Åbo Akademi

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CONSUMERIZATION OF B2B SALES

Harnessing B2C Interaction Design Strategies for a Consulting Company

Master's Thesis in Information Systems

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<tr><td colspan="2">Field: Management Information Systems</td></tr>
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<tr><td colspan="2">Title: Consumerization of B2B Sales - Harnessing B2C Interaction Design Strategies for a Consulting Company</td></tr>
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<tr><td colspan="2">Abstract:
The increasing global connectivity and the growing amount of consumer technology at workplaces has resulted in companies having to rethink parts of their IT strategies. Consumer innovations penetrating the workplace is called 'Consumerization' and has been the guiding force of this thesis. The main objective is to explore how a consulting company could utilize consumer interaction design to leverage the potential of its digital sales channels. This is done by reviewing relevant user experience (UX) and interaction design models, comparing the B2B and B2C business models and their characteristics, and exploring some relevant innovation theories.

There are significant differences between B2B and B2C business models, however, the line between the two is often blurred and calls for better classification methods. B2B companies struggle more with implementing UX compared to their B2C counterparts. This might relate to B2B companies' challenges in measuring the benefits of their websites and the fact that the way of doing business, in general, is less emotional compared to B2C companies. Still, B2B companies contribute to the majority of all e-commerce revenue worldwide.

A case study research method was chosen to connect the theory to practice. Due to the local nature of the study, a mixed methods design was adopted and consisted of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The case study included an internal interview, a customer survey, a competitor search, and a trend review.</td></tr>
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The results show that the case company's typical customers would be open for a more interactive online sales experience. The survey also revealed that credibility in the form of testimonials and references was highly valued among the respondents. Competitors of the case company did not show many innovative features on their websites and the design features were mostly true to their segment. This indicates that there could be unrealized competitive advantage to be gained from implementing the proposed sales platform on the case company's website.

The study's findings serve as a guide for the case company but also contributes to general managerial practices. Even in a B2B setting, buyers are influenced by their consumer experiences which could be utilized when developing online sales solutions in the future. A four-point classification method could be used to more accurately determine the business model for a company, which in turn translates to more accurate digital strategies. When implementing new innovations, the MAYA-principle (most advanced yet acceptable) combined with Design Thinking could help formulate the correct approach for projects. The combined findings of the case study serve as a platform for future research and as such narrow the gap of B2B research.

Keywords: Consumerization, B2B, B2C, Consulting, Interaction Design

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1 INTRODUCTION

The world is becoming increasingly connected by the day, and a significant proportion of our life is spent online. In the second quarter of 2023, the worldwide average time spent online was almost seven hours (Statista, 2023). This means that most of our daily routines involve IT and the Internet in some form. As a result, we have become experienced Internet users, and companies are tweaking their products and services to cater to our consumer needs.

Companies and organizations have been seeing an increase in the presence of consumer technology during the last two decades due to ‘consumerization’. The definition was first used by Moschella et al. (2004) to describe the change in innovation caused by a growing influx of consumer technology in the business environment. This means that an ever-growing number of innovations that penetrate organizations and institutions today stem from consumer markets. According to Moschella et al. (2004), businesses could use consumerization to their advantage by acknowledging that people have two roles; they are both employees and consumers simultaneously. This idea has been one of the underlying motivators for this thesis.

Companies and organizations have made significant progress in implementing innovative interaction design on their websites. Still, the differences between business-to-business (later referred to as B2B) and business-to-consumer (later referred to as B2C) companies are evident. Both Harrison et al. (2017) and Konradt et al. (2012) state that B2C companies invest more in website usability and interaction design than B2B companies. This is connected to variations in the approaches each business model employs. Some of the major differences relate to the amount and size of customers (fewer but larger customers in B2B) as well as the presence of emotions in purchasing decisions (more in B2C markets) (Rėklaitis & Pilelienė, 2019; Iankova et al., 2019).

Other differences between B2B and B2C markets can be observed as well, and even an imbalance in academic research can be noticed: the B2C field has gained more research exposure compared to B2B (Lilien, 2016). According to Lilien (2016), B2B markets are usually characterized by more complex transactions, with more decision-makers and stakeholders involved, fewer customers, and a more quantifiable value proposition than in B2C markets. Because B2C markets receive more research attention, most marketing applications are developed for consumers. Lilien (2016) also mentions that there is an apparent demand for customer analytics in the B2B world but that it is challenging to implement the existing consumer-oriented solutions to fit B2B models. This means that many B2B companies could benefit from benchmarking B2C models when creating their solutions.

Considering the entire business landscape when comparing B2B and B2C marketing is essential. Gummesson and Polese (2009) advocate for a network perspective when examining marketing strategies for B2B and B2C companies. Rather than entirely separating the marketing approaches for each group, Gummeson and Polese (2009) emphasize the importance of recognizing the interdependence between them, particularly for businesses that are a combination of B2B/B2C or B2B2C. According to Gummesson and Polese (2009), both the many-to-many approach and the service-dominant logic in B2C marketing emphasize the role of consumers. These approaches could, therefore, be valuable tools for B2B companies aiming to find more value in their marketing efforts.

Furthermore, a study by Iankova et al. (2019) found that the perceived value gained by social media marketing was significantly different for B2B and B2C companies. Social media marketing is considered a perceptual marketing tool that relies more on emotions than rationality and can, therefore, be challenging to measure (Iankova et al., 2019). This coincides with the observations of Lilien (2016), who defines B2C marketing as more emotionally driven than B2B marketing, which is more technical by nature. This shows that even though B2B and B2C companies can be seen as part of an interdependent network, hands-on marketing approaches may vary greatly.

The acknowledgments mentioned above raise many interesting questions about key differences between the markets and why online marketing is being treated differently in the two. Above all, there is some indication of the B2B world seeking to learn more from the consumer markets and possibly applying the solutions to their own processes. The idea of gaining benefits from using a consumer interaction strategy for digital B2B services has been the primary motivation of this thesis.

1.1 Purpose of Study

This thesis will be conducted as an assignment for a consulting company based in Turku, which will later be referred to as “the case company”. The case company provides strategy and marketing consulting services for both B2B and B2C companies. The practical goal of this thesis is to give the case company advice on how to proceed with its online sales platform project. The academic goal is to explore literature related to the subject and examine the differences in interaction design approaches for B2B and B2C companies.

The initial task is to examine the theoretical landscape that covers interaction design and B2B and B2C marketing theories. Exploring what the B2B and B2C markets look like, how to differentiate between the two, and how to recognize which marketing strategy to use is essential in order to start planning for relevant interaction design methods. To connect the literature, relevant innovation and consumerization theories will be covered. Based on the knowledge discovered in the literature, the case company will be able to formulate its needs and constraints for the study. The theory and the company’s requirements will set the grounds for the empirical study. The outcome of the thesis is aimed at serving both the case company and other B2B companies seeking to improve their marketing strategies.

As described, this thesis will have a heavy practical approach to better meet the case company’s requirements and provide them with useful insights. While the primary purpose is to provide the case company with a practical business application, the thesis also aims at contributing some academic value. The literature review will present the differences and practices of B2B and B2C markets and their possible overlapping trends. Both the theoretical and practical findings are intended to give rise to further discussion and research in the hope of narrowing the academic gap between B2B and B2C research described by Lilien (2016).

1.2 Problem Statement & Research Questions

The main problem identified by the initial literature review is that many B2B sales interactions are often described as complicated and detailed (Lilien, 2016; Iankova et al., 2019). This becomes increasingly apparent when comparing B2B and B2C sales interactions. Unnecessarily complex interactions lead to many inefficiencies, which could be difficult to fix due to the business landscape of the B2B market. However, many of these inefficiencies might also stem from the assumption that B2B interactions are inherently different compared to B2C interactions, which could lead to B2B companies continuing with outdated business models. Because many B2B sales interactions now involve IT, the need for good interaction design is increasing. The struggle for many B2B companies to perform as well as the B2C market regarding digital innovation and good interaction design (Lin et al. 2011; Harrison et al. 2017) means that there is room for improvement.

The case company identified similar problems specific to the consulting business, namely that customers often perceive consulting services as expensive and difficult to procure. These types of services are also difficult to purchase online. The interaction between the customer and the consultant is highly confidential and puts the consultant in a powerful position with great responsibility. These perceptions and doubts are issues that raise the barriers to the initial contacting decision and bring challenges to consulting companies.

The objective of this thesis is to identify the main problem areas of B2B sales interactions, especially those specific to the consulting industry, and find innovative solutions that could be incorporated into the sales platform as a means to alleviate these problems. To reach the objective, the following research questions have been established:

RQ1: What are the main differences between B2B and B2C websites, and how could B2B companies benefit from B2C interaction design practices?

RQ2: How could the case company benefit from B2C interaction design?

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six main parts. The first part consists of the introduction chapter that presents the starting point, background information, and scope of the thesis. Part two briefly presents the case company and the background information of the project. The third part consists of the literature review. Part four presents the method and results of the case study. The fifth and final part discusses the findings and highlights the implications of the case study.

2 THE CASE COMPANY

This section covers a short presentation of the case company. The presentation includes the characteristics, niche, and goals of the case company. In addition to the company profile, the mission and strategy, as well as the initial starting point for the project, will be covered. Finally, the initial mock-up of the proposed digital sales platform is presented. The mock-up was derived from several unofficial team meetings and brainstorming sessions and is based on the needs and constraints of the case company as well as some of the theories presented in the introduction chapter.

2.1 Company Profile

The case company is a micro company (<1m turnover) specializing in strategic marketing and growth consulting and is based in Turku, Finland. The company was founded in 2013 and provides consulting services to both B2B and B2C companies. Customers vary from small to medium-sized enterprises and are situated all around Finland. The case company specializes in growth through the strategic aspects of marketing and is interested in companies that have plans to internationalize their business. The case company is currently employing five people and is part of an extensive partnership network that contributes to new customers and business opportunities.

2.2 Mission and Strategy

The case company's mission can be translated to "Sustainable story. Sustainable growth.". According to one of the two owners, the company believes in a long-term and feasible marketing strategy as the enabler for sustainable and steady growth. This statement is strengthened by the company's value propositions that highlight fact-based analyses, practicality over unrealistic goals, tailor-made consulting, client-first -mentality, and offering the knowledge of the whole team in projects.

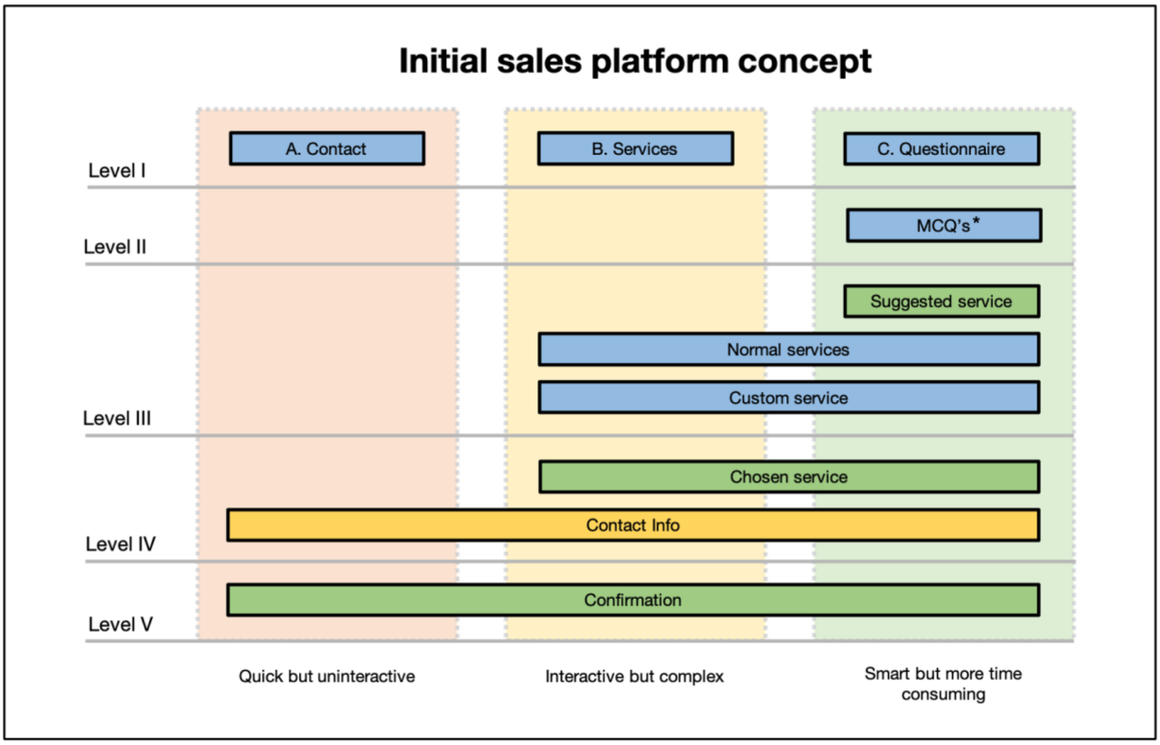
2.3 Initial Starting Point of the Project

The company continuously seeks ways to improve lead generation and renew. Currently, most leads are generated through networking activities and inbound contacts. The remaining leads come from direct quotation requests through the website. While the overall number of offers remains adequate with this model, networking and sales quickly become time-consuming and out of balance in a smaller organization. The initial idea was, therefore, to find a way to possibly automate lead generation on the company's website to be able to both channel resources towards more value-generating activities as well as increase and standardize the lead generation to improve the customers' user experience.

According to the case company, the solution that could help increase lead generation should contribute to the goal of revenue growth, standardize data gathering and utilization, improve organizational processes, support knowledge-sharing, enable 24/7 sales, and enhance user experience. The project scope should include short-term agile development, quick prototyping, and testing, manageable with in-house resources, and designed with external funding in mind.

Based on these specifications and the initial overview of relevant literature, a preliminary concept of a website sales platform was created to give the project a reference point. The simplified concept sketch highlights some of the key ideas that were seen as relevant to be considered in the research of the project.

The conceptual figure (figure 1.) depicts a framework for the online sales platform with the steps of interaction on the y-axis and three different types of paths on the x-axis for different scenarios. The levels on the y-axis are the steps in the sales interaction, with level I being the initial interest to contact and level V being the final confirmation that ends the interaction. Every step, therefore, requires a decision for moving forward. The idea was to be able to provide an interactive solution that still takes into account the needs of different types of customers, can gather data about the user, and ultimately leads to contact.



*Multiple Choice Questions

Figure 1. Initial sales platform concept

Path A was included as the traditional and quick option of getting in contact. This option lets the user quickly find the contact details and fill in their information, which is then sent out to the company. This alternative was aimed at more determined and conservative customers. As depicted in the figure, Path A has the least amount of steps but, consequently, is the most uninteractive.

Path B gives the user the option to compare standard services and their prices as well as tailor a custom-made service to fit their needs. After having selected the service, the user fills in their information, and a more in-depth request is sent out to the company. This alternative was aimed at more knowledgeable and thoughtful customers.

Path C collects the most data about the user and is also the most complex. The user takes a quick quiz on their marketing knowledge and needs. The platform then suggests a suitable service based on previous data and set parameters. This alternative was aimed at curious customers who do not clearly recognize their needs.

Path C is also the most persuasive of the three paths and could make the sales interaction less intimidating for indecisive customers.

The case company's profile and the sales platform concept give a perspective for the literature review and narrow down the case study. In recognizing the needs of the case company, research question 1 (*What are the main differences between B2B and B2C websites and how could B2B companies benefit from B2C interaction design practices?)* will be partially explored from a small B2B company point of view in order to be able to answer research question 2 (*How could the case company benefit from B2C interaction design?).*

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The theory chapter is designed around research question 1. (What are the main differences between B2B and B2C websites, and how could B2B companies benefit from B2C interaction design practices?). The chapter is an overview of relevant themes surrounding interaction design, how B2B and B2C companies use it, and of the methods of leveraging the benefits. The underlying idea is the assumption that B2B companies could find ways to benefit from B2C interaction design strategies. The first part examines relevant interaction design principles and consumer psychology theories that help concretize the practical approach to the problem. The second part will examine the differences between B2B and B2C companies and how to characterize them. The third and final part explores the possibilities of harnessing the benefits of B2C interaction design for B2B companies.

3.1 User Experience and Interaction Design

Several studies show that there are differences in the fundamental design and usability between B2B and B2C websites. These differences are clearly noticeable in the overall user experience of websites, and in order to understand how to improve the overall user experience, it is essential to understand the concept of interaction design, which has the purpose of enhancing the overall user experience.

Norman & Nielsen (2022) define user experience or UX as the experience a user has with, e.g., a company when interacting with its offerings. User experience is frequently shaped by various departments within the organization, encompassing fields like engineering, marketing, graphic and industrial design, as well as interface design, among others. Norman & Nielsen (2022) continue to explain that actual user experience is something that the user is not aware of that they want, which explains the depth and complexity of user experience.

Interaction design, also abbreviated IxD, is a crucial aspect of user experience but is more focused on specific interactions instead of the whole experience, which builds up over time (Edwards, 2015). Even though no commonly agreed definition of interaction design exists, Fallman (2008) describes the discipline as the procedure of designing digital artifacts such as products, services, and spaces with a focus on the qualities of user experience. Another definition of interaction design by Cooper et al. (2014) states that interaction design is the practice of designing interactive digital or physical solutions with the user in mind. Furthermore, interaction design is generally more focused on behavior than it is on form and differs from software engineering, that is often designed for technical stakeholders.

To further illustrate the definition of interaction design, we can examine Saffer's (2010) illustration of h ow interaction design relates to other similar design disciplines (figure 2.). According to Saffer (2010), interaction design is still a young discipline and is still finding its place in relation to the other disciplines, of which many are still equally young. The critical finding is that interaction design is almost entirely a part of user experience design and interlays with all disciplines that have an interaction element present, namely a human interacting with a physical or digital medium comprised of different dimensions or elements of interaction.

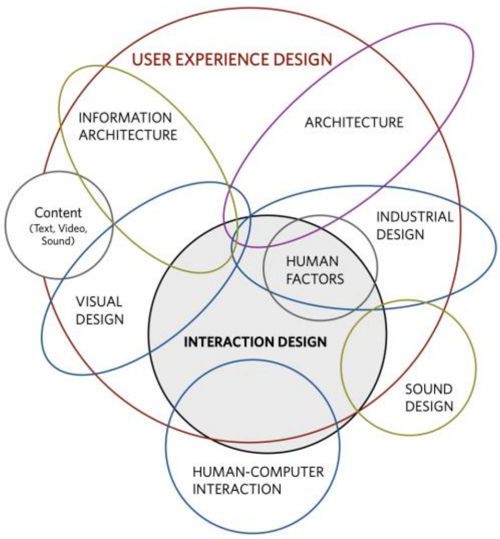


Figure 2. The disciplines surrounding interaction design (Saffer, 2010).

3.1.1 Dimensions of Interaction Design

Crampton Smith (2007) explores interaction design through design languages or dimensions. According to her, interaction design can be divided into four distinct dimensions: words, visual representations, physical objects and space, and time. The list of dimensions was later modified by Kevin Silver (2007) to include behavior as the fifth dimension (figure 3.). Silver (2007) states that the first three dimensions enable interaction, and the last two define interaction.

1D Words – This dimension comes in the form of written words. Factors that affect how the user interacts with this dimension are, e.g., tone of voice, context, and content.

2D Visual representations – These are the elements that the user can perceive, e.g., graphics, photos, iconography, typography, and other visual elements.

3D Physical objects and space – This dimension encompasses objects and forms with which users act or the space that users work within. This can be a physical object, such as a vase or a button on a website. It can also be the website itself or a room in a house.

4D Time – Time elements in interactive design can be time-sensitive content such as sound, video, or animation. This dimension is, in other words, the dynamic part of this list.

5D Behavior – The last dimension is behavior and explains the reaction that the user has to an interface or a specific action.

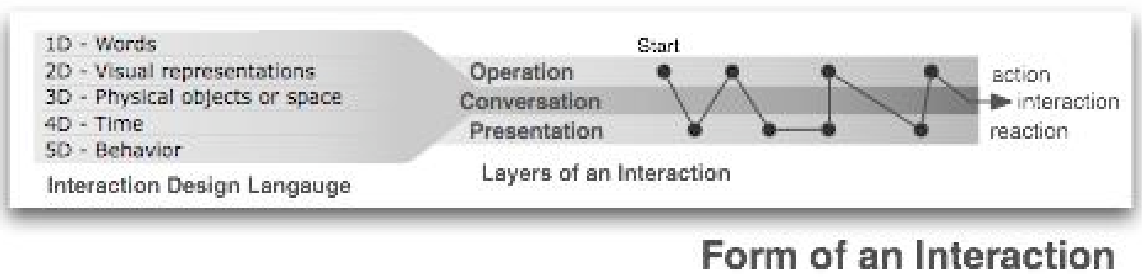


Figure 3. Elements of the form of an interaction (Silver, 2007).

3.1.2 The Components and Goals of Interaction Design

Since interaction design is one of the most vital parts of good user experience, the goals of both interaction design and user experience overlap in many ways. Edwards (2015) suggests that user experience is built up from various interactions over time, and to achieve good user experience, the system or product should include all of the following characteristics.

Flow – A characteristic of a system that makes the user genuinely submerged in their activity.

Delight – The system should produce feelings of happiness and positive connotations.

Frameworks – Design patterns in the system allow the user to understand their interactions and what they are trying to achieve.

Hierarchy – All systems should strive to have a clear hierarchy that helps the user identify what is essential in any given interaction.

Control – Users should feel as if they are in control of their decisions and not overwhelmed by different options.

When these characteristics are present in a system good user experience can be achieved, which in turn leads to desired results, efficiencies, advocacy, and return on investment, defined by Edwards (2015) as the goals of user experience design.

Morville & Sullenger (2010) explore the goals of user experience design through a honeycomb model. The model (figure 4.) consists of seven qualities of websites, which all contribute to the user experience. The seven qualities are usable, useful, desirable, accessible, credible, findable, and valuable. A situation where any of the seven qualities are left ignored results in sub-par user experience. Some of the qualities also have interdependent relationships. Morville & Sullenger (2010) argue that findability, for example, directly impacts the credibility of a website. If a website cannot be found easily with a search engine, it seems less credible, and if it cannot be found at all, all the other qualities become irrelevant. If the website is found and is credible enough, it needs to be accessible and then usable. However, if the website lacks usefulness and desirability, the user will likely find little value in the experience.

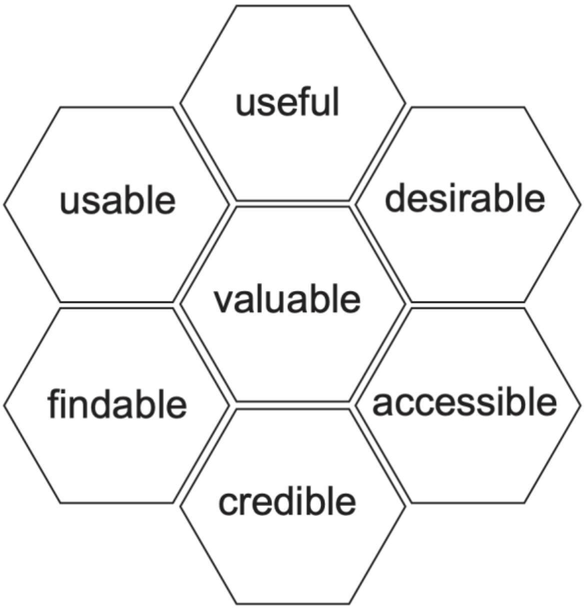


Figure 4. User experience honeycomb (Morville & Sullenger, 2010).

3.1.3 Designing for Credibility, Completion, and Value

Morville & Sullenger's (2010) and Edwards' (2015) frameworks explained what makes up the components of good interaction design from the user's perspective. What interaction design components to emphasize, however, depends on the type of website and what the owner of the website needs to achieve. Therefore, when creating interactive websites, there are two main stakeholders to keep in mind – the visitor or customer and the website owner or company. In other words, both the user and the website owner have a need, and their needs should be met for the website to serve its purpose.

On commercial websites, the goal of the interaction is ultimately conversion. A conversion event on a website means that a website visitor commits to an action that is favorable for the website owner (Nielsen, 2016). On an e-commerce website, the most important conversions are often purchases, whereas a consulting company might count a contact request as a conversion event. According to Nielsen (2016), understanding the difference between website design and marketing-generated conversion events is essential in order to improve the interaction design on the website.

When looking at conversion through Morville & Sullenger's (2010) user experience honeycomb, the first step in the customer journey process is the *findability* of the website. This mainly relates to search engine optimization (SEO), advertising, and other similar marketing activities. As soon as the visitor enters the website, however, interaction design becomes an essential tool for increasing conversion rates.

Accessibility and *usability* can be considered fundamental elements of interaction design. According to Sivaji et al. (2011), the fundamental usability and design elements are a prerequisite for more advanced interaction design elements and social aspects of the websites. Sivaji et al. (2011) mention *Gestalt principles, Fitts' Law, heuristics,* and *affordances* as important methods for building the base for an interactive website.

Gestalt principles, rooted in psychology, are a set of principles that describe how humans perceive and interpret visual information. These principles suggest that people tend to perceive and organize visual elements into meaningful patterns and wholes (Wertheimer, 1938). In interaction design, these principles are utilized to create intuitive and user-friendly interfaces. *Fitts' law* and *affordances* also stem from psychology. *Fitts' law* describes the relationship between the size of a target, its distance from the user, and the time it takes to move and accurately select that target (Fitts, 1954). This theory is widely used in interaction design to optimize the placement and sizing of interactive elements, such as buttons or links, for improved user experience and efficiency. *Affordances* originally studied by Gibson (1977) are, to a certain extent, related to Fitts' law and, in the context of interaction design, refer to the perceived or inherent properties of an object or interface that suggest its functionality and how it can be used. They provide clues to users about the possible actions and interactions available to them and, therefore, influence the accuracy and the time it takes to complete said actions. *Heuristics* finally explain the more basic usability methods. Although utilized as a method in many fields, in the context of interaction design, heuristics refer to mental shortcuts that help users make decisions and navigate through interfaces more easily (Nielsen, 2020). Heuristics guide users in quickly understanding and interacting with a system, often based on their prior knowledge and experiences. Finally, the choice of website elements and the visual intensity need to be carefully considered. A certain visual intensity is required for an interactive website, but having too many interactive elements will start deteriorating the user experience (Jankowski et al., 2019). The threshold is unique for every website and changes with time, which makes usability testing crucial.

The abovementioned design methods are well established in the UX community and widely used on a variety of different websites. The solid foundation that is created by following these methods increases the overall credibility of the website. Credibility, in turn, translates to user trust, where the lack of it has been identified as a major stumbling block of website design, especially on e-commerce sites (Sivaji et al., 2011).

While the accessibility and usability factors of a website mainly relate to basic interaction design, the *credibility* and *trust* factors are more multifaceted in nature. King (2008) highlights that credibility is often established at the moment the visitor enters the website. This first impression credibility is influenced by ease of use and attractiveness, which is part interaction design and part company brand. During the evaluation and purchasing stages, the website visitor needs structural assurance in order to gain trust. This consists of the previously mentioned usability fundamentals, which assure that the site is easy to navigate, has sufficient flow, and is intuitive. Both King (2008) and Chakraborty et al. (2002) discuss the importance of security and privacy aspects when aiming to increase trust. The visitor is not only evaluating the value of the service or product but also how the potential transaction and any related personal information is handled. According to King (2008), having clear and concise privacy statements as well as trust-related certifications visible on the website increases trust.

Schlosser et al. (2006) explore trusting beliefs through *ability, benevolence,* and *integrity*. Ability refers to a company's perceived professional ability to deliver the service or manufacture the product that was ordered. Benevolence refers to the company's perceived will to do its best to satisfy the customer's needs, and integrity reflects the company's ability to adhere to different policies and norms considering its services. Schlosser et al. (2006) argue that increasing trusting beliefs in customers increases the likelihood of conversion. The study found that the company's perceived ability could be positively influenced by website investment, thus increasing the likelihood of conversion. This was especially true when the customer evaluated the purchase as risky.

The above-mentioned fundamental usability aspects and the credibility factors could be enough to turn a visitor into a buyer. *Usefulness*, *desirability,* and *value* are, however, factors that separate mediocre websites from great websites (Morville & Sullenger, 2010). These factors are again co-dependent on marketing efforts. Desirability, for example, can be achieved with aesthetically pleasing interaction design and graphics. Still, the messages and content need to be well thought-out and aligned with the marketing strategy in order to achieve the full impact of a commercial website (Saffer, 2015; Palmer & Griffith, 1998). While usefulness mainly extends the functionality of the website, desirability and value relate to more abstract and subjective aspects of the website. This area of interaction design is dependent on understanding the users and knowing what factors to focus on.

Aesthetics play an important role when aiming to increase the user's satisfaction and create an impact. The *aesthetic usability effect* by Kurosu & Kashimura (1995) is a well-known phenomenon in the UX community where the pleasing aesthetics of a website positively influence the perceived usability, making the overall user experience more desirable. Since aesthetic preferences are subjective, it is essential to know what kind of design choices to apply. The *Exposure Effect* is based on research by Bornstein (1989), who states that sufficient exposure to certain stimuli makes people develop a preference for said stimuli. In other words, familiarity with something increases our positive feelings about it. In an interaction design setting, this means that it is possible to take advantage of specific design choices that are generally established and familiar to the users. If executed according to basic rules of aesthetics, the overall outcome will likely be positive. When designing with the aesthetic usability effect and the exposure effect in mind, it is possible to achieve a desirable end result. However, for the website to make an impact, it needs to stand out from the competitors. Blake et al. (2005) discuss innovation as an important factor in satisfying the needs of especially more experienced online shoppers. This means that the features and design need to push the limits of what the visitor is familiar with and invoke novelty and excitement. The *Most Advanced yet Acceptable* principle, also known as *MAYA*, suggests that successful design should strike a balance between familiarity and innovation. In other words, designs should be innovative enough to be intriguing and attractive but not so radical or unfamiliar that they are rejected or not understood by the target audience (Hekkert et al., 2003). While the MAYA principle serves as a good guideline for creating desirable and valuable designs, Hekkert et al. 2003 emphasize that the optimal balance between familiar and innovative is dependent on a multitude of factors. This is why prototyping and usability testing become crucial tools for finding the right design choices.

When looking at the conversion process as a whole, it becomes clear that both the marketing strategy and interaction design play essential roles in guiding the visitor towards the conversion event. According to King (2008), persuasion is one of the key elements for increasing the likelihood of conversion throughout the customer journey. Persuasion is a way to guide the visitor toward conversion in a way that benefits both the website owner and the visitor. King (2008) emphasizes the mutual benefit factor and incentives as essential tools for increasing conversion rates. A persuasive website is built from both marketing and the previously mentioned interaction design-related elements. When these two align, it is possible to create a valuable experience that leads to both conversion and brand loyalty.

The aforementioned interaction design principles are general and build on essential communication and behavioral psychology rules, which are available regardless of the business model. B2C businesses, however, have been more successful at implementing user-centered website design than their B2B counterparts (Harrison et al., 2017). B2B companies have, however, started to look beyond their existing marketing strategies to be able to offer more interactive experiences on their websites.

3.2 Differences Between B2C and B2B Customer Interactions

To be able to understand the differences between B2C and B2B interactions, it is essential to start by looking at the definitions and characteristics of the respective business models.

B2C, or Business-to-Consumer, covers commercial transactions between a company and individual consumers. This form of business is distinguished by the sale of goods or services directly to end-users, who represent the final consumers of the product. B2C transactions primarily occur online or in physical retail stores and can include e-commerce websites, mobile apps, and traditional brick-and-mortar stores.

B2B, or Business-to-Business, covers commercial transactions between two businesses. This type of business is characterized by the exchange of products or services directed at other businesses rather than end-users. B2B transactions are commonly conducted between a manufacturer and a wholesaler or between a wholesaler and a retailer. These types of transactions can also take place between two service-oriented enterprises, such as a consulting firm offering its services to a software company.

Few companies, however, fall strictly into only one of the aforementioned business models. Many B2B companies, e.g., can be considered B2B2C companies, which means that the products or services that they sell to other businesses are used for B2C commerce. These companies often have to adapt B2C marketing approaches in order to meet their customers' needs efficiently. Another example of a common hybrid model is the mixed B2C/B2B approach, where the company sells products or services directly to consumers as well as to other businesses. Some B2B companies might also sell services or products to their customers via channels primarily intended for B2C transactions, which would make them neither purely a B2B nor a B2C company.

According to Pfoertsch & Scheel (2012), many studies show that industrial or B2B and consumer or B2C brands should be managed differently. They argue that while this is true, it might be challenging to find the right approach, especially for mixed B2B/B2C companies.

Jewels and Timbrell (2001), on the other hand, argue that companies that create separate e-commerce strategies for B2B and B2C markets may miss the fact that B2B transactions can sometimes happen through B2C channels. Failing to recognize a B2B transaction or mistaking it for a B2C transaction can hurt the chances of building a long-term business relationship with that B2B customer. In other words, it is essential to understand that the line between B2C and B2B marketing is often blurred.

Instead of trying to separate B2B and B2C marketing efforts, it could be beneficial for many businesses to adopt a network approach where both B2C and B2B marketing strategies are utilized. Gummesson & Polese (2009) suggest that more focus should be put on the interdependency between B2B and B2C marketing. This is especially true for mixed B2B/B2C and B2B2C businesses. According to Gummesson & Polese (2009), both the many-to-many approach as well as the service-dominant logic underline the role of consumers in marketing efforts.

The fact that the business models sometimes overlap calls for better categorization and also an increased ability for business leaders to be able to manage both B2B and B2C marketing strategies at the same time in many cases.

3.2.1 Characteristics and Classification of B2C and B2B Companies

In order to find the right marketing strategy for a company, we must first understand whether the company is B2B, B2C, or a mix of both and in what relation. Once we understand the processes of the company, the marketing strategy can be built based on commonly used approaches for the different business models.

B2B and B2C companies have several distinctive characteristics that become particularly clear in a marketing context. According to Rėklaitis & Pilelienė (2019), B2B companies are characterized by large complex markets, longer purchasing processes, greater sales volumes, and more valuable orders than their B2C counterparts. B2B companies also have fewer customers but more profound relationships with them. This makes decision-making more complex and interactions riskier. Rėklaitis & Pilelienė (2019) also underline that emotions are a key difference between the two business models. B2C buying decisions are more likely to be emotionally influenced, whereas B2B decisions tend to be based on logic and reasoning. A study by Iankova et al. (2019) shows that B2B companies perceive social media marketing as less effective than other marketing tools, which further illustrates the more rational nature of B2B companies. Jewels & Timbrell (2001) have also identified several differences between B2B and B2C marketing but from an e-commerce point of view. Some of the main differences in an e-commerce context are *pricing* and *payment, product availability,* and *contracts*.

B2C sites show prices and often utilize discounts and campaigns to attract customers. B2B websites, on the other hand, often hide their prices. The prices are negotiable, and discounts are often customer-specific and sometimes volume-based. The payments are also handled differently. Consumers often have an array of payment alternatives ranging from direct payments via credit card or bank transfer to part payments offered by different institutions. B2B companies usually use invoicing, which is based on contractual agreements, and the payments are typically divided into installments. While direct payments by credit card are frequently used in smaller purchases, B2B companies seldom generate the bulk of their revenue with direct payments.

According to Jewels & Timbrell (2001), product availability is also distinct between the B2B and B2C companies. B2C companies openly exhibit all their products and invest in ways to showcase them in innovative ways, whereas B2B companies might opt to rely more on technical drawings and specifications. B2B companies also offer customized products more frequently than B2C companies.

Due to B2B e-commerce having more risk, with more substantial transactions and fewer customers, than B2C e-commerce, contracts have become an essential tool for mitigating that risk. Terms and conditions in B2B interactions are often based on the current market landscape and are often applied differently to different customers. Braking B2B contracts will typically also lead to sanctions, which is uncommon in B2C e-commerce.

Pfoertsch and Scheel (2012) have developed a classification model to characterize B2B and B2C companies. The model builds on the fact that most companies exhibit traits of both B2B and B2C companies and, therefore, examines the business model through four different classification attributes. All four attributes have two poles where typical B2B behavior is on one end of the scale, and typical B2C behavior is on the other end of the scale. When companies evaluate their processes in relation to these four attributes, they develop a profile that shows how consumer or business-customer-oriented their business model is. The categories also provide a more comprehensive understanding of a company's character than simply categorizing it as either a B2B or B2C company.

The first classification attribute can be translated to the *type of demand*. Pfoertsch and Scheel (2012) state that in traditional B2B companies, the demand for a product or service is derivative, which refers to the demand for a product or service that arises from the demand for another product or service. The secondary or derived demand is dependent on the demand for a related or interconnected product. In contrast, B2C companies are recognized by origin demand. This demand refers to the demand for a product or service that arises directly from the final consumer or end-user. This represents the initial or primary demand for a particular product or service.

Communication strategy is the second classification attribute. According to Pfoertsch and Scheel (2012), B2B companies typically focus on interpersonal communication, whereas B2C companies utilize mass communication. Examples of interpersonal communication are customer meetings, sales calls, and trade shows. Mass communication, on the other hand, can be a billboard, social media advertising, or other methods that reach out to a large audience.

The third classification attribute is *branding strategy*. B2B companies are often recognized by focusing on corporate branding, which translates to, e.g., communicating their values, presenting reference cases, and highlighting their commitment to CSR. B2C companies conversely focus on product branding, and the company behind the products does often not have a strong presence. Some B2C companies might have a dedicated corporate site, while others only go by the brand name, with the legal company not being advertised explicitly. (Pfoertsch & Scheel, 2012)

The fourth and final classification attribute by Phoertsch & Scheel (2012) is *the role of the individual,* which in this context translates to the degree of individual thinking involved in decision-making processes for customers. B2B customers are often professionals who, in theory, make rational decisions that often include the opinions of other professionals such as colleagues and superiors. On the other hand, consumers tend to base their decisions on more individual and emotional factors, with the brand being an important selling point.

The characteristics mentioned above of both B2B and B2C business models are essential to acknowledge when looking to increase the innovativeness of B2B interaction design and online sales. The classification model by Phoertsch & Scheel (2012), on the other hand, serves as a good tool to help quantify the business model for a company before deciding what marketing strategy to pick.

3.2.2 B2B Interaction Design and Challenges

Since the business models of B2B and B2C have different characteristics, the website interaction design also differs between the two. Not only are there differences, but research shows that B2C companies are better at designing user-centered websites than their B2B counterparts (Harrison et al.,2017). Harrison et al. (2017) found that B2B companies trail behind B2C companies regarding digital innovation. Compared to B2C, B2B companies fare significantly worse in aligning IT strategy with the overall strategy, evaluating the success of their digital solutions, and lacking the latest digital know-how and tools (Harrison et al.,2017). This results in less consistent and time-consuming implementations of digital innovations. These findings coincide with the research of Sundberg (2015), who states that product-related user experience design is often not fully utilized, and the benefits of UX are not communicated well enough in B2B companies. Lin et al. (2011) further specify that significant struggles with creating effective websites and evaluating them lie among SMEs. The problems with adoption, enhancement of organizational readiness, and lack of experience in assessing digital efforts discourage companies from further developing their e-commerce (Lin et al., 2011). Since successful e-commerce equals better performance in the B2B market, and SMEs make up the bulk of this market (Lin et al., 2011), there is still a significant amount of unrealized competitive potential.

Concurring themes for the challenges are the lack of strategic alignment, organizational support, and relevant tools for evaluating the benefits. Konradt et al. (2012) mention that organizational support is indeed important, especially when

B2B companies spend less money on developing user-centered designs than their B2C counterparts. These challenges mainly stem from the complex nature of B2B business models. Pfoertsch & Scheel (2012) state that face-to-face and other personal selling is still the preferred way of doing business in B2B companies. This is an example of how the structure of the B2B business model can slow down the development of e-commerce.

Chakraborty et al. (2003) and McLean (2017) have both studied the website quality preferences among B2B customers. Chakraborty et al. (2003) found that organization was the most important and entertainment the least important factor on a B2B website (figure 5.). Organization refers to the organization of information on the website, which is essential due to the fact that B2B websites are often heavy on information (Chakraborty et al., 2003). Entertainment, on the other hand, is related to factors that make the user experience more fun and enjoyable by including exciting graphics and features on the website.

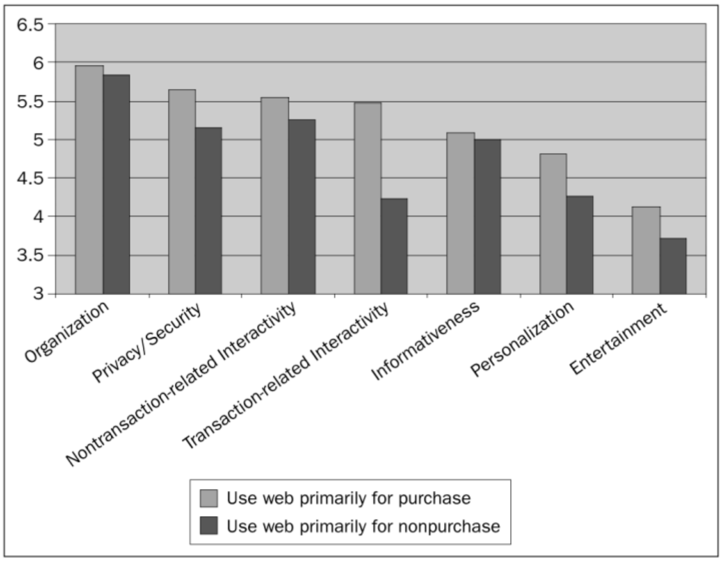


Figure 5. Average Importance of Factors Based on Respondent's Web Usage Activities (Chakraborty et al. 2003)

McLean (2017) obtained similar findings. However, the quality of the information or informativeness, as well as website credibility, scored highest. Furthermore, the study by Chakraborty et al. (2003) compared purchasing and non-purchasing customers and found that transaction-related factors scored significantly higher for purchasing customers. This finding indicates that the role of the customers matters when deciding on what features to prioritize on a B2B website. Bridges et al. (2005)

acknowledge that B2B buyers are also influenced by their personal characteristics, which inevitably affect the website buying process. While this is expected, most of the literature emphasizes rationality as the main virtue of B2B buyers compared to emotionality for consumers (Rėklaitis & Pilelienė, 2019).

Although B2B interaction design receives less attention than B2C, and companies face frequent challenges with adopting and supporting new technologies, B2B e-commerce is over twice the size of B2C (Babenko et al., 2019). The gap in market size between B2B and B2C e-commerce has grown steadily since the launch of B2B e-commerce and is expected to keep growing (Chakraborty et al., 2002). According to Chakraborty et al. (2002), one reason for the difference in market size comes from the apparent efficiencies that arise from adopting a B2B e-commerce business model, which incentivizes many B2B companies to start selling online. Furthermore, the benefits of e-commerce in an international marketing context are more significant for B2B companies than for B2C (Chakraborty et al., 2002).

The challenges B2B companies face with their digital strategies are decreasing, with new research emerging and knowledge being more attainable. At the same time, however, with more B2B companies becoming seasoned in e-commerce, the competition also increases, pushing companies to look for more innovative marketing strategies.

3.3 Harnessing Consumerization for B2B Websites

The move towards e-commerce and more user-centered websites, even for more traditional B2B companies, could be justified by the consumerization phenomenon. Moschella et al. (2004) define consumerization as a trend where technologies, products, or services initially designed for personal or consumer use are adopted and integrated into professional or business environments. This also involves the influence and impact of consumer preferences, behaviors, and expectations on business practices and technology adoption. According to Moschella et al. (2004), one result of consumerization is that the line between personal boundaries is becoming blurred, meaning that the roles of individuals as employees and consumers are blending together. Reasons for this include, e.g., remote working, social media, and the use of personal devices at the workplace. Weiß and Leimeister

(2012) highlight that also the use of consumer mobile apps and gamification is becoming increasingly popular in a business setting. Another interesting study by Harrison et al. (2017) highlight that customers of B2B companies might be professional buyers at work but use popular B2C online shopping platforms at home. This means that the preferences in a professional context will be influenced by personal experience to some degree.

Harrison et al. (2017) add that while there might be a desire for more intuitive and consumer-like solutions for employees in a B2B context, the inherent nature of the business model makes it difficult to implement more innovative technology. A study by Dotzel & Shankar (2019) found that B2B service innovations increase firm value more than firm risk. This was, however, more pronounced in B2B dominant industries compared to industries with a mix of B2B and B2C companies. The companies that focused more on product innovations were also more likely to gain increased value from new service innovations (Dotzel & Shankar, 2019).

The Diffusion of Innovations by Rogers (2010) is an important framework for assessing the potential success of a consumerization-based innovation. Variables that influence the rate at which innovations are adopted include *Perceived Attributes of Innovation, Type of Innovation-Decision, Communication Channels, Nature of the Social System,* and *Extent of Change Agents* (Rogers, 2010). Interaction design choices can influence the Perceived Attributes of Innovations and are thus the variable that can be affected the most in a web development project. The *Type of Innovation Decision* is predominantly optional in web development projects for B2B companies due to websites being designed with different personas in mind. A company deciding to implement innovative features on its website would, in other words, be able to do it in iterations. While improving the user experience on websites aims to increase conversion, a secondary objective is to increase brand value and stand out in the competition. In this context, the *Communication Channels* and the *Extent of Change Agents* variables are essential to acknowledge; how and where is the innovation potentially advocated for and who will spread word of mouth? The most challenging variable to influence is the *Nature of the Social System,* which refers to the local factors that determine the success of the adoption of the innovation. Especially for B2B companies selling services domestically, this variable mainly serves as a factor for planning the development of the innovation.

Utilizing the *Design Thinking* process can be a valuable tool for the successful execution of website innovation projects, ensuring the comprehensive achievement of all established goals. According to Gibbons (2016), similar concepts to Design Thinking have existed for a long time. Still, as user-centered design gained more popularity, the methods were conceptualized into a more professional process (Gibbons, 2016). Design Thinking consists of three parts: *understand, explore,* and *materialize*. Each part has two phases. The phases for Design Thinking are as follows:

Empathizing – The starting phase includes conducting research and developing an understanding of the users of the service or product innovation. From a marketing perspective, this phase consists of exploring market trends, competitive analysis, customer analysis, and an analysis of the internal goals and resources.

Defining – This phase combines the research and highlights the main problems.

Ideating – The ideate phase consists of generating creative and ambitious ideas. The ideas can be illustrated in simple wireframe models or even mock-ups.

Prototyping - The fourth phase extends the preliminary ideas to more concrete prototypes. In an interaction design context, this translates to interactive test sites with all relevant features included.

Testing – This phase gives users a chance to test the new features. Usability testing can range from quick hallway tests on unpublished sites to more in-depth tests with eye tracking and heat mapping on live sites. After the soft launch, different AB tests can be conducted with a selected group of customers.

Implementing – The final phase of one Design Thinking iteration round includes the final implementation, which translates to the official launch of the website or new feature in an interaction design context. After the official launch, the website starts gathering visitors, and thus, the performance can be measured using, e.g., Google Analytics.

The iterative nature of the Design Thinking process means that both the individual phases as well as the process as a whole work iteratively (Gibbons, 2016). The idea is that the process continues as long as a website or other service innovation is public.

While the discussed theories are interesting and could provide direct benefits for the case company, they are highly context-dependent, which is why it is essential to test them in a local setting. A case study is an efficient method for exploring the benefits of harnessing consumerization for B2B websites.

4 METHODOLOGY

A case study method was chosen to answer research question 2 (How could the case company benefit from B2C interaction design?). This section presents the research design, motivation, and data gathering. For each method, the purpose, type of data, source of data, and data-gathering process will be explained. The results are presented in chapter 5.

4.1 The Case Study Method

This study focuses on the ways of increasing online sales for a consulting company, which means that the results can only be used to explain a specific scenario. According to Yin (2009), a case study approach is appropriate when trying to answer "why" and "how" questions; the researcher has little control over the circumstances or when trying to explain a contemporary phenomenon. These criteria closely match the characteristics of this study since the observations are strongly tied to time, environment, and resources.

Case studies often utilize a mixed methods approach in the research design, which is also the case in this study. Since this case study is isolated within a specific scenario, a mixed methods approach will offer the required tools to strengthen the validity.

According to Schoonenboom & Johnson (2017), the goal of mixed methods research is mainly to expand and strengthen the conclusion of a study by combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Greene et al. (1989) divided the motivation for using a mixed methods approach into five primary purposes. According to

Greene et al. (1989), the purpose of a mixed methods approach should be based on one or more of the following aspects:

Triangulation aims to bring together, confirm, and align results obtained through different methods.

Complementarity aims to explain, improve, show, and clear up the results of one method by using results from another method.

Development aims to use the findings from one method to shape or guide the other method. This includes choosing samples and making measurement decisions.

Initiation aims to uncover inconsistencies and contradictions, offer new perspectives or frameworks, and reframe questions or results from one method with those from another method.

Expansion aims to broaden and diversify the research by applying different methods to various aspects of the research.

In this study, the main goal when designing the research was triangulation in order to strengthen the outcome and increase validity. The different parts of the research fulfill each other and overlap in some ways. The research was conducted in iterations to be able to adjust methods according to the results of previous methods, which would contribute to the development aspect. Finally, the expansion component in this research design comes from the different types of methods used (interview, survey, and online data searches).

The case study builds on the Design Thinking process by Gibbons (2016) as well as common marketing analysis procedures and consists of four main methods. The first method is an initial internal interview based on the case literature with the intention of formulating the different needs and constraints of the case company. Based on the interview, it became apparent to include both a customer and competitor analysis. The customer analysis was conducted as a survey and mainly aimed to answer “how” -questions. The competitor analysis utilized web search and answered “who” and “what” -questions. Finally, the trend review was designed as a method further contributing to the execution of the final suggestion by answering “how” -questions on a specific level.

4.2 Internal Interview

The purpose of the interview was to determine the needs and constraints of the project at an early stage. The questions for the interview were derived from team meetings with all four of our full-time employees, including the owners. The project was discussed at these meetings in order to capture all internal perspectives. After having identified the main problems and goals, the topics were formulated into an email questionnaire.

The interview questions were sent to one of the owners via email in Finnish. Finnish was chosen as the language for the whole team to understand the questions. The interviewee answered the questions, and the answers were later reviewed with the interviewee in person to fill in some missing information and clarify some of the questions. The review of the answers with the interviewee was conducted in Swedish, which was the common language in the situation.

Even though the second session was conducted as an interview, there was no significant reason to record the audio and transcribe the discussions since the aim of the interview was to gather only the key points for creating the scope and constraints for the project as well as to be able to make decisions about what other methods to use for the study. Instead, the missing information was added to the previously gotten answers during the interview.

After the interview, the questions and revised answers were translated into English.

The interview questions:

1. *Explain the nature of the company, what you do, and what the key financial figures look like.*
2. *Describe your three main customer profiles.*
3. *What are the five main goals for your business at the moment?*
4. *What kind of a solution could help achieve these goals?*
5. *What should the solution contribute to?*
6. *What kind of features do you want to see in the solution?*

7. What resources do you have for executing the project?

4.3 Customer Survey

Based on the initial interview and literature, a customer survey was formulated. The purpose of the survey was to reach out to respondents that corresponded to the typical customer profile of the case company and find out about their service procurement habits in the context of the planned sales platform.

The survey was in Finnish, and the scenario presented to the respondent was to act as a "first-time visitor on company X's website in need of their services".

The survey was made with Google Forms and was sent out to 54 members of a sparring group consisting of Finnish CEOs and entrepreneurs who correspond closely to the typical buyer of the case company's services. To further profile the respondents, a question about the respondent's familiarity with online procurement was included before the actual survey questions. The respondents were to choose between three options that ranged from "frequent" and some "past experience" to "no service procurement experience at all". Respondents falling in the latter category would be discarded from the sample. The sex of the respondents was not taken into account in this survey.

The main section of the survey consisted of five questions. The answers to the first three questions were given on a 6-point Likert-type scale. A 6-point scale was chosen in order to encourage respondents to make a choice that leans in either direction of the scale. The scale ranged from 1 to 6, where one corresponded to "Not at all" and 6 to "Extremely". The first three questions were:

1. *How willing would you be to give your company ID when asking for a quote on a company's website if it meant that the quotation you would receive would be more detailed?*

2. *How important would a preliminary or rough price estimate be in the quotation phase for a service for which the final price can only be determined after the first meeting?*

3. *How willing would you be to spend more time (approx. 5 min) and give more detailed information about your company's needs in the quotation phase if it meant that you would receive a preliminary price for the services you were looking for?*

The fourth and fifth questions were designed as single-choice questions. The questions and their answer options were:

4. *Which of the following actions would you most probably take before requesting a quotation if you weren't sure of which service would best fit your needs?*

   a. I would send an email inquiring for more details about the services.

   b. I would take a short quiz that would help me find a suitable service for me.

   c. I would inquire about suitable services over the phone.

5. *Which of the following options would increase trust the most when buying a service from a company that you weren't familiar with before?*

   a. Clear case references

   b. Services with prices showing

   c. Photos and information of employees or contact persons

   d. A detailed description of services

   e. Other… (ability to type in a custom answer)

4.4 Competitor Search

A competitor search was conducted in order to benchmark the solutions of close competitors. The purpose of the search was to find all relevant competitors and examine the best-performing companies for any innovative solutions on their websites. A secondary purpose of the search and analysis was to establish a clear picture of the competition in general.

The required sample size for the search was 30 companies. The criteria for the companies were derived from the initial interview and were the following:

In order for a company to be considered a competitor, it should:

1. be registered in Finland
2. have a minimum of 300.000 € in revenue
3. and be considered a digital marketing, management consulting, advertising, or strategic marketing agency.

The search was conducted utilizing Google and the Finder Yrityshaku -portal. The process began by searching for similar services to that of the case company on Google. The next step was to visit the website of the service provider and type in their company name or business ID (Y-tunnus) in Finder Yrityshaku. The Finder -portal displays key financial figures and metrics of all limited companies in Finland.

The following quantitative data were gathered about the companies

- Company name
- Location / City
- Establishing year
- Latest available revenue information
- Latest available profit information
- What type of contact options the company had (contact information, contact form, personal chat or chatbot, webshop for services)

The following qualitative data were gathered about the companies from their websites:

- Business segment/niche based on value proposals and service offerings (Digital marketing agency, management consulting agency, strategic marketing agency, or advertising agency)

- Primary services
- Did the company put a strong emphasis on business cases and references?
- Overall graphic design of the website

4.5 Trend Review

The trend review was conducted as an Internet search in order to establish an overview of the most prevalent user interface trends for 2020. The results of the analysis could then be used as decision grounds for the suggestion of execution.

The platforms used in the search were Google and Google Scholar. The search words used were “UI design trends 2020”, “User interface trends 2020” and “UI trends 2020”. The targeted sample size was 15, and valid sources could be blogs, articles, or studies. The requirement for blogs or other non-academic sources was to have at least five different trends listed.

5 RESULTS

This chapter presents the results from the internal interview, customer survey, competitor search, and trend review.

5.1 Internal Interview

Below are the results of the internal interview conducted with the owner of the case company. The answers were summarized from an email inquiry and an informal interview.

The case company is a strategy and marketing company that offers both B2B and B2C services to many different fields of business. The company’s mission is “Sustainable story – Sustainable growth,” and its specialty is strategy planning and execution as well as internationalization projects. The company provides its services nationwide and, at the time of the interview, had five employees and a vast network of collaborators. The company’s revenue is just under 500.000 euros.

The case company's primary customers are 1. Growth seeking small and medium-sized companies with a revenue of 1-10 million euros. 2. Companies seeking to go abroad or companies that already are established in foreign markets. 3. Companies that seek to outsource their marketing efforts.

The main goals of the case company are to: 1. Increase the revenue to 1 million euros. 2. Improve data gathering and standardization. 3. Develop internal processes. 4. Improve knowledge sharing within the team. 5. Make sales a 24/7 function.

The case company would like to automate sales and information gathering through some sort of sales platform on its website.

The sales platform should increase leads, which in turn would increase sales and, therefore, the company's revenue. The solution should also gather lead and visitor data as well as be able to integrate with existing company software preferably. The solution should finally work as a marketing tool that invites more visitors to the company's website.

The solution should have a visitor survey and a product selection/suggestion feature. A reference/business case suggestion should also be part of the solution. The booking/quote should automatically be paired with the right specialist. The solution should be an intelligent data-gathering tool that transforms according to the visitor's information. We would like to obtain data that could be transformed into information about our customer segment, visitors, and product preferences. Finally, the solution should be easy to use and maintain."

The case company seeks external funding preferably, and the project should be executed in a short (< 1 year) time frame. The goal is to produce a working prototype as soon as possible to start user testing. The planning and execution of the project will be conducted by the company's own employees.

5.2 Customer Survey

The customer survey was sent out to 54 business professionals and yielded 29 responses. Of these 29 respondents, 22 (75.9%) stated that they are currently in charge of procurement and send out several requests for quotations per year (later referred to as active buyers). Seven (24.1%) of the respondents stated that they have participated in procurement activities on behalf of a company in the past but are not currently active (later inactive buyers). All of the responses fit the desired profile and were therefore relevant, which means no responses had to be discarded.

In the first question, the respondents were asked how willing they would be to give their company ID when asking for a quote on a company's website if it meant that the quotation they would receive would be more detailed. The average answer for this question was 4.24 (Mdn=5), which translates to "somewhat willing" (figure 6.).

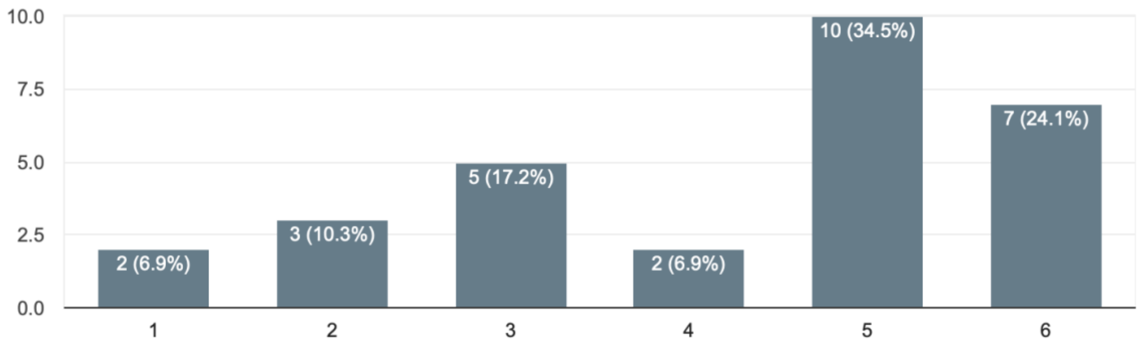


Figure 6. Results for question 1, n=29 (Customer survey)

The second question asked the respondents how important they think that a preliminary or rough price estimate would be in the quotation phase for a service, of which the final price can only be determined after the first meeting. The average answer to this question was 4.62 (Mdn=5), which translates to "important" (figure 7.).

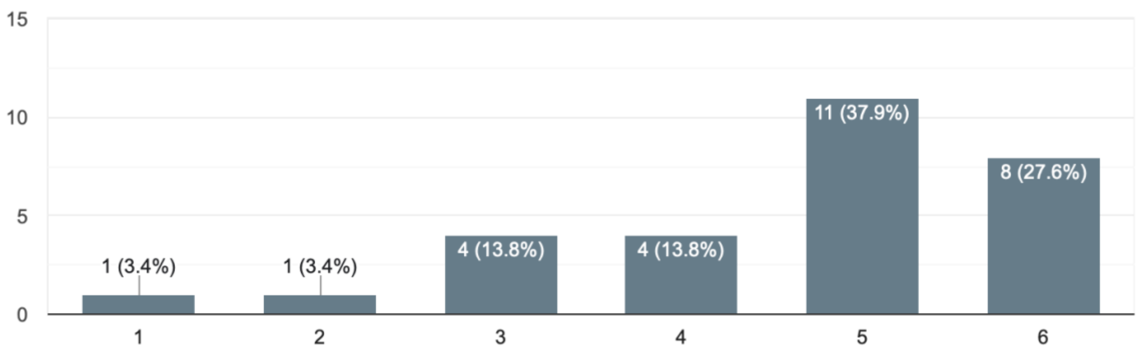


Figure 7. Results for question 2, n=29 (Customer survey)

The third and final Likert-scale question asked how willing the respondents would be to spend more time (approx. 5 min) and give more detailed information about their company's needs in the quotation phase if it meant that they would receive a preliminary price for the services they were looking for. The average answer to this question was 4.17 (Mdn=5), which translates to "somewhat willing" (figure 8.).

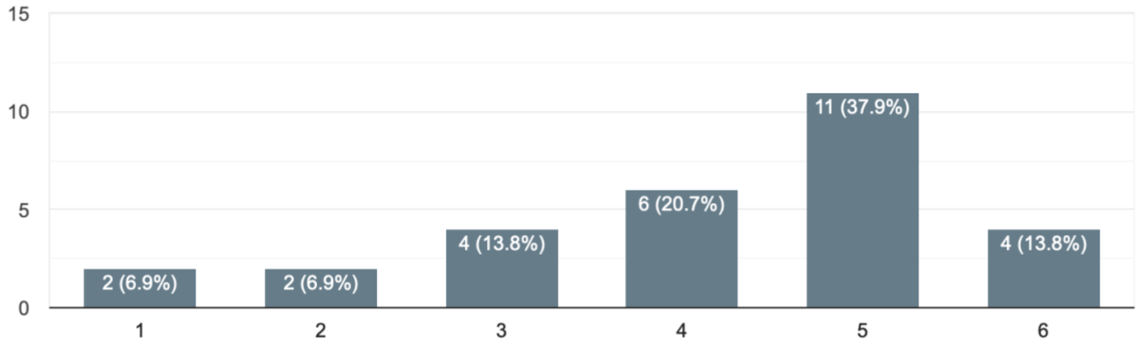


Figure 8. Results for question 3, n=29 (Customer survey)

The fourth and fifth questions were single-choice questions. The fourth question asked the respondents to choose which action (a. Email inquiry b. Short quiz c. phone inquiry) they would probably take before requesting a quotation if they weren't sure of which service would best fit their needs. Figure 9. Shows that the most popular action was alternative a. with 37.93% (n=11) of the answers. Alternative b. and c. both received 31.03% (n=9) of the answers.

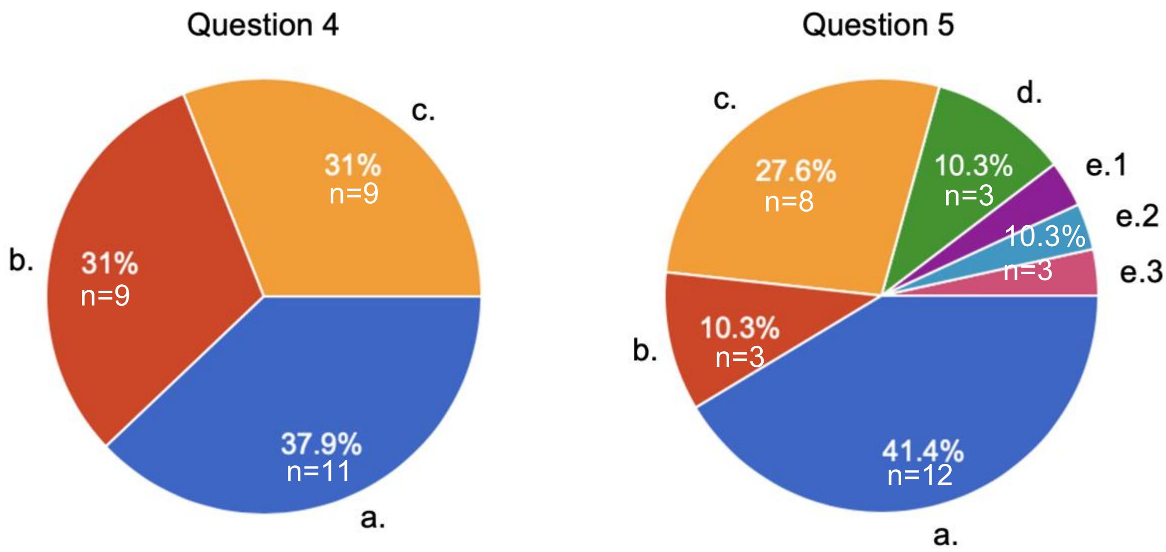


Figure 9. Results for questions 4 and 5, n=29 (Customer Survey)

The fifth and final question asked the respondents to choose which of the following options (a. Clear case references b. Services with prices showing c. Photos and information of employees or contact persons d. A detailed description of services e. Other... (ability to type custom answer)) would increase trust the most when buying a service from a company that they weren't familiar with from before. The options from most to least popular were a. (41.38% n=12), c. (27.59% n=8), b. (10.34% n=3), and d. (10.34% n=3). Three of the respondents chose option e, making up 10.34% (n=3) of the answers. The three responses to option e. were "[Company] Financials visible in Fonecta [Finder]", "Both case references and company employees [contact persons] are equally important", and "Prices showing [on the website] AND a detailed description of services. If there are no prices/descriptions, I will immediately move forward [to the next site]."

To further validate the responses, the answer patterns of both the active (n=22) and inactive (n=7) service buyers were qualitatively compared (figure 10.). The average answer for question 1 was 4.23 (Mdn=5) for the active buyers and 4.29 (Mdn=5) for the inactive buyers. The average answer for question 2 was 4.73 (Mdn=5) for the active buyers and 4.29 (Mdn=4) for the inactive buyers. The average answer for question 3 was 4.18 (Mdn=4.5) for the active buyers and 4.14 (Mdn=5) for the inactive buyers. Regarding question 4, the active buyers were open to all three different ways of acquiring more information, whereas the inactive buyers primarily preferred email inquiries. In question 5, both the active and inactive buyers valued clear case references as the primary trust-increasing factor on unfamiliar websites. Since the weight of the answers did not differ significantly between the respondent groups, there was no reason to discard the inactive buyers as outliers.

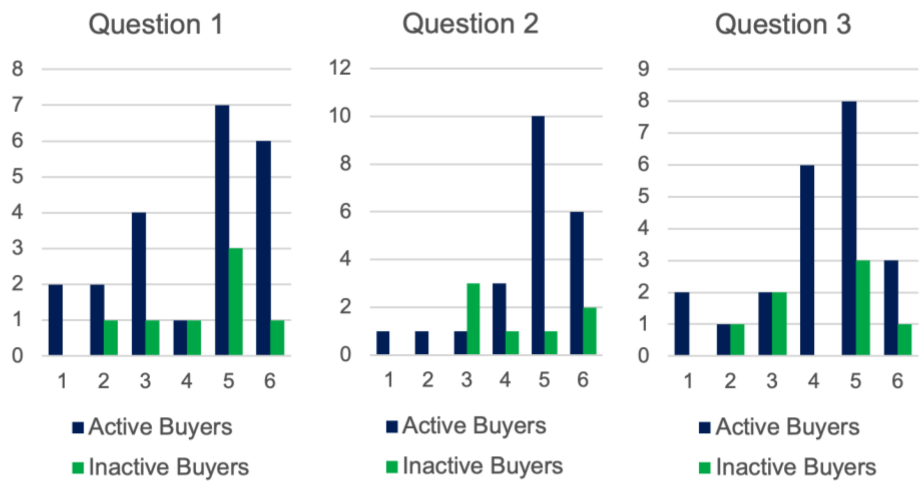


Figure 10. Answer pattern comparison (Customer survey)

5.3 Competitor Search

The competitor search yielded 38 companies. The observations were done in 2019, and the financials were from 2018. The companies were primarily based in the Helsinki region (n=24), Turku (n=4), Tampere (n=3) and Jyväskylä (n=3). The rest of the companies were from smaller cities all over the country. The companies varied greatly in size, with the most prominent company having a revenue of a little over 155 million euros and the smallest having a revenue of 360 thousand euros. The average revenue for all the companies was 12,7 million euros, and the median was 2,7 million euros.

All analyzed companies fell into one of the following predetermined niches: digital marketing, advertising, management consulting, and strategic marketing. Of the 38 companies, six were identified as digital marketing agencies, 12 as advertising agencies, eight as management consulting firms, and 12 as strategic marketing agencies.

The primary purpose of the competitor analysis was to benchmark competitors' contact and sales methods. A company's emphasis on references was added to the list of methods even though it is not purely neither a way of contacting customers nor a sales method. The customer survey, however, indicated that emphasis on references is essential from the buyers' point of view and was therefore benchmarked.

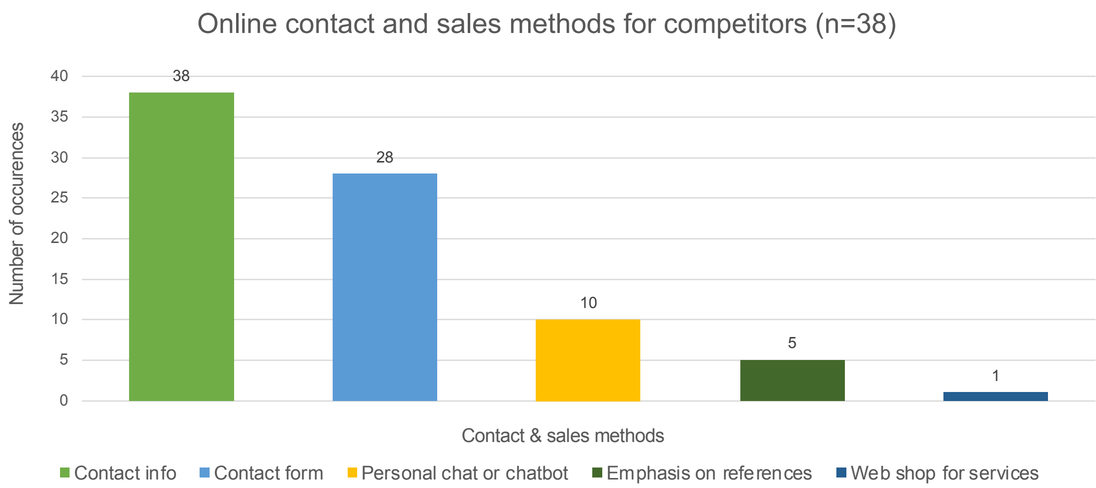


Figure 11. Online contact and sales methods for competitors (n=38)

Figure 11. shows that all companies exhibited at least one method of contacting or sales. Basic contact information (phone number and/or email) occurred on all competitor websites (n=38). The second most prevalent method was a contact form, which was seen on 28 websites. A personal chat or a chatbot was implemented on 10 of the websites. Five websites had a clear emphasis on references, and only one website had a webshop for their services. Some frequently recurring features were website feedback, pop-up newsletters, pop-up contact forms, value-added newsletters, marketing status surveys, guides and reports, search with mapping, and personalized chats.

The graphic design of the competitors' websites was similar in the sense that most sites followed pleasing aesthetics and basic color schemes but did not utilize radical visuals or graphical elements commonly seen on consumer sites (interactive elements, animations, prominent use of 2D o 3D illustration, vivid colors, and oversized fonts, etc.). Some differences in the average aesthetic between the management consulting and advertising agencies were, however, observed, with the former utilizing less color and more minimalistic fonts than the latter with a more vivid and warm average aesthetic.

5.4 Trend Review

The study analyzed 15 articles, news pieces, and blogs to identify website UI trends. The frequency of mention for each trend is as follows:

Website feature or element	**Frequency of occurrences**
Animation and micro-interactions	14
2D and 3D Illustration	14
Voice UI	13
AI and Chatbots	11
White space	9

Responsive / bright / bold / bi-colors (dominant two-color designs)	7
Storytelling	6
Creative gradients	6
Creative navigation elements	6
Personalization	5
Oversized, bold typography	5
Broken grid, asymmetrical layouts	4
Deep flat / Flat 2.0	4
Full-screen images	2
Split screen design	2
No loaders / smart loaders	2

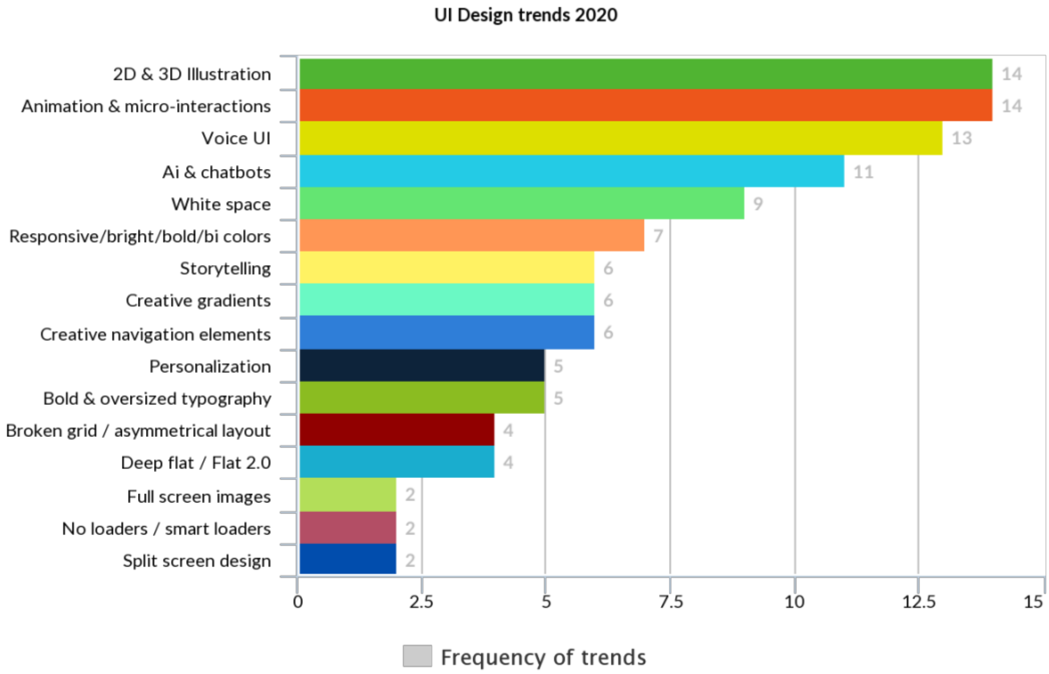


Figure 12. UI Design trends 2020 (n=15)

Figure 12. shows that amongst all the different trends mentioned, 2D and 3D illustrations, as well as animation and micro-interactions, were represented on 14 of the 15 websites. Other trends included within the top 5 were Voice UI, AI, and Chatbots, as well as White Space. Full-screen images, no loaders or smart loaders, and split-screen design were all among the least frequent trends.

6 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this thesis was to provide the case company with recommendations on the implementation of their online sales platform project and how they could use consumerization to their advantage. A secondary purpose was to contribute to the existing literature by examining the differences in interaction design approaches between B2B and B2C companies. The discussion chapter first discusses and answers the research questions, followed by suggestions and managerial implications. Next, the limitations and further research are covered. The chapter ends with the conclusions of this study.

6.1 Addressing the Research Questions

Since this thesis was conducted as a case study for a real company, it was necessary to establish two research questions to ensure the correct direction of the thesis. Research question 1 (What are the main differences between B2B and B2C websites, and how could B2B companies benefit from B2C interaction design practices?) was established in order to gain insight into the underlying problems and gain a sufficient understanding of the literature. Research question 2 (How could the case company benefit from B2C interaction design?), served the purpose of providing value to the case company. While the two research questions serve slightly different purposes, they still support each other.

The main differences between B2B and B2C companies can be divided into two different categories; a general business model perspective and an interaction design perspective.

The business model perspective that examines the two business models, in general, reveals that the primary difference is the amount of rationality that is expected to be present in decision-making (Pfoertsch & Scheel, 2012; Rėklaitis & Pilelienė, 2019). B2B decision-makers are considered rational, while consumers are believed to act on an emotional basis primarily. The other differences between the two business models are either causing this behavior or emerging from it. The often more technical and complicated nature of B2B solutions is one example of how the industry needs to maintain a rational way of doing business. Transaction size and scarcity of customers also require a more methodological approach. The rational nature of the B2B industry translates to less user-friendly website designs compared to their B2C counterparts (Harrison et al., 2017; Konradt, Lückel & Ellwart, 2012).

Many B2B companies also face challenges with understanding and being able to implement UX thinking across their organizations (Sundberg, 2015). Most of the differences in interaction design were found to stem almost exclusively from the rationality vs. emotionality factors of the business models. Aesthetic design, interactivity, and intelligent conversion design are some of the factors that B2C seems to be more proficient at. These are examples of the second perspective that examine the differences from an interaction design point of view.

The findings from the case study seem to support the aforementioned insights. When comparing the trend review results with the actual websites of the case company's competitors, it was observed that the top interaction design trends were rarely represented. The use of personal chat applications and chatbots was only implemented on 10 of the websites, and only one company had a 24/7 webshop for their services. Overall, the websites were aesthetically designed, but many lacked interactive features. Surprisingly, only five competitors put a clear emphasis on references or testimonials, which is mentioned as a key strategy for increasing trust on websites (King, 2008). The fact that the companies are classified as consulting or specialist companies might affect the brand image they want to portray. Seriousness, competence, and discretion are values that many consulting companies share, which could directly impact their choice of digital strategy. However, most of the companies provide marketing and advertising services, which require creativity and would thus align well with an interactive and innovative sales platform. Another factor that might contribute to the absence of the top UI trends is that most of the companies were micro companies with presumably small budgets for unique graphic design. The lack of innovative features on the competitors' websites might also be indicative of an assumption that the cost associated with creating an innovative website environment for a B2B audience will not be profitable due to the limited number of customers and the complicated nature of B2B sales interactions. This assumption would be in line with the research of Lin et al. (2011), which found that B2B companies have trouble with the adoption of new e-commerce technologies and lack experience in evaluating their digital efforts.

While many B2B companies can be characterized as rational, conservative, and less innovative regarding user-centered design, they still contribute to an e-commerce market size roughly twice as valuable as B2C, and the gap is believed to keep growing (Babenko et al., 2019; Chakraborty et al., 2002). This raises interesting questions regarding the e-commerce performance of B2B companies and whether there exists untapped potential that could be realized by enhancing the user experience of B2B e-commerce platforms and websites. Alternatively, the question may arise of whether customers in the B2B context have different expectations and preferences compared to their experiences as individuals and whether the potential is, in fact, close to being reached. While these questions remain unanswered, the literature revealed some clues about the performance of B2B e-commerce.

Many B2B companies still rely primarily on personal selling strategies such as meetings, networking, and trade shows (Pfoertsch & Scheel, 2012), and when having a limited budget, might opt for a basic non-interactive website with poor e-commerce performance. The fact that many B2B SMEs struggle with the implementation and evaluation of their websites' effectiveness (Lin et al., 2011) is another clue as to whether there could be room for improvement in this category.

The consumerization trend could also serve as a compelling driver for B2B companies to invest in and embrace user-centered e-commerce innovations. As consumer technology and innovations penetrate corporate settings and gradually become the norm, B2B companies could draw inspiration from the B2C markets with greater confidence when exploring innovative approaches for their own e-commerce strategies (Moschella et al., 2004). Furthermore, customers of B2B companies are consumers in their private lives. They are already familiar with a plethora of different technologies (Harrison et al., 2017) that have not yet been normalized in a B2B setting due to the previously mentioned challenges. This could indicate that despite the B2B e-commerce culture does not support certain applications, the customer has gained sufficient exposure to said applications as a consumer and, therefore, appreciates a more radical and innovative approach in a B2B procurement setting.

The MAYA principle by Hekkert et al. (2003) could be a great tool and justification for moving forward with more innovative website designs. As described in the literature review, “most advanced” refers to the innovation being exciting and new, while “yet acceptable” refers to sufficient familiarity, which is needed for acceptance. Since exposure increases acceptance and adoption rate (Bornstein, 1989; Rogers, 2010) and B2B buyers have been gaining exposure from consumer applications, B2B website innovations could potentially be pushed further than the industry standard seemingly allows. In practice, this means that companies could gain significant competitive advantages by harnessing B2B website norms and implementing them in a B2B setting, thus increasing brand value and revenue.

The customer survey was implemented to assess the willingness to adopt a more innovative approach for B2B service procurement. The survey tested the acceptance and attitudes toward concepts such as visible pricing, trust-related elements, and incentivized tasks. The findings revealed that the respondents, who consisted of typical customers of the case company, did, in fact, appreciate a more interactive and webshop-like experience when buying from a consulting company. Visible pricing was appreciated, a feature that is highly uncommon in the industry. The respondents also showed open-mindedness towards quiz-based contact forms, which surprisingly ranked similarly to traditional email and phone inquiries. In addition to these overall positive attitudes towards making consulting service procurement more interactive, the preferences were on trust and credibility-related features, which the literature also recognizes as one of the key aspects of website user experience (King, 2008; Schlosser et al., 2006; Morville & Sullenger, 2010)

The overall findings suggest that the case company should continue to explore the possibilities of the initially planned webshop and other interactive service procurement methods. The literature reveals that the harnessing of consumerization could indeed be beneficial when planning the logic of the case company’s website. Many different tools were also covered that help to evaluate, test, and implement the planned features of the webshop. The case study shows that typical customers show positive attitudes towards more innovative features on the website. Meanwhile, the competitors do not seem to have focused on said features, which could generate competitive advantages for the case company. As in all web development projects, the primary focus after deciding the focus of the project should be on iterative development and testing (Gibbons, 2016).

6.2 Suggestions & Managerial Implications

Based on the findings and discussion, a set of suggestions were formulated to help the case company proceed in the project and to be able to harness the benefits of consumerization. Some of the suggestions could also be generally applicable to businesses in other industries. Paired with the literature and case study findings, the suggestions offer a practical approach to the initial assignment. Here are the proposed suggestions:

- When working with innovation projects, make use of the Design Thinking process or a similar iterative development model.
- Utilize the four-point classification model by Pfoertsch & Scheel (2012) to correctly identify to what degree your company classifies as B2B or B2C. This helps with identifying future customer prospects and what industries to draw inspiration from when looking for service innovations.
- Use the User Experience Honeycomb by Morville & Sullenger (2010) to pinpoint what area of the user experience you want to focus on.
- Understand what your competitors are doing by conducting in-depth competitor analyses as frequently as needed.
- Form an understanding of the latest e-commerce trends in the most advanced industries (both B2C and B2B) and make a list of desired and relevant features to implement.
- According to the findings of the study, the following features could be beneficial for improving the user experience: open or visible pricing, automated lead generation in the form of quizzes and incentivized forms,

high priority on increasing trusting beliefs and credibility (transparency, references, testimonials, etc.), personalization, different conversion paths for different personas, and the use of AI and smart chatbots.

- The MAYA principle and the theory of exposure can be used as tools to evaluate the level of innovation and balance between familiarity and novelty.
- When building the online webshop, it is essential to acknowledge the importance of marketing efforts. Service and product descriptions, as well as clever pricing, are fundamental factors for the success of the webshop. Hard-to-understand services or insufficient descriptions make the services challenging to buy even though the conversion paths are otherwise well-designed.
- Interaction design focuses on the website environment, but the findability aspect is a crucial part of the customer journey. Things that improve findability, e.g., SEO (search engine optimization) and advertising, should be carefully incorporated into the project plan.
- Quick iterations and relevant testing should be practiced in order to alleviate the uncertainty that often characterizes innovation.

6.3 Limitations & Further Research

This thesis has a few academic and practical limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study relies heavily on a combination of factors from different perspectives in order to provide a general starting point that does not narrow down available ideas. The innovative nature of the project required a flexible platform in order to provide a sufficient number of alternatives for the analysis phase. This resulted in a broad spectrum of interlinked theories that did not aim to explain the problem on their own but instead provided a solid strategy for the project.

Related to this, the second limitation is linked to the conceptualizing nature of the project. Since the thesis revolves around a real-world case with a specific focus, a hypothesis could not be tested in the frame of this case study.

Thirdly, since the success of the project relies on a combination of factors, the focus of the research design was on both external theories as well as on local data to provide the case company with practical suggestions. This means that the studies and analyses were conducted under specific conditions and could not be generalized or used easily to describe the behavior of other industries or companies.

Finally, some aspects of the case study can be criticized. Since the needs and attitudes of the customers were gathered with a survey, the wording might have revealed the intentions behind the survey and thus influenced the answers. Having conducted a usability test with working prototypes could have possibly yielded more precise answers. Furthermore, due to the time-sensitive and subjective nature of the trend review, its relevance diminishes over time, making periodic reassessments necessary.

The findings and limitations of this study prompt some recommendations for future research. The B2B knowledge gap identified by Lilien (2016) is still relevant and should be addressed. This translates to a need for more academic attention that could be directed towards understanding how B2B companies could increase the user experience of their websites and acknowledge that user-centered design is essential even in the more traditional industries. Furthermore, the business classification model by Pfoertsch & Scheel (2012) has excellent potential as a strategic tool, and therefore, its effectiveness against the conventional classifications (B2C, B2B, B2B2C, mixed, etc.) should be further studied. This could help many companies, especially SMEs that tend to face challenges with their website effectiveness (Lin et al., 2012), to find the right strategies.

6.4 Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to explore the concept of consumerization and its potential applicability to the case company. The results showed that there is room for innovation in the local competitive field and that the typical customer of the case company could be open for a more innovative service procurement process on the website. The tools for the exploration and execution of a project that would fit the initial requirements of the case company were identified in the literature. Notable tools include the User Experience Honeycomb by Morville & Sullenger (2010), the

MAYA principle by Hekkert et al. (2003), and the business classification model by Pfoertsch & Scheel (2012).

The main academic findings were that B2C and B2B companies have many inherent differences that stem from their sales models and customer characteristics. B2B companies are also behind B2C companies in interactive and user-centered website design while still having roughly twice the market size in e-commerce. If the business model of a company is observed through a four-point classification model by Pfoertsch & Scheel (2012), however, many B2B and B2C companies could have more similarities if they belong to the same industry. The classification of B2B and B2C companies therefore requires more academic attention in order to help companies better formulate their strategies in the future. The consumerization phenomenon as an innovation tool for companies should also be further studied in a practical context to serve as a guide for B2B companies.

7 SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

KONSUMENTISERING AV B2B-FÖRSÄLJNING

Utnyttjande av strategier för B2C-interaktionsdesign vid ett konsultföretag

Inledning

Världen blir alltmer uppkopplad och en stor del av vårt liv spenderas online. Globalt spenderades i medeltal nästan sju timmar online per dag under det andra kvartalet 2023 (Statista, 2023). Detta tyder på att våra dagliga rutiner starkt involverar informationsteknologi vilket företagsvärlden har varit tvungen att anpassa sig till. Den ökande mängden konsumentteknik som introducerats på arbetsplatser har lett till innovationer. Fenomenet att konsumentteknik har börjat påverka företagens it-strategier kallas konsumentisering (eng. *Consumerization)* och uppmärksammades först av Moschella m.fl. 2004. För att dra maximal nytta av fenomenet bör företag inse att människor har två roller: de är både anställda och konsumenter samtidigt. Denna tanke genomsyrar denna avhandling.

Företag och organisationer har gjort tydliga framsteg när det gäller implementering av innovativ interaktionsdesign på sina webbplatser. Trots detta är skillnaderna mellan Business-to-Business-företag (senare B2B) och Business-to-Consumer-företag (senare B2C) tydliga. Både Harrison m.fl. (2017) och Konradt m.fl. (2012) påpekar att B2C-företag investerar mer i användbarhet och interaktionsdesign på sina webbplatser jämfört med B2B-företag. Orsakerna till detta hänger ihop med skillnaderna i affärsmodellerna för respektive företagstyp. Några av de största skillnaderna härstammar från antalet kunder och deras storlek (färre men större kunder inom B2B) samt mer emotionellt styrda köpbeslut (mer inom B2C-marknaderna) (Rėklaitis och Pilelienė, 2019; Iankova m.fl., 2019). Studier visar även att sociala mediers påverkan skiljer sig åt mellan B2B och B2C (Iankova m.fl., 2019) och att B2C-marknadsföring är mer emotionellt styrt än B2B-marknadsföring (Lilien, 2016).

Detta leder till utmaningar då man vill anpassa konsumentorienterade lösningar inom B2B-företag (Lilien, 2016). Skillnaderna mellan B2B- och B2C-marknader är alltså tydliga och även forskningen visar en klar obalans där B2C har fått mer uppmärksamhet inom forskningen än B2B (Lilien, 2016).

De ovannämnda skillnaderna väcker intressanta frågor om varför online-marknadsföring behandlas olika på respektive marknader. Konsumentiseringen tyder på att B2B-världen strävar efter att lära sig mer om konsumentmarknader och om möjligheterna att utnyttja B2C-innovationer. Tanken att man kunde dra nytta av interaktionsstrategier som används inom B2C även för digitala B2B-tjänster har varit det drivande syftet för denna avhandling.

Syfte, problemformulering och forskningsfrågor

Avhandlingen har utförts som ett uppdrag för ett konsultföretag i Åbo. Avhandlingen har två syften, ett praktiskt syfte och ett forskningssyfte. Det praktiska syftet är att ge fallföretaget råd om hur de ska gå vidare med sitt projekt för en plattform för onlineförsäljning. Forskningssyftet är att utforska litteraturen som behandlar ämnet med avsikten att belysa skillnaderna i metoderna för interaktionsdesign hos B2B- och B2C-företag och således kunna bidra till B2B-forskningen. Målet är att resultaten även ska kunna användas som allmänna riktlinjer för beslutsfattare.

Många B2B-försäljningsinteraktioner beskrivs som komplicerade och detaljerade, vilket blir tydligare vid jämförelse med interaktioner vid B2C-försäljning. Onödig komplexitet leder till ineffektivitet, vilket kan vara svårt att åtgärda på grund av B2B-marknadens karaktär. Denna ineffektivitet kan delvis bero på antagandet att B2B-interaktioner måste skötas annorlunda än B2C-interaktioner, med den påföljd att man använder sig av föråldrade affärsmodeller. Med ökad användning av informationsteknologi inom B2B ökar också behovet av effektiv interaktionsdesign. Utmaningen för B2B-företag är således att komma i kapp B2C-marknaden gällande användbara digitala innovationer och interaktionsdesign.

Fallföretaget står inför liknande problem som är specifika för konsultbranschen, där kunder uppfattar konsulttjänster som dyra och svåra att köpa, särskilt online. Interaktionen mellan kund och konsult, som är konfidentiell till sin natur, skapar en kraftobalans med stort ansvar hos konsulten. Dessa omständigheter höjer tröskeln för kontaktbeslut hos kunden och skapar utmaningar för konsultföretag i allmänhet.

Målet med avhandlingen är att identifiera de huvudsakliga problemområdena vid försäljningsinteraktionerna inom B2B-marknaden särskilt vid interaktioner som är specifika för konsultbranschen och att föreslå innovativa lösningar som kan implementeras i utvecklandet av försäljningsplattformen för fallföretaget. För att uppnå detta har följande forskningsfrågor formulerats:

FF1: Vilka är de huvudsakliga skillnaderna mellan webbplatser hos B2B- och B2C-företag, och hur skulle B2B-företag kunna dra nytta av interaktionsdesignpraxisen hos B2C-företag?

FF2: Hur skulle fallföretaget kunna dra nytta av interaktionsdesignen hos B2C-företag?

Fallföretaget

Fallföretaget är ett Åbobaserat mikroföretag (<1 miljon i omsättning) som specialiserat sig på strategisk marknadsföring och tillväxtkonsultation. Företaget grundades 2013 och erbjuder konsulttjänster till både B2B- och B2C-företag. Kunderna varierar från små till medelstora företag runt om i Finland. Fallföretaget är specialiserat på tillväxt genom de strategiska aspekterna av marknadsföring och intressefokuset ligger på kundföretag som planerar att internationalisera sin verksamhet. För närvarande sysselsätter fallföretaget fem personer och är en del av ett omfattande partnerskapsnätverk som bidrar till nya kunder och affärsmöjligheter.

Fallföretaget ville automatisera sin onlineförsäljning med målet att minska mängden arbete som läggs på försäljningen. Samtidigt vill de kunna samla mer data om sina besökare på webbplatsen. Utifrån fallföretagets önskemål och utmaningar skapades ett koncept bestående av en försäljningsplattform som gör webbplatsen delvis mer lik en upplevelse i en B2C-webbshop. Försäljningsplattformen beaktar olika kundprofiler för att kunna skräddarsy användarupplevelsen. I denna avhandling fungerar försäljningsplattformen som ett verktyg för att styra både litteraturöversikten och fallstudien.

Användarupplevelse och interaktionsdesign

Utmärkt användarupplevelse är en central förutsättning för att kunna skapa mervärde med hjälp av informationsteknologi. Användarupplevelse (eng. *User-experience* eller *UX*) handlar om att skapa positiva helhetsupplevelser, medan interaktionsdesign fokuserar på att utforma gränssnitt och interaktiva element med målet att användarinteraktionen ska upplevas som smidig och meningsfull. Interaktionsdesignen utgör en del av den totala användarupplevelsen och ligger i fokus för denna avhandling.

”*UX-Honeycomb*” av Morville och Sullenger (2010) är ett ramverk som beskriver hörnstenarna i en användarupplevelse. Ramverket består av följande hörnstenar: användbar (eng. *usable*), nyttig (eng. *useful*), attraktiv (eng. *desirable*), tillgänglig (eng. *accessible*), trovärdig (eng. *credible*), hittbar (eng. *findable*) och värdefull (eng. *valuable*). Morville och Sullenger (2010) argumenterar för att till exempel "hittbarhet" direkt påverkar trovärdigheten hos en webbplats. Om en webbplats inte kan hittas enkelt med en sökmotor verkar den mindre trovärdig, och om den inte kan hittas alls blir de andra egenskaperna irrelevanta. Om webbplatsen hittas och är tillräckligt trovärdig måste den vara tillgänglig och sedan användbar. Men om webbplatsen varken upplevs om nyttig eller attraktiv kommer användaren sannolikt inte betrakta upplevelsen som värdefull.

För att lyckas bygga upp en utmärkt och värdefull användarupplevelse bör ramverkets alla hörnstenar vara väldesignade och detta kräver exceptionell interaktionsdesign.

Skillnader mellan kundinteraktioner hos B2B- och B2C-företag

Det finns flera skillnader hos B2B- och B2C-företag. Dessa skillnader förekommer främst i beslutsprocesserna (mer komplexa hos B2B), kundrelationer (större och färre kunder hos B2B än hos B2C), produktkomplexitet och marknadsföringsmetoder (mer emotionell och mindre faktabaserad marknadsföring på B2C-marknaden). Pfoertsch och Scheel (2012) presenterar ett verktyg för att poängsätta företagets aktiviteter med syftet att identifiera till vilken grad företaget är ett B2B- eller B2C-företag. Verktyget av Pfoertsch och Scheel (2012) visar också att skillnaderna mellan B2C- och B2B-företag även kan vara mycket små ifall företagen är verksamma i liknande branscher med variation endast vad gäller kundtypen.

Eftersom affärsmodellerna hos B2B- och B2C-företag skiljer sig åt, varierar även webbinteraktionsdesignen mellan dem. Forskningen visar att B2C-företag är skickligare på att skapa användarcentrerade webbplatser jämfört med B2B-företag. B2B-företag släpar alltså efter i digital innovation och stöter därför på svårigheter med att implementera en it-strategi och utvärdera sina digitala lösningar (Harrison m.fl., 2017). Trots att interaktionsdesignen hos B2B-företag får mindre uppmärksamhet än hos B2C-företag, överträffar e-handeln hos B2B-företag i storlek e-handeln hos B2C-företag.

Utnyttjande av konsumentisering för B2B-webbplatser

Rörelsen i riktning mot e-handel och mer användarcentrerade webbplatser, även för traditionella B2B-företag, kan motiveras av fenomenet konsumentisering. En studie av Dotzel och Shankar (2019) visar att tjänsteinnovationer hos B2B-företag ökar företagsvärdet mer än risken, särskilt i B2B-dominerade branscher.

Konsumentisering definieras som en trend där teknik, produkter eller tjänster från konsumentvärlden integreras i professionella miljöer. Konsumentiseringen påverkar även affärspraxisen och implementeringen av teknik genom att sudda ut gränsen mellan personliga och professionella roller. Studier visar att B2B-kunder, trots sina professionella roller, påverkas av sina personliga erfarenheter. Inköpare i B2B-företag använder sociala medier och nätshoppar på fritiden vilket gör att de är vana med B2C-lösningar. Detta påverkar personernas åsikter om användarupplevelser även i B2B-kontext. Trots intresset för B2C-lösningar hos B2B-företag är själva implementeringen ofta svår p.g.a. affärsmodellens natur.

”*The Diffusion of Innovation*”-teorin av Roger (2010) är ett värdefullt verktyg då företag vill implementera innovationer. Teorin öppnar upp de olika skedena i innovationsprocessen. Design Thinking-processen av Gibbons (2016) är ett annat värdefullt verktyg för framgångsrik webbinnovation. I den iterativa processen ingår faserna förståelse (eng. *empathizing)*, definiering (eng. *defining),* idégenerering (eng. *ideating),* prototypframställning (eng. *prototyping),* testande (eng. *testing)* och implementering (eng. *implementing)* som gör webbdesignsprocessen intuitiv och effektiv.

Medan teorierna är intressanta och direkt väsentliga för fallföretaget, krävs lokala tester för att kunna anpassa dem effektivt. En fallstudie är en effektiv metod för att utforska fördelarna med konsumentisering på B2B-webbplatser.

Metod

Denna studie fokuserar på hur man kunde öka onlineförsäljningen hos ett konsultföretag, vilket innebär att resultaten kan endast användas för att förklara en begränsad typ av situationer. Fallstudier är lämpliga metoder i situationer där omständigheterna är praktiska till sin natur. Inom fallstudier används ofta blandade metoder i forskningsdesignen, vilket är fallet även i denna studie. Eftersom fallstudien är isolerad till en specifik situation kommer en blandad metodansats att erbjuda de nödvändiga verktygen för att stärka studiens validitet.

I metoderna som använts i avhandlingen ingår en intern intervju med en av fallföretagets ägare, en enkätundersökning riktad till företagets kunder, en konkurrensanalys samt en trendanalys. Metoderna valdes för att som beslutsunderlag få ett internt, ett lokalt och ett generellt perspektiv på forskningsproblemet.

Den interna intervjun hade som tema att kartlägga fallföretagets interna behov och restriktioner. Intervjun gjordes per e-post och innehållet fördjupades senare genom en intervju.

Enkätundersökningen skickades till 54 mottagare som valdes ut så att de representerar fallföretagets typiska kund (företagare, beslutsfattare och vd:n för små till mellanstora företag). Frågorna var formulerade med stöd av den interna intervjun och konceptet för försäljningsplattformen. Respondenterna svarade på frågor om hur villiga de skulle vara att lägga ner mer tid på försäljningsinteraktion online i utbyte mot prisuppgifter. En fråga handlade om respondenternas allmänna vanor gällande försäljningsinteraktioner hos B2B-företag samt vad de anser väcker mest tillit på en B2B-webbplatsen.

Konkurrensanalysen utfördes med hjälp av Google och Fonecta Finder Yrityshaku och målet var att utvärdera åtminstone 30 olika företag registrerade i Finland. Företagen skulle antingen vara direkta eller indirekta konkurrenter och ha en omsättning på minst 300 000 €. Informationen som samlades in inkluderade bl.a. finansiella data, företagets karaktär samt kvantitativ och kvalitativ information gällande företagets webbplats och onlineförsäljningskanaler.

Trendanalysen utfördes även på webben och utnyttjade olika artiklar och bloggar på Google och Google Scholar. De sökord som användes var "UI design trends 2020", "User interface trends 2020" och "UI trends 2020". Sampelstorleken skulle vara åtminstone 15, och giltiga källor kunde vara bloggar, artiklar eller studier. Kravet för bloggar eller andra icke-vetenskapliga källor var att ha minst fem olika trender listade.

Resultat och besvarande av forskningsfrågorna

Avhandlingen utfördes som en fallstudie åt ett konsultföretag och styrdes av två forskningsfrågor. Den första frågan fokuserade på skillnaderna mellan onlineförsäljning hos B2B- och B2C-företag, medan den andra utforskade hur fallföretaget kunde dra nytta av interaktionsdesignen hos B2C-företag.

FF1: Vilka är de huvudsakliga skillnaderna mellan webbplatser hos B2B- och B2C-företag, och hur skulle B2B-företag kunna dra nytta av interaktionsdesignpraxisen hos B2C-företag?

Skillnaderna mellan de två affärsmodellerna avspeglade sig främst i rationaliteten vid beslutsfattandet vilket syns i mindre användarvänliga B2B-webbplatser. Små till medelstora företag var överrepresenterade bland de B2B-företag som hade svårigheter att inse värdet med it-innovationer. Trots detta bidrar B2B-företag mer till e-handelsmarknaden än B2C-företag. Eftersom utmaningarna som B2B-företag möter inkluderar svårigheter med UX-tänkande och en brist på innovativ webbdesign, kan det hävdas att framgången på e-handelsmarknaden inte beror på kvaliteten på lösningarna utan storleken på efterfrågan. Ifall B2B-företag och speciellt små till medelstora företag kunde förbättra användarupplevelsen på deras onlineförsäljningskanaler, kunde även större marknadsandelar nås.

Det finns alltså ett behov av mer innovativa och användbara lösningar på B2B-sidan i likhet med sådana som finns på B2C-sidan. Utvärderingsverktyget av Pfoertsch och Scheel (2012) kunde vara ett utmärkt hjälpmedel i syfte att hitta den rätta digitala strategin och kunna dra nytta av konsumentisering.

FF2: Hur skulle fallföretaget kunna dra nytta av interaktionsdesignen hos B2C-företag?

Resultaten från fallstudien indikerade att konkurrenternas webbplatser saknade de främsta trenderna inom interaktionsdesign. Det finns alltså utrymme för utveckling även på det lokala planet. Även om B2B-företag generellt sett betraktas som rationella och konservativa, finns det potential för att öka användarupplevelsen och därmed åstadkomma ökat förtroende och ökade intäkter. Enkätundersökningen visade positiv en inställning till interaktiva inköpsmetoder inom konsultbranschen. Undersökningen avslöjade även att kunderna värderade trovärdighet högt vid försäljningsinteraktioner i allmänhet. Sammanfattningsvis tyder resultaten på att fallföretaget bör fortsätta med webbshopsutvecklingen och med interaktiva metoder för köp av tjänster, vilket kan ge konkurrensfördelar på en marknad där konkurrenterna inte har lagt vikt vid sådana funktioner.

Baserat på fallstudiens resultat formulerades en uppsättning förslag till stöd för fallföretaget i det fortsatta projektet och för att kunna dra nytta av fördelarna med konsumentiseringen. Några av förslagen kan också vara generellt tillämpliga för chefer inom andra branscher. Tillsammans med litteraturen och resultaten från fallstudien erbjuder förslagen ett praktiskt tillvägagångssätt för fallföretaget i uppdraget med försäljningsplattformen.

Sammanfattning

Syftet med denna avhandling var att utforska begreppet konsumentisering och dess potentiella tillämpning vid fallföretaget. Resultaten visar att det finns utrymme för innovation i det lokala konkurrensfältet och att fallföretagets typiska kunder kan vara öppna för en mer innovativ tjänsteanskaffningsprocess på webbplatsen. Verktyg för att utforska och genomföra ett projekt som skulle uppfylla fallföretagets inledande krav identifierades i litteraturen. Noterbara verktyg inkluderar ”*UX-*

Honeycomb" av Morville och Sullenger (2010), *MAYA*-principen av Hekkert m.fl. (2003) och affärs klassificeringsmodellen av Pfoertsch och Scheel (2012).

De huvudsakliga vetenskapliga resultaten visade att B2C- och B2B-företag har många grundläggande skillnader som härstammar från deras respektive försäljningsmodeller och kundegenskaper. B2B-företag ligger också efter B2C-företag när det gäller interaktiv och användarcentrerad webbdesign, samtidigt som de har en dubbelt så stor marknad inom e-handeln. Om företagets affärsmodell observeras genom en fyrapunktsklassificeringsmodell av Pfoertsch och Scheel (2012) kan dock många B2B- och B2C-företag ha fler likheter speciellt om de tillhör samma bransch. Klassificeringen av B2B- och B2C-företag kräver därför mer vetenskaplig uppmärksamhet då målet är att hjälpa företag bli bättre på formulera sina strategier i framtiden. Konsumentisering som ett innovationsverktyg för företag bör också studeras ytterligare i ett praktiskt sammanhang för att det ska kunna fungera som en guide för B2B-företag.

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APPENDICES

Palveluiden ostaminen toiselta yritykseltä

Tässä kyselyssä kartoitetaan yritysten välistä digitaalista ostokäyttäytymistä. Kohderyhmä kyselylle on palveluostoista päättävät tai niitä tehneet henkilöt, joilla on kokemusta tarjouspyyntöjen tekemisestä yrityksen nimissä. Kysely on osa Åbo Akademin Kauppakorkeakoululla tehtävää Pro Gradu -tutkielmaa, joka käsittelee B2B-yritysten digitaalista kanssakäymistä. Vastaamalla kyselyyn täydennät suomalaisten yritysten näkemystä aiheeseen, jota on tutkittu hyvin vähän.

Kiitokset etukäteen ajastasi,

Mathias Kerke

Kyselyssä on viisi kysymystä, joihin vastaamisen tulisi kestää alle 2 min. Skenaario: Kaikissa tilanteissa olet yrityksen X nettisivuilla ensimmäistä kertaa ja tarvitset heidän palveluitaan.

Vastaa mahdollisimman totuudenmukaisesti kysymyksiin. Ensimmäinen reaktio kysymykseen on yleensä se aidoin eli älä jää pähkäilemään kysymystä.

Valitse vaihtoehto, joka kuvaa sinua parhaiten: *

- ○ Vastaan palveluiden hankinnasta yrityksessäni ja teen useita tarjouspyyntöjä vuodessa.
- ○ Olen aikaisemmin tehnyt tarjouspyyntöjä yrityksen nimissä.
- ○ En ole ikinä tehnyt tarjouspyyntöä yrityksen nimissä.

1. Kuinka halukas olisit antamaan Y-tunnuksesi yrityksen nettisivuilla tarjouspyyntövaiheessa vastineeksi paremmin räätälöidystä tarjouksesta? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
En ollenkaan	○	○	○	○	○	○	Erittäin

2. Kuinka tärkeänä pitäisit alustavaa/suuntaa antavaa hinta-arvioita tarjouspyyntövaiheessa palvelulle, jonka tarkka hinta voidaan määrittää vasta ensimmäisen tapaamisen jälkeen? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
En ollenkaan	○	○	○	○	○	○	Erittäin

3. Kuinka halukas olisit käyttämään enemmän aikaa (n. 5 min) ja antamaan tarkempia tietoja yrityksesi tarpeista tarjouspyyntövaiheessa, jotta saisit heti alustavan hinnan eri palveluista näkyviin? *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
En ollenkaan	○	○	○	○	○	○	Erittäin

4. Mihin seuraavista toimenpiteistä ryhtyisit todennäköisimmin ennen tarjouspyynnön lähettämistä, jos et tietäisi mikä palvelu sinulle sopisi parhaiten? *

- ○ Lähettäisin sähköpostin, jossa pyytäisin lisätietoja palveluista.
- ○ Tekisin lyhyen kartoittavan testin, jonka avulla löytyisi minulle sopivimmat palvelut.
- ○ Tiedustelisin sopivia palveluita puhelimitse.

5. Mikä seuraavista lisää mielestäsi eniten luotettavuutta ostaessasi uutta palvelua yritykseltä, joka ei ole entuudestaan tuttu? *

- ○ Selkeät referenssit
- ○ Palveluiden hinnat näkyvillä
- ○ Yhteyshenkilöiden kasvot ja nimet selkeästi esillä sivuilla
- ○ Palveluiden tarkka kuvaus
- ○ Other...

Palveluiden ostaminen toiselta yritykseltä

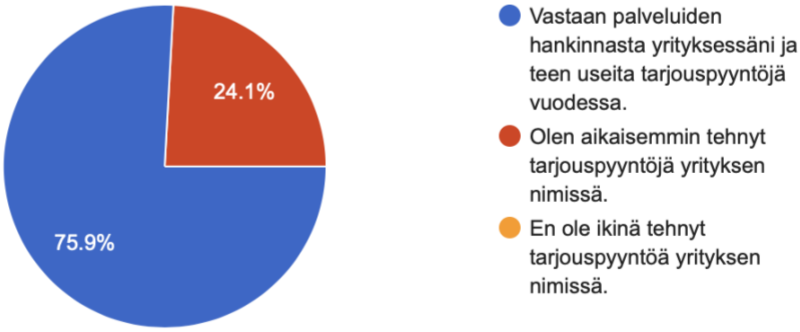
29 responses

Publish analytics

Kyselyssä on viisi kysymystä, joihin vastaamisen tulisi kestää alle 2 min. Skenaario: Kaikissa tilanteissa olet yrityksen X nettisivuilla ensimmäistä kertaa ja tarvitset heidän palveluitaan.

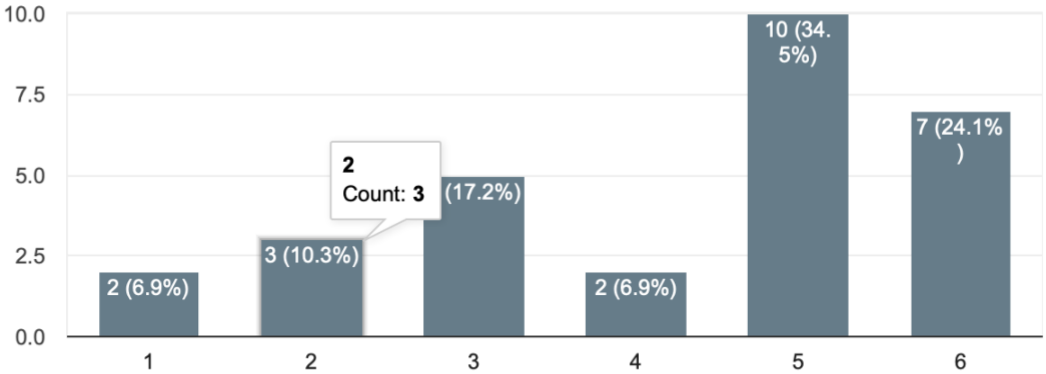
Valitse vaihtoehto, joka kuvaa sinua parhaiten:

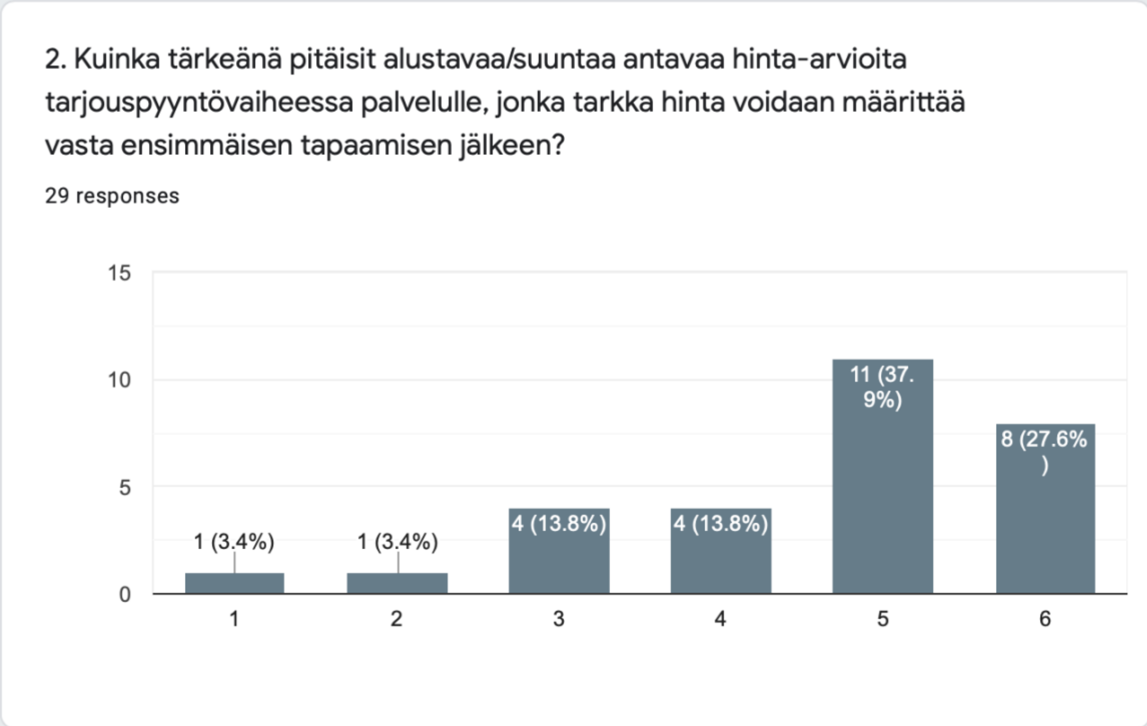
29 responses

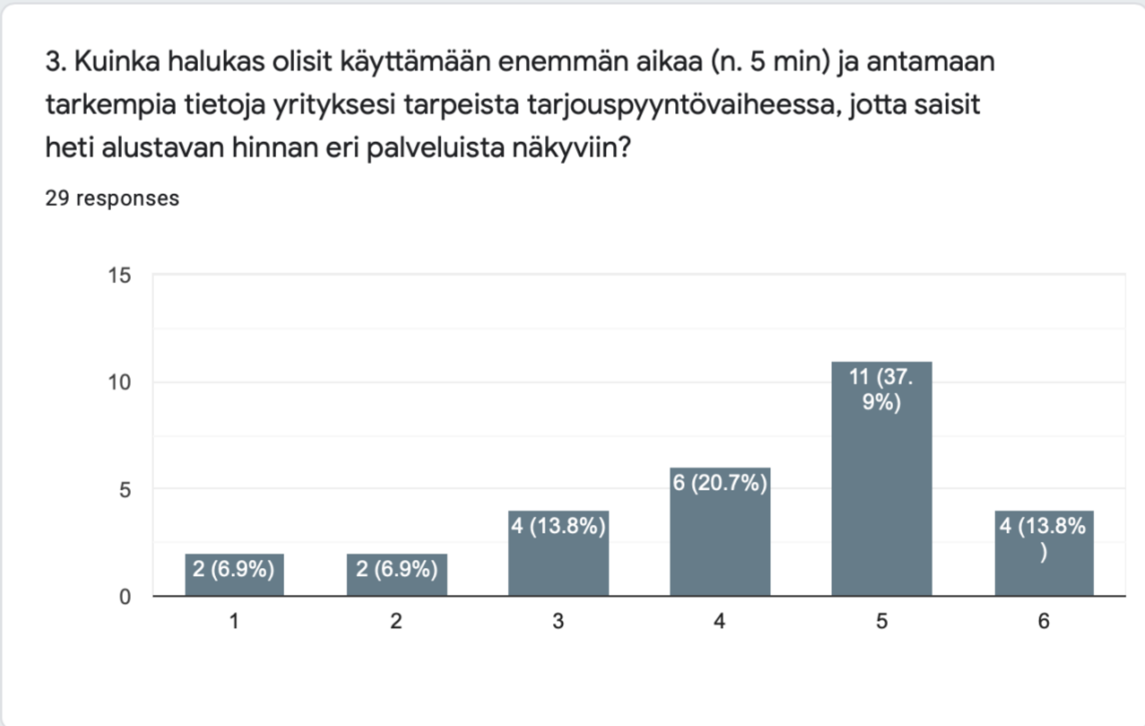


1. Kuinka halukas olisit antamaan Y-tunnuksesi yrityksen nettisivuilla tarjouspyyntövaiheessa vastineeksi paremmin räätälöidystä tarjouksesta?

29 responses

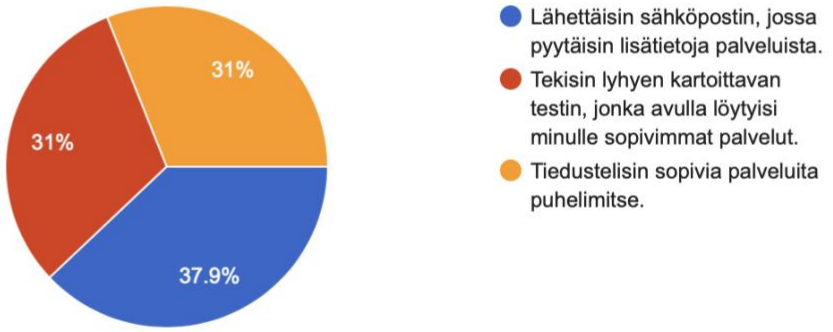



2. Kuinka tärkeänä pitäisit alustavaa/suuntaa antavaa hinta-arvioita tarjouspyyntövaiheessa palvelulle, jonka tarkka hinta voidaan määrittää vasta ensimmäisen tapaamisen jälkeen?
29 responses
15
10
5
0
1 (3.4%)
1 (3.4%)
4 (13.8%)
4 (13.8%)
11 (37.9%)
8 (27.6%)
1
2
3
4
5
6


3. Kuinka halukas olisit käyttämään enemmän aikaa (n. 5 min) ja antamaan tarkempia tietoja yrityksesi tarpeista tarjouspyyntövaiheessa, jotta saisit heti alustavan hinnan eri palveluista näkyviin?
29 responses
15
10
5
0
2 (6.9%)
2 (6.9%)
4 (13.8%)
6 (20.7%)
11 (37.9%)
4 (13.8%)
1
2
3
4
5
6

4. Mihin seuraavista toimenpiteistä ryhtyisit todennäköisimmin ennen tarjouspyynnön lähettämistä, jos et tietäisi mikä palvelu sinulle sopisi parhaiten?

29 responses



5. Mikä seuraavista lisää mielestäsi eniten luotettavuutta ostaessasi uutta palvelua yritykseltä, joka ei ole entuudestaan tuttu?

29 responses