy, and precision". Based on the insights from the previous mentioned studies, the use of zero-party data is the correct approach to focus on transparency, privacy protection and true information about customers.

There is an upcoming platform which has the potential to mitigate the current breach of consumer data privacy by providing zero-party data to brands. The value of zero-party data is in high accuracy and high quality of customer information as it is provided by the customer personally. Therefore, zero-party data is extremely valuable to brands who seek a detailed understanding of their customers and respond to their needs and preferences (Vision Critical , 2019). Given these conditions, brands no longer need to worry about acting against GDPR or other data protection regulations. Given the transparent and ethical perimeters of zero-party data, brands are able to feel confident that they are not violating the conditions of GDPR or other data protection regulations. Shared data can comprise of various types of sensitive information, such as "preference center data, purchase intentions, personal context and how the individual wants the brand to recognize" each consumer (Card, 2020). The platform allows brands "to build direct relationship with consumers", and in turn, "improve customer experiences, product innovation, marketing effectiveness, or employee engagement" (Vision Critical, n.d.).

Not only brands, but also consumers are able to benefit from the platform. After a consumer gives their information to a platform, "the consumer maintains control over how their data is treated throughout their experiences with a brand" (Vision Critical, n.d.). The consumers have the authority and ability to "edit and revoke access to their data at will". In order to maintain the customer relationship, the data cannot be sold or shared without explicit permission from the customer. The main purpose of the platform is that data should always be used to improve the value the firm delivers to the consumer (Khatibloo, 2017).

As elaborated earlier, this applied research project is investigating the current sources and evaluation process with regards to consumer data and possible approach toward consumer data protection in Swiss B2C companies from various industries. This, in turn, gives scope for the future to

investigate expectations and requirements of the platform from a company's perspective. Further details on the research design and how the study has been carried out are given in the following chapter.

3 Methodological Approach

This chapter will explain the selected research method, the data collection approach and lastly the methodology to analyze the data presented in this paper. The initial methodology of this paper was affected due to the global health pandemic known as Covid-19 and had to be slightly adapted to still be able to been carried out.

The figure below outlines the classic process of a qualitative research and therefore shows the steps that were taken by the research team to develop research questions, determine the sample & sample criteria, adjust to change via restructuring research questions by adding sub-question, data collection & analysis and lastly summarizing the findings.

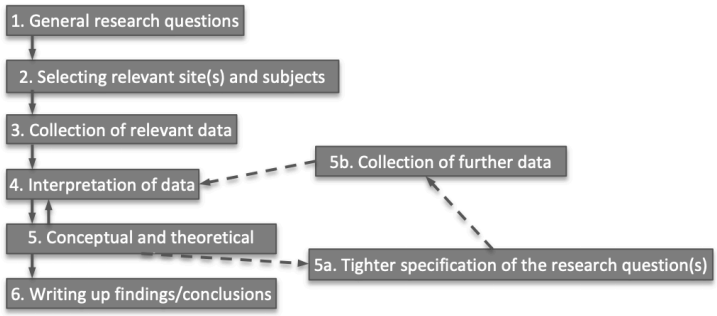

Figure 2 Main steps of qualitative research (Henderson, 2016)

3.1 Qualitative Research Approach

No pre-existing theory has been used for this research and therefore an inductive process has been followed to structure the results and formulate recommendations. The research team has applied an inductive approach to collect, explore and understand the opinions of experts in order to translate them into generalized statements and assumptions about the topic of customer data and the role of data in a company's marketing strategy. This paper has implemented the methodology of "Grounded Theory", which is a qualitative research methodology established by Glasser & Strauss in 1967, to "construct" a theory "grounded on the "data" collected (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Using grounded theory allowed the research team to collect the data, analyze the data and then present reccomendations based on the findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). For this research project, qualitative data has been used as a primary data source. Qualitative data is a type of data that can be collected such as by conducting different kind of qualitative interviews or observing focus groups. The main objective of qualitative research is to "describe a phenomenon" or "compare several cases" and understand similarities and differences in

order to “develop a theory of the phenomenon” from the “study” of the “analysis of empirical material.” (Henderson, 2016). Qualitative research allows the use of description and finds patterns which can help in the present case to understand the current landscape of customer data usage in the Swiss B2C market. The below table highlights the key differences between quantitative & qualitative research methods and emphasizes further, why a qualitative approach was chosen to gather insights about zero-party data and its potential within companies’ marketing activities.

Quantitative	Qualitative
Numbers	Words
Point of view of researcher	Points of view of participants
Researcher distant	Researcher close
Theory testing	Theory emergent
Static	Process
Structured	Unstructured
Generalisation	Contextual understanding
Hard, reliable data	Rich, deep data
Macro	Micro
Behaviour	Meaning
Artificial settings	Natural settings

Table 1 Contrast between quantitative and qualitative research (Henderson, 2016)

Quantitative data is numerical. In addition, it can be “quantified, verified and is amendable to statistical manipulation” (Business Dictionary, 2020). A key factor of quantitative data is “researcher detachment”, when a researcher is on the “outside” it is very difficult to conduct an “in-depth study of a phenomena within its natural settings” (Eyisi, 2016). For this reason, qualitative data has been used as a source of data collection, as the paper’s aim is directed at gathering “unprompted” and more detailed answers from the interview partners. A crucial factor of the research study is to correctly conduct research with minimal bias in the outcome. Unlike quantitative research, the “close relationship that exists between the researcher and the participants in this approach” aids in the “participation and contribution” of the interviewees to shape the research findings. Qualitative research allows the research team to be “closer” to sample and “ understand the points of view of the participants” to allow a “theory to emerge” from the research (Henderson, 2016).

In order to carry out this research approach, the method “expert interview” was applied to gather data. Due to the sensitive nature of the research topic, expert interviews “lend themselves” to situations where it “might prove difficult or impossible to gain access to a particular social field” for example in the case of “taboo subjects” such as how companies deal with customer data (Littig , Bogner, & Menz, 2009). Throughout the process of conducting interviews, it proved to be difficult to engange interviewees who are willing to talk about this “taboo” subject. Expert interviews are also a much more

efficient data collection method than for example "participatory observation or systematic quantitative surveys" as experts can be seen as "crystallization points" (Littig , Bogner, & Menz, 2009). Expert interviews especially during the Covid-19 crisis proved an "effective means of quickly obtaining results and obtaining good results" through 30-50 minutes long interviews. Although the initial interview guide consisted of more detailed questions, it had to be repeatedly scrutinized and reformulated due to the effects of Covid-19 to ensure a sufficient number of interviews with the experts. Initially, our interview requests were for 60-75 minutes long interviews, however, many experts could not commit to this time frame and thus the research team adjusted the interview guide to incorporate broader questions. Additionally, various companies turned out to be not as evolved in the data collection and usage process which also led to shorter interviews because only little insights could then be given on some questions.

During the data collection process, an explanation of the concept of zero-party data was given by the interviewer. This explanation aimed to ensure the clear understanding of interviewees as the concept of zero-party data is relatively new. The below text is an excerpt from the interview guide and represents the description that was given to the experts.

Description of ZPD

"As we would like to make sure that all our interviewees are having a similar knowledge about zero-party data and are answering the following question on the same base of understanding, what ZPD is, we would like to give a short explanation.

The term 'zero party data' describes any data that a customer proactively and deliberately shares. It differs from first-party data as it provides organizations with explicit consumer preferences, rather than implied preferences that are generated from a brand's interactions with a consumer.
Essentially, zero party data aligns with the customer's desire for personalization, as it enables them to proactively state what they want from a brand in exchange for their personal information. It gives companies greater insight into their needs, interests, and intent – unlike first-party data which can only offer insight generated from purchase history or basic facts like date of birth.
Zero party data also shines a light on explicit consent, giving companies the assurance required to process potentially sensitive data (such as political opinions).

As an example. Zero party data could be made available through a platform, where customers can state all their interests, preferences, habits, and hobbies in a very detailed manner. These profiles can be purchased and accessed by brands and companies, AFTER the consumer is giving its consent. This consent on using your data can be revoked at any time."

3.2 Sampling Strategy

The experts who form the sample of this research are predominately marketing specialists, brand managers and employees responsible for communication or marketing at B2C companies throughout

Switzerland. The research team has aimed to accurately represent the population of Swiss B2C companies in Switzerland with its sample. Due to the current global health crisis of Covid-19, the original number of proposed interview partners had to be decreased from 25 to 14. As many businesses were affected or operations were temporarily shut down, the research team faced the challenge of many companies being unable or denying an interview. Due to the instability and uncertainity caused by COVID-19, many companies declined the interview request due to the delicate subject manner of customer data. These companies stated that they did not feel comfortable to discuss their data usage strategy with external parties due to compliance & legal issues. This led to an additional challenge, resulting in losing about 4-5 potential interview partners. The initial strategy was to define four characteristics which made the categorization of the companies possible. The research team aimed to interview an equal number of companies for each of the quadrant of the below graph. Quadrant 1 comprises of big scale companies that are product based, for example, McDonald's. Quadrant II companies of big-scale company and service-based, for example Zurich Insurances. Quadrant III comprises of small and medium companies that are service-based, such as budget hotels. Quadrant IV comprises of small and medium companies that are product based such as Freitag.

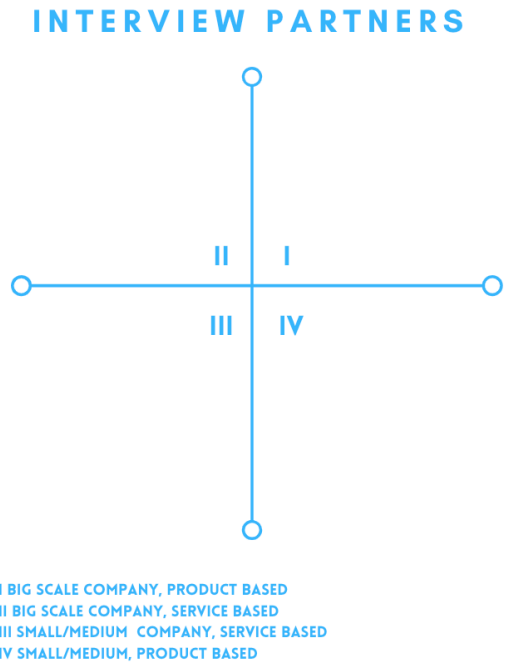

Figure 3 Categorization of desired interview partners into quadrants

3.3 Sampling Criteria

Initially, the research team decided on the following sampling criteria to categorize potential companies to take part in the study; Large Corporations and Small & Medium enterprises based in Switzerland. A large corporation can be defined as a company with over 250 employees, as the European Commission (Rudd & Lawson, 2007) defines Small & Medium enterprises as 250 or

fewer employees. Within Switzerland, 99% of all companies can be considered SMEs, which means market economy companies with fewer than 250 employees.

The second sampling criteria to categorize potential companies to take part in the study also encompasses the nature of the companies' businesses, meaning if they are product or service-based companies. Both product-based and service-based companies are considered to sell a product. The differentiating factor between the two company types is product-based companies sell "physical" products and service-based companies sell "a skill" (Business Dictionary, 2020). Service-based businesses are client-centric and have a strong focus on customer experience and deliver "intangible" (Business Dictionary, 2020). Product-based businesses, on the other hand, deliver physical products that are reasonably consistent in quality for each customer, making the customer experience fairly predictable (Brandenberg, 2018).

Based on the quadrants below, the research team was able to interview a company that fits into each quadrant below. As elaborated, within the 30 interviews planed, every quadrant should have been equally represented in the study. However, based on the factors mentioned in the prior chapter, the team lost a considerable number of interviews. The figure below shows that the majority of interviews conducted were with small/medium scale product-based companies. Further details on the interviewed companies can be found in Appendix A.

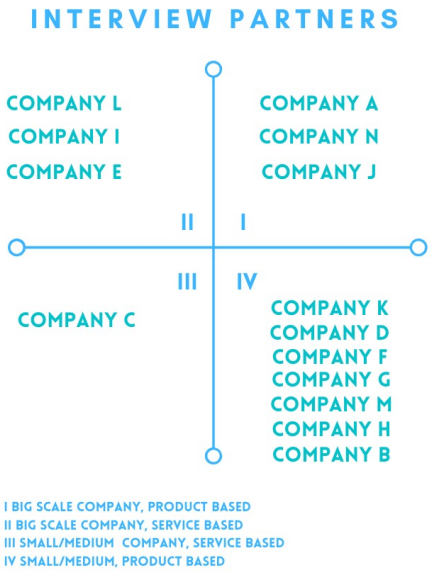

Figure 4 Final sample categorized according to the sampling criteria

For selecting the interview partners purposive sampling has been used. The intention of purposive sampling is to select "information-rich" samples that "best provide insight into the research question" and "will convince the audience of the research" (Emmel, 2013)." This sampling strategy aims at forming a sample of participants "based on the judgement" of the research team. The researchers considered the relevancy of the sample based on the research question.

The list of interview partners includes B2C companies which have both a physical and e-commerce presence to mitigate any risk of unintentional bias throughout the study and to ensure both consistency and diversity in participant selection to reach saturation and a representative image of the industries attitude regarding this topic. As mentioned previously, the research team did not achieve an equal participation throughout all four types of companies. Even though this leads to the fact that the study is not representative, meaning that the population is not equally represented, saturation could still be achieved throughout the data collection process. Saturation is a key concept in qualitative research that is applied to purposive samples. Saturation can be defined as "data adequacy" and is "operationalized" until the research team is not receiving any new information from the participants (Morse, 1995). In layman terms , saturation occurs when "researchers have heard it all" (Morse, 1995). Once saturation has been reached, there will be a "richness in data" that allows behavioral patterns to emerge (Morse, 1995).Saturation was used to understand if the data from a study is sufficient to "develop an understanding" of the "phenomenon" (Hennik & Kaiser, 2019). The research team could assume it has reached saturation, after conducting a sufficient number of interviews to get consistently similar answers for each question for your different interview partners.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection was a fundamental part of this research project. All interviews were conducted via phone or by Zoom, an online video call software. All conversations were recorded and transcribed, after having received the interviewee's consent. The recording enabled the researcher to pay attention entirely on the respondent and not lose focus by taking notes. Throughout the data collection process, the interviewers followed a semi-structured interview guide. This guide was designed by the research team with the aim to explore the earlier proposed research question.

A semi-structured interview is a discussion with purpose, it is composed of primarily "open-ended" questions, which allows interviewers to ask additional questions from the interviewees if their answers require more specification. The main objectives of the interviews were to understand current data collection and its usage for targeting and marketing purposes by costumer-facing companies, find out if a zero-party data approach could be a potential benefit for them and how that could change their marketing and targeting technique.

3.5 Analysis of the Collected Data

The analysis process of the collected data can be separated into two phases (Bryman & Bell, 2015), transcription and coding. As mentioned earlier, all interviews will be recorded and fully transcribed afterwards. This process will use recognized transcription practices by writing down everything word by word, considered a full transcript, ensuring the legitimacy of the data recorded during the data collection process.

After transcribing the interviews, the researchers will start open coding of the data on each transcript, following Mayring's qualitative content analysis method (2015). This method allows the minimization of a great amount of data while highlighting and evaluating the influential elements of the collected data. The reduction of data enables better focus on the important elements.

During the coding process, the researcher will break down the transcripts into various components and label them with a descriptive category names, thus creating codes in the data. Listing primary categories before coding all transcripts can help guide the researcher's attention to possible reoccurring categories, however as the coding progresses on more transcripts these categories can be expended and refined to serve a better understanding of the data. Furthermore, as the research is based on an inductive approach, no theory is considered to create codes.

After the coding process, the researcher will look for reoccurring elements, characterizations and connections in the coding within a single transcript and between different cases. This is referred to as thematic analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2015), which allows the researcher to manage the collected data more easily than if no transcription or coding would have been done. The Analysis file will be submitted seperatly from this report.

4 Results

To answer the main research question and various sub-questions on current and future approach, the expert insights' on data collection, its usage as well as thoughts on data privacy and ZPD are summarized in this chapter. The sub-questions on in which type of B2C companies could ZPD data be most likely used will be answered in the recommendations chapter.

4.1 Current Sources of data

All of the interviewed companies primarily use first-party data for their business, which includes for example purchase history and demographic data (Divakaran, n.a.). Demographic data provides context around ability (Seufert, 2014) and therefore it includes data such as age, gender, language and country. Demographic data, unlike behavioral data, can be considered "stiff" which refers to it's inability to shift even though products and services evolve. This type of information is made available to a company by creating a customer profile used for purchasing products or services online. Therefore, when asked for their current sources of customer data, most interviewees mentioned websites, social media, direct contact with the customers and various analytical tools. Only one of the companies named buying third-party data as a practice used for campaigns (Company I) and several use second-party data in form of cookies on their websites (Company A, Company B, Company N). For general understanding, every source and the respective sourced data as named by the interviewees is summarized below. The channels are not ranked in any order of importance.

Channel	Sourced data
Website	Cookies, behavioral data, e-mail addresses via sign-up forms for newsletters
Customer Profile / Loyalty Program	demographic data, e-mail, internal data (e.g. contracts)
Purchasing History	Statistics, frequency of purchasing
Social Media	anonymized customer information, activation through competitions that ask for submitting details, data collection campaigns
Direct contact with customers	demographic data, interests, e-mail addresses
Google Analytics or other analytic software	data about usage, interaction, demographic data, metrics
Market studies	general trends, peer groups
Retailers	general trends, anonymized purchase history
Third-party platforms	ratings, customer feedback
Surveys	satisfaction, general feedback

Table 2 List of sources for data collection and the respective data types that are collected via these sources.

Even though the named sources for collecting data were very similar for all the interviewed companies, differences were noticeable regarding the emphasis on the importance of data. Smaller companies put a rather low emphasis on data collection and usage, this signifies that they are only at the beginning of their marketing journey. Although there was a varying degree of data usage, there was an equal acknowledgement of the importance of data. Conclusively, the low emphasis stems from a lack of resources rather than the lack of interest or recognition of importance. Alternatively, some larger companies with complex structures seemed to lag behind to get adjusted their processes to data, as for example, implementing a CRM system (Company I and Company A). Furthermore, one of the international companies surprised by highlighting their strict data policy, saying that absolutely no data can be shared across brands, even though they belong to the same group (Company J).

Unanimously all interviewees agreed on the significance they attributed to customer data. All Companies asked to rank the importance of data from one to ten, all answers were seven and above. The importance of customer data was emphasized by the statement, from Company N's interviewee: "It tells you so much about your customer, about your prospects, about anything, demographically, and also maybe even future behavior. Is this person going to purchase something in the next month/years? So you can read this much out of data. And this is why it's so important for us."

Even though only one company mentioned buying data, it seems noteworthy to mention that all interviewees declared to use data analytics services from Google, Facebook, Amazon or other

institutions, where they pay to obtain e.g. insights on demographic data. While they are not buying the data, there is a clear interest to understand more about the customers' profile and behavior and hence, services instead of data are purchased to analyze the traffic on their accounts.

Regarding data sharing policies, only three companies gave affirmative answers when asked if they share data with external partners. However, none of the three is sharing non-anonymized data. Company A is acquiring data through affiliate connections with third-party resellers, Company I is legally required to share certain data with other insurance companies and Company E is sharing data to suppliers in connection with innovating new concepts for their business.

4.2 Usage of Data

Following the evaluation of the types of data used and sourced by interviewed companies, further insights should be presented for how this data is used for Marketing & Sales. The following different fields of application were identified and summarized. The below order does not symbolize decreasing importance.

Advertising

The collected data is mostly used to create campaigns, advertisements or newsletters on different kind of channels (Amazon Ad, Google Ad, Instagram, Facebook, Mailchimp). Interviewee No 11, the founder of Company K, a Swiss retail brand that was founded when there has been a fierce discussion in terms of consumer data and its privacy protection, says: "We create campaigns, mostly paid social ad campaigns or Google YouTube stuff. (...) And every once in a while, we also do segmented email marketing, but really not so much. We should also do more there." While data could be used for various purposes, such as creating similar audiences for Google Adwords based on an existing remarketing list, some companies only do retargeting with the gathered data. Company N for example clearly stated, that "so far, we only use data in order to retarget customers who really opted in for this service." (Interviewee No 14)

Segmentation & Targeting

The data is used to segment the clients into smaller customer groups, that are subsequently used for targeting and marketing decisions. In addition to demographic data which some companies use customers purchase history and other factors such as Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) to derive additional or more detailed segmentation. Further use can be predictions of trends. As segmentation is key when using data for advertisement, a majority of the companies named it as one of the purposes of their data. Segmentation and Targeting based on data aids companies in Advertising. By determining different customer segments or groups, the companies have the possibility to create different marketing activities or campaigns per segment. Company B, for example, analyzed who bought more than twice last year and made a special gift to those customers. Company I, on the other hand, would launch

different campaigns depending on the contracts the clients already have with them, which shows a different segmentation approach.

Personalization

Personal data such as birth dates are used for personalization of marketing output. As one of the main goals of marketing is to reach the right person at the right time with the right message (Todorova, 2015) tailoring marketing can usually lead to better output, as confirmed by Interviewee No 2 from Company B: "...the more tailored the message, the more effective, the better results" Personalization, however, is not only about tailoring messages. When Interviewee No 10 from Company J was asked for the importance of data, he mentioned the following: “This is definitely important because I know also that we are looking into more personalized services going forward.” Interviewee No 12 from Company L also mentioned that “we want to understand what the customers interests are. What services might they be particularly interested in, how come, what can they benefit from what potential additional services could they benefit on and would be possible to sell to these customers.” These statements support the fact that customer data is also used to personalize products or services further to customers’ needs. Another form of personalization was used by Company M. As an experiment, they let their customers decide via a poll function on Instagram in which color they should buy a certain product. Even though many people participated and the winning colors were bought afterwards, which can be seen as a customer-centric approach in buying (Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012) the company afterwards also got to experience the negative side of such an approach. They received critical messages from disappointed customers due to the remained shortage of specific colors the requested after the poll was conducted.

Understanding customers

In a time where a customer-centric approach is increasingly important (Williams, n.a.) having sufficient customer data and knowledge about your customer is considered a premise. As Interviewee No 1 from Company A puts it: “When you have this data you have a competitive advantage and you understand your customer better and you can allocate your marketing budget better." According to Interviewee No 2, Company B, all the data is eventually used to know your customer better and to build stronger customer relationship.

Strategic Decisions

On a larger scale, data was used for strategic decisions. Interviewee No 5 from Company E mentioned how she uses data for her company in that way: "I use data to basically back up my brand strategy which links back to my brand's DNA, which obviously should give me competitive advantage.” Interviewee No 8 from Company H mentioned using the data to identify the products they sell and working out its cost and margin.

General Optimization

There was a general consensus that data is beneficial and utilized for all sorts of optimization. As an example, the statistics about interaction with Facebook or Instagram ads are used for further improvement of these ads. Additionally, user experiences are being intensified by analyzing interaction on websites. On the other hand, this behavior on the website is used by another company for optimizing newsletters.

Among the interviewed companies was one, who clearly mentioned to not do any Online Marketing: “We are just … happy that we (…) we get very well-known just by spreading the word through the community.” (Interviewee No 7, Company G) Additionally, there were a few brands, as already with data collection, that are at the beginning of their journey, testing new options continually according to their resources and capabilities. Regarding satisfaction on how they use the data opinions were mixed. While some seemed to be satisfied with the position they are in and making the best with any data they have, others felt that more could have been done to improve their marketing efforts. In particular, one interviewee seemed to have struggled with justifying internally as his company placed less emphasis on marketing activities and did not fully acknowledge its importance as a business driver. This has led to difficulties such as having lesser motivation for employees to share their data across departments. Interviewee No 9 from Company I mentioned that “marketing is just something like, ‘okay, we're going to contact clients and inform them about new products or sometimes make some Commission on promotional campaign’, but it's not seen as the business driver.” On another note, Interviewee No 4 from Company D expressed its dissatisfaction: "It's pretty, pretty terrible because there's a lot more restrictions on our industry than basically almost everything else." However, all interviewees agreed, that more could always be done, as put by Interviewee No 14, Company N, the following way: “...of course, I mean, this is so complex, and it has so many options. So, I think we would need more manpower to use it to the full extent that we could.”

4.3 Gaps in Sourcing and Additional Desired Information

To derive an answer to the first sub-question on future approach, what are B2C companies desired information additionally to the one they already have, interviewees were also asked to identify gaps in the current process of sourcing data. For the companies who are not advanced in sourcing and using customer data, rather basic points as e-mail addresses were named, whereas Company K would be interested in phone numbers in order to be able to do text message marketing. For Interviewee No 3 from Company C the use of Instagram for collecting data and connecting with customers would be a desirable advancement in sourcing data. Currently, the company owns a Profile, but is apparently not using it to its full potential. Additional answers from other companies included that there is no data mining done to look for patterns (Interviewee No 1), fashion preferences of customers (Interviewee No 7) and the suitable amount of communication a customer prefers (Interviewee No 2). For Company N, the gaps consist of offline data not being aligned with online data, level of customers’ buying process,

what could include aspects from problem recognition to post-purchase evaluation (iEduNote, n.a.) and not being able to predict the frequency of a customer buying (Interviewee No 14). According to them it "would be definitely a goal for the future to have the holistic data and to cover … really every data we can get and also to align all this data stream line in one process."

Interviewee No 12 from Company L, identified for themselves another gap: “It would be very interesting in using far more telecommunications data than we currently do. We are very, very restrictive in that area. So currently, we … really stick to the requirements in absolute detail to such an extent that we ... don't even ask the customer’s consent to do more than is allowed based on regulations as such.”. Company J named to be not able to source more data due to the company’s strict data policy and Interviewee No 8 from Company H mentioned to currently not identify real gaps. A particular answer that might be interesting for the hospitality industry was given by Interviewee No 5, Company E. For her, the missing data on specific services in their industry, such as for example the arrival experience, would be desirable but hard to obtain. Furthermore, she pointed out a more general issue connected to customers and their desires: "Sometimes you can't just ask guests what they want because sometimes they don't know what they want, you know. And only when you give it to them, they're like, Oh, my God, how could I live without?". Considering this, sourcing authentic data about customers’ preferences and interests might be difficult in general when they are not able to express or imagine their preferences.

Apart from identifying gaps in sourcing data, interviewees were also asked to name what types of additional information they would desire to know about their customer. Even though the research team expected long lists of wishful thinking, the interviewees’ responses were rather vague. One possible reason might be the lack of knowledge of the types of data that could be made available through ZPD. However, there were still some noteworthy points mentioned. The order does not symbolize decreasing importance.

Emotional data

Receiving information about customers' emotions or emotional data was mentioned several times. This desire derives because of the way human beings are making decisions. As Douglas Van Praet, the author of Unconscious Branding, explained: “The most startling truth is we don’t even think our way to logical solutions. We feel our way to reason. Emotions are the substrate, the base layer of neural circuitry underpinning even rational deliberation. Emotions don’t hinder decisions. They constitute the foundation on which they’re made!” (Praet, 2013)

Accordingly it is no surprise that brands are interested in receiving more emotional data about their customers and on how they make their purchase decision: "The more emotional data I can get from a customer the better because then I can really have a conversation with them.” Interviewee No 8 elaborated emotional data and its potential for Company H as follows: "Sensing their heartbeat when they have a burger, and if it goes, I mean, they're happy, then you're going into very deep, deep analysis of your clients and this cannot lie.” Information regarding factors that destress a customer, or vice versa

keep its energy level high, plus expectations can also be categorized under emotional data and would be wished for (Interviewee No 5). Additionally “anything which helps me as a hotel operator to stay in an environment where the guest doesn't need to do anything but do good for him, that would be perfect.”

Information on their lifestyles and interests

Apart from emotional data, information about interests, lifestyles and hobbies were mentioned the most frequently by the interviewees. For example by Interviewee No 7, Company G: "I would need some really specific information about the customers regarding.. their values? What is their lifestyle? How are they about fashion? Or how are they thinking about fashion?” As is observable from this statement, knowing if a customer is interested in the respective industry and if he/she buys in that category, would be of value to a company like Company D. Also Company L would be interested in this information, however further pointed out the difficulty to obtain it: "…to understand what the interests of the customer are, what they what they're looking for, what their profile is, more specifically, those areas ... that any company would be very, very interested in. It's actually not that easy to source that kind of data yourself.”

Happenings in a customer’s life

Companies saw new possibilities on expediting targeted marketing to propose detailed offering that is valuable to the customers. For instance, knowing major life milestones of customers such as buying a new flat or travelling around the world. This data allows the companies to better match their products and services to their customers’ needs in that exact moment. In general, as Interviewee No 10 from Company J put it: “the more you know, the more you can be part of a solution that helps them you know".

Professions

Several companies form different industries named information about customers professions and their working hours as data they would wish for, for example Company C: "As a business guy that's working from 8 to 8 will not be working out at 12, right? So that way, I think professions will be very interesting." Hence, knowing a customer's working schedule helps a company to customize their offering better. For Company K this information is of equal interest. Also the industry, the range of revenue per household and other information about the customers household (number of kids, living at home) could be of interest to companies, for example for Company I.

A further point that is potentially connected to a customer's profession and its working hours is the question of when a customer is online the most. As many marketing activities these days are carried out online, this information might be crucial for a brand which was probably also the reason why companies named this information as a desired additional information.

Political views

Knowing a customer's political views was a further point mentioned to be worth knowing. According to Company M they noticed that being interested in a certain type of product might correlate with political orientation. Hence, thinking backwards could a customer's political view could be a further source to make a decision of who to target with what product.

Buying process / habit

When it comes to conversions, knowing a customer's position within the buying process can help a company significantly in converting a prospect into a customer. For Interviewee No 14, Company N, this information would be of high interest: "The most valid information that's relevant to companies is, at which level is this customer in the buying process? Is he actively thinking about purchasing something in the next, let's say, two weeks, is he just browsing, just wants to be entertained? So at which process of the funnel is this customer, this would be interesting. Is he maybe even a competitor buyer? That's interesting." Also, information about customers preferred payment method and the frequency of online purchases is of interest to companies like Company K.

As previously mentioned, some interviewees experienced trouble to identify specific data or information they would like to additionally know about their customers. However, all the answers went into the same direction, namely to understand the customer eventually better through more data. Furthermore, the concept of ZPD seemed to be quite hard to grasp in retrospect which might have influenced the answers. More insights on this will be given in a later chapter.

4.4 Change Potential of ZPD

Deriving from customer data companies would wish to obtain, the main research question will be answered. The first part of the question, how the integration of zero-party data could change Swiss B2C companies' approach for marketing and customer targeting will be answered in this chapter. The conditions and concerns will be further explored in the next chapter.

All of the interviewed companies had no prior knowledge about ZPD. Hence, it required a lot of thought work from the interviewees as many of the interview questions were not directly about their work field but rather about a hypothetical approach in the future. There were some skeptical responses about using this type of data, like Company G, but still does not fully dismiss it as an option.

However, most companies were positive and open to trying out integration of ZPD into their business by e.g. running a trial and comparing the results and outputs with their current numbers. As stated by Company I, exists a need for new data: "Yes, for sure. We always are looking for data who can enrich our behavior or you know, our customer or prospect to make more precise prospection." Interviewee No 3, a marketing manager from Company C, commented that this might even lead to new job positions dedicated to managing the ZPD platform on the company side. Bigger companies like

Company J might probably not be the first one's to adapt to this new concept: "It's maybe a little bit too early, we need to see how this works for other companies. I cannot imagine that Company J, will be one of the first companies to hop on." This statement gives a strong indication of what kind of companies might be most likely to use ZPD, which will be treated in a later chapter.

The integration of zero-party data could potentially lead to less dependency on the big four players in the industry (Google, Amazon, Facebook and Apple) as more implicit but transparent customer data would be made available through a third-party platform and with the tightening of online data regulations. As of today, the big four accounting firms are considered as the gatekeeper and companies can hardly avoid them when being interested in doing business. Besides less dependency from the big four ZPD might also lead to diminishing value of the data that has been collected so far: "it may be if everyone gives more details about themselves the data collected by other companies will lose value because there will be... there will be like competitiveness against those platforms." (Interviewee No 8)

It could be observed that Zero-party data presents as an opportunity to close the gap between marketing managers' desire to obtain more data and personalization while maintaining customer's trust. Interviewee No 1, Company A, put it the following way: "It's absolutely key to have as much data as you can have to...not only to survive, but also to... to give them the marketing they deserve from day one."

According to Interviewee No 2, Company B, rewards for the personal information shared by customers, will be either way inevitable in the future. In this context, a mentioned advantage of ZPD would be that the marketers get an advanced sensing that the prospective users are interested in their brands and would like to receive updates and marketing-related content. Hence the selection of target groups for campaigns or marketing activities could be facilitated and companies could avoid going through Google or a similar service where marketing dollars are spent on a more generic target group that is very likely to also include people without any interest in their brands. Furthermore, benefits of ZPD for both companies and customers were proven based on the interview results. Customers could receive the relevant information without being bombarded by multiple brands which they may not have interest in. As Company N put it: "I think this could be the future to put the customer in charge of what he gets in terms of marketing material." Likewise, companies are to maximize the output of their marketing budget and are more likely to reach the right person at the right time with the right message. The need to spend marketing budget on more targeted audiences is tangibly the way companies want and need to go these days "because this spray and pray approach is... it's gone!" (Interviewee No 1)

Apart from the choice of more suitable target users, ZPD could also aid in refining the content of the marketing programs that are tailored closely to user's interests and trends (Interviewee No 3). Hence, information on lifestyle and interests as a desired data and personalization current usage of data could potentially be matched with ZPD and taken to a more advanced level. As a consequence, ZPD might help companies convert their business approach from product-centric to customer-centric.

Regarding customers attitudes towards their data privacy, different outcomes could be imagined by the marketers. Interviewee No 8, Company H, guessed that “maybe they already lost all the privacy, so they'd rather just now, give it personally” which would speak in favour of ZPD and its success probability (see chapter 4.5). As already explained in chapter 2.3, Swiss customers are wary about their data and marketers know this: "In general customers are sensitive about that data but even more in the luxury segment. So customers are really super suspicious about this fact.” (Interviewee No 14). Interviewee No 12, Company L, made a further point on that subject: "You have certain parts of the public that … don't really care and just say, well, I want to use Facebook and I know they process a lot of data. And maybe I'll complain if there's another scandal, but they still continue using it. So. they … don't actually then act on that despair. But then you see, you see the authorities and you see the response of media. And all ... those players have become much more sensitive and much more demanding.” Subsequently, ZPD might be able to help companies to comply with privacy rules as GDPR, as data is only shared with the confirmation of the customer. However, summarizing the interviewee’s experiences with customer awareness on data privacy and sharing data, customers might not yet be sufficiently annoyed by it to opt for another data sharing solution, as elaborated by Interviewee No 1, Company A: “...I think ... it's probably difficult to really implement it within... within the customer, because the customer in general is lazy or has so many other things to do that people don’t want to care.” Even though ZPD would have potential to achieve changes in this field, the question for the timing constitutes a boundary.

Conclusively, even though many companies expressed their interest, there seem to be also many conditions and questions around the topic: “If it was available, and you could access it and, and people customers were actually prepared to, to share that data, on such a platform. It would definitely be an interesting source for us to anyone else designing services or products.” (Interviewee No 12) Hence, conditions and success probability of a ZPD platform need to be further elaborated.

4.5 Conditions and Success Probability

As elaborated earlier, even though ZPD was a new concept to all our interviewees, it was positively viewed and many are open to incorporate it into their businesses. Interviewee No 6, Company F, expressed her interest “because it's interesting to work towards more customers specific needs and wants and not always just go around what we need and want to produce from there." However, as ZPD is still foreign to the interviewed companies, many remained skeptical and prefer to adopt it, after having tested it out or having seen proven results or success, like Interviewee No 2, Company B: “I would have to test it first before.. I spend money on it”. Based on the interviews, ZPD could potentially be a success, should it meet the following stated conditions and the concerns addressed.

Sufficient value proposition for both customers and brands

There should be a sufficient value proposition for both the customers and the brands to adopt or switch to a ZPD platform, which is a two-sided market. Till date, with greater awareness of how companies obtain customer data and with internet cookies consent being sought, most customers have recognised data as the new currency and are accustomed to the idea of providing their data in exchange for a service. According to a PwC survey conducted in 2012, 73% of the respondents are willing to share personal data with companies, depending on the returns they can expect (Bothun, Lieberman, & Tipton, 2012). However, Interviewee No 1, Company A, questioned the role of ZPD and highlighted the importance for it to present real value that is needed, demanded and accepted by society: "I have my doubts… you are giving so much data away already.. people... are just willing to give it away because of.. what they get out of it..it's more worth for them than what they have to give away...". In addition, Interviewee No 4 from Company D indicated that customers could already select their preferred brands to interact and market to them through subscription to their newsletter or at their homepage: "…you could sign up to their newsletter..and you can interact directly with the brand. I don't know why I would sign up to a platform that is specifically just a platform to advertise on."

According to Interviewee No 12, Company L, the value should also be made clear to customers, meaning how they could benefit from it: "They'd have to see a real benefit. So either it could be that you just pay them for their data, or it could be that you show the customers how the services they are provided with are improved or how they how they gain access to, to information to services to products to other insights which they potentially wouldn't have had access to without sharing that data." As such, aside from monetary compensation, there should be other benefits that serve to establish and build customer relationships. Interviewee No 4, Company D, refered to this as follows: "The consumer has to get some serious benefits from this platform, otherwise, there's zero reason for them to join. Either the customers are getting discounts or ..points...where they're trying to get customer loyalty through a system like this..." This was also substantiated by Interviewee No 10, Company J, for the case of getting brands on board as he reiterated the principle of added value of ZPD through the third-party mobile app: "How can I leverage this kind of platform in order to do things... that I would not be able to do myself... or to get access to more relevant or more targeting or more value for my consumers that I could not do it myself? And that is… the principle question of added value."

New Data

One way of ensuring added value is by providing new data that companies are unable to source or obtain due to data restriction, regulations or company policy. "What does this data offer that we cannot get from our common channels?" (Interviewee No 14) This is further supported by existing gaps and challenges in data that companies would love to have, identified by Interviewee No 4, Company D, as follows: "The problem is that..there's no way to directly access them. At this moment, legally, you can't access anybody directly through these channels." As most companies have been actively collecting data,

they saw ZPD as a new source of data beyond basic demographic data such as behavioural, psychographic or even competitor data (Interviewee No 14). These data shed new light on customer relationships and provide deeper insights, not only for analysis but prediction of customer's behaviour.

Relevant, Recent & Industry-Specific Data

Another way to add value is to ensure that the ZPD obtained is relevant, recent and specific to the industry. This is pointed out by Interviewee No 14: "The most recent data is the most powerful for us to use." Similarly, Company A's marketing manager expressed his concerns about the usability and timeliness of the data as customers might not be interested or have the time to update their preferences particularly when interest and preferences change over time. Furthermore, customers are less concerned with providing timely data (Interviewee No 1). Marketing managers like Interviewee No 3, Company C, also gave feedback that industry specific knowledge and information can be hard to obtain but useful for them to improve their products and services: "It would be interesting to know what people do as a profession, which they're not always willing to share, but it would help me as a fitness trainer to understand their needs." While Company C, requires unique data like job profession, business in the hospitality industry like Company E, would be interested in data that could help them create smart rooms (Interviewee No 5).

Data Transparency and Security

The success probability of ZPD largely lies on ensuring data transparency and security: "From a company's perspective, yeah, data security, data security, data security. So this is very important and then also transparency, transparency…" (Interviewee No 14) Apart from reassuring partner brands, Interviewee No 12, Company L, mentions that it is also important to communicate this to the customers: "It would be very important that it can be guaranteed that the customers or the data subjects were fully aware of what they're doing." Through data transparency and security, brands have retained trust and brand reputation that they had built with their clients. Since companies would have to partner with the ZPD platform, they are aware of how the ZPD platform could potentially have an influence on their reputation: "It would be a really bad image if it turns out that this (…) somehow not maybe keep the promises when it comes to all the transparency and security issues." (Interviewee No 7) Companies also expressed the importance of knowing what happens to the data in the event customers wish to exit from the ZPD platform. Thinking from a customer's point of view, Interviewee No 14, Company N, wondered: "Is there also a possibility to opt out for me if I'm not happy with that? Or will I be chased forever?" On the other hand, ownership of data when customers decide to leave the ZPD Platform presents as another concern from a company's perspective: "Let's say... two customers said they don't want to be part of that anymore. What do I have to do…? Because in the case of Facebook, it's not so easy...you have to... delete... reupload it... and add the audience... to the campaigns." (Interviewee No 11) The question lies in how the ZPD Platform as well as companies who obtained data via this service are handling due diligence of data.

Right Pricing for ZPD and ZPD Platform

Setting the right pricing for ZPD and the service provided via a platform are essential. Being asked about their feelings on paying for ZPD, most companies, as for example Company K, are open to the idea: "I feel I'm willing to pay for it. The question is what the prices are." (Interviewee No 11) However, it is necessary to benchmark the prices with other existing methods which companies are able to obtain data from: "I would pay max 1% my marketing budget. No more. …because of paid social ads are so cheap at the moment to just make a campaign…" (Interviewee No 11) Some of the interviewees were also concerned with the effectiveness and conversion rate of the ZPD Platform. Payment was deemed to be fair only if there is an actual sales conversion: "I would rather maybe find something like cost per app per action reasonable. You.. really pay in case you get a purchase." (Interviewee No 14) Therefore, not only the price but also the pricing model should desirably be similar to existing practices as e.g. Google's.

Reach and Diversity of Users on ZPD Platform

Apart from the mentioned need for a sufficient value proposition, which can be considered as every business' base for success, marketing managers considered ZPD only useful for them should it be able to have sufficient reach or a certain mass of users. Otherwise, as pointed out by Interviewee No 1 from Company A, they would still have to fall back onto their old methods of using services by the big four: "If... a broad audience really interact with them... and this is a need and then... as soon as this is proven, I think it's something that both sides could win at the end." Other than quantity of users, quality in terms of diversity of users plays another important role. Interviewee No 3, Company C, expressed concerns in the potential lack of diversity of users due to the nature of ZPD, which could skew the data received. As many people are still wary about sharing data, only a certain group of people, who are more open in nature, might end up on the platform. This lack of reach could reduce the attractiveness of the ZPD platform due to the possibility of missing target groups and again require marketers to use ZPD parallel to existing methods instead of substituting it.

Ease of Collection and Platform Usage

In addition, the ease of collecting ZPD data from users is crucial. In today's fast-paced society, people do not have the time or the attention span to be filling in length survey questionnaires (Subramanian, 2018). Interviewee No 1, Company A, suggested making the process fun and interactive to motivate users to provide their data or even to tap onto technology like Artificial Intelligence to automate or facilitate the process: "Some kind of artificial intelligence work… so that it somehow tracks my behavior... then I can decide what I really like or not because I wouldn't be really interested to go through a huge list of things… but it… can also have some level of entertainment to me." Another way of facilitating data collecting might be via ease of usage of the ZPD platform. For Interviewee No 6, Company F, it must be a priority to have a user-friendly interface that is easy to use and understand for

both customers and brand partners: “Definitely user friendly..the information that I get from it has to be easily accessible and understandable.”

Data Authenticity

Maintaining and ensuring data authenticity is another essential factor contributing to the success of ZPD. As customers will be compensated in a monetarily in exchange for their data, Interviewee No 2, Company B, surfaced the potential issue of users abusing the system and viewing it as an opportunity to gain more money by creating fake profiles with made-up email accounts and contributing falsified data: “I can imagine somebody creating like eight email addresses just to sign up and get 10 bucks for signing up to 20 emails… People will make literally businesses out of this thing.. if they're going to get paid for it… They would… have to filter it…so that these are legitimate customers and not just, you know, gift hunters or sample hunters”. As a consequence, the received ZPD data might be of no or only little use for the companies. It is therefore necessary to either filter out falsified or duplicated data or prevent the creation of fake accounts in the first place to ensure data integrity and accuracy.

Nature of ZPD Platform

With the nature of ZPD and focus on ethical marketing, the business intention behind the ZPD platform on using monetary compensation to entice users appeared to some of the interviewees contradictory to building credibility with customers. Interviewee No 2, Company B, pointed out that there probably has to be a higher trust level or credibility level: “If it's commercial, I don't know how that's gonna work.” Interviewee No 5, Company E, was also skeptical and felt that it would be better to focus on the philosophy or cause behind ZPD: “I'm not sure about that monetary reward, especially because it's going to be peanuts, it's going to make me sit down for half an hour for two francs... I might do it if I know it goes towards a charity.” Both interviewee saw a higher chance of success if the ZPD was non-commercial or eventually for a good cause.

Dealing with Existing Competition

With the dominance of the big four, particularly Google and Facebook, as the gatekeeper of most data, ZPD faces strong competition in being the new alternative for businesses. Interviewee No 1, Company A highlighted the prevalence and impact the big four have on all businesses and that it would be hard to change it: “I would say, difficult because as I said the big players within this business are .. so huge and they are so a force within this business... they're also the gatekeeper... all the businesses have to go through them...”. More importantly, for the concept of ZPD to work and for customers to regain control of their own data, it requires the acceptance and cooperation of other companies, particularly the major big four players: “If they don't work together with Facebook and Google, which I think they don't, then you will.. continue to be..spammed all the time.” (Interviewee No 11) As first, second and third-party data continue to remain available to companies through existing channels and platforms, there is less incentive for brands and customers to switch to ZPD. Referring to this, a crucial

question was posed by Interviewee No 14, Company N: “Is it really necessary that we need to buy this data? It might be that this one is already in our pool.”

Other than the major players, companies vying for data are also wary of losing competitive advantage should the same data from the ZPD platform be shared with their industry competitors: “But here's also the question, for instance, which other companies then would get the same data at the same time?” (Interviewee No 14)

Selection of partner brands

It is important to partner with the right companies to ensure success of ZPD. Partner companies should also buy into the same philosophies and values: “I think if the vision and the business model is in line with the objective and the business model of the companies which are partnered with them, that is the base for me for success.” (Interviewee No 1) In addition, the size and development pace of the company determine the likelihood of companies adopting ZPD.

Larger companies like multinational corporations such as Company J, tend to be late majority or laggards in the buyer’s decision process for new services (Interviewee No 10). One reason to explain this phenomenon is that larger companies need more justifications on decision for new products or services. Due to their size and large customer base, larger companies tend to sustain a greater impact and have a greater need to gain and maintain customers’ trust. “A company with very important brands like Company J, cannot afford to have this reaction, we need to really have people that really know that we care for them.” (Interviewee No 10) Interviewee No 9, Company I, further explained the complex procedures required for a change in a large company: “It’s not so easy... to change things, the processes are quite complicated, for the customer..things are not moving so quickly...”

On the contrary, smaller companies which lack digital presences like Company G, are more preoccupied with gathering digital data, hence ZPD is too advanced for them to adopt at the moment. Interviewee No 7, Company G, mentioned that “right now I don't feel like this will be my first priority.”

Culture

Brand managers handling international markets revealed the role of culture played in the different levels of data sensitivity and awareness that influences the likelihood of companies adopting ZPD. The Swiss have higher awareness of data privacy as compared to the Americans, which has translated into how customers expect to be reached out to (Allen, 2018). For Interviewee No 14, Company N, “this has definitely to do with culture. For instance, I see that when I'm doing the same campaigns in the US that are doing Switzerland, the Americans are not that sensitive.” Similarly, Interviewee No 2, Company B, shared her experience on the low awareness of data protection in America: “In Europe, we're lucky because we have the data protection rules.. But in America, it's not like that.”

Conclusively, the second part of the main research questions on under which conditions the integration of ZPD could change Swiss B2C companies in marketing and targeting could be answered.

However, it should be stated that this list is not final and other conditions or concerns might arise when additional marketers would be asked for their insights. Nevertheless, certain recommendations can be made to providers planning to launch a ZPD platform that potentially enhances its success probability.

5 Recommendations

Factoring in the important conditions stated above, this chapter covers the recommendations on future approaches towards zero-party data. Additionally, it tackles the sub-question on in which type of B2C companies could zero-party data be most likely used and how zero-party data could be successfully taken up by Swiss companies.

Selecting Suitable Partner Companies

In reaching out to partner companies, we recommend, for starters, to target small-and-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are more agile, innovative and open to changes. This will enable building up a sufficiently large user base or critical mass of users by having sufficient brand offerings. With more users, it will, in turn, increase the attractiveness of ZPD and the platform. Generating results with the SMEs will provide proven results that could be used to convince larger corporations or multi-national corporations (MNCs) to take up ZPD. As stated by Interviewee No 1, Company A: "If we can make a use case and show the benefit for the company but also for the customer at the end, I think I could win them over, yes." Accordingly, success cases are essential in getting the buy-in of larger companies. It is also important to take into account cultural differences for Swiss companies with multiple brands, working with international markets or franchises. These companies might respond differently to the different markets they work with.

Apart from the company's size and culture, it would also be more effective to reach out to companies that have a digital presence and conduct digital marketing since ZPD functions on a digital platform. Selection criteria for partner companies should include companies with the same principals, values and beliefs that ZPD entails such as fair and ethical marketing, to ensure lasting partnership (Interviewee No 1).

In addition, we suggest targeting and segmenting partner companies that are product based instead of service-based as it seemed that product-based companies have a greater focus on obtaining more data from customers to improve their products.

Education on ZPD

As ZPD is a new concept to every industry, it is, therefore, essential to educate both customers and brand companies about it. This could be conducted through tutorial videos, workshops, face-to-face meetings, via ambassadors, bloggers, influencers and eventually even satisfied users. Another way to spread awareness is to start a movement or online campaign through storytelling to get people talking and learning about it. In addition, customers and brand companies need to have in-depth knowledge

about how the ZPD platform systems work such as the functions it possesses, how the data is being handled, the flow of operations from before, during and after they join and even after they leave the ZPD platform. Benefits for both long term and the short term should be emphasized to the customers and brands such that they are clear about their role with ZPD.

Reducing perceived risk for users

As data privacy is increasingly important, people are warier about giving away their personal data, especially to a new platform. Interviewee No 12, Company L, mentioned that it is necessary to lower the real and perceived risk for users in order to entice them on board: "Because... even if a platform says, Hey, this is what we're going to do.. you absolutely lose control. I think that the risk for the data subjects would be very high and I would personally never provide that for such a platform."

To reduce perceived risk for Swiss companies, we recommend allowing free trials for companies to pilot and test out the ZPD and its platform. As for the customers, having strong customer service and improving customer experience are two means to reduce risk, particularly since customer service is the first touchpoint with users.

Building credibility

Trust is of utmost importance to all companies. As such, there is a need to build credibility around ZPD. This could be achieved through coopetition, where companies collaborate with their competitors to optimise the benefits, creating a win-win situation that they could not achieve alone, including risk and cost-sharing, sharing distribution channels, co-marketing, and collaborative innovation (Ritala, Golnam, & Wegmann, 2014). One of the ways is to cooperate with the big four and other key data companies. By cooperating and syncing data with the big four, a more holistic experience could be attained. In addition, ZPD could leverage and tap onto the wide diverse audience of users that the big four possess. As the big four is widely known, ZPD is able to better build credibility. Rather than reinventing the wheel, there should be integrative tools with existing platforms such as Google Analytics and Facebook that are used by most corporations (Interviewee No 11).

On top of working with the big four, Interviewee No 11 proposes that endorsement from the government and the GDPR committee should be sought. This could better align with legality and policies of Swiss companies, encouraging them to adopt ZPD.

Publicity with Switzerland's top experts in data privacy could be held to gain credibility as a start-up for the ZPD platform. Interviewee No 11 suggested that this could involve conducting interviews and podcasts data experts as a means of expanding the network. Additionally, getting trustworthy or known brands on the ZPD platform will also increase users' trust in the ZPD platform.

Data Authenticity

The ZPD platform could authenticate users based on their ID numbers instead of merely emails to extend greater credibility. Alternatively, a two-step verification of both email and phone numbers could be added in place. It is, therefore, necessary that phone numbers must be uniquely tied to the provided email address.

Data Protection & Due Diligence

Data transparency and security should be kept intact by having a strong IT and highly secured system to prevent hackers on the ZPD platform. Both customers and brand companies should be kept aware of how their data is being used and why it is required. Ownership and distribution of data should be clearly established within the terms and conditions and communicated upfront. This includes what happens to the list of data that was obtained by a brand and if users no longer wish to subscribe to providing data to those brands. Besides denying access on the platform, companies are also interested to know what will happen to the user data that is already on various lists and files, which might still be used by companies. While brand companies partner with ZPD platform, databases of various brands should be kept separate and confidential.

Creating Added-Value

ZPD differs from existing first, second and third-party data by solving the marketing managers' dilemma of obtaining highly personal information since it creates enough incentive for customers to voluntarily provide sensitive data. The ZPD data should entail desired data that companies are unable to obtain and unique to the industry.

As companies now receive data from multiple sources, it would be useful if the ZPD platform is able to sync and filter the same list of customers to prevent duplicated information. Integrative functions through the ZPD platform is also beneficial to companies. For instance, enabling customers to subscribe to the company's mailing list within the platform.

Other than monetary payment, other forms of incentives such as privileges to VIP events, discounts or special entitlements could be offered. Additionally, incorporating the option to donate your earned money might be a future incentive for people to share their data.

Implementation of the ZPD Platform

It is necessary for the ZPD platform to be visually appealing, interactive and user-friendly. Data collection could be simple, short and engaging. This could be done through gamification or pictorial surveys. Additionally, the use of Artificial Intelligence might be an aspect to consider for proposing, such as crafting or prioritizing types of surveys questions that is more suitable to the user.

Right amount of payment for ZPD

Deriving from several marketers' statements, they would not be willing to use the platform due to payment being too small in comparison to effort and time spent on answering surveys. Accordingly, we suggest conducting another study with customers if they would be willing to use the ZPD platform for the stated price and if they would prefer other forms of benefits and incentives. This study could also touch on the expectations and functions of the platform.

Timeliness and Readiness for an alternative data collection model

Launching a product at a time when the market is ready for it, is crucial for its success (Dickmann, 2019). Hence, more profound research should be carried out to understand the sentiments of customers towards first, second and third-party data collection methods used by companies and if they are ready to adapt to a new concept of data sharing.

6 Conclusion

All in all, the experts confirmed what is being stated in the literature, namely that data present as key importance for all companies interviewed. All interviewed companies rely on first-party data and partially on second-party data, except for one which purchased third-party data. While companies seek for similar sources such as demographic data, the level of emphasis on data collection and the types and methods of data sourcing differs. These vary among companies depending on factors such as the industry need, marketing budget, how stringent the company's data policy is, the size of the company, and whether the company has any digital presence. Although most interviewees mentioned the importance of collecting and using data, it is surprising that many do not use the potential deriving from their data fully. It was astonishing to the research team how big the gap is between the assumed scope of data collection and usage and the actual scope.

All interviewed companies did not have any prior knowledge of zero-party data. Additionally, some of the interviewed companies lack digital presence and are still exploring ways of online data collection. As such, having a digital presence provides sensing on how progressive a company is in terms of data collection and usage. However, it was difficult for all interviewees, no matter how progressive, to understand and mentally adopt the concept of zero-party data.

In general, most companies are open and interested to try out the zero-party data. However, they are only willing to pay after there is proven success, if they had an opportunity to try it out or if it were based on a pay-per-conversion payment model. Some companies remain skeptical about it as there is insufficient information about zero-party data and how the zero-party data would work. The concerns include maintaining trust with customers by ensuring data transparency, security and authenticity. With regards to the zero-party data platform, other concerns entail the need for sufficient value proposition for both customers and brands and choice of suitable partner companies. In addition, the commercial

nature, pricing, reach, diversity, ease of usage and data collection of the zero-party data platform is pivotal to its success. Apart from that, it is important to recognise and deal with existing competition like the big four. A potential approach might be through coopetition. Lastly, it is also necessary to acknowledge customer brands in global markets with different cultures and adapt to their needs and attitudes towards data privacy. The chances of success for the adoption of zero-party data and the zero-party data platform will be higher should those concerns be addressed.

In our recommendations, we suggest working with SMEs, with a digital presence, to produce results before reaching out to large corporations. Other criteria for selection of partner companies include companies having the same principles and values that align with that of zero-party data and to target and segment product-based companies. As zero-party data is a new concept, we proposed to educate both customers and partner companies on it through different approaches and channels such as various offline and online means of spreading awareness. Apart from educating on the zero-party concept, the customers and partner companies should be taught on how to use the zero-party data platform and kept informed on the process and various stages from joining to quitting the platform. Free trials should be made available for companies to experiment to reduce their perceived risk and encourage them to adopt the platform. To continue to build credibility, zero-party data should be made known through coopetition by collaborating with the big four, government bodies and institutions, as well as publicity with key industry players including start-ups and data experts. Tightening user authentication through more stringent measures like two-step authentication and requirement of official ID could further enhance data authenticity. The zero-party data platform should be equipped with strong data protection and due diligence to sustain users' trust. It should also create added-value by providing partner companies with new and industry-specific data, more incentives besides monetary compensation and integrative features with companies' marketing activities. Functions and features like attractive design and usability of the zero-party platform are vital. To prompt participation of using the platform, gamification and Artificial Intelligence could be integrated into the design of survey questions.

To derive further insights, more research should be conducted. On one hand, a further study with a larger sample of marketing and brand managers could be used to determine the right pricing for the zero-party platform. Learning from the current study, marketers should be provided with more detailed information on the zero-party data platform, such as test trials, informative presentations and a visualization of the app. This could encourage interviewees' to have a better understanding of the research topic. On the other hand, a quantitative study could be carried out with users to determine the suitable timing for the app's launch. As indicated in the results, various experts expressed a lack of willingness to be part of the app on the user's side. This could be due to their profession, as they are aware of how data could be handled and therefore being more cautious about it. However, some of them also pointed out that customers might not yet be sufficiently aware or annoyed by current data practices. As timing is crucial for the success of a business model (Dickmann, 2019) a further study on this topic could be of interest.

Going forward, future research studies such as focus group discussions with potential users could be conducted to obtain greater inputs with regards to the details of the zero-party data platform and how it could be improved. Research studies with industry experts could also spin off new ideas that could strengthen the implementation of the collection of zero-party data and lead to potential collaborations.

There were some limitations the research team had to face during the study. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many brand managers were not available for interviews. Furthermore, under the Swiss law, companies undergoing "Kurzarbeit", a measure enforced that slated temporary reduction in working hours of employees meant that employees have lesser time to partake in our interviews.

Another limitation lies in the sensitive nature of this topic, being data collection and usage. Multiple rejections from companies were given, stating that they are unable to provide us with information after they went through our interview questions.

Last but not least, the added and probably biggest challenge stems from the newness and lack of awareness of the zero-party data concept. As the concept of zero-party data was difficult to understand by the interviewees without having ever heard of it and without visual support, it was difficult to gather quality feedback. As such, we propose for future studies to be supported with a visual presentation of how the zero-party platform would look like and the functions of the platform. With a concrete example of the zero-party platform, interviewees could gain a better understanding of the zero-party data concept and will be able to provide more detailed and useful insights.

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Appendix A: List of Interviews

Interviewee No 1, Company A, 28 April 2020
international product-based company in the watch industry

Interviewee No 2, Company B, 06 May 2020
international product-based company in the beauty industry

Interviewee No 3, Company C, 09 May 2020
national service-based company in the fitness industry

Interviewee No 4, Company D, 10 May 2020
national product-based company in the CBD industry

Interviewee No 5, Company E, 13 May 2020
international service-based company in the hospitality industry

Interviewee No 6, Company F, 14 May 2020
national product-based company in the beauty industry

Interviewee No 7, Company G, 15 May 2020
national product-based company in the clothing industry

Interviewee No 8, Company H, 15 May 2020
national product-based company in gastronomy

Interviewee No 9, Company I, 18 May 2020
national service-based company in the insurance industry

Interviewee No 10, Company J, 20 May 2020
international product-based company in the food industry

Interviewee No 11, Company K, 19 May 2020
international product-based company in the clothing industry

Interviewee No 12, Company L, 19 May 2020
national service-based company in the telecommunication industry

Interviewee No 13, Company M, 26 May 2020
national product-based company in the clothing industry

Interviewee No 14, Company N, 28 May 2020
international product-based company in the watch industry