

**Targeting is Also Publishing:
A Case Study of the *Asparagus Tips* Newsletter**

**by
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Abstract

This project explores the significance of targeting in content development and delivery, with a focus on the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter. During my internship as a Marketing Assistant with *Asparagus Magazine*, a publication dedicated to promoting sustainable living from environmental, social, and cultural perspectives, and based on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations, I collaborated closely with Anjali Bhardwaj, the magazine's marketing and business development coordinator. Together, we worked on building audience profiling and marketing personas for *Asparagus Magazine*, as well as designing the visual identity for the new newsletter. This experience exemplifies the crucial role of targeting in crafting engaging content for specific audiences.

The motivation behind this project stems from my belief in the importance of marketing within publishing practices. Through my internship, I witnessed the interconnectedness of targeting, content development, and content delivery. This project delves into this case study, examining the impact of effective targeting on content development, audience engagement and publishing success.

Keywords: targeting; audience; engagement; marketing; newsletter; publishing

To my husband, who left our home country to embark on this journey together and has been the main support throughout the entire program.

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Glossary

Clicks	The total number of times users interacted with a clickable element, such as a link or button.
Click Rate	The percentage of recipients who clicked on a link compared to the total number of recipients, measuring the effectiveness of a call-to-action.
Impressions	The total number of times a piece of content is displayed, regardless of whether it is clicked or not.
Open Rate	The percentage of delivered emails that recipients opened.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

First, the publishing industry is a business, and if it is to survive it must either make a profit, or find funding from elsewhere.

— Alison Baverstock & Susannah Bowen, *How to Market Books*

My journey into this master's program began with a strong desire to explore the business aspects of books and magazines. As a writer, proofreader, and marketing professional, understanding the industry I belong to was crucial for me. This project report marks the culmination of this journey, which was dedicated to exploring the interconnectedness between marketing and publishing. It emphasizes the necessity of embracing this relationship to create, deliver, and sustain both for-profit and not-for-profit publishing projects effectively.

Marketing is sometimes perceived as the “ugly duckling” by the audience due to the associated stigma of capitalism, sales, and manipulation propagated by big corporations. “This perception among consumers that marketing means manipulation pervades most areas of the field. Consumers may even develop a resistance to marketing efforts because they are afraid of being manipulated” (Gatignon and Le Nagard, 2015). However, marketing itself is a discipline—an understanding of the market, its needs, desires, and circumstances to fulfill them in the most valuable way. Marketing serves as a strategic instrument for business purposes, and this project primarily focuses on business survival and growth.

Before immersing into business growth, it is essential to address business awareness and positioning—two central aspects of my role during my professional placement at *Asparagus Magazine*, a Vancouver-based award-winning magazine, founded in 2018, dedicated to publishing stories on how we can live sustainably from intersectional perspectives. From April to August 2022, I worked as a Marketing Assistant at *Asparagus Magazine*, where I was also involved in activities like production for the website, social media content creation, and event planning. As a small independent magazine transitioning into a non-profit organization, *Asparagus* does not currently have

a dedicated marketing team. Nevertheless, during my placement, I worked closely with the magazine's marketing and business development coordinator, Anjali Bhardwaj, along with a marketing consultant, Anita Li, who guided us in creating marketing personas and strategies.

Working at *Asparagus Magazine* offered me a perfect opportunity to appreciate the power of targeting and learn how it intertwines with content creation and delivery. My role involved analyzing data gathered over the years through social media, surveys, Medium, and Mailchimp to develop audience profiles. The most exciting experience during my placement was being part of the creation of a brand-new product, the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter, which emerged from a deep understanding of our audience and the need to further connect with it. This experience reaffirmed the central idea that drove me into this program: Publishing is a business.

Talking about targeting, this project report is intended for publishing students who are interested in learning how to create marketing personas from real examples and understanding why this is helpful and what impact it can have on future actions. It is also relevant for publishing professionals who want to know more about market segmentation, customer-centric marketing, and the processes behind a targeted newsletter. The main focus of this project is to showcase, through a specific case, how crucial it is to understand your market and define your audience to be able to connect with them.

1.1. In this Report

This first chapter introduces this project report, providing insight into the project's purpose, approach, and the connection between marketing, publishing, and me.

Chapter Two offers a comprehensive exploration of *Asparagus Magazine*, covering its history, manifesto, vision, and organizational structure. This overview showcases the magazine's key features and its present and future objectives and challenges. Additionally, the chapter digs into *Asparagus*'s online presence, exploring its use of digital strategies and tactics, and includes an exploration of past strategies and practices employed by the magazine. This subsection examines their effectiveness and lessons learned, giving readers a better idea about where they are and what they need in today's

ever-evolving publishing landscape. This analysis provides context for understanding the magazine's current trajectory and its strategic approach to captivating its audience.

Chapter Three serves as the heart of this project report, exploring the concept and importance of targeting in marketing. It emphasizes how targeting plays a pivotal role in achieving marketing goals, such as community engagement and growth. The chapter then takes readers on a journey of identifying target audiences for *Asparagus Magazine*, considering their unique characteristics and preferences. This section serves as a real example of defining marketing personas. It focuses on targeting *Asparagus*'s specific market segments, exploring their needs and behaviours, while showcasing the subsequent steps in the marketing strategy, exemplified by customer-centric marketing and low-budget marketing strategy, born from segmentation. The chapter culminates by explaining the significance of targeted newsletters, increasingly embraced by magazines, and introduces the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter as a case study of a targeted approach, revealing the rationale behind its creation, benefits, and purpose.

Chapter Four dives into the process of developing the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter, outlining key stages such as brainstorming, teamwork, research, design process, and content development. It also examines the implementation and execution, including content creation and distribution, leading to a compelling exploration of the outcomes achieved through the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter's implementation. This chapter serves as a tangible example of how publishers can create, or direct, products based on a deep understanding of their audience.

Chapter Five concludes the project report, underscoring the significance of resourcefulness in achieving project goals within a limited budget. The section shares the lessons I learned from the experience working with zero budget but unwavering enthusiasm for a project embraced by the entire team. It summarizes how content can be recycled and redirected to reach different segments of the market, and the possibilities of creating marketing strategies without using paid advertising.

The structure of this project report aims to guide readers through a process akin to my experience as an intern, beginning with understanding the magazine and its needs, followed by analyzing the audience and building marketing personas, and culminating in the creation of a new product based on the realization of a lack of connection with the

younger audience. This journey emphasizes the importance of understanding our product and audience to create targeted content effectively.

With all that said, now let's talk marketing!

Chapter 2.

Asparagus Magazine

The belief that the concept of “sustainability” can’t only be applied to thinking about the environment. A society that averted climate change without also eliminating poverty, hunger, racism, sexism, colonialism, militarism, ableism, body fascism, homophobia, transphobia, white supremacy, mass incarceration, and the oppression of Indigenous peoples, would not be “sustainable.”

— Jessie Johnston, *The Asparagus Magazine Manifesto*

2.1. About the Magazine

Asparagus is an award-winning sustainability magazine published by the Asparagus Journalism Society, based in Vancouver, British Columbia, on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations. The magazine is dedicated to telling intersectional stories about how to live more sustainably from environmental, social, and cultural perspectives. *Asparagus's* entire purpose is encapsulated in its vision: "stories cultivating a just society on a healthy planet". Since its inception, publishing online in February 2018 and releasing its first print issue in the summer of 2019, *Asparagus* has continued to strengthen its commitment to creating impactful stories that are firmly grounded in science, while also being engaging and enjoyable. With nine print issues under its belt and a robust online presence, *Asparagus* remains steadfast in its mission.

The magazine is founded on the principle of "a belief in science. A belief in justice. A belief in journalism and in art, in laughter and in vegetables"; in "a belief that a sustainable society can only be achieved through a combination of individual decisions and collective actions, and that we must be well informed to make those choices, individually and together" (*The Asparagus Manifesto*). *Asparagus* honours its manifesto and beliefs through stories around four main pillars: Planet, Society, Living, and West Coast. These pillars cover a range of topics from Climate Change, Energy, Plastic and Pollution, Plants and Animals, Science and Tech, Art and Design, to Cities, Economy, Gender, Human Rights, Indigenous, Fashion and Beauty, Food, Health, Home and

Garden, Kids and Parenting, and Travel. *Asparagus* has received various awards and nominations for its stories, including the 2022 BC Magazine of the Year by Alberta Magazine Awards, the 2021 Best Feel-Good Story - Consumer by the Canadian Online Publishing Awards, and the 2021 Silver BC Story of the Year by Alberta Magazine Awards. *Asparagus* received its most recent nomination in 2023, marking its first international award nomination for the Covering Climate Now Journalism Award.

Every printed edition is crafted using 100% post-consumer-recycled paper and is mailed to its 300 or so subscribers, which includes a growing number of public libraries. Moreover, the magazine has found its way to over 50 newsstands across Canada through its affiliation with Magazines Canada. Additionally, *Asparagus* seeks collaborations that introduce it to new readers, locating them in anticipated locations such as eco-conscious stores, farmers markets, independent bookshops, festivals, conferences, and cultural gatherings.

2.2. Objectives and Challenges

In its efforts to stay afloat, *Asparagus Magazine* has charted a resilient course defined by a commitment to the continuous publication of high-quality journalism. The imperative “to keep the printer running” underscores the magazine's primary and foremost objective. As I pointed out in the first chapter, publishing is a business, and like any business, it needs funding to survive. During its first six years, *Asparagus Magazine* has published award-winning stories, supported by various sources of funding and fundraising campaigns. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the work has continued, proving the magazine's enduring spirit.

However, it is no secret that 2023 was a challenging year economically, and *Asparagus* was not able to publish any new issues during that time. Being an independent for-profit magazine was no longer feasible. But, as a happy ending for the year, the magazine successfully made the transition into a non-profit organization in 2023, opening access to new kinds of funding. This metamorphosis not only symbolized survival but opened avenues to new and diverse funding streams, accompanied by a comprehensive restructuring of its internal dynamics.

Within this transformative landscape, *Asparagus Magazine* confronts an array of objectives and challenges that are intrinsic to its newfound identity. The restructuring process demands a meticulous reevaluation of tasks and responsibilities, requiring a strategic realignment to align with the magazine's evolved mission. Planning for the future necessitates a dynamic approach to securing funding, a task that involves exploring innovative avenues while adapting to the intricacies of non-profit dynamics. The challenge encompasses a comprehensive understanding of *Asparagus's* current identity, the funding landscape at its disposal, and the intricacies of operational procedures.

Navigating this new dynamic landscape further involves a nuanced comprehension of the bureaucratic intricacies and evolving standards associated with non-profit entities. The magazine must coordinate its operational processes with these standards, ensuring compliance while preserving its core objective of sharing engaging narratives. During the challenges faced in 2023, the magazine's newsletters and website stood resilient, continuing their vital role of connecting stories with the audience and thereby upholding the essence of *Asparagus* in its new era.

As *Asparagus Magazine* embarks on this transformative journey, it is not merely surviving, but seeking ways to be sustainable and grow. This confluence of objectives and challenges shapes the new reality of the magazine, showcasing *Asparagus's* remarkable commitment to meaningful storytelling in an ever-evolving publishing landscape. *Asparagus* aims to increase awareness about what it is doing and enhance the positioning of both its online and print presence. Continuing to expand its reach through various digital channels, such as social media, the website, and newsletters, is crucial, as well as maintaining a consistent publication schedule for its print issues. In 2021, *Asparagus* achieved the milestone of publishing three new issues, marking it as a year with the highest number of issues published by the magazine... and that's the goal: securing funding to continue delivering quality content. The challenge? The reality of the publishing industry and the market; but *Asparagus*, like a six-year-old child, is learning how to dance in this complex economic reality.

2.3. Online Presence

Asparagus Magazine emerged from its digital inception in February 2018, when its founder, Jessie Johnston, decided to turn her publishing dream into a reality. As the pages of this project report unfold, *Asparagus* celebrates its sixth birthday, a milestone where the first and latest years have seen its publishing endeavours exclusively in the digital realm.

This might make you wonder: Where does *Asparagus Magazine* reside in the vast expanse of the online world, and what dictates its virtual footprint? Presently, *Asparagus* boasts a diverse digital portfolio comprising six key products. Among them, the longstanding digital email newsletter named *Letters from the Editor* stands as a testament to the magazine's journey. A newer addition, *Asparagus Tips*, joins the lineup, offering refreshing insights and perspectives on both old and new stories published by *Asparagus*. The official website serves as the digital hub, providing a comprehensive platform for readers to engage with *Asparagus* content. Additionally, during the time I was working at the magazine, we maintained an active presence on social media (X, previously Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook). However, the magazine has stopped engaging with those platforms recently due to changes in those environments beyond the magazine's control.

Yet, the question persists: Why this particular online landscape, and what significance does it hold for *Asparagus Magazine*? Each digital outpost is a strategic node in *Asparagus*'s goal to connect with its audience and contribute to the ever-evolving world of publishing. The older newsletter serves as a personal touchpoint, offering direct communication from the editorial team, keeping readers and donors updated about what is happening and what is coming. *Asparagus Tips* embodies a commitment to staying current, providing bite-sized insights on sustainable living to today's and future younger subscribers of *Asparagus* (millennials), as well as those with busy agendas. The official website serves as the primary digital platform for the magazine; a space where the majority of the stories published by *Asparagus* are available, including some that have been featured in print issues and others that are exclusive to the online realm; a space where the storytelling prowess of *Asparagus* unfolds, and where *Asparagus* stories coexist. The purpose of its social media channels is to act as bridges, connecting

Asparagus with diverse communities and amplifying its narrative across the digital landscape.

In terms of reach and marketing, let's illustrate with data the reality of this indie, sustainable magazine in British Columbia. This information was collected in February 2024, when *Asparagus Magazine* displayed a total of 55k impressions and 716 clicks on its website as the performance for that month. In terms of digital newsletter subscribers, *Asparagus* has a total of 1,209 subscribers across both newsletters (compared to approximately 300 print subscribers): 1,051 for *Letters from the Editor*, 339 for *Asparagus Tips*, with 181 subscribers subscribed to each newsletter. Both newsletters have had fantastic average open rates during the last 14 months, with *Asparagus Tips* at 70.69% and *Letters from the Editor* at 58.81%. Despite the magazine having stopped engaging with these platforms since August 2023 on Facebook and Instagram, and since October of the same year on X, *Asparagus Magazine* counts 2.5K followers on Facebook, 930 followers on Instagram, and 595 followers on X.

Asparagus Magazine's online evolution reflects its dedication to sharing stories in the ever-changing landscape of digital publishing. This strategy not only fosters audience engagement but also facilitates the exploration of avenues for potential funding and the promotion of its content.

2.4. Previous Strategies and Practices

As *Asparagus Magazine* navigates its own journey, the pursuit of amplifying its reach takes shape through a myriad of practices and strategies, spanning both the digital realm and the physical world. These multifaceted approaches encompass a range of initiatives, each contributing to the magazine's overarching goals: traditional magazine subscriptions and donations, partnerships, giveaways, advertising, mentorships, government grants, events, digital organic and paid promotions, product diversification, merchandise sales, and the latest addition, bus shelter advertising.

In the domain of traditional magazine subscriptions and donations, *Asparagus* has forged a connection with its audience, inviting them to participate not only as readers but also as contributors to the sustainability of the magazine. The cultivation of partnerships with like-minded organizations adds depth to *Asparagus's* network, creating a

collaborative ecosystem that resonates with its mission. Strategic giveaways serve to engage and expand the readership, creating a buzz around the magazine and attracting new audiences. Selective advertising by organizations aligned with *Asparagus's* values amplifies its presence, reaching audiences that share a commitment to sustainability and meaningful storytelling.

Mentorship programs further enhance the magazine's impact, addressing areas where the magazine may lack experience or resources. Pursuing government grants opens avenues for financial support, aligning *Asparagus* with broader initiatives that recognize and encourage the value of independent journalism.

Events, both physical and virtual, act as platforms for direct engagement, allowing *Asparagus* to connect with its audience in a dynamic and interactive way. One recurrent event where the magazine is present is at various farmers markets across Vancouver throughout the year, distributing free issues to increase awareness about the magazine's purpose and inviting visitors to subscribe to its digital newsletters and online platforms. Farmers Markets are spaces that align with *Asparagus'* mission and values, offering an opportunity to connect with potential readers, subscribers, and donors in the community.

Embracing digital strategies, a mix of organic and paid promotions across various channels aims to achieve a broad and impactful online presence. Product diversification, the origin of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter, will be explored in chapter three.

Merchandise sales provide not only a revenue stream but also a tangible connection with the *Asparagus* brand. The latest addition to the array of strategies is bus shelter advertising, a new promotional tactic aimed at increasing awareness of *Asparagus Magazine* among a wider audience in physical spaces, a result of its new status as a non-profit organization.

All these strategies sound good on paper. As I read what I am writing, I just think, “amazing!”. *Asparagus* has been doing everything right, so why is it not financially sustainable? Why doesn't it have many more followers, donors, events, partnerships, or subscribers? Why is it an award-winning magazine, with award-winning stories, that not a lot of people know about? Well, I think this is a great question and the answer is in *Asparagus's* manifesto: “The belief that the concept of 'sustainability' can't only be applied to thinking about the environment”. What does that mean? Our publishing

industry is part of our economic system, and that system is not sustainable for indies. So, what do indies do with this? The best that they can, with what they are, and that is what *Asparagus* has been doing with all these strategies and practices for the last 6 years — the possible best, always maintaining its values and mission, in every event, partnership, and everything.

In conclusion, all these efforts converge on two fundamental goals: Get funding and get people. Without money, there is no magazine, and without readers, there is no point in having a magazine.

Chapter 3.

Targeting as a Marketing Strategy

Segmenting a market makes sense in order to produce more manageable numbers and concentrate resources appropriately – and efficiently. Segmentation is an important strategic planning tool and promotes more precise definition of the market, enabling you to get to know both your customers and your competition better, to respond to developments within the market quickly and to test ideas before making them more widely available.

— Alison Baverstock & Susannah Bowen, *How to Market Books*

3.1. What is Targeting and Why Does it Matter?

In the vast landscape of marketing, targeting serves as a guide for businesses and organizations to achieve their objectives. Just as every publishing company navigates a unique path, understanding and implementing targeting strategies becomes pivotal for success. Targeting, in essence, is the art of precision in marketing. It involves identifying and directing efforts toward specific segments of the audience most likely to be receptive. This intricate process analyzes demographic, psychographic, and behavioural traits to tailor marketing approaches that resonate with a particular audience.

The significance of targeting lies in its ability to make marketing efforts count. By focusing on specific demographics, businesses can effectively communicate with those most inclined to engage, thereby optimizing and concentrating their resources. Whether for a publishing company or any business, targeting ensures that messages reach the right audience, fostering connection and resonance. In the pursuit of marketing goals, targeting serves as the linchpin. “One marketing professional confessed to me after conducting her first buyer interview, “This is almost like cheating; like getting the exam paper weeks before the final. Instead of trying to guess what matters, I now know not only what the customer wants—I realize how she goes about it” (Adele, 2015). A well-crafted targeting strategy is important for businesses looking to enhance visibility, build brand awareness, or drive sales. It is not about casting a broad net in the hope of

catching all fish, but strategically aligning efforts to capture the attention of the most relevant audience.

The expansion of reach through various channels, mirroring the diversity of audience platforms, exemplifies the essence of targeting. For any business seeking sustainability, understanding and connecting with the audience across different digital channels is crucial. A comprehensive targeting approach acknowledges the varied ways potential customers engage with content.

The overarching importance of targeting becomes apparent when milestones are achieved. Just as businesses celebrate reaching goals and milestones, effective targeting strategies contribute significantly to these successes. It is a dynamic dance with consumer behaviour, market nuances, and economic realities, ensuring that every move is purposeful and aligned with the achievement of business objectives. In conclusion, targeting serves as the strategic framework guiding businesses toward their goals while ensuring alignment with the dynamic market landscape. This enables businesses to execute purposeful and focused marketing strategies.

3.2. Determining *Asparagus*'s Audiences

Marketing at its most effective appears simple: the slogan so appropriate that it is instantly memorable; the email that makes a product sound such a specific and personal match for individual needs that the recipient responds immediately... In reality this simplicity is not easily achieved; the marketing processes and the creation of effective marketing materials are much more complex.

— Alison Baverstock & Susannah Bowen, *How to Market Books*

In the pursuit of sustainable growth and strategic audience engagement, *Asparagus Magazine* undertakes a meticulous examination of its target audiences, reflecting the publication's commitment to navigating the complex landscape of contemporary publishing. Guided by a mentorship initiative featuring industry expert Anita Li, the founder of Other Wave and The Green Line, the magazine worked to refine its audience strategy, fostering deeper connections, and expanding its community impact.

At the core of this strategic initiative lies a comprehensive analysis of *Asparagus Magazine's* existing audience segmentation. Harnessing data derived from diverse sources, including social media platforms—specifically Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter—Mailchimp, Medium (the website hosting platform until 2023), previous events, and surveys; this evaluative process seeks to unravel the intricacies of the current audience composition.

Collaborative efforts with the magazine's marketing and business development coordinator have allowed for an in-depth exploration of four key dimensions of the current readers and consumers: Geographic, Demographic, Behavioural, and Psychographic. “It is important to spend time considering the different reasons customers have for buying, and the ways in which they do so, and hence making you appreciate individual differences. This can be done informally (and cheaply). For example, you can segment by: Geographic factors. Demographic factors. Behaviouristic factors. Psychographic factors” (Baverstock, and Bowen, 2019). This framework forms the basis for a nuanced understanding of the magazine's diverse readership audience, serving as an important bridge to understand the audience, as humans with different layers.

The Geographic dimension analyzes the geographic distribution of readership, offering insights into the magazine's global reach as well as an idea of the specific geographic characteristics of the locations to which the readers belong. The demographic analysis examines characteristics such as age, gender, and other defining attributes, providing a holistic view of the audience composition. Behavioural scrutiny uncovers patterns of engagement and interactions, shedding light on audience activities and preferences. Psychographic considerations explore the audience's lifestyle, personality traits, desires, pertinent issues, things that bother them, and their alignment with *Asparagus Magazine's* mission and values.

This multi-layered analysis, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative data, enables a precise segmentation strategy. The detailed insights garnered from this process extend beyond mere numerical representation, offering tangible information to outline the audience, until getting the profile personas that define *Asparagus Magazine's* current and potential audience.

As the audience profile takes form, it evolves into a dynamic representation of individuals united by shared thematic interests inherent in *Asparagus*'s narrative. Beyond numerical growth, the segmentation process becomes instrumental in identifying latent growth opportunities and building a more engaged community. The delineation of untapped demographics and the refinement of engagement strategies become intrinsic to the magazine's pursuit of a broader and more loyal readership spectrum.

In essence, the determination of *Asparagus Magazine*'s audiences transcends a static categorization exercise; it represents an ongoing, iterative venture. This commitment to audience segmentation is central to *Asparagus*'s mission, ensuring the alignment of its storytelling endeavours with the evolving preferences, behaviours, and characteristics of its diverse and dynamic readership. Through this strategic pursuit, *Asparagus Magazine* not only defines its present readership but anticipates and adapts to the ever-evolving contours of its audience landscape.

As a result of this process, *Asparagus Magazine* discovered two different audiences among its readers and was able to build specific profile personas that clearly represent the current and potential community.

3.3. Targeting *Asparagus*'s Market Segments

(...) When buyer personas evolve from authentic stories related by actual buyers – in the form of one-on-one interviews – the methodology and presentation allow you to capture the buyer's expectations and the factors that influence them. Then, and only then, can you truly stand in your buyer's shoes and consider the buying decision from the buyer's point of view.

— Adele Revella, *Buyer personas*

After an intense analysis of all the data discussed in the previous chapter, we discovered that our current readership audience could be classified into two significant groups based on their age, activities, behaviour, necessities, incomes, realities, and lifestyle. These two groups, which I will detail in the next section, are markedly different from each other, and the primary commonality linking them is their concern for the environment and their desire to discover sustainable living practices. However, the time and resources

they can invest in learning about sustainable living are vastly different, necessitating distinct approaches in delivering content to each group.

As a result of this revelation, *Asparagus* found itself facing a new question: Are we adequately addressing the needs of both our audiences? And if not, how can we do it? This marked the beginning of a new journey, which culminated in the creation of an entirely new publishing product that was a finalist in the Canadian Online Publishing Awards 2023. But first, let's explore into the reasons behind and the process of creating this innovative product.

First things first, what do we do with the information that we analyzed? We created marketing personas. Summarizing, these were the steps followed by *Asparagus* during the process of segmentation and audience profiling: 1) Gather all the relevant data from the readers and followers, 2) Analyze data with the four factors indicated (Geographic, Demographic, Behavioural, and Psychographic), 3) Proceed with audience profiling, and building marketing personas. But what is a Marketing Persona? It is a marketing tool that helps marketers and businesses to put a clear, defined, and human face to their audience, enabling them to identify and understand their audience more clearly. A good marketing persona is so clear that you can actually talk about it like a real person. It is the face of a whole segment, encapsulated in that "fake but not fake" persona profile. What do I mean by fake but not fake? Basically, this person is an invention based on a reality, the reality that defines your whole target. So, when you are thinking about how to talk to your audience after you have your marketing personas defined, you will be thinking about how to communicate with that persona, opening the door to a more human and engaging connection. Marketing personas are fictional characters representative of your audience that contribute to focusing your marketing strategies.

In the case of *Asparagus Magazine*, we built two different marketing personas based on their quantitative and qualitative data. Our audience is significantly divided into these two main groups not only based on demographic factors, like gender and age, but also based on their life circumstances and lifestyle. Something important to take into consideration is the impact and importance of the qualitative data in this kind of marketing analysis, because they give us the opportunity to really understand the consumer's position and behaviour, allowing us to stand in their buyer's shoes, as Adele Revella, founder of the *Buyer Persona Institute* and author of the book *Buyer Personas*:

How to Gain Insight into Your Customer's Expectations, Align Your Marketing Strategies, and Win More Business said in the citation at the beginning of this section.

The more human, complex, and personal our customer profiling could be, the more powerful this tool is going to be in terms of marketing strategies. Humans are complex; they have, we have, a lot of different layers, as well as it should be in our profiling and the details that we take into consideration during this process of building our personas. It is important to avoid stereotypes as much as possible and strive to construct authentic personas with genuine needs and connections, rather than relying on generic archetypes that could apply to any other organization.

With all that said, let me now introduce you to *Asparagus* marketing personas, our lovely Amy and beloved Deb. Say, "Nice to meet you", as we are going to talk a lot about their impact on our decisions!

3.4. Profiling-Guided Marketing Strategy

When the *Asparagus* team reached this stage of the process, after completing the analysis and profiling of their audiences, they gained a clearer understanding of who their audience is, what they need, and why they are engaging with *Asparagus'* work. Now, they not only know that, in general, most of their readers and followers are women seeking to lead a more sustainable life and contribute to a more sustainable world, but also that this community of women readers and followers is divided into two groups, based on their life realities and age.

Amy represents our younger audience, a millennial at 35 years old and a second-generation Canadian. She is a full-time employee, juggling the roles of a parent, partner, and professional, all while striving to maintain a healthy lifestyle and social responsibility. Amy faces budgetary and time constraints, yet she is deeply committed to leaving a better world for future generations.

Deb embodies our baby boomer audience. She is a 70-year-old retired woman living in Vancouver. As a mother and grandmother, she spends her retirement engaging in leisure activities and meaningful community involvement to enhance the quality of life for her descendants. Deb is driven by the desire to help reverse the effects of climate change affecting future generations.

Recognizing the distinctions between our "Amys" and "Debs", the *Asparagus* team, guided by consultant Anita Li, realized that our current and only newsletter, known today as *Letters from the Editor*, was more directly tailored to Deb in terms of content, design, and structure. *Letters from the Editor* is dedicated to reporting on all aspects of *Asparagus Magazine*. It is a lengthy newsletter intended to keep magazine subscribers informed. Our "Debs" have the time and inclination to read this type of material, but our "Amys" lack the time and are exposed to a lot of content competing for their attention on other platforms. Therefore, they need concrete information about what they are looking for, in this case, concrete information on how to live more sustainably. We lacked a product specifically designed for Amy, a publishing product conceived to deliver vital information on sustainable living to this younger audience, considering their specific characteristics such as time and budget constraints.

Confronted with this reality, we initiated the process of redesigning or creating a new product with a focus on Amy as the primary target audience. For this next step, we applied the marketing concept known as "customer-centric marketing", reorienting our thinking process to better meet the needs and preferences of our younger audience.

3.4.1. Customer-centric marketing

Customer-centric companies understand not only what the customer values, but also the value the customer represents to their bottom line.

— Booz & Company, *Business report 2004*

Now, let's delve into the concept of customer-centric marketing and its significance. Customer-centric marketing, as the name suggests, is a strategic approach where the customer is placed at the centre of every decision, thought, change, and question within the marketing process. This philosophy acknowledges that a successful marketing strategy is not just about promoting a product or service but is deeply rooted in understanding and fulfilling the needs and preferences of the customer.

The importance of customer-centric marketing lies in its ability to foster stronger connections with the target audience. By prioritizing the customer experience, businesses can create a more meaningful and personalized interaction. This approach recognizes that each target market is unique, with distinct preferences, behaviours, and

expectations. Therefore, the marketing strategies are tailored to address these specific needs, creating a more engaging and satisfying experience.

In the context of marketing persona profiles, customer-centric marketing aligns with the process of creating detailed and accurate representations of the target audience. Marketing personas, such as Amy and Deb for *Asparagus Magazine*, serve as the embodiment of specific segments within the broader customer base. These personas encapsulate the characteristics, preferences, and aspirations of the audience, guiding the marketing team to tailor their strategies accordingly.

Amy and Deb represent distinct segments with unique needs and lifestyles. Embracing a customer-centric marketing approach means recognizing and addressing these differences. For example, as we discovered through the segmentation process, Amy, being a younger, busy professional, has limited time and budget constraints. On the other hand, Deb, a retired baby boomer, is more engaged in community activities and values reliable information for decision-making.

The connection between customer-centric marketing and the decision to create a second newsletter for *Asparagus Magazine* is fundamental. Recognizing the need to cater to Amy's specific requirements, *Asparagus* embarked on a journey to design a new newsletter that aligns perfectly with her lifestyle and preferences. This shift in focus from a generic newsletter to a product tailored for Amy exemplifies the essence of customer-centric marketing.

As we applied the principles of customer-centric marketing in the product development process, we considered Amy's limited time, budget constraints, and desire for easily accessible information. The new product aims not only to provide valuable content on sustainable living, but to deliver it in a way that resonates with Amy's busy lifestyle.

In conclusion, customer-centric marketing is a paradigm that prioritizes the customer throughout the marketing process. Its importance lies in building stronger connections, personalizing interactions, and addressing the unique needs of diverse customer segments. The synergy between customer-centric marketing, marketing persona profiles, and the new product development at *Asparagus Magazine* showcases a commitment to understanding and serving the distinct requirements of the audience.

This holistic approach ensures that marketing efforts are not only impactful, but also resonate with the diverse and dynamic readership of *Asparagus Magazine*.

3.4.2. Low-Budget Marketing Strategy

Navigating the realm of effective marketing on a limited budget is not merely a challenge but an opportunity to leverage resources strategically. As a team at *Asparagus Magazine*, when we confronted the need for a new product, particularly geared towards our younger audience, we embarked on a journey to maximize the impact of our limited resources. The result of this collective effort was the inception of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter, a solution born out of innovation and a commitment to delivering value even within constraints.

Working with a limited budget necessitates a shift in perspective—a move from seeing limitations as obstacles to viewing them as catalysts for creativity. Jessie Johnston, the founder of *Asparagus Magazine*, played a pivotal role in steering the team towards this mindset. The idea of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter was not just a practical solution; it was a testament to our collective ability to think outside the box and make the most of what we had.

The *Asparagus Tips* newsletter, with its catchy name, embodies a shift towards content delivery that is concise, actionable, and tailored to Amy's busy life. Here, the importance of the name itself becomes evident. *Asparagus Tips* not only reflects the essence of the magazine but also sets the tone for the kind of content Amy can expect—practical, insightful, and directly applicable to her goal of living a more sustainable life. Considering the unique characteristics of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter, we can talk about three effective marketing strategies on a limited budget that we applied for its development: Content optimization, leveraging digital platforms, and implementing metrics and analytics.

The main strategy was content optimization. Given the limited resources, the content becomes the cornerstone of our marketing strategy. Every element of the newsletter, including photos, design icons, and all text, must be meticulously crafted to deliver maximum value in a concise format. We focus on quality over quantity, ensuring that every tip, article, or suggestion resonates with our audience.

Leveraging digital platforms is key in today's digital age. The online realm offers cost-effective opportunities for reaching a wide audience. The *Asparagus Tips* newsletter utilizes email marketing and the magazine's website to disseminate content. These channels not only ensure broad reach but also allow for targeted engagement with our specific audience segments, as we will explore in the next section.

And lastly, and most importantly in terms of continuity, is the capacity to implement metrics and analytics tools. Implementing analytics tools allows us to measure the performance of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter. By tracking metrics such as subscribers, open rates, and click-through rates, we gain valuable insights into how well our readers are engaging with the content and what kind of content they prefer to receive. This data-driven approach enables us to refine our strategies over time, giving us the opportunity to create new content based on the consumer behaviour that readers experience with the newsletter. This ensures the possibility of continuous improvement with limited resources, crafting new issues with the knowledge of what content the readers engage with.

In conclusion, effective marketing on a limited budget is not only feasible but can lead to innovative solutions that resonate deeply with the target audience. The *Asparagus Tips* newsletter exemplifies this principle, showcasing how strategic thinking and a customer-centric approach can drive impactful results even in resource-constrained scenarios. As we continue to navigate the evolving landscape of sustainable living, the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter stands as an example of our commitment to providing valuable, accessible, and engaging content to our readers in the way that they need it.

3.5. Harnessing Engagement Through Targeted Newsletters

And finally, you might ask, why a newsletter? Why, among all the options in the digital landscape, did we choose a newsletter? The short answer is this: based on our resources. Not only financial resources, but also human resources, which translate into our capacity for production, and journalism resources. During the marketing mentorship with Anita Li, she focused on identifying sustainable alternatives to connect with the *Asparagus* audience. We didn't have the capacity to introduce a new high-demand product in our responsibilities, such as a new section on the *Asparagus* website or

engaging multimedia content on social media, and we didn't have the resources to produce new stories at a fast pace. At the same time, we didn't have the resources to compete on social media with consistent publications and rebranding to connect better through the channels where the younger segment of our audience spends time, such as Instagram and TikTok, which demands paid advertisement and video content production to increase engagement.

Based on this, the best strategy for *Asparagus* is the one that is based on its reality as an organization and is designed in a way that can be sustainable for the magazine. For that reason, Li presented to us the idea of a targeted newsletter. The strategic deployment of targeted newsletters has emerged as a formidable tool for capturing and leveraging audience engagement. This approach involves crafting content with precision, tailoring it to specific audience segments, and ensuring that the information provided not only aligns with the readership but also resonates deeply with their unique interests and needs. The significance of targeted newsletters lies in their ability to foster a more personalized and meaningful connection with the audience, resulting in increased loyalty and sustained engagement, as well as content that puts their customer at the centre.

After analyzing all the benefits and realizing that we can mobilize the bank of stories that *Asparagus* has been publishing over the last 6 years, we decided that a targeted newsletter would be viable for us, not only to create, but also to maintain consistency by continuing to publish content over time. *Asparagus Tips* newsletter would serve as an educational tool, offering actionable advice and practical tips that empower readers to make sustainable choices in their daily lives. It goes beyond generic information, exploring the nuances of implementing eco-friendly practices in real-life scenarios. This actionable approach not only enhances engagement but also positions the newsletter as a valuable resource that actively contributes to the reader's pursuit of a more sustainable lifestyle.

Chapter 4.

The *Asparagus Tips* newsletter

The most obvious bit of wordplay available to a business named after Asparagus is the phrase "Asparagus Tips." And people who know me have often asked why there's no part of the magazine with that name. The answer is: I've been saving it up. Because once we used it, we could never use it again. I wanted to make sure we used it for the most perfect thing, and it took a while for the right idea to come along. But come along it has!

— Jessie Johnston, *Letters from the Editor*

4.1. Development Process

In this section, we uncover the journey of bringing the *Asparagus Tips* monthly newsletter to life. Each issue comprises summarized tips from three or more stories in the *Asparagus Magazine* archive, focusing on one specific topic each month. Having carefully examined our audience, segmented it, developed marketing personas, and identified the need for a product tailored to our younger readers, the decision to create a second targeted newsletter naturally emerged. This developmental process unfolded in two primary stages: concept and execution.

The concept stage marked a phase of collaborative efforts, intensive brainstorming, and extensive research. Conversations resonated within the team as we synthesized insights gained from audience analysis. The multidisciplinary team, comprising both editorial and design facets, brought a holistic perspective to the table. Research of other newsletters played a crucial role, guiding our decisions as we navigated through the design and content planning phases. Each team, editorial and design, synchronized their efforts to ensure an integration of ideas and strategies.

As we transitioned to the execution phase, the envisioned *Asparagus Tips* newsletter began to take tangible form. The collaborative groundwork laid in the design phase bore fruit as the editorial team curated content aligned with the preferences and needs of our younger audience. Simultaneously, the design team translated these insights into

visually appealing and easily digestible formats, ensuring the newsletter's accessibility and engagement.

This developmental process was not just a mechanical series of steps; it was a narrative woven with the threads of creativity, strategy, and a commitment to delivering impactful content to our valued readership. In subsequent sections, we will delve into the specific aspects of concept and execution, unravelling the intricacies of each stage in the creation of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter.

4.1.1. Concept

After our founder and Editrix-in-Chief, Jessie Johnston, conceptualized the idea of *Asparagus Tips*, a newsletter geared towards providing short and practical tips for our younger audience, we initiated a comprehensive design process to breathe life into this new concept. At this pivotal stage, we divided our efforts into two dedicated teams: Editorial and Design. The editorial team was composed of Sun Woo Baik (writer), Zeahaa Rehman (writer), and Alia Dharssi (editor), while the design team consisted of Anjali Bhardwaj (designer) and me, Aniana Domínguez (designer). As a part of the design team, I collaborated closely with the magazine's marketing and business development coordinator, Anjali Bhardwaj, to bring visual identity to the new newsletter.

The design process unfolded as a collective journey, spanning six distinct stages: 1) brainstorming, 2) research, 3) mock-up proposals, 4) design proposals, 5) presentation to the team, and 6) application of feedback. During the brainstorming phase, we started a creative exploration of ideas, perspectives, and opinions related to the new newsletter concept. This phase aimed to visualize the appearance of the newsletter, contemplating elements such as colour schemes and the desired level of formality. Following the brainstorming session, each team member conducted individual research to gather inspiration from magazines and organizations sharing similar purposes, particularly those targeting the same demographic in terms of age, gender, and motivations.

The insights from our research guided us to distill key points that we believed would work effectively for our new newsletter. These findings propelled us to the next stage, where each team member independently crafted mock-up designs. During this process, we generated visual proposals for the newsletter, presenting them to the entire team,

including the editorial team. The feedback received during this collaborative session allowed us to refine our design direction. Notably, both designs shared a common thread in terms of colours and embraced a minimalist aesthetic. Building upon this foundation, we synthesized our ideas into a cohesive design proposal that was then presented to the team. A thorough discussion ensued, resulting in minor adjustments for optimal effectiveness. Once the final design template was complete, we shared it with the editorial team, ensuring alignment across all aspects of the newsletter.

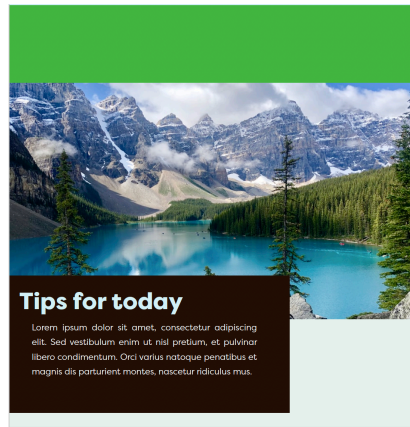


Figure 1. The header of the first digital mock-up presented to the Asparagus Magazine team.

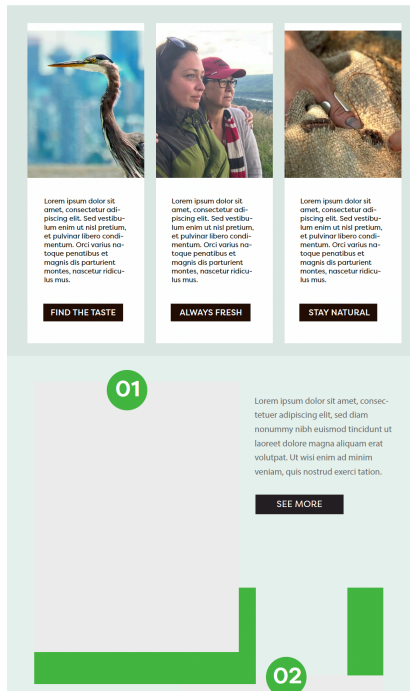


Figure 2. The body of the first digital mock-up presented to the Asparagus Magazine team.

The editorial design process added another layer of depth to our creative journey. A significant decision was made to incorporate the recycling of old content into the new newsletter. This approach allowed us to repurpose content from the stories already published on our website and printed issues of *Asparagus Magazine*, breathing new life into it, and presenting it to our audience in the form of bite-sized, practical tips. These tips, while offering a quick and refreshing glimpse, also provided readers with the option to explore further should they wish to dig deeper into a particular topic.

Simultaneously, the editorial team undertook the task of classifying stories previously published by *Asparagus Magazine* into specific topics. Each topic serves as the central theme for an issue of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter. By categorizing content into topics such as laundry, kids' fashion, grocery, kitchen, and more, we aimed to create a structured and engaging narrative for our audience. As the design process unfolded, the synergy between the design and editorial teams became increasingly evident. By repurposing and presenting content in a new format, we aimed to capture the attention of our audience and provide them with valuable, relevant information.

We carefully considered several factors to ensure a cohesive and engaging experience for our readers. Firstly, we have selected a palette of green, blue, white, and yellow. These colors are deeply rooted in the fundamentals of human connection with nature. Green represents the earth, blue embodies the sky, yellow symbolizes the sun, and white serves as the canvas upon which our journey unfolds. By reducing the saturation or tone of each color, we aim to minimize eyestrain and create a visually comfortable reading experience.

Furthermore, all shapes within our design are intentionally curved, avoiding sharp lines. This choice mirrors the organic forms found in nature, contrasting with the rigidity of man-made structures. By embracing curves, we aim to symbolize our alignment with the natural world and reinforce the theme of our newsletter. Moreover, we integrate this curvature not only into the design elements but also into the pre-edited pictures accompanying each article or tip. By applying consistent curved shapes to our visuals, we ensure that images blend into the overall design, becoming an integral part of the storytelling process. This approach transforms pictures from mere additions to essential components, enhancing the cohesiveness and impact of our newsletter.

The success of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter is an example of the meticulous design process that prioritized creativity, research, and feedback. By embracing a customer-centric approach, we tailored the newsletter to resonate with the preferences and lifestyle of our target audience. The design choices, from colour schemes to layout, were informed by a deep understanding of our audience's expectations and visual preferences. The *Asparagus Tips* newsletter stands as a tangible outcome of this dedication, providing valuable content in an engaging format that aligns with the magazine's core values.

4.1.2. Execution

After completing the conceptualization process and finalizing crucial decisions regarding both editorial and design, the next phase involved the hands-on implementation and execution of the inaugural edition of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter. Our primary focus during this stage was to create a product that not only could be easily replicated each month but also maintained an innovative edge with every issue. Standardization and practicality emerged as two fundamental principles, both in terms of design execution and sustainability in content and editorial material for each new release.

Central to our execution strategy was the creation of a design template that would serve as the consistent visual identity for all issues of the newsletter. This template allowed for flexibility, particularly in the swapping of photos based on the topic, while preserving the overall design that became synonymous with the brand identity of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter. The design templates were drafted using Photoshop, ensuring a blend of aesthetic appeal and functionality. To streamline our workflow and maintain a centralized approach to our product, we used Mailchimp, an email marketing platform already familiar to us through the older newsletter, *Letters from the Editor*.



Figure 3. The header of the first draft presented to the Asparagus Magazine team.

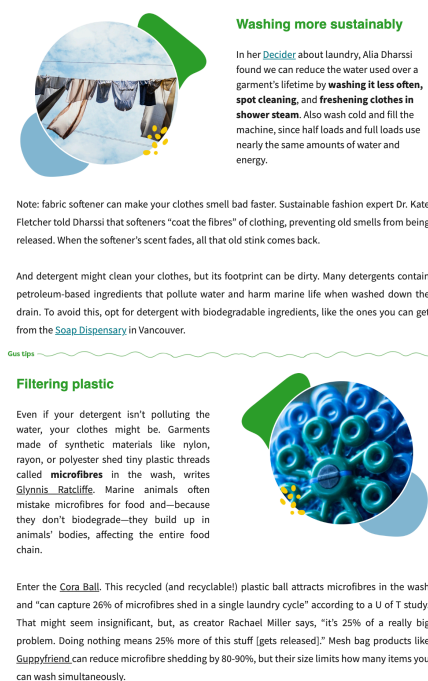


Figure 4. The body of the first draft presented to the Asparagus Magazine team.

Mailchimp's user-friendly interface facilitated the integration of our design templates, providing a cohesive and efficient platform for managing our newsletter campaigns. Crucially, Mailchimp offered robust analytics for each email campaign, offering valuable insights into audience engagement and interaction. This analytical capability played a pivotal role in our selection of an email marketing platform, allowing us to refine and optimize our approach based on real-time data.

On the significant date of July 8, 2022, we successfully launched the first edition of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter. The culmination of our efforts was met with enthusiasm as we witnessed the tangible result of our design and execution processes coming to life. The carefully designed template not only provided a visually appealing and consistent layout but also allowed for adaptability to different topics, maintaining a fresh and engaging look with each edition.

The decision to employ Mailchimp proved advantageous, as the platform's analytics promptly provided valuable feedback on the performance of the first edition. Insights into open rates, click-through rates, and audience interaction allowed us to gauge the effectiveness of our content delivery and make informed adjustments for subsequent editions.

In conclusion, the implementation and execution phase marked the transition from conceptualization to a tangible, deliverable product. By emphasizing standardization, practicality, and sustainability, we ensured that the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter not only met the immediate objectives of the first edition but also set a precedent for future issues.



Figure 5. The header of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter, edition no. 8, published in February 2023 and a finalist in the Canadian Online Publishing Awards 2023.



Closed season for open flame?

There's romance to cooking with fire. But, any way you slice it, kitchen flames mean fossil fuels. Gas stoves are also inefficient compared to other heating methods, according to restaurant consultant André LaRivière. On average, 70% of the energy from gas stoves is wasted on heating the air. Meanwhile, electric induction stoves direct more than 95% of their energy to the food.

The best thing restaurants and would-be kitchen renovators can do for the environment is switch to induction, like Christine Boyle and Seth Klein did for their [climate-conscious home reno](#). Induction is better for your health, too. Gas stoves release nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter, which can cause respiratory problems. Homes with gas stoves reportedly contain twice the NO₂ and particulate matter as homes with electric ones.

Don't Get Lit

Figure 6. The body of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter, edition no. 8, published in February 2023 and a finalist in the Canadian Online Publishing Awards 2023.

That's all for now! Until next we tip,

Sun Woo Baik and Zeahaa Rehman
Assistant Editors, *Asparagus Magazine*

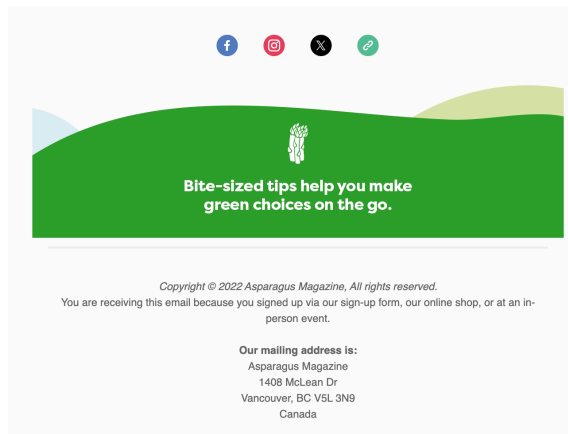


Figure 7. The footer of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter, edition no. 8, published in February 2023 and a finalist in the Canadian Online Publishing Awards 2023.

4.2. Results

The inaugural edition of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter launched on July 8, 2022. Ever since its inception, the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter team has maintained its commitment to monthly publication, having a total of 20 insightful issues by February 2024, each corresponding to a month on the calendar. Each of these editions is intricately dedicated to furnishing succinct yet impactful tips aimed at guiding individuals towards leading a

more sustainable life across various facets. The initial 20 digital issues of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter thoughtfully covered a diverse range of topics, including drinking sustainably, laundry, bathroom, clothes, travel, holidays, sleep, cooking, personal care, grow food, kid's clothes, food shopping, home energy, wildlife, food waste, reading, gifts, festive season, plastic, and food. All these topics were selected from *Asparagus* archive of published stories by the *Asparagus Tips* editorial team and presented by them in a more concise manner to cater to our audience pressed for time. The goal is to make the reading process more accessible, especially for individuals constrained by time.

The strategy for unveiling the first issue of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter involved a strategic outreach plan targeting the subscriber list of the existing newsletter, *Letters from the Editor*. This approach not only unveiled the new *Asparagus Magazine* product to the existing loyal subscribers but also extended a warm invitation, clarifying that subsequent editions would only be sent to readers who subscribe to the new newsletter, *Asparagus Tips*. The first edition successfully reached a broad audience, totalling 717 recipients. By the second edition in August 2022, the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter had garnered an additional 55 subscribers. The subsequent 20 months, spanning from the second to the twentieth edition in February 2024, witnessed a remarkable surge in the subscriber list, culminating in an impressive increase of 344 subscribers (in comparison to approximately 300 print subscribers and 1,051 digital newsletter subscribers for *Letters from the Editor*) — an encouraging surge of 525.45%.

Feb 2024 Asparagus Tips - Food

[Switch report](#) ▾

[Overview](#) [Activity](#) ▾ [Click Performance](#) [Content Optimizer](#) [Social](#) [E-commerce](#) ▾ [Inbox](#) [Analytics360](#)

344 Recipients

Audience: Asparagus Magazine (Unsaved segment)

Delivered: Wed, Feb 7, 2024 7:15 PM

Subject: Green Your Grocery Run

[View email](#) · [Download](#) · [Print](#) · [Share](#)

Figure 8. Number of recipients/subscribers of *Asparagus Tips* newsletter for February 2024.

In terms of effectiveness and engagement, *Asparagus Tips* maintained an outstanding open rate, consistently averaging 70% over the 20 months despite the larger total audience. This remarkable open rate firmly positions the newsletter in the upper echelons of excellence, signifying sustained interest from the targeted and customer-centric audience that the newsletter aims to serve. The click rate average for the

newsletter stood at an impressive 11.59%, surpassing the benchmark (2.62%) for high click-through rate (CTR) according to research made available by *Mailchimp*. It is crucial to note that while the primary focus remains on delivering bite-sized tips that the younger audience can use without clicking through to read more, achieving, and maintaining a high CTR serves as a testament to the *Asparagus Magazine* team's proficiency in not only capturing attention but also actively driving traffic to the website.

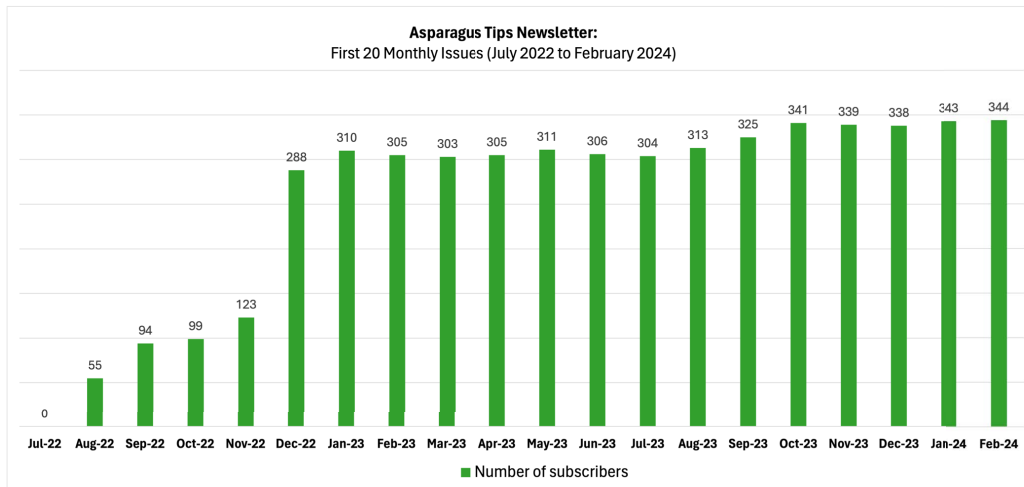


Figure 9. The number of subscribers for each of the first 20 months and 20 issues of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter from July 2022 to February 2024.

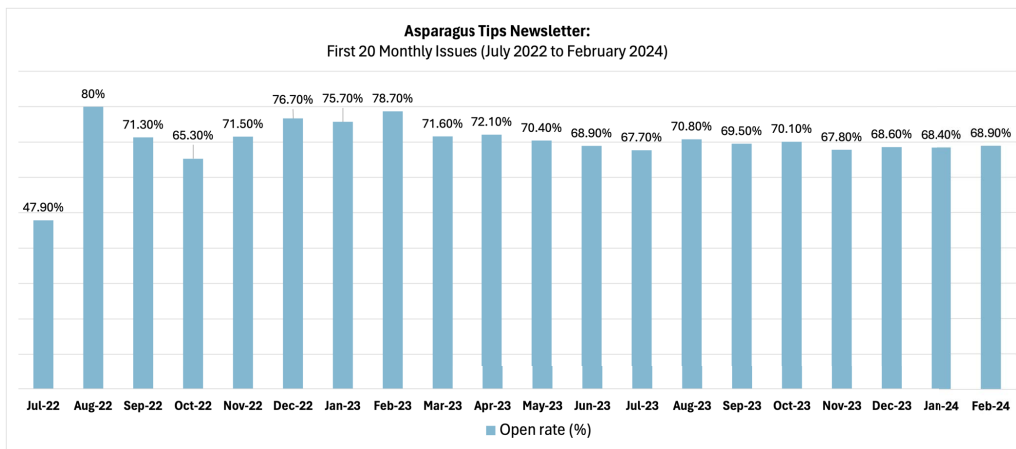


Figure 10. Percentage of open rate for each of the first 20 months and 20 issues of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter from July 2022 to February 2024.

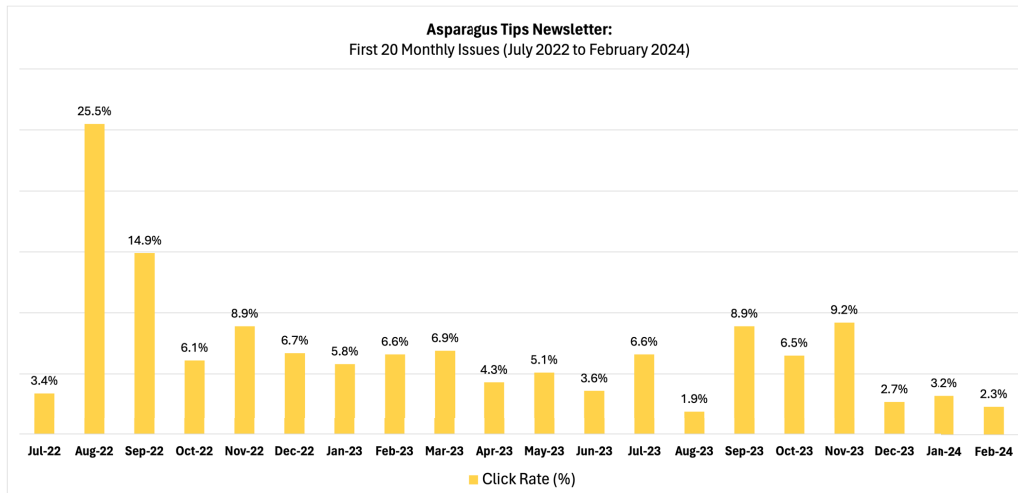


Figure 11. Percentage of click-through rate (CTR) for each of the first 20 months and 20 issues of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter from July 2022 to February 2024.

Adding to the sense of pride and motivation, the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter received a distinguished nomination as a finalist for the Canadian Online Publishing Awards 2023 in the category of "Best Email Newsletter Design" for consumers. While the team embarked on their publishing journey driven by a genuine passion for contributing to a more sustainable world, this recognition stands as a profound honour. It underscores the dedication of the team to excellence in crafting a newsletter that transcends conventional boundaries, contributing meaningfully to the discourse on sustainability.

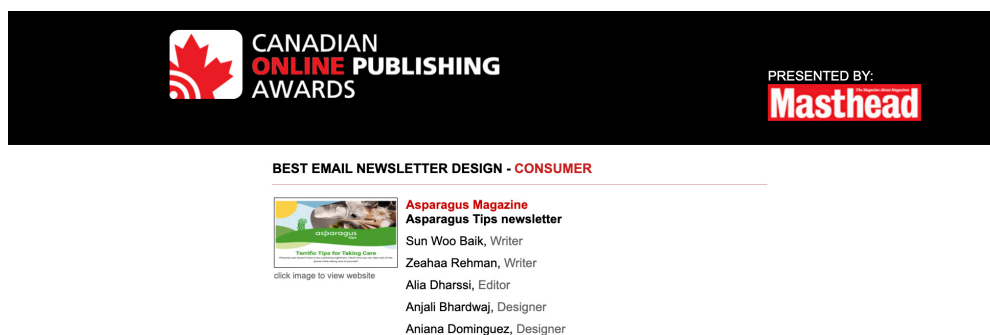


Figure 12. Nomination as a finalist in the Canadian Online Publishing Awards 2024, in the Consumer category for "Best Email Newsletter Design".

As the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter continues to celebrate its first years of existence, it has injected a significant dose of fun and yielded commendable results for *Asparagus Magazine*. The journey is still unfolding, and we eagerly anticipate the myriad of possibilities and achievements this little powerhouse will unlock as it matures with time!

Chapter 5. Conclusion

Books (or any published content) compete for spending power against a whole range of products, not just other books.

— Alison Baverstock & Susannah Bowen, *How to Market Books*

5.1. Low Budget, High Creativity, and Determination

Operating within the confines of a limited budget may seem like a hindrance, but at *Asparagus Magazine*, it is seen as an opportunity to unleash creativity and determination. In the realm of publishing, particularly at *Asparagus Magazine*, a low budget doesn't equate to an inability to achieve; rather, it serves as a catalyst for ingenuity. Creativity, in terms of generating alternatives for problem-solving, takes centre stage as a driving force behind the success of projects under budget constraints. *Asparagus Magazine* values imagination. The team excels at generating new concepts and approaches, ensuring that each project, even with budget limitations, is fortified with a different perspective.

However, creativity alone is not enough; it must be coupled with determination. *Asparagus Magazine* exemplifies a spirit that refuses to be bogged down by financial restrictions. Determination becomes the driving force that propels the team forward, fostering resilience and a can-do attitude. The synergy between a low budget, high creativity, and determination becomes a powerful trio in the *Asparagus Magazine* narrative. It is not about succumbing to limitations; It is about redefining them.

One of the remarkable outcomes of this synergy is the development of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter. The trifecta of a low budget, high creativity, and determination is a celebration of making the most out of limited resources, transforming challenges into opportunities, and showcasing that, with the right mindset, financial constraints can be the impetus for unparalleled creativity and success; driving the team to explore other solutions to the same challenge.

5.2. Lessons

Today, I am concluding this piece with a heart brimming with pride, knowing that our *Asparagus Tips* newsletter is a finalist in the Canadian Online Publishing Awards 2023. I couldn't be prouder of this team that produces stories because they genuinely believe in their power to contribute to building a more sustainable world across all aspects of life; and of myself as a designer, marketing, and publishing professional for the results I achieved with this newsletter, which is one of the works I am proudest of, not only for the aesthetic that I, along with my co-designer and marketing team, Anjali Bhardwaj, achieved, but also for the marketing analysis work behind this whole project that we executed.

I want to conclude this project report with six important lessons learned from this professional placement and the creation of the *Asparagus Tips* newsletter.

First, the importance of gathering data. One of the key lessons that I got from this project is the importance of data recollection and analysis. To make marketing efforts that can be measured is basic to be able to assess the impact of the work that you are doing.

Second, invest in understanding your audience. The magazine is the sender that wants to transmit a message (publishing content). But if the magazine does not know who the receiver is, how will it be able to select an appropriate channel to send the message? It is essential to understand who your audience is, with whom and to whom you are talking, to be able to communicate with them in a more effective way.

Third, consult an industry expert. You don't need to know everything about everything, but you need to be open to asking those who know about what you don't. The process of creating the two marketing personas and a new newsletter in less than four months was possible, in a big part due to the good feedback and guidance that we were receiving. External consultations are keys to getting the work done.

Fourth, content is king. In this digital marketing era, where everyone is competing with each other and investments are needed to connect with potential consumers, many efforts are often lost in the rapidly changing and competitive digital environment. The importance of organic, well-thought-out content to support any paid content is even greater. It is essential to learn how to take advantage of new marketing strategies and

tools without allowing them to alter the core essence of the brand. This placement showcases the creation of new publishing products and marketing strategies through creativity and a thoughtful process, rather than following trends. *Asparagus* taught me that we can still create editorial content based mainly on the stories that people need and want to read, understanding the audience.

Fifth, teamwork. Having a good, diversified team that truly believed in the purpose and vision of the work they were doing was essential for success. I learned about the dynamics of a magazine firsthand in a real scenario, where each of us had a specific task, but at the same time, we functioned as a team, brainstorming together and helping each other to refresh our ideas, always striving for the best possible outcome for our common objective.

Sixth, determination and creativity versus budget. It is better to have a budget than not have a budget, but when you do not have one, it is a great advantage to know how to get ahead without it. Completing my professional placement at *Asparagus Magazine* has been one of the most impactful experiences and opportunities in my life. I learned firsthand what it means to publish excellent stories without the luxury of amazing infrastructure, top-notch equipment, or a large team. *Asparagus* stands as an example of doing the job every day because you genuinely believe in it. For me, it is proof that demonstrates how you can become an award-winning magazine with two factors: belief in what you are doing and doing it because you believe in it.

Asparagus and this project taught me a lot, but above everything, they reaffirmed the importance of marketing and targeting to create and deliver engaging publishing content to the desired audience, and, of course, that targeting is also publishing!

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