



**HUISKES  
KOKKELER**  
AUTOGROEP

The effect of congruence between content and persona  
on customer's attitude and behavior in the automotive industry.



**Master Thesis Marketing Communication**

Marloes de Jong

November the 14th, 2016



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## **MASTER THESIS MARKETING COMMUNICATION**

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**Marloes de Jong**

S1367099

m.j.dejong-1@student.utwente.nl

**University of Twente Enschede**

Faculty of Behavioural, Management & Social Sciences

MSc Communication Studies: Marketing Communication

1<sup>st</sup> supervisor: Dr. M. Galetzka  
m.galetzka@utwente.nl

2<sup>nd</sup> supervisor: Dr. T. van Rompay  
t.j.l.vanrompay@utwente.nl

**Huiskes-Kokkeler Autogroep**

Goudstraat 65

7554 NG Hengelo

Supervisor: I. Esmer  
i.esmer@huiskes-kokkeler.nl



## PREFACE

In february I started my graduate internship at Huiskes-Kokkeler Autogroep in Hengelo for the finalization of my master Marketing Communication. My interest in communication started with the bachelor Communicatiewetenschap and grewed along to the fulfillment of my master Marketing Communications. Among the years my interest in marketing became bigger and bigger and I developed a special interest in content marketing.

During the internship at Huiskes-Kokkeler I combined my interest for cars and my interest in the effects of content marketing in the execution of this research. With this research I investigated how the automotive industry can develop effective content strategies based on their customers, by understanding their customers and creating insight in their needs, interests and behavior. With the use of effective content strategies car dealers can improve the customer experience and therefore focus more on creating an omnichannel strategy. During the past eight months I was an intern at Huiskes-Kokkeler I experienced how to implement the theoretical knowledge I had acquired over the past years in practice. Huiskes-Kokkeler offered me a lot of freedom to execute my research and getting the most detailed results, for which I am very grateful. But this research would not be a success without certain people, to whom I owe a big thank you:

First of all I want to thank Huiskes-Kokkeler Autogroep for the opportunity of executing this research, and especially Ilker Esmer, who guided me perfectly in my times of struggle and the completion of my thesis. Thank you to my co-workers for teaching me new insights and marketing related matters, and for giving me a warm welcome and a great and unforgettable time at Huiskes-Kokkeler.

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Finally, I want to thank my family and friends. It has been a turbulent period with a lot of ups-and-downs. Thank you for standing by me and supporting every move I make and every step I take. Thank you for who you are and loving me always. I would like to dedicate this thesis to my loving father, who unfortunately is not able to experience the final result of my thesis and my graduation of the master.

I hope you will enjoy reading my master thesis as much as I enjoyed working on it.

Marloes de Jong

Wierden, November 14, 2016

## ABSTRACT

It is becoming more and more important for companies to offer relevant and valuable content to customers to create a positive customer experience and thereby positively influence customer's attitude and behavior towards the company and its products. Prior research has shown positive effects of personalized content on customer's attitudes and behavior. Personalized content is mostly based on buyer persona profiles which represent the characteristics, interests, needs, behavior and lifestyle of a particular type of customer. Prior research has also shown positive effects of buyer personas on customer's attitude and behavior. However, little emphasis has been put on the congruence between content and buyer personas and its combined effects on customer behavior and attitudes. Therefore, the aim of this research was to examine a possible match between the personalized content and the buyer persona on which the content was based, and if this interaction effect had a positive influence on customer's attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation towards the automotive industry at different touchpoints in the customer's buyer journey. To represent car dealers within the automotive industry a case study was executed with Huisjes-Kokkeler Autogroep.

Before conducting study 2, study 1 was executed in the form of an online survey with a total of 105 participants. With the execution of study 1 participant's demographic characteristics, such as gender, job, family situation but also their interests and preferences concerning cars and car dealers, were outlined in order to form four main personas: Cindy, Robert, Evelien and Sandra. With study 1 as input, study 2 consisted of a 4 (content condition: Cindy car vs. Robert car vs. Evelien car vs. Sandra car) x 4 (preferred persona: Cindy vs. Robert vs. Evelien vs. Sandra) experimental design, which was also examined through an online survey. A total of 780 participants filled in the online survey in which they were randomly assigned to one of the four content conditions based on two critical touchpoints in their customer journey, the orientation phase (a stock-webpage scenario and a detail-webpage scenario) and the purchase phase (in the form of a showroom scenario), which needed to be evaluated by the participants. At the end of the survey the participants had to match themselves, their interests and lifestyle to one of the four described personas.

In contrast to what was expected, there was no interaction effect found between content and persona on customer's attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation towards the car dealer and its products. Although this research showed no interaction effect, the constructs content and persona did have an effect on some of the independent variables within certain touchpoints independently from each other. The findings provide organizations within the automotive industry with startingpoints and insight in the use of personalized content based on persona profiles to create and use more effective marketing communication strategies.

## KEYWORDS

Customer journey, content, personalized content, buyer persona, persona profile.

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the focus of corporate marketing is more and more shifting from a service-based to an experience-based economy. Companies feel the urge to move beyond goods and services to create memorable experiences for their customers (Gilmore & Pine, 2002). According to Knutson, Beck, Kim and Cha (2006) this is mostly caused by the increasing advanced technology, more sophisticated and demanding customers and increasing competitive business environments. The customer's interactions with the company, also known as touchpoints within their customer journey, can also be referred to as their customer experience. This experience has been defined by Grewal, Levy and Kumar (2009) as *"including every point of contact at which the customer interacts with the business, product or service"*. Meyer and Schwager (2007) define customer experience as *"both an internal and subjective response that people have to any direct or indirect contact with a company"*.

To really understand customer's experience with a product or company and to provide them with the most optimal and effective customer experience, one must understand the steps a customer takes in their purchase process. The path a customer takes from orientation to the purchase of a product is called the customer journey. Within this customer journey a customer has a series of touchpoints which occur whenever a customer interacts with the organization across multiple channels (Bitner, Ostrom & Morgan, 2008). The customer journey and its touchpoints involve all activities and events related to the delivery of the service and the products from the customer's perspective (Patrício, Fisk, Falcao e Cunha & Constantine, 2011).

Customers nowadays are interacting with an increasing number of touchpoints within their customer journey and are using an increasing number of different offline and online channels as mobile devices, websites, webstores, but also physical stores (Lazaris, Vrechopoulos, Katerina & Doukidis, 2014). To anticipate on these touchpoints in the most effective way, it needs to be clear which content strategies and which channels are used and appreciated most by customers. A principle of good content is therefore that the content should be appropriate for business, for users and receivers of the content, and for the context in which the content will be sent (Kissane, 2012). This appropriate and effective content can be created through different content strategies as for example storytelling, giving purely facts or persuading through advertising with the use of banners or animation (Lee & Shin, 2015).

Because people's customer journeys are never the same for every individual, the creation of buyer personas can serve as a tool to base content strategies on. Personas serve as a representation of target customers that share common characteristics and lifestyles (Maness, Miaskiewicz & Sumner, 2008). Therefore, personas provide detailed information about the customer or a specific kind of customer who will use the service or will be interested in the product (Texeira, Patrício, Nunes, Nóbrega, Fisk & Constantine, 2012). After creating different persona types content can be created based on the characteristics, goals and needs of the customers in their customer journey. The goal of effective content is creating unique and interesting content that focuses on prospects and customer's goals, needs and interests.

Because of growing competition within the automotive industry and the growing need to grow along with technical innovations concerning creating an effective customer experience, car dealers need to redevelop their current communication and content strategies in order to create more effective customer experiences, positive attitudes and customer behavior. To examine if certain content strategies match a persona type, it is necessary to determine what information the customers within the persona profiles will find interesting and most helpful to address to their needs or problem (Berkey, 2012). Therefore, this research will aim to create persona profiles based on analysis, and examine if there exists a match between different content strategies and the linked buyer persona to these content, at different touchpoints in the customer journey.

This research will be executed with the use of a case study around Huiskes-Kokkeler Autogroep. Huiskes-Kokkeler is the biggest car dealer of the region Twente, in the east of the Netherlands. The results of the research concerning Huiskes-Kokkeler Autogroep will be representative for the automotive industry.

With this information the research questions of this research are as followed:

**RQ:** In what way can car dealers improve their content strategies with the use of personalized content based on personas to create effective customer experiences, attitudes and behavior?

The following questions are attempted to be answered with the help of this study:

**SQ1:** In what way can the content be created so that the content matches customer's personal interests and lifestyle?

**SQ2:** What is the extent to which the personas match certain content strategies?

**SQ3:** What are the effects of personalized content based on buyer personas?

Based on the results indicating the most critical touchpoints and the most effective content strategies based on persona profiles, an indication will be made if and how personalized content based on buyer personas is interesting and can have a positive effect on customer's attitude and behavior within the automotive industry.

This research adds value to the literature in that its focus continues where prior research has stopped in combining two previously studied variables and its effects on customer's behavior, perceptions and experiences with a product and company. Prior research has put the emphasis on the effects of the use of buyer personas by companies to get a better view of customer's demands and preferences. Research has proven that buyer personas can work as a useful design tool (Ma & LeRouge, 2007; Maness, et al., 2008; Long, 2009). Prior research has also investigated which different content strategies exist and what their effects are on customer's responses and perceptions (Kreuter & Wray, 2003; Kalyanaram & Sundar, 2006).

What makes this study new and valuable, is that prior research has barely taken a detailed look into the relationship between personas and the content companies offer their customers. This research makes a new step in creating personalized content based on personas to provide insight in if there exists

a match between personas and personalized content. The findings of this research may provide valuable strategy points for using personalized content to reach the target group in the most effective way. But, before introducing the study, the key constructs within this study will be elaborated.



## 2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 | The customer journey and its critical touchpoints

A customer follows a certain path when purchasing a product, in which he or she starts with the orientation of certain options and possibilities to fulfill his or her needs. This path ends with the purchase of the goods. Within this so-called customer journey the customer reaches different stages and experiences at different touchpoints. A touchpoint could be any communication or interaction of a customer with the company that helps the customer form an impression of the organization or brand (Quellette, 2012). To anticipate on these touchpoints, it is important to examine and point out the gap between customer's expectations and their experience with the service at each touchpoint (Meyer & Schwager, 2007).

#### *The customer journey*

The journey of purchasing a car takes a great amount of days. When purchasing a new car people take around 54 days to complete this purchase. For purchasing a used car people take around 63 days. The amount of times the customer comes in contact with the dealer decreased from 4 times to 1.5 to 2.5 times the last couple of years (BOVAG, 2015). This means that dealers nowadays have less opportunities to interact in a direct and personal way with their customers. Besides, customers nowadays enter the dealer with more product knowledge because of online orientation than before. In 2014 93% of the car buyers first searched and oriented online before purchasing a car. According to the BOVAG research (2015) customer's orientation has mostly been completed before they visit the car dealer. Most customers view the internet as a valuable information source, more valuable than they would perceive the car dealer. There is still an important role for the dealer in this journey, because 86% of the customers state that they would not buy a car without at least one test drive.

The research of BOVAG (2015) shows three different types of consumers, namely: the *"light researcher"* whose orientation exists out of a short check with an average of 5 research actions. The second consumer type is the *"medium researcher"* who asks for advice from family and friends to make a decision, and uses an average of 16 research actions. Finally, the research addresses the *"heavy researcher"* who checks everything, including 17 different websites, and makes use of an average of 50 research actions. The BOVAG research shows that still the majority of 60% would not take the chance in ever buying their car online.

According to Darley, Blankson and Luethge (2010) a customer's decision-making process consists of five core stages: problem recognition, search, alternative evaluation phase, choice, outcomes. Gupta, Su and Walter (2004) summarized the customer journey into four phases, as shown in figure 2.1.1.

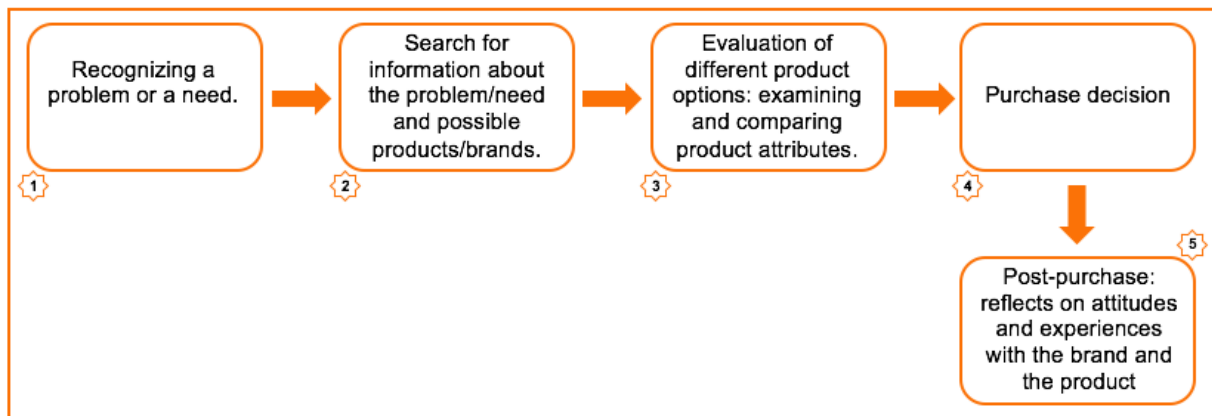


Figure 2.1.1

*Customer journey according to Gupta, et al. (2004) and Darley, et al. (2010).*

As displayed in figure 2.1.1 a customer's purchase journey starts with a problem or need which needs to be resolved or fulfilled. In order to do so, customers search for available information and possibilities concerning the problem or need. When all the information and possibilities are gathered, customers will evaluate this information and compare the possibilities in order to choose the most suitable option which will lead to finally making the purchase decision. According to Gupta, et al. (2004) this is where the purchase journey of a customer ends. Darley, et al. (2010) expand to this customer journey with a post-purchase phase in which customers reflect on their decisions and experiences with the purchased products or brands.

The BOVAG research (2015) developed a purchase journey of customers buying a car, as displayed in figure 2.1.2. This journey also starts with the recognition of a need. In this case it concerns the specific need for a car. The recognition of the need is followed by the orientation of all the available possibilities which will lead to the forming of a clear vision of the preferred car brands and models. With this information customers will visit a car dealer to experience the preferred cars in real life. This visit may end in making a test drive. Based on the information gathered at the car dealer and the experiences with the car during the test drives, the customer will make a purchase decision. Similar to what Darley et al. (2010) proposed, also the BOVAG research (2015) include a post-purchase phase. In the journey of purchasing a car this phase includes maintenance or repair of the current car or the rise of new needs concerning a car.

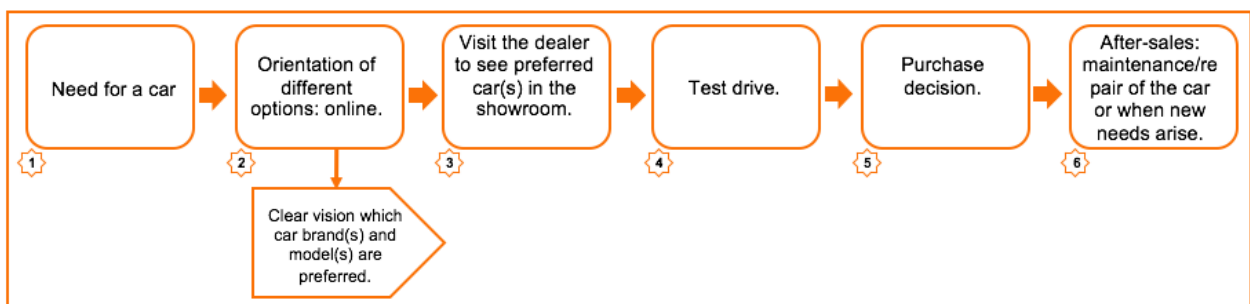


Figure 2.1.2

*Purchase journey within the automotive according to the BOVAG research (2015).*

Knowing the exact state of the location of the customer within their customer journey is essential for companies to design promotional campaigns, to interact effectively with customers at the appropriate touchpoints in their journey and to improve the relationships with the customer (Vázquez, Muñoz-García, Campanella, Poch, Fisas, Bel & Andreu, 2014).

In order for companies to compete with competitors and to create and provide customers with relevant content to create positive customer experiences, it is necessary for companies to arrange all the hints people detect in the buying process (Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros & Schlesinger, 2009). Insight in customer behavior is therefore necessary. According to Puccinelli, Goodstein, Grewal, Price, Raghubir and Stewart (2009) a few areas play a role when it comes to consumer motivation to engage with a certain product or company, such as: consumer's goals, desires and needs, information processing, involvement, attitudes, mood and emotions and environment.

Dunn and Davis (2004) categorize all the touchpoints into three categories. Firstly, they address the pre-purchase experience touchpoint which is of great importance, regardless of whether the customer will purchase the products. This touchpoint includes contactpoints such as word-of-mouth, internet and advertising. Secondly, the purchase experience touchpoint makes customers not just consider a brand or product, but makes them purchase the product in question. This touchpoint includes customer center contact and physical stores or showrooms. Finally, Dunn and Davis (2004) address the post-purchase experience touchpoint which will influence customers after their purchase. Examples of this touchpoint include the product itself, warranties, customer services and customer satisfaction surveys. Mårtensson (2008) categorizes the touchpoints into controllable, influenceable and uncontrollable touchpoints. This study will focus solely on the controllable and influenceable touchpoints since these touchpoints are focusing on situations which can be controlled by the company and touchpoints which a company can influence but not completely control.

Based on prior research into the customer journey, a couple of touchpoints are considered as the most critical or the most important moments for a company to come in contact with their customers and provide them with effective information, namely the orientation touchpoint, the first contact with the car dealer, the purchase phase and the after-sales phase. This research will focus on the orientation touchpoint and the moment the customer visits the showroom of the car dealer.

### **Buyer personas**

Not every customer journey is the same because of personal gain differences between customers (Texeira, et al., 2012). Developing buyer personas can help an organization to get insight in different types of customers, their wants and needs, personal preferences and characteristics, their behavior and customer journeys (Scott, 2007). Personas are defined as *“an archetype of a fictional user representing a specific group of typical users”* (Scott, 2007). Personas are used to represent a group of target users that share common characteristics, needs and goals (Maness, et al., 2008). A persona is created based on prior research and analyses of current customers and prospects to create certain profiles. According to Scott (2007) a buyer persona represents an individual with specific features and characteristics. Next

to personal characteristics, the persona also contains information about the persona's knowledge, skills and abilities and their personal goals, motives and concerns. A persona is mostly developed to describe the usage pattern a particular type of customer would have (Scott, 2007). Berkey (2012) expands on this explanation by stating that when a persona is developed effectively, it can provide an organization insight into its customers' buying process, experiences and their perceived barriers to purchase.

Next to the attitudinal traits, such as motivation, beliefs and desires, personas should also consist of behavioral traits according to Guo, Shamdasani and Randall (2014). However, Guo et al (2014) state that because of prior research concerning buyer personas we are very familiar with persona's personality and background, we still miss details about what a persona would do and what kinds of information they would look for online. Hasan, Mahfuz, Ahamed and Hossain (2012) therefore introduce the creation of the digital persona which represents the scale of one's requirements of an intelligent environment or in a digital territory. A digital persona is based on one's wishes on how they want to configure and manage the smart environment. The digital persona is therefore an important part of the buyer persona in the current digital world.

Prior research into consumer behavior has identified internal and external factors as influencers of the online behavior of buyer personas (Baik, Lee, Kim & Choi, 2016). Internal factors include personality traits, motivation, attitude and belief and external traits can include culture, locality and reference group (Sandhusen, 2000). Therefore, consumer behavior can be categorized based on specific consumer profiles concerning the personality traits, lifestyle and social contexts of the personas (Saeed, Hwang & Yi, 2003).

The use of personas has great benefits for organizations. One of the benefits of persona use concerns the positively affected guidance of product-related efforts such as marketing campaigns (Cooper & Reimann, 2002) and the enhancement of identification with users (Ma & LeRouge, 2007).

The development of a persona starts with an analysis of current customers, or other targeted people, to get insight in different types of customers to generalize this data to specific persona profiles (Maness, et al., 2008). Secondly, the personas will be provided with demographic features such as a name, profile picture, age, family situation and job function. These details make the persona seem like a real person and a realistic customer (Maness, et al., 2008). An important factor of the personas concerns the information goal they are seeking to fulfill according to Maness, et al. (2008). Jahn and Kunz (2012) refer to the specific needs of the persona in question as self-orientation. It is stated that the most important motivators for social interaction, as a result of content via corporate media are entertainment, informativeness and irritation (Luo, 2002). Persona's user goal is the most important factor in creating effective content according to Richards (2014). Richards notes the following: "if you keep your users' primary goal in mind and get them to what they need as quickly as possible, you are respecting their time and attention, which means they are more likely to recommend you and/or come back". Building a relationship through corporate content revolves in Richards' vision around inspiring trust between the company and the customer.

## 2.2 | Content strategies

An important factor in creating valuable and relevant content for customers is to create experience-based content. This is because the customer experience has a large influence on customer's perception of value and service quality of the company, which can indirectly influence their customer loyalty (Petere, Minocha & Roberts, 2006). Rose and Pulizzi (2011) also state that content marketing is a strategy focused on the creation of valuable experiences. This experience will be developed whenever a customer interacts with an organization, its products, channels and its activities (Carbone & Heackel, 1994).

The creation of customer-based content within messages is central in marketing (Zerbini, Golfetto & Gibbert, 2007). Kissane (2012) describes content as *“anything that conveys meaningful information to humans”*. Holliman & Rowley (2016) expand to this definition by stating that content is *“the creation and distribution of education and/or compelling content in multiple formats, to attract and/or retain customers”*. The term digital content is defined by Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) as *“involving creating, distributing and sharing relevant, compelling and timely content to engage customers at the appropriate point in their buying consideration process, such that it encourages them to convert to a business building outcome.”*

To create valuable and relevant information on a consistent basis, content strategies are used. The central requirement of good content is according to Kissane (2012) creating content which is appropriate in its way of delivery, its style, structure and most of all in its substance. The effectiveness of content is determined by understanding the message and getting the desired reaction from the receiver (Popescu, 2002). Popescu states that a content strategy is used to determine what these things mean for a company and how to get there from where the company is right now. Next to these requirements, Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) state that personalizing content to the customer's needs and interests increases the effectiveness of the message. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model the more personal and relevant a message is, the more likely that message will be noticed, thus increasing its effectiveness (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). The most important key feature of high quality content is creating value for customers rather than promoting the company, its products and services. Good content focuses on helping customers solve their problem and offering advice on unclear and unsure issues amongst customers (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). Prior research suggests that point-of-purchase information, or detailed information about the product itself, the usage and the advantages of the product, the attributes of the product or service aren't always clear to customers. This will cause customers to declutch themselves from the product and the brand to look for other options (Meise, Rudolph, Kenning & Phillips, 2014).

The goal of content of marketing messages is not to profit directly from the content, but to attract and retain customers indirectly (Pulizzi, 2012). This is also supported by Silverman (2012) who states that the purpose of content marketing is to draw leads and supplement brand credibility. Less sales oriented content is therefore much more valued by customers.

According to Pulizzi (2012) attraction-oriented messages are rated higher when the brand or

the company name is removed from the story. The removal of the sales pitches creates higher trust and credibility. Besides, customers value content only when they perceive value in the message. This is achieved when the content of the message matches the customer's expectations at the same time of contact between both. Creating valuable and meaningful content and brand "outings" can strengthen the consumer-brand relationship (Ahuja & Medury, 2010). The greater the expected benefits and utility from an ongoing relationship between customer and brand, the more likely customers will commit to the brand and the company.

To attract and retain customer's attention and interest, a message should be actively engaging customers in order to convert them from a receiver to a "transmitter" (Woerndl, Papagiannidis, Boulakis & Li, 2008). Therefore, the following aspects need to be fulfilled by a marketing message:

- Imagination: is the message imaginative?
- Fun and intrigue: does the message offer fun and intrigue to the customer?
- Ease of use: is the message easy to use and does it have high visibility?
- Engaging: does the message engage both the transmitter and receiver?

It is important to offer solutions and experiences in different moments of relations between the customer and the products and services of the organization. This can be achieved by creating an experience with the purchase, which is valued by the customer (de Carvalho & Campomar, 2014). According to the Carvalho and Campomar (2014) the focus needs to be on the experience of a customer with the purchase process itself, with the brand and the product rather than focusing on what ways a customer is buying a product.

Ashley and Tuten (2015) differentiate the content strategies into high and low involvement with messages, products and brands, using the Elaboration Likelihood Model. They state that functional messages are most positively valued in high-involvement situations. When customers are in the orientation phase, primarily emotional messages are used to evoke attention, interest, empathy and an emotional connection with the product and/or brand.

The most important aspect of the creation of effective content is to ensure that key information such as pricing, product information, promotions, marketing messages and store profiles, are in sync across all the available channels (Belk, 2015).

In the case of marketing messages within the automotive industry, different strategies can be used, matching different phases in the buyer journey and different information needs of customers. As for example, the introduction of changed products or new products to the market are positively affected by informative message that provide details regarding product attributes and product functions (Talke & O'Connor, 2011). At the same time Franke, Huhmann and Motherbaugh (2004) demonstrate in their research that informative messages create more positive effects for search processes. This can occur in the early stages of innovation diffusion within products or when customers are entering the orientation phase. Within the informative message, the content of a message that demonstrates the usability of a

new or enhanced product should be effective. Describing the usability of a new product in an effective way can predict adoption of the concerning product according to Moore and Benbasat (1991).

To make the introduction of a new product more appealing, a comparison between its features and the offers of competitive products can be made to make an overview of the advantages of the new or improved product (Talke & O'Connor, 2011).

The above-mentioned literature shows that a customer has different phases in its customer journey wherein they interact with the company. These so-called touchpoints are important for the company in that these represent the points in customer's buyer journey where the organization can play an influence on the perception, attitude and purchase intentions of the customer towards the organization and its products. In order to achieve a positive influence on customer's attitudes and behavior, it is important for companies to get a clear view of their targeted customers. This is achieved by mapping customer's demographic characteristics, interests, needs, lifestyle and behaviors and combine them to create persona profiles. These persona profiles represent individuals with specific features and characteristics which describe the usage and behavior pattern of a particular type of customer within the organization's target group.

A positive influence on customer's attitude and behavior can be established by creating and integrating effective content within the organization's communication channels. This content can be personalized based on the persona profiles to create more valuable and relevant content for customers. Personalized content can create higher customer experience which has a big influence on customer's perception of value and quality. Therefore, customer-based content is central in marketing and also in this research.

## 2.3 | Hypotheses

Based on above mentioned literature this research' aim is to examine if personalized content, by creating content based on buyer personas, has a positive effect on customer's attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation of the content and indirectly of the product and the company. With the help of the following hypotheses, which will be tested with the use of a 4x4 experimental design, the research question will be answered:

- H1:** Congruence between content and persona positively influences the attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation towards the stock-page, whereas incongruence between content and persona negatively influences the attitude (a), customer experience (b), purchase intentions (c) and appreciation (d) towards the stock-page.
- H2:** Congruence between content and persona positively influences the attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation towards the detail-page, whereas incongruence between content and persona negatively influences the attitude (a), customer experience (b), purchase intentions (c) and appreciation (d) towards the detail-page.



**H3:** Congruence between content and persona positively influences the attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation towards the showroom, whereas incongruence between content and persona negatively influences the attitude (**a**), customer experience (**b**), purchase intentions (**c**) and appreciation (**d**) towards the showroom.

The research model in figure 2.3.1 visualizes what relations this researchs aims to reveal.

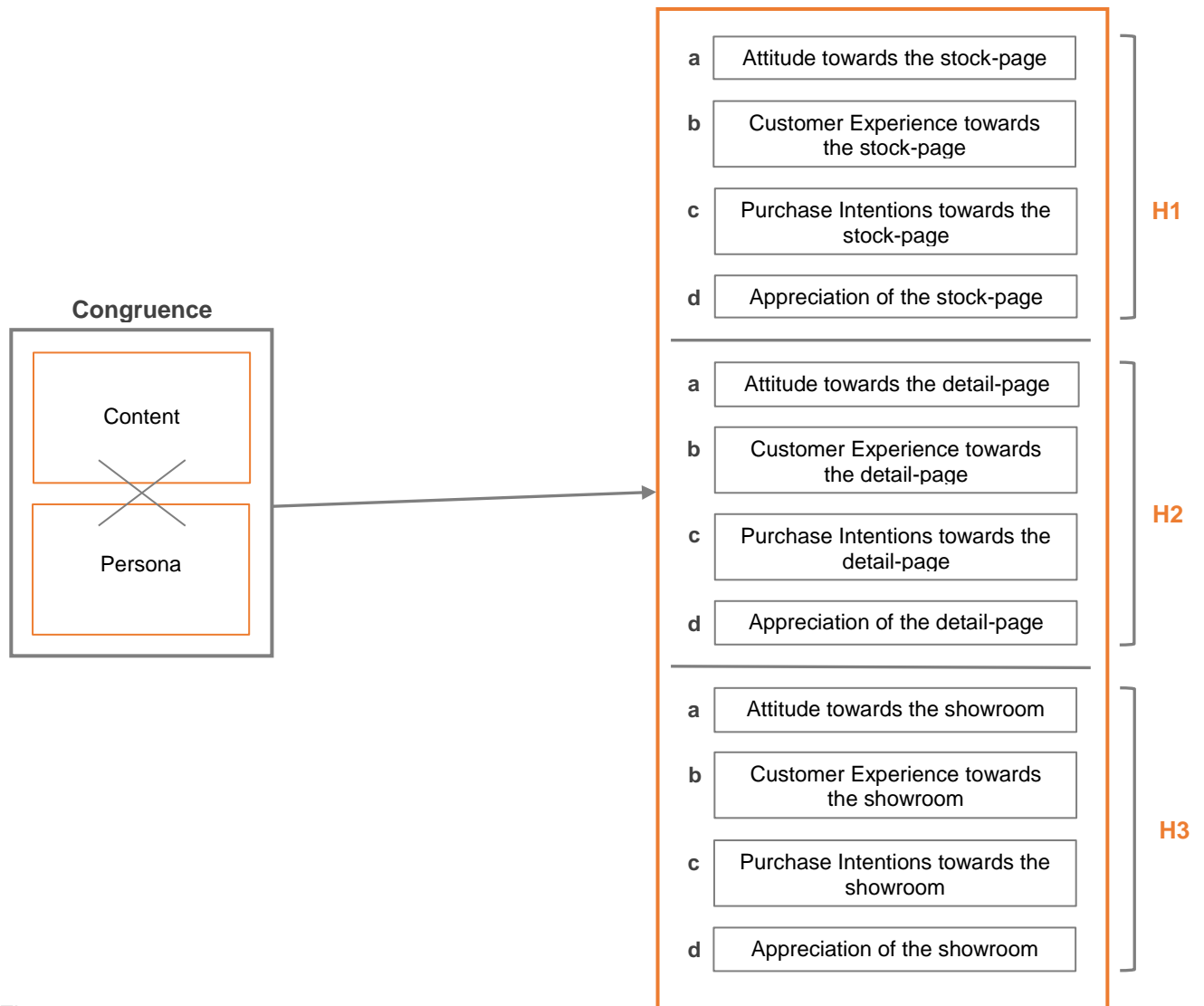


Figure 2.3.1  
Research model



### 3 | STUDY 1

#### 3.1 | Research method study 1

In order to complete study 2, study 1 had to be executed. The goal of study 1 was to obtain personal information of the participants concerning their demographic characteristics, their preferences, interests and demands concerning cars and car dealers and how they search for a new car.

Study 1 was conducted in the form of an online survey which was spread via Facebook, e-mail and through social contacts of the researcher. A total of 105 participants completed the survey. The survey started with an explanation of the goal of the survey. The survey continued with questions regarding participant's demographic features, such as age, gender, education, current job, family situation and car features, such as being in the possession of a drivers license and a car. The following pages of the survey concerned questions regarding participant's preferences and expectations of car features, characteristics of car dealers, information subjects concerning cars and information sources to distract car-based information from. The final part of the survey asked the participant to estimate how many weeks and search-actions they would need when they were looking to purchase a car and if they would rather retrieve car-based information from a car dealer or online. With all the data the participants were divided into six age categories, as shown in table 3.2.1.

Based on personal demographics, preferences and expectations concerning the possession and purchase of a car, which resulted out of study 1, out of the six personas four main buyer personas were concluded and created, as can be seen in section 3.3. These personas served as input and a handhold for study 2. Based on the results of study 1, study 2 will link certain content strategies to a persona in a certain phase of their buyer journey. This implies the value of this research by personalizing content based on created buyer personas. Prior research did evaluate the sole effects of the impact of content and personas on customers, but hardly paid closer attention to the combined effect of the two variables on customer's perception, evaluation and experiences before.

#### 3.2 | Results study 1

Table 3.2.1

*Age categories segregated per demographic features.*

Age		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Gender	Male	8	5	5	15	7	2
	Female	13	6	20	14	1	6
Family situation	Single	8	4	0	6	2	1
	Cohabiting	13	7	25	23	6	7
Job function	Direction	0	1	5	2	0	0
	Top management	0	0	1	0	0	0
	Line management	0	1	6	4	2	0
	Executive/professional employee	6	6	11	15	4	0

	Unemployed	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Student	11	2	1	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	1	8	2	8
In possession of a car	Yes	9	9	25	29	8	8
	No	12	2	0	0	0	0
Car bought before	Yes	5	9	25	28	8	7
	No	16	2	0	1	0	1
Kids younger than 18 years old	Yes	0	1	24	16	0	0
	No	21	10	1	13	8	8
<b>Total</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>

Table 3.2.1 shows the demographic features per age category included in this study. Table 3.2.2 (shielded) shows a matrix based on the persona template in figure 3.2.1 (shielded) with more detailed information per age category concerning participant's most common preferences and expectations when it comes to purchasing a car.

The aspects outlined in table 3.2.2 (shielded) concern the most common answer to the questions if the participants in the different age categories were currently in the possession of a car, if they had purchased a car before and if they had children who were younger than 18 years old. The most important aspect of the personas concerned their motivation to buy a car, their preferences and needs concerning aspects of a car and car dealers, their information subjects of interest concerning the automotive industry, and the information sources they would use when planning to purchase a car.

The complete results of study 1 are outlined in appendix B (shielded).

Based on the most common demographic features for each age category in table 3.2.1, the most common preferences and expectations concerning the orientation for and purchase of a car outlined in table 3.2.2 (shielded), and the persona template in figure 3.2.1 (shielded) a persona was formed and created for all six age categories within study 1.

The six personas were provided with a name and personal characteristics which made the personas more realistic as possible customers. This resulted into six personas (shielded).

### 3.3 | Conclusion study 1

Based on foregoing results of the comparison between the six personas and the different aspects and preferences concerning the purchase of a car, car dealers and car-concerned information, the personas were enriched with specific information, preferences and personalized interests. With the results of study 1 the final personas will be created and completed based on the persona template shown in figure 3.2.1 (shielded).

Based on similarities in the family situation, preferred car and car dealer characteristics, information sources and goals to purchase a car, the six personas resulted out of study 1 are combined into four main personas which will be implemented in study 2. Therefore, the personas Evelien and Alex are combined to one profile, as are Hans and Sandra. Next to their similarities in preferences, interests and family situation, these personas are also combined because of their age categories wherein the personas Evelien and Alex will experience quite similar life changes, as well as Hans and Sandra. The life changes which will take place in the age categories of Cindy and Robert will be bigger and have more impact on their lifestyle, interests and needs and therefore differ more from each other. These age categories will therefore not be mergeable.

Based on this information study 2 will focus on the following four age categories: 18-24, 25-34, 35-60 and 60+ years old. With these four age categories the personas were formed (shielded).

The four persona profiles are visualized according to the template of figure 3.2.1 (shielded) and shown in Appendix C (shielded). The personas were matched to a specific car to represent the different car segments within the assortment which Huisjes-Kokkeler Autogroep has to offer. The cars were chosen based on the profiles of the personas in which the car was matched to the persona's lifestyle, interests and their preferences and needs concerning the car they are looking for.

The persona Cindy was matched to a SEAT Mii because this concerns a small car, and has therefore a high usability in a city environment in which the student Cindy lives. Besides, the costs of the car are relatively low and affordable for a student. The SEAT Mii has a modern and fashionable appearance which matches Cindy's personal interests and lifestyle.

The second persona, Robert, was matched with the Audi A1 which represents a sportive, young but classy looking car for private and business use. This matches Robert's wish to appear as a professional man. The looks of the Audi A1 also matches Robert's age in that the car has a youthful and sportive appearance.

Evelien, the third persona, who is aged in the category 35-60 and is a board member within an

insurance company, is matched to a Volkswagen Tiguan. This car represents her business appearance and job function and is at the same time practical for private use. In the first place Evelien was looking for an appropriate car matching her job function with a positive additional tax, comfort and functions. The Volkswagen Tiguan has a business appearance and a favorable additional tax since she will lease her car via her employer.

Finally, Sandra who has just retired from her job was matched to a Skoda Fabia. Since Sandra is looking for a car which is practical, safe and has comfort for the trips she is planning to make, she is matched with a car which offers her a lot of space, comfort and safety. Therefore, this car matches her personal needs, interests and her new lifestyle as a retired woman perfectly.

## 4 | STUDY 2

### 4.1 | Experimental design

Study 2 consisted of a 4 (content: *Cindy car* vs. *Robert car* vs. *Evelien car* vs. *Sandra car*) x 4 (preferred persona: *Cindy/Job* vs. *Lucile/Robert* vs. *Evelien/Alex* vs. *Sandra/Hans*) experimental design. The study has been executed in the form of an online survey developed with Qualtrics Survey Software. The independent variables in this study concerned content and the preferred persona. The construct preferred persona represented the persona chosen by the participant which matched the participant's lifestyle, needs and interests the most. Content concerned the personalized content condition which was developed based on the buyer personas of study 1. The dependent variables consisted of the following constructs: attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation of the content at three different touch points.

The goal of study 2 was to combine content strategies, which could be implemented on a car's detail webpage or for example in a showroom, to buyer's phases in their customer journey and their personal preferences, demands, interests and lifestyle. With this experiment lifestyles and car-specific aspects were matched to a particular persona type, to see if there is a match between offered content and a positive evaluation of the content and the associated product, in this case a car, by the customer at different touchpoints. Study 2 will thereby focus on three critical touchpoints wherein a customer comes in contact with a car dealer: the orientation phase divided into a stock webpage and detail webpage and a showroom visit representing the purchase phase.

### 4.2 | Participants (shielded)

The target sample included men and women of 18 years and older. The research focused at making a distinction between current customers and no customers of Huisjes-Kokkeler. A total of 780 participants completed the survey. As shown in table 4.2.1 the sample group consisted of 603 males (77.3%) and 177 females (22.7%) with an average age of 52.2 ( $SD = 14.7$ ) with a minimal age of 19 years and a maximal age of 86 years.

Only 28.3% of all the participants have children younger than 18 years old. With a total of 77.6% the majority of the participants are currently a customer of Huisjes-Kokkeler. Also, the majority of the participants (59.5%) completed the survey via the desktop version of the survey.

The average age within the four conditions was quite similar (*Cindy car* ( $M = 50.9$ ,  $SD = 15.2$ ), *Robert car* ( $M = 51.3$ ,  $SD = 14.4$ ), *Evelien car* ( $M = 54.6$ ,  $SD = 14.2$ ) and *Sandra car* ( $M = 51.9$ ,  $SD = 14.7$ )), this also applies to the sample sizes of the four conditions.

The participants were randomly assigned to one of the four content conditions. After having examined the content within the survey the participants had to match themselves to one of the four prescribed personas, based on the best match between the prescribed persona and the participant's lifestyle, interests and needs. Looking at the results in table 4.2.1 the average age of the preferred personas hardly differs from each other (*Cindy* ( $M = 43.8$ ,  $SD = 15.0$ ), *Robert* ( $M = 48.5$ ,  $SD = 13.3$ ), *Evelien* ( $M = 48.9$ ,  $SD = 12.4$ ) and *Sandra* ( $M = 57.9$ ,  $SD = 12.8$ )). This means that there were no big similarities in participant's age, lifestyle interests and needs and their choice of persona. More detailed

results of the demographic characteristics per persona are listed in a table, shown in Appendix G (shielded).

Table 4.2.1

*Demographic results study 2*

Persona		Evelien car:				Total
		Cindy car: <i>Seat Mii</i>	Robert car: <i>Audi A1</i>	<i>Volkswagen Tiguan</i>	Sandra car: <i>Skoda Fabia</i>	
Cindy/ Job	Gender	22 ♂ 12.2%	27 ♂ 14.9%	30 ♂ 16.6%	28 ♂ 15.5%	107 ♂ 59.1%
		13 ♀ 7.2%	7 ♀ 3.9%	8 ♀ 4.4%	46 ♀ 25.4%	74 ♀ 40.9%
	Age	<i>M</i> = 43.1	<i>M</i> = 43.9	<i>M</i> = 44.2	<i>M</i> = 43.9	<i>M</i> = 43.8
		<i>SD</i> = 15.8	<i>SD</i> = 14.9	<i>SD</i> = 15.2	<i>SD</i> = 14.9	<i>SD</i> = 15.0
	N	35	34	38	74	181
Robert/ Lucile	Gender	27 ♂ 21.6%	23 ♂ 18.4%	20 ♂ 16.0%	26 ♂ 20.8%	96 ♂ 76.8%
		7 ♀ 5.6%	10 ♀ 8.0%	12 ♀ 9.6%	0 ♀ 0.0%	29 ♀ 23.2%
	Age	<i>M</i> = 48.1	<i>M</i> = 46.1	<i>M</i> = 50.3	<i>M</i> = 49.6	<i>M</i> = 48.5
		<i>SD</i> = 14.3	<i>SD</i> = 14.4	<i>SD</i> = 10.7	<i>SD</i> = 13.9	<i>SD</i> = 13.3
	N	34	33	32	26	125
Evelien/ Alex	Gender	14 ♂ 18.2%	12 ♂ 15.6%	9 ♂ 11.7%	28 ♂ 36.4%	63 ♂ 81.8%
		1 ♀ 1.3%	5 ♀ 6.5%	5 ♀ 6.5%	3 ♀ 3.9%	14 ♀ 18.2%
	Age	<i>M</i> = 45.3	<i>M</i> = 47.2	<i>M</i> = 48.9	<i>M</i> = 51.5	<i>M</i> = 48.9
		<i>SD</i> = 12.5	<i>SD</i> = 10.7	<i>SD</i> = 16.4	<i>SD</i> = 11.2	<i>SD</i> = 12.4
	N	15	17	14	31	77
Sandra/ Hans	Gender	82 ♂ 20.7%	81 ♂ 20.4%	102 ♂ 25.7%	72 ♂ 18.1%	337 ♂ 84.9%
		23 ♀ 5.8%	17 ♀ 4.3%	20 ♀ 5.0%	0 ♀ 0.0%	60 ♀ 15.1%
	Age	<i>M</i> = 55.3	<i>M</i> = 56.3	<i>M</i> = 59.7	<i>M</i> = 61.0	<i>M</i> = 57.9
		<i>SD</i> = 14.2	<i>SD</i> = 13.0	<i>SD</i> = 12.0	<i>SD</i> = 10.6	<i>SD</i> = 12.8
	N	105	98	122	72	397
Total	Gender	145 ♂ 18.6%	143 ♂ 18.3%	161 ♂ 20.6%	154 ♂ 19.7%	603 ♂ 77.3%
		44 ♀ 5.6%	39 ♀ 5.0%	45 ♀ 5.8%	49 ♀ 6.3%	177 ♀ 22.7%
	Age	<i>M</i> = 50.9	<i>M</i> = 51.3	<i>M</i> = 54.6	<i>M</i> = 51.9	<i>M</i> = 52.2
		<i>SD</i> = 15.2	<i>SD</i> = 14.4	<i>SD</i> = 14.2	<i>SD</i> = 14.7	<i>SD</i> = 14.7
	N	189	182	206	203	780

#### 4.3 | Procedure

The goal of the survey was to take the customers into a customer journey wherein they come in contact with three touchpoints (orientation phase on a stock webpage, orientation on a detail webpage and the buying phase in the showroom). Within these touchpoints the survey offered content.

Participants of the research were approached via Facebook or e-mail. Non-customers mostly

concerned relations of the researcher who were approached via a Facebook message in which the researcher explained the research and asked for their participation in the research. When they agreed to participate, the researcher shortly explained the goal of the survey and sent them the link to the survey. Customers of Huiskes-Kokkeler were approached via a direct e-mail. In this e-mail the research and the goal of the survey were explained and customers were kindly asked to participate in the survey by clicking on the button which sent them to the online survey.

The survey started with questions concerning demographic characteristics of the participants, such as their gender, age, if they had children younger than 18 years, if they were a customer of Huiskes-Kokkeler and through what device the survey was filled in, followed by an instructive text which stated that participants had to read the introductory text on every page. These introductory texts told the participants to imagine themselves in the prescribed situation. Next, the participants had to take a close look at the images in the three different scenarios, without taking their own personal preferences into consideration. An image of the manipulated stock-page was shown below the introductory text. After observing the image, participants needed to answer a couple of statements based on a 5-point Likert scale from “I totally agree” to “I totally disagree”. The following page showed a different introductory text, explaining the scenario the participants needed to imagine themselves in when viewing the image of the detail-page. Also this image was followed by statements. After reviewing the detail-page, the showroom scenario was shown and followed by statements.

The final page of the survey showed one of the main aspects of this research. On the final page of the survey the four buyer personas resulted out of study 1 were prescribed. These personas represented four customer types who were looking to purchase a car with specific features which matches their lifestyle, interests and preferences. Participants were asked to reflect on themselves, their lifestyle and interests in order to choose one of the four prescribed personas which matched the most to the participants when they would search for a new car. Their choice of persona represented how they would reflect on, look at and interpret things concerning cars and product-based content. Based on participant’s choice of persona this research sought to find a match between their preferred persona and their evaluation and appreciation of one of the four content conditions they were exposed to. Therefore, it was predicted that the choice of persona was in line with a high appreciation and evaluation of the content condition matching the buyer persona which was chosen by the participant, and a low appreciation and evaluation of the content which didn’t match this persona profile.

When the participants had chosen a matching persona they were thanked for their participation by the researcher. This page also contained an e-mail address of the researcher for participants who had questions or comments regarding the research.

Within the survey the participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. This was automatically arranged via Qualtrics. For an example of one of the four survey conditions, see Appendix E (shielded).

### **Manipulations**

Based on the results of study 1 four personas were created, namely: Cindy, a young woman who is finishing her study and looking for her first second-hand car; Robert, a young professional who is looking

for his first brand new car to match his wish to appear as a professional; Evelien a business woman with a family who is looking for a new beneficial business car; and finally Sandra, a retired woman who wants a car which is suitable for her new lifestyle of making outdoor trips. The four personas were enriched with personal features concerning their buying purposes, interests, preferences and lifestyles. Based on these personal characteristics, the four personas were matched to a specific car brand and model on which the content within the three scenarios (stock-page, detail-page and showroom) was based and manipulated, as shown in table 4.3.1.

Every condition contained three manipulated pages: a stock webpage, a detail webpage and a showroom. The stock-pages were manipulated based on car features the persona will be looking for, such as comfort and space, energylabel or cost savings. The detail-pages were enriched with images and content to put the emphasis on specific car features and characteristics which matched the lifestyle and preferences of the persona. For example, the youngest persona Cindy is looking to purchase her first car which will be practical in the city. Therefore, Cindy is matched to a SEAT Mii occasion. The detail-page for the SEAT Mii puts the emphasis on the fashionable appearance and practical size of the car for use in a city environment. The images which enriched the SEAT Mii detail-page showed only young people in combination with the car, in a city environment. The showroom scenario belonging to the SEAT Mii condition was enriched with features which matched the preferences and wishes of the persona concerning a car dealer.

The three youngest personas were matched with a showroom with technical innovations they are familiar with to support their decision in a modern way. The eldest persona was matched with a showroom where the focus lies more on the sphere in the showroom, with the addition of a colour to the walls to create an amiable and approachable appearance. To see all the manipulations of the three scenarios per persona, see Appendix D (shielded).

Table 4.3.1

*Manipulations of the three content scenarios, stock-page, detail-page and showroom, per persona.*

Persona	Car	Stock-page	Detail-page	Showroom
Cindy/ Job	Cindy car: <i>Seat Mii</i>	Button: “most sold car amongst starting drivers”	Addition of sphere images and content based on the youthfulness and practical use of the car in the city.	Addition of technical innovations such as a tv screen and ipads to serve the customer with information about the cars.
Robert/ Lucile	Robert car: <i>Audi A1</i>	Buttons: “most appreciated car by business people in the Netherlands” and “most economical car in its class”	Addition of sphere images and a video, and content based on the business look and class of the car.	Addition of technical innovations with a business appearance: a tv screen with a business appropriate car, which is still youthful and sportive.



Evelien/ Alex	Evelien car: <i>Volkswagen Tiguan</i>	Buttons: “take now advantage of 14% addition” and energy labels of the car.	Content concerning the benefits of the car for business use and the appearance and comfort of the car.	A business looking showroom with the addition of a tv screen to compare all the benefits of certain cars.
Sandra/ Hans	Sandra car: <i>Skoda Fabia</i>	Buttons: “safest car of 2015” and “most spacious car in its class”	Addition of sphere images and content concerning an active lifestyle wherefor the car is suited perfectly with its space, safety and comfort.	A showroom with sphere, with little technical innovation but with an inviting appearance for smalltalk and personal approaching of the customer.

#### 4.4 | Measures

In study 2 four constructs were measured with the use of manipulations of the content and aligning statements which needed to be answered by the participants. All items measuring the constructs attitude, customer experience and purchase intentions were answered on a 5-point Likert scale. The construct appreciation was indicated with a grade from 1 to 10. The following constructs were measured in the following way, whereby the Cronbach's Alpha of the constructs are shown in table 4.4.1:

##### Attitude

This was tested through a total of 12 items, divided over the three pages the experiment consisted: a stock-page of a car dealer's website, a detail-page and a car dealer's showroom. Attitude on the stock-page was measured through for example: *“The content on this stock-page has little to no effect on my emotions concerning this car.”* Attitude on the detail-page was measured through items such as *“This content makes the concerning company and product uninteresting to me”*. And finally, the attitude towards the showroom was measured with for example *“I have the feeling that in just one glance I get a lot of information about the cars in the showroom”*.

##### Customer experience

Customer experience concerned a total of 12 items divided over the three scenarios. The construct customer experience towards the stock-page was measured through items like *“The content on this page fully satisfies my need for information as a customer”*.

In the detail-page scenario, customer experience was measured through for example *“This detail-page strenghtens my customer experience with this company”*. Finally, in the showroom scenario, customer experience was measured with items as *“The appearance of the showroom has a positive effect on my experience of the company”*.

### Purchase intentions

Purchase intentions was tested through a total of 5 items. On the stock-page the two items concerned for example *“This page encourages me to look closer to the product”*. Purchase intentions towards the detail-page was measured with one item: *“The content on this detail-page encourages me to contact this dealer (in every way possible)”*. Finally, one of the two items measured purchase intentions towards the showroom reads *“I would recommend this company to others”*.

### Appreciation

Appreciation was tested in the three scenarios with the same item: *“How do you appreciate this page on a scale from 1 to 10?”*. Appreciation is the only construct which is not measured on a 5-point Likert scale but with grades from 1 to 10.

Table 4.4.1 shows the reliability of the three constructs over the three scenarios with the Cronbach's Alpha and the amount of items the construct contained in the different scenarios and in total. As can be seen, the three constructs attitude, customer experience and purchase intentions all have a Cronbach's Alpha higher than .70. This is also the case for the same three constructs in the three different scenarios stock-page, detail-page and showroom. With a Cronbach's Alpha higher than .70 the constructs are reliable and useful for the research. The construct appreciation has a Cronbach's Alpha of .55 which is relatively low. Although the Cronbach's Alpha is relatively low, appreciation is perceived as a reliable construct because this construct was measured with 1 item in all three scenarios. All items per construct are displayed in Appendix E (shielded).

Table 4.4.1

*Cronbach's Alpha per construct in the three scenarios.*

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Attitude</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>.79</b>
Stock-page	3	.65
Detail-page	3	.76
Showroom	3	.77
<b>Customer Experience</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>.86</b>
Stock-page	4	.78
Detail-page	5	.83
Showroom	3	.86
<b>Purchase Intentions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>.72</b>
Stock-page	2	.69
Detail-page*	1	-
Showroom	2	.83

<b>Appreciation</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>.55</b>
Stock-page*	1	-
Detail-page*	1	-
Showroom*	1	-

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*\* No Cronbach's Alpha is possible because this construct was measured with just one item.*

## 5 | RESULTS STUDY 2

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with  $\alpha = .05$  was executed to examine the relation between the two independent variables *content* and *preferred persona* and their effects on the dependent variables *attitude*, *customer experience*, *purchase intentions* and *the* in three scenarios, namely: stock webpage of a car dealer, a detail webpage of a car and a showroom. In table 5.1 the results of the multivariate analysis of variance are shown.

Table 5.1

*Effects Multivariate Analysis of Variance with independent variables: content and persona.*

Effect		Value	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Error <i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial eta Squared
Content (Cindy car, Robert car, Evelien car, Sandra car)	Pillai's Trace	.837	23.697	36	2205	.000	.279
	Wilk's Lambda	.221	40.112	36	2166	.000	.395
	Hotelling's Trace	3.264	66.342	36	2195	.000	.521
	Roy's Largest Root	3.185	195.069	12	735	.000	.761
Preferred persona (Cindy/Job, Lucile/Robert, Evelien/Alex, Sandra/Hans)	Pillai's Trace	.054	1.122	36	2205	.284	.018
	Wilk's Lambda	.947	1.123	36	2166	.283	.018
	Hotelling's Trace	.055	1.123	36	2195	.283	.018
	Roy's Largest Root	.031	1.911	12	735	.030	.030
Content * Preferred persona	Pillai's Trace	.162	1.131	108	6669	.168	.018
	Wilk's Lambda	.848	1.132	108	5349	.168	.018
	Hotelling's Trace	.167	1.132	108	6581	.167	.018
	Roy's Largest Root	.051	3.124	12	741	.000	.048

The results show a significant difference between the four content conditions; Cindy car (SEAT Mii), Robert car (Audi A1), Evelien car (Volkswagen Tiguan) and finally Evelien car (Skoda Fabia), on the dependent variables attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation in the three scenarios; stock-page, detail-page and showroom,  $F(36, 2166) = .221$ ,  $p = <.001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .395$ . No significant effect was found of the preferred persona's, Cindy/Job, Lucile/Robert, Evelien/Alex, Sandra/Hans, on the dependent variables,  $F(36, 2166) = .947$ ,  $p = .283$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .018$ . Also no interactions were found between the content and the preferred persona on the dependent variables,  $F(108, 5349) = .848$ ,  $p = .168$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .018$ .

Because Roy's Largest Root shows a significant effect for the two independent variables, as compared to Wilk's Lambda, this research also took a detailed look into the different dependent variables and their individual effects. Therefore, a two-way univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA)

$\alpha = .05$  was executed with content and the preferred persona as the dependent variables, and the constructs attitude, customer experience and purchase intentions over the three scenarios: stock-page, detail-page and showroom as dependent variables. The results of the ANOVA analysis will be explained in the following sections.

Table 5.2  
*Multivariate Analysis of Variance – Test of between subjects*

Source	Dependent variable	df	Error df	F	p	Partial eta Squared
Content (Cindy car, Robert car, Evelien car, Sandra car)	Attitude on stock-page	3	744	2.408	.066	.010
	Customer experience on stock-page	3	744	6.194	.000	.024
	Purchase intentions on stock-page	3	744	1.168	.321	.005
	Appreciation on stock-page	3	744	1.203	.308	.005
	Attitude on detail-page	3	744	5.123	.002	.020
	Customer experience on detail-page	3	744	6.212	.000	.024
	Purchase intentions on detail-page	3	744	4.598	.003	.018
	Appreciation on detail-page	3	744	1.456	.225	.006
	Attitude in showroom	3	744	43.884	.000	.150
	Customer experience in showroom	3	744	54.492	.000	.180
	Purchase intentions in showroom	3	744	48.836	.000	.164
	Appreciation of the showroom	3	744	453.487	.000	.646
Preferred persona (Cindy/Job, Lucile/Robert, Evelien/Alex, Sandra/Hans)	Attitude on stock-page	3	744	1.416	.237	.006
	Customer experience on stock-page	3	744	.567	.637	.002
	Purchase intentions on stock-page	3	744	.738	.530	.003
	Appreciation of the stock-page	3	744	1.534	.204	.006
	Attitude on detail-page	3	744	1.898	.128	.008
	Customer experience on detail-page	3	744	2.877	.035	.011
	Purchase intentions on detail-page	3	744	1.491	.216	.006
	Appreciation of the detail-page	3	744	.617	.604	.002
	Attitude in showroom	3	744	2.717	.044	.011
	Customer experience in showroom	3	744	1.132	.335	.005
	Purchase intentions in showroom	3	744	3.704	.012	.015
	Appreciation of the showroom	3	744	1.206	.306	.005
Content * Preferred persona	Attitude on stock-page	9	744	1.032	.412	.012
	Customer experience on stock-page	9	744	.661	.745	.008
	Purchase intentions on stock-page	9	744	1.129	.340	.013
	Appreciation of the stock-page	9	744	1.077	.377	.013
	Attitude on detail-page	9	744	.742	.670	.009
	Customer experience on detail-page	9	744	.716	.695	.009
	Purchase intentions on detail-page	9	744	.654	.751	.008
	Appreciation of the detail-page	9	744	.783	.632	.009
	Attitude in showroom	9	744	.481	.888	.006
	Customer experience in showroom	9	744	.774	.641	.009
	Purchase intentions in showroom	9	744	.722	.689	.009
	Appreciation of the showroom	9	744	.526	.856	.006

## 5.1 | Attitude

### *Attitude towards the stock-page.*

Results show no significant main effect of the content on the attitude towards the stock-page of the scenarios,  $F(3, 764) = 1.848$ ,  $p = .137$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .007$ . Results on the effects of the preferred persona on the attitude towards the stock-page show also no significant effect,  $F(3, 764) = 1.284$ ,  $p = .279$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .005$ . There was no interaction effect found between the content and the preferred persona on the perceived attitude towards the stock-page,  $F(9, 764) = 1.008$ ,  $p = .432$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .012$ .

### *Attitude towards the detail-page.*

Results show a significant main effect of the content on the attitude towards the detail-page,  $F(3, 764) = 5.267$ ,  $p = .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .020$ . The perceived attitude in the detail-page scenarios is significant higher ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = .73$ ) than in the stock-page scenario ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = .71$ ) and the showroom scenario ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = .86$ ). There are no big differences in the attitude towards the detail-pages of the four content conditions. However, the detail-page of the Evelien car was evaluated as providing the most positive attitude ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = .65$ ). The Sandra car condition had the lowest attitude score ( $M = 3.49$ ,  $SD = .71$ ).

No significant main effect was found of the preferred persona on the attitude towards the detail-page,  $F(3, 764) = 2.193$ ,  $p = .088$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .009$ . There was also no interaction effect found between the content and the preferred persona on the perceived attitude towards the detail-pages,  $F(9, 764) = .739$ ,  $p = .673$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .009$ .

Table 5.1.1

*Attitude towards the detail-page - Variables measured with Likert-scale 1-5 (I totally disagree – I totally agree). The filled columns represent the predicted outcomes of the highest attitude ratings in the four conditions.*

	Cindy		Robert		Evelien		Sandra		Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Cindy car	3.56	.84	<b>3.66</b>	.65	3.33	.71	3.64	.80	3.60	.77
Robert car	3.58	.62	<b>3.69</b>	.76	3.29	.78	3.49	.78	3.52	.75
Evelien car	<b>3.91</b>	.62	3.70	.68	<b>3.76</b>	.65	3.73	.65	<b>3.76</b>	.65
Sandra car	<b>3.62</b>	.73	3.38	.69	3.24	.76	<b>3.51</b>	.71	3.49	.71

### *Attitude towards the showroom.*

A significant main effect was found of the content on the attitude towards the showroom scenario,  $F(3, 745) = 43.897$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .150$ . Looking at the four content conditions of the showroom, the participants rated the attitude in the different showrooms significant different. The showroom of the Robert car was rated with the highest attitude ( $M = 3.70$ ,  $SD = .77$ ), followed by the showroom of the Evelien car ( $M = 3.64$ ,  $SD = .80$ ) and the Cindy car ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = .78$ ). The showroom of the Sandra car condition scored significantly lower on the construct attitude than the other three conditions did ( $M = 2.76$ ,  $SD = .75$ ).

Results showed also a significant main effect of the preferred persona on the attitude towards the showroom,  $F(3, 745) = 2.773$ ,  $p = .041$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .011$ . Within the scenario of the Evelien car the preferred persona Cindy rated the attitude in the showroom scenario significantly higher ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = .84$ ) than the other personas did (Robert ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = .83$ ), Evelien ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = .98$ ) and Sandra ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = .76$ )). This is in contrast to the predictions that the persona Evelien would rate the attitude on the detail-page of the Evelien car higher than the other personas would. The other conditions show no big differences between the evaluated attitude toward the detail-pages by the preferred personas, as can be seen in table 5.1.2. Also in the other three conditions applies that the outcomes of the research did not match the predicted outcomes of the preferred persona with a certain content.

No interaction effect was found between the content and the preferred persona on the attitude towards the showroom,  $F(9, 745) = .499$ ,  $p = .876$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .006$ .

Table 5.1.2

*Attitude towards the showroom - Variables measured with Likert-scale 1-5 (I totally disagree – I totally agree). The filled columns represent the predicted outcomes of the highest attitude ratings in the four conditions.*

	Cindy		Robert		Evelien		Sandra		Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Cindy car	3.42	.71	3.40	.79	3.50	.73	<b>3.66</b>	.80	3.56	.78
Robert car	<b>3.73</b>	.76	3.70	.81	3.45	1.03	<b>3.73</b>	.70	<b>3.70</b>	.77
Evelien car	<b>3.77</b>	.84	3.48	.83	3.36	.98	3.67	.76	3.64	.80
Sandra car	<b>2.81</b>	.73	2.64	.67	2.59	.78	<b>2.81</b>	.79	2.76	.75

## 5.2 | Customer Experience

*Customer experience towards the stock-page.* Results on the customer experience towards the stock-page show a significant main effect of the content on the customer experience towards the corresponding stock-page,  $F(3, 764) = 4.96$ ,  $p = .002$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .019$ . However, no significant effect was found of the preferred persona on the customer experience towards the stock-page,  $F(3, 764) = .584$ ,  $p = .625$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ . There was also no interaction effect found between the content and the preferred persona on the customer experience towards the stock-page scenarios  $F(9, 764) = .606$ ,  $p = .792$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .007$ .

As shown in table 5.2.1 the content conditions of the Cindy car, Robert car and Sandra car were evaluated very similar. Looking at the totals per condition in table 5.2.1, the two conditions that were rated as having the most positive customer experience towards the stock-page are the Evelien car condition ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = .78$ ) and the Robert car condition ( $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = .77$ ). These two conditions are followed by the Cindy car ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) and finally the Sandra car ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = .58$ ), which was perceived as having the least positive effect on the customer experience.

Table 5.2.1

*Customer experience towards the stock-page - Variables measured with Likert-scale 1-5 (I totally disagree – I totally agree). The filled columns represent the predicted outcomes of the highest attitude ratings in the four conditions.*

	Cindy		Robert		Evelien		Sandra		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Cindy car	3.31	.72	3.36	.60	3.32	.65	<b>3.39</b>	.65	3.36	.79
Robert car	<b>3.54</b>	.79	3.52	.68	3.41	.88	3.44	.78	3.47	.77
Evelien car	<b>3.72</b>	.79	3.32	.70	3.50	.55	3.50	.81	<b>3.51</b>	.78
Sandra car	3.24	.52	<b>3.26</b>	.50	3.10	.74	3.24	.61	3.22	.58

### *Customer experience towards the detail-page.*

A significant main effect was found of the content on the evaluated customer experience towards the detail-page,  $F(3, 764) = 6.55$ ,  $p = <.001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .025$ . The customer experience was evaluated as the highest on the detail-page of Evelien car ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = .61$ ), followed by the Robert car ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = .70$ ) and the Cindy car ( $M = 3.40$ ,  $SD = .72$ ). Customer experience was perceived as the lowest in the condition of the Sandra car ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = .72$ ).

Results showed also a significant main effect of the preferred persona on the customer experience towards the detail-page,  $F(3, 764) = 3.18$ ,  $p = .024$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .012$ . In three of the four content conditions (Robert car, Evelien car and Sandra car) the preferred persona Cindy evaluated the customer experience on these detail-pages higher than the other three preferred personas did. Strikingly, the Cindy car content condition was the only condition in which the preferred persona Cindy did not perceive the customer experience higher than the other three personas perceived it. Within this research, the content condition of the Cindy car was particularly based on the persona Cindy. Therefore, it was predicted that participants who matched themselves to the Cindy persona would evaluate the detail-page of the Cindy car with a higher customer experience than participants who would match themselves to one of the other three personas. However, the results are contradictory to the predicted outcomes, as can be seen in table 5.2.2.

No interaction effect was found between the content and the preferred persona on the evaluated customer experience towards the detail-page scenarios,  $F(9, 764) = .72$ ,  $p = .695$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .008$ .

Table 5.2.2

*Customer experience towards the detail-page - Variables measured with Likert-scale 1-5 (I totally disagree – I totally agree). The filled columns represent the predicted outcomes of the highest attitude ratings in the four conditions.*

	Cindy		Robert		Evelien		Sandra		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Cindy car	3.39	.69	3.41	.61	3.13	.64	<b>3.44</b>	.77	3.40	.72
Robert car	<b>3.61</b>	.52	3.59	.76	3.14	.74	3.53	.72	3.52	.70



Evelien car	<b>3.71</b>	.60	3.49	.56	3.61	.75	3.52	.61	<b>3.56</b>	.61
Sandra car	<b>3.43</b>	.69	3.19	.65	3.05	.83	3.28	.71	3.29	.72

#### Customer experience towards the showroom.

In the showroom scenario, results showed a significant main effect of the content on the evaluated customer experience,  $F(3, 764) = 52.15$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .170$ . The perceived customer experience of the participants towards the showroom scenario was strikingly lower in the Sandra car condition ( $M = 2.57$ ,  $SD = .86$ ) than in the other three conditions (Cindy car ( $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = .73$ ), Robert car ( $M = 3.49$ ,  $SD = .77$ ) and Evelien car ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = .77$ )).

No significant effect was found of the preferred persona on the customer experience towards the showroom scenario,  $F(3, 764) = 1.11$ ,  $p = .343$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ . Also, no interaction effect was found between the content and the preferred persona on the customer experience towards the showroom,  $F(9, 764) = .721$ ,  $p = .690$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .008$ .

Table 5.2.3

*Customer experience towards the showroom - Variables measured with Likert-scale 1-5 (I totally disagree – I totally agree). The filled columns represent the predicted outcomes of the highest attitude ratings in the four conditions.*

	Cindy		Robert		Evelien		Sandra		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Cindy car	3.51	.63	3.48	.71	3.60	.67	<b>3.64</b>	.78	<b>3.59</b>	.73
Robert car	3.40	.76	<b>3.53</b>	.71	3.20	.89	<b>3.55</b>	.76	3.49	.77
Evelien car	<b>3.60</b>	.86	3.43	.82	<b>3.29</b>	.82	3.48	.73	3.48	.77
Sandra car	<b>2.71</b>	.87	2.62	.78	2.39	.85	<b>2.50</b>	.87	2.57	.86

### 5.3 | Purchase Intentions

#### Purchase intentions towards the stock-page.

Results showed no significant main effect of the content on the purchase intentions towards the stock-pages,  $F(3, 764) = .671$ ,  $p = .570$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .003$ . There was also no significant main effect found of the preferred persona on the evaluated purchase intentions towards the stock-page,  $F(3, 764) = .735$ ,  $p = .531$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .003$ . In this scenario of the stock-page, results showed also no interaction effect between the content and the preferred persona on purchase intentions towards the stock-page scenarios,  $F(8, 764) = .998$ ,  $p = .440$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .012$ .

#### Purchase intentions towards the detail-page.

Results showed a significant main effect of the content on the purchase intentions towards the detail-page,  $F(3, 764) = 5.03$ ,  $p = .002$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .019$ . Participants evaluated the purchase intentions significantly higher on the detail-page of the Sandra car ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = .90$ ) than on the detail-pages of the Evelien car ( $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = .76$ ), Cindy car ( $M =$

3.19,  $SD = .93$ ) and finally the Robert car ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = .90$ ), as shown in table 5.3.1.

Results showed no significant effect of the preferred persona on the purchase intentions towards the detail-page,  $F(3, 764) = 1.49$ ,  $p = .217$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .006$ . No interaction effect was found between the content and the preferred persona on the purchase intentions towards the detail-page,  $F(9, 764) = .717$ ,  $p = .694$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .008$ .

Table 5.3.1

*Purchase intentions towards the detail-page - Variables measured with Likert-scale 1-5 (I totally disagree – I totally agree). The filled columns represent the predicted outcomes of the highest attitude ratings in the four conditions.*

	Cindy		Robert		Evelien		Sandra		Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Cindy car	<b>3.29</b>	.89	3.15	.66	3.07	.88	3.19	1.02	3.19	.93
Robert car	3.06	.78	<b>3.36</b>	.99	2.94	.90	3.14	.91	3.15	.90
Evelien car	<b>3.32</b>	.90	3.28	.58	<b>3.21</b>	.70	<b>3.32</b>	.77	3.31	.76
Sandra car	<b>3.74</b>	.79	3.50	.86	3.16	1.07	<b>3.56</b>	.90	<b>3.56</b>	.90

#### *Purchase intentions towards the showroom.*

Results on the purchase intentions towards the showroom scenario show a significant main effect of the content on this evaluated purchase intention,  $F(3, 764) = 45.49$ ,  $p = <.001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .152$ . Results showed also a significant main effect of the preferred persona on the purchase intentions towards the showroom scenario,  $F(3, 764) = 3.38$ ,  $p = .018$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .013$ . No interaction effect was found between the content and the preferred persona,  $F(9, 764) = .86$ ,  $p = .557$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .010$ .

Similar to the perceived attitude and customer experience in the showroom, also the perceived purchase intention scored significantly lower in the condition of the Sandra car ( $M = 2.57$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) than in the other three conditions (Cindy car ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = .84$ ), Robert car ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = .81$ ) and Evelien car ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = .81$ )), as shown in table 5.3.2. In this case, there existed no match between the content conditions and the preferred persona which was predicted to evaluate the purchase intention the highest in this showroom scenario. Strikingly, the preferred persona Evelien, which was predicted as perceiving the purchase intentions the highest in the condition of the Evelien car, actually perceived the purchase intention significantly lower in this condition ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = .92$ ) than the other three personas did (Cindy ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = .84$ ), Robert ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = .83$ ), Sandra ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = .77$ )).

Table 5.3.2

*Purchase intentions towards the showroom - Variables measured with Likert-scale 1-5 (I totally disagree – I totally agree). The filled columns represent the predicted outcomes of the highest attitude ratings in the four conditions.*

	Cindy		Robert		Evelien		Sandra		Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Cindy car	3.49	.83	3.19	.85	3.37	.81	<b>3.52</b>	.83	3.44	.84
Robert car	3.54	.73	3.39	.85	3.18	.97	<b>3.57</b>	.79	3.50	.81
Evelien car	<b>3.63</b>	.84	3.55	.83	3.11	.92	3.53	.77	<b>3.52</b>	.81
Sandra car	<b>2.74</b>	.79	2.44	.70	2.48	.75	2.47	.82	2.57	.79

## 5.4 | Appreciation

*Appreciation of the stock-page.* There was no significant main effect found between the content and the appreciation of the stock-page by the participants,  $F(3, 764) = .414$ ,  $p = .743$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ . Results showed also no significant effect of the preferred persona on the appreciation of the stock-page scenario,  $F(3, 764) = 1.612$ ,  $p = .185$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .006$ . No interaction effect was found between the content and the preferred persona on the appreciation of the stock-page,  $F(9, 764) = .776$ ,  $p = .639$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .009$ .

*Appreciation of the detail-page.* Also in the detail-page scenario of the research no significant main effect was found of the content on the appreciation of the different detail-pages,  $F(3, 764) = 1.655$ ,  $p = .175$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .006$ . Also with the preferred persona as dependent variable, no significant effect was found on the appreciation of the detail-page,  $F(3, 764) = .971$ ,  $p = .406$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ . No interaction effect was found between the content and the preferred persona on the appreciation of the detail-page in the different scenarios,  $F(9, 764) = .750$ ,  $p = .663$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .009$ .

*Appreciation of the showroom.* Solely in the showroom scenario there was a significant main effect found of the content on the appreciation of the showroom,  $F(3, 763) = 476.54$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .652$ . What strikes out the most, as shown in table 5.4.1, is the grade the participants gave to express their appreciation of the showroom of the Sandra car. The grades of the Cindy car ( $M = 7.29$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ), Robert car ( $M = 7.28$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ) and Evelien car ( $M = 7.28$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ) are significantly higher than the grade addressed to the Sandra car condition ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = .97$ ). The showroom of the Sandra car is therefore much less appreciated than the other three conditions.

Results show no significant effect of the preferred persona on the appreciation of the showroom,  $F(3, 763) = 1.654$ ,  $p = .175$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .006$ . No interaction effect was found between the content and the preferred persona on the appreciation of the showroom,  $F(9, 763) = .464$ ,  $p = .899$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .005$ .

Table 5.4.1

*Appreciation of the showroom - Variables measured with grades from 1 to 10. The filled columns represent the predicted outcomes of the highest attitude ratings in the four conditions.*

	Cindy		Robert		Evelien		Sandra		Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Cindy car	7.29	1.32	7.29	1.34	7.20	1.32	<b>7.40</b>	1.32	<b>7.29</b>	1.50
Robert car	<b>7.47</b>	1.11	7.24	1.46	6.53	1.87	7.36	1.47	7.28	1.46
Evelien car	7.24	1.24	7.31	1.20	6.93	2.02	<b>7.33</b>	1.33	7.28	1.34
Sandra car	2.57	.99	<b>2.58</b>	.76	2.48	.96	2.56	1.03	2.55	.97

The appreciation is the highest in the detail-page scenarios, ( $M = 7.40$ ,  $SD = .1.35$ ) followed by the stock-page scenario ( $M = 7.09$ ,  $SD = .1.40$ ) and the showroom scenario ( $M = 6.49$ ,  $SD = 2.30$ ).

When looking at the results of the constructs per scenario, what stands out the most is that attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions as well as appreciation are evaluated the highest in the detail-page scenarios, see table 5.4.2 and table 5.4.3. The showroom scenario scored lowest on three of the four constructs, attitude ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ), customer experience ( $M = 3.25$ ,  $SD = .90$ ) and appreciation ( $M = 6.06$ ,  $SD = 2.46$ ), in which the showroom scenario in the Sandra car condition scored significantly lower on the constructs than the other three conditions did, as can be seen in table 5.4.3.

Table 5.4.2

*Variables measured with Likert-scale 1-5 (I totally disagree – I totally agree), and on a scale from 1 to 10, differences within the constructs per scenario.*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Attitude</b>		
Stock-page	4.27	.79
Detail-page	4.55	.82
Showroom	4.10	1.16
<b>Customer Experience</b>		
Stock-page	3.39	.74
Detail-page	3.44	.70
Showroom	3.27	.89
<b>Purchase Intentions</b>		
Stock-page	3.15	.76
Detail-page	3.31	.89
Showroom	3.25	.90
<b>Appreciation</b>		
Stock-page	7.09	1.40
Detail-page	7.40	1.35
Showroom	6.06	2.46

When looking at the results in table 5.4.3, we see that in 8 of the 12 scenarios the variables were perceived as the highest in the content condition of the Evelien car. All four constructs; attitude ( $M = 2.69$ ,  $SD = .74$ ), customer experience ( $M = 2.57$ ,  $SD = .86$ ), purchase intentions ( $M = 2.57$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) and appreciation ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = .97$ ); were perceived significantly the lowest in the showroom scenario of the Sandra car condition. Looking at the appreciation variable in the showroom scenario in table 5.4.3, the Sandra car condition was rated with  $M = 2.55$  ( $SD = .97$ ) which is at least 4 grades lower than the Cindy car ( $M = 7.35$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ), the Robert car ( $M = 7.28$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ) and the Evelien car condition ( $M = 7.28$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ).

Table 5.4.3

*Variables attitude, customer experience and purchase intentions measured with 5-point Likert scale and appreciation with a scale from 1 to 10. Scores per scenario and per condition.*

	Cindy car <i>Seat Mii</i>		Robert car <i>Audi A1</i>		Evelien car <i>Volkswagen Tiguan</i>		Sandra car <i>Skoda Fabia</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Attitude</b>								
Stock-page	4.25	.78	4.27	.78	<b>4.38</b>	.76	4.17	.81
Detail-page	4.53	.88	4.50	.88	<b>4.71</b>	.71	4.46	.77
Showroom	4.50	.88	<b>4.59</b>	.99	4.55	.88	2.69	.74
<b>Customer Experience</b>								
Stock-page	3.36	.79	3.47	.77	<b>3.51</b>	.78	3.22	.58
Detail-page	3.40	.72	3.52	.70	<b>3.56</b>	.61	3.29	.72
Showroom	<b>3.59</b>	.73	3.49	.77	3.48	.77	2.57	.86
<b>Purchase Intentions</b>								
Stock-page	3.11	.76	3.15	.78	<b>3.22</b>	.70	3.10	.80
Detail-page	3.19	.93	3.15	.90	3.31	.76	<b>3.56</b>	.90
Showroom	3.44	.84	3.50	.81	<b>3.52</b>	.81	2.57	.79
<b>Appreciation</b>								
Stock-page	7.12	1.47	7.07	1.45	<b>7.21</b>	1.32	6.98	1.36
Detail-page	7.30	1.49	7.42	1.54	<b>7.54</b>	1.14	7.34	1.21
Showroom	<b>7.35</b>	1.42	7.28	1.46	7.28	1.34	2.55	.97

## 6 | DISCUSSION

This research had two aims. In the first place, this research aimed to reveal if personalized content had a positive influence on people's attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation of the content, the product and the company itself. In the second place, the research examined if there was a connection between the created buyer personas and the personalized content, which was based on the buyer personas, and if this connection had a positive effect on the attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions of the content, product and company.

According to literature, experience-based content is the most effective type of content to connect customers to the product and the company (Petere, et al., 2006). Personalized content, which is focused on customer's needs and interests, has a positive effect on the effectiveness of the content (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). Customer experience was the determinant factor in this research.

### 6.1 | Effects of congruence between content and persona

The results show no interaction effects between the content condition and the preferred persona on the independent variables attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation of the content and indirectly of the product and the company. This means that the results show no congruence effects between the content and the preferred persona and that the two independent variables do not interact in creating a more positive customer experience, attitude, purchase intention or appreciation. Based on these results all the hypotheses; **H1a, b, c, d**; **H2a, b, c, d** and **H3a, b, c, d**; could be rejected in that there was not found any congruence effect between the two independent variables on the dependent variables attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation towards the three scenarios, stock-page (H1), detail-page (H2) and showroom (H3).

The absence of the interaction effect of content and preferred persona implies that regardless which content condition the participants were shown, their evaluations of this content did not relate to their match with a persona type. So regardless if participants related themselves to the persona which was matched up with the content condition the participants were exposed to, this did not result in a more positive effect on their attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation of the content within the scenarios. Based on these results the main discussion point of this research concerns if there really exists a match between the participant's lifestyle, interests, needs and goals and the characteristics of the persona the participants chose in the study. When participants could not fully match themselves and their lifestyles to one of the personas in the study, the question arises how personalized the content within the concerning conditions really was. This could imply that the predetermined expectations of the match between content and persona did not work properly because the content was based on prototypes of buyer personas. The content could therefore not really have been personalized on the participant's characteristics and lifestyle. The absence of the match between the participant and the chosen persona could therefore explain the absence of the interaction effect between content and persona.

A factor of this research which could have been of influence on the missing interaction effect between content and preferred persona concerns the age spread of the participants among the four buyer personas. Looking at demographic characteristics of the participants per condition and preferred

persona, as shown in table 4.2.1, the age differences within the four preferred personas are very small. Where it was expected that the age of the participants would increase from the “youngest” persona Cindy, to the eldest persona Sandra, differed the average age between all four personas very little (Cindy ( $M = 43.8$ ,  $SD = 15.0$ ), Robert ( $M = 48.5$ ,  $SD = 13.3$ ), Evelien ( $M = 48.9$ ,  $SD = 12.4$ ), Sandra ( $M = 57.9$ ,  $SD = 12.8$ )). Although the average age increased as expected, from Cindy, to Robert, Evelien and finally Sandra, the average age in the youngest category was very high for a young persona in the age category of 18-24 years. This is also the case for the average age of the preferred persona Robert which represents a young professional in the age of 25-34 years. Therefore, we can conclude that the age segmentation between the four different personas didn’t succeed in this research. This could have been prevented by setting certain selection criteria which regulate how participants are assigned to one of the four conditions. With the selection criteria the spread of different ages could be more equally divided between the four content conditions.

The lack of the congruence effect between content and preferred persona could also have been caused by a disconnection between the interests and lifestyle of the personas and the focus of the content on the webpages and in the showroom. This disconnection could have been caused by a misinterpretation of the personas by the researcher in creating and manipulating the content. This could, for example, be the case with the eldest buyer persona Sandra, which could have been misinterpreted concerning her lifestyle, interests and goals. Lähteenmäki and Kaikkonen (2014) describe that older people are often treated as a homogenous group when designing personas, whilst in reality they are as heterogeneous as any other segments. The possible mismatch between the participant and the persona chosen by the participant could have been prevented by integrating questions regarding detailed demographic, lifestyle and behavioral aspects of the participants in study 2. With this personal information of the participants the research could take a close look into which participants do and do not have an existing match with their chosen persona. Participants who did not match to their preferred persona could therefore be eliminated from the results. Hereby a better match between the participants and the created buyer personas could have been established so that the content is personalized to the participant and an interaction effect between the buyer persona and the personalized content is assured.

The ineffectiveness of the personalized content could also have been devoted to the absence of a preliminary test, as input for study 2, which examines if certain car brands and models match a certain persona. This research addressed certain car brands and models to a specific persona based on the information of the persona and the image, information and class of the car. These decisions weren’t supported by research.

There is a possibility that the manipulations in the content did were successful, but had no effect on participants because of their personal preferences and interests concerning specific car brands and models. Potentially, the manipulations of the content could have had a significant effect on participants’s perceived attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation when the survey showed a different type of car-brand or model which better suited their personal preferences. Therefore, looking at the results of this research, it should be taken into account that the manipulations and the used cars are subject to the taste of the participants.

With the results of this study the question arises if the use of buyer personas is really that



necessary for creating effective and personalized content. An alternative for persona profiles could be the use of consumer profiles or a segmentation tool in which the current and proposed customers of the company are displayed. However, with the use of consumer profiles it is also questionable if this would result in very different findings than the use of persona profiles did.

Eventhough the results show no interaction effect between the content and the preferred buyer persona, there is still a possibility that the independent variables content and buyer persona can have an effect on the dependent variables, independently of each other. Therefore, this research also takes a look at the independent effects of content and personas on customer's attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation towards the three different scenarios the participants were exposed to in study 2.

## 6.2 | Effects of personalized content

Although the results showed no interaction effect between the content and the preferred persona the content in this study was based on, results do show an effect of the content on a couple of constructs in certain scenarios.

Hypotheses **H1a**, **H2a**, **H2b**, **H2c**, **H3a**, **H3b**, **H3c**, and **H3d** can partly be accepted for the fact that personalized content did have an effect on the *attitude* towards the stock-page, the *attitude*, *customer experience* and *purchase intentions* towards the detail-page and on the *attitude*, *customer experience*, *purchase intentions* and *appreciation* towards the showroom. This corresponds to what Petty, Wheeler and Bizer (2000) state, namely that when messages are closely linked to aspects of persons' self, that these messages can exert persuasive effects. Experiments have proven that individuals prefer objects or experiences which are closely related to their self compared to the objects that aren't related to the individual (Petty, et al., 2000). This is also supported by Sundar (2004) who states that customized content is contingent to user's preferences and interests. This can result in greater user activity and can increase customer's involvement with the website and company. By providing customers with personalized content, the information is more easily perceived as relevant or salient by customers which can generate positive communication outcomes (Kreuter & Wray, 2003). Finally, also Kalyanaraman and Sundar (2006) highlight the importance and effects of personalized content on customer's behavior in stating that customization of content is a psychologically significant variable which has the potential to impact attitudes and behaviors.

There is a possibility that the involvement within certain touchpoints in which a customer comes in contact with a company differs. This could be a cause of effects for the fact that the content did not have a significant effect on all the dependent variables in the three scenarios. Person's interest for the scenario and involvement with the company or product in the different scenarios may differ and could cause higher or lower evaluation of the different variables within the content.

## 6.3 | Effects of buyer personas

The independent variable buyer persona did have an independent effect on the *customer experience* towards the detail-page and on the *attitude* and *purchase intentions* towards the showroom. Therefore,



hypotheses **H2b**, **H3a** and **H3c** could be partly accepted. Buyer persona had solely effect on variables which were also influenced by the variable content. This is in line with the findings of the research of Long (2009) stating that personas work as a tool in strengthening company's focus on the customer, their tasks, goals and motivations. The role of personas is making the needs of customers explicit and can therefore make the shift of a company to go more towards the needs of customers (Long, 2009).

The variable buyer persona had only affect on three constructs on which content also played a big role. This mutual effect of persona and content can be seen as a collaborative effect in that personalization of content via personas psychologically makes a longer lasting impression on "the development team". Therefore, the company will work more towards fulfilling the information needs and goals of customers through their content, communication and with their products (Miller & Williams, 2006). According to Pruitt and Grudin (2003) this will result in a usable and effective system.

Based on the effect persona has on the customer experience towards the detail-page and the attitude and purchase intentions towards the showroom we could conclude that there partly exists a collaborative effect between the persona and content.

Although the focus of this study, to find an interaction effect of the congruence between content and persona on customers' attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation, was not supported, the results do indicate that the personalization of content and the use of persona profiles did have a positive effect on people's evaluation and perceptions.

#### **6.4 | Limitations and suggestions for future research**

This study has its limitations which should be taken into account when interpreting the results. Eventhough multiple actions have been executed to reassure the reliability and validation of this research, the research still brought a few limitations to light.

First of all, it should be taken into account that the target group of study 1 consisted solely of social contacts of the researcher and thus represents a convenience sample. This could be of influence on the results, being that this sample is not completely reliable in representing different types of car-buyers. Therefore, the results could represent a certain type of car-buyer more and leave other car-buyers out of the results. This also might have had an influence on the creation and construction of the personas.

Based on the results of this research it is questionable if there existed a match between the participant's lifestyle and interests and the prescribed personas the participant chose. Because the results show no interaction effect between content and preferred persona on the independent variables, it should be taken into account that the content in study 2 was not personalized enough to the participants and their preferences and interests. The created and used personas were too general to create a clear vision of how to personalize the content to their interests and needs. The lack of lifestyle, interests and behavior details within the buyer persona profiles causes the personalization of the content within this research to be ineffective in creating more positive attitudes and behaviors of customers. This could be prevented by only choosing the participants who did were a match with the prescribed persona so that the personalization of the content could have a bigger and more positive influence on their

attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation.

Looking at the results of this research, influences from outside should also be taken into account. The atmospherics of the participants when filling in the survey could be of influence on the participant's evaluation of the content as well as participant's personal interests and preferences. Although the survey underlined the importance of the participants being objective regarding the shown cars, there is a possibility that people's preferences concerning a certain car type and model were of influence on their evaluation and perception of the content within the three scenarios.

Another factor which should be taken into account is the sample of study 2. This sample existed of customers and non-customers of Huiskes-Kokkeler. Being a customer of Huiskes-Kokkeler could imply that these participants were already familiar with the appearance of the website pages and the showroom. Therefore, this could have had an influence on their evaluations and perceptions of the different scenarios. Whether this influence had a positive or negative effect could also be an effect of participant's prior experiences with Huiskes-Kokkeler.

This research is valuable for further research in that it investigated an effect of the congruence between content and buyer persona on people's attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation regarding certain touchpoints in their buyer journey. Prior research did investigate the separate effects of content and buyer persona on customer's attitude and behavior, but there is little published research concerning the effect of personalized content based on buyer persona and its effect on customer's attitude and behavior.

Future research can overcome the problems with an ineffective interaction effect between the buyer persona and the personalized content by making sure to reach the participants who match with the description of the personas, so that the research is assured of a fit between the participant and the persona profile. This could for example be established by integrating questions concerning demographic aspects and lifestyle aspects of the participants in the study so that it is clear which participants really match to their preferred persona. Therefore, the content which will be personalized based on the persona profiles, will also match the participants profile and therefore will have a more positive effect on customer's behavior and attitude.

It is also advisable for further research to make use of different situations. This research solely used situations from the car dealer Huiskes-Kokkeler which was used as a case study. As the implications implies, the familiarity of participants with the exposed situation might have an influence on their perception and evaluation. Implementing different situations, existing and non-existing, from different companies might have a positive effect on the objectivity of the participants when evaluating the situations and the content within these situations. It also offers a more detailed and reliable view of customer's attitude and behavior towards the automotive industry as a whole.

Based on the findings concerning the showroom scenario, this research can serve as a startingpoint for future research and organizations to focus on omni-channel strategies. Beck and Rgyl (2015) define omni-channel retailing as a set of activities which are involved in selling services through all available and widespread channels. Hereby the customer gets provided with the opportunity to attend full channel interaction. Simultaneously, the retailer is thereby able to control full channel integration.

The showroom scenarios in the four content conditions make use of digital tools such as television screens and Ipads to provide customers with information in a modern and interactive way. This is in line with the omni-channel customer who is described as a multichannel customer, who instead of using channels in parallel, uses them all simultaneously (Lazaris, 2014). When implementing an omni-channel strategy, a company provides the customer with a seamless experience when these customers are using all of the retailer's shopping channels (Levy, Weitz & Grewal, 2013).

This research focused on the automotive industry, but it is also advisable to investigate the effect of content and persona on customer's reactions in different branches. There might exist a different need for information and interest within different branches. This research is therefore not adjustable in branches outside of the automotive industry.

Finally, this research is a starting point for further research concerning the implementation of omni-channel strategies in the current content and communication strategies, as for example in the showroom. The content offered in the showroom needs to be in line with the content offered in other communication channels and offered in the right way based on the persona. In that way, young customers could be provided with information via digital channels as Ipads, television screens or other technical innovations to enrich the offline experience.

## 7 | CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research was based on the following research question: **In what way can car dealers improve their content strategies with the use of personalized content based on personas to create effective customer experiences, attitudes and behavior?** This research question was supported by two sub-research questions: **In what way can the content be created so that the content matches customer's personal interests and lifestyle?**, **What is the extent to which the personas match certain content strategies?** and **What are the effects of the implementation of personalized content based on buyer personas?**

Based on the results of this study, some suggestions about the use of content strategies in combination with persona profiles can be given. Based on the MANOVA and ANOVA results, this study did not support the interaction effect between content and persona on customer's attitude, customer experience, purchase intentions and appreciation towards touchpoints in their buyer journey. Eventhough no interaction effect was found, based on the results it can be concluded that content and persona do collaborate in creating a more positive attitude and behavior of customers, when looking at the significance level of Roy's Largest Root (MANOVA). This statement could also be concluded from the fact that the dependent variables where persona had a significant effect on, are also significantly influenced by the construct content. Besides that, personalized content is the ability to offer content or information matching user's interests and specification (Rayport & Jaworski, 2001). To get a detailed view of customer's interests, demographic characteristics and lifestyle details, persona profiles are useful and needed (Crowston, 2015). Therefore, this research can conclude that content and persona are related to each other and strengthen each other in influencing and creating more positive attitudes and behaviors of customers.

This study also shows the benefits of the use of persona profiles for the implementation of, among other things, personalized content. With the help of personas, companies get a clearer view of customer's details concerning their interests, emotions, settings, behavior needs and their goals. By using persona profiles to implement and adjust communication and business strategies, employees, or "the developers", maintain a common vision of the customer in that they are trying to provide all the information to fulfill customer's needs and goals, thus improving the impact of these strategies (Crowston, 2015).

Based on the results of this study it can be concluded that in this research there exists no match between the personas and the content strategies. This could be caused by the fact that the participants had no or little match with the preferred persona. Therefore, it is questionable if the used content in this research is really that personalized based on the characteristics of the four buyer personas resulted out of study 1. When looking at the results, in most cases there existed no match between the appreciation and evaluation of the content and the preferred persona. This could also imply that there was no match between the participant and the preferred persona. This could be an important factor influencing the absence of the congruence effect between content and persona.

It is important for car dealers to address their own target group to get a clear view of the

customers belonging to the company. It is therefore advised to create your own persona profiles and focus mainly on the preferences of your customers to get the most effect.

This study adds value to existing literature in the field of personalizing content in touchpoints of customer's buying journey based on persona profiles. The results present valuable insights in the independent effect of personalized content and persona profiles on customer's attitudes and behaviors, as well as for the collaborative effect of content and persona on customer's evaluation and behavior, which did not receive any attention in prior research. The results of this study are relevant for adapting and restructuring the current content and communication strategies and for rearranging the way information and content is provided in the showroom.

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